

# **The Fault Lines of Violent Conflict in Tajikistan**

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## **Declaration**

Except where otherwise acknowledged in the text, this thesis is based upon my own original research. The work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institute.

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12 August 2011

## Acknowledgements

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## Transliteration

The basic purpose for choosing the transliteration system that I have is to avoid any special characters that are not on a standard keyboard (with some further simplifications). For transliterating/Romanising Tajik names, places and concepts from the Tajik Cyrillic alphabet, I will avoid all systems of transliteration that use special characters or diacritics.<sup>1</sup> Instead, I will use the unnamed system that has become the standard commonly used in Tajikistan. Basically, it is the BGN/PCGN system (see above footnote) with some small alterations. The alterations: ‘и’ and ‘ӣ’ will both be transliterated as ‘i’ (e.g., the first and second ‘i’ in *Hisori* are different letters in Tajik Cyrillic); ‘ъ’ will be omitted (e.g., *tarikh*, not *ta'rikh*) in the main text (with one exception for the La’li Badakhshon movement) but not in the bibliography and footnotes; both ‘ӯ’ and ‘у’ will be transliterated as ‘u’; while ‘э’ and ‘е’ will both be rendered as ‘e’. This system may be jarring for those familiar with common transliterations of Dari, Farsi, Urdu and Arabic due to name transliterations such as Abdullo and Rahmon instead of Abdullah and Rahman. To minimise confusion, the new trend of constructing names with an *ezafe*<sup>2</sup> will be avoided. Variants on place and people names from Tajikistan that have become commonly accepted in English will not be put through the same strict transliteration (e.g., Tajikistan, Uzbek and Pamir; not Tojikiston, Uzbak and Pomir). What will be completely avoided in the main text is transliterating Tajik via Russian (e.g., Kulob, Qurghonteppa, and Rahmon; not Kulyab, Kurgan-Tyube, and Rakhmon). An exception will be made when I directly quote an author.

Bibliography entries and citations in Russian that include Tajik places or people will be transliterated using a Russian Romanisation system. The system of Russian transliteration for Slavic names in the main text will be the diacritics-free standard introduced in 1997 by the Russian government for use in passports,<sup>3</sup> with some further simplifications for commonly known names (e.g., Dmitry, not Dmitriy). The bibliography and footnote references will follow the above-cited transliteration system, with an exception for when I repeat another author’s citation in the footnotes.

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<sup>1</sup> These include transliteration standards known as ISO 9, KNAB, WWS, ALA-LC, Allworth and BGN/PCGN. See here for these systems: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization\\_of\\_Tajik](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Tajik)

<sup>2</sup> Example: President Emomali Rahmon’s son Rustam is often referred to as Rustami Emomali (i.e., Rustam-i Emomali, or Rustam [son] of Emomali).

<sup>3</sup> See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization\\_of\\_Russian#Passport\\_1997](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romanization_of_Russian#Passport_1997). The only alteration I add is that I will omit any transliteration of the Russian hard sign.

Map No. 1 Map of Tajikistan with major cities<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Map adapted from: UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 'Tajikistan, topographic map', accessed online (May 2011): [http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/tajikistan\\_topographic\\_map](http://maps.grida.no/go/graphic/tajikistan_topographic_map)

## Introduction

The focus of this dissertation is the civil war in Tajikistan, in particular the massive street demonstrations in the capital city of Dushanbe that preceded the war and the devastating fighting in the Vakhsh Valley south of the capital. Generally referred to as the ‘Tajik Civil War,’ the violent conflict in southern Tajikistan lasted from spring 1992 until its official end in June 1997 with the signing of a peace agreement and power-sharing arrangement. Narrowing the analysis further, the focus will be on the first phase of conflict that finished at the end of 1992. During this early period the vast majority of fatalities occurred. Early estimates (that went mostly unchallenged<sup>5</sup>) for the conflict as a whole cited the number of deaths as high as 100,000. A later study put the number at 23,500, with 20,000 of these deaths occurring in 1992.<sup>6</sup> This should in no way lessen the emphasis on the level of suffering during the war. Aside from the deaths of combatants and numerous unarmed civilians, the conflict generated a massive number of refugees and internally displaced persons, led to large-scale destruction and looting of property, resulted in the rape and torture of many, and further harmed the already fragile economy.

At the end of 1992 the armed opposition suffered a heavy defeat and fled to mountainous areas of eastern Tajikistan and, importantly, to a safe haven in Afghanistan where the ‘Islamic’ opposition attempted to regroup. The character of the war from this point was more that of a counter-insurgency with sporadic guerrilla warfare, as well as smaller operations against opposition strongholds in the mountains of the east, rather than what was seen during the first year: a complete collapse of the state and a fight that was roughly equal until October 1992. Despite the current popularity of studies on counter-insurgencies and asymmetric warfare in general, this dissertation will instead analyse the outbreak of conflict and the initial mobilisation of fighters as this process provides the clearest view of Tajikistan’s social and political cleavages.

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<sup>5</sup> This general assessment of problematic estimates for war fatalities matches Tajikistan quite well: “For many conflicts, commonly cited estimates employed in media and NGO reports are repeated so frequently as to become unquestioningly accepted as truth. [...] In many cases, the origin of these estimates is unknown or one of the warring parties; even where this information is available, the methodology and definitional guidelines used in generating the estimates are rarely transparent.” See: Kristine Eck and Lisa Hultman, ‘One-Sided Violence Against Civilians in War: Insights from New Fatality Data’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 44, No. 2 (2007) 237.

<sup>6</sup> Vladimir Mukomel’, ‘Demographic Consequences of Ethnic and Regional Conflicts in the CIS’, *Russian Social Science Review*, Vol. 42, No. 3 (2001) 23-4, table 1; Vladimir Mukomel’, ‘Demograficheskie Posledstviya etnicheskikh i religional’nykh konfliktov v SNG’, *Naselenie & Obshchestvo*, No. 27 (April 1997) table 1. Online: <http://demoscope.ru/acrobat/ps27.pdf>. In the second article, Mukomel points to his longer format study that includes full references: Vladimir Mukomel’, ‘Vooruzhennyye mezhnatsional’nye i regional’nye konflikty: lyudskie poteri, ekonomicheskiy ushcherb i sotsial’nye posledstviya’, in *Identichnost’ i konflikt v postsovetkikh gosudarstvakh* (Moscow: Karnegi, 1997).



This dissertation is not intended to challenge what has become a consensus view within the scholarship in regards to how to most accurately describe the Tajik Civil War. The most concise explanation is the uncontroversial assessment of Brent Hierman that the best way to view the civil war in Tajikistan (with as few words as possible) is “as a war fought between regional elites; specifically, following the collapse of the center, networks of elites, organized according to region, mobilized their supporters against one another in an effort to gain control of the existing state institutions.”<sup>7</sup>

What will be analysed are the social and political divisions during the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan and the subsequent first year of conflict. This includes an analysis of the cleavages within Tajikistan that resulted in a particular set of strategies and tactics. What will be explained is: (1) why the opposing sides had little choice but to resort to militarised mobilisation, and why the process continued despite efforts to defuse the situation, (2) why the main factions had a regionally-distinct base of support due to the legacy of cultural, geographical and political factors, (3) why local agendas were attached to what appear to be unrelated national-level cleavages, resulting in a war that was overwhelmingly rural and spatially constrained, and (4) why indiscriminate violence against the civilian population was used and then mostly abandoned by the belligerents all within the first year of conflict. What will not be analysed are the variables that resulted in the outbreak of violence. This exercise in dismissing and promoting variables can already be found in dissertations by Idil Tuncer Kilavuz, Lawrence Markowitz and Jonathan Zartman.<sup>8</sup> This dissertation is based on a multitude of both secondary sources and primary sources (memoirs, party manifestos, etc.). Observations in the field in 2009 back up most of the arguments in this thesis, particularly in regards to identity, loyalty and patronage.

The first phase of the civil war went beyond ethnic Tajiks fighting each other, and included ethnic Uzbeks and Pamiris on opposite sides allied to their Kulobi and Gharmi Tajik allies, respectively. And even this is too simple of a description, as it is not possible to neatly classify the main combatants into monolithic blocs based on

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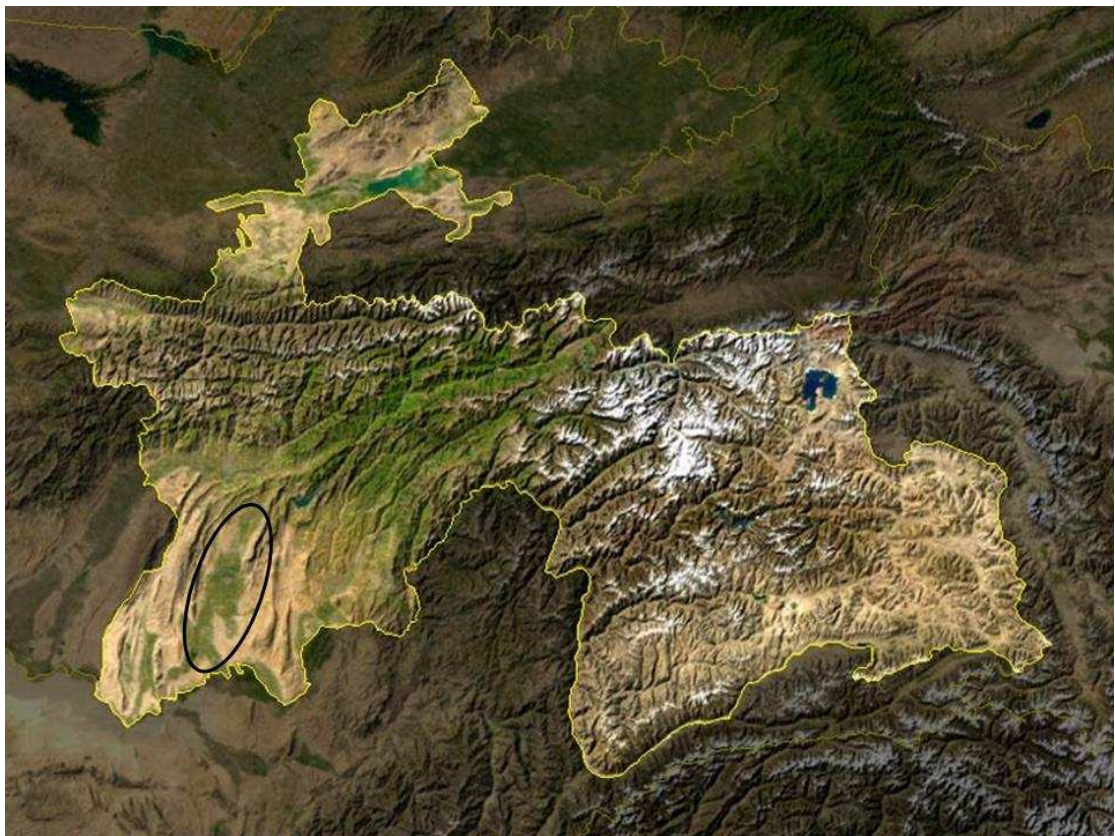
<sup>7</sup> Brent Hierman, ‘What use was the election to us? Clientelism and political trust amongst ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’, *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 38, No. 2 (2010) 256. I chose the preceding quote because it is concise, not because it is original.

<sup>8</sup> Idil Tuncer Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict: A Comparative Study of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, Indiana University, 2007; Lawrence Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia: Cross-Regional Determinants of State Formation in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2005; Zartman, Jonathan K. *Political transition in Central Asian republics: Authoritarianism versus power-sharing*. Unpublished PhD dissertation, University of Denver, 2004.

ethnicity and – for Tajiks – region of family origin. Factors such as ideology and religion will be deemphasised, in line with much of the later scholarship on the war.<sup>9</sup>

The above-mentioned social and political divisions necessitate an in-depth historical and social analysis of ethnicity, religion, social organisation, migration, state-building, politics and economics in Tajikistan (especially during the Soviet era). All of these factors – to varying degrees – affected the loyalties and actions of individuals and groups during the pre-war era though the outbreak of conflict. Of course, the historical and social analysis will focus mostly on the main zone of violent conflict: the economically significant Vakhsh Valley of southern Tajikistan:

Map No.2 – Satellite view of Tajikistan with the Vakhsh Valley circled.<sup>10</sup>



At the beginning of the Soviet era, the Vakhsh Valley was a sparsely populated river valley inhabited mostly by semi-nomadic Uzbeks.<sup>11</sup> It would soon become a grand project of Soviet agricultural and social engineering. After suppressing the *Basmachi* rebellion and securing the Afghan border during the 1930s, the Soviet authorities began

<sup>9</sup> Earlier writings (from journalists, local observers and academics) are mixed, so I do not claim that lessening the significance of religion and ideology in my analysis is an act of historical revisionism.

<sup>10</sup> NASA public domain licence image. Upload credit: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Poulpy>  
Modification by author: circle added.

<sup>11</sup> This includes Uzbek-speakers who claim a tribal affiliation as their primary identity (e.g., Loqay).

their transformation of the Vakhsh Valley. The meandering Vakhsh River was soon controlled and diverted into a system of irrigation canals as part of a plan to boost agriculture in the Tajik Republic. Food production had limited economic significance, so agricultural production was focused mainly on cotton – a crop that required significant amounts of irrigation in the arid region.

One of the main requirements for the labour-intensive projects of building irrigation canals and farming cotton (by hand) was a large pool of workers. This necessitated the massive in-migration of people from throughout Tajikistan and beyond. Since the economic potential of the mountain and foothills of Tajikistan was quite limited, people from these areas were selected as the primary core of migrants. The main groups of settlers were drawn from the mountain valleys of Qarotegin and Darvoz, as well as from the foothills of the Kulob region. Here in the valley they, and other outsiders (e.g., Pamiris, Russians and others), were settled into the Soviet collective farms that were a common feature throughout the rural areas of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (hereafter Tajik SSR) and the rest of the USSR. At independence, over half a century later, the Vakhsh Valley was part of the Qurghonteppa Province – an administrative region with a high degree of social and political-bureaucratic fragmentation where competition for resources occurred along lines of ethnicity and, most significantly, mainly along lines of region of origin: the Gharmi Tajiks from the mountainous area of Gharm (Qarotegin and Darvoz) and the Kulobi Tajiks from the foothills of the neighbouring Kulob Province. Again, as mentioned above, the blocs in the conflict were not monolithic and should be seen as the end result of not just long-term historical and social factors, but more recent political and economic competition, as well as a result of the initial tactics and strategies of mobilising for political struggles and war.

The Soviet authorities attempted to shape ethnic identities throughout the USSR, and in Central Asia there were particular difficulties as most people here did not see their primary identities at the ethnic or national level. As part of the Soviet process, languages were standardised, traditions codified, pre-existing sub-ethnic identities (e.g., tribe or city) were suppressed (e.g., by being removed as an option in the official census), privileges were granted or denied based on ethnic identity, and many people found that they were outside the borders of their titular republic (e.g., ethnic Uzbeks inside Tajikistan). Despite the continuing rhetoric that the divisions between nationalities (i.e., ethnic groups) would eventually disappear and give way to a unified people, ethnic identities continued to be strongly promoted in the Soviet republics, and

Tajikistan was no exception. However, there were also divisions within the ethnic groups. For Tajiks, there was the reality that ethnic Tajiks from different regions had obvious differences in dialect and other aspects of their culture.

Regional differences are a common feature of many countries, but they held – and still hold – a particular social, economic and political significance in Tajikistan. Tajiks from the northern province of Leninobod (now Sughd) – particularly from the city of Khujand – dominated the upper echelons of the Tajik SSR’s government and they cultivated patronage networks that were dominated by co-regionals. Besides competition within northern Tajikistan, these northern Tajiks then had to contend with their less privileged southern counterparts, whose elites also organised intricate patronage networks that came to be identified with regions such as Kulob and Garm. Of course, the people in these networks were not completely averse to cooperating with outsiders in mutually beneficial arrangements, especially at the higher levels. And the networks did not benefit all people in a particular region, so they should be considered to be dominated by people from a single region and mostly based there (and in the capital) rather than entire regions and their populations competing against each other.

Nevertheless, the end result was the ‘politicisation’ of regional identities – elites and those within their regional networks would benefit or suffer based on government appointments and bureaucratic decisions. For example, when a Kulobi held the post of Minister of the Interior, the ranks of that ministry were dominated by Kulobi Tajiks. And when a Pamiri was appointed to that post during the late 1980s, ethnic Pamiris displaced Kulobis from their positions – creating a pool of unemployed (and presumably angry) Kulobi former police officers.<sup>12</sup> Tajiks from Garm had a more modest level of access to national-level positions, and many turned instead to entrepreneurship and ‘gray market’ activities such as selling agricultural products to markets not just in Tajikistan, but in other republics as well. This activity was especially significant in the Vakhsh Valley, which was now home to many Garmi and Kulobi Tajiks. At a more official level, the competition for government posts at the district and provincial level, as well as for the top positions in the collective and state farms of Qurghonteppa Province (at times subsumed within Khatlon Province), was particularly fierce. An official position gave a person access to resources and jobs that they could then distribute. Losing one’s position meant far more than one disappointed Communist Party cadre; an entire network would then be at risk of losing benefits such as jobs, equipment, fertilisers, and other political and economic goods.

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<sup>12</sup> This anecdote is fully analysed in chapter 3.

The authorities in Dushanbe and Moscow were generally able to control this process within the authoritarian system of the Soviet Union. However, this 'control' was only in the sense that cadres did not challenge the arrangements at the highest levels. In Tajikistan, corruption was pervasive and local cadres competed to replace each other – but within the system. Finally, in the mid-1980s, this system began to break down in the Tajik SSR. Anti-corruption campaigns and perestroika reforms resulted in the removal and replacement of many apparatchiks in the republic, leading to Gharmis and Pamiris obtaining positions that were previously out of reach. In the Vakhsh Valley the turnover of leadership at the district and province level, as well as in the collective and state farms, was unprecedented. Kulobis and Gharmis, often living in mixed settlements, competed against each other for these positions as they were all-important in securing economic and social benefits locally. The local positions were then tied into the political wrangling at the republic level, giving locals a strong stake in national politics.

Around the same time (very late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s), the political and social atmosphere became less restrictive. Civil society groups and political parties began to form and agitate for further changes. After some time the political foes settled into two opposing coalitions: the incumbent leadership dominated by elites from Leninobod along with their primary junior partners from Kulob and Hisor, and the opposition coalition that included new political parties such as the mostly urban Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Gharmi Tajik-dominated Islamic Revival Party, and the Pamiri party La'li Badakhshon. The first post-independence presidential election of November 1991, after some difficulty and the replacement of the top government candidate, was won by the incumbent forces' candidate Rahmon Nabiev at the expense of the opposition coalition and their cinematographer-turned-politician candidate Davlat Khudonazarov – a man supported by anti-conservative politicians at the Union/CIS level. This was followed by a period of government crackdowns and harassment of the opposition, resulting in large street demonstrations in the capital starting in early spring 1992. The largest contribution to the opposition's demonstration was by the Islamic Revival Party (IRP). Meanwhile, the incumbents, geographically isolated in the capital from their home base in northern Tajikistan, relied instead on their junior Kulobi partners whose province was adjacent to the capital. The IRP's mobilisation effort also had a regional aspect. The leadership of the IRP, despite their pretensions to being a party for all (Sunni) Muslims, was more accurately a party for Muslims that was overwhelmingly dominated by Gharmi Tajiks. As the demonstrations intensified and eventually turned to violence, political and social authorities who could

not quickly mobilise manpower for violent conflict became powerless. The skilled technocrats increasingly lost power to savvy rural strongmen and religious leaders (e.g., mullahs) who could call on the support of men willing to fight. The urban intellectuals and reformists of groups such as the Democratic Party were helpless in the face of military mobilisation. Soon it was clear that the real players in the conflict were the Kulobi Tajik militias allied to local Uzbeks and militias from Hisor on one side against the IRP's mullahs and their Gharmi Tajik followers allied to Pamiri regular police and militias on the other.

What is written above is not a highly original analysis. While there is no single authoritative narrative and analysis of the civil war in Tajikistan,<sup>13</sup> there are many sources that provide a strong analysis on aspects of the conflict. The only problem here is that the analysis in this literature is focused mainly in two areas: causes of the conflict<sup>14</sup> and post-conflict state-building.<sup>15</sup> This is understandable as people, institutions and governments want to know what causes conflicts, and, once they have commenced, how they may be resolved. However, my focus is more on the 'processes' of conflict. First of all, this requires both a full narrative and analysis of the transition from political competition to violent conflict (late 1980s to May 1992) and a similar treatment for the mobilisation of forces and the first phase of the war (May 1992 to the end of the year). Other accounts give far too little information about these two periods as a whole, or provide great analysis on only a narrow aspect of the political competition and conflict. To restate the goals, this dissertation will demonstrate that (1) there was a 'perfect' logic behind the outbreak and continuation of conflict, (2) the cultural and political factors present shaped the opposing sides into regional and ethnic blocs, (3) seemingly unrelated local agendas were easily grafted onto national-level politics, and (4) there was a rationale behind both the use of violence against civilians and its abandonment at the end of 1992.

Furthermore, a comprehensive historical and social analysis is required in order to explain the Tajik Civil War. And this necessitates a full historical background to the

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<sup>13</sup> The best candidate for this would be a Russian-language book: V.I. Bushkov and D.V. Mikulski, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane (etno-sotsial'nye protsessy i politicheskaya bor'ba, 1992-1995)* (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1996).

<sup>14</sup> The above-mentioned sources (all dissertations) are the most complete of these attempts: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict: A Comparative Study of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*; Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia: Cross-Regional Determinants of State Formation in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*; Zartman, *Political transition in Central Asian republics: Authoritarianism versus power-sharing*.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example: M. Olimov (editor) *Mezhtadjikskiy konflikt: put' k miru* (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1998); John Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan: The Politics of Peacebuilding and the Emergence of Legitimate Order* (London: Routledge, 2009); Luigi De Martino (editor) *Tajikistan at a Crossroads: The Politics of Decentralization* (Geneva: Cibera, 2004).

modern state of Tajikistan, the social structure of the country, and the shaping and formation of identities and loyalties in Tajikistan. The structure of my dissertation is as follows:

**1. Conceptual model for violent conflict in Tajikistan**

**2. Historical background and social context**

**3. Transition from political competition to violent conflict**

**4. The civil war of 1992**

**5. Mobilisation, Islam, ethnicity and the regionalisation of forces**

**Conclusion: The Outbreak, Spread and Eventual Decline of Conflict**

The first chapter will outline the analytical model that will be applied to the case study throughout my dissertation and especially in the conclusion chapter. Tajikistan will be mentioned sparingly in this section. The second chapter will provide a full social and historical context so that there is not a need to endlessly introduce historical and social commentary in later parts of the dissertation. The third chapter will provide a clear analysis of the increasingly fragile nature of the state and the increasingly combative politics and social competition that occurred in the late 1980s and early 1990s up until the start of the war in May 1992. The next chapter will provide a full narrative of the conflict, and a complete analysis of all the factors relevant to the arguments that will follow in the chapter on the dissertation's conceptual framework.

# Chapter 1

## Conceptual Model for Violent Conflict in Tajikistan

### Introduction

This thesis will analyse the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan and the subsequent first year of conflict. This includes an analysis of the social and political divisions that resulted in a particular set of strategies and tactics. The concepts of the 'security dilemma' and the 'credible commitment problem' will be used to explain why the two sides felt they had no choice but to mobilise militarily and why they continued to fight despite efforts to end the conflict through negotiation and mediation. In order to analyse the reasons for the regional bases of support for the fighting formations, and the actions of leaders and followers within those groupings, this dissertation will borrow from social movement theory – particularly the concept of 'mobilising structures' and 'framing.' For analysing the convergence of national-level issues with highly localised politics, the theory of 'alliance' will be applied. And finally, in explaining the reasons for the use and eventual abandonment of violence against civilians, this thesis will borrow from the theory of 'indiscriminate violence.'

### Security Dilemmas and Commitment Problems

#### The Security Dilemma

A group suddenly compelled to provide its own protection must ask the following questions about any neighbouring group: is it a threat? How much of a threat? Will the threat grow or diminish over time? Is there anything that must be done immediately? The answers to these questions strongly influence the chances for war.

-Barry Posen, 1993.<sup>1</sup>

Barry Posen was the first to comprehensively apply the realist international relations concept of the 'security dilemma' to ethnic conflict.<sup>2</sup> This dissertation will

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<sup>1</sup> Barry R. Posen, 'The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict', *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (1993) 27.



demonstrate that this tool works just as well in describing the conflict in Tajikistan, even though the majority of the conflict was not inter-ethnic, but rather within the Tajik ethnic group between hastily-mobilised militias often based upon regionally-defined sub-ethnic groups of Tajiks. Describing the security dilemma, Posen notes that “what one does to enhance one's own security causes reactions that, in the end, can make one less secure.”<sup>3</sup> Posen continues:

Where central authority has recently collapsed, the groups emerging from an old empire must calculate their power relative to each other at the time of collapse and make a guess about their relative power in the future. Such calculations must account for a variety of factors. Objectively, only one side can be better off. However, the complexity of these situations makes it possible for many competing groups to believe that their prospects in a war would be better earlier, rather than later.<sup>4</sup>

The implementation of a security dilemma can in some cases be a conscious choice by a group leader seeking to boost his own power by use of provocations or exaggerated threat assessments, or it can be part of mass-led violence with little leadership, as noted by Stuart Kaufman.<sup>5</sup> Both of these are particularly relevant to Tajikistan, with both elite- and mass-led security dilemmas present during different phases of the conflict. Concerning groups' historical relations and enmities, David Lake and Donald Rothchild, while not completely dismissing the history of inter-group relations, argue against the factor of “ancient hatreds” in the likelihood of group conflict:

Ethnic conflict is not caused directly by inter-group differences, “ancient hatreds” and centuries-old feuds, or the stresses of modern life within a global economy. Nor were ethnic passions, long bottled up by repressive communist regimes, simply uncorked by the end of the Cold War.

We argue instead that intense ethnic conflict is most often caused by collective fears of the future. As groups begin to fear for their safety, dangerous and difficult-to-resolve strategic dilemmas arise that contain within them the potential for tremendous violence. As information failures, problems of credible commitment, and the security dilemma take hold, groups become apprehensive, the state weakens, and conflict becomes more likely.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Posen describes the security dilemma at the state level: “Realist theory contends that the condition of anarchy makes security the first concern of states. It can be otherwise only if these political organizations do not care about their survival as independent entities. As long as some do care, there will be competition for the key to security - power. The competition will often continue to a point at which the competing entities have amassed more power than needed for security and, thus, consequently begin to threaten others. Those threatened will respond in turn.” See: *ibid.*, 28.

<sup>3</sup> Posen, ‘The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict’, 28.

<sup>4</sup> Posen, ‘The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict’, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Stuart J. Kaufman, ‘An ‘International’ Theory of Inter-Ethnic War’, *Review of International Studies*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1996), 150, 158. As examples of elite- and mass-led ethnic conflict, Kaufman provides the examples of elite-led ethnic violence that began in Serbia and the mass-led ethnic violence between Armenians and Azeris in Nagorno-Karabakh.

<sup>6</sup> David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Autumn, 1996) 41-2.

Lake and Rothchild go on to argue that competition for resources is usually “at the heart of ethnic conflict.”<sup>7</sup> If the state controls access to resources such as property rights, jobs, government patronage, education admissions and language rights, the group competition for control over the resources can lead to conflict. However, Lake and Rothchild note that competition over resources is not sufficient on its own to result in violent conflict. As violent conflict will be costly for all sides, actors usually attempt to negotiate a settlement. Violent conflict can erupt despite this when ‘information failures’ take hold in society and groups start to represent themselves as stronger than they are in order to secure the highest level of resources in the bargaining process. The other side may attempt the same tactic and soon the opposing sides may start to “assume the worst.”<sup>8</sup> This process can lead to a polarised social and political atmosphere where the security dilemma is severe:

When incentives to use force preemptively are strong, the security dilemma takes hold and works its pernicious effects. Fearful that the other might preempt, a group has an incentive to strike first and negotiate later. In ethnic relations, as in international relations, when there are significant advantages to preemption, a cycle of violence can seize previously peaceful groups even as they seek nothing more than their own safety. By the same logic, previously satisfied groups can be driven to become aggressors, destroying ethnic harmony in the search for group security.<sup>9</sup>

Paul Roe adds to this violence-centric definition by adding the term ‘intersocietal’ to ‘security dilemma.’<sup>10</sup> Roe argues that “threats to societal security may come from other sectors of security apart from just the societal [i.e., identity issues] one; from the political, economic, and military sectors especially.”<sup>11</sup>

With a focus on Tajikistan, the use of the security dilemma has a limited timeframe where it is useful as it is focused on perceptions of insecurity. Roe writes:

Once violent acts have taken place, the situation thus changes from being one of an apparent threat to one of a real threat. In this way, the tragedy has already occurred: *because* of the security dilemma two sides have started to fight each other (albeit perhaps only locally).<sup>12</sup>

For the continuation and escalation of violence in Tajikistan, this dissertation will go beyond the security dilemma and use another analytical tool: ‘the credible commitment problem.’

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<sup>7</sup> Lake and Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, 44-5.

<sup>8</sup> Lake and Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, 46-8.

<sup>9</sup> Lake and Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, 53.

<sup>10</sup> Paul Roe, ‘The Intrastate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a “Tragedy?”’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 36, No.2 (1999) 194, 194 n. 17.

<sup>11</sup> Roe, ‘The Intrastate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a “Tragedy?”’, 194 n. 17. Brackets mine.

<sup>12</sup> Roe, ‘The Intrastate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a “Tragedy?”’, 191.

## The Credible Commitment Problem

The concept of the ‘credible commitment problem’ will be used to not just explain the outbreak of conflict, but more so to explain why neither side believed there was a realistic possibility of ending the violence once it started. Like the security dilemma, a concept used mainly for ethnic conflict and will be applied broadly to the varied conflicts in Tajikistan.

Lake and Rothchild note that “Ethnic conflicts also arise because groups cannot credibly commit themselves to uphold mutually beneficial agreements they might reach.”<sup>13</sup> This ‘credible commitment problem’ arises in the absence of mechanisms such as laws, formal and informal power sharing agreements and/or institutions that guarantee group rights.<sup>14</sup> According to James Fearon, a commitment problem occurs when two groups do not have a third party that can effectively guarantee agreements between the groups, a problem that is especially apparent when the two groups are acting in an environment of political anarchy.<sup>15</sup> If one of the groups believes that the other side can not or will not credibly commit to keep its promises, with or without a third party to guarantee the agreements, that group will prefer to fight, or continue fighting, rather than chance that it will be in a position of vulnerability in the future and be unable to protect itself.<sup>16</sup> Applied to an ethnic conflict, this could mean that a minority group would consider it preferable to fight the state or opposing group immediately, especially when the state is weak, instead of accepting the promises of their opponents when there is no guarantee that the majority group or state will not renege in the future. However, Fearon does warn that these groups should not be considered “unitary actors” when the group’s decisions are actually the result of complex internal politics.<sup>17</sup> Erin Jenne expands on this theory and connects the credible commitment argument to the issue of external support for an ethnic minority group. She argues that an ethnic minority will “radicalize” its demands if it believes it has external support for its cause, even if the ethnic minority believes that the state or dominant group will commit to its agreements. Jenne argues that minority demands and actions

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<sup>13</sup> Lake and Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, 48.

<sup>14</sup> Lake and Rothchild, ‘Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict’, 49.

<sup>15</sup> James D. Fearon, ‘Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict’, in *The International Spread of Ethnic Conflict: Fear, Diffusion, and Escalation*. Edited by David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild (New York: Princeton University Press, 1998) 108, 123; and James D. Fearon, ‘Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem’, Paper presented at the 1994 Annual Meetings of APSA, online at: <http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/papers/ethcprob.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Fearon, ‘Ethnic War as a Commitment Problem’, 10.

<sup>17</sup> Fearon, ‘Commitment Problems and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict’, 109, 119.

are not just a result of ethnic fear but are also a rational choice based on the amount of support they perceive that they will gain if they enter into conflict.<sup>18</sup>

In Tajikistan the credible commitment problem appeared at a time when government institutions were failing, security forces were scattering, the economy was crashing, and when no outside power was willing to intervene. The violence continued to increase in intensity despite efforts by powerless government leaders, irrelevant envoys and self-declared community leaders to end the fighting. Neither side, despite their announced intentions to seek peace, felt secure enough to commit to any cease-fire or peace agreement in the absence of any power or institution that could guarantee that peace.

Having now covered the security dilemma and the credible commitment problem, it is necessary to introduce an analytical framework that will help accurately describe the process of mobilisation by the participants in the conflict.

## **Mobilising Structures and Framing**

In analysing the networks and organisations that fought for power in Tajikistan, I will use a concept referred to as ‘mobilising structures’ in social movement theory – sociology theory that attempts to explain the success or failure of social movements. Mobilising structures can include family networks, voluntary associations, work units, and even parts of the state structure from which mobilisation can be generated.<sup>19</sup> The definition can include all formal and informal organisations that facilitate collective action.<sup>20</sup> While certain structures are designed with a specific purpose and goal, others are “pre-existing” structures that meet the everyday needs of its constituents. Of course, the strength of these mobilising structures has an effect on the end result of a group’s goals.<sup>21</sup> Jeff Goodwin and James Jasper harshly criticise the theoretical use of

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<sup>18</sup> Erin Jenne, ‘A Bargaining Theory of Minority Demands’, *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol. 48 (2004) 729.

<sup>19</sup> John D. McCarthy, ‘Constraints and Opportunities in Adopting, Adapting, and Inventing’, in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Edited by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer M. Zald (Cambridge University Press, 1996) 141.

<sup>20</sup> Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer M. Zald, ‘Introduction’, in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Edited by Doug McAdam, John D. McCarthy and Mayer M. Zald (Cambridge University Press, 1996) 3.

<sup>21</sup> Dieter Rucht, ‘The Impact of National Contexts on Social Movement Structures’, in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements*. Edited by McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (Cambridge University Press, 1996) 185-6.

mobilising structures, labelling the concept “tautological” and “trivial.”<sup>22</sup> This is a fair point, as every social movement is composed of networks and/or organisations.

Despite the drawbacks of using mobilising structures as an analytical tool to describe processes of success or failure in social mobilisation, it is useful for analysing the myriad networks, organisations and structures that individuals and group leaders attempted to use for social, political and military mobilisation during the late Soviet to early independence era in Tajikistan. Important mobilising structures in Tajikistan included government patronage networks dominated by geographically-defined sub-ethnic groups, collective farms, state security structures, political parties, underground religious networks, criminal and business relations, extended family and friend networks, etc. Of course, the analytical concept of mobilising structures will be used with the caveat that a mobilising structure is seldom a monolithic unit with a clearly defined membership and strategic direction, and is actually composed of multiple components with varying goals. With these factors considered, this dissertation will demonstrate how the pre-existing structures of regional sub-ethnic patronage networks (a legacy of the Soviet and pre-Soviet eras, and Tajikistan’s cultural geography) undermined all attempts to use not only the state structures, but also the relatively new secular and religious political parties to mobilise for power, resulting in sub-ethnic solidarity eventually providing the dominant structural base for the groups that fought for control of the state and its resources.

When describing the actions of actors within the networks and structures in Tajikistan, it is important to describe how they frame their motivations and common goals to potential supporters. So included with the analysis on mobilising structures and networks will be a discussion of ‘framing,’ or ‘frames.’ In describing collective action, Robert Benford and David Snow note that, along with journalists and government leaders, “movement actors are viewed as signifying agents actively engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for constituents, antagonists, and bystanders or observers.”<sup>23</sup> They argue that

Frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action. Collective action frames also perform this interpretive function by simplifying and condensing aspects of the “world out there,”

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<sup>22</sup> Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper, ‘Caught in a Winding, Snarling Vine: The Structural Bias of Political Process Theory’, *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (1999).

<sup>23</sup> Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment’, *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 20 (2000) 613.

but in ways that are “intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists.”<sup>24</sup>

Collective action frames are constructed in part as movement adherents negotiate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation they define as in need of change, make attributions regarding who or what is to blame, articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and urge others to act in concert to affect change. [...] Simply put, the former fosters or facilitates agreement whereas the latter fosters action, moving people from the balcony to the barricades.<sup>25</sup>

Framing can clearly be seen in the rhetoric of movement actors in Tajikistan. However, these ‘frames’ can most easily be analysed at the national level in the capital of Dushanbe. This leads to a methodological problem, which is especially acute in regards to secondary sources: ‘urban bias.’ Stathis Kalyvas writes that most narratives of civil wars are written by “urban intellectuals who rely on a set of explicitly or implicitly “urban” information and assumptions, even though most civil conflicts are rural wars...”<sup>26</sup> This problem applies quite well – with some qualification – to accounts of Tajikistan’s Civil War. This will be remedied by analysing the framing seen within the agendas of both national- and local-level actors, institutions and networks.

## Local Agendas and Cleavages

Stathis Kalyvas, as part of his study on violence in civil wars, analyses how ‘cleavages’ in society – invoked in the “national-level discourse” – connect with seemingly unrelated conflicts at the local level. Kalyvas makes a point that easily applies to Tajikistan’s civil war:

...conflicts and violence “on the ground” often seem more related to local issues rather than the “master cleavage” that drives the civil war at the national level. This is the case despite the fact that local cleavages are usually framed in the discursive terminology of the master cleavage.<sup>27</sup>

Because of the analytical dominance of national-level cleavages, grassroots dynamics are often perceived merely as their local manifestation. Likewise, local actors are seen only as local replicas of central actors. As a result, local dynamics and actors tend to be dismissed. However, on-the-ground descriptions of civil wars typically convey a perplexing and confusing world, entailing a mix of all sorts of motives that makes it difficult to neatly link the forces driving violence on the ground to the war’s stated

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<sup>24</sup> Benford and Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment’, 614, citing David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, ‘Ideology, Frame Resonance, and Participant Mobilization’, *International Social Movement Research*, Vol. 1 (1988) 198.

<sup>25</sup> Benford and Snow, ‘Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment’, 615.

<sup>26</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, ‘The Urban Bias in Research on Civil Wars’, *Security Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2004) 2.

<sup>27</sup> Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars* (Cambridge University Press, 2006) 364.

motives and goals. Such descriptions suggest that a real disjunction between issues, identities, and motives at the local and national levels often exists.<sup>28</sup>

Kalyvas' wide-ranging work on violence in civil wars demonstrates that local individuals and communities use the outbreak of civil war – and the resulting breakdown in state control – to pursue their own local agendas. These local conflicts, that usually pre-date the outbreak of war, are kept under control (i.e., they remain non-violent) until the opportunity arises to connect these local conflicts to the national-level conflict. Kalyvas argues convincingly that local violence in all of its multiple manifestations should not be dismissed as unrelated to the political conflict at the national level. Instead, he argues that “the fusion and interaction between dynamics at the center and the periphery are fundamental rather than incidental to civil war, a matter of essence rather than noise.”<sup>29</sup> Kalyvas clearly states the theoretical implications:

This book proposes, as an implication of the theory of selective violence, an alternative basis for the linkage between elite and ground dynamics: *alliance*. Alliance entails a transaction between supralocal and local actors, whereby the former supply the latter with external muscle, thus allowing them to win decisive local advantage; in exchange, supralocal actors recruit and motivate supporters at the local level. Viewed from this perspective, violence is a key selective benefit that produces collective action and support on the ground.<sup>30</sup>

Kalyvas provides numerous anecdotes from a diverse geographical, cultural and temporal selection of civil wars to back-up his assertions.<sup>31</sup> However, he does offer the caveat that “Local cleavages may be preexisting or war-induced; they may align neatly with central cleavages or subvert them; and they may be consistent over time or more fluid and random.”<sup>32</sup>

Particularly relevant to Tajikistan is Kalyvas' assertion that “nonmodernized states never penetrated their periphery effectively, thus failing to reduce the salience of local cleavages”<sup>33</sup> This phenomenon is most prominently analysed in Joel Migdal's

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<sup>28</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 366.

<sup>29</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 364.

<sup>30</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 365. Later, Kalyvas repeats this same point in more philosophical terms: “Local and private conflicts explode into violence neither because civil war is an instance of Hobbesian anarchy nor as a result of the designs and manipulations of supralocal actors. What matters, instead, is the interaction between the political and the private spheres.” See: *ibid.*, 381-2. Kalyvas later more fully introduces his concept of alliance. See: *ibid.*, 382-3.

<sup>31</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 364-87. Kalyvas includes a very brief reference to Olivier Roy's work on Tajikistan (p. 384).

<sup>32</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 374.

<sup>33</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 386, citing Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan, ‘Cleavage Structures, Party Systems, and Voter Alignments: An Introduction’, in *Party Systems and Voter Alignments: Cross-National Perspectives*. Edited by Seymour M. Lipset and Stein Rokkan (New York: Free Press, 1967)1-64.

work on ‘Strong Societies and Weak States.’<sup>34</sup> Even though Migdal’s work is focused on the ‘Third World,’ its theoretical core can be easily applied to Tajikistan and the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. When assessing the strength of a state, Migdal refers to

the capabilities of states to achieve the kinds of changes in society that their leaders have sought through state planning, policies, and actions. Capabilities include the capacities to *penetrate* society, *regulate* social relationships, *extract* resources, and *appropriate* or use resources in determined ways.<sup>35</sup>

This does require some qualification, as the process of state penetration in Tajikistan during the Soviet era did indeed result in the ‘penetration’ of local society by state structures. However, the process was only partially successful. The government had no choice at times but to accommodate local strongmen and traditional patterns of social organisation, religious belief, identities and loyalties.<sup>36</sup> The result at the level of centre-periphery relations was the central (Soviet Union) and republic-level (Tajik SSR) governments’ use of local cleavages as a power-balancing and patronage tool – thereby sustaining the cleavages, even if in a transformed state. The alliance of local networks and actors with the central government gave regional actors a stake in the success or failure of the political arrangements in the national government – thereby tying highly localised issues to national political issues. Concerning the outbreak and continuation of violence in Tajikistan, I will argue that Kalyvas’ analytical use of ‘alliance’ to connect the national level cleavages to those cleavages at the local levels fits quite well.<sup>37</sup>

## Indiscriminate Violence

Recent analysis on violence against civilians is mostly focused on ethnic wars. For example, Stefan Wolff, referring to the killing of civilians during ethnic conflicts, notes that by the start of this century over 90% of the victims of war were civilians. He states uncontroversially that the deliberate killing of civilians serves to “exact revenge, intimidate their opponents, and displace or destroy whole enemy populations defined on the basis of ethnic criteria.”<sup>38</sup> Joan Esteban, Massimo Morelli and Dominic Rohner

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<sup>34</sup> Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988).

<sup>35</sup> Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Again, this phenomenon is referred to in Migdal’s analysis of Third World states. See, for example: Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States*, 263-4.

<sup>37</sup> Indeed, Kalyvas includes a very brief reference to Olivier Roy’s work on Tajikistan as an anecdote to support his argument. See: Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 386.

<sup>38</sup> Stefan Wolff, *Ethnic Conflict: A Global Perspective* (Oxford University Press, 2006) 95-6.



provide an analysis of motivations that best match the worst incidents of large-scale violence during the initial round of the conflict in Tajikistan:

One distinctive feature is that mass killings are designed to kill, i.e. to reduce the size of the opponent groups, while other forms of conflict are about winning some prize and the fatalities they entail are merely a by-product of appropriation.<sup>39</sup>

The objective of a civil war is to impose a new social arrangement or new social contract, as desired by the ethnic group that rebels. [...] In civil wars, reducing the population size of the opponent group - by extermination and/or exile - allows for a larger viable share in the new social arrangement.<sup>40</sup>

Deliberate violence against civilians is a common aspect of war zones – but not just those limited to ethnic conflicts. Kalyvas, analysing the use of indiscriminate violence in civil wars, goes beyond ethnicity and offers a theory for why this often counterproductive tactic is employed:

I argue that indiscriminate violence emerges, when it does, because it is much cheaper than its selective counterpart. Yet, any “gain” must be counterbalanced by its consequences. Thus, indiscriminate violence is more likely either under a steep imbalance of power between the two actors or where and when resources and information are low. In the absence of a resolution of the conflict, even indiscriminate actors are likely to switch to more selective violence.

