

**SOVIET AND POST-SOVIET LANGUAGE POLICIES  
IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS  
AND THE STATUS OF RUSSIAN**

**DIETRICH, Ayşe**  
TÜRKİYE/TURÇIYA

**ABSTRACT**

This paper examines the development of language policy and the role of Russian in the five Central Asian states of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan from the time of the Russian Revolution to the present day. It begins by investigating the development of Soviet language policy during the Bolshevik period, looking at the roles of both local languages and Russian. It then follows the changes in language policy and the role of Russian in Soviet society until the end of the Soviet Union.

Next the establishment of national language policies in the newly independent states in Central Asia is examined. Specifically, it looks at language policy for the government, media and education as provided for in current or proposed legislation and government policies. In addition, the official or unofficial role of Russian in these states is discussed.

Lastly, the survival and possible future role of Russian in the Central Asian republics is discussed. These projections are based on the most recent demographic data on the number of ethnic Russians and Russian speakers in each country, as well as the measures that the Russian government has taken to promote the Russian language in the region.

**Key Words:** Russian, language policy, Central Asia.

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Following the Russian Revolution the Bolsheviks implemented a policy towards the minority nationalities of the USSR which aimed at uniting all the nations into a single socialist community with a uniform national culture. One aspect of this policy, language policy, was carried out by the *Narkomnats*, established in 1917, which served as an intermediary between the central Soviet organs and the minority peoples to help the government in dealing with a variety of problems, among them: standardizing each local language; spreading it as a lingua franca within the population; expanding the lexicon to meet the needs of a modern industrial society; increasing literacy; and creating new alphabets.

This last task, the creation of new alphabets for the languages of Central Asia, passed through several phases. Before 1917, the peoples of Central Asia used

the Arabic alphabet to write their languages. This script was a familiar system of writing as well as a symbol of religious and cultural ties with the Islamic world.

In the beginning, Soviet authorities modified the Arabic script, and this modified Arabic alphabet became the standard script for writing Kazakh, Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Turkmen (Bacon, 1966: 190). In 1925, this policy was reversed and all materials printed in the Arabic script were banned. In its place, the use of the Latin alphabet for these languages was proposed at the Baku Turkological Congress in 1926. This proposal was accepted, and between 1927 and 1930 all five languages transitioned to the Latin alphabet in order to separate them from Islam and from Perso-Arabic culture.

As Russian became the predominant language of the USSR in the mid-1930s the Latin alphabet came to be seen as an obstacle to non-Russians in learning the language. In addition, Soviet authorities feared that a new Pan-Turkic literature written in the Latin alphabet could draw the Turkic peoples of Central Asia toward Turkey (Bacon, 1966: 191; Laitin, 1998: 49-52). As a result, between 1938 and 1940 the Latin alphabet was abandoned and replaced with Cyrillic throughout Central Asia. It was claimed by Soviet authorities that this move would promote greater unification of the Soviet people by linguistically integrating the peoples of Central Asia into the Union. In 1938 the teaching of the Russian language was made mandatory in all non-Russian schools across the Soviet Union.

During the process of integrating the socialist republics into the Soviet Union a number of reforms were introduced into these languages to reduce the elements they shared with related languages and bring them closer to Russian. Along with the changes of alphabet, numerous Russian loan words and new grammatical structures were introduced. Though many of these words were Russian, there were also international terms, such as *telefon* and *telegram*, which the Russians had adopted during their own process of industrialization and modernization. The adoption of Russian loan words deeply affected the composition of the Central Asian languages' vocabulary. For instance, the percentage of Arabic and Persian words in Uzbek-language newspapers fell from 37 % in 1923 to 25 % in 1940, while the percentage of Russian words rose from 2 % to 15 % (Conquest, 1967: 76).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a process of social upheaval and the emergence of new, independent states took place; Russians and the other peoples of the former Soviet Union had to search for a new concept of national identity. Almost 25 million ethnic Russians suddenly became foreign citizens in the republics they considered their homeland, while the new states were confronted with the task of establishing their own national identities. Language became a major factor in this process.

In the years following the dissolution of the Soviet Union it can be seen that the former Soviet republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have each adopted very different attitudes and policies toward Russian and its role in their countries. In addition, in some cases, these policies have had to be altered to meet new realities.

