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Tajikistan: Turbulent Past, Future Uncertain

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TAJIKISTAN: TURBULENT PAST, FUTURE UNCERTAIN

By

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To my wife and son, thanks for your support.

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ABSTRACT

The first decade after Tajikistan became independent was characterized by a 5 year long civil war and a difficult peace process. Just as Tajikistan was beginning to recover, the US began the invasion of Afghanistan on Tajikistan's southern border. Periodically, insurgents from Afghanistan moved into Tajikistan upsetting security. At the same time Tajikistan became the number one transit country in Central Asia for drug trafficking from Afghanistan. The war and the narcotics trafficking brought international competition from Russia, China, Iran and the United States into Tajikistan. In 2014 coalition forces are scheduled to withdraw from Afghanistan. This will change the balance of power in Tajikistan and could lead to conditions that could cause Tajikistan to experience increased internal conflict or international war.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to consider what the future may hold for Tajikistan following the 2014 troop withdrawal from Afghanistan. It is divided into three parts. In order to make predictions about what the future may hold for Tajikistan, it is important to understand its past. In other words, understanding the problems Tajikistan faced and how they solved them as well as the ongoing problems that the country still faces can provide insights into how Tajikistan's political leaders may deal with problems in the future. Therefore, Chapter One and Chapter Two discuss the history of Tajikistan since its independence. Chapter One focuses on the internal politics of Tajikistan, while Chapter Two describes international interests and involvement in Tajikistan. In Chapter Three, the future of Tajikistan is considered and the possibilities for internal conflict or international war are discussed.

Geographical Regions

Tajikistan is the smallest country in Central Asia and was the poorest country in the former Soviet Union. Geographically it is located north of Afghanistan east of Uzbekistan south of Kyrgyzstan and west of China. The country is divided into four regions. The central region is controlled by Dushanbe. Khatlon is in the south. In 1993, the southwestern region, called Kurgan-Tyube and the south-central region called Kulyab were united to form this region. Sughd is in the North and it went through several name changes. Until 1991 it was known as the Leninbad Region; then Leninobod until 2000; then Sogd until 2004. The largest city in Sughd is Khojent. Gorno-Badakhshan is located in the east.

Demographics

Josef Stalin established the modern borders of Tajikistan in 1929 and intentionally drew the boundaries to include different ethnicities. Today there are several ethnicities living in

Tajikistan. The Pamiri, who live in Gorno-Badakhshan are primarily Ismaili, a Shia Islamic sect. The Khojentis live in Sughd and most of the political elites are from Khojent the second largest city in Tajikistan. While Tajikistan was a part of the Soviet Union Russia invested in this region and it became the most industrialized area of the country. Being the industrial center of the country allowed its residents to work their way into the government. The civil war pitted the political elites mainly from the Sughd region against the rest of the country, who organized mainly along regional lines. Uzbeks make up the southwestern population. Kulyabis live in the south central region and Karateginis live in the Garm Valley in the central part of the country.

Based on a 2000 census the CIA World Factbook divides the country into fewer ethnic groups. It says the ethnic makeup of the country is 79.9% Tajik, 15.3% Uzbek, 1.1% Russian, 1.1% Kyrgyz and 2.6% other. The age demographics for the country are 33.7% - 0-14 years, 20.9% - 15-24 years, 37.9% - 25-54 years, and 4.3% - over 65 years.

Historical Overview

To say that Tajikistan's first two decades of independence were tumultuous is an understatement. In the first three years of its existence there were five heads of state. One year after declaring its independence, the country fell into a five-year long civil war that saw the rival forces split along regional lines. The political elites from Sughd fought against the rest of the country. The intense fighting lasted for one year, bringing Imomali Rahmon, from Kulyab to power. Rahmon was the head of a collective farm and was the chief of the Kulyab Soviet. The fighting caused 60,000 people to flee to Afghanistan, where many received training from Islamic radicals and conducted attacks against border outposts between Afghanistan and Russia.

In 1995 Russia, Iran and the United Nations (UN) started peace negotiations, which lasted until 1997. After the peace deal, Rahmon consolidated power and Tajikistan became the

main transit hub for Afghanistan's heroin and drug trafficking. On September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda attacked the United States and Central Asia soon became the focus of the world's attention.

Sharing a border with Afghanistan, Tajikistan became an important point of entry to Afghanistan, thus attracting US interest. This interest caused concern for Russia, China and Iran and they, too, began to forge stronger relationships with Tajikistan. In order to keep Tajikistan close politically and to decrease other powers' influence in Tajikistan, Russia developed the Collective Security Treaty Organization, China created the Shanghai Five (later to become the Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and the United States offered Tajikistan membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Partnership for Peace Program. At the same time, Iran began investing heavily in Tajikistan to gain access. Tajikistan welcomed the attention from the great powers and became adept at acquiring financial aid, training and investment from them in order to promote its own interest.

CHAPTER ONE

TAJIKISTAN AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE SOVIET UNION

Introduction

Shortly after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, Tajikistan fought a five year-long civil war from 1992-1997. The war claimed the lives of 20,000 to 100,000. The civil war period in Tajikistan can be considered in three phases. Phase one is the development of opposition groups including the February 1990 riots in Dushanbe and the opposition gaining control of the government. Phase two is the power struggle occurring from May 1992 until December 1992. Phase three is the peace process, which lasted from 1993 to 1997.

After the civil war, Tajikistan focused on building its government and security forces and integrating members of the opposition groups into the military and government. Then on September 11, 2001 Afghanistan-based Al Qaeda masterminded attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. This event put Tajikistan at the forefront of the war in Afghanistan as it shares its southern border with the northern border of Afghanistan. During the early days of the war, Tajikistan provided an ideal location for launching operations and for journalists, and others to fly to in order to go to Afghanistan. This influx of people and military personnel allowed the leader of Tajikistan Imomali Rahmon to consolidate his power.

After the Taliban was overthrown Afghanistan began producing heroin at a greater rate and shipping it north through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, destined for Russia and Western Europe. In Tajikistan, drug trafficking is most likely controlled by members in the Tajik government or occurs with their approval. The drug money earned from transiting may compose up to half of Tajikistan's economy and helps government officials maintain power and influence in Tajikistan.

Prelude to Civil War

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, the Soviet Union was deteriorating. At the same time Tajikistan was suffering from numerous economic and social problems, including- “pollution, malnutrition, expansion of the unofficial economy, a rise in crime and infant mortality rate suggestive of a Third World country.”¹ Many in Tajikistan blamed Russia for these problems and began to form opposition groups. Perestroika allowed these opposition groups not only to form but also to voice their criticisms of the communist government in Tajikistan. There were four main groups, which united and were collectively called the United Tajik Opposition This group demanded a change in government. The four groups were the Rastokhez movement, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Islamic Renaissance Party, and Lali Badakhshan.

Bess A. Brown describes the organizations comprising the United Tajik.

The Rastokhez movement had begun as a group of Tajik intellectuals who wanted to restore traditional Tajik culture and revise use of the classical Tajik language. Similar small informal groups had appeared in Dushanbe a in the late 1980s, but by February 1990 Rastokhez had become the most influential...The Democratic Party of Tajikistan, a grouping of Western oriented intellectuals was formally founded in August 1990. When Tajiks participants in the founding Congress of the all – USSR Islamic Renaissance party applied for official permission to set up a branch of the party in Tajikistan, the authorities not only denied permission but the supreme Soviet Presidium banned the party before it could even be established. The ban did not prevent the growth of the organization in the underground, and by the time Tajikistan declared its independence in 1991, the party was estimated to be the largest after the Communist Party of Tajikistan and was particularly influential in the Garm region east of Dushanbe, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast in the Pamir’s, and the regions in the plains of southern Tajikistan.²

Both the Democratic Party and Rastokhez Movement wanted economic liberalization. They wanted to develop a textile industry and diversify crops instead of relying exclusively on cotton. They also wanted to develop a Tajikistan Army in part to stop Tajikistanis conscripts from being killed in Russian units. The Islamic Revival Party was a political organization that was founded on 9 July 1990 at a Congress which met in Astrakhan and covered the entire Soviet

¹ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 55

² (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 87-88,

Union. They wanted to unite Muslims throughout the USSR to defend their freedom of conscience. The Tajik branch was founded on 6 October 1990 and as stated earlier was initially illegal but was registered at the Ministry of Justice on December 4, 1991. According to Matthew Crosston, “The main objectives of the Islamic Renaissance Party were three fold: the spiritual rebirth of the republic, the economic and political independence of the republic and the political and legal awakening with the purpose of implementing the fundamental provisions of Islam in the life of all Muslims.”³ The leader of the Tajikistan section was Hajji Akbar Turajanzada. They received a subsidy from Saudi Arabia. Lali Badakhshan was a regional group based in Gorno-Badakhshan that “advocated autonomy for Gorno-Badakhshan and defended the rights of Pamiris.”⁴

The Tajik Communist Party later the People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan controlled the government. Most members were political elites from the Sughd Region which has a significant Uzbek population. These politicians tended “to promote Uzbeks and to favor less nationalistic policies.”⁵ The Communists wanted to maintain the status quo as well as ties with Russia and also to keep the 201st Motorized Rifle Division in Tajikistan. The 201st MRD was a Russian army unit stationed in Tajikistan that provided security.

The February 1990 riots in Dushanbe were the first indication that the opposition had both the ability to organize and the desire to demand change. The reason for the riots was that an earthquake in the Hissar Valley left hundreds of Tajikistanis homeless. Shortly after this Armenian refugees from the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan began to arrive. A rumor circulated that the Armenian refugees were going to be given priority for housing over Tajikistani residents. As a result, thousands converged in Dushanbe to protest this decision. In

³ (Crosston, 2006) p108

⁴ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p 213

⁵ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p 137

conjunction with the demonstrations, riots broke out on February 12 that caused significant material damage to the city. The government responded with violence and at least 22 people were killed.⁶

While the public was demonstrating and rioting outside there was a near riot within the government:

The Tajik leadership barricaded itself in the central committee building where during a stormy session of the central committee in which the top leadership blamed each other for what was happening in the streets, Communist Party chief Kakhar Makhamov attempted to resign. A handful of young officials, most notably state planning committee chief Buri Karimov, joined the protesters demanding a change in leadership and were reported to have set up a People's committee that was seen by the party and government leadership as an incipient rival government.⁷

The demonstrations were stopped because the Supreme Soviet rejected Makhamov's resignation. Makhamov then requested help from the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which sent troops who put down the demonstrations. The Tajik government officials who sided with the demonstrators lost their jobs.

Independence

After the February 1990 riots politics in Tajikistan were contentious but relatively stable. Anti-communist opposition groups formed and continued to grow. Then in August 1991, events in Russia provided a catalyst that set the stage for Tajikistan's independence and civil war.

In August 1991, communist hardliners attempted an unsuccessful coup in Moscow. In Tajikistan, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan accused Makhamov of supporting the hardliners and staged a demonstration in Dushanbe demanding the "resignation of the republican leadership and multi-party elections to a new legislature."⁸ Given the turmoil in Russia Makhamov could not request help from Russia and decided to resign. He was replaced by Kadriiddin Aslonov.

⁶ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 87

⁷ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 89

⁸ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 89

On September 9, 1991, Tajikistan declared its independence. Demonstrators gathered in Dushanbe to demand elections in November and for the dissolution of the Communist Party in Tajikistan. In response to the demonstrator, Aslonov banned the Communist Party on September 22. The next day, the Supreme Soviet overturned his decision and replaced him with Rakhmon Nabiev, the third head of state since Makhamov won elections in November 1990. By the end of September there were approximately 10,000 demonstrators. The Supreme Soviet declared a state of emergency, but the Minister of Internal Affairs Mamadaez Navzhuvanov, who was from the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, refused to enact security measures. In order to reduce tensions in the capital Nabiev legalized the Islamic Renaissance Party and reinstated the ban on the Communist Party.⁹

The November 1991 elections saw Nabiev run against UTO candidate Dawlat Khudonazarov. Nabiev won the election with “57%¹⁰ of the vote in an election of dubious fairness.”¹¹ After winning the election Nabiev lifted the ban on the communist party.