Like other forms of violence, indiscriminate violence may be used to achieve a variety of goals, such as exterminating particular groups, displacing people, plundering goods, or demonstrating a group’s power and ability to hurt another group. Consistent with this book’s scope conditions, my focus in this chapter is on the use of indiscriminate violence to control a population rather than simply to loot, displace, or eliminate it.<sup>41</sup>

The main reason that indiscriminate violence is employed at the expense of discriminate violence is as a result of a shortage of information. Unable to target the fighters or political actors of the opposing sides, an armed group settles for collectively punishing the civilian population that is associated, even vaguely, with the opposing side. The logic here is that the opposing side will change its ‘behavior’ in favour of its enemy out of consideration for the civilian population they have amity for. Also, the hope is that the civilian population will be scared into collaborating with the side inflicting the punishment out of a fear of future reprisals.<sup>42</sup>

In regards to indiscriminate violence being counterproductive, Kalyvas cites the well-known view that indiscriminate violence by the ‘incumbent’ (i.e., the dominant

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<sup>39</sup> Joan Esteban, Massimo Morelli and Dominic Rohner, ‘Strategic Mass Killings’, Households in Conflict Network, Working Paper 78 (May 2010) 4.

<sup>40</sup> Esteban, Morelli and Rohner, ‘Strategic Mass Killings’, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 147.

<sup>42</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 149-50.

side) is welcomed by the insurgents because these reprisals can bring new recruits.<sup>43</sup> Kalyvas goes beyond just the ‘revenge’ factor<sup>44</sup> in noting that there are numerous reasons why violence against civilians can be a counter-productive tactic.<sup>45</sup> Yet despite the acknowledged downside to the use of indiscriminate violence, it has persisted as a common feature of war zones – even considering that some selective violence has been mistakenly classified as indiscriminate due to the ignorance of outside observers.<sup>46</sup> Kalyvas argues that this may be due to several reasons, including some leaders’ ignorance of the counterproductive nature of indiscriminate violence, the relative cost savings over the resource intensive selective violence, and distorted military institutions that do not provide the resources or incentives for selective violence.<sup>47</sup>

Kalyvas offers a hypothesis to explain the use or avoidance of indiscriminate violence during war. Positing that “Political actors are likely to gradually move from indiscriminate to selective violence,”<sup>48</sup> Kalyvas writes:

Assume a setting where incumbents choose whether to use indiscriminate or selective violence, insurgents have the option of protecting civilians from incumbent indiscriminate violence, and civilians collaborate with the political actor who best guarantees their security. In such a setting, civilians will be likely to collaborate with the incumbents if the insurgents fail to protect them, whether incumbents are indiscriminate or selective; they will be likely to side with the insurgents when they are protected by them against indiscriminate incumbents; and the outcome is indeterminate when insurgents protect civilians and incumbents are selective.

In short, indiscriminate violence is likely to be effective when there is a steep imbalance of power between the two actors. Given reasonably strong insurgents, it should be unsustainable, as its counterproductive nature becomes clear. We would, therefore, expect rational incumbents who may initiate indiscriminate violence to muster additional resources and subject whatever institutional distortions they suffer from to the imperatives of their long-term interest. As a conflict waxes on, we should observe a

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<sup>43</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 151. Kalyvas cites many examples, most prominently the failure of Nazi reprisals in WWII.

<sup>44</sup> Kalyvas defines this as ‘Emotional Response’: basically, indiscriminate reprisals create hatred and a desire for revenge, which in turn creates a more enthusiastic pool of potential recruits for the opposing side. However, this only equals more armed resistance if there is an organisation capable of recruiting, arming and directing new recruits. See: Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 153-4.

<sup>45</sup> Other reasons cited by Kalyvas: (a) when all civilians are punished equally, there is no incentive to cooperate with the punishers, (b) reprisals often victimise people who are least involved in armed struggle, (c) an insurgent can use his opponent’s reprisals as a tool (e.g., threatening to leave uncooperative villagers unprotected), and (d) the relationship between civilians and belligerents may be overestimated. See: Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 153-9.

<sup>46</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 148, 161-2. Kalyvas notes that some violence considered to be indiscriminate is only considered so due to a lack of information and reporting by uninformed outside observers. The perpetrators of the violence in these situations may actually be killing based on a specific ‘criterion’, such as location of residence or economic status that an outside observer such as a foreign journalist may not recognise. Kalyvas provides the examples of Greece, Colombia, Kenya and Manchuria to demonstrate that incidents that were once considered indiscriminate violence are now convincingly shown to be selective, targeted killings.

<sup>47</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 161-6.

<sup>48</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 169.

shift toward selective violence, especially among incumbents, the ones likely to initiate indiscriminate violence.<sup>49</sup>

While not everything mentioned above by Kalyvas is applicable to the civil war in Tajikistan, the move from indiscriminate to selective violence with the passage of time matches perfectly with the pattern of violence during the Tajik Civil War. His theory will be applied with some modifications and qualifications.

## Summary

The theoretical tools selected in this chapter will be used to analyse the outbreak and spread of conflict, the characteristics of the warring parties, and the change in tactics used in the course of the first year of war in Tajikistan. The ‘security dilemma’ and ‘credible commitment problem’ will be used as tools to analyse the logic behind the outbreak and continuation of conflict in Tajikistan. To investigate the distinct regional and ethnic characteristics of the opposing armed groups I will demonstrate how the ‘mobilising structures’ were limited, or even captured, by the pre-existing networks and politically and economically relevant regional and ethnic identities in Tajikistan. The process whereby national-level political wrangling was intimately attached to local conflicts – resulting in the rapid spread of violence in rural areas – will be illustrated by the use of the concept of ‘alliance’, a process whereby seemingly unrelated local agendas quickly attach to broader cleavages at the national level. And finally, in an attempt to explain why indiscriminate violence was used against civilian populations and why it was eventually abandoned as a tactic, I will borrow from the theory of ‘indiscriminate violence.’

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<sup>49</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 168-9.

## Chapter 2

### Historical Background and Social Context

#### Introduction

In the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic the central authorities, as in other areas throughout the USSR, attempted to shape new national identities while suppressing pre-existing identities and loyalties. Over nearly seven decades, identities and traditional authority structures were indeed transformed, albeit not necessarily in a way that Soviet planners had anticipated. The new power structures and identities included much in the way of traditional authority patterns and identities, while adapting to the restraints and incentives that were present in the Soviet system. There is still much contemporary debate as to the social relevance of national identities (e.g., Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, etc...) that were shaped and promoted by the authorities when weighted against other categories of identity and loyalty that cross-cut these ethnicities. This dissertation will analyse, as one of the variables, the relevance of the various identities and loyalties in times of crisis. When the power struggles in Dushanbe led to civil unrest and violent conflict, national-level elites and local power brokers mobilised support from the local level, drawing on and appealing to ties of identity and shared economic concerns. Language, ethnicity, sub-ethnic identity, religious sect, region of origin, collective farm affiliation, family ties, professional relationships, political party membership, employer-employee ties and government patron-client networks have all been cited as factors in determining individual and group participation or non-participation in the conflict. Each one of these categories played a role in determining behaviour during the civil war—of course some of them to a far lesser degree than others. Therefore, an analysis of identity in Tajikistan can not include only Soviet nationality policies, nor can it completely be confined to the rather restricted territory of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. Examples from the wider region, particularly Uzbekistan, will also be included while historical patterns of identity will be analysed. This chapter will start with the policies and efforts of the Soviets and the successor states at the broadest level promoted by these states: ethnicity.

## Part 1: Identity in Southern Tajikistan

### Ethnicity in Central Asia

After the Second World War there was a reversal in primary ideological emphasis in the Soviet Union from class to ethnicity. Previously nationalism was officially viewed as stage in the evolution towards a class-based socialist society.<sup>1</sup> In Yuri Slezkine's words, nationalism became, with the full support of Soviet authorities, a "sacred principle of marxism-leninism."<sup>2</sup> As a result, according to Valery Tishkov's analysis of Soviet social sciences, the view of ethnicity became politicised and primordialistic (the equivalent is easily found in Western scholarship). There was a heavy emphasis on ethnogenesis, with social scientists providing writings to trace a group origin as far back as the upper-Palaeolithic era, identify cultural heroes, and demonstrate the existence of a people with "their 'own' territories and their 'own' states."<sup>3</sup> Victor Shnirelman provides a very similar critique,<sup>4</sup> and notes that this "invention of the past" is used to raise self-esteem, usually in relation to neighbouring groups, and to demand "special rights and privileges with respect to others who lack their glorious past."<sup>5</sup> According to Alisher Ilkhamov, in response to the perception of

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<sup>1</sup> Yuri Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment, or How a Socialist State Promoted Ethnic Particularism', *Slavic Review*, Vol. 53, No. 2 (Summer 1994). Slezkine writes that as part of this process "linguists and ethnographers expected—and tried to bring about—the fusion and consequent disappearance of linguistic and ethnic communities." Ibid, 137. See also: Yuri Slezkine, 'The Fall of Soviet Ethnography, 1928-38', *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (Aug.-Oct., 1991), 476-484. According to Adeeb Khalid it was in the mid-1930s that "official Soviet discourse came to accept—indeed, to assert—that national and ethnic identities were real and permanent, but it still did not compromise on the basic universalism of historical progress. See: Adeeb Khalid, *Islam after Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 65, also 94-8.

<sup>2</sup> Slezkine, 'The USSR as a Communal Apartment', 414.

<sup>3</sup> Valery A. Tishkov, 'Inventions and Manifestations of ethno-Nationalism in and after the Soviet Union', in *Ethnicity and Conflict in a Post-Communist World: The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China*. Edited by Kumar Rupasinghe, Peter King and Olga Vorkunova (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 42. Valery Tishkov, now the director of the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, offered a harsh critique of the nationalist intellectuals/scholars in the late Soviet period: "Among Soviet specialists, the major watershed runs along two lines which are not theoretical or methodological, but, political and ethnic. For 'periphery' scholars in the Republics, ethnocentric interpretations dominate, indirectly controlled by nationalistic forces and power institutions. Any approaches and opinions differing from the publicly accepted unilateral position may be proclaimed as 'subversive', as being expressed by 'enemies of the nation' and 'agents of the Kremlin.' The prevailing themes of the writings of these scholars are: elaborating lists of grievances against others, justifications for state, territorial, political, and cultural rights of titular nationalities, and a search for external enemies (mainly in Moscow or in neighbouring republics) as responsible for ethnic conflicts. Historical in-group descriptions, without serious interest in the significance of ethnic interactions, within and outside the region, remain the most striking features of this Soviet 'peripheral' anthropology." *Ibid.*, 43-4.

<sup>4</sup> Victor A. Shnirelman, *Who Gets The Past? Competition for Ancestors Among Non-Russian Intellectuals in Russia*, (Baltimore/London: John Hopkins University Press, 1996), 1-12, 58-61. Shnirelman notes the importance of autochthonism (i.e., a certain groups has always inhabited its current location) and particularism (de-emphasising common roots and stressing differences), *ibid*, 12.

<sup>5</sup> Shnirelman, *Who gets The Past?*, 2.

growing nationalism—particularly in the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic—the central Communist Party initiated a parallel process whereby they “gave the green light to ethnographic investigations that would raise doubts about the homogeneous nature of the modern Uzbek nation and question the reasons for the inclusions of certain ethnic groups...”<sup>6</sup> As a result it is possible to find clearly separate discourses on nationalism, identity and ethnic origins in the Soviet-era scholarship.

The search for a ‘glorious past’ is not an irrelevant, isolated intellectual pursuit. While academics may provide the basic material, it is those “amateurs in the field” such as popular writers, journalists, educators, and artists who play a significant role, and often in a manner that is “less restrained” and “highly selective.”<sup>7</sup> Shnirelman notes that as part of this search for a past, “an ethnic group may encroach upon or even appropriate the past and cultural legacy of another group, leading to misunderstandings, arguments and tensions.”<sup>8</sup> These types of claims are not without their material logic, as the ‘special rights and privileges’ part of Shnirelman’s explanation demonstrates. Kirill Nourzhanov notes the use of historiography by the state:

All governments use historical symbols and historiography to cultivate patriotism, explain and justify policies, and secure the acquiescence and cooperation of the people in times of crises. Symbolic encapsulation of the themes of regime legitimacy, common identity, and cultural revival through historical references is particularly crucial for emerging nations. The newly independent Central Asian countries present no exception from this pattern.<sup>9</sup>

Alisher Ilkhamov, in the context of modern Uzbekistan and addressing issues of power, provides similar reasons:

Here it is important to mention that according to the logic of imperial national-patriotism, the more ancient and magnificent the history of a people is, the stronger is its national consciousness. The latter is important primarily for the ruling elites, who appropriate the right to speak on behalf of the national symbols and historical past of a people. The more substantial this symbolic capital is, the more legitimate is the power controlling it. The power ultimately personifies the symbolic capital, which it creates together with its associate academic and cultural elites.<sup>10</sup>

In more positive terms, President Karimov of Uzbekistan explains his position:

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<sup>6</sup> A. Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Spring 2006), 27.

<sup>7</sup> Shnirelman, *Who gets The Past?*, 58-9. Similarly, as Schoeberlein notes about debates in Central Asia, “the debate amongst those who promote or oppose Uzbek nationalist claims, the debate is built more on emotion than on history.” See: John Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 2 (1996) 13; Schoeberlein-Engel, John. 1994. *Identity in Central Asia: Construction and Contention in the Conceptions of “Uzbek,” “Tajik,” “Muslim,” “Samarqandi” and other Groups*. PhD Dissertation, Harvard University (1994), 66, 72.

<sup>8</sup> Shnirelman, *Who gets The Past?*, 2, 60-1. Shnirelman notes that this is especially true when the encroachment involves claims on other’s territory.

<sup>9</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, ‘The Politics of History in Tajikistan: Reinventing the Samanids’, *Harvard Asia Quarterly*, 5:1 (2001), n.p.

<sup>10</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 29.

Historical memory, the restoration of an objective and truthful history of the nation and its territory is given an extremely important place in the revival and growth of national self-consciousness and national pride. History can be a genuine tutor of the nation. The deeds and feats of great ancestors enliven historical memory, shape a new civil consciousness, and become a source of moral education and imitation.<sup>11</sup>

The official Uzbek SSR version promoted after the 1950s – unmentioned in earlier official government histories – claims that the ‘ethnogenesis’ of the Uzbeks was completed by the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries during Karakhanid rule.<sup>12</sup> The Tajik official histories, for their part, traced the completion of their ‘ethnogenesis’ to the Samanid era (9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>13</sup> Shirin Akiner claims, in an assertion that can only be safely applied to nationalist intellectuals and select politicians, that “Historiography is to Tajiks an intensely emotive, fiercely contested political issue.”<sup>14</sup> Contemporary Tajik nationalists stress not only their Persian (Western Iranian) heritage, but also their Soghdian (Eastern Iranian) heritage in order to counteract the claim of “their Turkic neighbours” (i.e., Uzbek nationalists in Uzbekistan) that Turkic peoples are the original inhabitants of Central Asia and that the Tajiks are latecomers.<sup>15</sup> An excellent example of this is in a recent article by Shamsiddin Kamoliddin, a researcher at the Institute of History in Uzbekistan, wherein he makes the uncited claim that modern-day Uzbeks are descended

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<sup>11</sup> Islam Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century: Challenges to Stability and Progress*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 86-7. Shoshana Keller explains how this works in the schools of the Uzbek SSR and in Uzbekistan: “In modern nation-states, educators teach the history of the homeland in order to instil a sense of national identity, of cultural continuity through time, of loyalty to the state and acceptance of its ideology. In Soviet Uzbekistan, teachers had the additional task of creating and defining a new country for their students, and showing children where they be longed in the flow of a new historical narrative. What children learned about Uzbek history in school and in related activities was central to their formation of a personal sense of national identity, which was critical to the larger Soviet project of nation building.” See: Shoshana Keller, ‘Story, Time, and Dependent Nationhood in the Uzbek History Curriculum’, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 66, No. 2 (Summer, 2007), 257. Throughout her article Keller demonstrates how the government-sponsored efforts at the elite intellectual level were applied in schools.

<sup>12</sup> *Istoriia UzSSR*, Vol. 1, part 1 (1955), 269; *Istoriia UzSSR*, vol. 1 (1967), 501, as cited in Maria Eva Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, in *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*. Edited by Beatrice F. Manz (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994) 53. There are some extreme contemporary examples of speculating on the Uzbek ethnogenesis. John Schoeberlein wrote, in regards to some unnamed people, that “it has recently become fashionable in Uzbekistan to argue that the Uzbek nation extends back to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and even earlier.” See Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, 13.

<sup>13</sup> B. Gh. Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, Volume 1 (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1983) 494-501; Nourzhanov, ‘The Politics of History in Tajikistan: Reinventing the Samanids’, n.p.; *Tadzhikskaja Sovetskaja Sotsialisticheskaja Respublika* (Dushanbe: AN TadzSSR, 1974), 88, as cited in Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 53; Marlene Laruelle, ‘The Return of the Aryan Myth: Tajikistan in Search of a Secularized National Ideology’, *Nationalities Papers*, 35(1) (2007).

<sup>14</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001) 10. This is clearly not a new phenomenon, as demonstrated by Guissou Jahangiri in her analysis of Tajik-centric journals involved in the Tajik intellectual discourse in the 1920s. See: Guissou Jahangiri, ‘The Premises for the Construction of a Tajik National Identity, 1920-1930’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (editors). (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> Muriel Atkin, ‘Tajikistan’s Relations with Iran and Afghanistan’, in *The New Politics of Central Asia and Its Borderlands*. Edited by Ali Banuazizi and Myron Weiner (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 97-8.

from sedentarised “proto-Turks” who were the indigenous population of Central Asia *before* the arrival of Indo-European peoples. He further claims (again uncited) that these Turks had inhabited the region (and specifically not as nomads) since the second millennia B.C.E., only to be forced out by “Aryan invaders.”<sup>16</sup> As a reply, Tajik nationalists can easily point to the claim made by the prominent Tajik academic Bobojon Ghafurov that the “Iranian eastern populations did not come to Central Asia out of nowhere but constituted themselves there, on the ground.”<sup>17</sup>

This dissertation acknowledges the importance of historiography and the nationalist intellectual discourse<sup>18</sup> for the Central Asian governments’ past and current attempts at state-/nation-building and for the shaping of identities.<sup>19</sup> However, the argument presented here will be that the intellectual battles of this type have limited relevance in peoples’ lives and are not strongly related to the localised sub-national conflict that will be analysed in this dissertation.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, this dissertation will provide an analysis of ethnogenesis and historiography as part of the analysis of ethnicity in order to show the broader intellectual and national-level context before analysing the lower-level collective identities and loyalties.

## Tajiks

Attempting to determine the origin of the term ‘Tajik’ and its social use throughout history is an exercise in speculation. Folk etymologies, single historical references, scholarly guessing, various shifting social usages and highly politicised attempts to find ancient origins all must be navigated when attempting to find the origin and historical usage of ‘Tajik.’<sup>21</sup> Contemporary usage of ‘Tajik’ generally narrows

<sup>16</sup> Shamsiddin Kamoliddin, ‘The Notion of Ethnogenesis in the Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan’, *Archeology & Anthropology of Eurasia*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Spring 2006), 43-4.

<sup>17</sup> B. G. Gafurov *Istoriya tadjikskogo naroda v kratkom izlozhenii*. (Moscow: Politizdat, 1949), 26. As translated and cited in Laruelle, ‘The Return of the Aryan Myth’, 56.

<sup>18</sup> For a description of Turkic intellectuals versus Tajik intellectuals see Muriel Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, in *Muslims in Central Asia: Expressions of Identity and Change*. Edited by Jo-Ann Gross (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992) 50-9.

<sup>19</sup> For contemporary Tajik examples see the controversies outlined in Nourzhanov, ‘The Politics of History in Tajikistan’ and Laruelle, ‘The Return of the Aryan Myth.’ For an Uzbek example see Alisher Ilkhamov, ‘Archaeology of Uzbek identity’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2004).

<sup>20</sup> As an example of the irrelevance of nationalist intellectual’s debates over identity, I refer to Schoeberlein’s example from the late 1980s in Samarkand where few Tajik-speakers were interested in the agenda of political activists who were lobbying for an increased role for the Tajik language and identity. See: Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 217.

<sup>21</sup> For example, see: Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, 501, n. 83; Maria Eva Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 48-9; Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 137-42, 144; C.E. Bosworth and B.G. Fagner, ‘Tādjīk’, *Encyclopaedia of Islam, Second Edition*, Edited by P. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Brill Online. <http://brillonline.nl/>. As for the Tajik President, he says that “The word ‘Tajik’ is identical to



down members to sedentary, Persian-speaking Sunni Muslims in Central Asia and Afghanistan (with some exceptions such as Dari-speakers who claim Pashtun lineage). However, as stressed by Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont and echoed by other scholars, this “common term” refers to Persian-speakers of diverse origins.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, John Schoeberlein cautions that a “biological” group can very quickly shift its language, therefore making it “very problematic” to refer to the various Iranian peoples as both a “linguistic and biological-racial group.”<sup>23</sup> The fluidity of identity in the region is noted by Sergei Abashin, who states that historically in Central Asia

Cultural or linguistic distinguishing features were not permanent, but fluid, and a person could easily move from one category to another. In this period, such ‘transparency’ in relation to cultural and social boundaries was a necessity of life. Otherwise, a small group, insulated by strict self-consciousness, would have been unable to survive. It needed to have the capacity to absorb new members from outside, as well as the ability to join a new stronger grouping.<sup>24</sup>

When discussing the language of the Tajiks – variously referred to as Persian, Farsi, Dari or Tajiki – the historical linguistic changes in Central Asia within the Iranian languages family should be noted. The Eastern Iranian languages in Central Asia were superseded by a mutually unintelligible Western Iranian language (Persian<sup>25</sup>) several hundred years after the Arab conquests in a process that began well before the Arabs

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‘Aryan’ (meaning ‘noble, highborn’). From the viewpoint of modern Tajik language the word ‘Tajik’ is interpreted as ‘crowned’ or ‘of noble origins.’” See: Emomali Rahmonov, *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History*, Vol. I: From the Aryans to the Samanids (Guernsey, UK: London River Editions, n.d.), 94. A prominent example of a single historical usage is Ghafurov citing an 11<sup>th</sup> Century quote wherein a man in a sultan’s court said “We, who are Tozik.” See: Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, 501. For a criticism of this usage by Ghafurov, see: See: Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 129-30, esp. n. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Centlivres, Pierre and Micheline Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan: The Ethnic Groups on Either Side of the Border’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. Edited by Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 4. Or similarly, as noted by Shirin Akiner, ‘Tajik’ should be considered an ‘umbrella term’ for a diverse group that does not necessarily share a common history. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 9. See also Saodat Olimova, ‘Regionalism and its perception by major political and social powers of Tajikistan’, in *Tajikistan at a Crossroad: The Politics of Decentralization*. Edited by Luigi De Martino (Geneva: Citera Publications, 2004) 144.

<sup>23</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 115-6; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 48-9, n. 6.

<sup>24</sup> Sergei Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia: a case study of the Uzbeks and Tajiks’, *Russian Regional Perspectives Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (2003) 32.

<sup>25</sup> I.e., Farsi, Dari, Tajiki.

entered the region.<sup>26</sup> According to Ghafurov, the appeal and power of religious, cultural, political and economic factors all contributed to the spread of western Iranian.<sup>27</sup>

As mentioned above, Tajik official and nationalist histories trace the completion of their ‘ethnogenesis’ and the beginning of their ‘statehood’ to the Samanid era (9-10<sup>th</sup> centuries).<sup>28</sup> The works of Sadriiddin Ayni and Bobojon Ghafurov, for example, were written with the goal of shaping national identity and tracing its origins.<sup>29</sup> Ghafurov, an historian who was the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan from 1946-1956 and thereafter (until his death 20 years later) the director of the Moscow-based Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union, writes of the Tajiks as a clearly defined group from the Samanid era.<sup>30</sup> Ghafurov, commenting on the “process of consolidation of the Tajik people,” uses contradictory language: “Although the formation of the Tajik people had already been completed by the 9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries, in the following centuries it [i.e., Tajik identity] did not remain unchanged.”<sup>31</sup> This phrasing allows Tajiks to claim all populations that preceded this era to be included as ancestors of Tajiks and all cultural, linguistic and population changes after this era as not lessening the importance of the final ‘consolidation’ of Tajik identity. The Tajik archaeologist and historian N. N. Negmatov makes a similar claim of Tajik antiquity, albeit in somewhat more neutral terms when he identifies all the Iranian-speaking populations of Central Asia during and before the Samanid era and argues that

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<sup>26</sup> Muriel Atkin, ‘Tajiks and the Persian World’, in *Central Asia in Historical Perspective*. Edited by Beatrice F. Manz (Oxford: Westview Press, 1994), 127. Going back even further, Barthold speculates that it can be ‘reasonably assumed’ that the pre-Iranian populations of Central Asia are related to the present day speakers of the Caucasian languages. See: V.V. Barthold. 1956. ‘A Short History of Turkestan’, in *Four Studies on the History of Central Asia*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1956, essay originally published in Tashkent, 1922). 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, 107. Ghafurov writes further [translation mine]: “The Persian language spread from Marv, Balkh and other administrative, economic and cultural centres of Northern Khurasan into Movarounnahr [Central Asia], gradually taking the place of Eastern Iranian languages such as Soghdian and Tokharian (Bactrian).” Svat Soucek gives a similar description: “...at the cultural and linguistic level, Samanid rule in Khurasan and Transoxania played a catalytic role in the rise of a new Iranian identity, which was Islamic. A new language, Persian, came into being and replaced the kindred Soghdian and Khwarazmian idioms as the language of statecraft (besides Arabic) and literature. [Iranian culture] reasserted itself after the Arab conquest less [at home] than in Central Asia; for through a special process of cultural shift, the now Muslim Iranians from Fars joined the Arab conquerors to rule Khurasan and Transoxania, and were in turn joined by those local Iranians who proved to be fervent converts not only from Zoroastrianism to Islam but also from Soghdian or other Central Asian idioms to Farsi, as the Persians now call their language.” See: Svat Soucek, *A History of Inner Asia*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 71.

<sup>28</sup> Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, 494-501; *Tadzhikskaja Sovetskaia Sotsialisticheskaia Respublika* (Dushanbe: AN TadZSSR, 1974), 88, as cited in Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 53; Nourzhanov, ‘The Politics of History in Tajikistan: Reinventing the Samanids’; Laruelle, ‘The Return of the Aryan Myth.’

<sup>29</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 15-16.

<sup>30</sup> Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, 494-501.

<sup>31</sup> Ghafurov, *Tojikon: Ta’rikhi Qadimtarin, Qadim va Asri Miyona*, 500.

All these people were ethnically related and spoke languages and dialects of the Middle Iranian and New Persian language groups; they were the basis for the emergence and gradual consolidation of what became an Eastern Persian-Tajik ethnic identity.<sup>32</sup>

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon, while extolling Ghafurov's works in the most flattering terms, dispenses with any academic caution and writes

...I have had to stress again and again that it would be wrong to think that the first page in the history of Tajik statehood was written with the founding of the Samanid state. Long before the Samanid epoch, the Tajiks had already established a number of states. Little wonder that the Tajiks are recognised as one of the oldest peoples of Central Asia who laid down the very foundations of civilisation in these ancient lands. [...] The Tajiks have a history stretching back many thousand years.

[...]...how could we, the Tajiks and legitimate successors to the Kayonids, betray the memories of our forefathers and let them sink into oblivion?<sup>33</sup>

As for the social and political relevance of Tajik historiography and ethnogenesis, in particular their relation to post-Soviet state/nation-building, recent articles by Kirill Nourzhanov<sup>34</sup> and Marlene Laruelle<sup>35</sup> illustrate the importance that the government of Tajikistan and the various Tajik intellectuals attach to these issues, with a particular stress on the Samanids – all-important due to their status as the last 'Iranian' dynasty before the domination of Turkic dynasties. While these issues are clearly important for the continuing shaping of identity in modern Central Asian states, my focus on local mobilisation dynamics in the Tajik civil war focuses on more mundane aspects of identity and loyalty to which I will dedicate most of my focus.

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<sup>32</sup> N. N. Negmatov, 'The Samanid State', in *The History of Civilizations of Central Asia*, Volume IV. Edited by M. S. Asimov and C. E. Bosworth. (Paris: UNESCO, 1998), 94. At a UNESCO and Tajik government-sponsored conference in Dushanbe Negmatov's praise for the Tajik President is matched by his enthusiasm for the Samanid era. He stresses the Samanid era as the "renaissance" of Tajik culture, which he claims was "interrupted" by the Arab invasions of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. See: N. Negmatov, 'The Phenomenon of the Material Cultural of Central Asia in the Samanid's Epoch', in *The Contribution of the Samanid Epoch to the Cultural Heritage of the Central Asia*, UNESCO International Colloquium, Dushanbe 1998, (Dushanbe: Adib, 1999), 157-64.

<sup>33</sup> Rahmonov, *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History*, 5-6. Rahmon also traces the Tajiks to the mythological Peshdodids (who Rahmon notes ruled in the 5<sup>th</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia B.C.E.), *ibid.*, 64-5. Rahmon seems to be also framing a response in his writing. For example: "When Tajikistan finally gained independence and the process of state disintegration was progressing rapidly, we observed that there were some forces in our society which tended to belittle the historical role played by Tajiks, and to exaggerate the influence from other nations." *Ibid.*, 10. President Rahmon attaches enough significance to the Samanids that he thought it worthy of a UNESCO-sponsored conference in Dushanbe in 1998, at which he gave the welcoming speech. In very plain language he stressed that "The Samanid state, for us Tajiks, has another important historic significance. It was in this period that the factors and conditions necessary for the completion of the process of the Tajik nation were formed. It was the time when the literary Tajik language, was formed. It was of great importance for the unity of ancestors of Tajiks into one nation." See: 'Welcome Speech by Mr. E. Sh. Rakhmonov, President of the Republic of Tajikistan', in *The Contribution of the Samanid Epoch to the Cultural Heritage of the Central Asia*, UNESCO International Colloquium, Dushanbe 1998, (Dushanbe: "Adib," 1999), 128.

<sup>34</sup> Nourzhanov, 'The Politics of History in Tajikistan: Reinventing the Samanids.'

<sup>35</sup> Laruelle, 'The Return of the Aryan Myth.'

## Uzbeks

Official Uzbekistan government versions, unmentioned in earlier official government histories, claim that the ‘ethnogenesis’ of the Uzbeks was completed by the 11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries during Karakhanid rule and that the name Uzbek was given to a pre-existing ethnic group.<sup>36</sup> According to Alisher Ilkhamov, the contemporary version popular in Uzbekistan’s academic community cites the appearance of Qarluq Turks in Central Asia during the 10<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries as the most important event in Uzbek history. Meanwhile, he cites 1924 and the national delimitation that created the Uzbek SSR as the most important event in Uzbek history.<sup>37</sup> Ilkhamov, clearly influenced by contemporary theories of nationalism, looks to more recent processes:

It would be naive to imagine the formation of Uzbek nation only as an “objective” natural-historical process. Indeed, the process of forming modern Uzbek identity should be considered in close relation with the formation of the Uzbek SSR as well as the result of united efforts of ruling and cultural elites.<sup>38</sup>

The creation of the Uzbek national state, allotment of special territory, ensuring an Uzbek majority was a necessary but not sufficient condition for the formation of the new Uzbek identity. To complete the process, it was necessary to create the corresponding national consciousness. Before the creation of the Uzbek SSR, only a minority of urban dwellers, mostly local intelligentsia, merchants, and clergy, possessed a degree of national consciousness. The Soviet government, however, was very suspicious and even hostile to these social groups. That is why it was necessary to introduce the idea of the Uzbek nation with its own culture, language, history, and national heroes for the larger population. It became possible through codification of the Uzbek language, development of national symbols, and their spread through the republic. This required total literacy.<sup>39</sup>

Of course, it is not just the antiquity of the Uzbeks that is up for debate, it is also the composition of the Uzbeks. A 1941 article by the Soviet historian A. Yakubovskii claimed that the “Uzbek people” were already formed by the time the Shaybanid Uzbeks arrived in Central Asia. Rather than being the most significant event in the “formation process of the Uzbek people,” this population influx just completed the process.<sup>40</sup> One official Uzbek SSR publication, *History of the Uzbek SSR*, denies any nomadic component to the modern Uzbeks and stresses the local origins of the modern Uzbeks, claiming descent from the sedentary inhabitants of historical areas that coincide

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<sup>36</sup> *Istoriia UzSSR*, Vol. 1, part 1 (1955), 269; *Istoriia UzSSR*, vol. 1 (1967), 501, as cited in Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 53; Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 53-4.

<sup>37</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 11.

<sup>38</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 22.

<sup>39</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 24.

<sup>40</sup> A. Iu. Yakubovskii, *K voprosu ob etnogeneze uzbekskogo naroda* (Tashkent, 1941), as cited in Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 28.

with the territory of modern day Uzbekistan.<sup>41</sup> The official Uzbek SSR government version of the Uzbek ethnogenesis based Uzbek origins on a sedentary population within the territory of Uzbekistan, while deemphasising any nomadic roots to stress the “cultured” nature of Uzbek history and rejecting the connection to Shaybanid Uzbeks who came from outside the territory of modern day Uzbekistan.<sup>42</sup> However, the anthropologist Belkis Karmysheva contradicts the official version and notes the significant nomadic influence.<sup>43</sup> The Uzbek historian Karim Shaniiazov and the Kazakh historian Tursun Sultanov also contradict the official histories. They both argue that steppe nomads, including Shaybanid Uzbeks, contributed significantly to the present-day Uzbek population.<sup>44</sup>

An official Union-wide Soviet (i.e., not Uzbek SSR) publication titled *Uzbekistan* (1967) describes Uzbekistan’s ethnic Uzbek population in three parts: a long-settled population, a semi-nomadic and Turkic population that gradually sedentarised, and Turkic Shaybanid clans that arrived in the 15<sup>th</sup>-16<sup>th</sup> centuries. The book notes the differences between the groups but then claims that a unified Uzbek nation was formed out of the disparate groups during the Soviet era as “they gradually converged in way of life, culture and language and eventually became indivisible parts of the Uzbek nation.”<sup>45</sup> Ilkhamov is of the same opinion. He suggests

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<sup>41</sup> *Istoriia Uzbekskoi SSR*, Vol. 1 (Tashkent: Fan, 1967), 501, as cited in Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 53. Subtelny’s translation: “The Uzbek ethnic group (*narodnost*) is composed not of the fairly recently arrived nomadic “Uzbeks” of the fifteenth century Kipchak Steppe, but of the ancient inhabitants of Soghdiana, Ferghana and Khorezm. From the earliest times they led a settled life and were occupied in cultivating the soil.” This is contradicted by the earlier official history, which noted that “numerous” steppe nomads entered the present day area of Uzbekistan. See: *Istoriia narodov Uzbekistana*, 2 vols. (Tashkent: Izdatel’stvo AN UzSSR, 1947-50), vol. 2, 49, as cited in *ibid.*, 54-5.

<sup>42</sup> Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 52-3. Kamoliddin enthusiastically endorses this official view: “The Dasht-i Kipchak component is the latest external element in the Uzbek people’s history, which did not contribute anything new to the process of nation formation. Nomadic Uzbeks blended into the settled agriculturalist Central Asian population and, having adopted their language, partook of its high culture.” See: Kamoliddin, ‘The Notion of Ethnogenesis in The Ethnic Atlas of Uzbekistan’, 44.

<sup>43</sup> B. Kh. Karmysheva, *Ocherki etnicheskoi istorii iuzhnykh raionov Tadzhikistana i Uzbekistana*, (Moscow, Nauka, 1976), esp. 258-9, as cited in Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 54..

<sup>44</sup> K. Sh. Shaniiazov, *K etnicheskoi istorii uzbekskogo naroda* (Tashkent: Fan, 1974), 80; T. I. Sultanov, *Kochevye plemena Priaral’ia v XV-XVII vv. (Voprosy etnicheskoi i sotsial’noi istorii)* (Moscow: Nauka, 1982), 258-9. Both as cited in Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 54.

<sup>45</sup> *Uzbekistan* (In series *Sovetskii Soiuz*, Moscow: Mysl’), 65-9, cited in Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 177-8. The historical narrative of three components to the Uzbek population was clearly picked up on by Western scholars such as Alexander Bennigsen and Enders Wimbush. See: Bennigsen and Wimbush, *Muslims of the Soviet Empire: A Guide* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 57-8. This view of three components to the modern Uzbek population was later criticized by other western scholars such as John Schoeberlein. Schoeberlein disagrees with Bennigsen and Wimbush’s description of three ethnic types of Uzbeks as “formed of three ethnic layers: the urban population, the descendants of the pre-Shaybanid Turkic tribes, and the descendants of the Shaybanid Uzbek tribes.” He terms this “mytho-historical representations” and compares it to attempting to divide the English population into Celtic, Anglo-Saxon and Viking. See: Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 53-4; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, 13, 62.

...that three main sources constitute the original ethnic components from which modern Uzbeks were formed as an ethnos and as a nation. These are Dasht-i Kipchak nomad Uzbeks, most of whom migrated to Central Asia in the early 16<sup>th</sup> century; local Turkic tribes and clans (Chagatay and Oguz); and the Sarts, settled Turkic-speaking, who lost their tribal roots (if they had them in remote past) by the nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup>

Schoeberlein notes the mixing and assimilation of the various migrations of Turks who migrated into Central Asia and compares the arrival of the Shaybanids as more of political consequence than ethnic. The term did not have the modern connotation of a national identity. He notes that historically ‘Uzbek’ referred to a ruling dynasty and its subjects. From the 16<sup>th</sup> century Shaybanid conquests through to the various Uzbek Khanates that controlled Central Asia, the term ‘Uzbek’ referred to the rulers and, “by extension,” to those people ruled by them.<sup>47</sup> Schoeberlein describes a pre-Shaybanid population south of the steppes who, unlike the Shaybanids who “reckoned themselves to be of Uzbek descent,” were either (a) Turkic-speaking nomadic peoples whose descent-based identities were not connected with Uzbek lineages or (b) a sedentary population who spoke either a Turkic or Persian language (or both) and had no tribal identity.<sup>48</sup>

### **Uzbeks in Southern Tajikistan**

The Uzbeks outside of Uzbekistan did not go through the same Soviet-era process of assimilating many groups of Turkic and Uzbek peoples into a single Uzbek nationality as did those inside Uzbekistan. So while the Uzbeks of Uzbekistan are not completely homogeneous, the Uzbeks outside of Uzbekistan are even less so.<sup>49</sup> However, in the same way that Soviet ethnographers included all Persian-speaking groups in the Tajik group, they also placed many Uzbek dialect-speaking Turkic groups

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<sup>46</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 11.

<sup>47</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 53-4; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, 13, 62.

<sup>48</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, 13-4. Schoeberlein continues: “the first time a group associated with the name “Uzbek” established a permanent presence in Central Asia was with the Shaybanid conquest in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Meanwhile, a substantial segment of the historical population which has contributed to the gene pool now called “Uzbek” was in Central Asia very close to the beginning of history. This included Turkic language speakers, some of whom entered Central Asia more than a millennium before the Shaybanid “Uzbek” conquest. Just as importantly, the contemporary Uzbeks also have genetic roots in the region’s primordial population which was originally Iranian-speaking, but who, over many centuries prior to the Shaybanid conquest, had increasingly adopted Turkic language.”

<sup>49</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 13. Schoeberlein also warns that the total number or percentage of the population in Tajikistan registered as Uzbek should not be seen as a single united group.

in Tajikistan into the Uzbek group.<sup>50</sup> Most importantly for communal relations, despite all the diversity in the Uzbek and Uzbek-speaking Turkic population, Tajiks have come to consider all these peoples as one Uzbek group, despite their differences.<sup>51</sup> As an example of these differences, ethnic Uzbeks in the south, such as those in Hisor and Qurghonteppa, are much more isolated from the Tajiks than the Uzbeks in the north, and as a result the southern Uzbeks are less familiar with the Tajik language.<sup>52</sup>

## Loqay

Unlike the Turkmen, Kazakhs and Kyrgyz, the Tajiks and Uzbeks do not have a social structure based on kinship lineages. However, one of the Uzbek exceptions would be the Loqay,<sup>53</sup> who can be included in the category of those Uzbeks who were nomadic in recent history and who have kept their tribal structures.<sup>54</sup> This group has preserved its communal identity and has its own mono-ethnic collective farms. According to Olivier Roy, the Loqay will identify the tribe as their primary identity. This is in contrast to other southern Uzbek groups, such as the Kungrat, Qarluq, Durman and Barlos, who will give their tribal identity only if pressured to do so. Their Uzbek ethnic identity is more relevant than their tribal identity, which is no longer based on any real social structures.<sup>55</sup> Akiner and Rubin make very similar points about the Loqays, with Akiner noting that they maintain a “strong sense of communal identity”<sup>56</sup> and with Rubin stating that the Loqays in Qurghonteppa maintain distinct identities and dialects.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 5; Barnett R. Rubin, ‘Central Asian Wars and Ethnic Conflicts - Rebuilding Failed States’, *United Nations Human Development Report Office Occasional Paper* (2004), 10.

<sup>51</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 9.

<sup>52</sup> Necati Polat, *Boundary Issues in Central Asia*. (Ardsly, NY: Transnational Publishers, 2002), 91. William Rowe, while on fieldwork in Uzbek areas near Hisor, often had problems finding Tajik-speakers in certain rural districts. See: William Campbell Rowe, Jr., *On the Edge of Empires: The Hisor Valley of Tajikistan*, (PhD Dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2002), 79, n. 2.

<sup>53</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 114. Note: Kilavuz also names Kungrats along with Loqays, a view that is in disagreement with Olivier Roy.

<sup>54</sup> M.A. Olimov and Olimova, Saodat. 2002. ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, in Valery Tishkov and Elena Filippova (editors) *Local Governance and Minority Empowerment in the CIS* (Budapest: LGI Books) 249-50.

<sup>55</sup> Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations* (New York University Press) 15-7, 21, 23-4. Akiner makes a very similar point about the Loqays, noting that they maintain a ‘strong sense of communal identity.’ See Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 9. Olimov and Olimova make a comment about the Loqay and the relevance of their distinct identity that clearly requires some further analysis: “The Lokais do not think of themselves as an ethnic minority, they think of Tajikistan as their own state, because their land is part of that state, so the Tajik president is to them the supreme suzerain of the Lokai tribe.” See Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 259.

<sup>56</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 9.

<sup>57</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery: Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan’, in Barnett R Rubin and Jack Snyder (editors) *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*. (London: Routledge, 1998), 157-8, n. 17.

Matteo Fumagalli notes the continuing controversy over the status of Loqays (i.e., are they Uzbek or not?). In particular, their inclusion as a unique ethnicity in the 2002 census at the expense of a larger count for Uzbeks is disputed.<sup>58</sup>

### Blurred Tajik-Uzbek Boundaries

Like Sergei Abashin,<sup>59</sup> Schoeberlein notes that Tajiks have had a close historical relationship with the Turkic peoples. He argues that in Central Asia there is a “broadly unified culture” and that it is impossible to categorize a distinct Tajik or Uzbek culture thanks to linguistic, cultural and genetic mixing.<sup>60</sup> President Karimov of Uzbekistan is of the same opinion, speaking of the Uzbeks he notes:

...we also have common cultural, historical and anthropological roots with the Tajik people, and this suggests that our culture is a unique synthesis of Turkic and Persian elements.<sup>61</sup>

Uzbeks and Tajiks are the one nation which speaks the two languages.<sup>62</sup>

Central Asia was populated by an Eastern Iranian-speaking population that, throughout history, had received influxes of various populations and cultures. Starting in the 5<sup>th</sup> century the region was subjected to the in-migration of nomadic Turkic-speakers. But despite the influx of Turkic languages, the long-settled areas retained many elements of Iranian/Persian culture.<sup>63</sup> The historically close relations between Turkic and Iranian speakers did not have just political and socio-economic consequences, but ethnic and linguistic ones as well. The common phenomenon of bilingualism in Central Asia is mentioned in historical sources as early as the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Maria Eva Subtelny describes the ‘ethnolinguistic’ process in Central Asia:

<sup>58</sup> Matteo Fumagalli, *The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-political Mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: 1991-2003*. Ph. D. Dissertation (University of Edinburgh, 2005) 85-6, 86 n. 58.