The last of the Central Asian republics to proclaim its official language in 1990, Turkmenistan designated Turkmen as its official language in its constitution. In 1993 Turkmenistan adopted a Turkmen Latin alphabet, and has attempted to put its national language on an equal footing with Russian as an international language ([www.unesco.org/most/v13n2schlyter.htm](http://www.unesco.org/most/v13n2schlyter.htm)). Since independence the number of schools conducting classes in Russian has decreased 71 %, and instruction in Russian was scheduled to end in 2002 (Blagov, *Newsweek International*, 1 July 2002).

Uzbekistan's language law, adopted in 1995, recognises the Uzbek language as the official language, however, except in the symbolic areas of renaming streets, neighbourhoods etc. implementation of the law has been somewhat slow (Fierman, 1995; 583). Two new Latin alphabets were adopted for Uzbek, one in 1993 and the other in 1995, but neither can be regarded as an improvement over the former Cyrillic alphabet, because the Latin alphabet does not reflect the phonology of Uzbek language well.

Uzbekistan faces another language problem regarding the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan which lies within Uzbekistan's borders and whose dialect is far closer to Kazakh than to Uzbek. If this language's script is to conform to that of any other language, it would be Kazakh, not Uzbek. However, there has been no independent Karakalpak language policy to date, and it seems that this issue's solution is linked to whether or not the Kazakhs adopt the Latin alphabet.

Another source of contention in Uzbekistan has been the status of ethnic Russians living in the country. During the Soviet era Russians had been the most privileged group, but this situation ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. They lost their privileged status in Uzbekistan and the 1995 language law does not guarantee the free usage of Russian as a language of international communication. In addition, anyone who did not adopt Uzbek citizenship by 1 July 1993 was regarded as a foreigner, and non-citizens were denied access to health care and education. As a result, many Russian-speaking non-citizens have left Uzbekistan.

In Kazakhstan, the constitution, adopted in 1995, designates Kazakh as the official language, while recognizing Russian as the language of inter-ethnic communication and guaranteeing its equal use in the government and media. Currently, only the highest state officials are required to demonstrate Kazakh language proficiency, while the remaining state personnel have been given a 15-

year grace period to learn Kazakh. Kazakh remains the language of the poor and those on the fringes of society despite support from the government. However, the Kazakh government must seek a way to promote the Kazakh language without creating animosity among its large Russian minority (approximately 38 % of the population). In addition, Kazakhstan shares an almost 7,000- km long common border with Russia; thus, it cannot afford to antagonize the Russians inside or beyond its borders. As a result, it is difficult for the government to build a state based solely on Kazakh national identity.

A large segment of the Russian population in Kazakhstan has continued through diplomatic channels to urge the government to recognise Russian not just as a language for interethnic communication, but as Kazakhstan's second official language. The leadership of the Slavonic Public Movement 'Lad' see the language movement as the central issue if the Russians are to consider Kazakhstan their home. According to 'Lad' Kazakh is unsuited to the modern public sphere because it cannot serve as a language of modern politics, science and education; historically Kazakh has never been a language of high culture<sup>1</sup>, but rather a language of nomad poetry. Such statements have, naturally, antagonized Kazakh nationalists. They blame the government for a lack of determination in making Kazakh the official language, pointing out that Kazakhstan is the only Central Asian republic which has not proceeded with its announced plan to transition to the Latin alphabet ([www.cacaianalyst.org](http://www.cacaianalyst.org)). Kazakhstan continues to use the Cyrillic alphabet. As previously mentioned, this lack of resolve also has a direct bearing on if and when the language issue in neighbouring Karakalpakistan is resolved.

Turning to the situation in Tajikistan, the constitution adopted in 1994 declares Tajik to be the official language, yet Russian is recognised as a language of inter-ethnic communication and its use is also allowed in all spheres of social life. In fact, all ethnic groups are free to use their own native languages ([www.usefoundation.org](http://www.usefoundation.org)). Tajikistan has a large Uzbek population and a 1989 language law allows the use and teaching of Uzbek. Tajik law also guarantees all citizens the freedom to obtain general secondary education in Tajik, Russian or Uzbek ([www.usefoundation.org](http://www.usefoundation.org)). In addition, Tajik-Russian bilingualism is strongly encouraged in Tajikistan. Tajikistan still uses the Cyrillic alphabet.

