

THE FERGHANA VALLEY: CONFLICT POTENTIAL

IDENTITY-CONFLICT RELATIONS: A CASE-STUDY OF THE FERGHANA VALLEY CONFLICTS

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe and explain the relations between identity and conflict by drawing on different theoretical approaches in political science. It examines the questions of whether collective identity, either on a national, civilizational, religious, or social level, is an important variable in trying to understand current conflicts, as well as the prospects for formulating identity-based approaches to conflict. In other words, is it even possible to think about collective identity and conflict simultaneously? This gives rise to another ques-

tion: Why is collective identity an important factor for explaining the conflict in the Ferghana Valley?

The Ferghana Valley has played a role both in establishing stability in Central Asia and in becoming the starting point of violent conflict throughout the history of the region. The valley became administratively and ethnically divided into several parts during the Soviet and post-Soviet era. Currently, the tension among the different ethnic, social, and political groups is high because of overpopulation, the increasing scarcity of

water and arable land, and the economic hardships and social differentiation that occurred during the political, economic, and social transformation after the Soviet Union collapsed. The Ferghana Valley, at the heart of Central Asia, has become one of the most conflict-prone areas in Central Asia. For these reasons, the valley is a good area for testing the explanatory power of different approaches of political science to explain identity-conflict relations.

Ethnic issues are still extremely important for understanding much of the tension arising in the valley. Not only is there division among the Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik people, the issue is further complicated by the hostility between different identity-groups and minorities in the region. Additional pressure is arising due to the fact that not only does this tension exist inside each state, it could also escalate to the interstate level.

KEYWORDS: *Central Asia, identity, Ferghana Valley, ethnic relations, conflict.*

Introduction

After the Soviet Union's demise, numerous identity-based conflicts arose within the post-Soviet states. It seems that the nature of conflict has changed, since conflicts more often arise between neighboring communities, as well as between neighboring states. Thus, when talking about nations, ethnic groups, or communities, questions of conflict become closely related to questions of collective identity.

Arguments about identity inevitably bring up the question of level of analysis. Naturally, the first question to be asked is, "what identity are we talking about—communal, ethnic, national, or international?" The same question can be asked about conflict. However, conflict seems to be a more tangible concept than identity, since conflicts involve material changes on the face of the earth, such as destruction of the environment or death. While the next question is, what type of identity matters in a conflict?

This study, therefore, aims to describe and explain the relations between identity and conflict by drawing on different theoretical approaches in political science. It asks whether collective identity, either on national, civilizational, religious, or social level, is an important variable in trying to understand current conflicts? And what are the prospects for formulating identity-based approaches to conflict? In other words, is it even possible to think about collective identity and conflict simultaneously? This brings up another question: Why is collective identity an important factor for explaining conflict in the Ferghana Valley?

The Ferghana Valley has played a role both in establishing stability in Central Asia and in becoming the starting point of violent conflict throughout the history of the region. The valley became administratively and ethnically divided into several parts during the Soviet and post-Soviet era. During the Soviet era, the Socialist Union Republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan administered the region within the Soviet Union, while after the collapse of the Soviet Union, they became independent states and continued to administer the region separately. Currently, the tension among different ethnic, social, and political groups is high because of overpopulation, the increasing scarcity of water and arable land, and the economic hardships and social differentiation during the political, economic, and social transformation that occurred after the Soviet Union collapsed. The Ferghana Valley, at the heart of Central Asia, has become one of the most conflict-prone areas in

Central Asia. For these reasons, the valley is a good area for testing the explanatory power of different approaches of political science to explain identity-conflict relations.