<sup>59</sup> Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia’, 32. Note: Abashin uses “Turkic” and “Iranian” rather than “Uzbek” and “Tajik” in reference to the historical process of language, population and culture mixing.

<sup>60</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 7-9; Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 21, 23. Schoeberlein goes to note that many communities of sedentary people classified as Uzbeks have more in common with their Tajik neighbours than with some other communities classified as Uzbek. See also Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 50. For an older historical example, a reference by N. Mayev in the 1870s of “the cities in the Eastern Bukharan lands”: “Uzbeks are mixed with Tajiks in such a way that it’s quite impossible to draw any line between them.” See N. Mayev, ‘Ocherki Gissarskogo kraya’, in *Materiali dlya Turkestanskogo kraya*, Issue 5 (St. Petersburg: 1879), 267-8, as cited in M. A. Olimov and Saodat Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, in Valery Tishkov and Elena Filippova (editors) *Local Governance and Minority Empowerment in the CIS*. (Budapest, Hungary: LGI Books/ Open Society Institute, 2002), 248.

<sup>61</sup> Karimov, *Uzbekistan on the Threshold of the Twenty-First Century*, 88-9.

<sup>62</sup> Press Service of the President of Uzbekistan, ‘President Islam Karimov Arrives in Dushanbe, Holds Several Talks’, 28 August 2008. Online:

[http://www.press-service.uz/en/news/show/main/dushanbinskie\\_vstrechi\\_prezidenta\\_islama/](http://www.press-service.uz/en/news/show/main/dushanbinskie_vstrechi_prezidenta_islama/)

<sup>63</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 7, 9.



Ethnic assimilation also worked both ways, depending on the particular region and circumstances. [...] Ultimately,...the general ethnolinguistic trend was in the direction of Turkicization and in roughly a millennium the population of Central Asia was transformed from predominantly Iranian-speaking to Turkic speaking....The balance was decisively tipped by the Uzbek invasions of the late fifteenth and early 16<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>64</sup>

Culturally, only language clearly demarcates the Tajik and Uzbek categories, and the prevalence of bilingualism lessens the importance of this division.<sup>65</sup> Shirin Akiner notes that a “bilingual Turco-Iranian culture emerged in which both elements had equal status. Consequently, because of the symbiosis, the two languages did not serve as markers of ethnic identity in relation to each other.”<sup>66</sup> In Samarkand and Bukhara there was, under the control of Turkic dynasties but with the domination of Persian language, a “mutual-influence and mutual-benefit between Tajik and Uzbek culture.”<sup>67</sup> But these two political and cultural centres should not be taken as a rule for the entire region. Subtelny cautions that while usually the minority group became bilingual, there are others factors such as “prestige, function, and setting” that determine linguistic dominance.<sup>68</sup> For example, Tajiks from mountainous areas of eastern Tajikistan are much less likely to speak Uzbek as would a Tajik from northern

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<sup>64</sup> Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 49-50. Shirin Akiner gives an earlier date, arguing that Turkic languages in Central Asia predominated by the 14<sup>th</sup> century. See Shirin Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron? Manipulation and mobilization of ethnic and religious identities in Central Asia’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1997), 365.

<sup>65</sup> Olivier Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?’ in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (editors). (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1998), 136, 144; Payam Foroughi, ‘Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities - Sources and Solutions’, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2002), 45; Atkin ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 50; Eden Naby, ‘The Emerging Central Asia: Ethnic and Religious Factions’ in *Central Asia and the Caucasus After the Soviet Union*. Edited by Mohiadin Mesbahin (University Press of Florida, 1994), 36, 38, 44; Schoeberlein, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 8. For an historical perspective see N. Mayev (1879) quoted in Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 248.

<sup>66</sup> Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron?’, 365. See also: Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 411. Schoeberlein goes even further, stating that when a Central Asian self-identifies as an Uzbek, it is to distinguish themselves from Russians and other non-indigenous peoples rather than from Tajiks. See: Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 238-9.

<sup>67</sup> Davlat Khudonazar, ‘The Conflict in Tajikistan: Questions of Regionalism’, in Roald Z. Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower (editors), *Central Asia: Conflict, Resolution, and Change*. (Chevy Chase, Maryland: CPSS Press, 1995), 250. As Muriel Atkin notes, “In the realm of the Uzbek Emirs of Bukhara, Persian was widely used as a language of literature, scholarship, and government, while Persian speakers often knew Uzbek as well...” See: Atkin, ‘Tajiks and the Persian World’, 128. Many Uzbeks who moved to the city of Bukhara linguistically became Tajik after a generation in the city. See: Anita Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 19, No. 3-4 (2000) 400.

<sup>68</sup> Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 49-50.

Tajikistan.<sup>69</sup> In regards to Uzbeks in Tajikistan, one community in the Hisor Valley near the border with Uzbekistan is mono-lingual and completely segregated from Tajiks.<sup>70</sup>

Phenotype stereotyping relying on physical characteristics is also of limited help in discerning distinct Uzbek and Tajik identities. As Roy notes, “An Uzbek is someone who speaks Uzbek and who calls himself Uzbek, and not someone who has ‘Turkic’ features.”<sup>71</sup> Schoeberlein finds even Central Asians’ insistence that they can distinguish between Uzbeks and Tajiks based on physical appearance to be problematic. It is not possible to divide Uzbeks and Tajiks into separate categories. The stereotypes for the ‘ideal’ appearance (while not completely reliable in determining identity) of Turkic peoples (including Uzbeks) and Iranian peoples (including Tajiks) are very different. However, the population of sedentary Central Asia has been intermixed for so long that it is impossible to accurately distinguish Tajiks from Uzbeks on physical appearance alone, particularly those who live on the plains and in the valleys.<sup>72</sup> The lowlands Tajiks share more physical characteristics that are stereotyped as Turkic while mountain dwellers share fewer linguistic and physical features with Turkic peoples.<sup>73</sup> A large part of the Uzbeks in Central Asia have Iranian ancestry while Tajiks who live outside of the isolated mountain communities have some Turkic ancestry.<sup>74</sup> In line with this description, it is noted that mixed marriages are common in Tajikistan,<sup>75</sup> with the Ferghana Valley being the area where mixed marriages are most common.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> This phenomenon will be address in the discussion of rivalries amongst Tajik intellectuals in Dushanbe, some of whom were bilingual with Uzbek (i.e., those from Samarkand and Khujand) and others who could not speak Uzbek (i.e., Tajiks from Gharm). See chapter 3.

<sup>70</sup> Rowe, *On the Edge of Empires: The Hisor Valley of Tajikistan*, 147. Rowe writes that “when I did interviews in the Sherkent Valley, it became immediately apparent in the village of Asbob (located just north of the mouth of the river), that I could spend whole mornings trying to talk to people and find not a single person who spoke either Tajiki or Russian. The fact that I could find few men around compounded the issue until one day while conducting interviews for a drought assessment, an older woman mentioned off hand that she “thought” some Tajiks lived up over the hill behind the village. Come to find out, the village was clearly divided into two, very unequal sections. Along the Sherkent River with access to the rice paddies along the river lived Uzbeks, while the mostly waterless hills behind the village were entirely inhabited by Tajiks.” See also *Ibid.*, 79, n. 2.

<sup>71</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 15.

<sup>72</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 8; Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 21, 54-5, 294. See also Donald S. Carlisle, ‘Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and its Neighbours’ in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. Edited by Yaacov Ro’i. (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 75-6.

<sup>73</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 148.

<sup>74</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 8.

<sup>75</sup> Foroughi, ‘Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities’, 45; Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?’, 136, 144; Naby, ‘The Emerging Central Asia’, 36, 38, 44; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 8. As a contemporary example, the former Tajik President Nabiev was possibly born of “mixed Uzbek-Tajik parentage.” See: John Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 165.

<sup>76</sup> Naby, ‘The Emerging Central Asia’, 36, 38, 44.

## Sarts

The designation and self-designation of the identity category ‘Sart’ has significance for the ‘formation’ of both Tajiks and Uzbeks as this term transferred through history from Persian-speakers to Turkic-speakers.<sup>77</sup> V.V. Barthold, among others, writes that ‘Sart’ was being used by the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century as both an ethnonym and an exonym for urban Turkic-speakers in Central Asia.<sup>78</sup> However, the Tajik scholar Pulat Shozimov argues that by the 19<sup>th</sup> century the term ‘Sart’ transferred from the “Persian-Tajik population” to a self-designation by an “urban population for whom language and ethnic features were not of high importance,” hence de-stressing the Turkic character of Sarts.<sup>79</sup> Alisher Ilkhamov describes the vague and somewhat confused categorisation of Sart identity at the beginning of the Soviet era:

‘Sarts’ are a social rather than an ethnic category. In some cases those former Dashti-Kipchak Uzbeks and Chaghatay Turks and Turko–Mongols who switched to a settled life-style and lost their nomadic identity are classified as ‘Sarts.’ In other instances, they are seen as turkified Tajiks. In any case, the notion ‘Sart’ combines both ethnic and class attributes. Sarts are, as a rule, urban inhabitants engaged in craftsmanship, trade and in middle level administrative and educational activity. The percentage of clergy, supervisors of cults and law enforcement officials is also relatively high among them. In addition, in rural areas they are involved in agriculture.<sup>80</sup>

By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in Central Asia, the most controversial contemporary political issue was whether to classify the Sarts, a bilingual, settled population (especially in the Ferghana Valley and Tashkent where they formed 50-60% of the population) as ‘Turk’ or ‘Uzbek.’ Sarts were classified as Uzbeks in the 1917 census and then completely ‘disappeared’ into the official Uzbek category by 1924. Abashin notes that the current arguments between certain Tajik and Uzbek academics and politicians may give the misleading impression that there were historical controversies focused on the ‘Uzbek-Tajik’ question. However, this controversy did not arise until the 1920s when the Soviets began to classify Central Asians by nationality.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>77</sup> W. Barthold, ‘Sārt’, *Encyclopedia of Islam, Second Edition*. Edited by P. J. Bearman, Th. Bianquis, C.E. Bosworth, E. van Donzel and W.P. Heinrichs. Brill, 2009. Online: <http://www.brillonline.nl>; Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 49.

<sup>78</sup> Barthold, ‘Sārt.’

<sup>79</sup> Pulat Shozimov, ‘Rethinking the Symbolic Scope of Uzbek Identity’, *Anthropology and Archaeology of Eurasia*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (2006), 49. A complete analysis of the “Sart” identity is quite relevant for discussing the Ferghana Valley. However, it is far less relevant to southern Tajikistan. So for further discussion of the “Sarts,” see W. Barthold, ‘Sārt’; Ilkhamov, ‘Archaeology of Uzbek identity’, 297-304; Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 412; Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 169-71.

<sup>80</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archaeology of Uzbek identity’, 303.

<sup>81</sup> Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia’, 33; Ilkhamov, ‘Archaeology of Uzbek identity’, 300-1; Barthold, ‘Sārt.’

## Soviet Nationalities Policies

Muriel Atkin notes that in Central Asia before the Soviet nation-building process the “overwhelming majority of indigenous inhabitants considered themselves part of the Muslim community but also saw that community as subdivided into groups which were different and, not infrequently, mutually hostile.”<sup>82</sup> Atkin lists these divisions as ethnicity, religious ties, loyalty to dynasties or local tribal chiefs, tribal or clan affiliation, economic interests, geographic locations and political ideologies.<sup>83</sup> Subtelny provides fewer identity categories, listing tribe, town or religion.<sup>84</sup> Sergei Abashin provides a more comprehensive list:

The basic cultural frontiers in pre-Russian Central Asia were not shaped along ethnic or ethnic-national lines. The main divides used to differentiate ‘one of us’ from someone ‘foreign’ were based on position in the social hierarchy, religious separation into Sunni, Shi’ite, or Ishmaelite, membership of different Sufi brotherhoods, economic-cultural categorization between settled, mountainous, nomadic or semi-nomadic groups, family or tribal distinctions, or by regional classification.<sup>85</sup>

By the beginning of the Soviet era, in Abashin’s words, the many “cultural and social categories and ‘named groups’ that existed in Central Asia was artificially and administratively reduced to an extremely limited range of ‘nationalities’ or ‘national groups.’”<sup>86</sup> The manipulation of identity categories began at an early date. One example is from the 1920 census where there was, in addition to difficulty in assigning ethnic identity to those within the Tajik-Uzbek categories, “deliberate misidentification for political purposes, particularly in the Tajik-Uzbek case.”<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Atkin writes that many people

...feared being forcibly relocated to ensure that a given nationality would be entirely contained within “its” own republic. Thus some of the self-designations as ‘Tajik’ and ‘Uzbek’ did not reflect that individual’s ethnic consciousness but rather his estimate of which answer would enable him to remain in his home.”<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 47.

<sup>83</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 47.

<sup>84</sup> Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 51.

<sup>85</sup> Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia’, 32. Abashin argues that these categories are “much more important than a ‘functional’ characteristic like language.”

<sup>86</sup> Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia’, 33. An example of these wide variety of “named groups” that were to be administratively eliminated is a census list from 1924 of Uzbek tribe and clan names in Bukhara which, when sub-clans categories are included, has over 100 categories. See: I. Magidovac, ‘Administrativnoe delenie’, *Materialy po raionirovaniu Srednei Azii*, 2(2): 29-60 as cited in Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 153-5. The Commission on the Delineation of Regions in Central Asia, was part of what Schoeberlein notes was the task “to acknowledge the depth of Central Asia’s diversity before it was to be thoroughly denied” as almost all of the categories have been eliminated. Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 156-7, 255, 260.

<sup>87</sup> Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 411.

<sup>88</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 49.

The Tajik historian Rahim Masov takes the above themes to a much higher level, dedicating much of his writing to demonstrate what he perceives to be the ethnic injustices inflicted upon Tajiks by both Uzbeks and fellow Tajiks. Masov convincingly demonstrates that many Tajiks outside of the present-day area of Tajikistan were forced into the ‘Uzbek’ category through discrimination, falsified census results, local bureaucratic subterfuge, and various other methods.<sup>89</sup>

Soviet social scientists’ work was “closely tied into the official ideology and politics of ethno-nationalism dominant in the Soviet state – with ethnic groups forming pseudo-federal administrative units or Republics.”<sup>90</sup> Their work was required because in 1925, when national consolidation had just begun, Uzbek “national consciousness” did not, according to Donald Carlisle, exist “below.”<sup>91</sup> In Soviet Central Asia, Uzbek and Tajik cultural histories were “redefined” on the basis of language and territory. However, many of those now determined to be Uzbeks and Tajiks had often shared the same territory, culture and languages throughout recent history, so the “compartmentalization of individual elements from this common background into ‘Uzbek’ and ‘Tajik’ was bound to create confusion and overlap.”<sup>92</sup> Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont maintain that Soviet ethnographers took many diverse Persian speaking and Turkic speaking groups and gathered them into two categories, Tajiks and Uzbeks respectively, and “treated them as homogeneous entities.”<sup>93</sup> However, this focus on the Soviet central government’s plans does not take into consideration the manipulative roles played by local allies of the Bolsheviks. As an example, Carlisle points especially to Fayzulla Khojaev, a Jadid (Muslim reformer) and Moscow’s “primary native ally.”<sup>94</sup> Obiya Chika focuses entirely on Khojaev’s career and identity, noting that as his career progressed he “seemed to show a drastic change of self-identity—from Bukharan to Uzbek,”<sup>95</sup> and that ultimately he was the most active of any Central Asian leaders in the process of national delimitation.<sup>96</sup> Masov is particularly

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<sup>89</sup> Rakhim Masov, *Istoriya topornogo razdeleniya* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1991) 16-8, 78, 105, 113.

<sup>90</sup> Tishkov, ‘Inventions and Manifestations of ethno-Nationalism in and after the Soviet Union’, 42.

<sup>91</sup> Carlisle, ‘Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and its Neighbours’, 73. See also Donald S. Carlisle, ‘Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks’, *Problems of Communism*, Vol. 40, No. 5 (1991), 24. Other scholars such as John Schoeberlein are also of the view that ‘Uzbek national identity’ did not exist before the Uzbek SSR was established. As a way of backing up this viewpoint, Schoeberlein notes that Barthold does not, in his work *The Turks: An Historical-Ethnographic Survey*, make mention of the Uzbeks until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, 13.

<sup>92</sup> Subtelny, ‘The Symbiosis of Turk and Tajik’, 52.

<sup>93</sup> Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 5.

<sup>94</sup> Carlisle, ‘Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks’, 26.

<sup>95</sup> Obiya Chika, ‘When Faizulla Khojaev Decided to Be an Uzbek’, in Stéphane Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (eds.) *Islam and Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*, (London/New York: Kegan Paul, 2001), 100.

<sup>96</sup> Chika, ‘When Faizulla Khojaev Decided to Be an Uzbek’, 103.

critical of the role played by Khojaev and other local leaders – both Uzbek and Tajik – in the process of manipulating the process whereby the population of Central Asia was divided ethnically into nationality categories and geographically into republics.<sup>97</sup>

During the Brezhnev/Rashidov years in Uzbekistan (roughly, early 1960s to early 1980s), nation and nationality were, according to Donald Carlisle, “largely irrelevant, or better stated, not yet relevant, to much, if not most, of Uzbekistan’s native population.”<sup>98</sup> But Carlisle then goes on to claim that the concepts of nation and nationality were “meaningful” realities to the ruling elites, the intelligentsia, and the “state middle class.”<sup>99</sup> Sergei Abashin describes the process:

Over seven decades, Soviet power was responsible for huge changes in people’s self-consciousness. Moscow mobilized all of the instruments and resources necessary to achieve this: a national state, a national culture, national language and literature, national education and national media (particularly television). Among the most powerful tools for introducing ethnic self-consciousness to the masses were internal passports and the census, which, in effect, was a survey of the population’s ethnic-national allegiance. Every person had to be formally registered as a specific ‘nationality’, which he/she could not change later, even if he/she wished to. Education also contributed to this socialization process. Thus, in the Soviet period, a citizen’s consciousness, the sense of belonging to the Uzbek or Tajik state, came increasingly to resemble ethnic self-consciousness, as in identifying with a certain culture, language and history.<sup>100</sup>

Ilkhamov makes a similar argument for Uzbekistan:

It must be admitted that decades-long efforts of ruling and cultural elites regarding Uzbek identity formation proved to be fruitful: today, the overwhelming majority of those registered as Uzbeks really feel that they belong to the Uzbek nation. [...] Starting in the 1950s and continuing into the 1960-70s, most Uzbeks answered the question “Who are you?” by saying that they are first of all “Uzbeks” and then giving their region of residence.<sup>101</sup>

However, William Fierman takes issue with the second part of the above anecdote. He suggests that the answers were dependent of the context: who was asking the question and who the interviewee believed the surveyor to be. He also adds that at this time both sides of this interaction were like to hear this question as “What is your passport

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<sup>97</sup> Masov, *Istoriya topornogo razdeleniya*. In particular, the appendix of Masov’s book (starting on page 115) provides a view into the internal workings of the committees presided over by local leaders.

<sup>98</sup> Carlisle, ‘Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks’, 32.

<sup>99</sup> Carlisle, ‘Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks’, 32.

<sup>100</sup> Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia’, 33-4. Valery Tishkov makes a similar point about the USSR in general: “To a very considerable extent, this Soviet theory [of ethno-nationalism] constructed social realities and enforced scholarly definitions on political activists as well as on the programmatic context of mass public movements during the time of perestroika.” See Tishkov, ‘Inventions and Manifestations of ethno-Nationalism in and after the Soviet Union’, 42. An alternate, but not quite opposite view is expressed by S. S. Gubaeva (‘Ethnic Consolidation is a Natural-Historical Process’, *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, Vol. 44, No. 4, 2006, esp. 40) who, in regards to Uzbeks, argues that the formation of ethnic republics “strengthened and hastened” what was an already-occurring “natural” process of “ethnic consolidation.”

<sup>101</sup> Ilkhamov, ‘Archeology of Uzbek Identity’, 31.

nationality?” and that the respondent is likely (more so than earlier generations) to understand the importance of nationality classification.<sup>102</sup> This scepticism is displayed by other authors, but in a far less cautious manner.

### **Scepticism of Effectiveness of Soviet Nationalities Policies**

Schoeberlein, while conceding that the Soviets did manage to dramatically transform identities in Central Asia, argues that the end result was not as intended. The Soviet authorities, while strongly attacking the traditional identity categories, offered only “weak alternatives.”<sup>103</sup> Others, such as Akiner, give slightly more credit to the power of Soviet nation-building. She notes that after demarcation the government in Tajikistan introduced a standardised Tajik language based on the northern group of dialects, expanded the reach of the media and formed “national, political, cultural and educational institutions,” while intellectuals “gave shape and substance to the Tajik heritage.”<sup>104</sup> Akiner concedes that while this process never completely overcame the significance of ‘regional divisions’ it did create a “palpable sense of shared national identity.”<sup>105</sup> Writing with an emphasis on Tajikistan, Akiner outlines the superficial aspects of the Soviet modernisation attempts, conceding that while the Soviet system quickly transformed the “public face of society,” it was limited in its success in transforming the “private domain.”<sup>106</sup> These limitations are seen most acutely in rural society, as demonstrated polemically by Sergei Poliakov’s study of the ‘traditional’ lives of Central Asians.<sup>107</sup> In regards again to identity categories, the local, pre-existing identities were often ‘incorporated’ into the larger nationality categories. As a result, these pre-existing identities continued to survive ‘unofficially’ below the level of nation and nationality. Akiner notes that because these older sub-national identities are “More

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<sup>102</sup> William Fierman, ‘On Uzbek “Nationalization”’, *Anthropology & Archeology of Eurasia*, Vol. 44, No. 4 (Spring 2006), 84.

<sup>103</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 1-2, 297; Schoeberlein-Engel ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 10.

<sup>104</sup> Shirin Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, in *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives*. Edited by Aryn B. Sajoo (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004) 153.

<sup>105</sup> Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 153, 187, n. 6. Akiner identifies three main Tajik dialects: northern (Bukhara, Samarkand, Ferghana), central (Zarafshon), and southern (Hisor, Kulob, Qarotegin). See: Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 7, n. 2, 18.

<sup>106</sup> Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 156. Akiner continues: “...pre-Soviet identities (tribe, region and religion) continued to be important points of self-definition. So-called ‘clans’ – political and economic networks based on traditional kin/tribal/regional groupings as well as newer associative bonds formed through a shared experience (e.g. in the army, at college) – dominated society.”

<sup>107</sup> Sergei P. Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*. (London: M. E. Sharpe, 1992), esp. 53-144. My description of Poliakov’s work in this book as polemics is in line with Martha Brill Olcott’s introduction to the book, wherein she refers to this monograph as a “caustic critique of Islamic traditionalism.”

fluid and negotiable than the formal identities, these informal identities could either lay dormant, or be activated and manipulated, according to the requirements of the situation,”<sup>108</sup> as will be further illustrated in the following sections.

### **Sub-Ethnic Identity in Central Asia**

...as one observes the lives of “Uzbeks” and “Tajiks,” it becomes apparent that these identities are superseded by other terms of identity which bear much greater significance.<sup>109</sup>

At the time of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Shaybanid invasions, people in Central Asia identified with tribal or other lineages or locality, the categories that were important for the navigation of their social existence.<sup>110</sup> This assertion was still relevant at the beginning of the Soviet era. For example, in Tajikistan during the 1920s, aside from the small number of intellectuals who stressed their Persian heritage, the people of this mostly rural country identified by family, communal and regional categories.<sup>111</sup> Meanwhile, at the same time in the Uzbek SSR, the political manoeuvring at the elite and non-elite level indicated strongly that the previously established loyalties and localised identities were still very relevant. Concerning the late Soviet era in Uzbekistan, Carlisle (1991) wrote that “...in dealing with native politics and loyalties, the label ‘Uzbek’ or other designations are no more helpful – and ordinarily less useful – than place or location as the grounds for patriotism.”<sup>112</sup> Akiner argues that in the late Soviet period in Central Asia there were three levels of identity: state (Soviet), national group (nationality) and sub-national (kin groups, regional networks, etc...). She argues that “These layers were not contradictory, but complimentary” and that they were subject to “hierarchical weighting” depending on the context.<sup>113</sup> These ‘informal identities’ were maintained by genealogical knowledge, rites of passage that brought extended families together, mutual assistance based on kinship, and loyalty to place of origin. These groupings were important in politics, work and occasionally in the criminal underworld.<sup>114</sup> And despite the abovementioned Soviet efforts, Kilavuz concludes that identity in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is still primarily based on “local

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<sup>108</sup> Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron?’, 383.

<sup>109</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 76.

<sup>110</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘The Prospects for Uzbek National Identity’, 13-4.

<sup>111</sup> Anderson. *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 165.

<sup>112</sup> Carlisle, ‘Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks’, 25-6.

<sup>113</sup> Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron?’, 384.

<sup>114</sup> Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron?’, 383-4.



units, regions and subregions.”<sup>115</sup> Carlisle adds to this view, noting that the surviving sub-national loyalties, where the “real loyalties” were directed, created allegiances that could at time alternately complement or undercut the Uzbek and Tajik identities.<sup>116</sup> In regards to Central Asia as a whole—and specifically Tajikistan—Olivier Roy concludes that “Sovietism did little to disturb the basic cores” of kinship-based identities.<sup>117</sup> Writing specifically on Tajikistan, Navruz Nektshoev states that, contrary to the assumptions of modernization theory which predicts the inevitable end of local sub-national/ethnic identities in the face of nationalizing states, the “mechanisms of modernisation” in Tajikistan may have actually strengthened these identities.<sup>118</sup>

### Islamic Unity?

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Barthold wrote that a Central Asian “feels he is first a Muslim and second a resident of a specific town or location.”<sup>119</sup> But while identifying as a Muslim may be important for some when interacting with a non-Muslim, does an Islamic identity have much relevancy in Central Asia when locals interact with each other? Muriel Atkin stresses that while there is some “strength” in the Islamic identity for Central Asians, it does not mean that the identity is accompanied by some “supranational” Islamic unity as embodied in the idea of the *umma*, the idealised concept of a unified community of all Muslims.<sup>120</sup> As for Central Asians’ interactions with the broader Muslim world community, while Central Asians may see Russian models as unsuitable, they are also not interested in replicating the Muslim societies of their neighbours. Schoeberlein argues that greater exposure to the outside Muslim world since the mid-1980s has, for Central Asians, confirmed to them a “sense if its being alien to them.”<sup>121</sup> This viewpoint is echoed by Nazif Shahrani, an Afghan-American

<sup>115</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 114.

<sup>116</sup> Carlisle, ‘Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and its Neighbours’, 87.

<sup>117</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 87. While Roy elsewhere notes that Uzbek tribal identities in Tajikistan have faded, he leaves open the importance of lower level kinship structures.

<sup>118</sup> Navruz R. Nektshoev, *Clan Politics: Explaining the Persistence of Subethnic Divisions in Tajikistan: Comparative Approach*, Master of Arts thesis (Duchesne University, 2006), 13.

<sup>119</sup> Vasily Barthold, *Sochineniya*; vol. 2, part 2. (Moscow: Nauka 1964), 528. Quoted in Abashin, ‘The transformation of ethnic identity in Central Asia’, 32. See also: Barthold, ‘Sārt.’

<sup>120</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 47.

<sup>121</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 251. The opposite view can be found at the pinnacle of official Muslim leadership. Writing about the then *Qozi* of Tajikistan, Akbar Turajonzoda, Mavlon Mahkamov write that Turajonzoda “and his adherents emphasized the advantage of the Islamic way of life, maintaining that Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates had achieved great success in economic development and secured high living standards for their population only through their devotion to Islam.” See: Mavlon Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, in *Central Asia: Its strategic importance and future prospects*. Edited by Hafeez Malik (NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1994) 200-1.

anthropologist. However, instead of blaming increased awareness, he points to ignorance. He found during his fieldwork in Central Asia that

In general the peoples of former Soviet Central Asia are very poorly informed, especially about the Muslim countries to the south and west. What the post-Soviet Central Asians say about these areas is often negative and demeaning and always accompanied by an exaggerated sense of their own progress and modernity.<sup>122</sup>

According to these viewpoints, Central Asians do not feel any strong sense of unity with the outside Muslim world. For a quantitative example, a survey of Uzbeks and Kazakhs in 1993 asked respondents to name the countries that Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan should keep the greatest distance from. While Israel was listed at number four, the top three answers were Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.<sup>123</sup>

Additionally, there is no Islamic unity between Central Asians themselves (even discounting sectarian divides such as Sunni vs. Ismaili) when measured against other categories of identity. Talib Saidbaev argues that secular social categories often prevail over religious categories. He stresses that economic interests are a more important factor than religious ones. Issues of agricultural resource access, employment and other material interests are assigned more importance than the ideal of Islamic unity. A sign of the primacy of non-religious factors is the fact that it is common for the different ethnic groups in the towns of Central Asia to have their own Muslim clergy and their own mosque.<sup>124</sup> Sergei Poliakov gave a similar description of separate communities within a larger rural community having their separate mosques. However, he notes that it was the *mahalla* (neighbourhood/quarter) that had its own mosque, rather than ethnic groups (this would also be a de facto ethnic segregation if the *mahalla* is mono-ethnic).<sup>125</sup> Roy also noted the primacy of kinship over Islam in the collective farms where kinship groups that feel marginalised start a secondary ‘oppositional’ mosque. According to Roy, these marginalised kin-based groups “thus tend to identify with Islam as one way of consolidating their opposition to others—although of course everyone would claim to be Muslim.”<sup>126</sup> In a case study undertaken in an Uzbek village

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<sup>122</sup> M. Nazif Shahrani, ‘Islam and the Political Culture of “Scientific Atheism” in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Future Predicaments’, in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. Edited by Michael Bourdeaux (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 291, n. 24. Shahrani does go on to say that attitudes are beginning to change as Central Asians visit other Muslim countries. This is essentially the opposite of what Schoeberlein-Engel is claiming; more contacts with other Muslim countries brings a more favourable opinion.

<sup>123</sup> Nancy Lubin, ‘Islam and Ethnic Identity in Central Asia: A View from Below’, in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. Edited by Yaacov Ro'i (Portland: Frank Cass, 1995) 67.

<sup>124</sup> Talib Saidbaev, ‘Inter-Ethnic Conflicts in Central Asia: Social and Religious Perspectives’, in *Ethnicity and Conflict in a Post-Communist World: The Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China*. Edited by Kumar Rupesinghe, Peter King and Olga Vorkunova (New York: St. Martin's, 1992), 168.

<sup>125</sup> Poliakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*, 96.

<sup>126</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 90.

in Tajikistan, Sergei Abashin found that the contestation between competing religious authorities was referred to by the locals in “terms of kinship.”<sup>127</sup> This is just one anecdote Abashin provides in his article, wherein he argues that at the local (rural) level “religious conflicts are often submerged within the dynamics of local political, kinship and economic relations, with each Muslim community containing its own interest groups and means of legitimacy.”<sup>128</sup>

At a higher level, Abduvakhitov expressed his doubts in late 1991 about the possibility of Islam as a politically unifying factor:

[During perestroika] Islamic activists in the Muslim community began their social activity with an appeal to the Muslim *umma*. Their appeal excluded the growing sense of nationalism. Pan-Islam, as practised in the Muslim world, was not a power that could unite millions [...] In the Central Asia republics, where people have for many years been united by the Muslim community, the national identity of the different peoples has limited this factor of pan-Islam. The activist movement, which includes Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz, and others, must preserve itself from a growing nationalism. Tribalism and regionalism also remain strong in Central Asia. Thus it is difficult to see how pan-Islam can be a uniting factor in the political life of Central Asia.<sup>129</sup>

Nancy Lubin, remarking on the results of the abovementioned survey, concluded that there are “schisms as much within Central Asian and Muslim communities as between them and others” and that “divisions among nationality groups in Central Asia run deep.”<sup>130</sup>

### **Region, Kinship, Communities and Identity**

Much of the population of Tajikistan self-identifies not by ethnicity, but by locale. Amongst Tajiks, individuals identify themselves by town or region of origin. The use of ‘Tajik’ is used only for identifying oneself to outsiders.<sup>131</sup> Kilavuz states that the regional identities were not created during the Soviet era, but had in fact already been important at both the elite and non-elite level. However, she goes on to note that Soviet policies gave these identities the “meaning and structure” that they currently

<sup>127</sup> Sergei Abashin, ‘The logic of Islamic practice: a religious conflict in Central Asia’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (2006), 275.

<sup>128</sup> Abashin, ‘The logic of Islamic practice’, 268.

<sup>129</sup> Abdujabar Abduvakhitov, ‘Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan’, in *Russia’s Muslim Frontiers: New directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis*. Edited by Dale F. Eickelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 95. Abduvakhitov also dismisses pan-Turkism as a “unifying factor,” noting that in Uzbekistan “pan-Turkism has appealed only to the intelligentsia and has never been a widespread popular movement.” Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> Lubin, ‘Islam and Ethnic Identity in Central Asia’, 63-5. The responses leading Lubin to this conclusion were in regards to marriage and neighbour preferences.

<sup>131</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 237; Irina Zviagelskaya, *The Tajik Conflict* (Ithaca Press, 1997), n.p. Accessed Online: [http://www.ca-c.org/dataeng/st\\_09\\_zvjag.shtml](http://www.ca-c.org/dataeng/st_09_zvjag.shtml)

have by politicising regional identities, giving them a relevance at both elite and non-elite levels.<sup>132</sup>

Akiner lists the cultural “markers” of the various sub-Tajik identities as including “group histories, social structures, customs, music, folklore, and material culture (e.g., traditional styles of clothing and ornamental designs).”<sup>133</sup> Kilavuz provides a very similar list of markers when she writes that significant differences, especially cultural, are given for those from the different regions of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The people themselves cite regional differences amongst the same ethnic group that manifests in “dialect, physical appearance, traditions and customs.”<sup>134</sup> She also notes that in both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan people cite the significance of regional dialects which are used to determine a person’s region of origin.<sup>135</sup> As for the relevance of language, Muriel Atkin notes that while members of the Tajik elite can speak literary Tajik (and Russian); most people speak various Tajik dialects, divided most broadly between north and south dialects, with “several further subdivisions.”<sup>136</sup> Kilavuz cautions that while the regions may have their own characteristic dialects, with differences even within the region; many people have the ability to speak in different dialects, including the standard literary form promoted by the government. She then goes on to cite the primacy of ancestry over dialect in determining identity.<sup>137</sup> Akiner adds ‘psychological stereotyping’ as a significant factor in marking group boundaries amongst Tajiks. The examples of stereotypes she provides are: Qaroteginis are “flexible and adaptable”; Kulobis are “conservative and obstinate, reluctant to compromise,” and “northerners like consensus and continuity, are good at manipulating people.”<sup>138</sup> Akiner also argues for the importance of geographical influences, particularly the mountain-plains dichotomy, on the distinct sub-Tajik identities, citing these regions of Tajikistan – having distinct “economic, political and cultural environments” – traditionally having a low level of interaction with each other in relation to the Soviet era.<sup>139</sup> The small size

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<sup>132</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 80, 88.

<sup>133</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 7.

<sup>134</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 80.

<sup>135</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 80-2.

<sup>136</sup> I. M. Oranskii, *Tadzhikioiazychnye etnograficheskie gruppy Gissarskoi doliny (Sredniaia Aziia)*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1983), 29-30; L. F. Monogarova, ‘Evolutsiia natsional’nogo samosoznaniia pripamirskikh narodnostei’, in *Etnicheskie protsessy u natsional’nykh grupp Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), 130. Both cited in Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 60.

<sup>137</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 80-1.

<sup>138</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 7, n. 3.

<sup>139</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 7-8.

and relative isolation of mountain settlements created “tight-knit communities with strong local identities.”<sup>140</sup>

Aziz Niyazi sets a contrast when describing Tajiks in southern Tajikistan, noting that they are more isolated and “self-contained.” He posits that they (Kulobi and Gharmi Tajiks) are, in comparison to valley Tajiks (e.g., Ferghana Valley Tajiks), subjected to more fragmented local subcultures.<sup>141</sup> The term ‘Gharmi Tajiks,’ (hereafter ‘Gharmis’) refers to Tajiks from the Province of Gharm – a usage that began after the large-scale transfer of Tajiks from the Gharm province to the lowland of the Vakhsh Valley. However, the term ‘Qaroteginis’ is also used, as Gharm Province includes the Qarotegin Valley, as well as the smaller Darvoz and Vakhyo Valleys. Qarotegin and Darvoz, as well as province such as Kulob, roughly match pre-Soviet areas that were ruled as semi-independent *beks* in the Bukharan Emirate. The name for the Gharm province is taken from the small city of Gharm, which was the pre-Soviet capital of the Qarotegin *bek*.<sup>142</sup>

By the end of the Soviet era, the majority of Tajiks lived in rural areas and over 80 percent of the rural population still lived in their place of birth, in one of over 3000 villages. Rural social life in Tajikistan, the least urbanised of the Soviet republics, was still “comparatively isolated and inward focused.”<sup>143</sup> At this time many villages in Tajikistan were mono-ethnic, and where they were multi-ethnic they may in fact be divided into mono-ethnic neighbourhoods. In addition, Tajik villagers are, according to several Soviet era researchers, “highly endogamous.”<sup>144</sup> However, Muriel Atkin cautions that these conclusions should be viewed with caution due to the “imprecision” of the Uzbek and Tajik nationality categories.<sup>145</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 7-8. Davlat Khudonazar also writes that in mountainous areas the Tajiks were isolated from outside cultural influences. See Davlat Khudonazar, ‘The Conflict in Tajikistan: Questions of Regionalism’, in *Central Asia: Conflict Resolution and Change*. Edited by R.Z. Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower (Chevy Chase, MD: CPSS Press, 1995) 250. Khudonazarov also compares the social status of mountain dwellers before and during the Soviet era to that of a low caste. However, he does not distinguish between Pamiris, Yaghnobis and Tajiks in this claim. See *ibid.*, 255.

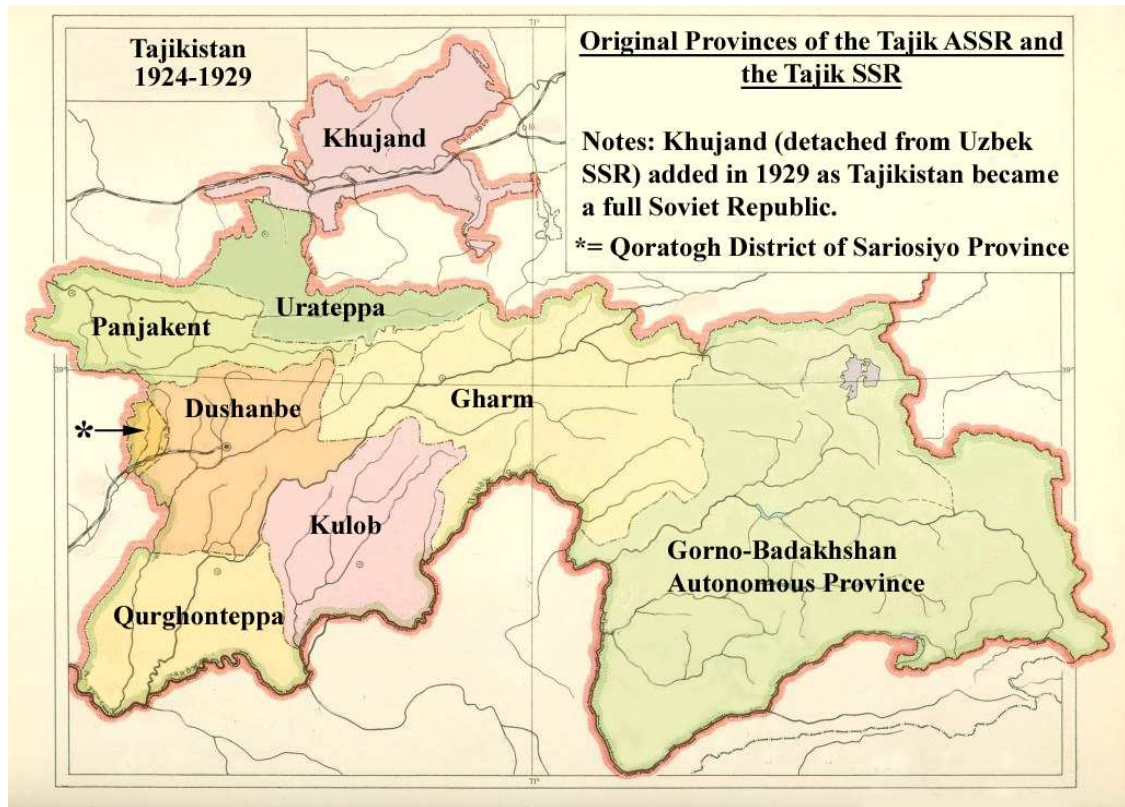
<sup>141</sup> Aziz Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimension of Conflict’, in *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*. Edited by Michael Waller, Bruno Coppieters and Alexei Malashenko (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 147. Akiner claims that the Kulobis, thanks to their historical independence and regional domination, developed a ‘clearly defined identity,’ as perceived both by themselves and by outsiders. See Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 8.

<sup>142</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 9; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 96; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 143-4.

<sup>143</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 59-60.

<sup>144</sup> T. S. Saidbaev, *Islam i Obshchestvo*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1984), 222; A. Islomov, ‘Az ki madad juem?’, *Tojikiston soveti*, No. 25, March 1986, 3; Ia. R. Vinnikov, ‘Natsional’nye I etnograficheskie gruppy Srednei Azii po dannym atnicheskoi statistiki’, in *Etnicheskie protsessy u natsional’nykh grupp Srednei Azii i Kazakhstana*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1980), 36; *Sotsial’no-kul’turnyi oblik sovetskikh natsii*. (Moscow: Nauka, 1986), 153, 167. Cited in Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 60. Atkin notes: “On the rare occasion when they marry exogamously, they are most likely to marry Uzbeks, rather than Russians or others of non-local origins.”

<sup>145</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 60.

Map No. 3 – Original Provinces of Tajikistan 1924-1929.<sup>146</sup>

“Which region are you from?” is, according to Kilavuz, a standard inquiry in both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. However, in Tajikistan informants reported to Kilavuz that the question became more sensitive after the civil war. She notes that individuals may cite the wider region of their origin or a town within it, depending on the situation. Based on her extensive research in Tashkent, Dushanbe and, most relevantly to this dissertation, in Qurghonteppa, Kilavuz finds that people identified with their region of origin, even after being three generations removed. People identify with their paternal grandfather’s place of birth and in order to identify with that region, according to popular belief, an individual’s ancestors must have been there for a minimum of three generations.<sup>147</sup>

In Tajikistan, regional identity can be seen as a factor in not just group conflict and competition, but in many types of other social behaviour such as marriage preferences for co-regionals and university socialisation patterns where there are reports of students from the same region eating, drinking and living together, with the

<sup>146</sup> Map adapted from: M.S. Asimov (editor) *Tadzhikiskaya Sovetskaya Entsiklopediya* (Dushanbe: Akademiya Nauk TSSR, 1974) 98. Note: ‘Qoratogh’ (transliterated from Uzbek) is more commonly rendered via Russian as ‘Karatag.’

<sup>147</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 80-1. Kilavuz notes that the question of a person’s region of origin “is still asked often, if not as freely or as early in the conversation as before.”

occasional fights between groups of youths from different regions.<sup>148</sup> Locally based identities, whether at the regional, village or *mahalla* level, can be significant when a person leaves their home. In their new location their origin is frequently employed to seek assistance from co-regionals.<sup>149</sup> “Regionalism,” according to Khudonazarov, manifested itself even in the spatial distribution of Dushanbe where people of the same region often lived clustered together.<sup>150</sup> However, despite the importance of regional identity, it should not be mistaken for an all-determining factor for social and political behaviour. As an example, Kilavuz argues strongly for the case that, at the elite level, there are divergent interests and divisions within the “regionally-based elite networks” and links between elites from different regions with mutual interests.<sup>151</sup> Kilavuz writes that “...regional identities and loyalties, while important, are not the only factor in the formation of elite networks.”<sup>152</sup> Akiner concurs, stating that regional identities, despite their importance, should not be overstated. They are often “crosscut” by other considerations.<sup>153</sup>

## Part 2: Power and Governance in Southern Tajikistan

The role of government and of local patterns of loyalty, identity and authority in the conflict – and the changing nature of these structures throughout recent history – will be analysed throughout the next two sections. For the changing nature of governance, an historical survey of governance, especially of the Soviet era, is required in order to illustrate the structure of society that provided incentives for groups and individuals to seek protection and benefits through affiliation with a certain faction, group or traditional solidarity structure. In particular, this section will provide the social context and historical background for the outbreak of civil unrest and political turmoil in February 1990 (and the resulting civil war that began in the first half of 1992), with a particular emphasis on the Qurghonteppa region (especially the Vakhsh Valley) of

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<sup>148</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 82.

