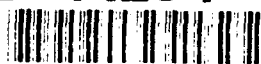


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IRAN'S INFLUENCE ON THE FORMER SOVIET MUSLIM REPUBLICS
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR U.S. STRATEGIC POLICY

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

Mr. Thomas E. Todd
Department of Defense

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Iran, however, has other concerns regarding the former Soviet Union, upon which it had come to rely for sophisticated weaponry in order to re-establish itself as a regional power in the Persian Gulf. In approaching the six Muslim republics, Iran has been careful not to offend the central power of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Russia, as represented currently by Boris Yeltsin.

The United States has already declared a policy of recognition for the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union, and will provide diplomatic representations soon. Turkey is providing an alternative, secular model of government for them--in contrast to the Islamic republic model presented by Iran--and is assisting in their development.

This paper describes the pressures on the six republics over the last several months, provides an historical perspective on occasion, and offers additional policy considerations and recommendations for the United States.

"If one fought against an enemy
ostensibly because of his methods, and permitted
oneself to be impelled by the heat of the struggle
to adopt those same methods,
who, then, could be said to have won?"

George F. Kennan, 1967

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I. THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN	4
Before the Islamic Republic	4
Exporting the Revolution	5
Economic and Military Developments	6
Soviet Relations With the Islamic Republic of Iran	7
Relations Since the Breakup	9
II. THE MUSLIM REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION	15
Historical Perspective	15
The Individual Republics	16
Azerbaijan	16
Kazakhstan	19
Kyrgyzstan	23
Tajikistan	25
Turkmenistan	28
Uzbekistan	30
III. UNITED STATES POLICY CONSIDERATIONS	37
U.S.-Iranian Relations	37
Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic Movements	38
Nuclear Weapons Control and Proliferation	39
Ethnic Rivalries	40
The Commonwealth of Independent States	41
IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	48

INTRODUCTION

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution specifies: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...." With ratification by the state legislature of Virginia (the eleventh state necessary to secure passage) on 15 December 1791, the first ten amendments (Bill of Rights) to the United States Constitution and the principle of separation of church and state became part of the American tradition. Another tradition, however, was established in Iran in 1979 when that country experienced a revolution, overthrew its monarchy, and became a theocracy--the Islamic Republic of Iran. In a national referendum on 30 and 31 March 1979 to select a form of government, 98 percent of the people of Iran voted for an Islamic republic. Voting was not by secret ballot, and the only form of government to appear on the ballot was an Islamic republic.¹

With this beginning, the Islamic Republic of Iran, under the spiritual leadership of Ayatollah Sayyid Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini, set out on a path to establish an "Islamic World Order."² Part of this concept involved exporting the Islamic revolution to other countries, a prospect which most of Iran's neighbors--not only around the Persian Gulf, but also including the Soviet Union--found to be very threatening, to say the least. Coming down from over 50 years of fearing first Nazi and then U.S. threats to its nationhood, the leaders of the USSR were at once happy to have a neighbor to the south that was not in the

U.S. camp, but also disturbed to discover that the new Islamic republic might attempt to influence its own six Muslim republics: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

Some might ask: Why should the United States concern itself with what happens in these six republics? Why should it care whether they are influenced by Iran (or Turkey, or Pakistan, or Saudi Arabia, or China, or any other country) in terms of their future development politically, economically, ethnically, religiously, or militarily as nations? What are the interests of the United States in the region? Nuclear proliferation, regional stability and the spread of Islamic fundamentalism are three reasons why the United States should be concerned.

It is the intent of this paper to explore, describe, and explain the influence Iran has had and attempted to have on the Muslim peoples of the former Soviet Union and to offer some alternatives for U.S. strategic policy in the region. The first part of the paper deals with Iran's affairs in terms of how it is trying to interact and assert its influence upon its neighbors. The second part of the paper describes, collectively and individually, the six Muslim republics of the USSR and provides details of Iranian involvement in those republics. The final portion offers strategic policy considerations for the United States in the region.

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CHAPTER I

THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

Before the Islamic Republic

During most of the 19th and 20th centuries, Iran's foreign policy was devoted to trying to survive as a buffer zone between two expanding empires--first the British and the Russians, then (after 1917) the British and the Soviets, and finally (following World War II) the Soviets and the Americans.

Imperial Russian policy regarding Iran was largely one of expansionism. In 1801, Georgia and part of Azerbaijan were annexed from Iran by the Czar. Under the treaty of Gulistan in 1813, Iran acknowledged Russian authority in the Caucasus. Parts of Armenia and still more of Azerbaijan were annexed from Iran by Russia 15 years later.¹ The treaty of Turkmanchay in 1828² established the boundaries between the two countries pretty much as they exist today, approximately 1050 miles long with no boundary line in the Caspian Sea. The boundary between the two countries west of the Caspian was 434 miles long; and east of the Caspian, was 616 miles long.³

British policy in the region was one of containment of both the Ottoman Turks and the Russians to protect its empire. As the British empire receded following World War II, the British were replaced by the United States. All three countries, the United States, Soviet Union, and Great Britain, had stationed troops in Iran during World War II, but the U.S. troops were there primarily to facilitate wartime supply efforts to the USSR.⁴

Concerned about Soviet expansionism,⁵ the United States used Iran as part of its own policy toward the Soviet Union. The delayed Soviet withdrawal from Iran soon after World War II⁶ was among the first confrontations between the two new superpowers.⁷ Indeed, Articles V and VI of the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921 gave the USSR the unilateral right to intervene in Iran militarily whenever it judged its security to be threatened from Iranian territory.⁸ After the fall of the Shah, U.S. policy centered on the danger that the Soviets might try to destabilize Iran or to replace the Ayatollah with a regime more friendly to Soviet interests.⁹ U.S. concerns in the region later centered on the continued flow of oil from the Persian Gulf, according to then-Vice President George Bush in 1988:

"The Persian Gulf is a region of vital importance to the United States and the economy of the world. American and European forces are in the gulf, with the support of the states of the area, to meet a vital need --to help ensure the unimpeded flow of oil...."¹⁰

Exporting the Revolution

The theocracy that came to power in Iran in 1979 quickly took the initiative in establishing its ground rules for a new foreign policy that called for exporting the revolution. There was, however, some ambiguity about how this endeavor was to be accomplished. Technically, swords were not to be used to expand the revolution, but, in cases of self-defense, force was permissible. Self-defense for Iran included defending Muslims throughout the Middle East, including countering the attack by

Iraq (with spiritual and financial support by Iraq's Arab neighbors across the gulf from Iran) upon Iran itself in September 1980, defending against Soviet aggression in neighboring Muslim Afghanistan beginning in December 1979, and opposing Israeli attacks on Muslims in Lebanon (with considerable Israeli support coming from the United States). Besides its hot war with Iraq, Iran employed various coercive means (such as smuggling arms into Saudi Arabia through pilgrims in 1986, placing a Revolutionary Guard contingent in Lebanon, support for hostage-taking, and bombings) as well as propagandistic broadcasts to export the Islamic revolution.¹¹

With the end of the Iran-Iraq War, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, and the ascendancy to power of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and President Hashemi-Rafsanjani in Iran, some believe that the expansion of the Islamic revolution began to be enveloped in a new package: a good-neighbor policy toward its Muslim neighbors in deed, as well as in word.¹² Along with other events such as the release of most foreign hostages held by Iranian sympathizers in Lebanon, the resolution of the major Iranian claims against the United States at the Hague Tribunal stemming from the 1979-80 hostage crisis in Tehran, and the generally warming relations between Iran and western European nations, Iran began to reenter the mainstream of world politics.

Economic and Military Developments

Following its long and devastating war with Iraq (the cease fire became effective under United Nations auspices in August

1988), Iran has found itself economically and militarily in dire straights. One estimate has put Iran's domestic needs at \$25 billion a year with oil revenues bringing in only \$15 billion per year.¹³ Economic deterioration in Iran was noted recently as reasons for demonstrations, bombings and arson attacks reported in several Iranian cities, including Rasht, Isfahan, Tehran and Tabriz.¹⁴

The long war with Iraq also left Iran's military in a shambles. The visit of future President Rafsanjani to Moscow in June 1989, however, was the beginning of Iran's return as a regional military power, equipped with sophisticated weaponry. The Soviet-Iranian arms deal brought advanced MiG-29 fighter and SU-24 fighter-bomber aircraft,¹⁵ T-72 tanks,¹⁶ and submarines¹⁷ to the Islamic republic. Iraq made a substantial, unsolicited contribution of state-of-the-art aircraft to Iran's Air Force during the U.S.-led attack during Desert Storm. CIA Director Robert Gates warned in recent congressional testimony that "Tehran has embarked on an ambitious effort to develop its military and defense industries, including programs for weapons of mass destruction."¹⁸

Soviet Relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran

The central government of the Soviet Union actively supported ethnic nationalism in Iran immediately following World War II, but showed considerable restraint in this regard during 1979-80 as the Islamic republic consolidated its power.¹⁹ Any hopes that the Soviet Union had to court the new Islamic republic

to the south were dashed with Soviet brutality towards Muslims in Afghanistan and because of the Soviets' refusals to allow Iran to open new consulates in Central Asia.²⁰ Soviet fear of a second Islamic republic to contend with on its southern border may have contributed a large amount to the decision it made to use military force in Afghanistan.²¹ Early Soviet sympathy shown for the Iranian revolution, however, was in marked contrast to the anti-Marxist sentiments displayed by the theocracy in Tehran.²² Not to be overlooked as well was the fact that Iran became embroiled in a bitter armed conflict with Iraq, a major client state for Soviet arms.

Following the Iranian revolution, there were reports that the new theocracy directed religious broadcasts to adjacent Soviet republics and that Islamic religious leaders in those republics recorded the broadcasts to be played back to groups of believers at a later time. Indeed, one of the Iranian candidates for the 1980 presidential election indicated to a Soviet publicist that the Shia revolution in Iran would be followed by a second, Sunni, one in Afghanistan and a third in the USSR.²³ In 1982, Iran asked to be permitted to transfer its consulate in Leningrad to Dushambe, the capital of Tajikistan, but the request was denied by the Communist Party Politburo.²⁴ In 1987, the Soviets complained to Iran about an Iranian newspaper article which quoted the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Commander as saying that the Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Turkmenia, and Uzbekistan, as well as some districts of Georgia, should be freed

since they were originally Iran's national territory.²⁵

Ironically, the Bolsheviks had used pan-Islamic movements to influence Central Asians immediately after the Russian revolution in 1917. Following a Muslim Communist Party Congress in Tashkent in 1919 which promoted unification of the Muslims, Moscow quickly reversed the previous policy, crushing the movement and eliminating the word "Muslim" from the Soviet vocabulary for nationalities.²⁶

The beginning of the rapprochement between Iran and the USSR followed Mikhail Gorbachev's rise to power, the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, and the cease fire in the Iran-Iraq War. The Ayatollah Khomeini's letter to the Soviet leader in January 1989, while rejecting both eastern and western philosophies (with their emphasis on ownership and materialism), proposed the alternate path of Islam to fill the ideological vacuum that existed in the Soviet Union.²⁷ This was followed by a most dramatic improvement in Soviet-Iranian relations. Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze visited Iran in February 1989, meeting with the Ayatollah Khomeini, and setting the stage for better relations. Iran's then parliamentary speaker Rafsanjani subsequently visited Moscow in June (shortly after the Ayatollah's death), leading to far-reaching economic and military arms agreements.²⁸

Relations Since the Breakup of the Soviet Union

Iran has demonstrated remarkable restraint in dealing with the newly-independent Muslim republics of the Commonwealth of