The Civil War Begins

In March 1992, two incidents caused massive demonstrations in Dushanbe. First, “Nabiev arrested the pro-opposition mayor of Dushanbe Bay on corruption charges,”¹² which led to demonstrations. At the same time, Lali Badakhshan supporters came to Dushanbe to protest rumors that Navzhuvanov was going to be removed for refusing to enforce the state of emergency. These demonstrations caused pro-government supporters to conduct counter protests of their own. By the end of March, there was an estimated 100,000 people demonstrating in Dushanbe.

⁹ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 89-90

¹⁰ In (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) Bess Brown reports that Nabiev won 66% of the vote

¹¹ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p 213

¹² (Mandelbaum, 1994) p 213

As a result of the demonstrations Nabiev asked the Supreme Soviet to grant him emergency powers. On May 2 he used these powers to establish a national guard which reported directly to him. The National Guard was comprised mainly of men from Kulyab. During the demonstrations, UTO supporters seized the Tajik Television center. On May 3, Nabiev ordered the guard to suppress the demonstrations. On May 5, fighting broke out between the demonstrators and the National Guard and several people were killed. On May 11, Nabiev signed an agreement with the opposition in order to stem the violence.¹³

The agreement established the National Reconciliation Government. Under the agreement one third of the seats in the government would go to the opposition. Nabiev remained president and Davlat Usman from the Islamic Renaissance Party was appointed Deputy Prime Minister.

The announcement of the new government was repudiated by the Leninbad and Kulyab oblasts who threatened to secede from Tajikistan. On May 12 fighting began in Kulyab.

The fighting that raged in southern Tajikistan for the last six months of 1992 involved regional, ethnic and family disputes as well as political ones. The most savage fighting was reported from Kurgan-Tyube and Kulyab Oblasts as villagers in Kurgan-Tyube Oblast who had migrated from the Garm region fought villagers from Kulyab. Tajiks settle scores with Uzbek neighbors and thousands of Uzbeks fled into Uzbekistan. The town of Kurgan-Tyube was reported to have been nearly destroyed in attacks by Kulyabi forces.¹⁴

One of the most brutal militias fighting in Tajikistan was the pro-communist People's Front from Kulyab. They were led by Sangak Safarov "who had spent 23 years in prison for a variety of offenses, notably murder."¹⁵ Although the Russian forces stationed in Tajikistan were supposed to be neutral in 1992 there were credible allegations from UTO that they were supplying the pro-communist side with arms and munitions. The UTO was being supplied

¹³ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 90-91

¹⁴ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p91

¹⁵ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p214

mainly from sympathetic supporters from northern Afghanistan who were working with the Taliban.

On September 7, Nabiev attempted to flee from Dushanbe to his home in Leninbad Oblast. He was captured by anti-communists at the airport and forced to sign a letter of resignation. As a result of his resignation, Akbarsho Iskanadarov, the Supreme Soviet Chairman became president although the Supreme Soviet did not meet to approve Nabiev's resignation, but the Supreme Soviet did agree to meet in November in the Leninbad Oblast city Khojent to discuss the formation of a new government. Iskanadarov was from the Pamir region and an opposition member.

By this time, Russia and Uzbekistan were taking notice of the violence in Tajikistan. The president of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, was worried about the increase in Islamic parties which were fighting in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, as well as the number of refugees coming to Uzbekistan. He was also worried about some of the rhetoric coming from the UTO which said that they wanted to eventually reclaim Bukhara and Samarkand, two historically Tajik cities which were made a part of Uzbekistan in the 1920s.

On September 3 the president of Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan issued a warning that the conflict endangered the security of the Commonwealth of Independent States. Since May, when supporters of the opposition had begun to enter Afghanistan in search of weapons and military training, Russia had also reinforced its border guards along the Amu Darya. Russia and Uzbekistan sent additional troops and border guards in September; Kazakhstan followed later, while Kyrgyzstan's Parliament refused to authorize such deployment.

Russia and Uzbekistan decided that their security interest required the imposition of order on Tajikistan, and that the only force capable of establishing such order was the ex-communist and their supporters. Mainly Uzbek fighters from Hissar and Kurgan Tiube, [sic] as well as Kulabis, [sisc] received arms and training in Uzbekistan.¹⁶

On November 16, the Supreme Soviet met and established a new government. They abolished the office of the president and elected Imomali Rahmon as parliamentary chairman the highest executive post. They also filled the new government with members from Kulyab. The

¹⁶ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p215

Iskanadarov government accepted a cease fire as the terms of the agreement demanded in an effort to stop the civil war.

On December 6, forces loyal to the Rahmon government with support from Uzbekistan started an attack on Dushanbe. They overthrew the Iskanadarov government and Rahmon moved his government to Dushanbe on December 14.

By January 1993, the majority of the fighting in the civil war was over. Many Islamic Renaissance Party supporters fled to northern Afghanistan. In the months following Rahmon's establishment numerous atrocities were committed.

Garmis and Pamiris, singled out for reprisal killings or executions on the basis of the place of birth indicated in their passports, fled to safer areas of Tajikistan or into Afghanistan. Some who tried to cross the Amu Darya were shot by Russian border guards, and hundreds reportedly drowned while crossing. Tens of thousands camped out in freezing weather with no shelter, food, or water supplies. One kolkhoz director in Kurgan Tiube [sic] claimed on December 13 that 100 children a day were dying.¹⁷

The Peace Process

Rahmon's first priority after coming to power was to silence the opposition. Most of the UTO leadership fled to Russia, Afghanistan and Iran and set up networks to support continued opposition to Rahmon. The Supreme Court in Tajikistan officially banned the Democratic Party, Rastokhez, the Islamic Revival Party and Lali Badakhshan in June 1993 after the procurator general asked for them to be outlawed on February 6. In addition to outlawing the opposition organizations the government also closed down opposition press and arrested some journalist. In February, Mirbobo Mirrakhimov, the chairman for Tajik Television, and two of his deputies were arrested. At the same time, leaders of the opposition groups were tried in absentia for armed insurrection against the constitutional order and waging civil war. A 1993 Amnesty

¹⁷ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p 215

International investigation reports that atrocities were wide-spread from December 1992 to February 1993.

Scores of people, mostly unarmed civilians, are reported to have been extra judicially executed by law enforcement officials since the entry into Dushanbe of forces subordinate to the government, or have “disappeared” since being detained by law enforcement bodies. The victims are reported to be mainly people originating from the Garm region east of Dushanbe, and from the Pamir mountains in the far east of the country, areas apparently believed by government supporters to be centres of opposition. The killings and “disappearances” are reported to have followed checks of identity papers on the streets or at the airport, or during house-to-house searches. People have reportedly been executed on the spot, or have been placed under arrest and their bodies found later in the street or in the city morgue, while the fate of other people who have been detained remains unknown.¹⁸

In March, the government was secure enough to start making conciliations. They agreed to disarm the militias and they agreed to allow the displaced people to return to their homes. The decision to disarm the militias caused a fracture in the Popular Front.

[Popular Front] leader Sangak Safarov supported these moves, but his deputy, Faizali Saidov, who represented non-Kulabi [sic] factions of the PF, opposed them. The two men killed each other at a meeting on March 29. This conflict was symptomatic of strains within the governing coalition. The Kulabis, represented by Safarov, had also made off with most of the power and spoils of victory, leading to tensions with other elements of the victorious coalition.

The government had trouble controlling Gorno-Badakhshan. The people in this area still supported the opposition and independence. However, the area is geographically isolated and constant fighting along the highways prevented them from bringing in food. Facing starvation and an economic collapse the Gorno-Badakhshan government agreed to “formally renounce the goal of independence.”¹⁹

The greatest threat to the government came from Afghanistan. Approximately 60,000 refugees fled Tajikistan for northern Afghanistan many of them loyal to the Islamic Renaissance Party. They moved to two areas- the city Mazar-i-Sharif an area controlled by Gen. Abdu Rashid Dostum and the Kunduz and Takhar provinces which are controlled by the Amiat-i-Islami (Islamic Society). In Afghanistan the most belligerent refugees, numbering between

¹⁸ (Amnesty International, 1993)

¹⁹ (Djalili, Grare, & Akiner, 1997) p 94

5000-8000, received training, arms and support from mujahedeen commanders in Kunduz and Takhar who were supported by “radical Islamist Arabs, especially Wahhabi groups in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait.”²⁰ The fighters conducted daily raids throughout 1993 against border outposts manned primarily by Russians. The largest attack occurred on July 24, 1993 when Tajik opposition fighters attacked Kulab killing up to 200 villagers and 25 Russian border guards.

Beginning in 1993, Russia, Uzbekistan and the United Nations were actively participating in the Civil War in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan was trying to become a leader in Central Asia and Karimov was worried about Russia’s neo-imperialism in Central Asia. Nevertheless, Karimov recommend that Russian forces be designated UN peace keepers in the region. Karimov also asked Russia to support his allies in northern Afghanistan but Russia did not want to because they were worried about the growing Islamist threat and coordination between Islamists in Central Asia, Chechnya and the Middle East. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees was also attempting to return refugees in Afghanistan to Tajikistan. They began a repatriation process in Mazar-i-Sharif in May 1993 but the group in the Kunduz and Takhar province had to flee after two staff members were killed in February.

In January 1993, the UN deployed a Mission of Observers to Tajikistan that helped secure a cease fire in October 1994. On November 6, 1994, a new Constitution was overwhelmingly approved in a popular referendum and Rahmon was reelected.

Then in 1996, the Taliban overthrew the government in Afghanistan prompting concerned parties to seriously consider the need for peace in Tajikistan.

Each of the participants had their own motives for reestablishing peace. Rakhmonov [sic] calculated that his dependence on Russia and Uzbekistan for security ultimately weakened his position as leader of the country, and that he was unable to govern was such a narrow base of

²⁰ (Mandelbaum, 1994) p 218

support. The Islamic Renaissance Party believed that Russia and Uzbekistan were eager to destroy them, so a rapprochement with the government would strengthen their position in Tajikistan and provide a base for agitation against the Central Asian leaders. The Russians and Iranians saw a need to support Masoud as the best hope of victory against the Taliban, and they now urged compromise, while Uzbekistan believed that the best means to protect the Uzbek population insight Tajikistan was to bring the Civil War to an end and concentrate their efforts against the radical Islamists threatening their own domestic security.²¹

“On 27 June 1997, President Imomali Rakhmonov [sic], Sayed Abdullo Nuri, leader of the United Tajik Opposition [UTO], and Mr. Gerd Merrem, then Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General, signed in Moscow the *General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan* and the *Moscow Protocol*.”²² But, significant security and economic concerns threatened to unravel the peace. In November 1998 the former Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajanov attempted a coup in Khujand that left 700 casualties. Then in 1999 there were several kidnappings and bombings and assassination attempts in Dushanbe. “In the country side, government troops fought several skirmishes with splinter groups of the IRP.”²³ The Tajik economy had been seriously disrupted by the civil war. There was high unemployment and rebuilding was slow because economic aid was significantly less than what the UN requested. In 2000 the UN requested \$34 million but received only \$15 million.²⁴

In 1998, the Taliban gained control of northern Afghanistan and threatened to conduct cross-border raids into Tajikistan. Instead they used Tajikistan as a trade route for heroin trafficking. In 1999, opposition fighters had been integrated into Tajikistan’s security forces but many young men were unable to find a job. Agriculture was not lucrative because there was a drought in Tajikistan from 2000-2005 so many were forced to become migrant workers or join drug trafficking gangs. In fact, an estimated 10 times as much heroin came through Tajikistan by

²¹ (Johnson, 2007) p 89

²² (Global Security, 2013)

²³ (Johnson, 2007) p 90

²⁴ (Johnson, 2007) p 91

May 2000 than in 1999.²⁵ Another economic problem Tajikistan faced was that Uzbekistan closed much of its border with Tajikistan and implemented a visa system for Tajik residents in 2000. Tajikistan was dependent on Uzbekistan for trade and trade routes since it is landlocked and its mountainous eastern borders limit transportation. The reason Uzbekistan closed its border was that Islamic militants were passing through or living in Tajikistan and were conducting attacks in Uzbekistan. Additionally, Uzbekistan cut off gas shipments to Tajikistan.