Theoretical Debate

Inside/Out Approaches: Identity Formed Inside

Changes in national identity can be hypothesized as taking place within one state or within one nation. Clearly, classifying approaches to identity according to territorial “dimensions suffers from generalizations.” As R.J.B. Walker correctly pointed out, most approaches in international relations are geared to defining “spatial limits,” and most IR thinkers are limited to engaging in “box” thinking. To illustrate, most IR thinkers talk about states, less clearly defined “international spheres” or polities within a state.¹

An alternative to this way of thinking is to include the “time” dimension, according to which the concept of “self” and “other” will be examined across a span of time. However, it seems that studies of identity, be it national, global, or personal, cannot be totally detached from the concept of territory. All human beings are born into an “environment.” If changes in identity are to be examined, those changes must originate somewhere. Thus, the territorial dimension must somehow be dealt with. According to the inside/out approaches, a nation-state becomes prone to a conflict from within if there is a mismatch between “society” and a “nation-state.” If individuals recognize the priority of their “political” identity over others, they can be considered “good citizens” of a state or a polity. Consequently, conflict can be studied along “traditional” lines at the state or international level. However, a problem arises when there is a conflict within the unit, e.g., a “society” as opposed to a “state” (or a polity). In a “society,” some individuals may feel that they can identify better with a group than with the state (or a polity), e.g., they feel more Uzbek than citizens of Kyrgyzstan. To put it simply, if citizens experience a conflict between the different dimensions of identity within a territorial political unit, this unit is prone to conflict.²

Realists, for example, are interested in the influences of national character or national philosophy on national power. In *Politics among Nations*, Hans J. Morgenthau discusses national character: “...those who act for the nation in peace and war, formulate, execute, support its policies,... all bear the imprint of those intellectual and moral qualities which make up the national character.”³ According to this definition, in order for the “imprint” (or characteristics of national character or national identity) to be seen, an “action for the nation” must be undertaken. Usually nation-states base their identity on the majority group’s cultural legacy. When other groups with a strong feeling of identity are marginalized politically, culturally, or otherwise, society becomes prone to conflict.⁴

¹ See: R.J.B. Walker, “International Relations and the Concept of Political,” in: *International Relations Theory Today*, ed. by K. Booth, S. Smith, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995, pp. 306-328; idem, *Inside/Outside: International Relations as Political Theory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1993, p. 15.

² See: “National groups can retain their separate languages and senses of identity, wrote Fukuyama, but that identity must be expressed primarily in the realm of culture rather than politics. The French can continue to savor their wines and the German their sausages, but this will all be done within the sphere of private life alone” (F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Avon Books, New York, 1992, p. 271).

³ H. Morgenthau, K. Thompson, *Politics among Nations*, 6th edition, McGraw-Hill, New York, 1985, p. 16.

⁴ Often studies based on the assumption that certain types of identity already exist in a conflict area and not interested in the process of construction of identity end up identifying different conditions that may lead to an escalation of conflict. These conditions may include historical and social aspects that would help to explain the relationship between identity and conflict.

One of the major insights of the approaches that focus on the phenomena within a political unit is finding that consensus about national identity is a precondition for the consolidation of democracy,⁵ and liberal democracies, in turn, are not likely to fight each other. To go back to the “warrior images,” warriors who look and act similarly are unlikely to fight each other. The inside/out approaches to identity, however, are not capable of explaining why some of these disputes caused by clashes between different types of identity involve violence, while others are conducted peacefully.

According to inside/out approaches, individuals who are the members of “polities” (e.g., the citizens of nation-states) and who manifest traits of national character in their behavior, especially at times of conflict, are torn between two identities. On the one hand, an individual may be confronted by his/her allegiance to humanity as a whole (especially if an individual espouses Judeo-Christian ideals such as “Thou shalt not kill”). On the other hand, she or he feels allegiance to the state. As Morgenthau pointed out, in most conflict situations, the philosophy of the state usually proves to be superior to universal rules of moral conduct.⁶

In addition to conflict between the two dimensions of identity, some groups in one political unit may refuse to identify themselves with their countries and may choose (during a conflict) to identify themselves with the enemy. This naturally escalates the conflict, especially if the individuals involved are military leaders.⁷

The inside/out approaches provide fragmental insights into the relationship between identity and conflict. It is impossible to determine what comes first—conflict or identity, which suggests that identity-based approaches geared toward examining the relationship between identity and conflict must be “process-oriented.” Inside/out approaches offer some insights into the conflict within an individual between his/her “universal” and “national identity;” however, the question of when one dimension of identity will be more important than another remains unanswered.