<sup>149</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 114-5.

<sup>150</sup> Khudonazar, ‘The Conflict in Tajikistan: Questions of Regionalism’, 256. He describes the areas where Gharmis, Kulobis and Pamiris lived as dilapidated and neglected. Kilavuz notes that region of origin for Tajiks and Uzbeks is even important outside of Tajikistan. She cites Soviet-era Uzbek workers in Siberia and contemporary Tajik workers in Russia self-identifying by region of origin and forming “mutual-support networks” with co-regionals. Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 82.

<sup>151</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 13.

<sup>152</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 80.

<sup>153</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 41.

southern Tajikistan. And since the focus of this dissertation is on the Vakhsh Valley – an area that underwent drastic demographic changes starting in the 1930s – the patterns of migration and local governance here, as well as the interaction in this area of groups of people who identified with various sub-ethnic categories and patron-client networks, will be shown to have had a strong effect on social mobilisation when state authority broke down and civil unrest ensued.

The Qurghonteppa region (roughly, the Vakhsh Valley and some surrounding areas) is extremely complex, with a history of power struggles, social upheaval, quick-paced economic development and massive in-migration. The Qurghonteppa region went, in a very short period, from being on the semi-autonomous periphery of the Bukharan Emirate to being at the centre of Soviet social and economic engineering. The Soviet authorities, as in other areas throughout the USSR, attempted to shape new national identities, suppress the pre-existing power structures, industrialise the economy and change the demographics to suit their development plans. Identities and power structures were indeed transformed, albeit not necessarily in a way that the Soviet planners had anticipated. The new power structures and identities included much in the way of traditional authority patterns and identities, while adapting to the restraints and incentives that were present in the Soviet system.

For decades before the outbreak of civil war, elite-level patronage networks competed for power, access and resources at the national (Tajik SSR) level while locally-based solidarity groups competed for resources distributed from the centre and for resources obtained at the local level. There were many connections and mutually beneficial relations between these two levels. In 1992 when the power struggles in Dushanbe led to civil unrest and violent conflict, national level elites and local power brokers mobilised support from the local level, drawing on and appealing to ties of identity and shared economic concerns. Language, ethnicity, sub-ethnic identity, religious sect, region of origin, political party membership, collective farm affiliation, family ties, professional relationships, employer-employee ties and patron-client networks have all been cited as factors in determining individual and group participation or non-participation in the conflict. All these factors, and the historical and social transformations that frame them, are complex enough that they need to be analysed independently and in combination in the pre-conflict context.



## Pre-Bukharan and Bukharan Era

The area of modern day southern Tajikistan (the Qurghonteppa/Vakhsh River region and Kulob) was, throughout all historical periods, the isolated periphery of empires or under the control of various autonomous local powers, but never home to any strong entity that could project power elsewhere.<sup>154</sup> After the collapse of the Timurids, the region was under fluctuating levels of influence by the Shaybanid, Janid and Manghit Uzbek dynasties. In the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, as the Bukhara Emirate started to lose authority in the area, the Yuz Uzbeks took control of Vakhsh Valley and Qabodiyon from their base in Hisor. And at times during the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Vakhsh would come under the control of Kunduz to the south, or Kulob and Baljovon in the east.<sup>155</sup>

In 1870 the Bukharan Emirate, now under a certain level of Tsarist control for two years, expanded its control over Qurghonteppa and Qabodiyon with Russian assistance. Qurghonteppa, along with other eastern areas, became a sub-province of Hisor and the wider region of modern-day southern Tajikistan came to be referred to as Eastern Bukhara.<sup>156</sup> The Bukharan Emirate, allowed to keep its bureaucratic structures and Emir by the Russians, *attempted* to create a bureaucratic structure that would incorporate local political, financial, judicial and religious structures at three levels of government, from top to bottom.<sup>157</sup> This is in line with the Tsarist enactment in 1867 of an administrative and territorial reorganisation whereby civil and military powers were exclusively the domain of the military administration while “all local affairs were

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<sup>154</sup> The lower Vakhsh and Kofarnihon valleys were “under the orbit” of ancient Bactria and Balkh, which is shown in the numerous archaeological sites. The town of Qurghonteppa was first mentioned in historical sources in the 17<sup>th</sup> century as it began to prosper. See: Habib Borjian, ‘Kurgantepe’, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, n.p. (2005) Online: <http://www.iranica.com/articles/kurgan-tepe>. Borjian notes that Khottalon (Kulob) “remained a vassal of successive empires, but often with substantial degrees of autonomy due to its relative isolation” Habib Borjian, ‘Kulab’, *Encyclopedia Iranica*, n.p. (2005) Online: <http://www.iranica.com/articles/kulab>

<sup>155</sup> Borjian, ‘Kurgantepe’, n.p. Borjian writes that Kulob, on the trade route from Hisor to Afghanistan, was an area of competition for surrounding Uzbek states, including the Janids in Balkh, the Loqay and the Qataghan Uzbeks in Kunduz (Beg Murad Khan appointed his son as ruler of Kulob). Influence from south of the Amu Darya lasted until the Durrani empire took control of northern Afghanistan. After this point Kulob came under the expanding influence of Hisor. Then, for much of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was a buffer zone between Bukhara, Khoqand and Afghanistan. See: Borjian, ‘Kulab,’ n.p.

<sup>156</sup> Borjian, ‘Kurgantepe’, n.p.; Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 11.

<sup>157</sup> This included *viloyats* (provinces) administered by *hakims* or *begs/beks*, subdivisions of *viloyats* called *tumens*, further subdivision into *kents* and *amlakdaris* (which also administered tax collection and irrigation management) which were continuations of *begliks/bekliks*, and the *kishlak* (also *Qishloq*, a village) at the lowest level, several of which may be combined to be administered by a *min-bashi/boshi*. The villages elected *aksakals/oqsoqols* to represent them (unless combined into several *kishlaks*) while nomadic tribes were represented by an *il-beg*. The *aksakals*, *min-bashis* and *il-begs* served as the intermediaries between their communities and the government. See: Hélène Carrère D’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire: Reform and Revolution in Central Asia*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 1988), 26; Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 399-401, 407.

relinquished to the traditional hierarchies.”<sup>158</sup> However, the reality of Bukharan power was not quite so orderly. Hélène Carrère D’Encausse describes a state where many regions were “living in a situation of almost total independence or constant rebellion.”<sup>159</sup> According to Anita Sengupta, the Bukharan Emirate had little semblance of territorial integrity. Geographic factors of distance, isolation and mountainous terrain gave the Eastern Bukharan lands a high level of autonomy. Sengupta notes that “complete control almost entirely eluded the Emirs and people preserved their family community structures.”<sup>160</sup> She goes on to note the lack of stability, with “a constant process of flux where assimilation of certain parts was constantly accompanied by the threat of secession by others.”<sup>161</sup> B. I. Iskandarov similarly argues that Bukhara’s failure to unite its eastern domains under centralised rule allowed small autonomous local social units to prosper.<sup>162</sup> Especially relevant to Tajiks from the mountainous regions, mountain dwellers were able, thanks to their geographic location, to sidestep the Manghit Emirs’ attempts at centralised rule. Olimova and Olimov state that “hill valleys and their inhabitants with small pieces of cultivated land and no hope for irrigation came together in small groups and preserved their self-sufficient complex and independence from the central government.”<sup>163</sup> Nourzhanov notes that in Eastern Bukhara “In the eyes of the traditional communities and their leaders, any centralising agent constituted a potential menace” and that “non-Uzbek peasants and *beks* treated the Emir as an alien ruler and oppressor.”<sup>164</sup>

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<sup>158</sup> Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 401. For a discussion of Russian administrative policy and local autonomy in Central Asia and Turkestan, see: Daniel Brower, ‘Islam and Ethnicity: Russian Colonial Policy in Turkestan’, in *Russia’s Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700-1917*. Edited by Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

<sup>159</sup> Carrère D’Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 25.

<sup>160</sup> Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 399.

<sup>161</sup> Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 399.

<sup>162</sup> B. I. Iskandarov, *Vostochnaya Bukhara i Pamir v Pereod Prisoedineniya Srednei Azii k Rossi*. (Gosudarstvo: Tadjikskoe Gosudarstvo, 1960). As cited in Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 399.

<sup>163</sup> S. K. Olimova and M. A. Olimov, ‘Nezavisimi Tajikistan – trydni puch peremen’, *Vostok*, No. 1 (1995), n.p. As translated and cited in Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 399. An example: While *hakims* had the responsibility of collecting taxes on behalf of the Emir, areas outside of effective central control such as Darvoz, Qarotegin and Karshi gave only occasional tribute to Bukhara. See: Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 400.

<sup>164</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, ‘Reassessing the Basmachi: warlords without ideology?’ *Journal of South Asia and Middle East Studies*, Vol. XXXI, No. 3, (Spring 2008), 61.

## Early Soviet Era (pre-WWII)

### National Delimitation

While it may be true that Tajikistan is “the most artificial and flawed of all the Soviet territorial creations,” as argued by Shirin Akiner,<sup>165</sup> was this ‘artificiality’ a deliberate strategy of ‘divide and rule’ on the part of the Soviets? This assessment is shared by many scholars and appears time and time again in the literature on Central Asia.<sup>166</sup> Some make short references to the strategy. Muriel Atkin, for example, refers to national delimitation as “*divide et impera*” (divide and rule).<sup>167</sup> Other examples can be provided:

...Moscow-imposed governments that were favorably disposed to the Stalinist system and assigned arbitrary borders to the republics and autonomous territories. In Central Asia, as elsewhere in the USSR, state boundaries and ethnic composition thus lacked correspondence. This was part of a deliberate strategy to weaken peripheral resistance.<sup>168</sup>

Partition also serves one final principle: it ensures that none of the new republics is really viable on its own, and thus capable of independence. [...] The frontiers of the various countries of Central Asia have no rationality, whether geographic, economic or ethnic. [...] The ethnic groups were so extensively intermingled that no frontier could have ever been entirely rational. But even in this area the Soviets amused themselves by making things more complicated.<sup>169</sup>

In fact, these republics were created primarily to accommodate the Bolsheviks’ political agenda, rather than some ‘ethnographic’ reality.<sup>170</sup>

However, two of the scholars quoted above qualify their remarks. Schoeberlein notes that the “conventional wisdom” that portrays national delimitation as part of a “divide and conquer” strategy has not been “adequately documented,”<sup>171</sup> while Olivier Roy questions whether national delimitation was a “Machiavellian calculation,”

<sup>165</sup> Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron?’, 386-7.

<sup>166</sup> A good example of which is Svante E. Cornell, ‘The Devaluation of the Concept of Autonomy: National Minorities in the Former Soviet Union’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1999). Francine Hirsch, who researched national delimitation in Central Asia cites other authors who provide the same ‘divide and rule’ argument for Central Asian borders: Olaf Caroe, *Soviet Empire: The Turks of Central Asia and Stalinism*, (London, 1953); Helene Carrere d’Encausse, *The End of the Soviet Empire: The Triumph of Nations* (New York, 1993); Robert Conquest, *The Last Empire* (London, 1962), 29; Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New Haven, 2002), 88 and Steve Sabol, ‘The Creation of Soviet Central Asia: The 1924 National Delimitation’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (1995): 225-41. All as listed in Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union*, (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005), 160-1, n. 59, 61.

<sup>167</sup> Atkin, ‘Religious, National and Other Identities in Central Asia’, 48.

<sup>168</sup> Rajan Menon and Hendrik Spruyt, ‘Possibilities for Conflict Resolution in Post-Soviet Central Asia’, in *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*. Edited by Barnett R Rubin and Jack Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998), 109.

<sup>169</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 68.

<sup>170</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 25.

<sup>171</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 23.

“bureaucratic incompetence,” or “the power interests of local factions at work.”<sup>172</sup> In regards to English-language literature on the subject, an alternate view was presented as early as 1995 when Isabelle Kreindler argued that the apparently “illogical” Central Asian administrative divisions are a result of the “complexity of the task – intermingled, illiterate populations, unstudied dialects – rather than a deliberate policy to weaken Muslim peoples.”<sup>173</sup> When more significant attempts to adequately document national delimitation based on primary sources were eventually made (in English), it became clear that the ‘divide and rule’ theory is quite weak, most prominently as illustrated by Francine Hirsch.<sup>174</sup> Olimov and Olimova argue that the borders of Tajikistan were not created on the basis of “ethnic lines,” which were “never a reality,” but on the ‘administrative realities’ of geography, land usage, economics and communication.<sup>175</sup> At the same time, writing in Russian and specifically about Tajikistan, Rahim Masov noted that national delimitation was a complex process where native Central Asian cadres presented different proposals and argued their cases before the Soviet authorities.<sup>176</sup> And in Masov’s view, the main villains of national delimitation are not the Soviet central authorities, but rather the Uzbek leaders allied to the Bolsheviks who manipulated the process of national delimitation to create an unfairly large Uzbek SSR at the expense of ethnic Tajik-dominated areas.<sup>177</sup>

### **Basmachi Era in Eastern Bukhara**

The Soviet government consolidated control over the area of present day Tajikistan by 1931 when they defeated the last significant *Basmachi* revolt, a series of uprisings that began in 1918 in response to the Soviet offensive and then later against Bolshevik reforms.<sup>178</sup> Sengupta argues that the *Basmachi* were a broad movement that consisted of actors with numerous motivations: some fought for the restoration of the

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<sup>172</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 69.

<sup>173</sup> Isabelle T. Kreindler, ‘Soviet Muslims: Gains and Losses as a Result of Soviet Language Planning’, in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. Edited by Yaacov Ro’i (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 36.

<sup>174</sup> Hirsch, *Empire of Nations*, esp. pages 160-86.

<sup>175</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 248.

<sup>176</sup> Rakhim Masov, *Tadzhiki: istoriia s grifom ‘sovershenno sekretno’*, (Dushanbe: Paivand, 1995), 158-93. As cited in Akiner, ‘Melting pot, salad bowl – cauldron?’, 373-4.

<sup>177</sup> Masov, *Istoriya topornogo razdeleniya*, esp. 103-5. Throughout the book Masov also hurls abuse at ethnic Tajiks who did not resist the process strongly enough.

<sup>178</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 46-9; Nourzhanov, ‘Reassessing the Basmachi’, 63. Nourzhanov puts the number of Basmachi fighters across Central Asia at a high of possibly 30,000 in the 1919-1922 period. See: Nourzhanov, *ibid.*, 46. Nourzhanov asks the rhetorical question “Whom did the Basmachi fight?” and comes up with these answers, illustrating the complexity of the conflict: “the Bolsheviks, the Russians, Enver Pasha [a former Ottoman Turk military officer operating independently], the *jadids* [Muslim reformers], the Emir [of Bukhara], and each other.” *Ibid.*, 60.

Bukharan emirate, some fought for the autonomy of local authority structures and leaders, and some fought for the creation of a “Turkestan-wide federative union.”<sup>179</sup> Beatrice Penati argues that, unlike the *Basmachi* in Ferghana, the Basmachi in Eastern Bukhara were focused on the restoration of the Bukharan Emirate and were “probably sensitive to pan-Islamist rhetoric.”<sup>180</sup> However, Nourzhanov provides a different description of the *Basmachi*, particularly for Eastern Bukhara, where he focuses his study. He dismisses the notion that the Basmachi were fighting for Turkic national liberation as “romanticised” and “displaced.”<sup>181</sup> He also argues that describing the Basmachi as waging a popular *jihad* or defending Islam is “difficult to accept” considering the native population’s indifference to the message of *jihad*, the cooperation of many locals with the Bolsheviks and the rejection by many local religious leaders of the *jihadi* message.<sup>182</sup> Nourzhanov also qualifies the idea that the Basmachi were attempting to restore the Bukharan Emirate:

The sympathy and legitimacy that the Emir himself enjoyed is mostly the stuff of fiction. His name did not carry any weight in Ferghana or Khiva. The situation in Eastern Bukhara was somewhat different: Ibrahim Bek and a few other Uzbek tribal chiefs who enjoyed power and privilege in Alim Khan’s state rallied to his cause, but the majority Tajik population was rather ambivalent.<sup>183</sup>

In Eastern Bukhara, Ibrahim Bek and other *Basmachi* leaders relied upon the remnants of the Bukharan government as well as local kinship and patronage networks.<sup>184</sup> The Soviet military campaign in the late 1920s in Eastern Bukhara was aimed at defeating the *Basmachi* and establishing Soviet control over the area. During this campaign the influx of civil authorities, the use of village self-defence units and irregular troops, some of whom were former *Basmachi*, resulted in the disruption of local power networks.<sup>185</sup> Another factor disrupting local powers structures was the Soviet and *Basmachi* use of famine relief as a tool in their respective struggles, with the Soviets distributing food “according to political criteria” and the *Basmachi* also using the redistribution of food

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<sup>179</sup> Sengupta, ‘Imperatives of national territorial delimitation and the fate of Bukhara’, 413-4.

<sup>180</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 522.

<sup>181</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Reassessing the Basmachi’, 49. Nourzhanov argues that Turkic nationalists had only “tenuous” links to the *Basmachi* and “over-emphasised their role in history, and the appeal their theories had for the masses.” *Ibid.*

<sup>182</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Reassessing the Basmachi’, 49-50. Nourzhanov writes that “Central Asian Muslims and their spiritual guides followed motivation infinitely more complex when charting the course of political or military action.” *Ibid.*, 55.

<sup>183</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Reassessing the Basmachi’, 50-1.

<sup>184</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 522, 533. Note: “The presence of Bukharan Emirate government personnel in Soviet power structures complicated the fight against the *Basmachi* as some bureaucrats were collaborating with the *Basmachi* or passively resisting engaging in activities directed against the *Basmachi*.” See: *ibid.*, 527.

<sup>185</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 521-2, 532-4.

as a reward for communities that were loyal to them.<sup>186</sup> In the struggle between the Basmachi and the Soviets in Eastern Bukhara, “the population’s allegiance depended on the ability of different actors in satisfying its most basic needs.”<sup>187</sup>

## Governance

The Soviet authorities in Eastern Bukhara, due to the absence of educated locals to recruit as cadres, had to exercise central rule through a small number of “poorly-supervised local agents.”<sup>188</sup> And some of the ‘new’ local Soviet officials were in fact the same old local authority figures. Schoeberlein notes that some of the local leaders joined the Bolshevik side as they saw an opportunity to use the Soviet “power structures” as a vehicle to promote their own interests.<sup>189</sup> Penati notes that the Central Commission for Struggle against the *Basmachi* complained that as of the late 1920s the local power structures were mostly untouched and that the local Soviet bureaucracy was “colonized” by former bureaucrats of the Bukharan Emirate.<sup>190</sup> Another aspect of ‘colonisation’ concerned not former bureaucrats of the Bukharan Emirate, but powerful local figures. In Tajikistan, wealthy local elites were able, assisted by their local patronage networks, to get elected to serve in Soviet institutions, especially at the rural district level. This even led to factional fighting, power struggles and abuse of power by those in positions of authority. The Soviets noticed this problem and worried that “clans” would successfully integrate themselves within the Soviet bureaucracy.<sup>191</sup> In the former Bukharan Emirate the Kremlin encountered particular difficulty transforming the local power structures into Soviet institutions, unlike elsewhere where the transformation was from Tsarist to Soviet.<sup>192</sup> Moscow finally found the educated class

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<sup>186</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 532.

<sup>187</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 521-2, 532-4. This pragmatism of the common people, as described by Penati, is echoed by Nourzhanov’s description of the Basmachi leadership: “...the Basmachi were *excellent* politicians, and changed allegiances and ideological platforms to offer their communities the best chance of survival.” See: Nourzhanov, ‘Reassessing the Basmachi’, 61.

<sup>188</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 149.

<sup>189</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 23.

<sup>190</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 526.

<sup>191</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 526-7. A contemporaneous traveller to the region, E. E. Kisch, quoted a Soviet official regarding local authority figures: “In many districts the clergy and the *kulaks* have taken the Soviet apparatus into their own hands. Some of them have even joined the Party and exercise their corrupt reign of terror in the name of the Soviet, extorting registration fees, levying taxes, and coolly pocketing the money.” See Egon Erwin Kisch, *Changing Asia*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1935), 36-7, as quoted in Nekbaktshoev, *Clan Politics*, 50.

<sup>192</sup> Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 526. For example, public works projects required the cooperation of a traditional authority figure in order to mobilize the labour.

needed as bureaucrats in Tajikistan with the 1929 addition of the northern urban centre of Khujand to the Tajik SSR.<sup>193</sup>

## Later Soviet Era

### State Effectiveness

Shirin Akiner characterises “Soviet modernisation” as being “highly authoritarian” and being implemented within a “totalitarian system.”<sup>194</sup> Olivier Roy seems to go even further, stating that “the Soviet Union constituted a totalitarian system in which the state was the alpha, beta and omega of all socio-political existence.”<sup>195</sup> However, Akiner and Roy, both of whom have written extensively on Tajikistan, contradict and/or qualify these statements throughout their writing. Roy dedicates much of his work to the description of how social networks were recreated within the structures of the Soviet system, especially in Tajikistan, despite resistance from the authorities. He also argues that parts of Tajikistan were “under-administered” by the Soviets.<sup>196</sup> Many others have, in their work on Tajikistan, presented an analysis of Soviet state effectiveness that is much different in comparison to these quotes above.<sup>197</sup> After WWII, with the fight against the *Basmachi* long finished and the worst of the purges being over, a picture of a Soviet and a Tajik state with mixed effectiveness emerges. For example, the local branches of the KGB were staffed by high-ranking ethnic European officers who could not speak local languages and were often rotated to new areas, and by local officers who were enmeshed in the local community and

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<sup>193</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 149. As for the highest levels of leadership, during the first years of the Tajik SSR (from 1929) Pamiris and Gharmis dominated in the top positions of power. During the purges of 1937 an ethnic Russian was appointed as first secretary. And then from 1946, with the appointment of Bobojon Ghafurov, all the first secretaries were from Khujand. See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 101-2. Rubin provides a less subtle analysis, characterising the 1930s as a period of ‘Russification’ in Tajikistan, with an ethnic Russian First Secretary and large-scale purges of cadres. See: Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 149.

<sup>194</sup> Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 154-6.

<sup>195</sup> Olivier Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, in *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives*. Edited by Aryn Sajoo (New York: I.B. Tauris 2004), 126.

<sup>196</sup> For example, just one page later: Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, 127. Or, as an entire book written on the subject: Roy, *The New Central Asia*. Another good example is provided by Alexei Malashenko. He terms the “Soviet Union” an “unconditionally totalitarian system.” But on the very same page he writes that “the security services...were not in a position to establish absolute control over the lives of Muslims. A system of informant was not always effective in the face of strong kinship and clan ties.” See Alexei V. Malashenko, ‘Islam Versus Communism: The Experience of Coexistence’, in *Russia’s Muslim Frontiers: New Directions in Cross-Cultural Analysis*. Edited by Dale F. Eickelman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993) 64.

<sup>197</sup> One of many examples, Menon and Spruyt argue that in Central Asia “rival forms of rule such as clan membership, Islam, and ethnic and regional affinities have not been displaced by centralizing high-capacity states.” See: Menon and Spruyt, ‘Possibilities for Conflict resolution in Post-Soviet Central Asia’, 109.

“tended to keep troubles 'inside the family.’”<sup>198</sup> Other factors show a Soviet state that is far from totalitarian. For example, the Loqay Uzbeks were at times confrontational with the state as late as the 1960s. While Olimov and Olimova write that the government defeated the last large Loqay “uprising” in the 1960s by both the use of force, they also note that the government – uncharacteristically of an effective totalitarian state – offered concessions to the Loqay community.<sup>199</sup>

Until the late 1960s the Soviet central government intervened regularly in local affairs in Central Asia, redistributing power, balancing factions and appointing new leaders. But starting in the 1970s, Brezhnev ceased this strategy and allowed leaders to hold their position for lengthy periods.<sup>200</sup> During this era the Tajik state was able to successfully carry out the basic tasks of governance, as illustrated by Kirill Nourzhanov:

The process of decision-making in Tajikistan, perhaps more than elsewhere in the USSR, was concealed from 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 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.<sup>201</sup>

However, this ‘stability of the cadres’ under Brezhnev allowed for the expansion of patron-client relationships – often formed on kinship bases – and corruption. In the late Soviet era the government unsuccessfully attempted to reduce the prevalence of local patron-client relations and “clan loyalties,”<sup>202</sup> a failure that served to undermine state effectiveness. Later, perestroika policies implemented by the government of the Tajik SSR were meant to increase the centre’s power of oversight. However, these reforms were not successful in increasing the centre’s power over the periphery. Markowitz argues that Tajikistan, as early as the 1960s and especially in the early 1970s, exercised much weaker central authority than Uzbekistan. He cites as examples the “accommodations” that the central government made with provincial elites in Kulob and Qurghonteppa.<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>198</sup> Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, 129.

<sup>199</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 257. Unfortunately, they offer no further description of this incident.

<sup>200</sup> Rafis Abazov, ‘Central Asia’s Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies: Revisiting a Crisis Zone of the Former USSR’, *Nationalism & Ethnic Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (1999) 67-9.

<sup>201</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan’, *Russian and Euro-Asian Bulletin* (August 1996), Online version, no pagination. <http://www.cerc.unimelb.edu.au/bulletin/1996.htm>

<sup>202</sup> Abazov, ‘Central Asia’s Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies’, 67-9.

<sup>203</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 78, 82.



The corruption that grew during the ‘stability of the cadres’ under Brezhnev eventually reduced the effectiveness of the state. According to Akiner, the level of corruption undermined the “legitimacy” and “integrity” of the state.<sup>204</sup> Akiner notes that a parallel economy and, along with that, parallel power structures, operated independent of the state. She describes a “façade of national unity” behind which lay these parallel, “semi-invisible” structures.<sup>205</sup> But the ‘independence’ of the parallel structures needs to be qualified with the fact that many of the power brokers who operated outside the law were often holding positions of authority within the Tajik SSR’s official structures.<sup>206</sup> Corruption in the Tajik SSR was pervasive and prosecution rare. The penalties received were often “mild,” while being a member of the *nomenklatura* or a patronage network offered protection from prosecution.<sup>207</sup> In one serious development, towards the end of the 1980s crime increased dramatically in Leninobod, Kulob and Qurghonteppa.<sup>208</sup> For example, local mafias operated in the black market with some official protection in Qurghonteppa during the 1980s.<sup>209</sup> Fraud, theft of state property, falsification of cotton production and other forms of organised crime and embezzlement all contributed to weakening state capacity. In response, First Secretary Qahhor Mahkamov – forced by a Second Secretary appointed by Moscow<sup>210</sup> – led a campaign against corruption between 1986 and 1991, resulting in a large turnover of the political and economic elites.<sup>211</sup> Mahkamov’s campaign included law enforcement investigations into areas that were previously under the protection of local party officials. Of course, the turnover was implemented in a manner which would keep Leninobodis/Khujandis in a dominant position. But still, Pamiris and Tajiks from Qarotegin were appointed to national level positions for the first time since the 1940s. In reaction to Mahkamov’s policies, the elites in Kulob no longer saw a mutually beneficial patronage relationship with the central government. They soon started embezzling agricultural profits while taking over local law enforcement and judicial agencies as a way to protect their scheme. By the end of the Soviet period, farm bosses and regional politicians in Kulob exercised

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<sup>204</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 27

<sup>205</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 27

<sup>206</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 27

<sup>207</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan.’

<sup>208</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 83-4.

<sup>209</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 26.

<sup>210</sup> The role of Second Secretary Pyotr Luchinsky will be discussed in a subsequent chapter.

<sup>211</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 83-6. Markowitz argues that Roy (*The New Central Asia*) and Kathleen Collins (*Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) have “erroneously suggested that perestroika-era purges were not implemented fully in the republic.”

“significant influence” over law enforcement agencies and the courts while increasingly relying on illegal income.<sup>212</sup>

### “Underground” Islam

Another example of the Soviet’s lack of “total control”, as argued by Anderson, would be the emergence of politicised underground Muslim organisations in the 1970s.<sup>213</sup> However, ‘underground’ Islamic education started as soon as the traditional institutions of Islamic education were closed by the Soviets in the 1920s.<sup>214</sup> The use of ‘underground’ also needs to be qualified. Abduvakhitov’s description of Islamic groups that emerged during the “Islamic revitalization” of the 1970s notes the lack of success – and lack of interest – the government of the Uzbek SSR had in countering them.<sup>215</sup> Parviz Mullojonov’s description of Tajikistan’s “underground Islamic circles,” that gained momentum in the 1970s, echoes Abduvakhitov’s narrative of Uzbekistan’s experience:

..it is doubtful that, in the general conditions of the USSR, such underground religious circles could have escaped the KGB’s gaze for more than 15 years. In fact the KGB’s national departments, which used to employ a broad network of agents among the Muslim clergy, knew from the very beginning about the existence of these Islamist circles. Probably the Soviet security organs did not tamper with the young mullahs’ activities: it rather aimed at using them for reducing the authority of the conventional clergy, which in the 1970s and early 1980s was considered by the Soviet power as the main evil.<sup>216</sup>

If Mullojonov is right and the security services considered the official Soviet-sponsored clergy to be more of a threat, then this speaks even more about the Soviet Union’s inability to control society. Their tactic of using the two groups against each other, is

<sup>212</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 84-90, 95, 99, 101.

<sup>213</sup> Anderson. *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 174. This era of “Islamic revitalization” is further described by Abdujabar Abduvakhitov. He notes that much of the activism of this era was focused on education and the lessons were “not oriented towards politics.” However, he describes actors in the process who most definitely were political, and whose activities increased throughout the 1980s as the Soviet authorities’ “countermeasures” proved ineffective. See: Abduvakhitov, ‘Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan’, 79-97, esp. 81-90.

<sup>214</sup> Ashirbek Muminov, ‘Fundamentalist Challenges to Local Islamic Traditions in Soviet and Post-Soviet Central Asia’, in *Empire, Islam, and Politics in Central Eurasia*. Edited by Tomohiko Uyama (Sapporo: Slavic Research Centre, Hokkaido University, 2007) 249-262, especially 258-9.

<sup>215</sup> Abduvakhitov, ‘Islamic Revivalism in Uzbekistan’, 82-5. For example: “Communist Party countermeasures in Uzbekistan against revivalist groups were unsuccessful. One arm of the party was hampered by tribalism, regionalism, and kinship ties and thus was uninterested in activities going on around them.” Meanwhile at the lower levels of the party some actually sympathized with the activists and saw their activities as working towards “self-determination” and thus remained “silent observers.” *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>216</sup> Parviz Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, in *Islam and Politics in Russia and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*. Edited by Stéphane Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (London/New York: Kegan Paul, 2001), 228.

that was actually the case, shows the further ineffectiveness of the state's repressive measures. An effectively repressive state would just simply eliminate both groups. However, by the mid-1980s the Soviet security services did begin to arrest and "harass" Tajik Islamists.<sup>217</sup>

As for the private lives of Central Asians and their leaders, life-cycle rituals such as birth, death, marriage and others continued to retain their "Islamic" characteristics throughout the Soviet era.<sup>218</sup> Poliakov's description of the rural areas shows exactly how little Soviet rhetoric and policies mattered to the people here. The unofficial Islamic institutions had a great deal of relevance. For example, while counting unregistered mosques in northern Tajikistan, Poliakov found that every village had at a minimum one mosque with some villages having multiple mosques divided by *mahalla*.<sup>219</sup> As for the people that operated these unregistered mosques, Poliakov writes that the activities of the "unofficial clergy are neither controlled nor administered."<sup>220</sup> Olivier Roy gives nearly the same description, noting that each village and *kolkhoz* during the Soviet era had a mullah, who was usually registered as a worker.<sup>221</sup>

### **Persistence of Traditional Authority and Solidarity**

Whether *rod*, *avlod*, *klan* or *urugh*, located in the *mahalla*, *qishloq*, or *kolkhoz*, fundamentally these terms represent variations on a theme, embodying the qualities of kin-based identity networks.<sup>222</sup>

According to Roy, anthropologists view "traditional collective identities" as the primary means for resisting the "encroachments of the state."<sup>223</sup> The 'resistance' in the case of Tajikistan took the form of social networks being recreated within the structures of the Soviet system.<sup>224</sup> Akiner notes the importance of informal institutions, both in the Soviet and pre-Soviet period. The informal institutions she cites, beyond the *mahalla* (roughly, a neighbourhood or quarter), are the *avlod* (extended family), the *jamoat* (mosque congregation), the *guzar* (roughly the same as the *mahalla*), the *kucha* (street), and, during the Soviet era, the apartment block. According to Akiner, the residents in

<sup>217</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 230-1.

<sup>218</sup> Rainer Freitag-Wirringhaus, 'Atheistic Muslims, Soviet Legacy and Islamic Tradition in Central Asia and the Caucasus', in *The Islamic World and the West: An Introduction to Political Cultures and International Relations*. Edited by Kai Hafez (Leiden: Brill, 2000) 222.

<sup>219</sup> Poliakov, *Everyday Islam*, 96. Also see *ibid*, 95-112.

<sup>220</sup> Poliakov, *Everyday Islam*, 106.

<sup>221</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 90.

<sup>222</sup> Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 218.

<sup>223</sup> Roy, 'Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia', 126-7.

<sup>224</sup> Roy, 'Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia', 126-7.

these “informal institutions” were often of the same ethnic group and usually related to each other.<sup>225</sup> Membership in one of these institutions included the obligation of mutual assistance, sometimes in the form of community work projects (*hashar*). Within these institutions there was a certain level of autonomy from the state. And, in Akiner’s words, these informal institutions “served as an important bonding mechanisms, fostering communal identity and solidarity; they also reinforced social values and ‘civilised’ norms of behaviour, acting as both moral mentor and moral censor.”<sup>226</sup> Another informal institution that created links of solidarity and assistance is the *gap* or *gashtak* (lit., chat, talk, conversation). These are essentially groups of (usually) men who meet over dinner and drink. Membership in a *gap/gashtak* entailed the exchange of information, the expectation of mutual assistance and group-supported mobilisation. Akiner claims that the links created within these groups were passed on to the next generation with the expectation that members would regard each other and each other’s children as kin.<sup>227</sup>

### ***Mahalla***

“We were all born in a *mahalla*.”

- Uzbekistan President Karimov.<sup>228</sup>

In the pre-Soviet era the *mahalla* was an often walled and gated neighbourhood within a town or city. In pre-Tsarist Tashkent, for an example of the larger cities, there were 149 *mahallas*.<sup>229</sup> While there were extended families within a *mahalla*, the neighbourhoods included many people who were unrelated to each other. New members could be accepted through the purchase of residencies with the *mahalla*. However, the consent of the *mahalla* leaders was required. In both rural and urban areas the leaders of the *mahallas* were referred to as *aqsaqals* (i.e., *muysafeds*) or *arbobs*. These leaders, according to Paul Georg Geiss, ascended to a leadership position by virtue of their reputation and wealth, with an election during which assistance from the imam was often required. The *mahalla* leader, with the assistance of advisors, administered community affairs and was the representative to the next higher level of authority in the area. Within the community the *mahalla* leadership decided on what communal labour

<sup>225</sup> Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 170-1.

<sup>226</sup> Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 170-1.

<sup>227</sup> Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 170-1.

<sup>228</sup> President Karimov speaking on July 15, 1994 in Tashkent. In Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 107.

<sup>229</sup> Paul Georg Geiss, ‘Mahallah and kinship relations: a study on residential communal commitment structures in Central Asia of the 19<sup>th</sup> century’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 20, No. 1 (2001), 97-100.

projects to carry out, enforced religious duties along with the imam, resolved disputes within the *mahalla* and collected taxes.<sup>230</sup> In a contemporary study on both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Sabine Freizer notes that *mahallas*, which ‘formed’ in the pre-Soviet era, regulated and assisted with many aspects of a person’s life. The *mahalla* was essentially a “forum where local values, rules of behaviour and common needs were defined.”<sup>231</sup> Certain elders within the community mediated disputes, helped organise communal life-cycle celebrations, and facilitated (mutual) assistance.<sup>232</sup> Such was its importance that, beyond being an administrative entity, the *mahalla* was, as argued by Donald Carlisle, a source of identity in Soviet era Uzbekistan.<sup>233</sup> However, in villages in Tajikistan the *mahalla* takes on an extra meaning. Here the *mahalla* can be used to refer to the entire community, and even to the community leader, the *rais*.<sup>234</sup> Akiner gives a similar meaning for *mahalla* in Tajikistan, translating it as “local community” (and noting that this ‘traditional body’ provides “more effective governance” than the official local government).<sup>235</sup> Other scholars write that the *guzars* and *mahallas* that pre-existed the Soviet Union in Central Asia were integrated into Soviet power structures and functioned as a unit of the state.<sup>236</sup> Olivier Roy cites the *mahalla* as a relevant entity before, during and after the Soviet era in Tajikistan. He argues, in line with his analysis of other identity categories and institutions, that the *mahalla* survived collectivisation and population transfers and was “reincarnated” in the collective farm.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>230</sup> Geiss, ‘Mahallah and kinship relations’, 97-100.

<sup>231</sup> Sabine Freizer, ‘Central Asian fragmented civil society: Communal and neoliberal forms in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan’, in *Exploring Civil Society: Political and Cultural Contexts*. Edited by Marlies Glasius, David Lewis and Hakan Seckinelgin (London: Routledge, 2004), 116.

<sup>232</sup> Freizer, ‘Central Asian fragmented civil society: Communal and neoliberal forms in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan’, 116.

<sup>233</sup> Carlisle, ‘Uzbekistan and the Uzbeks’, 30. Writing specifically on Uzbekistan, and generalizing broadly about mahallas (rural and urban) Donald Carlisle strongly connects the mahalla to identity....“Based in familial networks and cemented by geological principles, the mahallah constituted the neighborhood where a Muslim was born, reared, and ordinarily lived for his or her entire life. [both urban and rural].” [...]“An individual’s primary, permanent allegiances were spawned in these native neighborhoods. Family and friends were the pillars of local life, the keystones of identity and of person-to-person associations and loyalty.” [...]“Everything revolved around the all-embracing mahallah – from one’s own allegiance extended to the native city and embraced the locale and region. In such traditional settings, one’s experience seldom extended beyond the immediate range of person-to-person contacts.....[Despite a person travelling widely] realms beyond the local mahallah and extended family/kinship networks carried little weight in daily life. Kith and kin and tribe and clan, not the artificial political contrivances of the Soviet state, were the permanent and paramount realities.”

<sup>234</sup> John Heathershaw, ‘Peacebuilding as Practice: Discourses from Post-conflict Tajikistan’, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (2007), 230.

<sup>235</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 56.

<sup>236</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 266-7; Freizer, ‘Central Asian Fragmented Civil Society’, 116. Freizer writes that the mahallas “often functioned in symbiosis with communist institutions.”

<sup>237</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 86-7. For a more focused analysis of the *mahalla* in Tajikistan see Sabine Freizer, ‘Neo-liberal and communal civil society in Tajikistan: merging or dividing in the post war period’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (2005), 224-43.

Navruz Nektakhtshoev provides an example of the use of *mahalla* for interaction between Tajiks, noting the typical question between Tajiks who have just met each other: “*shumo az kadam mahalla?*” (“which *mahalla* are you from?”). Nektakhtshoev notes that it is a general “where are you from?” question that may require further inquiry once place of origin is determined. The next even more localised identity question, if locality is insufficient for the interaction, is given as “*shumo az kadam avlod?*” Literally, “which *avlod* are you from?”<sup>238</sup>

### ***Avlod***

*Avlod*, a word of Arabic origins,<sup>239</sup> is term used in Tajikistan to describe an extended patriarchal family that serves as an informal mutual support structure.<sup>240</sup> Olimov refers to the *avlod* as a smaller unit within the *mahallas* and *qishloqs* (villages) of the pre-Russian period that formed a “microstate” for Tajiks.<sup>241</sup> Similarly, Kamoludin Abdullaev refers to the *avlod* as “the basic unit of sedentary Tajik society and dominant institution of power,” while noting that the “avlod system provided survival, autonomy, and adaptability to its members, serving traditionalism and sustainability of the society.”<sup>242</sup> Abdullaev notes that while the Soviet system “eroded” the *avlod*, it still continued to exist as a “parallel system of power.”<sup>243</sup> Nektakhtshoev also argues that the Soviet structures and programs indirectly altered the *avlod*, as well as pushing it out of the “legitimate public space.” However, he notes that despite these changes the *avlod* is still an important concept in Tajikistan, as noted by the above “which *avlod* are you from?” question.<sup>244</sup> The answer to this question would include a recitation of ancestry because of the importance of the exchange of “genealogical information” in determining “identity” and “difference,” as kinship differences are not visible.<sup>245</sup> For the Uzbeks who no longer have “tribal divisions,” the social structure is based on the *avlod*, though

<sup>238</sup> Nektakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 29

<sup>239</sup> In Arabic, *avlod* means ‘sons.’

<sup>240</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 249; Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 24, 42. Olimova provides a short definition: “an *avlod* is a patriarchal community of blood relatives who have a common ancestor and common interests, and in many cases shared property and means of production and consolidated or coordinated household budgets.” See: Soadat Olimova and Igor Bosc, *Labor Migration in Tajikistan* (Dushanbe: IOM, 2003) 49-50, as cited in Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia*, 71. Collins characterizes rural *avlods* as the “nonelite level of clans.” *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>241</sup> Muzaffar Olimov, *Inter Tajik Conflict: A Road to Peace* [title translation by Nektakhtshoev], (1998), 83, as cited in Nektakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 30.

<sup>242</sup> Komoludin Abdullaev, ‘Current local government policy in Tajikistan’, in *Tajikistan at a Crossroads: The Politics of Decentralization*. Edited by Luigi De Martino (Geneva: Cimera, 2004), 8.

<sup>243</sup> Abdullaev, ‘Current local government policy in Tajikistan’, 8.

<sup>244</sup> Nektakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 29.

<sup>245</sup> Nektakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 22, 29.

significantly less than for Tajiks. Olimov and Olimova found in their studies that the *avlod* structure “encompasses” approximately 46% of the detribalised Uzbeks as compared to 82% of certain Tajik ‘subgroups.’<sup>246</sup> They do not name the Tajik ‘subgroups,’ but Akiner claims that the *avlod* is most noticeable among the resettled groups from Darvoz and Qarotegin (Gharm), who resisted assimilation most noticeably.<sup>247</sup>

### Patronage and Solidarity Networks

Olivier Roy argues that solidarity networks based on kinship and/or patronage allow a population to resist the interference of an authoritarian state, or to “compensate for the weakness or corruption of the state.”<sup>248</sup> However, Schoeberlein notes the role of patronage/kin networks in the “corruption”:

Since virtually all property and resources are state-controlled, connections are essential in order to negotiate the extra-legal and unofficial mechanisms that regulate access to the resources necessary for any kind of economic activity: permission to sell goods on the market, provision of raw materials, access to vehicles or buildings—even simply freedom from the legal or illegal interference of “law enforcement” authorities. All this requires an elaborate and effective network of mutual back-scratching relationships, which is most readily develop within the family framework. [...] However, as each person seeks to maximize the breadth and effectiveness of her network, it is often expedient to draw on criteria of connections that extend beyond the family to a larger community.<sup>249</sup>

This creates a tautological problem of ‘circular cause and consequence’: did state corruption force people into what is often termed as ‘clan behaviour’? Or did pre-existing ‘clan behaviour’ create the corruption and the weakness of the state? It can be at least argued that the two are mutually reinforcing. Nekbakhtshoev points out the mutually reinforcing nature of the cycle, blaming it for the proliferation of “clan behaviours.”<sup>250</sup> He argues that the corrupt behaviour by “members of clan networks” creates shortages in the economy for others and therefore creates a situation where those

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<sup>246</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 249.

<sup>247</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 24, 42.

<sup>248</sup> Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, 124, 127.