Tajikistan after September 11

In 2000, Tajikistan was weak and vulnerable. They were still dependent on Russian security forces to secure their southern border. They were vulnerable to the whims of Uzbekistan which controlled their gas imports and the only rail line leaving Tajikistan. Finally, they were largely dependent on UN subsidies to feed the population.

Still, despite its security problems and economic vulnerabilities Tajikistan was making progress politically. In 1999, the Islamic Renaissance Party was legalized as a political party. There were parliamentary elections in March 2000 in which the People's Democratic Party won 38 seats, the Communist Party won nine and the Islamic Renaissance Party won two. In the summer of 2001, radical Islam was beginning to be identified as a greater security threat. As a result the US, the EU and Japan pledged \$430 million to Tajikistan²⁶. Then, on September 11, 2001, Al Qaeda attacked America and Tajikistan became a focal point for entrance into Afghanistan. The influx of money allowed Rahmon to consolidate domestic power and at the same time create more autonomy for Tajikistan by using the major powers against each other.

In late September 2001, the Tajik government expressed its willingness to allow coalition troops to be based in Tajikistan and to allow over flights and landings if necessary. On October

²⁵ (Johnson, 2007) p 91

²⁶ (Johnson, 2007) p 94

8, the Tajik government made its offer public. US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld visited Tajikistan on November 3 and Tajik authorities offered the US the use of its three military airfields. Assessment teams found that the Dushanbe airport would be useful in order to refuel cargo planes. In December coalition troops began arriving in Tajikistan. On February 5, 2002 America and Tajikistan signed a bilateral agreement in which America would provide training and communications equipment and Tajikistan would cooperate in intelligence gathering.

2002 brought about more changes in the Western – Tajikistan relationship. In January America allowed the export of weapons to Tajikistan. In February Tajikistan joined the NATO Partnership for Peace Program. In November Rahmon participated in the NATO summit meeting in Prague. In December 2002 Tajikistan signed an agreement with France which allowed Tajik military personnel to attend French military colleges.

The agreement with America to provide assistance to Tajik border guards may have irked Russia. In early 2002 Russia established a policy limiting Tajik migrant workers and began to deport them in late 2002. Another explanation for this move is that Tajikistan asked for compensation for Russian troop presence, although this has been officially denied.²⁷

Improving relations with the West may also have had a positive effect on Tajikistan's relationship with its neighbors.

Tensions increased in central Asia in the immediate aftermath of the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks, primarily between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Most Uzbek border crossing points were closed. Strict regulations were introduced for the transit of goods. For Tajikistan the costs were considerable: freight traffic was stopped at the Uzbek border in the costs for transit through Uzbekistan were damaging to Tajikistan's exports. The strict visa regime introduced by Uzbekistan created effective barriers to the transit of people and goods, and to the shuttle traders and local merchants... On 25 September 2001 Kazakhstan suspended passenger trains from Tajikistan to Moscow via Kazakhstan... Uzbekistan mines in the Fergana Valley along the borders with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan continued to take lives. By early 2002 almost 100 Tajik civilians had been killed or injured. Most victims were women and children gathering firewood along the border or shepherds pasturing cattle in the area.²⁸

²⁷ (Jonson, 2004) p 90

²⁸ (Jonson, 2004) p 91

In December 2001, after coalition troops began arriving in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Rahmon met with Karimov and they agreed to reopen 25 border crossings, reduce tariffs and to decrease Tajikistan's gas debt. By November 2002 the border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan was opened except for four disputed areas. Also contributing to the reduced tension was that the Taliban was overthrown in November 2001 reducing the threat to the Central Asian states.

Rahmon Consolidates Power

In *The Temptations of Tyranny in Central Asia* David Lewis explains how Rahmon targeted potential political rivals in order to consolidate power prior to the 2006 presidential elections. Beginning in 2002 Rahmon began arresting and exiling regional warlords. In January 2004 Rahmon dismissed General Ghaffor Mirzoyev who had been commander of the presidential guard. Rahmon appointed him to the UN-run Drug Control Agency but later arrested him and 15 other officers on charges of an attempted coup in August. In a meeting with the US Ambassador Rahmon said that Mirzoyev was also conspiring with the Russian border guards and requested that the Russian Border leave.²⁹ The majority of the Russian border guards left by the end of 2004 with the remainder leaving in 2005. Next to go was Yaqob Salimov who fled Tajikistan for Russia in 1997. Tajikistan asked Russia to extradite him in 2003 and he was sent to Dushanbe in 2004 where he was imprisoned.

Another major challenger was Mahmadrusi Iskandrov the former leader of the Democratic Party. After the civil war Iskandrov ran the national gas utility agency. Throughout 2003 he became a more outspoken opponent of Rahmon's policies and was dismissed in November. Fearing for his safety he returned to his hometown in Garm and later fled to Russia.

²⁹ (The Guardian, 2010)

He was charged with conspiring to overthrow the government and was kidnapped in Russia and returned to Tajikistan by Tajik security forces. He was sentenced to 23 years imprisonment.

Prior to the parliamentary elections in 2005 Rahmon began targeting NGOs and US aid programs that he thought were political. As a result the People's Democratic Party swept the elections.

Lewis concludes his description saying

More than any other state, perhaps, in the region, Tajikistan's state-building was undermined by criminalization of state structures. At first, it was the former warlords that had challenged the state at every turn; by 2005 most of them had been jailed or forced into exile. Only the fantastically wealthy Suhrob Qosimov remained, heading what was euphemistically called the Interior Ministry Rapid Reaction Force, but looked much more like a private army. He eventually resigned in March 2007, to "spend more time at the Football Federation." As the influence of the warlords faded, criminal groups were merging more closely but the state, with high-ranking security officers frequently accused of involvement in the country's most lucrative business: drug trafficking.

Drugs Move in

For Tajikistan the drug trade is perhaps a necessary evil. Much of the population lives on less than \$1 (US) a day. No less than 30 percent of Tajikistan's GDP is related to drug trafficking.³⁰ Clearly drug trafficking is an important piece to Tajikistan's economy but at what cost? Corruption is thought to be extremely high in Tajikistan. Drug traffickers either bribe government officials and sometimes government officials are the ones conducting the drug trafficking.

In May 2000, 86 kg of heroin and large amounts of foreign currency were discovered in Almaty, the (then) capital of Kazakhstan, in cars belonging to the Tajik ambassador and trade representative. The latter was then convicted on drug charges, while the ambassador fled Kazakhstan. In April 1998, a former Tajik deputy defense minister was imprisoned for using a military helicopter to smuggle 89 kg of opium from Dushanbe to Pendjikent in the Soghd [sic] region. Moreover, several officers of Tajik law enforcement agencies as well as diplomats have been arrested and charged in Russia Kyrgyzstan for wholesale opiate smuggling. Many customs and police officials possess lavish houses and expensive cars, which they could not have bought on their salaries. This provides circumstantial evidence of law enforcement corruption. General

³⁰ (Paoli, Rabkov, Greenfield, & Reuter, 2007) p 952

Nustam Nazarov, and the respected director of the Tajik drug control agency himself stated that “corruption in law enforcement bodies became critical and hampered drug control activity.”³¹

According to the UN nearly 19 percent of the opiates produced in Afghanistan are trafficked through Tajikistan.³² The top four drug trade routes from Afghanistan are Pakistan with 28%, followed by India 24 %, then Tajikistan and Iran 7%. Tajikistan is the number one destination for Afghan drug distribution out of the countries in Central Asia. Turkmenistan the next largest destination in Central Asia receives less than 2%.

The main reason Tajikistan is leading the drug trade in Central Asia is because Tajik and Dari are similar Persian based languages. The other Central Asian countries speak a form of the Turkic language. This common language facilitates communication.

A report from the UN Office of Drugs and Crime explains how the drug trafficking groups operate.

In 2009, there were 20 known drug trafficking groups operating in Tajikistan. Drug trafficking is mainly conducted by small groups of 3 - 15 persons along the Afghan borders; these groups might hold opiate stockpiles just inside the Tajikistan border according to the DCA [Drug Control Agency]... The Tajik DCA believes that each of these groups has one leader, a clearly defined hierarchy and a strong disciplinary system in place. These groups are believed to be closely affiliated with the persons involved in the transportation, packaging, repackaging, storing, selling to other traffickers and street retailing, as well as working with traffickers exporting to various areas including Central Asia, the Russian Federation and other Commonwealth of Independent States’ countries... Afghan drug traffickers are likely selling heroin to Tajik organized crime groups in the border area.³³

The five main routes for drug trafficking are...

- Pyanj district → Kurgan Tyube city → Dushanbe city → Khudjand city → Isafara → Batkent (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Shurotabad district → Kulyob city → Dushanbe city → Khudjand city → Isfara → Batkent (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Shegnan → Murghab → Sary Tash city (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Darvoz → Murghab → Sary Tash city (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh city
- Shurotabad → Kulyob → Dushanbe → Garm → Batkent (Kyrgyzstan) → Osh
- Pyanj → Kurgan Tyube city → Dushanbe city → Uzbekistan³⁴

³¹ (Paoli, Rabkov, Greenfield, & Reuter, 2007) p 958

³² (Demirbuken, Mili, Sassova, Azizi, & Pahtoon, 2012)

³³ (Demirbuken, Mili, & Le Cussan, The Global Afghan Opium Trade A Threat Assessment, 2011) p 46

³⁴ (Demirbuken, Mili, Sassova, Azizi, & Pahtoon, 2012) p 68

In addition to corruption drug trafficking has increased addiction and HIV/AIDS in Tajikistan. “The ready supply of heroin has seen a massive rise in intravenous injection of the drug, which gives a much bigger ‘high’ for much less money. Alongside intravenous drug injection has come its malignant twin – HIV/AIDS. A map of the drug routes through Central Asia is almost identical to maps that show increases in HIV/AIDS infection: needle – sharing is quite normal, and the level of knowledge about the dangers of infection is minimal.”³⁵ A 2003 report estimated that 55,000-75,000 people in Tajikistan were problem drug users and 80% of them use heroin regularly.³⁶ According to UNAIDS estimates in 2004 5,000 people are infected with HIV.