Outside/In Approaches: Identity is Changed from the Outside

Approaches that consider globalization forces to be the most important developments within states can be referred to as “outside/in” approaches to identity. As a matter of fact, such approaches do not necessarily deny the existence of national, subnational, or personal dimensions of identity. However, they consider “global” phenomena, such as growing interdependence or the formation of “civilization consciousness,” to be more influential than developments on the national level aimed at changing national identity. By way of an alternative to the nation-state as a source of identity, some thinkers have accepted “civilization identity.”⁸ Another alternative to the traditional concept of national identity is “global identity.” According to such perspectives, there is a trend toward perceiving

⁵ Francis Fukuyama asserts that “the reason why liberal democracy has not become universal or remained stable once it achieved power lies ultimately in the incomplete correspondence between peoples and states. States are purposeful political creations while peoples are pre-existing moral communities” (F. Fukuyama, op. cit., p. 212). This view is supported by the findings Nordlinger, Pye, Rustow, and Verba, and challenged by Wachman, who maintains that the absence of national identity may impede, but does not prevent the consolidation of democracy.

⁶ See: H. Morgenthau, K. Thompson, op. cit., p. 269.

⁷ See: Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁸ The concept of “civilizational identity” was brought back to the current debates by Samuel P. Huntington (see: “The Clash of Civilizations,” *Foreign Affairs*, Summer 1993, p. 25). Several authors focused on “civilizational identity” in their works in the 20th century, such as Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West*, A. A. Knopf, New York, 1926; Arnold J. Toynbee, *Civilization on Trial*, Oxford University Press, London, 1949; Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, Blackwell, Oxford, 1994; Ahmet Davutoğlu, *Civilizational Transformation and the Muslim World*, Quill, Kuala Lumpur, 1994.

oneself primarily not as a citizen of a nation-state, but as a part of a bigger entity, such as civilization or the Earth. Globalization or the intensification of consciousness of being a part of a civilization rather than a nation-state is usually attributed to the processes that have made the world a “smaller place.” As a result, the same processes that make the world shrink make societies and, in turn, the “old” national identities change.

One of the major propositions of the outside/in approaches to identity is that the world is increasingly becoming a smaller place; therefore, distinct spatial boundaries between the political units, i.e., states, are blurred. The reasons for this phenomenon are numerous, growing economic interdependence and the rapid advance of technology, especially mass communications, to mention a few.⁹ Consequently, space is becoming compressed through communication, and different cultures are brought into closer contact than before. Most “globalization” approaches (usually referred to as “modernization theories”) lead to two distinct conclusions about the end state of this phenomenon. On the one hand, bringing different cultures into closer contact inevitably leads to conflict, since they feel the need to assert their greater distinctiveness, or, in other words, to protect or to redefine their identity.¹⁰ On the other hand, if “separate and fearful entities” (i.e., nation-states) are eliminated gradually, and if the world continues to move toward a “world society” united by different transactions, conflict is unlikely in the new world society.¹¹

One of the heated debates in international relations was fueled by the idea of “civilizational identity,”¹² the formation of which, asserted Huntington, inevitably leads to major conflict. The debate, however, remains focused on territorial lines: should we talk about a bigger “box” or a smaller one, i.e., should we talk about nation-state identity or civilizational identity?¹³

There are theorists who believe that potential for conflict lies in the movement from a smaller box (i.e., nation-state) to a bigger box—world society. Globalization forces societies to pass through four stages: transition to democracy, transition to open markets, demographic transition to small families, and ecological transition to protected environments. Somehow there is a right way for a society to pass through all these four stages, and most societies are willing to voluntarily sacrifice their national identity for the sake of global identity, which means Western standards of living. Some societies go through these stages smoothly; however, others stumble, the result of which is a world in conflict and disorder.¹⁴

Approaches to identity based on the idea of “modernization,” or on the belief that the way to peaceful co-existence of nations is possible only if nations choose the path chosen by the West, were

⁹ See: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and the Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, New York, 1991, p. 19.