Independent States (CIS). On the one hand, Iran's efforts at exporting its own revolution, although more recently with "good-neighborliness" rather than with militancy, remained a central theme for elements within the theocracy as it continues to try to serve as a model for others as an Islamic state. On the other hand, just as Iran has become dependent upon the Moscow regime for sophisticated weapons, the new CIS has come to rely upon Iran for certain of its own needs, particularly for natural gas.²⁹ More recently, in December 1991, Moscow news media announced that the Russian Scientific Research Institute for Metallurgical Engineering Plants will assist, on a contractual basis, in rebuilding an Iranian plant in Isfahan.³⁰ Other areas where the two countries have reached agreements include border-crossing regulations³¹ and freighter service on the Caspian Sea.³² Iran's cautious approach to the new state of affairs to its north was reflected in a statement by President Rafsanjani in September 1991:

We are not upset about the collapse of Marxism at all. As for the future of the Soviet Union, what is important is the will of the people. If they decide for all the republics to live together, we will be content and be a good neighbor for them. If the people want to be independent and live in separate republics, again we are ready to cooperate with all of them. It makes not much difference for us.³³

Perhaps another reason for Iranian caution in dealing with this changing situation on its border was its fear of Azerbaijani nationalism from the CIS side of the border spilling over to the Iranian side to form an independent Azerbaijan.³⁴ Even if

true, Iran, along with Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and other Muslim states, have offered support and taken steps to develop relations with all the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union. It appears that Iran has been a little slower about it than the others, however.

An earlier report indicated that, while President Rafsanjani favored caution, Iran's religious leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, wanted the country to pursue a more offensive approach to the new Muslim republics.³⁵ An Iranian newspaper (Jomhuri Islami) on 30 August 1991 urged all Muslim countries to recognize without delay the Muslim republics of the USSR and called for Iran "to play a primary role, given its geographic and cultural proximity to the Muslim Soviet republics."³⁶ Also in August, an Iranian daily called for the leaders of the Soviet Muslim republics to put aside their differences and indicated that Tehran might be a suitable venue for them to meet to adopt a common stance to face events in the Soviet Union.³⁷ At the same time, Iran has been wary of a reemergence of Russian imperialism; the Iranian Foreign Minister, Dr. Ali Akbar Velayati, in September criticized Boris Yeltsin as an advocate of "Czarism."³⁸

On 26 November 1991, Tehran radio announced that the Islamic republic will set up consulates in the five Central Asian Muslim republics.³⁹ Iran has maintained a diplomatic representation in Soviet Azerbaijan, in Baku, for several years. This announcement coincided with Foreign Minister Velayati's visit to Moscow. Moscow radio confirmed the opening of the new consulates

on 19 December 1991.⁴¹⁰

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CHAPTER II

THE MUSLIM REPUBLICS OF THE FORMER SOVIET UNION

Historical Perspective

The nomadic Scythians, Massagetae, and Sacae of Central Asia were described by the Greek historian, Herodotus, in the sixth century, B.C. These nomads interacted with town and village-dwellers (near oases) who were probably Persian-speaking peoples with an Iranian culture. Later migrations through the area involved the Chinese Yueh-chih and the Huns on their way into Europe. Turkic tribes entered the region around the sixth century, A.D., and these were followed in the 13th century by the Mongols who dominated politically for several centuries. The Mongols, however, did not impose themselves culturally upon the region's inhabitants. The result was a population that was largely Turkic-speaking, but with large areas that remained culturally Iranian. Indeed, the strongest cultural influence on the town-dwellers was from nearby Iran. In terms of the economy, pattern of government, family life, arts, and religion, the oases were largely Iranian. Islam was introduced within a century after its introduction in Iran, although the Central Asians remained Sunni when the Iranians adopted the Shia sect.¹

Azerbaijan, to the west of the Caspian Sea from the Central Asian republics, also has a checkered history with Arabs, Turks, Iranians and Russians occupying the area at different times.² The Azerbaijanis, also known as Azeris, generally have considered themselves to be Iranians that speak a Turkic language (also

known as Azerbaijani or Azeri)).³ Azerbaijan was partitioned in 1828, with the southern part, and the majority of ethnic Azeris, now located in Iran.⁴

The Individual Republics

Azerbaijan

General:

Economically, Azerbaijan has claimed one of the richest oil fields in the world, but it has been largely untapped. While part of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan was the nation's leading producer of oil-drilling equipment, and it also refined oil and made petrochemicals. Some agriculture was reported as well-- mainly cotton, grain, and sheep.⁵

An upsurge in Muslim religious demonstration in Azerbaijan has occurred, with reports of mosques being repaired and the opening of an Islamic institute and a religious school in Baku.⁶ Also, the Iranian Prosecutor General, Ayatollah Abolfazl Musavi-Tabrizi, visited Baku in November 1991 to brief on Iran's Islamic judiciary.⁷ Even so, the movement in Azerbaijan is primarily nationalistic, rather than Islamic, with a powerful focus on ethnicity and territorialism.⁸

Iranian Influence:

This former Soviet republic has presented special problems for the Islamic Republic of Iran. Baku, Azerbaijan's capital city, was the Soviet Union's fifth largest city,⁹ and Azerbaijan was the only Soviet Muslim republic that is predominantly Shiite, as is Iran. Ethnically, the Azeris of independent Azerbaijan

share a common heritage with Iran's largest minority located in northwestern Iran's Azerbaijan Province with its capital city at Tabriz. While supporting the former Soviet Muslim republics with their emerging national identities, Iran must be wary of its own Azeri minority. In the past, Iran has been dealt firmly with separatist movements.¹⁰ Although Azerbaijan declared full independence from the Soviet Union in late August 1991, Iran delayed its recognition. In comparison, Turkey, Iran's chief competitor--and a model for the CIS Muslim republics as a secular, as opposed to theocratic, state--officially recognized the independent Azerbaijan in early November.¹¹

Azerbaijan's President Ayaz Mutalibov visited Iran, both Tehran and Tabriz, in mid-August 1991. He met with Iran's President Rafsanjani, and the trip was accompanied by much fanfare about "good-neighborliness" and mutual ties. His visit was cut short, however, by the attempted coup in Moscow.¹² Upon his return to Baku, President Mutalibov was quoted by Moscow's press:

The completely instinctive consolidation of Muslim states which is often written about does not exist. I am convinced that the Azerbaijani people, having set off on the road to joining world civilization, will preserve their traditions.¹³

Also during August, Iran and the Soviet Union agreed on opening two additional border towns as crossing points between Iran and Azerbaijan,¹⁴ and Turkey opened its consulate in Baku.¹⁵

Probably the most significant development in relations between Iran and Azerbaijan was the visit to Baku in December

1991 by Iran's Foreign Minister on the last leg of his whirlwind tour to the CIS Muslim capitals.¹⁴ During the visit, Dr. Velayati agreed to support Azerbaijan's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Also, cooperation agreements were signed which involve tourism, trade, transportation (land, air, sea and rail), and communications, and Iran proposed joint ventures on oil and gas projects in the Caspian Sea.¹⁷

A complicating factor in the region has been the conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh (largely Armenian) Autonomous Republic, which is completely encircled by Azerbaijan¹⁸, and the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic (largely Azeri), which is separated from Azerbaijan by Armenia. Iran has been instrumental to Azerbaijan in providing alternate routes to Nakhichevan when Armenian roads are blocked.¹⁹

Turkish, U.S. and Other Influences:

Iran's chief competitor for influence in Azerbaijan is Turkey. Following the visit of Azerbaijan's Prime Minister Gasan Gasanov to Turkey and Italy in November 1991, he reported to Azerbaijan's parliament that those two countries "could be expected to be Azerbaijan's chief economic partners."²⁰ Ankara radio later in November quoted Prime Minister Gasanov as saying that his country's relations with Turkey are "very special" and that he places great importance on bilateral ties between the two countries.²¹ Also in November, Prime Minister Gasanov received leading members of the Turkey-Azerbaijan business committee.²²

One key indicator of the direction Azerbaijan has chosen for its future was its rejection of the Russian Cyrillic alphabet and its selection of the Latin alphabet for the republic in early January 1992, instead of the Arabic one used in Iran.²³

During November 1991, Amoco, in meetings with President Mutalibov, discussed future exploration of the Azeri oil deposits on the Caspian shelf.²⁴ During U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III's recent (February 1992) visit to Baku, President Mutalibov pledged to uphold the basic principles of democracy, free markets, respect for minorities and human rights.²⁵

Kazakhstan

General:

President Nursultan Nazarbayev has demonstrated considerable effectiveness in courting the United States, developing ties with his country's neighbors, and serving as a strong influence in the CIS, while earning a reformist and progressive reputation for himself. Even prior to the August coup attempt, President Nazarbayev indicated that he was looking outward to find a model for Kazakhstan. "What appeals to me is the experience of South Korea, Singapore and Turkey," he told Komsomolskaya Pravda.²⁶

Of all the six Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union, Kazakhstan may be the most economically sound with potentially lucrative oil fields and huge deposits of rare minerals. The republic also maintained successful agriculture endeavors in grain, tobacco, fruit and cotton and was an important meat exporter from the Soviet Union.²⁷

Iranian Influence:

Iran's Foreign Minister Velayati visited Kazakhstan in late November 1991 as part of his tour of all six Muslim republics as well as Moscow. Meeting with the republic's Prime Minister, Sergey Aleksandrovich Tereshchenko, Dr. Velayati signed a memorandum of understanding to form committees to develop cooperative agreements between the two countries in the future. Dr. Velayati also met with President Nazarbayev and discussed plans for each country to establish consulates in the other's capital. Of interest was the concern expressed in completion of a railroad that will give Kazakhstan an outlet on the Persian Gulf and Iran an outlet on the Pacific. Other areas of discussion concerned direct air links, student exchanges and enterprises to process wool, leather and other agricultural products.²⁸

Regarding Islam and the possibility for establishing an Islamic republic similar to Iran, President Nazarbayev has rejected such a proposition as "clearly unrealistic," indicating that half the republic's population is either atheist or committed to another religion.²⁹ Indeed, Kazakhstan's Muslim leader, Ratbek Nysanbayev, has refused to support any idea of forming an Islamic party in the republic.³⁰ Even so, Kazakhstan sent a delegation for the first time to the Islamic Conference Organization meeting in Senegal in December 1991. The delegation was part of the official Iranian representation at the meeting. Saylau Batyrsha-Uly, Kazakhstan's acting Minister of

Foreign Affairs, described this participation as part of raising the national and spiritual consciousness of the republic, saying as well that Kazakhstan is "...on a sure road to openness and integration with the entire world community which...includes the Arab world."³¹

Turkish, U.S. and Other Influences:

The most dramatic events relating to the development of Kazakhstan's relations with the United States concern the visits of and contacts by U.S. Secretary of State Baker. Secretary Baker visited President Nazarbayev in the Kazakh capital, Alma-Ata, in mid-September 1991³² and again in mid-December 1991.³³ In addition, while visiting Jordan, Secretary Baker made a much-publicized phone call to President Nazarbayev in Alma-Ata.³⁴ In cultivating good relations between the United States and Kazakhstan, Secretary Baker has exhibited U.S. concern for accountability of the nuclear weapons and technology of the former Soviet Union which reside in Kazakhstan, while at the same time recognizing that President Nazarbayev represents a significant, almost pro-Western, influence in the ambiguous network of republics that came into being with the demise of the USSR.