Another troubling finding from the UN Office on Drugs and Crime is that drug seizures have decreased in recent years in Tajikistan even though estimated drug flows have not decreased. One of the reasons could be that earlier interdiction methods have pushed smaller drug trafficking rings out of the business and consolidated drug trafficking into the hands of powerful organizations which have government protection. Another reason could be that the border guards are involved in trafficking or taking bribes because their monthly pay is on average \$150-\$200 and drug trafficking is a lucrative means to augment their salaries.³⁷

There have been attempts to turn Tajiks away from the drug trade. In Gorno-Badakhshan the population is mostly Ismaili an Islamic sect whose spiritual leader is Aga Khan. In Gorno-Badakhshan, 84% of the population lives below the poverty line.³⁸ Most of the residents rely on aid provided by Aga Khan, who said he would stop sending aid unless the drug traffic halted.³⁹

Summary

³⁵ (Lewis, 2008)

³⁶ (Paoli, Rabkov, Greenfield, & Reuter, 2007) p 963

³⁷ (Demirbuken, et al., 2012) p 72

³⁸ (Demirbuken, Mili, Sassova, Azizi, & Pahtoon, 2012) p 65

³⁹ (Lewis, 2008) p 177

In summary, Tajikistan has experienced numerous problems since declaring its independence in 1991. A civil war ravaged the country during its first five years leaving tens of thousands dead and the economy in shambles. The peace process was marred by revenge killings and political tyranny. Then a war started in its neighboring country leading to serious security concerns as well as the influx of narcotics and its associated problems. However, the war in Afghanistan may have had some positive benefits for Tajikistan. International aid and development was given to Tajikistan which they may not have received if the war had not occurred.

CHAPTER TWO

INTERNATIONAL INTEREST IN TAJIKISTAN

Introduction

Chapter One discussed primarily the domestic challenges Tajikistan faced following independence and some of the problems it had with neighboring states primarily Uzbekistan. Chapter Two discusses international interests in Tajikistan. There are four major powers, Russia, China, Iran and the United States, who have an interest in the future of Tajikistan and also have the ability to influence it. Depending on how these interests interact may have a stabilizing or destabilizing effect in Tajikistan.

Russia Develops the CSTO

When the Soviet Union collapsed, the successor state of Russia felt vulnerable. The country experienced economic, political and security instability. Russia's future was uncertain, would it remain a regional power or would it become marginalized. Looking back at the steps Russia has taken it becomes clear that they want to be a regional power and this includes Central Asia and Tajikistan. Russia's primary concern in Tajikistan is security.

When the Soviet Union collapsed there were three competing ideas on what Russia's relationship with the Central Asian states should be.

The liberal institutionalist view was that Russia should learn to coexist with the newly independent states as equal partners and accept the possibility that Central Asia would become a part of a 'larger Middle East'. Realists, however, argued that the containment of Islam and the stabilization of relations between states of the former Soviet Union (FSU) was conceivable only with great power protection. In this view ideological conflicts had been replaced by geopolitical struggles for spheres of influence. If Russia did not offer some form of direction, the Central Asian buffer zone could eventually comprise an unstable block of hostile states... The centrist formulation of the Russian Council on Defence and Foreign Policy that Russia should pursue an 'enlightened post-imperial integrationist course', eschewing any consideration of coercive re-integration of the post-Soviet states, consequently secured wide support within the policymaking elite.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ (Kanet, Russia Re-Emerging Great Power, 2007) p 153

Yet according to Sergei Gretsky,⁴¹ it would be Tajikistan that would be the catalyst for Russia's famous foreign policy strategy "the Near Abroad Policy."⁴² During the Civil War in Tajikistan hundreds of thousands of refugees, many who were Russians, returned to Russia with stories about how they had been persecuted for their nationality. These stories galvanized the public who demand protection for Russians living abroad. These demands became a political rallying point for Russian nationalists and Communists, who were Yeltsin's political rivals, and who demanded action.

The near abroad policy proclaims the NIS [New Independent States] a zone of Russia's vital interest. It postulates Russia's special responsibility for the protection of NIS borders. These Russia considers to be its own, and it aims to preserve stability in the NIS and to protect the interests of Russians and Russian speakers living in NIS. Less eloquently but more straightforwardly, the essence of this policy was formulated by Konstantin Zatulin, State Duma CIS Committee, who said that "with all respect to the states [NIS], many of them are doomed to become our satellites or die – this is the degree to which I recognized their territorial integrity."⁴³

On December 8, 1991 Russia, Belarus and Ukraine created the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) formally dissolving the Soviet Union. On December 21 the Central Asian States joined. Due to competing interest and the mistrust the Former Soviet states had of Russia's intentions the CIS never accomplished its goals. "Aleksi Arbatov, Russia's leading liberal security analyst, likewise dismissed the CIS as 'an absurd hybrid of NATO, The European Union and the UN, and it is not effective in any of its incarnations.'"⁴⁴ However it did help create the Common Security Treaty.

The Common Security Treaty was signed in 1992. In 2002 the treaty was amended and is now the Common Security Treaty Organization. Current members are Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This organization has had more success in

⁴¹ Sergei Gretzky, a native Belarus, received his PhD in medieval Islam from the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. From 1991 to 1993, he taught at Dushanbe Pedagogical University in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

⁴² (Rubinstein & Smolansky, 1995) p 242

⁴³ (Rubinstein & Smolansky, 1995) p 242

⁴⁴ (Kanet, Russia Re-Emerging Great Power, 2007) p 154

developing common goals in security related matters than previous attempts. Numerous joint training exercises have been conducted fostering military cooperation amongst its members.

The organization also provides a forum for Russia to increase its influence over other nations. The treaty established a joint command center in Moscow and established a rapid reaction force and a military air base in Kyrgyzstan.

In 2005, the CSTO conducted an anti-crime operation called “Channel 2005” in Belarus that seized almost 9 MT of drugs of which 200 kg was heroin. Recently the effectiveness of the CSTO has been brought into question. “The organization failed miserably last summer, [2010] when it was faced with its greatest test to date – the ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan. When President Otunbayeva requested emergency assistance, the CSTO, seemed paralyzed by indecision, dithered and declined to take any action.”⁴⁵

Russia has also positioned itself to possibly play an obstructionist role in Central Asian security through the CSTO. In 2011 CSTO members voted to give Russia the right to veto the establishment of foreign military bases in CSTO states. This could allow Russia to prohibit the United States or other coalition members from establishing a base in Tajikistan when the US hands over security responsibility to Afghan security force and withdraws from Afghanistan in 2014. In 2011 Russia approached Tajikistan with a proposition to allow Russian border guards to return to Tajikistan but so far Tajikistan has denied Russia’s request.⁴⁶

Russia is worried about America’s redeployment from Afghanistan and is considering options for securing Central Asia:

Meanwhile, Russian government sources, mindful of the disastrous decade-long Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, are wary of being drawn into the Afghan conflict again. To hedge against that possibility, they are considering the deployment of a multinational force along the Tajik-Afghan border, an official from the Russian Foreign Ministry in Moscow, speaking on condition of anonymity because he did not have permission to speak to the media, told EurasiaNet.org.

⁴⁵ (Trilling & Tynan, 2011)

⁴⁶ (Parshin, 2011)

“Given the instability of the existing regime in Afghanistan, there could emerge the probability of being drawn into a conflict,” the Foreign Ministry official said. “One option Russia is considering is the development of collaboration among the [Tajik] border guards and a special reaction force of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization [SCO] and ISAF,” he said, referring to the Eurasian security body dominated by Russia and China and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. Russia’s 201st Motorized Division – which most observers estimate has 10,000 troops currently deployed in Tajikistan – would not be involved, the diplomat stressed.⁴⁷

In October 2012, the Russian defense minister and Tajik defense minister signed an agreement allowing the 201st MRD to be based in Tajikistan until 2042. Tajikistan is important to Russia because it has a better relationship with Tajikistan than it does with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. But, in January 2013, Tajikistan refused to ratify the agreement until Russia begins implementing agreements concerning giving Tajik migrant workers preference to work in Russia.⁴⁸ The agreement to extend the contract for Russian basing in Tajikistan was part of a package deal that also included lifting custom duties on 1 million metric tons of Russian petroleum exports to Tajikistan, \$200 million to rearm Tajik military units and investments in hydro-electrical power plants.

Russia’s Drug Problem

The drugs emanating from Afghanistan are causing serious problems in Russia. Heroin addiction is an increasing problem for Russia and is contributing to the degradation of its socio-economic well-being. According to the information provided to the UNODC from the Russian Federal Ministry of Health and Social Development there are 517,389 registered drug addicts in Russia 89 percent of them are opiate abusers.⁴⁹ Unofficial estimates place the number of drug user at 4 million. From 1996 to 2006 the age when people reported first using drugs dropped from 17 to 14. HIV cases have also increased from just over 200,000 in 2002 to nearly 400,000 in 2006. According to the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, “Russia now has a 1 percent HIV

⁴⁷ (Parshin, 2011)

⁴⁸ (Upadhyay, 2013)

⁴⁹ (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008) p 9

prevalence rate among its young people and the fastest growing HIV/AIDS epidemic in the world.”⁵⁰ Drug related crime has also increased from approximately 150,000 in 2004 to 240,000 in 2006. In March 2012 Viktor Ivanov, Director of the Russian Federal Drug Control Service said that over the past five years drug related deaths have fallen 33% for 15-34 although there are an estimated 100,000 drug related deaths in Russia.⁵¹ The high death rate and HIV infection rate is especially troubling considering that Russia has a declining population; estimates predict that Russia’s population could fall from 143 million to 107 million by 2050.⁵²

This declining population forces Russia to depend on migrant labor which makes up 7%-20% of its workforce.⁵³ Thirty percent of Tajikistan’s males are migrant laborers and 98% of them go to Russia for work. This dependence on foreign labor could make Russia economically vulnerable if economic conditions significantly improve in the sending countries. Therefore, Russia could have an incentive to ensure that Tajikistan remain economically underdeveloped. Russia has taken steps to limit Tajikistan’s economic development. Shortly after Rahmon asked Russian border guards to leave the country Russia stopped plans to build the Rogun Hydroelectric Dam, which would have been the third largest hydroelectric dam in the world. The Rogun Dam if completed would have provided 100% of Tajikistan’s electricity and would have allowed Tajikistan to export electricity. Soon after that, the state run Russian Aluminum pulled funding to upgrade Tajikistan’s aluminum smelter in Tursunzade, which was working significantly under its operational capacity due to age. The aluminum smelter provides 10% of Tajikistan’s GDP and 60% of its export revenues.⁵⁴ Withdrawing financial support for projects

⁵⁰ (UN Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008) p 6

⁵¹ (Interfax, 2012)

⁵² (Bryanski, 2012)

⁵³ (Hemmings, 2010) p 12

⁵⁴ (Hemmings, 2010) p 9

in Tajikistan shows that Russia is prepared to use soft power in order to express dissatisfaction and punish Tajikistan for making decisions contrary to Russian goals.

China

Generally, China's main concern with regard to Central Asia and to a lesser extent Tajikistan is in limiting the independence aspirations in Xinjiang. When the Soviet Union collapsed China had border disputes with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. To resolve these issues China proposed developing the Shanghai Five which later evolved into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). As time has passed China has used the SCO to develop economic ventures into Tajikistan. The SCO seems to be slightly more successful than the CSTO in settling disagreements about common interests. With respect to Tajikistan specifically China has made moves towards trying to establish ways to extract Tajikistan's resources which could cause friction with Russia. Also, China has been critical of the US presence in Central Asia through the SCO which could increase disagreements with the US.

In *The New Silk Road Diplomacy* Hassan H. Karrar explains China's thinking about Central Asia when the Soviet Union collapsed.

Beijing was challenged by the emergence of the Central Asian republics because of their proximity to Xinjiang, a Turkic, Muslim-majority region. The Chinese leadership feared that regional instability stemming from the retreat of Soviet power from Central Asia would adversely affect Beijing's authority in Xinjiang. This was because the people of Xinjiang, who shared cultural and ethnic similarities with their neighbors and Central Asian republics, had historically resisted Beijing's efforts at control... Thus, from the beginning, Beijing found itself appealing to the secular central Asian leadership to ensure that émigré dissidents from Xinjiang did not receive encouragement to break free from the People's Republic.⁵⁵

In January 1991, the Chinese Minister of Trade signed commercial agreement with Tajikistan. The hope was that increased trade between Central Asia and Xinjiang would raise standards of living and decrease tensions. During the first years after the collapse of the Soviet Union China was careful to maintain close ties with Russia and to assure Moscow that it did not

⁵⁵ (Karrar, 2009) p 7

want to infringe on Russia's sphere of influence in Central Asia. In 2000 China adopted the Go West program which consisted of significant infrastructure investment and Han colonialization and Uighur repression in Xinjiang.

