POLITICS AND CHANGE IN TAJIKISTAN

by

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of The Australian National University

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university of institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the text of this thesis. I hereby also certify that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution.

Kirill Nourzhanov

Date: 4 September 1997
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Abstract

This thesis examines the political history of Tajikistan - the least explored amongst all the Central Asian states. Adopting a trans-disciplinary approach, it analyses politics in Tajikistan as a reflection of cultural processes in Tajik society, whereby cleavages and tensions in the Tajik ethnicity are viewed as fundamental factors underlying political socialisation. The dynamic of political change is then assessed in terms of interaction amongst various units of political action: the state, regional elite factions, solidarity networks, ethnic communities and external interests.

This study concentrates on, but is not limited by, the period between 1917 and 1992. While not seeking to supplant earlier work done by others, it represents the first attempt to write an integrative account of Tajikistan's history in the 20th century. The thesis traces in detail the peculiarities of the Soviet type of modernity in Tajikistan, the rise and ultimate failure of nationalism, and the causes, moving forces and ramifications of the civil conflict in that country.

This thesis is a case study in political analysis; however, it provides theoretical constructs and empirical observations that may be useful for closer investigation of other divided societies in neighbouring countries. The tragic experience of independence in Tajikistan highlights similar political processes throughout Central Asia and offers possible solutions to avert a new outburst of violence in the region.
Note on Transliteration

Transliteration of Tajik and Turkic names and terms follows the system used by the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* and modified by R.D. McChesney to approximate the manner in which words are spoken and written in Central Asia. Wherever there are several ways to render a word, the version phonetically closest to contemporary Tajik is employed. For example, the term for a Sufi leader is transliterated as *ishon* rather than *ishan*, the word for a Muslim judge becomes *qozī*, not *qadi* or *kazi*, and so on. The spelling of all geographic locations in Tajikistan is based on original Tajik names, not their Russian variants: Leninobod, not Leninabad; Kulob, not Kuliab, Khujand, not Khojent, Qurghonteppa, not Kurgan-Tiube. The only two exceptions are Badakhshan and the Pamirs, for which established English equivalents exist and which otherwise should have read 'Badakhshon' and 'Pomir'.

Transliteration of Russian words follows the standard Library of Congress system. When practical, Russian names pertaining to administrative units (*raion* for district, *oblast* for province or region) are retained, as well as some political terms, eg. *gorkom* (city Party committee) and *kolkhoz* (collective farm). Words such as *apparatchik*, *glasnost* and *perestroika* are frequently used in English and do not need translation.

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**Introduction**

At the very beginning of Perestroika an old dusty Tajik in Dushanbe said: 'If a single man dies of Perestroika, then what is this Perestroika for?' But thousands have died, and millions will die if this bloody dark mute Cart of Death roaming across the smashed Russian Empire is not stopped. O Allah! Where is that old Tajik? Perhaps, killed in the civil war, or died of starvation? Who listened to this old man and other old men of our land? What is happening in our destroyed bleeding country, - this is a revolt of children against fathers and grandfathers ... And this is the most horrid revolt! The most bloody and horrific primordial troglobyte sin in the land of men!

Timur Zulfikarov

Pain and bitterness permeate these words of the foremost contemporary Tajik writer. And bewilderment - bewilderment at the outburst of violence and destruction that in the early 1990s swept the Tajik people, hitherto quiescent, tranquil and placid to the point of submissiveness, and raised "a positive horror of civil disorder in general, and of interethnic disruptions in particular" amongst other Central Asians. Why did the bloodshed occur in Tajikistan and not in the neighbouring republics of the former Soviet Union? What were the origins of the conflict? Did it come to an end, and if so, who was on the winning side? These are but a few questions, the answers for which can only be provided by a systematic exploration of the Tajiks' history.

Until the breakup of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan was neglected by Western scholars for a number of reasons. Its remote geographic location made physical access to the republic almost impossible for foreigners. The fact that Tajikistan bordered Afghanistan and China and had a large network of strategic installations on its territory, including uranium mines and missile bases, had made Soviet security services extremely vigilant and alert in the republic, so the trickle of information emanating to the outside world from Tajikistan, and about Tajikistan, was heavily censored and scant. Finally, Tajikistan was always viewed, and not without grounds, as a bastion of Soviet power, invariably loyal to the Kremlin and was always treated as a dull political backwater of the USSR even in comparison with other Central Asian republics. Not surprisingly, in seven decades of Soviet rule, only one monograph devoted to history and politics of Tajikistan was published in the West, and that happened in 1970. Trends, events and patterns of continuity and change in Tajikistan, especially in the crucial period between

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1965 and 1992, have so far remained ignored, overlooked or misinterpreted by the scholarly community. In the meantime, this country represents a microcosm of Central Asian politics, with all its inherent modalities and controversies unprecedentedly amplified and exposed in the post-Communist era. Thus, explicating focal issues of political development in Tajikistan may facilitate a better and more nuanced understanding of the entire region.

This thesis represents an attempt to integrate the many significant changes in Tajik society and politics in the 20th century into a more or less cogent empirical and conceptual whole. In a sense, it is the first step in the direction of writing a political history of Tajikistan in modern times. Yet, it transcends preoccupation with political power as such, concentrating instead on cultural fundamentals and variables in Tajikistan's society, and mechanisms that translate cultural tensions into political action.

**General Concepts and Arguments**

Robert McChesney has remarked that "the history of Central Asia is a product of its geography. Its story, past and present, is a record of the ebb and flow of ideas and peoples along the routes linking South Asia with the Mediterranean and China ... For historians, certain moments in the past have come to epitomise the crux of the region's story. These were moments when disjunctions occurred in the political life of the region or when the flow of ideas and peoples seemed to culminate in a major shift in cultural orientation." The history of the Tajiks is no exception to this pattern. Descended from the original sedentary population of Central Asia, they followed a peculiar cycle of civilisational adaptation in the wake of numerous dislocations brought about by exogenous forces, usually in the form of military conquest: political subjugation, adjustment, cultural synthesis, rise of a new social order and its decay, once again, due to external influences. The invasions of Alexander the Great, the Turks, the Arabs, the Mongols and the Uzbeks were the major landmarks in the emergence of what, borrowing from Charles Tilly, should be referred to as the 'politics of memory' of the Tajiks: "From the past people take not only a history of their relations to potential objects of their claims and a more general sense of their own common identity but also histories of the particular forms of claim making they have at their disposal ... These pasts frame collective ideas of what actions are generally possible, permissible, and desirable." The latest cultural dislocation in Tajikistan was associated with the

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establishment of Communist rule after 1917. It initiated a new adaptation cycle which formed the broader historical context for political occurrences in modern Tajikistan.

A number of adjoining academic disciplines were utilised in the thesis, including anthropology, sociology and economics. The critique of Habermas' social theory based on the juxtaposition of state and society (or 'system' and 'life-world') furnishes an overall framework for this study: "Politics today is more about changing relations between conflicting value systems than between society and the state: it is about struggles over culture." The cultural divisions inside Tajik society as the source of political action is the subject matter of this work; they are explored at several interlocking tiers of discourse:

- tradition and modernity;
- endogenous and exogenous influences in cultural overlay;
- hierarchies of identity;
- symbolic referents and normative signposts of competing cultural entities.

The state remains the major focus of analysis in this thesis, but only as one of a multitude of social institutions, although the *primus inter pares*, in Tajikistan, that compete for the ability to prescribe rules of behaviour for the populace. This approach, detailed in Joel S. Migdal's ground-breaking book, provides for better understanding of autonomous political actors and their vibrancy and adaptability to crisis conditions. Another important theoretical work dealing with the structural, institutional, and personal components of the politics in a divided society belongs to Naomi Chazan: the present study draws heavily on her concepts and arguments, especially in the part concerning symbolic processes in the political realm - state-sponsored political ideas, party ideologies and populist idea-logics.

Naturally, there are many conceptual and methodological difficulties associated with the study of such phenomena as 'culture', 'tradition', 'ethnicity', 'nationalism', 'social control' and so on - wherever possible, in the relevant sections bridges are built over definitional quagmires in order to achieve a degree of analytical precision. The notion of the 'elite', however, is the recurring theme in this thesis. While tensions in Tajik

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society have been generated by conflicting cultural units, their explicit realisation in the form of a struggle for power has been carried out by independent political actors, or elites - coherent minority groups of people "who are able, through their positions in powerful organisations, to affect national political outcomes individually, regularly, and seriously. Elites thus constitute a nation's top leadership in all sectors ... including both 'establishment' and 'counterelite' factions." References to 'social', 'specialised', 'governing', 'political', 'power', 'prestigious' and other elites found in abundance in modern sociological literature are of secondary importance for the purposes of this study;\textsuperscript{10} at the same time, two points have to be emphasised: (a) members of elites possess some attributes, real or perceived, achieved or ascribed, that are valued in society and enable them to make decisions binding for the rest of the populace; and (b) they "form a more or less compact social and psychological entity ... there is a qualitative split, rather than a numerical scale, separating them from those who are not elite ... they accept one another, understand one another, marry one another, tend to work and to think if not together at least alike."\textsuperscript{11} The subjective choices made by the elites have determined the actual course of political change in Tajikistan. Structural factors, such as economic performance, global and regional context, and social divisions, although important as constraints on the process of strategic decision-making, cannot explain political occurrences in modern Tajikistan with any degree of fullness.

In summary, at the most general theoretical level, this thesis is based on three tentative assumptions.

1. The modern history of Tajikistan should be viewed through the prism of a complex cultural whole which represents a synthesis of Soviet socio-political order with potent traditional elements encapsulated in the 'politics of memory' of the Tajiks.

2. The cultural divisions in Tajik society, endogenous and imposed from outside, have generated tension in the Tajik polity. The state has been neither responsible for the emergence of those divisions, nor capable of eliminating them, confining itself to containing their disruptive effects, while other actors in public space have sought to use them to their advantage.


3. Constant negotiation amongst various elite groups has formed the essence of the political process in Tajikistan. The stability of the political regime has been conditioned by the degree of elite consensus reached and maintained, for whatever reason, at any given time.

The Conflict in Tajikistan: Some Preliminary Remarks

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is the major operational concept in the thesis. It is interpreted from the positions of 'cultural primordialism' and is defended hereinafter against more fashionable, celebrated and effervescent theories of nations and nationalisms. Ethnic identification has always been and remains the basis for the organisation and formulation of political claims; nationalism is but a fleeting superstructure, a modern avatar of 'primordial bonds of ethnicity'. Henceforth, the notion of the "pre-eminence of the nationalist sensibility", promoted by modernisationists, is considered untenable in Tajikistan. When Ernest Gellner, assessing the phenomenon of ethnic nationalism as a product of industrial social organisation, made the daring statement that "there is no point in discussing, for any practical purpose, the charms and the horrors of the cultural and political accompaniments of the agrarian age" , he should have confined this judgement to Europe.

This study generally follows the critique of liberalist and economistic definitions of ethnic revival offered by Anthony Smith, who views ethnic groups as repositories of certain fundamental, 'primordial' cultural traits, of which common history is the most important one. Gill Bottomley has amplified Smith's argumentation by pointing out that ethnicity is not just a social category with a fixed set of parameters, but a fairly fluid process. This attenuation is particularly important in the case of Tajiks - while they do possess unique cultural features to qualify them as an ethnic community, the degree of

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12 'Primordiality' consists in the notion that ethnic identity is determined by: a) kin bonds; b) deep human attachments to the natal community, even to the natal geographic location; c) reality perceptions shaped by cultural traits. (Adapted from Virginia Tilley, "The Terms of the Debate: Untangling Language about Ethnicity And Ethnic Movements." Ethnic and Racial Studies, Vol. 20, No. 3, July 1997, pp. 499-500.)


their cognisance of those features and, more significantly, the degree of their readiness to act as a collectivity in defense of this uniqueness has fluctuated substantially over centuries.

Soviet Nationality Policy

The notions of 'Soviet colonialism' and 'Russification', favoured by so many stalwarts of Cold War in the West, are rejected forthwith. In line with Martha Brill Olcott's findings for Kazakhstan, this thesis posits that general policies conducted by Soviet authorities were uniform throughout the USSR and did not offer deliberately preferential treatment to any ethnic group. The Soviet 'nationalities policy' was, in effect, supra-national. The patterns of political institutionalisation, economic and cultural development and emancipation were basically the same for Russia and Tajikistan, Armenia and Uzbekistan. Local variations that, in retrospect, might have had far-reaching ramifications, were the result of the struggle between local elite factions. For instance, the administrative delimitation of the 1920s greatly disadvantaged the Tajiks not because of the Jesuitic 'divide-and-rule' policy of the Kremlin, but because of the preponderance of ethnic Uzbeks in Turkestan's power structures.

The process of the Tajiks' inclusion into Pax Sovietica was accompanied "by the radical transformations in the spheres of economic modernisation and mass education, and the creation of prestigious institutions of 'national statehood' on the basis of a substantial layer of managerial, creative and scientific and technical intelligentsia ... It was these successes of the old nationalities policy ... that were conducive to and made possible a mighty spurt of the Central Asian periphery of the Soviet Empire along the road of the national self-determination." This approach, however, totally ignores the issue of ethnic dynamics. Zvi Gitelman's provocative remark that "perhaps development and ethnicity may not be related at all" finds corroboration in the thesis - economic modernisation, politicisation and territorialisation of the Tajik ethnic community under Soviet rule failed to alter significantly cultural differences amongst its sub-units.

20 A superb account of the delimitation's history, based on hitherto secret documents from Soviet archives, can be found in: Rahim Masov. Tadzhiki: istoriia s grifom 'sovershенно секретно'. Dushanbe: Pervand, 1995.
Traditional Cultural Institutions: Flexibility and Tenacity

Donald Carlisle's profound observations on Uzbekistan have been essential for building an argument in this thesis.23

In Uzbekistan a tightly integrated traditional society lived on into the Communist era and has continued into the present. Over the years it has proved resilient in the face of the threats to its integrity posed by modern life in general and the Soviet regime in particular ... The nation and the nation-state, as well as everything associated in the modern mind with nationalism, were alien notions to the typical Turkic/Muslim inhabitant of the mahallah. True, he had a specific ethnic affiliation and this set him apart from other groups; to the outside observer, these ethnic formations might have appeared to provide the wherewithal for nations. But a mahallah uzbek or tajik was not an Uzbek or a Tajik in the modern nation-state sense.

The 'Soviet Tajik culture' and, accordingly, the 'Tajik socialist nation' were undoubtedly artificial creations, in the sense that they could have been sustained only with support from Moscow. However, they were also organic phenomena, for their components, namely the communist political system and traditional culture, affected different spheres of people's lives, public and private, and whenever they overlapped, antagonism was not the inevitable outcome - if not a symbiosis, then at least accommodation had been achieved between the two.

The thesis takes a minimalist approach towards Islam, which is viewed as part of the Tajiks' traditional culture, incapable of mobilising the masses for political action on its own. The claim that Islamic structures, Sufi brotherhoods in particular, "openly challenged the authority and legitimacy of Soviet and communist institutions, and focused as centres of opposition and even armed revolt"24 is strongly refuted as not corresponding to historical reality.

Anthony Smith has cautioned against mixing ethnic groupings with regions, arguing that "regions are administrative and ecological divisions of state", whereas ethnic groups involve cultural and psychological features that "central governments habitually ignore or underrate" or "are unable to grasp". This fixation with the role of the state is questionable - in many places throughout the world regions contain distinctive cultural groups, and governments simply draw administrative borders over existing cultural boundaries, merging ethnic and geographic categories. This is certainly the case in Tajikistan, where regions have long independent histories and populations with discernable cultural and even anthropometric features, and which thus can be regarded as sub-ethnic communities. Accordingly, regionalism, that is, identification with a territorialised sub-ethnic community, is conceptualised largely in cultured terms, just like ethnicity.

The Role of the State

Even if the state in Tajikistan cannot challenge the lasting influence of people's loyalties to kinship, religious and ethnic groups, it is certainly capable of acting as a mediator and incorporator in relation to these communities. Henceforth, the political system in Tajikistan is analysed from positions of instrumentalism, that is, its efficiency in regulating the competition for resources amongst elites representing various communities. It is argued that from the 1930s until the mid-1980s the regime in Tajikistan did not face any legitimation crisis, having attained a high degree of stability based on broad elite consensus, with formal and informal rules of political behaviour accepted by all players involved. Following the theoretical constructions of Agnes Heller and Ferenc Feher, the official ideology with its Marxist trappings is dismissed in explaining the operation of political system in Tajikistan. While acknowledging that a contravening school of thought exists, Harry Rigby's concept of goal-rationality is regarded as infinitely better geared to explicate how policies were formulated, implemented and evaluated in Tajikistan within a broader framework of the Soviet polity. The Tajik ethnic elite had even less belief in the telos of Communism than their

superiors in Moscow; ideological mantras were instrumental, however, in maintaining positive discourse between the two and creating an image of internal cohesion inside Tajikistan.

Theodor Hanf has written that in a multi-communal society, crises are likely to occur when "approximate social equality between communities has been diminishing to the advantage of one and the disadvantage of the others: in other words they are more likely when the mode of incorporation changes."29 In Tajikistan, such a critical situation arose in the second half of the 1980s and was linked to Gorbachev's reforms.

Myron Rush's approach, unorthodox for a Western analyst, albeit widely accepted in Tajikistan, has been adopted in the thesis to analyse the course and consequences of perestroika: "the 1985 succession brought to office an aberrant figure whose course toward revolution ... was not forced on him by an aroused society or by compelling circumstances; it stemmed from his highly individual perceptions and experimental bent ... Gorbachev's possession of the power to destroy the regime was a gift of fortune. Since holding of power by a crypto-revolutionary was due to a chance, so also in large measure was the outcome, the collapse of the regime and the USSR."30 Gorbachev's ill-conceived economic reforms exacerbated the already bleak socio-economic situation in Tajikistan. However, it was his political endeavours that wrought havoc to Tajik society, having triggered defensive ethnic mobilisation, on the one hand, and having aggravated tensions amongst sub-ethnic units in the republic, on the other. The struggle between these two opposite tendencies against the background of a weakened state eventually led to radicalisation of the political process.

The hypothesis that in a divided society, which is largely dependent on external support and where the viability of the state is a primary concern, "the functioning of institutionalised opposition may prove to be beyond the meagre forces of the society",31 appears to be correct in the case of Tajikistan. The major point to be made forthwith is that political opposition (as well as the ruling elite) in the republic coalesced along sub-ethnic regional lines, and various modern ideologies they ostensibly articulated were little more than a mask.

Explaining the Conflict

There exist several schools of thought in regards to the major causes and moving forces of the Tajik conflict. The first one attempts to present the events in Tajikistan as a confrontation between the old-time Communist apparatchiks and a coalition of nascent democratic forces. Such perception prevailed in 1992 and early 1993 and stemmed primarily from accounts provided by liberal Russian media, but it still has some currency amongst Western scholars, who do not hesitate to call the incumbent Tajik President Emomali Rahmonov a communist leader and decry the fate of a mythical "neo-democratic state which has grass-roots support" in Tajikistan. Another group of experts believes that Tajikistan has essentially succumbed to the ferocious struggle between Islamic radicalism and secularism, and, as one author claimed in 1993, the country "has already fallen to the pro-Iranian fundamentalist forces in the region." Such assumptions are shared by a third faction, represented mainly by Russian and Uzbek hardliners who put special emphasis on the role of exogenous forces in the Tajik imbroglio. Their views have been epitomised in a number of conspiracy theories; the most amazing of them all asseverates that the West, beginning in the mid-1970s, had spent millions of dollars and trained hundreds of 'Islamic fighters' in order to destabilise the situation in Tajikistan. Lately a 'synthetic' approach has come into being - it is only too tempting to lump together a bit of everything: 'liberation movement against Soviet colonialism', 'revolutionary nationalism', 'reformism', 'external factors', 'traditional animosities' and 'regional rivalries'. This study maintains that the conflict in Tajikistan is essentially the conflict between sub-units of the Tajik ethnicity conditioned by fundamental cultural differences and made possible by political developments in the late USSR beyond control of Tajikistan's elites.

Note on Sources

This thesis puts together the diffuse information on Tajikistan available in English, Russian and Tajik. As already mentioned, as of mid-1997, there exists only one comprehensive book on Tajikistan’s history published in the West. Similarly, compared to the rich corpus of specialised studies in the archaeology, ethnography, culture and economy of Tajikistan generated in the former Soviet Union, the paucity of literature on socio-political development of Tajikistan in Tajik and Russian is baffling. Until recently, Istoriia Tadzhikskogo naroda\(^39\) remained, for all practical purposes, the only comprehensive historical study, implemented, unfortunately, within the rigid constraints of the Leninist ideological paradigm. In 1995 and 1996, two excellent books dealing with civil conflict in Tajikistan after independence were published in Moscow.\(^40\) As a minor corollary, it should be noted that their authors relied mainly on ethnographic research and did not use the rich arsenal of political analysis to its full capacity.

From general literature on Central Asia and numerous case studies used in the thesis, the works by Gregory Gleason,\(^41\) Donald Carlisle,\(^42\) Shirin Akiner\(^43\) and the panoramic compendium edited by William Fierman\(^44\) deserve special credit. The studies of Russian experts Sergei Poliakov\(^45\) and Aziz Niyazi\(^46\) have been extremely helpful, too. The writings of Harry Rigby dealing with mono-organisational socialism in the USSR\(^47\) have provided the starting point for the theoretical analysis.

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The bulk of factual data, in the form of printed materials, official documents, audio-visual footage and interviews with government and opposition figures as well as diplomats accredited in Dushanbe, was collected during two fieldwork trips conducted in Tajikistan over the period from October 1994 to January 1996. Confidential telephone directories of the Communist Party of Tajikistan and the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan have provided an invaluable source of personalia. Type- and hand-written documents, procured mainly through the good offices of the Spokesperson of the President of the RT, Zafar Saidov, have been particularly useful in exploring opposition movements in Tajikistan. Memoirs of Tajik politicians, retired and still active, that until now remained virtually unknown to the scholarly community throughout the world, have also been widely utilised in the thesis.

Structure of the Thesis

The organisation of the thesis basically follows the arguments outlined above, although, for the sake of clarity of presentation, chapters I through III and V through VII are put in chronological sequence, which, generally, coincides with the subjugation-adjustment-synthesis-decay pattern of continuity and change in Tajikistan. Each chapter concentrates on a limited number of themes that shaped each phase in the country's modern history.

Chapter I provides an historic overview of Tajikistan before the Soviet rule. It deals specifically with the process of the ethnogenesis of the Tajiks, analysing factors that, on the one hand, could have facilitated the transformation of the Tajik ethnic community into a modern nation, and, on the other hand, were conducive to the preservation of deep cultural cleavages in it.

Chapter II examines the establishment of the Communist mono-organisational political order in Tajikistan from 1917 to the late-1950s, with a particular emphasis on the main features of the Soviet type of modernity introduced to Central Asia.

Chapter III provides a detailed account of institutionalised political activism in Tajikistan under Soviet rule and is focussed primarily on the corporatist compromise between the all-Union and Tajik national elites achieved in the post-Stalin era.

Chapter IV is the analytical centrepiece of the thesis. It explores the essence of traditional units of political socialisation in Tajikistan - patronymic associations, Islamic community and sub-ethnic solidarity networks, the sources of their vitality and their interaction with one another and the state. For the first time the concept of regionalism as a cultural phenomenon is theorised and illustrated by empirical evidence.

Chapter V extends the systematic discussion of politics in Tajikistan to the period of Gorbachev’s leadership and closely examines such issues as macro- and microeconomic crises, nationalism and fragmentation of social control.

Chapter VI covers the short but crucial period from 1989 to 1991 and deals with the reasons for the break-down in the consensus between elite factions inside Tajikistan which manifested itself in the rise of political opposition and mass violence.

Chapter VII examines the causes, course and ramifications of the civil conflict in Tajikistan which erupted in the wake of the USSR’s unravelling.

**Limitations of the Study**

This thesis is not a comprehensive narrative of Tajikistan’s past and present. Contrary to the formula suggested by the classic scholar of social historicism, Joseph Furnas, it does not concentrate so much on people - who Tajiks are, ‘what they were doing and why, where they were going and how, what they ate, drank, wore, hoped’. Rather, it is concerned with political concepts, choices and processes and primary cultural traits of the Tajik ethnicity that generate them.

Having accepted the weak correlation between structural factors and policies of change in modern Tajikistan as a major working hypothesis, this study brings into focus Machiavellian notions of ‘fortune’ - stochastic events beyond the control of any institution in the Tajik polity, and ‘virtue’ - prowess and personal qualities of political leaders. Consequently, the assessment of key *dramatis personae* forms an integral part of the analysis, creating numerous contentious points and potential pitfalls of biased judgement. The re-evaluation of the much stereotyped image of Gorbachev is of special importance here. It has been implemented from the perspective of Tajikistan, and may appear somewhat one-sided and incomplete; however, it accurately reflects the

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prevalent line in public discourse in that country today and, henceforth, may contribute to a better-informed polemic in the field of post-Communist transformation.

The upper chronological limit of the thesis has been purposefully set at the end of 1992, by which time the Soviet social order had ceased to exist in Tajikistan. The new political reality that has begun to evolve in its place is characterised by different dynamics which requires separate conceptualisation. Still, cultural cleavages and domestic actors delineated in this study are likely to persist in the foreseeable future, albeit in an altered configuration.
Chapter I. Tajikistan before Soviet Rule

It is impossible to study the process of change in any society in the modern era without exploring its historical setting. Establishing a multidisciplinary framework that first combines elements of ethnic history, social anthropology and comparative political development has obvious advantages when it comes to analysing such a complex and ancient society as the one in Tajikistan. It is also an intrinsically interesting experience, for there are very few other places on Earth which in almost every period of human history have been a cross-road of civilisations and an arena of competing cultural influences. While the claims of some Tajik writers that their direct ancestors included Shem son of Noah or Biblical Adam himself should be attributed to the poetic imagination worthy of Rudaki or Ferdowsi, Tajik society demonstrates a surprising continuity over centuries which makes a lengthy historical excursus worthwhile.

The Pre-Islam Period

The spacious country between the Amu-Darya and the Syr-Darya became inhabited rather early, not later than 200,000 years BC. The geographic and climatic peculiarities of the region favoured the emergence of various forms of agriculture there. Steppes and semi-deserts provided plentiful feed to herds of hoofed animals; the camel and the goat may have been originally domesticated in this part of the world. An arid climate was the reason for the predominantly irrigated character of farming in Central Asia. Though, as Nikolai Vavilov has showed in his formidable work on agricultural history, wheat, barley, rice and other crops were not indigenous to the region but had been acquired from South-Western Asia and China, it was Central Asia that became the granary of the Middle East and, consequently, a desirable prize for all sorts of invaders.

Archaeological data suggests that urban settlements which served as centres of commerce and craftsmanship were present in Transoxiana in the early Bronze Age, circa 3000 BC. It is notable that caravan routes of the Great Silk Road crossed the territory of what now is

Tajikistan. The Road's northern trail went through Khujand in the Zaravshon Valley and the southern one traversed Badakhshan. This land had become the meeting point of Mediterranean, Indian and Chinese civilisations; people who lived here used this opportunity to adopt technologies, state concepts and religious teachings and to develop them further using vast local resources. There is no exaggeration in Gavin Hambly's statement that "in terms of commerce, manufacture and cultural achievement probably the most important part of Central Asia has always been the area bordering the Amu-Darya and the Syr-Darya".

The influence of ancient civilisations in the region was complemented by the constant interaction between sedentary and nomadic cultures. In the beginning of the second millennium BC the Indo-Iranian tribes penetrated Central Asia. The onslaught of these steppe herds was a lengthy process and it was not until five centuries later that they succeeded in assimilating the local peoples, adopting the latter's achievements and giving up to a considerable extent their pastoral way of life. As a result, a number of mixed-type cultures emerged in the territory of Tajikistan which combined highly developed arable farming with cattle-breeding and extensive use of the horse for military purposes and transportation. The Aryans had laid the foundation for the formation of the Iranian ethnos and culture in the region; the language continuity became a decisive factor in this process.

Periodic incursions by the steppe hordes from the North were conducive to the emergence of proto-state entities in Transoxiana. In Ronald Cohen's words, "warfare, conquest, trade, ethnic and ecological competition for dominance in an area ... defensive reactions to raiding ... have all contributed to greater degrees of centralised power and the growth of hierarchal early states." Prior to the rise of the first world power of the Achaemenids, Khorezm, Soghd and Bactria dominated in the region, while a number of lesser principalities such as Khuttal (contemporary Kulob) retained independence and ruling dynasties of their own. However, despite the ethnic homogeneity of the population and close cultural and economic bonds, these territories had not merged into a centralised state with a complex government machine. They still remained localised autonomies which once in a while recognised the supremacy of one over all others, for a short time only. In the

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The Achaemenid period witnessed an amazing improvement in the irrigation technique in Transoxiana. Between the sixth and fourth centuries BC, ancient irrigation systems which had merely helped to utilise the seasonal floods of rivers were complemented by a number of huge canals capable of delivering water for tens of kilometres, beyond the scope of the natural estuary overflow. They formed the backbone of a highly efficient agriculture that allowed local people to survive and recuperate relatively quickly after innumerable wars and invasions. Ultimately, the hordes of Chengiz-khan destroyed the intricate web of irrigation in Mavarannahr in the early thirteenth century AD, thus striking a fatal blow to its economy.

Alexander the Great subjugated most of its eastern territories in 330 - 327 BC. In the centuries that followed his death in 323 BC, Transoxiana once again found itself a border zone, torn apart by different centres of power, such as Parthia, Graeco-Bactria and the Kushan and Sasanian empires. It was the period when a number of distinctive dialects within the bulk of the Middle Iranian languages evolved there, including Parthian, Soghdian, Bactrian, Khorezmian, Saka and Alan.11 In the late fourth and early fifth century AD, a new force appeared in the steppes adjacent to Khujand and Ustrushana - the north-eastern outposts of the Iranian civilisation - namely, the Turkic tribes of the Ephthalites12 and the Huns. Like all their nomadic predecessors, they quickly settled...
down, mostly in urban centres. The Turks exerted a great influence over the formation of medieval ethnic groups in Central Asia before the Arab conquest, and long after it.

The Arab Conquest and the Zenith of Medieval Culture

In 1963, V.V. Bartold expressed the view that a period of more than one thousand years from Alexander the Great to the advent of Islam passed almost unnoticed in terms of state formation and political organisation in Transoxiana. This opinion, which obviously did not fit the Marxist concept of linear political evolution, was severely criticised by Soviet scholars. However, there is no doubt that at the time of the Arab invasion the Central Asian lands were divided among as many as twenty-seven petty princedoms. Their rulers did not enjoy absolute authority, as the real power lay with the traditional landed aristocracy (the dihqans) who had fortified castles and small private armies at their disposal. In times of trouble, princes had literally to grovel to their supposed vassals for help. The whole picture bore a striking resemblance to the post-Achaemenid period, where the political map of Central Asia was changing kaleidoscopically; actually, some of the local oligarchs traced their roots down to the Kushan times.

The Trans-Oxus principalities never formed a viable confederacy. On top of mutual mistrust and hostility, there had emerged more fundamental divisions between the communities in the Zaravshon and Oxus Valleys by the 7th century AD. The populace to the north of the Hissor mountain range had become Turkicised to a considerable extent due to the endless immigration from the steppes. In fact, the stream of fresh migrants "had swollen to such a mass as already to crush the original Iranian inhabitants under the exclusive dominion of the Turks." Religious affiliations also varied considerably: people in the North professed Mazdaism, Nestorian Christianity and Manichaeism, while the bulk of the inhabitants of Tokharistan and Khuttal still clung to Buddhism.

Such conditions of disunion favoured the piecemeal conquest of Transoxiana by the Arabs. Beginning in 651 AD, they organised periodic marauding raids deep into the territory of Mavarannahr, but it was not until the appointment of Qutaiba as Governor of Khorasan in 705 AD, during the reign of Walid I, that the Caliphate adopted the policy of annexing the lands beyond the Oxus. Ten years later the task was accomplished. As Hamilton Gibb has

noted, "the existing dynastic houses were everywhere maintained, as the representatives of the conquered peoples and vehicle of the civil administration. The actual administrative authority in their territories, however, passed to the Wali, or agent of the Arab governor of Khorasan."  

By the mid-eighth century the Arabs had managed to solidify their hold over Transoxiana. They checked the advancement of the Turgesh Turks at Isfijab and defeated a strong Chinese army at Talas in 751, thus putting an end, once and for all, to Chinese claims for dominance in Mavarannahr.

The ascension of the Abbasids to rule the Caliphate (750 - 1258) opened a new era in the history of Central Asia. While their predecessors - the Omayyads (661 - 750) - were little more than leaders of a loose confederation of Arab tribes, the Abbasids set out to build a huge multi-ethnic centralised state which would emulate and perfect the Sasanian government machine. They gave the Near East and Transoxiana a unity which they had been missing since Alexander the Great. In the eighth century "the enormous expansion in trade brought about an explosion in the growth of cities and market towns everywhere ... The internationalism of the age burst into full bloom, as commerce and culture, hand-in-hand, flourished as never before."  

The Abbasid caliphate as a territorial empire succumbed to the centrifugal tendencies and succession disputes soon after the fabled Harun ar-Rashid died in 809. Yet it left a mighty legacy, the Islamic civilisation, which for centuries "was the real centre of the ecumene, in contact (as Christianity was not, until the sixteenth century) with all other major societies except, of course, those of America."  

Islam spread rapidly in Mavarannahr: as early as the year 728 the authorities of Bukhara trumpeted complete conversion of Soghdiana to the Muslim faith. The new religion was mostly received by popular acclaim, for it promised greater social mobility and created favourable conditions for trade. Islam provided the peoples of Central Asia with a spiritual and cultural bond and brought them closer to each other as nothing had before. With Islam there came Arabic - not only the language of the holy Quran and the Abbasid court, but also

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21 V.V. Bartold. *Sochineniia.* Vol. II. Part 1. Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoi literatury, 1963, p. 456. Of course, the process of Islamization in Transoxiana was somewhat more protracted, especially in its easternmost lands (Rushan, Shughnan and Vakhan in what is now Tajikistan). However, there is no doubt that the cultural reconciliation of Islam and Iranian tradition was accomplished in Transoxiana earlier than in Iranian Plateau proper where Zoroastrianism had become deeply entrenched, especially in the rural areas, under the Sasanian rule.
the language of science and poetry and the lingua franca of trade and diplomacy. It must also have stimulated the emergence of the Modern Persian language (Dari), where the share of loan-words from Arabic fluctuated from ten percent in the vocabulary of Rudaki (9-10th centuries) to forty percent in the writings of Baihaqi (11th century). All in all, "the volume of Arabic lexicon, its share in the vocabulary of the Dari language remained exceptionally high until the first quarter of the nineteenth century." 

Based on the general economic rise in the region and the coexistence and fruitful interaction of Arabic and Persian literatures, the newly emerged ecumenical Islamic culture reached its zenith during the rule of the Samanid dynasty (875 - 999). The Samanids, who originated from an old dihgan family, created a kingdom of their own which stretched from the Persian Gulf to India. The relatively stable domestic and international situation allowed them to encourage learning and the arts. Intellectuals from all over the Islamic world came to Bukhara, the Samanid capital. Such was "the influx of scholars that Bukhara won the epithet 'the dome of Islam in the East', equal to Baghdad, because it was such a great meeting place for distinguished men of letters." 

It would not be correct to call the Samanid empire the first Tajik state. Rather, it was the last time the bulk of Iranian lands became the domain of an Iranian ruler, in the traditions of the Achaemenids and the Sasanians. The Samanids were lucky to carve a bigger kingdom and hold it somewhat longer than other ephemeral dynasties of Iranian extraction within the Caliphate, otherwise they differed little from the Saffarids or the Tahirids. Their base was still a clan, a small professional army and a handful of big cities. Within the Samanid administration there was a discernible ethnoreligious division: an Iranian chancery, staffed with recent converts par excellence, co-existed with the predominantly Arab ulama, while the core of the army consisted of Turkic slaves or mercenaries. Given time, a coherent society might have evolved behind the Samanid empire, but the attack of the Qarakhanid Turks ended its reign in 999, and dominance in Mavaranahr passed on to Turkic rulers for nine centuries to come.

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The Problem of Tajik Ethnogenesis

Contemporary Tajik scholars claim that "the formation of the Tajik nation was completed during the rule of the Samanids".\(^{25}\) Regrettably, the question of the ethnogenesis of the Tajiks has heretofore received little coverage elsewhere in the world. Still, the presence of a Tajik nation (or more precisely, a distinctive ethnicity, since the concept of 'nation' is a relatively recent phenomenon which dates from the late eighteenth century) in the 10th century AD, finds little corroborative evidence. It would be interesting, however, to speculate about the emergence of the primary form of ethnic community in Central Asia - the *ethnie*, in Anthony Smith's parlance.

An *ethnie* is a given population, a social group "whose members share a sense of common origins, claim a common and distinctive history and destiny, possess one or more distinctive characteristics, and feel a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity."\(^{26}\) In the case of Tajiks, the problem of collective cultural individuality put in historical perspective is twofold: (a) their distinctness from non-Iranian peoples of Central Asia and (b) their dissociation with the populace of Iran proper.

The Aryan tribes residing in Central Asia since the Bronze Age belonged to two types of the Europoid Mediterranean race, characterised by dolicho- and mesocephalia respectively.\(^{27}\) The Turkic nomads brought in a Mongoloid South-Siberian component, which, naturally, was stronger in the northern parts of Mavarannahr. By the end of the 10th century there was a tendency towards "homogenisation" of the population of Central Asia as "the morphological border among the three variants [of anthropological groups] ... was eroding and losing its marker significance."\(^{28}\) As a result of this protracted process, the so-called Europoid Central Asian anthropological type had developed, and had become prevalent in the northern and central parts of Transoxiana. Notably, in Khorasan the Mediterranean racial complex with accented gracility had been preserved almost intact.\(^{29}\)

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\(^{25}\) B.G. Ghafurov. *Tojikon. Ta’rikhi qadimtarin, qadim va asri miyona*. Vol. I, Dushanbe: Irfon, 1983, p. 494. There is a slight terminology confusion present in recent Tajik and Russian studies on the matter: the Tajik words *mellevat* and *mellat* (nationality and nation) as well as their Russian equivalents *narodnost* and *natsiya* are often used as synonyms.


Apart from a favourable anthropological background, some other elements are indispensable for the formation of a viable *ethnie*. The use of a collective, identifying name is one of the most important. Usage of the word 'Tajik' as a mode of self-definition was not registered before the second quarter of the 11th century. It has been generally accepted amongst scholars that the term was initially used in Mavarannahr to refer to the Arabs (probably, it was derived from the Arab *Tai* tribal name). Afterwards it became a collective name for both Arabs and local converts to Islam (predominantly Iranians) and only much later was this term transformed into the ethnonym of an entity amongst Central Asian Iranians. A number of Tajik experts adheres to a different theory which implies that the word 'Tajik' originated from the Persian 'Taj' (meaning 'crown') and that as early as the eighth century Iranians of Mavarannahr, especially in the mountainous areas, called themselves Tajiks, that is, the 'Crown Headed'. Thus, these Iranians emphasised their supposed superior genealogy over all other local peoples.

Another important element in the making of an *ethnie* is an elaborate set of myths which explains the origins of a community in space and time, stresses the common fate of its members, and provides legitimation for its policies in relation to other communities. Called *mythomoteur* by John Armstrong, it "sustains a polity and enables it to create an identity beyond that which can be imposed by force or purchased by peace and prosperity." The mythology of an *ethnie* finds its reflection in this or that form of epic tradition. All ethnic groups of the Aryan descendancy in Iran and Central Asia had practically identical *mythomoteur* until the late Middle Ages. It was first codified in *Avesta*, then in Middle Persian literary monuments, for example, *Yadkari Ardashir Papakan*, *Ayatkar Zareran*, *Artavirnamak*, and reached the felicitous epitome in Ferdowsi's *Shahnama*, circa 1011 AD. All major motifs and protagonists in *Shahnama* (as well as in *Iskandarnama*, *Darabnama*, *Jamaspnama*, *Gushtaspnama* and so on) are common for Tajiks and Iranians. There might have been local deviations from the canon, such as the autochthonal cults of Bibi Seshambe or White Div in the eastern part of Tajikistan but, generally, as late as the eleventh century there existed a collective *mythomoteur* of Greater Iran, with the struggle against the Turkic world (Ferdowsi's Turan) as its pivotal point. The ideas of *Shahnama* continued to form the backbone of the 'state epos' in Persia under the Safavids. In contrast, the mythical tradition of Iranians in Central Asia underwent a dramatic change by the second half of the 16th century, as the Tajik epic poem *Gurugli* testifies. Its very title is a replica of a cluster of Turkic folklore legends (*Korogly* in Azerbaijan, *Gorogly* in Turkmenistan, *Gorogly* in

Uzbekistan), as is its plot. Behind the figure of Avaz-khon, a fervent fighter, noble knight and gifted commander of the Iranian (forget the Turkic name!) Shah Gurugli, there is the historical character of Ayaz - a Turkic slave and favourite of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi (997 - 1030). However, having acquired the plot from their Turkic neighbours, the Tajiks largely reiterated their own ancient epos onto its basis. Gurugli has direct parallels with Shahnama's Faridun and, unlike his Turkic counterparts, is more of a fair monarch than a pahlavon (a gallant and reckless warrior). Also, of course, Gurugli is a poetic work and "several times as big" as its prose Azerbaijani original.33

Language and religion are considered the most basic traits of an ethnie's shared culture. Under the Samanids, ordinary people continued to speak local dialects (Soghdian, Khorezmian, and so on), while Dari was primarily the language of official documents and court life, only beginning to spread en masse in Bukhara, Samarkand and Fergana.34 Literary Modern Persian remained uniform in Western Iran and Mavarannahr until the 15th or even 16th century.35 Similarly, behavioural patterns, law procedures and educational systems based on shari'a stayed almost identical in both regions. Under the Samanids a bulk of Turkic tribes beyond the Syr-Darya became converted to Islam; it was a severe blow to the image of the Turk as a perennial enemy of the Iranian. The sunni - shi'a dichotomy was yet to become a watershed among different ethnic communities, and to find its reflection in Gurugli through the mediation of the Turkic text.36

The question of association with a specific territory in the 10th century is an easy one. The indigenous Iranian population constituted an absolute majority throughout Mavarannahr, both in cities and villages. More importantly, this association had commemorative overtones: Shahnama includes Transoxiana into Iranshahr and stresses this region's opposition to Turan.

According to Anthony Smith, "a strong sense of belonging and an active solidarity, which in time of stress and danger can override class, factional or religious divisions within the community"37 is the decisive factor for a durable ethnic community. This was not the case amongst Iranians in Mavarannahr before, during and after the Samanid rule. Internal divisions in principalities, valley communities or other territorial sub-units were more

potent sources of identity than affiliation to an *ethnie*. Khuttal, Chaganian, Isfijab, Khorezm and princedoms of Badakhshan nominally acknowledged the supremacy of the Samanids, yet in practice they "were ruled by local dynasties according to their old traditions."\(^{38}\) Four distinct regions had formed by the twelfth century on the territory of Tajikistan that were characterised by political and cultural autarchy: (1) Northern Tokharistan and Khuttal; (2) the Zaravshon Valley; (3) the basin of Upper and Middle Syr-Darya, including Ustrushana, Khujand and Western Ferghana; (4) the Pamirs. With some variations, these specific geographic areas have survived until today. Prior to the Mongol invasion, their populations *never* acted in unison to repel aggressors; moreover, cases of mass resistance to aggression were almost unheard of in Mavarannahr.

In summary, it is impossible to single out a distinct Tajik *ethnie* in the 10th century. Central Asian Iranians remained an integral part of a wide Iranian ethnic community that came into being in the Achaemenid era, and from which they drew their name, history, inspiration and shared culture. However, the Samanid period can be regarded as a landmark in the process of the ethnogenesis of the Tajiks. It produced an encoded fund of myths, memories, values and symbols - the puissant core of the future *ethnie* in Tajikistan. Eventually, the Samanids themselves moved into the realm of the legendary tradition of contemporary Tajiks; the main green bazaar in Dushanbe has been named after Shah Mansur (961 - 976), who is viewed as the epitome of a fair and caring ruler.

As the future showed, the centuries-long absence of economic unity and a common polity did not lead to the dissolution of the Tajiks. The sense of shared origins and cultural markers allowed them to survive in the ocean of Turkic tribes, and later gave them a chance to reconstruct (or forge) their history, pedigree and ethnicity.

**The Ascendancy of Turkestan**

In the 10th century the ethnic boundary between Iranians and Turks and the cultural boundary between sedentarism and nomadism were roughly the same. The whole medieval history of Mavarannahr can be written in terms of the relationship between steppe pastoralism and oasis agriculture. These contacts went far beyond warfare and the exchange of goods. Samuel Adshead, while describing the symbiosis between the two modes, applies the words "complementarity" and "compenetration" and gives a lucid picture of political interaction: "On the one hand, the sedentarist found the best defence against one set of nomads was another set of nomads. On the other hand, if the nomad

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wanted to organise an empire out of his conquests, it was best done from an oasis with its granaries, money, literacy and unifying religion. The oasis needed government and protection: the steppe could provide both. The steppe lacked administration and education: the oasis could provide both."

Prior to the 10th century, sedentist Transoxiana had demonstrated an almost infinite ability to accommodate nomadic tribes invading its territory. Within two or three generations the steppe dwellers usually gave up their habitual way of life and language. Some experts believe that only "the vast, sudden incursion by pagan Mongols in the mid-thirteenth century" broke the routine. However, archaeological and anthropological data point to the fact that already in the eleventh century the situation in Mavarannahr was undergoing a radical transformation: "The greatest influx of anthropologically Mongoloid tribes to the territory of Central Asia dates from the Qarakhanid epoch. It is even more perceptible than in the period of Mongol invasion."

This time the newcomers settled down in rural areas as well as in towns; they not only retained their tongue but also eventually gave it to lands with ancient Iranian tradition. In Richard Frye's words, the spread of the Turkic language in Transoxiana was "nothing short of amazing". On top of the numerical strength of the Turks, the Qarakhanids' conversion to Islam which supposedly took place under Satuq Bughra-khan (died about 955), must have facilitated the infixion of the Turkic element in Mavarannahr enormously. Even before the Mongols, many Turkic toponyms had appeared in the Zaravshon Valley. Though Transoxiana was still associated with the ancient Iranian heartland in the eyes of the local population and of people abroad, and a clear distinction existed between Mavarannahr and Turkestan (that is, the steppes to the north of Syr-Darya), shifts in the anthropological composition of the former were becoming noticeable. A further division within the Europoid Central Asian racial type had come into being in Tajikistan, with the Zaravshon mountain range again acting as a separator between

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"the Northern and Southern variants that differed in terms of anthropometric and anthroposcopical traits."\(^4^6\)

The process of Turkicisation was not accompanied by serious depredations or genocide. Statements to the effect that "from the tenth to the thirteenth centuries the Turks ... advanced into Turkestan increasing the Turkic population there and destroying the Iranian culture"\(^4^7\) should be treated with extreme caution. This period witnessed further growth of cities; for example, the population of Samarkand, Bukhara and Termez in the eleventh century stood at 100,000, 70,000 and 50,000 people respectively, while the corresponding figures for London and Paris in the 12th century were 40,000 and 120,000.\(^4^8\) As John Armstrong has noted, "all Turkic regimes used Persian as their Court language" before the rise of the Ottoman empire.\(^4^9\) It was the era of an unprecedented flourishing of Persian poetry in Khorasan and Mavarannahr, suffice it to mention the names of 'Attar, 'Unsuri, Farrokhi, Manuchehri and Vatvat - all of them court poets of various Turkic monarchs. For the first time Dari began to substitute Arabic in prose belles-lettres, historical chronicles and scientific works.

One of the determining factors for prosperity of culture and trades in Mavarannahr was that the new Turkic dynasties completed the process of liquidating the class of the old Iranian landed aristocracy, the dihqans, which had begun under the Samanids. As Bartold has put it, "in the beginning of the 13th century... the dihqans did not play any role and the word itself was used only in the meaning of 'peasant'."\(^5^0\) As a result, the highly stratified elite culture so characteristic of the Achaemenids and the Sasanians became more diffused and permeated in varying degrees most sections of the population. Iranian urban-based strata - merchants, artisans, tradesmen - rose to eminence, and often had a say in political affairs under the Turkic rulers of Mavarannahr, who used them as a counterbalance to the nomad nobility. This transition from a lateral or aristocratic community to a demotic one made an important contribution to the formation of a single Tajik ethnic culture.

The period from the 11th to the 13th centuries was marked by the evergrowing gap, political and cultural, between Mavarannahr and Iran. While the Seljuqis managed to create a centralised state in Persia, the Qarakhanid empire in Mavarannahr was a flimsy

confederation of self-governed cities and petty prince doms run by Turkic chieftains. Both were overrun by an onslaught of the Qara-Khitays from Western China between 1137 - 1141, before being completely destroyed by the former Seljuqi governors of Khorezm in the beginning of the 13th century. This endless succession of ephemeral rulers stemmed from the very essence of the feudal nomadic state. Polities built up to a critical size and then broke into splinters due to centrifugal tendencies amongst local rulers and secession of purely pastoralist elements, which, for some reason, failed to settle down. The traditional dihqan land ownership had once been the culprit of fiascopic trends; the iqta fief system introduced by the Qarakhanids was no less detrimental to the existence of a centralised state.

Mavarannahr fell an easy prey to the invasion of Chengiz-khan during 1219 - 1221. The consequences of the attack of the pagan Mongol hordes were truly deplorable. The medieval chronicler an-Nasawi wrote that "people became witnesses of the calamities unheard of in the past centuries ... Has anybody heard before about an horde that would begin its way from the place where sun rises, cross the lands to Derbent and go on to the country of Kipchaks from there? On arrival to a certain land this horde ransacked it and on capturing a town demolished it. Bloodshed, pillage and destruction were such that settlements stood abandoned and peasants were leaving stark naked. Overt and covert property was extorted, open and hidden things were squeezed out, and it became so that no bleating or bellow could be heard: only owls hooted and echo resounded."

Arminius Vambery has observed that "no part of all Asia suffered so severely from the incursions of the Mongolian hordes as the countries bordering on the Oxus and the Yaxartes." On top of the immediate consequences of the invasion, such as depopulation, interruption of trade links and decay of cities, which were overcome to an extent in time, it had dramatic long-term ramifications for Mavarannahr. The military expeditions of Mongols were not accompanied by large-scale resettlement and sedentarisation of nomadic peoples from Mongolia. Transoxiana was treated as a source of booty to be procured during periodic raids and a grazing ground for herds. In the absence of state-sponsored maintenance, the irrigation systems declined gradually, and vast spaces of arable land turned to pastures or even desert. In the 13th and the 14th centuries, whole clusters of villages and small towns disappeared from the map of Mavarannahr, especially in the basin of Syr-Darya.

After the death of Chengiz-khan in 1227, the Mongol empire was divided amongst his four sons, whereby the bulk of Mavarannahr was included in Chaghatai’s ulus. Very soon it became virtually independent from the Great Khan residing in Karakorum and from 1269 was in constant confrontation with three other Mongol states with their centres in China, Persia and Eastern Europe. This period was crucial with regard to the separation of Iran and Central Asia. While the Il-khans in Persia quickly converted to Islam, adopted all major elements of Iranian culture, language in particular, and readily employed local ulama to staff their relatively complex bureaucratic machine, the situation in Mavarannahr was quite different. It has been mentioned already that the Mongols themselves did not move in great numbers from their Inner Asian heartland. The main force of the Mongolian explosion under Chengiz-khan actually consisted of a number of East Turkic tribes, such as Jalair, Barlas, Orlat and others. They played an ever-increasing role in the Mongol army and were incorporated into the Mongol oboghs. By the beginning of the 14th century the Chaghatai Mongol nobles had been thoroughly Turkicised and, as Samuel Adshead has pointed out, “it was Turkish therefore that the collaborators learnt, and Turkish that they passed to the people of the oases generally.” From that time on, the word ‘Turkestan’ gained currency in reference to Mavarannahr.

The Chaghataids failed to achieve even a semblance of a centralised state. Chaghatai (1229 - 1242) was a gifted and ruthless ruler who suppressed any dissent with brutal force, but his successors became hostages to endless fighting amongst various amirs and beks - heads of Turkic or Turkicised oboghs. The tradition of Islamic statehood was interrupted in Mavarannahr; in fact, when the Ghaghataid Tarmashirin converted to Islam (around 1326) and demonstrated a degree of benevolence towards urban Perso-Islamic culture, a group of tribal aristocrats rioted and killed him.

All political entities based on the tribal system proved highly unstable in Central Asia. Even the impressive structure created by Timur from the Barlas tribe (1370 - 1405) did not survive its founder. There was an evident dichotomy, even antagonism, between the Turks who clung to the old nomadic way of life and the Turks who had become sedentarised. Their co-existence within a unified state was problematic. Under the Timurids the universal

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53 Obogh, or unagan bogol, is a tribal entity where “a single powerful clan subordinated completely some neighbouring groups of nomads, regardless of whether they were kinsmen or strangers.” (L.P. Lashuk. "Opyt tipologii etniceskikh obschestv srednevekovykh turok i mongolov." Sovetskaia Etnografija, No. 1, 1968, p. 99).
55 Actually, there are three Turkestans to be found in historical and geographic literature: Eastern, Western and Afghan. The second one, however, was always superior culturally and politically, henceforth the general designation was conferred upon it.
pair of enmities, previously 'Iran vs Turan' and 'Tajik vs Turk', largely took the form of 'Sart vs Nomadic Turk', whereby 'Sart' had the meaning of a sedentary dweller, irrespective of ethnic or linguistic affiliation.\(^{57}\) It was not unusual for whole groups of tribes to secede from the parent polity and return to the nomad way of life, creating state entities of their own and ravaging their former kin. That was definitely the case in the Chaghatai Khanate, the Golden Horde and the Timurid empire. From the end of the 14th century, all nomadic clans of different extraction who lived in the steppes between the Ural and the Irtyskh Rivers were known under the collective name of the Uzbeks.\(^{58}\) In the 15th century they formed an autarchic community with the beginnings of state organisation, of which the Chengiz-inspired 'decimal' military machine was the most notable feature.\(^{59}\)

Like any other nomadic polity it was bedevilled by the absence of legitimacy and clear rules of succession, and the central political authority remained viable only as long as it could wage successful wars which provided clan aristocracy with plunder and status.

By 1512, the Uzbeks had gradually conquered Mavarannahr and pushed vast masses of the sedentary population out of the fertile river valleys. This was the last large-scale influx of nomads into Turkestan. Afterwards, a distinctive demographic pattern emerged in what now is Tajikistan: mountainous regions were inhabited almost exclusively by the Tajiks; the broad river valleys and steppes were dominated by the Kipchak Uzbeks; while the expansive transitional areas between the two ethnic and geographic zones were characterised by a mixture of the indigenous sedentary population (Tajik and Turkic) and semi-nomadic Uzbeks.

Once the Uzbeks captured Mavarannahr, each clan was quartered around a certain city from which it collected taxes. Under such circumstances the demise of the state of the nomadic Uzbeks was inevitable, but permanent warfare against the Safavids put it off until the mid-1580s. The Khans tried to find alternative means to create unity amongst the clans and sponsored Sufi orders, especially Naqshbandiya, to this end. However, this policy backfired, for the dervish brotherhoods failed to engender strong bonds in the society and

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\(^{57}\) Originally the word "Sart", derived from the Sanskrit 'senior merchant', designated people involved in trade and commodity production, predominantly Tajiks, as opposed to Turco-Mongol nomads (13th century). With the passage of time the layer of Turks in villages and towns increased, so this term lost its ethnic dimension. (V.V. Bartold. Sochineniia. Vol. II, Part 2, Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoi literatury, 1964, pp. 527-528.)


\(^{59}\) The division of army into units comprising 100, 1,000 and 10,000 warriors was a routine practice for steppe rulers long before Chengiz-khan. However, he applied this system as a centerpiece of the government machine: combat units became administrative units as well, and military commanders served as civil officials. (See: Sh. Sandag. "Obrazovanie edinogo mongolskogo gosudarstva i Chingizkhan." In: Tataro-mongoly v Azii i Evrope." Moscow: Nauka, 1977, p. 35) In the Emirate of Bukhara each vilayet (province) consisted of several tumans (districts) - a word with the original meaning of a 10,000-strong army detachment.
at the same time these orders became a substantial economic and political force themselves, due to lavish endowments made by the ruler. At the end of the 16th century, "the Uzbek polity demilitarised itself and became a kind of Polish commonwealth: weak king, irresponsible aristocracy and dominant clericalism. The dervish orders became the leading institution in state, society and culture."60 The period of feudal sedition that ensued had disastrous results for Turkestan, comparable to those produced by the Mongol invasion.

The endless fighting amongst Uzbek clans, exacerbated by the dramatic decline of the trans-continental caravan trade in the 17th century, led to economic devastation which reached its nadir in the first half of the 18th century, when "there were no citizens left in Samarkand" and "Bukhara had only two inhabited mahallas."61 Even the rise of relatively centralised states, the Khanates of Bukhara and Khiva and later Kokand, could not reverse the trend. The history of the principality of Uroteppa is illustrative of this process. Though nominally one of the 14 vilayets, or provinces, of the Bukhara Khanate, Uroteppa was ruled independently by hakims from the Uzbek tribe of Yuz from the mid-18th century. Its territory included Panjakent, Khujand and Jizak, and was comparable in size with Kokand. The hakims raided Bukhara and Kokand periodically, and were raided in response. In the period from 1800 to 1866, Uroteppa suffered some fifty attacks; as a result, it lost two-thirds of its population and turned into "one of the most devastated areas of Central Asia."62

In the mid-19th century the territory of present-day Tajikistan was divided between the Emirs of Bukhara and Khans of Kokand, while Khujand, Uroteppa and Qarotegin remained disputed territories where dominance constantly shifted from one side to another. A number of eastern mountain vilayets, such as Bukhara's Darvoz and Kokand's Shughnan, Vakhan and Rushan were virtually independent (they only sent occasional gifts to the Emir or Khan) and unpredictable in their political alignments, thus presenting a liability rather than an asset for Bukhara and Kokand. In addition, Bukhara was engaged in permanent squabbles with Afghanistan over Balkh, Hissor, Kulob and the Pamir districts, and both Bukhara and Kokand had aspirations in Chinese Turkestan.

On top of internal rivalries amongst constituent units and ongoing external conflicts, the Khanates were cursed by a precarious dichotomy between the ancient oasis sites with their intensive agriculture, trade and urban life, on the one hand, and on the other autonomous

groups of nomads who did not acknowledge the government’s authority and exploited (or robbed) nearby towns at their discretion.

The interaction among Tajiks, sedentarised Turks and nomadic Uzbeks remained a highly complex process. Though, as Maria Subtelny has rightly observed, "the general ethnolinguistic trend was in the direction of Turkicisation and in roughly a millennium the population of Central Asia was transformed from predominantly Iranian-speaking to Turkic-speaking", the unavoidable sedentarisation of Uzbeks led to a phenomenon of widely spread bilingualism in Eastern Central Asia. Moreover, this bilingualism "was not merely the result of the impact exerted by the surrounding Uzbek population upon local Tajiks, but rather the result of the merger of the two peoples, i.e. not only Tajiks were becoming bilingual, but Uzbeks as well." In Eastern Bukhara, where Tajiks constituted the majority of the population, large numbers of Uzbeks ultimately lost their native tongue and clan divisions, and adopted the way of life of the indigenous sedentary population. On the whole, the ethnic composition of the inhabitants of Tajikistan in the 19th century was characterised by extraordinary heterogeneity: apart from Tajiks and Tajik-speaking Turks (called Chaghatai in southern vilayets), there were also various Uzbek tribes, Kyrghyz, Turkmens, Jews, Iranians, Afghans, Arabs, Lesgins, Armenians and Indians. The Tajiks were sub-divided according to their affiliation with ancient cultural and historical regions: Kulob (medieval Khuttal), Panjakent (in Zaravshon Valley), Asht (Upper Syr-Darya) and Qarotegin (foothills of the Pamirs); the Kulobis may have accounted for over 60 percent of the Tajik ethnie.

The oral tradition of the Asht Tajiks is illustrative of the tendencies in the Tajik ethnic community in the late 19th century. Asht was a locality in North-Western Ferghana which consisted of a number of qishloqs (villages), with very different histories and ethnic composition, that could be divided into three groups. First, the titular qishloq of Asht

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65 The number of Uzbek tribal names varies from 32 to 92 (P.P. Ivanov. Ocherki po istorii Srednei Azii. (XVI - seredina XIX v.) Moscow: Izdatelstvo vostochnoi literature, 1958, p. 128). Actually, the collective name "Uzbeks" was used in Bukhara only in juxtaposition with other ethnic groups, such as Tajiks or Karakalpaks; the clan identification was far more important for these nomads.
allegedly had an uninterrupted cultural tradition since the Achaemenid period and its inhabitants readily referred to Shahnama's Rustam, Alexander the Great and Qutaiba as contributors to their original Soghdian genealogy. Second, the citizens of Ponghoz claimed that their qishlog was established by migrants from the South. Darvoz in particular, whom they called "real Tajiks" as opposed to the local mixture of Soghdians and Turks ("also Tajiks"). Third, "real Tajiks" and "also Tajiks" were very persistent in stressing their dissimilarity with the predominantly Uzbek dwellers of Kamysh-Qurghon in terms of "customs, outlook and especially consciousness", though they admitted that Uzbeks had been living in the region "for a long time, too."

For centuries the Iranians of Eastern Transoxiana were exposed to the onward roll of Turkic peoples, but avoided ultimate assimilation. They did not exchange their indigenous culture for that of their conquerors, but rather welded the two into a unique combination. They did not have a state of their own, but carefully preserved the memories of their glorious past. Finally, they had elaborated a strong similarity-dissimilarity pattern, which in modern times acquired the form of a 'Tajik - Uzbek' dichotomy, and at length helped to activate the sense of ethnicity amongst members of its numerous sub-units.

**Russia's Entry**

Russia had trade connections with Central Asia as early as the tenth century AD: 95 percent of coins recovered during archaeological excavations at Novgorod originated from the Samanid mints. Starting in the 17th century, relations between the two gradually acquired a more stable and politicised character. Between the years 1600 and 1700, twenty-six embassies from Bukhara and Khiva visited Moscow, and Russia reciprocated with six missions. The rulers of Turkestan sought Russia's help in fighting their neighbours, while the Tsars' main interest lay in securing the border with Siberia and in the lucrative trade with China. In the eighteenth century, as Russia became a rapidly growing centralised land empire, it began to take an interest in expansion to the south, and took the bulk of the Kazakhs and Karakalpaks under its suzerainty between 1731 and 1742. The Khanates of Turkestan, however, remained for the time being beyond the scope of Russia's imperial ambitions.

The situation changed dramatically in the mid-nineteenth century after Russia had suffered a number of setbacks in its European policy and, more importantly, lost its role as a major

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69 *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR.* Tashkent: Fan, 1974, p. 64.
supplier of manufactured goods to world markets in competition with Great Britain, Germany and the US. The share of grain and other primary produce in Russian exports to Europe reached 96 percent, while textiles, machinery, metals and other processed goods made up 60 percent of its sales to Central Asia. In addition, Russia's nascent modern industry desperately needed raw materials, cotton in particular, which Turkestan could provide in large quantities. Such considerations induced the Russian authorities to conduct a more active foreign policy in regard to the Khanates of Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand.

Russian expansion into Turkestan in the 19th century was "a process apparently planned, logical and inexorable" and so differed in this sense from the rather spontaneous mastering of Siberia. Adventurous expeditions, such as Cossacks' raid on Urgench in 1603 and Bekovich-Cherkassky's mission to Khiva in 1717, gave way to a methodical advancement, based on thorough planning, which could be divided into three stages.

Between 1856 - 1864, the Russians strengthened their military presence in border areas and carried out three major reconnaissance missions in the region. While dismissing any large-scale aggressive actions, the imperial government sought to encourage Russian trade in Turkestan, to prevent Great Britain from meddling into Central Asian affairs and to foster closer ties with the Emir of Bukhara - "the most reliable and strong ruler in Central Asia" - in order to exploit the animosity among the Khanates.