The only Central Asian republic to have granted the Russian language official status is Kyrgyzstan through a law passed in May 2000 (Landau&Barbara, 2001: 120). The new constitution, amended in 1996, recognises Russian as a language for inter-ethnic communication ([www.usefoundation.org](http://www.usefoundation.org)). Under current law both Kyrgyz and Russian have official status. Gazeta SNG reported on 18 February

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<sup>1</sup> Up until the 20<sup>th</sup> century the languages of culture in this region were Persian and Chaghatay Turkish.

2004 that State Secretary Osmonakun Ibraimov told journalists that Russian is the de facto official language for meetings and documents at high levels of government (**The Times of Central Asia**, 23 Feb. 2004). However, the Kyrgyz parliament passed a language law which requires state officials to know Kyrgyz well enough to perform their jobs and mandates the use of Kyrgyz in education and mass media. At a three-day international congress on the Russian language in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) held in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek, former President Askar Akaev spoke in favour of the law, stating that he is confident the two languages can continue to coexist. During the opening ceremony President Akaev said that the development of the Russian language is not only an economic priority, but also an important political task for Kyrgyzstan (**The Times of Central Asia**, 12 March 2004). He emphasized that the status of Russian in Kyrgyzstan is under 'firm protection' and Russian as a language of inter-ethnic and international communication will always serve as a bridge in Kyrgyzstan's relations with Moscow. Akaev also pointed out that CIS countries should upgrade the role of the Russian language in all areas of cooperation (**Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty**, 2004). Kyrgyzstan, like Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, still uses the Cyrillic alphabet.

In the fifth annual assembly of Peoples of Kyrgyzstan held in Bishkek in 2006, the Bakiev government was accused of ignoring the concerns of ethnic minorities. Russians represent about 12 per cent of the population, well behind Kyrgyzstan's largest ethnic minority group, the Uzbeks, at around 16-17 per cent, who also want their language to be recognized as an official language. On May 27, 2006, hundreds of people in Jalalabad took to the streets in a peaceful rally, demanding that the Kyrgyz government make the Uzbek language official. However, at the rally current president Kurmanbek Bakiev rejected the possibility of granting the Uzbek language official status.

### **The Future of the Russian Language in the Central Asian Republics and Conclusions**

A number of factors, both internal and external, will determine the Russian language's future in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia. Among the internal factors are demographics, the view of the national governments on the role of Russian in their countries, the foreign policy orientation of these countries, and the general attitude of the citizenry towards Russian. External factors influencing the continued use of Russian are the state of the Russian economy and the level of support the Russian government provides for the study of Russian and Russian-language education programmes both in Russia and in the Central Asian republics.

The demographic makeup of the country, in particular the ratio of the titular nationality to Russians and other minorities within the country is the first internal

factor affecting the future of Russian. Because Russians during the Soviet era generally did not make the effort to learn the titular language, and minorities, too, generally learned Russian rather than the titular language as their means of interethnic communication, the existence of sizable Russian and minority communities within a country could be an indicator of the degree of potential support for the continued use of Russian within the country.

As for the future of Russian in the five republics of Central Asia, this varies from republic to republic.

The future of Russian is unclear in Turkmenistan. Since 1993 Russian schools have been systematically closed down. At present there is only one school that offers a proper Russian language education – the Pushkin School in Ashgabat. All other schools that formerly taught in Russian have transitioned to Turkmen. The lack of Russian classes in Turkmen schools, the effective ban on the subscription to Russian press and the cutoff of Russian TV channels have all had a negative effect on the level of Russian language proficiency. The young generation can speak almost no Russian. While in the capital Russian is still spoken by a number of people, it has almost been forgotten in the provinces.