In 1996, China spearheaded establishing the Shanghai Five. The members were China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The goals of the organization included "troop reduction in the border area, confidence building and creating a broad forum for future regional engagement."⁵⁶ Some of the measures the countries agreed to were: they would notify each other about military exercises occurring within 100km of China's border, troop deployments were limited to 130,400 personnel within 100 km of each other's borders and they made plans to establish a center to combat terrorism⁵⁷ which became operational in Tashkent in 2004. China was also able to settle its border disputes with the Central Asian countries except for Tajikistan by 2000. In June 2001 the Shanghai Five along with Uzbekistan developed the SCO. The goals of the organization were to allow members to coordinate measures to combat separatism, fundamentalism and terrorism as well as to develop economic policies that promote trade.⁵⁸

As time has passed, China has used the SCO to increase the SCO's focus on trade and expand influence:

In December 2004, the SCO had attained observer status at the United Nations. Next in April 2005, the SCO Secretariat signed a memorandum of understanding with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Secretariat in Jakarta. ASEAN and the SCO propose cooperation in combating transnational crime (counterterrorism, drugs and narcotics control, arms smuggling, money laundering, and human trafficking) as well as economic cooperation, tourism, environment and natural resource management, social development, and energy cooperation. Also in April 2005, the SCO Secretariat signed a memorandum of understanding with the CIS executive committee.

Another reason for the increased visibility of the SCO involves the representation of new countries at the annual summit of the heads of state held in Astana, Kazakhstan, on July 5 – 6, 2005. During the 2005 Summit, India, Iran, and Pakistan attended as observer states... The admittance of India,

⁵⁶ (Karrar, 2009) p 79

⁵⁷ (Chung, 2004)p 990

⁵⁸ (Chung, 2004) p 992

Iran, and Pakistan as observers meant that the SCO have brought together some of the most important geopolitical actors in Asia.

The Chinese Tajik Border Dispute

When the Soviet Union collapsed Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan inherited border disputes with China that dated back to 1884. China refused to recognize the original agreement signed by Czarist Russia and the Qing Dynasty claiming that it was unfair. China and the Soviet Union were in negotiations to settle the dispute when the Soviet Union collapsed. Settling the border disputes with the Central Asian countries became an important part of its strategy to secure Xinjiang.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union and the emergence of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as independent republics stoked long-smoldering Uighur nationalism in Xinjiang and fueled Uighur aspirations for independence. This triggered apprehension in Beijing that Xinjiang would break away. Coming close on the heels of the Tiananmen uprising of 1989, which had undermined the Chinese government's legitimacy, the separatist violence in Xinjiang compounded Chinese regime insecurity, as it posed a threat to China's territorial integrity. This made it imperative for Beijing to nip Uighur unrest in the bud.⁵⁹

In 1996 China settled its dispute with Kyrgyzstan accepting 22% of the disputed territory and in 1998 it settled with Kazakhstan for 32% of the disputed territory. In exchange for accepting a relatively small amount of the disputed territory China received agreements with these countries that they would return Uighur activists living in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

There were three border disputes between China and Tajikistan. Efforts to settle the border disagreements with Tajikistan were delayed because of the civil war. They began negotiations in 2002 and reached an agreement in 2010. The Tajikistan parliament signed the agreement into law in January 2011. Under the agreement Tajikistan ceded approximately 1100 sq. km of land to China this equates to 1% of Tajikistan's land area. China had claimed 28,000 sq. km of land. The area that Tajikistan ceded is known to be rich in gold deposits as well as uranium, nickel and mercury. The area also has salt and fresh water reserves.

⁵⁹ (Ramachandra, 2011)

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union China has become Tajikistan's second largest trade partner. China is investing billions of dollars in infrastructure projects including road and tunnel construction and hydroelectric dam projects. Shortly after the two countries reached an agreement concerning the border, Rahmon announced that he had signed an agreement allowing 82,000 Chinese farmers to come to Tajikistan to grow rice. This decision was largely unpopular because only 6%-7% of Tajikistan's land is arable and Tajikistan has 1 million migrant workers because unemployment in Tajikistan is so high. These two decisions have increased internal opposition and could lead to domestic problems in the future.

Iran

Ethnic Tajiks are closely related to Persians and, therefore, Tajikistan and Iran share a cultural heritage although religiously Tajiks are primarily Sunni while Iranians are Shia. Since Tajikistan became independent Iran has had conflicting relations with Tajikistan. During the civil war Iran supported the Islamic Renaissance Party, but after Uzbekistan and Russia decided to support the Rahmon government Iran withdrew its support for the opposition and encouraged and facilitated peace talks between the factions. After the civil war Iran became one of Tajikistan's biggest foreign investors.

After coming to power in Tajikistan, Nabiev's first international visit was to Iran in 1992.

Among the variety of protocols signed by the two countries, the cultural agreements were the most extensive and far-reaching. These included cooperation in the areas of language, publication of Persian education books for Tajik schools, student exchanges, scholarships, book exhibitions, and rebroadcasting of Iran's television programs. In his report to the Tajiks Supreme Soviet after his visit to Iran, Nabiev was very particular about the cultural emphasis in the shaping of relations with Iran, with which "until the 15th century we lived in a single state." In an interview with *Narodnaia gazeta*, Nabiev characterized Iran and Tajikistan as two countries closely linked "by hundreds of threads of joint history and culture, unity of language and literature..."⁶⁰

The Tajik civil war placed a difficult burden on Iran. On the one hand they could support the United Tajik Opposition and thus their ideological interests or on the other hand advocate for

⁶⁰ (Rubinstein & Smolansky, 1995) p 122

peace and place their strategic interest as a priority. In order to understand the dilemma one must understand Iran's foreign policy strategy. Prior to the Iranian Revolution in 1979, Iran's biggest political rival was the Soviet Union and their biggest fear was the encroachment of the Soviet Union into their territory, thus Iran forged diplomatic ties with the West positioning itself as a buffer state between Western concerns and Soviet concerns. The Iranian Revolution was marked by anti-Western sentiments and when Ayatollah Khomeini came to power Iran became more isolationist. Then three events occurred which made Iran seek out foreign help and they turned to Russia for support.⁶¹ First the Iran-Iraq War left the country destroyed and Iran needed financial help to rebuild. Then Operation Desert Storm happened bringing the US right to its border which was quickly followed by the Afghan Civil War. The war in Afghanistan made Iran think that they could be encircled and isolated.

Although there is little actual evidence of Iranian involvement in Tajikistan's civil war there are numerous credible rumors. In October 1992 the Iranian Embassy was staffed with 21 official diplomats and 50 unofficial diplomats; there were six other embassies in Dushanbe at that time with a combined staff of 20.⁶² Russian intelligence estimated that Iran funneled \$3-\$4 million to the Islamic Renaissance Party. But, according to Russian Foreign Minister, Andrey Kozyrev, by the end of 1992 all support from Iran had stopped in Tajikistan⁶³ but Iran continued to provide aid to Tajik refugees in Afghanistan. After the attacks on the Russian border outpost that killed 25 Russians Moscow redoubled efforts to encourage peace talks and they asked Iran to help. Iran decided to help negotiate peace because they wanted a closer relationship with Russia, they saw the futility of supporting a losing side, and because they were concerned about

⁶¹ (Allison & Jonson, 2001) p 172

⁶² (Parker, 2009) p 70

⁶³ (Parker, 2009) p 81

American intervention. During the peace talks Iran ensured that the Islamic Renaissance Party would be allowed to participate in government.

After the civil war Iran has provided Tajikistan with humanitarian and economic aid development. In 2008 Iran provided Tajikistan 4,000 tons of fuel when Tajikistan was experiencing an energy crisis.⁶⁴ In December 2009 Tajik President Rahmon said, "We assume all-out cooperation with Iran as a priority for ourselves and actually view Iran as the closest country to us."⁶⁵ In 2011 an Iranian company signed an agreement to build a \$500 million cement plant in Tajikistan.⁶⁶ Iran has also invested in the Sangtuda-2 Hydro Power Plant and plans to invest in three more hydropower projects. In 2010 Iran was the biggest investor in Tajikistan contributing \$65.5 million. In January 2012 in celebration of the 20th anniversary of diplomatic relations with Iran Rahmon sent a telegram to Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad which said, "'After the Republic of Tajikistan acquired sovereignty, our friendly countries, having established diplomatic relations, started developing a fundamentally new form of bilateral relationship. The 20-year path in this direction confirms the truth that both countries are natural partners united by the rich common history.'"⁶⁷

However, Iran and Tajikistan have had diplomatic disagreements.

Last fall, after President Imomali Rahmon voiced concern that young people studying Islam "fall under the influence of extremists and turn into enemies," his government ordered home some 1,400 students studying in the Middle East, including approximately 200 who had been in Iran. Officials later cited "technical problems" behind a decision to prevent a group of teachers from traveling to Tehran to learn the Persian alphabet. And in December, officials yanked 90 Tajik children out of a school run by the Iranian embassy in Dushanbe.⁶⁸

After these incidents Iran canceled several diplomatic visits. There are other areas Tajikistan and Iran have disagreed over. Tajik Air reduced the number of flights between

⁶⁴ (BBC, 2008)

⁶⁵ (Asia News Monitor, 2009)

⁶⁶ (Anonymous, 2011)

⁶⁷ (Interfax-America Inc., 2012)

⁶⁸ (Eurasianet, 2011)

Dushanbe and Tehran leading Iran to express concern. Also, Iran wanted to broadcast Persian television to Tajikistan but the Tajik government has stalled equipment installation.

United States

The United States began military cooperation with Central Asia in the mid-90s when NATO began offering Partnership for Peace Plans. Tajikistan was the last Central Asian country to accept in 2002. Western engagement with Tajikistan was delayed because of the civil war; however after the attacks on September 11, 2001 Central Asia and Tajikistan became a primary focus. Tajikistan offered to host US forces in October 2001. The United States has been providing significant military and social support to Tajikistan.

In January 2001 the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense visited Dushanbe and established bilateral ties between the US and Tajikistan. After September 11, 2001 the US was able to use the airport in Dushanbe to refuel transport airplanes and Tajikistan allowed US Special Forces to establish a base on its southern border for operations into Afghanistan.⁶⁹

At a conference in March 2013 Frank Huddle, a former Ambassador to Tajikistan said that American involvement in Tajikistan was originally going to be much greater.

“Rumsfeld had come to Tajikistan, he'd had orders from the president to get a base in Tajikistan. I sat in in the meeting and translated, in fact [for part of the meeting]. That base was then given to them, and the Tajik government asked the Russians to leave, which was a big deal. Well, then Rumsfeld changed his mind and decided to use Kyrgyzstan instead, just as the base was all ready to open, trains were coming to bring ammunition. That was Christmas Eve. So Christmas Day, I had to go in and tell President Rahmon what was not a very nice piece of news. The Tajik government, to their credit, took it like a man and didn't say anything about it and kept the relationship going.⁷⁰

A year later, President Rahmon came to the White House for an official visit. Rumsfeld asked Huddle if there was anything that he could do to make up for changing his mind at the last minute and Huddle responded that the US should contribute funds to build a bridge at Nizhny

⁶⁹ (Goldstein, 2002)

⁷⁰ (Kucera, 2013)

Pyanj, which opened in 2009. This bridge has become an important piece of the Northern Distribution Network facilitating trade through Tajikistan to Afghanistan. Critics of the bridge claim that the bridge also facilitates drug trafficking.