Other regional contacts and agreements Kazakhstan has achieved have involved Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and China. President Nazarbayev visited Turkey in late September 1991 and signed three "important" documents there with Turkish President Turgut Ozal. These included air links serving Istanbul, Baku,

and Alma-Ata; television and telephone links between Turkey and Kazakhstan; and the establishment of an economic council, based in Istanbul, to coordinate cultural and economic links. Ten business contracts totalling \$25 million were also concluded, and a joint bank was set up.³⁵

In an interview on 7 November 1991, President Nazarbayev indicated plans to visit Saudi Arabia and stated that:

We do not forget that we are a Muslim people, and I believe that our relations with the Arab states will grow and improve constantly and that a long period of estrangement and separation from our Islamic world will be ended.³⁶

An agreement between Kazakhstan and the Sultanate of Oman was signed on 14 November 1991 in Muscat whereby Oman will assist in studying Kazakhstan's oil resources and in developing its oil industry. Oman also agreed to participate in creating an international oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to the Persian Gulf region.³⁷ Similarly, a trade agreement was signed in Beijing on 22 December 1991 providing for development of trade and economic relations as well as friendship, cooperation, equality and mutual advantage.³⁸

Perhaps most telling in terms of defining the direction Kazakhstan will turn for its future was a statement by President Nazarbayev in 16 December 1991:

I do not believe that Islam will pose a threat to Kazakhstan. On the contrary, I believe that it will be useful. The Kazakh people do not blindly believe in anything, so a radical Islamic trend cannot be established in Kazakhstan. Let us again turn to Turkey. We regard its secular system as a model for

Kazakhstan.³⁹

Kyrgyzstan

General:

In contrast to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan is quite poor with undeveloped industry and a less-educated and business-minded population. Only seven percent of the land is arable, with half of the mountainous republic being 10,000 feet above sea level. Livestock-breeding--mostly sheep, goats, and yaks--provides a livelihood for much of the population. Investment opportunities include coal and wool.⁴⁰

Iranian Influence:

Iran's main effort regarding Kyrgyzstan was the visit of Dr. Velayati in late November 1991. After he met with the republic's president, Askar Akayevich Akayev, in Kyrgyzstan's capital, Bishkek, the Iranian Foreign Minister described agreements that include establishing common institutions, the opening of Iran's consular general in Bishkek and Kyrgyzstan's office in Tehran, and the promotion of ties. A memorandum of understanding was also signed on economic, cultural, and trade cooperation.⁴¹ Earlier, in October 1991, the Kyrgyz parliamentary leader, Medethan Sherimkulov, visited Tehran where he participated, at the invitation of Iran's Islamic Consultative Assembly--with a number of Arab and other Muslim countries in a conference on a possible settlement in the Middle East. Following that visit, Mr. Sherimkulov reported that Kyrgyzstan does not plan to join any international Islamic organizations and that Islamic

fundamentalism will be unable to grow roots in the republic.⁴²

In early November 1991, Mr. Sherinkulov denied reports that the republic had applied for membership in the Islamic Conference Organization, stating that Kyrgyzstan is primarily interested in economic ties.⁴³

Turkish, U.S. and Other Influences:

Other countries have shown moderate interest in the republic, notably Turkey, Pakistan, and the United States. Turkey was among the first to recognize the republic's independence and sent a foreign ministry delegation to visit Bishkek in September 1991. Meeting with the republic's premier, Nasirdin Isanov, and vice president, German Kuznetsov, Turkey offered to give economic aid to assist during the transitional period and to establish diplomatic relations.⁴⁴ Later, in December 1991, President Akayev visited Turkey.⁴⁵

Also in December, Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan agreed to develop bilateral economic and cultural ties. In a meeting in Bishkek with President Akayev, a high-level Pakistani delegation offered Pakistan's technical and administrative expertise and invited the Kyrgyz Prime Minister, Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, to visit Islamabad.⁴⁶

President Akayev's visit in late October 1991 to the United States where he met with President George Bush and Secretary of State Baker was perhaps most telling in terms of the direction Kyrgyzstan hopes to go. A cooperative agreement in agriculture with the state of Idaho was described by President Akayev upon

his return to Bishkek as was American offers to help in creating processing industries, storage technology, transportation, and agricultural training.⁴⁷ President Akayev also expressed interest in learning about the U.S. President's political apparatus, press service, planners and speech-writers.⁴⁸

In November 1991, the U.S. Military Attache assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Moscow visited Kyrgyzstan,⁴⁹ and this was followed by a visit by the U.S. Secretary of State in December. Following the visit by Secretary Baker, President Akayev announced interest in obtaining credit from the United States for the purchase of 240,000 tons of wheat.⁵⁰

Tajikistan

General:

Textiles, carpet-weaving, metal (including uranium) mining and processing represent Tajikistan's main industries with the majority of the population being rural and agricultural, engaged in growing cotton and grain and raising sheep, cattle and yaks. Only six percent of the republic's land is arable. The republic has experienced high unemployment and has done little towards economic reform.⁵¹

During September 1991, there was much turmoil in Tajikistan. Following the republic's declaration of independence early in the month,⁵² there were demonstrations by opposition groups--primarily the Rastokhez Popular Front movement, the Tajikistan Democratic Party, and the Islamic Rebirth Party. Its old-guard Communist parliament forced the acting President, Kadreddin

Aslonov, to resign, assumed executive power, and posted guards to prevent damage by demonstrators to Lenin statues in the republic. During the previous month, President Kakhar Makhamov had been forced from office by opposition street demonstrators in the aftermath of the August coup attempt in Moscow.⁵³ Retired Communist Party leader, Rakhman Nabiyeu, was then called upon to assume power, and, although the Islamic Rebirth Party was banned as extremist, hundreds of Islamic men continued to roll out their prayer rugs in Dushanbe's city square to show defiance to the Tajikistan Communist Party.⁵⁴

Iranian Influence:

This republic presents a special case for Iran. Its language, Tajik, provides a linguistic link with Iran where Farsi is spoken and with Afghanistan where Dari is the predominant language.⁵⁵ All three are Persian dialects. There are Persian dialects in Iran which exhibit much stronger differences from Farsi than does Tajik.⁵⁶ Tajikistan shares a 644-mile long border with Afghanistan.⁵⁷ These cultural and ethnic ties are evident, for instance, in the fact that an Afghan mujahidin leader, Ahmad Shah Massoud who is ethnically a Tajik, is a local hero in the streets of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan. Unlike Azerbaijan, Tajikistan has decided to switch from the Cyrillic alphabet to the Arabic characters used by Iran.⁵⁸ It is also evident that Islam is growing in strength in this small, mountainous republic.⁵⁹

Despite word in mid-November 1991 that Tajikistan's Foreign

Ministry was studying whether the republic should join the Islamic Conference Organization,⁴⁰ Kazikolon Khodzhi Akbar Turadzhonsoda, chairman of Tajikistan's Muslim religious leadership, indicated that the people are not yet ready for an Islamic state. He further indicated that Tajikistan's goal should be democracy, with respect for human rights and encouragement of entrepreneurship, rather than as an Islamic state.⁴¹ This announcement occurred on the eve of Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati's visit to Dushanbe.