Between 1864 - 1884, systematic conquest was launched and successfully completed. Even facing the threat of ultimate annihilation, the rulers of Bukhara and Kokand could not overcome mutual antagonism. Russian General Romanovsky reported in 1866 that "they don't conceal hatred towards each other ... and more than once expressed to me their readiness to assist us in our advancement: the Kokandians - if Bukhara is to be attacked, the Bukhariots - if Kokand is to be attacked." In 1867, the General-Governorship of Turkestan (GGT) was established, with its centre in Tashkent. It embodied all territories of Kokand and Bukhara occupied until then by the Russian army. In 1868, Kokand became a vassal of the Russian Empire and Bukhara ceded its northern cities of Khujand, Uroteppa, Panjakent, Samarkand and Qatta-Qurghon to the GGT and acknowledged its status as a Russian protectorate. Khiva followed suit in 1873 and the majority of petty principalities in Eastern Bukhara were subjugated between 1870 - 1875. In 1876, Alexander II formally

abolished the Khanate of Kokand and in 1884, when the Turkmen city of Mary (Merv) surrendered, the whole of Turkestan was included in the Russian realm. In Helene Carrere d'Encausse's adroit phrasing, "despite initial anxieties as to the supposed strength of existing Muslim states and English opposition, the conquest of Central Asia had been, in the final analysis, rapid, and, on the whole, not very bloody, at least for Russia."75

In the period from 1866 to 1899, the Russian authorities were preoccupied with organising efficient government and development of the subjugated territories. By the end of the century Russian Turkestan had comprised the GGT with five oblasts and two protectorates - Bukhara and Khiva. Once again the Tajiks found themselves divided by administrative borders. The northern and eastern parts of present-day Tajikistan with the cities of Panjakent, Uroteppa, Nau, Khujand, Isfara and Tashqurghon were included in the Samarkand and Ferghana oblasts, while the central and southern areas remained within the fold of Bukhara. In 1895, firm borders were established between Russian Turkestan and Afghanistan which have survived until today. Rushan, Shughnan and part of Vakhan were acquired by Emir Abd al-Ahad of Bukhara in return for lands on the right bank of the Panj river which became part of Afghanistan. Russia retained garrisons in the Pamir vilayets of Bukhara and subsequently annexed them in 1905 because, as Governor-General Vrevsky remarked in 1895, "the Tajiks treat the Bukhariots with animosity and we should value sympathies on the part of the Tajiks since all countries bordering the Pamirs - Badakhshan, Chitral, Gilgit, Kanjut, Tagarma - are inhabited by Tajiks who are related to the populace of Shughnan, Rushan and Vakhan."76

The Russian government deemed it feasible to preserve the Emirate of Bukhara intact for a number of reasons. First of all, it served as a buffer state covering a 1500-km border with Afghanistan. Then, the introduction of Russian administration to a 2 million plus country with centuries-long traditions of feudal unrest would be a costly affair with unclear results. Finally, Bukhara was a religious centre, renowned not only in Turkestan but throughout the world Islamic community. In the end of the 19th century, its capital city of eighty thousand had 80 madrasas with up to 10 thousand pupils including students from India, Kashgar, Afghanistan, China and Russia, some 260 mosques and dozens of sacred places (mazors) associated with various Sufi saints.77 The religious establishment played an important role in local politics, and the appointment of Russian officials there would have alienated Muslims far beyond the borders of Turkestan.

The relative isolation of Bukhara from the GGT led to a different pace of economic development in what is now Tajikistan. As Bartold has noted, the mining and manufacturing industries were in worse shape in the Khanates of Bukhara and Kokand in the beginning of the 19th century than under the Samanids in the 10th.78 The Russian conquest paved the way for capitalist penetration, which was facilitated by the construction of the Trans-Caspian railway between 1881 - 1886 and the creation of a unified monetary and customs zone in Turkestan between 1892 - 1895. Northern Tajikistan, however, found itself in a privileged position compared to the territories belonging to Bukhara. The latter was treated by Russian industrialists and merchants predominantly as a commodity market and source of raw materials until the beginning of the 20th century. The feudal land tenure and taxation systems did not undergo any changes there; as a result, in the words of a Russian geographer, "the economic management of Bukhara is carried out in a predatory way and has deplorable consequences ... The government sucks the blood of poor Bukhariots and if some time Bukhara is attached to Russia, we will literally acquire a bunch of mendicant people."79 The cause of promoting Russian economic interests in Bukhara was largely left to private enterprise. It is symptomatic that the Russian Political Agency was not established there until 1885. On the contrary, the development of the Samarkand and Ferghana oblasts of the GGT was largely inspired by the Russian government, and the construction of railroads and irrigation systems there was financed from the state budget or through government-owned banks. In 1886, a new landmark legislation on the GGT was approved, providing for private land ownership in Turkestan. The Russian authorities encouraged cotton-growing in Turkestan and during 1883 - 1889 introduced high-yield American varieties of cotton. Soon it became the main source of capital accumulation for Russian and local entrepreneurs: "hundreds of clerks, officers, other government employees and merchants rushed to grow cotton ... The fathoms of golden rain, the dream of American wealth in Turkestan eclipsed everything else. They planted cotton everywhere a piece of irrigated land could be found."80 By 1915, cotton plantations had occupied 60 - 95 percent of arable lands in the Ferghana oblast81; thenceforth, cotton monoculture prevailed in this area.

While Northern Tajikistan was gradually becoming included in the all-Russian market and division of labour, Bukhara, especially its eastern parts, stood aloof. The number of factories in the whole Emirate of Bukhara in 1917 - 28\(^2\) was less than the corresponding figure for the single Khujand uzd \(^3\) of the Samarkand oblast in the 1890s.\(^4\) Though the Emir joined the 'cotton rush' in Central Asia and by the end of the 19th century cotton accounted for 40 percent of his country's export,\(^5\) it was not until 1916 that a cohesive program was devised with the participation of the Russian Stakheev Concern to rationalise production and sales of cotton and to irrigate new vast lands for cotton-growing.\(^6\) Eastern Bukhara remained completely devoid of railroads, and pack animals were its main means of transportation.

The period of Tsarist rule in Turkestan ushered in a number of significant social and demographic changes. In the territories of the GGT, Uzbek was progressively transformed from the language of the majority to the language of all the population. In 1868, people in Samarkand spoke Tajik almost exclusively; by 1904 it had given way to Uzbek.\(^7\) This dramatic shift was caused by the fact that the Russian administration utilised Turkic Kazakhs, Tatars and Bashkirs as interpreters and sometimes staff members. The improvement in communications and education was conducive to the wider circulation of a normative Uzbek literary language rather than a handful of Uzbek dialects. Interestingly, of 415 students who completed their studies at the Tashkent Teachers' Seminary in the twenty-five years from 1879 to 1904 there were only 65 natives; of these, 54 were Kazakhs or Kyrgyzs and not one was a Tajik.\(^8\) Given that Tajiks accounted for 9 percent of the population of Turkestan in 1897\(^9\) and were settled compactly in the Samarkand and Ferghana oblasts, there was a deliberate policy of Turkicisation on the part of the Russian administration which was later complemented by Russification. In 1891, the Governor-General instructed oblast governors that volost chairmen, qozi, village headmen and other native administrative officials should use the Russian language in the course of their duties, and that a good command of Russian should be a criterion for selecting candidates to fill vacancies.\(^10\) After 1876, the Russian administration tried to introduce modern Russian-type schools with a single, officially proclaimed purpose: to train indigenous personnel

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devoted to the Tsarist regime who subsequently "will be given the task of handling all issues pertaining to local population that are not of political essence."90

In the beginning of the 20th century there existed three types of educational institutions in Turkestan: (1) traditional maktab and madrasa; (2) the so-called "new method" (usuli jadid) schools which combined Islamic education with modern European elements; (3) Russian-type schools. The Tsarist government grew more and more suspicious of the pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic activities of the Jadid schools, run mostly by well-educated Tatars, but encouraged their spread in Bukhara where they could undermine the influence of the conservative clergy. On the whole, the achievements in the field of public education both in Bukhara and Russian Turkestan were very modest; in 1917 literacy varied from 1 to 2 percent - "considerably worse than India at that time."91 However, a small stratum of middle-class intellectuals came into being in Turkestan, whose views were not confined either to Islamic dogma or to the geographic boundaries of the Russian Empire. They formed the nuclei of future Tajik and Uzbek national intelligentsias who, decades later, would "invite masses into history."92

The struggle against Russian imperial domination had its own peculiarities in Bukhara and Tajik-populated territories of the GGT. First of all, they did not suffer from the influx of Russian peasant migrants who had seized 121.5 million acres (49.2 million hectares) of the best land from Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs by 1907.93 There were only 14 Russian settlements in northern Tajikistan (the Khujand uzd) in 1914; of these, 13 were located in sparsely populated Hungry Steppe.94 Consequently, popular revolts there were caused by excessive taxation and exploitation rather than by land confiscations. When Kokand was subdued, the tax burden upon local peasants was somewhat lightened, but by the early 1880s it had increased 2-3 fold95 and had become "between 50 and 150 percent higher than those levelled upon the none-too-liberally treated people of European Russia."96 Russian industrial workers in Turkestan received wages almost twice as high as their native colleagues.97 These grievances underlay peasant riots in Khujand (1875, 1889, 1906) and in Uroteppa (1875, 1907) and tumult amongst native coal miners in Panjakent (1885).

Periodic anti-feudal riots in Eastern Bukhara also gradually acquired an anti-Russian colouring, since Russian garrisons unfailingly helped government forces to suppress insurgence. Interestingly, a huge peasant revolt headed by Abdul Vose that swept Baljuvon, Khovaling, Sary-Khosor and Kulob in 1885 and shattered the power of the Emir was one of the reasons for the establishment of the Russian Political Agency in Bukhara, which could advise local authorities how to avoid such calamities in future. At first rebellious peasants of Eastern Bukhara constantly asked the Russian representatives to save them from the arbitrariness of the Uzbek beks and the Emir officials, but to no avail. Eventually Russian officers and travellers became the target for a widespread form of spontaneous protest in Eastern Bukhara as well as in Turkestan - bandit attacks, assault and robbery. In the period from 1899 to 1917, the number of such attacks registered more than a ten-fold growth in Turkestan (from 50 to 547 annually).

The native population of Central Asia rose up protesting against poverty, infringement upon customs and religious feelings (the 1892 cholera riots in Tashkent), and forced conscription to labour battalions (the huge 1916 rebellion, which began in Khujand and then spread throughout Central Asia). However, all these uprisings were "sporadic and limited in scope ... and had no broader revolutionary significance for the Moslem masses or the Moslem leaders." By no means were they inspired by an organised nationalist and/or anti-colonialist ideology. The Tsarist regime fully succeeded in at least two important elements of its imperial policy in Central Asia: it managed to divide local peoples by artificial administrative and cultural boundaries, and it sealed off the whole region from the outer world. Even one of the severest critics of Russia, Lord Curzon of Kedleston, had to acknowledge ultimately the impregnable position of the Tsarist Empire in the region: "I

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98 The revolt began after several years of drought and locust invasions from Afghanistan had placed local farmers on the brink of complete ruin. It could not be pacified quickly because the Emir's army at the time comprised just "five or six units of soldiers, the majority of whom are thieves, gamblers, drunkards, some of them are mad and insane, others are lame and blind, who have never heard a gun shot." (Mirza 'Abdal 'Azim Sani. Tarikh-i Salatin-i Manghitiya. Moscow: Izdatelstvo Vostochnoi Literatury, 1962, p. 119.) The uprising was crushed by the irregular Uzbek cavalry from Hisor and Karotegin. In the Soviet period a district in Tajikistan was named after Vose who was being depicted as a fervent fighter against the Emir's feudal oppression.


101 Interestingly, for the first time ever indigenous women took an active part in anti-government demonstrations in Khujand and Uroteppa. (Sh. Iusupov, D. Berdiev. "Vostanie 1916 g. v gorode Ura-Tube i Ganchinskoi volosti." Izvestiia AN RT. Seriia: vostokovedenie, istorii, filologii. No. 4 (28), 1992, p. 77.)

admit that Russia has in her career of Central Asiatic conquest by devious, and often dishonourable, means achieved a successful and salutary end."103

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The Tajik ethnicity has emerged as a result of cultural meiosis, through a succession of archetypal civilization complexes: Aryan, Hellenistic, Greater Iranian, Perso-Islamic and Turkestani. Each stage of this process left an imprint on the affect and collective knowledge systems of the Tajiks, characterised by a specific 'politics of memory' which was determined most of all by morphological similarity-dissimilarity dyads. By the beginning of the 20th century, the Tajiks had retained the notion of sameness by maintaining cultural boundaries that kept them separate from Turkic ethnic groups in Central Asia. However, the weak solidarity component of their ethnie, the inability to overcome dissonances within those boundaries, reflected in competing cultural elements on the sub-ethnic level, diminished its chances to seek national status in the modern era.

The policies pursued by the latest in the series of invaders, the Russian Empire, were conducive to the preservation of sub-ethnic consciousness amongst Tajiks. Cultural differences between people living to the north and to the south of the Hissor range, or Valley Tajiks and Mountain Tajiks, were aggravated by administrative borders established by Tsarist officials. In addition to this major dichotomy, smaller communities defined by geographic and historical features, although subject to ethnic awareness, remained remarkably passive in furthering it; this was the situation where "an individual knows (s)he possesses a certain ethnic trait(s) which is no more meaningful than his or her other cultural, physical, social or territorial characteristics."104 The 1917 revolution in Russia brought the promise of change to this stalemated pattern.


Chapter II. The Formation of Modern Tajikistan.

From the second half of the nineteenth century, Central Asia was inexorably subjected to internal developments in the Russian Empire. The hectic, often controversial process of modernisation which commenced in Russia under Alexander II, continued under Stolypin and finally took the form of socialist revolution in 1917, could not have failed to affect this region in a most dramatic way. If modernisation is viewed as a transformation of a traditional society that commences "once the leaders of a society have decided to adapt their existing institutions and values to modern functions", then the natural questions to ask are: Who were the real leaders in the Central Asian societal milieu? How resistant did traditional institutions prove to be vis-à-vis elements of modernisation, such as industrialisation, territorial unification, universal education, administration and legal principles? Why did this adaptation not take the conventional linear form of moving from an agrarian to industrial society? This chapter, which is chronologically set in the period from 1917 to the 1960s, deals with the peculiarities of Tajikistan's movement towards the Soviet form of modernity, concentrating on the initially violent character of the process and its inherently contradictory features.

The Russian Revolution and Turkestan

The Russian Empire entered the year 1917 with its economy, armed forces and moral foundations badly shaken by the continuing war in Europe. Turkestan was no exception to the generally catastrophic state of affairs in the Romanovs' realm. The arbitrary low purchase prices for cotton and other raw materials introduced in 1915 had led to mass bankruptcy amongst local producers. Land tax, the main source of revenue for the Turkestan budget, more than doubled over the period between 1914 and 1916. During 1916-1917, the area under cotton declined by thirty percent and the total number of livestock plummeted almost three-fold. In 1916, shipments of cereals from metropolitan Russia met only six percent of local needs and famine became the harsh reality in Turkestan.

The political situation had become highly volatile in the General-Governorship by 1917. While the Russian conquest and the innovations that followed resulted in the establishment of lasting peace and significant improvement in living standards in the

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region, it all came at a horrendous price for the indigenous population. They acquired the status of second-grade people in their own land; the Russians brought in with them "an administration that cherished a really touching belief in its superiority over its 'uncivilised' subjects; all sorts of conflicts involving Russian settlers; Orthodox churches which symbolised the triumph of the alien faith; brothels staffed with local women." The imperial regime's administrative, legal, educational and land reforms, initiated in Turkestan under Governor-General K.P. von Kaufman (1867 - 1882) were aimed primarily at strengthening and maintaining Russian supremacy, all other goals were secondary. Once a certain degree of stability was achieved in the region and Turkestan became incorporated into the all-Russian economy, there was no compelling need for the Tsarist government to press on with reforms, especially in the political field. During his tenure as Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Russian Empire (1907 - 1911), P.A. Stolypin delivered a clear message that the Russians were not prepared to share their monopoly of power with the native population in Central Asia.

Ultimately, however, the empire found it difficult to cope with the social forces it had unleashed inadvertently in Turkestan. First of all, the ever-growing class of local entrepreneurs, industrialists and intellectuals grew more and more vociferous in its demands for equal rights with Russians. Whereas in 1906 they had asked only for religious freedom, the return of expropriated lands and the creation of a Muslim religious administration in Tashkent, in 1916, for the first time, an explicit demand for independence and the establishment of a sovereign state of Turkestan was made public at the Congress of Nationalities in Lausanne. Secondly, Russian rule failed to weaken traditional institutions, such as adat, shariat or the patriarchal agnate family; in fact, indigenous social control at a grass-roots level gained from the Russian government's recognition of local men of authority as its representatives. While proclaiming allegiance to the Tsar, many traditional leaders were disposed to pursue their own agenda in crisis periods and incite the masses against Russian rule, as happened in 1892 in Tashkent with qizi Muhitdin and ishon Abu-l-Qasim. "Hitherto notable amongst the natives for their loyal speeches and declarations."

The imperial government did not manage to create a solid social base amongst the indigenous population. Two worlds coexisted in Turkestan, one of Russian settlers and

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9 In this thesis, 'social control' is used as a neutral term "to cover all social processes to induce conformity ranging from infant socialisation through to public execution." (Stanley Cohen. Visions of Social Control. Crime, Punishment and Classification. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994, p. 2.)
administrators, the other of the local inhabitants; interaction between the two was minimal. By 1917, this coexistence had acquired overtones of open hostility. The Tsarist regime was no longer in a position to ameliorate economic difficulties in Turkestan, nor could it resort to intimidation in order to maintain the status quo, for its army and police were in complete disarray.11

Both Russians and the indigenous population of Turkestan welcomed the abdication of Nicholas II and the establishment of the Provisional Government on 27 February 1917. The Russians anticipated a quick end to the war and an easing of the economic crisis; the locals hoped to achieve the right to self-determination. Arguably, the short period in Spring - Autumn 1917 was the time of utmost, unheard-of freedom in Russia, and particularly in Turkestan. Over 70 political parties and organisations were operative throughout the former empire,12 including a variety of jadid and conservative Muslim groups, united in Shurai Islamiya (the Islamic Council) and Jami'yati 'Ulama (the Assembly of the Clergy) respectively. In May 1917, the First All-Russian Muslim Congress was held in Moscow. The majority of its 800 delegates, one-third of whom represented Central Asia, voted in favour of federation with Russia, with territorial self-rule for each nationality.13

The Russian Provisional Government, dominated by Constitutional Democrats, Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs) and Mensheviks, was reluctant to share power with local elites in Turkestan. It retained the anti-native attitudes of the Tsarist regime and, moreover, preserved the old administrative structures. Governor-General Kuropatkin issued a decree in March 1917 which stipulated that the proportion of Russians in local legislative bodies must not be lower than fifty percent.14 One month later an official of the Executive Committee of the Provisional Government made a comment to the effect that "the revolution has been waged by Russians; that is why the power is in our hands in Central Asia."15

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11 During Winter - Spring 1917, the number of deserters from the Russian armed forces rose almost five-fold, from 6,300 a month to a staggering figure of 30,900. (N.N. Golovin, "Voennye usiliiaRossii v mirovoi voine." Voeno-istoricheskii zhurnal, No. 4, 1993, p. 29.) Arrest and dismissal of officers by the rank and file soldiers were the order of the day and, as the military commander of the Samarkand oblast reported, there were evident "tremendous decay of discipline in the regiments and general licentiousness of soldiers." (D.I. Soifer, "Bolshevistskie voennye gruppy Turkestanskogo voennogo okruga v 1917 godu." In: Iu.I. Korabel'ev, ed. Voennye organizatsii partii bolshevikov v 1917g. Moscow: Nauka, 1986, p. 252.)


In 1917, only the Bolsheviks appeared to have a positive solution to the nationality question. Their Seventh All-Russian Conference in April confirmed the right of nations to self-determination, but conditioned it with the supreme interests of the proletariat's struggle for socialism, thus creating a space for political manoeuvre. A sizeable part of the native intelligentsia in Turkestan found the Bolshevik doctrine attractive, since it promised equality with Russians and an accelerated pace of social progress. As Alexandre Bennigsen has noted, "their Marxism was vague, if not unlearned. Their aims were twofold: reformist vis-à-vis traditional Islam and nationalist vis-à-vis the creation of independent Muslim polities free from Russian domination." The Bolsheviks, in their turn, regarded Muslim socialists as a useful means of spreading the Party's influence in Central Asia.

The second half of 1917 was characterised by further decline of authority in Turkestan. Organs of the Provisional Government coexisted and competed with various self-proclaimed Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies whilst the bulk of the indigenous population stood aloof from the political struggle. The prosecutor of Samarkand oblast reported in August 1917 that "Samarkand and the lands of Bukhara and Khiva face an exceptional situation now ... The natives (Uzbeks, Tajiks, Sarts, Bukharan Jews and others) are absolutely not acquainted with political and social doctrines, and nurture their very special outlook on state power, which is extremely durable and is in striking contradiction to the views of Russian citizens ... The Soviets' authority amongst the populace is based on the notion that they are propped up by military force rather than the recognition of their rights to decide upon vital problems." At the end of the day it was precisely Bolshevik and left-wing SR influence in the army that secured victory over the Provisional Government throughout Turkestan in October 1917.

Nationalist elements in Turkestan were too weak and fragmented to challenge Russian supremacy, and inevitably had to decide which side to support in the Russian Civil War. The idea of preserving the old state of affairs did not appeal to them; and finally the bulk of the national intelligentsia either joined the Turkestan Communist Party (TCP) or at least remained neutral in respect to its activities. After the Red Guards

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19 Even Soviet scholars admitted the "outstanding role" of the Bolshevik-dominated units, especially the First and the Seventh Siberian Regiments in Tashkent and Samarkand, in the establishment of Soviet power in southern Central Asia which used to be described as a popular revolution. (See: D.I. Soifer. "Bolshevistskie voennye gruppy Turkestanskogo voennoo okruja v 1917g." In: Iu.I. Korablev, ed. Voennye organizatsii partii bolshevikov v 1917g. Moscow: Nauka. 1986, pp 249-250.)
quashed the short-lived Kokand Autonomy in February 1918 and the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) was promulgated on 1 May 1918, Soviet power became the single most important force in the region. As the White General Denikin noted, "by the Summer of 1918 the whole Turkestan okrug had been captured by the Bolsheviks with the assistance of Hungarian and German prisoners-of-war settled there."\(^{20}\) All alternative political organisations including Shurai Islamiya and Jami'yi 'Ulama were disbanded, and even Muslim Soviets (Musovdepy) were merged with district Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies (Raisovdepy) because, according to the TASSR government, there could not be "division between Russians and Muslims in Soviet Turkestan."\(^ {21}\) The adoption in October 1918 of the TASSR Constitution, which emulated Soviet Russia's basic law, and placed its defence, foreign affairs, communications, transport, industry and finances under Moscow's jurisdiction, underlined the process of Turkestan's integration into the Soviet realm. It received further impetus with the end of fighting in mainland Russia in 1920; henceforth the vast territories of Turkestan, which included northern Tajikistan, shared all major perturbations of the Communist experiment in full measure. The patterns of War Communism, wholesale nationalisation, New Economic Policy (NEP), industrialisation and collectivisation in Khujand and Isfara did not differ much from those in Tambov or Donetsk.

**The Downfall of Bukhara**

The situation was quite different in the Bukharian Emirate. The two revolutions of 1917 had a very modest impact on this country. Soviets were organised exclusively in Russian settlements there, and generally kept a low profile. In November 1917, there were only three Bolsheviks in Bukhara.\(^ {22}\) Emir Alim-khan's main concern was the increasing activism of the jadid movement which demanded liberal reforms, particularly in the sphere of education. In April 1917, the most active jadids were arrested and flogged, and their leaders, most notably Faizulla Khojaev, sought asylum in New Bukhara and Turkestan. With the triumph of the Bolsheviks in Turkestan came an opportunity for the jadids to implement their reformist program. In September 1918, some 200 radical jadids created the Bukharan Communist Party (BCP); two years later its membership exceeded five thousand.\(^ {23}\) Faizulla Khojaev, though not a member of the BCP, was included in the Turkestan Commission (Turkkomissiia) - the plenipotentiary body established by the Russian Communist Party and the Russian

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government in March 1919 to supervise and coordinate all Party and state activities in the region.\textsuperscript{24}

The first attempt to overthrow the Emir and install \textit{jadid} authority in Bukhara took place in February 1918 when F.I. Kolesov, Chairman of the Turkestan government and an ardent Bolshevik, arrived in Bukhara with 500 Red Guards from Tashkent only to find that Faizulla Khojaev’s promise of mass popular revolt against Alim-khan was a bluff. He had to retreat and for more than two years Bukhara was allowed to live in relative peace. Whenever the question of sending additional troops and resources to Turkestan was raised, Lenin invariably opposed it: "Your demands for personnel are exorbitant. This is ridiculous or worse than ridiculous if you imagine that Turkestan is more important than the Centre or Ukraine ... In my opinion, Frunze asks for too much. We should capture Ukraine first, let Turkestan wait and get by somehow."

In the Summer of 1920 the wait was over. On 28 August forces of the Turkestan Front under the command of Mikhail Frunze attacked the Bukharan Emirate, and by the second of September had taken control of its capital city and northern and central districts. An easy victory was guaranteed not only by the technical superiority of the Red Army;\textsuperscript{26} as had happened many times before, the constituent principalities showed little desire to fight side by side with the Emir. Only the city of Bukhara offered fierce resistance. Alim-khan fled to Dushanbe. On 6 October 1920, the Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic was proclaimed, and Faizulla Khojaev became the head of its \textit{jadid}-dominated government.

The deposed Emir failed to gather any considerable forces around him in Dushanbe. His position was thoroughly weakened by intermittent clashes between local warlords; in December 1920, the strongmen of Qarategin rebelled against him. Consequently, the Soviet Hissor Expeditionary Corps, formed in November 1920 to gain control over Eastern Bukhara, managed to resolve this task by Spring 1921. Alim-khan fled to Afghanistan and the Extraordinary Dictatorial Commission was set up in Eastern Bukhara to act as a supreme administrative organ on behalf of the Bukhara People’s Republic. Similarly, the Military-Political Trio was empowered by the TASSR to rule in the Pamirs.

The Tajiks of Eastern Bukhara initially welcomed the Red Army soldiers. They knew nothing about Communism, and the majority of them had not even heard about the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{24} A. Ishanov, \textit{Rol kompartii i Sovetskogo pravitelstva v sozdании natsionalnoi gosudarstvennosti uzbekskogo naroda}. Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1978, pp. 91-92.
\item \textsuperscript{26} The task force of the Turkestan Front comprised 7,000 infantry, 2,500 cavalry, 40 cannons, 230 machine-guns, 10 armoured vehicles, 5 armoured trains and 11 planes and was opposed by Emir’s 8,300 infantry, 7,600 cavalry, 23 cannons and 16 machine-guns. (O. Khudoiberdyev, \textit{Boevata dražiba, rozhdennâia Oktiâbrem}. Moscow: Nauka, 1984, p.79.)
\end{itemize}
dramatic events of 1917; what they understood and cared about was that the oppressive rule of the Emir and his Uzbek warlords was over. The isolated self-sufficient peasant communities in Eastern Bukhara strove for autonomous existence according to ancient traditions in a peaceful environment, with as little state interference as possible. Of course, these hopes could not eventuate under the new regime. The Dictatorial Commission appointed Revolutionary Committees (revkoms) to each of the five vilayets of Eastern Bukhara, and these began to requisition food, confiscate private and vaqf lands and mobilise people for public works. In European Russia "arrogant, often abutting on malversation activities of revkoms, indulgence in bribery, drinking and other excesses"\(^{27}\) caused a large-scale peasant revolt led by A.S. Antonov between Autumn 1920 - Summer 1921; in Central Asia the defensive reaction of the indigenous population took the form of the so-called basmachi movement.

The Resistance in Central Asia

The interpretation of the basmachi as mere gangs of "counter-revolutionary feudal elements" who favoured "political banditism in combination with criminal activities"\(^{28}\) cannot hold, for the movement at its height had an undoubtedly mass character and pursued definite political goals, centred mainly around the preservation of the old economic and social order. It even managed to form a Provisional Government in Fergana in August 1919. It is equally hard to corroborate the notion that "the struggle between the Basmachi and the Soviet Russian troops was not between Communists and anti-Communists, as in Russia, but between Russians and Moslems."\(^{29}\) The Fergana Provisional Government was formed as a result of an alliance between an eminent basmachi leader, Madamin-bek, and a former Tsarist officer, Monstrov, commander of the Russian Peasant Army - an alliance that "enjoyed support from merchants and townspeople of both nationalities" and survived "both Monstrov's death in January 1920 and Madamin's surrender in March of the same year."\(^{30}\) On the other hand, in late 1920 indigenous conscripts made up almost 33 percent of the regiments of the Turkestan Front that fought the basmachi.\(^{31}\)

At risk of oversimplifying, it seems that the main conflict stemmed from protest by the predominantly peasant society of Turkestan against any attempts at radically reforming existing economic patterns and concomitant rules of social behaviour. Ideological, religious and nationalist considerations were of secondary importance in this context.


The successes and defeats of Soviet power in its struggle with the *basmachi* were directly linked to its agrarian policies.

During 1918 - 1919, *basmachi* forces in the Ferghana Valley, including Northern Tajikistan, numbered 7,000 fighters, but by the Spring of 1920 their ranks had swollen four-fold.\(^{32}\) The Soviet authorities began to realise that they could not succeed by purely military methods, and opted for some social and economic concessions. The VI Congress of the Turkestan Communist Party (August 1921) stressed that the abolition of mandatory food requisitions, cessation of looting by the Red Army, a broad propaganda campaign, nativisation of the local administrative bodies, and the especially cautious implementation of land reform, which "absolutely did not affect peasants of average wealth [*seredniaki*]" had been instrumental in undermining the *basmachi* movement.\(^ {33}\) The arrival of reinforcements from Russia and the endorsement of a general amnesty enabled the Soviet authorities to deal a final blow to the *basmachi* in Turkestan in 1922, when from February through to October, 119 out of 200 *basmachi* groups dissolved or surrendered,\(^ {34}\) and the rest were annihilated or moved elsewhere.

The situation in Eastern Bukhara had its own distinctive features. The euphoria caused by the collapse of the Emirate quickly gave way to popular resentment of marauding Red Army units and the new dictatorial organs which they supported. In the Summer of 1921, the local population began to create paramilitary formations and demand the withdrawal of the Red Army. Unlike in Ferghana, these formations acted exclusively as self-defence forces, and very seldom operated outside their parochial territories. Each of them was headed by a local strongman: a former *bek*, mullah, tribal chief or village elder. They offered resistance both to the Soviet authorities and to Alim-khan's guerilla units. In Turkestan in 1922, the Soviet state had been able to enforce social control through established agencies, such as the ramified Communist organisation, numerous garrisons linked by railroad and the hierarchy of elected Soviets which began to replace *revkoms* in 1919; but Eastern Bukhara was completely devoid of those attributes. The nominal incorporation of some strongmen into the Soviet structures\(^ {35}\) by no means meant the strengthening of Soviet power in Eastern Bukhara. By the end of 1921, in the absence of an overarching state authority, the whole country had slipped into anarchy and violence.

The Red Army was fighting against Enver Pasha's guerillas, who were operating from Afghanistan with the Emir's blessing and with British money and supplies. The chief of

\(^{32}\) *Grazhdanskaia voina v SSSR*. Moscow: Voennoe izdatelstvo, 1986, pp. 128, 357.


\(^{35}\) In July 1921, Davlatmin-bek (formerly *bek* of Kulob) and *ishan* Sultan (a noble from Gharm) were appointed to head *revkoms* in their respective territories.
the Uzbek Loqai tribe Ibrahim-bek raided adjacent Tajik districts, and periodically assaulted both Soviet and Enver-pasha’s troops. In mountainous districts, such as Mastchoh, Darvoz and Qarotegin, villagers blocked and fortified narrow roads, and ambushed all strangers, irrespective of their origin or party affiliation. In lowlands where people could not effectively resist more or less large armed units, they either met the stronger party’s demands for supplies and booty, or joined its ranks to avenge their relatives. Most commonly, they migrated abroad: 206,800 people, one-fourth of Eastern Bukhara’s population, left their homes, predominantly in south-western and western districts, during 1920 - 1926. All in all, the situation in Eastern Bukhara in that period bears a striking resemblance to that in Tajikistan in 1992. In both cases it was not the state (the Soviet or the Emir’s) which offered the populace a viable strategy for survival, but rather an assortment of local strongmen who were in a position to guarantee (or deny) livelihood, and to organise defense.

Red Army commanders indiscriminately labelled all their adversaries basmachi, Enver Pasha’s soldiers called themselves mojahedin, but the local population itself employed neither of these terms in reference to their militias. Instead of ideological, political or religious markers, they used the name of a specific warlord for identification purposes: Fuzail Makhsum in Gharm, Dilovarsho in Darvoz, Yuldash Sohibnazar in Hisror, Asror-khan in Mastchoh, etc. In late 1922, there were 250 self-defence paramilitary groups in Eastern Bukhara. They comprised 5,000 people, recognised no supreme authority, and fought ferociously against any intruder. The thoroughly reinforced Red Army regiments had destroyed the Emir’s forces in Eastern Bukhara by the Summer of 1923, but the task of subduing local strongmen proved far more difficult.

In February 1922, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party decreed that in order to cope with the basmachi in Bukhara it was imperative “to make concessions to the local population, particularly to return the confiscated vaqf lands, restore traditional courts and pardon moderate elements of the basmachi.” In 1923, Eastern Bukhara became exempt from land tax and received substantial credits

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36 Even before 1917 the Loqai terrorised and plundered their Tajik neighbours and pushed them out of the Yavan Valley. Some 25,000 Loqai nomads enjoyed the Emir’s favour and were a kind of bete noir for the rest of the population in Eastern Bukhara. (See: B.Kh. Karmysheva. Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii iuzhnykh raionov Tadzhikistana i Uzbekistana. Moscow: Nauka, 1976, pp. 97-98, 154-156.)


40 It is estimated that between 1922 - 1924 in Kulob and Gham alone 5528 people perished and 2912 were wounded at hands of fellow-Muslims Ibrahim-bek and Enver-pasha. (A.I. Zevelev, Ju. A. Puliakov, L.V. Shishkina. Basmachestvo: Pravda istorii i vymysel falsifikatorov. Moscow: Mysl, 1986, p. 179.)

41 Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR. Tashkent: Fan, 1974, p. 323.
and shipments of consumer goods from Russia. In November 1923, a selective land and water reform was carried out in the Loqai district, which benefited the majority of local inhabitants at the expense of the late Emir's estate. Soon after that a conference of Loqai ulama issued a judgement to the effect that, on the one hand, Soviet power was not in contradiction with Islamic norms, and on the other hand the basmachi could not be regarded as defenders of the faith. "It was one of the first sentences passed on the resistance movement. Shortly, a similar kurultai took place in Bukhara, and 113 religious authorities signed and sealed a proclamation which denounced the insurgents and called upon the populace to render assistance to the Red Army."\(^42\)

Two well-organised campaigns which combined military, political and economic measures brought Eastern Bukhara under Soviet control during 1925 - 1926. This region was spared the horrible excesses that accompanied the strengthening of Communist rule in Ukraine or Kazakhstan. Still, any serious crisis, such as the bad harvest in 1925 or the attempt at mass collectivisation in 1929, would cause the resurgence of armed resistance.\(^43\) In Eastern Bukhara "although Soviet in name, the local authority structure remained unchanged from the pre-revolutionary period, traditional leaders merely assuming the new Soviet titles."\(^44\) This situation precluded the implementation of socialist reforms in Southern Tajikistan, but at the same time negated any possibility of an all-out anti-Soviet uprising. Fuzail Makhsum in 1929 and Ibrahim-bek in 1931 managed to assemble only 150 - 200 warriors in what are considered the two last outbursts of the basmachi movement in Tajikistan.\(^45\) A certain ishon summed up the hopelessness of their enterprise when he appealed to Makhsum: "Fuzail, don't fight against the Red Army, because you have neither state, nor arms. How can you possibly fight such a big and strong power? ... If you die in this war you will die an ass. You are not going to become a shahid."\(^46\) The pacification of Eastern Bukhara was nearing its end, and the period of Soviet transformation and adjustment was about to commence.

The Evolution of Tajik Statehood

Once Communist power prevailed at the civil war fronts and suppressed its internal enemies, its leadership set out to build a viable state on the expanses of the former Russian Empire. After years of breakdown of all civil authority, the Bolsheviks began

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\(^{43}\) Not surprisingly, in 1932 only 38.5 percent of all peasant homesteads were collectivised in Tajikistan as compared to 60 percent throughout Central Asia. (M.S. Sadykov. *Istoriyeksi opyt KPSS po stroitelstvu sotsializma v Tadzhikistane (1917-1959gg.)* Dushanbe: Irfon, 1967, p. 263.) In remote mountain areas collective farms were not established until 1936.


to install a mono-organisational political system which would ultimately give them an almost infinite capacity for social control and mobilisation, and produce a society "structured and operating substantially as a single organisation."47

In Central Asia the Bolsheviks at first had to rely heavily on local 'national Communists' - essentially radical reformist intellectuals. In 1920, there were four communist parties in the region: the Russian Communist Party, the TCP, the BCP and the Khorezmian Communist Party. The relationship amongst them was not without problems. At times national Communists directly confronted the Centre, as in January 1920, when Turar Ryskulov, the Chairman of the Regional Muslim Bureau of the Russian Communist Party, put forward the ideas of forming a Turkic Republic which would embody not only Turkestan but Bukhara and Khiva as well, and a united Turkic Communist Party to govern it.48 Even more blatant manifestations of dissent occurred in Bukhara, where a number of high-rank party and state officials, including the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Bukharan People's Republic, Usman Khojaev, defected to Enver Pasha in late 1921. Moscow applied a three-pronged policy to tighten its grip over Central Asian Communist organisations: it despatched experienced Bolshevik cadres to the region;49 it recruited new indigenous personnel from circles other than the traditional intelligentsia;50 and finally, by recurrent purges it removed 'class alien' elements from the Party structures.51 In May 1922, the Central Asian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party was organised, and assumed control over all existing Communist structures. From that time on, decisions made in Moscow could not to be altered by local Party organisations, which in fact were gradually transformed into mere executants of directives from the Russian Communist Party Central Committee.

49 Over the period from February to December 1921, 869 Party officials from Russia were posted to Turkestan. (A.I. Khon. Detalnost Kommunisticheskoi partii po osushestveniu novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki v Turkestane. Tashkent: Fan, 1986, p. 163.)
50 One of the most important sources of the formation of the new native elite was the Red Army, where Central Asian recruits underwent illiteracy liquidation courses and massive Communist indoctrination. In the 1920s military service was viewed by local poverty-stricken peasants as a potent means to increase their social status and receive material benefits: the draft of volunteers to the Red Army in Tajikistan in 1927 was overfulfilled by 20 percent. Many Tajik soldiers were assigned to administrative positions in their republic immediately upon demobilisation. (O. Khudojerdyev. Boevaya drechba, rozhdeniaia Oktabrema. Moscow: Nauka, 1984, pp. 102-105.)
51 In 1922, 14,000 members were expelled from the BCP, leaving a total membership of a meagre 1,560. (Alexandre A. Bennigsen and S. Enders Wimbush. Muslim National Communism in the Soviet Union. A Revolutionary Strategy for the Colonial World. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1979, p. 82.) The TCP lost 32,705 members of the original 49,206 from October 1921 to January 1923. (A.I. Khon. Detalnost Kommunisticheskoi partii po osushestveniu novoi ekonomicheskoi politiki v Turkestane. Tashkent: Fan, 1986, p. 52.)
The establishment of a uniform territorial-administrative system based on centralised control from Moscow was another important step on Central Asia's way to 'USSR, Inc.' Known as the national-territorial delimitation of 1924, it remains a highly controversial issue in terms of its motivation and far-reaching results. In Rakowska-Harmstone's words, "the process of delimitation was designed to grant political autonomy to major ethnic groups, in line with the stated policy of the right to national self-determination; the degree of formal autonomy granted depended on the degree of political development. Other reasons for the delimitation, equally important if not explicitly stated, were the Russian desires to facilitate All-Union (federal) control and to keep local nationalities apart by application of a 'divide and rule' policy."  

It would be misleading, however, to regard this process as a scheme conceived and implemented exclusively by Bolshevik masterminds in Moscow. In reality, the delimitation was greatly influenced by nationalist forces in Central Asia.

In October 1919, the Russian government stated that "self-determination of the peoples of Turkestan and elimination of all kinds of national inequality and privileges of one national group at the expense of another constitute the backbone of the entire policy of the Soviet government of Russia."  

Ostensibly this declaration was aimed at overcoming the image of Russians as a domineering force in Central Asia. In January 1920, Turkkomissiia published the draft document entitled 'On the Dismemberment of Turkestan for Three Separate Republics According to National Features', that is, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. Why was it decided to create these particular national units instead of devising plain administrative divisions according to territory and population, or simply retaining existing borders, as some Russian orientalists advised? It appears that the leadership of the Russian Communist Party believed the fledgling sense of national identity a force to be counted with. As Stalin emphasised at the XII Congress of the Russian Communist Party in April 1923, apart from the danger of Great Russian chauvinism, "there is local chauvinism, especially in those republics that have several nationalities. I allude to Georgia, Azerbaijan, Bukhara, and partly Turkestan, where we have several nationalities whose progressive elements may soon begin to compete with one another for primacy."  

Indeed, the fact that Bukhara and Khiva had become People's Socialist Republics by no means alleviated the historical animosity between Tajiks and Uzbeks, or Turkmen and Uzbeks. If anything, the turbulent years of revolution and civil war had politicised previously dormant ethnic elites, so that in the 1920s traditional raiding, plundering and blood feuds were compounded by confrontation along ethnic lines in local Party committees. The creation

of national state entities under Moscow's strict supervision appeared to be the best way to placate nascent nationalist sentiments, avert a serious conflict in the already ravaged region, and in the long run utilise Central Asian elites in building Communism.

There is little doubt that Islamic, tribal and local affiliations remained the potent sources of identification for indigenous people in Central Asia at the beginning of the 20th century. Still, this region was not immune to the general rise of nationalism in Asian countries, such as Turkey, Iran or Afghanistan, where it had successfully ousted ideas of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism. In Central Asia, too, "the development of a capitalist economic order, the spread of literacy, written communication and modern education culminated in the rise of local and regional elites which ... identified themselves consciously with a particular region and ethno-linguistic group and language. These elites were the architects of the forthcoming nation."56 Interestingly, contemporary scholars in Uzbekistan maintain that pan-Turkism in Central Asia was essentially a manifestation of robust Uzbek nationalism later emasculated by Soviet authorities.57

In summary, the presumably 'divide and rule'-motivated policy of national-territorial delimitation proved to be in line with the aspirations of ethnic elites in Central Asia. It is rather this policy was conducted that echoes today in numerous inter-ethnic disputes in the former Soviet Union. These tensions are caused either by unclearly defined borders, or by the perception that these borders had been drawn wrongfully in the first place. As the leading Tajik historian Rahim Masov has written, "it is still not clear what criterion was decisive for the incorporation of this or that settlement into the newly created republics, how other factors were treated, and whether economic, historical, national and other peculiarities were considered objectively, and whether interests of every nationality were taken into account."58

Arguably, the Tajiks suffered most from the arbitrariness of new administrative borders. Prior to 1924, 47.7% of some 1,200,000 Tajiks of Central Asia lived in TASSR and 52.3% in the Bukharan People's Soviet Republic, accounting respectively for 7.7% and 31.0% of the total populations in those republics.59 However, Tajik participation in Central Asian political life was negligible. As of September 1924, 49% of BCP members were Uzbeks, 22% Russians, 8% Turkmens, 5% Tatars and only 0.7% Tajiks.60 There were no Tajiks in the BCP Central Committee or in any other

important positions in the Bukharan Republic. A similar situation prevailed in Turkestan. In 1923, the 77 Turkestani students at the Communist University of Toilers of the Orient in Moscow - the main institution to produce elite party cadres for the Soviet periphery - included not a single Tajik.\textsuperscript{61} During 1921-22, the People's Commissariat of Nationalities of Turkestan (Turkkomnats) consisted of four national departments (Kyrghyz, Turkmen, Uzbek and National Minorities). Tajiks were under the jurisdiction of the fourth department, on a par with Armenians, Latvians and Germans. Turkkomnats published 60 newspapers and magazines in native languages, but none in Tajik.\textsuperscript{62} Stalin, then People's Commissar of Nationalities of Russia, did not include Tajiks in the number of main Central Asian ethnic groups either: "There are three nationalities in Bukhara: Uzbeks, Turkmens and Kyrghyz."\textsuperscript{63}

Not surprisingly, there were no Tajiks in the Special Territorial Commission of the Central Asian Bureau of the Russian Communist Party which was created in Spring 1924 to redraw boundaries impartially according to the predominance of a particular ethnic group in a given territory. The fate of the Tajiks was decided by four Uzbeks, five Kazakhs, one Ukrainian, one Lithuanian, one Latvian, one Russian, one Turkmen and one Kyrghyz.\textsuperscript{64} Tajikistan was to become an autonomous \textit{oblast} in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Uzbekistan received the most fertile, populated and developed territories of Central Asia: Ferghana, Samarkand and part of Syr-Darya \textit{oblasts} of Turkestan, Western Bukhara, south-eastern Khorezm and the city of Tashkent. Tajikistan was given Eastern Bukhara and the Pamirs. Henceforth, in October 1924 Tajikistan was deprived of any city, and large concentrations of the Tajik population in Bukhara, Samarkand, Ferghana and Termez stayed outside its borders. Whilst Uzbek, Kazakh, Turkmen and Kyrghyz officials bargained ferociously for every inch of land, the Uzbek national sub-commission quietly determined borders for the Tajiks. In the meantime, Uzbek newspapers published articles maintaining that the "small number and dispersedness of Tajiks over great expanses do not allow them to create an independent political life"\textsuperscript{65} and that, anyway, the inevitability of assimilation of the Tajiks "is predetermined by the movement of the social progress."\textsuperscript{66} It was only intervention by the Politburo of the RCP Central Committee on 11 October 1924, that precluded the transformation of Tajikistan into simply one of the districts of Uzbekistan: the Tajik state entity was instead elevated to the status of an autonomous republic.\textsuperscript{67}


\textsuperscript{67} \textit{Ocherki istorii kompartii Turkestana, Bukhary i Khorezma.} Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1959, p. 73.
In December 1924, the first government of the Tajik autonomy of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic was created, and in March 1925 the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic was officially proclaimed. The inadequate character of the national-territorial delimitation as far as the Tajiks were concerned was accentuated by the fact that the capital of the new republic, in the absence of alternatives, had to be established in the qishloq of Dushanbe which, with less than 1,000 inhabitants, had never before served as a cultural or administrative centre.  

The Tajik autonomy embraced only 63.1 percent of all Central Asian Tajiks; 35.8 percent of them remained enfolds by Uzbekistan.  

The elevation of Tajikistan to a full Union Republic in October 1929, and the acquisition of Khujand and other Tajik lands in Ferghana, rectified the situation only partially. Samarkand and Bukhara, the two paramount cultural, spiritual and economic centres of the Tajiks, were never released by Uzbekistan. The Uzbek leaders used underhand tactics to prevent such a contingency: the capital of Uzbekistan was temporarily moved from Tashkent to Samarkand, where Tajik citizens were encouraged to call themselves Uzbeks, otherwise they could be sent to ‘brotherly Tajikistan’ to help overcome its backwardness. This policy yielded the following results: in 1917, there were 44,758 Tajiks and 3,301 Uzbeks amongst the Samarkandis; the corresponding figures in 1926 stood at 10,716 and 43,304. In reality, however, Tajiks constituted over 70% of the population of Bukhara and Samarkand oblasts.

The new Tajik government had to start nation-state building from scratch. Apart from the fact that eponymous people accounted for an absolute majority (74.6 percent) of the republic’s population, there was little else to bind them together. A Tajik scholar has written that "Tajiks who lived in the Hissor mountains did not have knowledge about Tajiks residing in Khujand. And Tajiks of the Zaravshon Valley were not in the least cognisant of the life of Tajiks in Gorno-Badakhshan." As late as 1935, nine raions of Tajikistan had no telephone and telegraph installations, and seven other raions were devoid of any means of communication at all. The level of development of constituent regions in the republic varied considerably: the North (Khujand, Isfara, Kanibodom) had relatively relatively industrialised areas with market-oriented farming; the Centre and the South (Hissor, Kulob, Qurghonteppa, Gharm) clung to patriarchal subsistence agriculture, and had very little access to the benefits of modern civilisation as for the

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74 In 1925, the Chairman of the Kulob viloyat Abdulaziev made a rather vitriolic statement: "I represent a very backward people. We don't have schools. I have a facsimile seal in my pocket and
Pamirs, its people still practiced stone age methods of agriculture and constantly teetered on the edge of survival.\textsuperscript{75} The task of bringing all Tajiks together appeared almost impossible but the nascent Tajik elite had a very powerful instrument at its disposal - the Soviet government machine, with its vast economic potential and efficient coercive mechanisms.

In the 1920s and early 1930s what can be called a 'territorial nation' was being feverishly constructed in Tajikistan. It was based on a sense of clear-cut boundaries, as well as on a commonality of laws and legal and governmental institutions. Between 1926 - 1929, the previously ill-assorted territorial-administrative structure was unified and simplified throughout the republic: the newly created seven \textit{okrugs} and one autonomous \textit{oblast} were divided into \textit{raions}, which in turn comprised several \textit{selsovets} each. In 1926, the process of mass Sovietisation of the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic began, and was successfully completed in 1929 (extraordinary dictatorial organs - \textit{revkoms} - had previously been replaced in northern Tajikistan by elected Soviets). In 1931, the Constitution of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was adopted, consolidating and sanctioning the changed political system. Finally, the independent Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) was set up in 1929, with a membership of 1,479 (48 percent Tajiks)\textsuperscript{76} as compared to the total of 11 Communists in Eastern Bukhara in 1924.\textsuperscript{77} The Tajik Communist elite had grown sufficiently to fill vacancies in state agencies, especially at the grass-roots level; while at the beginning of 1925 eighty percent of personnel in local executive committees were former Emirate officials,\textsuperscript{78} by 1931 they had been all but expunged.

The growth of a national elite in Tajikistan was facilitated by the general policy of nativisation of cadres conducted by Moscow during 1920 - 1934. As Stalin pointed out in 1923, "in order to make Soviet power dear to peasants of another [non-Russian] nation, it is necessary to make it understandable to them, to have it operating in the native language, to staff schools and organs of government with people who know the tongue, traditions, customs, everyday life of non-Russian nationalities."\textsuperscript{79} The Commission for Tajikisation of the State Apparatus was set up in Dushanbe in March 1926. In October 1929, the ratio of indigenous personnel in central republican organs

\begin{flushright}
when they bring me a paper [for signature] I stamp it, but I don't know what is written there ...We drink from wooden cups. Our footwear is also made of wood. Everything we have is made of wood. We have never seen the glass." (M.S. Sadykov. \textit{Istoricheskii opyt FPSS po stroitelstvu sotsializma v Tadzhikistane} (1917-1959gg.)) Dushanbe: Irfon, 1967, p. 117.)


reached 14.3 percent, at the okrug level 22.2 percent and in raions - 44.9 (72.0 percent in 1933). Of course, all more or less important matters were decided upon in Moscow, and their solutions were supervised by centrally appointed personnel. Still, the policy of nativisation laid a solid foundation for the emergence of a viable territorial bureaucracy in Tajikistan in the 1970s.

The advancement of a common Tajik culture was potentially another important factor for fostering a sense of national cohesion. However, the loss of the tremendous cultural and intellectual resources of Samarkand and Bukhara inhibited this process. The dialect of these two regions was supposed to form the basis of a contemporary literary Tajik language, but there were not enough qualified people in Tajikistan to promote it. Nor did the introduction of Latin (1928) and then Russian (1940) alphabets instead of the old Arabic script help to preserve the great medieval tradition. On the other hand, it was not until the advent of Soviet power that the rich cultural heritage and history of the Tajiks became subject to systematic research and popularisation. In 1930, a special Committee of Tajik Studies was established in Dushanbe, and two years later it was transformed into the State Research Institute, dealing with a whole array of topics in Tajik history, language, literature and ethnography. The Soviet authorities also sponsored national cinematography, fine arts and other forms of intellectual activity that altogether constituted "the new motor of ethnic revival." The unprecedented spread of education created an evergrowing social stratum receptive to the ethnic myths reconstructed and elaborated by the Tajik intelligentsia.

In 1897, only 0.5 percent of the Tajiks in Eastern Bukhara were literate, but after the creation of a national republic Tajikistan registered spectacular progress in literacy, even in comparison with its richer Central Asian neighbours (Table 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Russians</th>
<th>Tajiks</th>
<th>Uzbeks</th>
<th>Kazakhs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>63.5</td>
<td>61.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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Compared to a literacy rate of about 20 percent in Iran, Turkey and the Indian subcontinent, complete literacy was achieved in Tajikistan in the late 1950s.\textsuperscript{84} In 1940, there were in Tajikistan six tertiary education institutions and thirty colleges with 8,262 students, 74 percent of whom were being trained to become teachers.\textsuperscript{85} That year allocations to education programs accounted for 39.5 percent of all outlays from the republic's budget.\textsuperscript{86} In the early 1960s, the number of tertiary students per 10,000 of population was 131 in Tajikistan, 71 in France, 24 in Turkey, 18 in Pakistan and 2 in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{87}

The unprecedented social mobilisation achieved in the course of the Communist experiment throughout the USSR was instrumental in turning the latent and degenerating Tajik \textit{ethnie} into a proto-nation. It hardly mattered that the whole mobilisation process had been conceived to serve the ultimate goal of building a communist society devoid of class, national or state distinctions. What mattered in the 1920s and 1930s was that the Tajiks acquired a common and concrete political goal; that is, the establishment of the Tajik socialist nation. The populace may not have cared a straw about socialism \textit{per se}, but large sections were forced to take up political activism, and consequently considered themselves members of a great Tajik community that transcended traditional local affiliations - previously the privilege of a handful of intellectuals.

The usual triad of Bolshevik mobilisation and penetration methods (industrialisation, collectivisation, cultural revolution) was augmented by women's emancipation and mass resettlement in Tajikistan. It was a cold pragmatic consideration that "to provide women with unconditional access to suffrage, and to all elective or appointive, as well as legislative and administrative, offices in the land, would not just challenge the traditional male monopoly of the political arena; it would immediately and decisively undermine the position of traditional political elites - tribal chieftains, village elders, and notables."\textsuperscript{88} The emancipation campaign (\textit{hujum}) launched in 1926 envisaged the abolition of women's seclusion, their promotion to party and state structures, and generally the creation of a climate of equal opportunities for both sexes. In Tajikistan in 1925, 99.4 percent of women were illiterate; ten years later 35.7 percent of all students

\textsuperscript{85} Calculations based on: \textit{Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR} v 1965 g. Dushanbe: Statistika, 1966, pp. 227-228.
\textsuperscript{86} \textit{Ocherki istorii narodnogo khoziaistva Tadzhikistana}. Dushanbe: Donish, 1967, p. 309.
\textsuperscript{87} \textit{Tadzhikistan za gody Sovetskoi vlasti}. Dushanbe: Statistika, 1967, p. 177.
in primary and secondary schools were girls.\textsuperscript{89} Indigenous women, erstwhile confined to the family hearth, made up almost 80 percent of the labour force in Tajikistan's light industry by 1937.\textsuperscript{90} Numbers of female members of the CPT grew from 3 in 1925 to 1,016 in 1932.\textsuperscript{91} In 1928, 957 women worked in primary administrative organs (selsovets) - 22 times more than during 1925-1926.\textsuperscript{92}

Following incorporation into Russia, Central Asia experienced a demographic explosion at the turn of the 20th century, when the natural population growth rate rocketed from 0.3 to 2.5 percent every year.\textsuperscript{93} In Tajikistan rural overpopulation began to be felt in the late 1920s, especially in Northern Tajikistan and Gharm. Two waves of resettlement took place between 1926 - 1929 and 1933 - 1937 whereby some 30,000 peasant families from Gharm, Uroteppa, Panjakent, Gorno-Badakhshan, Hisor, Kulob and Ferghana, as well as those returning from Afghanistan, were forcibly moved to develop virgin lands in the Qurghonteppa okrug, only sparsely populated by Uzbek nomadic tribes.\textsuperscript{94} This major demographic undertaking was presented by the Soviet authorities as "rectifying the historical injustice emanating from the Emirate's feudal policy towards the Tajik people, which had been pushed into the mountains."\textsuperscript{95}

**Patterns of Economic Development**

Overcoming the 'economic inequality' of the peoples of Central Asia was always regarded in Moscow as an important element of its nationality policy in the region. Theoretically, the aim was to achieve similar levels of socio-economic development throughout the Soviet Union by eliminating what was referred to as the grim legacy of Tsarist rule in non-Russian regions: \textsuperscript{96}

- narrow specialisation of economy in producing food and raw materials;
- absence of heavy industry;
- one-sided and primitive structure of industry;
- extreme technological backwardness of industry and agr.culture;
- lack of infrastructure and transport networks;

\textsuperscript{89} Velikiï Oktiabr' i raskreposhenie zhenshin Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana (1917-1936). Moscow: Mysl, 1971, pp. 177, 440.
\textsuperscript{93} V.I. Bushkov. "Tadzhikskii avlod tysiachelet'ia spustia." Vostok, No. 5, 1991, p. 76.
\textsuperscript{95} Ibron Sharipov. *Zakonomernosti formirovaniia sotsialisticheskikh obshestvennykh otnoshenii v Tadzhikistane*. Dushanbe: Donish, 1983, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{96} Adapted from: P.M. Alampiev. *Likvidatsiia ekonomicheskogo neravenstva narodov Sovetskogo Vostoka i sotsialisticheskoe razmeshenie promyshlennosti*. Moscow: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR, 1958, pp. 22-26.
absence of native working class;
- general cultural backwardness of the population.

In practice, however, considerations of pragmatism and expediency determined the course of economic modernisation in Central Asia. As Geoffrey Jukes has pointed out, "industrialisation is not merely an act of social policy; for it may make little economic sense to establish industry in a border area, remote from central markets, perhaps vulnerable to invasion, possibly poorly endowed with raw materials, or with a labour force which is difficult to train because of backwardness, language difficulties, or the lack of an industrial tradition." 97 Other experts often put special emphasis on geostrategic factors such as the proximity of China to prove that "the USSR has every reason not to give decisive, attractive importance to this region." 98

It appears, however, that it was the internal logic of the Soviet Union's economic development that affected the course of modernisation of Central Asia most profoundly. Tajikistan apparently was in the category of territories less suitable for rapid industrialisation. In 1926, Moscow set up the Permanent Expedition for Exploring Productive Forces of Tajikistan (PEEPFT) which almost immediately arrived at the conclusion that "we cannot talk about modernisation of industry in Tajikistan, because there isn't any, it is an agricultural country." 99 The Expedition implemented an impressive amount of work and finally came up with a set of guidelines as to how exactly the republic's economy should be developed in the future. Its main recommendations included: 100

a) establishing mining industry, hydro-power generation and cotton-growing as priorities;
b) setting up basic industry and infrastructure with the help of workforce and materials imported from European Soviet Union;
c) dividing Tajikistan into several economic zones with particular production specialisation;
d) rapid restoration and expansion of irrigation network.

This blueprint was in compliance with the all-Union economic strategy promulgated at the XVI Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1930 101 and

101 The Congress' resolution stated in particular that "industrialisation of the country can no longer rest solely on the Southern coal-metallurgical base [ie. Donbass]", hence "the Congress deems it
remained valid well into the post-war period. The Kremlin invested generously in the
development of Tajikistan (Table 2.2), and in 1932 the share of industry in the
republic’s economy reached 22 percent, as compared to 6.6 percent four years
before.102

**Table 2.2 Centralised Financial Transfers in Tajikistan’s Budget (1926-1930)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1926</th>
<th>1927</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1929</th>
<th>1930</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Subvention as % of the Republican Budget</td>
<td>84.4</td>
<td>92.2</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>72.6</td>
<td>78.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Soviet modernisation of Tajikistan which was conceived and implemented as a
process of forced industrialisation *par excellence,* brought about two fateful
developments as early as the mid-1930s. First of all, it destroyed a local economic
mechanism which organically combined handcrafts and cottage industry on the one
hand and modern factory production on the other. In the 1920s, the traditional sector of
the economy, based on private and cooperative ownership, was growing at an
impressive rate in Turkestan, registering a 42 - 45 percent increase in the number of
those employed annually, and accounting for 34 - 37 percent of industrial output in
the region.103 In the early 1930s, all private- and family-owned enterprises in Tajikistan
were closed or nationalised; the share of cooperatives in industrial production had
decreased to 15.3 percent by 1940 and stabilised at 3 percent in the post-war period.104
Large state-owned factories emerged as the backbone of the republic’s economy (Table
2.3)

**Table 2.3 Dynamics of Industrial Output in Tajikistan in 1913 - 1940**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>All Industry</th>
<th>Large Industry*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1932</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>43.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>324</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(* For the year 1913, large industry includes enterprises with 30 workers and more; for later years, it
comprises factories subordinated to all-Union and republican industrial ministries.)

Source: *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR.* Stalinabad: Gosstatizdat, 1957, p. 16.

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necessary to begin accelerated development in eastern territories (the Urals, Siberia, Kazakhstan, Central
Asia) of industries based on local sources of raw materials (non-ferrous metallurgy, textile industry, etc.).”
(KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. Vol. 4. Moscow:
Izdatelstvo politicheski literatury, 1970, pp. 441-442.)

102 A. Rahmatullloev, S. Mukhtorov. *Ocherkhi ta’rikhi Tojikistoni Soveti.* Dushanbe: Maarif, 1989,
p. 93.
134.
According to Sergei Poliakov, in Tajikistan "city-based industrial production was completely dependent on drawing settlers from the ... industrially developed regions of the country, whereas development of rural areas was based on local human resources. But in terms of qualitative characteristics the latter were not prepared enough to guarantee smoothness and efficiency of the process of industrialisation." In 1938, migrants from the European part of the Soviet Union accounted for 46 percent of the entire workforce in industry, construction and transport in Tajikistan. Despite constant attempts on the part of Soviet authorities to increase indigenous representation in these areas, the problem was never satisfactorily resolved. The main reasons for such a state of affairs were not the absence of vocational training facilities, poor command of the Russian language or limited supply of food and housing in the cities; it was rather caused by the persistence of traditional values and attitudes in Tajik society, whereby industrial labour was not regarded as a very respectable occupation. A sociological study conducted at a number of industrial enterprises in Tashkent revealed that as late as 1985 there existed dramatic differences between Russians and Central Asians in terms of work ethics and preferences (Table 2.4).

The Soviet system offered no substantial incentives to technical personnel and skilled workers employed in more sophisticated branches of industry. Additionally, it strongly encouraged the influx of indigenous cadres into bureaucracy, academia, arts communities and other non-productive spheres. It has been observed that such a skewed arrangement in Tajikistan was made possible due to the fact that "practically all national income produced in the region is utilised in the non-productive sphere, and expenditure on national economy is footed by the Centre. This 'benevolent' economic regime provides for the level of life comparable with that of the population of the industrialised regions. Henceforth, as a rule, indigenous people choose agriculture or the services sector to work in." Consequently, not only were opportunities for inter-ethnic socialisation "below the expected level for an otherwise 'integrated international work force'", but eventually a binary pattern of settling began to evolve in Tajikistan, whereby the two largest distinctive groups of the populace - industrial and white collar workers living in some 70 cities and towns, and peasants inhabiting 3,500 villages - differed from one another quite substantially in a whole range of parameters:

107 For instance, in 1979 ethnic Tajiks still constituted a mere 10.9 percent of industrial workers - almost three times less than the figure for Russians. (Naselenie Tadzhikskoi SSR. Po dannym Vsesoiuznoi perepisi naseleniia 1979g. Dushanbe: TsSU TSSR, 1980, p. 47.)
The salient ethnic division of labour quickly became a characteristic feature of Tajikistan’s economy. Its dualism also found reflection in the fact that right from the start the economy was geared to meet the needs of the all-Union markets. From the 1940s to the 1980s, republican authorities controlled only one-tenth of the volume of industrial output in their territory:110 generally, it was up to central ministries in

Moscow to determine what and how much should be produced in Tajikistan. As one Tajik scholar cautiously remarked in the early 1970s, industry in that republic "is characterised by the lack of correspondence between production profiles of a significant number of enterprises and the structure of demands of the republic and adjacent districts."111 The level of economic integration amongst regions in Tajikistan remained low. Soviet planning practices resulted in paradoxical situations: for example, in the 1960s, three quarters of the republic's light industry was located in the northern Leninobod oblast and the bulk of its output, primarily textile, used to be exported to other Soviet republics; at the same time, the southern regions had to import fabrics from European Russia, 4,000 kilometres away.112 Similarly, the textile combine at Uroteppa had to import 95 percent of raw materials from Uzbekistan, although nearby districts could have provided an almost unlimited supply of cotton.113

The "predilection in Soviet planning towards overconcentration and monopoly production (i.e., localising all of the USSR's output of a particular product at one or a few production sites)"114 is a well-known phenomenon. The pronounced emphasis on cotton-growing in Tajikistan was caused by two major factors: a) optimal climatic conditions,115 and b) Moscow's relentless efforts to achieve self-sufficiency in this strategic commodity.116 Generally, this task had been accomplished by about 1950, when the Soviet Union gathered 5 times more raw cotton than imperial Russia did in 1913.117 'Cottonisation' of Tajikistan (Table 2.5) resulted in a dramatic decline of staple crops and a growing dependence on food imports from other parts of the USSR.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2.5 Production of Main Agricultural Crops in Tajikistan, 1913 - 1958 (thousands of centners)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cereals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potatoes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetables</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>________</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Until 1958, cotton enjoyed very favourable terms of trade as compared to other agricultural products. In the early 1950s, for instance, grains and meat producers in the USSR would receive less than one-seventh of the world price, whereas cotton was purchased by the government at a rate which was 30 percent above the international price. As a result, Tajikistan's agricultural income grew impressively. Fixed capital of the republic's kolkhoz, which included houses, cinemas, hospitals, kindergartens and other institutions of social infrastructure on top of the productive base, increased 15-fold between 1940 and 1958. Between 1954 - 1955, the state budget allocated funds for the construction of 38 schools in Tajikistan; at the same time, 119 schools were built using money from local collective farms. The labour-intensive character of cotton cultivation helped to absorb the consequences of high population growth. During the first three decades of its existence as a Soviet state, Tajikistan offered plentiful corroboration to the following conclusion made for the entire region: "The attainment of prosperity in the Central Asian republics has not come through the classical path of industrialisation. The industrial progress of the region has no doubt been very substantial, but rapid growth in agriculture has been a key element in their progress. A distinctive and related feature of their experience has been the continued predominance of the rural sector ... What the Central Asian republics experienced was rapid agricultural growth leading to a rising standard of living in the rural areas and the consequent absence of pressure to move out of the rural society."  