Drug trafficking presents a difficult foreign policy problem for the US.

Despite the public nature of the drug trade and related corruption in Tajikistan, however, the West has done relatively little to pressure President Rahmon.

Some Western officials acknowledge that it's the result of a political tradeoff: No one wants to risk alienating Rahmon on the issue of drug corruption because his authoritarian regime's cooperation is important for preventing Islamic militants from using the Tajik-Afghan border as a sanctuary.

"The Americans want to have a logistics base here, so do you think they're going to pressure the government about corruption?" said William Lawrence, a chief adviser for a U.N. Afghan border-management program based in Dushanbe. "The answer is no."

The U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe declined to comment, but a State Department official said that such balancing acts were common.

"There is always going to be a tradeoff based on different foreign-policy objectives, different security objectives, the tolerance for different types of corruption, different levels of corruption," said the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of diplomatic protocol. "I don't think the situation in Tajikistan, frankly, is that much different than the rest of Central Asia in terms of these types of tradeoffs."

A second Western diplomat in Dushanbe was more blunt about Western governments ignoring reports on Tajikistan's official complicity in drug corruption.

"We send reports every month to our capitals, very negative, but they don't (care)," said the diplomat, whose country has troops in Afghanistan. "Because it's a so-called stable country leading to Afghanistan, we accept it."⁷¹

According to a CENTCOM press release military assistance provided to Tajikistan includes...

- Constructing a National Training Center which will include an English language laboratory
- Building border outposts
- Increasing military-to-military cooperation through the Virginia National Guard, Tajikistan's US National Guard partner

⁷¹ (Lasseter, 2009)

- Creating a Peacekeeping Operations Battalion capable to deploy in support of UN Peacekeeping Operations
- Continuing to assist Tajikistan with demining operations which included purchasing a \$1.6 million “Mini-Minewolf” mechanical demining machine. Tajikistan has 600 known minefields with 240,000 mines

The US Department of State coordinated programs aimed to improve Tajikistan’s economy by focusing on agricultural development and clean water initiatives.⁷² The State Department assisted the Tajik government with transferring communal services to local enterprises. The US Department of State also provided assistance to legal aid centers that represented 89 clients in land disputes. In addition, the US Department of State worked with local NGOs to distribute medicine medical supplies and non-medical assistance.

Tajikistan is also working with NATO to destroy dangerous surplus munitions.⁷³ Following the civil in Tajikistan tens of thousands of tons of munitions were left abandoned and unguarded throughout Tajikistan. These munitions pose a serious threat to people because they degrade over time. Alexander Griffiths, a demining and munitions expert from the NGO Swiss Foundation for Mine Action, explains the dangerous conditions in which munitions are stored, “The storage locations are often dilapidated without enough room, where munitions that should not be together lay side by side. Most storage sites are just warehouses, poorly maintained and insecure.” Another danger is that fire could ignite the munitions given Tajikistan’s hot summer months. The United Kingdom, Japan and Switzerland are funding efforts to clean up the munitions. When sufficient funds are collected NATO will recruit and train personnel from Tajikistan’s military to conduct the clean-up.

⁷² (US Department of State, 2012)

⁷³ (NATO, 2012)

One of the biggest contributions United States has made to Tajikistan is the development of the Northern Distribution Network. The Northern distribution network is a series of seaways, roads and railways that form a transportation network from Afghanistan to the Baltic Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Black Sea, the Caspian Sea, and the Arabian Sea. Most of the routes into Afghanistan terminate in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The southern route through Pakistan has become increasingly dangerous and military strategists began shipping 75% of Afghan bound cargo over the NDN by the end of 2011. The coalition forces will pay transit fees to countries located on the Northern Distribution Network and are currently in negotiations with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan concerning the movement of equipment. Currently, the US Department of Defense pays \$500 million to Central Asian states.⁷⁴ If the Northern distribution network continues to be upgraded after the draw down it will become an increasingly vital link for Tajikistan's trade since Tajikistan is a landlocked country.

Tajikistan's position at the crossroads of Central Asia connecting the state with the major seaports of the Indian Ocean, with China's Karakorum highway, with Iran, and through Iran with the states of Persian Gulf is of a great importance to the state's economy. Opening new avenues of transit through Afghanistan will give Tajikistan an opportunity to move out of its geopolitical cul-de-sac and transform the state into a territory for commercial transit into neighboring states resulting in considerable geopolitical and economic benefits to the country.⁷⁵

There are dangers associated with relying on the Northern Distribution Network. First Uzbek-Tajik relations have been strained since independence and Uzbekistan has periodically closed the border with Tajikistan. Also, Russia could try to use its influence within Tajikistan to limit transportation of goods. Nevertheless, the future prospects of the Northern Distribution Route and its eventual transformation to an economic distribution network are promising.

Summary

⁷⁴ (Tynan, 2012)

⁷⁵ (Kuchins, et al., 2010) p 8-9

There are four major powers operating in Tajikistan: Russia, China, Iran and the United States. Each is pursuing a different tactic to gain influence in the country. The main Russian interest is to maintain Tajikistan under its sphere of influence in order to maintain itself as a military power in the region. Russia uses threats against Tajikistan's migrant workers to illicit compromises from Tajikistan. China and Iran are using economic aid and development to garner favor with Tajikistan and to develop a foothold in the country. The United States is investing heavily in building Tajikistan's military and security capabilities while at the same time funding projects to upgrade its infrastructure.

Each power is also using different tactics in its relations with Tajikistan. Russia and China are both trying to maintain relations through international organizations, Russia by using the CSTO and China by using the SCO. On the other hand America and Iran are developing ties on a bilateral basis. The United States does have some influence through NATO's Partnership for Peace Program but Tajikistan's degree of involvement in this is an individual decision and does not have the same demands that the CSTO and SCO have.

At the same time Tajikistan has proven itself to be rather adept at playing the power of one another in order to maintain its autonomy. It seems that each time one of the powers tries to impose too much of its will on Tajikistan the government increases negotiations with one of the other powers. This has ensured that since September 11, 2001 no single power has tried to unilaterally assert its will on Tajikistan. In fact, Robert O. Blake Jr., Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia commented that "Far from being a 'Great Game' in Afghanistan and in Central Asia, there is more of a great gain. There is space for all of us to benefit, and there is space for all of us to have a role."⁷⁶

⁷⁶ (Brooke, 2013)

CHAPTER THREE

PREDICTIONS AFTER THE AFGHANISTAN DRAWDOWN

Introduction

Part Three presents current security trends in Tajikistan and recent government policies and using theories on international and domestic conflict makes predictions for the possibility of conflict in Tajikistan following the troop reductions in Afghanistan. Essentially there are three possible outcomes for Tajikistan's future. Most likely, Tajikistan will continue on its current course and the status quo will remain. Tajikistan could experience significant internal conflict brought about by either a democratic or Islamic revolution. Finally, Tajikistan could find itself fighting an international war with one of its neighboring countries.

The predictions in this section are based on an assumption that the troop will reductions in Afghanistan will create a change in the balance of power. The reason for this assumption is based on events that occurred throughout North Africa and the Middle East commonly referred to as the Arab Spring. The Arab Spring began on December 29, 2010 when Mohamed Bouazizi set fire to himself sparking riots in Tunisia. Eventually, protests spread throughout the Middle East and North Africa leading to regime changes, civil war, and violent government repressions. Revolutionaries in each country had their own reasons for protesting their governments. The events coincided with the withdrawal of troops from Iraq which was completed in May 2011.

Admittedly, the start of the Arab Spring and the withdrawal of troops from Iraq could be coincidental. However, the withdrawal of troops could have changed the balance of power in the region and provided an impetus for revolutionaries to demand change. Also, although Iraq had numerous problems in 2010, significant coalition investment rebuilt the country and Iraq had conducted several free elections. Seeing the moderate progress in Iraq could also have inspired

the Arab Spring. It is also telling that Western countries did not provide military ground forces in support of either the government or rebels. NATO did establish a no-fly-zone in Libya and the US conducted drone attacks in Yemen and other countries against known terrorists.

The troop reduction in Afghanistan will not consist of a total withdrawal of all coalition troops. There will be perhaps as many as 20,000 soldiers remaining in Afghanistan who will serve as trainers and mentors to Afghan security forces.⁷⁷ Another assumption the predictions in this section require is that these soldiers will not conduct military operations specifically in Tajikistan.

Status Quo Remains in Tajikistan

In the short term, the most likely scenario for Tajikistan's future is that the status quo will remain in effect. That is that Rahmon will remain in power and there will be periodic uprisings that do not threaten the stability of the government. Tajikistan is holding presidential elections in November 2013. Based on the presidential election in 2006 it is highly probable that Rahmon will stay in power. There are several reasons to believe that Tajikistan will remain relatively unchanged in the future.

First, Tajikistan lacks a revolutionary base. Current estimates place the number of Tajik migrant workers around 1 million.⁷⁸ The majority of these are young males who go to Russia to work in construction. Typically young males are the demographic who participate in revolutions. Without this demographic it is unlikely that revolution can occur.

It is true that the majority of labor migrants choose to leave the country for economic reasons and are unconcerned about politics. Even so, outmigration sustains the political status quo. Migration weakens the tie citizens have to their home country, as they only come back for a short term and thus are less likely to become vocal. With [so many people] permanently out of the country, the government does not need to improve its performance because it is aware that, from the labor migrants' perspective, migrating is less costly than voicing criticism. [Also,] the mobility is bad for opposition parties' mobilization efforts.

⁷⁷ (Starr, 2013)

⁷⁸ (Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 2012)

As long as outmigration remains an option for Tajikistanis, the brutal political and economic status quo will be sustained. Of course things can change if opposition parties became more active and find innovative solutions to change the status quo through constitutional means. In a nutshell, the government survives largely because of the outmigration, which is considered by Western policy analysts to be a defining feature of all that is wrong with Tajikistan's economy and which potentially imperils its stability. ... The government of Tajikistan will enjoy a safe ride into the future as long as the possibility of exiting the country is available for the average Tajikistani.⁷⁹

Second, Rahmon is able to block criticism. Since becoming president Rahmon has eliminated most rivals. In December 2012 he blocked more than 100 websites which he viewed as critical.⁸⁰ The websites included Russian social media sites, Facebook, Russian and Tajik news sites and a Ukrainian soccer site. Facebook was subsequently turned back on after the US and some EU countries complained. He also passed a series of laws targeting Islamic opposition in Tajikistan.⁸¹ The laws allow the State Committee for National Security to confiscate the property of suspected members of banned Islamic groups and to impose fines on citizens who get a religious education abroad.

Third, Rahmon must be taking care of his support base. He has been in power since 1992; this demonstrates that he is capable of understanding Tajik politics. This also shows that there are enough people in the government who are satisfied with the way he governs. Clearly Rahmon understands who his political supporters are and he is able to coerce them into supporting him through fear or payment.

Finally, Rahmon has the approval of Russia, China, and the US. Putin's last election win was marred by allegations of election impropriety so it is doubtful Russia will lodge a complaint if Tajik elections are similarly thought to be improper. Tajikistan has also been one of Russia's closest allies in Central Asia. Despite the fact that Russian border guards left the country in 2005, Russia still maintains its largest deployed force in Tajikistan- the 201st MRD numbering

⁷⁹ (Eurasianet, 2012)

⁸⁰ (Reuters, 2012)

⁸¹ (Vinson, 2012)

approximately 10,000 soldiers and housed in three bases. China seems willing to work with Rahmon because they use state repression in Xinjiang. Finally, although the US may voice concern in the UN or similar international body as long as it needs Tajikistan infrastructure it has shown its willingness to look the other way. There is also speculation that the US may set up a logistical base in Tajikistan following the troop reduction in Afghanistan. The presence of Western troops on Tajik soil could have a pacifying effect on the population, because of the economic benefits that comes from soldiers spending money in the local economy.