The Tajik Prime Minister, Izatulla Hayayev, met with Dr. Velayati on 2 December 1991 and signed a cooperation agreement proposing economic, political, civil, and cultural relations to be developed between the two countries. In addition to calling for the opening of consulates in the respective capitals, Dr. Velayati indicated that the National Bank of Iran will open a branch in Dushanbe and proposed agreements as well on road, rail and air transportation. He also pointed out the common grounds and very long historical ties between the Iranians and the Tajiks.⁴²

On 9 December 1991, the leader of Tajikistan's Islamic Rebirth Party (IRP), Mukhammadsharif Khimmatov, held a news conference in Dushanbe where he had legally registered his party that day. He announced that the party would provide passive opposition to President Nabiyeu's pro-Communist regime and, upon assuming power, the IRP would decide whether to build an Islamic or secular Muslim republic in Tajikistan. In the meantime, Mr.

Khimmatov offered opposition to pan-Turkism, calling instead for the Muslims of Central Asia, as well as Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran, to form a union.⁴³

U.S. Influence:

Recently Tajikistan's uranium has taken on new significance in world politics. U.S. Secretary of State Baker's trip to Central Asia, to include Tajikistan, in February 1992 was viewed by many as a counter balance to Iran's efforts to influence the new Muslim republics and occurred following a report in the Moscow News, quoted in the New York Times, which began:

It has been a long-standing dream of the Islamic world to have its own nuclear arsenal. After the defeat of Saddam Hussein, Rakhman Nabiyev may be the leader who could help them meet their atomic ambitions.⁴⁴

The report went on to say that Tajikistan was recently visited by a high-ranking Libyan delegation.⁴⁵

Turkmenistan

General:

Only two percent of Turkmenistan's land is arable, and its main crop is cotton. The republic is 90 percent desert. Industries include oil and gas production, and the republic is renowned for its carpets, Turkoman horses, and Karakul sheep. Its people and leaders appear to have little appetite for economic reform.⁴⁶ Indeed, prior to the August coup attempt in Moscow, Turkmenia was thought to be the most loyal Soviet Republic to the Kremlin.⁴⁷

Iranian Influence:

In August 1991, some movement in opening relations with Iran were noted as new border crossing points were announced between the two.⁶⁸ Also there were meetings between officials in Turkmenistan and the Iranian province of Khorasan at which many topics were discussed, including air and rail links, cross-border trade exchanges, industrial contracts, telephone links, and political and cultural affairs.⁶⁹ In October, border crossing regulations were simplified at Turkmenistan's border with Iran.⁷⁰

Also in October, an agricultural agreement was signed which established a protocol on exchange of experts between Khorasan and Turkmenistan. The republic also agreed to deliver agricultural machinery to Khorasan in exchange for apples and sent experts to inspect the Iranian sugar beet production farms and sugar factories.⁷¹

Although visited by the Iranian Foreign Minister on 30 November-1 December 1991,⁷² a great deal more attention was paid in Turkmenistan to its president's (Saparmurad Niyazov) visit to Turkey immediately after Dr. Velayati's departure. As with the other Muslim republics visited by Dr. Velayati, Iran and Turkmenistan signed a cooperation agreement. In addition, President Niyazov invited Dr. Velayati to visit Ashkhabad (Turkmenistan's capital) in 1992 when the republic is to host a session of the heads of the former Soviet Muslim republics.⁷³

Turkish, U.S. and Other Influences:

On 2 December 1991, President Niyazov led a delegation from

Ashkhabad to Ankara where he was met by the Turkish President and Foreign Minister. Concluding the visit on 4 December, President Niyazov signed documents which called for the two countries to set up joint enterprises in transportation, communications, television, and tourism, as well as to developing and using raw material and energy-bearing deposits for oil, chemical and gas industries. Turkey also is to render technical aid to develop Turkmenistan's banking sector and will consider granting credits to assist the republic's transition to a market economy, and Turkmenistan plans to export gas and oil products to Turkey via Iran.⁷⁴

Less clear has been the republic's attitude toward Islam. In an interview on 6 December 1991, Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister, Avdy Kulihev, announced that the republic was considering joining the Islamic Conference Organization and said that he plans to develop relations with neighboring states, particularly Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India.⁷⁵

During U.S. Secretary of State Baker's recent (February 1992) visit to Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan's leaders pledged that they would adhere to democratic principles and human rights.⁷⁶

Uzbekistan

General:

As the world's third largest cotton producer, Uzbekistan's environment has been devastated by over-fertilization, use of pesticides which threaten the water supply, and irrigation which has contributed to the shrinking of the Aral Sea by over 40

percent.⁷⁷ The Communist Party changed its name to the Popular Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, and an opposition group, known as Birlik ("Unity"), has appeared. Islam Abdulghaniyevich Karimov, the republic's president, supported the August coup-plotters against Gorbachev, but somehow survived the coup's aftermath.⁷⁸ Many of the people in Tashkent, the republic's capital, interviewed in September 1991, indicated that President Karimov was simply mouthing the Uzbek nationalist slogans and feigning democratic change in order to keep power.⁷⁹ Shortly thereafter, President Karimov stated that henceforth Uzbekistan will follow the Chinese model and indicated that his republic was not ready for democracy or a market economy.⁸⁰