<sup>249</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 268-9. Navruz Nekbakhtshoev makes a similar argument: “No longer the comprehensive source of social and cultural identity that it had been in the past, clans in the Soviet period served a narrow purpose as an underground means through which Central Asian navigated everyday life. The contours of clans were subject to change as shortage economy compelled clan members to seek allegiance with non-members through marriages and client-patron relationships in order to create networks of access to economic and politic resources. And since its advantages predicated on goods/power distribution, it had become a centrally political phenomenon.” See Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 95.

<sup>250</sup> Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 92.

outside of the dominant network replicate the behaviour of that dominant group and engage in the same “clan behaviours” to compensate for the shortages that were created.<sup>251</sup> Rafis Abazov, for his part, sees the patronage networks of the Soviet era in Tajikistan as not a completely new phenomenon, but rather as a continuation of the “tribal and communal (i.e., *mahallagaro*) affiliations.”<sup>252</sup>

The ‘stability of the cadres’ during the Brezhnev era, when local officials remained in their regional positions, allowed patronage networks to flourish. Regional elites, serving long careers in the same locality, were able to strengthen their power bases and further strengthen personal allegiances and “localism” (in Russian: *mestnichestvo*, in Tajik: *mahallagaro*)<sup>253</sup> At the height of Soviet rule in the Tajik SSR, patronage networks, as well as other forms of “semi-legal and illegal exchange,” were commonplace.<sup>254</sup> The characteristics of the centre-periphery relations in the Soviet Union allowed patronage to flourish. If local authorities could meet, or appear to meet, the goals of the prescribed economic plans, the violations on the ground would be ignored.<sup>255</sup> Political patronage networks thus “diverted, undermined and used state power for their own end – facilitating benefits for the group...”<sup>256</sup> An important aspect of this patronage was regional affiliations. During the Soviet era these affiliations became a source of economic and political power for the elites and a source of political and economic resources for the masses. At the republic level this patronage relationship united the elites and their regional constituencies in the competition for the resources controlled by the state.<sup>257</sup> And at the provincial (*oblast* or *viloyat*) level the first secretaries of the local party committees (*obkom*) formed local patronage networks with the help of their powers to distribute resources and appoint people to official positions within the province.<sup>258</sup> Beyond enriching themselves, regional leaders used their powers of economic distribution and appointment to benefit their families, friends or persons

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<sup>251</sup> Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 92.

<sup>252</sup> Abazov, ‘Central Asia’s Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies’, 66. Nekbakhtshoev also portrays the clan behaviour of the Soviet era as an adaptation by pre-existing clans. See note 2 above.

<sup>253</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 93. Kilavuz also argues that the increased ratio of the titular nationality in positions of power resulted in the expansion of local patronage networks. See Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 94. Also: Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 156. Bobojon Ghafurov, the First Secretary of the Tajik Communist Party (1946-1956), wrote in 1959 that he “deplored ‘localism and friendship ties’ which led to the selection of ignorant, inexperienced people who lacked ‘political faith.’” B. G. Gafurov, *Nekotorye voprosy national’noi politiki KPSS*, (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1959), 2. As cited in Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 53.

<sup>254</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan.’

<sup>255</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan.’

<sup>256</sup> Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, 128.

<sup>257</sup> Pauline Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Power, Perceptions, and Pacts*. (Cambridge University Press, 2002), 62-3.

<sup>258</sup> Roland Dannreuther, ‘Creating New States in Central Asia’, *Adelphi Paper* No. 288 (London: IISS, 1994), 13, as cited in Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 92.



who could provide some “reciprocal benefit.”<sup>259</sup> In Pauline Jones Luong’s view, this system ensured that the people and the elites both had strong incentives to be loyal to their “regions.”<sup>260</sup>

Akiner disputes the idea that there were monolithic regional blocs competing against each other. She concedes that the social patronage networks, often identified as regional ‘clans,’ did have a geographical aspect, but that self-interest was the prime determinant in the formation of networks. The national-level elites usually had experience working not just in the capital, but also in various regions throughout Tajikistan, as well as outside of the republic. During their career they would form relationships with various regional elites, some of them even facilitated by marriage across regional and ethnic lines.<sup>261</sup> Idil Kilavuz agrees about “self-interest,” remarking that “Common interest is an important driving force of elite networks.”<sup>262</sup> She goes on to say that

Self-interest, career, work, and education experiences all seem important in the formation of networks. There are neither “clans” based on kinship, nor purely regional allegiances. The main element is not the pure “traditionalism,” nor continuation of traditional kinship-base relations as argued by some scholars. The mere factor of place of birth does not explain the elite networks. There were rivalries among people from the same region and alliances among people from different regions.<sup>263</sup>

Regional identity is just one factor in the formation of political power networks. Kilavuz argues that these networks, while they may have a regional base, should not be considered “unitary actors”, as “People from the same region can be rivals, while people from different regions can be allies.”<sup>264</sup> She notes the existence of “sub-factions” within a region that can both “ally with each other against a common competitor” and “clash”

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<sup>259</sup> T.H. Rigby and Bohdan Harasymiw, eds., *Leadership Selection and Patron-Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 6, as cited in Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 92. Antoine Buisson describes a similar process: “Political factions work in accordance with the rule of “localism” (or *mahallgerayi* in Tajik, *mestnichestvo* in Russian), which consists in relying on people from one’s region of origin to make a career of oneself, and to promote them in return once a position has been obtained in state structures or elsewhere. This involves practices of cronyism, nepotism and patronage. Another specificity is that these solidarity networks are articulated with the state production sector. As well as with the informal and criminal sectors that were already vibrant at the end of the Soviet period. *Apparatchiki* and technocrats got used to diverting state economic resources and channelling them to their solidarity networks. This involved the mobilization of illegal groupings and activities that could prosper under the protection these influential political figures could ensure by working in the Party-State apparatus.” See: Antoine Buisson. ‘State-Building, Power-Building and Political Legitimacy: The Case of Post-Conflict Tajikistan’, *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2007), 136.

<sup>260</sup> Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, 62-3.

<sup>261</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 19-20.

<sup>262</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 119.

<sup>263</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 120.

<sup>264</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 14.

with each other.<sup>265</sup> The elites in a single region may have divergent interests, making it difficult to accurately predict political behaviour based on region of origin. And as the political environment changes, the nature of these regional bases may also change. Kilavuz notes that the regionally-based power networks are not “permanent and fixed categories.”<sup>266</sup> Kilavuz argues that regional loyalty is not a “definite or reliable criterion” as some politicians will cooperate with whoever has the strongest network and switch their allegiances when it is in their own private interest to do so.<sup>267</sup> She notes that a client will be loyal to his patron (e.g., a *kolkhoz* boss or an *obkom* secretary) as long as the patron continually provides the benefits and resources (“providing employment, promotions, assistance, welfare, permits, access to important goods and services, land, etc.”).<sup>268</sup> Kilavuz takes issue with those studies that portray regional identities or origin as the sole factor determining the composition and formation of ‘elite networks.’<sup>269</sup> She notes the importance of government policies in the formation of these “political networks with regional bases.”<sup>270</sup> Lawrence Markowitz also rejects the notion of unitary regional political blocs in Tajikistan. He instead stresses the political contestations within these “blocs” as well as the individual cross-cutting ties between the blocs.<sup>271</sup> Matteo Fumagalli makes a similar point about the internal competition within the “regions,” a concept that he considers reification.<sup>272</sup>

In regards to the discussion of national level elite networks and localised networks, as well as kin-based networks, some confusion arises in that at both the national and local level these groups are often referred to as ‘clans,’ both in the literature on Tajikistan and in common use within the country. Kilavuz argues that ‘clan’ is, in both cases, used within Tajikistan in the “pejorative sense” of networks that are seeking self-enrichment for members: at the elite national level and in the local context, referring to “prominent extended families.”<sup>273</sup> Kilavuz is quite right to point out that the use of ‘clan’ (usually given via Russian as *klan*) in the literature is an incorrect anthropological use, as ‘clan’ is defined as “unilineal descent groups which unite a series of lineages descended from a theoretical common ancestor, the

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<sup>265</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 119.

<sup>266</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 14.

<sup>267</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 121.

<sup>268</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 123.

<sup>269</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 14.

<sup>270</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 113.

<sup>271</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 4.

<sup>272</sup> Matteo Fumagalli, ‘Framing ethnic minority mobilisation in Central Asia: The cases of the Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’, *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (2007), 575, n. 18. Fumagalli cites as an example the fractured nature of the Leninobod region, with competition between Khujand, Leninobod’s administrative centre and the areas around Istaravshon and Panjakent.

<sup>273</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 115-6.

genealogical links to whom are often either not remembered or who may be purely mythological.”<sup>274</sup> Kilavuz’s argument against the use of the term ‘clan’ is that if the regionally-based solidarity networks are ‘clans,’ then any patronage network could be termed a ‘clan.’ The elite power networks include non-kin as well as individuals from outside the region. While some scholars refer to the political power networks in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as ‘clans,’ Kilavuz notes that they are more like patron-client networks and they “may or may not involve family ties among members of the network.”<sup>275</sup>

These groups which are mistakenly called “clans” are political power networks which aim to control political and economic power within the republic, and gain assets and privileges resulting from this control. They maintain their position and power through the distribution of the assets under their control. They are definitely not kinship groups, nor is regional origin their sole determinant. They are power networks organized for the control of administrative and economic assets. These political power networks are not coherent units. Membership is not permanent; people from the same region or people who were within the same group do not take on the side of their group permanently. The main factor is its utility in providing power and control over resources and assets to the actor. Relations can be established with people from other regional groups, and people can change sides. When common interests change and clash, these elite coalitions can change.<sup>276</sup>

Jonathan Zartman makes the very same qualification about ‘clans,’ though he is more comfortable with the term. He refers to ‘clan’ as a “shorthand term” for the networks he calls “regional solidarity networks.”<sup>277</sup> He, like Kilavuz, notes that allegiances can go beyond kinship ties. Since ‘clan’ is in both popular usage and in the literature in Tajikistan I will not ban its use here. However, when it is used I will qualify it in context to avoid confusion.

Kinship, in the context one of several factors, has been noted by numerous scholars. Sabin Freizer argues that “Distrust reigned supreme outside networks based on family, proximity and religion. Relations that did not follow these lines were held suspect.”<sup>278</sup> And the “overlap” of kinship with several other factors in the formation of networks in Tajikistan was noted by Kirill Nourzhanov who remarked that “informal

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<sup>274</sup> Thomas Barfield, *The Dictionary of Anthropology*, (Cambridge, Mass: Blackwell, 2000). As cited in Kilavuz *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 113.

<sup>275</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 14-5, 112, 115, 117.

<sup>276</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 118.

<sup>277</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asia Republics*, 6.

<sup>278</sup> Freizer, ‘Central Asian fragmented civil society’, 117.

political, parochial, kinship and criminal networks often overlapped and were inseparable from one another.”<sup>279</sup> Nourzhanov demonstrates the importance of kinship:

As a rule, patron-client webs in Tajikistan bear an imprint of kinship solidarity and are characterized by (a) less pronounced inequality and asymmetry in interaction amongst those involved; (b) life-long endurance; (c) more diffused spheres of penetration – far beyond strictly professional activities; (d) relative closeness. These hierarchical structures could be referred to as clans, for they have consonance with the attributes of a classic 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.<sup>280</sup>

Almost every locality in Tajikistan can boast one or more patronage networks. They may take the form of a purely clientilistic dyad, as in Abdumalik Abdullojonov’s case, or that of clans – kinship structures with primarily horizontal links and blurred 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 organizations have always played an important role in regulating life and channelling resources within the community in Tajikistan.<sup>281</sup>

The importance and authority of the patriarchal authority figure within the ‘clans,’ or rather extended families, is reflected in the fact that many of the “clan divisions” are named after them.<sup>282</sup> And far from being a new phenomenon, some of the rural elite families have been so since before the Soviet era,<sup>283</sup> an example being the Arabovs of northern Tajikistan.<sup>284</sup> Rural elites, in particular, engage in strategically sending younger members to the urban areas to expand their network and its ability to access resources. D. V. Mikulsky argues that the urban Tajik is not an “isolated entity,” but rather in fact still a part of the rural networks. He/she has many connections to the “extended family or clan” that is based in the village or region of origin. Family elders push an individual member towards a certain profession and expect that the city dweller will provide benefits and resources to family members back in the village. And

<sup>279</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan’, n.p. As an example, Nourzhanov provides the example of Abdumalik Abdullojonov’s strategic marriage, political relations and the resulting benefits.

<sup>280</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan’, n.p. As adapted by Nourzhanov from N.A. Butinov, ‘Obschina, sem’ia, rod’, *Sovetskaia Etnografia*, No. 2, 1968, 91.

<sup>281</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan’, n.p. As an example, Nourzhanov names six extended families as part of the post-war Leninobod-Kanibodom clan: the Arabovs, the Yaqubovs, the Karimovs, the Asrorovs, the Chuliubaevs and the Bobojonovs. The families named have long histories as economic, intellectual and/or political elites, with the Arabovs being prominent as early as the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>282</sup> Mikulski, *The History of Civil War in Tajikistan*, 12, as cited in Nekbaktshoev, *Clan Politics*, 32. The example of several extended families (*tup*) in a village of Northern Tajikistan is given by Mikulski: *tup-i Niyoz*, *tup-i Hofizi*, *tup-i Qozigi*, and *tup-i Mullaolibi*.

<sup>283</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 276.

<sup>284</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan.’

reciprocally, the city dweller often seeks resources such as agricultural products from the extended rural family.<sup>285</sup> Schoeberlein gives the same description of the urban family member providing resources from the cities to the rural relatives. However, he specifically names the “rural elite” as engaging in this strategic behaviour of sending their children to the city for a university or technical education. He notes that many of them will return, but others will remain in the city in order for the extended family to access “scarce” resources.<sup>286</sup>

### **Regional Elite Competition**

As the ratio of the titular nationality serving in positions of power within the governments of the Uzbek and Tajik SSRs increased, it lessened the importance of cleavages between the titular nationality and non-titular groups such as the Russians and increased the importance of cleavages within the titular nationalities, therefore increasing the significance of “regionalism.”<sup>287</sup> Khujandis from Leninobod dominated the Tajik Communist Party and the government, but they did not hold positions of power exclusively as the central Soviet government attempted to maintain a balance between the regions for elite appointments.<sup>288</sup> According to Davlat Khudonazar, from 1956-61 First Secretary Tursunboy Uljaboev, an ethnic Uzbek from Leninobod, “balance[d] the representation of the regions” and distributed resources equally before being removed on the pretext of falsifying cotton production figures, a very common practice at the time.<sup>289</sup> The argument that Leninobod politically dominated Tajikistan is qualified by Shirin Akiner. She notes the much larger population, higher levels of education and political awareness, as well as the industrialized economy of Leninobod and argues that it would be natural that this area would produce the elite of the state.<sup>290</sup> Matteo Fumagalli makes a similar argument, crediting the Leninobodi elite’s dominance in the Tajik SSR to “economic, socio-cultural and geographic factors.”<sup>291</sup> He notes that the location of the Leninobod region in the fertile and industrialised Ferghana Valley

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<sup>285</sup> Mikulski, *The History of Civil War in Tajikistan*, 14, as cited in Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 55.

<sup>286</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 277.

<sup>287</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 94. Kilavuz notes that in Tajikistan the Tajiks, between the 1940s and 1960s, held 45% of the positions in the CP. By 1980 it was 61%.

<sup>288</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 97, 102-4.

<sup>289</sup> Khudonazar, ‘The Conflict in Tajikistan: Questions of Regionalism’, 254-5.

<sup>290</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 19-20.

<sup>291</sup> Fumagalli, ‘Framing ethnic minority mobilisation in Central Asia’, 575, n. 18.

region, and its economic integration with the Uzbek SSR, provided Leninobod with its economic dominance.<sup>292</sup>

At the republic level the Soviet government divided the state apparatus among the various factions, which produced competition for power and resources among the different region-based factions.<sup>293</sup> The Leninobod/Khujand-based faction came to dominate the Tajik government after World War II.<sup>294</sup> The Khujandi elite maintained their dominant position by constantly changing the administrative status of the other regions. The elite from other regions were not able to develop a region-wide patronage network as they lost their province (*oblast, viloyat*) status and found their networks disrupted.<sup>295</sup> However, there was a level of power sharing involving the Kulobi elites in a patronage relationship starting in the 1970s.<sup>296</sup> The various reasons given are that it was a response to the Leninobodi elite being challenged by local competitors or even, according to Stephane Dudoignon, as a result of economic exchanges between the two involving cotton.<sup>297</sup> As for the other groups, Akiner stresses that the power held by Leninobodis (mostly from Khujand) was not exclusive. The power structures of the higher levels of the Tajik government were often held by Russians, Pamiris and Gharmis as part of the power balancing of the elite.<sup>298</sup> And during this time the Tajik SSR's large Uzbek minority in the north had an informally protected status thanks to the Tajik Communist Party's close links to Uzbekistan and the political domination of the Leninobodi faction that secured benefits for the north's population, including the

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<sup>292</sup> Fumagalli, 'Framing ethnic minority mobilisation in Central Asia', 575, n. 18. Fumagalli also notes that "The north was also culturally more exposed to contacts with Russia and the rest of the Soviet Union, compared with the more provincial areas in the south."

<sup>293</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 146; Saodat Olimova, 'Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra', in *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia*. (London/ New York: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), 250.

<sup>294</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh, 'Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?', *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 7 (November, 1996), 1108; Rubin, 'Central Asian Wars and Ethnic Conflicts', 10; Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 151; Foroughi, 'Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities', 46.

<sup>295</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 108-12

<sup>296</sup> Akbarzadeh, 'Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?', 1108; Rubin, 'Central Asian Wars and Ethnic Conflicts', 10; Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 151; Foroughi, 'Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities', 46.

<sup>297</sup> Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 151. Another possible factor is the incident where, in the early 1970s, a Khujandi sent to Kulob to head the regional government was found dead, possibly assassinated, in his Kulob hotel room one day after arriving. See: Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 176; Igor Rotar, 'Voina bez pobeditelei', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (13 September 1992), 6; and D. V. Mikulski, *The History of Civil War in Tajikistan*, (Moscow, 1996), 14, as cited in Nekbakhtshoev, *Clan Politics*, 82; Gavhar Juraeva, 'Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan', in *Ethnic Conflict in the Post-Soviet World: Case Studies and Analysis*. Edited by Leokadia Drobizheva, et al. (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1996), 260.

<sup>298</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 19-20.

Uzbeks.<sup>299</sup> The exception, according to Shirin Akiner, was the Kulobis, who despite holding many high ranking positions in the security forces and having started a patronage network relationship with the Leninobodis in the 1970s, were generally marginalised at the national level in comparison to Gharmis and Leninobodis. Akiner offers an alternative explanation for the exclusion of Kulobi elites from the national level: lack of interest in pursuing positions outside of Kulob. Within Kulob the local elites had autonomy and development projects that were directly funded by the central Soviet government, as well as enjoying “status, wealth (often illegally acquired) and a social environment in which they were at ease.”<sup>300</sup> As a result, there was not a need to pursue appointment at the Tajik SSR level. For the Gharmi elite, the position of Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan was “reserved” for Gharmis. However, for almost the entire Soviet era it was a position of little power and influence that made no significant economic or bureaucratic decision-making authority.<sup>301</sup> As a result, Gharmis had “relatively little stake” in national-level power structures and a greater one in the “emergent market economy” and in the national academy of sciences, which Barnett Rubin calls the “principle institution of national cultural identity.”<sup>302</sup> The exclusion from government and economic institutions meant that Gharmis could not create any patronage networks on the scale that the Leninobodis and Kulobis could. Even within Qurghonteppa Province they were excluded from positions of power.<sup>303</sup>

Markowitz notes that the party positions at district (*raikom*) and province level (*obkom*) became the focus of local power struggles. From these positions one could access resources from the centre and even work towards higher level postings. As these positions were “aggressively sought after,” local political manoeuvring became “perhaps the most fluid and uncertain venue of political contestation within the Soviet state structure.”<sup>304</sup> In southern Tajikistan, districts (*rayons, nohiyas*) were subordinate directly to the republican administration in Dushanbe. This ruled out the possibility of any southerners controlling any institution higher than district level that could be used for mobilising against the Leninobodis. Only later were the provinces of Kulob and

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<sup>299</sup> Fumagalli, *The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-political Mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, 217; Shale Horowitz, ‘Explaining Post-Soviet Ethnic Conflicts: Using Regime Type to Discern the Impact and Relative Importance of Objective Antecedents’ *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (2001), 650. The close relationship between the Leninobodis and Uzbekistan was partly owing to Tajikistan’s status as being formerly part of Uzbekistan from 1924-1929 when Tajikistan was an autonomous Republic within the Uzbek SSR. Also, until 1929 Khujand was part of the Uzbek SSR.

<sup>300</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 19-21.

<sup>301</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 160, n. 64.

<sup>302</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 151-2.

<sup>303</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 151-2.

<sup>304</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 47-8.

Qurghonteppa reinstated.<sup>305</sup> In Qurghonteppa the Leninobodi elite installed their own people (Leninobodis, those of Leninobodi descent or ethnic Uzbeks) as collective farm chairs and district *raikom* secretaries in order to control the region's wealth producing bases while Kulob, with its relatively modest economic base, was of much less interest to the Leninobodi elite. The stability of the cadres under Brezhnev took away a tool for the Leninobodis to control southern Tajikistan: the removal of local politicians. As a result the Leninobodis used their national level positions to distribute patronage and manage networks based on resources distributed from the national level. Using resources derived from their patronage relationships with the centre, local elites in Kulob and Qurghonteppa were able to maintain local patronage networks. By the late Soviet era the local elites in Qurghonteppa and Kulob were using the "informal economy" as a power base, but still needed their relationships with the Leninobodi-dominated centre to protect this base from scrutiny.<sup>306</sup> By the late 1980s Gharmi Tajiks, Kulobi Tajiks and Uzbeks were fighting over administrative positions in Qurghonteppa.<sup>307</sup> The 1988 consolidation of Kulob and Qurghonteppa into Khatlon Province was aimed at reducing the power of Kulobi elites. But in 1990 Khatlon was eliminated and Kulob was reinstated. At this time the locals were able to take back control over the local government apparatuses. But while the attacks on local elites had now ended, the Kulobis were still excluded from national level positions while Pamiris and Qarotegini (Gharmi) Tajiks were being appointed to national level positions. This led to an even further disaffection between the Kulobi elite and the centre as the Kulobi elite no longer saw any beneficial relationship to be had with the centre.<sup>308</sup>

### **The *Kolkhoz***

During the communist era the Soviets maintained control at a national level over the distribution of resources and the promotion of cadres. However, in the rural areas the Soviet security apparatus and central government representatives had much less of a presence as in the cities. In the rural areas the government allowed local leaders to be the middlemen between the people and the state. This allowed local leaders to maintain their own power bases, leaders who Olivier Roy calls the "new *beys* and *khans*."<sup>309</sup> The government did not destroy the pre-existing solidarity groups (*qawm*, *avlod*, *mahalla*, or

<sup>305</sup> Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 150.

<sup>306</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 34, 56, 59-60.

<sup>307</sup> Niyazi, 'Tajikistan I', 154.

<sup>308</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 97-100.

<sup>309</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 85-6.



other types of solidarity groups). Instead it often formed collective farms (*kolkhozes*) from some of these groups, allowing their structure to remain intact throughout the Soviet era. Within the *kolkhoz* the *qawm* and *mahalla* were often duplicated/transported wholesale into the work brigades and *uchatska* (housing estates). In Olivier Roy's words the *kolkhozes* "became the new tribes of Central Asia."<sup>310</sup> The Russian anthropologist Sergei Polyakov makes a similar argument. He describes land administration in rural Central Asia as having been changed "in name, but not in substance"<sup>311</sup> by collectivisation, with local patterns of authority being transferred into the collective farms and the "customary way of life unaffected."<sup>312</sup> And like Roy, Polyakov also notes that collective farms and work brigades in rural Central Asia were formed on the basis of traditional communal solidarity groups. He provides as an example 13 *avlods* in a town in northern Tajikistan being established as 13 *kolkhozes*. And later, after these 13 farms were united into a single *kolkhoz*, these *avlods* became discrete work brigades.<sup>313</sup>

There was an attempt by the Soviets to break apart these traditional solidarity groupings, starting in the mid-1950s, when the state restructured the *kolkhoz*. At this time the government started to appoint the head of the *kolkhoz* and to consolidate multiple *kolkhozes* into one *sovkhov* (state farm).<sup>314</sup> These changes, however, did not destroy the solidarity groups, which often remained intact. Sometimes, the *kolkhoz* itself became a new solidarity group. In either case, according to Roy, relatively autonomous communities persisted. Eventually the Communist Party settled on a policy of manipulating existing regional factions against each other instead of trying to

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<sup>310</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 85-9, 102-6; Roy, 'Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia', 128.

<sup>311</sup> Sergei P. Polyakov, 'Modern Soviet Central Asian Countryside: Traditional Forms of Property in a Quasi-Industrial System', in *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: A Post Soviet Critique*. Edited by Vitaly Naumkin (Reading, UK: Ithaca Press, 1993), 139. Polyakov elaborates further on this subject. See: Polyakov, *Everyday Islam: Religion and Tradition in Rural Central Asia*, 16-7.

<sup>312</sup> Polyakov, 'Modern Soviet Central Asian Countryside', 137.

<sup>313</sup> Polyakov, *Everyday Islam*, 17, 140. Furthermore, he notes that "in distributing personal-use plots to collective farm workers [...], the boundaries of the old "tribal" and "avlod" holdings were strictly observed." *Ibid*, 17.

<sup>314</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 85-9, 102-6; Roy, 'Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia', 128. Frank Bliss describes the process of creating larger units: "The originally small cooperative farms (*kolkhoz*) were first amalgamated into larger units and then, sometime in the early 1970s, the majority of these were turned into purely state-run farms. This created a strong economic unit with a mandate extending far beyond the actual work of a farm. The *sovkhov* organised and maintained the entire infrastructure, ranging from water and energy supplies to running the nursery and primary schools. Democratically elected members of each Soviet were not able to make real decisions or carry out any administrative functions, because everything depended de facto on the leader of the *sovkhov* and his budget." See: Bliss, *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs*, 246.

reconfigure them.<sup>315</sup> Collectivization placed considerable resources under the control of collective farm bosses. However, the patterns of farm boss strength and patronage varied considerably through out the Soviet Union, and within Central Asia. Though generally speaking, the Soviet state relied on farm bosses for mobilisation of rural labour, resource distribution, effective use of technical resources, and fulfilment of agricultural plans. The collective farms became “critical instruments of social control.”<sup>316</sup> The *kolkhoz* leadership, thanks to its monopoly on the distribution of resources within the community, as well as the option of physical force, was able to control the inhabitants of the *kolkhoz*. The *kolkhoz* was also able to assist members who had left the community. *Kolkhozniks* who moved to cities were able to rely on a network of former members of their *kolkhoz* as well as the *kolkhoz* leadership’s connections in the Communist Party bureaucracy.<sup>317</sup>

State control over collective farms was inadvertently weakened during Khrushchev’s time in office and even further during Brezhnev’s tenure. By this time collective farm chairs “emerged as Soviet style local strongmen.”<sup>318</sup> Farm chairs and factory bosses were engaged with regional politicians in patronage networks in which the exchange was protection and access for resources for the bosses in return for illicit income for the politicians. For example, in Qurghontepa the Leninobodi elite installed their own people (Leninobodis, those of Leninobodi descent or ethnic Uzbeks) as collective farm chairs and district *raikom* secretaries in order to control the region’s wealth producing bases while Kulob, with its relatively modest economic base, was of much less interest to the Leninobodi elite. In Kulob, local authority figures were embezzling agricultural profits while taking over local law enforcement and judicial agencies as a way to protect their scheme. By the end of the Soviet period, farm bosses and regional politicians in Kulob exercised “significant influence” over law enforcement agencies and the courts while increasingly relying on illegal income.<sup>319</sup> As for the Gharmi Tajiks in Qurghontepa, they were, towards the end of the Soviet era,

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<sup>315</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 85-9, 102-6; Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, 128.

<sup>316</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 32-3, 35.

<sup>317</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 88. Kilavuz writes further: “The *kolkhoz* was the main source of its members’ work, social welfare and social services, income, irrigation and housing. The Soviet system gave the *brigadirs* (*kolkhoz* brigade leaders) immense power within the *kolkhoz* they directed. The *brigadirs* had control over the economic resources in the *kolkhoz*, and the power to distribute these resources as they wished.”

<sup>318</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 38-9, 54 in regards to Tajikistan.

<sup>319</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 40-3, 56, 88-90, 95, 101.

more focused on ‘free enterprise’ and positioned themselves in opposition to the collective farm directors who were often Uzbeks or Kulobis.<sup>320</sup>

### **Power, Community and Population Dynamics**

The previous sections have illustrated how traditional authority and state power interacted under changing, even volatile, political conditions. The competition at the local and national level by elite-level patronage groups and their local clients was also described. However, a very significant factor was omitted: the changing population dynamics of southern Tajikistan, specifically the Vakhsh Valley. The population in this area was in flux before the Soviet era. And in the Soviet era massive population transfers to the area were carried out, causing serious disruptions in lifestyle and in inter-communal relations as discrete groups from different regions and “ecological niches” were moved into the area. The complexity of the population and social dynamics in southern Tajikistan will be the focus of the next section.

## **Part 3: Population Dynamics in Southern Tajikistan**

### **Pre-Russian**

Pierre Centlivres and Micheline Centlivres-Demont describe the same pattern of Turkic migration into southern Tajikistan that they find for northeastern Afghanistan: early pre-Shaybanid Turkic groups such as Qarluq, Moghol and Barlos, and then Shaybanid Uzbeks in the 16<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>321</sup> As a result there are, in addition to Tajiks, certain Turkic and/or Uzbek groups present on both sides of this modern border<sup>322</sup> thanks to the historically non-existent boundaries that allowed for population movement

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<sup>320</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 152.

<sup>321</sup> Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 3, 6-7. They also argue that the populations in these two areas can be “considered as one large group which has evolved differently on either side of the border because of different ethnic policies and socio-economic development.”

<sup>322</sup> Gunnar Jarring, *On the Distribution of Turk Tribes in Afghanistan*, Lund Universitets Årsskrift, N. F. Avd. Bd 34. Nr. 4 (Lund/Leipzig: C.W.K. Gleerup/Otto Harrasowitz, 1939), esp. 13-35, 52-64. According to the Turkologist Gunnar Jarring, the following Turkic and/or tribal groups are present on both sides of the Amu Darya: Mangyt, Ming, Karluk, Qungrat, Kenegez, Kitay, Kipchak, Kangly, Chagatay, Qataghan, Durmen, and Loqay. There are also small numbers of Turkmen, Central Asian Arabs and, towards the east, Eastern Iranian speaking populations on both sides of the current border.

back and forth across the Amu Darya.<sup>323</sup> Specific to southern Tajikistan, the Vakhsh Valley was for centuries occupied by Turkic Loqay, Qungrat, Qataghan, Durmen, Yuz and other tribes.<sup>324</sup> In a broader description, covering the entire territory of Tajikistan, M. A. Olimov and Saodat Olimova categorize the Uzbeks of Tajikistan as being in two distinct groups:

The first group, living in the compact settlements of Uzbeks who have lost their tribal affiliation, are found mainly in the regions adjacent to Uzbekistan, on the low reaches of the rivers and also dispersed in the Leninabad region. The second group, consisting of only recently nomadic Uzbek and Turkic tribes - such as Lakai [Loqay], Marka, Yuz, Karluk, Karshilik, Kungrat, Moghol, Barlos, Kipchak and others - live in settlements mainly in the Khatlon Region and in central Tajikistan, as well as a few locations in the Leninabad Region.<sup>325</sup>

Shirin Akiner gives a similar description of Uzbeks in Tajikistan. She states that the Uzbeks in the north comprise a uniform, homogeneous group. Akiner then identifies three origins for the Uzbek/Turkic population in the south. The first is located mostly in the southwest and is descended from the earliest Turkic migrations into the area. They have long been sedentarised and many speak Tajik as a first language. The second group is from the pre-thirteenth century wave of Turkic migration through the area. This group lives in the center-west and was semi-nomadic in recent history. The third group, which includes the Loqay, was part of the 15-16<sup>th</sup> century Turkic migration into the area. The Turkic peoples in the third group have at times maintained a level of independence and have a strong communal identity.<sup>326</sup>

According to Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, the “geo-ecological distribution” of Tajiks and Uzbeks in southern Tajikistan is “to some extent similar to that in northeastern Afghanistan.”<sup>327</sup> Olimov and Olimova describe the same ‘ecological niches’ for Uzbeks/Turkic peoples and Tajiks that others have given for northern Afghanistan:

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<sup>323</sup> Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 7. An example given by the authors is the Qarluqs who fled Afghanistan during the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman and settled around Kulob.

<sup>324</sup> Aziz Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimension of Conflict’, in *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*. Edited by Michael Waller, Bruno Coppieters and Alexei Malashenko (London: Frank Cass, 1998), 153; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74.

<sup>325</sup> M. A. Olimov and Saodat Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, in Valery Tishkov and Elena Filippova (editors) *Local Governance and Minority Empowerment in the CIS*. Budapest, Hungary: LGI Books/ Open Society Institute, 2002), 249; see also B. Kh. Karmysheva quoted in Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 5-6. For a Soviet era map of areas where ethnic Uzbeks predominate in Tajikistan see: [www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/tajikistan\\_ethnic\\_92.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/tajikistan_ethnic_92.jpg)

<sup>326</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 9; see also Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 4-7.

<sup>327</sup> Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont, ‘Tajikistan and Afghanistan’, 4

Before the Russian domination began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.....In a sense, it was possible to trace ethnic distinctions by a community's natural geographical zones, the altitude of their home above sea level and certain economic and cultural lifestyles. The percentage of Tajiks increased as one moved from the west to the east and from the south to the north—in other words, from the lowlands to the mountains. The percentage of Uzbek and other Turkic populations was greater in the other areas. The semi-nomadic Turkic-peoples occupied the steppes and foothills, suitable for livestock breeding. The land-tilling Tajiks and Badakhshanis settled along the rivers, in the irrigated foothills and in the highlands.<sup>328</sup>

### Russian/Later Bukharan era

Valentin Bushkov notes that the population dynamics north of the Amu Darya stabilised after the 1860s when Russia took control of the Bukharan Emirate. Then, decades later, a further constraint on population movements was the official closure of the Amu Darya boundary in 1895.<sup>329</sup> Concerning specifically the Qurghonteppa/Vakhsh region, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries the population, estimated at only about 10-20,000, was very unstable with few communities having “deep roots” in the area.<sup>330</sup> During the Tsarist era the first documented attempts at estimating the population of the Qurghonteppa region occurred. The Qurghonteppa *Viloyat*, the pre-revolutionary province of the Bukharan Emirate, counted 55% of the population as Uzbek and only 18% as Tajik.<sup>331</sup> A later attempt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century specifically counts the immediate Qurghonteppa area in addition to the region as a whole. According to this survey the Uzbeks and other Turkic groups accounted for 96% of Qurghonteppa.<sup>332</sup>

The total population figures in the Eastern Bukhara population census of 1917 by the Bukharan government are reduced by 40-45% from 1913. Bergne, without elaborating further, assigns this to the assumption that much of the population died.<sup>333</sup>

<sup>328</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 246. For the northern Afghanistan perspective on ecological niches see Burhanuddin Kushkaki (1923. *Rahnuma-i Qataghan Wa Badakhshan*. Kabul) cited in Nazif Shahrani, ‘Ethnic Relations under Closed Frontier Conditions: Northeast Badakhshan’ in *Soviet Asian Ethnic Frontiers*. Edited by W. McCagg and B. Silver (New York: Pergamon, 1979), 178. Akiner names the locations of the Tajiks’ ‘ecological niches’ in Tajikistan; in the lowlands of the Ferghana, Zarafshan, Syr-Daryo and Surkhon-Daryo valleys and in the foothills and mountain valleys of the central and south-west regions. See Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, 152.

<sup>329</sup> V. I. Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan: Past and Present’, *JCAS Symposium Series*, No. 9 (2000), 148-9. The Russian takeover in the 1860s did, in the short term, cause emigration to Afghanistan from the southern regions of Tajikistan.

<sup>330</sup> Borjjan, ‘Kurgantepe’, n.p. As an example of unstable populations he cites peasants fleeing the high taxes levied by the Bukharan emirate.

<sup>331</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 288.

<sup>332</sup> Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan’, 147. Uzbeks in other areas: 36.5% of the population in Kulob, 25% in Qarategin and Hisor. Turkic groups, including Uzbeks, accounted for 90% of Qabodiyon.

<sup>333</sup> Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*. (London/New York: I. B. Tauris, 2007), 163-4. The 1917 census figures (of select viloyats in Eastern Bukhara), noting that Bergne warns these statistics should be considered “approximations:” Qurghonteppa Viloyat: 33,686

Beyond the obvious debate that could be made on the accuracies of this census, and the one that preceded it, are qualified explanations for the loss of population such as war, disease, famine and “population movements.”<sup>334</sup> Soon after, the Russian Civil War and the Bolshevik campaigns and policies in the region contributed to a mass migration to Afghanistan and East Turkistan (Xinjiang). Valentin Bushkov cites the differing estimates of between 44,000 households and 200,000-480,000 for those that fled.<sup>335</sup>

### Early Soviet/ Basmachi period

The Basmachi-Soviet conflict, exacerbated by a poor harvest in 1925, resulted in an estimated 26% of the population of Tajikistan, mostly from the south, fleeing to Afghanistan. Although some of these returned, the result was the loss of half of cultivated land, livestock and the destruction or decay of irrigation systems.<sup>336</sup> The official data shows a 60% decline in the population of Hisor, Kulob, Qabodiyon and Qurghonteppa, with Eastern Bukhara as a total having its population reduced by 42.5%.<sup>337</sup> According to official Soviet documents, in the late 1920s there was still an estimated 700,000<sup>338</sup> Central Asian refugees still living in Afghanistan, most of whom were ethnic Uzbeks. The Party therefore decided to set up an Uzbek center in southern Tajikistan to “act as a pole of attraction” to encourage refugees to return and to “counter

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persons (5% Tajik, 90% Uzbek, 5% Kyrgyz), Kulob Viloyat: (44% Tajik, 55.1% Uzbek), total for East Bukhara: 551,805 persons (62.4 % Tajik, 35.2 Uzbek).

<sup>334</sup> N. A. Kislyakov, *Patriarkhaln'o-feodal'nye omohseniya sredi osedlogo sel'skogo naselniya Bukharskogo khanstva v kontse XIX-go i nachale XX-go veka*, (Moscow/Leningrad, 1962), 19 as cited in Carrère D'Encausse, *Islam and the Russian Empire*, 16. This discussion of population loss is for the Bukharan Emirate/People's Republic of Bukhara as a whole.

<sup>335</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 148-9. Bushkov provides the varying estimates for the numbers that fled: 200,000-480,000 people (Pankov, A. "Naselenie Tadjikistana," in *Sbornik "Tadjikistan,"* Tashkent, 1925, 82.) and 44,000 households (*Iz istorii industrializatsii Tadjikskoi SSR*, t. 1, Dushanbe, 1972, 8). No information is provided on the methodology involved in estimating the number of refugees.

<sup>336</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 22. Akiner notes the loss of nearly 40% of livestock and a 95% reduction in cotton production. Paul Bergne notes that the Territorial Commission of 1924 assessed that 40-45% of the population of the Tajik Oblast (estimated at 1.2 million in 1913) had left to Afghanistan due to the conflict between Basmachi and the government. See: Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 51-2. The Soviet authorities used forced population transfers as a tactic against the Basmachi, depriving them of their local support bases. See: Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', 529. There was also a foreign safe haven. Lev Gotfrid, a Communist official, reported in June 1928 that Basmachis based in Afghanistan were attacking and robbing resettlement convoys. See Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 88-9.

<sup>337</sup> Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', 527-8. At this “peak” the official documents only note the number of people who left their villages, not their destinations, which included Chinese Turkestan, Afghanistan and points beyond.

<sup>338</sup> I treat this number with scepticism, as I have not as yet found any historical references from Afghanistan to such a large number of refugees, which would have been a multiple population increase for northern Afghanistan.

anti-Soviet propaganda emanating from Northern Afghanistan.”<sup>339</sup> And by 1925 there started a large refugee return. In the south, according to a source cited by Bushkov, the number of returnees from Afghanistan numbered 25,000.<sup>340</sup> The promise of government assistance and free irrigated land induced refugees to return from Afghanistan.<sup>341</sup> But while there may have been refugees returning in 1925, there continued to be refugee flows after this date.<sup>342</sup> However, the situation eventually stabilised and, by the end of the 1920s, 60,000 of the estimated 250,000 refugees who had fled to Afghanistan from Tajikistan had been repatriated.<sup>343</sup>

The new Soviet government institutions formulated plans to assist and attract returnees, with efforts focused in Qurghonteppa. However, the local administrators did not always receive the necessary resources from the central government, itself short of resources. Government inefficiency and lack of proper resources caused severe hardships for both the settlers and the returning refugees, both of whom did not receive the resources that they were promised. Furthermore, it was the Qurghonteppa District that had to accommodate the majority of returning refugees. This redistribution of populations in Tajikistan led to not just material hardship, but some interethnic tensions as well, such as when Tajik returnees found Uzbeks occupying their lands, and vice versa.<sup>344</sup>

### **Cotton agriculture population transfers**

Starting in the mid-1920s the Soviets began to forcibly resettle inhabitants to the south of Tajikistan, primarily to facilitate the construction of irrigation works and the production of cotton. The Soviet resettlement policies in Qurghonteppa were clearly

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<sup>339</sup> Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 72-3. However, the authorities did not want Qurghonteppa to become an Uzbek *viloyat*, as resettlement programs would continue to bring in more Tajiks, so they based the Uzbek centre in Sarai Kamara and gave it responsibility for Qabodiyon, south Jilikul and Chubek Parkhar.

<sup>340</sup> *Iz istorii kolektivizatsii sel'skogo khoziaistva I kolkhoznogo stroitel'stva tadzhikskoi SSR*, t. 1, Dushanbe 1973, 208-209. Cited in Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 149.

<sup>341</sup> Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia: The Case of Tadzhikistan*. (Baltimore/London: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 33.

<sup>342</sup> Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', 527. Penati notes, in regards to the areas of what was Eastern Bukhara: The emigration continued between 1922 and 1928, and was often associated with the flight of Basmachi bands bringing with them their families and sometimes the entire tribe (*rod*). [...] A peak in the trend of this kind of migration took place immediately after the powerful anti-Basmachi campaign in spring-summer 1926, because the peaceful population was largely victim of extortions and reprisal from both sides. At the end of the 1920s there was another surge in the number of emigrants, this time likely connected to the Soviet "emancipation" drive for local women. See: *ibid.*, 527-8.

<sup>343</sup> Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 107.

<sup>344</sup> Penati, 'The Reconquest of East Bukhara', 528-30. Penati provides only a small number of 200 returning families to Qurghonteppa in 1928-30.

part of its strategy to boost agriculture, particularly cotton.<sup>345</sup> The Hisor and Vakhsh Valleys offered the best potential for growing cotton, most of which was to be exported to Russia.<sup>346</sup> The result in the Qurghonteppa region was the construction of thousands of kilometers of irrigation canals as part of the Vakhsh Valley irrigation system that started in 1931. After this time numerous groups and individuals arrived in the region to work on the construction of the canals and in the cultivation of cotton.<sup>347</sup> However, as noted by Aziz Niyazi, the resettlement policies were not guided by a strategy as simple as merely boosting cotton production:

The active internal migration of the local population in Tajikistan began in the mid-1920s. This was connected mainly with the accelerated industrialization of the republic both in agriculture and industry. The revolutionary goal was promoted to make an industrial and agricultural proletariat out of the traditional peasantry, which had constituted the majority of the population.