Although Russian remains a language of instruction in some educational institutions, there is a continued effort to increase the role of Turkmen in all areas of public life. In addition, there are even indications that Turkmenistan is attempting to move towards a three-language policy of Turkmen, Russian and a third international language such as French, German or English (Landau&Barbara, 2001: 189-193). Russian remains a means of communication with many of Turkmenistan's neighbours, a fact which favours its survival in the country, but politically, Turkmenistan has pursued a more independent and isolationist international policy. While relations with Russia have improved since former President Turkmenbashi's death last year, they are not as close compared to some of the other Central Asian republics, nor has Turkmenistan attempted to align itself more closely with the West. Neither the Russian Embassy in Turkmenistan nor the Russian authorities display any great interest in preserving the Russian language in Turkmenistan (<http://www.chrono-tm.org/?025504269200000000000013000000>).

In summary, Russian will continue to have a role in the life of Turkmenistan in the near future, particularly in the field of higher education, but the extent of its role in other fields, and continued vitality over time are uncertain.

In Uzbekistan, although the Uzbeks make up 80 % of the population and Russians just over 5 %, Russian still retains an important role. For example, in the education system Russian is the most emphasized language after Uzbek. However, since independence Russian has lost some ground in educational institutions both to Uzbek and to other foreign languages, especially English

(landau&barbara, 2001: 173-178). In the area of international policy Uzbekistan, while not wishing to sever ties with Russia, had moved to align itself with the West, a trend that accelerated after the events of 11 September 2001. Closer relations with the United States, combined with an increased American presence in Uzbekistan as well as other parts of Central Asia, could have been an incentive to study English rather than Russian. However, Uzbek-Russian ties have been rapidly growing ever since the May 2005 Andijan events and the eviction of US forces from the Qarshi-Qanabad air base in 2006. A bilateral agreement signed in November 2005 expanded economic and educational options for Uzbeks. In the realm of employment, Russia is the primary destination for unskilled workers who migrate in search of jobs; over a million Uzbek citizens work at least part of the year in the Russian Federation. This, combined with the restoration of bilateral political ties, means that Uzbekistan's current capacity can not keep up with the demand for Russian language instruction.

In addition, Russian is still used for regional communication with the other former Soviet republics in the region, another factor in favour of its continued use and study in Uzbekistan. A survey of students conducted in 2002 in Uzbekistan's two largest cities, Tashkent and Samarkand, indicates that Russian continues to be important in the lives of young Uzbeks. When asked which language they used in their professional lives, 41.2 % of those responding in Tashkent said 'only Russian.' A slightly smaller number, 41.0 % responded 'Russian and Uzbek.' Only 7.4 % answered 'Uzbek only.' The statistics from respondees in Samarkand showed a slight drop in the percentages for 'Russian only,' and 'Russian and Uzbek,' and a slight increase for 'Uzbek only' at 39.0 %, 38.0 % and 11.0 % respectively ([www.gazeta.kg](http://www.gazeta.kg) 2.08.2003). These figures, combined with the current political trends, indicate that the Russian language will certainly have a place in Uzbek life for the near future, although its long-term prospects may still remain less certain.

In the remaining three Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the future of Russian is perhaps more assured than in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, although the reasons for this differ from country to country.

Kazakhstan's large Russian community, combined with the extremely widespread knowledge of Russian among all ethnic groups (up to 95 %)<sup>2</sup> ([www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kz.html](http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/kz.html)) virtually ensure that Russian will continue to play an important role in Kazakhstan, despite the government's moves to increase the knowledge and use of the official language Kazakh. In addition, although Kazakhstan has ties to the West, particularly in the fields of energy and regional security, Russia remains a country with whom Kazakhstan maintains close ties. This, too, will work in favour of Russian

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<sup>2</sup> 2001 estimate.

remaining a major language in the country. Nowadays, all legislative acts, decrees and other documents are issued in Russian and afterward translated into Kazakh. The policy of multi-nationality puts the official language in one row with other languages of the nations residing in Kazakhstan. The Russian language in many ways dominates over the official Kazakh language.

In a further bid to make the workforce more competitive, the government also seeks to boost the role of English in Kazakhstan. President Nazarbaev proposed a new project called the Trinity of Languages, with the ultimate view of making the country trilingual in the official language Kazakh, Russian, ‘the language of inter-ethnic communication’, and English, ‘the language of successful integration into the global economy’.