The specialisation in cotton was complemented by a spectacular increase in yield per hectare due to the introduction of new long-stapled varieties, implementation of massive irrigation schemes and use of chemicals. In the early 1960s, output of raw cotton per hectare in Tajikistan stood at 23 - 26 centners as compared to 5.4 centners in Brazil and 4.2 in India. Even in the late 1980s the republic continued to have the best yields in the USSR and was not far behind main world cotton producers (Table 2.6).  

While it is true that cotton production in Tajikistan became "the focus for the development of a large economic complex embracing many industrial sectors: irrigation; production of agricultural machinery; production of mineral fertilisers and toxic

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120 Rezoliutsiia X s'ezda Kommunisticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana. Stalinabad: Tadzhikgosizdat, 1956, pp. 5-6.

121 The first combine harvesters appeared on cotton plantations in Tajikistan in 1961 and accounted for a mere 2 percent of that year's yield. (Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 26 January 1962.) An anonymous expert referred to agricultural methods and techniques practised in Tajikistan as those of the 18th century. (Problems of the Peoples of the USSR. No. 11, 1961, p. 66.)


chemicals; the cotton refining, oil producing, paper manufacturing and - to a lesser extent - sewing and knitting industries".\textsuperscript{124} It is important to remember that this complex never presented a viable manufacturing entity capable of guaranteeing the republic's balanced independent development. It was meant, first and foremost, to provide the USSR Inc. with deficit materials - a design "logically stemming from and imposed by the strategy of the [Soviet] command-administrative system that favoured creation of agricultural and raw-material enclaves in the national economy."\textsuperscript{125} Throughout the Soviet period only 4 to 5 percent of Central Asia's cotton was processed locally; the rest was dispatched to the European part of the USSR where more than 70 percent of the country's output of cotton textiles was generated.\textsuperscript{126} Although starting in the second half of the 1960s Tajikistan's economy showed a perceptible tendency towards diversification based on the growth of processing industry, even in 1989 the share of finished goods in the republic's net material product (NMP) did not exceed 46 percent.\textsuperscript{127} Apart from raw cotton and cotton fibre, Tajikistan exported a variety of ores and ore concentrates, most notably rare earths, zinc, lead, mercury, silver and gold. In the 1940s, rich uranium deposits in the Leninobod oblast began to be exploited. Production of fissile materials at the mammoth VOSTOKREDMET plant situated in the town of Chkalovsk played a crucial role in the success of the Soviet nuclear program.\textsuperscript{128}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\caption{Yields of Cotton Fibre by Country, 1987}
\begin{tabular}{|l|c|}
\hline
Country & Yield (centners per hectare) \\
\hline
Israel & 14.86 \\
Australia & 12.10 \\
Mexico & 9.70 \\
Egypt & 9.20 \\
Turkey & 9.16 \\
Tajikistan & 8.91 \\
USA & 7.41 \\
USSR & 7.00 \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{128} \textit{Ivestitsia}, 13 August 1993.
One cannot but agree with Aziz Niyazi's statement that "the Soviet regime, though established by force, nevertheless greatly stimulated the economic development of Central Asia."129 In the pre-war period, Tajikistan registered an average annual industrial growth of 9 percent, and progress in the production of basic commodities was self-evident (Table 2.7). The initial great surge in the industrialisation of Tajikistan slowed markedly in the 1950s, however. (Table 2.8) As a result, in 1960 it remained the second least industrialised republic in the Soviet Union (after Moldavia) as far as the structure of employment was concerned: only 18.2 percent of those employed worked in industry as compared to the USSR's mean of 35.0 percent.130 All the same, the suggestion that comparatively low levels of urbanisation and industrial participation could serve as indicators of inappropriate economic development and inadequate standards of living131 should be treated with a degree of caution. The peculiar economic system that had emerged in Tajikistan was the result of Moscow's deliberate policy of the all-Union division of labour and for quite a few decades this worked satisfactorily, considering that "the nationalities of Soviet Central Asia had achieved living standards, insofar as these may be expressed by wages, health and educational opportunity, somewhat lower than those of the European USSR, but a great deal higher than those of their independent neighbours."132 Its continuous functioning, however, depended on two crucial factors: a) the Centre's ability to transfer the amount of resources necessary to meet the demands of the growing population of the republic in exchange for raw materials, and b) availability of natural conditions, especially fertile land and water, to sustain extensive growth of the cotton-based economy.

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Table 2.7 Output of Selected Commodities in Tajikistan (1913 - 1960)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1913</th>
<th>1928</th>
<th>1940</th>
<th>1960</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Electricity (millions of kilowatt/hours)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>62.1</td>
<td>1288.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal (thousands of tons)</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>854</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cement (thousands of tons)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>134.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction Bricks (millions)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45.1</td>
<td>238.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Fibre (thousands of tons)</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>60.9</td>
<td>137.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotton Textiles (millions of square metres)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.2</td>
<td>51.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2.8 Growth in Industrial Production in Tajikistan and the USSR (in percent)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan</th>
<th>USSR</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Five-Year Plan</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1928/1932)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Five-Year Plan</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1933/1937)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Five-Year Plan</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1938/1941)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Five-Year Plan</td>
<td>189</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1946/1950)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5th Five-Year Plan</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1951/1955)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


***

In the 1920s and 1930s, the Tajik ethnie was revitalised and underwent processes of mobilisation, territorialisation and politicisation. At the beginning of this century it seemed that the Tajik ethnic community was close to losing its demographic and cultural continuity. Communist leadership in Moscow deemed it necessary to preclude such a development and created the Tajik Soviet Socialist republic. Its sovereignty may have been ephemeral, its boundaries artificial, but it did provide the Tajik ethnie with an institutional basis for transformation into a modern nation.

Socio-economic development of Tajikistan in the first half of the 20th century was an extremely uneven and controversial process. Over a surprisingly short period of time Tajikistan achieved remarkable progress in improving standards of living, literacy.
cultural and emancipation for women. In a sense, however, it was a Pyrrhic victory, for these successes did not reflect the real growth of productive forces in Tajik society. Stalin's leadership was of the opinion that "the triumph of socialist construction in Turkestan is completely dependant on the rapid solution of the literacy problem of the indigenous population" and allotted huge resources to the development of non-productive spheres in the region. Consequently, the upkeep of the relatively overinflated stratum of intellectuals, doctors, teachers and other professionals in Tajikistan was entirely up to the Kremlin's discretion. The depth of cultural changes across Tajik society also remained rather equivocal.

By the same token, economic development of the republic was regulated by the current needs of the centre, and not by considerations for long-term prosperity of the eponymous people. Investment occurred primarily in those branches that promised quick return and provided the all-Union industrial complex with raw materials - cotton-growing and mining. Although a number of sophisticated machine-building, electrotechnical and chemical enterprises had been set up in Tajikistan, modern industry remained largely alien to it, because they employed primarily non-indigenous workers and their profile had nothing to do with the requirements of the republic. Such grotesque economic mechanism could exist and be reasonably efficient only when state socialism in the USSR was in its prime and the Kremlin was able to carry out its role as a universal planner, provider and distributor.

A lucid generalisation made by Victor Zaslavsky can be fully applied to Tajikistan: "Soviet nationality policy ... was one of the most successful policies of the Soviet regime, enabling it to reconcile a strong unitary state with a federal structure, and maintain internal stability in a country harbouring deep ethnic divisions. Ruthless suppression of nationalist movements, institutionalisation of ethnicity, large-scale affirmative action and transfer payment policies, institutional isomorphism of ethnoterritorial units - all these major planks of Soviet nationality policy must be taken into account if both its successful functioning and its eventual disastrous outcome are to be explained." The relationship between the Soviet state on the one hand and the institutions of Tajik society on the other, which forms the centrepiece of Tajikistan's modern history, will be discussed in detail in the chapters that follow.

133 Andrei Vydrin, "Furat Polivanov, Stalin i drugie." Zvezda Vostoka, No. 5-6, 1994, p. 156.
Chapter III. State Structures and Political Institutions in Soviet Tajikistan

The state has traditionally been an important venue of political analysis in any society. True, "the state ... merely provides one framework for political interaction ... To proceed from here to the subordination of all other units to the state level is not only uncalled for, but probably misses the point as well."¹ Still, it is imperative to understand the functioning of government mechanisms in order to investigate later their dynamic relationship with other social actors.

It has been argued that "the emergence of a strong, capable state can occur only with a tremendous concentration of social control. And such a redistribution of social control cannot occur without exogenous factors first creating catastrophic conditions that rapidly and deeply undermine existing ... bases of social control."² This chapter investigates the instalment of Soviet political order in Tajikistan and its subsequent evolution. The role of coercive methods in administration, the centre-periphery relationship and especially the terms of contract between 'rule-applying bureaucracies' in Moscow and 'task-achieving bureaucracies' in the republic³ will be major points of discussion.

Restructuring of Political Authority

After all major spots of armed resistance in the territory of Tajikistan were quashed in the early 1930s, the Soviet authorities continued to erect, at an accelerated pace, a new social order there that reflected the pattern accomplished elsewhere in the USSR. It was based on:

(1) a single universalistic ideology, which proclaimed the building of Communism as the supreme goal of the country's development;
(2) a single economic system, heavily centralised and planned;
(3) the principles of 'Soviet federalism', whereby the borderlands were gradually deprived of their autonomy in favour of Moscow, behind the ostensibly federal structure of the state.

The year 1928 was a turning point in the history of the Soviet Union. Stalin's 'Revolution from Above' meant that the VKP(b), or, more precisely, its administrative apparatus had evolved as the sole centre of power in Soviet society. The period of relative political and economic liberalism of the early 1920s was over. The Party now sanctioned and supervised activities of all other social institutions; as one contemporary Russian scholar observed, "the Communism in its 'purest', utmost form implies the liquidation of the state. However, this very liquidation is viewed as the process of the absorption of all functions of the state ... by the VKP, which would incorporate everything that is not yet the VKP ... The Party's monopoly in the state has been complicated by the state's monopoly in all major spheres of social, economic and cultural life of the country. The state has substituted the people, and the Party has replaced the state. The Party's monopolism has been squared."  

Tajikistan presented no exception to the emerging Soviet monoorganisational order, which has been aptly described by Ernest Gellner as "Caesaro-Papism-Mamonism". At the time of the creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (TSSR) in October 1929, the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) was a formidable and well-organised force with its 146 primary cells and 3,848 members (up from 17 cells and 435 members five years before). However, Moscow had its doubts in regards to the loyalty of local cadres, many of whom were National Communists, carryovers from the jadid movement, such as Abduqodir Muhiddinov - head of the Tajik government between 1926 - 1928. Until 1934, the effective management of Tajikistan remained in the hands of the Central Asian Bureau of the VKP(b) Central Committee and its proxies, such as the Central Asian Economic Council, the Central Asian Planning Committee, or plenipotentiary representatives of the All-Union Commissariats. Statements of Soviet historians to the effect that "this measure in no sense limited the sovereignty of the republics of Central Asia and did not infringe upon the rights of autonomous republics and regions" are hardly credible, if only for economic considerations: in 1931, 80

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8 For a number of years Ivan Fedko, the Commander of the XIII Rifle Corps stationed in the republic, carried out duties of Tajikistan's People's Commissar of Agriculture.
percent of capital investments in Tajikistan were planned and implemented by the centre, bypassing local authorities.\textsuperscript{10}

Stalin’s strategy of creating government structures in Tajikistan that would be unquestionably faithful to himself and to the Central Committee’s Secretariat did not differ from the design applied elsewhere in the USSR and envisaged three measures: (a) elimination of old cadres; (b) large-scale posting of reliable officials from the centre; and (c) quick promotion of suitably indoctrinated locals. The Central Asian Bureau of the VKP (b) Central Committee passed a resolution ‘About the Work of the Tajik Party Organisation’ in 1931 which stressed in particular that “alongside with the purification of Soviet, economic, cooperative and other apparatuses from class-antagonistic and bureaucratic elements, it is necessary to carry out mass promotion of cadres from amidst workers, kolkhoz members ... tested during struggle against the bai.”\textsuperscript{11} Purges of Party members and other elites in Tajikistan commenced in 1933 with the removal of the First Secretary of the CPT Central Committee, M. Huseinov; Chairman of the Central Executive Committee, N. Makhsum; and Chairman of the Council of People’s Commissariat A. Hojibaev. Their arrests were made with the standard accusations of being “bourgeois nationalists”, “enemy agents”, “counter-revolutionary elements” and “saboteurs”.\textsuperscript{12} In May 1934, a group of 79 high-ranking officials including A. Muhiddinov, then the Chairman of the State Planning Committee of Tajikistan, was executed. Muhiddinov was reported to have had objected to the renaming of Dushanbe as Stalinobod.\textsuperscript{13} In the months that followed dozens of Tajik intellectuals, amongst them renowned poets Ikromi, Hakim Karim, Ghani Abdullo, Zehni, Fitrat, Alikhush, Hamdi and Munzim were imprisoned, exiled or put to death. Even Sadriddin Aini, the founding father of contemporary Tajik literature, invariably loyal to the Soviet regime, was labelled ‘pan-Turkist’, ‘pan-Islamist’, ‘Bukharinite adventurist’ and ‘homeless Baha’i’, and only the intercession of Russian colleagues saved him from arrest in 1937.\textsuperscript{14}

The number of victims of Stalin’s reprisals is still to be revealed.\textsuperscript{15} However, the fact that 7,883 people sentenced in Tajikistan during the 1930s-1950s have been

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} M. Nazarshoev. Muborezi rohi haqiqat. Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993, p. 90.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} A. Holiqzoda. Tarikhii siyosii Tojikon. Dushanbe: [Self-published]. 1994, p. 75.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} According to the NKVD order No. 00447 On the Operation to Repress Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements’ dated 30 July 1937. 500 people were to be arrested and executed in Tajikistan, and 1,300 more were to be sent to labour camps. There are reasons to believe that in its first two months alone the operation affected three times more people than originally planned.
\end{itemize}
may be a fair indication of the scale of terror in the republic. The new leadership in Tajikistan was subservient and tolerably literate. It feared and readily obeyed directives from Moscow, if only to survive. The case of Munavvar Shogadoev, the Chairman of the Central Executive Committee (later President of the Supreme Soviet) of Tajikistan between 1937 - 1950 provides an excellent example of the Stalinist appointee. He had an impeccable social background (son of peasants, day-labourer at a cotton mill) and scant education (3 years of rafak - crash educational courses - in Tashkent). Shogadoev joined the Party in the late 1920s and was appointed head of a district Party committee in his native mountainous region of Gharm in 1930, where he showed himself an exemplary executant, having managed to recruit hundreds of fellow-highlanders to take part in irrigation projects in South-West Tajikistan. He had a poor command of Russian, but the establishment of Russian schools in Gharm was amongst his main priorities. Shogadoev fully demonstrated his organisational skills and dedication in the 1940s, when, as Head of the republic’s legislative body, he sanctioned and supervised forced resettlement of tens of thousands people from his native Gharm to the Vakhsh Valley - a project that cost scores of human lives.

The CPT, thoroughly purged and re-staffed, became an organisation that could be entrusted with day-to-day management of the republic. The policy of nativisation was abandoned. Moreover, from 1930 to 1932 alone, 217 Party officials were posted to Tajikistan from the centre. Table 3.1 illustrates the process of the ‘adjustment’ of the republic’s Party structures to the demands of Stalin’s era.

Members of traditional elite groups, even those who had hailed the advent of Soviet power, were all but exterminated. The wave of terror wiped away not only the representatives of institutionalised Islam and the old status hierarchies (such as sayeds - descendants of the prophet Mohammad, khojas - offsprings of the first four caliphs, turas - progenies of the Timurid rulers, pirs and ishons - dynastic leaders of Ismaili and Sunni communities, mirs - chieftains and old landed aristocracy); it also destroyed the whole stratum of Bukharan literati, who had carefully preserved and propagated old cultural values. This campaign swept Tajikistan in 1937, much later than in other Central Asian republics, but was waged with the same ferocity and yielded similar

results. Contemporaries testified that in the city of Uroteppa the public baths were heated for a month by burning confiscated books and manuscripts of ecclesiastical works and classical poetry. Not unnaturally, "the subsequent formation of the Tajik intelligentsia largely rejected the old cultural tradition. It consisted mainly of newcomers from the peasantry, often the products of children's homes and boarding schools to whom Soviet rule had given everything and for whom a totalitarian regime was a familiar and accustomed reality. The new intelligentsia was not only formed by the authorities, it was also tied to representatives of the structures of power by close, almost literally kinship bonds." 

The Structure and Performance of Government

The institutional foundations of the Soviet state in Tajikistan were laid in the Constitution of 1931 and became further elaborated in the Constitution of 1937, which was a carbon copy of the All-Union Constitution adopted in 1936. The republic acquired a ramified set of governmental organs that was characterised by a relatively clear-cut separation of powers and a stable structure.

The official legislature of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was the Supreme Soviet elected every four years on the basis of universal suffrage by citizens over 18 years of age. Articles 15, 22, 23 and 28 of the Constitution of 1937 conferred upon the Supreme Soviet the status of the sole authoritative law-making body of Tajikistan. Yet in reality it had little power to elaborate or endorse independent policies and acted primarily to furnish the Party's directives with a veil of legitimacy. During 1946 - 1953, in the heyday of Stalin's command-administrative system of government, the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan was not even approached for a formal approbation of the annual plan for economic development of the republic, in direct violation of Article 15 of the Constitution.

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22 Actually, the first comprehensive body of laws was ready in 1929, at the moment of the formation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, but its provisions could not be fully implemented at the time when large parts of Tajikistan were yet to be pacified.
Table 3.1  Changes in the Membership and Ethnic Composition of the CPT  
(1933 - 1938)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Total Membership</th>
<th>Tajiks</th>
<th>Uzbek</th>
<th>Russians</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>14,329</td>
<td>7,575</td>
<td>3,177</td>
<td>2,480</td>
<td>1,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>4,715</td>
<td>1,971</td>
<td>776</td>
<td>1,197</td>
<td>771</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The composition of the Supreme Soviet was carefully regulated and remained stable for decades (Table 3.2), despite an impressive turnover rate of over 50 percent. It was meant to emphasise the representative nature of the republican legislature, on the one hand, and its inseparable links with the Party, on the other. The Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was always a member of the CPT Central Committee's Bureau, and for many Party functionaries work in the organs of the national parliament provided a necessary step for their future career. Additionally, the Supreme Soviet served as a symbol of statehood of the Tajik nation: it usually had a distinct Tajik majority, inconsistent with the actual ethnic mosaic in the republic.

Elections to the Supreme Soviet and local legislative bodies (regional, district, city and village Soviets) were not contested; sometimes all 100 percent of eligible voters turned up at polling stations and unanimously supported the candidate of the 'bloc of Communists and non-Party people'. Plenary sessions of the Supreme Soviet conducted twice a year were formal and tedious affairs, where hardly any deputy would dare vote against a decision or abstain. Even during Gorbachev's perestroika important bills would be put to the vote and approved without discussion due to the apparent lack of interest on the part of the Tajik MPs. Gordon Smith's description of the USSR Supreme Soviet could have been easily applied to Tajikistan: "Sessions are dominated by the formal presentation of speeches by high-ranking party and state officials. Following the speeches, party decisions are formally presented to be enacted into legislation ... If a legislature is defined as a forum in which conflicting interests are articulated, mediated and compromised, resulting in policies, then the legislative functions of the USSR are performed by the CPSU Central Committee and the Politburo, not the Supreme Soviet."  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Convocation</th>
<th>Number of Deputies</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Workers and Peasants</th>
<th>Party Members</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV (1955)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>47.8%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI (1963)</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>33.0%</td>
<td>48.0%</td>
<td>69.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VIII (1971)</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>34.0%</td>
<td>50.4%</td>
<td>68.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X (1980)</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>35.1%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At the inception of the USSR in 1922 the constituent republics were given a high degree of autonomy in handling domestic matters. Maintenance of law and order, public health, education, social welfare and agriculture were within the competence of the republics' executive institutions; the formation of superordinate federal organisations was not envisaged.\(^{28}\) The republics also enjoyed broad financial independence within their share of the All-Union budget. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, as the country was preparing for rapid industrialisation and forced collectivisation, the republics' autonomy was dramatically reduced, and federal and local executive bodies were transformed to fit a super-centralised chain of command based on the branch rather than territorial principle.

Article 39 of the 1937 Constitution identified the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan as the highest executive and administrative organ in the republic. At the same time, its status and prerogatives were not clearly defined; for example, technically it did not have the right to initiate legislation, though in reality draft bills were often prepared in ministries and state committees. Article 41 stipulated that Tajikistan's Council of Ministers acted to implement decrees and orders given by the USSR's Council of Ministers. The latter also had the right to suspend the execution of the former's directives, but in more than 50 years such a contingency never arose.

As elsewhere in the USSR, the ministerial structure in Tajikistan consisted of two tiers: Republican Ministries, answerable exclusively to the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan, and Union-Republican Ministries of dual subordination that took orders from the central institutions (and ultimately from the Council of Ministers of the USSR) but simultaneously were under the jurisdiction of the republic's Council of Ministers (Table 3.3). Gregory Gleason has rightfully observed that "this overlapping authority frequently has resulted in an awkward pattern in the distribution of responsibilities", often leading to disputes over competence.\(^{29}\) In practice, however, the centre always had the upper hand. Its dominant positions in Tajikistan were reinforced by the fact that more than half of the republic's gross industrial output was produced by enterprises under direct control of All-Union Ministries, that is beyond even nominal control by Tajikistan's government.\(^{30}\) Such vital industries as mining, machine-building,

\(^{28}\) "Postanovlenie Plenuma TsK RKP(b) o vzaimootnosheniyakh s nezavisimymi Sovetskimi Sotsialisticheskimi respublikami. 6 oktobra 1922g." KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniyakh s'ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK. Vol. 2, Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1970, pp. 401-402.


metallurgy, chemical industry, electric power generation in Tajikistan were developed exclusively under the auspices of central institutions which did not necessarily take the republic's demands into consideration. In the 1980s only 7 - 10 percent of all industrial enterprises in Tajikistan were of Republic subordination; the rest operated in the interests of the respective all-union branches rather than those of the local economy.

In a situation where the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan was little more than a ceremonial institution and the republic's executive organs acted as mere extensions of central ministries, it was the Party apparatus that carried out decision-making and served as the vehicle to articulate the republic's needs at the federal level. The Party institutions permeated the entire society and were well geared to implement social control, political indoctrination and economic management (Figure 3.2).

Party organs on lower levels - regional, district and city committees - had a similar configuration with a ramified network of specialised departments that covered every aspect of life of the populace in a given territory. In the USSR, the Communist Party ceased to be just a major centre of power *primus inter pares* in the late 1920s. Under Stalin it not only became the core of the government, it eventually subjugated or liquidated all other formal social institutions, thus putting in place the Soviet monorganisational order where the Party "is entrusted with integrating all the others into a single organisational whole, and does so primarily by appropriating and exercising on their behalf the key prerogatives of any autonomous organisation, namely determination of their goals, structures and leadership."

The Party performed its integrative role through (a) prescribing the innumerable rules of behaviour in the society based on its unchallenged political legitimacy; (b) empowering its organs at all levels with control and coordination functions; and (c) placing its cadres at the head of non-Party hierarchies.

Soviet legitimation, that is, "an acceptance, even approbation, of the state's rules of the game, its social control, as true and right" was based on the supreme goal of building Communism, the validity of which was never allowed to be questioned. Intermediate tasks and objectives were deduced by the leadership from this ultimate goal. Accordingly, as T.H. Rigby has noted, "the central role in the [Soviet] political system

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is played by institutions concerned with formulating the goals and tasks of the constituent units of society and supervising their execution." This state of affairs found formal reflection in the USSR Constitution of 1977 (Article 6) and the 1978 Constitution of Tajikistan (Article 6). Of course, it would be incorrect to assume that before this time Party directives had not been legally binding for all Soviet citizens, as they most certainly were.

Officials in the legislature, government institutions, judiciary and law enforcement agencies, industrial and agricultural managers as well as the Party membership were subordinated to the Party apparatus through an effective system of personnel appointments, the so-called nomenklatura system that was characterised by "first, the concentration of important positions in all official and 'voluntary' organisations in the nomenklatura of party committees; second, the inclusion of elective positions (and most of the more important ones are in form elective); and third, the comprehensiveness of the system, which omits no position of any significance in the society, and thereby incidentally converts the occupants of nomenklatura positions into a distinct social category." Party organisations exercised the power of personnel selection and placement according to the administrative level on which they operated. Their spheres of jurisdiction changed frequently, but in the post-war period the general trend was for the republic and regional party committees to acquire more independence in staffing official structures.

In the 1930s, almost all positions of authority in Tajikistan, including secretaries of district and city Party committees, were in the sphere of duty of the VKP(b) Central Committee. After Stalin's death the situation changed dramatically. In 1960, there were over 7,000 officials of authority (otvetstvennye raboiniki) in the republic who were answerable to local Party committees, 1,779 of those were in the nomenklatura of the CPT Central Committee.

35 The most obvious illustration are myriads of decrees issued jointly by all-Union and republican Central Committees and Councils of Ministers on almost every matter of any importance, including staff structure, programs and budgets of public associations, theatre repertoir, erection of monuments, etc. (I.Sh. Mukhinov, *Sovet ministrov soiuznoi republiki* Moscow: Juridicheskaiia literatura, 1969, pp. 28, 131, 136-137.)
39 Ibid., p. 173.
### Table 3.3 Ministries in Tajikistan (1976)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>State Committees and Main Administrations</th>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>State Committees and Main Administrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>State Security</td>
<td>Geology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(the KGB)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>People's Control</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Vocational Technical Education</td>
<td>Prices Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>Land Reclamation and Irrigation</td>
<td>Cinema-</td>
<td>Supplies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>tography</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Industry</td>
<td>Food Industry</td>
<td>Publishing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk and Meat</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Radio and TV</td>
<td>Motor Transport and Main Roads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Planning</td>
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<td>Construction</td>
<td>Rural Construction</td>
<td>Agricultural</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Materials</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>Fruit and Vegetable Production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 18  Total: 13  Total: 5  Total: 1

Figure 3.1 The CPT Central Committee Organisational Structure (1986)

Source: Telephone directories of the Communist Party of Tajikistan
### Table 3.4 Examples from Nomenklatura Lists of Party Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party Organ</th>
<th>Powers of Appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CPSU Central Committee                | a) First Secretary of the CPT CC, heads of departments and Party control of the CPT CC, first secretaries of regional Party committees;  
|                                       | b) members of government, the KGB chairman, members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, chairmen of the Supreme Court;  
|                                       | c) chairman of the council of trade-unions, First Secretary of the Komsomol, editor of the republican newspaper "Kommunist Tadzhikistan";  
|                                       | d) directors of crucial industrial enterprises (e.g., VOSTOKREDMET uranium complex in Chkalovsk)                                                    |
| CPT Central Committee                 | a) regional and city Party secretaries and heads of departments, secretaries of district Party committees in the districts of republican subordination;  
|                                       | b) chairmen of the executive committees of the regional soviets and cities, judges at all levels;  
|                                       | c) heads of public associations such as Society for nature protection, regional Komsomol leaders, editors of newspapers and magazines;  
|                                       | d) directors of industrial enterprises, research and cultural institutions                                                                         |
| Regional Party Committee (obkom)*     | a) Party functionaries at the district and city level, secretaries of primary Party organisations of large factories and farms;  
|                                       | b) chairmen of the executive committees of districts;  
|                                       | c) secretaries of the district Komsomol committees, trade-union leaders of districts;  
|                                       | d) chairmen of collective farms (kolkhozy) and directors of state farms (sovkhzozy); engineers and managerial personnel of industrial enterprises; directors of vocational training colleges; university professors |
| District and City Party committee      | a) *raikom* and *gorkom* instructors, heads of primary Party cells;  
| (raikom, gorkom)                       | b) chairmen of local representative organs (*mahalla* soviets);  
|                                       | c) heads of primary Komsomol cells, functionaries of primary trade-union organisations (*mestkoms*);  
|                                       | d) brigade leaders at factories and farms, school teachers, librarians                                                                             |

* Administrative division of Tajikistan provided for the existence of districts subordinated directly to Dushanbe. In their cases, the prerogative of staffing the most important positions belonged to the CPT CC which thus fulfilled the role of an obkom.


As Rolf Theen has astutely observed, "we must be aware that the appointment, advancement, transfer, and dismissal of key personnel in the apparatuses of the trade unions, the Komsomol, the central and local soviets, the administrative organs (police, courts, procuracy), the vast ministerial structure, as well as all economic and cultural organisations, are subject to a nomenklatura process controlled by the leading officials in those institutions, that is, almost invariably by members of the CPSU or nonparty individuals who are considered politically trustworthy."  

40 Nomenklatura lists of various bodies often overlapped and contradicted one another, but Party organs always had the final say in matters involving movement of cadres. For example, the Ministry of

Culture of Tajikistan would appoint graduates of its training institutions as directors of provincial clubs, libraries and museums, but District Party Committees would not let them work, nominating their own candidates who sometimes "could not carry out their duties on the grounds of not knowing the job." 41

It was general practice that the Party committees, on top of providing universal coordination and staffing for all other agencies, were directly involved in executing local and specialised measures, especially in the economic sphere. Setting tasks for the economic development of national republics always featured prominently on the agenda of the CPSU Central Committee; suffice it to say that out of the 56 cases between 1931 and 1980 when Tajikistan was mentioned in resolutions passed by the highest Party bodies, 49, or 88 percent, were of a purely economic nature and only three dealt with political issues. 42 The lower the level of a Party committee, the more it focused on the running of the economy. The CPT Central Committee issued one-year and five-year guidelines for economic development of the republic where, within the limits set by the centre, all major economic indicators and the ways to attain them were specified in a very detailed manner. At the district level, the raikoms eventually ran industrial enterprises and collective farms. As a Soviet source has stated, the District Party Committees "often had to bear the economic-distributional functions uncharacteristic of them: to allocate funds for supply of agricultural machinery and other materials, to be thoroughly immersed into the questions of growing various crops, to coordinate the activities of economic partners, to arbitrate, etc. All this placed an excessive burden on the Party apparatus and did not allow it to indulge fully into organisational and political work." 43 Failure to fulfil the directives of the Party organs usually meant sacking for the manager in question. The turnover amongst agricultural administrators was especially high: in 1956, more than 50 percent of kolkhoz chairmen were replaced. 44 In 1984, the First Secretary of the Qurghonteppa obkom, F. Karimov, assembled more than 400 kolkhoz chairmen, brigade leaders, agronomists and other specialists from the region in a conference hall and in the course of five hours a special commission questioned every single one of them about his/her performance during an

41 A. Kuvatov, "Podgotovka, rasstanovka i vospitanie kadrov kul'turno-prosvetitel'nykh uchrezhdhenii (1956-1965 gg.)" In: K.N. Gavrilkin, ed. Materialy k istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana. Vypusk 4, chast II, Dushanbe: Izdatelstvo TGU, 1972, p. 334. A certain Akhunov was appointed by the Kolhazabad raikom as director of the library at Uzun only because he was an old Party member, had a big family and suffered from some disability. He was barely literate at that, so this position became a genuine sinecure for him. (Ibid., p. 333.)

42 Calculations are based on: KPSS v rezoliutsiakh i resheniakh s'ezdov, konferentsiy i plenumov TsK. Vols. 5 – 13, Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literatury, 1970-1981.


extraordinarily bad harvest campaign; those who could not come up with a plausible account of their work were dismissed or demoted on the spot.45

Generally, the structure of the political system in Tajikistan conformed ideally to the common Soviet model which remained stable from the 1930s; it consisted of a core organisation, the Communist Party of Tajikistan, and a number of specialised agencies with varying degrees of autonomy. The entire decision-making process was concentrated almost exclusively in the CPT Central Committee, which (a) initiated projects and settled conflicting interests vested in them; (b) mobilised support for their implementation by launching public campaigns, coercion or otherwise; and (c) put them into effect. Samuel Huntington has written that "in the Soviet Union, perhaps more than in any other state, the party did come close to monopolising legitimacy, political recruitment and the determination of policy."46 Consequently, in Tajikistan until the late 1980s political activism was confined to covert struggle amongst units within the CPT hierarchy or to bargaining with the superior organs of the CPSU for more resources and the freedom to use them.

The Political Elite in Tajikistan: Composition, Mobility and Patronage Building

Being on the nomenklatura list of the CPT Central Committee was a fair indication of belonging to the elite in Tajikistan. However, the governing elite (that is, according to S.F. Nadel, the group of political rulers who have decisive preeminence over other social and specialised elites47) was somewhat smaller. Its membership "was synonymous for all practical purposes with the membership of the Central Committee of the Tadzhik Communist Party."48 As Table 3.5 shows, the governing elite in Tajikistan in the post-war period was dominated by ethnic Tajiks. Prior to 1946, except for a short period in 1937, the republic's Party organisation was headed by people despatched from Moscow,49 but after the removal of Dmitry Protopopov - a career CheKa, OGPU and NKVD officer who bore personal responsibility for the purges

45 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 19 February 1985.
amongst local cadres and intelligentsia - this position remained invariably in the hands of a Tajik.

With the end of Stalin's era of uncontrolled despotism and terror and the emergence of more stable, institutionalised and reciprocal patterns of exchange amongst various units of the Soviet leadership (the process that T.H. Rigby has referred to as the emergence of a 'self-stabilising oligarchy'\(^50\)), the indigenous elites in the national republics gradually increased their participation in the administration of their respective territories. The impressive economic growth and diversification, the continuous process of social mobilisation, the expansion of education and culture necessitated and made possible the rise of ethnoterritorial bureaucracies that "often sought to use feelings of local 'ethnofidelity' to promote government policies, and, often enough, their personal political agendas."\(^51\)

### Table 3.5 Ethnic Composition of the CPT Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Locals</th>
<th>Russians and Other Non-locals</th>
<th>Locals</th>
<th>Russians and Other Non-locals</th>
<th>Locals</th>
<th>Russians and Other Non-locals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>95 (79.8%)</td>
<td>24 (20.2%)</td>
<td>51 (86.4%)</td>
<td>8 (13.6%)</td>
<td>32 (82.1%)</td>
<td>7 (17.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>96 (78.0%)</td>
<td>27 (22.0%)</td>
<td>53 (79.1%)</td>
<td>14 (20.9%)</td>
<td>38 (84.4%)</td>
<td>7 (15.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>108 (78.3%)</td>
<td>30 (21.7%)</td>
<td>45 (76.3%)</td>
<td>14 (23.7%)</td>
<td>33 (71.7%)</td>
<td>13 (28.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>108 (78.3%)</td>
<td>30 (21.7%)</td>
<td>45 (73.8%)</td>
<td>16 (26.2%)</td>
<td>40 (85.1%)</td>
<td>7 (14.9%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Documents of XI, XIII, XVIII and XIX Congresses of the CPT.

The recruitment and movement of elite cadres in Tajikistan, as in any other republic of the USSR, was based on (a) objective-rational and (b) personalistic factors. If under Stalin and, to a lesser degree, Khrushchev, elite careers were made and ruined primarily at the discretion of higher officials in the Party hierarchy, in later years knowledge, technical and administrative skills and 'life experience' played an ever-growing part in the elite's upward mobility. To advance rapidly through the Party/state ranks, a person was required:

- to be a Tajik;
- to have a lengthy record of Party membership (minimum five years for obkom secretaries, three years for raikom secretaries and one year for primary cells' secretaries);
- to have a good education (Table 3.6);

---


- to possess practical experience as a government official or an industrial or agricultural manager;\(^{52}\)
- to show commendable administrative performance.

Grey Hodnett has put Tajikistan into the 'partly self-administering' category of the Soviet republics in his exhaustive study on personnel movement in the USSR\(^ {53}\), using the criterion of native occupancy of all leading positions in a given republic. Indeed, certain crucial jobs (second secretaries of the CPT CC and regional and district Party committees responsible for personnel matters, heads of industrial departments of the CPT CC and the Council of Ministers, the KGB Chairman, and so on) were reserved for non-natives, usually Russians. It should be kept in mind, though, that these officials arrived in Tajikistan for a tour of duty and after its completion were transferred to other regions of the USSR. At the same time, native cadres in Tajikistan had the lowest age thresholds for positions of authority of all Soviet republics; they also faced less competition for primary leadership jobs than aspirants elsewhere in the USSR.\(^ {54}\)

All these favourable conditions for the Tajik elite existed only within the boundaries of the republic: it was almost impossible for a Tajik Party or state official of high standing to be transferred to a higher or equal position in the all-Union hierarchy. Unlike their colleagues from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Tajik Party leaders never made it to the Politburo or Secretariat of the CPSU CC. Secretarship of the CPT Central Committee appeared to be the limit in terms of upward mobility for local cadres: upon reaching the level of a Regional Party Secretary or Deputy Minister (usually, stepping-stone posts in the Soviet personnel system), a Tajik would find it extremely difficult to make further merit-based advancement. This may explain why obkom functionaries in Tajikistan had the most protracted initial tenures in office in the entire Soviet Union - 191 months, 2.5 and 3 times longer than those of their Uzbek and Kazakh peers respectively.\(^ {55}\) The tendency to let officials occupy one position in a particular region for a substantial period of time, especially salient under Brezhnev's policy of 'stability of cadres' (1964-1982), was conducive, alongside other factors, to the establishment of ramified networks of informal exchange amongst elite groups in Tajikistan.

\(^{52}\) In the post-war period all First Secretaries of the CPT CC, except Bobojon Gafurov, were promoted from the position of the Chairman of the republic's Council of Ministers.


\(^{54}\) Ibid., p. 80.

Table 3.6 Educational Level of Secretaries of Regional, City and District Committees of the CPT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>14.6%</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
<td>92.7%</td>
<td>96.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete Higher</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>63.4%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>32.4%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>2.2%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incomplete Secondary</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary</td>
<td>33.2%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


As S.N. Eisenstadt has shown, the monolithic Soviet political system "gives rise to areas of uncertainty which ... create conditions under which patron-client relations thrive. Such conditions are also fostered by the monopolistic character of the ruling groups, which seemingly reinforces the possibility of control by various 'stronger' groups over access to markets and to public goods. The combination of these factors allows a very far-reaching spread of patron-client relations, their continuous reappearance, and their concentration into somewhat more enduring patterns among the central elites."56 Practices of favouritism, cronism, protection, overt and covert sponsorship not only flourished in the context of bureaucratic contacts but also pervaded the daily life of the populace under the circumstances of scarcity of the most basic commodities (food, clothes, housing) in the USSR. In Tajikistan, the viability of patronage networks was reinforced by the existence of particular patrimonial, family and sub-ethnic social institutions.

Due to a number of systemic determinants (small population, low level of industrial development, remoteness from the centre) the Tajik political leaders constantly failed to establish strong personalised clientelistic relationships with top bureaucrats in Moscow. Perhaps Tursun Uljaboev, the CPT CC First Secretary from 1956 to 1961, came close to acquiring a status as Khrushchev's protege: he had been selected for promotion to the position of the Secretary of the CPSU CC, but anti-Khrushchev opposition in the Central Committee (F.R. Kozlov, G.I. Voronov and L.F. Il'ichev) effectively removed Uljaboev from the political scene.57 Tajikistan retained only token representation in the Central Committee, the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and henceforth its elite had limited opportunities to lobby for resources. The importance of direct access to the all-Union top leadership in terms of distribution of funds to national

republics can be illustrated by the following fact: over the period 1971-1985, the per capita investment in Uzbekistan was 1.75 times higher than in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Kyrgyzstan; irrigation works in Uzbekistan consumed 20.4 billion roubles of capital investments as compared to the figure of 7.9 billion roubles for the three other republics put together, although the return from those investments in Uzbekistan was 2 to 5 times lower.\(^58\) Obviously, Sharaf Rashidov, the First Secretary of the CPUz CC, a Candidate Member of the Politburo and a crony of Leonid Brezhnev, was in a good position to persuade the centre to allocate additional funds to his republic.

At the level of the republic, the creation of potent patron-client dyads was a natural product of the peculiar nature of the centre-periphery relationship in the Soviet polity. Moscow assigned local authorities specific economic tasks, which were to be met at any cost. If in the course of their implementation the prescribed standard operation modes were violated or altered, the centre, more likely than not, would turn a blind eye, provided that the plans were (or appeared to be) fulfilled. In Gregory Gleason's words, "for local leaders to succeed in their charges, they must develop and steward the resources necessary to inspire, enthuse, mobilise, and promote within their republics. That is, they must develop political resources. To the extent that they succeed at this, they concentrate in their hands the ability to conduct politics in the traditional sense of the word, namely, to help friends and hurt enemies."\(^59\)

**Informal Political Exchange**

The concept of goal-rationality as the source of the legitimation of authority in the USSR put forward by T.H. Rigby implied, amongst other things, that at all levels of Soviet polity "the dominant rationale for evaluating social action is the achievement of prescribed tasks."\(^60\) And while command mechanisms predominated in the Soviet society, exchange continued to play a substantial role in coordinating social activity due to the sheer magnitude of the problems the country faced, and the physical inability of controlling institutions to offer quick and plausible solutions. Under circumstances where the main mode of institutionalised exchange - contractual relations based on private property rights - was anathema, 'gray' and 'black' market, corruption and other forms of informal exchange inevitably came to the fore. These phenomena were not necessarily detrimental to the Soviet system; in fact, some sociologists agree that they


may have served as "a stabilising or conservative force in systems experiencing rapid change and institutional decay" and they may have had "positive functions that were not adequately performed by formal institutions and legally devised arrangements."61 The black market "was allowed to flourish precisely because much of the time it distributed goods and services more efficiently than the formal institutions of the state."62 According to official statistics, in 1991 the black market accounted for eight percent of the USSR’s GNP.63 There are reasons to believe that the figure for Central Asia, the region with strong traditions of entrepreneurial activity, was even higher. The fact that in the late 1970s an underground congress of criminal leaders adopted a resolution to charge illegal shops producing unregistered products a 15 percent commission64 could be regarded as an indicator of the steady growth in the shadow economy.

In a situation where lawfulness of means of achieving state goals was of secondary importance, those "who played by the informal rules could be assured of protection ... The corrupt system was widely understood, and, for many years, quite stable."65 In Tajikistan, informal political, parochial, kinship and criminal networks often overlapped and were inseparable from one another. The life and career of Abdumalik Abdullojonov, the Prime Minister of independent Tajikistan from 1992 to 1993, is especially illustrative in this sense.66 His rise began in 1983, when he divorced his Osetian wife and married the daughter of the chief KGB officer responsible for the Nau district. The bride's mother happened to head the procurement authority of the same district. Almost immediately the hitherto inconspicuous engineer was appointed director of the Nau bread bakery. Connections within the KGB helped Abdullojonov shortly afterwards: acts of embezzlement were uncovered at the bakery; but he avoided jail and was even promoted to Deputy Minister of Grain Products of Tajikistan. At this juncture he started to build his own entourage. Abdullojonov pulled some of his former 'henchmen' out of prison and placed them throughout the republic. More than one furtive director of a bakery found protection from Deputy Minister, later Minister, Abdullojonov, in return for particular services. The most spectacular case involved Partov Davlatov - head of the grain procurement authority in the city of Tursunzoda.

66 Details of Mr Abdullojonov's biography have been collected during a number of interviews in Dushanbe and Khujand in February-April 1995 and also derive from an extensive article in Sadoi Mardom (11 June 1994) as well as from a recent book by a well-known Tajik politician (Hikmatullo Nasriddinov. Tarkish: Dushanbe: Aftona, 1995, pp. 236-286).
The Inspectorate of the Ministry of Finances produced a 946-page report in early 1991 in which Davlatov was accused of stealing thousands of tonnes of grain. Abdullojonov sacked the miscreant, only to reappoint him to a similar position in the capital city of Dushanbe a few months later, after destroying all evidence of malfeasance. Davlatov instantaneously turned the Dushanbe baking combine into his own personal enterprise, where all 400 employees were either his relatives or originated from his native village.

Abdullojonov's positions in the republic grew even stronger after the collapse of the Soviet Union when grain, which constitutes the basic (often the only) element of people's rations in Tajikistan, became an extremely scarce commodity and selling stolen grain on the black market became an exceptionally profitable occupation. With the absence of superior independent control authorities, it also became, in Partov Davlatov's words, "a very easy occupation, since all leading officials in the Ministries of Grain Production and Finance and other agencies involved are actually our people."

At the beginning of 1992, Abdumalik Abdullojonov's personal wealth was widely rumoured to exceed 2 billion roubles. He had loyal proteges in every corner of Tajikistan, and after becoming Prime Minister in September 1992 he worked feverishly to promote them to higher positions. Thus, Abdujalil Homidov, formerly director of the Nau bread bakery, was made Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Leninobod region; Timur Mirzoev, a distant relation of Abdullojonov, received the post of Mayor of Dushanbe; Farhod Mirpochoev, Abdullojonov's nephew, became Adviser to the Cabinet of Ministers, and so on. Much in line with the changing times, Abdullojonov was behind the creation of several private firms ("Edland", "Somoniyon", "Tojikbonkbiznes", "Timur-malik") which easily received export licences and lavish credits from the state. Even three years after Abdullojonov's dismissal so many people owed their positions and influence to him that he was seldom criticised for his deeds and still remained in the public service of his country, as Tajikistan's ambassador to Turkmenistan.

The example of Abdumalik Abdullojonov's patronage network is not very typical for Tajikistan, in the sense that it was constructed primarily along professional linkages and encompassed people of different nationalities and from different regions of Tajikistan who could relatively easily break away after their patron's dismissal. This is exactly what happened to Abdujalil Homidov who was in hostile opposition to Abdullojonov when the latter was running for president in 1994. As a rule, patron-client webs in

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Tajikistan bear an imprint of kinship solidarity and are characterised by (a) less pronounced inequality and asymmetry in interaction amongst those involved; (b) lifelong endurance; (c) more diffused spheres of penetration - far beyond strictly professional activities; and (d) relative closeness. These hierarchal structures could be referred to as clans, for they have consonance with the attributes of a classic agnate clan:

- common ancestry of the nucleus of the entity;
- territorial unity (the clan coincides with the local group);
- social integration inside the clan; in particular, the coopting of new members through marriage.

Figures 3.2 and 3.3 depict two clans from different parts of Tajikistan that featured prominently in the republic's life in the post-war period. The Leninobod-Kanibodom clan (Fig. 3.2) had its base in the north of the republic and consisted of six major families: the Arabovs (Bukhara-Leninobod), the Yaqubovs (Leninobod), the Karimovs (Kanibodom), the Asrorovs (Leninobod), the Chuliubaevs (Leninobod) and the Bobojanovs (Leninobod-Dushanbe). The Arabov family, the stem of the clan, migrated to Khujand from Bukhara late in the 19th century. While not belonging to the prestigious status groups of sayeds, its members traced their roots to the times of Arab rule, of which their family name was an indication. Jurabek Arabov was a successful entrepreneur and land developer under the Tsarist regime and in 1917 managed to transfer all his multi-million capitals to Germany. In 1925, he was executed by the OGPU, but legends about his unclaimed treasures still linger in Tajikistan.

The Asrorovs, as an old family from Bukhara, enjoyed great respect and bestowed additional lustre on people connected with them. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Khol Yaqubov and Hilol Karimov joined them and subsequently played a significant role in expanding the power of the clan. Yaqubov was responsible for agricultural matters, sheep-breeding in particular, in the Central Committee, and Karimov was an influential member of the Tajik intelligentsia. He was the creator of the first textbooks of contemporary Tajik, and he and his relatives for decades dominated academia in Tajikistan. In a situation where education remained a relatively rare commodity but presented a crucial element to social mobility, the ability to control admission to tertiary institutions inevitably gave certain groups within Tajikistan's prestigious elite a valuable

69 Data for the genealogical schemes was collected during fieldwork in Tajikistan in 1994-1995. The author would like to express gratitude to M.A. Arabov - the oldest surviving son of Abduqodir Arabov, who made invaluable comments and alterations to them.
resource to offer in exchange for favours. A sociological poll conducted amongst school-leavers in the republic in May-June 1989 yielded results that generally confirm this postulate (Table 3.7)

**Table 3.7 Main Criteria for Admission to Higher Education Institutions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Well-Connected Relatives</th>
<th>Bribes</th>
<th>Relatives in Educational Institutions</th>
<th>Regionalism and Patrimonialism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
<td>32.2%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>19.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Each respondent could give two preferences


In later years Hilol Karimov's son, Jamshed Karimov, became the pivotal member of the clan. He was born in 1940, educated in Moscow and for a long time worked in the Tajik State University, where he acquired the degree of Doctor of Economics. In 1983, he was appointed the Deputy Chairman of the State Planning Committee of Tajikistan and in 1988 was promoted to head it, with the concomitant rank of Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. During 1989 - 1991, Jamshed Karimov held the important position of the First Secretary of Dushanbe gorkom. In 1992, he returned to the government as First Deputy Prime Minister, in December 1994 he became Prime Minister and served in that position until February 1996. Some incumbent Cabinet members owe their posts directly to Karimov: Shavkat Ismoilov, Minister of Justice, for one. It was Karimov's support that allowed Ismoilov to retain his portfolio during the tumultuous period in early 1995 when President Rahmonov was extremely dissatisfied with his performance. Entrepreneur Solaimon Chuliubaev and the commercial bank "Sharq" with which he is closely connected have increased their operations dramatically of late, thanks to the benevolent attitude of the Prime Minister's office.

According to information supplied by a member, the clan's families meet regularly to discuss house and business matters. There is no longer strict subordination to elders, but the oldest surviving Arabov - Mamadqul son of Abduqodir - always presides over ceremonial gatherings despite his modest position as a director of documentary films. Junior members of the clan are currently encouraged to pursue careers in such relatively new fields as business and the diplomatic service. Some of them have already found employment with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign missions in Dushanbe - OSCE in particular.
Figure 3.2 The Leninobod - Kanibodom Group of Families
Figure 3.3 The Gharm - Pamirs Group of Families

- relation by blood

- relation by marriage
The second clan (Figure 3.3) is of special interest because it has been developing in strict coordination with the socio-political processes in Tajikistan. Aqasharif Juraev, whose centenary was widely marked in 1995, was born in Darvoz (Qal'ai Khumb) and throughout his life remained an ardent propagandist of its traditional music and folklore culture. As an extraordinarily talented musician, he was amongst 5 or 6 Tajiks who were allowed to travel abroad during the 1940s-1960s. His tours of Iran in 1957 and of Afghanistan in 1959 attracted tens of thousands of admirers. Juraev was a friend of Tursun Uljaboev who helped him and his big family to settle down comfortably in Dushanbe. His son Qandil, a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan, was also an outspoken advocate of interests of the cis-Pamirs districts; for example, he vehemently opposed the abolition of the Gharm oblast in 1955.

Mirsaid Mirshakar, the author of the gigantic poem 'Lenin at the Pamirs', stayed on good terms with all post-war Party leaders in Tajikistan. He was richly decorated for his literary works glorifying Soviet rule, ascended to the CPT CC membership and finally was elected Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan in 1966. He patronised scores of young Pamiri poets and writers and made a substantial contribution to the establishment of a thriving community of intellectuals from Badakhshon in Dushanbe. This was a significant accomplishment, since in the 1950s and 1960s people from Gharm and the Pamirs were rapidly losing ground in Tajikistan's political structures. The appointment of Mehrabon Nazarov as the Minister of Culture in 1966 should be regarded as an exception. The younger generation of the clan in question realised itself mostly in creative and artistic capacities. Davlat Khudonazarov, arguably the brightest of them all, became a symbol of the Pamiri cultural renaissance in the late 1980s. He was elected as a deputy to the last Supreme Soviet of the USSR and made numerous contacts amidst political figures in Moscow in the late Gorbachev period. His relation, colleague and close friend Valery Ahadov became famous throughout the USSR as the director of the exorbitantly popular comedy movies. Links with the Moscow intelligentsia established by Khudonazarov and Ahadov proved to be useful for Khudonazarov's political career - during the 1991 presidential campaign in Tajikistan, he managed to use Moscow's TV channels to canvass the electorate. Needless to say, Khudonazarov's clan did a good job mobilising masses to vote for him, too: he received an almost 100 percent result in the Pamirs.

Almost every locality in Tajikistan can boast one or more patronage networks. They may take the form of a purely clientilistic dyad, as in Abcunalik Abdullojonov's case, or that of clans - kinship structures with primarily horizontal links and tacit obligations. They can run to the national level and beyond, but they can also be confined to a certain
village or district. The point is, that all these informal organisations have always played an important role in regulating life and channelling resources within the community in Tajikistan. S.N. Eisenstadt has made a general observation for the USSR that patron-client relations there "just as in most modern democratic societies" constituted "above all an addendum to the institutional centre of the society". This notion was only partly true for Tajikistan with its still potent traditional society; the formalised exchange prevailed there so long as uniform institutionalised organisations executed effective social control, through coercion and meeting the basic needs of the majority of the populace.

Informal exchange and its most obvious form - corruption - were a tacitly recognised part of the political life in Tajikistan. In 1975, A. Schelochinin, Procurator-General of Tajikistan, disclosed the details of a major fraud in the republic's system of consumer goods retailers, which ostensibly ran "for decades" and implicated Tajikistan's Minister of the Food Industry, a deputy Minister of Trade and 28 directors of shops and warehouses who "had developed their own standards of behaviour, their own morale and office ethics". Those exposed usually received relatively mild penalties, unless Moscow directly ordered otherwise. Belonging to the nomenklatura on the one hand and to a patronage network on the other was the best guarantee against imprisonment. Over the period 1965-1990 only nine officials were punished for official crimes in Tajikistan (two were removed from their posts and seven were incarcerated) - the lowest figure in all five Central Asian republics.

Bribery was instrumental in fulfilling economic plans. The Kommunist deplored the methods of a certain district Party committee secretary, who "intercepted fertilisers and fodder designated for others. He acquired them using bribes collected from the kolkhozes of his district". There existed a fairly rational system of bribes along the following chain: director of a collective farm or industrial enterprise - raikom secretary - obkom secretary - minister or the CPT CC secretary. Eventually, it came to resemble a taxation system, since the accrued funds were spent mostly on economic development

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71 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 5 April 1975.
72 Another interesting case occurred in 1961, when a group of high-ranking officials in Dushanbe were caught red-handed embezzling public funds to build private homes (one of the accused was Mahmud Ismoilov, then Chairman of the Juridical Commission of the Council of Ministers). It took one year, three articles in the central Izvestia newspaper and intervention on the part of the CPSU CC to induce the Tajik leadership to take any serious action in this regard. (The Current Digest of the Soviet Press, Vol. XIV, No. 16, 1962, p. 28; Vol. XIV, No. 24, 1962, p. 24.)
and social welfare. Promotions, mentions in the awards list or honorary titles were to be paid for separately. Another ingenious way of amassing shady money was based on manipulation of cotton procurement. Unlike their colleagues in Uzbekistan, officials in Tajikistan did not indulge into upward quantitative distortion. They preferred instead to decrease the fibre contents in raw cotton (from the average 34.4 percent in 1962 to 29.4 and even 18 percent in 1984), which gave them a robust additional revenue of 140 roubles per tonne gathered. Given the fact that in the 1980s the annual cotton crop in Tajikistan was in the vicinity of 900,000 tonnes, there could be as much as 126 million roubles in unregistered profits from cotton sales a year (of which collective farms retained fifty percent), amounting to approximately 8 percent of the entire republican budget.

It is worth noting that long career association with Tajikistan made non-indigenous officials equally susceptible to local models of exchange and behaviour. P.S. Obnosov, a Russian Second Secretary of the CPT CC, posted to Tajikistan in order to monitor the activities of First Secretary T. Uljaboev, formed a sort of entente cordiale with him. Together they even managed for some time to block the work of the special investigative commission sent in 1961 to Tajikistan by the CPSU Central Committee. The CPSU CC Presidium member F.R. Kozlov who came to Dushanbe in order to rectify the affair accused Obnosov of 'having been Tajikicised' and concealing facts of corruption and mismanagement. As it became clear from Obnosov's speech at the XIII Congress of the CPT (February 1960), he had created his personal clique of proteges in the republic which included native first secretaries of the Gharm, Komsomolobod and Jerghatol district committees and Uroteppa city committee.

It may be appropriate to outline the major attributes, or role expectations, of a member of Tajikistan's governing elite under Soviet rule:

- conformity with the set of rules and directives prescribed by Moscow;
- commitment to the cause of the development of the republic;
- development of personal political resources inside and outside Tajikistan;
- conflict avoidance, settlement of disputes with peers as unobtrusively as possible.

75 In the Kolhoxzobod district a raikom secretary used to require chairmen of 13 collective farms to contribute 5,000 roubles a year to the 'slush fund' in order to organise summer camps for children, build kindergartens, etc. (Taped interview with Mo'azza Osmanova - Deputy Head of Kolhoxzabad hukumat (district administration), 27 March 1995.)
77 Calculations are based on: Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 6 December 1985.
As long as a national leader could strike the right balance between contradictory loyalties to the centre and to the republic, as long as he managed to build up and maintain networks of informal exchange without attracting too much attention from the centre's control organs, as long as he could successfully lobby for centralised allocations, his job would be secure and he would be in a position to make policies, especially in the cultural sphere, that stuck. After Uljaboev's dismissal, the leaders of Tajikistan more or less succeeded in these endeavours and the conclusion made by Gregory Gleason that "by the early 1980s, with the end of Brezhnev's zastoi period, the bureaucratic structures within the fifteen national republics of the USSR had developed an unprecedented basis of internal political resourcefulness" was fully applicable.

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The political system in Tajikistan under Soviet rule was formed according to the basic principles of Moscow's nationality policy which in its turn was yet "another aspect of the all-out mobilisation of the population for state building and extensive economic growth. And, with the aid of repression ... this worked about as well as the rest of the system during its decades of expansion under Stalin and Khrushchev." The Kremlin managed to create the administration in Tajikistan which was largely nativised, reasonably efficient and thoroughly dependent on centralised decision-making. The bureaucratic structures of the Communist Party of Tajikistan constituted its centrepiece, and, from the republic level downwards, in the power triangle made by party committees, coercive organs and legislative bodies, the last played the least important role.

The notion of the "Russian hegemony" in the Soviet multinational state could be misleading: there never was a deliberate policy of Russification in the political realm in the USSR. It is much more appropriate to speak about the policy of complete subjugation of the national interests to the "hegemonistic strength of the sole true minority" in the country - that is, the CPSU leadership. As a result, the Tajik political elite was ridden by a dichotomy between allegiance to the central Party institutions, to

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which it owned its privileged position in the first place, and its native cast and the specific cultural environment in which it had to operate. The particulars of compromise reached between these two opposite tendencies varied, but until the mid-1980s the general trend was towards the emergence of a cohesive self-regulated state bureaucracy in Tajikistan which was in a position to implement directives and redistribute resources sent from Moscow in a rather flexible manner, operating beyond the prescribed rules of administration. In Martha Brill Olcott's eloquent characterisation: "the conditions of zastoi ... were well suited to Central Asia's party elite. They ruled like feudal overlords, free to steal and spend as they wished, once they had dispatched the required tribute to Moscow."84

Patterns of informal understandings, semi-legal and illegal exchange, and patronage networks were widespread; in the Brezhnev era, "the system of social relations based on the combination of the feeling of impunity, mafia-type solidarity and security from the so-called 'common people' embraced the not so narrow circle of persons. It included not only obkom secretaries but academics, journalists and other intellectuals as well."85

In Tajikistan, perhaps more than elsewhere in the USSR, the process of decision-making was concealed from the public view - it was essentially cryptopolitics, concentrated largely within the limits of the CPT Central Committee and its apparatus. Under Brezhnev the governing elite in Tajikistan transformed itself into a self-stabilising oligarchy which could retain its status even without resorting to blatant coercion. The overall sum of authority enjoyed by the Communist state was impressive, it effectively coped with the problems of legitimation, compliance and distribution in Tajikistan. At the same time, as the next chapter will show, its success in the field of penetrating a number of social institutions and containing rival identities within the society were much more modest; this was fraught with potential for political upheavals.

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Chapter IV. The Social Foundations of Political Action: An Anatomy of Traditional Social Institutions in Tajikistan

The Soviet system was characterised by the incessant attempts of the state to establish overwhelming control over society. The supposition that it had succeeded in penetrating all other social units, regulating social relationships down to the grassroots level, appropriating and distributing resources at its discretion gave rise to the totalitarian concept of Soviet politics in the 1960s. This theoretical construction has been criticised as far from perfect ever since, and the main argument of its opponents appears to have been that "the continuous process of social mobilisation, the expansion of education, and the growth of numerous professional groups and organisations created in Soviet Russia a much greater range of nuclei, the kernels of civil society." This notion was applicable to Tajikistan as well; however, the Soviet state faced the toughest competition not from the offsprings of its own development, but from the social institutions of tradition.

The policy of Sovietisation in Central Asia envisaged the establishment of a "modern industrial-type society devoid of social antagonisms, where social interests would be uniform and national distinctions would be erased." In the specific conditions of this region the implementation of this policy would supposedly invoke (a) accelerated economic growth, urbanisation and cultural development - 'catching up' with the European part of the USSR; (b) the liquidation of traditional patterns of socialisation - most notably, secularisation and dismantling of local ties and parochial loyalties; (c) the installation of a new mode of socialisation based on uniform communist values; and (d) the creation of viable Soviet nations on the basis of existing ethnic groups.

Answering the question of why the Soviet experiment in grandiose social transformation ultimately failed lies beyond the scope of this study. It is imperative,

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2 There is an ongoing debate on the exact meaning of the words 'tradition', 'traditional' and 'traditionalism' in contemporary sociological literature. For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that 'tradition' is "the statements, beliefs, legends, customs, understandings, terms, and categories of experience and social relationship that are handed down from one generation to another. Tradition, used alone, can never explain a people's behaviour, since behaviour is always situational, contextual, circumstantial. But there are frames of meaning, biases, and entrenched understandings that people have received from their past, which are already intact when they are confronted with exigencies, and these affect how people understand their problems, how they perceive what is of immediate or of prior importance, and thus how they will be prone to act." (Robert L. Canfield. "Ethnic, Regional, and Sectarian Alignments in Afghanistan." In: Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner, eds. The State, Religion, and Ethnic Politics. Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1986, p. 88).
however, to try to understand why people in Tajikistan could not be "successfully assimilated as 'new Soviet men'" over the period of almost seven decades. It appears that the following social actors had the ability to challenge the monopoly of state agencies in making and enforcing rules in Soviet Tajikistan:

- the family;
- religious community;
- sub-ethnic regionalism.

Exploring their dynamic relationship with the state is likely to corroborate the notion that even in the age of modernity "the Central Asian social system is oriented to the past in its value system as well as in its social structure." 5

**The Family and Traditional Patriarchy**

T.H. Rigby has noted that in the USSR "a considerable autonomy of choice is vested in an acknowledged personal-family-domestic sphere, to which the system concedes a major influence over such societally important matters as quantitative and qualitative changes in the population, childrearing, personal consumption and leisure-time activities." 6 In Tajikistan, where the transition to a modern small family is yet to be completed, the importance of the family was and is greatly enhanced by its function as a primary unit of economic, ideological and cultural activity. The traditional Tajik family has survived almost intact seven decades of ruthless pressure towards a Soviet-type modernity, retaining its main values and its adaptive role vis-à-vis society at large. The sources of such vitality are concealed in the demographic, structural and behavioural parameters of the kinship groups in Tajikistan.

There are three types of patriarchal undivided families in Tajikistan: (1) parents living with married sons; (2) families of married brothers who run one household; (3) uncles with married nephews. 7 In the early 1990s, these types constituted over 21 percent of all families in Tajikistan, 8 but, given the fact that their size was much bigger than the average nucleate family, they embraced well over half of the population in the republic.

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Table 4.1 shows that in rural areas families with 7 and more members (the national average family size being 6.1) dominated the demographic landscape in Tajikistan, accounting for 51.1 percent of all families.