¹⁰ See: R. Robertson, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, SAGE Publication, London, 1992, pp. 98-99.

¹¹ The world “cobweb” model was first proposed by John Burton (see: J. Barton, *World Society*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1972).

¹² In his article “The Clash of Civilizations,” Huntington put forward a thesis that future conflict is likely to take place between civilizations, or between nation-states and peoples of different civilizations. Differences among civilizations are basic; they are the product of centuries. Since, due to the increased number of interactions (or due to the processes of globalization), the world is becoming a smaller place, these interactions increase the “civilization consciousness,” which inevitably leads to conflict, since differences between the civilizations are basic. Janet L. Abu-Lughod expressed an alternative view to the Huntingtonian “clash of civilizations.” Based on extensive historical evidence, she drew a picture of the world system A.D. 1250-1350, in which different civilizations co-existed peacefully (see: J.L. Abu-Lughod, *Before European Hegemony: The World System A.D. 1250-1350*, Oxford University Press, USA, 1991, p. 20).

¹³ The immediate responses to Huntington’s thesis almost exclusively focus on the inaccuracy of Huntington’s “broad brush” when identifying civilization lines (e.g., F. Ajami, “The Summoning”), and the idea that states control civilizations, not vice versa. (“But is it really clear that the greatest potential for conflict lies between the civilizations instead of within them?” asks Robert L. Bartley in “The Case for Optimism.”) The responses are in *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 72, No. 4, September/October 1993.

¹⁴ Such an approach is advocated by Sheldon Smith in *World in Disorder 1994-1995*, University Press of America, Lanham, 1995, p. 21.

criticized for their ethnocentric bias. If the whole world suddenly became the West, there would be no clashes of civilizations, as prophesied by Huntington, nor inter-state conflicts emanating from within the state, as asserted by inside/out theorists such as G.M. Tamás.

Following the logic of the outside/in approaches, the relationship between identity and conflict resembles a description of a vicious circle. For the modernists, in order to get out of disorder and conflict, nations must subdue their national identities for the sake of a global liberal identity, which is a guarantee of peace. On the other hand, if some nations are inherently too weak to do so (i.e. embark on a path of “modernization” and subdue their national identities for the sake of a change to the right, liberal-type identity), such nations are doomed to live in misery and conflict.

Conceptualization of Ethnic Identity

Scholars give different answers to the question of what an ethnic group is. According to David Carment, ethnic identification can include any one of six different criteria: race, kinship, religion, language, common traditions, and regionalism.¹⁵ Peter Kruger notes that culture is the most important part of ethnic identity.¹⁶ On the other hand, for Frederick Barth the critical features of an ethnic group are its consolidation and its exclusiveness. Therefore, its continuity depends on the maintenance of a boundary.¹⁷ One can define an ethnic group as a group of individuals who supposedly share cultural or racial characteristics, especially common ancestry or territorial origin, which distinguish them from the members of other groups.¹⁸

For a group to mobilize and take part in a conflict or political violence, it first needs a common identity.¹⁹ Every person identifies himself or herself with something, such as gender, generation, organization, social class, ethnic group, or nation-state. People often identify themselves with several such subgroups depending on the context they are in. If identity does not match with the territorial borders, a conflict may arise within that territory. What makes ethnic identity particularly conflict-prone is that it is based on fundamental factors like language, history, ethnic group, or religion factors that may often seem more important than territorial boundaries and seldom match them perfectly where they live. Events that threaten the identity of a group could be met with some kind of resistance.²⁰

Conflict is a social situation in which a minimum of two parties strives at the same moment in time for the same set of scarce resources. This definition means that conflict is a social phenomenon that involves a necessary condition, scarcity. In addition, there are three basic requirements if scarcity is to lead to a manifest conflict, one that poses a serious challenge to life and property—these are actors, issues, and actions.²¹

¹⁵ See: D. Carment, “The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 30, No. 2, 1993, p. 146.