Like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan has attempted with varying degrees of success to increase the role of the Kyrgyz language in the country. However, although the percentage of Russians in Kyrgyzstan is less than half that of Kazakhstan, Russian is an official language. This alone is almost enough to guarantee the Russian language’s continued use in Kyrgyzstan. When combined with the country’s continued close ties to Russia<sup>3</sup> there can be little doubt as to Russian’s long-term survival in the country.

The population of Tajikistan contains the smallest number of Russians of any of the Central Asian republics, a number which continues to decline due to emigration. Despite this, Russian remains the language of interethnic communication and Russia maintains a relatively strong military presence in the country, especially along the Afghan border (Jonson, 2004; 107-108). As a result, while Russian will undoubtedly continue to play a role in the life of the country in the near future; its survival in the long term may depend on whether Tajikistan maintains its current close ties with Russia and the existence of institutions such as the Slavonic State University in Dushanbe, opened in 1996. As an example of the two countries’ current close ties, President Emomali Rahmanov stated at an international conference held in Dushanbe in 2005 on ‘Russian Language and Literature in Central Asian Countries’, that Tajikistan and Russia are ‘strategic partners’. As a result learning Russian remains important for Tajikistan. Despite the presence of 20,000 Russian teachers, the Tajik government has appealed to the Russian Embassy to provide even more instructors due to the intense demand for instruction in Russian. In addition, the Government has purchased \$ 300,000 dollars worth of Russian text books.

There is an additional factor that may work in favour of the continued use of Russian in the republics of Central Asia, namely the attitude of the Russians

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<sup>3</sup> Despite the Kyrgyz government granting the United States limited rights to station military personnel in its territory prior to the 2001 war in Afghanistan, ties with Russia remain close. One example is the new air base that Russia opened in Kyrgyzstan in 2003, Russia’s only airbase outside its territory. See: “Russia opens Kyrgyzstan Base”, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/2/hi/asia-pacific/3206385.stm>.

living in these republics towards learning the titular languages and adapting to the new societies they find themselves in. For many Russians the religious and cultural differences between Slavs and Muslims are insurmountable, and they have little desire to assimilate into what they see as an alien and, often, inferior culture. By refusing to assimilate, they will continue to form a Russian-speaking bloc in the region, though they may, out of necessity, learn the titular language to a greater extent than in the Soviet period (Landau&Barbara, 2001: 211).

Yet another factor in the continued use of Russian in Central Asia is the problems that could arise if Russian language proficiency is lost. In most of the former Soviet republics the majority of newspapers and magazines are now being published in the local language, and fewer materials are being published in Russian. Should this trend continue there is the risk that many potential young scholars from other countries who know Russian, but not the local language, may be discouraged from conducting research in or about these countries.

Another consideration for the countries that abandon Russian is that Russia is the largest, most dominant and most technologically advanced of the former Soviet republics. It has nearly three-fourths of former Soviet military territory and more than half of its population. It is estimated that Russia accounts for 75 % of the gross domestic product of the former Soviet republics. If the Russian economy grows a situation could develop where Russia would prefer to invest in countries such as Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan where Russian is still widely used, rather than in those former Soviet republics that have abandoned or restricted Russian. Such a development could force those countries that have resisted to finally yield to a new oncoming linguistic tide that favours Russian ([www.epic.org/periphelion](http://www.epic.org/periphelion)).

A final factor that may help to determine the future of the Russian language in the former Soviet republics is the level of support provided by the Russian government for Russian-language schools at all levels in these countries and the opportunities it provides for students from these countries to pursue higher education in Russia. Russia has responded in a number of ways in these areas. For example, the head of the Ministry of Education's CIS Department, Yuri Kungurtsev, reported that the ministry had established three Russian universities in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, an indication that Russian officials are taking steps to encourage the study and use of Russian outside the Federation ([www.atimes.com](http://www.atimes.com)). In addition, the Russian education minister announced that the quota for scholarship students from CIS countries who want to study in Russian high schools had been almost doubled. Kyrgyzstan's quota is now six times higher than it was before (*The Times of Central Asia*, 12 March 2004). At the previously mentioned Bishkek congress the Education Minister Vladimir Filipov announced that Moscow had decided to increase funds to \$6 million to support the Russian language in the CIS (*Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 2004). Clearly, the

Russian government is determined to regain for the Russian language the status it previously enjoyed in these regions.