The settlement policy was aimed at increasing the number of towns in valleys and large settlement at the expense of small and middle-sized *qishlaqs* (villages) in the mountains. Development of the mountainous territories was considered to have no future.<sup>348</sup>

The first Soviet forced migration ‘wave’ in the mid-1920s to the Vakhsh Valley lowlands of Qurghonteppa consisted of thousands of Gharmi Tajik households from the

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<sup>345</sup> Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan’, 149; Penati, ‘The Reconquest of East Bukhara’, 529; Menon, Rajan and Hendrik Spruyt. (1998) ‘Possibilities for Conflict resolution in Post-Soviet Central Asia’, in Barnett R Rubin and Jack Snyder (editors) *Post-Soviet Political Order: Conflict and State Building*. London: Routledge, 134; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74; Foroughi, ‘Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities’, 49; Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 72, 88-9, 107; V. I. Bushkov and D. V. Mikul’sky, (*Tadzhikskoe obshchestvo na rubezhe tysyacheletii – etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v nachale 1990x godov*. Moscow, 1992), especially 8-15 and 33-8, cited in Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 177; Thomas Loy, ‘From the mountains to the lowlands - the Soviet policy of "inner-Tajik" resettlement’, *Internet-Zeitschrift für Kulturwissenschaften*, No. 16 (August 2006), 13.2. Issues of Internal and External Migration in Post-Soviet Central Asia. Online: [http://www.inst.at/trans/16Nr/13\\_2/loy16.htm](http://www.inst.at/trans/16Nr/13_2/loy16.htm)

<sup>346</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 54-5.

<sup>347</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 22; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74; Olivier Roy, ‘Inter-regional dynamics of war’, in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, Issue 10: ‘Politics of Compromise: the Tajikistan Peace Process’, Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catherine Barnes (editors). (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001). In regards to the construction of the canal systems, one source, an American administered anti-Soviet research institute in Munich, claimed that forced laborers, *kulaks* from Siberia and the Caucasus, were used in the construction of the Vakhsh Valley irrigation system. They claim that nearly 60,000 were sent to Qurghonteppa for this work project, but that all eventually died of disease and neglect. See Boris Iakovlev. 1955. *Kontsentratsionnye lageri SSSR*. Institut po Izucheniiu Istorii I Kul’tury SSSR, Issledovaniia I Materialy, ser. 1, no. 23. Munich: Institut po Izucheniiu Istorii I Kul’tury SSSR, 140-1. Cited in Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 118-9, n. 36. For a description of the institute, see: Anatol Shmelev, ‘Russian Émigrés in Western Europe and the Formation of Radio Liberty,’ in *Migrations in Society, Culture and the Library*. Edited by Thomas D. Kilton and Ceres Birkhead. (Chicago: Association of College & Research Libraries, 2005), 36.

<sup>348</sup> Aziz Niyazi, ‘Migration, Demography and Socio-Ecological Processes in Tajikistan’, *JCAS Symposium Series*, No. 9 (2000), 169.



mountainous regions of Qarotegin and Darvoz.<sup>349</sup> The immigrants were organised into collective farms, some mono-ethnic, others mixed and extended family groupings were usually not split up, but larger communities were.<sup>350</sup> These population movements to the south were mainly a process of forced migration,<sup>351</sup> particularly in regards to mountain dwellers that were expelled from their homes in the mountains and sent to the valleys.<sup>352</sup> While force was clearly used to move many Kulobi and Gharmi Tajiks to the Vakhsh Valley, some migrants later reported that incentives such as free land were offered and they had chosen to go voluntarily as they expected a better life in the valley.<sup>353</sup>

This first phase of force population transfers that started in 1925 lasted until 1932 was mostly unsuccessful as only 30% of the 56,000 resettled households throughout Tajikistan – including those who were resettled to facilitate the production of cotton – stayed in their new locations.<sup>354</sup> However, the campaign continued and throughout the 1930s Tajiks from the Gharm and Kulob Provinces, as well as Pamiris from Gorno Badakhshon, were transferred to Qurghonteppa and the wider region of the Vakhsh Valley. Here they were organised into *kolkhozes* in an area that had previously been populated by semi-nomadic Turkic speakers, many of whom had fled the Basmachi conflict to Afghanistan.<sup>355</sup> The Soviet authorities, in Olivier Roy's words, "sedentarized" the remaining Uzbeks and Loqays of the Vakhsh Valley on the foothills where they were previously living by forming "relatively homogeneous *kolkhozes*."<sup>356</sup> For the Gharmi Tajiks from the mountainous region of Qarotegin, resettlement was not initially successful. The forced migrants had no skill in the new type of agricultural work they were expected to do and the government, for its part, provided little in the

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<sup>349</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74; Olivier Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war'; Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 57. Additionally, wealthy Uzbek farmers from the Ferghana Valley were declared to be 'kulaks' and were deported to Qurghonteppa Province while workers from other Central Asian republics and Russia also arrived in the region.

<sup>350</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 22; Foroughi, 'Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities', 49; Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 33; Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 72, 88-9, 107. Later during World War II Germans were deported to the Vakhsh Valley in the area of Kuybyshev. The vast majority of these Germans left in the 1990s. See Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 23.

<sup>351</sup> Niyazi, 'Migration, Demography and Socio-Ecological Processes in Tajikistan', 169.

<sup>352</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 33. Harmstone notes that some of these mountain Tajiks were later able to return to their home regions. For an in-depth case study of the forced resettlement of the non-Tajik Yaghnobis from their mountainous homes to the cotton farming valleys, see: Leslie Donovan, *Causes and Consequences of the Forced Migration of Yaghnobis in the Tajik SSR*. Unpublished MA thesis (2007), California State University, Dominguez Hills.

<sup>353</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74-5. Kilavuz lists one of the incentives as two free hectares of land. She also notes that some chose relocation as an alternative to some unspecified judicial punishment.

<sup>354</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 149. See also: Loy, 'From the mountains to the lowlands', n.p.

<sup>355</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74; Olivier Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war'; Menon and Spruyt, 'Possibilities for Conflict resolution in Post-Soviet Central Asia', 134.

<sup>356</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 139.

way of assistance and disease was common.<sup>357</sup> Border issues may also have played a role in population transfers, as between 1933 and 1941 almost 27,000 households in southern Tajikistan were moved by the state to the Afghan-Tajik SSR border regions.<sup>358</sup> In the broader context, from 1925-1941, 48,700 households were transferred into the Vakhsh Valley. For the republic as a whole, in the period before the start of the Second World War the state had forcibly resettled 400,000 people, or 30% of the population of Tajikistan.<sup>359</sup> During the war forced relocations to cotton growing regions continued. For example, the government moved 20,000 households from mountainous areas to the Vakhsh Valley between 1943 and 1947. In 1947 the government decided to move 7,800 households in the form of entire *kolkhozes* from mountainous areas to more arable areas of Tajikistan. The Vakhsh Valley was one of these areas.<sup>360</sup> In Roy's words, Qurghonteppa was "colonized" during the 1950s by settlers from Gharm and Kulob who arrived early in the decade as part of large Soviet population transfers.<sup>361</sup> The population transfer to the south from 1947-1960 again included Tajiks from mountainous areas, as well as Pamiris. Also, Kulobis in the south were moved from the foothills to the valleys.<sup>362</sup> During the 1950s the state resettled over 100,000 people to arable valleys, Vakhsh included. Bushkov notes that the resettlement process after the 1950s became less regular. He only mentions the resettlement of 14,000 people in 1968-1970.<sup>363</sup> According to Kilavuz, the Soviet policies of forced migration from Gharm, Kulob and the Pamirs into Qurghonteppa continued until 1960,<sup>364</sup> while Roy points to large population transfers as late as 1968.<sup>365</sup>

Unfortunately for the settlers, the authorities did not provide a sufficient social support structure in the south. The living conditions endured in the first few years for forcibly resettled populations were quite bad. There was a lack of infrastructure, water, sanitation, and proper housing, as well as other issues related to problems in adjusting to

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<sup>357</sup> Rakowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, 57.

<sup>358</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 149.

<sup>359</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 150; Sh. Kurbanova (1993. *Pereselenie: kak eto bylo*. Dushanbe: Irfon, 76) cited in Saodat Olimova, 'Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra', in *Democracy and Pluralism in Muslim Eurasia*. (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2004), 246, 262, n. 4.

<sup>360</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 150.

<sup>361</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 139; Olivier Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war', in *Accord: An International Review of Peace Initiatives*, Issue 10: 'Politics of Compromise: the Tajikistan Peace Process', Edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catherine Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001).

<sup>362</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 23. Non-mountain Tajiks were also considered for resettlement. The Tajik First Secretary Ghafurov (1947-57) attempted to "get" Ferghana Valley Tajiks to settle in the then Uzbek-dominated Qurghonteppa region during the population transfers of the 1950s. See Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 118.

<sup>363</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 150.

<sup>364</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 74.

<sup>365</sup> Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war.'

the southern valley climate. New diseases such as malaria were encountered, medical assistance was “minimal,” the summer weather was much more extreme than what the mountain dwellers were accustomed to, while the new type of work was very different from their traditional lifestyle.<sup>366</sup>

The policies of resettlement into the valleys, which comprise only 7% of the territory of Tajikistan, resulted in the density of the population exceeding the capacity of the land to support them. According to Niyazi, in the 1920s approximately 70% of the population of Tajikistan was living in the foothills and mountains. The contemporary situation has been reversed and now 70% of the population lives in the lowlands. Niyazi goes on to describe the development of Tajikistan and how economic growth did not keep pace with population growth while the valleys were overpopulated, resulting in ecological degradation – including the destructive monoculture of cotton.<sup>367</sup> Niyazi offers a critical appraisal of the effects of resettlement policies:

Industrialization and intensification of agriculture with the priority given to the development of the cultivation of cotton destroyed economic structure, which had remained unchanged for ages. Hundreds of thousands of peasants and craftsmen had to abandon the way of life to which they were accustomed and were forced into a quite different and even alien cultural environment. Many of them – unable to bear the abrupt changes of climate and exhausting work, and lacking new qualifications – became hostages of the state’s migration policy. [...] Accelerated and mindless industrialization of this agrarian country, irrational and wasteful use of natural resources, and violence against peasant culture led to destructive results both for the environment and the society. The industrial assault on this essentially traditional society resulted in degradation in all spheres of life.<sup>368</sup>

### **Nature of settlements and social patterns**

The change in population ratios due to the influx of Tajiks and Pamiris from the 1950s is difficult to determine since the published Soviet population data on the area is

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<sup>366</sup> V. I. Bushkov and D. V. Mikul’sky, (*Tadzhikskoe obshchestvo na rubezhe tysyacheletii – etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v nachale 1990x godov*. Moscow, 1992), especially 8-15 and 33-8, cited in Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 177; Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan’, 151; Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 22; Niyazi, ‘Migration, Demography and Socio-Ecological Processes in Tajikistan’, 169-70.

<sup>367</sup> Niyazi, ‘Migration, Demography and Socio-Ecological Processes in Tajikistan’, 169-71. Niyazi describes a “natural” process before resettlement whereby “a natural self-regulation of social and ecological system took place, and excess population was pushed to uninhabited regions.”

<sup>368</sup> Niyazi, ‘Migration, Demography and Socio-Ecological Processes in Tajikistan’, 173-4. Niyazi’s description of the urban centres is just as critical: “The native population, which traditionally lived on agriculture, moved to towns almost without any wish to do so, and they tried to escape work in large enterprises of heavy industry. A large stratum of unemployed manpower grew not only in towns and cities, but also in rural areas. With increasing population density, sanitary conditions sharply worsened, the incidence of disease increased, and social problems aggravated.” See *ibid.*, 169-70.

vague.<sup>369</sup> But what is clear is that by the 1980s Qurghonteppa was demographically dominated by people who were transferred to the area or who were born to families that were. In the upper Vakhsh Valley about 90% of the population could be classified this way (Tajiks from Qarotegin, the Yovon Valley and Khovaling, Uzbeks from the Ferghana Valley and other parts of Uzbekistan, as well as Russians). The remaining population consisted of indigenous Loqay and Kungrat Uzbeks.<sup>370</sup> Kilavuz describes the pattern of ethnic and regional composition in the new settlements:

Many villages were composed mainly of people coming from the same region, with only a small minority of people from another region. For example, where a majority of the village was from Garm, there was usually a minority from Kulyab, and vice versa. People in Qurghonteppa lived in homogenous villages. If the great majority in one village was from Garm, the majority in another village was from Kulyab. There were also entirely Uzbek villages. The majority of villages in Qurghonteppa were ethnically and regionally homogenous. Some villages were heterogeneous in terms of the regional origin of their inhabitants. In these mixed villages the population composition was roughly 50 percent from Garm and 50 percent from Kulyab or others. But these cases were very few. Only approximately 20 percent of all villages in the region were like this.<sup>371</sup>

According to interviews conducted by Kilavuz (obviously of later settlers to Qurghonteppa), those who were resettled in villages of their co-regionals said that was partly their choice. The settlers, who preferred living with family, relatives and “countrymen,” chose to settle in this pattern for obvious reasons of living near people who could be trusted and relied upon for support. People even relocated from one resettlement to another in order to be with people they were familiar with. However, in the towns and cities the populations were mixed in terms of ethnicity and region of origin.<sup>372</sup>

### **Effects of transfers**

According to Shirin Akiner, the process of forced population transfers “increased social and ethnic segmentation” while the “atomization of traditional communities enhanced micro-ethnicities and, perhaps more especially, micro-loyalties and micro-allegiances.”<sup>373</sup> Whole communities that were transferred often ended up in the same collective farm. For those mixed collective farms the different groups usually

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<sup>369</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, *Conflicts in Tajikistan and Central Asia*, 288.

<sup>370</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 23.

<sup>371</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 75.

<sup>372</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 76.

<sup>373</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 25.

worked in their own brigades and lived in their own settlements. Olivier Roy suggests that this resulted in the groups keeping their distinct identities.<sup>374</sup> Roy notes further:

Population transfers reduce the oppositions between lineages and consolidate essentially geographical identities (one's place of origin) as primary identities. Paradoxically, transfer reinforces territorial identity. [...] The term "Gharmi" develops in Tajikistan among transferred populations in the province of Kurgan-Teppe.<sup>375</sup>

Those people who settled in Qurghonteppa kept their regional identities, even after decades in the valley had passed. Kilavuz cites people in the region identifying themselves by the region their grandparents came from. They even know the exact village that their ancestors were from, and can provide it when pressed on their exact origins. In addition to knowing where their ancestors came from, they also know where other people's ancestors migrated from.<sup>376</sup> Akbarzadeh argues that the "minimum-contact *kolkhoz* system" resulted in the various groups keeping their cultural practices from their home regions.<sup>377</sup> For example, in the Vakhsh Valley there are Uzbek collective farms that, in Akbarzadeh's words, "have very little to do with their neighbouring, say Gharmi, *kolkhozy*."<sup>378</sup> The immigrants to Qurghonteppa adjusted in different ways. For example, some adjusted well to Qurghonteppa while others such as those from Qarotegin and Darvoz "resisted assimilation" and "maintained a strong sense of separate identity."<sup>379</sup>

Tajiks resettled from the mountainous areas, especially Gharm, found their interests in conflict with those populations already there.<sup>380</sup> Forced population transfers and sedentarisation soon put Uzbek Loqay, Kungrat and Durman in competition for resources with Tajiks in Qurghonteppa.<sup>381</sup> For those who did not immediately enter into

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<sup>374</sup> Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war.'

<sup>375</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 96.

<sup>376</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 76.

<sup>377</sup> Akbarzadeh, 'Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?', 1107.

<sup>378</sup> Akbarzadeh, 'Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?', 1107. See also V. I. Bushkov and D. V. Mikul'sky, (*Tadzhikskoe obshchestvo na rubezhe tysyacheletii – etnopoliticheskaya situatsiya v nachale 1990x godov*. Moscow, 1992), especially 8-15 and 33-8, cited in Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 177.

<sup>379</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 24. Akiner points especially to those from the Vakhyo Valley (a valley on the periphery of Darvoz). Akiner notes that "For centuries, it has been a place of refuge for those fleeing persecution. In modern times, the people of Vakhio have gained a reputation for initiative and non-conformism."

<sup>380</sup> Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 72. The locations cited as examples are Jilikul and Kaizabad.

<sup>381</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 96. John Schoeberlein also provides the example of problematic relationships between Tajiks and Uzbek-speaking Arabs. He notes that Uzbek-speaking Arabs in southern Tajikistan were pastoralists and were not in competition in this area as it was previously not arable. The introduction of cotton growing schemes, irrigation and immigration put them in competition for resources with the newcomers, predominantly Gharmis and Badakhshonis. The Arabs maintained a level of autonomy from the Soviet state, a situation that resulted in the immigrants dominating local government and the marginalization of the Arabs. See: Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 261-2.

problematic relations, relations worsened later. According to Akiner, the original inhabitants of the Vakhsh Valley came to resent the eventual success of the immigrants to the region.<sup>382</sup> A later example in Qurghonteppa is from the 1960s when Gharmis and Uzbeks were involved in disputes over land and water.<sup>383</sup> Population and demographics and a shortage of resources in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in further increased competition for resources among the groups in the Vakhsh Valley.<sup>384</sup>

## Summary

### The Interaction of Identity, Power and Demographic Changes

This chapter has illustrated the high level of complexity that must be navigated when attempting to put in context the pre-conflict dynamics of Tajikistan, particularly the Vakhsh Valley and the Qurghonteppa Province. Cataclysmic changes in governance structures, social controls and demographics occurred concurrently with the intentional and unintentional reshaping of identities and loyalties. And this all happened before the disruption of social order and government authority at the beginning of the 1990s. Despite having had decades of relative stability leading up to the late 1980s, the social and political dynamics became no easier to analyse. With the breakdown of central and local state control and the turnover of elites in the late 1980s and very early 1990s, the numerous layers of loyalty, identity and political and economic ties were once again tested, reshaped and realigned. As civil unrest spread and violent conflict started, the situation became in many ways much more complicated and, in other ways, much simpler. As the situation deteriorated, national level elites and local power brokers mobilised support from the local level, drawing on and appealing to ties of identity and shared economic concerns. Language, ethnicity, sub-ethnic identity, religious sect, political party membership, region of origin, collective farm affiliation, family ties, professional relationships, employer-employee ties and government patron-client networks have all been cited as factors in determining individual and group participation or non-participation in the conflict. Each one of these factors played a role in determining behaviour during the civil war—of course some of them to a far lesser

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<sup>382</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 42.

<sup>383</sup> Niyazi, 'Tajikistan I', 161; Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war.'

<sup>384</sup> Roy, 'Inter-regional dynamics of war.' Natural population growth and immigration from outside the Tajik SSR caused the population to increase from approximately 1.5 million in 1950 to 3.6 million in 1977. See: Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 154.

degree than others. The next chapter will fully explore these variables as part of the mobilisation process during the era of political competition that transitioned to violent conflict.

## Chapter 3

### Transition from Political Competition to Violent Conflict

“I thought we needed to be wise and careful. We had become a nation but we didn’t know what “nation” was. In the Soviet time we said “people” – the Tajik or Uzbek people of the Soviet Union – not “nation”. We had never lived in a nation state. Suddenly we needed to understand the idea of “nation”. We needed to have a “national interest.” National interest? We didn’t know what that was! People knew just their own interests, or the interests of their family or their village.”

- Muhammadjon Shukurov on Tajikistan’s independence.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

The relatively open social and political environment during the Glasnost era in the Tajik SSR (late 1980s to 1991) allowed for increased freedom of expression and for the emergence of many new civil society groups, including political parties. At the same time that political parties and various independent social groups were forming, the state bureaucracy was being restructured. Gorbachev’s Union-wide efforts at Perestroika reforms included attacks on and removals of ‘conservative’ apparatchiks in favour of ‘reformist’ cadres who would assist rather than obstruct the implementation of reforms. In Tajikistan this created an intersection of interests whereby pro-Perestroika reformists in the state bureaucracy were supported by, and in turn supported, the anti-incumbent agendas of the newly emerging political parties. Another agenda that must be factored into this political environment is that of the regional elites and their local patronage networks. Local elites in the north, Hisor, Kulob, and to a certain extent in Qurghonteppa,<sup>2</sup> worked to maintain their positions in the face of the Perestroika bureaucratic reforms. On the other side, regional elites from the Pamirs and Garm (including Gharmis in Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa Province) increasingly began to use the political parties and the Gorbachev reforms as a vehicle to make political gains as the government appointed mostly Pamiri and Gharmi reformists to the newly vacated positions. Soon, region of origin became associated with support for, or opposition to,

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<sup>1</sup> As quoted in Monica Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River: The Untold Story of Central Asia*, (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2003) 152-3. Shukurov is a well-known literary critic and academic.

<sup>2</sup> In Qurghonteppa this would not include the Gharmi Tajiks who overwhelmingly supported the opposition parties.



the Perestroika reforms – both in the bureaucracy in Dushanbe and in the rural areas where local elites (e.g., collective farm bosses and provincial/district leaders) had much to gain or lose from the reforms. In Qurghonteppa, the competition between Gharimi and Kulobi administrators for local government positions and control of collective farms was especially intense.

The competition for state resources and positions of influence continued into the post-Soviet era. At the same time political parties mobilised in opposition to the incumbent leaders, who also sought to mobilise their own supporters. The combination of an election failure on the part of the opposition, the increased use of large street demonstrations on the capital, plus the reckless rhetoric and actions on both sides led to an increasingly dangerous political and social atmosphere. The overwhelming belief on the part of both sides – in the face of the mutual security dilemmas – of the need to arm themselves soon turned to escalating violence and eventually open military combat.

## **Part 1: Political Competition and Regionalism**

### **Glasnost-era opposition activities**

Freizer argues that the activities of civil society organizations during the early Glasnost period in Tajikistan “attracted mainly the urban middle classes – scientists, professors, teachers and students – and bypassed many rural communities.”<sup>3</sup> Olimova describes a similar constituency for the first early social movements, noting that their support at the end of the 1980s came firstly from the “western-oriented national intelligentsia.”<sup>4</sup> Mavlon Mahkamov, referring to the political parties that formed in 1989 and 1990, wrote that their gestation was an urban process and that “rural society mostly stayed out of the process of politicization of social life.”<sup>5</sup> Whatever the exact

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<sup>3</sup> Freizer, ‘Central Asian fragmented civil society’, 117. Related to the growth of civil society, Dudoignon writes that “the 1980s had seen the resurgence of alternative social phenomena, as witnessed by the blossoming of numerous underground cultural and sports clubs...” See: Stephane Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. Edited by Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997) 64.

<sup>4</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 246. However, she also notes Nina Chicherina’s assessment that poor, unemployed rural migrants in Dushanbe “played a significant role in the opposition movements.” *Ibid*, citing N. G. Chicherina, *Grazhdanskie dvizheniia v Tadzhikistane*, (Moscow: Akademia nauk, 1990), 18.

<sup>5</sup> Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 198. Olimova lists some exceptions, noting that some “tradesmen and private farmers” also participated. See: Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 246-7.

composition of the opposition groups, it was clear that while they were growing, they still had relatively limited numbers and their active members made up only a very small percentage of the total population of Tajikistan.<sup>6</sup>

Concerning the goals of these new groups, Freizer stresses that while some individuals wanted massive changes in the system of government, generally the civil society groups of the 1980s did not oppose the state and focused mostly on local issues.<sup>7</sup> In the opinion of Mahkamov, most active civil society groups had a very low level of influence.<sup>8</sup> While Freizer's and Mahkamov's assessments may work for a narrow definition of civil society, it does not describe the late-Glasnost political opposition movements very well. Atkin writes that "by the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, a growing number of people advocated more substantial change than the republic-level leadership was willing to allow."<sup>9</sup> However, the government implemented some of the changes demanded by the early opposition movements – possibly with strategic motives. For example, while the communist government had previously criticised nationalism and the influence of religion, it eventually co-opted some of the opposition's platform. Starting in 1989 the government started to implement elements of the nationalist agenda, including the passage of a language law favouring Tajik.<sup>10</sup>

Dudoignon provides an explanation for why the Soviet government allowed these non-state actors to form:

The alternative political organisations and parties in Tajikistan were initially tolerated because they were thought to provide so many necessary and convenient outlets for the frustrations of the country's urban population, and ensure that these did not escalate into inter-communal violence.<sup>11</sup>

Niyazi has a similar, but more cynical explanation for the emergence of certain groups in the late Glasnost period:

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<sup>6</sup> Muriel Atkin, 'FAST Case Study: Tajikistan', Swiss Peace Foundation, Institute for Conflict Resolution (3 February 1999) 1.

<sup>7</sup> Freizer, 'Central Asian fragmented civil society', 117.

<sup>8</sup> Mahkamov, 'Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985', 199. Mahkamov provides some examples of these groups: "*Ehya-i Khojent* (Revival of Khojent); the sociocultural association of Samarkand; *Oftab-i Sugdian* (the Sun of Sogdiana); *Vahdat* (Unity); a popular front of supporters of reconstruction; *Oshkoro* (Publicity); society *Maihan* (Homeland); and *Haverim* (society of the friends of Jewish culture)."

<sup>9</sup> Atkin 'FAST Case Study: Tajikistan', 1. For example, in 1990 "The Tajik ex-apparatus reformers proposed turning the USSR into a commonwealth of independent states, long before the term existed... They hoped to enjoy all the benefits of political independence while receiving from Moscow all the grants necessary for the maintenance of the Tajik economy which the Soviet system had so long guaranteed them." See: Dudoignon, 'Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993', 62.

<sup>10</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 144-5. As well as "the appearance of nationalist concerns in official newspapers" and "the establishment of a cultural foundation to preserve Tajik heritage."

<sup>11</sup> Dudoignon, 'Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993', 56-7.

The authorities try to counteract the opposition by using ‘nonformula’ organisations such as social-political clubs like ‘The Workers’ Perestroika’ of the Dushanbe Railway District Committee of the CPSU, ‘*Ru ba Ru*’ (face to face) of the Komsomol Central Committee, and ‘*Tajdid*’ (renewal or renaissance) of the Vakhsh Komsomol District Committee. They were all set up and continue to be controlled by the authorities. It is quite evident, however, that they are unable to give any really effective support to the regime.<sup>12</sup>

As for Islam, the Soviet government loosened its restrictions, allowing the *Qoziyot* (the official Islamic governing body) and others to open new Islamic schools and mosques in Tajikistan, as well as to renovate *mazars* (shrines) and organise *hajj* to Mecca.<sup>13</sup> However, as noted by Kilavuz, there were additional issues on the agenda in the late 1980s beyond just nationalist and religious ones, evidenced by critical newspaper articles regarding the economy, health and the environment.<sup>14</sup>

### **Perestroika-era political competition**

Within Tajikistan, there were major changes in the power structures starting in the mid-1980s. Gorbachev’s removal of Tajik First Secretary Rahmon Nabiev is the most prominent example. Then, from early 1987 to the end of 1989 the First Secretary of the Communist Party Qahhor Mahkamov – using what Markowitz terms “attacks,” “reforms” and an “anti-corruption campaign” – attempted to dismantle the patronage networks within the Communist Party.<sup>15</sup> These included actions against the elites of patronage networks in Kulob, Qurghonteppa and Mahkamov’s home province of Leninobod. Mahkamov removed many regional elites from their administrative positions and appointed “reformist politicians” – often Pamiris and Gharmis/Qaroteginis – to their positions.<sup>16</sup> This portrayal of Mahkamov as a motivated reformer needs to be qualified. In particular, the reforms he carried out need to be placed in the context of the Soviet Union, in particular Moscow’s relationship with and control over the republics.

<sup>12</sup> Aziz Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, in *State, Religion and Society in Central Asia: A Post Soviet Critique*. Edited by Vitaly Naumkin (Reading, Ithaca Press: 1993) 285.

<sup>13</sup> Muriel Atkin, ‘Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan’, in *Conflict, Cleavage and Change in Central Asia and Caucasus*. Edited by Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrot (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 283; Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 200. Mahkamov notes the quid pro quo: “Representatives of official Islam regularly called on their followers to remain loyal to the government and to observe state laws.”

<sup>14</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 138.

<sup>15</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 5, 102-3. Alternately, Kilavuz, making a comparison to Uzbekistan, posits that in the late 1980s Tajikistan did not experience “great purges [as in] Uzbekistan. There were no major changes in political leadership, and the political elite structure remained in place.” Kilavuz continues: “Although there was an election in Tajikistan (as in Uzbekistan) in this period, it did not bring any change. Rather, the small in-party opposition was eliminated and Mahkamov was reappointed as first secretary without difficulty.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 136.

<sup>16</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 5, 102-3, 118-21.

Karim Abdulov, the chief of staff for President Nabiev (1991-1992), writes disparagingly of Mahkamov as an “inept” and “slow-witted” leader who was dictated to by Moscow *desantniks* (literally, ‘paratroopers’; figuratively, outsiders who arrive suddenly and without invitation).

Chief among these outsiders, in Abdulov’s opinion, was the Second Secretary (1986-1989) and true power in Tajikistan, Petr Luchinsky – better known nowadays as Petru Lucinschi, the president of Moldova from 1997-2001. Abdulov is quite open in his bias against the “chauvinist” Luchinsky, who he blames for using and exacerbating regionalism (*mahalgaroy*) in his placement and removal of cadres in Tajikistan.<sup>17</sup> Abdulov maintains that Luchinsky’s tactics worsened the regional divides in Tajikistan and lead the country towards war.<sup>18</sup> Abdulov is adamant about the effect of the Mahkamov-Luchinsky reforms, especially the increased level of regionalism. He points to the period from 1985-1990 as a time when the people of Tajikistan “became slaves of the centre,” and when “Everyone became concerned with only themselves, their own families, and their own relatives.”<sup>19</sup> While other analysts are less concerned with assigning blame, they do agree on the increased importance of region of origin as a result of how the reforms of the late 1980s were implemented.<sup>20</sup>

According to Olimova, Pamiri and Gharmi/Qarotegini elites had accumulated some economic strength by the late Soviet period. Elements within these two groups then decided to use the new Glasnost-era opposition movements as a vehicle to gain a greater share of the political power. As a result, “regional origin exerted a major influence on the choice of behavioral strategy of the new elites” while support or opposition to the “Soviet imperial centre” was “determined by regional affiliation.”<sup>21</sup> The reforms of the late 1980s “emboldened many of the informal groups” in the republic while the “elites” of the Communist Party “had not yet regrouped from the attacks on their patronage bases.”<sup>22</sup> Towards the end of 1990 Mahkamov had been unable to reconcile the “increasingly radicalized reformist movements and a

<sup>17</sup> Karim Abdulov, ‘Tojikiston va Chin’, n.d., Online: [http://www.abdulov.tj/bk19\\_1.php](http://www.abdulov.tj/bk19_1.php); ‘100 Solagii Rakhim Jalil: Ohanraboi Millat’, n.d., Online: [http://www.abdulov.tj/bk15\\_1.php](http://www.abdulov.tj/bk15_1.php).

<sup>18</sup> Abdulov writes: “I am confident of what I have concluded and I can emphatically say this: Luchinsky’s contribution to the tragedies of my people and nation today is quite large. Many times he separated my people to the north and south, to the east and west. With dozens of lies and deceitful acts he took away stability and made Tajik children homeless through war.” See: Karim Abdulov, *Rohi Behbud* (Dushanbe: 1995) 16.

<sup>19</sup> Abdulov, *Rohi Behbud*, 19.

<sup>20</sup> E.g., see Markowitz’s points above on the appointments of Pamiris and Gharmis to the newly vacated positions.

<sup>21</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 249.

<sup>22</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 102-3. Markowitz does write that the Communist Party elites, while under attack, “still occupied a majority of the seats in the republican legislature, the Supreme Soviet.”

"reactionary" wing of the Communist Party."<sup>23</sup> With Mahkamov becoming increasingly weak, the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and the Islamic Revival Party become the strongest supporters of further reforms. The opposition supporters placed themselves in a position of conflict with the conservative elements of the Communist Party with their demands for further reforms in Kulob, Qurghonteppa and Leninobod.<sup>24</sup> Markowitz writes that as part of this process the collective farm bosses began to lose the protection of the "conservative political elites" who they were tied to through mutual "regional interests," resulting in "ideological divisions in the centre [becoming] increasingly tied to regional interests."<sup>25</sup> This strategy placed the opposition movement in conflict with the incumbent elites in these regions as Gharmi and Pamiri elites started to also use the new opposition movements as a tool to mobilise against their rivals.<sup>26</sup>

### Post Independence

After independence the leaders of most Central Asian states were able to maintain the system of regional patronage networks. However, due to the weakness of the system in Tajikistan (e.g., the purges of cadres mention above), previously less privileged regions successfully challenged the dominant Leninobod faction for an increased share of power and resources.<sup>27</sup> Before independence, starting in 1990, the capabilities and power of the government in Tajikistan rapidly deteriorated,<sup>28</sup> with different parts of the state apparatus divided between the different regional factions.<sup>29</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union the central government in Tajikistan became even weaker, deprived of the perception of control and order in the eyes of its population. Furthermore, the state was now facing political opposition from various groups.<sup>30</sup> Atkin

<sup>23</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 103. Elsewhere, Markowitz writes: "ideological divisions widened between political elites in the centre, juxtaposing those who sought to dismantle the political-administrative system and its ties to the republic's lucrative cotton economy against those elites who sought to preserve that system." See: Lawrence P. Markowitz, 'How master frames mislead: the division and eclipse of nationalist movements in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2009, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 103-4.

<sup>25</sup> Markowitz, 'How master frames mislead', 12.

<sup>26</sup> Olimova, 'Opposition in Tajikistan', 249. On a related note, Roy stresses that Gharmis in the government apparatus were not displaced by mullahs as the only source of power in the Gharmi community, even as the IRP made gains around this time. See: Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia', 139.

<sup>27</sup> Jones Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia*, 100; P. Jones-Luong, 'The Future of Central Asian Statehood', *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 1 (1999) 4, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Niyazi, 'Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimensions of Conflict', 146.

<sup>29</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 146.

<sup>30</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or Robber Barons?', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (2005) 111; Menon & Spruyt, 'Possibilities for Conflict Resolution in Post-Soviet Central Asia', 113.

argues that the Khujandi/Leninobodi elite – and their Kulobi allies as junior partners – wished to preserve the system, not for reasons of ideology, but to keep the monopoly of power and the control of resources that they enjoyed during the Soviet era.<sup>31</sup> Despite the government's efforts, by spring 1992 the country was divided among various regional factions and the central government was completely ineffective.<sup>32</sup>

### **Competition in Qurghontepa and Kulob**

A clear pattern of 'alliance,' in Kalyvas' terminology, was seen at an early point before the outbreak of violent conflict. Contentious local issues in rural areas increasingly became attached to national level politics in an environment of weakening central control. While Roy pointed to the relative personal wealth of Gharmis in Qurghontepa,<sup>33</sup> it was the control of collective farms that was the most contentious issue in the competition between Gharmi and Kulobi elites, as well as between the memberships of their respective networks. The collective and state farms of Qurghontepa's Vakhsh river valley accounted for 40% of the value of Tajikistan's agricultural production, resulting in the competition for influence and control here being "one of the greatest sources of inter-regional tension in the republic."<sup>34</sup> Administrators in Qurghontepa Province, as elsewhere in Central Asia, had very long tenures, the powerful chairmen of collective farms in particular. For example, in a sampling of 15 Qurghontepa farm bosses from the late 1930s to the mid-1980s, Markowitz finds that the mean number of years in office was over 23 years. However, starting in the early 1980s there was significant turnover of political and economic leaders in Qurghontepa. The purges of the second half of the 1980s included the replacement of the purged

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<sup>31</sup> Muriel Atkin, 'Tajikistan: Reform, Reaction and Civil War', in *New States, New Politics: Building the Post-Soviet Nations*. Edited by Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (Cambridge University Press, 1997) 614-6. Ideology was far less important. John Anderson argues that the government was "concerned less with preserving Marxist-Leninist ideology against a new philosophy than with protecting positions and influence built up over decades." See: Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 172-3.

<sup>32</sup> Niyazi, 'Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimensions of Conflict', 146.

<sup>33</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 139. Roy writes: "For reasons that have yet to be elucidated, the Gharmis rapidly acquired a dominant position locally [in Qurghontepa]: their wealth is apparent from their houses (often multi-storied). [...] Well off, but excluded from Communist power..." Colette Harris studied Gharmi communities in Khatlon [Qurghontepa] and offered this assessment of their income levels before the war: "...the Gharmis increased their incomes substantially by selling fruit from their private plots in Russia at high prices. Before the civil war many Gharmi families in this area possessed several cars as well as at least one television set, radio, sewing machine, and refrigerator—that is, most of the larger consumer goods available in the former Soviet Union." However, she does not make a comparison to others locally and does not claim that they were better off financially. See: Colette Harris, 'Coping with daily life in post-Soviet Tajikistan: The Gharmi villages of Khatlon Province', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 4 (1998) 657-8.

<sup>34</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 52.

leaders with Russians, Pamiris and Gharmis. The very brief tenure of District First Secretaries in Qurghonteppa Province, as opposed to the long tenure of their predecessors, illustrated this trend. Despite these actions, the reforms in Qurghonteppa were not successful in asserting control over the local power structures, even as the old elites' patronage networks were dismantled. Established patterns of political and economic power were not easy to displace.<sup>35</sup> Markowitz describes the situation in Qurghonteppa leading up to independence:

...the provincial elite was divided from 1988 onwards, splitting districts and even collective farms with some tied to reformist cadres (who primarily originated from the Karategin Valley [Gharmis] and GBAO [Pamiris]) and others tied to the old guard (who had close ties to Leninabad and Kuliab) being appointed to posts in the region following Makhkamov's resignation in August 1991.<sup>36</sup>

Makhkamov's bureaucratic changes had allowed Gharmis to secure important positions in the Qurghonteppa regional government. But the situation changed by late 1991 when President Nabiev's counter-reforms allowed Kulobis to gain "unprecedented access" to power positions in Qurghonteppa.<sup>37</sup> This was part of an effort on the part of Kulobi elites that Schoeberlein terms an attempt to "dominate and even annex" Qurghonteppa.<sup>38</sup> However, not as many old elites were able to retake their positions as those in Kulob had done.<sup>39</sup>

Stephane Dudoignon describes an intensified competition during 1990-91 at the elite level in Qurghonteppa between the Brezhnev-era elite on one side and Gharmi and Pamiri elites on the other. The Pamiri and Gharmi elites continued to push for political and economic reforms that would bolster their decreasing power and influence.<sup>40</sup> In competition with the Gharmi and Pamiri elites were many apparatchiks from Kulob who were – since autumn 1991 during the lead-up to elections – working as part of an alliance with Nabiev.<sup>41</sup> However, Matveeva notes that there was an earlier relationship. As early as the 1970s more personnel from Hisor and Kulob were brought into the "ruling establishment."<sup>42</sup>

By early 1992 in Qurghonteppa the competing Gharmi elites – some tied to "patrons in the Karategin valley" – on one side and elites tied to Kulob and Leninobod

<sup>35</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 114-5, 119-21.

<sup>36</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 121.

<sup>37</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 118, 121.

<sup>38</sup> Schoeberlein, 'Bones of Contention: Conflicts over Resources', 89.

<sup>39</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 118, 121.

<sup>40</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 122.

<sup>41</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 248.

<sup>42</sup> Anna Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood: Civil War and State Reconstruction in Tajikistan', *Crisis States Working Papers Series No. 2 Paper No. 46* (March 2009) 7. This is as opposed to Gharmis, who "had little standing" at the time.

on the other side “increasingly viewed their interests as under attack from the other” as each side made “repeated efforts [to] gain ground over the other” in the competition for control over state-controlled resources.<sup>43</sup> Markowitz argues that “Tension and barely concealed hostility within the provincial elite left the region primed for the outbreak of conflict.”<sup>44</sup> The situation worsened once President Nabiev agreed to form a ‘Government of National Reconciliation’ in May 1992. The emboldened opposition leaders then attempted to remove select leaders in the Qurghonteppa regional administration, many of whom had been appointed in late 1991 when Nabiev returned to the top leadership position. Markowitz argues that these administrators appointed by Nabiev “had come to represent a foreign occupying force among those with patronage ties to the Karategin Valley.”<sup>45</sup> Under pressure, Nabiev allowed his new appointee to the top administrative position in Qurghonteppa to remove several politicians and attempt to remove others with ties to Kulob. However, the new appointee, Nurali Kurbonov, did not have the power to remove the strongest local politicians and economic actors. The action further polarized the two sides in Qurghonteppa.<sup>46</sup>

## Part 2: Political Parties and Opposition Movements

### General Overview

The political competition immediately after independence in 1991 pitted the opposition, which included the Democratic Party, the Pamiri party La’li Badakhshon, the Tajik nationalist party Rastokhez, and the heavily Gharmi Tajik ‘Islamic Revival Party’ against the Khujandi-dominated faction in power.<sup>47</sup> Opposition leaders, allied with the leaders of “solidarity networks in disenfranchised regions, appealed to regional loyalties in officials of various agencies of state control.”<sup>48</sup> Olimova assessed the results of this strategy:

Gradually, the proportion of members belonging to a specific Tajik ethno-regional group grew in all these organizations, and under cover of an all-national purpose,

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<sup>43</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 118-9, 122-3.

<sup>44</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 122-3.

<sup>45</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 123.

<sup>46</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 123-4.

<sup>47</sup> Stuart Horsman, ‘Uzbekistan’s Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1999) 37-8; Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the Nation or Robber Barons’, 111-2.

<sup>48</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 94.



regional interests became distinct...The regional elites turned to the parties as instruments of political mobilization and political struggle.<sup>49</sup>

Specifically, the Gharimi/Qarotegini and Pamiri “regional elites, having achieved economic clout, sought to change the balance of forces in their own interest and used the newly emerging opposition movements to this end.”<sup>50</sup> In regards to Kulobis, Nabiev had chosen to enter into an alliance with the Kulobi faction in the fall of 1991. The reasoning for this strategy, according to Parviz Mullojonov, is that they seemed to be the weakest in the republic.<sup>51</sup> Other reasons could include the obvious – the Kulobi elites were not using opposition movements to rally against the incumbent government, or that they were the only partner with any mobilisation capabilities available in the vicinity of the capital. Another option could be that the Kulobis were not strangers to alliances with the dominant Leninobodi elite group in power. Starting in the early 1970s there was a level of power sharing involving the Kulobi elites in a patronage relationship with the dominant elites of the central government.<sup>52</sup> One example of this arrangement was the composition of the Interior Ministry during the 1980s. The ranks were dominated by Kulobis until the Pamiri Mamadayoz Navjuvonov was appointed Minister of the Interior. After this point a process began where Kulobis were pushed out in favour of Pamiri police officers.<sup>53</sup>

The patterns of what Kalyvas terms ‘alliance’ became increasingly clear at the time that mutual dilemmas arose along regional lines. Dudoignon writes that at this time the “two newly shaped sides” were settled: northern “Khujand Communists” and the southern Kulobis on one side versus the Pamiri party La’li Badakhshon, the DPT, and the Gharimi-dominated IRP on the other side. Dudoignon writes further that “Both [sides] were almost ready for an armed conflict and would prepare themselves for it

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<sup>49</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 252.

<sup>50</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 249.

<sup>51</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 248.

<sup>52</sup> Akbarzadeh, ‘Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?’, 1108; Rubin, ‘Central Asian Wars and Ethnic Conflicts’, 10; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 151; Foroughi, ‘Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities’, 46.

<sup>53</sup> Zviagelskaya, *The Tajik Conflict*, n.p., citing V.I. Bushkov and D.V. Mikul’skiy, ‘Tajikistan: chto proiskhodit v respublike?’, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Moscow, 1992-3, 25-26; Said Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II: The Regional Conflict in Confessional and International Context’, in *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*. Edited by Michael Waller, Bruno Coppieters and Alexei Malashenko. (London: Frank Cass, 1998) 175; Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I’, 151. On Pamiri domination in the ranks of the Ministry of the Interior, see: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37; Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 7.

during winter 1991-92. [By] February 1992, [...] everybody would have chosen his side once and for all.”<sup>54</sup>

There were numerous exceptions to the rule of region of origin determining political loyalty. Atkin and Kilavuz both note prominent exceptions at the elite level, both on the opposition and pro-government side. Some prominent Pamiris and Gharmis supported Nabiev<sup>55</sup> while certain prominent Kulobis and Khujandis/Leninododis supported the opposition parties.<sup>56</sup> As for pro-government politicians from regions whose elites trended towards the opposition, Atkin remarks that those who benefitted personally under “the old order” were likely to work towards preserving that system. This resulted in “veteran politicians” from Gharm and Badakhshon who had previously benefitted from the existing system of power distribution working on the pro-government side in an effort to preserve it, along with their positions of power.<sup>57</sup>

## **Rastokhez, the DPT, and the Nationalist Intelligentsia**

### **Rastokhez**

The political organization Rastokhez, led by the academic Tohir Abdujabbor, was founded on 14 September 1989. The government officially recognized the party as a legal entity on 21 June 1991.<sup>58</sup> Niyazi assesses Rastokhez at an early point in its history, noting that it had enough ambiguity in its charter that it did not specifically condemn communism, nor did it prohibit members from holding Communist Party

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<sup>54</sup> Stephane Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia: The Case of the Tajik Civil War’, *Islamic Area Studies Working Paper Series*, No. 7, Islamic Area Studies Project (Tokyo, 1998) 14.