¹⁶ See: *Ethnicity and Nationalism: Case Studies in Their Intrinsic Tension and Political Dynamics*, ed. by P. Kruger, Hitzeroth, Marburg, 1993, p. 12.

¹⁷ See: F. Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, 1969, p. 14.

¹⁸ See: A. Smith, *Ethnic Origin of Nations*, Oxford University Press, Blackswell, 1986, pp. 22-31.

¹⁹ See: Ch. Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Random House, New York, 1978, p. 54.

²⁰ See: T.R. Gurr, *Peoples against States: Minorities at Risks in the New Century*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., 2000, p. 5.

²¹ See: P. Wallenstein, “Understanding Conflict Resolution: A Framework,” in: *Peace Research: Achievements and Challenges*, ed. by P. Wallenstein, Westview Press, Boulder, 1988, pp. 119-143.

Conflicts in the Ferghana Valley

The Ferghana Valley is a region of utmost importance for Central Asia as a whole and for the three states that share its territory, i.e. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, in particular. The identity-based disputes that arise in the valley have the potential to hinder the region's development. The tension among the ethnic groups in the three states that share the valley's territory has already led to numerous conflicts in the past and, if not eliminated completely, could lead to more conflicts in the future. There are numerous reasons for such disputes: ethnical differences, complex national composition of the region, disputes over resources, political influence, etc. All of these components create grounds both for extending the conflict and for violent outcomes.²²

It may appear that concerns about the importance of the valley for Central Asia as a whole are unsubstantiated, since it comprises about only 5 percent of the territory of Central Asia. Such a doubt, however, is itself problematic, since the valley is home to more than 13 million people, i.e. close to 20 percent of the region's population. It stands to reason that any tension arising among such a large number of people could lead to severe consequences for the whole region.

The Ferghana Valley includes the eastern part of Uzbekistan, the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, and the northern part of Tajikistan. Each of the countries is in turn divided into separate administrative units. For Uzbekistan, these units are the three Ferghana Valley provinces: Andijan, Namangan, and Ferghana, while Kyrgyzstan's part of the valley is divided into three oblasts, Osh, Batken, and Jalal-Abad. Tajikistan's part of the valley is the Sogd province, also known as Khujand after its major city.²³ It is clear that although the valley differs in economic significance for all of the states, it is of utmost importance for them since it hosts much of their population. It also serves as a crossroads among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Consequently, should any turmoil arise in that part of Central Asia, it will have the tangible impact on all five countries. Closing the borders has brought more complications to the region, where competition is already emerging.

Historical Background

The Ferghana Valley's states, as well as the other states of Central Asia, share a common history, being part of Alexander's empire, Timur's empire, khanates, etc. The last "empire" in which all of the states were united was the Soviet Union. Interestingly, "throughout the pre-Soviet history of the area, ethnic and linguistic divisions played little political role."²⁴ The Soviet pattern of state formation focused on the differences between the nations in order to create a state. This issue is discussed in more detail later in this study. The differences created by Soviet legacy were further emphasized after its collapse. This has led to increased economic competition, emphasizing ethnic differences rather than focusing on the similarities, and the growing dispute over national resources. Violent conflicts have since arisen in the valley, mostly on an ethnic basis.²⁵

²² See: "Zakliuchenie Natskomissii po rassledovaniuu sobytii v iune 2010 na Iuge Kyrgyzstana," 8 June, 2011, available at [<http://www.ethnic.analytics.kg/2011-05-23-08-59-33/2011-06-08-11-41-10/36--2010-.html>], 12 December, 2011.

²³ See: N. Lubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley. Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia*, Center for Preventive Action, The Century Foundation Press, New York, 1999, p. 33.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

²⁵ See: Ya. Sari, C. Asanbayeva, "1990 ve 2010 Yıllarında Güney Kırgızistan'daki Etnik Çatışmalar: Nedenler, Benzerlikler ve Farklılıklar," in: *Orta Asya'da Siyaset ve Toplum, Demokrasi, Etnisite ve Kimlik*, ed. by M.T. Demirtepe, USAK Yayınları, Ankara, 2012.