Iranian Influences:

Iranian Foreign Minister Velayati visited Tashkent on 29 November 1991, met with President Karimov, and signed essentially the same agreements on cooperation with Uzbekistan that he had signed with the other Muslim republics visited during his tour. Interestingly, President Karimov stressed the common religious and cultural backgrounds between Tehran and Tashkent and indicated that an Uzbek delegation will visit Iran soon.⁸¹

Turkish and Other Influences:

In late September 1991, the republic's Vice-President, Shukurulla Mirsaidov, concluded an agreement with a visiting Turkish commercial and industrial delegation. Part of the agreement dealt with establishing air transportation between the two countries and in setting up joint ventures.⁸² By December

1991, the relationship with Turkey had grown to much larger proportions with President Karimov leading an official visit there to meet with President Ozal. Apparently his favor for the Chinese model had waned since August as the Uzbek President indicated, on more than one occasion during the visit, that Turkey's positive experience with economic reform and in stabilizing living standards must be used in Uzbekistan during the transition to a market economy. In the agreement that consummated the visit, the two countries were to establish consular relations and Turkey was to help organize a banking system, establish small and medium-sized enterprises, and give assistance in education.²³ Upon his return to Uzbekistan, President Karimov rejected allegations that the two countries had discussed establishing a "Muslim alliance," stressing instead that Uzbekistan must choose its own way and that the Turkish model suits Uzbekistan best. On 16 December 1991, a TU-154 transport of the Uzbek Civil Aviation Directorate carried out the first flight on the Tashkent-Istanbul route.²⁴

Also during November 1991, the Government of Uzbekistan, in a joint venture with a Swedish firm, created a company for exporting manpower. Protocols of intent had already been signed for Uzbek workers to take up jobs in Malaysia, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait in order to bring hard currency to Uzbekistan.²⁵

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CHAPTER III

UNITED STATES' POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

There are many U.S. policy considerations for developments in the Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union. These considerations are wrapped together--not very tightly--in a complicated ball of yarn with strands that include: 1) slowly changing policies between the United States and Iran towards each other, 2) Iran's brand of Islamic fundamentalism and its efforts to establish an "Islamic World Order," 3) pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic movements in the new Muslim republics, 4) nuclear weapons control and proliferation as well as concerns for other weapons of mass destruction, 5) ethnic rivalries versus regional stability and potential impacts of regional violence on the continued flow of oil from the Persian Gulf area, and 6) concern for the new Commonwealth of Independent States and its ability to find a place in the "New World Order." U.S. concerns for independence, democracy, human rights, and compassion for peoples of different cultures in a time of economic austerity also are important policy components in this complicated region.

U.S.-Iranian Relations

Beginning with the takeover of the U.S. embassy in Tehran in 1979--and continuing through the failed hostage rescue attempt, the arms-for-hostages deals of Iran-Contra fame, and military confrontations in the Persian Gulf--relations between Iran and the United States were characterized for over a decade by considerable animosity, distrust, and misunderstanding. More

recently, there have been signs that these relations have begun to warm with release of U.S. hostages held in Lebanon and agreements reached at the Hague. The two countries have found a new cause for rivalry in the Muslim republics of the CIS. An Iranian daily on 17 September 1991 warned against U.S. influence in Muslim USSR following Secretary Baker's first visit to Kazakhstan:

America is trying to intervene politically, culturally, economically, and so forth in the various Soviet republics, and especially in the Muslim republics, not only with Baker's visit but through other means as well. Visits to these republics by delegations from Saudi Arabia, the announcement by Saudi merchants that they are ready to invest in these republics, and the recent appointment of an expert of Turkish origin as Azerbaijani President Ayaz Mütalibov's economic advisor are among the other steps being taken by the minions of America with a gesture from it and within the framework of the interests of the great satan.¹

The article went on to criticize its own administration when it complained that "not even one Islamic foreign minister has travelled to any of these republics."² Dr. Velayati's trip followed in late November and early December of that year.

On the U.S. side, Secretary of State Baker was quoted in early February 1992 as saying that Washington plans to move quickly to open diplomatic representations in the new Muslim republics of the former Soviet Union in order to counter Iranian influence in those states.³

Pan-Islamic and Pan-Turkic Movements

If Iran and Turkey were concerned about the danger of

instability and violence from the former Soviet Union spreading across their borders into their respective countries, each would attempt to assert influence on the new republics as a way of preventing such occurrences. Iran is attempting to apply religious influence, even though the Sunni-Shia schism in Islam has resulted in Iran being on one side of the religious schism while the former Soviet republics, with the notable exception of Azerbaijan, are on the other.⁴ In the case of Tajikistan, Iran has the additional tool of a common language as a means of influence. Indeed, the Muslims of the former Soviet empire, in developing a sense of nationalism, are searching for their roots and common heritage. These turn out to be their religion and their languages.⁵ The Islamic Revival Party best typifies the pan-Islamic movement in Central Asia.

Turkey shares its Sunni faith with five of the six Muslim republics, and Turkey has a common linguistic heritage with all but Tajikistan. The dream of Turkestan is one of unifying the region's Muslims who are related linguistically under a single political umbrella.⁶ (Not to be forgotten is the fact that related peoples exist as well in China which must also be concerned about the Turkic/Muslim nationalism on its back doorstep.) The Birlik movement, discussed in Chapter II under Uzbekistan, best typifies the pan-Turkic sentiment in Central Asia.