At this point, the efforts that have been made in some circles to replace Russian with another language as the means of communication between some countries should be considered. After the collapse of the Soviet Union Turkey displayed great interest in Central Asia, especially regarding the issue of creating a new alphabet for the Turkic languages. In November 1991, at a conference held at Marmara University in Turkey, a common Turkic alphabet based on the Latin alphabet used in Turkey was adopted. It was believed that this would be a step to bring Turkey and the Central Asian Turkic republics closer as well as to reduce the influence of Russia and the Russian language in the region. However, this project was doomed to failure as each of the Central Asian republics later introduced their own alternative alphabets ([www.iias.nl](http://www.iias.nl)). What Turkey apparently failed to fully appreciate was that the Central Asian republics each had distinct languages and that the proposed Turkic alphabet did not reflect the unique characteristics of each language. The Turkic languages of Central Asia have followed different lines of development and many are no longer mutually intelligible. As a result, Russian is still used as the means of communication among the different ethnic and national groups. Nonetheless, Turkey still has a lively interest in the region, maintaining a number of educational institutions there and even opening new ones (Demir et al, 2000: 141-155).

For a variety of reasons Russian will continue to be a significant language well into the future in the republics of the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, despite some efforts to the contrary. Russian serves as an established medium of regional and interethnic communication, a fact that could have important economic implications (Kaplan&Baldauf, 1997: 159). It is the language of the skilled Russian workforce and remains the language of instruction for science and technology, a fact which gives it considerable prestige over the local languages (Kaplan&Baldauf, 1997: 241). "Russia's growing economy, its consumer products, its popular culture, and the persistence of the Russian language as the regional **lingua franca** for commerce, employment, and education in many of the states of the former Soviet Union have all made Russia a more attractive nation for regional populations. If the influx of migrants from surrounding regions continues; if Russian business investment grows in neighboring states; if regional youth continue to watch Russian TV and films and purchase Russian software, cds and DVDs, and other consumer products; and especially if the heavy hand of Moscow is pulled back and the hand of commerce is extended instead in Russian foreign policy, Russia will achieve the economic and cultural predominance in Eurasia." (Hill, 2006: 342).

In addition, for the political and cultural elites who were educated during the Soviet era Russian was the language of administration and culture and may serve

as a part of their elite identity (Kaplan&Baldauf, 1997: 299). For example, the Kyrgyz writer Chingiz Aitmatov pointed out in his welcome speech to the congress participants in Bishkek, 'each language is unique and thirsts for recognition.' He then continued: 'But, following our traditions and developing our language, we must never forget about the people and language that have helped us to come out of medieval darkness. For this reason we will save, protect, use and cultivate the Russian language as one of the greatest values of the Kyrgyz nation.' (**The Times of Central Asia**, 12 March 2004).

Another example which shows Russian's definite future in the Central Asian republics can be seen in their militaries. Officers from Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan attended a two-week training exercise in 2005 in the eastern US state of Virginia aimed at improving cooperation on border security and counterterrorism efforts. During the exercise the US Army required 22 Russian linguists and Russian software for its computer systems, because Russian remains the common language of Central Asian militaries (McMahon, 2005).

For many of these countries relations with Russia-political, military, and economic - are, and will continue to be important, despite the desire by some of them to forge closer links to the West. Most of the Central Asian republics suffer from weak economies and high unemployment and may find it easier to receive aid from and conduct business with their close neighbour with whom they share recent historical ties than a distant countries and relative new-comers to the region like the United States and the European Union.

Another point that seems to have received little consideration is the 'ripple effect' that language policy in one country can have in neighbouring countries (Kaplan&Baldauf, 1997; 271). That is, adopting a language policy favorable to Russian in one country, could influence the formation of a language policy also favorable to Russian in neighboring countries.

In the end, the fate of the Russian language in these countries is in the hands of the young generation which has grown up after the breakup of the Soviet Union. As an indication of the attitude of the new generation in some of the former Soviet republics toward the Russian language I can provide an example from my own teaching experience. Several of my students enrolled in both undergraduate and graduate courses in the Russian Language and Literature Department at Ankara University come from various former Soviet republics. Despite already being able to speak Russian, they are determined to improve their knowledge of Russian grammar, composition, and literature, and even want to learn Old Russian. They clearly believe that when they return home to their own countries they will be able to teach Russian or find other employment with their knowledge of Russian. Despite being encouraged to study English also, they show little inclination to do so, preferring to further their studies of Russian; they perceive a continuing and important role for Russian in their countries in the years to come.