The Uzbekistan Conflict of 1989

For two weeks, the Uzbekistan part of the valley was shaken by a violent conflict between ethnic Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks, a small ethnic group deported from the Caucasus to Uzbekistan by Stalin. It originally started in the small town of Kuva and then spread to Ferghana, Kokand, Margilan, and Namangan. This conflict illustrated how a small amount of tension can grow into a large conflict. Lubin emphasizes that “what led to this act of ethnic violence was the existing economic disparity between the relatively better-off Meskhetians and the economically deprived Uzbeks of Ferghana.”²⁶ Although this conflict occurred within only one of the three states, it can well be considered an illustration of how important ethnic tension is in the Central Asian environment.

The First Osh Conflict of 1990

This conflict caused the death of at least two hundred people. The main reasons cited for the riots were the struggle for control over land and housing, the absence of ethnic Uzbeks in the higher echelons of the local and regional administration, and demands for greater Uzbek autonomy. The Kyrgyz side was also concerned about land distribution. The disputes began when the leaders of the Kyrgyz national organization “Osh Aymaghi” demanded that the land belonging to an Uzbek collective farm be reallocated to build housing for the Kyrgyz.²⁷ After the authorities agreed to distribute a small part of the land, both the Uzbek and the Kyrgyz side were unhappy about it. Their concerns led to violent confrontations that only Soviet army units were able to stop. This conflict remains one of the most violent outbreaks in the region and illustrates how economic issues, together with ethnic differences and lack of proper government control and attention, can result in outcomes as grave as human death.

The Uzbekistan Conflict of 1991-1992

This conflict grew from religious tension inside Uzbekistan resulting from the Adolat movement trying to take over the former regional Communist party headquarters on 8-9 December. Karimov’s use of force illustrated his inability to retain power in the country and how religious forces, if they become political, can pose a danger for the ruling regime.²⁸ Although the majority of the Central Asian population is Muslim, the clergy in the Central Asian states have little influence on the government. This attempt of the clergy to gain political momentum failed and served as a warning for colleagues in other countries not to repeat the attempt. In this case, the use of government authority proved legitimate and effective both because stability was retained in the country and no lives were lost.

²⁶ N. Lubin, op. cit., p. 47.

²⁷ See: A. Knyazev, *Vektory i paradigmy kyrgyzskoi nezavisimosti*, Printhouse, Bishkek, 2012, p. 18.

²⁸ See: M.B. Olcott, “Islam and Fundamentalism in Independent Central Asia,” in: *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*, ed. by Yavoi Ro’i, Frank Cass Press, London, 1995, p. 330.

The Tajikistan Conflict of 1997-1998

After the Tajik central government and Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan, which led the United Tajik Opposition, signed an agreement on sharing power in June 1997, a new conflict arose in the northern part of Tajikistan, where Uzbeks are in the majority. It started with demonstrations in the northern cities. Demonstrators in the two largest cities of the North, Khujand and Ura-Tepe, demanded the removal of local officials appointed by the southern-dominated central government. This was followed by a series of protests and riots that ended up in more killings in May 1996 during an attempt to take over the Khujand prison. Some Uzbek community leaders in Khujand, with the assistance of the government of Uzbekistan, even demanded more autonomy in their region. This unstable situation led to a new wave of violence in the Ferghana Valley. Complications arose due to the fact that the Tajik government had been accusing the Uzbek government of giving a hand to the northern protesters. The Uzbeks denied the charges, but the tension remained. In 1997, it was the turn of the Uzbek side to accuse the Tajiks of engaging in terrorism in Uzbekistan, since the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) was continuing to use Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to attack Uzbekistan. The bombings in Tashkent in February 1999 were also attributed to the IMU militants from the Ferghana Valley, so this dispute and the border problems in the region are far from over.²⁹