<sup>55</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 615; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 183-4. For example, Nabiev has some prominent Pamiri supporters, including Nazrullo Dustov (Nabiev’s vice president from November 1991 to May 1992). Akbarsho Iskandarov (who became speaker of the Supreme Soviet in May 1992) and Shodi Shabdollov (who was secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1988-1999, and later its chairman). Nabiev even had some powerful Gharmi allies, including Sadulloh Khairulloev (vice premier 1991-1992) and Munavar Nazriev (a leader in the Communist Party).

<sup>56</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 615; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 183-4. For example: Kulobi opposition members include Mullah Abdurahim (an IRP leader, one of original founders), Said Ibrahim (IRP leadership), Odina Khoshim (folk singer), Rajab Ali Safarov (Soviet-era Transport Minister), Asaev (mathematician), Sharofaddin Imomov (deputy chair of Rastokhez). Opposition supporters from Khujand include: DPT members Abdunabi Sattarov, Jumaboy Niyozov, Latifi, and Haluknazarov. There were also many Rastokhez members from the north, most prominently the organisation’s leader, Tohir Abdujabbor.

<sup>57</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 615.

<sup>58</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139; Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 275. Abdujabbor was a “candidate” (*sic*, I assume Russian *kandidat*) of Economic Sciences at the Tajik Academy of Sciences and worked in a research center. See: *Javanan-i Tajikistan* (1 January 1990) in SWB SU/0690 (16 February 1990) B/4-5. Rastokhez soon incorporated several small groups: *Vahdat* (unity) in Istaravshon, Oshkoro (*glasnost*) in Kulob city and *Ehyoyi Khujand* (Renaissance of Khujand). See: Niyazi, *ibid*.

membership or even high level positions in the Communist Party. Niyazi stresses that Rastokhez was more like “coordinating centre” in that at an early point it did not openly oppose the Communist Party and preferred instead to lobby the government.<sup>59</sup> In terms of membership, Rastokhez was dominated by secular urban intellectuals,<sup>60</sup> a group which enthusiastically joined reform movements and political parties.<sup>61</sup> This was a problem politically as these urban intellectuals were isolated from the broader Tajik society and their networks did not extend outside of their small circles.<sup>62</sup> Rastokhez’s nationalist political agenda consisted of advocating for the “revival of the Tajik language and its recognition as the state language, the development of Tajik culture and nationalist historiography, and republic sovereignty.”<sup>63</sup> However, despite being a monoethnic nationalist political party, the party platform did insert moderate language calling for democracy, human rights, equality for all citizens of Tajikistan regardless of ethnicity or religion.<sup>64</sup> Other issues were more regional in nature, such as Rastokhez’s demands for a disproportionate redistribution of seats in the Supreme Soviet away from population-based distribution of seats towards one that would disproportionately favour the city of Dushanbe (where Rastokhez was strongest), a move that would hurt the Leninobod province.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 275.

<sup>60</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 252; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139. Kilavuz describes these intellectuals as “writers, artists, teachers, and other members of the urban intelligentsia,” some of whom were former Communist Party members “though not apparatchiks.”

<sup>61</sup> Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 197. Mahkamov elaborates: “The republic’s authorities failed to cope with economic difficulties, which lowered living standards of workers, peasants, intellectuals, and nearly all social classes. Students and teachers, physicians, scientists, scholars, and other professionals were left destitute. Even before 1985 these social groups had lived under trying conditions; the housing conditions were especially poor. Hundreds of scholars and scientists working in academic institutes waited for apartments for 15 to 20 years. No wonder that opposition parties and movements first appeared in research institutes of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. Students and intellectuals became active members of these movements.”

<sup>62</sup> Grigorii G. Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. Edited by Yaacov Ro’i (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 131, citing Olimov and Olimova, ‘Obrazovannyi klass tadjikistane v peripetiiakh XX veka’, *Vostok. Afro-aziiatskie obshchestva: istoriia i sovremennost’* 5 (Moscow, 1991) 100-1.

<sup>63</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139, citing interview with Tohir Abdujabbor in *Javanan-i Tajikistan* (1 January 1990) in SWB SU/0690 (16 February 1990) B/4-5. Note: This interview does not mention language, and the lack of historical knowledge is only briefly mentioned. However, he does stress sovereignty. I assume Kilavuz is working directly from the Rastokhez party manifesto, rather than wholly from the article above. In regards to language, Rastokhez argued for the adoption of the Arabic alphabet. The government, while ignoring this proposal, did adopt some of the nationalists demands, such as making Tajik the official state language. See: Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 142.

<sup>64</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139; Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 275. The point on the monoethnicity of Rastokhez was made by Niyazi based on its public meetings and its publications.

<sup>65</sup> Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 199. Rastokhez “pointed out bluntly that “higher circles of the state apparatus were controlled by natives of Leninabad,” and demanded that this injustice be removed. In order to implement this demand, the Central Council of Rostokhez proposed on June 2, 1990, that the Leninabad province should be entitled to elect only 30

The preoccupation with Uzbekistan amongst the membership of “Dushanbe’s reform movements”<sup>66</sup> is noted by many. Grievances over the Tajik-Uzbek border delimitation, the historically ethnic Tajik cities of Samarqand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan, and the Tajik minority in Uzbekistan were prominent themes in these movements,<sup>67</sup> with rhetoric among certain members occasionally being quite fanciful. This included identifying Uzbekistan as a threat to Tajikistan and arguing for the formation of a “Greater Iran” that would include Samarqand and Bukhara – a view that obviously aggravated the government of Uzbekistan.<sup>68</sup> As for the attitude of Rastokhez members towards ethnic Uzbeks, Schoeberlein disagrees with Naby’s assessment of Rastokhez as being hostile to Uzbeks, noting that these views were rejected by most of the leadership and members of Rastokhez.<sup>69</sup>

The decline of Rastokhez is most fully analysed by Lawrence Markowitz. He argues that Rastokhez continued to use the theme of a Tajik nationalism and cultural revival as its main mobilising strategy at a time when the people and government of Tajikistan had more tangible concerns – particularly the increasingly regionalised nature of power. In response to its declining support, Rastokhez allied with the IRP and DPT – both of which were able to ‘usurp’ the Rastokhez program – leaving it redundant as early as late 1990.<sup>70</sup> Niyazi adds further to the discussion of Rastokhez’s decline. He argues that their credibility was harmed when the group became involved in the political manoeuvring surrounding the February 1990 riots and the attempt to force the leadership of the Tajik SSR to resign. Niyazi’s harsh assessment is that

The February events showed that *Rastokhez* failed when put to the democratic test. Many of its leaders were drawn into ‘palace intrigues’. They became members of the *Vahdat* committee and joined forces with influential functionaries. Then they sought power on the wave of the riots and were ready to accept any top positions in the party and government that happened to become vacant. They did not threaten the pyramid

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deputies to the new parliament. Ironically, one-fourth of the republic’s population lived in Leninabad, while Rostokhez’s supporters were to elect 50 deputies. In Dushanbe, where Rostokhez was expected to win the elections, 100 deputies were to be elected.” In Rostokhez’s eyes this reshuffling of electoral seats would have rectified the “wrongs” of the past.” Citing *Rostokhez*, N:2. July 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Dudoignon’s terminology here allows the inclusion of the DPT with Rastokhez.

<sup>67</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 69.

<sup>68</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 60, 69; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 142.

<sup>69</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 6, referring to E. Naby, ‘Tajik Political Legitimacy and Political Parties’, *Central Asia Monitor*, Vol. 1, No. 5 (1992). [Note: Schoeberlein provided the incorrect volume/number. Correct version used here.]

<sup>70</sup> Lawrence Markowitz, ‘How master frames mislead: the division and eclipse of nationalist movements in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan’, *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4 (May 2009) esp. 717-8, 721, 728-30. Dudoignon gives an earlier date, arguing that Rastokhez had been replaced by the DPT and the IRP as early as summer 1990. See: Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 10.

power structure. Only its summit and the blocks immediately supporting it did not suit them.<sup>71</sup>

Niyazi stresses that the Tajik media's biased coverage of the February 1990 events further contributed to damaging Rastokhez's reputation. These attacks resulted in Rastokhez changing its tactic to "tough defence" and "open confrontation with the government," whereas previously Rastokhez had been more focused on lobbying the government and seeking cooperation.<sup>72</sup>

### **The DPT**

The Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) was founded on 10 August 1990 as a faction led by the philosopher Shodmon Yusuf, who had left Rastokhez along with many others. The DPT claimed a membership of 7,000, of which about 85% were ethnic Tajiks. The leadership, including a few ethnic Russians, were similar to Yusuf, coming almost entirely from academia and the intelligentsia.<sup>73</sup> Similar to Rastokhez, the DPT advocated for the abolishment of one-party communist rule and for the promotion of democracy, sovereignty, religious freedom and civil rights while condemning the ideology of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>74</sup> Starting in September 1991 and continuing through the winter of 1991-2 the DPT was preoccupied with condemning the Communist Party elites' strategy of creating joint ventures that would be out of reach of any future election winner's attempts to take over Communist Party-controlled economic assets. In particular, DPT-aligned journalists attacked Kulobi apparatchiks in print and wrote about "illegal capital transfers from Dushanbe to Khujand."<sup>75</sup> In terms of election success, the DPT was only successful in securing votes from Dushanbe's "radical youth" and "intellectual circles" – and in a few limited cases in special circumstances outside of Dushanbe in the small centres of Ura-Teppa (Istaravshon), Kofarnihon and Fayzabad.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>71</sup> Niyazi, 'The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990', 275-6.

<sup>72</sup> Niyazi, 'The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990', 275-6.

<sup>73</sup> Dudoignon, 'Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', 10; Atkin, 'Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan', 285; Niyazi, 'The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990', 276-7. Up until February 1990 Yusuf worked as a senior research fellow in the Department of Philosophy of the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences. See: Mahkamov, 'Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985', 208, n. 3. See also: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 140-1. Kilavuz points to the Academy of Sciences as a noted source of DPT leadership.

<sup>74</sup> Atkin, 'Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan', 285; Niyazi, 'The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990', 276-7.

<sup>75</sup> Dudoignon, 'Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', 18. The DPT claimed that a "considerable number" of journalists and media professionals were members. See: Mahkamov, 'Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985', 198.

<sup>76</sup> Dudoignon, 'Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', 10-1. Dudoignon describes the special circumstances: "Ura-Teppa in the north (a traditional rival of Khujand),

## The failure of the intelligentsia

The people who dominated the base of support for Rastokhez and the DPT were at times a dysfunctional group. Aziz Niyazi, himself a Tajik academic and son of a prominent intellectual,<sup>77</sup> clearly has a high level of disdain for some of his peers:

It was mainly among social scientists that the Soil Movement developed and continues to develop. It has a strong tendency to focus on ethnic, nostalgic and pseudo-rationalist ideas and has weak links with reality. It has a lot in common with the Russian ‘patriotic bloc’, and in the same way does considerable harm to the movement for national and cultural renaissance. It prefers to use feelings of hurt national pride and ignorance. By encouraging Russophobia and Turkophobia, the ideologists of the Tajik Soil Movement transfer the evil of the system to the peoples. They seem to believe that national consciousness can be cemented by hatred towards other nations.<sup>78</sup>

As for ‘Turkophobia,’ Uzbek-themed insults were used amongst rival intellectuals with some of the newer generation (native-born and usually from the mountains or the migrant communities in the Vakhsh Valley) accusing the older generation (intellectuals from Khujand and Samarqand) of secretly being foreign Uzbeks who arrived to Dushanbe in the late 1930s after the *Cheka* secret police allegedly killed off the “true” Tajik intelligentsia.<sup>79</sup> These fights were even found in television production studios in the 1970s.<sup>80</sup> Naby remarked on the generational difference, noting that older Tajik intellectuals were equally at ease in Uzbek and Tajik, plus Russian, while younger intellectuals were mostly limited to Tajik and Russian.<sup>81</sup> The divide mentioned above is further described by Dudoignon, a specialist on the history of intellectuals in Tajikistan, who notes that the older Tajik intelligentsia changed their strategy and stopped advocating for reforms when it became clear that the reforms could threaten their careers. This led to a rift with the younger generation, which had no such privileged

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Kafirnihon (an industrial satellite of Dushanbe) or Fayzabad (situated between Dushanbe's plain and Gharm's valley, and fatherland of the popular poet Bazar Sobir, spokesman of the radical intelligentsia against the political apparatus).”

<sup>77</sup> Aziz Niyazi is currently employed as a researcher at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. His father is the Samarqandi Tajik author Shavkat Niyazi – whose family moved to Dushanbe in the early 1930s. For more on the Niyazi family, see: Iraj Bashiri, *Prominent Tajik Figures of the Twentieth Century* (Dushanbe, Tajikistan: Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan and International Borbad Foundation, 2002) 213-4.

<sup>78</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 278.

<sup>79</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 18. I use ‘allegedly’ here because there are no sources that write of the existence of any Tajik intelligentsia in Dushanbe in the 1930s that did not arrive in the city from elsewhere to southern Tajikistan.

<sup>80</sup> Moukhabbat Khodjibaeva, ‘Television and the Tajik Conflict’, *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 1 (1999) 11. Khodjibaeva writes that in nationalist discussion regarding Samarqand and Bukhara took place amongst the producers of Tajik TV in an environment in which southerners expressed resentment towards those from the north and their alleged pro-Turkic/Uzbek “intentions.” And it was in the 1970s that the first southern Tajik was appointed Chair of the State TV and Radio Committee.

<sup>81</sup> Eden Naby, ‘Tajiks Reemphasize Iranian Heritage as Ethnic Pressures Mount in Central Asia’, *Report on the USSR*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (16 February 1990) 21.

positions and much less to lose.<sup>82</sup> Additionally, Dudoignon writes of a rift between the “young radical students” and the older intellectuals of the DPT that occurred when the urban youth supporters of the DPT became dissatisfied with the “liberal intelligentsia’s” level of verbal attacks on the CP “conservatives.”<sup>83</sup> And as noted above by Dudoignon,<sup>84</sup> members of the newer generation of intellectuals were usually from the mountains or from the migrant communities of the Vakhsh Valley (i.e., Gharmis). Dudoignon, using the term “Kuhistianian”<sup>85</sup> in place of Gharmi or Qarotegini below, notes how aspiring Gharmi students were pushed into powerless social niches:

Kuhistianian intellectual elites were victims of the division of work created since the mid-1970’s inside Tajik higher education and professional distribution system. Increasing numbers of students from Kuhistan and *muhajir* communities of central and southern Tajikistan were oriented, during two decades, toward “literary” faculties and deprived of real possibilities of acquiring “interesting” technical abilities (in such fields as law or economics).<sup>86</sup>

As mentioned above, political party networks that relied on urban intellectuals lacked a network that extended into broader parts of society. And the intellectuals that were most prominent – the academics and scientists – did not hold any positions of influence in government, a fact admitted at the 1990 annual session of the Tajik Academy of Sciences.<sup>87</sup> The intelligentsia, deprived of influence in the politics of the republic, were quite vulnerable. Dudoignon offers a harsh assessment:

The fondness felt by many Tajik intellectuals of the apparatus for the institutions and political sphere handed down by the USSR can be explained in part by their awareness that radical political reform would fell the branch on which they were comfortably perched: the intellectual mediocrity prevalent in Dushanbe, as in all the Soviet provincial capitals, precluded any hope of the intelligentsia’s survival...<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 18.

<sup>83</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 11. Dudoignon points to one incident as particularly important in this process. On 8 January 1991 Gorbachev approved “a measure which made the kolkhoz and sovkhos presidents the true directors - and virtual beneficiaries - of any future agrarian reform. More and more unsatisfied with this economic policy, the young Tajik intellectuals began to radicalize their discourse about nationality problems inside the republic, accusing the power in place of betraying the interests of the local population at large.” *Ibid*, 9.

<sup>84</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 18.

<sup>85</sup> An awkward translation from French that should instead be “Kuhistani,” literally a person from “Kuhistan,” or “mountainous area.” The term is also used in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

<sup>86</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 21-2. Mullojonov makes a similar point about the rural Gharmi students who came to Dushanbe. He refers to the “the anti-establishment organizations of young urban intelligentsia—the Tajik “second intelligentsia,” which were being formed since the 1980s notably by the first waves of migrant Gharmi youth coming from Qurghontepa’s cotton farms to the suburbs of Dushanbe, where they enrolled mostly in the humanities sections of the Pedagogical Institute and the State University.” See: Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 249.

<sup>87</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 277. Niyazi notes that in 1990 the Supreme Soviet had “practically no lawyers, economists, ecologists, sociologists or political scientists” serving as deputies.

<sup>88</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 58.

The ‘liberal intelligentsia,’ who were often “official writers and technocrats closer to the Communist party” became worried about preserving their careers and turned increasingly uncomfortable with the alliance with the “Islamists.”<sup>89</sup> In Tajikistan, as elsewhere in the Soviet Union, the “technocrats initially allied with elements of the intelligentsia to support perestroika against an entrenched party apparat.”<sup>90</sup> However, the violence of the February 1990 riots and the increasingly radicalised nationalism of the DPT and the “Islamic politics” of the IRP “pushed the old intelligentsia and the technocrats back into an alliance with the apparat.”<sup>91</sup> The lack of any broad support that could be mobilised in any forceful manner was fatal in 1992 when the DPT “apparatus would be submitted to hard pressure from the power [*sic*] and many of its members would more or less rapidly return to the bosom of the Communist party.”<sup>92</sup> One DPT leader even conceded that the weakness of the party was in its lack of “armed supporters.”<sup>93</sup>

Table No. 1 – Support (%) in Tajikistan in November 1991 (bottom) and June 1992<sup>94</sup>

	IRP	DPT	Rastokhez	Communists	No party
Students	4.7				
Government officials	1.1			21.5	
Professionals <sup>95</sup>	10.9	10.9		21.7	
Agricultural experts <sup>96</sup>	5.3			48.7	
Farmers	5.9			57.7	
Industrial engineers and technicians	16.8	27.7		9.2	
Industrial workers	3.9			28.4	
Survey totals	6	10	3	40	39
November 1991 totals	6	21	6	36	

<sup>89</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 11.

<sup>90</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 152.

<sup>91</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 152.

<sup>92</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 10.

<sup>93</sup> Abdunabi Sattorzoda, ‘The Democrat Party’, in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catharine Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 29.

<sup>94</sup> Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 134-6, citing *Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviakh stanovleniia gosudarstvennosti (Opit sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy v Tadzhikistane, Kazakhstane, Rossii i na Ukraine)* (Moscow, Russian Academy of Management, 1992) 29-43. Note: No polling was conducted in GBAO. Polling was conducted in the Leninobod, Qurghonteppe and Kulob oblasts, Dushanbe and surrounding regions such as Hisor and Tursunzoda areas. The poll does not break down respondents into nationality/ethnicity. Industrial workers were heavily Russian speakers. Kosach remarks on the survey: “Despite all the errors, which are unavoidable in this type of work, these surveys obtained information on the social base of the political parties which can be considered generally accurate.” See: *ibid*, 133-4.

<sup>95</sup> Defined in the survey as “teachers, doctors, research institute workers, university lecturers.”

<sup>96</sup> Defined in the survey as “agronomists, livestock specialists, veterinarians, etc.”



## Independent Opposition Figures

### Khudonazarov

Davlat Khudonazarov, who was to become the single presidential candidate representative for the opposition parties in Tajikistan, had a non-political career trajectory up until 1989. Khudonazarov was born to a Pamiri family in the Gorno-Badakhshon Autonomous Province. Although his family included prominent Communist Party members, Khudonazarov chose a career as a cinematographer. He was eventually elected as Chair of the Tajik Cinematographers Union in 1986 and then the Soviet Union-wide Cinematographers Union in 1990. In 1989 he held his first explicitly political office when he was elected to the USSR Supreme Soviet as a deputy. And just one year later he was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Khudonazarov declined to join any opposition party in Tajikistan, but he did agree to serve as the unified opposition presidential candidate.<sup>97</sup> He received 30% of the vote (to Nabiev's 56%) in an election which the opposition claimed was fraudulent, arguing that he had actually received 40% of the vote. Khudonazarov then mostly receded from prominence in Tajik politics.<sup>98</sup> Despite Khudonazarov's apparent position of power and influence in the opposition, it was actually a religious leader who had united the opposition and persuaded the various parties to support a single candidate. This man, *Qozi Akbar Turajonzoda*, was the top official religious leader in Tajikistan.<sup>99</sup> Unlike Khudonazarov, Turajonzoda did not disappear from the political arena.

### Turajonzoda

“...our hopes can come true when there is a veritable democratic, rule-of-law and, however strange one may find it, secular state. As Muslim leader, I certainly dream of living in a state governed by the laws of Islam, but, if one is realistic, one should realize that our society is not yet ready for this.”

- Qozi Turajonzoda, September 1992<sup>100</sup>

<sup>97</sup> Kamoludin Abdullaev and Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Lanham: The Scarecrow Press, 2001) 204-5. His first name is also given as Davlatnazar, while his surname is also given as the de-russified Khudonazar. Regarding artistic accomplishments, see: Bashiri, *Prominent Tajik Figures of the Twentieth Century*, 150-1.

<sup>98</sup> Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 204-5; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 149-50, 172. Khudonazarov, an Ismaili Pamiri, endured pro-incumbent taunts during the election campaign labelling him a “Badakhshani kafir” (i.e., a non-Tajik and an infidel). See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 198.

<sup>99</sup> This view is most clearly outlined by Kilavuz. See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 171-2.

<sup>100</sup> Quote from an interview with Turajonzoda. See: ITAR-TASS 1252gmt (16 September 1992) in SWB SU/1490 (19 September 1992).

Akbar Turajonzoda was born Akbar Qaharov in 1954 near Kofarnihon (Vahdat) in the village of Turkobod, about 30 kilometres from Dushanbe. Turajonzoda traces his prominent Sufi family lineage seven generations back to Samarqand. His grandfather, Sufi Abdulkarim, was a Sufi leader exiled to Siberia in the 1930s while his father, Ishon Turajon, was a Sufi *ishon* (leader) who possibly had as many as 1000 *murids* (committed followers). At age 18, Turajonzoda was sent to study at the *Mir-i Arab* madrassa in Bukhara. Afterwards he went on to study in the Islamic Institute in Tashkent before going to Jordan to study Islamic law at Amman University as one of a few officially-approved students from the Soviet Union. After returning he worked for the Department of International Relations of the Muslim Spiritual Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM<sup>101</sup>). Soon he was appointed as the *Qozi Kalon* (highest rank of Islamic judge/administrator in the *Qoziyot*<sup>102</sup>) of Tajikistan in 1988 at the age of only 34. In 1990 he took on the additional position of a deputy in the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan.<sup>103</sup> At this time the leaders of the officially-endorsed Islamic bodies were supportive of the government as they were dependent on it for their careers. This was reinforced in September 1990 with a *Qoziyot* decree/treaty agreement with the *imam khotibs* (top imams) of local mosques forbidding participation in politics, with a specific prohibition against membership in any political party – likely a response to the recent appeal by the Union-wide Islamic Revival Party for the *ulema* to become involved in politics.<sup>104</sup>

For a short period of time Turajonzoda had been a student of Muhammadjon Hindustani<sup>105</sup> and had, in 1983 or 1984, met Sayid Abdullo Nuri – the eventual leader of the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRP). When Nuri was released from jail in 1988

<sup>101</sup> This Russian acronym is most commonly used. SADUM was the Soviet governing body for religious affairs, literally the ‘Spiritual Administration for the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan.’ For a more complete description, see Khalid, *Islam after Communism*, esp. 78-9, 110-4.

<sup>102</sup> The *Qoziyot* was the official Islamic administrative body in Tajikistan.

<sup>103</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, 196, n. 13; Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 11-2; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 169; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 143-6; Conciliation Resources ‘Profiles: Khoji Akbar Turajonzoda’ <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/profiles.php>; Sergei Gretskey, ‘Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda’, *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 1, 1994, 16; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 149. Notes: Whitlock maintains that Turajonzoda read Muslim Brotherhood literature while in Jordan. Also, Whitlock writes that he was in Jordan from 1982 to 1987 while Conciliation Resources instead gives the dates as the late 1970s to early 1980s. Kilavuz refers to Turajonzoda’s Sufi lineage as being Naqshbandi while Dudoignon and Roy instead mention the Qadiri Sufi order.

<sup>104</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 280-1. Niyazi notes that some official religious leaders’ support for the government increased as they were the target of accusations of wrongdoing by the “fundamentalists.” However, he also notes that some were supportive of the “fundamentalists.” In regards to the *ulema* being dependent on the state see also: Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 200.

<sup>105</sup> A full discussion of Hindustoni is included in the analysis on Islamic Revival Party influences.

Turajonzoda hired him as the editor for the official newspaper of the *Qoziyot – Minbar-i Islom* ('Tribune of Islam').<sup>106</sup> Despite whatever relationship Turajonzoda may have had with Nuri, he was disinclined to endorse the IRP as it "advocated a different path to Muslim revival" and was a threat to his power as *Qozi Kalon* as it was a political party that advertised itself as the 'vehicle of revival' rather than the *Qoziyot*.<sup>107</sup> Kilavuz qualifies this competition:

A dispute emerged between the traditionalists and the IRP over the latter's status as an Islamic party, which the traditionalists saw as contrary to Islam. They did not object to existing relations between state and religion, or approve of the direct involvement of religion in politics. Accordingly, they accused the IRP of disrespecting or betraying Sunni Hanafi tradition. The Qazi had good relations both with the IRP and the traditionalists, who were composed mostly of Naqshbandi and Qadiri Ishans. Although these groups were suspicious of each other, in September 1991 Turajonzoda was able to convince them to unite against the government. His intervention helped prevent a possible clash between the "official" imams of the mosques, and the "unofficial" mullahs and the political wing of Islam represented by the IRP. He was a figure who could be accepted by both sides, and who had relationships with all relevant groups.<sup>108</sup>

Initially, Turajonzoda maintained a distance from the IRP and the opposition parties and continued instead to work from within the government as a deputy and as the *Qozi Kalon*. The turning point, according to Kilavuz, was when his proposals in the Supreme Soviet – regarding religious holidays, observance of Friday as a non-working day, *halal* regulations in abattoirs and land tax breaks for mosques – all failed.<sup>109</sup> In late 1991, Turajonzoda and the IRP had a "rapprochement and then alliance" as the *Qozi kalon* announced his support for the opposition demands.<sup>110</sup> According to Kilavuz, Turajonzoda's political skill and charisma played a key role in persuading the

<sup>106</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 143; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 170.

<sup>107</sup> Conciliation Resources 'Profiles: Khoji Akbar Turajonzoda.' There is some disagreement on the communities in which Turajonzoda and the IRP's popularity overlapped. Dudoignon stresses that Turajonzoda's *Qoziyot* was in competition with the IRP for the loyalty of believers, with both entities having their main base of support in Gharm and amongst the Gharmi communities in the Vakhsh Valley. See: Dudoignon, 'Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', 11-2, citing V. I. Bushkov & D. V. Mikul'skii, *Anatomiia grazhdanskoï voïny v Tadjikistane*, 106-114; Dudoignon, 'Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993', 64. On the other side, Vitaly Naumkin writes that Turajonzoda "was especially popular in Zerafshan, Aini, and Matcha and also among a part of the population of Dushanbe; but contrary to the opinion of certain researchers, he did not command a support base in the Gharm group of regions-Karategin, Tavildara, Kofarnihon-and in the Leninabad region, nor did he fully control any sizable part of Dushanbe's population." See: Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 215.

<sup>108</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 170-1.

<sup>109</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 171. Similarly, Atkin writes: "The country's most influential religious figure, Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda, was not a member of any political party but supported political and economic reforms as well as recognition of Muslims' rights to practise their faith openly and without hindrance." See: Atkin, 'Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war', 611. In regards to the religious leadership in general, Mahkamov writes: "...soon the *ulamas* registered their displeasure with the fact that the government allowed them only the opportunity to engage in purely religious matters. They wanted to determine state policy, insisting on transforming Tajikistan into an independent Muslim state." See: Mahkamov, 'Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985', 200-1.

<sup>110</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 237, n. 25

opposition parties to present a united front for the elections and support Khudonazarov. Instead of joining a single party, Turajonzoda remained independent and worked to ‘mediate’ between the parties, particularly the nationalists and the Islamists.<sup>111</sup> Whitlock and Kilavuz both note that Turajonzoda had both formal and informal influence at this time, in addition to being witty, confident and a skilled orator – traits which enabled him to play the role of a powerful political broker.<sup>112</sup>

## Political Islam, the IRP and Qozi Turajonzoda

### Islam in the 1970s and 1980s

In the mid-1980s the Soviet government conducted a sociology survey on religious practices in the Muslim areas of the Soviet Union:

Its findings showed a ‘comparatively extensive practice of [Islamic] traditions, festivals and rites among all socio-demographic groups of the population, including the young, which indicates not only a relative stabilization of the level of religiosity, but also...a mass basis for Islam’s continued existence in the USSR. The results of the survey refuted the widely held opinion that Islam was becoming ‘increasingly ritualistic’ (*obriadovyi*) and demonstrated that the ‘preservation and reproduction’ (*vosproizvodstvo*) or religiosity were ‘ensured by the existence of a still fairly significant number of believers characterized by a uniformity of religious consciousness and religious conduct.’<sup>113</sup>

The survey revealed the importance of an Islamic-mandated morality in family life, as well as a high level of observance amongst those with high school and university education.<sup>114</sup> In regards to the ‘survival’ of Islam in the Soviet Union, others have remarked on the importance of the large ‘network’ of unsanctioned mullahs who, despite the existence of the officially endorsed clerics of SADUM, “established Qur’an

<sup>111</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 171-2.

<sup>112</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 143-6; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 172. Kilavuz’s assessment: “Almost every informant whom I asked about Turajonzoda spoke of his charisma. He had a reputation for being intelligent, very knowledgeable, and able to speak foreign languages. People who witnessed the events during demonstrations in Dushanbe say that he could move or stop the people with one word. He knew how to talk and influence people. According to informants, he had the image among the populace of an honest and good man and a respected religious figure. He was also a skilled politician, which also helped him in bringing the opposition together.”

<sup>113</sup> *Sostoianie religioznosti i ateisticheskogo vospitaniia v regionakh traditsionnogo rasprostraneniia islama* (Moscow: Akademiia obshchestvennykh nauk pri TsK KPSS, Institut nauchnogo atizma; Sovetskaia sotsiologicheskaiia assotsiatsiia, 1989), 5-8, as cited in Yaacov Ro’i, ‘The Secularization of Islam and the USSR’s Muslim Areas’, in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. Edited by Yaacov Ro’i (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 13-4.

<sup>114</sup> *Sostoianie religioznosti i ateisticheskogo vospitaniia*, 5-8, 26, 32, as cited in Ro’i, ‘The Secularization of Islam and the USSR’s Muslim Areas’, 13-4.

schools, preserved shrines, presided at burials, weddings and other rituals and, in the urban Muslim settings at least, monitored the observation of ‘traditions’...[i.e., in the mahallah]” during the Soviet era.<sup>115</sup>

At independence the number of registered mosques surged. However, many of the ‘new’ mosques were not newly built, but rather pre-existing unofficial mosques that were officially registered for the first time.<sup>116</sup> As for the political significance of religiosity in Tajikistan, Grigorii Kosach maintains that the “Soviet experience showed quite clearly that youthful dissidence more often than not gave way to career considerations and adaptation to ideological and political realities.”<sup>117</sup> Nevertheless, in the 1970s and 1980s “underground and semi-underground” Islamic groups were operating in southern Tajikistan.<sup>118</sup> Early Islamists from the 1970s onwards were strongest in Qurghonteppa Province among those resettled from Qarotegin/Gharm.<sup>119</sup> Mullojonov believes that the Soviet authorities were obviously aware of the young mullahs’ activities, but decided to leave them alone and let them weaken the “authority of the conventional clergy, which in the 1970s and early 1980s was considered by the Soviet power as the main evil.”<sup>120</sup> Concerning the lower level leadership (provincial, city, farm and factory officials) in the Vakhsh Valley, the leader of an underground network of Islamic teachers stressed that

Although they were Communist Party members, in secret they maintained their original faith since they were the children of Muslims. Their connection to Islam was strong. As a result of this, even though they still did not help us, they deliberately overlooked and ignored our connection to this work [i.e., unofficial Islamic schooling]. Through this behaviour they facilitated the dissemination of progressive ideas and the spirit of striving for freedom in the Vakhsh Valley.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, ‘Islam and Fundamentalism in Independent Central Asia’, in *Muslim Eurasia: Conflicting Legacies*. Edited by Yaacov Ro’i (London: Frank Cass, 1995), 24.

<sup>116</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 143. Malashenko makes this same point in regards to Central Asia in general in the early 1990s. See: Alexei V. Malashenko, ‘Islam and Politics in the Southern Zone of the Former USSR’, in *Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict*. Edited by Vitaly V. Naumkin (Westport/London: Greenwood Press, 1994) 111.

<sup>117</sup> Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 133.

<sup>118</sup> Saodat Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 247. By “semi-underground,” Olimova means that the authorities were aware of the activities but took no action.

<sup>119</sup> Shirin Akiner and Catharine Barnes, ‘The Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics’, in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catharine Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 20. The authors also remark that Islamists also had some success amongst “marginalized urban youth” and “traditional village-based community networks.”

<sup>120</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan Since the End of the Soviet Period’, 228.

<sup>121</sup> Sayid Abdullohi Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) in *Mujaddidi Asr: bakhshida ba 60-umin solgardi zodruzi ustod Sayid Abdullohi Nuri (r)*. Edited by Qiyomiddin Sattori (Dushanbe: Devashchik, 2007) 158. More on this leader below.

However, by the mid-1980s the authorities began to see the unofficial mullahs and underground Islam as a bigger threat and began to use the official clergy against the unofficial mullahs.<sup>122</sup>

### **Nuri and the early IRP**

The origin of the Islamic Renaissance/Rebirth/Renewal/Revival Party (henceforth IRP) of Tajikistan was a group led by Sayid Abdullo Nuri that formed an underground organisation or network in 1973. This group, which eventually took the name *Nahzati Javononi Islomii Tojikiston* (Revival of the Islamic Youth of Tajikistan), operated mainly in Qurghonteppa and the wider area of the Vakhsh Valley.<sup>123</sup> Adeb Khalid describes this group as not just an “organization,” but also as an “underground network” which, according to Khalid, “represented *hujra* students who rejected the political caution of their teachers and advocated a social, if not political status for a purified Islam.”<sup>124</sup>

Nuri was born Abdullo Saidov in 1947. His place of birth is Tavildara, in the now defunct Gharm province.<sup>125</sup> In 1953 the government sent his family to the lower Vakhsh Valley as part of its agriculture resettlement programs. Specifically, Nuri’s family lived in the ‘Turkmeniston’ *sovkhos* (state farm), located in the Vakhsh District of Qurghonteppa Province. His father, Nureddin Saidov, was a *sovkhos* director and a member of the Communist Party while his brother held a position of some importance in the local Party apparatus. Nuri’s education was at a technical school and he worked

<sup>122</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 228-9.

<sup>123</sup> Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 155-8; Stephane A. Dudoignon, ‘From Ambivalence to Ambiguity?: Some Paradigms of Policy Making in Tajikistan’, in *Tajikistan at a Crossroad: The Politics of Decentralization*. Situation Report #4, Edited by Luigi Di Martino (Geneva: Cimera Publications, 2004), 126, citing Qiyomiddin Sattori, ed., *HNIT, Zodai Ormoni mardum: Ba iftixori 30-solagii ta’sisi Hizbi Nahzati Islomii Tojikiston*. (Dushanbe: Imperial-Grupp, 2003); Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139-41; Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 248; Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri’, Online: <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/profiles.php>. The IRP name came later with the formation of a Tajikistan branch of the federal IRP in 1990. See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139-41; S. Olimova and M. Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party’, Conciliation Resources. Online: <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/islamic-renaissance-party.php>

<sup>124</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 147. *Hujra* here refers to secret Islamic lessons.

<sup>125</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 53; Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.’ Akiner gives his origin as Vakhyo [another name for the Tavildara valley] in the ‘Karategin-Darvaz’ region while Conciliation Resources refers to Tavildara being in Qarotegin. Qarotegin and Darvoz were both regions that were incorporated into the Gharm Oblast. Conciliation Resources states that Tavildara was known previously as Sangvor. Note that there is currently a small settlement also named Sangvor approximately 80km up the Khingob river from Tavildara.

as a driver and government land surveyor.<sup>126</sup> According to Roy, Nuri was given religious lessons at home by his father and by an unnamed “unofficial cleric” before studying under Muhammadjon Hindustani.<sup>127</sup> In an interview Nuri named this “unofficial cleric” as *domullo*<sup>128</sup> Siyomuddin, stressing that “89%” of his studies were completed under this teacher. Nuri stated that after studying under Siyomuddin he moved on to become a student of *Mavlavi*<sup>129</sup> Hindustoni, a well-known Islamic scholar, for two to three years.<sup>130</sup>

Nuri commented on the activities of his group, which he mostly mainly refers to as a *sozmon* (which can be translated as an ‘organisation’ or a ‘society’), but also as a *jumbish* or *harakat* (both translate to ‘movement’). In his recollection, preparations for the formation of this group began in 1971. Nuri stresses that this process was quickened by a February 1973 KGB raid in the Hippodrome *mahalla* of Dushanbe that resulted in the arrest of 30 students in Nuri’s network. This raid, which narrowly missed catching Hindustoni, gave a sense of urgency to Nuri and his associates. On 20 April 1973 Nuri met with four senior scholars,<sup>131</sup> including Hindustoni, and was selected to lead an underground Islamic movement which later gained many members from Nuri’s generation (as opposed to the four senior scholars who selected Nuri), including the IRP’s first official leader Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda and deputy leader Davlat Usmon.<sup>132</sup> For the first one or two years, Nuri’s group operated without a name until one was agreed upon: *Nahzati Javononi Islomii Tojikiston*<sup>133</sup> – referred to by members as *Nahzat* (revival) or *Jamiyat* (society). Nuri is clear on the goals of *Nahzat*:

With the creation of our own organisation, we did not have any goals of anti-state activities; we only wanted to disseminate the beliefs of Islam amongst the youth. In essence, our organisation or movement in the beginning was a movement for Islamic

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<sup>126</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 53. Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.’; Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 34; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 154; Olivier Roy, ‘The Impact of the Afghan War in Soviet Central Asia’, in *In a Collapsing Empire: Underdevelopment, Ethnic Conflicts and Nationalisms in the Soviet Union*. Edited by Marco Buttino (Milan: Fondazione Giangiacomo Feltrinelli, 1993), 344; A.V. Kudryavtsev and A. Sh. Niyazi, ‘Politicheskiy islam, nachalo 90-kh’, in *Sovremennyy Islam: Kul’tura I Politika* (Moscow: Institut Vostokovedeniya RAN, 1994) 124.

<sup>127</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 154; Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.’

<sup>128</sup> *Domullo* is a title used for religious teachers.

<sup>129</sup> *Mavlavi* is a title given to well-established Islamic scholars.

<sup>130</sup> Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 153. More on Hindustoni in text below.

<sup>131</sup> Muhammadjon Hindustoni, Ishoni Nematullo, Kholidi Abdusalom, and Hoji Qalandar.

<sup>132</sup> Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 154-5. These later members include: *ustod* (professor) Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda, *Mavlalvi* Muhammadqosimi Rahim, Davlat Usmon, *ishon* Qiyomiddini Ghozi, Zubaydullohi Rozik, *mullo* Muhammadsharifi shahid, *mullo* Abdughaffori shahid, *mullo* Haqnazari Sohbnazar, *mullo* Ayomiddini Sattorzoda, *mullo* Muhammadrasuli Salom, *mullo* Abdullohi Khitobi shahid, *mullo* Saididdini Rustam, *mullo* Muhammadii Navid, *ishon* Mirzoyusuf, *ishon* Shamsiddinkhon, and *mullo* Ubaydulloh. [Note: ‘shahid’ (lit. ‘martyr’) indicates that they were killed].

<sup>133</sup> Literally, ‘Revival of the Islamic Youth of Tajikistan.’

social reforms, not a political movement. The main goal was to invite [those Muslims who had strayed] back to Islam, as well as the education of Muslim children.<sup>134</sup>

Nuri's *Nahzat* had several departments: (1) proselytising (*davat*), (2) security (from KGB efforts to ascertain their activities<sup>135</sup>), (3) finances, and (4) education. Nuri argues that this structure borrows nothing that is foreign, which he used to bolster his argument for *Nahzat's* indigenous nature – an organisation that he stressed needed nothing and received no influences from outside local society.<sup>136</sup> During the mid-1980s Nuri was operating an underground Islamic school in Qurghonteppa.<sup>137</sup> His work did not go unnoticed. Conciliation Resources maintains that the Soviet authorities warned Nuri to desist with his religious activities in 1983.<sup>138</sup> Khalid writes that Nuri, while not providing exact details of his plans for the form of the planned future state structure, was “arguing in public, usually at well-attended feasts marking life-cycle events, for the establishment of an Islamic state in Tajikistan.”<sup>139</sup>

Whitlock writes of the effect of the Soviet-Afghan War on Nuri and his network:

...Nuri and his circle had been critical of the war in Afghanistan from the start. “It was an act of aggression against a fellow Muslim country. We said nothing in public, but of course we were dissidents,” said one of the study group who met at Hindustani's house. Hindustani had listened to all the news he could from Afghanistan, but made no comment except that to say that what was happening was absolutely dreadful. Some of his younger students were less reserved. Contemporaries remember that Nuri and others toured the villages, praying and giving homilies against the war in people's houses. Nuri won an audience among families who had lost their sons for reasons they did not understand in a country only a couple of hours' drive away.<sup>140</sup>

Roy writes that on 8 March 1987 Afghan mujahideen attacked Soviet territory at the Tajik river-border town of Panj. He then claims that in the same month (not clear if before or after the 8th) there was a demonstration “in favour” of the mujahideen “a few dozen km” from Panj (presumably in Qurghonteppa).<sup>141</sup> Roy further claims that Nuri was arrested and jailed for being one of the leaders of this demonstration.<sup>142</sup> Regarding this incident, the rocket attacks into Soviet territory in March 1987 are acknowledged by

<sup>134</sup> Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 155-6.

<sup>135</sup> Nuri notes that members – concerned with potential KGB activities – generally did not take notes in their meetings. When they did, they wrote in code. See *ibid.*, 157.

<sup>136</sup> Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 156-8.

<sup>137</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 230.

<sup>138</sup> Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.’

<sup>139</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 146. In an earlier work, Kudryavtsev and Niyazi provide a different view, stating that before the 1990s the underground Islamic activists in Tajikistan “Still retained a belief in the strength of the Soviet Union, within which the dream of an Islamic polity seemed absurd.” See: Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, ‘Politicheskiy islam, nachalo 90-kh’, 112.

<sup>140</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 140.

<sup>141</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 154.

<sup>142</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 154.



many other sources.<sup>143</sup> However, Nuri could not have been arrested for leading a pro-mujahideen demonstration as he was at this time imprisoned in Siberia. It was a year earlier, in 1986, that Nuri was finally arrested for producing and distributing religious materials.<sup>144</sup> On 24 June 1986 the KGB raided the homes of approximately 40 men in Qurghonteppa in an unsuccessful search for subversive religious literature. Nuri, also working as a surveyor, was on his way to Yovon that morning on business for the building unit he worked for. He was arrested on the road and taken into custody. Nuri's friends and kin, apparently concerned that Nuri would disappear in custody, held a demonstration in Qurghonteppa city, which Whitlock refers to as "the first unsanctioned demonstration of any size held in Tajikistan."<sup>145</sup> Whitlock frames the incident as an accidental boost to Nuri's profile:

The Afghan war was still going on, and a young teacher who was there said he saw the demonstration dove-tailing with other worries. "Four coffins had just arrived from Afghanistan. [...] All dead were local boys. Maybe a hundred or a hundred and twenty people came, mainly relatives, and held a mourning meeting. Then a thousand more people came and wrote a petition, demanding that their sons be brought home from Afghanistan. Because Nuri was against the war, it looked like a demonstration for him, and he grew stronger then because people did not trust the authorities any more."<sup>146</sup>

Nuri was sentenced for his subversive activities<sup>147</sup> to 18 months at a prison camp in Siberia, the only prominent religious teacher among his contemporaries to be given this punishment. Whitlock maintains that this incident gave Nuri a higher level of popularity than other young clerics. One supporter remarked: "The Soviet Union was getting weaker, we could feel it. People wanted a mulla to follow, they looked around, and they

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<sup>143</sup> For example, from two different chronologies: Mark Urban, *War in Afghanistan*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: MacMillan Press, 1990), 215-6, citing *The Times*, 20 April 1987 and *Daily Telegraph*, 26 March 1987; Tom Rogers, *The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan: Analysis and Chronology*, (London: Greenwood Press, 1992), 77, 80. Urban gives 9 March as the date while Rogers gives 4 March. They both describe the attack being rockets fired across the river from Imam Saheb. Urban writes that one Soviet civilian was killed. Both sources also describe Soviet operations in retaliation in late March and a small scale mujahideen attack at Panj on 8 April. The April incident, in which two Soviet border guards were killed, was confirmed by the Soviet authorities.