Language planners in the Central Asian republics may need to reconsider the strategies they have adopted to promote and preserve their national languages if, despite their efforts, the young people of their countries continue to feel the need to learn Russian. The language policies adopted have generally taken a 'top-down' approach with little or no attempt to ascertain what the citizens of their countries actually want. For example, the effort to modernise and intellectualise their national languages to the degree that they are able to fully replace Russian in the areas of law, administration higher education and science requires qualified specialists fully fluent in both languages to create and disseminate the necessary terminology. However, if these efforts are ultimately successful, their people are now faced with a permanent lag in the flow of information, especially scientific information from the outside world. Since most research is published in just a few widely known international languages, scientists who cannot at least read them must now wait for this research to be translated into their own native language, often a lengthy process. Likewise, the results of their own research must go through the same process in reverse for it to become widely known. In the end, those responsible for language policy may discover, as have other countries attempting to promote a new national language, that the financial costs and long-term efforts to modernise and intellectualise their native languages are simply not worthwhile nor widely accepted by their own citizens.<sup>4</sup>

Language planners will also need to carefully consider the effects of their policies on internal stability and external relations. For example, any attempt by Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan to impose their national languages on the sizeable Uzbek minorities inside their borders has the potential to create discord among these ethnic groups within their borders and tension in their relations with Uzbekistan.

Rather than the centralized, top-down approach that has characterised language planning in the Central Asian republics, language planners may need to adopt a very different approach to their task. To be effective in the long run, language planners will need to consider a number of factors: among these are the purpose or purposes of language planning; the needs and desires of their citizens; the economic costs and perceived benefits of a particular language policy; the possible effects of this policy in other areas, neighbouring countries in particular; and who should be involved in the formation of language policy.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, language planners in the Central Asian republics will need to carefully examine the role of the Russian language in their countries and plot a new, more realistic

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<sup>4</sup> Intellectualisation refers to the process of developing new linguistic resources to discuss and disseminate information at the highest levels of intellectual application and abstract realities. For an introduction to the topic of intellectualisation see Liddicoat and Bryant; for a discussion of the efforts to intellectualise Filipino see Gonzalez.

<sup>5</sup> For an overview of the various issues involved in language planning and language policy see Kaplan and Baldauf.

language policy, one that takes into account the linguistic and ethnic diversity of their societies.<sup>6</sup>

As for Turkey's language policy in the Central Asian republics, in order to have an effective and long-term language policies in that region, Turkey has to reconsider her approach and adopt a more effective bottom-up policy. That means, instead of encouraging the people of Central Asian republics to use Turkish as an interethnic language, Turkey has to produce specialists who know the local languages and Russian as well, since it is the only interethnic language in all the Central Asian republics and send them to the Central Asian republics. In order to produce specialist of that kind that Ministry of Education in Turkey has to add Russian language in their primary and secondary school programs and the institutions like TOMER or the universities in Turkey has to reopen the language classes for the languages of the Central Asian republics. It should be remembered that any nation which previously suffered under an iron fist which suppressed their native languages, will not allow any other country to do the same now. Therefore, Turkey, instead of a domineering approach, should adopt a humbler, more low-key one to promoting Turkish in Central Asia. To do that the Turkish government, like the US, Russian, British, German, French, Iranian and other governments have done in Turkey, has to open cultural centers in the republics of Central Asia to teach Turkish. This approach will introduce Turkish to a large number of people as an attractive alternative foreign language which is easy to learn because it is close to their own native language, but without threatening to take over or replace their own language like Soviets attempted to do. Another point that these centers should emphasize is that as Turkey proceeds towards full EU membership, Turkish will become an increasingly important language in the EU. As a result, Turkish will have the added attraction of being the easiest major EU language for the citizens of the Turkic Central Asian republics to learn since it is related to their own languages.

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<sup>6</sup> For a discussion of language planning that not only recognises, but encourages linguistic diversity see Mühlhäusler.

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