The Andijan Conflict of 2005

Another explosion of violence in the Ferghana Valley took place in Uzbekistan in May 2005. It can be argued that this was a matter of domestic politics and is not to be considered within the framework of the entire valley. The implications of this event, however, had a large impact on the neighboring republics, so discussing this issue appears quite relevant. On 12 May, 2005, 23 businessmen were accused of Islamic extremism and imprisoned. The families of the charged businessmen believed them to be innocent and so on 13 May, the jail was attacked and the prisoners had a chance to escape. Quick government action resulted in killings that are now estimated in the hundreds.³⁰ The harsh measures taken by the Uzbek government have been criticized by humanitarian organizations and yet some consider the steps to have been necessary in order to keep stability in the country. It stands to reason that further development of the prison outbreak would have had more complex implications for the region. The implications that have already arisen are increased regard for the international organizations in the region, increased concern of the states of the valley over the spillover effects, as well as the refugee flow from Uzbekistan and the consequent complications in interstate relations.

The Second Osh-Jalalabad Conflict of 2010

After the fall of the Bakiev regime in April 2010, peace in the part of the Ferghana Valley under the Kyrgyzstan administration also ended. There are different reasons and actors blamed for the sec-

²⁹ See: G. Gleason, "Why Russia is in Tajikistan," *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2001, p. 85.

³⁰ See: B.B. Ozpek, "The Andijon Events: Demand for More Development or Threat to Stability," *Perception*, Winter 2007.

ond conflict in Osh–Jalal-Abad regions between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks.³¹ The conflict began in the third week of June 2010, it spread very quickly from the city of Osh to the Osh Region and then to the Jalal-Abad Region. According to different accounts, hundreds of people (most of them Uzbeks) were killed.³² The new transition government of Kyrgyzstan could not prevent the conflict from spreading and turning into a violent clash between the two ethnic groups. The trauma of the conflict is still hurting relations between the two communities and neither the Kyrgyz government nor international organizations have been able to begin the healing process.

Conclusion

Much of the tension in the region can be traced back directly to Soviet legacy. The Soviet authorities had a very specific approach to state-building; the consequences of these principles are still influencing the region. Between 1924 and 1928, the Central Asian republics were established to become the first administrative units in the region formed on the basis of ethnic nationality.³³ The Soviet authorities simply divided people of the same religion and related language group into separate administrative units. At that time, the planners in Moscow determined that the Ferghana Valley region would be divided into three parts, although for most of its history it had been within the territory of a single state such as the Kokand Khanate or the Soviet Union. The declared criteria for this division were ethnic (to unify the members of a given group within a single “national republic”) and economic (to produce rational and economically coherent administrative units). Intervention in the state-building process was based not on differentiation of nations but on a “merger” of nations under a central government and authority. In other words, while trying seemingly to create states based on the titular nationalities in the majority in a certain part of the region, the Soviet authorities in fact cared little about the great interdependence that existed in the Ferghana Valley. Ethnic issues are still extremely important for understanding much of the tension arising in the Valley. Not only is there division among the Kyrgyz, Uzbek, and Tajik people, the issue is further complicated by the hostility between different identity-groups and minorities in the region. Additional pressure is arising due to the fact that not only does this tension exist inside each state, it could also escalate to the interstate level.

³¹ For reasons and actors of the conflict, see: Ya. Sari, “Kırgız-Özbek Çatışmasının Nedenleri Üzerine Bir Analiz,” *Eurasian Analysis*, No. 1, 2010, pp. 31-37.

³² For a more detail account of the conflict, see: *Otchet mezhdunarodnoy nezavisimoi komissii po issledovaniiu sobitii na luge Kyrgyzstana v iune 2010 goda*, 3 May, 2011, available at [http://www.mfa.kg/images/userfiles/file/IKK_001.pdf], 8 April, 2012.

³³ See: A. Joldoshev, “Kabilecilik, Bölgecilik ve Etnisite: Kırgız Kimliği Üzerine Çalışmalar”, *Journal of Central Asian & Caucasian Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 15, 2013.