Table 4.1 Number and Size of Families in Tajikistan (1993)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of Families</th>
<th>Number of Families</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>798,914</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>319,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>479,230</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In a big patriarchal family in Tajikistan the oldest male member concentrates power in his hands; he controls all expenditure, he determines the division of labour within the family, and he decides upon the future of junior members - who should continue education and who should go to work in the fields, and so on. Even if grown-up sons separate from the parental household, they cannot claim absolute economic independence, for they continue to belong to the kinship group of a higher order - the so-called avlod, which embodies all males descending from the common ancestor seven generations before. Avlod is based on: (a) commonality of property (mulki avlodi) in land; (b) tight spiritual bonds, vested in common sacred places (mazors), an assortment of the spirits of the dead (arvoh), traditions of blood feuds; (c) compact settlement, usually around one big yard - havili; (d) a uniformity of action in relations with the outer world. Under Soviet rule mulki avlod was craftily adapted to the realities of collectivisation; collective farms in Tajikistan were often created on the basis of pre-existent communal land ownership, and, like their ancestors, members of avlod continued to work jointly on the same allotment, disguised as a kolkhoz brigade.9

Subsidiary small-holdings also constituted part of the avlod property and played an increasingly important role in maintaining the economic viability of consanguinial structures under circumstances where collective farms were constantly reorganised, enlarged, amalgamated or transformed into state farms. During the 1980s, the number of people who worked exclusively on private family plots in Tajikistan increased sixfold and reached 7 percent of all those employed, and in some areas, such as the Gharm district, such people accounted for almost one-third of the entire rural workforce.10 Even employees of collective farms tended to spend substantial amount of their time on

private allotments: in 1985 an average kolkhoznik would work only 187 days at the farm, devoting the rest to his or her personal garden or vegetable patch.11

As Sergei Poliakov, the most profound scholar of traditionalism in Central Asian societies, has written, "the second part of rural economy - what is referred to as private small-holdings of kolkhozniks and workers of state farms ... is not regulated, controlled and explored by the state."12 In Qarotehin in the 1980s, it was the order of the day for a family to earn 30-50 thousand roubles a year simply by selling apples from the avlod garden - a sum equivalent to the annual salary of 18 - 30 people working at the farm.13 All revenues from wages and commercial activities went to the family fund and all spending was controlled by the head of avlod, even in cases where junior members of the family lived separately.14 The head's authority was unquestionable and he effectively prescribed the rules of behaviour to the members of the family.

Avlod’s main distinction from the undivided patriarchal family consists of the fact that it presents the entity of all relatives over seven generations, both dead and alive, and as such can incorporate more than one family.15 Both types are derivatives of the primordial agnate clan, which means that they are essentially kinship systems. The concept of avlod is closely related to the phenomenon of mahalla - the neighbourhood community in a city block or village. All residents in a given territory form a cohesive and exclusive entity which has its own organs of self-administration (mahalla committees, sanctioned and recognised by the civil authorities), gathering place (usually a mosque) and an array of ritual events. The mahalla committees are rarely elected but rather formed by people of influence - be they local elders, spiritual leaders, wealthy merchants or, more recently, armed gangs' commanders. They carry out a wide range of duties: they

14 A typical patriarchal family of Tanchi Kholmurodov in the Qurghonteppa region consisted of 12 people: two of his elder sons were formally independent, but still brought all their money to the father. The family worked as a single brigade in a state farm, with an aggregate annual wage of 12 thousand roubles. Tanchi Kholmurodov used the money as he saw fit (for example, he had bought a car and a motorcycle), and "nobody felt hurt about it." (Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 20 March 1975.)
15 An example of the classic avlod is a group of families which resides in the village of Qulbai Poyon: a certain Tohirbay who died in the 1910s had 10 children; 4 of them married offsprings of uncles on the father's side; 4 married children of uncles on the mother's side; and 2 remaining sons took wives from amongst distant relatives. Three generations later Tohirbay’s avlod consisted of more than 200 people, who cherished his memory and maintained a strong family cohesion. (O.A. Sukhareva. "Traditsiya semeino-rodstvennykh brakov u narodov Srednie Azii." In: G.P. Snesarev, ed. Sem'ia i semeyne obradi u narodov Srednie Azii i Kazakhstana. Moscow: Nauka, 1978, p. 122)
- form public opinion;
- monitor observation of *shariat, adat* and localistic patterns of behaviour;
- impose penalties on violators, including money pay-outs and ostracising;
- sanction real estate transactions;
- collect municipal taxes;
- organise ceremonial affairs, eg. weddings and funerals

However, it is the *mahalla*'s role as a means of transmission of socially significant information and of regeneration of the traditional ways of life that appears to be of paramount importance for understanding political processes in contemporary Tajikistan. Poliakov, describing the situation in the late 1980s, has written that "the mahalla ... has ideological life entirely and firmly in its hands. The committee and its active members, the elders, use very refined techniques to direct the education of the youth. The channelling and, even more important, the interpretation of information is extremely simple: the forty-year-old father passes it from the mosque to his twenty-year-old son and his year-old grandson ... In rural areas the mahalla controls all aspects of life for people ... even more completely than it does in the city."\(^{16}\) It is appropriate to note in this context that the *mahalla* mosque in Tajikistan is not necessarily the centre of purely religious activities. In fact, its function as a communicative hub of the community - *gapkhona* or *mehmonkhona* - is at least equally meaningful and certainly date back to pre-Islamic times. Unlike the Friday mosque, the *mahalla* temple is primarily perceived as "the public gathering point of the male population of the mahalla; kitchen utensils are kept there and hearths are set up in its yard."\(^{17}\) In the mountainous areas east of Dushanbe the meeting place of a *mahalla* mosque is often referred to as *alovkhona*, or 'the house of fire' - clearly a survivor of Zoroastrian rites.\(^{18}\)

Male unions, widely known throughout the ancient world from Greece to China, remain very much a reality in today's Tajikistan. Their regular assemblies, known as *gashitak, gapkhuri, gap, ziyofat, tukma, jura* or *maslinat* in various localities of the country, share several common features:
- taboo against women's presence;
- initiation procedures for newcomers;
- absolute authority of the leader - *bobо*, or 'grandfather' (hence the nickname of Sangak Safarov, the infamous Tajik warlord in 1992-1993 - *bobо* Sangak);

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- obedience and even servility of younger members to the older ones, but only within the limits of a given gashtak.

The late 1980s saw a rapid revival of the tradition of male unions in Tajikistan. It was especially evident in the cities, where they operated under the mask of newly allowed public associations and sport clubs. It has been noted, however, that in modern gashtaks vertical ties between generations are giving way to horizontal links, according to professional, criminal or other common interests. It is noteworthy that youngsters in such formations are encouraged to go in for combat sports, such as sambo, judo and karate. Yaqubjon Salimov, a racketeer and later Minister of Interior of Tajikistan in 1992 - 1995, acquired necessary skills for his career in the 1970s fighting for his gashtak based in the Dushanbe suburb Obdoron against rivals from Shomansur.

In rural districts of Tajikistan mahalla and gashtak are almost invariably mere extensions of avlod. The latter is, first of all, a kinship structure and as such performs primarily controlling and regulatory functions. The term mahalla has a territorial connotation and is essentially an organisational system. Gashtak, originally a sub-unit of avlod, has been acquiring a new universal function - the establishment and maintenance of viable ties amongst members of a certain occupation in the community vis-à-vis external forces, including the state. In the cities the distinction between the three is blurred, but what really matters in this case is the fact that, for the bulk of the Tajiks, the collective form of self-consciousness is yet to be replaced by the individualistic one. Their lives are still determined to a great extent by the centuries-old canons and the will of various kinship and communal structures. A representative sociological survey conducted in 11 republics and regions of the USSR between 1988 and 1990 showed that 49 percent of the population of Tajikistan were guided in their behaviour primarily by the rules prescribed by the family, as compared to 26 percent in Moscow; the rules set by the state and society at large proved to be nowhere near as authoritative in this Central Asian republic.

Patriarchy, interpreted as a "kinship-ordered social structure with strictly defined sex roles in which women are subordinated to men", serves as a fair indication of the persistence of traditional patterns in Tajik society. The entry of women into public life,

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20 Confidential source in Dushanbe, January 1996.
sponsored and encouraged by Soviet authorities, had weakened patriarchy to a substantial extent, but the socialisation of women, especially in rural areas of Tajikistan, still remains centred on the patrilineal family and focuses on child-rearing, limiting their mobility and access to employment and education (Table 4.2). It has been estimated that in Tajikistan a woman with a family of five spends an average of 45 hours a week running the household,23 which effectively precludes her from pursuing alternative life options.

Table 4.2 Comparative Social Indicators in Tajikistan and the Soviet Union on the Whole (1988)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Indicators</th>
<th>USSR</th>
<th>Tajikistan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender Ratio: females per 100 males</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labour Force: % female</td>
<td>50.6</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Education: % of college population that is female</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fertility Rate</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>5.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The legal status of women in Tajikistan is not different from that of men, but in practice patriarchal forms of control over women, such as the senior male's domination in avlod, restrictive codes of behaviour and a specific public opinion which holds female virtue the *sine qua non* of family honour, cast doubt on the universal effectiveness of emancipatory measures implemented in Soviet Central Asia. In private life especially, a significant proportion of Tajik women have not achieved freedom from traditional patriarchal structures. A study conducted amongst female students of Dushanbe tertiary institutions - arguably one of the most fully socialised and mobile strata of the populace - has yielded quite revealing results (Table 4.3).

In rural areas, the role of the family in determining the future for a girl is near absolute. Parents would more often than not give a daughter away without asking for her consent, on the basis of economic considerations and the interests of the avlod. The importance of dynastic marriages for *nomenklatura* clans in Tajikistan was illustrated in the previous chapter; it is appropriate now to stress the general point made for the traditional society: "family leaders, government elites, and religious officials may promote marriages between different families as a means of enhancing or defending their political and social status, of gaining property and other wealth, or of extending business contacts and networks ... The same can be said for nonelite families."24

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are "still many matrimonial arrangements between cousins amongst Tajiks, such as marrying mother's brother's daughter and marriages between two brothers' children. In fact, mountain Tajiks disapprove of marriages between non-relatives." 25 Betrothal at the age of 9 or even 2 is not infrequent in Yaghnob, for example. Of course, the actual marriage is usually postponed until the age of consent, but the bride-to-be constantly remains "the subject of attention and speculation, not in terms of beauty and physique, but the emerging aptness as a house-keeper and worker. These qualities are valued most of all." 26 The feeling of being trapped between traditional and modern ways of life often results in tragedy: Tajikistan was the only republic in the USSR where women constituted the majority (52%) of those who committed suicide; self-immolation was an especially gruesome method of settling scores with life amongst women "confined to the family circle." 27

Table 4.3 Motivation for Marriage amongst College Students (1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motives</th>
<th>National Composition of the Family</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Love</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commonality of</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual Interests</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire to Have Family</td>
<td>11.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents' Will</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


A lengthy quotation from a Tajik academic probably gives the best account of the state of affairs in the republic at present: 28

The Tajik woman, who has experienced fear of derision, punishment, solitude for centuries, has been trying to fulfill all whims and demands of the husband and his family with obedience and has been enduring injustice, cruelty and abasement. They have penetrated her flesh and blood and have been transmitted from generation to generation, to daughters and granddaughters. This situation, fortified by public opinion and learned through experience, traditions and family and marriage customs, has oriented the Tajik girl towards married life and the role of the mother of a large family at a very early age. The same experience has cultivated in her such features as

27 Saodat Safarova. "Vyzov, broshennyi zhizni." Pamir, No. 8, 1988, pp. 140, 142. In 1987, fifty-seven cases of female suicide were registered in the Leninobod oblast. None of them were properly investigated.
indecisiveness, servility, reticence, unquestionable subordination to the
husband and parents' will, modesty and high regard to woman's virtue and
mother's duty.

The eminent Western scholar Kent Geiger has observed that "the family has been the
slowest of Soviet social institutions to undergo modification. Such changes as ... fewer
children per marriage, an increase in marital equity, more independence of children -
have been overshadowed by the struggle to maintain family life intact, and in as much
the same form as in the past as possible." 29 For seventy years traditional family
structures and values in Tajikistan continued to exist parallel to and independently of
official ideology, concealed from the eyes of strangers and proving to be "something
difficult to control even for a Soviet-style state". 30 With the weakening of the
Communist monolith in the late 1980s they began to pay a more salient role in local
politics. When alternative political organisations and social movements, such as
Rastokhez and the Democratic Party, emerged in Tajikistan, their rank-and-file
membership consisted of avlods, mahalla committees and men's unions related to the
political leaders by blood or otherwise, rather than individuals sharing their
programmatic ideals. 31 The Islamic Renaissance Party has been especially keen to use
traditional organisational structures: it is known that 12 members of the Ulama Council
of the IRP belong to one gashtak, and functionaries at lower levels are habitually heads
of kinship entities in their respective territories. 32

In times of political instability traditional institutions tend to play an ever growing part
in providing security and welfare to the populace in Central Asia. It has been revealed
that even in the period of Soviet stagnation, and even in such a cosmopolitan and
heavily industrialised city as Tashkent, at least thirty percent of indigenous males were
actively involved in the gap and tukma activities. 33 In Tajikistan, where the process of
urbanisation was far less advanced and a high percentage of city dwellers were still
employed in agriculture, this figure must have been much higher. Moreover, beginning
in the late 1980s, quasi-traditional structures began to evolve in hitherto unaffected

30 Michael Rywkin. "National Symbiosis: Vitality, Religion, Identity, Allegiance." In: Yaakov Ro'i,
ed. The USSR and the Muslim World. Issues in Domestic and Foreign Policy. London: George Allen &
Unwin. 1984, p. 4.
Moscow: TsIMO, 1995, pp. 52-53.
32 V.I. Bushkov, D.V. Mikulskii. "Obchestvenno-politicheskii situatsiiia v Tadzhikistane: ianvar
1992g." Issledovania po prikladnor i neotlozhnoi etnologii, Series A, Document No. 26, Moscow:
33 L.A. Tultseva. "O nekotorykh sotsialno-ethnicheskikh aspektakh razvitiia obriadovo-prazdnichnoi
areas. In the Bofanda suburb of Dushanbe, for example, residents of four nine-storey apartment block buildings decided in 1989 to pool their efforts to cope with day-to-day problems, such as frequent power failures and garbage disposal. They furnished a gathering place in the yard (which also served as a mosque), and elected the *mahalla* committee, composed of a vocational school teacher, a cinema director and a supplies manager of a tannery-cum-self-taught mullah. This *mahalla* would not be different from thousands others around the country, but for the fact that 80 percent of Bofanda residents are workers at the Tajik textile combine and thus mostly non-Tajiks. As a result, only 10 - 15 people attend purely religious events in that community, while the rest are more interested in maintenance and leisure activities. In 1990 and 1992, all grown-up men of the *mahalla* formed a self-defence unit, regardless of their nationality or political and religious affiliation.

In summary, the kinship-familial setting of Tajik society has coped well with the realities of Soviet rule. The seemingly omnipresent and omnipotent Party-state machine failed to alter significantly the major attitudes to the problems of human existence and cultural order amongst the Tajiks. The Communist regime, although it was the only sanctioned political system in the society, could not transform what Shmuel Eisenstadt has called the second level of organisational activities, that is the traditional collectivities and communities “whose systemic boundaries are organised or patterned around symbols or likeness of common attributes and of participation in them, but which are not necessarily structured as systems with clear organisational boundaries.”

**Islam As A Traditional Institution**

Islam was another traditional institution which proved to be extraordinarily resistant to the policies initiated by the Communist state. While there is little doubt that in Soviet Central Asia "political institutions and political processes have been completely freed from the influence of religion", Islam has retained its positions as a source of identity, a transmitter of cultural tradition and, more generally, as a way of life.

Secularisation and atheistic education were permanent components of the Party line in Tajikistan. The concrete policy towards religious observance, however, fluctuated substantially. Between 1920 and 1927, the secular state had to tolerate the existence of Islamic schools (*maktabs* and *madrasas*), real estate property of mosques (*vaqf*) and

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34 Information gathered during fieldwork in Tajikistan in February 1995.
shariat courts. The years from 1928 to 1941 witnessed a ferocious attack on Muslim establishment: certain religious practices were outlawed, religious institutions were closed down, vaqf was abolished and the clergy was thoroughly purged. The predominantly Ismaili population of the Pamirs were prohibited from sending annual tribute to their spiritual leader, the Aga Khan in India, and his representative in Tajikistan, ishon Seid Yusofalisho, was arrested in 1931. The Islamic courts were disbanded in November 1927, on the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution: "This was a new Soviet tradition - to mark revolutionary holidays with labour and other accomplishments." The post-war period was characterised by a somewhat more tolerant approach, with an emphasis on anti-religious propaganda rather than blatant coercion. In 1958, 2,056 teams of agitators with a membership in excess of 33 thousand operated in the republic exposing the harmful and reactionary essence of Islam. The effectiveness of the seemingly relentless struggle conducted by local authorities on the ideological front, however, was often questioned by Moscow. A special resolution of the CPSU Central Committee on Tajikistan (the only one of its kind throughout the Soviet period) stated in particular that "Party organisations in the republic direct ideological-educational work aimed at the formation of a Marxist-Leninist outlook amidst all working people in an unsatisfactory manner ... Lately atheistic propaganda has weakened and the activities of clergy and religious sects have been on the rise." Obviously, the anti-Islamic drive in Tajikistan was often maintained as a sheer formality: in 1961 for example, out of 43 women's atheistic groups reported in the Panj raion only one was functioning. A curious note was left in 1981 by a couple of visitors from India in the guest-book of the famous mosque of mavlono Ya'qubi Charkhi near Dushanbe: "We are very excited about seeing the mosque. We are not Muslims ourselves, but we have become convinced that in the Soviet Union, especially

37 For instance, circumcision was strongly discouraged; but the ritual operation continued to be performed at home regardless, and the number of patients admitted to hospitals with complications after circumcision remained constantly high. (Igor Ermakov, Dmitrii Mikulskii, eds. Islam v Rossii i Srednei Azii. Moscow: Lotos, 1993, p. 105)
38 Until 1989, there was not a single officially registered maktab or madrasa in Tajikistan, in sharp contradiction with the pre-revolutionary period - in 1903, the city of Khujand alone had 30 maktabs and 30 madrasas, where 575 students were trained to become mullahs. (Leninobod. Dushanbe: Irfon, 1986, p. 166.)
42 "O rabote TsK Kompartii Tadzhikistana po vypolneniu reshenii XXIII s'ezda KPSS." Partiinaia zhizn', No. 1, January 1969, p. 5.
43 XIV s'ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana. Stenograficheskii otchet. Dushanbe: Tadzhikskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo, 1962, p. 188.
in Tajikistan, the Islamic religion is fully fledged and its practice is free. We have seen it with our own eyes and have rescinded the wrong impression we had had before."\(^{44}\)

In the 1970s and 1980s, there emerged a kind of accommodation between the state and Islam in Tajikistan. It was characterised by two non-contradictory parameters: (a) state-sponsored secular institutions and norms of behaviour dominated the public realm of social action, and (b) the religion was tacitly recognised as an integral element of private life - an element which would wither away with the progress of the Communist project. As Yaacov Ro'i has observed, "even if at first a departure from religion was imposed upon them by force, in the course of time, this population became basically secularised from conviction, education and/or force of habit. This did not mean that it renounced its Muslim identity, seeing no contradiction in declaring itself at one and the same time Muslim and atheist or non-believing."\(^{45}\) A unique sociological survey conducted in 1985 showed that 55.6 percent of Tajik communists regarded themselves as true Muslims.\(^{46}\) Apparently, Bobojon Ghafurov, former First Secretary of the CPT CC, made a pilgrimage to Mecca after retirement, for he was "a son of a pious Muslim and sincerely yearned to visit Qa'aba."\(^{47}\)

At least two factors contributed to the reasons why the Soviet regime did not treat Islam as a serious threat in Tajikistan in the post-war period. First of all, the so-called 'official Islam', or "that segment of religious life revolving around the functioning mosques, registered mullahs and officially recognised religious communities",\(^{48}\) was closely monitored and regulated by the authorities. All working mosques\(^{49}\) and clerics were registered with the republican branch (qoziyot) of the Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM), as well as with the Council for Religious Affairs - an organ of the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan. Official mullahs were on a government payroll and their appointment was subject to the authorities' approval. Second, the 'parallel', or 'popular', Islam, based on the activities of clandestine Sufi orders and great cultural traditions and free of all interference from the

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\(^{49}\) In 1963, there were only 18 officially registered mosques in Tajikistan, down from several thousand in the pre-revolutionary period. Until the late 1980s, their number remained virtually unchanged. (Alexander Bennigsen, S. Enders Wimbush. Muslims of the Soviet Empire. A Guide. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986, p. 90)
state, had "too apolitical a character and too diffuse a structure to rally believers under an anti-Soviet political banner." 50

Popular Islam in Tajikistan has several important characteristics which made it different from similar phenomena in the republics of the former Soviet Union. Its ideological core, that is the 'popular knowledge of Islam', 51 has always been more pronounced for the simple reason that the corpus of Muslim literature which embodied not only ecclesiastic texts but also classic medieval lyrics, didactic stories and anecdotes inherited from the past, had been written mostly in Persian. On the other hand, it would be an exaggeration to say that adherence to the main tenets of Islam or understanding of its theoretical dogmas is stronger among Tajiks in comparison with other Central Asian nationals. Data collected in the field in Tajikistan corroborate the general observation made for Central Asian Muslims by Nancy Lubin: "more than three-quarters of those who said they are Islamic believers do not pray at all, and three-quarters say they never fast." 52 Moreover, even those who observe the fast (ruza) in Tajikistan, especially in the cities, would refer to health considerations for doing so, rather than treating it as a conscientious act of compliance with one of the pillars of Islam. 53 One may recall in this connection a discouraging report of a Muslim World League official on his trip to Central Asia: "Central Asian Muslims lack the basic Islamic understanding, not only about prayers (ibadah) but also about daily life and halal and haram. Therefore, one may find many un-Islamic traditions, customs and habits prevalent among these Muslims ..." 54

Popular Islam in Tajikistan is centred on a seemingly endless succession of ceremonies and rituals, most of which date back to pre-Muslim times. Birth, coming of age, marriage and funerals are the landmark events for every Tajik family and kinship or neighbourhood community. Their proper commemoration according to Islamic or, to be more precise, local cultural tradition, is vitally important for every individual, or any given social group, in terms of maintaining their social status. But even the day-to-day life of Tajiks is largely regulated by a set of beliefs which they perceive as Muslim. In reality, it has more to do with ancient fertility cults and various agricultural rites, to which the existence of a thriving institution of shamans testifies.

53 The prevailing explanation for holding the ruza in Dushanbe at present is that it helps to purify the organism of dross. (Interviews in Dushanbe, February 1995)
Shamans in Tajikistan, called parikhon and folbin, are omnipresent; every mahalla in a village or city can boast at least one man or woman who is believed to have special relationship with spirits and can thus: (a) diagnose and care illnesses; (b) impose or lift a curse; (c) interpret omens and forecast the future; and (d) find missing objects and people. People's belief in ajina, chiltan, miros and other supernatural creatures, hardly compatible with Orthodox Islam, has found its reflection in a Tajik saying: 'Khudo zada bosh, arvoh zada - ne', which means 'If the God strikes you - let it be, but don't let the spirits'. In rural areas there still exist whole dynasties of self-styled medics, who specialise in treating infertility or pneumonia through exorcism. Generally, in modern times "the shamans have never experienced restrictions in their practice and coexisted peacefully with the clergy. There has emerged a sort of cooperation: shamans would send the ailing to mullahs, and mullahs would advise them to go to shamans." Quite often, particularly in remote areas such as Yaghnob, one person combines the responsibilities of a mullah, hereditary Sufi leader and shaman. Common people in Tajikistan usually do not bother to worry themselves with the fine demarcation of these terms and tend to refer to anybody with religious charisma, obtained through position, training, inheritance, divine intervention or otherwise, as ishon - a word that originally carried a strictly Sufi connotation.

According to Bennigsen and Wimbush, "parallel Islam is represented in Tajikistan by the adepts of some Sufi brotherhoods (mainly of the Naqshbandiyya) which are more structured than in the other Central Asian republics ... The representatives of parallel Islam control numerous holy places which, in absence of working mosques, tend to become the real centres of religious life." These same authoritative authors, however, made quite a different assumption in their earlier work: "In Tajikistan ... Sufi brotherhoods are less active and play a relatively minor role in the preservation of the religious feelings of the population. In this republic the holy places are less numerous and enjoy but a moderate prestige among the believers and the unbelievers. The religious life of the Tajiks is less dependent on parallel Islam and for this reason the role of the holy mazors is lesser than in Turkmenistan and Kirghizia." This issue may

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57 In the Zarafshon Valley, a mullah is required to spend 40 days in fast, seclusion and prayer to qualify as an exorcist. (O. Murodov. "Predstavlenia o devakh u tadzhikov srednei chasti doliny Zeravshana." *Sovetskaiia etnografia*, No. 1, 1973, p. 154.)
indeed be confusing, so long as popular Islam in Tajikistan is viewed as an extension of official Islam par excellence, which has become important mainly due to the atheistic onslaught of Soviet authorities. It is reasonable to adopt the approach whereby popular Islam represents a certain way of life in its wholeness, far beyond the confines of a religious creed, and as such cannot be measured quantitatively. The statement that "there is no evidence whatsoever to suggest that Soviet Muslims have ever been less (or more) devoted to their faith than they are now" then makes perfect sense.

Mazors, or holy places, in Tajikistan, in a contradistinction to the situation in other Central Asian countries, are not necessarily linked to a burial place of some real or mythical Sufi saint. The number of such shrines in the republic is relatively small, the two most revered are the mazor of mavlono Ya'qubi Charkhi near Dushanbe, and the mausoleum of khoja Ishoq 'Makhdumi A'zam' in Hisor (both date back to the 16th century). The bulk of the mazors in Tajikistan, however, are related to the primordial cult of trees, springs and stones which are believed to harbour evil and benign spirits. It is not infrequent that the trunk of a 'sacred tree' constitutes the minaret of a village mosque. In rural areas every avlod has at least one mazor, and the living members of the family pay homage to them regularly, usually on Fridays and Sundays, to placate the souls of the dead.63

Some mazors are devoted to animistic deities (for examples, bibi Seshambe, the patroness of maternity, and bibi Mushkelkusho, the spirit of good fortunes), or even Zoroastrian religious symbols, such as a rather popular temple of the sun, 'Shokambar Oftob', in Vakhlan. The pre-Islamic elements in Tajik Sufism are an intrinsically interesting and enormous subject in themselves, however, it appears that in everyday

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64 A very typical case of the establishment of a new mazor was reported in 1957 in the kolkhoz named after Karl Marx: "the kolkhoz worker Abdullo Umarov while being sick had made an oath that he would repair one [of his relatives] tomb. Umarov's organism overcame illness and he convalesced. After that, Umarov mended the tomb and conveyed the whole story to his relations. In their turn, they shared the news with others. That's how the pilgrimage to this burial commenced." (XI s'ezd Kommunistcheskoi partii Tadzhikistana. Etnograficheskii otchet. Stalinabad: Tadzhikskoe gosudarstvennoe izdatelstvo, 1958, p. 144.)
religious practice a thick layer of traditional beliefs is barely covered by Muslim rites, distorted as they are almost beyond recognition from their canonical version.

Medieval Sufism in Central Asia had all the attributes of classical mystical Islam: several competing brotherhoods, hierarchal structure, degrees of initiation, missionary activity, and so on. In the 19th century, however, "the link with the original Sufi orders was rather weak. Sufism degenerated into Ishanism - every big ishon virtually gave rise to a separate order, headed thereafter by his descendants. The dissociation of the Sufi brotherhoods led to the situation whereby an ishon became the only authority for his disciples, the sole source of spiritual authority that, according to the demands of the Sufi doctrine, was absolute."67 Thus ishons, who originally were the middle link in the mursched (Sufi teacher) - murid (disciple) chain found themselves in a unique position: they wielded great power, without having proper knowledge and education.

In Tajikistan, the surviving members of traditional status groups (sayeds, khojas, mirs and tura) are often treated as ishons. In the early 1990s, a certain police lieutenant in Mastchoh, who was also a tura, acted as ishon for a group of people living in neighbouring Uzbekistan and collected sadaqa (alms) from them in this capacity.68 It is difficult to draw a dividing line between a collectivity of murids,69 an extended patriarchal family and a solidarity network coalesced around representatives of a traditional elite stratum. It appears, however, that purely religious mursched - murid dyads are quite rare in Tajikistan. In modern times there was only one eminent Sufi teacher in the republic - hazrat Pirmuhammad Sangi Qulula, who died in 1968 in the village of Olimtoy near Kulob. His funeral was attended by thousands of people from all over Central Asia, including several dozen high-ranking Party officials.70

In summary, there is much truth in the conclusion that for Tajikistan "the most important dimension of Sufism is not the sophisticated mysticism practised by the Sufi adepts but the Sufi embodiment of folk Islam."71 Furthermore, popular Islam incorporates "people's ancient beliefs, vestiges of magic and elements of folklore culture. Thus this is a national phenomenon and perceived by many as such ... The non-conflictual co-existence of various, often directly opposite ideas, is characteristic of

69 Every ishon may have from one to over fifty disciples. (S.M. Demidov. Sufizm v Turkmenii. Ashkhabad: Ylim, 1978, p. 103.)
it ... Popular Islam is loyal to the authorities and calls for the rejection of political struggle." 72 With this in mind, it would be easier to avoid the temptation to explain the retention of traditional customs as manifestations of religious zeal aimed against the secular state - a theme rather fancied by some Western scholars from the time of Soviet rule to the present day. 73

There is no reliable data on the religious affiliation and observance of the eponymous population of Tajikistan. A survey conducted in the Qurghonteppa region in 1989 revealed that 81 percent of those polled "were under the influence of Islam, its traditions and rituals." 74 Table 4.4 shows that Islamic mores affect broad sections of Tajik society and are successfully reproduced in younger generations. In 1991, the percentage of weddings conducted with the presence of a mullah was 86.5 percent in Tajikistan, as compared to 80.1 percent in Turkmenistan and 32.4 percent in Kazakhstan. 75 Similarly, 55 to 82 per cent of polled women consider Islamic funeral ceremonies necessary, while "in fact a much higher percentage (approximating 100 per cent of population, including atheists and non-believers) practices them." 76 Still, such attitudes and shared understandings cannot be regarded solely as a product of Islamic belief - they are part of a wider cultural order or the Great Tradition, and are "so deeply rooted that they flow almost automatically." 77 It has been argued that the ratio between people who observe Muslim rituals and those who really believe in Muslim faith is 4 to 1. 78 Moreover, Islamic mores appear to be highly particularistic, especially in the area of marital arrangements: for example, Quranic views on exogamy are strictly observed amongst Tajiks whose ancestors had migrated from Herat (heroti), whereas mountain Tajiks by and large ignore them. 79

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74 S. Boronbekov. "Religioznye verovaniia, obychai i ugolovno-pravovoe soznanie." Izvestia AN TSSR. Seria: filosofija, ekonomika, pravovedenie. No. 4, 1991, p. 66. The methodology of the poll is not quite clear, but presumably the respondents did not include the so-called Russian-speaking population.
Table 4.4 Percentage of Believers amongst Tajiks According to:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Pensioners and Housewives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engineers and Agricultural Experts</td>
<td>64.8%</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intellectuals and experts</td>
<td>61.3%</td>
<td>89.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

b) Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Pensioners and Housewives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-24</td>
<td>73.0%</td>
<td>77.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In modern Tajikistan the dividing line between *adat* and *shariat* is rather blurred. Under conditions where the society retains strong elements of patriarchy and where the stratum of carriers of orthodox Islam is thin, the job of interpreting the principles of common good and establishing codes of honour and decency - the privilege of the *ulama* in most Muslim countries - is inevitably relegated to traditional communal leaders: heads of *avlods*, elders in the *mahalla* committees, patrons of solidarity networks and members of ascribed prestigious status groups.\(^80\) On the whole, Islam of any form or description in Tajikistan has failed to impose a set of universalistic values on the society, and thus can hardly be seen to play an overarching integrative and mobilisational role today.

**Regionalism: the Ultimate Cause of Social Polarisation**

Apart from familial and religious affiliations, which overlap and complement one another, there is another important source of identity that arguably matters most for Tajiks in the context of political processes. French scholar Olivier Roy was the first analyst in the West to single out "the influence of political loyalties based on geographic origin" in shaping conflict in Tajikistan, defining this phenomenon as 'localism'.\(^81\) He also drew a very important distinction between 'localism' and the social fragmentation along clan and ethnic lines thus contrasting with so many authors who are tempted to mix together "the long-suppressed clan, regional and ethnic rivalries" in Tajikistan.\(^82\) Roy's work, however, is somewhat sketchy, and its other major postulate, that "the present fragmentation is largely a product of the Soviet period"\(^83\) could be misleading.

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\(^{80}\) The Tajik saying 'Avval khesh, ba'd darvesh', or 'Relatives [come] first, dervish - afterwards' connotes the primacy of the kinship allegiance over the religious one.


It has been shown in the preceding chapters that the entire course of Tajik history, both before and after the 1917 Revolution, has been conducive to the emergence and survival of distinctive sub-ethnic communities which could never merge into a modern nation. Called mahallgaroyi or mantaqagaroyi in the Tajik language, this phenomenon will hereupon be referred to as 'regionalism' which appears to be a more precise term than 'localism', both linguistically and in view of the realities in today's Tajikistan.

The concept of 'the region' is by no means new to political scientists, but it has been used primarily to explore Western societies, particularly the USA. The Wordsworth's Dictionary gives this definition of the word: "A tract of country: any area or district, especially one characterised in some way ... a realm: a portion or division, as of the body: a portion of space." In this study, the region is understood to be an area with a recognisable community which has:

- distinctive physical traits, such as weather conditions, length of growing season, vegetation, and similar features;
- distinctive history;
- special cultural characteristics such as dialect, costume, architecture, use of given tools, rituals - what is referred to in anthropology as a 'culture area';
- natural and artificial barriers, for examples, mountain ranges and administrative borders;
- a focus of gravitation, such as a trade centre and/or political or historical capital;
- an ad hoc problem: environmental pollution, crime, ethnic tension and the like.

In contemporary literature, more often than not, the notion of 'region' is either put into the Procrustean bed of econometrics, or explored in relation with flows of authority in a nation-state, within the centre-periphery model of resource distribution. In the foregoing analysis regions and regionalism are treated as predominantly cultural categories; many issues pertaining to regional sub-ethnic identities in Tajikistan in historical perspective have already been discussed in Chapter I. The crucial point about regionalism in contemporary Tajikistan is that, unlike America or Europe, it does not

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87 Asheim and Dunford define regions simply as 'productive systems characterised by economic disparities'. (Bjørn Asheim and Michael Dunford. "Regional Futures." Regional Studies, Vol. 31, No. 5, 1997, p. 453.)
denote the interrelationship between the several areas in the total nation, and, therefore, has a pronounced divisive meaning. Economic factors and institutional variables (such as regional representation in decision-making bodies) play a subordinate role in shaping self-awareness in a given region as compared to the fundamental 'givens' of communal affect; still, they warrant a thorough examination, for they do influence the intensity of this self-awareness and the ways it transforms into political action.

Chapter II showed that the administrative demarcation in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was largely implemented along pre-existent boundaries. The constituent regions became incorporated into the all-union division of labour, but the level of economic integration inside the republic remained low - the potential for production cooperation between oblasts and raions of the republic in the late 1980s was used at 12-18 percent. The specific Soviet economic policy, however, was only one element in the intricate mosaic of inter-regional interests and contradictions in the republic, which in recent years has acquired the following configuration.

I. The Leninobod oblast (or viloyat in Tajik) in the north with its centre in Khujand has always been the most developed and populated part of Tajikistan (Table 4.5). Its economy is based on grain, cotton growing and modern industry: in 1992, 616 out of the republic's total of 733 factories were located there. In 1994, this region accounted for 62 percent of the state budget's revenues. The spirit of entrepreneurship has never been extinguished amongst the Khujandis; even in the hey-day of Stalin's rule they continued with private productive activities, mainly on family allotments, and with trade, which allowed for higher living standards than elsewhere in Tajikistan. Consequently, the cooperative movement initiated in the USSR in the late 1980s and the process of small privatisation that followed have yielded impressive results. The variety of privatised, semi-privatised and de-facto-privatised enterprises operational in Khujand (usually headed by government officials of some kind) is astounding.

91 The author is indebted to Dr Azizzullo Avezov, Director of the Khujand Branch of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Tajik Academy of Sciences for the data related to the economic performance of the regions supplied during a series of interviews in March 1995 in Khujand.
93 For example, the government has a 40 percent stake in the Khojandi-based "Sham" Joint-Stock Company which was established in 1988 on the basis of several cotton-processing plants, another 40 percent belong to the employees and the remaining 20 percent to private investors. In 1994, however, all profits of the company were utilised single-handedly by 'Sham' s President Mr Fattoh Azizov, a close friend of the then Prime-Minister Jamshed Karimov, and the state's participation in running the enterprise was reduced to supplying raw materials and energy at heavily subsidised prices. (Taped interview with a confidential source in Khojand, 7 March 1995).
Inside Tajikistan, the Khujandis have the reputation of being pragmatic people obsessed with making a profit and prone to striking dubious deals and gambling, to which their collective nickname, budanaboz (‘quail fight fan’), testifies. It is also believed that "the political ideal of the Leninobodis is a combination of rigid authoritarian central power and freedom of private entrepreneurship and initiative ... The freedom of entrepreneurship by no means is associated with the freedom per se, it is realised through communal mechanisms with their authoritarian character, paternalism and negation of individualism."[94]

The Leninobod oblast is an organic part of the multi-ethnic Ferghana Valley and, in terms of infrastructure and even ethnic composition, is closer to Uzbekistan than rump Tajikistan; suffice it to mention that Uzbeks make up 43 percent of the population in the

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northernmost Asht raion. This region is connected with Dushanbe by one narrow road which is out of operation three months a year; there is no direct railway communication, and the only reliable means of transportation is the airplane. The sense of isolation from the rest of Tajikistan is so entrenched that Khujandi businessmen flying from their hometown to Dushanbe would routinely say that they are going 'to Tajikistan'. Valley Tajiks who live in the North have been traditionally viewed as Turkicised half-casts by mountain Tajiks in the South and South-East of the republic. In their turn, the Khujandis go to great lengths to assert their purity and cultural superiority, claiming, for example, that they are direct descendants of the Aryans, Cyrus the Great and Ismail Somoni, and that only ignorant people would say their capital city is 2500 years old, because in reality it has a 8400-year history.

Between 1946 and 1991, the top leadership of Tajikistan was invariably recruited from Leninobod. In addition to the position of First Secretary of the republican Party Central Committee, people from the North were traditionally in charge of industry and trade, and, generally, dominated the top Party organs (Table 4.7). Moreover, the oblast enjoyed the privilege of trading abroad directly, bypassing Dushanbe. Beginning with Jabbor Rasulov, the CPT CC First Secretary in 1961-1982, the Leninobodi ruling elite adopted a truly Machiavellian tactic in preserving their control: representatives of other regions did gain access to positions of authority, however, they were viewed "not as people who cherished interests of their compatriots, but spineless individuals, or, even worse, 'marginals' (those who had a Russian or Leninobodi wife, or had been brought up somewhere 'far away'), or complete nincompoops, in order to discredit the southern nomenklatura clans in the eyes of Moscow." Hikmatullo Nasriddinov, a Kulobi who was appointed as Minister for Irrigation in 1980, remembers with a degree of bitterness that one condition of his promotion was he could never employ fellow-townsmen in the Ministry: "Of course, these incantations of Jabbor Rasulov about inadmissibility of nepotism and favouritism were correct. But I saw that Rasulov himself, as well as his high-placed co-regionalists, did not uphold them. Their words were one thing, and their deeds - quite another. They tried in every imaginable way to plant cadres from the North in positions of influence and income in the mountainous regions."
It would be wrong to depict the Leninobodi regional clique as a cohesive entity with a clear-cut political agenda. After all, it is an area where traditional ties and allegiances have been most weakened by Communist efforts at modernisation and the rekindled taste for a market economy. There is an assortment of rival kinship and solidarity networks, which have come into existence in the Soviet period and continue to play a pivotal role in contemporary Tajik politics: the Uroteppa clan headed by Salohiddin Hasanov, the Panjakent grouping centred around Isomitdin Salohiddinov, the Qairaqqum-Yaghnob cluster represented by Safarali Xenjaev, the Osimov-Olimov family agglomeration in Khujand which has viable ties in the religious establishment throughout Central Asia, are only a few of these groups. All of them compete for greater autonomy and larger allocations for their patronages, or for political influence on the republican level, in defiance of the more powerful and well-established structures, such as the Leninobod-Kanibodom group of families (the Arabovs-Karimovs), Abdullojonov's shadowy empire, or ex-Premier Samadov's patronage web. In time of peril, however, the feeling of regional loyalty invariably proves stronger than the resentments of more localised ambitions. This was the case when a Leninobodi Rahmon Nabiev was removed from the leadership of Tajikistan in 1985 and the Kremlin was looking for a replacement from amongst mountain Tajiks. This is the situation at present - all strongmen in the region unite in order to defend the privileged status of their homeland.

II. The Kulob region in the South is a predominantly agricultural zone - in 1989, only 16.5 percent of those employed worked in industry.\(^{100}\) Cotton is the single most important crop, and it has to import foodstuffs from adjacent districts and Uzbekistan. Rural overpopulation and hidden unemployment became perceivable as early as the mid-1960s, and a special decision was made in Moscow to create the South-Tajik Territorial Manufacturing Complex (STTMC) to tackle this problem. The project envisaged the accelerated industrial development of the region as well as the continuing increase of cotton production in the newly irrigated lands.\(^{101}\) Its practical implementation was to be supervised by the republican authorities; that is, people from the North. Not unnaturally, there has emerged an understanding between elite groups from Khujand and Kulob which reached symbolic heights in 1990 when the two cities became twins.

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\(^{101}\) The Tenth Five-Year plan (1976-1980) stipulated that 65 percent of growth in industrial and agricultural output in Tajikistan was to be achieved through developing the STTMC. The generation of electricity in the region alone was to be increased three-fold over five years. ("Tuzhno-Tadzhikskii kompleks - iz piatiletki deviatoi - v desiatuui," *Druzhba narodov,* No.2, 1976, p. 188.)
### Table 4.7 Regional and Ethnic Composition of the CPT Central Committee*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Membership</th>
<th>Place of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Leninobod</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>123 (1960)</td>
<td>42 (34.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140 (1981)</td>
<td>48 (34.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(*Khatlon embodies Kulob and Qurghonteppa oblasts; Gharm includes adjacent mountainous districts; 'unidentified locals' are mostly people born in Dushanbe or Tajiks of Samarkand and Bukhara extraction and Asians whose affiliation to regions in Tajikistan could not be traced.)

Sources: printed materials of XI, XII, XIII, XIV and XIX Congresses of the CPT and Party telephone directories
The Kulobis are regarded as hard-working people, short-tempered and not particularly bright; their nickname, govsvor ('cow-rider'), speaks for itself, though the locals prefer to interpret it as 'a person who can mount a wild bull'. Kulob featured prominently in the medieval history of Central Asia. Its lancers were famous for bravery and recklessness. Before the creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist republic the Kulobis made up 60 percent of the population of Eastern Bukhara\textsuperscript{102} and, as has been mentioned, were viewed as real 'mountain' Tajiks, in opposition to the Turkicised 'valley' Tajiks in the north. In the 1980s, the feeling of past greatness was still alive. A certain Berdyeva, the Supreme Soviet deputy from Kulob, once stirred a sensation when she said in public: "I wonder why everyone thinks that a Kulobi woman cannot give birth to a leader."\textsuperscript{103} In recent years a concerted program has been initiated by local intellectuals to revise the annals of history and portray Kulob as the cradle of Zoroastrian civilisation, blessed with a great urban culture that reached its zenith 2700 years ago.\textsuperscript{104}

Patriarchy and kinship bonds are much stronger in Kulob than in the Leninobod region. Although prior to 1992 local solidarity groups had never played an important role in the republic's politics, their positions inside the oblast were extremely strong. It was especially evident at the level of separate collective farms - the backbone of Kulob's economy. The kolkhoz chairman - respectfully referred to by peasants as ra'is or bobo - usually combined the features of an oriental despot and the head of a big patriarchal family. Mirsaid Mahmadaliev, twice Hero of Socialist Labour, headed the kolkhoz named after Lenin for over three decades. By the mid-1970s, his kolkhoz had evolved into an impressive enterprise, with 350 tractors, 57 combine harvesters, 35 cotton-growing brigades, 6 dairy farms, 13 retail shops, 7 schools and an assortment of other facilities, which made it entirely self-sufficient and profitable at the same time.\textsuperscript{105} Bobo Mirsaitov managed the kolkhoz as his own fief without any interference from outside, for he had taken the precaution of becoming a Deputy of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and had served as a CPT CC member for quite some time. He was also in the habit of inviting influential guests from Moscow and entertaining them in a princely way. Mirsaitov patronised a few young aspiring graduates from Kulob: one of them, Qurbon Mirzaaliev, eventually became Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kulob oblast and continues to feature prominently in the Tajik political arena today.

\textsuperscript{103} Interview with Mr Iskandar Asadulloev, former official of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 25 March 1995.
\textsuperscript{105} Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 7 January 1975.
III. The Hisor Valley which includes the capital Dushanbe is another industrialised zone in Tajikistan. The aluminium plant at Tursunzoda near the Uzbek border is the third largest in Asia and presently generates 50 percent of Tajikistan's hard currency earnings. By the early 1990s, an unofficial alliance had emerged between the industrial and financial captains of Leninobod and Hisor; the latter had been allowed to occupy high positions in the state bureaucracy as a sign of recognition of Hisor's industrial and agricultural potential (Tables 4.8 and 4.9). The geographical proximity of the two regions as well as close cultural ties complemented the political rapprochement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Zone</th>
<th>Capital Investment</th>
<th>Industrial Output</th>
<th>Agricultural Production</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leninobod</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisor</td>
<td>45.0%</td>
<td>42.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qurghonteppa</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>39.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulob</td>
<td>7.3%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gharm</td>
<td>19.1%* (&lt;2%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GBAO</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>2.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Mostly investment in the construction of the Rogun hydro-power station


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Zone</th>
<th>Production of Raw Cotton (thous. tons)</th>
<th>Capacity of Cotton-Processing Plants (thous. tons)</th>
<th>Production of Textiles (thous. square metres)</th>
<th>Production of Vegetable Oil (thous. tons)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leninobod</td>
<td>255.8 (26.5%)</td>
<td>95.3 (26.2%)</td>
<td>2.5 (2.3%)</td>
<td>21.8 (23.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hisor</td>
<td>82.7 (8.6%)</td>
<td>51.5 (14.1%)</td>
<td>106.9 (97.7%)</td>
<td>39.1 (42.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qurghonteppa</td>
<td>491.0 (51.0%)</td>
<td>159.4 (43.7%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>23.6 (25.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kulob</td>
<td>134.3 (13.9%)</td>
<td>58.3 (16.0%)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>7.0 (7.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>963.8 (100%)</td>
<td>364.5 (100%)</td>
<td>109.4 (100%)</td>
<td>91.5 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Hisor was a major principedom from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. It was subjugated by the Emirate of Bukhara only in 1868, in the wake of the 15-day battle of Dehnav. Local activists have always believed it is unfair that Hissor should be just one of the raions under Dushanbe's direct jurisdiction; they have demanded its elevation to oblast status and mooted the idea of 're-acquisition' of territories in Qurghonteppa.

Qubodiyon, Boisun. Sherobod and even Darvoz and Qarotegin, for "they belonged to the realm of the bek of Hisor, or sent him annual metayage and were accountable to him." But its relatively small population and its shee heterogeneity (45 percent of the population is Uzbek) effectively precluded a dramatic rise in Hisor's influence in the republic until recently.

The region's location at the trade crossroads of Central Asia, the presence of hard-currency earning industries in its territory, the relatively high degree of mobility of the population and the folklore tradition of Hisori polvons - the outlawed fighters against the Manghyt authorities - were instrumental in the emergence of organised crime groupings as a potent unofficial institution in the region by the early 1990s. At that time the four main gangs specialised mostly in extortion, smuggling and car-stealing. They also maintained close contacts with colleagues in Uzbekistan and enjoyed protection in high places in Tashkent.

IV. The mountainous region of Gharm, east of Dushanbe, is the granary of Tajikistan, due to its mild climate and abundance of water. In addition to the Ghrm raion proper, it includes districts of Komsomolobod (historical Qarotegin), Faizobod and Jerghatol. The Gharmis, 95 percent of whom live in villages (Table 4.5), have been traditionally engaged in growing fruit and vegetables rather than cotton. An average Gharmi farmer would gain up to 80 times more profit from one acre of citrus trees than his Kulobi colleague growing cotton, spending much less effort. Gradually the Gharmis accumulated substantial capital through trading agricultural produce on local markets and began to penetrate the republican trade structures, both legal and shadowy, that had been previously dominated by the Leninobodis and Uzbeks. Yet their growing wealth and sprawling commercial activities failed to bring about any rise in the political status of the region. On the contrary, it was downgraded from oblast status to just 'a group of raions' in 1955. In the late 1970s, the regional elite's aspirations were rekindled again - this time it was connected with the name of Mirzo Rahmatov, the USSR's Ambassador in Ghana and a personal friend of Brezhnev. Brezhnev's untimely death in 1982, however, put an end to these hopes.

The principalities of Ghar, Qaroteqin and Darvoz were always hard to conquer and administrate. They were the last to fall into the fold of Bukhara with the help of Russian armed forces during 1869 - 1870. These areas formed the stronghold of the basmachi movement until the late 1930s. The highlanders of Ghar cling staunchly to their traditional institutions, such as the non-divided agnate family, adat and shariat. They call themselves qab (eagle) or Tajiki toza (pure Tajik), and are noted for religious piety. In 1974, a certain sovkhoz in Ghar had no less than 30 mazors, and in 1977 there was only one girl from Komsomolobod who studied in a tertiary institution.112

The Gharms arguably suffered more than other Tajiks from Soviet demographic exercises. Tens of thousands of people from this region were resettled to the Vakhsh Valley in the south-west between 1928 and 1931 in order to develop new cotton plantations. The whole project was based on forced labour and scores perished from drastic change of climate, "lack of the most elementary facilities ... and an epidemic of typhoid."113 In 1934, the CPT CC passed a special resolution which aimed "to carry out, in the shortest possible time, the special investigation amongst the settlers in the Vakhsh Valley, with the aim of getting rid of them."114 As a result of this purge, many Gharms peasants ended up in the GULAG. After World War II the authorities continued to press the Gharms to migrate from their homeland which registered the highest birth rate in the republic (over the period from 1979 to 1989 the population in the region grew by 36 percent, as compared to the republic's figure of 26 percent).115 In the mid-1970s, the construction of a gigantic hydro power station began at Roghun which would have required the evacuation of 62 villages and could have led to an ecological disaster in Ghar.116 Approximately 30,000 Gharms were scheduled to be removed from the flooded area and resettled in Kulob and Vakhsh.117 Not surprisingly, the population of Ghar felt aggrieved by the government's plans. The sentiments of internal protest and subdued opposition were widely spread amongst Gharms settlers (mohajirs) throughout the republic as well. The Dushanbe-based poetess Gurlukhsor Sufieva was especially active in voicing the grievances of fellow Gharms. The Cultural Foundation for the Spiritual Wealth of the Tajik Nation, which she came to head in 1990, saw that its important duty was to expose "the Communist terror which devoured the best sons and the spiritual treasures of the Tajik nation."118

117 Adabiyyat va san'at, 17 August 1989.
V. The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous oblast (GBAO) in the Pamirs occupies almost half of Tajikistan’s territory but accounts for only 2.5 percent of the country’s population. It is the least developed part of the country, totally dependent on external supplies delivered via two seasonal roads. Badakhshan is characterised by appalling unemployment rates and the lowest standard of living. Amazingly, such basic vegetables as potato and cabbage were only introduced to the Pamirs in 1938, and ten years later people still wore homespun clothes.\textsuperscript{119} On the other hand, the ratio of people with a college education amongst the Pamiris is the highest in Tajikistan: 124 per 1000 employed, as compared to 100 in Leninobod and 56 in Qurghonteppa.\textsuperscript{120} In the post-war period they could not find jobs according to their specialisation in their place of birth and moved to major urban centres of the republic. Progressively, the Pamiris formed a sizeable stratum of Tajikistan’s ‘prestige elite’, that is, writers, artists, scholars, and so on.\textsuperscript{121} In 1991, 180 thousand Pamiris lived and worked outside the GBAO - more than that oblast’s actual population.\textsuperscript{122}

The Pamiris have always differed from other Tajiks in important cultural characteristics, such as language, religion and strong familial affiliation. Their dialects belong to the East-Iranian language group as opposed to the West-Iranian Tajik. The majority of Pamiris adhere to the Ismaili sect of Shiism whilst the bulk of valley and mountain Tajiks are Sunnites. All eight Pamiri sub-ethnic groups retain potent self-consciousness and can identify themselves on at least three levels: by their primary cultural name, for examples, rykhen, zgamik, khik and so on when dealing with one another; by their collective name, pomiri (Pamiri) when interacting with other groups in Tajikistan; and, finally, as Tajiks when outside the republic. In the 1980s, the official line of the Tajik leadership consisted in denying the Pamiris their cultural uniqueness: “the Pamiris are Tajiks by descent and their languages are nothing more than dialects of Tajik.”\textsuperscript{123}

The ancient consanguineal commune with its patrilineal and patrilocal characteristics - natural economy, cult of ancestors, even blood feud - has survived in the Pamirs. There

\textsuperscript{121} In 1990, 20 poets of Pamiri extraction were members of the prestigious Writers’ Union of Tajikistan. Over the period of 30 years, GBAO produced in excess of 300 scholars with the qualification of doctor or candidate of sciences - more than all other regions of Tajikistan put together. (Dodkhudo Karamshoev. “Polemika o Pamire.” Pamir, No. 6, 1991, p. 111.)
\textsuperscript{123} Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 24 June 1988.
used to be a joke in Tajikistan to the effect that if Communism were ever to be built in the USSR, it would happen in Badakhshan as commodity-market relations were virtually unknown there. Trade is a rather despised occupation there, and when in the 1970s a market was finally opened in Khorog, there was not a single local amongst the vendors.\textsuperscript{124} The family solidarity amongst Pamiris is legendary; for them, there is nothing inherently bad in nepotism. There was a case in 1975 when a certain Mahmadakov had managed to plant all 16 of his children in various scientific institutions throughout the republic.\textsuperscript{125}

Although the republican authorities paid lip service to the necessity of the accelerated development of the GBAO, in real life nothing was being done and the region, with its 0.03 percent of Tajikistan's total material production, was constantly placed on the brink of survival.\textsuperscript{126} Since the early 1970s, the Pamiri elite has striven to upgrade the region to the status of an autonomous republic in an attempt to change the situation, but to no avail. Even worse, by 1980 all leading positions in the region had been occupied by people from the North - a situation which made an important visitor from Moscow exclaim: "What is this invasion of Leninobodis during the Tenth five-year plan all about?"\textsuperscript{127}

VI. The Qurghonteppa region in the south-west which includes the Vakhsh Valley is the melting pot of Tajikistan. Having been only sparsely populated before 1917, under Soviet rule it became subject to an enormous influx of Tajiks from Gharm and Kulob as well as Uzbeks, Russians, Germans and representatives of other nationalities, who mixed with local Tajiks, Turkmens, Arabs and Baluchi. Between 1926 and 1929 alone, 160 thousand new settlers arrived there.\textsuperscript{128} All of them participated in 'great construction projects of Communism', such as the Vaksh Irrigation Complex. In 1990, more than one-fifth of the republic's population lived in the Qurghonteppa oblast; its share in Tajikistan's industrial output exceeded 15 percent and 39 percent in cotton production (Table 4.8).

The struggle for dominance in Qurghonteppa involved Kulobis, Gharmis and Uzbeks (the latter made up almost one-third of the population\textsuperscript{129}). In the 1980s, the pattern of

\textsuperscript{125} Kommunist Tadjikistana, 10 October 1975.
\textsuperscript{128} Ibr on Sharipov. \textit{Zakonomernosti formirovania sotsialisticheskikh obshestvennykh otnoshenii v Tadjikistane}. Dushanbe: Donish, 1983, p. 80.
sharing power in Qurghonteppa was as follows: obkom First Secretary from Kulob, Chairman of the Executive Committee from Gharm and head of the local cooperative society (Tojikmatlubot) - an ethnic Uzbek. The leaders of Kulob managed to secure the merger of Qurghonteppa with their oblast in 1989, but the status quo was restored shortly afterwards.

Qurghonteppa in the early 1990s was where "the complex of national inferiority was the strongest and most transparent. It was exacerbated by the emergence of a dual economy, whereby 'giants' of industry were not oriented towards local labour resources and traditions, had no links with local industrial complex and formed enclaves of alien 'big industry'."\(^{130}\) In rural areas, kolkhoz bossism similar to that in Kulob flourished\(^{131}\), with the difference that local collective farms were even richer, particularly in the Kolkhozobod raion, renowned for its long-staple cotton. Needless to say, newly established settlements in the Vakhsh Valley were organised on ethnic and regionalistic lines, and "if there happened to be a wedding in an Urghut kolkhoz, their Gharmani neighbours were not likely to be invited."\(^{132}\)

The statements of Soviet authorities to the effect that "the spread of literacy, general rise of culture caused by industrialisation and reconstruction of agriculture have made the groups of Tajiks closer to each other"\(^{133}\) are not particularly convincing. Certainly, it would have required concerted efforts of several generations to achieve any positive shifts on the demotic cultural level. An immensely thorough study of Tajik folk tales completed in 1971 linked most of their moralities and plot lines to Iranian, Sanskrit, Arabic and even Chinese influences, which was not surprising. However, experts noted the unusually high level of localised variegation in motifs, functions and language forms of the 419 analysed texts coming from different regions of Tajikistan.\(^{134}\) Shodmon Yusuf, an eminent Tajik political figure, commented on one occasion that "the so-called Tajik people does not have a single song that would satisfy all regions [of Tajikistan]."\(^{135}\)


\(^{130}\) The Hero of Socialist Labour Ishbek Sattarov, an ethnic Uzbek, came to the Vakhsh Valley in 1929 and later rose to head the "Yangiabad" kolkhoz - a position that he held for 33 years. (Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 24 July 1973.) His name has been immortalised in a series of literary works and a village has been named after him.

\(^{131}\) Taped interview with Mr. A. Abdurazikov, School Inspector of the Kolkhoozabad raion, 27 March 1995.


Tensions among six historico-geographical regions of Tajikistan failed to diminish as the grotesquely uneven development patterns lingered on. They could be checked temporarily either by coercive methods (such as campaigns against mestnichestvo under Stalin and Khrushchev) or by channelling more resources from the centre (as was the case under Brezhnev), but they were always present.

Interaction amongst regional elites has formed the core of all symbolic processes and practical endeavours in Tajikistan. During the Brezhnev era, the Tajik party-state structure demonstrated an almost infinite capacity to control regional ambitions in the republic. Moscow’s stabilnost kadrov (stability of cadres) policy allowed the web of informal ‘understandings’ and exchanges amongst the regional elites in Tajikistan to become institutionalised. In the 1980s, it was the order of the day for the authorities to issue quotas for regional representation in the republican legislature, industrial management and law-enforcement agencies, or to decree how many doctorate degrees should be given to each region.136 These practices found reflection on a popular level in a common saying that ‘In our republic nobody sits idle: Leninobod rules, Kulob guards, Qurghonteppa ploughs and Pamir dances.’ As long as Tajikistan fulfilled its economic obligations to the Union and complied with the general line prescribed by the CPSU, Moscow did not seem to object to the peculiarities of local personnel policy.

In the Soviet period bargaining for resources on behalf of the regions was an essential part of political activism in Tajikistan. It was also an arcane process, hidden from the public view. In September 1961, during the CPT congress, Saidali Jumaev, First Secretary of the Gfarm raikom, must have stirred quite a commotion when he criticised the republican leadership for its lack of interest in the development of his region.137 After the congress Jumaev was sacked. Twenty five years later people in Tajikobod staged a protest against neglect of their needs on the part of Dushanbe, 60 or 70 of their delegates came to the capital and marched to the building of the CPT Central Committee. The next day all editors of republican, regional and district newspapers received an order to refrain from mentioning Tajikobod forthwith, in any context, in order “to expunge this word from people’s memory altogether.”138

Competition and overt animosity amongst people from different regions can have various manifestations. The most obvious of them is the wedding taboo: for example, representatives of the Tajik sub-ethnic group of sugutti, who live in Varzob to the north

of Dushanbe and are anthropologically close to the Hissoris, never marry Kulobis, though technically both of them belong to mountain Tajiks. The division between mountain and valley, or between Northern and Southern Tajiks, where the Hissor mountain range serves as a geographical marker, certainly remains intact. As a well-known Tajik poet Saidali Ma’mur has put it:

"Where you come from?" is the first thing you ask,
Then you check all my ancestry - that’s a difficult task.
North or South - should it really matter that much?
Put this discord away, and in peace shall we bask.

Why don’t you ask what I keep in my hand?
Your only query is about my homeland.
Alas, you have never offered me help,
There’s stone in your heart, all good feelings are banned.

However, it is the division amongst six main regions that presents the major cleavage in the Tajik society today. Indeed, anthropologically, the Kulobis and the inhabitants of Gharm and the Western Pamirs are very similar, but there is not much love lost between them. With this in mind, it is hard to disagree with a Tajik journalist’s opinion that "the most tragic absurdity in the history of Tajikistan is a hostility that lasted for many years between the people of the Pamirs and the people of Kulob. No one was able to explain clearly the reason for this confrontation which in the past had been confined to hooligan tricks, and from the beginning of the political struggle it has led to the heavy and bloody conflict." As a hypothesis, it can be argued that the root of the evil lies in the historical memory of the populace: Kulobis formed a part of the Afghan army when it ravaged the Pamiri principalities in the late 19th century. The narrative of Afghans’ mind-boggling atrocities has been passed on from generation to generation, and elders in Badakhshan may still believe that "Afghans [and Kulobis with them] are from the confounded kin of Satan. Their place is in hell, in the eternal flames and inferno."

Stereotypes and prejudices of a similar kind are widely spread throughout Tajikistan. In the words of Academician Tursunov: "regionalism has firmly settled in the consciousness of our people, and not its backward section at that; the regionalistic self-awareness manifests itself at all levels of social stratification, especially, to our shame,

amidst the intelligentsia."143 Within the rigid framework of the Soviet system it could never acquire the form of a violent political action. Moreover, it had been de-facto institutionalised and, henceforth, could be controlled and manipulated to a certain extent. The ruling regional elite from Leninobod did not need to invoke traditional institutions of power to maintain its privileged position - its legitimacy was guaranteed by Moscow. Generally, in the Soviet period traditional social structures and popular Islam on the one hand, and regionalism on the other operated on different planes - private and public. However, these phenomena were closely linked, and there always remained a possibility that informal networks would be activated as the primary mechanism for establishing the authority of a clique with roots in a particular region.

***

The Soviet drive towards modernisation of Tajikistan yielded ambiguous results. Accelerated economic development, growth of education, secularisation of culture and political mobilisation of the masses altered the fabric of Tajik society considerably. The profundity and irreversibility of these changes, however, were questionable. After all, seventy years of the Communist experiment and millennia of continuous cultural tradition in this country are incomparable in the historical perspective. Modernity presumes that "local ties and parochial perspectives give way to universal commitments and cosmopolitan attitudes; that the truths of utility, calculation, and science take precedence over those of the emotions, the sacred, and the non-rational; that the individual rather than the group be the primary unit of society and politics ... that the identity be chosen and achieved, not ascribed and affirmed ..."144 The most important failure of Soviet rule in Tajikistan was that it couldn't reform the largely mythological and irrational Weltanschauung of the Tajiks, traditional allegiances and the omnipresent spirit of collectivism, that made an individual completely dependent on institutions such as the family, neighbourhood, solidarity network and coterie of fellow-regionalists.

In a handful of cities, in industrial enterprises, scholarly institutions and government agencies, social praxis was ostensibly no different from patterns of monorganisational Socialism elsewhere in the USSR. At the same time, in rural areas that were of little interest to Moscow-based industrialisers and where "even the People's

Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) proved to be incapable of setting up a network of informers", 145 an ethno-cultural mentality based on traditional patrimonialism, popular Islam and regionalism had survived unscathed and any breakdown in the mechanisms of social control would inexorably transpose it into the realm of political action.


On 24 May 1979 the US Embassy in Moscow sent a cable to the US diplomatic mission in Kabul which said: "All information that we have been able to gather on this region [Soviet Central Asia] testifies that Moscow controls the situation completely. During frequent visits of Embassy officers to Soviet Central Asia few signs of discontent were discovered. Central Asian republics under Soviet leadership have achieved considerable social and economic progress and have a higher standard of living than neighbouring districts of Iran and Afghanistan."\(^1\) The same year 81 percent of Uzbeks living in cities and 85 percent of those living in rural areas said that they were satisfied with the fulfilment of the prime values of their lives.\(^2\) Yet, a decade later the entire region was plunged into the abyss of ethnic conflict, fratricide, civil violence and tremendous deprivation. How did this become possible?

The answer is linked with the name of Mikhail Sergeevich Gorbachev, the last General Secretary of the CPSU CC and the President of the USSR, and the policies implemented by him and a coterie of his associates, known under the aggregate name of perestroika. As Francis Fukuyama has put it, "It is perfectly possible to imagine substantially different and quite plausible outcomes to the events of the 1980s, given changes in the personalities involved. If Andropov or Chernenko had been younger and/or healthier men, perestroika most likely would never have happened."\(^3\)

This chapter attempts to analyse the impact of perestroika on patterns of modernisation, nation gestation and political authority in Tajikistan, and to explain why today's Tajiks, when asked whom they regard as the biggest villain in world history, name Gorbachev, who takes an impressive 13.5 percent lead over the next contender - Adolf Hitler.\(^4\)

The Controversy of Centrally Planned Development

Stalin's strategy of forced industrialisation, which had transformed the USSR into the world's second largest economy and allowed it to compete with a varying degree of success with the United States for global domination was based primarily on the

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\(^4\) Vechernii Dushanbe, 10 June 1994.
extensive means of growth: expansion of production was achieved through channelling natural and human resources to certain sectors of the economy, heavy industry in particular, at the expense of others. However, "by 1960 it was clear to the Soviet leadership that the scope for further extensive growth was exhausted. Capital accumulation was at maximum levels and the labour resources of the country were fully mobilised." In-depth analyses of the state of the Soviet economy under Brezhnev and of his successors' attempts at reforming it can be found elsewhere; however, the author shares Myron Rush's view that in 1985, when Gorbachev came to power, the USSR "was not poised for a collapse, nor was it even in acute crisis ... The economy was stagnant and falling farther behind the West, but inflation was not a serious problem; agriculture ... fed the Soviet people adequately, perhaps better than in the past; and industry provided them with their basic needs. The economy had been in worse shape, arguably, in Khrushchev's last years, 1963 and 1964. There was no compelling need for the Soviet Union to enter on the dangerous path of systemic reform." The system had enough internal resources to stay afloat for decades, tackling the symptoms, if not the causes, of its numerous maladies. In the case of Tajikistan, the most acute problems of the time were:

- the continuing demographic explosion;
- the inability of the centralised planned economy to sustain steady growth;
- the declining living standards of the population;
- the decaying environment.