Internal Conflict

In the near-term the possibility of internal conflict could increase in Tajikistan. This could take the form of democratic revolution or Islamic revolution. In order to explain the potential of each it is necessary to understand Ted Gurr's theory about the origins of and potential for internal conflict.

First, Ted Gurr explained that men rebel because of relative deprivation.⁸²

Relative deprivation is defined as a perceived discrepancy between men's value expectations and their value capabilities. Value expectations are the goods in conditions of life to which people believe they are rightfully entitled. Value capabilities are the goods and conditions they think they are capable of attaining or maintaining, given the social means available to them.⁸³

In other words men rebel because there is a flaw within the state that prevents them from getting what they know that they are capable of earning and they feel that they are capable of changing the system. Things that a population may want could be human rights or access to resources. Depending on the degree to which society feels relatively deprived will determine the way in which they voice their opposition. Gurr identifies three forms of political violence, they are: turmoil which is spontaneous and unorganized, such as strikes, riots and localized rebellions;

⁸² (Gurr, 1970)

⁸³ (Gurr, 1970) p 13

conspiracy which is organized but has limited participation and includes terrorism and guerilla wars; and internal war which is organized and wide spread and includes civil wars.

Tajikistan has experienced recent surges of “conspiracy” recently. From August-November 2010, a series of violent attacks occurred in Tajikistan.⁸⁴ On August 22, 26 prisoners escaped from a top-security prison in Dushanbe killing 5 guards. The escapees included 15 citizens of Tajiks, five Russians, four Afghans, and 2 Tajiks. On September 3, suicide bombers detonated a car bomb in Khujand. On September 19, 26 Tajik soldiers were killed in an ambush. On October 6, twenty-seven soldiers were killed in a helicopter crash that the Islamic Movement Uzbekistan claimed they shot down. In early November, a woman, who the government said was the widow of an Islamic Movement in Uzbekistan commander killed in 2006, blew herself up when police tried to arrest her. The motivation to oppose the government could come from the economic neglect of the Rasht Valley and the fact that the government has resorted to press-ganging in order to fill the ranks in its military. By the end of November the government announced that the violence was subdued. However, arrests continued throughout 2011. Abdukodir Muhamadiyev, the deputy prosecutor general reported that 200 members of extremist organizations had been arrested nationwide in 2011.⁸⁵

The growing dissatisfaction with the Tajikistan government was illustrated in a 2010 BBC article titled *Tajikistan Youth turn to Radical Islam*. In the article ‘Bahrom’ a 34 year-old Tajik who was convicted and sentenced to 5 year imprisonment for belonging to Hizb-ut-Tahir is interviewed. He says, ““If you want to go to university, you have to bribe teachers to get a place. If you have a diploma and want to get a job, again, you need to pay corrupt officials. Corruption is everywhere.” As a result, many young people are turning to Islam as an alternative to the

⁸⁴ (Kucera, Violence in Tajikistan, 2010)

⁸⁵ (Vinson, Tajikistan Cracks Down on Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, 2012)

hardline tactics used by the government. ‘Bohrom’ says, “More and more people are coming to join our cause. If they arrest one of us, four new people will join. It will never stop.”

[Hizb-ut-Tahir calls] for the reestablishment of an Islamic Caliphate that would unite all Muslims regardless of national, regional, tribal or clan differences. Its propaganda is vehement in its denunciation of the West and rejection of Arab regimes not properly honoring Islamic heritage. It claims to support only nonviolent methods but is not against revolutionary struggles conducted by other groups that already exists and to involve violence... its nonviolence pledge is most certainly countered by the tacit support a gives of others violence.⁸⁶

The government may be correct in identifying most of the banned organizations as threats to the state. However, the continued repression of its citizens’ civil rights seems to be having unintended consequences. As the government represses freedom of religion it forces people to form clandestine and underground networks. Many of organizations are able to tap into people’s feelings of relative deprivation and turn them against the government. It is possible that people will begin to demand a change in government and the possibility for internal war to increase. Other analysts disregard an Islamic threat arguing that the government in Tajikistan blames radical Islam even though its problem are local and not religiously affiliated in order to get international military aid and equipment.⁸⁷

In July 2012, fighting started between government forces and militants in Gorno-Badakhshan.⁸⁸ The impetus for the fighting seems to have been the assassination of GKNB General Abdullo Nazarov by Tolib Ayombekov, a border post commander and suspected narcotics smuggler. The fighting caused the death of 30 militants, 12 government soldiers and 30 civilians. There were unconfirmed reports that government snipers were shooting people not involved in the fighting. Gorno-Badakhshan is the least populated region in Tajikistan. During the winter many areas are completely isolated when the roads freeze and many residents

⁸⁶ (Crosston, 2006) p 148

⁸⁷ (Bleuer, 2012)

⁸⁸ (Eurasianet, 2012)

complain about their under-representation in the government. It also has the highest poverty rates in the entire former Soviet Union.⁸⁹

Political analysts suspect the government's response to the murder was a masked attempt at consolidating authority over a mountainous region that has remained largely beyond central control since Tajikistan gained independence following the 1991 Soviet collapse. Sharing a long border with Afghanistan, Gorno-Badakhshan also is a well-known drug-trafficking route, and turf wars are hard to rule out.

Ceasefire negotiations in the days after the July 24 fighting in and around Khorog included a disarmament drive, with the government saying it collected hundreds of small and medium arms. Ayombekov surrendered himself to authorities on August 12. "But if they wanted me and my brother, why didn't they just come and arrest us?" he said. "After the offensive I was wounded and at home, and the government knew this. We never resisted arrest."

There are also economic feelings of relative deprivation within Tajikistan. First, the standard of living does not reflect the mineral resources available in Tajikistan. Around 50% of the Tajik population lives at or below the poverty line. The average salary in Tajikistan is around \$43/month. In July 2012, Tethys stated that Tajikistan could have 27 billion barrels of recoverable oil equivalent, and 3.2 trillion cubic meters of gas.⁹⁰ The find could be worth \$1 trillion.

Compounding the sense of relative depravity is that nearly 50% of Tajikistan's GDP is made up of remittances sent by approximately 1 million migrant workers who are exposed to degradation and discrimination in Russia. According to a recent news article, "In 2012 1,055 Tajik workers died in Russia, according to Tajikistan's Ministry of Internal Affairs. That's up from 884 in 2011."⁹¹ Hilary Hemmings explains some of the hardships migrant workers face in Russia:

Besides unsafe working conditions and lowered pay, another reality that factors negatively into the daily lives of migrant workers is their interaction with the Russian public. Russia has made its hostility toward migrant laborers no secret, ranging from general disdain to outright violence. On May 26, 2009, a Tajik immigrant was stabbed to death on a bus by two Russian men... Negative stereotypes of Tajik migrant workers are pervasive in Russia, especially in Moscow. A total of

⁸⁹ (Eurasianet, 2012)

⁹⁰ (Parshin, Tajikistan: Just How Much Energy Does Dushanbe Have?, 2013)

⁹¹ (Keevil, 2013)

47% of Russians believe that migrant spread crime and disease (particularly AIDS) and 60% see them as a wellspring for terrorist groups.

There are other reports of Tajik migrant labor abuses in Russia. January 26, 2006, Iskanar Saidov was allegedly beaten to death by a police officer in Moscow.⁹² On February 6, nine Tajiks died in a fire at a vegetable warehouse. On February 8, four Tajiks died in a fire at a construction site. On February 23, seven died when a roof collapsed in a market in Moscow. Human Rights Watch says that employers often fail to pay, delay payments, or reduce pay to Tajik migrant workers.⁹³

One other development that shows the government's mismanagement of the economy is that in January 2013 Rahmon signed a bill into law which imposes mandatory retirement at age 63 for men and 58 for women.⁹⁴ The bill relates to all government employees including teachers, who earn \$70/month, doctors, who earn \$200/month and secretaries, who earn \$100-\$150/month. The pensions that the retirees will receive are substantially smaller than their pay averaging \$32/month. Also, corruption is an acceptable way to augment salaries in Tajikistan so retirees will lose this income also. This decision could cause problems in the future because it creates a new class of disaffected people who have an education and leadership skills and could organize protests against the government.

Given the deplorable working conditions in Russia, the lack of economic opportunity in Tajikistan and the influx Chinese farmers it is possible that people could begin to demand more from the government. It is possible that the economic aid and development from Iran and China as well as Russia's recent promise to improve conditions for Tajik migrant labor could alleviate some of the tensions the population feels. However, given Rahmon's past actions and the lack of

⁹² (Eurasianet.org, 2006)

⁹³ (Camm, 2013)

⁹⁴ (Parshin, Tajikistan: Executive Order Disregards Collective Wisdom , 2013)

economic freedoms in Tajikistan it is unlikely that the money foreign investment brings into the country will make it to the general population.

Clearly there are examples supporting relative deprivation in Tajikistan which could lead the country to experience greater instances of political turmoil in the future. Many in Tajikistan are turning to religious organizations as an outlet for their grievances but some of these are exploiting these feelings and advocating the overthrow of the government. In general, religion has not played a galvanizing role in Tajikistan due to its history of being part of the Soviet Union which suppressed religion and chose religious leaders. Also, many in Tajikistan blame the Islamic Renaissance Party for the civil war. But, as many young people who do not remember the civil war become adults, they are increasingly embracing Islam as part of their culture. These facts point to conditions that are forming which could lead to an Islamic revolution. At the same time economic conditions in Tajikistan are so dire that people may be encouraged to demonstrate in order to improve their access to capital.

If Tajiks begin to demonstrate will the Russians intervene? If past events are indications of future actions then the answer is no. There have been numerous instances of social upheaval throughout Central Asia in the past decade. In 2010 ethnic clashes erupted in Osh, Kyrgyzstan between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek communities. The fighting took place in June 10-15, hundreds were killed and hundreds of thousands were displaced. “On June 12, the head of the Kyrgyz interim government, Roza Otunbayeva, described the situation in Osh as ‘out of control’ and made an appeal to Russia to send troops to help restore order.”⁹⁵ Russia did not send help saying that the violence was an internal conflict and they could only respond in accordance with the UN Charter and after consulting with the CSTO. Also, Russian forces did not participate in the 2010 or 2012 clashes that occurred in Tajikistan. However, after the troop withdrawal in 2014 it is

⁹⁵ (Tynan, Russia Turns Down Kyrgyzstan's Plea for Military Support, 2010)

conceivable that Russia could consider military intervention in Central Asia in order to maintain order in the region. If Russia chooses to intervene they may do so in order to maintain Central Asia as a buffer zone between Russia and the radical elements operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

International War

Analysts have predicted the possibility that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan could go to war with each other since 2010.⁹⁶ They point to the differences of opinion over water rights, threats of terrorism, unresolved border demarcation and Uzbekistan's blockade of rail traffic and gas shipments to Tajikistan as reasons the two countries may go to war. But these are merely disagreements and disagreements do not cause wars they are excuses for them. The probability for war is the most unlikely future for Tajikistan but there is a chance that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan could go to war near the end of the decade.

In *The Causes of War* Geoffrey Blainey wrote that wars are caused when states disagreed over their relative power. As things stand now, there is not a disagreement over which state is more powerful. Uzbekistan is the stronger state. It has a larger population, a bigger economy, a bigger military and controls the main route for Tajikistan's imports giving Uzbekistan the ability to cut off Tajikistan's supplies. Also, the issues that some analysts point to for war are currently in limbo. Uzbekistan emplaced numerous minefields along the border between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Although this is a temporary and sub-optimal solution, it does decrease tensions concerning the border and the possibility for insurgents to cross the border without having to go through Uzbek border posts.