Nuclear Weapons Control and Proliferation

U.S. concern for nuclear weapons control of those systems

currently in place in the former Soviet Union and the Muslim republics is primarily focused on ensuring that the control is centralized, and that the controlling authority is responsible and friendly. This would prevent a rogue action by a dissenter or group of dissenters unfriendly to the United States from bringing about a nuclear attack. The second concern, of equal importance from the U.S. point of view is to prevent proliferation of nuclear weapons and/or technology from spreading to outside countries.⁷ A number of steps have been taken by the CIS central government and Boris Yeltsin's Russia to accomplish these requirements, including putting the nuclear weapons under a permanent joint command⁸ and deciding that nuclear treaties signed by the Soviet Union apply to and will be honored by all republics.⁹

Especially troubling for the United States, however, are reports that many countries are working toward development of nuclear weapons. Iran's Foreign Ministry has denied Western media reports that the Islamic republic is seeking a nuclear arms capability,¹⁰ and it has been reported that Pakistan now possesses a nuclear weapon.¹¹

Largely undiscussed in any news media is concern for other weapons of mass destruction--chemical and biological weapons--which should be equally alarming to the United States as its concern for nuclear proliferation from the former Soviet Union.

Ethnic Rivalries

In June 1989, Uzbeks in the Fergana Valley began killing the

Meskhetian Turks, who are fellow Muslims that had been relocated there by Stalin. The Uzbeks alleged that the Meskhetians were taking Uzbek jobs.¹² In June 1990, there were clashes between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in Osh.¹³ Violence between Muslim Azeris and Christian Armenians has been in the headlines time and again. When the borders in Central Asia were inscribed in the 1920's, they did not reflect the ethnic populations; as a consequence, Tajiks were left in Uzbekistan and Uzbeks were left in Kyrgyzstan.¹⁴ The Kazakhs represent an ethnic minority to the more populous Russians in Kazakhstan.¹⁵ Although consideration of pan-Islamic or pan-Turkic movements might lead to the belief that unification is at hand, the evidence above would lead to another conclusion.

Although it is unlikely that U.S. interests would be directly threatened by ethnic violence in the Muslim republics, other than concern for our diplomatic personnel once established, there are secondary effects which might become very important. Among these are a concern for a spread of the violence to neighboring countries (and perhaps to the Persian Gulf where much of the world's oil supply might be threatened) and a concern for the nuclear weapons that might remain in the areas affected by ethnic violence (thereby possibly enabling them to fall into the wrong hands).

The Commonwealth of Independent States

The United States has an interest in ensuring a smooth transitional period for the republics of the former Soviet Union

as they find their ways to a civilized and democratic path for entry into the world's commonwealth of nations. The alternatives to this course of action are most unpleasant: either a return of a strong, authoritarian dictatorship that might prove to be most unfriendly to the United States, or development of a world hot spot or series of hot spots bringing about regional conflict or civil war.

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CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is nothing--I repeat nothing--in the history of the Soviet Union regime which could justify us in assuming that the men who are now in power in Russia, or even those who have chances of assuming power within the foreseeable future, would hesitate for a moment to apply this power against us if by doing so they thought that they would materially improve their own power position in the world.¹

The world situation has taken many turns since George F. Kennan expressed this idea in September 1945 in referring to the Stalin regime. At the same time, it must not be forgotten that the United States is dealing today with CIS, Russian, and Muslim republic leaders who are the products (sons and grandsons) of the system Mr. Kennan described in 1945. Mr. Kennan also said, "Our actions, in the field of foreign affairs, are the convulsive reactions of politicians to the internal political life dominated by vocal minorities."²

There is an old saying shared by the Kyrgyz and the Kazakhs: "A nation regenerates itself in half a century."³ Perhaps the Muslim nations that are growing out of the collapse of the Soviet empire will achieve regeneration in less than 50 years. Central Asia and Azerbaijan face great economic challenges, social and political turmoil, and ecological problems brought about by many decades of neglect and ignorance. Cultural unity, based on common religious and linguistic roots, exists, but is not yet flourishing. Regional political cooperation, such as that which

the three Baltic republics have achieved, is not yet in sight, but there are strong signs that the Muslim republics are turning to their neighbors--Iran and Turkey especially--to help bring them to their destiny in a new world order.⁴

Although Iran and the United States appear to find themselves on opposite sides of a contest to wield influence in the new Muslim republics, the two have, in the past, conveniently found ways to overlook their respective ideologies when their national interests are at stake.

While the United States cannot turn a blind eye to any Iranian attempts to subvert its neighbors or otherwise threaten vital U.S. interests, (Iran's) legitimate role and security interests in such places...should be recognized. The United States must also realize that its own interests regarding Iran's regional role may not always coincide with those of the U.S. allies in the region who have priorities of their own.⁵

When Shireen Hunter made this statement in 1989, she was referring to Afghanistan and the Persian Gulf, but the same applies equally well to the Muslim republics of the former USSR.

There is little that the United States can do about Iran's proselytizing its Islamic fundamentalism in the new Muslim republics, except to interact with the republics and to encourage democracy, freedom, free enterprise and human rights. Jeremy Azrael asserted, "On the contrary, U.S. efforts to prevent the spread of fundamentalism would almost certainly backfire, if, as is likely, they were perceived as such."⁶ A key point is the fact that a Muslim country can, following the Turkish secular model, achieve modernization and develop ties with the West

without giving up its Muslim religion.

Regional and world security as well as U.S. national interest demand development of adequate assurances and safeguards to monitor and control the weapons of mass destruction of the former Soviet Union and to prevent the spread of the technologies which provide the ability to manufacture such weaponry. At a speech in Washington before the American Political Science Association in August 1991, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, in referring to events in the Soviet Union, said, "It is extremely important that we not let the euphoria of the moment blind us."⁷ He was concerned specifically about the weapons in the Soviet nuclear stockpile in making this statement.

While the United States is accomplishing the necessary safeguards to reduce, and hopefully eliminate, Secretary Cheney's fears, it must also be prepared to provide whatever assistance is necessary to assure the peaceful transition to democracy and economic reform in the former Soviet republics. As was stated so eloquently by James Billington:

Unless more of the peoples of the Soviet Union are brought out of their long isolation from the modern democratic world, they will remain vulnerable to some future nativist fascism that will feed on the inevitable hardships of the coming transition period. The United States then would once again risk becoming the external enemy--in part because at a crucial breakpoint in history, we were unwilling to give more of ourselves to help others practice the ideals we had so long been preaching.⁸

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