As it has been mentioned in Chapter II, following incorporation into the Russian empire, Tajikistan experienced a demographic explosion: its annual growth between 1870 and 1917 was estimated at 1.2 - 1.5 percent, as compared to a meagre 0.2 percent in the first half of the nineteenth century. This tendency gained further momentum under Soviet rule. By the mid-1970s, Tajikistan had overtaken all other republics of the USSR in terms of birth rate which, coupled with its low mortality rate, gave it the highest natural growth in the Soviet Union. (Table 5.1).

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Table 5.1 Birth and Mortality Rates and Natural Population Growth in the USSR and Soviet Republics
(per 1,000 of population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Number of Births</th>
<th>Number of Deaths</th>
<th>Natural Growth of Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>31.2</td>
<td>24.9</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>39.8</td>
<td>37.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>30.6</td>
<td>33.5</td>
<td>42.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


With its population doubling every 20 years, and reserves of cultivable land all but exhausted, the demographic pressure came to be felt in Tajikistan in no uncertain way. It has been estimated that in the predominantly peasant Central Asian society, an allotment of 0.28 hectares of arable land per person is required to guarantee reproduction on a simple scale. As Table 5.2 shows, the corresponding figure for Tajikistan was considerably lower, and, generally, it was incapable of producing enough food to meet the domestic demand. The south-western Qurghonteppa region was particularly inauspicious demographically: by 1989 its population density had reached 91.7 people per square kilometre - 2.5 times the average for Tajikistan and far ahead of the second most densely populated area, Leninobod (59.5).

Even in the heyday of Soviet rule, regulation of land allotments on the local level (village - kolkhoz) tended to generate tension. An account on the 1983 gathering of some 6,000 inhabitants of the village of Surkh in Northern Tajikistan, who had assembled to decide upon redistribution of parcels of privately-held land, stated that despite the presence of district Party and Soviet officials "there were moments when the discussion seemed to have become unmanageable. The strain began to tell, and nerves gave way." Six years later the same village and three other settlements of the Isfara raion found themselves in the epicentre of land disputes with adjacent districts of Kyrgyzstan. In July 1989 thousands of Tajiks and Kyrgyzs clashed, one person was

9 In 1951 - 1960, 341,000 hectares of new agricultural lands were put into circulation; in 1961 - 1970, 231,000; in 1971 - 1980, 144,000; and in 1980 - 1990 only 89,000. (Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR. Dushanbe: Statistika, 1965 - p. 83; 1988 - p. 212; 1990 - p. 163.)
11 In the 1980s, Tajikistan harvested 5 to 7 percent of the quantity of grain it needed. (Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 11 October 1991.)
killed and 27 were injured or wounded; it took the leaders of the two republics and their superiors in Moscow over one month to quell the 'Isfara - Batken incident'.

The policy of economic development based primarily on rapid agricultural growth that had been imposed on Tajikistan by planning authorities in Moscow was not conducive to the migration of people from the countryside. In fact, in the post-war period the movement to urban centres was constantly declining: in 1960, one percent of Tajikistan's rural population chose to settle in cities; in 1970, 0.8 percent; and in 1976, 0.7 percent. In later years a process of actual de-urbanisation became evident in the republic - an unprecedented phenomenon in the USSR. The share of city dwellers dropped from 35 percent in 1979 to 32 in 1990; in 1991 for the first time there was an absolute decline in the urban population. Tajik experts have offered the following explanation for the weak migratory mobility of the agricultural population:

- levels of skills are too low for industrial employment;
- large size of families and high birthrate create problems in finding adequate housing and child-care facilities in cities;
- inadequate knowledge of Russian complicates the acquisition of 'city professions';
- strong urban-rural ties are disincentive to move.

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15 The history of the conflict is as follows. In 1958, the Tajik kolkhoz named after Kalinin ceded 144 hectares of its fallow lands to the namesake kolkhoz in the Batken raion of Kyrgyzstan. Thirty years later the Kyrgyzs decided to build a huge irrigation canal in that area, thus allegedly depriving their Tajik neighbours of water. Additionally, due to imprecise mapping, the issue of ownership of a land parcel of 95 hectares remained moot. By the late 1980s, the population on both sides of the administrative borders had grown to an extent where even this exiguous patch had appeared a coveted prize. The inquiry instituted by the USSR Supreme Soviet commission concluded that "outwardly the conflict looks like one between nationalities. In fact, however, it is based on socio-economic problems which have built up over years ... The tension in the region is created by 'land' issues: the shortage of farmland, the scarcity of water, the surplus manpower." (BBC Summary of World Broadcasts. Part I USSR, 18 July 1989, SU/0511 B/2.)
Table 5.2 Land and Food Provision in the USSR and Tajikistan, 1940 - 1986
(units per capita of population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Land Area (hectares)</th>
<th>Arable Land (hectares)</th>
<th>Production of Cereals (tonnes)</th>
<th>Production of Potatoes (tonnes)</th>
<th>Production of Meat, (tonnes)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>0.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While accepting the validity of these arguments, it appears that at least two other fundamental factors are responsible for the laggard country-to-town migration. First of all, the Soviet system did not provide sufficient remuneration to industrial workers or skilled managers. Indeed, it would be very hard for a Tajik family with half a dozen children to survive on a bare salary. The story of a qualified builder who left Dushanbe, where he earned a decent wage of 350 roubles a month, for a remote village where he would get 70 roubles and still "feel happy", was a typical one. In the countryside a private plot generated the bulk of family income. A certain agronomist in 1981 received 2,280 roubles in wages; his fifty apple trees fetched him another 15,000, and his two cows and some sheep saved him the trouble of buying food in state shops. The second factor is rooted in the traditionalism of Tajik society. As Aziz Niyazi has observed, "young people are not at all enthusiastic about moving to towns, notwithstanding the fact that incomes in the rural areas are low. Many of the young people are bound by family ties, as it is not easy to get parental consent for moving away." In a patriarchal family every pair of working hands means additional output from its privately owned strip of land, even more so in a situation where tractors and other means of mechanisation are not readily available. Additionally, industrial employment is not a prestigious occupation for the eponymous population, who prefer to work in agriculture, trade and services.

Not surprisingly, a survey conducted in the early 1980s in Tajikistan revealed that 65 percent of rural young people wanted to stay in the countryside, only 15 percent wanted to move to the capital city, and 8 percent to other towns. In 1986, as many as 25.7 percent of the working-age population may have been unemployed; the figure for rural areas was higher - probably in the region of 35 percent. An estimate made in 1985 suggested that 7.1 million people would have to leave Central Asia before 2000

19 Kommunist Tadzhiikistana, 31 May 1975.
24 The number of able-bodied people of working age who did not study or work at state or cooperative enterprise. (V.V. Vybornova, E.A. Dunaeva. "Neresheennye protivorechhii kak istochnik mezhnatsionalnykh konfliktov." Izvestia AN TSSR. Seriya: Filosofii i pravovedenie. No. 3, 1992, p. 37.)
simply to maintain its existing level of national income per able-bodied inhabitant. Admittedly, Tajikistan fared badly even compared to its neighbours: "an absolute majority of the republic's population does not accept even modest attempts aimed at the reduction of population growth ... The demographic situation in Tajikistan has passed the critical level and is no longer under control.”

The leadership of Tajikistan was reluctant to acknowledge even the existence of such a problem. Not until 1985 did Rahmon Nabiev, First Secretary of the CPT CC, publicly express concern at the fact that the growth of the agricultural production in the republic lagged hopelessly behind the population growth. The first comprehensive set of legislation dealing with family planning and the rationalisation of human reproduction was passed only in June 1988. Still, contraception and other means of family planning have not been embraced by traditional society, and even "urban Tajik women, students, factory workers and activists, have to plan the number of children in secret from their husbands." The centre remained equally incapable of dealing with the growing demographic pressure in the republic. A low key program to move 15,000 Tajiks to sparsely populated areas of the USSR, the Khabarovsk krai in particular, was aborted soon after its inception in 1983 due to the unwillingness of the would-be settlers to leave their birthplaces.

From the 1960s to the 1980s Tajikistan, like any other republic of the USSR, succumbed to two tendencies in the autarkic Soviet economy. On the one hand, the planning centre gradually lost its ability to control all the links in the economic mechanism due to its sheer expansion and complexity. On the other hand, branch ministries, most importantly 'base supermonopolies', became ever more powerful in strategic decision-making. The ideals of comprehensive, integrated development of Central Asia, if they ever existed at all, were eventually sacrificed to the interests of

ministerial lobbyists in Moscow who craved unlimited government allocations for
grandiose but hardly feasible projects in the region.

In order to cope with the burgeoning population growth it would have been natural to
build low-cost and labour-intensive production enterprises in Tajikistan to utilise local
resources. In the 1970s, investment of one million roubles could create over 600
seamstress posts, 380-450 in the leather, textile or footwear industries, or 165 in food
or cotton-processing, versus only 35-40 in the aluminium or chemical industries. Yet
it was precisely the last two that received rising capital allocations from Moscow. Tajik
economists cautiously expressed their astonishment: "In recent years in the republic, as
compared to the rest of the USSR, more capital-intensive and less labour-intensive
industrial development has been in evidence. Generally speaking, this contradicts the
strategy of industrial development of the republic which is based on the necessity to put
emphasis on labour-intensive and capital-saving manufacturing." But central planners
and ministerial heavyweights in Moscow continued to pursue the fetish of physical
economic growth at all costs, primarily through inflating the capital stock. As a result, a
situation arose where "there are too few resources chasing too many projects - the
familiar problem of overinvestment ... More funds are authorised than are appropriated,
an effort to juggle more economic goals and work more compromises than the actual
size of the pie will allow." The creation of the South Tajik Territorial Production
Complex (STTPC) is probably the best illustration of the inefficient planning and
investment and total disregard of local agendas, that were inherent in the Soviet
command-administrative system of economic management.

The STTPC, conceived in the early 1960s, was to become the new industrial centre of
Tajikistan. It embraced 37 percent of Tajikistan's territory with 64 percent of its
population. Utilisation of the area's enormous hydropower potential formed the
centrepiece of the design. At the initial stage, covering the period until 1985, the
gigantic Norak hydroelectric power station was the major element of the STTPC, with
an aluminium smelter in the city of Tursunzoda, an electrochemical plant in Yovon and
a fertiliser combine in Vakhsh, as well as 46 other enterprises reliant on its electricity.
Poor interdepartmental communication and lack of a clear-cut construction program

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35 Rivers of Tajikistan have the potential of generating 283 billion kWh of energy annually, with Vakhsh and Panj in Southern Tajikistan accounting for over 100 billion kWh. (M.S. Osimov, ed. Tadzhikskai SSR. Dushanbe: AN TSSR, 1974, pp. 175-176.)
plagued the project right from the start: "Lack of coordination amongst various ministries and institutions was evident, in that they strove to decide, and consequently to finance the measures that stemmed primarily from their own, albeit important, but still narrowly selfish interests."36

It took the Ministry of Energy of the USSR twenty-two years instead of ten, and 2.5 times the originally allocated money, to build the Norak station with a capacity of 2.7 million kWt.37 However, in 1981 the Ministry started work on an even more powerful (3.2 million kWt) hydrostation at Roghun. Three years later the construction manager exclaimed in frustration that it might take up to a hundred years, rather than the planned twelve, to complete the project,38 but it didn't really matter; it would be impossible anyway to use surplus electricity, as projects implemented by other ministries were in an even worse shape. The smelter in Tursunzoda with a capacity of 517,000 tonnes of primary aluminium a year was built between 1965 and 1984, and proved to be a disaster: "People at the plant say that their aluminium costs more than the gold extracted from the bottom of the Zeravshan river ... just two years after start-up, the plant is already in urgent need of major overhaul and reconstruction."39 The factory in Yovon, commissioned in 1981 instead of 1974, was operating at 37 percent of its nominal capacity, and in 1983 its production costs were twice its revenues.40 Despite all this waste and inefficiency, money continued to flow freely from Moscow: from 1965 through 1980, annual investment in all industries in Tajikistan rose from 155 to 320 million roubles, "with two-thirds of fixed assets, output, and labour force represented by the South Tajik Complex."41

The Spiral of Economic Decay

Even in better years, returns on capital in Tajikistan were 10 percent below the USSR's average.42 Since 1968, the volume of incomplete construction constantly exceeded that of absorbed capital investment. Insufficient attention to infrastructure development and

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reliance on an expensive imported workforce also impeded Tajikistan's economic performance. In 1985, 15 percent of all industrial enterprises and 31 percent of all collective and state-owned farms were loss-making. Gorbachev's ill-conceived reforms exacerbated the situation even further. In line with the Kremlin's new idée fixe of accelerated development of high-technology sectors, Tajikistan was issued with a program which envisaged:

- increases in the volume of capital investment and its share in the national income;
- emphasis on re-equipping and reconstructing operating factories;
- expansion of the share of new equipment in the overall sum of investments;
- more allocations to the machine-building and construction industries.

Once again, light industry and agriculture were ignored by planners in Moscow. Millions of dollars were spent on purchasing hardware and technology abroad, but state-of-the-art machinery rusted quietly in factory backyards because there were no personnel to install and operate it. The stockpile of imported equipment standing idle rose almost eleven-fold from 1988 to 1991 in Tajikistan. Growth in industrial labour productivity was the slowest amongst Soviet republics, and in 1990 actually declined by 1.2 percent, while in agriculture labour productivity sank by 1991 to only 75.6 percent of its 1980 level. On average, construction workers in Tajikistan took three times as long to build a house as their counterparts in Russia.

Tajikistan's agriculture was especially badly hit by Gorbachev's reforms, particularly by his obsession with gigantic and amazingly inefficient agro-industrial complexes. Over the period from 1988 to 1991, the republic's agricultural output decreased by 17 percent; production of cotton dropped by 14 percent, cereals - 12 percent, fruit - 15 percent, grapes - 36 percent, meat - 19 percent and eggs - 21 percent. The disruption

43 In the 1960s, 80 percent of all employed in the STTPC were recent immigrants from other republics of the Soviet Union. (Vestnik statistiki, No. 8, 1991, p. 80.) One of the many absurdities in recent history of Tajikistan was a steady influx of European settlers, mainly skilled workers, to already overpopulated areas. They accounted for 17.5 percent of the population growth in the republic over the period from 1960 to 1970, which was much higher than the corresponding figure for the rest of Central Asia. (L.K. Narzizkulov, A.G. Khajibaev, "Tadzhikskaja Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaja respublika." In: Naselenie soyuzykh respublik. Moscov: Statistika, 1977, p. 252.)


of old all-Union food supply mechanisms in 1990 arose the spectre of hunger in Tajikistan.

It appears that Tajikistan's economy, especially its industry, could exist and produce so long as it remained an integral part of the Soviet economic mechanism. It has been argued that "the level of integration amongst regions and branches in the USSR is much higher than in the European Economic Community." In 1988, Tajikistan exported 21 percent of its produce to other republics, and imported 25 percent of what it consumed from them - more than any other entity in the USSR. Throughout the Soviet period Tajikistan had a negative trade balance with other republics. And, as Lucjan Orlowski has convincingly demonstrated, "inter-republican trade flows in which prices for goods were set by the authorities independently from the market became ... [a] powerful channel of income transfers." Additionally, Tajikistan received substantial cash infusions from Moscow. Critics of the command economy cited Tajikistan as evidence that "administrative redistribution and non-equivalent exchange, 'brotherly help', have created conditions in which it is economically more feasible to be backward and ask for assistance, than to work better." A Western author, analysing budgetary practices in the centre-periphery relationship in both Soviet and post-Soviet times, has judged that the fiscal system in the former Soviet Union was "not truly a 'system', but rather a series of ad hoc bargained agreements, non-transparent at best, whose effects and incentives are not well understood." However, it is safe to assume that tax-sharing schemes and direct, centralised subsidies constituted two major elements in Soviet fiscal federalism. In the second half of the 1980s, Tajikistan was one of the few republics that were allowed to retain 100 percent of turnover tax collected, and 14 to 21 percent of its budget revenues comprised direct subventions from Moscow.

52 Vestnik statistiki, No. 3, 1990, pp. 36-37.
Not surprisingly, when in September 1987 the Baltic republics, Belorussia, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldavia and a number of Russia's oblasts floated the idea of regional self-financing ('regionalnyi khozraschet'), the most vehement opposition arose from the Central Asian republics, Tajikistan in particular. Similarly, Gorbachev's legislation introduced in June 1987, which granted individual enterprises managerial freedom, did not work well in Tajikistan: local factories simply could not survive without the patronage of a respective branch ministry, and by 1990, 16 percent of the 'liberated' industrial enterprises had returned to the ministerial fold. A sociological survey conducted that year revealed that, generally, people in Tajikistan were resolutely against Gorbachev's economic reforms. (Table 5.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>Ambivalent</th>
<th>Negative</th>
<th>Indifferent</th>
<th>Hard to Answer</th>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>29.1</td>
<td>40.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>18.1</td>
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<td>Estonia</td>
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<td>43.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>8.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It would be incorrect to say that Tajikistan lived off the more developed regions of the Soviet Union. After all, indicators such as the volume and structure of the NMP and national income, labour productivity, resource and investment efficiency simply reflected the sectoral composition of republican economic complexes that had been moulded according to directives from Moscow. As long as the all-Union economic mechanism was intact, it made little sense to speculate who was the donor and who was the recipient inside the USSR, Inc. A senior Russian diplomat based in Dushanbe, who had previously served with the Soviet State Planning Authority (GOSPLAN), recollected that "while Tajikistan produced one million tonnes of cotton a year, we could provide it with all the goods it needed and even some extras, without incurring losses." The leaders of Tajikistan were happy with such an arrangement and could not, or did not, want to respond to the crisis resulting from Gorbachev's economic endeavours. As late as May 1991, Dr Rustam Mirzoev, then Director of Tajikistan's Productive Forces Research Council, wrote that "in the next 50 years there will be no alternatives to the existing production-technological integrity of this country's economy ... It is impossible to act against the laws of the established production-technological system and violate its manageability ... The coordinating and regulating role of the

59 Osnovnye pokazateli ekonomicheskogo i sotsialnogo razvitiia oblastei, gorodov i raionov Tadzhikskoi SSR za gody devjatnadtsati piatiletek. Dushanbe: Goskomstat TSSR, 1991, p. 34.
60 Recorded interview at the Russian embassy, Dushanbe, 3 March 1995.
Centre in strategic spheres of public production constitutes the inalienable element of management of the republics' economies."\(^{61}\) At a time when the political cohesion of the USSR was in tatters, when the breakdown of central planning and severe monetary and fiscal crises signalled the end of the Soviet socialist economy, such statements betrayed either extreme naivety or deplorable complacency.

The Mounting Social Problems

The downwardly spiralling economy inevitably led to a deteriorating quality of life in the USSR. It has been suggested that in 1987 "simply to maintain the current standard of living in Tajikistan, which was already the poorest republic, would demand a 250 per cent increase in investment or another 6 to 7 billion roubles more. Considering that the entire budget in 1988 was only 2.1 billion roubles, no such investment was possible."\(^{62}\) According to official figures and considering revenues from the formal sector only, in 1988, 12.6 percent of the Soviet population lived below the poverty line; the corresponding figure for Central Asia was 45 percent, and for Tajikistan a staggering 58.6 percent.\(^{63}\) By 1991 this figure had increased to 87.3 percent.\(^{64}\) It can be argued that the actual state of affairs may have been better in Central Asia due to undeclared incomes and produce-in-kind from private plots, but statistical evidence shows that Tajikistan was the worst off amongst all Soviet republics on a variety of socio-economic parameters (Table 5.4). Even the food pyramid of an average Tajik family did not meet nutritional norms - as centuries before, bread remained its major element (Table 5.5).

Environmental problems also seriously affected the quality of life in Tajikistan. Until the mid-1980s, the Soviet government's efforts to solve them "were still at least partially effective ... This situation changed in 1985 and 1986 ... One contributing factor was certainly the erosion of technological discipline in industry that took place under perestroika."\(^{65}\) Soil degradation, deforestation, air and water pollution and loss of biodiversity emerged as major ecological hazards.


\(^{64}\) Vestnik statistiki, No. 12, 1991, p. 10.

Table 5.4 Selected Indicators of Quality of Life, 1988

(percent to the USSR average)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Consumption of Goods and Services (per capita)</th>
<th>Housing (per capita)</th>
<th>Availability of Communal Services (per capita)</th>
<th>Doctors (per 10,000)</th>
<th>Infant Mortality (per 10,000)</th>
<th>Pre-School Facilities (per capita)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 5.5 Annualised Per Capita Consumption of Selected Comestibles, 1990

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Bread (kg)</th>
<th>Meat (kg)</th>
<th>Milk (ltr)</th>
<th>Eggs</th>
<th>Fish (kg)</th>
<th>Sugar (kg)</th>
<th>Vegetable Oil (ltr)</th>
<th>Potatoes (kg)</th>
<th>Vegetables (kg)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>229</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>258</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10.2</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>92</td>
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<tr>
<td>Estonia</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>24.0</td>
<td>44.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>64</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
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Source: Vestnik statistiki, No. 9, 1991, pp. 54-56.

Over-extensive use of agricultural lands resulted in appalling soil degradation. In 1989, the humus content in land under cultivation was barely 30 percent of the 1940 level.66 According to agronomic norms, plantations in Tajikistan should have produced 700 thousand tonnes of raw cotton a year in the 1980s.57 In reality, annual yields approximated 1 million tonnes. This was achieved primarily through a barbaric use of chemicals. Every hectare of arable land in Tajikistan received 31.6 kg of pesticides in 1986 - ten times the average for the USSR.68 It was normal for farmers to use mineral fertilisers at twice and even six times the recommended rate "in the false belief that the more fertilisers you put in, the more cotton you harvest."59 Given the omnipresence of cotton plantations in Tajikistan, which pervaded even suburban areas and traditional zones of fruit and vegetable growing, there was little exaggeration in the assessment that "the employment of the so-called high technologies of cotton production had led to such catastrophic chemicalisation of agriculture, that local ancient fertile oases became

68 Tojikistoni Soveti. 28 August 1988.
poisoned for long years to come." In 1989, 82.3 percent of all pregnant women residing in cotton-sowing areas suffered from anaemia, due to exposure to harmful substances, poor diet and back-breaking labour in plantations.71

Great quantities of chemical residues returned to surface streams and aquifers with drainage water. The result was not unexpected: "The analysis of the high rate of infant mortality has shown that its main cause consists of acute digestive diseases, and especially of the fact that 45 percent of the rural population procured drinking water from open reservoirs."72 To make the situation even worse, industrial sewage escape in Tajikistan more than doubled over the period from 1985 to 1989.73 In 1990, 15 percent of drinking water samples showed chemical pollution and 21 percent of samples bacteria infestation.74

Newly built factories were often put into operation without any recycling or rectification facilities. All vegetation died within a 10-kilometre zone around the smelter in Tursunzoda because the fluorine content of the soil rose ten-fold between 1979 and 1986, and an environmental disaster eventually turned into a problem of human ecology - it became dangerous to live in the region where "the air basin is saturated with compounds of aluminium, fluorine, lead, zinc, cadmium, copper, mercury, arsenic, sulphur and nitrogen oxides, and mineral acids."75 Emissions of toxic chemicals by the Yovon electrochemical plant increased from 451 tonnes in 1985 to 853 tonnes in 1987; the concomitant rise in fines - from a ludicrous 300 to a pathetic 1,110 roubles76 - indicated not punishment but criminal indifference of the authorities to environmental protection. A study conducted in 1991 revealed that residents of Dushanbe, once regarded as the greenest and cleanest capital city in the USSR, were seriously concerned about looming ecological problems: 82.5 percent of those polled complained about dust and gaspollution, 77.8 percent noted the increasing presence of vermin and 99.9 percent deplored high noise levels.77

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In the post-war period the acreage of forests in Tajikistan decreased almost four-fold. Still, the Soviet-era powers that be had enough common sense to set up a number of nature reserves. The most famous reserve, 'Tiger Gorge', was established in 1938 in the southern segment of the Vakhsh Valley. It offered sanctuary to 30 species of mammals, 140 of birds and 150 of plants; many of them were extremely rare and endemic to Tajikistan. A special permit from the republican State Committee for Forestry was required simply to visit it. In the 1960s however, following the construction of dams on the Vakhsh river, the marshes and bogs in 'Tiger Gorge' began to dry up. In the early 1990s, with the weakening of the political centre, unauthorised agricultural development and logging commenced in the reserve; and today it has virtually ceased to exist.

Scarce financing of conservation and protection measures, irresponsible behaviour by industrial and agricultural managers, and demographic pressures have undermined the unique ecological potential of Tajikistan. Environmental decay was beginning to affect the genetic health of the population in a gruesome way similar to that in neighbouring Turkmenistan, where in 1991 only 12.2 percent of children in the age cohort from 3 to 12 months born in the countryside were without developmental abnormalities. In one cotton-growing kolkhoz, only 3 out of 368 children who underwent medical examination were pronounced healthy. In 1990, Dr Sofia Hakimova, Director of the Institute for Reproductive Health in Dushanbe, assessed the situation as follows: "Health of the nation has been sacrificed for cotton. Our genetic fund has been completely destroyed. It must be a case of genocide." In the early 1990s Tajikistan had the worst ratings amongst all republics of the Soviet Union on a number of indicators pertaining to quality of life, sanitation and medical provision, and the situation was likely to deteriorate.

By the late 1980s, it had become obvious that Tajikistan was in the middle of a "systemic structural crisis that economically hinged on the absolute land and water starvation, and socially - on the exceptionally high birthrate and the loss by the
grassroots social structures of their self-sustainability functions."\(^8^4\) Its symptoms used to be ameliorated by the centre's redistributive policies - the share of aggregate external transfers in the national income used in Tajikistan rose from 6.7 percent in 1970 to 12.0 percent in 1988.\(^8^5\) Obviously, this situation could not last forever in the conditions of economic collapse during the late Gorbachev period. Tajikistan was living on borrowed time, trying desperately to maintain production and welfare provision at the levels of the more fortunate years of 'developed socialism'. The crunch in the economic sphere came in 1991. The republic's budget for that year envisaged a deficit of 23.8 percent, even though Moscow had promised to contribute 35.8 percent of all budgetary revenues in subsidies.\(^8^6\) When the centre failed to deliver, it was only a matter of time before economic catastrophe led to political turmoil.

**The Politics of Centralisation**

As discussed earlier, the Brezhnev era was characterised by a high degree of stability in the ruling establishment in the union republics. In the 1970s in particular, the tacit compromise between the Kremlin and regional elites "allowed strong, extensive political machines to develop sub rosa in the Central Asian union republics."\(^8^7\) Territorial bureaucracies had acquired virtual autonomy in handling domestic affairs. The long-serving Communist leaders of Central Asia were regarded by the indigenous population as the fathers of their respective nations, who governed not according to some obscure laws imposed by Moscow but in line with traditional sets of values and practices. Donald Carlisle has coined the following metaphorical description while writing about Uzbekistan's First Secretary in 1959-1983, Sharaf Rashidov: "There surfaced a variant of communist feudalism, or, to put it another way, an Uzbek version of Oriental Despotism, with Rashidov ruling as khan or emir and the CPSU bureau serving as a council of viziers. A great deal of power was also delegated to the party secretaries of the various provinces, who administered them much in the way begs (or beks) had ruled their dominions before the Russian conquest.\(^8^8\)

The situation changed dramatically in 1985 with Gorbachev's appointment as General Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee. To curtail the independence of regional apparatuses was crucial for consolidating of his own position at the apex of the Soviet power pyramid. Gorbachev had far greater powers than Brezhnev and Khrushchev did at the beginning of their tenures; still, he worked feverishly to expand his power base and by the time of the CPSU 27th Congress held in February-March 1987, "Gorbachev supporters occupied the key positions in the strategically important fields of foreign affairs, agriculture and personnel, a situation which none of his predecessors had contrived in anything like such a short time (if at all)." It has been argued that Gorbachev may have needed to strengthen his primacy within the Party before he could embark upon systemic reform, but people who worked closely with him, such as his Chief of Staff, Valery Boldin, have suggested that unlimited power was a goal in its own right for the new Soviet leader, and in fact a kind of Napoleonic complex compelled Gorbachev "to proceed so quickly to wreck all the country's productive and social structures."

Gorbachev's methods of re-establishing Moscow's firm hand in Central Asia were not dissimilar to those of Stalin and included wholesale purges, unfair trials and a massive influx of 'trusted cadres' from the Centre. First Secretary of the CPT CC, Rahmon Nabiev, vehemently objected to the Politburo's plans to place 78 'outsiders' in positions of authority in Tajikistan, and was dismissed in December 1985. His replacement, Qahhor Mahkamov, was widely regarded as a mere puppet of the Kremlin. Although he had spent many years in high government positions and served as the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan between 1982 - 1986, Mahkamov did not have a ramified power base built on parochial and solidarity ties. On top of that, Mahkamov obviously lacked features necessary for an authoritative national leader in Tajikistan. Unlike Nabiev, he did not belong to a traditional noble family; in

92 Nomzad ba raisi jumhuri Tojikiston Rahmon Nabievich Nabi. Dushanbe: [No publisher], [1991], p. 5.
93 The Resolution No. 157 of the Bureau of the CPT CC of 14 December 1985 did not specify the pretext for Nabiev's dismissal. However, well-informed sources within the CPT maintained that he had been set up on order from Moscow. Allegedly, Rahmon Nabiev was secretly filmed while participating in a drunken binge during a business trip to Badakhshan; the compromising videotape was shown to the Politburo members, and in the paranoid atmosphere of Gorbachev's anti-alcohol campaign his fate was sealed. The CPSU CC Secretary responsible for personnel matters, G.P. Razumovsky, was dispatched to Dushanbe, and Nabiev was out of office in a matter of days. (Interviews in Dushanbe, December 1994 - January 1995.)
fact, he was orphaned at 14, his wife was a Tatar, his elder son married a Korean, and his daughter a Lithuanian. He owed his position exclusively to good relations with higher-ups in Moscow; the real power in Tajikistan became concentrated in the hands of Second Secretary of the CPT CC, P.K. Luchinsky, a Moldovan and Gorbachev's close associate. The new pro-consul's activities have been summarised by a senior Tajik party official as follows: "I categorically maintain that the role of Luchinsky in today's tragedy of Tajikistan is enormous. He divided our people into north and south, west and east. Through lies and intrigues, he had dozens of decent sons of Tajikistan imprisoned and their lives ruined ... The newcomers to the Central Committee were all under Luchinsky's patronage ... The majority of them did not come here to improve Party work, reconstruct Tajikistan and strengthen friendship amongst peoples. Many of them indulged in smearing the Tajik cadres and sowing national discord and mistrust."

None of the CPT CC secretaries of the 1985 vintage remained in office in 1987. By the end of 1986 all oblast leaders had been replaced in Tajikistan, and so had over 80 percent of Party officials at raion - town level. There are reasons to believe that Moscow was preparing a frontal assault on the Tajik political elite on the lines of the notorious 'Uzbek affair'. In 1986, a special group of investigators was seconded to the republic from the USSR's General Procurator's Office with unlimited powers to investigate and uproot corruption. The Kulob oblast had been singled out as the seat of evil, and in 1987 the obkom First Secretary, Salohiddin Hasanov, and the Head of Regional Procurement Authority, Halil Karimov, were arrested on charges of bribery and abuse of office. Hasanov wrote later: "The investigative group was busy not establishing the truth, but incessantly collecting dubious documents that 'confirmed' this or that version that would satisfy the powers that be. I was pressed to give false testimony against First Secretary of the CC, Q. Mahkamov, Chairman of the Council of Ministers, I. Khayyoev, Chairman of the republic's Supplies Agency [GOSSNAB], S. Ashurov, Chairman of the Supreme Court, I. Khojaev, Party and Soviet leaders of the Kulob oblast ... Defamatory materials were being gathered that implicated the Minister of Interior Pulatov, deputy Procurator of the republic Emomov and many others who

94 Kommunist Tadzhikistano, 2 April 1991.
96 Assessment is based on the analysis of name entries in the CPT confidential telephone directories.
97 The total purge of Brezhnev-era cadres in Uzbekistan from 1983 to 1989 came to be known as the 'Uzbek' or 'Cotton affair'. Under Gorbachev it was accompanied by a massive propaganda campaign in Soviet media conveying the message that "bound up in the general criminal conspiracy were not nearly all but absolutely all the party, state, Komsomol, trade union and economic managers of the republic and of its regions." (Arkady Vaksberg. The Soviet Mafia. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991, p. 116.) From 1985 to 1988, 58,000 senior officials in Uzbekistan were replaced. (Donald S. Carlisle. "Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbours." In: Yaacov Ro'i, ed. Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies. Frank Cass: London, 1995, p. 79.)
were destined to experience the gloom and darkness of prison cells ... Several goals were pursued in the process: those who were wholly subordinate to Moscow but still had the audacity to have personal opinion were removed, and soulless marionettes replaced them. Thus, the influence of Moscow was becoming infinite and the republic was being deprived even of the trappings of autonomy.\textsuperscript{98}

As in Uzbekistan, prosecutorial terror and judicial arbitrariness were hallmarks of Gorbachev’s centralisation drive in Tajikistan. Moreover, General S.M. Gromov who headed the inquisition team in Tajikistan in the late 1980s later confessed frankly that "violations of legality committed by investigative officers in Tajikistan were incomparably greater than in any other republic of the former Soviet Union."\textsuperscript{99} In 1991, Hasanov, Karimov and dozens of other high-ranking Tajik officials were fully acquitted. Lt.-Colonel V.A. Shushakov from the USSR Ministry of Interior, who had initiated a number of illegal criminal cases in the Kulob oblast, went into hiding in 1990 after he became a subject of investigation himself.\textsuperscript{100}

Gorbachev’s frontal attack on the old \textit{nomenklatura} in Tajikistan was successful in the sense that it did excoriate the elaborate system of patronage networks in Tajikistan. For the time being the Kremlin regained full control over all recruitment there; between 1986 and 1990, "no \textit{kolkhoz} chairman, no workshop director, no university lecturer could be appointed without Moscow’s permission."\textsuperscript{101} The Tajik elite surrendered its positions without much resistance due to internal friction based primarily on regional rivalry. Henceforth, there was no need for a mass campaign \textit{a la} ‘cotton affair’ in Uzbekistan which had made the words ‘crook’ and ‘Uzbek’ synonyms in the Soviet media. However, Gorbachev’s victory quickly backfired. As James Critchlow has noted, the old Soviet elites in Central Asia "whatever their shortcomings, helped the Party to maintain political stability while promoting economic development and a degree of social change in the face of challenges of many kinds. These elites evolved over many decades in response to the Party’s needs for an apparatus that could deal with a largely Islamic-traditionalist, nationalistic, elder-venerating, agrarian, male-dominated society with inherent hostility to change. Now the equilibrium of many years has changed."\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{98} Biznes i politika, 8 January 1994.
\textsuperscript{99} Biznes i politika, 31 July 1993.
\textsuperscript{100} Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 3 July 1991.
\textsuperscript{101} Karim Abdulov. \textit{Rohi behbud}. Dushanbe: [Self-published], 1995, p. 10.
Gorbachev, who could not even pronounce Tajikistan's name correctly (referring to it more than once as 'Tadzhikia'), Luchinsky, who called ancient Tajik shash maqom music "pathetic strumming", and their worthy lieutenants brought in from the European Soviet Union, could not and did not pay any attention to the intricacies of Tajik domestic policies. Jabbor Rasulov and Rahmon Nabiev were very skilled operators who managed to maintain a modus vivendi amongst regional cliques. Luchinsky, for his part, was known to have made remarks such as "these churlish Kulobis should be completely and utterly destroyed." Between 1986 and 1989 the balance of parochial interests in Tajikistan was irreparably damaged. The fragmentation of the national power elite reached new heights. At republic level four major competing groups emerged:

1. The group of Qahhor Mahkamov. First Secretary of the CPT CC, which embraced representatives of relatively minor clans from the North, such as the CPT CC Secretary, Guljahan Bobosadykova, and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Habibullo Saidmurodov, from Uropeppa. It also included some prominent politicians from Leninobod who were in personal opposition to Rahmon Nabiev - the charismatic regional First Secretary. Rifat Khojiev, and another CPT CC Secretary, Temurboi Mirkholiqov. Since Mahkamov's status was not rooted primarily in the local community, he had to rely heavily on the 'paratroopers' and a rather limited circle of people who owed him favours. A Pravda correspondent once observed that he "is too lenient to his coterie; perhaps, he has not been selective enough while forming his 'team'. Indeed, he is surrounded by a fair number of quite strange persons whose presence by his side is hard to explain."

2. The group of Rahmon Nabiev. Though ousted from the top leadership, Nabiev continued to command wide respect in his patrimony, Leninobod. Old-time nomenklatura cadres sacked or demoted after 1985 tended to coalesce around him; they were not only Northerners but influential Kulobis as well - most notably, former Minister of Education Talbak Nazarov. Rahmon Nabiev was Chairman of the Society

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104 Their collective nickname in Tajikistan was 'paratroopers'; indeed, they appeared out of the blue sky, without the slightest idea about local culture and traditions, but with an enormous sense of superiority. A certain Vladimir V. Ruzanov presents a typical case in this respect. A Russian, who spent all his life in Ukraine, he was transferred in 1986 from the humble position of a raikom instructor to head a sector in the Ideological Department of the CPT CC, and in 1988 became First Deputy Head of this Department. He was notorious for his indiscriminately denigrating attitude toward all of his native subordinates and peers for he believed them to be clandestine Muslims and hence anti-communists. (Taped interview with Iskandar Asadulloev, former Head of Sector in the CPT CC, Dushanbe, 6 January 1995.)
for Environmental Protection of Tajikistan in 1986 - 1990, a post which allowed him to travel widely on official business and maintain personal contacts with leaders in Moscow and Central Asian capitals.

3. The group of Kulobis headed by Hikmatullo Nasriddinov, Minister of Irrigation and the CPT CC Secretary under Nabiev. Technically, Izatullo Khayoev, the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan, was the most senior representative of the Kulob region in the government, but he was regarded as a weak leader loyal to Mahkamov rather than to his patrimony.

4. The group of Ghoibnazar Pallaev, the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan, comprised officials of Gharimi and cis-Pamir extraction including the First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Akbar Maksumov - son of the widely respected first Revkom Chairman of Tajikistan from 1924 to 1933, Nusratullo Maksum and Dushanbe's Mayor, Maqsud Ikromov.

Kulobis and Gharmis became primary targets of restructuring and reorganisation campaigns launched by Mahkamov and Luchinsky. The Gharmis sustained the most humiliating losses, especially when Akbar Maksumov was sacked from the government and made Head of the republic's botanic garden. The program of accelerated industrial development of the South had been abandoned; in 1989, the Leninobod oblast received 60 percent of the funds earmarked by Moscow for Tajikistan, whereas Kulob received a mere 6 percent.107 Thus, the main line of confrontation in the late 1980s appeared to be between the North and the South, or Valley Tajiks and Mountain Tajiks. Toshmat Nozirov, then Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Farkhor raion in the Kulob oblast, reminisced that "the conflict was brewing on the regionalistic grounds then ... A group of unsavoury politicians based their intrigues on this dichotomy to play for power."108

In 1989 it became clear that Gorbachev's experimentation had led to "a diminishing of the regime's power over society, even as he sought to increase his own power over the regime."109 Having failed to exact the obedience of the Party apparat, he attempted to downgrade it and use other institutions, such as the legislature, the army and security establishment, as his power base, but with little or no success. The 'mature' Gorbachev practised what Joel Migdal has called the 'politics of survival' - a "pathological style at

108 Biznes i politika, 8 March 1994.
the apex of the state” which incorporated “a mechanism of deliberately weakening arms of the state and allied organisations in order to assure the tenure of the top state leadership.”110 Creation of the presidency, glasnost, invitation of the masses to politics through popular referenda and contested elections also contributed to the atmosphere of legal and political uncertainty in Central Asia. The populace there had very strong negative views on Gorbachev’s reforms (Tables 5.3 and 5.6).

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<th>Table 5.6 Public Views on Perestroika. Tajikistan, 1990</th>
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A sociological study conducted in the Tajik State University in 1989 revealed that students and staff members “link perestroika with the emergence of negative phenomena in the life of modern society, such as: organised crime, economic chaos, absence of concrete deeds ... aggravation of ethnic relations, inertia and reversals in social development, growth of alcoholism and its consequences, profiteering, lawlessness ... absence of social protection, evanescence of public consumption goods.”111 A year later it was disclosed that “while seven Balts and Georgians out of every ten say there is too little freedom and very few people claim there is too much, Central Asians are quite different; only 28 percent of the Turkmen and Tadjiks and 36 percent of the Uzbeks complained of restriction on freedom, and 20 percent of the Tadjiks say there is too much freedom.”112

Confronted with increasing dissatisfaction with his line in the Union republics, Gorbachev failed to amend his line: “Given his complete lack of understanding, Gorbachev was simply dumbfounded when one nationality after another demanded attention.”113 Gradually the incumbent ruling elite in Tajikistan came to realise that reliance on the decaying centre could not guarantee its stay in power. It might have embarked upon the path of adapting the political machine to the new conditions, mobilising the masses under the slogans of nation-state building, as was done in the neighbouring Central Asian republics; instead, Mahkamov’s clique deployed its own

version of the 'politics of survival' which pursued the sole objective of preempting the emergence of competing power centres in Tajikistan. Coalition-building along regional lines and pitting sub-ethnic groupings against each other were two important elements of this strategy.

Mahkamov's Northerners found an unlikely ally in the face of the Pamiris, who were promised greater political and economic autonomy. During the XV Plenum of the CPT CC in December 1989 Mahkamov declared that "there are already shifts in this field. For example, the Chairman of the [Badakhshan] oblast Soviet of People's Deputies will have the status of Deputy Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the republic. The right of legislative initiative has been granted to the oblast. A certain quota for the GBAO representatives in the Supreme Soviet should be envisaged in the future."114 The appointment of M. Navjuvonov, a Pamiri, to the position of the Minister of Interior in March 1989 signalled a major departure from established personnel practices - previously this crucial post had been occupied exclusively by Kulobis. Navjuvonov, an Army Colonel with no police experience, "elevated regionalism to its repulsive heights. He placed his relatives and friends in important positions in regions, districts and towns of the republic, and especially within the Ministry of Interior."115

Simultaneously, Mahkamov tried to promote fragmentation inside the Southerners' camp. In April 1988, the regions of Kulob and Qurghonteppa were merged under the name of the Khatlon oblast. Kulobis received most top administrative jobs in the newly established unit, much to the annoyance of Gharmi settlers in the Vakhsh Valley who had by that time "gained control of transport and trade, the spheres that had always brought much profit."116 According to Rahmon Nabiev, the merger was a purely political exercise, costly, unnecessary and not warranted by economic considerations.117 Additionally, in 1988 a series of clashes between Gharmis and Uzbeks erupted in the Qurghonteppa region, especially in its southern Kolkhozobod raion. Uzbeks, who were the indigenous population, demanded fairer distribution of scarce arable lands and the breakup of collective farms into smaller units on an ethnic basis. The CPT leadership showed remarkable inability to cope with the problem. The crisis lasted a whole month and ended only when local elders took the initiative into their hands and demarcated fields and living quarters, bypassing the civic authorities. Trespassing was strictly prohibited, and ethnic militias armed with clubs and hunting

114 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 8 December 1989.
117 Tojikistoni Soveti. 23 February 1990.
guns were formed, for the first time in the Soviet period. At one point the building of the Kolkhozobod district Party committee was ransacked during a mass rally: "It was the first political gathering that claimed blood ... People driven to the edge had realised that the leader of the Tajik state, Mahkamov, was incapable and his government was in a state of paralysis. Preparations for overthrowing Q. Mahkamov's regime went underway amongst the Gharmis, Qaroteginis and Pamiris residing in the Qurghonteppa region." The stalemated pattern of leadership at the top was about to be challenged by civil violence, focusing on political issues but rooted in much deeper cultural cleavages.

Nationalism That Did Not Work

During the period from 1988 to 1991, Gorbachev destroyed the mechanisms of legitimacy for state socialism and eviscerated the Party's monopoly on political socialisation. Various alternative forms of social and political aggregation came into being to fill the void left by the shrinking CPSU. Analysing Gorbachev's political reforms, T.H. Rigby has observed that "whereas in Russia proper the most influential unofficial organisations were concerned with general issues of political and social reform, in the non-Russian republics those focusing on national causes quickly came to the fore." Ostensibly, Tajikistan was no exception from the rule - institutional processes in the republic had a distinctly nationalist imprint. However, ethnic mobilisation ultimately failed there, and political activism took the form of regional factionalism. Why did this happen?

The definition of nationalism as a "political ideology aspiring towards the congruency of nation and centre" is perfectly legitimate but may engender cognitive problems for it implicitly puts the emphasis on political aspects of nationhood, such as sovereignty. Ernest Gellner's version appears to be more encompassing: "Nationalism is, essentially, the general imposition of a high culture on society where previously low cultures had taken up the lives of the majority, and in some cases of the totality of the population. It means that generalised diffusion of a school-mediated, academy-supervised idiom, codified for the requirements of reasonably precise bureaucratic and technological communication. It is the establishment of an anonymous, impersonal

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118 Haqiqai Kolkhozobod, 3 October 1991.
society, with mutually substitutable atomised individuals, held together above all by a shared culture of this kind, in place of a previous complex structure of local groups, sustained by folk cultures reproduced locally and idiosyncratically by the micro-groups themselves.” Territoriality and political cohesion are senseless without a cultural overlay that binds segments of society together. It has been argued in earlier chapters that the Tajiks had managed to preserve the fundamental characteristics of their ancient Iranian inheritances, the mythomoteur, the sense of belonging in their land. The introduction of Soviet rule, on the one hand, greatly facilitated the development of the Tajik national culture by providing it with an institutional framework, resources and trained personnel. Yet, on the other hand, the Communist authorities kept it isolated from the rest of the world and suppressed some of its elements, most notably, religion. Given time, a new cohesive cultural entity based on the national consciousness might have evolved in Tajikistan under the aegis of the Soviet order. It is possible to draw parallels with the historic period following the Arab conquest here. This is not to say that the Communist experiment in Central Asia would have inevitably led to something on a par with the majestic Perso-Islamic civilisation; however, a viable ‘Tajik Soviet nation’ could well have become a reality.

Michael Rywkin, hardly one of Brezhnev’s admirers, has assessed his era as ”the culmination of what Soviet nationality policy and the socialist economy were capable of delivering.” In 1982, Rahmon Nabiev, then First Secretary of the CPT CC, wrote: ”From the heights of the present day we can clearly see the heroic path covered by the Tajik people, toilers of the republic, during the years of Soviet power, the path from feudalism to developed socialism, from a state of possessing no rights to freedom, from poverty and ignorance to a peak of economic and spiritual prosperity.” However bombastic and preposterous this statement may appear, the Great Socialist Myth did indeed take root in Tajik society, at least in its upper strata. And ”once a myth has been propounded in a closed society, it can be nurtured and developed through the almost unlimited controls at the disposal of the regime.”

Intellectuals have always been the bearers of national consciousness in developing societies. In Tajikistan “an impressive quota of Tajik novelists, essayists, historians, and poets from all classes and regions converged within the unerring guidelines of the writers’ unions in Moscow and Dushanbe to define the republic’s literary personality.

As compensation for political subordination, the Tajiks ... had developed a cultural superiority complex."\(^{126}\) The Tajik intelligentsia was characterised by spiritual dualism: its commitment to traditional cultural values and forms had to coexist with the aesthetic and ideological imperatives of the Soviet era. A Tajik writer reminisced in 1994 that "if we go back to the socialist epoch, poets then were on top of social influence, unlike Islamists, and were making a substantial contribution to the Weltanschauung of the people ... The poet in the Orient is more than a poet. This formula ... has always been supported by the Bolsheviks in our country ... Many politicians in Tajikistan took pride in friendship with *literati* ... It was not simply a matter of prestige, but also the recognition of poetry as the main cultural component of the Oriental mentality."\(^{127}\) Beginning in the late 1960s, in the general context of Brezhnev's politics of 'normalcy', the moral dilemma of intellectuals lost its acuteness to an extent; the new generation of poets, writers and artists were able to express a plurality of views, albeit in camouflaged form. Professor Rahimi Musulmoniyon, a renowned Tajik anti-Communist, has written that it was a time when a lot of young, talented people not afraid of telling the truth came to the fore.\(^{128}\) Eventually a number of discursive fields emerged in Tajik culture where national and Soviet themes organically merged - the unprecedented heroism of Tajiks during the Great Patriotic war for one.\(^{129}\)

Gradually the denigrating Khrushchev-era image of Tajiks, as primitive Asians led out of a historical backwater by progressive forces from European Russia,\(^{130}\) gave way to a more realistic appraisal of reality, based on praising the glorious past and creative present of the Tajik people. Publication in 1970 of Bobojon Ghafurov's monumental work *The Tajiks: Archaic, Ancient and Mediaeval History*,\(^{131}\) which laid claim to most of the classical Persian canon was a milestone in the process of reinventing Tajik history. It quickly became the Bible of every Tajik intellectual: in 1989, 62 percent of tertiary students of the titular nationality had this book in their possession.\(^{132}\) Ghafurov

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129 During the war 13,997 Tajiks received orders and medals of the USSR; 14 of them became Heroes of the Soviet Union. *Natsionalnaia politika KPSS v deistvii*. Tashkent: Uzbekistan, 1979, p. 257.
130 See, for instance, the sycophantic statement made by the CPT CC First Secretary, Turson Ulijboev, in February 1960: "Who helped us to gain freedom, to become consolidated as a nation ... to build up an industry and the kolkhoz system, to liquidate illiteracy once and for all, to create a culture national in form and socialist in content? - The Communist Party, the great Russian people." (V. Borysenko. "The 1959 Purges in the Communist Parties of the Soviet National republics." *Problems of the Peoples of the USSR*. No. 5, 1960, p. 13.)
gave rise to a whole school of academics who propagated the notion of the uniqueness of the Tajiks and their Kulturträger mission in Central Asia. Rahim Masov, one-time director of the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, has insisted that "without the knowledge of the Tajik language, study of the cultural heritage of Turkic peoples is impossible ... All pre-revolutionary spiritual culture of the peoples of Central Asia can be comprehended only with the assistance of the Tajik language."\(^{133}\) Generally, one has to agree with Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone that "the massive effort to adapt the traditional modes of cultural expression to the reality of the new Soviet system has been impressive, and has produced some interesting results on the part of the new Tadzhik Soviet intellectuals and artists ... The dominant theme ... has been the desire to preserve the traditional and Persian classical characteristics in as unadulterated a form as possible. This does not mean that the Soviet content has been wholly rejected; some of its features - especially those touching on the improvement in the economic and social conditions - appear to have been fully absorbed."\(^{134}\)

The alleged outright Russification of non-Slavic ethnic groups used to be one of the favourite themes of Western experts on Soviet nationality policy; some of them propounded truly apocalyptic views such as "the languages of the non-Russian peoples of the USSR seem doomed to eventual extinction."\(^{135}\) In reality, the 1970s saw more extensive use of indigenous languages in public communication in Central Asia, at the expense of Russian.\(^{136}\) In 1971, the Terminology Committee of the Academy of Sciences of the TSSR published an instruction which provided for greater usage of Tajik words and grammatical constructions in state affairs and science; this was "an important step in the direction of strengthening and formalising the national basis of the Tajik semantics."\(^{137}\) The percentage of Tajiks who claimed fluency in Russian did not increase after the 1970s and was only 30 percent at the time of the 1989 census.\(^{138}\)

A combination of factors, such as the autonomy of the nativised bureaucracy, the existence of a stratum of indigenous intellectuals, and a growing ability to express national identity through artistic means, had contributed to the phenomenon of "Soviet-
encouraged cultural nationalism" in Central Asia. However, it remained confined, by and large, to specialised and governing elites in Tajikistan, having failed to acquire demotic traits. In Donald Carlisle's words, "the intelligentsia and middle class, and urban settings as opposed to rural locales, are the initial incubators for nationalism. But unless such restive elites have mass backing and their urban base expands into rural support, no powerful national amalgam emerges and no successful national movement can be born." Modernist city-based intellectuals were as alien to their traditionalist compatriots in the countryside as hi-tech factories were foreign to the agricultural economy of Tajikistan. Moreover, the competence and breadth of outlook of writers, artists, scholars and other professionals, who were trained inside and outside the republic in quite sufficient numbers, were often inadequate. In the 1980s, only one-quarter of all research projects pursued under the aegis of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan corresponded to the all-Union level. An inspection of Clinical Hospital No. 1 of Dushanbe in 1990 revealed that all the diagnoses made by its specialists were wrong.

In the national republics "the reproduction of intellectual and governing elites had acquired unprecedented proportions ... For the sake of maintaining the symbols of national statehood enormous resources were pumped into the structures of local academies of science, professional creative unions, cinematography, the theatre, elite sports, etc." The new indigenous middle class in Tajikistan was reared for one purpose only - to serve the USSR, Inc; it was part of the nomenklatura. There was no danger that 'Soviet cultural nationalism' in the republic would become political nationalism. Asliddin Sohibnazarov, one of the genuine proponents of Tajik nationalism, has remarked bitterly that at the beginning of perestroika there were just "one-two dozen of Tajik intellectuals who had accepted progressive [ie., nationalist] ideas."

The socialist type of modernity created serious identification problems, of which national identification was just a part. Figure 5.1 depicts a hierarchy of identities in Soviet Tajikistan in ascending order. Traditional forms of spatial organisation were supplemented by affiliation with the Soviet Union and Tajikistan; in fact, as far as this affiliation was concerned, it was quite possible to speak about the “fusion of national and imperial identities under both the Tsarist Russia and, in a different way, the Soviet regime.”\(^\text{146}\) The fact that socialism was mapped onto the heterogeneous Tajik community by external forces need not have undermined the viability of new identities: "A sense of identity may be consistent with inauthenticity and great impoverishment of character. In malign environments, a sense of identity may even depend upon inauthenticity of character or personality except in the most philosophically wise individuals."\(^\text{147}\) The national republic of Tajikistan was created by Soviet authorities, it was associated with Communist rule in people's minds, and remained a potent source of identity so long as the regime's coercive and redistributive functions remained intact.

Alexandre Bennigsen wrote in 1979 that "sub-national and supra-national loyalties remain strong in Central Asia and actively compete with national ones."\(^\text{148}\) However, his thesis that this supra-national identity ought to be based on anti-Russian 'Pan-Turkestanism' with the Uzbeks as its directing element stands no criticism, at least as far as Tajikistan is involved. To begin with, in the years before perestroika anti-Russian feelings were practically unknown in Tajikistan. As Ben Fowkes has noted, corporatist compromise under Brezhnev allowed the titular nation "to lord it over the non-titular nationalities."\(^\text{149}\) Ethnic Tajiks dominated in all spheres of human activities in the republic, except for industry, construction and science (Table 5.7). There was practically no occupational competition between them on the one hand, and Russians and other Europeans on the other. In contrast, Uzbeks, who lived predominantly in rural areas of Tajikistan and were involved mostly in agriculture, presented a potential target for ethnic antagonism. Additionally, discriminatory policies pursued by Uzbek leaders throughout the Soviet era towards Tajiks living in Uzbekistan had led to a situation where "language, culture, national feelings and interests of Tajiks in these cities [Samarkand and Bukhara] were deeply harmed. Negative developments in the field of Uzbek - Tajik interlingual and interethnic relations have created perceptible


social strain. Still, sociological data gathered in 1989 demonstrated that while throughout the USSR 29 percent of the population characterised the state of interethnic relations in the country as 'very tense and prone to further exacerbation', only 14 percent of those surveyed in Tajikistan shared this pessimistic view.

Figure 5.1 Spatial Hierarchy of Identities in Soviet Tajikistan


Table 5.7 The Share of Employees of Titular Nationality by Branch, 1987

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Agriculture</th>
<th>Transport and Communications</th>
<th>Construction</th>
<th>Trade and Public Catering</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public Health</td>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>Sciences</td>
<td>Government Apparatus</td>
<td>Communal Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48%</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Thus, it appears that affiliation with the Soviet Union was the dominant supra-national identity for the Tajiks; it also served as a major source of modern political and cultural values on the national level. Old values derived vitality from traditional identities, of which regionalism was the highest form. David Harvey has commented that "territorial place-based identity, particularly when conflated with race, gender, religious and class differentiation, is one of the most pervasive bases for both progressive political mobilisation and reactionary exclusionary politics."152 For decades the communist authorities suppressed and, to an extent, utilised regionalism in Tajikistan, but ultimately failed to overcome it. The native elite in the republic was uniform in the sense that "it was poisoned by conformism, duplicity, cowardice and selfishness ... Being its sole employer, the state had secured its material and spiritual dependency."153 At the same time, it was highly compartmentalised along regional lines. According to Otakhon Saifulloev, Secretary of the Writers' Union of Tajikistan between 1968 - 1973 and Chairman of the State Broadcasting Committee of Tajikistan between 1991 - 1992, in the early 1970s there were 94 Tajik writers in the republic who formed 6 rival groups; Saifulloev headed the largest faction of 25 Leninobodis that dominated the Tajik literary landscape and had the lion's share of books published.154

The 'imaginary community' of the Tajiks in the greater part of the 20th century was a symbiosis construed through the political actions and poetics of Soviet nationalism and the Great Tradition of Central Asian Iranians. The importance of the Soviet component, with its specific political culture, forced indoctrination and modernisation drive, should not be underestimated. However contradictory, artificial and cruel, it constituted "the thin film of modern notions over the formidable layer of values, motivations, role expectations and behavioural stereotypes inherent in each region's traditional

Institutional Changes and the Crisis of Social Control

Radicalisation of reforms ultimately reduced Gorbachev's power base and alienated all major elites in Soviet society. With the benefit of hindsight, the USSR's ex-premier Valentin Pavlov concluded: "Yeltsin and Gorbachev, not being economists, theoreticians or practitioners ... did not have a clue about the market and how it was to be regulated, what could and should be achieved through the market and how it was to be implemented in practice. Their disagreements over reforms reflected not contradictory approaches and principles, but only clashes in the process of struggle for sole supreme political power, hence, they (disagreements, contradictions) should have been created, even if they did not exist in real life. The country's economy, the people's well-being became hostage to the power struggle, which manifested itself in the conflict of ideas and concepts, in the struggle for democratic reforms against the administrative-command system, where everyone declared himself a democrat and a reformer, and calls the adversary a conservative, a bureaucrat and a partocrat." 

The second and final stage of *perestroika* included the following measures in the political realm:

- liberalisation of formal political institutions;
- democratisation of public expression and public association;
- withdrawal of the Party's key regulatory functions;
- weakening of the state's coercive mechanisms.

The Communist *apparat* eventually began to realise that its very existence was under threat, but it was too late; the dismantling of the mono-organisational order was out of control. As Charles Fairbanks views it, "the enormous power of Gorbachev goes far to explain why the elite gave up power, contrary to our expectations. They gave up power because of their own reformism and because of fear of the public, but most of all because Gorbachev forced them to." In January 1987, secret ballot and multi-candidate elections were introduced in all Party organisations. Following the 19th

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CPSU Conference in June 1988, Party committees at all levels were stripped of the ability of overseeing economic agencies, the bulk of administrative powers was transferred to the soviets and contested elections to a new legislature were announced. In October 1988, Gorbachev was elected Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, signifying a shift of the loci of power from Party structures. In Spring 1989, the new Soviet parliament was convened which elected Gorbachev President of the USSR. In February 1990, the CPSU formally renounced its monopoly on power. The role of the military in national decision-making decreased: withdrawal from Afghanistan, unilateral concessions to the West and usage of troops in police operations contributed to the decay of the Armed Forces. The KGB, an erstwhile tool of social control, was exposed to public criticism and lost, to an extent, its coercive edge.

Similar processes unfolded in Tajikistan, which remained "the quietest and the most obedient of all the republics. Whatever the centre ordered, was accepted, with a thousand thanks." By 1989, the CPT CC apparatus had shrunk by one-third as compared to 1986. Party structures at lower levels were weakened to the point where they did not have the organisational capacity to implement social control: the committee of the Hisor raion with a population of 230 thousand had 12 staff, whereas four registered mosques in the district had 24 official mullahs alone. In Spring 1988, 25 ministries and 17 State Committees that operated in Tajikistan were reorganised into 12 new agencies. The Tajik KGB was especially badly crippled in the late Gorbachev period: its staff cuts were three times the all-Union ratio. One major deviation from the Moscow pattern was that freedom of speech and freedom of association never really took off in Tajikistan. While in 1989 in Moscow alone there existed 500 unofficial organisations which "strove to some degree or other to influence the domestic or foreign policy of the state", Qahhor Mahkamov had the following to say on the subject of proliferation of alternative associations: "And, really, let us think - is it appropriate today to put forward suggestions about creating this or that new public organisation, when we already have more than enough of them? Those who have a sincere desire to help perestroika can apply their energy, initiative and craving to serve their people, and transform them into practical deeds, through Party, trade-union and Komsomol organisations, newly elected Soviets and our numerous existing public

159 Calculations based on the CPT CC telephone directories.
associations and creative unions." A very thorough sociological survey of people's attitudes conducted in Central Asia by the US Institute of Peace has disclosed that "the problem most often selected as important - by roughly 90 percent of respondents ... - was strengthening social order and discipline ... On the other hand, the responses indicated less support for elements fundamental to a democracy - free speech, freedom of the press, pluralism and tolerance of other political views ... less than 40 percent of all respondents in Kazakhstan and less than half of all respondents (47 percent) in Uzbekistan believed that securing free press and free speech was important." At the beginning of 1990, the overall impression was that throughout Central Asia popular acceptance of the republican leaderships remained high; the participation of the population in political life was nowhere near "as advanced or as widespread as was public involvement elsewhere in the country." The Communist elite was still in charge in Tajikistan, and the major menace to its dominance emanated not from disgruntled masses of people, but from the internecine struggle inside the apparat.

On 25 February 1990, elections to the new Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan were to be held. In light of the latest developments in the USSR, positions in the republican legislature had acquired special attractiveness to members of the power elite. For the first time ever at least some constituencies had a choice of candidates. In the absence of institutionalised forms of interest aggregation such as political parties and organisations, only belonging to the Communist establishment could guarantee electoral success for would-be parliamentarians. It was clear that Mahkamov's coterie would dominate the Supreme Soviet unless something dramatic happened to change the alignment of forces in the CPT leadership. In February 1990 a desperate attempt was made by elements in the ruling oligarchy, heretofore alienated from supreme power, to oust Mahkamov. Intrigues and mini-coups were not uncommon in the Byzantine world of Communist cryptopolitics, but this time the attempt to redistribute power entailed mass civil violence.

In his brilliant analysis of violent collective action, James Rule has come up with a number of useful generalisations:

164 Payyomi Dushanbe, 8 December 1989.
1. In any polity there are sets of interests around which segments of the population may mobilise.

2. When such 'vital interests' emerge, the groups concerned are apt to perceive them as matters essential to their symbolic or literal self-perpetuation. One example may be the right to traditional occupational roles.

3. Collective action in support of such interests may be either expressive or instrumental - an end in itself, or a means to some longer-term end.

4. The proximate causes of violent collective action are often, though not always, the receipt of new information. Examples might be rumours of insults to cherished group symbols, or reports of violence against members of the group, or news of a weakening of the central powers' coercive abilities.

5. Collective actors do calculate costs and benefits of their actions at least enough to avoid overwhelming repression and to seize evident political opportunities.

6. The frequency and intensity of collective action, including collective violence, is associated with threatened and accomplished applications of central political power.

In early 1990, the Southerners in Tajikistan understood quite well that Mahkamov's hold on power would receive further legitimation through parliamentary elections. It was also evident to them that the incumbent regime had been weakened by Moscow-inspired reorganisations and, as the clashes in Isfara and Kolkhozobod had demonstrated, enjoyed limited abilities to deal with public strife. They also remembered that militant manifestations and consequent interference by the centre in Tbilisi in April 1989 had resulted in the leadership change in Georgia.\textsuperscript{168} Clan leaders decided to trigger collective action in the capital city of Tajikistan in order to challenge, and possibly destroy, the positions of incumbent power holders from the North.