⁹⁶ see (Parshin K. , 2010) (Arbour, 2011)

But, recent developments might shift relative power into Tajikistan's favor. First, Tajikistan has been working extensively with China to build new roads in the north east and with Iran to build hydroelectric dams which increase Tajikistan's domestic power and reduce its dependency on oil imports. Second, if the recently announced oil reserve discovery happens to be true and Tajikistan can find foreign investors to extract the resources Tajikistan will not have to worry about oil imports at all. Third, Tajikistan is working with Iran to determine the feasibility and cost of building a road from Iran through Afghanistan and Tajikistan and into China, the plans are also considering including an oil pipeline which can deliver oil to Tajikistan and water pipeline to deliver water to Iran. This will increase Tajikistan's autonomy and reduce its dependence on Uzbekistan for transportation. If Uzbekistan perceives Tajikistan's development as a threat, Uzbekistan may consider conducting a preemptive war in order to keep Tajikistan's power relatively less than Uzbekistan's. But given the range of compromises on these issues this course of action seems unlikely.

Consider the disagreement over the construction of the Rogun Hydroelectric Dam. First, the plan was conceived and ground was broken in 1961. There are numerous problems with the concept of the dam which is why it has taken so long to build, primarily cost. The project has been started and abandoned several times. Most recently, Tajikistan and Iran were raising funds and preparing to purchase supplies but the World Bank stopped them in 2012. The World Bank was concerned about building the third largest dam in the world in one of the most seismically active areas on earth. As long as the plans are on hold Uzbekistan's concerns over water should be alleviated.

Even if the dam gets built in the future, Uzbekistan's actions towards Tajikistan do not seem logical because there are a range of compromises that each country should be able to agree

to. For instance, the countries could share operations of the dam if Uzbekistan invests in it; the countries could pay an outside actor, such as a private contractor, to operate the dam; or Tajikistan could place a deposit for future potential damages in an account managed by a disinterested third party. Clearly the disagreement over the dam does not present a convincing argument for war.

Similarly, the argument over Uzbekistan's blockade of Tajikistan is unlikely to lead to war. First, Tajikistan is developing alternative routes to bypass Uzbekistan. Secondly, if Tajikistan decided to use force to end the blockade the Uzbeks could continue the blockade all the way back to the starting point in Uzbekistan. It is unlikely that the Tajik armed forces could continue to press an attack far across their own borders. Next, if Tajikistan decided to fight a limited war and ask for a third party intervention the most likely respondent would be Russia who would probably demand some form of payment that would be more costly than not fighting in the first place.

Tajikistan could ally with Iran to conduct a military operation against Uzbekistan. Iran's national interest in Tajikistan seems to be developing trade with routes to China and Uzbekistan's interference on the existing rail system interferes with these goals. An Iran-Tajikistan alliance could improve the chances for military operations against Uzbekistan in theory but is unlikely to occur in reality. Nevertheless the Iranian ambassador to Dushanbe said this in April 2012...

We believe the issues between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are something between them, so we try not to meddle. However, there are times when we feel Uzbekistan's attempts to interfere in Tajik affairs are somehow related to Iran too. In such cases *we decide how to respond based on our strategic and national interests.*

For instance, Uzbekistan has been strongly against our proposed 150-megawatt Ayni hydropower plant on Tajikistan's Zerafshan River. We studied the regional problems and positive effects that it could have for Tajikistan, and we pondered the studies that have been done proving the dam will have no adverse effect on Uzbekistan. And we made our decision independently and signed a

contract saying that, after we finish building the \$220 million, 220-megawatt Sangtuda-2 hydropower plant, we will start building Ayni.

Another example: sometimes Uzbekistan's border guards prevent the traffic of Iranian trucks passing [en route to Tajikistan]. We try to solve these problems; however, when these remain unsolved, we pursue our strategic and national interests, *which sometimes Uzbekistan may not like*. [Emphasis mine]

It is unlikely that Iran would try to engage in a military confrontation with Uzbekistan because Russia's response would be unknown. Russia and Uzbekistan signed a mutual security defense pact 2005. According to Eurasianet.org, "Under the mutual defense treaty, Tashkent and Moscow pledge to 'build and develop allied relations on a long-term basis.' The pact's central provision calls for both sides to have access to each other's military installations and facilities. It also states that "an act of aggression against one side will be considered as aggression against both sides.'"⁹⁷

Mitigation Factors

Developing solutions to help Tajikistan is sometimes comes down to selecting the lesser of two evils. If drugs are targeted the economy could be negatively affected. If you try to reduce migrant labor more young males stay in the society which could have a destabilizing effect by increasing the demographic most likely to stage a revolution. If you improve migrant labor conditions you encourage people to leave and wives and children are potentially abandoned.

Consider a case study presented in *Do No Harm How Aid can Support Peace or War*. Save the children Federation was one of the first NGOs to arrive in Tajikistan in spring 1994. By autumn they had 50 staff members working in Tajikistan most were located in Khatlon Province the area that received the most destruction during the war. Save the children foundation decided that they could best help facilitate reconstruction efforts by establishing a food for work program to rebuild destroyed houses. They hired 40 local national staff members

⁹⁷ (Blagov, 2005)

who visited villages to conduct surveys of the damage. Once the surveys were completed the staff members worked with village leaders to set up 10 to 12 person working brigades.

Initially the program seemed successful but as they started work in 1995 ethnic divisions began to appear. 75 percent of villages in the region were mono-ethnic and 25% were mixed. Because of this segregation and because most of the houses destroyed during the war were from Garmi families aid unintentionally went to Garmi villages. Kulyabi citizens were upset and complained about the preferential treatment that the Garmi villagers were receiving. Attempts to create brigades composed of Garmis and Kulyabis had mixed results:

Upon reflection, however, [Save the Children Federation] was aware that these measures did not offset the way its aid reinforced intergroup competition and suspicion. Further, the agency did not build on any of the networks and linkages in the Khatlon Province that already existed between the two groups. For example, some staff members wondered whether they could have relied on the self – appointed housing reconciliation committees that handled occupied housing problems to set priorities for what should be built first and to communicate to the entire community why those priorities makes sense. They further recognized that many people in the area, including the Kulyabi, wanted a return to normalcy and, in fact, depended on the return of Garmi families to ensure sufficient labor to restart cotton production. Given a strong common incentive to rebuild and restart the cotton farms in which everyone had depended, it might have been possible to open discussions among worker groups that would have resulted in a focused rebuilding of Garmi houses but with everyone's agreement that these families' return served them all.⁹⁸

This case study illustrates the difficulties outsiders have working with endogenous people during a time of conflict. The NGO had great intentions wanting to help rebuild houses damaged during the civil war. The NGOs hired local nationals to assist them with their goals but failed to capitalize on local knowledge and institutions to implement their goals. As a result, they contributed to promoting the interethnic competition which they were trying to reduce.

Often times good intentions have unintended consequences. When military planners were developing the Northern Distribution Network, many thought that the roads would encourage regional trade and cooperation. However, some of the unintentional consequences of the Northern Distribution Network are that border guards are soliciting bribes and the road

⁹⁸ (Anderson, 1999) Chapter 7

networks are being used to transport drugs. It is possible that by providing military assistance and training to local military forces to combat terrorism, coalition forces created a more efficient machine for state repression. Framing the war against Al Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan as a global war on terror and radical Islam allowed autocratic regimes in Central Asia to call political rivals terrorists and members of radical Islam in order to justify state attacks against them. “Increase assistance and technology given to border guards tended to be used to make border crossings difficult to pass for ordinary travelers rather than for drug traffickers. And no one in the international community could quite bring themselves to admit that their projects in support of counter narcotics forces were often supporting the very people they were trying to stop.”⁹⁹

Policy has to be created with one eye focused on the future and one focused on the immediate. All choices have opportunity costs and decision makers must think through what they are giving up compared to what they are getting and what the unintended consequences may be. Too often, decisions have to be made and they are usually the least bad decision.

Summary

What does the future hold for Tajikistan after the troop withdrawal from Afghanistan? Most likely more of the same. Rahmon will win elections in 2013 and continue Tajikistan on its current path as a semi-functioning narco-state.

There is a slight probability that Tajikistan could experience significant internal turmoil that could result a regime change in a few years. Violence seems to come into your cycles. There was flare-up in the Rasht Valley in 2010 and in Gorno-Badakhshan in 2012. Given the fact that Rahmon eliminated his political rivals in the run-up to the last election and given the

⁹⁹ (Lewis, 2008) p 181

time it takes to create and organize revolutionary sentiment I would expect that the next chance of significant political turmoil 2015.

If there is a significant negative change to economic conditions one could expect that the turmoil would be democratic in nature. If civil rights continue to be violated it is possible that the revolutionary spirit could have a religious. The chance for international war extremely unlikely but could occur under certain conditions.

The future of Tajikistan does not have to be bleak. There are indicators that the lives of ordinary people will improve. Large deposits of oil and gas could be a boon for Tajikistan's economy. Continued investment from China and Iran in Tajikistan's transportation and power infrastructure could encourage increased trade and power independence. Given Tajikistan's geographical location at the crossroads of trade routes between Iran and China and between Russia and Afghanistan, Tajikistan is in a good position to expect continued investment from these powers. It is also possible that Tajikistan could host a logistical base for US and coalition forces after 2014. However, due to the debate in Washington D.C. over the budget, it seems likely that US investment in Tajikistan will decrease in the future.

CONCLUSION

Tajikistan has been through a lot since becoming an independent nation in 1991. It has experienced a civil war, coup attempts, state repression, corruption, drug trafficking and found itself at the center of international competition. In the near future there is a chance that Tajikistan could see internal violence or a war there are equally promising signs that it could experience progress.

The next indication of what Tajikistan's future could look like will be the presidential elections in the fall 2013. The opposition boycotted the 2006 elections but are planning to participate in these elections. Right now there is not a strong anti-government organization demanding that Rahmon step down from power which indicates that the population will accept the election results whatever they may be. As the election cycle continues demonstrations could indicate that there is an undercurrent of dissatisfaction with the government which could lead to domestic turmoil up to and after the election. But, Rahmon's response to the uprisings in the Rasht Valley and Pamiris indicate that security forces are capable of establishing order.

The major powers have also improved Tajikistan. Membership in multiple international and regional organizations seems to encourage dialogue rather than violence. Foreign aid in energy development, transportation infrastructure and military training also seems to be a positive carrot for maintaining stability in the country. The cooperation (or at least lack of confrontation) that Iran, Russia, China and the US have displayed in Tajikistan also helps maintain stability.

In the future, after the troop reductions in Afghanistan the possibility for change increases. If Afghan security forces are capable of maintaining security in Afghanistan the US may begin linking financial aid to democratic reforms which could see Russia, China or Iran

increase their competition for influence in Tajikistan. On the other hand, the large oil and gas discovery could lead other countries to increase engagement with Tajikistan in order to secure drilling rights.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Lennol Absher is a Major in the United States Army and serves as a Eurasian Foreign Area Officer. He earned his commission from Marion Military Institute in 1996. He entered into active service in 2000 and served in a Field Artillery Battalion in the 1st Cavalry Division where he deployed to Iraq in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom from 2004-2005. He was a basic training commander at Fort Sill and commanded the Army Detachment at the DoD English Language Center at Lackland AFB. He earned an Associates of Arts from Marion Military Institute and a BBA from the University of Texas at San Antonio. He is also a graduate of the Field Artillery Officer Basic Course, the Captains Career Course, ILE, and the Russian language school at the DoD Foreign Language Center. Lenny is married to Jeannette and they have a son, **Alex.**