At the beginning of February 1990, rumours were spread throughout Dushanbe to the effect that Armenians fleeing from Baku were arriving in droves in the city, and being

\textsuperscript{168} On 8 April 1989 mass demonstrations took place in Tbilisi. Organised by Georgia's Popular Front, they put forward slogans demanding the solution of the Abkhaz problem. The Soviet Army units, deployed in the city to protect government buildings, clashed with the protestors; 16 civilians were killed and 75 servicemen were wounded. On 14 April 1989 First Secretary of the Georgian CP CC, Jumber Patashvili, was relieved of his duties, ostensibly for exceeding his powers by having ordered the troops to open fire. (\textit{BBC Summary of World Broadcasts}. Part I USSR, 18 April 1989, SU/0437 A1/2. See also: Ronald Grigor Suny. \textit{The Making of the Georgian Nation}. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, pp. 322-323.)
given apartments bypassing the waiting list. Given that 41.2 thousand citizens of Dushanbe, or 7 percent of the entire population, were on this waiting list,\textsuperscript{169} the reaction was swift - on the 10th of February anti-Armenian pogroms took place. It didn't matter that the total number of Armenian refugees in Dushanbe was only 29, and that none of them had received housing from the city authorities; instead, they had stayed with relatives in the city, were several thousand Armenians had lived for decades.\textsuperscript{170} The next day a five-thousand-strong crowd assembled in front of the CPT CC building and demanded the deportation of the refugees. Mahkamov was taken by surprise and failed to react adequately. On the 12th of February more than 10,000 people gathered in the same place; this time the slogans calling for the immediate resignation of Mahkamov and the "purification of the government of charlatans, saboteurs and mafiosi"\textsuperscript{171} were brandished. Later that day, government buildings were attacked by the mob, and looters and pillagers engulfed the city. At 9pm martial law and a curfew were declared as the first detachments of the Interior Troops began to arrive from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. On the 13th of February the mass meeting in the city centre continued in defiance of martial law; bands of marauders proceeded to operate in the suburbs. The self-appointed Temporary Committee for Crisis Resolution (TCCR) endorsed by the meeting and headed by the First Deputy of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers and Chairman of GOSPLAN, Buri Karimov, entered negotiations with Mahkamov. The next day Mahkamov, Khayoev and Pallaev announced their resignation. A group of high-ranking officials, including B. Karimov, Minister of Culture, N. Tabarov, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, O. Latifi, Head of the State-Juridical Department of the CPT CC, N. Khuvaiddulloev, Editor-in-Chief of the \textit{Tajikistoni Soveti} official newspaper, M. Mabatshoev, Deputy Minister of Justice, Kh. Homidov, and Dushanbe Mayor, Maqsud Ikramov began organisational work to create a Temporary Bureau of the CPT CC. However, the Extraordinary Plenum of the CPT CC, convened on the 15th of February with the participation of the CPSU CC Politburo Candidate Member, B.K. Pugo, did not approve of this measure and rescinded Mahkamov's resignation. Most notably, all Northerners voted against the resignation, while Nasriddinov's group supported it.\textsuperscript{172} Manifestations and sporadic acts of violence continued until the 19th of February, but then "everything changed abruptly overnight."\textsuperscript{173} During one week over 850 citizens were injured and 25 people

\textsuperscript{171} \textit{Kommunist Tadzhikistana}, 16 January 1991.
were killed (all but 4 by firearms): 16 Tajiks, 5 Russians, 2 Uzbeks, 1 Azeri and 1 Tatar.  

The events that occurred in Dushanbe in February 1990 had several peculiar features. First, the disturbances in Dushanbe were not spontaneous. A masterful propaganda campaign, impressive logistical support (thousands of protestors were fed, sheltered, and transported from one location to another) and activities by compact combat groups suggested careful planning. The organisers were also aware of the fact that at the time there were no interior troops in the city and its military garrison had been reduced.

Second, the majority of participants were not residents of Dushanbe, but people brought in from Kulob, Qurghonteppa and districts to the south of Dushanbe. Many of them did not realise what exactly they were doing in the capital, as, for instance, 300 schoolchildren from the 'XXII Party Congress' kolkhoz in the Lenin raion who simply obeyed orders of their four grown-up leaders.

Third, unofficial strongmen, such as avlod leaders and bosses of organised crime, played an important role in challenging the political authorities. The heads of four major gangs in Dushanbe were asked to spring into action by the statesmen "who feed them, protect them from law and keep them handy for a crucial time." Targets for pilfering were selected carefully during the riots: in one street, some shops were looted, but others, under racketeer protection, stayed intact.

Fourth, contrary to the images disseminated by the Moscow-based media, the conflict did not have anti-Russian and/or pro-Islamic substance. A closer look reveals that it was a case of struggle for power, where one of the parties "pursued its pragmatic political objectives camouflaging them artfully in nationalist and religious overtones." The leader of Muslims of Tajikistan, qozikaln Akbar Turajonzoda, was asked by B.K. Pugo to join the mediating process between the TCCR and Mahkamov's group, and succeeded in cooling down the passions in the city precisely because he was viewed as a neutral figure.

Fifth, law-enforcement structures proved themselves useless as a means of protecting the populace. Initially the Minister of Interior, M. Navjuvonov, was made the Military

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174 Rastokhez, No. 3, August 1990, p. 4.
176 Pravda, 10 May 1990.
177 Komsomolskaja pravda. 28 March 1990.
178 V. Spolnikov, L. Mironov. "Islamskie fundamentalisty v borbe za vlast". Azija i Afrika segodnia, No. 4, 1992, p. 27.
Commandant of Dushanbe in charge of all armed formations. He was so grossly inefficient in this role that within hours General I. Senshov from the Central Asian Military District took over. Even then the Army and interior troops could provide security only for government institutions. On 13th February Qahhor Mahkamov called on residents of Dushanbe to defend their lives on their own. Efficient self-defence units were instantaneously organised on the basis of mahalla committees - they were "a unique phenomenon. Nothing of this kind has existed in the short but horrid history of 'hotheds'. People of different nationalities stood up shoulder-to-shoulder against pogrom-mongers." 179 This was yet another lesson of perestroika for the people of Tajikistan - only local centres of power could offer viable strategies of survival in times of tumult.

The truth about the events in Dushanbe has never been fully disclosed. Qahhor Mahkamov limited his assessment to cliched incantations concerning the 'human factor' so characteristic of the Gorbachev period: "Absence of attention to the man, to his necessities and demands, the second-rate attention given to this particular factor ... have led to the growth in unemployment, especially amongst youngsters, to the increase in crime. As a result, social tension has been aggravated in the republic, in the city of Dushanbe in particular." 180 The documents of the 18th Plenum of the CPT CC held on 3 March 1990 to investigate the whole affair were loaded with vague references to 'certain anti-perestroika forces', 'several unexpected developments', 'demagogues and political profiteers', 'some leaders who overstepped norms of Soviet legality', and so on. No names were mentioned, except for Buri Karimov and Nur Tabarov, who were made scapegoats and expelled from the Party for breach of Party discipline. Karimov even retained his post in the government. The real organisers of the bloody uprising - leaders of Southern regional groupings - remained in the shade. Mirbobo Mirrahimov, the TCCR member and one of the founding fathers of the Tajik democratic movement, though also refraining from mentioning names, was more frank: "Today's regime in Tajikistan is a dual power. First, this is a purely nominal power of the Soviets that have no rights. Second, this is the clan-based, party-administrative mafia of the republic, which is wrapped and permeated by threads of conjugal and localistic relations ... In order to strengthen its position, each clan has to compromise others. And only one goal unites them - preservation of the present regime ... As a result of the bloody tragedy the Party-clan mafias have strengthened their positions in the system of power. Some disarray and hostility in the CC and the Council of Ministers are temporary, very soon the clans will unite again for the sake of the regime's stability. The events have

179 Rabochaia tribuna. 26 October 1990.
shattered the leading clan and damaged its authority ... Other clans were in complete control and didn't lose a single member.”

What happened in Dushanbe in February 1990 was an attempt at an oligarchic coup. However, neither Buri Karimov, an ambitious Uzbek from Hissor, nor his associates from the 17-strong TCCR, who included mostly intellectuals of Gharmi origin devoid of political influence, were the real culprits in this gambit. According to Narzullo Dustov, Vice-President of Tajikistan in 1991-1992, the whole scheme was masterminded by Ghoibnazar Pallaev, whose resignation alongside of Mahkamov and Khayoev was just a manoeuvre. He was actively aided by the leaders of the Kulob faction: Kulobi youths formed the backbone of hit squads during the riots, commanded by a convicted criminal, Yaqub Karimov. Evidence suggests that Head of the Political Department of the Ministry of Interior, General A. Habibov, a Kulobi, collaborated with the rioteers. Needless to say, the investigation never unmasked the real figures behind the bloodshed and violence. In January 1991, Tajikistan's Procurator G.S. Mikhailin reported that 105 people had been sentenced (all 'small fry' - hooligans and arsonists), and that "at this juncture the investigation cannot provide juridical evaluation of the deeds committed by Karimov, Tabarov and others." The farce was over, the groups within the ruling elite had reached an accommodation and wanted to forget the whole episode. Amazingly, ex-Minister of Culture, Nur Tabarov, who had played his part as a pawn in the coup, complained in September 1990: "There is nothing I can blame myself for. I was, and remain loyal to the authorities ... I naively believed that the CC members could be objective and not make me the scapegoat. They are in no hurry to rehabilitate me ... In early March [1990], when I had a conversation with Mahkamov, he promised me to help with decent employment. I haven't heard from him since." The Kulobi faction benefited most from the new alignment of forces. A steady trickle of investments was diverted to the region again. The strategically important Kulob - Qurghonteppa railroad, a project that had been in the making for 50 years, finally received the necessary financing: the USSR Ministry of Railroad Transport agreed to foot half of the 260-million rouble bill for the construction to be completed by 1995.

The breaking of the North - South polarisation and rapprochement between the elites

181 Rastokhez, No. 1, May 1990, p. 4.
184 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 29 August 1990.
186 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 26 September 1990.
187 Adabryot va san'at, 24 August 1990.
from Leninobod and Kulob received symbolic capping in July 1990 when these two regional centres became sister-cities. In the long run, Gharmis proved to be the major losers in the power-sharing scheme. Ghoibnazar Pallaev was relieved of his duties as the Supreme Soviet Presidium Chairman. His replacement, Qadriddin Aslonov, though also a Gharmi from Qurghonteppa, did not have Pallaev’s clout and influence. In March 1991 the Gharm zone of districts underwent administrative restructuring; the Komsomolobod and Gharm raions were broken up into smaller units with populations below 20 thousand each. This measure was aimed at further reducing the organisational capabilities of local bureaucratic structures.

The elections to the new Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan went as planned; 95 percent of those elected were Communists, and only 2 out of 225 were active members of the incipient democratic movement. In the lower-level soviets the Communist share was not as high: 80 percent in the oblast legislatures and slightly over 50 percent in city and raion soviets. The following observation, about Russian politics under Gorbachev, was equally relevant to Tajikistan: “In most cases ... the institutional shift of power from the party to the state was accompanied by a corresponding move of personnel as leading soviet posts continued to be filled from a pool of recruits provided from the old elite. As for economic managers, they did not need to move into the representative bodies of power simply because they were already there.”

Gorbachev’s emissary Boris Pugo was instrumental in keeping Mahkamov’s clique in power. However, the fact that he had to negotiate with the opposing sides rather than simply deliver Moscow’s verdict, the failure to avert violence in advance and the sheer sluggishness with which law and order were restored in Dushanbe, indicated that the Kremlin was again losing its grip over Central Asia. By 1990, bureaucrats in central government agencies, especially from industrial ministries, had become Gorbachev’s main adversaries. Not only was he forced to give up centralisation efforts in the periphery, he had to seek the support of territorial bureaucracies against the recalcitrant apparat in Moscow. In a very short period of time ruling elites in national republics regained their autonomy and legitimised it during what was referred to as the ‘parade of sovereignties’. The Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan adopted a Declaration on State Sovereignty on 24 August 1990. This document stated, in particular, that "the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic is a sovereign multinational state. The state sovereignty manifests itself in the unity and supremacy of the state power on all territory of the Tajik

188 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 1 March 1991.
189 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 22 March 1990.
190 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 6 August 1991.
SSR and independence in external relations ... The Tajik SSR decides independently all questions related to political, economic, socio-cultural construction on its territory, except those which will be voluntarily delegated by it to the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics."^192 This was everything the incumbent elite could hope for. It did not long for complete independence, it simply wanted to have a free hand in commandeering and distributing its share of the Soviet pie, and to be propped up by the centre's bayonets, if need be.

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Political developments in Tajikistan from 1985 to 1991 were characterised by three main features. The first was economic decay. Tajikistan lived on an inherited endowment, gradually depleting its material and demographic resources. While the bulk of the people were still quiescent, deteriorating quality of life was about to trigger a frustration-aggression reaction amongst the most deprived strata of the population. The second was the atmosphere of instability and uncertainty wrought by Gorbachev's reforms. Ideological cohesion, sets of specific values and identities, and modes of social behaviour were undermined and destroyed. The third feature was the deflation of the state, both in the sense of contraction of its agencies and in the loss of moral authority, especially after the bloody events of February 1990 in Dushanbe.

The central political authority of Tajikistan failed to adopt the national idea as a means of mass mobilisation, relying on Moscow to deal with all its problems. Consensual tasks were fulfilled more successfully on the sub-national level through traditional components of the polity, primarily regional solidarity networks. Mono-organisational socialism gave the Tajik people a historical chance to emerge as a modern nation. With the demise of the Soviet order, this opportunity was gone. It is not beyond the imagination, however, that the people of Tajikistan might reconstruct a viable political organism and a cohesive national community along the lines suggested by their Central Asian neighbours and based on authoritarianism and relative isolationism.

^192 Novye zakony Respubliki Tadzhikistan. Sbornik (Chast' I). Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1991, p. 35.
Chapter VI. The Rise of Opposition, the Contraction of State and the Road to Independence.

The Gorbachev era freed Soviet society politically. However, democratic consolidation has occurred only in a handful of the ex-USSR republics; in the majority of them the transition period from authoritarian rule is far from over, if it has commenced at all. Economic factors have undoubtedly contributed to the sluggishness of post-Communist transformation, but perestroika had equally devastating effects on all Central Asian republics, yet only Tajikistan succumbed to acute civil conflict, virtual dissolution of the state and fragmentation of the country. The hypothesis that "the consolidation of democratic rule depends not only on economic growth and a broad distribution of benefits; it also depends on the development of political institutions that can effectively mediate policy debates and coordinate the relations among contending social and economic interests"\(^1\) deserves proper consideration in this sense. Additionally, a strong argument can be put in favour of the high degree of indeterminacy in the process of transition from Soviet authoritarian rule, whereby "unexpected events (fortuna), insufficient information, hurried and audacious choices, confusion about motives and interests, plasticity and even indefinition of political identities, as well as the talents of specific individuals (virtù) are frequently decisive in determining outcomes."\(^2\)

As Jonathan Steele has observed, "the Communist system was not democratic, but it was an effective administrative machine, which worked and where the 'estates' ... had a framework for presenting their interests."\(^3\) Gorbachev had broken this machine, and during 1990 - 1991 it was up to political elites in every republic to put something new in its place. Unfortunately for Tajikistan, its leaders in this crucial period proved to be incapable of coping with the task.

Proto-Opposition in Tajikistan: Public Movements and Localised Action Groups

In early 1991, Grzegorz Ekiert wrote that "on the one hand, the swift disintegration of one-party states has left a dangerous political vacuum, setting in motion an often chaotic process of political change. On the other hand, the restoration of individual and collective rights, as well as opening of public spaces, has triggered rapid political

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mobilisation. As a result, the power vacuum has been permeated by highly fragmented political forces prone to radicalisation not only around political and economic issues but also around ethnic and religious cleavages. "4 In Tajikistan, the absence of stable class cleavages and mezzo-structures based upon them, as well as the general lack of civic culture, inhibited the formation of political parties characteristic of liberal democratic systems. Their main functions - interest aggregation, constituency representation and structuring the vote during elections - were performed by other institutions which had nothing to do with the classical left-right continuum.

The events that took place in Dushanbe in February 1990 signalled the end of the monolithic social order, and served as a powerful catalyst for the emergence of a variety of public entities that were not in compliance with the regime. Outwardly they appeared as mass public associations and political parties, but it will be argued hereupon that essentially they were little more than façades for elite factions in disagreement with the ruling faction on policy questions. Henceforth, although institutional analysis is important in understanding formal structures in any polity, the transactional approach first developed by Dankwart A. Rustow, which implies that "the key actors in the transition process are political elites, whether in the government or opposition, not interest groups, mass organisations, social movements, or classes,"5 remains the major theoretical tool of this study.

The opening of Tajik society in 1989 and early 1990 was marked by a rapid rise of various public associations - that is, partially institutionalised collectivities with some structure but no formal membership. Although quite often they protested and opposed government policies, they never explicitly sought to gain power. Instead, they strove to limit it; this distinguished their "protest activities and civil actions from opposition political party activities."6 It is possible to single out five types of such associations that came into being in this period in Tajikistan, according to their objectives, membership and methods of operation.

I. The Ru ba ru ('Face to Face') Political Club was set up in February 1989 at the initiative and under the aegis of the Tajik Komsomol (Lenin Communist Union of Youth, or TLCUY) Central Committee. Its initial Statute, while pledging allegiance to

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the CPSU and *perestroika*, contained a number of rather radical, for that time, programmatic provisions, such as:7

- formation of national and political self-awareness of Tajik youngsters;
- upholding of human rights and their primacy in the national legislation;
- all-round development of the Tajik language;
- endorsement of parliamentary candidates at all levels;
- environmental protection and making public the true records of ecological situation in the republic.

The Club, based in Dushanbe, was run by a 9-member council, and all discussions were supposed to be held in Tajik. Its major form of work consisted in inviting senior Party and state officials for round-table discussions. More often than not, they would demonstrate incompetence and plain illiteracy, much to the satisfaction of approximately 400 members of *Ru ba Ru*. By September 1989, the TLCUY CC had grown weary of the Club’s independence, disbanded its elected council and removed controversial items from its agenda. From that time on, *Ru ba Ru* was ordered to discuss only those problems that had been approved by the Komsomol’s Bureau - 41 in total, including such nuggets as 'Psychological Culture of a Komsomol Propagandist' and 'Nationalism - A Tool of Subversive Activity of Imperialism'.8 Very quickly *Ru ba Ru* lost all its attractiveness to the public and slipped into oblivion.

According to some sources, the Club was established with the blessing of the KGB, which planned to collect data on potential dissidents at its gatherings.9 Even if this were true, *Ru ba Ru* objectively played an important role in diversifying the political landscape of Tajikistan: it served as a role-model for similar clubs throughout the republic, and, more importantly, provided leaders of proto-opposition groups, such as *Rastokhez*, with a forum in which they could disseminate their views and recruit followers.

II. The People’s Movement of Tajikistan in Support of Perestroika *Rastokhez*10 (PMR) held its first conference in Dushanbe on 30 December 1989,11 but its pamphlets,

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7 *Proekt polozheniiia o politicheskom klub e “Ru Ba Ru”.* Type-written document dated 14 March 1989, courtesy of Zafar Saidov, then Head of the Ideological Department of the TLCUY CC.
9 *Rastokhez*, No. 13, April 1992, p. 3.
10 The word *rastokhez* has a dual meaning in Tajik: first, revival or resurgence, and second, rarely used, revolt, commotion and disorder. The Tajik government press interpreted the name of the PMR as a sign of its subversive nature and linked it to the namesake organisation in Iran (*Tojikistoni soveti*, 23 February 1990). While it is true that the *Rastokhez* party existed in Iran between 1975 - 1979, it was
mostly in hand-written form, were in circulation throughout the republic since early 1989. Rastokhez had coalesced around a group of intellectuals, such as the poet Bozor Sobir, the philosopher Mirbobo Mirrahim and the economist Tohir Abdujabbor. In January 1988, Mirbobo Mirrahim published an article entitled 'Till When Shall The Water Flow Under The Ice?' which called for the revision of the following aspects of Soviet policy:

- national nihilism;
- atheistic extremism;
- unjust territorial delimitation;
- suppressed status of the Tajik language.

It should be remembered that as part of Gorbachev's drive for centralisation many educational and research organisations in Tajikistan were stripped of their autonomy, and in 1987 Moscow ordered the switch to Russian as a universal medium of teaching in the Tajik State University and other tertiary institutions. Henceforth, ideas propounded by Mirrahim found ample support amongst Tajik intellectuals. The language issue became, albeit for a short period of time, the most important and unifying component of their political thought, and resulted in the adoption of the Law on Language by the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan in July 1989, which proclaimed Tajik the only state language (downgrading the status of Russian to the language of interethnic communication, but guaranteeing its free circulation). Article 23 of the Law stipulated that "in all vocational-training schools, specialised secondary and tertiary educational institutions of the Tajik SSR, regardless of their organisational affiliation, teaching is carried out in the state language."
Having assessed the situation in Tajikistan as a political, economic, ecological, cultural and spiritual crisis, the first conference of *Rastokhez* called on all inhabitants of the republic to think and act on five major issues: 15

First, all land, mineral and other natural resources, as well as all factories, should become the property of the populace of Tajikistan. The republic should attain complete 'economic and material sovereignty'.

Second, in the process of establishing economic sovereignty of the republic, the most urgent task is to reform prices for goods produced inside Tajikistan, cotton in particular. Central organs must be deprived of the ability to dictate prices.

Third, relations with other republics, regions and states should be based on mutual agreements which recognise the equal rights of each, and on the sale and purchase of processed goods and raw materials according to the laws of the market.

Forth, *Rastokhez* shall issue an all-embracing concept of economic sovereignty of the Tajik SSR that would realise 'all hopes and expectations of the peoples inhabiting the republic'.

Fifth, the future of the Tajik nation depends on the success of democracy, hence it is imperative to elect a new parliament that would be responsible and answerable to the people.

Documents of the PMR conference were filled with references to the process of democratisation instigated by Gorbachev and a general appreciation of the leading role of the reformed Communist Party in implementing progressive changes in Tajikistan; they designated "some individual officials in the apparatuses of the CPT CC and the TLCUY CC who distort truth, as they did in the years of personality cult and stagnation", 16 as the major impediment to *perestroika*’s triumph in the republic. The newly elected chairman of *Rastokhez*, Tohir Abdujabbor, sent a letter to Qahhor Mahkamov where, in a rather humble tone, he asked the First Secretary to peruse and

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endorse programmatic statements of the PMR. In hand-written pamphlets, however, Rastokhez leaders severely criticised the ruling elite, but on somewhat different grounds: "If we scan through periodicals and archive documents for the past 100 years, we shall find representatives of the same families as leading officials; if we acquaint ourselves, however briefly, with the lists of leading staff of Party and executive committees at various levels, we shall discover the eventual monopoly of people of Leninobodi extraction on controlling the upper echelons of power [italics added]." From such statements it appears that the perceived injustice in traditional power-sharing arrangements, rather than ideological oppression, was the major grievance harboured by Rastokhez' creators.

In mid-1989, Rastokhez leaders claimed to have up to 10,000 sympathisers throughout the republic, but it remained an extremely poorly organised and fragmented entity. Its supporters originated from very different social strata. On the one hand, there were highly educated urban intelligentsia, members of the Academy of Sciences, writers and journalists, who genuinely believed in reforming and modernising Tajik society. On the other hand, there were lumpen-proletarians in big cities, new arrivals from impoverished rural areas in the South and East, bazaar traders, and various shadowy figures involved in black and grey market activities who treated the conditions created by perestroika as an opportunity to improve rapidly their social status.

The dichotomy in composition resulted in the PMR's failure to work out a clear-cut political platform that would enable it to become a genuine nationalist opposition on the lines of the Popular Fronts that emerged at the time in the Baltic republics and Transcaucasus. The 'intellectual' wing of Rastokhez promoted ideas of national revival based on rediscovery of the history and culture of ancient Tajiks, invoking rather sophisticated rhetoric and theoretical concepts. The motto of the PMR - Пиндори нект, гуфтори нект, кирдой нект (Good thoughts, good words, good deeds) - was borrowed from Zoroastrian ethics. According to Bozor Sobir, Rastokhez was not unlike a sort of mystical order with its sacred Mission: to be the guide and crosier (aso - a well-known Sufi symbol) of the nation, and with its very own spiritual leader.

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17 Document A/396 received by the CPT CC Secretariat on 24 January 1990, courtesy of Zafar Saidov, Spokesperson of President Emomali Rahmonov.
20 Clause 7.5 of the PMR Charter, for example, stated that "The PMR Presidium and its city and distinct chapters do not bear responsibility for each others' activities."
Thousand thanks.
Thousand bows.
Thousand praises
To Ulughzoda, the patron-prophet of Rastokhez.

Davlat Khudonazarov, has given perhaps, the best summary of the Tajik intelligentsia's philosophical outlook: "Unlike Christianity, Islam cannot be conducive to moral resurgence of the people, this is an aggressive religion which consolidated stagnation and backwardness. Iranian peoples - the Tajiks' ancestors - had possessed the highest culture and beautiful religion prior to the Islamic conquest; Islamisation led to slowing down and almost complete halting of social progress, destruction and decay of culture, and, indirectly, served as a cause of Central Asia's backwardness as compared to Europe." Anti-Islamism, nationhood and Western-type modernisation were the ideas that drew free-thinking professors, poets and artists in Tajikistan to Rastokhez.

However, the 'populist' wing of the PMR held somewhat different and rather simplistic views on the past, present and future of the Tajik nation. For them, it was the preponderance of 'foreign elements' in the republic that made life unbearable. While Tohir Abdubjabbor believed that "Russians, Uzbeks and representatives of other nationalities can easily join us in solving problems we face", his less refined colleagues pushed forward their scenario of revivifying the Tajik nation: "We shall go to the districts of the republic, organise meetings in student dormitories and raise them to struggle against the Russians and leaders of the republic. We have special scores to settle with the Uzbeks, with whom we shall deal after we expel the Russians." Some pamphlets distributed by young Rastokhez activists called for jihad, Holy War, to purify Tajikistan.

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22 Satym Ulughzoda, born in 1911, is considered to be the father of modern Tajik historical drama and prose. His works on Rudaki, Abu Ali ibn Sino and Vose have been widely published in many languages. Ulughzoda represents an interesting case of an indigenous intellectual raised and recognised by Soviet power; he fought courageously during the Great Patriotic War, translated Lenin's writings into Tajik and eventually became a corresponding member of the Tajik Academy of Sciences. (Bol'shaja sovetskaia entsiklopedija. Vol. 26. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo BSE, 1977, p. 606.) Ulughzoda, originally from around Namangan, has always advocated the idea of restitution of all lands inhabited by Tajiks to Tajikistan, thus endearing himself to young radical intellectuals.


Safar Mastonzod, a worker at the footwear factory in Dushanbe and member of the Central Council of Rastokhez, thus outlined his political views: "Seventy years of pro-Russian chauvinist propaganda have addled our brains ... The planned pillage of the republic is taking place. They pump everything they can out of Tajikistan ... We don't know what political culture is, but we need to channel the national movement into the river-bed of democracy ... I am against the law based on Shari'a. I would like Sweden to be the model of our social order ... We do not lay claims on the Bukhara and Samarkand oblasts [of Uzbekistan] in their entirety, just on traditional lands of the Tajiks who undergo real genocide there. Those are the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand, a narrow corridor adjacent to Panjakent and part of the Qashqadarya oblast.".27 It can be argued that it was this bizarre mixture of conflicting democratic, nationalist and populist ideas, and not persecution by Communist authorities, that contributed to the weakness and ultimate demise of what had been conceived as a broad popular movement.28

III. Throughout 1989, a number of public associations emulating the organisational structure and methods of work of Ru ba ru appeared in regional and district centres. They proved to be more viable and independent than the latter, for they articulated grievances of established local communities. Their populist notions of well-being and equity based on regionalism were more comprehensible for common people, especially in rural areas, than any nationalist platform.

The Unofficial Socio-Political Organisation Oshkoro (the Tajik term for Gorbachev's glasnost) operated under the very simple slogan: 'Kulob - to Kulobis!' Its membership included the USSR People's Deputy, B. Safarov, the sarkhatib (chief preacher) of Kulob's Friday mosque - essentially, the head of all Muslims of the region - Haidar Sharifzoda, Honoured Teacher of the Republic, R. Abdurahimov, and many other dignitaries, Soviet and traditional, united by considerations of local patriotism. They raised seemingly mundane problems, such as why there was not enough meat in the city's stores, why the number of workshops in villages remained negligible, or why transport links with neighbouring Qurghonteppa were so hazardous. However, at times up to 15,000 people would attend Oshkoro meetings - a figure Rastokhez leaders could only dream of.29 The suggested solution to those problems was also clear - a thorough

27 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 9 February 1990.
28 The Program and Charter of the PMR, written in September 1989, were not published until October 1990, although the movement started its own newspaper in May 1990. This reluctance was explained by the Rastokhez ideologues' fear of not being understood by "wide urban and rural strata of the population, from which they were utterly separated." (Grazhdanske dvizheniia v Tadzhikistane. Moscow: TSIMO, 1990, p. 35.) The first representative congress of the PMR was convened as late as March 1991.
29 Rohi Lenini, 16 November 1989.
overhaul of republican and regional leadership: "All persons of authority in the Party and state apparatus are Leninobodis. Is it fair? Kulob is quite capable of producing leaders from its own midst."\(^{30}\)

The *Ehyoi Khujand* (Revival of Khujand) movement, based in Leninobod, was preoccupied with the restoration of the city as the most important economic and cultural centre of Tajikistan, the status which "it had been robbed of illegally by a partocratic oligarchy."\(^{31}\) In conjunction with its sister organisation in Uroteppa called *Valdat* (Unity), *Ehyoi Khujand* advocated greater autonomy for the Northern region and closer ties with Uzbekistan. Both refrained from criticism of the CPT and emphasised the importance of compromise and cooperation with the authorities. Their main political tenets included a broadening of the powers of local Soviets and more transparency in the process of decision-making at the republic level.\(^{32}\)

The *La'lì Badakhshon* (Ruby of Badakhshan) movement demanded elevation of the GBAO to an Autonomous Republic (GBAR). It strove to preserve the distinct local culture and languages;\(^{33}\) the movement's leaders believed that by no means were the Pamiris part of the Tajik nation.\(^{34}\) *La'lì*’s economic program envisaged that Badakhshan should have the right to deal with the outside world on its own, bypassing Dushanbe, in order to take full advantage of the rich mineral deposits in its territory. A typical argument in favour of economic independence for the region was as follows: "American, English, French and Japanese companies show interest in the GBAO. According to Academician Fersman, The Pamirs is a real treasury of the world'. All elements from Mendelelev's [periodical] table are present here. Those are all strategic raw materials ... Even a non-specialist can understand our advantages if a direct route from Badakhshon to the Indian Ocean is laid."\(^{35}\)

On a lower level, entities like *Hisori Shodmon* in Tursunzoda, *Zarafshon* in Panjakent and *Dirafshi Koviyon* in Norak indulged in semi-autonomous political activity,

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\(^{31}\) *Rastokhez*, No. 3, August 1990, p. 5.

\(^{32}\) *Komsomolets Tadzhikistana*, 15 September 1989.

\(^{33}\) In 1969, a heated polemic flared amongst Soviet ethnographers in regards to the Pamirs. One group of scholars, especially Dushanbe-based, believed that "in the years of Soviet power the process of assimilation of Pamiri nationalities unfolded peacefully and harmoniously, along the path predetermined by history and without any abuses on the part of republican and local authorities", while their opponents maintained that "everything that has happened and is happening to the Pamiri languages, script and folklore of the Pamiri nationalities reflects the policy of their forced assimilation, spanning several decades." (A.I. Grunberg, I.M. Steblin-Kamenskii. "Neskolko zamechani po povodu otklika A.S. Davydovala na stat'iu S.V. Chesliko." *Sovetskaia etnografiiia*, No. 4, 1989, p. 37.)


\(^{35}\) *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 27 August 1994.
contributing greatly to the institutionalisation of public life around local communities. The example of the Khovaling-based political club *Hamroz* (Confidant) is illuminating in this respect: though it claimed affiliation with both *Rastokhez* and *Ru be ru*, its main concerns stood aloof from abstract struggles for democracy and nationhood, covering the immediate day-to-day needs of the town’s population (Table 6.1).

**Table 6.1 Plan of Activities of the Socio-Political Club *Hamroz***

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Club, through negotiations and consultations with Party and state authorities of the district, endeavours to facilitate implementation of the following measures in the district:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A General Plan of the district's development will be compiled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A share from the exploitation of natural resources of the district, such as oil, gas and gold, will be earmarked for the district's development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The number of livestock will be limited to 30,000 in state farms and 30,000 in private hands to avert land erosion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Other districts will be prohibited from using our pastures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mulberry and walnut orchards will be expanded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Distribution of meat will be put under strict control.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Gas supply to households will be accelerated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Loss-making state farms will be helped.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. The issue of housing for young people will be dealt with.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Drinking water supply will be improved in the district centre and villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. A sports complex will be built, using the proceeds from the oil, gas and gold fund.</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. A slaughterhouse will be built, which will fully satisfy people's demands for meat.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


At the grassroots level, local representative councils, regardless of their exact composition, rather than Party committees, began to be viewed as decision-making organs. Usually they were village and town Soviets, but sometimes discrete bodies of local strongmen were created to solve parochial problems. An action committee set up in the Komsomolobod raion in August 1989 to prevent construction of the Roghun hydro-power station serves as an example of such *ad hoc* organs. This committee comprised the raion Party secretary, chairman of the local soviet, village elders, and a number of eminent people of Komsomolobod origin living elsewhere at the time - scientists and a *Ru ba ru* functionary from Dushanbe, representative of Gharimi settlers
in the Vakhsh Valley, and so on. On 12 August 1989 it convened a meeting of protest attended by some 3,600 residents of settlements that would be submerged if the Roghun project were to proceed. This was the first public demonstration sanctioned by local authorities in Tajikistan in defiance of policies introduced of the CPT CC, and it signified the devolution of power and authority from Dushanbe to the periphery.

Unofficial societies with local agendas began to affect politics at the republic level in two ways. First, they were successful in imposing their specific, and often extremist, outlooks that contradicted official political ideas on substantial segments of the population. The program of the Union of Democratic Youth Bokhtar (Bactria) garnered wide support far beyond its birthplace - Khovaling in the Kulob oblast, having become the manifesto of Southern regionalism: 

Politics in Tajikistan is all about the struggle between two varieties of Tajiks - the Northern and the mountain ones ... If justice is not restored any time soon, that is, if the Party and government leadership is not altered in favour of the majority of Tajiks, confrontation will ensue. Skirmishes between Kulobis and Pamiris are simply friendly rehearsals before the fight against Leninobodis ... They [Northerners] are essentially Uzbeks in half-Tajik skins who have been planting pan-Turkism in Tajikistan for 70 years, trying to transform Tajiks into Uzbeks ... Being at the helm, they have cardinally changed our native Persian language, they have bred hatred towards Iranians and Tajiks of Afghanistan, they have maintained the cult of the Uzbek tongue. But they have achieved nothing, only stirred the wrath and fury of the Mountain Tajiks. Our people has preserved its language (Persian-Dari), culture, art ... In the long run, if we cannot become united with the half-Uzbek North of Tajikistan, we shall have to put forward the question of autonomy, up to the expulsion of the Leninobod oblast from the Tajik SSR. Let them live with their beloved brethren in Uzbekistan. To get rid of these scoundrels is the dream and hope of every Mountain Tajik. Just imagine, the dialect, songs and verses of Northern half-Uzbek Tajiks are repulsive to the Mountain Tajik; still, they have occupied radio, television, press and literature. One has to be an idiot or an animal not to feel disgust at all this. This aim is set before every informal organisation existing in the districts of the Khatlon oblast and mountain Tajikistan.

36 Adabiyo va san’at, No. 33, 17 August 1989, p. 2.
Second, they created branches in the capital city to lobby for regional interests and, if necessary, exert physical pressure on the government. In 1989, residents of Dushanbe from the North, the cis-Pamirs and Kulob were respectively united in societies called Hamdilon, Nosiri Khisrav and Mehri Khatlon. There is strong evidence that these groups played a significant role in the events of February 1990, acting as a sort of 'fifth column' for regional cliques in Dushanbe.38

IV. In 1989, a number of non-government organisations that represented the interests of ethnic minorities were initiated in Tajikistan. The Uzbek Society of Tajikistan, the Russian and Ukrainian Communities, the Association of Soviet Koreans, the Society of Friends of Jewish Culture 'Khoverim', the Armenian Society named after Mesrop Mashtots, the Georgian Society 'Satvistomo Iberia' and several similar groups explicitly eschewed political activism of any kind, concentrating instead on cultural issues. The Uzbek Society's Charter stated its main goals as follows:39

- exploration and propagation of the common history and traditions of Tajiks and Uzbeks;
- securing a better understanding of the spiritual foundations of Uzbek culture;
- establishment of Uzbek clubs, dance troupes and dramatic theatres in Dushanbe and provincial centres of Tajikistan;
- promotion of Uzbek-language programs on radio and TV in Tajikistan;
- facilitating quality teaching of Uzbek language and literature in secondary and tertiary education institutions;
- improvement of Uzbek-language publications in Tajikistan;
- rendering assistance to the needy through public foundations and relief committees.

At the same time, these organisations often served as venues of resource mobilisation to resolve issues of immediate practical importance to a given ethnic community. For instance, under Soviet rule Koreans had virtually monopolised production of rice, maize and onions in Tajikistan, deriving substantial profits from trade in these stocks. In the late 1980s they began to face competition from Gharmis and Uzbeks, who often resorted to unfair practices to evict Koreans from Tajikistan's bazaars. The Association of Soviet Koreans, which could rely on 7,000 well-to-do compatriots in Dushanbe alone, hired qualified lawyers, bribed officials and even set up physical protection squads to rectify the situation.40

38 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 1 April 1990.
40 Interview with Victor Kim, Vice-President of the Association of Soviet Koreans, Dushanbe, 16 March 1995.
V. Tajiks living outside their republic formed a number of associations whose primary task was the preservation and transmission of language and culture from one generation to another. Organisations of Tajiks residing in Uzbekistan, such as *Ehysi farhangi Bukhoro* (Revival of Bukhara’s Culture), *Oryoni buzurg* (Great Land of Aryans), *Ofiobi Sughiyion* (The Sun of Soghdians) and *Samarkand*, were especially active and numerically strong. Before World War II there were only two Uzbek, two Armenian and a handful of Russian schools in Samarkand - the rest were Tajik; in 1989, not a single Tajik school operated in this city.  

*Samarkand’s* program proclaimed that “We have the right to be indignant and to appeal directly to our people ... Without creation of a Tajik autonomy within Uzbekistan or *oblasts* of Uzbekistan full equality and resolution of problems we raise is impossible.”  

The leadership of Tajikistan supported the creation of Tajik cultural centres in Uzbekistan and elsewhere. The Society of Surkhandarya Tajiks in Dushanbe *Basvand* (Addition) and particularly one outspoken member, historian Rahim Masov (who also was one of the founders of the PMR), spearheaded a rather aggressive ideological campaign of Tajik reassertiveness: “There are some 900,000 Tajiks living in Uzbekistan ... and a considerable number of Tajiks whose ancestors had been forcibly registered as Uzbeks. It is high time the historical justice prevailed for those who have not been assimilated, who have not lost their mother tongue and national (ethnic) self-awareness ... People who reassume their genuine nationality should not be subject to any limitations and should be guaranteed against any discrimination on the part of local authorities.”  

In 1991, dissemination of books and articles by Masov in Uzbekistan was prohibited, and members of *Samarkand* smuggled this literature in, making a handsome profit, since demand was insatiable.  

In October 1989, the Society for Relations with Compatriots Abroad *Paivand* (Family Link) was set up in Dushanbe. It operated under the aegis of the Council of Ministers, had many eminent Tajik intellectuals in its ranks and was entrusted with the mission of spreading the fulgent truth about the achievements of Soviet Tajiks throughout the world, even though its primary targets were the descendants of some 900,000 emigrants who had left Central Asia abscending from the Russian and then Soviet incursion, and who had then settled in Afghanistan, Iran and China.  

*Paivand* established broad connections with cultural figures in Iran and Afghanistan, and very soon its Soviet-style propaganda activities of this organisation were augmented by ideas of creating a Greater Tajikistan.46

In January 1989, Tajiks residing in Moscow, mostly students, professors and creative intelligentsia, founded the Society of Tajik culture *Sughdiyon* (Soghd.ana). They organised courses in the Tajik language, Sunday schools for children of Tajik expatriates, offered counselling services to the newly arrived students, and so on. At the same time, they maintained strong ties with the PMR. *Ru ba ru* and influential politicians of the younger generation, such as Davlat Khudonazarov. *Sughdiyon* was the most vociferous critic of Mahkamov's regime. Its assessment of the events in Dushanbe in February 1990 was as follows: "The real reason for protests in Dushanbe was not the presence of innocent refugees, but the acute dissatisfaction of the Tajik people with the republic's government, which for decades had been doing whatever it wanted to do in the republic, ignoring interests of its people and bringing it to the brink. The real reasons are economic backwardness, the penury of the population, especially in rural areas, where mass unemployment and unsettled existence deprive youths of hopes for the future."47

By the end of 1989, an area beyond the CPT's direct control had evolved within which limited interest articulation and interest aggregation was allowed. This phenomenon was as much the result of pressure from Moscow to 'democratise' as it was the product of internal dynamics of Tajikistan's political system. The aforementioned informal groups did not constitute serious political opposition to Mahkamov's government. However, their very existence denoted the emergence in the republic of the classic Dahl Dilemma of Mixed Regimes: if the authorities could tolerate *some* opposition, could they indefinitely enforce *any* limits to toleration short of the wide limits set in polyarchies?48

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46 Confidential sources in Dushanbe. Interestingly, the ill-fated Tajik ruler of Afghanistan Habibullah-khan, alias Bachai Saqaw (1928-1929), was hailed by some *Paivand* members as the true champion of the Tajik cause; one of them proudly showed the author a copy of a book allegedly smuggled from Afghanistan in 1991 which eulogised Habibullah and praised his efforts to found a mighty Tajik state with the centre in Bukhara. (Abdurrahman Ali Najib. *Afghanistan dar gozargahi atash wa khun.* Peshawar: Haj Nayyer Hosaini, 1991, p. 165).


The Emergence of Political Opposition - the Democratic Party of Tajikistan

Prior to February 1990, the Communist regime successfully maintained barriers to broad public participation in the political process. There was no legislation regulating activities of unofficial organisations - they were invariably 'attached' to some government organ (TLCUY Central or district committee, Council of Ministers, Soviets and so on), or, like Rastokhez, operated without registration, on a semi-legal basis. They had no publications of their own, and their access to state-controlled media was limited. As a result, even Rastokhez was relatively unknown to the bulk of the population, had no ability to mobilise the masses, and, as one of its leaders commented, "had nothing to do and could not have had anything to do with the events in Dushanbe [in February 1990]." 49 Although nine members of the Temporary Committee for Crisis Resolution belonged to the PMR, and despite a massive media campaign to present Tohir Abdujabbor and his colleagues as power-thirsty villains, people had little doubt about the real forces behind the conflict in Dushanbe. (Table 6.2)

Table 6.2 Who Is to Blame for the Events in February 1990 in Dushanbe?
(Results of the poll conducted throughout Tajikistan in May-June 1990)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communist Leadership of Tajikistan</th>
<th>35.2%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law-Enforcement Agencies</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Associations</td>
<td>11.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Circles</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dushanbe City Authorities</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary Institutions' Professors</td>
<td>9.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creative Intelligentsia</td>
<td>8.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Part of the 'deal' brokered by Boris Pugo in February 1990 included the diversification of political space in Tajikistan to create checks and balances vis-à-vis the omnipotent apparat, according to the formula suggested by Gorbachev for the rest of the USSR. Already on 20 February 1990 the TSSR Supreme Soviet Presidium adopted a resolution 'On the Temporary Procedure of Registering Charters and Programs of Public Associations of Citizens of the Tajik SSR', which was an exact copy of an all-Union document. 50 On 12 December 1990, the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan passed a law 'On Public Associations of the Tajik SSR' providing for further institutionalisation of non-governmental organisations. Between February 1990 and November 1992, 208 requests for registration were lodged with the Ministry of Justice of Tajikistan; 143

49 Vechernii Dushanbe, 14 February 1990.
50 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 21 February 1990.
requests, including those of Rastokhez and most regional political groups, were approved.\textsuperscript{51}

On 10 August 1990 the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) held its first conference. Its newly-elected Chairman, Shodmon Yusuf, thus summarised the objectives of his 4,000-strong party:\textsuperscript{52}

1. The most important task of the DPT is the creation in Tajikistan of a law-based, authentically democratic civil society with a free economy and genuine state sovereignty and welfare of all citizens regardless of their national, racial, language, religious and philosophical identification.

2. The USSR cannot continue to exist in its present form. It should be transformed into a confederation of sovereign and independent states.

3. Tajikistan should conduct an independent foreign policy with special emphasis on good relations with Afghanistan, Iran, India, Pakistan, China and the Arab countries.

4. The republic should become independent economically through the promotion of a free market and various forms of ownership.

5. Education at all levels should combine classical traditions and progressive achievements of world civilisation.

6. The DPT is motivated by the cultural heritage of the ancient Tajiks, respects religious values and fights for the unswerving implementation of the Law on the National Language.

7. The Tajiks should maintain close ties with democratic Russia, the Baltic states, the Caucasus, and Central Asian peoples.

8. The DPT is ready to cooperate with all political parties and movements standing on positions of democracy, whose goals do not contravene truth and justice.

9. Environmental protection and public health are a major concern of the DPT.

\textsuperscript{51} Narodnaia gazeta, 27 April 1993.

\textsuperscript{52} Sh. Yusupov. "Neobkhodimost' sozdaniia Demokraticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana i ee blizhaishie zadachi." Transcript of Sh. Yusuf's speech at the Constituent Conference of the DPT, 10 August 1990.Courtesy of Dr V.M. Zaichenko, Dushanbe.
According to one prominent leader of the Russian Social-Democratic Party, "the DPT's program was not different from the platform of the Russian democratic movement (especially the Democratic Party of Russia), and at times it was appropriate to speak about conscientious copying of the latter." In practice, however, the Tajik Democrats' vision of building a new society in the republic proved to be as blurred and eclectic as that of their ideological predecessors - the members of Rastokhez. Its program claimed that "the DPT draws from such great thinkers as Marx, Engels, Plekhanov, Bakunin, Lenin, Kautsky, Bernstein and others." Elsewhere, Shodmon Yusuf opined that socialism was the right choice, if it combined elements from the teachings of Prophet Mohammad and Jesus Christ, the ideas of Lenin "shortly before his death" and modern European social-democratic thought. The dynamic DPT Chairman, who possessed the academic degree of Candidate of Philosophical Sciences, was renowned for bombastic statements based on Western liberal parlance that carried little or no meaning to the wider public: "We shall form an Opposition that will induce the Communist Party to become cleaner and more humane, we shall block the path to totalitarianism. As a philosopher, I am against all parties altogether. If the CP dissolved itself, we would follow its example immediately ... If our people taste real freedom, the advent of a dictator will be impossible. As it is impossible in the USA, France and England ... I understand the culture of France a little, and I would like to go to that country to lead a normal life."

The authors of the DPT program "rightly evaluated the distortions that occurred in the economy, and first of all industry of the republic, but they had an evidently weak understanding of the reasons for these distortions and the ways and goals of reforming the economy. Most importantly, they completely failed to comprehend the real socio-economic conditions of Tajikistan, ignoring the fact that the republic had been a subsidised region for decades, and had become incapable of providing itself with vitally important produce without carrying out deep social and economic changes which were not even mentioned in this document. 'Easy' solutions were sought and found by the DPT experts: "the main role in the economy and well-being of the peoples of Tajikistan will be played by precious stones, noble, non-ferrous and rare metals ..."
today not more than one-tenth of the profits of the mining industry remains in the republic.”

The DPT became the first organised political force, apart from the CPT, that had openly declared its intention to fight for power in Tajikistan by using parliamentary procedures, moulding public opinion and building political coalitions. Mahkamov’s regime was alarmed by the emergence of a serious rival. In a confidential CPT CC memorandum circulated in October 1990 it was acknowledged that the ruling party was losing members to the DPT, and a number of countermeasures were suggested "taking into consideration the special menace posed by the DPT leaders ... who, speaking against the totalitarianism of the Communist party, have nothing against establishing a totalitarian state system of their own under the guise of a government of national concord.” As a result, the DPT faced major difficulties in establishing regional and district chapters because local Soviets delayed and frustrated their registration, sometimes using preposterous excuses: in Ordzhonikidzeobod, the letterhead of the DPT committee was pronounced "not befitting the image of a solid organisation".

The DPT structure presented a mixture of principles borrowed from Communists (only ‘democratic centralism’ was renamed ‘democratic unity’) and traditional organisational forms - Clause 4.1.1 of its Charter envisioned flexibility of its primary cells which could consist of family members, mahalla neighbours, cultural clubs and so on. Unlike the PMR, the DPT had rudiments of intra-party discipline, membership cards and permanent executive bodies - the Central Coordination Committee, the Central Revision Commission and the Main Editorial Council. Nevertheless, as Eden Naby has pointed out, "the Democratic Party remains chiefly rooted in regional politics with an agenda similar to the old Rastakhiz Party ... The problem is that [this] party neither cuts across regions nor does it have widespread backing.”

Indeed, a closer scrutiny reveals that from the start Gharmis and Pamiris dominated the DPT. Its Chairman, Shodmon Yusuf, was born in Vakhiyo - the most conservative part of Qarotegin, while Davlat Khudonazarov, widely accepted in Moscow and the West as the envoy of the Tajik democratic movement, represented the GBAO. The DPT received financial support for its activities, especially publication of the newspaper *Adolat*, from Gharmi merchants and the Islamic establishment. In the eyes of anti-

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59 *Rastokhez*, No. 4, October 1990.
60 *Komsomolets Tadzhikistana*, 23 November 1990.
Leninobodi regional cliques it was a more efficient vehicle to promote their interests than *Rastokhez*, and by 1991 the latter showed signs of decay "retaining just a few motley groupings ... and a couple of familiar faces (Tohir Abdujabbor, H. Homidov and several others)."\(^{63}\)

Any assessment of Tajikistan's political landscape would be deceptive if based primarily on an exploration of concepts and political thoughts - the easiest and most conventional path taken by many Western scholars. Even such an astute observer as Muriel Atkin has followed it: "In Tajikistan, as in other countries, the fact that some political groups had pronounced regional associations did not preclude their also having political platforms. The outcome of the power struggle will determine not only who will govern but also toward what ends they will do so, whether the political clock will be turned back to the Brezhnev era or whether some form of post-Communist political system will evolve."\(^{64}\) When it comes to the translation of programmatic statements of these groups into concretely identifiable behaviour, such an approach proves faulty; it cannot, for example, explain why secular democratic forces in the republic failed to unite in 1990 - 1991,\(^{65}\) and why in 1992 some of them deemed it possible to form a coalition with Islamic organisations. Cultural traits, particularly local identification, and not ideological considerations, played the pivotal role in these processes. As Homi Fern Haler has suggested, "each coalition is made up of separate groups, and each group has an identity. Where do they get this identity if not by coming together as a community, drawn together by similar interests, needs, or in other words, by similar (partial) identities?"\(^{66}\) The glow of liberalism and nationalism of the DPT catered to international public opinion and flickered brightly: Shodmon Yusuf, despite his fondness of France, also claimed to emulate the experience of Kuwait, Singapore and other beacons of modern democracy in Tajikistan, depending on which country he was touring at the time.\(^{67}\)

**Political Islam?**

It was argued in Chapter IV that Islam could not play an integrative and mobilising role throughout Tajik society. That does not mean that Islamic ideology could not appeal to certain sections of the republic's population, namely, those sections that experienced

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\(^{63}\) Charoghi ruz, No. 1, June 1991.


\(^{65}\) There were at least two attempts initiated by the DPT to form the Union Party on the lines of Russia's Movement for Democratic Reforms, but both times *Rastokhez* and regional blocs objected feverishly. (See: Mirzot Salimpar. "Infarkti savvumi KPSS." *Charoghi ruz*, No. 4, July 1991, p. 1.)


relative deprivation as a result of Soviet modernisation efforts. In Tajikistan, those were residents of Mastchokh, Gharim and Qarotegin; those who were constantly resettled, whose villages were destroyed while hydro power dams were erected, and who were forced to forego their traditional occupations for the sake of building socialism. To borrow from John L. Esposito, "loss of village, town, and extended family ties and traditional values were accompanied by the shock of modern urban life and its Westernised culture and mores. Many, swept along in a sea of alienation and marginalisation, found an anchor in religion. Islam offered a sense of identity, fraternity, and cultural values that offset the psychological dislocation and cultural threat of their new environment ... Islamic organisations' workers and message offered a more familiar alternative which was consistent with their experience, identified their problems, and offered a time-honoured solution." 68

The first organised groups of Islamists 69 in Tajikistan were reported in 1978 in the Qurghonteppa region, in the areas populated by Gharmi settlers. 70 They consisted primarily of young men who, as a rule, did not have formal religious education, represented marginal strata of traditional society and criticised the Soviet and Islamic establishments from positions of 'pure Islam'. 71 Their animadversions focused on:

- graft and corruption of local Communist bosses;
- ignorance, licentiousness and greed of official and supernumerary mullahs;
- Soviet involvement in Afghanistan.

However, the Islamists were few, they did not advocate changing the Soviet system, and, generally, they kept a low profile. In 1978, a handful of them, led by Said Abdullo Nuri, a self-proclaimed spiritual leader of Gharmi settlers in the Vakhsh raion, held a rally in front of the Qurghonteppa CPT obkom; Nuri was arrested, but otherwise the authorities ignored the incident and no large-scale reprisals took place. 72 In 1986, inspired by Gorbachev's glasnost, Nuri sent a letter to the XXVII CPSU Congress


69 For the purposes of the present study, this term is employed to distinguish 'the activist, militant 'true believer', and born-again Muslim from the run of the mill Muslim who takes his/her religion for granted, viewing Islam as a matter of 'aqaid and 'ibadat (a set of beliefs and specific acts of worship), plus a certain basic ethical code, inherited traditions, cultural conventions, and so on.' (Sadik J. Al-Azm, 'Islamic Fundamentalism Reconsidered: A Critical Outline of Problems, Ideas and Approaches, Part I', South Asia Bulletin, Vol. XIII, Nos. 1&2, 1993, p. 99.) It appears to be a more concise concept than the fashionable but extremely obscure and misleading 'Fundamentalism', which until recently did not even have an equivalent in the Persian language.


expounding his ideas on freedom of religious belief. Moscow's reaction was swift: on direct orders from the Kremlin, he was again put behind bars and 24 of his comrades were sentenced to imprisonment for 'anti-state propaganda. 73

In the wake of this mini-purge, the Islamist movement in Tajikistan experienced a change of leadership: "domination gradually shifted to representatives of old influential religious families, mostly those of ishons, (ie. heads of clans of Sufi mystical brotherhoods, such as Qadariya and Naqshbandiya)."74 The result was further moderation of the movement's platform on the one hand, and a perceptible surge in the number of followers and material resources of Islamists, on the other. Tajik delegates participated actively in the first conference of the Islamic Renaissance Party75 of the USSR (IRPU) held in Astrakhan on 9 June 1990, and a close associate of Said Abdullo Nuri, Davlat Usmon, was elected Chairman of the Mandate Commission of the newly established party and a member of its supreme body - the Council of Ulama. Shortly afterwards, the IRPU program was published in the underground bulletin of Tajik Islamists. Its main tenets were by no means radical and could be summarised as follows:76

- the IRPU is a socio-political organisation which operates on lofty Islamic principles;
- the party consists of honest Muslims who fight for a revived and pure Islam by spreading the truth of the Quran and Sunna amongst the people;
- the party operates on a constitutional basis, condemns terrorism and reactionary (sic) theory and praxis, and respects all international treaties and agreements if they are not in violation of Islamic norms;
- the party respects human rights and upholds legal equality between Muslims and non-Muslims;
- the party demands cessation of state-sponsored atheistic propaganda, and contrives to establish Islamic educational centres, train qualified personnel, organise lectures, discussions and other events to spread the knowledge of Islam;
- the party strives to protect the honour and dignity of women, appreciates their active role in society and helps them to realise themselves fully in all capacities;

75 Hizbi nehzati islomi in Tajik. The word 'nehzat' has roughly the same meaning as 'tastokhez', but originates from Arabic.
76 Hidayat, No. 5, July 1990, p. 5.
- the party favours modern economic development based on Islamic principles of pluralism; it supports environmental protection and health programs, and strong and durable families.

The IRPU was registered in Moscow, but when its Tajik members applied for official recognition of the republican IRP, the authorities in Dushanbe turned them down. Nevertheless, on 6 October 1990 an IRP regional conference organised by Davlat Usmon convened illegally in the village of Chortut to the north of the capital. Once again, the IRP's political agenda appeared to be rather moderate; according to Davlat Usmon, the party did not have the aim of establishing an Islamic state even in the remote future, because "it is impossible even in principle. We operate within the framework of international law and all-Union legislation ... We represent the interests of the faithful Muslims. These interests lie not only in the sphere of religion, but also extend to the political, economic and social realm. But, I would like to stress it once more, our activities take place in strict compliance with the existing legislation ... the IRP does not strive to make the political situation in the republic more acute. We are in favour of friendship and cooperation between parties and peoples, and a joint search for the way out of the crisis situation." 77 Still, Mahkamov's regime spared no efforts to suppress the Islamist movement. In November 1990, the CPT CC officially condemned the attempt to set up an IRPU branch in Tajikistan. In December 1990, the Supreme Soviet of the TSSR outlawed the IRP and ordered the republic's KGB, Ministry of Interior and the Prosecutor's office to prevent any IRP activities. Even before this series of events, a media campaign was launched to portray Tajik Islamists as terrorists trained in Afghanistan and Pakistan, 78 or, alternatively, in Saudi Arabia and Iran on CIA (!) money, who desired to "found an exclusively Islamic society through physical elimination of ideological opponents and non-believers, and general genocide." 79 The IRP was even accused of organising riots in Dushanbe in February 1990 on behalf of "the Wahhabis and other fundamentalist Islamic forces from abroad". 80

Surprisingly, some analysts in the West took these agitprop invectives in good faith and gleefully trumpeted to the world that "in some areas of Central Asia, particularly but not exclusively in central and southern Tajikistan, there has also been a resurgence of Wahhabism." 81 The question of how exactly the "puritanism and militancy of the

77 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 21 November 1990.
78 Komsomolets Tadzhikistana, 25 February 1990.
79 Tadjikstoni Soveti, 20 November 1990.
80 Pravda, 16 May 1991.
81 Yaacov Ro'i, "The Islamic Influence on Nationalism in Soviet Central Asia." Problems of Communism, No. 4, July-August 1990, p. 52.
Wahhabis"\(^\text{82}\) might have become rooted amongst a population practising folk Islam characterised by broad humanism, tolerance and a liberal approach to other religions, obviously never crossed their minds. For their part, Tajik academics have convincingly shown that the teachings of Mohammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab, as well as radical doctrines of Sayyid Qutb, are inherently alien to the absolute majority of the eponymous population of Tajikistan.\(^\text{83}\) While it is true that following the revolution in Iran and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan the trickle of Islamist ideas coming to Tajikistan from abroad increased, in 1984 Alexander Bennigsen urged caution in assessing their impact, adding that their "long-term effects will be felt ... primarily in the field of ideology."\(^\text{84}\) Even after the withdrawal of Soviet troops in February 1989, Afghan \textit{mujahedin} failed to establish permanent channels of communication with their 'oppressed brethren' in the North; as one of the \textit{Jami'at-e Islami} leaders in Peshawar complained in February 1990, "there are absolutely no contacts between field commanders of the Resistance in the North of Afghanistan and citizens of Tajikistan. The border is guarded extremely thoroughly by Soviet border troops."\(^\text{85}\) It seems, however, that Islamist propaganda from Afghanistan was doomed to failure because of the lack of any positive demonstration effect - in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when Soviet Tajiks were finally allowed to visit their relatives in Afghanistan, they were not impressed by its social progress achieved under Islam. A certain resident of the Tajik city of Panj reminisced on his stay in Afghanistan: "I went to visit my brother, whom I hadn't seen for 30 years. My God, how poorly they live, it is pitiful to look at them."\(^\text{86}\)

The great increase in the number of mosques - from 19 to over 3,000 between 1989 and 1992\(^\text{87}\) - has sometimes been cited as an illustration of the Islamisation of Tajikistan. In reality, this surge should be attributed to simple legalisation and registration of the already existing religious institutions, or, rather, traditional gathering places in villages and \textit{mahallas}. Roland Dannreuther has pronounced that in Tajikistan "radical Islam also has the attraction of combining radical political objectives within an outwardly traditional framework ... For people used to the all-encompassing and intrusive ideology of Marxism-Leninism, it can be reassuring to find a more authentic replacement which provides a similarly comprehensive interpretation of the world with


\(^{85}\) \textit{Kommunist Tadjikistana.} 15 February 1991.

\(^{86}\) \textit{Grazhdanskie dvizheniia v Tadzhikistane.} Moscow: TSIMO, 1990, p. 112.

the backing of a global internationalist brotherhood." This eloquent generalisation may be too far-reaching - it is somewhat doubtful whether customers of a mosque-gapakhona-men's club somewhere in Qarotegin would be interested in any universalistic interpretation of the world: Marxist, Islamist, or otherwise. Traditional communal life is a self-sufficient microcosm for them, and it is unlikely that any ideas coming from a 'global internationalist brotherhood' could move them to action.

Mahkamov's government refused to enter a dialogue with Tajik Islamists, but at the same time it failed to follow the hard line of Uzbekistan's leader, Islam Karimov, who clamped down on the nascent IRP of Uzbekistan in the summer of 1990, arresting some 400 delegates of its first conference. Official Dushanbe confined itself to half-measures, such as imposing fines on Islamist activists; eventually, not a single person was tried in the republic for defying the anti-IRP legislation. Lacking the political will for either compromise or drastic action, the authorities tried to weaken the Islamist movement by wooing the official Muslim establishment. On 8 December 1990 the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan passed a law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations" which resolutely broke with the Communist tradition of atheism, allowed religious organisations and individuals to take part in political life, provided for the re-creation of the institution of vaqf and permitted religious education for children over 7 years of age. The head of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Tajikistan (the Qoziyot), Akbar Turajonzoda, and two other imams became members of the Supreme Soviet. In December 1990 Qahhor Mahkamov held an unprecedented conference with influential mullahs, where he said, in particular, that "we treat religious sentiments and requests of the believers with great respect. Only during the past year - year and a half -

89 Bess Brown. "The Islamic Renaissance Party in Central Asia." Radio Liberty Report on the USSR, 10 May 1990, p. 14. Shortly afterwards, authorities in Uzbekistan closed a 'Wahhabi' madrasa in Kokand, detained a group of unofficial imams in the Qashqadarya oblast and banned any unsanctioned public gatherings; as Karimov put it, 'I believe that democracy without discipline is not democracy. Every meeting or demonstration in Tashkent tended to transform into grandiose pugilist and arsonist excercises and pogroms. Frankly speaking, I disagree when opposition members are called democrats and we are referred to as conservatives. If a person assembles a crowd around him and preaches intolerance towards other nations, distorts history, and ... calls for the unification of all Muslims, does this person deserve to be called a democrat?' (Argumenty i fakty, No. 15, April 1991, p. 2.)
91 Akbar Qahhorov, alias Akbar Turajonzoda, was born in 1954 in the village of Turkobod to the east of Dushanbe, on the border with Ghar. His father, iashon Turajon, was a disciple of the prominent Sufi leader mavlavi Said Qalandarshoh from Qandahar in Afghanistan, who eventually made him a powerful Naqshbandi leader of Kofarnikhoz, Gharin and Qarotegin. Turajonzoda received formal theological education in Bukhara, Tashkent and Amman, and in 1988 was appointed Qoziyot (Supreme Judge) of Tajikistan. In 1990, the Qoziyot gained independence from the SADUM. The IRP Chairman, Mohammadsharif Himmatzoda, born in Gharin in 1951, spent formative years in a village adjacent to Turkobod and knew Turajonzoda well. Himmatzoda introduced Said Abdullo Nuri to Turajonzoda, and the latter entrusted Nuri with editing the Qoziyot's newspaper. According to some sources, the IRP Deputy Chairman, Davlat Usmon, is a distant relative of Turajonzoda.
in excess of 70 mosques and hundreds of meeting-houses were built, and an Islamic Institute was opened in the republic ... In the nearest future we shall create a consultative group together with you and ... subject to good will and mutual compromise, we shall be able to solve rather complicated issues in a humane and good-natured manner. "Qozikaljon expressed appreciation of the government's efforts, but at the same time put forward several demands, implementation of which, according to him, "would be conducive to further strengthening of public confidence in the leadership of the republic." They included:

- proclaiming high days of Islam public holidays;
- shifting the weekly day off to Friday;
- introducing the Quranic method of cattle slaughter (halal);
- exempting mosques and other holy places from taxation.

In the meantime, the official Islamic clergy promised not to support the IRP. Turajonzoda made the following public announcement: "We have stressed more than once that Islam is a party in its own ... The emergence of various parties in any state that call themselves 'Islamic society', 'Islamic party', 'Islamic renaissance' and so on, has led to the weakening and dispersal of the Muslims. Taking this into consideration, the Qoziyot administration has made efforts to guarantee and preserve the Muslims' unity." However, those few imams who explicitly denounced the activities of the IRP in Tajikistan won a reprieve from the Muslim Spiritual Board.

As Mahkamov's regime was in no hurry to cater to the aforementioned demands of the Qoziyot, Turajonzoda gradually abandoned his neutrality. As he wrote in 1995, "there was a serious need to establish a political party for Muslims ... The IRP through its official activities intended to play a role in the spiritual self-realisation and development of the nation and to defend the rights and demands of Muslims, who constitute the majority of the country's population." The rapprochement between qozikaljon and the Islamists was not unexpected - they had essentially the same power base. Aziz Niyazi thus characterised the IRP: "These were mainly peasants and part of the town population from the Gharomi group of regions, or people who were originally from these regions who are now living in the Qurghonteppa oblast, Hisor Valley, Leninsky

93 Ibid.
95 Komsomolskaja pravda, 23 March 1991.
raion, and the city of Dushanbe."\(^{97}\) On the other hand, it was a well-known fact that "the Supreme Qozi in his day-to-day activities relies on fellow-regionalists from G harm, which stirs resentment in other regions of Tajikistan."\(^{98}\) While one may question Narzullo Dustov's opinion that "he organically hated people of Kulob","\(^{99}\) there is ample evidence of a strained relationship between Turajonzoda and religious figures in Kulob and Leninobod, especially in early 1991 when qozikalon attempted to replace Kulob's spiritual leader, Haidar Sharifzoda, with his crony, Mullo Abdurahim. Not only did Sharifzoda successfully repel this attack, he actually secured confirmation of his investiture directly from the SADUM, thus gaining autonomy from the Qoziyot.\(^{100}\)

In the Leninobod oblast the congregation intensely disliked Turajonzoda's appointees, believing them (as well as their high-placed patron) to be 'spoiled' by years of study in Uzbekistan.\(^{101}\)

By mid-1991, in many areas of Central and Southern Tajikistan it had become difficult to distinguish between official and unofficial mullahs, the IRP functionaries and traditional strongmen. They had all coalesced into a somewhat obfuscated yet potent entity with common background and agenda (Gharmi regionalism), ideology (Islam) and organisational principles (traditional consanguineal structures and gashtaks). Loosely called the 'Islamic opposition', it possessed tremendous organisational and financial resources,\(^{102}\) and was preparing to play a more active part in political struggle. Once again, it is imperative to reiterate that "the use of Islam by a political opposition, and indeed the mere emergence of an opposition, became possible only under conditions of relative democratisation, and then not so much in the Muslim provinces as at the centre."\(^{103}\)

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\(^{101}\) Interview with hoji Husain Musoev, sarkhatib of the Leninabad viloyat, 9 March 1995.


Political Organisations in Tajikistan - Preliminary Conclusions

Sporadic attempts at categorising major political parties and public associations in Tajikistan using the conventional arsenal of ideological criteria have so far yielded somewhat equivocal results. Two scholars from Tajikistan have offered the following typology: (1) conservatives - orthodox members of the CPT; (2) liberal reformers - Paivand, Khoverim, Oryoni buzzur, Ehyoi Khujand, Vatan, Oshkoro, Hamdilon and some others; (3) reactionary radicals - the IRP, the DPT, Rastokhez, Ru ba ru and La’li Badakhshon. Obviously, their vision of liberalism and the dark forces of reaction is refreshingly innovative; unfortunately, the authors have not gone into great detail to explain it. An equally obscure yet popularly accepted scheme portrayed the following picture: (1) quasi-Communism - the Communist Party; (2) political pluralism - the DPT; (3) Islamic liberalism - Rastokhez; (4) Islamic fundamentalism - the IRP; (5) irredentism - La’li Badakhshon. It appears that even such a basic dichotomy as 'programmatic parties/electoral parties' is not fully applicable to Tajikistan, because those who participate in party activities often do so not by virtue of rational choice, sharing that party’s ideology or pursuing elective office, but rather by following traditional collective incentives, such as familial, local or regional solidarity. A satisfactory theoretical solution, perhaps, should be credited to Zsolt Enyedi, who has introduced the notion of the 'subcultural party' - a party "involved directly or indirectly, in non-political (ie., cultural, recreational, educational, religious, etc.) activities and surrounded by different, strongly interlinked social organisations, though sometimes the party itself can be regarded as the satellite organisation of other subcultural bodies." In Tajikistan, as can be seen from the foregoing account, the bulk of the newly established political organisations in the late 1980s and early 1990s served to promote and defend the interests of particular regional cliques and local strongmen. Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh's definition of the opposition as a "coalition of democrats, nationalists, Islamists, and inhabitants of regions seldom represented in the government" should have read 'a coalition of inhabitants of regions underrepresented in the ruling elite who used democratic, nationalist and Islamic slogans.'

Exploring neo-patrimonial politics in Ghana, Naomi Chazan has deconstructed symbolic processes into three broad types of political thought patterns - apart from (1) state-generated political ideas, there are (2) protest ideologies (that is, "cohesive networks of ideas that reflect the concerns of specific horizontal groups that were out of favour at a given point, or, more pertinently, that sought to re-order society and the distribution of power within it") and (3) populist idea-logics that "vary in substance from location to location and have been linked to the particular historical heritages of given communities". In Tajikistan, even under mono-organisational socialism, populist idea-logics rooted in traditionalism, localism and regionalism ordered the social behaviour of the majority of the population. Any ideologies of protest, of course, were then out of the question. Communism, viewed not as a Marxist dogma but rather as a specific form of social organisation where all elite groups are centralised and abide by common codes of conduct, allowed these elites to maintain a stable regime. Once it was undermined, the need for new verbalisation, ideologisation and conceptualisation of populist idea-logics presented itself, and was finally realised under the guises of 'liberalism', 'democracy', 'Islamism' and 'orthodox Communism'. The DPT and the IRP, by and large, represented the same community - the deprived people of Gharm, Qarotegin and Yaghnob; they used different political languages, symbols and ideas to mobilise specific segments within those sub-ethnic groups according to their educational, residential and occupational status. By the same token, organisations like Oshkoro or Vahdat employed Communist rhetoric not because their leaders and rank-and-file members believed in the withering away of the state or permanent revolution, but because the Communist order, especially in its Central Asian variant, provided, at least potentially, for the privileged position of their respective localities.

The Disintegration of the Soviet Political System

Prior to 1985, regional elites in Tajikistan were united in a single political organisation, publicly professed the same ideology, and conducted elementary consensual activity inside the CPT CC. With the commencement of perestroika elite factions gained an opportunity to take opposition stances in public, and in February 1990 eventually took the risk of pushing them to violent confrontation. But even then an elite settlement could be achieved within existing institutional structures. With the rapid decay of the mono-organisational system, especially following the XXVIII CPSU congress in July 1990, the national elite in Tajikistan quickly reached a 'disunified' state, characterised by "ruthless, often violent, interelite conflicts. Elite factions deeply distrust each other.

interpersonal relations do not extend across factional lines, and factions do not cooperate to contain societal divisions or to avoid political crises.\footnote{110}{Michael G. Burton, John Higley. “Elite Settlements.” American Sociological Review, Vol. 52, June 1987, p. 296.}

In the second half of 1990 and in 1991, the CPT continued to contract and implode, following the all-Union pattern. Internal haemorrhaging of the CPSU and the CPT proceeded along different lines, however: the former was splitting on ideological grounds,\footnote{111}{In March 1991 there were up to ten platforms and factions operating in the party. (Graeme Gill. The Collapse of a Single-Party System. The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 144.)} and the latter disintegrating according to the territorial criterion. This was especially evident during the VII Plenum of the CPT CC held in February 1991. While the mandatory report of Qahhor Mahkamov was, as always, filled with empty phrases and commitments "to defend staunchly positive democratic gains of perestroika",\footnote{112}{Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 21 February 1991.} his colleagues from regions and districts were surprisingly frank and businesslike. Representatives of Leninobod and Kulob, interested in maintaining the status quo, deplored the Party's loss of its governing functions; they argued that perestroika was "a succession of precocious, inconsequent, incompetent decisions and mistakes in the national economy" and that "as a result of the Party's withdrawal from administration economic decay has become visible, negative processes in social and moral spheres have been unfolding and the Soviet people have been suffering hardships."\footnote{113}{Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 22 February 1991.} The First Secretary of the Khorog gorkom, Qozidavlat Qomidouv, spoke in favour of reforms that were defined somewhat narrowly but brazenly as an increased share for Pamiris in the leadership.\footnote{114}{Ibid.} A group of raikom functionaries, without going much into high politics, insisted on delegating the right to use Party property from the CPT CC to district committees.\footnote{115}{Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 27 February 1991.} The demolition of central control in the CPT was in the making. In 1990 its membership contracted by 2,070 - a 1.6 percent decrease\footnote{116}{Nazare ba ta'rikh. (Ma'lumotnomai makhtasar.) Khujand: Komiteti viloyati Leninobodi pariyol komunistii Tojikistona. 1994, p. 16.} whereas the CPSU shrank by 1.3 percent.\footnote{117}{Graeme Gill. The Collapse of a Single-Party System. The Disintegration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994, p. 155.} It is illuminating that the greatest numbers of defectors were registered in Dushanbe (one third of the total) and in the Gharm group of districts,\footnote{118}{Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 21 February 1991.} while the Leninobod oblast organisation actually grew by 804 people.\footnote{119}{Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 25 May 1991.} The Party was exhibiting a tendency towards becoming a political organisation of Northerners par excellence.
Despite its emaciation and fragmentation, and despite its inability to cope with the mounting problems in Tajikistan, the CPT was still viewed by many as the only institution guaranteeing a semblance of stability and national unity. A political observer of the opposition newspaper Charoghi ruz wrote in June 1991: "Contrary to the triumphant shouts of the opposition that 'Communists have lost dignity and prestige' ... the Communist party remains a formidable political force in Tajikistan ... the insignificant level of public protest against measures of the Communist government signifies that the CPT enjoys sufficient political respect here."120 Opinion polls corroborated this conclusion (Table 6.3).

Table 6.3 Trust in the CPSU and the CPT, 1990-1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CPSU</th>
<th>CPT</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(all-Union Surveys)</td>
<td>(Tajikistan Surveys)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn 1990</td>
<td>&lt;10%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autumn 1991</td>
<td>&lt;6%</td>
<td>36%</td>
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The results of the referendum on the preservation of the USSR held on 17 March 1991 also indicated strong public support for the continuous Soviet corporatist compromise in Tajikistan. The CPT called on the population to vote for retaining the Soviet Union as a rejuvenated federation of sovereign republics with equal rights, while the DPT and Rastokhez urged it to boycott the poll. At the end of the day, the overwhelming majority of the people of Tajikistan participated in the referendum and said 'yes' to the Union (Table 6.4).

Table 6.4 Results of the Referendum on the USSR Preservation, 17 March 1991

<p>| | | | | |</p>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Turnout</td>
<td>'Yes'</td>
<td>'No'</td>
<td>Invalid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>94.4%</td>
<td>96.2%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSFSR</td>
<td>75.4%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>26.4%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukraine</td>
<td>83.5%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>1.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhstan</td>
<td>88.2%</td>
<td>94.1%</td>
<td>5.0%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrgyzstan</td>
<td>92.9%</td>
<td>94.6%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>1.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbekistan</td>
<td>95.4%</td>
<td>93.7%</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
<td>1.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmenistan</td>
<td>97.7%</td>
<td>97.9%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The CPT still formed the centrepiece of the republic's political system; it had lost its control and implementation functions, but its role in strategic decision-making remained substantial, and all positions of authority in state structures were still staffed with

120 Charoghi ruz, No. 1, June 1991, p. 3.
Communists. There were forces within the Party, grouped around the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Abdujalil Samadov, who favoured dialogue with opposition groups and offered balanced solutions to the socio-economic problems that Tajikistan faced. In November 1990 they published a document entitled “The Program of Concrete Measures of Economic Stabilisation and Transition to a Market in the Tajik SSR”, which envisaged:

- continuing economic cooperation within the USSR;
- partial price liberalisation;
- gradual privatisation of state property (with a detailed list of enterprises and time schedule attached);
- encouragement of small businesses and private entrepreneurship;
- creation of a market infrastructure;
- land reform;
- rationalisation of the government apparatus;
- adoption of laws conducive to the emergence of a market economy.

Qahhor Mahkamov failed to rally the reformist elements in the CPT to secure the regime’s gradual adaptation to changing conditions. He followed Gorbachev’s path, neither breaking completely with the Party nor using its potential. In November 1990, the Supreme Soviet elected Mahkamov President of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. He faced a strong opposition in the person of Rahmon Nabiev, but persuaded the deputies to vote for him by making all manner of promises and resorting to political jockeying. President Mahkamov received vast executive powers, most importantly, to rule by edict, and appoint and dismiss senior public servants at his will. He used these powers not to initiate and oversee reformist policies, but to secure his position and the well-being of his immediate supporters.

Mahkamov’s regime had to achieve accommodation at three levels - (a) within the upper state leadership itself, (b) with organised opposition, and (c) with political actors in the regions and districts. While handling top bureaucrats, Mahkamov employed the tactics of political musical chairs, arbitrary political appointments and frequent changes to the institutional and legal framework of administration. As one Tajik MP lamented in July 1991, "Is it normal that every session of the Supreme Soviet has to approve a new government structure? Top echelon cadres ... are replaced every 3-4 months. As a

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121 *Programma konkretnykh meropriiatii po stabilizatsii ekonomiki i perekhodu k rynku v Tadjikskoi SSR* Proekt. Dushanbe: [No Publisher], 1990.

122 One of Mahkamov’s arguments was that Gorbachev, who had become Soviet Union’s President five months previously, would disburse 1 billion roubles to cover Tajikistan’s 30% budget deficit more easily if he were elected. (Hikmatullo Nasiriddinov. *Turkish*. Dushanbe: Afsona, 1995 p. 133.)
result, for example, the republic’s agriculture does not have a unified structure and lacks coordination.”\textsuperscript{123} Still the CPT CC First Secretary, Mahkamov, in February 1991, sanctioned transferral of the Party’s assets to an obscure holding company, EKOMPT. This firm took over the CPT polygraphic facilities, transport pool and construction organisations, and used them in tourism, entertainment and export-import businesses, refraining, however, from channelling profits to "material-financial support of the CPT activities."\textsuperscript{124} The CPT apparatchiks, even in the Leninobod oblast, began talking about the "betrayal on the part of the leaders which has pushed the Communist Party from the political arena."\textsuperscript{125}

Mahkamov acted as if opposition parties and organisations did not exist. Martial law, introduced in February 1990 in Dushanbe, precluded them from holding mass rallies in the capital, and infrequent meetings of the DPT and Rastokhez supporters in Leninobod and Kulob were regularly disrupted by members of local action groups with tacit police approval. The IRP kept a low profile, and the handful of vociferous opposition parliamentarians could be safely ignored. In fact, the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan in 1990 and 1991 was an amorphous collation of Communist and ex-Communist officials with little or no experience of the legislative process, factionalised according to regional affiliation and rather easy to manipulate. It also resembled a glorified gashtak: women were all but expunged from its ranks,\textsuperscript{126} the judgement of the bobo, that is, the President, was seldom questioned, and its entire modus operandi bore an imprint of patrimonialism: "When a parliamentary commission head or a member of the government is to be appointed, they take into consideration how many seats representatives from this or that locality already have ... Sometimes an appointment can be blocked if there is an evident surplus of a particular clan’s representatives amongst office-holders. Some instances of blackballing are truly laughable, when members of the parliament, forgetting their democratic image, begin to discuss openly the place of

\textsuperscript{123} Kommunist Tadjikistana. 19 July 1991. The Tajik leadership copiously reproduced Gorbachev’s patterns of administration, with a time lag of 4-5 months. The USSR Prime Minister Nikolai Ryzhkov came up with the following statement in November 1990: “Control has been totally lost at all levels of the state structure. Authority has been paralysed ... Universal destructiveness is basically becoming the norm. One can say with sufficient conviction and grounds that, throughout the greater part of the country’s territory, a situation has been created in which no one is in charge, and that this has led to a complete or partial deterioration of all systems of administration.” (Quoted in: John P. Willerton. “Executive Power and Political Leadership.” In: Stephen White, Alex Pravda, Zvi Gitelman, eds. Developments in Soviet and Post-Soviet Politics. London: Macmillan, 1992, p. 65.)

\textsuperscript{124} Kommunist Tadjikistana. 23 July 1991.

\textsuperscript{125} M. Hojev. Ta’rikh guvoh ast. (Sahifaho az ta’rikhi Partiyai Kommunistai Tojikiston.) Khujand. Omor, 1994, p. 25.

\textsuperscript{126} Women made up 36 percent of the Supreme Soviet deputies in 1985, and only 3.9 percent in 1990. (Kommunist Tadjikistana, 25 July 1991.)
birth and clan affiliation of a vacancy-seeker. Hundreds of thousands of Tajikistan's residents witnessed such debates in the parliament on TV not long ago..." \(^{127}\)

In March 1991, another blow was dealt to the old system of checks and balances inside the power structure. A new law on local government suggested merging the positions of Chairman of the Soviet and Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Soviet. Henceforth, at the district-town level legislative and executive power became vested in one person, who was elected by the corresponding Soviet, but who could be dismissed directly by the President. Mahkamov hoped that this move would help him in combating the *oblast* leaders, but very soon local bosses developed political resources that made their positions virtually unassailable either by the head of state or regional authorities. Out of 60 newly elected chairmen of executive committees only 10 were Communist functionaries, others were local strongmen of various descriptions, ranging from *sovkhоз* and factory directors to shadowy traders. \(^{128}\)

Qahhor Mahkamov tried to create a number of executive bodies, not necessarily mentioned in the Constitution, to advise him in setting policies and to control their implementation. The most important of them was the 15-strong Presidential Council established in February 1991. This organ had a considerable potential to evolve as a forum for negotiations amongst elite factions, but the President appeared to have selected its members on the basis of personal loyalty rather than political influence and abilities. With the exception of the Vice-President, Izatullo Khayoev, and the Minister of Interior, Mamadayoz Navjuvonov, the Council consisted of rather nondescript characters - the Kulob region, for example, was represented by a 68-year old woman pensioner, Nizoramo Zaripova, who may have commanded respect due to the fact that she was well advanced in years, but who had no influence in the decision-making process. The Council sank into oblivion without leaving a trace in Tajikistan's political history.

In the meantime, the economic situation in the republic was nearing a critical point. In 1990, Tajikistan's GDP contracted by 2.2 percent, but the national income used actually grew by 6.4 percent due to transfers from the centre. \(^{129}\) By the second half of 1991 the following grim picture had emerged: \(^{130}\)

- production of 56 out of 77 major commodity groups lagged hopelessly behind targets;

129 *Narodnoe khoziaistvo Tadzhikskoi SSR v 1990g.* Dushanbe: Goskomstat TSSR, pp. 3-6.
- civil construction stood at 50 percent of the 1990 figure;
- scarcity of food in cities was a pressing problem;
- the current budget deficit exceeded 1.7 billion roubles, and there were absolutely no internal resources to cover it.

Mahkamov's regime did nothing to reform the economy. As always, he pinned all his hopes on Moscow. The Communique of the leaders of Central Asian republics published on 14 August 1991 stated that they wholeheartedly supported the new Union treaty prepared by Gorbachev whereby this region would continue to receive "financial resources for socio-economic development and for covering compensation pay-outs to the population." The signing of the treaty was preempted by the abortive coup in Moscow on 19-21 August 1991, in the wake of which any sort of continuation of the Soviet Union, even as a loose confederation of states, was impossible. Following other Central Asian republics, Tajikistan proclaimed its independence on 9 September 1991; to borrow Martha Brill Olcott's expression, it was "a freedom more forced on them than acquired or won."

Contrary to popular myth, Mahkamov did not support the putsch. He was disoriented and bamboozled, and did not come up with any political statements concerning the political struggle in Moscow - years of subservience to the Kremlin had obviously taken their toll. As a Tajik political expert has put it, "the enemies of the [Tajik] state presented this silence as unconditional support for the GKChP. Government media did not bother to deny this categorically. Mahkamov did not have the skill, wisdom and shrewdness of Nazarbaev [President of Kazakhstan], who officially hailed the coup but two days later denounced it, having received hundreds of millions of roubles from the leaders of Russia - investment into their countries' independence." On 27 August 1991, Mahkamov signed a decree disbanding the CPT structures in government agencies and sequestrating its property. On 28 August, he and the Chairman of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet, Qadriddin Aslonov, formally quit the Party. The next day under pressure from inside and outside the republic,

\[\text{Reference numbers:} 131, 132, 133, 134, 135\]
Mahkamov resigned as President of Tajikistan. The Communist era in the history of Tajikistan came to an end.

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Over the period of 70 years the Soviet political system in Tajikistan embraced and coopted elements of the traditional culture, cultivated legal, semi-legal and illegal links amongst various units of society and restrained fissiparous tendencies in it. This system was based on the Communist mono-organisational order, and, eventually, "the communists were better adapted to this neotraditional society than the mullahs or the 'democrats'." The system was altered and ultimately destroyed in the Gorbachev period, primarily by exogenous forces.

In a society where political life was characterised by primitive consensual activity and direct bargaining by local and regional groups and self-interested politicians, the institutionalisation of political opposition was premature. All opposition figures were interested in gaining access to power rather than concerned with the expression of independent attitudes. The absence of a viable economy, the reluctance of the political leaders to form broad coalitions under the banner of nationhood, the flimsiness of the constitutional framework for political process, and the breakdown of state mechanisms of social control, presaged a turbulent future for the independent Republic of Tajikistan.


The immediate consequence of Gorbachev's political reforms in Tajikistan was a constant flux in the rules of the political game. The transition from a mono-organisational type of national elite to a disunified one was well advanced. Additionally, non-elite involvement in the political process showed a potential for growth: in September 1991, approximately 20 percent of Tajikistan's population felt that they had been driven to the edge by the deteriorating economic situation, providing radicals from all elite factions with potential followers. In an article written in October 1991, an Uzbek academic ruminated on the new realities in Central Asia: "Suddenly the 'oxygen' of freedom and independence appeared from nowhere and reached the smouldering 'coals' of social tension. With the acquisition of state sovereignty every republic has become difficult to prognosticate in its actions. Only Allah knows what may happen next."  

The chain of events in Tajikistan led to a civil war. The presence of deep cleavages in Tajik society, mainly of a sub-ethnic and regional nature, always suggested the possibility of an acute internal conflict. However, assuming that "civil wars are about a crisis in national sovereignty, and thus about the ability of nation-states to control national space", it can be argued that the practical realisation of this possibility was conditioned by deliberate acts (or inaction) of elite leaders affecting the functioning of the state. It was not inevitable that Tajikistan would follow the path of destruction: like the USSR, it "succumbed to ill-conceived reforms originating in the leadership, to poor governance, and to bad fortune."  

The New Institutional Setting and Moscow-Imposed Conflict Regulation

The Extraordinary Session of the Supreme Soviet that sat in two stages from 29 August to 4 October 1991 introduced substantial changes to the political system of the Republic of Tajikistan:

- the President was to be elected by popular vote forthwith;

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- the institution of Vice-President was created;
- the Cabinet of Ministers was to be formed by the President, but every member of the Cabinet was answerable to the Supreme Soviet;
- Presidiums of regional legislatures were abolished and, as at the district-town level, the Chairman of the Executive Committee became head of the oblast Soviet;
- the President lost the ability to remove Chairmen of Executive Committees at all levels.

Tajikistan's parliament also addressed the Congress of People's Deputies of the USSR and the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation with a passionate plea for help: "We face a real threat of food and energy crisis, ecological catastrophe and a new escalation of social and ethnic tensions ... We are convinced that alone, deprived of our cooperation of many years, we cannot overcome the present deep crisis... We cannot imagine our future outside the Union and without ancient indissoluble ties that linked it [Tajikistan] with Russia and other brotherly republics." It was quite prepared to cede attributes of independence and sovereignty for the sake of retention of the reformed Soviet Union.

Opposition forces which had insignificant representation in the national legislature tried to find alternative ways to influence the decision-making process. Rasokhez and the DPT held one meeting after another in front of the Supreme Soviet's building, demanding dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and new elections, the government's resignation and prohibition of the CPT. The Qoziyot and the IRP for the time being refrained from active political action, but, according to Narzullo Dostov, in late August - early September 1991, Akbar Turajonzoda, Tohir Abdujabbor and Dushanbe's Mayor, Maqsud Ikromov, held several clandestine meetings with Acting President, Qadriddin Aslonov, in Aslonov's house. On 22 September, Aslonov published an edict banning the CPT and nationalising its property. The same day Ikromov authorised the removal of Lenin's statue from the central square of Dushanbe. Both officials exceeded their powers: an existing political party could have been outlawed only by the Supreme Court of Tajikistan, and the removal of any monument should have been approved by the city Soviet. Thousands of opposition supporters, however, hailed these measures with enthusiasm.

On 23 September, Tajikistan's parliament reconvened urgently, cancelled Aslonov's illegal edict and fired him from the position of Supreme Soviet Chairman. He was replaced by Rahmon Nabiev (182 MPs voted for him, 2 voted against and 2 abstained.)

5 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 3 September 1991.
The Supreme Soviet reintroduced a state of emergency and martial law in Dushanbe and instructed Procurator General, Nurullo Khuvaiddulloev, to investigate the incident with Lenin's monument. On 24 September, the IRP, the DPT and Rastokhez, in violation of martial law brought 10,000 people to the Ozodi square. This was a well-planned event - the participants had tents, medical units, a press-centre and a 300-strong security force; the chairman of the permanent meeting, imam-khatib Qosim Rahmonov from Qurghonteppa, admitted to enjoying generous financial and material support from the southern and eastern districts as well as from City Hall. In addition to its previous demands, the opposition pressed for the resignation of Nabiev, Khuvaiddulloev and of the Chairman of the State Broadcasting Committee, Otakhon Saifulloev, as well as for the reversal of the Supreme Soviet's decisions made on 23 September. For the first time 'democratic' and 'Islamist' oppositions openly confronted the government as a unified movement. Tajik liberal intellectuals were appalled. Rahim Masov left Rastokhez in protest against the "chaos unleashed by the meeting frenzy [mitingovschina] and the conviction that political goals can be attained through pressure, which conviction is espoused by leaders of various parties who draw in people remote from politics ... The meeting, its conduct, the masses of people brought from the districts - not from the city! - mainly the elderly and adolescents ... created an impression of a well-directed theatrical performance. Foreign journalists who arrived in Dushanbe somehow discerned a protest of defenders of democracy in what was happening ... The clergy had become the moving force, the spring of the events, though democrats and Rastokhez posed as its organisers."8

The Supreme Soviet's supporters organised parallel demonstrations in Dushanbe, using methods similar to those of the opposition - people were transported to the capital city from Kulob and Hisor on orders from local strongmen. In the Leninobod, industrial managers issued warning to the opposition that unless pressure on the parliament stopped they would go on strike. On 30 September, the 11 largest factories of Khujand stopped work. Political turmoil seriously affected Tajikistan's economy, especially agriculture; by 4 October only 28.5 percent of cotton had been harvested - half of the 1990 figure. In the meantime, several hundred people in the Ozodi Square, including Gulrukhsor Sufieva, by then a USSR People's Deputy, and 7 Sufi leaders from Gharm and Qarotegin, went on a hunger strike. This move received sympathetic coverage in the Moscow-based media. An avalanche of telegrams from opposition supporters

7 Narodnaia gazeta, 3 October 1991.
8 Narodnaia gazeta, 26 October 1991.
9 Narodnaia gazeta, 4 October 1991.
poured into the Kremlin requesting intervention. Gorbachev reacted by sending a conciliation team to Dushanbe.

The activity of this team formed one of the most bizarre events in the modern history of Tajikistan and once again highlighted the ineffectual character of Gorbachev as the leader of a multinational state. The team comprised two members of his Political Consultative Committee - Saint-Petersburg's Mayor, Anatolii Sobchak, and Vice-President of the USSR Academy of Sciences, Academician Evgenii Velikhov. Both were ardent reformist democrats but had no experience of Central Asia so they were accompanied by an 'expert' - an American citizen, A. Yanov, Professor of History from New York. The juridical status of the Sobchak-Velikhov expedition was dubious - it had not been invited by the lawful government of independent Tajikistan, and it had no clearly defined agenda. Velikhov disclosed in October 1991 that the President of the USSR had not bothered to determine their powers or to discuss possible actions and outcomes, and went on with a remarkable narrative of the mission: "Gorbachev did not hold any briefing with us prior to our departure ... we just packed up quickly and flew to Dushanbe ... We did not receive any useful information from Yanov ... We did not offer any solutions ... but we said sternly that we would not go back to Moscow while people starve themselves to death in the square ... Though I am not a specialist in this field, I have made the following conclusions, having acquainted myself with the developments in situ: I believe, a union between Islam and democracy is necessary in the republic today. And if this union is durable and if its activities are open and understandable for the people, it will be the basis for consolidation of the main forces in the society."  

Between 1 and 4 October 1991, Sobchak and Velikhov conducted a series of negotiations with Rahmon Nabiev, the Supreme Soviet leadership, the qozikaloni and major opposition figures, and spoke in front of the meeting in the Ozodi Square. As a result, most of the opposition's demands were met:

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10 One of them, signed by 8 members of Tajikistan's and All-Union legislatures, including Davlat Khudonazarov, Bozor Sobir, Akbar Turajonzoda and Asliddin Sobibnazarov, read: "On 23 September 1991 in the city of Dushanbe reactionary Communist forces set out to restore the totalitarian regime in our republic ... During numerous speeches Communist people's deputies befouled the honour and dignity of M.S. Gorbachev, B.N. Yeltsin and other democratic leaders of the Union and Russia, and called them traitors ... We ask for your help to build democracy in the republic and request that until it happens, all economic, political and other ties [between Moscow and Dushanbe] be severed."
the CPT (which changed its name to the Socialist Party of Tajikistan on 21 September) was suspended for two months pending an investigation of its activities during the coup;
- the state of emergency was lifted;
- the ban on the formation of religious parties was lifted;
- Rahmon Nabiev stepped down as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet for the duration of the presidential race and was replaced by Akbarsho Iskandarov, a Pamiri;
- representatives of the DPT, the PMR and Qoziyot were included in the Election Commission of the Republic of Tajikistan;
- presidential elections were postponed from 27 October to 25 November in order to allow opposition parties to campaign properly;
- new parliamentary elections were promised, but without setting a specific date.

Sobchak addressed the meeting in front of the Supreme Soviet with the following words: "Our task is to assist democratic forces and all political movements of the republic to find a common platform, something that would unite you all in order to help the republic start solving its economic and social problems."\(^\text{12}\) A Tajik eyewitness commented on this address as follows: "People like Sobchak fly here from Leningrad and without understanding anything make speeches in front of Islamists gathered in the square. 'Citizens of Leningrad greet in your face true democrats. You are the future of Tajikistan. Already the great democrat Herzen said ...' Well, if you ask bearded Gharmis who watch the orator from Leningrad expressionlessly who Herzen is, you are unlikely to get a coherent answer. It is laughable."\(^\text{13}\) Sobchak and Velikhov, perhaps, unbeknownst to them, tipped the balance of power in favour of the elite factions from Gharm, Qarotegin and the GBAO. They had a strong bargaining chip in dealing with the incumbent Tajik leadership - the threat to sever financial support from Moscow. As Yanov frankly admitted, had they been sent with a similar mission to the economically strong Ukraine, they would have achieved nothing.\(^\text{14}\) Central Asian leaders, Nazarbaev in particular, severely criticised Sobchak's 'mediation efforts' at the time.\(^\text{15}\)

On 26 October 1991, the IRP held its first congress in Dushanbe. Mhammadsharif Himmatzoda was reelected as its Chairman and Davlat Usmon became his deputy. Although the congress that represented 15-20 thousand members of the party reiterated the policy line aimed at building a "law-based democratic secular state", \(^\text{6}\) Himmatzoda

\(^{12}\) Narodnaja gazeta, 5 October 1991.
\(^{13}\) Biznes i politika, No. 43, November 1993, p. 3.
\(^{14}\) Narodnaja gazeta, 24 October 1991.
\(^{15}\) Karim Abdulov. Rohi bekhud. Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1995, p. 35.
\(^{16}\) Narodnaja gazeta, 29 October 1991.
put forward the thesis about moving to an Islamic State of Tajikistan by non-violent means, remarking that "Western countries have their democracy and we shall have ours. Our democracy is incompatible with the Western one."\textsuperscript{17}

The legalisation of the IRP and the suspension of the CPT were undoubtedly the most important political events in Tajikistan in Autumn 1991. As Grigorii Kosach has noted, "the communists were not in a position to resume their legal activities until December 1991, when the ban on them was lifted. But by now this was a party that had been divorced from Tajikistan's power structures and lost not a few adherents ... The absence of the centre's tutelage and the communists' loss of control over the entire ruling elite turned the confrontation between the two political camps into an open bid for power by the opposition, in which the differences in ideology and principle became ancillary to other considerations."\textsuperscript{18} The two camps clashed in earnest during presidential elections in November 1991.

**The Clouding Horizon: Parties, Elections and Shaky Compromises**

In September 1991 the number of candidates for the presidency exceeded twenty. Every region and every substantial political organisation (except the CPT) had nominated a hopeful. By 24 November, only eight remained - others, including Tohir Abdjabbarb, Shodmon Yusuf and Akbar Turajonzoda, had quit the race. The remaining runners were: Ismoil Davlatov (Pamirs); Davlat Khodonazarov (Pamirs); Akbar Makhsumov (Gharm); Rahmon Nabiev (Khujand); Hikmatullo Nasriddinov (Kulob); Burikhon Salimov (Kulob); Bobisho Shoev (Pamirs); Saifiddin Turaev (Uroteppa).

From the above-mentioned figures only Rahmon Nabiev and Davlat Khodonazarov were serious contenders. The former represented the bloc of Leninobodis, Kulobis and Hisсорис, and the latter was supported by elite factions from Gharm, Qarotegin, the GBAO and mohajirs. The legitimate question is, then, why would strongmen in Kulob support Nabiev versus their recognised leader, Nasriddinov, and, similarly, why would Gharmis vote for Khodonazarov rather than their very own Makhsumov? The answer may be partially found in population statistics. Table 7.1 shows that no politician with a power base in only one particular region could have counted on electoral success. It is also indicative of the fact that this success would be heavily dependent on voters' behaviour in highly heterogenous Qurghonteppa and Dushanbe that accounted for one-third of the total vote between themselves.

\textsuperscript{17} Nezavisimata gazeta, 18 September 1991.
Shahram Akbarzade has come up with the following characterisation of Rahmon Nabiev: "a hardliner with no reformist pretences. As the epitome of the Soviet 'nomenklatura' [sic] he was used to top-down command with no taste for compromise. Nabiev had no experience in negotiating policies with diverse political currents or in seeking support from his opponents." 19 This description needs some qualification. Nabiev was a master of traditional clan politics and temporary coalition-building, and by no means was he bound by any ideological commitments. In 1990, especially in the period preceding the XII Session of the Supreme Soviet where Mahkamov was elected President of the TSSR, Nabiev became quite close to Akbar Turajonzoda, Asliddin Sohibnazarov, Tohir Abdujabbor and other influential opponents of Mahkamov. Opposition groups sponsored Nabiev’s comeback to politics after five years of inactivity and separation from the summit of power and “actively promoted his image as an advocate of the independence of Tajikistan and the well-being of its people. All their publications contained one refrain: weak-willed Mahkamov must be replaced by strong Nabiev. Undoubtedly, the Qoziyot and the IRP rendered Nabiev serious assistance. He suited them in the transitional period.” 20 As soon as Qahhor Mahkamov stepped down as President and the IRP became legalised, the tone of the opposition’s statements changed rapidly: “The election of Nabiev [as Chairman of the Supreme Soviet] is wrong ... Aren’t there any other cadres in our republic apart from Mahkamov and Nabiev? ... How often is Nabiev sober? Whose fate is more attractive to Nabiev - Pinochet’s, Mussolini’s or Ceausecu’s?” 21

In the Autumn of 1991, Nabiev managed to rally the majority of Northern clans around him. He formed an alliance with Abdulmalik Abdullojonov; the latter was offered

20 G. Khaidarov, M. Inomov. Tadzhikistan: tragediya i bol’ naroda. St. Petersburg: LINKO, 1993, p. 15. Akbar Turajonzoda corroborated this conclusion in 1995: “Since the Communist party had ostracised Nabiev and he was completely forgotten, it was only thanks to us that he was resurrected. I very much regret this move.” (“Interview with Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda.” Central Asia Monitor, No. 2, 1995, p. 10.)
indemnity from any inquiry into the activities of the Ministry of Grain Products, and his relative, Temur Mirzoev, was promised the position of Dushanbe’s Mayor.22 A prominent politician, Safarali Kenjäev, who had a power base in the Aini district of the Leninobod oblast, as well as in Hissor, became Nabiev’s campaign manager.23 Saifiddin Turaev, representative of a powerful Uroteppa group of clans and another runner-up for the Presidency, was seriously weakened when one of his associates, Deputy Procurator General Amirqul Azimov, defected to Nabiev’s camp.

Nabiev had a substantial following in the Kulob oblast. By October 1991, the group of Hikmatullo Nasriddinov had become largely a spent force, for it had failed to use the post-February 1990 elite settlement to improve economic conditions in the region. Local groups, such as Oshkoro, and charismatic strongmen, such as the criminal authority Sangak Safarov, canvassed for Nabiev. Generally, Kulobis remembered Nabiev’s tenure as the Party leader in 1982-1985 as a period of growth and prosperity; this perception received a further boost when in September 1991 massive shipments of food and consumer goods from Leninobod to Kulob commenced. Unsurprisingly, over half of all telegrams and letters from labour collectives nominating Nabiev that were received by the Electoral Commission originated from Kulob.24

Nabiev’s selection of Narzullo Dustov as Vice-President was a carefully designed measure: the latter was born in Darvoz, in the Pamirs, but his paternal ancestors used to live in Baljuvon of Kulob. Dustov was a hard-working transport official devoid of any political ambitions, and not particularly bright.25 He had no patronage web behind him but enjoyed the reputation of a person sympathetic to the problems of the common people.

In his election program Nabiev announced that “the accelerated growth of productive forces of the Kulob oblast, the GBAO, Qarotegin Valley and other mountainous

22 Confidential sources in Dushanbe. January 1996. According to some reports which could not be verified, Abdullojonov also handed Nabiev 3 million roubles for the election campaign in October 1991.
23 Safarali Kenjäev was born in 1942 in Aini. He belongs to a family of traditional Yaghnobi notables, hence his influence on both sides of the Hissor mountain range. Kenjäev has known Akbar Turajonzoda since childhood and for some time lived in the same makhalla with him. Kenjäev is a qualified lawyer; in 1983-1989 he acted as the Regional Central Asian Railway Procurator and the Transport Procurator of the TSSR, and in 1990-1991 headed the Control Commission under the President of Tajikistan. His solidarity web included several local administration heads (Qairoqqum, Varzob). In February 1990, he was put in charge of the Supreme Soviet commission to investigate the bloody events in Dushanbe, which helped him to become known throughout Tajikistan.
25 The opposition referred to him as the ‘village fool’. (Charoghi vaq, No. 2 (80) 1995, p. 13.)
districts should become the decisive element of our socio-economic strategy","26 but, overall, this document was little more than an assortment of populist premises and did not touch upon the principles of state building in independent Tajikistan at all. The problem of sub-ethnic fragmentation in the country deserved one short line - "regionalism has increased."27

The IRP, the DPT, La‘li Badakhson, the PMR and a number of creative unions and public associations nominated Davlat Khudonazarov as their presidential candidate. Khudonazarov is a unique and tragic figure in the political history of Tajikistan. At the age of 16 he was admitted to the All-Union Institute of Cinematography in Moscow. His work as a cameraman and later film director won accolades throughout the country and abroad. Although his father, Khudonazar Mamadnazarov, was a high-ranking CPT official, Khudonazarov himself was always at loggerheads with the Soviet establishment. He was a disciple of Andrei Sakharov, and after becoming a USSR’s People’s Deputy in 1989, he joined the reformist Interregional Group faction in the Soviet parliament. Gorbachev coopted him to the CPSU CC alongside sixty other reformers. Khudonazarov did not formally belong to any political organisation in Tajikistan, but his ties with the DPT and the PMR were well-known.

Khudonazarov was the only Tajik politician who openly castigated regionalism in the republic’s politics. He deplored "the division of the nation as a result of the half-century-long usurpation of power by the leaders who defended only clan and localistic interests. The elevation of regionalism to a state policy over a lengthy period of time made the society accumulate enormous destructive energy."28 Khudonazarov’s election program envisioned that the President should "form a coalition government of popular trust which would take into account opinions of other presidential candidates and their teams, and gather at a 'round table' representatives of all parties, movements and national-cultural centres in order to work out principles of political consensus, interethnic concord and civic peace in the republic."29 Khudonazarov understood that, being a Pamiri, he had no chances of being elected on his own, so he accepted the endorsement of the force to which he had natural antipathy, that is, the Islamists. Even then he knew that his victory would require a major miracle. Still, Khudonazarov decided to fight to reform the system.

27 Ibid., p. 8.
The opposition banked on Khudonazarov for purely pragmatic reasons - he was likely to attract the votes of the cosmopolitan intelligentsia and the Pamiris. Narzullo Dustov has reproduced a conversation he had with Akbar Turajonzoda on 20 April 1992 - the reverend qozikalon, with no little cynicism, explained to the slightly petrified Vice-President of the RT that "we do not have any respect for the Pamiris at all, they are not accomplished Muslims anyway. The Pamirs [region] is necessary to us today in order to reach our goal, that is, state power; henceforth, we use them temporarily, then we shall part company and leave them to face their fate." Even more importantly, Khudonazarov had exceptionally good ties in the Kremlin and could provide the opposition with international publicity it so badly needed. Indeed, during the presidential campaign Moscow-based journalists spared no effort to support his cause; a series of trailers were aired by Channels 1 and 2 in November that urged the voters in Tajikistan to make a decision in Khudonazarov's favour. Khudonazarov's colleagues had the following to say about his qualities:

- Ella Pamfilova, the USSR MP: "As a presidential candidate, Davlat is marked by a truly statesmanlike way of thinking ... He is one of those politicians who can introduce an element of lofty morality to politics."

- Iurii Ryzhov, Chairman of the Science Committee of the USSR Supreme Soviet: "If we want to come to a civil society and social justice, we need people with a European mode of thinking. Davlat is one of them."

- Vladimir Volkov, the USSR MP: "He enjoys great authority with the leaders of Russia, Boris Yeltsin in particular. Personal links between state leaders are extremely important, voters in Tajikistan should remember this."

- Aleksandr Iakovlev, Chief Advisor to President Gorbachev: "Democracy is the essence of life for him. He is a Man of Freedom of the perestroika epoch."

During the campaign Nabiev put emphasis on stability and gradual change, while Khudonazarov and his would-be Vice-President and the DPT Deputy Chairman, Asliddin Sohibnazarov (who represented interests of a group of districts to the east of Dushanbe bordering on Gharm), actively exploited the themes of reformism, nationalism and Islam. Sociological monitoring conducted by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tajikistan showed that Nabiev's supporters had a much clearer idea

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31 Adopted from a collation of promotional trailers of Davlat Khudonazarov. Courtesy of Deputy Director of the Tajik Film Authority, Mr Safar Haqddod.
about their candidate than those of Khudonazarov (Table 7.2). Nabiev had managed to capitalise on his image of an experienced and paternalistic leader; it is noteworthy that in both cases commitment to democratic ideals did not feature as an important criterion. Moreover, Khudonazarov's nationalist stance eventually repelled the non-eponymous voters, and Nabiev acquired a substantial lead amongst all ethnic electoral cohorts (Table 7.3).

### Table 7.2 Personal Qualities Most Appreciated by Loyal Voters in Presidential Candidates, October 1991*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal Qualities</th>
<th>Rahman Nabiev</th>
<th>Davlat Khudonazarov</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ability to unite different parties</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modesty</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral purity</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good knowledge of Tajik literature and language</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of economics</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithfulness to Islam</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention to people's needs</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills of managing the state</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The survey involved 1,361 respondents in all regions and districts of the RT, except the GBAO.


### Table 7.3 Election Preferences of Ethnic Groups, October-November 1991

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Cohort</th>
<th>For Rahman Nabiev</th>
<th>For Davlat Khudonazarov</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>28-31 October</td>
<td>14-16 November</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians and Ukrainians</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Nationalities</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The returns of the poll on 24 November 1991 were as follows: Nabiev - 56.92%, Khudonazarov - 30.07%, S. Turaev - 5.03%, H. Nasriddinov - 1.28%, B. Shoev - 0.37%, A. Makhsumov - 0.23%; in total, 84.6% of eligible citizens cast their vote. Generally, traditional factors proved to be decisive in the election's outcome. The structure of vote corresponded to the regional affiliation of the candidates: Nabiev and Dustov scored 80-100 percent in northern constituencies, 90 percent in Kulob, but, for example, only 0.02 percent in Qal'ai Khumb in the GBAO. The vote in Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa was split fifty-fifty. Nabiev's team masterfully used prejudices.

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deeply rooted in the Tajiks' patriarchal mentality to smear Khudonazarov - he was pronounced unworthy of becoming the leader because "he was born illegally, for he was conceived by his real father when his mother was married to another man." Mullahs in Kulob habitually referred to Khudonazarov as an unbeliever or an heretic, successfully "fanning the fire of suspicion and hatred against the Ismaili sect."

Khudonazarov accepted defeat with bitterness but as something naturally determined, the opposition chose not to challenge the results, although there might have been some irregularities, "in view of the widely regarded fairness of the election process." On 2 December 1991 Rahmon Nabiev took an oath as the first popularly elected President of the Republic of Tajikistan.

**Nabiev's Presidency**

David Mervin has remarked that "ingratiation, the ability to render oneself agreeable and likeable to others, is a major resource in a polity marked by an absence of ideology, insubstantial parties and an intense fragmentation of power." Nabiev was certainly capable of maintaining the elite consensual unity using his authority, flexibility, communication skills and personal charm in a stable mono-organisational political system. In December 1991, he inherited a system that had become highly unstable, where the old rules of the elite settlement had been annulled and new ones had not yet emerged. Like any other leader in a transitional polity, Nabiev had a choice: "rules can be imposed unilaterally by a dominant actor and the other players may obey them out of fear or respect, or they can be elaborated multilaterally by implicit agreements or by explicit pacts." In the neighbouring republics at the time, Islam Karimov and Saparmurat Niyazov were feverishly constructing overtly authoritarian regimes, while Nursultan Nazarbaev and Askar Akayev opted for quasi-democratic coalitions dominated by strong executive. Nabiev as President remained somnolent: "he was sure that after

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36 He was quoted saying that "our place of birth predetermined our lot." (Ibrohim Usmon. *Solli Nabiev*. Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1995, p. 109.)
40 Nazarbaev must have learned certain lessons from the meeting frenzy in Tajikistan - when in June 1992 several hundred people assembled in front of the parliament's building in Almaty under democratic banners, he ordered police to disperse them at once, saying that "we shall preserve stability in the
gaining power, he would inherit automatically absolute subordination to the will of 'the First', which had existed before, when the system itself reliably guaranteed the functioning of various spheres of the Republic's life ... Nabiev was not ready to work under new conditions because of lack of character, knowledge or talent for organisation.\textsuperscript{41}

In Uzbekistan, where friction amongst regional elites was also on the rise since the beginning of \textit{perestroika},\textsuperscript{42} President Islam Karimov, elected in December 1991, continued to depend confidently on the renamed and de-ideologised Communist Party, while building a political system where "in place of the dispersal of power celebrated in the constitution, there is a concentration of power in the hands of the president and his main policy-making organ, the Office of the President. The operative pattern in relations among branches is not separation of power, let alone some sort of balance, but monopolisation of power by the executive organs - in particular the presidency - with the legislative and judicial branches in effect subordinate to them."\textsuperscript{43} Nabiev's attempt to build a strong presidency failed miserably. He could not even run his personal Office properly. His Chief of Staff, Abdul Karimov, who had 33 people under his command (4 Councillors, 12 Senior Experts, 1 Secretary, 2 Advisers and 14 technical staff), has left a scathing description of how the Office operated over the period of ten months in 1991-1992:\textsuperscript{44}

Nobody worked with us. The President did not have time. The Vice-President met with our officers once, and that was it. Every Councillor and Adviser worked on his own problems. Weekly briefings were deemed unnecessary by the President ... Most meetings of the President took place without preparation. Not a single official record was left after these meetings. Nobody knew who prepared those meetings and who invited people to them. The major record (if we may call it a record) of these meetings for us was the news disseminated by papers and TV ... During the first days of [Nabiev's] presidency a lot of people came to see him -


\textsuperscript{44} Karim Abdulov. \textit{Rohi behbad}. Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1995, pp. 59, 86.
members of his staff, ministers, government and Supreme Soviet officials. Gradually the situation changed. The traffic of visitors began to be controlled by the group of Anatolii Omoev [Nabiev's bodyguard of many years] ... Day by day Omoev's and his friends' clients poured in to talk with the President ... However, government officials who wanted to discuss issues of state importance did not have a hope of being given an audience.

The aggregation of pro-Nabiev support was implemented by a variety of vertical and horizontal structures, united temporarily by considerations of preserving the status quo. It would have taken immense institutional craftsmanship to make them stick together. Following his victory, Nabiev did nothing to create a political machine behind his regime. Barnett Rubin is certainly wrong when asserting that Nabiev relied on the renamed CPT.45 In early 1992 it was disclosed that "the relations between R. Nabiev and the Communist Party are rather complicated. According to sources close to the President, R. Nabiev will try to finish the Party off because he had suffered from the Party arbitrariness in the mid-1980s."46 The Supreme Court of Tajikistan cleaned the CPT's name and on 18 January 1992 it held its XXIII congress, but Nabiev refused to restore the bulk of its property, including the building of the Central Committee in Dushanbe. The newly elected CPT leader and Mahkamov's long-time ally, Shodi Shabdolov, was not on speaking terms with Nabiev.47

Nabiev rewarded his supporters by promoting them to senior positions in the civil service. Of course, he was not unique in making non-merit bureaucratic appointments and creating sinecures for loyalists the order of the day, but in a nascent independent state like Tajikistan the leaders' priority should have been different: "the government must choose between a bureaucracy capable of playing a reasonably efficient and dynamic role in the developmental process and a bureaucracy designed to augment social welfare by absorbing successive generations of graduates. They cannot have it both ways."48 Experienced personnel from Mahkamov's era faced wholesale dismissal; entire ministries were dissolved and then resuscitated, chaos prevailed, and the "heavy

47 Interview with the First Secretary of the CPT city organisation of Dushanbe, Isomiddin Salohiddinov, Dushanbe, 4 April 1995.
burden of serving the people and dealing with the republic's problems landed on the shoulders of just 7-8 capable officials."\(^\text{49}\)

In late 1991, a think-tank attached to the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Tajikistan sent a detailed memorandum to the Presidential Office, pinpointing the main problems that the regime faced. This document concluded in particular that: \(^\text{50}\)

- under conditions of deepening economic crisis and decaying social welfare, political struggle is conducive to processes of disintegration in society;

- the government's authority is weakened by instability of legal foundations, absence of mechanisms to carry out laws and decisions and weak control over their implementation, which leads to misuse of power by local structures;

- the unceasing redistribution of political and economic powers between the centre and peripheral organs and executive and legislative institutions disorients the populace;

- the structures of presidential authority are characterised by blurred functions, lack of levers of social mobilisation and inherent instability.

The experts' recommendation was clear: it was imperative to consolidate social control by all possible means through establishing a strong presidency; they also believed that it could be done quickly and painlessly, for "the great proportion of the population is tired of political confrontation and is interested in putting key issues of economic life outside the brackets of political ambitions and passions." \(^\text{51}\) Nabiev failed to heed this advice. He made mistake after mistake. He didn't even try to gain control over regional administrations (as Karimov successfully did in Uzbekistan in January 1992 by introducing the institution of appointed governors that existed parallel to elected Soviets). He was in no hurry to set up national armed forces. He retained General Anatolii Stroikin, invited in July 1991 from Kazakhstan, as the Chairman of the Committee of State Security (CSS) - the successor to Tajikistan's KGB; Stroikin "for a number of objective and subjective reasons could not orient himself properly in the intricate and complex situation, which led to a split in [Tajikistan's] security organs." \(^\text{52}\)

The economic situation in the country was critical. Food shortages were common in the


\(^{51}\) Ibid., pp. 16-17.

cities, in some places bread was rationed at 170-240 grams a day per person, as compared to 600 grams during the most difficult months of World War II. In his radio address to the people on 29 January 1992, Nabiev said: “You all know better than anyone else ... that the republic has no reserves and no potential. The budget has been fixed only for the first three months of the year, unfortunately, and contains many faults.” Yet, instead of cutting budget expenditure and introducing market reforms, Nabiev, in a truly populist fashion, blamed greedy merchants and the nascent strata of businessmen for economic troubles and launched an attack on them under the new law ‘On Strengthening Control over Cooperatives’: “In Dushanbe, regional centres and districts ... cooperatives, small enterprises and procurement shops began to be liquidated. Tens of thousands of people were rendered jobless.” Nabiev spent a lot of time visiting former Soviet republics, procuring grain from Kazakhstan, oil products from Turkmenistan, and so on. Tajikistan joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in December 1991, but relations amongst its member states desperately lacked proper institutionalisation. Nabiev showed remarkable slackness in this respect - for instance, by June 1992 Tajikistan remained the only Central Asian republic that had not signed a cooperation agreement with the Russian Federation.

After his inauguration, Nabiev appointed a new cabinet. Akbar Mirzoev, the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kulob oblast, became Premier. Nabiev also secured the election of Safarali Kenjaev as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, instead of Acting Chairman Akbarsho Iskandarov. Thus the prerogative of the Pamiris and Gharmis to head Tajikistan’s legislature was violated. Both Mirzoev and Kenjaev had substantial political resources of their own and could act independently of the president. As an opposition observer wrote in May 1992 in an article entitled ‘The Flailing King’, ‘in the ruling triumvirate Nabiev is just a figurehead ... whose brain has shrunk due to excessive consumption of alcohol, and who, naturally, does not play any role in running the state.” While this statement was an obvious exaggeration, Hikmatullo Nasriddinov, who at the time chaired one of the Supreme Soviet committees, concurred that “Akbar Mirzoev considered some of the requests, suggestions and edicts of Rahmon Nabiev unacceptable and even rejected them or left them unattended.” Clearly, the presence of regional strongmen at the top undercut state capabilities to extract and distribute resources, mobilise masses and regulate social relations.

53 Narodnaia gazeta, 1 November 1991.
56 Diplomatiiia Tadzhikistana. Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1994, p. 58. The Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between Tajikistan and Russia was signed as late as 25 May 1993.
Following the presidential elections, there was a lull in the struggle amongst elite factions, while they regrouped and prepared for future battles. Relative tranquility was also maintained by the personal efforts of Nabiev, who met with qozikalon and opposition leaders more frequently than with his own executives: "he would tell them [opposition leaders] 'Let us discuss things' and 'Please, table your requests', and so on. Most of the time the President would receive them tête-à-tête and negotiate with them secretly." This provided a feeble alternative to working out an overarching intra-elite pact which theoretically should have:

- confined the sphere of political action to rational, controllable processes, such as elections and parliamentary debates;
- precluded intervention of extraneous forces in decision-making;
- envisaged a more equitable distribution of benefits amongst regional factions.

The conflictual environment persisted in Tajikistan and needed only a single impetus to erupt into violence. It came in March 1992.

**Use and Abuse of Mass Mobilisation**

The government coalition struck first. On 6 March 1992, the Mayor of Dushanbe, Maqsud Ikromov, was arrested on charges of corruption. On 11 March 1992, one of the PMR leaders, Mirbobo Mirrahim, was sentenced to two years of imprisonment for defamation of the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Safarali Kenjaev. On 25 March 1992, Kenjaev convened the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet which recommended that Nabiev dismiss the Minister of Interior, Mamadayoz Navjuvonov, "for blatant violations in personnel policy, inept leadership, connivance in illegal privatising of state-owned vehicles and personal immodesty." The next day 500 Pamiris living in Dushanbe gathered in front of presidential residence on the Shahidon Square to defend Navjuvonov. The opposition saw it as a convenient moment to counterattack. As in

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60 His place was taken by Mirzotemur Mirzoev - a close relative of Abdumalik Abdullojonov. This move was widely interpreted in Dushanbe as Nabiev's 'repayment' for Abdullojonov's support during the presidential elections.
61 In February 1990, Mirrahim was put under investigation conducted by a special commission headed by Kenjaev. Kenjaev tried to present Mirrahim as the culprit behind bloodshed and violence in Dushanbe. A bitter personal feud sprang up between the two of them. (See: "Ba Mirbobo chi shud?" *Adolar,* No. 8, 1991, p. 3.)
62 *Tadzhikistan v ogne.* Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993, p. 154. The real reason for Navjuvonov's disgrace was his reluctance to obey orders from the Supreme Soviet to enforce the state of emergency and disperse demonstrators in the Autumn of 1991. Nabiev promised to remove him if he became President (*Sadoi mardum,* 31 October 1991), but later backed down.
September 1991, reinforcements from rural areas of Gharm and Qurghonteppa were brought in, and very soon the number of people in the Shahidon Square reached 3,000. On 27 March 1992, Shodmon Yusuf, Mohammadsharif Himmatzoda, Davlat Usmon, Tohir Abdujabbor and the Chairman of *La’li Badakhshon*, Amirbek Atobek, on behalf of the participants of the meeting put forward a list of demands, which included: resignation of Kenjaev; release of Ikromov from custody; dissolution of the Supreme Soviet; adoption of a new Constitution; organisation of multi-party elections to the new legislature - *Majlisi melli*; cessation of reprisals against the opposition.63

Nabiev, Kenjaev and Dustov urgently summoned representatives of the power agencies in order to make an inventory of what forces they could count on. The results were not encouraging for them:64

- the State Councillor, Major-General B. Rahmonov, disclosed that Nabiev's edict on the creation of a 700-strong National Guard, dated 22 December 1991, was never implemented, and that the National Guard servicemen who took an oath in January 1992 in front of Vice-President Dustov were in fact disguised Russian soldiers assembled to 'intimidate the opposition';

- the Chairman of the Defence Committee, Major-General F. Niyozov reported that he had received 37 armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and other heavy equipment, which, however, could not be used for lack of trained personnel;

- the Military Commissar of Tajikistan, Major-General M. Mahmadjonov said that he had prepared lists of 1,000 officers and NCOs of the reserve ready to be drafted; further questioning revealed that those lists contained only names, without addresses, military qualifications and personal data, and, henceforth, were useless;

- the Deputy Minister of Interior, Major-General A. Qahhorov deplored the preponderance of Gharmis and Pamiris in the police force, who not only refrained from active action against the demonstrators but deserted to them in whole units, following Shodmon Yusuf's appeal;

- the CSS Chairman, General A. Stroikin proclaimed the neutrality of his officers in domestic strife and expressed the personal opinion that the opposition meeting was not a 'serious business' anyway;

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63 *Vechernii Dushanbe*, 1 April 1992.
- the Border Troops Commander (under Russian jurisdiction), General L. Martovitskii said that his soldiers would not interfere in Tajikistan's domestic affairs under any circumstances:

- the Dushanbe Military Commandant, also the Commander of the Russian 201st Motor Rifles Division (MRD), Colonel V. Zabolotny explained that without explicit permission from the President of the RF, B. Yeltsin, and the Commander-in-Chief of the CIS Armed Forces, Air Marshal E. Shaposhnikov, he could not help the government of Tajikistan in any way.

Having no desire to acquiesce to the protesters' demands and being unable to resort to coercion, the government set up a Committee for Protection of Constitutional Order (CPCO) on 28 March 1992, which comprised activists from Leninobod, Kulob and Hissor. On 1 April 1992, they organised a mass meeting in support of President Nabiev and the Supreme Soviet. Thus, two permanent sit-ins came into existence in Dushanbe that together lasted for over a month - one in the Shahidon Square backed opposition, and another in the Ozodi Square, in front of the Supreme Soviet, supported the government. In the Shahidon Square slogans of political pluralism, freedom of the press and human rights may have been uttered, but, as a correspondent of the Russian reformist newspaper Nezavisimaia gazeta observed, "the vast majority of the 'democrats' - bearded people in peasant robes and skull-caps - had a weak understanding of political intricacies and quite often did not understand the very word 'democracy', but during confidential conversations eagerly told the correspondent that they had been instructed to come to the meeting by a mullah."65 The 'defenders of the constitutional order', assembled only a mile away, had been mobilised by traditional leaders in a similar fashion. In the village of Avangard in the Bokhtar raion of Kulob the Chairman of the local Soviet together with the village mullah explained to the residents in plain words that: the government does not send grain to the village any longer because of 'non-Muslim mullahs', democrats and 'Rastokhezians'; the CPT used to feed them, but once the 'Rastokhez mullahs' came to the fore, their dinner table went empty; Turajonzoda is the puppet of bloody Iranians, but, inshallah. Nabiev assisted by Russian soldiers will dispose of him.66 After this fiery pep-talk,

65 Nezavisimaia gazeta, 21 January 1993. Opposition newspapers printed materials portraying Kulobis as dolts organically incapable of embracing progressive ideas; take the following humorous dialogue, for example:
- Congratulations! The people of Farkhor [Southern Kulob] acquired consciousness, too. Their tents appeared [in the Shahidon Square].
- I also thought so. But then I found out that those were Gharmis living in Farkhor. (Rastokhez, No. 13, April 1992, p. 4.)

enthusiastic crowd boarded buses and lorries and motored to Dushanbe to join the Ozodi Square meeting.

On 12 April 1992, Akbar Turajonzoda and six Sufi leaders announced their support for the opposition. The number of protesters in the Shohidon Square had swollen to a staggering 50,000 by then. The government was plunged into panic, and a split in the ruling coalition emerged. Two Kulobis who held a personal grudge against Nabiev, Davron Ashurov and Hikmatullo Nasriddinov, resigned from the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Akbar Mirzoev, on the pretext of illness, real or feigned, withdrew from the power struggle. On 20 April 1992, the XIII Session of the Supreme Soviet commenced which was supposed to find a solution to the political crisis. The next day armed squads of the opposition occupied the parliament building and took some 20 people hostage, including 16 MPs and 2 Deputy Premiers. Safarali Kenjaev tendered his resignation, and opposition forces withdrew. However, on 29 April 1992 the Supreme Soviet reinstated him as the Speaker, which sparked another bout of demonstrations and hostage-taking. On 30 April 1992, Nabiev introduced direct presidential rule in Tajikistan, but both opposition and Nabiev's confederates ignored it. All elite factions hastily armed themselves, and their leaders negotiated directly, bypassing the president. Kenjaev and Dustov met with Turajonzoda, Khudonazarov held talks with Haidar Sharifzoda, and, generally, the political process in Tajikistan degenerated into a squabble amongst region-based strongmen. Liberal demagoguery was put aside. In Davlat Khudonazarov's words, "the political antagonism was reflected externally through inertia (a red flag with hammer or sickle for the government, a tri-colour banner for the opposition), but it was regional antagonism that was rapidly gaining strength." On 6 March 1992, Mirzo Samiev and Abdullo Ochilov, the only two Leninobodis in the DPT top leadership, left their party and joined Nabiev's camp. That same month the Kulob regional organisation abandoned the DPT. Charoghi ruz, the mouthpiece of the 'liberal' opposition that used to preach national unity of the Tajiks, suddenly admitted that in Tajikistan "regionalism has never been a malaise, it is rather a social phenomenon that, to an extent, is a natural part of the national psyche of our people ... Politicians who understand the situation in the republic well have not criticised the rise of localistic organisations, they have come to

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69 In a televised statement, both anathematised the DPT's 'Bolshevism' and 'extremism', and warned that if it came to power, "the best and honest cadres [ie., Northerners] will be killed." (Ibrohim Usmon. Soli Nabiev. Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1995, p. 29.)
head them."70 Any constructive political dialogue between the government and opposition became virtually impossible, not least of all because of the weakness of the central authority. Opposition leaders realised that they could gain more by exerting direct pressure on government structures.

The most alarming development in April 1992 was a rapid militarisation of the struggle for power - most political figures of any degree of prominence, including Kenjaev, Khudonazarov, Turajonzoda, Abdullojonov and even Qahhor Mahkamov acquired private armed units.71 Political assassinations became a harsh reality. On 3 May 1992, the Editor-in-Chief of the pro-government newspaper Sadoi mardum and member of the Supreme Soviet, Murodullo Sheraliev, was gunned down. Four days later a popular radio journalist and DPT activist, Olim Zarobekov, was killed. Anarchy and violence were engulfing Dushanbe, and, as in February 1990, criminal structures made their entry to the political arena.

Organised Crime and Politics

In 1990, there were 1,226 recidivists living in Tajikistan.72 Many of them formed gangs specialising in extortion, narcotics, smuggling and gambling. The number of these mafia-type entities rose from 4 in 1989 to 22 in 1992.73 They also constantly tried to perfect their structure and methods of operation: in every gang 'executive' groups (up to 30) committed crimes; the leader and his immediate entourage - 'the council' - did not participate in concrete crimes, confining themselves to strategic planning; and the support unit tackled financial issues, recruited personnel and took care of internal and external security.74 The notorious gang of Rauf Soliev, a Samarkandi, that operated in Dushanbe consisted of several hundred well-armed people; it was alleged that the gang enjoyed patronage of Tajikistan's Procurator General, Nurullo Khuva-idulloev, and had taken an active part in the events of 1990.75

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70 Charoghi ruq, No. 33 (54) 1992, p. 5.
72 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 5 April 1991.
73 Data disclosed by Dr Rahmatillo Zoirov during a seminar at the Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 14 February 1995.
An important feature of organised crime in Tajikistan is its rootedness in traditional social institutions. A recent study has shown that in the country "a criminal group is frequently organised and maintained by ties of kinship amongst its members.\(^7\)

Quite often a criminal gang encompasses male youths from one mahalla,\(^7\) and, given the regionalistic patterns of settlement in Dushanbe and other cities, it is sensitive to issues of sub-ethnic rivalry. Soliev's gang was based in the capital's suburb Obdoron, inhabited primarily by Kulobis; his deputy, Yaqubjon Salimov, was a Kulobi, which may explain the gang's involvement in the anti-Mahkamov coup in 1990. On the other hand, Dushanbe's Ispechak and Shomansur quarters, populated by Gharmis, had their own mobsters. The city's law-enforcement agencies had even developed psychological profiles of 'Khujandi', 'Kulobi', 'Samarkandi', 'Shomansuri' and other criminals according to their local identification.\(^7\)

On 29 April 1992, 13 criminal groupings that had assumed a collective name of the Youths of Dushanbe City (YDC), mostly of Gharmi extraction, from Shomansur, Ispechak, Ovul, Qozikhon and Qarotegin Street, held a meeting in one of Dushanbe's squares where they supported the opposition's political demands.\(^7\) One of the orators expostulated with assiduity that "these days only Mountain Tajiks are in all Dushanbe squares, and the government can play them against each other. In the Ozodi Square, Kulobis support Kenjaev, Nabiev and Saifulloev. [But] They have no relation to Kulobis ... Nabiev must pay for pitting Mountain Tajiks against one another. We have one issue today - Nabiev's resignation. We must drive him away from Tajikistan."\(^8\) Two days later armed bandits from Shomansur attacked the TV centre. They encountered no resistance from the 'neutral' police and "without a single casualty captured the television station, people's by name and subversive and mendacious in essence, and handed it over to the opposition."\(^8\)

As Aziz Niyazi has described the Islamist movement in Tajikistan, "to say the least, the IRP turned into a regionalistic, monoethnic organisation that found itself associated with mafia and other corrupt groups. The good intentions of the Islamic revolutionary romantics were paved in the

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\(^7\) In 1991, there were some 140 mahalla-based youth groupings 'with aggressive orientation' in Dushanbe, that often clashed in neutral zones such as Putovskii market in the centre of the city. (Interview with the Deputy Minister of Labour of the RT, Bekmahmad Qurbanov, Dushanbe, 18 March 1995.)


\(^8\) Ibrohim Usmon. Soli Nabiev. Dushanbe: [No publisher], 1995, p. 64.

\(^8\) Jumhuriyat, 15 June 1992.
road leading to Hades." The same characterisation could have been applied to practically every political organisation, pro-government or opposition - "each side's regionalist ties solidified in response to the security threat posed by the other side", and political leaders were not fastidious in using the netherworld elements with whom they were linked by business, conjugal and patrimonial ties. One of the founding fathers of Oshkoro in 1989 was 61-year old Sangak Safarov, who had spent 23 years in jail on various charges, including murder. His influence in the Kulob oblast was hard to overestimate. According to the region's Chairman of the Executive Committee, Qurban Mirzoaliyev, who became acquainted with Safarov in 1980, he was honoured to be addressed as 'brother' by bobo Sangak - then an obscure barman.

The Government of National Reconciliation, the Rise of Militias and the Descent to Civil War

On 1 May 1992, Nabiev made the last desperate attempt to create a loyal military force behind the presidency. His Decree No. 76 provided for the formation of a Special Tasks Battalion (STB) from volunteers in the Ozodi Square; 1,700 assault rifles were distributed amongst them the next day. Simultaneously, the President addressed the Supreme Soviet with a belligerent statement:

The tolerance exhibited by the government and the lengthy talks are aimed at one goal - to avert bloodshed ... I shall be frank with you. If we get away from slogans, the crux of the matter is as follows - the meeting in front of the Supreme Soviet building is a resolute protest of the people against the opposition meeting. It is a meeting in favour of a constitutional order and a law-based democratic state ...

The Qoziyot has overtly become the headquarters of the [opposition] meeting. The IRP and qozi have become its leaders. They have lied to such an extent that they have begun to believe their own fibs. They frighten

84 Contrary to some speculations, Safarov was not a 'thief-in-law' - the highest informal rank in the Soviet underworld; he was a 'cormorant' - a lower rung, which, however, ensured his authority amongst criminal figures not only in Tajikistan but also elsewhere in Central Asia. (Arkadi Dubnov. "Katastrofa v Tadzhikistane, o kotoroi v Rossii pochti nichego ne znaiut." Novoe vremia, No. 4, 1993, p. 14.)
people by saying that the government will close mosques, burn the sacred books and destroy Muslims ...

We have tolerated this so far. Tolerated it to a degree that astonished the world ... Let me repeat: our people is a peaceful people ... But we also should be aware of the fact that there are limits to any patience. We were patient when the opposition took a group of parliamentarians and two Deputy Premiers hostage. We were patient even when for two and a half days officials of the President's Office and the Cabinet were held hostage ... Praised be our patience. But, perhaps, enough is enough. We respect the opposition. But it seems that we respect it too much, it has sat on our heads and continued to put forward demands. The respect must be mutual. The opposition does not respect us. This is its will. If so, we shall not respect it any longer ...

Let it be known that I shall undertake all necessary measures to guarantee normalisation of the situation and people's security.

In response, firearms were issued to the Shahidon Square militia, headed by 'people's General' mullah Qiyomuddin from Qurghonteppa,88 who, with active cooperation from the Head of the State Automobile Inspectorate, Col. Habib Sanginov, cut the roads leading from Kulob to Dushanbe. Opposition commanders reached a 'gentlemen's agreement' with police authorities in Kofarnihon whereby the latter surrendered 275 machine-guns, 180 pistols and 10 vehicles to Qiyomuddin's forces.89 On 5 May 1992 a shoot-out occurred between drivers delivering supplies to the Ozodi Square from Kulob and opposition forces at a road block to the south of Dushanbe. This date can be regarded as the beginning of civil war in Tajikistan. During the next five days 108 people perished, 233 were wounded and 104 were reported missing as a result of skirmishes in the capital city.90

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88 The quantity and source of this weaponry are not clear. One author has written about a truckload of submachine-guns, not less than 5-6 thousand, delivered from the Qoziyat. (Ibrohim Usmon. Soli Nabiev. Dushanbe: [No publisher]. 1995, p. 73.) This information could not be confirmed. Earlier Qiyomuddin made an interesting statement: "We have armed groups. So far 27 thousand have signed up ... We are able to arm them all. We have very strong ties with our mujahed brothers - Ahmad Shah Mas'ud, Burhomuddin Rabbani and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar." (Sadot mardum. 25 April 1992.) While Qiyomuddin was renowned for his unsubstantiated albeit eloquent utterances (Turajonzoda called him Dr Goebbels of the Tajik people once), the fact remains that the opposition had had armed formations in early 1992 and probably even before that.
90 Charoghi raz, No. 20 (41) 1992, p. 3.
On 5 May 1992, Major-General Bahrom Rahmonov, an ethnic Uzbek who was in charge of the Presidential Guard, committed an act of treason. Having declared himself a grandson of Sufi sheikh Abdurahmon from Qarotegin, he defected to the opposition with 7 APCs and 450 firearms, and was appointed Chief of Staff of mullah Qiyomuddin’s militia, which by then had named itself the National Guard. The next day the National Guard took control over Dushanbe’s key facilities, including the presidential palace, the airport, bus terminals and the radio committee. Nарзullo Dustov fled to Kulob, Safarali Kenjæv escaped to Uzbekistan, Otakhon Saifulloe v and other high-place Leninobodis flew to Khujand. The meeting in the Ozodi Square was terminated; its Kulobi participants, headed by Haidar Sharifzoda, retreated to their patrimony in an organised fashion, carrying hundreds of arms received for the Special Tasks Battalion. However, Sangak Safarov and Rustam Abdurahimov were apprehended by the National Guard, beaten up and forced to make a public statement from which the following ‘facts’ transpired:

- the Leninobod mafia had deceived honest people of Kulob and used them to stay in power;
- the President is a nincompoop, and people of Tajikistan cannot relish peace and prosperity so long as he is in office;
- the real power is in the hands of a Russian KGB Colonel, whose name for an unknown reason could not be disclosed.

Nabiev lost, and on 7 May 1992 signed a protocol accepting the opposition’s demands, dismissing senior government figures, disbanding the Special Tasks Battalion and lifting the state of emergency. For two days it was not clear who controlled the situation in Dushanbe - opposition leaders announced the creation of the Supreme Consultative Council, but at the same time an armed group that had occupied Tajikistan’s radio, presumably the YDC, broadcast a statement on behalf of the Revolutionary Council of the Union of Progressive Forces claiming to have taken over the state. After a short period of confusion the opposition chose to refrain from a blatant violation of constitutional norms and on 9 May 1992 made Nabiev sign a power-sharing agreement. The President ceded most of his powers to the Cabinet, including control over personnel appointments, coercive structures and mass media. Fresh parliamentary elections were slated for December 1992. A new constitution was to be drafted by July 1992 by a commission which included five representatives from each of the following organisations - the IRP, the DPT, the PMR, La’li Badakhshon and the Qoziyot.

92 Adolat, No. 20 (32) 1992, p. 3.
93 Izvestiia, 8 May 1992.
On 11 May 1992, a Government of National Reconciliation (GNR) was formed, in which the opposition received 8 portfolios out of 24. Davlat Usmon became Deputy Premier in charge of law-enforcement agencies, courts, customs, archives, religions and regional policy. In reality, the opposition gained more control over central decision-making than corresponded to one-third of seats in the Cabinet. Its three representatives - Saifiddin Turaev, Akbar Turajonzoda and Asliddin Sohibnazarov - were made members of the Supreme Soviet Presidium. Akbarsho Iskandarov was confirmed as the Speaker. Mirbobbo Mirrahim was placed to head the republic's radio and TV. The National Guards and the YDC members developed a routine of taking hostages from amongst government officials and MPs if they disagreed with their policy. Nabiev was gradually edged out of running the country: in June 1992, 16 presidential edicts and 50 Cabinet resolutions were adopted; corresponding figures for May were 38 and 51. As Bess Brown has noted, "it is possible that Nabiev could have been forced out of office in May [1992], but the opposition leaders who negotiated the compromise with him decided against pressing for his resignation because, as ... Akbar Turajonzoda explained, they feared his departure might have a disruptive effect."

Indeed, under conditions of presidential rule Nabiev's signature was enough to make the GNR a legitimate entity. The Chairman of the Committee for Constitutional Supervision of the RT, A. Imomov, has delivered the following assessment of the April-May period:

Perhaps, political aspects of government appointments were faulty, which led to such a fundamental confrontation between opposing political forces ... However, the juridical basis of those acts was impeccable. They were issued by fully empowered, competent subjects with observance of necessary forms and procedures ... It is a different matter that the Supreme Soviet, having failed to occupy the principal position in political disputes and conflicts, fell under the influence of one force, then another ... The Supreme Soviet ... distanced itself from the burden and responsibility of governing the country, having shifted them onto the President, who already was not up to the mark in coping with his duties.

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94 Zafar Saidov, then First Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan, was taken hostage four times between May and October 1992. (Personal interview, Dushanbe, 2 January 1996.)
The legitimacy of the GNR was immediately rejected by Kulob and Khujand. On 12 May 1992, an extraordinary session of the Kulob oblast Soviet was held. It was more than an assembly of regional law-makers; Kulobi members of the Supreme Soviet and the Cabinet, town and village councillors, police commanders, leaders of criminal gangs, prominent mullahs, factory directors, kolkhoz chairmen and other strongmen took part in its work. All elites constituting the Kulobi regional clique put aside internal differences and (a) declared all presidential edicts and government’s decrees issued after 7 May 1992 null and void on the oblast’s territory; (b) subordinated all farms, enterprises and institutions to the regional Soviet; and (c) demanded an urgent reconvening of the Supreme Soviet in a safe location to rectify the political crisis. On 12 May 1992, on Haidar Sharifzoda’s orders, the recruits of the former STB attacked the mosque of Turajonzoda’s protege in Kulob, mullah Abdurahim, and issued an ultimatum to gozikalon for the immediate release of Sangak Safarov and Rustam Abdurahimov from IRP custody. Once free, these two charismatic figures set out to form para-military units throughout the region.

Addressing a session of the Leninobod oblast Soviet on 14 May 1992, the Procurator General of Tajikistan, also the strongman of Asht, Nurullo Khuvaiddulloev, said that "in the republic a coup d’etat has occurred, and those people who in previous times should have been brought before a criminal tribunal have ascended to the leadership. The President of the republic has lost the ability to govern ... We support the unity and integrity of Tajikistan, but because of the coup the question of secession has arisen." The region’s authorities appropriated full control over the economy, sanctioned formation of self-defence units and cut transmission of Dushanbe TV.

In June 1992, the political situation in Tajikistan appeared extremely complex. The opposition had a hold on Dushanbe and enjoyed strong support in Gharm, Qarotegin and the greater part of the Qurghonteppa oblast. The Badakhshani elite supported it reluctantly; it was concerned primarily with gaining and retaining as much autonomy as possible. Leninobod and Kulob were beyond the GNR’s control. The

100 Izvestiia, 8 May 1992.
101 For all practical purposes, it controlled central government at that time, but continued to refer to itself as opposition.
102 On 9 December 1991 the GBAO Soviet adopted a resolution on transforming the region into the autonomous republic within Tajikistan (GBAR). One month later the Supreme Soviet conceded that "this move reflects interests of the peoples of the GBAO and ... may be conducive to more active socio-economic development of the territory", and instructed the Cabinet to prepare concrete measures
President's will had been broken, but he was unwilling to cooperate with the opposition; in Shodmon Yusuf's sarcastic words, "Nabiev remains a toy which needs winding up every time you want to use it."\textsuperscript{103} The Supreme Soviet could not hold its sessions in Dushanbe because many deputies feared reprisals, so a lot of crucial government acts remained unratified. The Parliament's Speaker cared more about the needs of his home region than anything else - on 3 June 1992, in secret from the President and the Cabinet, he endorsed the formation of a GBAR National Guard comprising three battalions armed with APCs, anti-aircraft guns and other heavy equipment.\textsuperscript{104} The GNR had no influence over various armed formations that supposedly supported it; they took orders from the \textit{Qoziyot}, the IRP, individual politicians and criminal ringleaders.

Dushanbe's Procurator complained about a 40 percent increase in the crime rate in the city, especially robberies and killings - in the second half of May "investigation of 46 murders was underway, but there are a lot of obscure [neponiatnye] corpses appearing daily."\textsuperscript{105} After 10 May 1992, the CSS lost 80 percent of its personnel and all its archives, including files pertaining to organised crime.\textsuperscript{106} Following a riot in a high security prison at Rohati near Dushanbe, during which 40 warders were killed, hundreds of criminals dispersed throughout the country.\textsuperscript{107} Police structures were paralysed in Dushanbe; in the provinces, except Leninobod, they either dissolved or joined various militias.\textsuperscript{108}

When, on 16 May 1992, the Shahidon Square meeting finally ended, its participants returned home carrying arms and speedily set up illegal para-military units. By the end of May they had imposed a blockade on Kulob. For seven months that region suffered from acute shortages of food, medicines and basic commodities;\textsuperscript{109} whatever meagre supplies reached it came either by air or with convoys protected by Russian troops. The GNR's numerous demands to remove road blocks had no effect. On 28 May 1992, Premier Mirzoev told the Cabinet that "peaceful [sic] political confrontation has been

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{103} Vechnernii Dushanbe, 10 July 1992.
\textsuperscript{105} Vechnernii Dushanbe. 5 June 1992.
\textsuperscript{108} In the Moskva district of Kulob 26 police officers took over the precinct building and arsenal and formed a separate unit to defend 'the constitutional government'. (Rajabi Munki. Amirshoi Khatloni. \textit{Nomus}. Dushanbe: Paik, 1994, p. 141.)
\textsuperscript{109} Population of the region was reduced to eating grass; as many as 30,000 people succumbed to hepatitis and other life-threatening infections. (Hikmatullo Nasriddinov. \textit{Tarkish}. Dushanbe: Afsona, 1995, p. 199.)
\end{flushleft}
transformed into armed confrontation and has moved from Dushanbe to other regions, the Kulob and Qurghonteppa oblasts in particular. The opposition's supporters and its adversaries have created illegal military formations which set up armed posts and patrols." The Tajikistan of 1992 began to resemble the Lebanon of 1975, where "the government does not exist, and whatever part of it exists it has no authority, and whoever has authority it is not the government." Parallels with Lebanon can also be drawn on a different plane. As Theodor Hanf has observed, "whereas the threat of violence may be an effective means of attaining political goals, once the spiral of violence is set in motion, people lose sight of the original goal. It is the fear of being marginalised, assimilated, or banished that accentuates the intensity of hostility between the warring communities. The more threatened communities become, the more they resort to violence to preserve their endangered identities, and the more apprehensive they become about the prospects of resolving the conflict, lest they lose whatever minimal gains they have made thus far." In Tajikistan, region-based elite factions formed political parties and organisations that mobilised mass support exploiting traditional idea-logics in the respective communities. They used modern ideologies to recruit acolytes in the capital city and amongst non-eponymous population, as well as to project a favourable image onto potential benefactors abroad. In a post-Communist political system where (a) a new elite agreement on procedures was yet to be reached, (b) the decision of the majority could be questioned, and (c) the majority was not inclined to show self-restraint in treating interests of minorities, crude force was the most potent factor in the fight for power, that is, for a greater share in central authority. Ironically, the conspiratorial activities of 1990, the mass demonstrations of 1991 and the terror of 1992 virtually eliminated the notion of central authority in Tajikistan, reducing political process to what it was centuries before - internecine warfare amongst principalities, where all parties involved were primarily concerned about defending their historical areas. In Buri Karimov's apt description, in 1992 "the old, unified Tajikistan was no more. There existed semi-feudal dwarfish states with their own laws, forces and vectors of activity."

A confidential report prepared by a group of Russian analysts for the Cabinet of Ministers of the RT on the basis of a sociological survey conducted in June 1992 stated

113 Vechernii Dushanbe, 12 October 1994.
that "the process, whereby mass psyche gets accustomed to socio-economic and political autonomisation of the regions, is highly visible." This conclusion was complemented by an analysis of public trust in government institutions which showed a shift of loci of power from centre to periphery (Table 7.4). High percentages of non-committal answers should be attributed to the state of confusion in people's minds.

Table 7.4 People's Evaluation of Political Institutions, June 1992

<table>
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<th>President</th>
<th>Premier</th>
<th>Supreme Soviet</th>
<th>Local Administrations</th>
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</tbody>
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On regional and district levels, efficient organs of administration emerged (usually called 'headquarters') that comprised all local strongmen whose authority emanated from traditional or official sources - 'solidarity-makers' and 'instrumental leaders', in Shmuel Eisenstadt's categorisation. A good example of such an arrangement could be provided by the Headquarters of the Fatherland's Salvation (HFS) of the Jerghatol raion in Ghar, which included: Deputy Chairman of the district Executive Committee (the Headquarters' Chairman); the Chief of police; the Military Commissar; director of the local agro-industrial association; an IRP official; a DPT official; a Qoziyot delegate; a CSS officer; the editor of a district newspaper.

The HFS was funded through 'voluntary' donations from local businesses and individuals. The presence of the district's Military Commissar on its board ensured that the HFS had complete data on all males of draft age, who could, however, avoid dangers of patrol and raid service by paying up to 40,000 roubles to the HFS. The HFS-type structures operated in Badakhshan, Ghar, districts to the east and south of Dushanbe and inside the city, and the greater part of Qurghonteppa. They were not

114 Narod i politika. (Tadzhikistan: iium' 1992 goda.) Type-written document dated 22 July 1992 and signed by Professor V. Boiko, p. 3.
sanctioned by the GNR, and took orders, when they did, from the Front of the
Fatherland's Salvation (FFS) - an organisation set up in Dushanbe on 20 June 1992,
without GNR authorisation, by the DPT, the IRP, Rastokhez and La'li Badakhshan,
under the leadership of Shodmon Yusuf.

Grassroots power structures in Kulob, Hissor and the Vakhsh raion of Qurghonteppa
were mirror images of the HFS and usually operated under the name of Headquarters
of the National Guard (HNG). Initially they were coordinated, rather poorly, through
the offices of Kulob's Executive Chairman, Qurbonali Mirzoaliev. In Kulob, the
consolidation of the HNGs was achieved under the guidance of Sangak Safarov,
whereas in Hissor it was Safarali Kenjaev who emerged as the principal warlord,
having created the People's Front of Tajikistan - Hissor (PFT-H) on 8 September
1992. The PFT's constituent conference was held in Tursunzoda as late as 6 October
1992, uniting the PFT-H, Safarov's HNG and the gangs of Rauf Soliev and Yaqubjon
Salimov, but de facto cooperation amongst Kulobi and Hissori commanders had begun

It is difficult to say whether Tajik political leaders could have predicted all the
consequences of the political struggle based on militant regionalism. Qozikalon, for
example, confessed that he was not in a position to explain how confrontation between
the Qoziyot, the IRP and their opponents had turned into a war between the regions.118
It is noteworthy that although Turajonzoda was apparently present at the FFS
inauguration meeting he was not included in its staff. What is important, however, is
that very few politicians in the summer of 1992 managed to transcend openly the
confines of patrimonialism. The opposition's Davlat Khudonazarov and the Executive
Chairman of the Bokhtar district, Abdulmajid Dostiev, a Kulobi, were amongst them.
Throughout June and July 1992, they tried to prevent bloodshed in Qurghonteppa,
risking their lives, but with very little success.119

Right from the start, the conflict in Tajikistan was a confrontation amongst sub-ethnic
groups which developed in a progression from regional mobilisation to regional
domination. In late May 1992, massive population cleansing commenced in Tajikistan:
Gharmis were expelled from the Kulob region, and Kulobis were driven from Gharm,
Qarotegin and Lenin and Faizobod raions to the south-east of Dushanbe. Displaced
Gharmis poured into the capital (200 by June, over 14,000 by August), bolstering

118 Vechernii Dushanbe, 10 August 1992.
119 Eventually Abdulmajid Dostiev joined the PFT, after the FFS militiamen burned his house and
houses of 27 members of his family - "in the wake of this incident he could not look his relatives in
the FFS ranks. On 5 July 1992, the FFS announced that "we have decided to assume the task of averting ... coercive pressure on the democratic forces of the republic"; several days later the FFS Deputy Chief of Staff, Asliddin Sohibnazarov, clarified exactly how this task was to be accomplished: "it is high time we declared war on the people of Kulob, and on the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kulob region, Qurbonali Mirzaaliev. All of us must take up arms." 

In a similar fashion, refugees fleeing from the Ghrami-dominated areas concentrated in Kulob, numbering almost 90,000 by early September 1992, and providing the local National Guard and the PFT with unlimited manpower. Kulob's leaders may have formulated their policies in terms of defending the 'constitutional order' and the fight against Islamic fundamentalism and Wahhabism, but beneath these slogans a clear image of the enemy crystallised - that of a vicious stranger belonging to a rival sub-ethnic group. An IRP official was absolutely correct when saying that "these days the label 'Wahhabi' is stuck indiscriminately ... on representatives of the entire region. Today people from Rasht, Ghrarm, Vakhyo, Tajikobod, Darband, and so on, are meant by this term." And an obscure head of the Uzbek militia in Western Qurghontepepa put the essence of the civil conflict, as perceived by dozens of field commanders, in a nutshell: "you are not even local Tajiks, you are strangers, from the mountains, we don't have enough land already, so clear off to your Pamirs and Ghrarm." 

By July 1992, Kulob and Ghrami-dominated districts of republican subordination had been 'homogenised'. The epicentre of the conflict now moved to Qurghontepepa, where neither of the sub-ethnic factions constituted a majority, and zones of influence were not clear. On 27-28 June 1992, the first combat engagement between Kulobi and Ghrarmi formations occurred in the Vakhsh raion, involving 400 fighting men and at least two APCs. In the two months that followed, incessant skirmishes throughout the Qurghontepepa oblast took the lives of 1,500 people, mostly civilians. Several attempts at peace-making failed, especially after the Independent Battalion of the Interior Ministry, composed mainly of Pamirs, which had been sent to Qurghontepepa from Dushanbe as a separation force, opened fire on the Kulobis. The situation deteriorated further when, on 22 July 1992, under pressure from the opposition.

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President Nabiev signed a decree appointing Nurali Qurbonov, a Gharmi from Vakhyo, as the Executive Chairman of the Qurghonteppa oblast, conferring on him dictatorial powers in that region.\textsuperscript{129}

The Character and Methods of Civil War

It should be clear by now that the journalistic interpretation of the civil war in Tajikistan as the "fighting between the Communists and their opponents, belonging to an alliance between Islamists and democrats"\textsuperscript{130} is misleading. Some comments, such as "in the power struggle between the Communist hard-liners and their various opponents, it was the hard-liners who bore much of the responsibility for thwarting compromise and using violence" and "much of the worst political violence in the country during 1992 took place in the southern province of Qurghonteppa, where support for the reformers was strong. The violence was largely the doing of the Kulyab militia"\textsuperscript{131} are more than misleading - they are overt distortion of facts and partisanship. Opposite, but equally absurd explanations stemming from ideological cliches, maintain that "beginning in May 1992, the spontaneous popular resistance to Islamist forces was gaining strength. Born in the Kulob oblast, the popular uprising rapidly engulfed an absolute majority of the republic's regions. All bloody attempts of the Islamists to break the popular resistance failed. As a result, the pro-Islamic leadership tumbled down."\textsuperscript{132}

Perhaps, it would be helpful to highlight several major features of the civil war in Tajikistan in May - October 1992.

1. This was a conflict between sub-ethnic groups, where Kulobis and Gharmis were protagonists, assisted, respectively, by Uzbeks and Hisoras, and Pamiris. The Leninobod leadership, despite its initial belligerent statements, preferred to stay neutral.\textsuperscript{133} In May 1992, it blocked the Anzob pass, rendering any attacks from the South impossible. On the several occasions that Safarali Kenjaev tried to persuade Khujandis to join him or at least help the PFT with money and equipment, "they grew

\textsuperscript{133} Life in the North, mostly self-sufficient and oriented to Uzbekistan and Russia, saw almost no disruption in 1992: "Being in Khujand, it is hard to imagine that there is a war being waged in this country. Public transport works, bazaars and stores function, there are wedding corteges in the daytime, and the streets are lit in the evening." (Arkadii Dubnov, 'Deputat dogovorilis', Teper' delo za polevymi komandirami.' Novoe vremia, No. 49, December 1992, p. 15.)
an additional pair of legs and ran away". Sangak Safarov accused Nabiev of betrayal of the Ozodi Square demonstrators and called Leninobodi politicians "eunuch rulers, incapable of decisive steps and fearful of responsibility." The North sent humanitarian aid to starving Kulob, but categorically refused arms deliveries.

2. This was a defensive war. As in Lebanon 17 years before, militias 'were superb defenders of their own, but poor invaders of others' territory. After the fronts were established, the enclaves overrun and the respective minorities expelled, there was a military stalemate." The mountainous terrain of Gharm and Badakhshan made these regions virtually impregnable to intrusions of anything short of a regular army.

3. As the spiral of internal violence uncoiled, guerilla groups, self-defence units, bands of vigilantes, criminal gangs and other illegal armed formations multiplied. The war brought them forth, and it was in their interest to protract it. Opposition leaders and their Kulobi opponents agreed on a cessation of fighting twice - on 29 June 1992 in Qurghonteppa, and on 27 July 1992 in Khorog, but both times the truce was violated on the day of signing by independent field commanders. Control over lucrative enterprises, such as cotton plantations, oil refineries and motor depots, was a major attraction to them. In November 1992, the town of Kolkhozobod to the south of Qurghonteppa, the centre of long-staple cotton production, changed hands six times as a result of infighting amongst militias nominally subordinated to the PFT.

4. Terror in all its manifestations, rather than combat engagements, was the main modality of war. In Michael Humphrey's phrasing, "the main aim is not to destroy physical place, but to destroy the living attachment to place through death, death of the body and the living cultural worlds of practices and memories. The destruction of cultural worlds through massacre or flight is designed to establish exclusive internal maps of place by eliminating rival maps. The term 'ethnic cleansing' encapsulates the elements of murder, humiliation and cultural destruction central to the politics of civil
Expulsions, hostage-taking, kidnapping and identity-card murders were practised by all parties. In the dry words of the Amnesty International report, "there were allegations of the deliberate targeting of non-combatant civilians by both sides ... although there are no reliable estimates of the numbers of victims." Gharmi fighters periodically raided colleges in Dushanbe, picked up students from Kulob and shot them. Pamiri bandits who formed the backbone of the FFS forces in the capital city robbed and killed Russians, Uzbeks and Tajiks from Leninobod and Kulob, sending the loot, especially to the Pamirs, Uzbekistan and even Afghanistan; their atrocities eventually compelled the traditional criminal underworld of Shomansur to serve Pamiris with the warning that if the bacchanalia of pillage continued, war would be declared on them. For their part, the opposition's adversaries indulged in extrajudicial arrests and executions with equal ease: "a passport with Badakhshani registration stamp, a photograph of Davlat Khudonazarov, a refusal to denounce gozikalon, a mere allegation of belonging to the opposition were enough grounds for arrest and elimination. The genocide took place mainly according to regional affiliation." Civilians, who are normally averse to any forms of violence, abetted their 'own' militias, in a belief that only the terror could deter the other side, and claimed that their violence was just an act of retaliation.

5. The involvement of patronymic associations in the civil war brought to the fore the custom of blood feud, which made the conflict even more ugly and uncontrollable. The slaying of some relatives compelled the rest to join one of the two fighting camps, with arms in hand. Personal vendettas were waged at all levels, beginning with Davlat

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145 As a chairman of an Uzbek (Urghut) kolkhoz in Qorghonteppa put it, "opposition plunged Urghuts into misery. Eighty percent of their houses were burnt. I buried thirty of the massacred myself, including women and children ... Cruelty has possessed the people. We are also accused of sins, but in comparison with Gharmis' bestiality they are kids' stuff." (Golos Tadzhikistana, 13 September 1992.)

146 The case of Faizali Saidov, one of the most ruthless commanders of the PFT, is a typical one. In mid-June 1992 he was in charge of a 10-strong self-defence unit of a sovkhoz near Qorghonteppa. His 65-year old father was arrested by opposition at the city bazaar. Saidov immediately took 40 Gharmi peasants hostage and entered negotiations concerning his father's release, which he was ultimately promised. Having set the hostages free, he discovered his father's burnt and savagely mutilated corpse two days later. Saidov gathered his male family members, classmates and co-workers and went to Sangak Safarov, who provided the new 200-strong formation with arms. (Hasan Yusuf. Nomusu nangi millat. Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993, pp. 10-12.) Saidov's pathological, unbound hatred of Gharmis and Pamiris eventually led to his mortal confrontation with Safarov.
Usmon, several of whose relatives were murdered by Kulobis in Qurghonteppa, and affecting numberless fighters on both sides, like a PFT field commander who made the following horrifying statement:  

This is Asia. You cannot fight here in velvet gloves. There is only one way not to go insane here - spill rivers of blood! Having adjusted to them, you stop noticing them. And you have to understand one more thing - your enemy does not deserve to tread this land. I realised that when I saw my family - mother, wife, and three kids - dead. Not only dead - before killing them, Islamists had performed despicable atrocities on them. Now, when an enemy falls to my hands, it is not enough for me to kill him. I want him to die slowly and painfully, being deprived first of his ears, then tongue, nose, fingers ... He screams, choking with blood, and I recall dead bodies of my children with bellies stuffed with manure and pity only one thing - that I can't extend his suffering for all eternity.

In summary, the assessment of the civil war in Tajikistan made by the former US Ambassador to Dushanbe, Stanley T. Escudero, appears to be most convincing: 'It is not an ideological conflict at all. It is a battle for power between two groups that represent different regions of the country ... [it is] impossible to distinguish between communists and noncommunists in this war. This war is not a 'good guy-bad guy situation'."  

In order to conclude the discussion on the Communists' role in the conflict, it should be noted that in the summer of 1992 the CPT still enjoyed the greatest public support of all political parties in Tajikistan (Table 7.5).

| Table 7.5 Levels of Popular Trust in Political Parties and Organisations, June-July 1992 |
|---------------------------------|----------|
| CPT                            | 40%      |
| DPT                            | 10%      |
| IRP                            | 6%       |
| Oshkoro                        | 4%       |
| Rastokhez                      | 3%       |
| La`li Badakhshon                | 2%       |


The CPT retained a membership of some 70,000\textsuperscript{149} and had the largest faction in the Supreme Soviet - 54 out of the total of 230 deputies.\textsuperscript{150} However, its leadership remained neutral in the conflict and "did not conduct work amongst the people, determine its positions clearly or undertake measures, or even wag its tongue, to support the constitutional order against the illegal fascist deeds of the opposition. In the majority of towns and districts of the republic, the primary organisations of this party did not function at all."\textsuperscript{151} According to some reports, in August 1992 the CPT discussed possible cooperation with the opposition on issues pertaining to the abolition of presidency and organisation of fresh parliamentary elections,\textsuperscript{152} but nothing concrete transpired. Interestingly, the family of Shodi Shabdolov (a Pamiri), the CPT First Secretary, was harassed by the PFT combatants more than once.\textsuperscript{153}

**Ethnic Dimension of the Conflict**

Michael Orr wrote in early 1993 that "it was expected that the conflict would derive from the rivalries between the different national groups within the country, such as the Tadjiks and Uzbek populations [sic], or begin with attacks on the Russian minority. The Tadjik Civil War has been almost entirely a fight between different groups of Tadjiks."\textsuperscript{154} Actually, such a situation was not entirely unexpected. It has been discussed earlier that there were no tensions between the eponymous population and migrants from the European Soviet Union in Tajikistan, and that serious animosity did exist between Uzbeks and mohajirs in the Qurghonteppa region. During the days of the Shahidon Square meeting, the opposition newspaper *Haft ganj* published a peculiar analysis of Nabiev's regime from an ethnic perspective: "The government, generally, relies on non-Tajiks, especially Uzbeks ... Naturally, the anti-national government could not have based itself on the authentic population. The second pillar of the government is Russian-speakers, but since the collapse of the Communist empire they have lost their influence ... Only grandchildren of bloodsucking Chchenghiz-khan [ie. Uzbeks] could have been capable of spilling the Tajiks' blood twice in the past two years."\textsuperscript{155}

Akbar Turajonzoda met with representatives of the Russian-speaking communities on 4 May 1992 and assured them that the opposition deemed retention of non-eponymous

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\textsuperscript{149} *Golos Tadzhikistana*, 21 April 1992.
\textsuperscript{150} *Golos Tadzhikistana*, 7 July 1992.
\textsuperscript{152} Vechernii Dushanbe, 17 August 1992.
\textsuperscript{153} Interview with the First Secretary of the CPT city organisation of Dusharbe, Isomiddin Salohiddinov, Dushanbe, 4 April 1995.
\textsuperscript{155} *Haft ganj*, 19 (31) 1992, p. 7.
population vitally important to the country's future. However, when on 10 May 1992 anti-Nabiev forces marched to capture the CSS compound, Shodmon Yusuf proclaimed all Russians 'hostages' to guarantee the non-interference of the 201st MRD. The statement was broadcast on TV three times, sending shock waves throughout Dushanbe. One of the FFS instructions signed by the 'father of Tajik democracy' some three months later declared that "[all] people of Russian and Uzbek nationalities, as well as Tajiks of Kulobi origin are declared hostages for the period of combat activities." On 15 October 1992, soldiers of mullah Abdughaffor occupied School No. 8 in Dushanbe and held all its Russian pupils at gunpoint for several hours, demanding heavy equipment from the 201st MRD. Constant psychological pressure and the sense of being at the mercy of unruly militias forced Russian-speakers to leave in droves - 104,000 fled Tajikistan in 1992, although physical casualties amongst them were comparatively low - 50 in all, mostly those caught in cross-fire and victims of banditry.

Uzbeks, especially the Loqais and Urghuts living in the Qurghonteppa region, became main targets of Gharmi paramilitary units, who employed scorched-earth tactics in zones of compact Uzbek settlement - in a certain Uzbek sovkhoz only 3 out of 46 houses remained intact after the opposition forces' attack. In July-August 1992, up to 30,000 Uzbeks may have left Qurghonteppa for Uzbekistan and Hisor. On 7 September 1992, President Karimov of Uzbekistan said that his country could not cope with the influx of refugees and added that "present events in Tajikistan, the lawlessness that spreads there, demand extraordinary measures." Those Uzbeks who stayed unleashed a campaign of terror against Gharmis and Pamiris. The Loqais, as in the days of the basmachi movement, formed the most deadly, well-organised and disciplined units; only this time their leader's name was not Ibrahim-bek, but Mahmud Khudoyberdyev, who had allied with Sangak Safarov but acted quite independently of the latter.

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159 Abdughaffor Khudoydodov was born in 1954 in Gharm and spent his youth in Qurghonteppa where he joined the Islamist movement. In 1986 he moved to Dushanbe and soon became imam of a mosque in the southern suburb of Dushanbe, inhabited by Gharmis. Mullah Abdughaffor maintained close ties with the IRP leadership, but his relations with qozikalon were always strained.
161 Izvestiia, 6 May 1994. Amazingly, in October 1992, Akbarsho Iskandarov declared that there was no mass exodus of Russians, only "separate instances of moving out." (Kommersant-Daily, 30 October 1992.)
162 Vek, 27 (134), 14 July 1995, p. 5.
Safarov masterfully used ideas of interethnic peace in his propaganda: "If Islamists start killing Russians, I will skin them alive. All people living in our land - Tajiks, Uzbeks, Russians, Tatars, Koreans, Jews and others - should stay together." However, once Gharmis and Pamiris were disposed in Qurghonteppa, the HNG commanders did their Uzbek comrades-in-arms out of their share of victory. As one of the Uzbek strongmen put it, "it is clear now that we made a mistake allying with Kulobis. We should have stayed neutral ... Kulobis act arbitrarily and shamelessly rob us of all prestigious jobs."

Analysis of the losses sustained by the PFT units under Kenjaev's command reveals that ethnic Uzbeks formed a substantial part of the anti-opposition forces, while the share of Russians was negligible (Table 7.6). Another important conclusion is that prior to the second half of October 1992, the PFT fighters were killed almost exclusively near their places of birth and/or residence, which means that they were engaged in defensive or localised mopping-up operations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>May 1992 - March 1993</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>292 (55.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>228 (43.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>4 (0.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>6 (1.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>530 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Victory Without Conciliation: A Partial Elite Settlement**

Throughout the summer of 1992, the President and the Supreme Soviet Chairman announced at least two ceasefires and three general amnesties in an attempt to stabilise the situation, but to no avail. The GNR had no authority even amongst its own armed supporters, who were the real masters in the capital city. On 24 August 1992, a Pamiri militant from *La'lli Badakhshon*, Rahimbek Nurullobekov, ambushed and killed Tajikistan's Procurator General, Nurullo Khuvaidulloev. On 31 August 1992, the unit of mullah Abdughaffor seized several government buildings in Dushanbe and took

169 The broad public believed that Akbar Turajonzoda was behind this assassination; as a result, mass protests erupted at Khuvaidulloev's patrimony in Asht - several mosques were burnt, and all known Islamists and opposition sympathisers were brought before the elders and took a solemn oath to respect the constitutional order and not to harm a fellow-villager in any circumstances. (V.I. Bushkov, D.V. Mifkulski. Istoriia grazhdanskoi voiny v Tadzhikistane. Moscow: Institut etnologii i antropologii RAN, 1996, p. 138.) Once again, the sense of local solidarity proved to be the most powerful regulator of social behaviour, stronger even than religious sentiments.
32 people hostage - ministers, parliamentarians and senior public servants. One of them, Deputy Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kulob oblast, Saifiddin Sangov, who had come to the capital to negotiate a resumption of grain deliveries, was subsequently brought to Abdughaffor’s mosque, savagely tortured and murdered. President Nabiev sought and received shelter at the 201st MRD headquarters, but on 7 September 1992, he was apprehended by the YDC’s Ismat Habibulloev and mullah Abdughaffor at the Dushanbe airport and forced to sign a letter of resignation at gunpoint. In the wake of this coup Akbarsho Iskandarov became Acting President, Abdumalik Abdullojonov was appointed as Acting Premier, and the opposition finally attained total control over the government, which turned out to be even more helpless than the GNR.

The country was saturated with weapons - illegal para-military formations may have possessed 18,000 firearms, but in early Autumn 1992 neither of the sides had heavy equipment and the organisational ability to achieve decisive victory. However, localised fighting intensified everywhere, especially in and around Qurghonteppa. By the end of September, this city had been reduced to rubble; its population had plummeted from 70,000 to just over 5,000. Eyewitnesses thus described the situation in Qurghonteppa: "There is no authority or justice in the city today. Nobody knows the exact number of the dead. Many corpses simply lie on the streets and in the gutters uncollected, decomposing in the heat. Hundreds of people have gone missing, and it is not clear whether they have been murdered, taken hostage and are hiding in the basements. Fires and marauding plague the city ... The peaceful population is terrorised, but what particular group does that is hard to establish. Commanders of formations unanimously claim that they will deal with robbers and killers themselves, denying their men's participation." Similar conditions prevailed in other zones of fighting, such as Norak, Yovon and Shahrinav. Garrisons of the 201st MRD were the

171 Habibulloev was one of the most notorious racketeers in Dushanbe and had stood trial for participating in the riots of February 1990. (Arkadii Dubnov. "Prodam BTR, kupliu dom v Rossi." *Novoe vremya*, No. 43, October 1992, p. 9.)
174 Taped interview with Mo’azza Osmanova - Deputy Head of Kolkhozobod hukumat (district administration), 27 March 1995.
only islands of security for civilians. Russian forces maintained strict neutrality in the domestic conflict in Tajikistan, despite numerous provocations from both sides, until 24-25 October 1992, when they helped Iskandarov’s government to repel the PFT’s attack on Dushanbe, headed by Safarali Kenjaev and Rustam Abdurahimov.176

On 16 November 1992, after a long break the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan convened. For the first time ever the parliament’s session was held not in Dushanbe, but near Khujand. Its XVI Session, aided by the presence of 24 main field commanders from all sides,177 worked out a new configuration of elite compromise in the country:

- the Leninobodis agreed to sacrifice Rahmon Nabiev, whose resignation was confirmed by the parliament;
- the institution of presidency was abolished;
- Emomali Rahmonov, a 40-year old People’s Deputy from Kulob,178 was elected as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet;
- Abdumalik Abdullojonov retained the premiership;
- in the newly appointed Council of Ministers only one person represented Gharm, others were from Kulob, Leninobod and Hisor;
- the Kulob and Qurghonteppa oblasts were merged again.

Regional strongmen from the North and the South achieved a power-sharing compromise from which Gharmis and Pamiris were excluded. By this time opposition politicians had ostensibly lost faith in their cause, having become hostage to their criminal allies in Dushanbe. Akbar Turajonzoda spent most of the time shuttling between Moscow and Tehran and did not come to the session at all. Shodmon Yusuf announced the disbandment of the FFS on 10 October 1992, but its field commanders refused to obey and accused Yusuf of treachery.179 Davlat Khudonazarov supported the decisions of the Supreme Soviet, saying that “most of the troubles that bedevilled Tajikistan are fruits of the labour of this very parliament. However, there is no way

176 On 24 October 1992, several hundreds of armed Hissoris captured the Presidentia palace, but soon were slaughtered by fighters of Jumakhon Buidokov - the godfather of Garm criminal gangs in Dushanbe and the YDC leader - who had created the so-called National Democratic Army (NDA) to take over from the FFS. Russian soldiers destroyed Kenjaev’s artillery systems and organised physical protection of Iskandarov and his top officials - one of them said that “the system of power in the city is paralysed. Everything hinges on Russian troops. If Russia withdraws - a new Karabakh will begin.” (Kommersant-Daily, 28 October 1992.)
178 Rahmonov was born in Danghara and grew up in Sangak Safarov’s mahalla, who became his patron. In early November 1992, Rahmonov made a meteoric rise from the position of a sovkhoz director to the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Kulob oblast, to replace Jiyonkhon Rizoev, conveniently killed on 28 October by bobo Sangak.
out, because it is the only lawful entity in Tajikistan, and all problems must be resolved according to law."  

Tohir Abdujabbar stated that Tajikistan needed a strong ruler, not necessarily democratically elected - "what matters is that he must possess authority to make people fulfil his orders ... Let him declare himself the shah of Tajikistan, or whoever else, and let him rule for 50, 100 years - the most important thing is that he should cope with his responsibilities."  

After the XVI Session, Leninobod made tremendous infusions of money and weaponry into the PFT which Sangak Safarov had come to head after Kenjaev's fiasco in Dushanbe. More importantly, Uzbekistan, with the explicit approval of Moscow, sent heavy equipment, instructors and even regular army units to aid Kulobi and Hissori militias, which in the beginning of December began to coalesce into a formidable 8,000-strong force with a unified chain of command.  

On 10 December 1992, the PFT formations entered Dushanbe, practically without a fight, installed Rahmonov in office, and by the end of the year brutally pacified the entire Qurghonteppa region and the Gharm group of districts, causing tens of thousands of refugees to cross the border with Afghanistan. The civil war was over. Its gruesome results included:

- 27,000 dead;
- 700,000 internally displaced people and 60,000 refugees in Afghanistan;
- 36,000 destroyed houses;
- total economic damage of US$ 7 billion.

The main political result of the war was the establishment of a new social order in Tajikistan based on the ascendency of one sub-ethnic group - the Kulobis - in all government and many non-government structures, especially in the central organs of power (Table 7.7). An autocratic style of administration, mass reprisals, concessions to other elite factions, especially from the North, have undoubtedly helped Rahmonov's

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180 Video recording of the XVI Session of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan. Tape 1, 16 November 1992. (Courtesy of Mr Sayf Rahimov, Chairman of the State Committee for Cinematography of the RT.)  
181 Video recording of the XVI Session of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan. Tape 2, 17 November 1992. (Courtesy of Mr Sayf Rahimov, Chairman of the State Committee for Cinematography of the RT.)  
183 According to Ashiddin Sohibnazarov, who was Deputy Premier in Iskandarov's Cabinet from September to November 1992, and at the time was the only senior opposition politician left in Dushanbe, on 7 December 1992 he summoned over 100 pro-opposition commanders and begged them to evacuate quietly in view of the adversary's superior strength: "Leave Dushanbe. You can shoot me, but casualties amongst civilians must be avoided." (Taped interview with Ashiddin Sohibnazarov, Dushanbe, 1 March 1995.)  
184 Information provided by Tajikistan's Deputy Minister of Labour, Bekmahmad Qurbonov, during an interview in Dushanbe on 18 March 1995.
regime to survive and even consolidate its rule, despite the on-going low-intensity armed resistance in vast areas to the east of Dushanbe. However, as Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh pointed out, "the Government does not want to sacrifice its short-term gains for long-term stability, which would mean making peace with the Opposition as well as creating mechanisms for integrating the different regions in the political process."\(^{185}\)

**Table 7.7 Regional Composition of Top Decision-Making Bodies in the Republic of Tajikistan, 1992 - 1995**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top Positions in the Cabinet, Parliament and Head of State's Administration</th>
<th>Leninobodis</th>
<th>Kulobis</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>62 (December 1992)</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68 (May 1995)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The crucial factor behind the incumbent regime's relative stability has been the military and economic support of Russia. Since December 1992 the international context of the conflict in Tajikistan has been the dominant one, and as such it deserves a separate, thorough analysis, which is beyond the scope of this study. As a preliminary remark, though, it is difficult to understand why Moscow, having a lot of vested interests in Tajikistan (protection of ethnic Russians, to name but one), remained neutral for so long. Russian diplomats and the military stationed in the republic recommended a more active policy aimed at establishing peace in Tajikistan immediately after the eruption of violence in May 1992; however, the Moscow leadership, especially State Secretary, Gennadii Burbulis, and Security Council Secretary, Yurii Skokov, advised President Yeltsin against such a move.\(^{186}\) Perhaps, they made the same mistake as Gorbachev's envoys in October 1991, assessing the confrontation in Tajikistan in purely ideological terms. As Colonel Evgenii Merkulov, Commander of the 201st MRD garrison in Qurghonteppa, has explained, "from the time of Sobchak's visit, in Russia's government circles an opinion has formed that in Tajikistan democrats came to power. From that moment the disorientation of public opinion began. In [Russia's] central press the stance in favour of the opposition as a democratic trend was quite salient ...\(^{185}\)


The forces that stood up against this 'democracy' were evaluated unambiguously as pro-communist." 187 There is little doubt that Russia could have averted the large-scale civil war in Tajikistan had its leaders shown more political wisdom and resolution.

***

Civil conflict in Tajikistan became possible because leaders of regional elites had failed to negotiate a comprehensive consociational pact. It acquired an especially bloody and violent form, because state institutions had been badly crippled in the centre and most of the periphery. The fact that Sangak Safarov, a criminal, had emerged as the only person who could protect the people of his home region from other criminals and guarantee their survival indicated a sharp reversal to traditional understandings of raw power and law in Tajik society. Had President Nabiev shown more determination to use authority, and, conversely, had Safarali Kenjaev, Akbar Turajonzoda and Shodmon Yusuf demonstrated more inclination for compromise, the history of modern Tajikistan might have been different.

Civil war was terminated after protracted fratricide, when the preponderant elite group from Leninobod, not directly involved in the war, realised that its continuation could be detrimental to its well-being. The Northerners sacrificed political power, but retained economic dominance. The partial elite settlement reached in November-December 1992 could not have lasted but for external support and pressure. Russia's presence, on the one hand, guaranteed relative peace and stability in Tajikistan, but, on the other hand, allowed Rahmonov's regime to avoid the incorporation of minority elite groups into the grand coalition - the process which has come to take off in 1997. Whether this coalition will come into being and will be able to serve as a basis for representative politics is impossible to predict in terms of social, economic or geopolitical forces. A lot will depend on acts of will by crucial region-based actors inside Tajikistan, who are not necessarily motivated by modern rational considerations.

Conclusion

As far as I know, the Tajiks, who pave forth their way despite centuries of adverse influences levelled at them, are the only example on our planet of such tenacious existence.

A.F. Middendorf, 1882.

It should be said in all fairness that the Tajiks are the most enduring people: a rare nation has sustained as many blows and such hard blows as they have; but it is enough to grant the Tajiks a brief respite, and they resurrect again.

N. Pavlov, 1910.

In historical records the Tajiks are not known for heroic exploits in the field of war. In ancient times and middle ages all sorts of invaders conquered them with relative ease. However, exogenous rulers could never achieve cultural subjugation and assimilation of the authentic sedentary population of Central Asia, who retained their traditions, values and the way of life and, not infrequently, actually imposed them on the newcomers. As a Russian scholar, A.A. Semenov, wrote in 1911, "having been overpowered by Uzbeks, the Tajiks quickly found a way out of the difficult situation of a vanquished people; they soon came to terms with the victors and gradually took them in their hands. With the cleverness and shrewdness inherent in them, they occupied almost all eminent positions in the Uzbek state, and, as they stood higher than the latter in terms of sophistication and development, they always served as teachers and an example for their overlords."\(^1\)

In the 20th century the Tajiks' unprecedented ethnic revival was associated with the grandiose Soviet social experiment. Even contemporary Tajik nationalists and anti-Communists, such as Academician Akbar Tursunov (one of the founding fathers of the Rastokhez movement) concede that much: "To say that the Soviet power gave us nothing and only exploited the Tajiks and ruined their traditional culture ... would be a distortion of historical truth ... Although the adventurous and egotistic enterprise of the Bolsheviks came to nothing ... during a certain period of history it yielded positive results ... [The] October [revolution of 1917] truly conferred a fresh spirit on the Tajiks."\(^2\)

From *Ethnie* to Modern Nation


The modern history of Tajikistan has been marked by the transformation of the Tajik ethnic community from an ethnie to a 'Soviet nation' to a formal nation-state. In 1992 it became clear that the final phase of this process had not been a success. First of all, ethnic revival in Tajikistan had not led to the emergence of nationness, that is, a set of "daily interactions and practices that produce an inherent and often unarticulated feeling of belonging, of being at home", amongst Tajiks throughout their recognised homeland. The second component of the 'national idea', namely, a sovereign government to rule in the historic homeland, did not last long after its inception in September 1991. Six years after the USSR's collapse, there is neither national unity nor a truly independent state in Tajikistan.

This failure has been conditioned by the fundamental features of the Tajik ethnie. Although its formation dates back to the 16th century, roughly at the same time as other distinct Central Asian ethnicities, its major cultural traits, elements of the Iranian Great Tradition, are much older and more deeply entrenched than any identity markers amongst the neighbouring Turkic peoples. Thus, the Tajiks' awareness of belonging to a unique community is very strong indeed. However, their ethnic consciousness, the internal cohesion of the ethnie, is undermined by the existence of potent autonomous sub-ethnic units congruent with historical and geographic regions. As Anthony Smith has noted, ethnicities "may be able to present a united community and a centuries-long history; but the institutions which are the result of the very length and depth of that history may block the transformation of an ethnic community into a nation', and hold back the acquisition of a national status." The ossified regional sub-ethnic groups with their specific histories and 'politics of memory' form such an institution in Tajikistan.

Virginia Tilley has suggested that "we might understand ethnic identities to reflect the historical experience of elements (groups) engaged in relations (between groups)." The state cannot have much influence on the formation and make-up of the elements in an ethnic community, but it certainly plays a pivotal role in regulating relations amongst them, elaborating and enforcing rules of conduct, moderating conflicts and, generally, fostering a 'political culture' in which "shared historic experiences are mirrored in the formation of common values and institutions which help to integrate different cultural

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and social groups." In Tajikistan, the Soviet state tried to cope with these tasks by installing the mono-organisational political system, with mixed results.

**Reassessing the Soviet Rule**

It was argued in Chapter V that in the late Soviet period the Tajiks may have possessed up to seven levels of identity, of which the Soviet supra-national, the Tajik national and regional ones were the highest. To borrow from Shirin Akiner, "these layers were not contradictory, but complementary. They were held, as it were, in free suspension, the hierarchical weighting of each being determined at any given moment by the current situation. The state [Soviet] identity was reinforced by formal institutions and symbols, whereas the sub-national identities were sustained by informal mechanisms. The national identity drew on both of these levels for support, deriving legitimacy from the state identity, of which it was a constituent element, as well as from the sub-national complex, which it encompassed." Akiner may have overstated the importance of Marxist-Leninist ideology as "the defining feature of the Soviet identity". The institutional aspects of Soviet policy, such as the one-party government, permanent borders and a well-educated, nativised bureaucracy, appear to have been much more instrumental in increasing the sense of ethnic collectivity amongst Tajiks. Particularly in the Brezhnev period, the ostensibly rigid and oppressive institutional setting in Soviet Tajikistan incorporated many mechanisms of informal political exchange which allowed it to contain conflicts between sub-ethnic elites, not so much through coercion (or threat of coercion), but through facilitating the on-going process of negotiation and bargaining for resources.

It has been noted that "whereas in Iran and Afghanistan joining of various ethnic groups, tribes and clans within the framework of a unified state was taking place primarily as a result of internal processes, here [in Central Asia] it was happening under the colossal pressure of the totalitarian system from without." Taking exception to the term 'totalitarian', which, perhaps, could be replaced with 'mono-organisational', this observation rightfully grasps the essence of politics and change in Tajikistan in the Soviet period - all major developments in that country were conceived and implemented at the behest of Moscow, in the interests of the USSR as a whole. Accordingly,

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8 Ibid., p. 378.

Tajikistan had its ample share of violence, mismanagement and ravaging of environment associated with the Communist modernity.

However, an outdated black-and-white view of the world based on the assumption that the Soviet socialist model was evil and whatever opposed it was good - does not contribute to a better understanding of post-Communist Central Asia. The Soviet period created a unique cultural complex; the fact that it differed from paradigmatic models offered by the West did not make it inferior to the latter. Its universal political ethos was based on a broad corporatist compromise which Linda J. Cook has termed as 'Brezhnev's Social Contract' - a set of policy norms which gave priority to egalitarianism, stability and security, a set of benefits which gave preferential treatment to national bureaucracies, and a set of institutions which maintained the contract as a matter of both commitment and standard operating procedure.\(^\text{10}\) In the form of Soviet cultural nationalism, it was objectively conducive to the revitalisation and reinforcement of common ethnic identity amongst the Tajiks. True, it was imperfect, for it suppressed some elements of traditional culture. It was unjust, for it deprived the Tajiks of an important part of their historical heritage - Samarkand and Bukhara. It did not and could not overcome the fundamental differences amongst cultural units in Tajik society, but it created conditions for their peaceful coexistence and stable interaction. After several decades of Soviet rule the Tajiks became well adjusted to the political parameters of the mono-organisational order and were better placed to follow the path of ethnic consolidation than ever before. This was going to be a protracted process, and susceptibility to changes in Moscow's strategic line turned out to be its major vulnerability. In the second half of the 1980s this process was reversed and then utterly disrupted. Gorbachev's ascension in 1985 brought an end to the internal stability in Tajikistan and Central Asia as a whole, and local leaders could do little to restore it.

**Bad 'Fortune' and Poor 'Virtue' at Work**

Neil Robinson has written that "perestroika was as much an accidental death by misadventure as it was the heroic victory of the repressed ... The joy that the people took in this destruction [of the Soviet political system] was a positive joy to a large degree."\(^\text{11}\) This statement, at least as far as Central Asia goes, is simply wrong. Gorbachev's reforms were rejected by the absolute majority of the local population, whose opinion the Kremlin simply ignored. 'Heroic victory of the repressed'? Were the


1,500,000 Tajiks who, at the CPT's request, signed petitions for the restoration of the USSR in late 1994 amongst them? If the struggle against 'Soviet totalitarianism' was a source of joyfulness, why did President Askar Akaev of Kyrgyzstan, the 'darling' of Western liberals, characterise the demise of the USSR as "the greatest cataclysm of the 20th century which has no analogies in the history of mankind"?

In the 1980s the Soviet system faced a lot of problems, primarily in the economic sphere. But it was stable, and had enough resources to carry on for a substantial period of time - 10, 20, 50 years, maybe more, had corrective reforms been introduced. Who knows? There was no urgent need for its complete overhaul, especially in the way Gorbachev envisaged it. The Tajik writer Timur Zulfikarov has expressed the attitude of his compatriots towards perestroika in a metaphoric and rather acerbic manner: "The largest sea on Earth is the sea of words of the ultimate usurper-Hierostratos of all times and peoples domullo Gorbachev. A great country - one-sixths of the world's dry land - drowned in this sea ... Humanity will die not of the atomic bomb, but of the lecherous, pitch-dark, intoxicating, lying, boundless tongue! Yes! Only the tongue transmits hatred and malice from people to people, as the fire flows and plays iridescently in the dry rush."

The main 'achievement' of perestroika in Tajikistan during 1986 - 1991 was the destruction of elite consensus and the radicalisation of the conflict of interests amongst regional factions. Gorbachev's failures in coping with economic, social and ecological problems resulted in a growing sense of deprivation amongst the people, who, consequently, became much easier to mobilise in order to defend the cause of this or that elitist group. In the wake of the abortive August 1991 coup in Moscow, the government of the newly independent Tajikistan had very few resources left at its disposal to prevent further escalation of the sub-ethnic tension, and whatever limited regulatory capacity the state had retained in that country, it was wasted through endless reorganisations, poorly crafted compromises with the opposition and, generally, the inadequate performance of the top leadership under Rahmon Nabiev. In hindsight, one can fully appreciate the stance adopted under similar circumstances by President Islam Karimov in neighbouring Uzbekistan: "The cautious approach to political reform, with a certain level of firmness and toughness toward pro-Islamic organisations and those who insisted on immediate dissolution of the existing power structures, was not too high a price for maintaining peace and stability."
There always existed a potential for sub-ethnic confrontation in Tajikistan, but it was the contraction of the state mechanisms of social control that made it a reality. The civil war that broke out in Tajikistan in 1992 was the culmination of a struggle for power amongst established regional cliques who, however, gradually lost control to a plethora of lower-level strongmen and warlords as the conflict lingered on. Only interference by Uzbekistan and Russia allowed one of the factions to prevail militarily over all others and impose its authority over the bulk of the populace. Since autumn 1992, developments in Tajikistan have been inseparably linked to power politics pursued by the external forces.

Conjectures for the Future

The exact course of normalisation in post-civil war Tajikistan is impossible to predict - the experience of other countries suggests that the elite settlements there "grew out of deliberate, relatively autonomous elite choices among an array of possible strategies for protecting their diverse factional interests. And success in creating settlements was due in part to the skills of specific elite persons who happened to occupy pivotal positions at the time."\(^\text{16}\) It is possible, however, to ruminate on the general guidelines of policy-making that may facilitate national reconciliation. Amin Saikal, writing on settlement in the Middle East, has come up with a recommendation that appears to be valid for Tajikistan, too: "The way forward perhaps is not to press for democratisation of political systems, which would require immediate and profound changes in the power structures, with deep effect on the fortunes of the very leaderships which are expected to bring about these changes. The objective should be to prepare the conditions for good government and a civil society. Such government and society do not need to be in conformity with the institutional models which underpin the operation of governments and societies in the West."\(^\text{17}\)

The establishment of power-sharing mechanisms amongst regional elites based on the consociational principle\(^\text{18}\) is the only way to create a 'good', that is, a viable and

\(^\text{18}\) Consociation is "the name of a political system used in some culturally divided societies to share and divide governmental power and authority. Political power is shared by the rival sub-cultures on a proportional basis - in the executive, the legislature and public employment. Each sub-culture enjoys rights of veto and autonomy in the management." ("Terminology and Glossary." *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1986, p. 1.)
authoritative government in Tajikistan. The idea of setting up an executive body "with equal representation quotas for historical regions of Tajikistan" was floated by the opposition in 1994, but its practical realisation commenced only three years later, with limited success so far. The formal written instrument on the lines of Lebanon's National Pact of 1943, signed by all parties involved, would signify a crucial breakthrough; unfortunately, the General Agreement on Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan initialled by President Imomali Rahmonov and the leader of the United Tajik Opposition Said Abdullo Nuri on 27 June 1997 falls short of this accomplishment, because it excludes Leninobod, Hissor and the GBAO from the proportional division of power. The broad consociational pact in Tajikistan need not become a self-perpetuating deus ex machina; rather, it should be viewed as a necessary first step towards creating a consensually unified elite, which, in its turn, is a precondition for a stable representative regime.

The establishment of a 'civil society' in Tajikistan should be interpreted in the broadest possible sense, without associating it to the resurgence of political parties, religious organisations and other institutions free of governmental control - a sudden mobilisation of the masses can easily derail the process of normalisation. First of all, an honest discourse on the causes of the conflict and mutual repentance should be encouraged; the situation where Rahmonov calls the opposition "hostages of regionalism and patrimonialism", refusing to recognise the very same features in his own regime, has to be overcome. Basic human rights should be upheld; as O'Donnell and Schmitter have shown, "liberalisation can exist without democratisation. Fundamental guarantees can be accorded while impeding individuals or groups from participating in competitive elections, from access to policy deliberations, and/or from exercising the rights that may make the rulers reasonably accountable to them." Such fundamentals as personal safety and inviolability of the home cannot be enforced without complete disarmament of rogue field commanders who still abound in Tajikistan. Overt and covert contacts, meetings, negotiations and consultations amongst elite factions and individual strongmen within them should grow in numbers and be routinised.

The domestic situation in Tajikistan in 1997 does not differ qualitatively from that in 1993. In Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh's apt characterisation, it is 'imposed peace without real reconciliation'. Given the deep roots of the conflict and the extremely brutal forms it acquired in 1992, it is impractical to expect rapid restoration of the minimal level of trust amongst elite groups essential for the emergence and acceptance of the new rules of the political game. In fact, presently any progress in this direction depends on external forces, primarily Russia, which, according to Olivier Roy, remains "the only country with real influence in Tajikistan ... The Russians ... need an unsettled, slightly chaotic situation in Tajikistan in order to maintain their foothold there, and they are not pushing for a real settlement to the conflict." Once again the Tajiks' fate is being decided by strangers. Their history has taught that they will probably be able to adapt to new geopolitical conditions and stage another revival of their ancient ethnicity, but when, how and at what cost remains to be seen.

Appendix I. Map of Tajikistan (1995)

Appendix II. Map of Tajikistan (1991)
## Appendix III. Ethnic Composition of the Population of Tajikistan (1989)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Population</td>
<td>5,092,603</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajiks</td>
<td>3,172,420</td>
<td>62.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uzbeks</td>
<td>1,197,841</td>
<td>23.52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>388,481</td>
<td>7.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tatars</td>
<td>72,228</td>
<td>1.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kyrghyzs</td>
<td>63,832</td>
<td>1.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>41,375</td>
<td>0.81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>32,671</td>
<td>0.64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkmen</td>
<td>20,487</td>
<td>0.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koreans</td>
<td>13,431</td>
<td>0.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kazakhs</td>
<td>11,376</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>9,701</td>
<td>0.19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ossets</td>
<td>7,861</td>
<td>0.15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belorussians</td>
<td>7,247</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crimean Tatars</td>
<td>7,214</td>
<td>0.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bashkirs</td>
<td>6,821</td>
<td>0.13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenians</td>
<td>5,651</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mordva</td>
<td>5,519</td>
<td>0.11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Only groups exceeding 5,000 are shown.

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