<sup>144</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 230; Conciliation Resources, 'Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.'

<sup>145</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 142-3. Khalid gives the date as August instead of June. See: Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 146.

<sup>146</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 142.

<sup>147</sup> Nuri was put on trial for subversive activities. However, Whitlock provides a version whereby, for reasons unknown, every single witness against him recanted. As a result, the only charge that stuck was possession of marijuana, which Whitlock calls a "standard Soviet charge against subversives." Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 142-3. Kudryavtsev and Niyazi provide a different version in their very brief mention of Nuri's arrest. They state that Nuri's sentence was reduced after "an impressive protest rally of his supporters in front of Qurghonteppa executive committee." See: Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, 'Politicheskii islam, nachalo 90-kh', 124, n. 12. In regards to the content of the "subversive material," Kudryavtsev and Niyazi write that "The "Anti-government Propaganda", in fact, largely prevailed in their criticism of the arbitrariness of local authorities, the misconduct of the official clergy, and the senseless bloodshed in Afghanistan." See: *ibid.*, 112.

found Nuri.”<sup>148</sup> Nuri, after his release from jail in 1988, was given a job by *Qozi* Turajonzoda as editor of *Minbar-i Islom* – the official publication of the *Qoziyot*.<sup>149</sup> He even went on *hajj* with the official Tajikistan delegation in 1990.<sup>150</sup> Around the time of his release, Nuri “became aligned” with other politically active men who would go on to form the Tajik branch of the IRP.<sup>151</sup> Nuri soon became a high-ranking leader in the Tajik IRP, but still behind others such as the top leader Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda and his deputy Davlat Usmon.<sup>152</sup> Nuri would eventually eclipse these men and become the top leader once the IRP was exiled.

### **Formal Beginning of the IRP of Tajikistan**

The IRP of Tajikistan was officially established on 6 October 1990 as a branch of the Soviet Union-wide IRP which was formed three months earlier in Russia.<sup>153</sup> Dudoignon speculates that in 1990 the Tajik IRP was given some support by the Kremlin leadership. The reason for this is that the Kremlin leadership saw the IRP as a force that could take support away from nationalists and others in the opposition side while also pushing against the recalcitrant segment of the Communist Party in Tajikistan that was giving the Kremlin problems.<sup>154</sup> Whatever the case, in November 1990 the Tajik government formally banned the IRP. The ban was temporarily lifted in September 1991 during the brief administration of interim President Qadriddin Aslonov before being reinstated when Aslonov was ousted. Legal recognition finally came at the end of 1991.<sup>155</sup> On 26 October of 1991 the IRP had held its first congress in a former Communist Party centre with 657 delegates, 310 guests and 50 journalists attending. The congress, which was opened by Dushanbe mayor Maqsud Ikramov, elected

<sup>148</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 142-3. See also: Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 230.

<sup>149</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 143; Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.’ Whitlock doesn’t portray Turajonzoda and Nuri as well-acquainted with each other. She notes that Turajonzoda first met Nuri in 1983 or 1984 when Turajonzoda was briefly a student of Hindustani.

<sup>150</sup> Roy, ‘The Impact of the Afghan War in Soviet Central Asia’, 344.

<sup>151</sup> Conciliation Resources, ‘Profiles: Said Abdullo Nuri.’

<sup>152</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 155.

<sup>153</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139-41; Olimova and Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party’, Conciliation Resources; Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 147. The leader of the IRP of Tajikistan at the time of its founding was Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, with Nuri being one of its ‘important’ leaders. See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139-41. The conference at which the Tajik IRP was established was held in the south-western Dushanbe outskirts, in Chortut. See: Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 281.

<sup>154</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 15-6.

<sup>155</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 140, citing *Izvestia*, 22 November 1990. Kilavuz mentions the alleged IRP involvement in the February 1990 riots as a pre-text for banning the organisation. See *ibid*, 145. On the banning and reinstatement of the IRP in the second half of 1991 see *ibid*, 145, 148.

Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda as leader and Davlat Usmon as the first deputy leader.<sup>156</sup>

The Tajikistan branch of the IRP soon broke relations with the wider IRP. Not only was the existence of an official clergy an obstacle to the Soviet-wide IRP, the nationalist cleavages within the organisation hurt coordination while the ambitions of the overall leadership conflicted with those of the Tajik IRP. The IRP federal leadership, which had supported the continuation of the Soviet Union, endorsed the Communist candidate Rahmon Nabiev in October 1991 for the upcoming elections while condemning the Tajik IRP for allying with nationalists, with whom the Tajik IRP had earlier criticized. This ended the relations between the Tajik IRP and the federal organisation.<sup>157</sup> Dudoignon also mentions the coalition between the ‘Islamists’ and the secular parties, but focuses more on the influence of Turajonzoda:

This great turn of October 1991 explains for a great part the specificity of the Tajik case in the matter of relations between Islamists, radical intelligentsia and specialists of the ministry of security. As elsewhere in Central Asia, one could observe the emergence of a semi-official neo-fundamentalist party, which took, quite soon, a "national" coloration. Here [...] the Islamists made alliances with radical intellectuals against the communist apparatus. At the same time, the increasing influence of qaziyat and its leader Hajji Akbar Turajanzada among the opposition favored the phenomenon of "deradicalization" of the Islamist party itself.<sup>158</sup>

By mid to late 1992 the IRP leadership was claiming a membership of 30,000, making it the second “strongest” in terms of numbers behind only the Communist Party.<sup>159</sup>

## **IRP Influences**

### **Muhammadjon Hindustoni**

“I am glad that people honoured him at last. I am also glad that he did not see the wickedness that came after.”

- Hindustoni’s grandson, commenting on his 1989 funeral.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>156</sup> Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, ‘Politicheskii islam, nachalo 90-kh’, 117. Sayid Ibrahim Hadoev was elected as second deputy leader.

<sup>157</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 155-6; Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 65; Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 16. As an example of nationalist cleavages in the federal IRP, Roy notes that the “Moscow IRP was also split, between Tatars and Caucasians: the former wanted to impose Tatar as the preaching language in Moscow mosques, while the latter wanted to keep Russian. In fact, the IRP was imploding on all sides, along ethnic lines of cleavage.” See: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 155-6. In regards to the IRP’s alliance with other opposition parties, Roy writes that secularists and even atheists joined into an alliance with the Islamists. See: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 135.

<sup>158</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 16.

<sup>159</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups: The Central Asian Islamic opposition movements’, Henry Dunant Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue (2003) 12-3.

Muhammadjon Rustamov (born 1892), better known as ‘Hindustoni’ for his time spent in India (*Hinduston* in Tajik), studied Islam near his place of birth in Kokand (now in Uzbekistan) and then in Bukhara. During the Bolshevik Revolution he left to Afghanistan and studied in Mazar-i Sharif before returning to Bukhara with his Afghan teacher. He soon accompanied his teacher, Muhammad Ghawth (also ‘Ghaus’), to the eastern Afghan city of Jalalabad where Ghawth was appointed as the *qozi*. From Jalalabad, Hindustoni went to India where he studied at the Usmania madrassa in Ajmer for 8 years, completing his studies. He returned home and settled in Kokand in 1929. During the anti-religious Communist attacks of the 1930s Hindustoni served two jail terms, including 3 years in Siberia. In 1940 he took up employment in a Kokand factory before being drafted into the military in 1943. He was badly wounded on the eastern front in Belarus and spent the next three years in hospital. After a year at home he moved to Dushanbe where SADUM officials eventually appointed him as *imom-khotib* of a local mosque. After almost a year in Tajikistan he was denounced and served over 4 years in prison. In 1953, after Stalin’s death, Hindustoni was rehabilitated and appointed to a post in Tajikistan’s Academy of Sciences where he spent most of his time translating Arabic texts and teaching Urdu. From the early 1960s Hindustoni developed a full Islamic curriculum that he taught in secret.<sup>161</sup>

Hindustoni went on to become a teacher of both Nuri and Himmatzoda (the initial leader of the IRP). Hindustoni’s “clandestine” madrassa in Dushanbe was closed by the KGB in 1973. But students and teachers “came out of it safely, thanks to family connections and corruption.”<sup>162</sup> Khalid summarises Hindustoni’s beliefs:

In his teaching and his writing, he took consistently conservative positions rooted in the local Hanafi tradition. He had little use for modernist reform. [...] Two aspects of his conservatism are worth noting: he defended local customs and traditions against attacks from all directions, and he took a resolutely quietist stance on questions of politics. Soviet rule was a test for believers, in which success lay in reliance on God (*tavakkul*) and patience (*sabr*) rather than in political or military struggle.<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 147.

<sup>161</sup> Bakhtiyar Babadjanov and Muzaffar Kamilov, ‘Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan’, in *Islam in Politics in Russian and Central Asia (Early Eighteenth to Late Twentieth Centuries)*. Edited by Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (London: Kegan Paul, 2001) 197-200. The authors mistakenly place the Usmania madrassa in Kashmir. Rather, it is in Rajasthan. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 34-5, 146. For a longer discussion of Hindustoni’s background, see: Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia: Between Pen and Rifle* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005) 44-9.

<sup>162</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 154.

<sup>163</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 113-4.

Khalid goes on to describe how Hindustoni's students rebelled against him and his "conservatism and his quietism" in particular.<sup>164</sup> Before the disagreements expanded into a larger dispute about broader issues within the "milieu of underground Islamic learning (hujra),"<sup>165</sup> the hostilities started with Hindustoni's students adopting Hanbali rituals as opposed to the dominant Hanafi forms practiced in Central Asia. The students' view was that the Hanbali school was more closely associated with Arab countries and therefore purer and "uncontaminated by local traditions."<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, Hindustoni did not approve of the way some of his former students were mixing religion and politics. Whitlock hints that it was his long view of human ambitions and failings that made him conservative on this issue.<sup>167</sup> Hindustoni felt that some of his former students in the Ferghana Valley were advocating a confrontation with the Soviet state that would be disastrous for Muslims, especially considering the recent gains in freedoms they had made. The arguments at the time (mid-1970s to mid-1980s) became quite heated, as can be seen in excerpts – both defensive<sup>168</sup> and offensive<sup>169</sup> in nature – from Hindustoni's open reply to those who accused him of apostasy and of being beholden to an atheist state. Nor did Hindustoni approve of the theological views of his former students.<sup>170</sup>

Khalid writes:

The students called themselves the *mujaddidiya*, the renovators, while calling their opponents *mushriklar*, polytheists. Hindustoni, for his part, argued that local customs were based on a long tradition of Hanafi jurisprudence, which in itself was based on the Qur'an and the example of the Prophet, and that by forswearing accepted Hanafi dogma, his critics had placed themselves beyond the bounds of the Sunni community of Central Asia and had become "Wahhabis." Hindustoni's use of this term owed a lot to

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<sup>164</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 145.

<sup>165</sup> Khalid makes clear that these disputes were confined to a narrow social group: "The mere fact that such a dispute could take place is testimony to the vitality of underground Islam, although given the numbers involved, this rebellion was very much a storm in a teapot at the time." See: Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 144-5.

<sup>166</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 144-5. See also: Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 54.

<sup>167</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 146.

<sup>168</sup> Example: "It is a shame that you do not know [my] biography; if you knew, you would be more discriminating and just. In my life, I have been deprived of my freedom three times on the charge that I was inciting the people against the Soviet government. The first time I was sentenced to one year in prison, the second time to three years, and the third time - to 25 years. I suffered such deprivations for this anti-government activity! And yet you call on me to take up the jihad? You admonish me, as if I were lost in ignorance." See: Muhammadjan Hindustani, 'Answers to those who are introducing inadmissible innovations into religion', Appendix in Babadjanov and Kamilov, 'Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan', 210-8.

<sup>169</sup> Later in the same open letter: "What are you afraid of? You are like a dog, barking from behind a fence. Close your eyes and consider your evil inclinations. All the faults and mistakes you accuse me of actually belong to you! Alright, then! If you are a man, go into the street and call people to make holy war! But, in any case, such boldness is not characteristic of you, and you are not capable of such action." See: Hindustani, 'Answers to those who are introducing inadmissible innovations into religion', Appendix in Babadjanov and Kamilov, 'Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan', 210-8.

<sup>170</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 145; Babadjanov and Kamilov, 'Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan', 200-1.

his time in India, where such debates over ritual purity were common and where opponents of the purists had long dubbed them Wahhabis. Thus, the term Wahhabi entered religious debate in Central Asia, from where it was to spread throughout the lands of the former Soviet Union.<sup>171</sup>

## Wahhabism

Muhammad Abd al-Wahhab, who lived during the 18th century in Najd province of Arabia, preached a “strictly puritanical doctrine,” gaining momentum when he made an alliance with what was to become the Saudi royal lineage.<sup>172</sup> ‘Wahhabi’ doctrine, according to Adeb Khalid, had little influence in the Muslim world until “the late 20th century, during which its fortunes have been tied intimately to those of the Saudi state and its geopolitical requirements.”<sup>173</sup> Khalid stresses that the term ‘Wahhabism’ was used mostly as a “polemic foil in sectarian arguments among Muslims,” including in British India as both colonial authorities and locals used the label ‘Wahhabism’ to denounce reformists and “troublesome Muslim opponents.”<sup>174</sup> Khalid further notes that in the former Soviet Union ‘Wahhabism’ has “come into indiscriminate use to denote any and all expressions of nontraditional Islam.”<sup>175</sup> In Tajikistan, the use of the term ‘Wahhabi’ as a pejorative for the Islamist opposition was used even by the mullahs who supported the government. They juxtaposed the alleged Wahhabism of a Saudi origin with a local Sufi-influenced “national and traditional Islam.”<sup>176</sup> However, scholars use the term as well – in a somewhat more neutral manner. Dudoignon cites the “wahhabite origins” of the IRP<sup>177</sup> while Matveeva notes the claims of local analysts that foreign Wahhabi groups had been “penetrating” Tajikistan – especially amongst Gharmis in Qurghonteppa and in the Ferghana valley – as early as 16 years before the civil war.<sup>178</sup> Niyazi acknowledges that a “very tiny section” of the religious community in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan started to refer to themselves as

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<sup>171</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 145. See also: Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia*, 51. Khalid writes further: “...in the Gorbachev years, the Soviet world began using the term as a catch-all for all nontraditional Muslims. In this usage, Wahhabi evokes a dark and sinister force of foreign origin that seeks to subvert normal life.” He notes that its use is now quite common in the post-Soviet era to denounce people who “run afoul of the state.” See: Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 172.

<sup>172</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 46.

<sup>173</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 46.

<sup>174</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 46.

<sup>175</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 46-7.

<sup>176</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 139-40.

<sup>177</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 66-7.

<sup>178</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 9. The local analysts (Ahad Mahmoudov and Faredun Hodizoda) also mention the influence of foreign Islamists through Tajiks participating in the hajj and Islamic education abroad, as well as through audio recordings and literature.

Wahhabis, in particular after leaders of these groups returned from the *hajj* in the late 1980s and early 1990s. However, he completely rejects any possibility of Wahhabi influences amongst the Gharmi Tajiks (i.e., from where the IRP draws most of its support). He blames a 1990 article written in Tajikistan by the head of the Committee for Religious Affairs for popularising “Wahhabi” as a term of abuse locally.<sup>179</sup> Niyazi notes the use of the slang term ‘Vovchik’ (diminutive for the name Vladimir, but here used for ‘Wahhabi’) as an epithet against the “Islamic opposition.”<sup>180</sup> While Niyazi’s article cited above is mainly a tract in praise of Naqshbandi Sufism, he instead cites the survival of pre-Islamic nature worship and elements of Zoroastrianism (both abhorrent to ‘Wahhabis’) in Gharm to refute the idea that Wahhabi Islam has made inroads here, rather than pointing to any presence of Sufi Islam in the region.<sup>181</sup>

The debate over Wahhabism in Tajikistan during the late Soviet era suffers from lack of a clear definition. Neither Matveeva nor Dudoignon make an effort to define Wahhabism for the brief use in their articles cited above. A more well-defined discussion of Wahhabism is found in the work of Bakhtiyar Babadjanov and Muzaffar Kamilov, which focuses on Hindustani’s defence of traditional Hanafi doctrine and his arguments with certain reformist ulema in the Ferghana Valley (particularly in Kokand). They do note that Abd al-Wahhab’s work was available – but very rarely acquired – in Central Asia as early as 1979, whether acquired on hajj or directly from the SADUM libraries (which held Arabic works by Wahhabi writers). However, despite the similarities between the reforms that many of the *mujaddidiya* ulema were asking for and Wahhabi doctrine, they find the use of the label ‘Wahhabi’ to be inaccurate.<sup>182</sup> Unfortunately, Babadjanov and Kamilov’s work does not include an analysis of those who would go on to form the core of the IRP in Tajikistan.

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<sup>179</sup> Aziz Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, in *Civil Society in Central Asia*. Edited by M. Holt Ruffin and Daniel Clarke Waugh (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999) 195, n. 7. The article in question: Sunnatullo Ibragimzoda, *Todzhikistoni Soveti*, 11 December 1990.

<sup>180</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, 195, n. 7. For more recent uses of “Wahhabi” in the discourse of academia and in the media of Russia and the West – particularly of the last 15 years – see: Alexander Knysh, ‘A Clear and Present danger: “Wahhabism” as a rhetorical Foil’, *Die Welt des Islams*, Vol. 44, No. 1, 2004.

<sup>181</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, esp. 183, 195, n. 7. Elsewhere Niyazi writes: “It is characteristic that Tajik fundamentalism is also tolerant of various manifestations of so-called popular Islam such as the worship of local saints or the worship of fire inherited from Zoroastrianism.” See: Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 280.

<sup>182</sup> Babadjanov and Kamilov, ‘Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the “Great Schism” among the Muslims of Uzbekistan’, esp. 200-6.

## Other 'Foreign' Islamic Influences

Dudoignon notes Iranian influences in the IRP, but not religious ones. Obviously, the Shia Islamist ideology of the Iranian rulers would have limited applicability to a Sunni party like the IRP.<sup>183</sup> Foreign Sunni ideological influences would seem to be more likely sources of ideological influence. The Deobandi school of Islam that began in India gets an occasional mention as an influence on Islam in Tajikistan. Niyazi writes that some mullahs travelled to the Ferghana Valley and to Termez in Uzbekistan to visit teachers. In Termez some *sayyids* kept Deobandi teachings alive during the Soviet era.<sup>184</sup> However, the only possible link between Deobandism and the IRP is the very weak connection between IRP leaders Himmatzoda and Nuri on one hand, and their one-time teacher Hindustoni on the other hand. Hindustoni's students and Turajonzoda claim that Hindustoni studied at Deoband during his time in India – even though Hindustoni makes no mention of Deoband.<sup>185</sup> Another South Asia influence may be the writings of Abu Ala Maududi – a Pakistani Islamist writer and founder of Jamaat-e-Islami – which circulated in the network that was to become the IRP.<sup>186</sup>

## Muslim Brotherhood

Ideological influences from the Muslim Brotherhood seem somewhat more likely. Like Wahhabi works, some Muslim Brotherhood writings were circulating in secret as early as 1979 in the Ferghana valley.<sup>187</sup> Kudryavtsev and Niyazi note that

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<sup>183</sup> However, Dudoignon maintains that there were some areas in which the IRP was influenced by Iran. He cites “Khomeynist points of reference” such as Persian nationalism and anti-Western sentiments in the IRP rhetoric. Furthermore, According to Dudoignon, this occurred when “the IRP attempted to correct its internationalist 'image' and dissociate itself from the Soviet chaos, seeking an alliance with the Islamic Republic [of Iran] in order to limit the influence of the *qazi kalan* Turajanzada, the favoured client of the Saudis.” Dudoignon does not elaborate on the Saudi relationship. See: Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 66-7.

<sup>184</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, 185.

<sup>185</sup> According to Whitlock, Hindustani’s students and others claim that Hindustani studied in Deoband. However, Hindustani makes no mention of Deoband and instead mentions the Usmania madrassa in Ajmer, Rajasthan. Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 34-5, 146; Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda, ‘Religion: The Pillar of Society’, in *Central Asia: Conflict, Resolution and Change*. Edited by R. Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower (Chevy Chase, MD: Center for Post-Soviet Studies, 1995) 268. The Usmania madrassa is of the Chisti Sufi order. See their website: <http://ajmersharifdargah.com/AJMER-sharif.html> See also: Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 113.

<sup>186</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 248; Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, ‘Politicheskiy islam, nachalo 90-kh’, 112.

<sup>187</sup> Babadjanov and Kamilov, ‘Muhammadjan Hindustani (1892-1989) and the Beginning of the "Great Schism" among the Muslims of Uzbekistan’, 202, n. 13. An example given is Sayyid Qutb’s *Al-Aqida*. The authors note that Hindustoni authored a satirical work that mocked “one of the sources of inspiration of the Muslim Brotherhood.” *Ibid*, 205.



among the literature seized from Nuri's underground circle in 1985-1987 were works by Muslim Brotherhood leaders Hassan al-Banna, Sayyid Qutb and Muhammad Qutb.<sup>188</sup> Nuri was clearly familiar with at least one Muslim Brotherhood figure, which was demonstrated when he quoted from and referred to the group's founder Hassan al-Banna in reverential terms at a 2003 Islamic conference in Iran.<sup>189</sup> Both Roy and Olimova stress the influence of the writings of the Muslim Brotherhood in the ideology of the IRP. Roy explicitly classifies the ideology of the IRP and of Nuri and Himmatzoda in particular as that of the Muslim Brotherhood while Olimova instead just notes the influence of Muslim Brotherhood writings in the IRP's platform.<sup>190</sup>

### Academia

When the all-Union IRP was formed in July 1990 in Astrakhan, it was heavily influenced by Islamist intellectuals rather than by the *ulema*.<sup>191</sup> As for the Tajikistan branch of the IRP and the movement for political Islam in general, Mullojonov notes the support from and membership of Tajikistan's "university intellectuals."<sup>192</sup> Niyazi notes that academics often had better levels of knowledge of Arabic and Islamic sources and thought than did mullahs and *ishons*.<sup>193</sup> Niyazi himself, while not explicitly endorsing the IRP in his publications, actually provides a good example of an intellectual who favorably views the role of Islam in society. He writes:

The ideals of an Islamic state concerning justice, equality, and brotherhood in our opinion are completely compatible with the commonly accepted contemporary understanding of civil society. ... The idea of a state ruled by law took root in the East on the basis of the universally accepted sharia law, which in theory eliminated estate, racial, and class privileges for the observers of the law, thus making the rights of the rank-and-file Muslim and the ruler equal.<sup>194</sup>

<sup>188</sup> Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, 'Politicheskii islam, nachalo 90-kh', 112.

<sup>189</sup> Sayid Abdullohi Nuri, 'Biyoed, Muvaqqati Ikhtilofro Kanor Biguzorem', conference speech in Iran (22-23 December 2003) in *Mujaddidi Asr: bakhshida ba 60-umin solgardi zodruzi ustod Sayid Abdullohi Nuri (r)*. Edited by Qiyomiddin Sattori (Dushanbe: Devashtich, 2007) 114. The reverential terms Nuri uses are *hazrati ustod* (roughly: 'most venerable scholar') and '(r)' for 'Rahmatullah Alaih' (added to names of respected religious figures).

<sup>190</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 154; Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia', 141; Olimova, 'Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra', 248. Roy cites an interview with Nuri in the Tajik journal *Sukhan* (No. 18, 12 July 1991) wherein Nuri rejects the separation of politics and religion, endorses 'Islamic economy' versus communism and capitalism, 'discreetly criticizes' the official *ulema* and traditionalist mullahs and endorses the Algerian Islamic Salvation Front. The Muslim Brotherhood writers – whose works circulated amongst the network that would become the IRP – listed by Roy and Olimova are Sayyid and Muhammad Qutb and Sayyid Hawa.

<sup>191</sup> Dudoignon, 'Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993', 63-4.

<sup>192</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 249-50.

<sup>193</sup> Niyazi, 'Islam and Tajikistan's Human and Ecological Crisis', 185.

<sup>194</sup> Niyazi, 'Islam and Tajikistan's Human and Ecological Crisis', 193.

Niyazi goes on to note that the “Islamic opposition” did become radicalised right before the outbreak of conflict, but that this was as a response to the government’s counter-opposition tactics. He stresses that “Before the start of the bloodshed, supporters of “pure Islam” in Tajikistan were a wholly moderate movement...”<sup>195</sup>

## Sufism

Mavlon Mahkamov notes the prominent role that the Naqshbandi and Qadiri Sufi Muslim orders played during the pre-Soviet era in the religious life of the people living in the areas of what is now Tajikistan. However, it is his opinion that the Soviet government destroyed these orders during the 1920s and 1930s – evidenced by the “overwhelming majority” of Muslims in Tajikistan who are ignorant of these Sufi orders.<sup>196</sup> But Mahkamov does stress that while the orders – particularly the leading theologians and Sufi leaders who had an authoritative understanding of Sufism – may have been destroyed, Sufi *pirs* continued their work in a leaderless fashion:

...the institution of *pir* (spiritual and religious mentors), though somewhat transformed, has survived in Tajikistan, particularly in the rural areas. *Pirs* were not officially registered, but they directed all ceremonial rites in the rural area. *Pirs* are regarded with greater reverence than *ulama*, representing official Islam. Some *pirs* have disciples and adherents (*murids*), and this fact is not concealed. They function openly, though not very actively.<sup>197</sup>

The role of Naqshbandi Sufism in society as protectors of the powerless against rapacious rulers is appraised glowingly by Niyazi:

In spring 1992, as government authorities continued to ignore the interests of a desperate peasantry, authoritative *ishans* from the southeast of the country rose to their defense. The *naqshbandi* tradition of intervention on behalf of land-workers and craftsmen was reborn.”<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, 190. Elsewhere, Niyazi mounts an enthusiastic defence of Islam: “The negative attitude towards Islam of a considerable part of non local population, officials, republican leaders and, sad to say, the secular intelligentsia, is an example of a persistent stereotype of ideologised consciousness. An aggressive, militant and primitive boorishness hides beneath a layer of mass ignorance and cultural deficiency. The image of Islam, like that of other religions, has been distorted by newspaper clichés, straightforward postulates and ‘scientific conclusions’ drawn by pseudo-erudite ideological servants. As a result, many people associate Islam with ‘fanaticism’, ‘extremism’, ‘reactionary forces’, ‘obscurantism’ and so on.” See: Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 279.

<sup>196</sup> Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 203. A similar view on Sufi practices is conveyed by Oumar Arabov: “If we ask passers by in the streets of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, what is Sufism, not many of them will be able to answer, and yet they sometimes carry out Sufi rituals. In other words, Sufism exists but is not easily discernible by people.” See: Oumar Arabov, ‘A note on Sufism in Tajikistan: what does it look like?’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 23, No. 3 (2004) 345.

<sup>197</sup> Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 203.

<sup>198</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, 189-90.

However, the Sufi notables of Tajikistan also “rose to [the] defense” of other interests. The result was that Sufi *pirs*, *ishons* and their *murids* supported various factions in the conflict.<sup>199</sup> This view is reinforced by Roy, who argues that “Sufi affiliations do not necessarily correspond to political affiliations.”<sup>200</sup>

### **IRP Platform**

The Soviet Union-wide federal IRP was formed in July 1990 in Astrakhan, Russia. The ideology of this organisation was based on adherence to the statutes of the Koran and *Sunna*. The IRP, as spelled out in its charter, saw itself up against not just certain non-Muslim forces, but also against a Muslim community that was acting against “universal morality and the *Sharia*”, and which was “divided, ignorant, downtrodden, and infected with the nationalist and democratic ideas.”<sup>201</sup> The attack on ‘democratic ideas’ is likely a reference to the ‘Western-style’ democrats of the Soviet Union/CIS, as the IRP advocated for its goals to be achieved through democratic means. In its publications the IRP attacked the official Muslim clergy, the leadership of the Muslim republics of the CIS, the “national-democratic movements” in those republics, the use of Islam by those movements, the history of Russian and Soviet oppression of Muslims, and the “state of ignorance, superstition, disunity and individualism prevailing among ordinary Muslims.”<sup>202</sup> The IRP advocated for a federation of Muslim states that would include the Muslim-dominated areas of the CIS and some neighbouring Muslim regions. This federation would have a system of elected Muslim leaders in a system that would implement a new era of the ‘Righteous Caliphs.’<sup>203</sup> The IRP provided some specific examples of what the new political and social order would entail. These included *zakat* (Islamic tax) and *sadaqa* (Islamic charity), the introduction of *Sharia*-compliant banking, as well as *dhimmi* status<sup>204</sup> for Christians and Jews.<sup>205</sup> Dudoignon notes that the IRP was “classically neo-fundamentalist” in its tenets such as proselytising, resisting the official clergy and advocating the Islamic taxes of *zakat* and *sadaqa*. However, he also notes the organisation’s attempt to reassure the broader public

<sup>199</sup> Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 173-4; Arabov, ‘A note on Sufism in Tajikistan: what does it look like?’, 347.

<sup>200</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 149. This issue will be further analysed in the chapter on the civil war.

<sup>201</sup> Igor Ermakov and Dmitry Mikulsky, ‘Islamskaya Partiya Vozrozhdeniya’, in *Islam v Rossii i Sredney Azii* (Moscow: Lotos, 1993) 181-5.

<sup>202</sup> Ermakov and Mikulsky, ‘Islamskaya Partiya Vozrozhdeniya’, 185.

<sup>203</sup> I.e., the *Rashidun*: the first four caliphs after the death of the prophet Muhammad.

<sup>204</sup> This entails fewer rights for, and a special tax on, non-Muslims.

<sup>205</sup> Ermakov and Mikulsky, ‘Islamskaya Partiya Vozrozhdeniya’, 190-1.

of its moderate character through the use of “fairly well-known” rhetoric (e.g., Islam is “humanist,” “pacifist” and “progressive”).<sup>206</sup>

In Tajikistan, the Union-wide IRP held a regional conference in Chortut, in the Lenin District near Dushanbe in October 1990.<sup>207</sup> But for the Tajikistan branch of the IRP in 1990 there was little coherence in organisation, platform and public message.<sup>208</sup> What the early Tajik IRP lacked in organisation, it compensated for in enthusiasm. Niyazi, writing in late 1990,<sup>209</sup> assesses the IRP’s motivations in a very favourable manner:

Now [IRP] fundamentalist activities are primarily aimed at strengthening religion. These people are united in their desire to free religious life from ubiquitous state supervision and to restore society's morals in accordance with Islamic ethics contained in the *fikh*. They want to restore and build new mosques, promote religious education, and urge Moslems to fulfill properly the prescribed rites and ceremonies. Many are demanding permission for women to attend sermons in mosques. They are appealing to their coreligionists to live modestly, to be humble and to refrain from wasting money on sumptuous parties at the expense of family well-being. It is having an effect. In many regions people are spending less on weddings, funerals, rituals of circumcision and so on. The consumption of alcohol in rural areas has decreased and Moslems in the towns have also become more moderate in their drinking.

In other words the fundamentalists have succeeded where the state has failed. A specific example is important here. In the field of politics the Tajik IRP is against any party having a monopoly of power. It seeks to establish a legal state with normal parliamentary activity based on equal rights for all political forces in the republic. It is willing to cooperate with all reasonable political forces, including the communists. The leadership of the party undertakes to act in accordance with international and Union laws and condemns nationalism in all its forms.<sup>210</sup>

The official charter and platform of the IRP of Tajikistan was adopted at its October 1991 congress. The published IRP platform<sup>211</sup> included references to the importance of cultural,<sup>212</sup> social,<sup>213</sup> “moral,” and political factors in Tajikistan and advocates for national independence, free elections and a multiparty democracy, a

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<sup>206</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 63-4.

<sup>207</sup> Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, ‘Politicheskiy islam, nachalo 90-kh’, 115.

<sup>208</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 281-2.

<sup>209</sup> The work cited is published in 1993, but based on Niyazi’s footnotes it is clear that this is based on an article (likely in Russian) written in late 1990.

<sup>210</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 282.

<sup>211</sup> ‘Programma Islamskoy Partii Vozrozhdeniya Tadjikistana’, (26 October 1991) in V.I. Bushkov and D.V. Mikulski, “*Tadjikskaya Revolyustiya*” i *Grazhdanskaya Voyna (1989-1994 gg.)*, (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1995) 183-90.

<sup>212</sup> In particular, the IRP program defends local/ethnic traditions, stressing that “our national traditions did not differ from Islam nor do they contradict Islam.” See: *ibid.*, 187.

<sup>213</sup> In the dedicated section for the “social sphere,” the IRP advocates for the “Provision of basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, purchase of medicines, education, parenting, family formation,” regardless of religion or ethnicity. See: *ibid.*, 188-9.

“decent life” for all citizens regardless of religion<sup>214</sup> or ethnicity, and education of the people in Islamic principles. The platform reaches beyond religious and moral advocacy, and included full sections on the economy, science and culture, ideology, health, and environmental protection. The call for democratic independence is clearly stressed:

The IRP stands for a multiparty system and free competition for the party. The IRP maintains links with all the democratic forces of the Republic and with all the democratic and Islamic movements from foreign countries.

The IRP calls for the unity of all parties and movements in order to cooperate for the sake of independence and national freedom in the name of liquidating all vestiges of colonial dependence.<sup>215</sup>

However, Islam is mentioned first, last and most often – even beyond the affirmations of some of the basic tenets of Islam. The program opens with these two lines:

IRP develops its program based on pure Islamic religion. Islam for us is a law and a guide for all political issues.

The overriding purpose of IRP is the implementation of education of the people on the principles of Muslim religion.<sup>216</sup>

The most important point is inserted as a main point in the section on ‘ideology,’ wherein the IRP states that it “recognises no law that contradicts the *sharia*.”<sup>217</sup> However, the IRP does not publicly state in its program what exactly they believe ‘contradicts the *sharia*.’ As for how the IRP would restructure the state and society, Kudryavtsev and Niyazi stress that the leaders of the Tajik IRP “made no secret that their ultimate goal - adoption of an independent Islamic republic of Tajikistan.”<sup>218</sup> As late as 1991-1992 the IRP’s goal was the creation – but not immediately – of an Islamic state. This was to be achieved, according to the IRP, through an election victory and then a referendum. However, this desired end-state was modified when the IRP realized that this goal was not supported by many people in Tajikistan.<sup>219</sup> During the lead-up to the civil war, representatives of the IRP, as well as Turajonzoda, stated to audiences

<sup>214</sup> Specifically, the programs states that the IRP “Recognises all heavenly religions and is sympathetic to their followers.” See: *ibid*, 188. Also see the above footnote.

<sup>215</sup> ‘Programma Islamskoy Partii Vozrozhdeniya Tadjikistana’, 185.

<sup>216</sup> ‘Programma Islamskoy Partii Vozrozhdeniya Tadjikistana’, 184.

<sup>217</sup> ‘Programma Islamskoy Partii Vozrozhdeniya Tadjikistana’, 188.

<sup>218</sup> Kudryavtsev and Niyazi, ‘Politicheskii islam, nachalo 90-kh’, 116.

<sup>219</sup> Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan’, 237; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 139-41; Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134; Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 611; Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 147; Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 175.

both foreign and domestic (including addressing supporters) that an Islamic state, however desirable in the long-term, could not be a model for Tajikistan in the near term as the people were not ready, nor did they want it.<sup>220</sup> Khalid argues that at this time the focus of the IRP leadership was “on breaking the hold of the incumbent elites on power—rather than on imposing Islamic law or Islamic norms on society.”<sup>221</sup> The Henry Dunant Centre notes that in official party statements the IRP stressed that it would take 50 to 60 years to accomplish their goal of educating “the people in the Islamic spirit,” but that “many had the impression that the opposition was not going to wait that long.”<sup>222</sup> Similarly, Atkin writes that in response to the IRP’s attempt to portray itself as a moderate organisation willing to work in cooperation with other political forces, the incumbent political elites and their supporters framed the post-independence political struggle as one of “modern, secular democracy against radical Islamicizers, who secular coalition partners were mere window dressing.”<sup>223</sup> A decade later Davlat Usmon, who earlier had been the IRP deputy leader, was still ambiguous regarding the goals of the IRP at the time when he remarked that “The mistake of the Islamic opposition was that at the beginning it expressed its opinions too clearly. It frightened Russia and neighbouring Uzbekistan...”<sup>224</sup> Within Tajikistan the rejection of an Islamic state is shown clearly in two polls conducted in late 1991 and mid-1992.<sup>225</sup> The key findings from the respondents in Tajikistan:

- In 1991/1992 “Islamicization in Tajikistan” was supported by only 5/6% while 74/77% of respondents wanted to “preserve the secular state.”
- In 1992, 18.6% of respondents in the Qurghonteppa Province and 14.7% in Dushanbe “supported the idea of establishing an Islamic republic in Tajikistan. However, this idea was almost fully rejected in Leninabad and Kulab oblasts, as well as in Gissar [Hisor] and Tursunzade.”<sup>226</sup>

<sup>220</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan’s Relations with Iran and Afghanistan’, 100; Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 616; Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 279.

<sup>221</sup> Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 151-2.

<sup>222</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 9.

<sup>223</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 616. Atkin writes that “This argument owes more to political self-justification than an accurate description of the Tajikistan opposition.”

<sup>224</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 9.

<sup>225</sup> Regarding these polls Grigorii Kosach writes: “In October-November 1991 and in June 1992, the Moscow-based Russian Academy of Management conducted sociological surveys in Tajikistan. They covered the north of the republic (Leninabad oblast) Kurgan-Tiube and Kulab Oblasts in the south, the capital, Dushanbe, and several of its neighboring towns and raions, such as Tursunzade and Gissar. Despite all the errors, which are unavoidable in this type of work, these surveys obtained information on the social base of the political parties which can be considered generally accurate.” See: Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 133-4.

<sup>226</sup> Kosach continues: “Sixteen per cent of respondents in the technical professions, 10.9 per cent of professionals, and 9.3 per cent of the students favoured Islamicization. This was resolutely opposed by industrial workers and the government apparatus.” See: Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 135-6, citing *Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviakh stanovleniia*

The increase in support for an Islamic state in Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa over the national average shown in the above statistics also returns a level of support for the IRP voiced by respondents of 17.5% in Qurghonteppa Province and 18.4% in Dushanbe.<sup>227</sup>

### Base of Support

Since the late 1970s the network of “non-official ulema” that would go on to form the IRP was active mainly in the mountainous areas of Qarotegin/Gharm and the lower Vakhsh Valley,<sup>228</sup> with Qurghonteppa city as its original base.<sup>229</sup> In late 1990 Niyazi described the IRP as having a rural base of support and being “headed mostly by young unregistered spiritual teachers.”<sup>230</sup> However, Tajikistan was not an easy recruiting ground for an Islamist organisation, aside from the obvious restrictions of the Soviet era on independent political and religious activity. Dudoignon argues that the rural nature of Tajikistan made it difficult for Islamists to recruit, as their successes have usually been in urban areas. He goes on to note the history of “problematic relations” between the IRP leadership and the “traditional religious elites” in rural Tajikistan, especially those affiliated with the official *Qoziyot* who also had a following among Gharmi Tajiks.<sup>231</sup> This may have hindered the IRP in its recruitment. Its original support base had a significant number of teachers and students who were educated in the city, yet who had a rural background.<sup>232</sup> Other sources point instead to unofficial mullahs

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*gosudarstvennosti (Oput sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy v Tadzhikistane, Kazakhstane, Rossii i na Ukraine)* (Moscow, Russian Academy of management, 1992) 29-43.

<sup>227</sup> Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 136, citing *Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviakh stanovleniia gosudarstvennosti* (Moscow, Russian Academy of Management, 1992) 29-43.

<sup>228</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 11. Dudoignon also notes the “strong links with the non-official madrasas of the Ferghana valley, in Uzbekistan.”

<sup>229</sup> Sayid Abdullo Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 156.

<sup>230</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 281. This article was published in 1993 based on Niyazi’s earlier work from late 1990.

<sup>231</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 11-2, citing V.I. Bushkov & D. V. Mikul'skii, *Anatomija grazhdanskoi voiny v Tadzhikistane*, 106-14; Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 66-7. Dudoignon notes that the IRP’s main urban recruiting success in Dushanbe in the early part of the civil war was partly due to the number of rural refugees flooding into Dushanbe.

<sup>232</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 9, citing Giampaolo R. Capisani, *The Handbook of Central Asia: a Comprehensive Survey of the New Republics*, London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2000, 161-204, 164. Matveeva continues: “IRP political identity took root with the rural youth, who were in favour of low-key Islamisation of customs and constraints on the behaviour of women.”

recruiting young men as more important.<sup>233</sup> The IRP developed a base that was skewed towards one region. The IRP had a significant presence in Mastchoh in northern Tajikistan, Khovaling in the northern Kulob region, in the Gharm/Qarotegin region and among the Gharmi/Qarotegini migrants who were sent to the Vakhsh Valley.<sup>234</sup> However, the broad consensus is that the IRP's strongest support came from Gharmi Tajiks, both at home in the Gharm region and especially among the Gharmi migrants in the Vakhsh Valley,<sup>235</sup> leading the party to become a platform for the interests of Gharmis/Qaroteginis with the majority of that community supporting the IRP.<sup>236</sup>

The simple explanation that Gharmis were more religious than the Kulobis – leading this community to rally to the IRP – is rejected by Roy, but with a weak supporting argument.<sup>237</sup> Niyazi, on the religiosity of the Gharmis, writes that “communal patriarchal relations and ties were strong, and age-old customs were held in high esteem. The local population was marked by a particular piety.”<sup>238</sup> Nuri's views are far closer to Niyazi's outside assessment, demonstrated clearly by his answer to the question of why an Islamic movement appeared “solely” in the Vakhsh Valley. Nuri, as a clearly unabashedly patriotic Gharmi, mainly credits the Gharmi population's religiosity with the group's success in mobilising in the Vakhsh Valley:

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<sup>233</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 143.

<sup>234</sup> Dudoignon, ‘From Ambivalence to Ambiguity?’, 126. Akiner and Barnes also note that the IRP had some success among “marginalized urban youth.” See: Akiner and Barnes, ‘The Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics’, 20.

<sup>235</sup> Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party’, in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catharine Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 26; Akiner and Barnes, ‘The Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics’, 20; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 156; Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 139; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 143; Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 11-2, citing Bushkov & Mikul'skii, *Anatomia grazhdanskoj voiny v Tadzhikistane*, 106-14; Sabine Freizer, ‘Central Asian fragmented civil society’, 117. Mullojonov also mentions that the IRP was strongest amongst Gharmis in their home region and amongst those forcibly resettled from Gharm. But he also mentions support for the IRP in a few suburbs of Dushanbe. See: Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 233-4, 250. Regarding the north, Mullojonov writes: “Because of its anticommunist inspiration, the IRP could not seriously count on the northern regions of the republic, where the positions of the ruling Leninabodi clan were monopolistic.”

<sup>236</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 250; Olimova and Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party.’

<sup>237</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 156. Roy discusses the Gharmi dominance in the IRP: “This does not necessarily mean that the Gharmis were more religious than their Kulabi adversaries: we have seen the role played by the Kulabis in the basmachi war. The Kulabis also experienced a religious revivalism: during his report to the Twentieth Congress of the Tajik Communist Party in January 1986, the secretary Mahkamov denounced the shortcomings of atheist policy, and explicitly attacked the two provinces of Kulab and Kurgan-Teppe.”

<sup>238</sup> Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimension of Conflict’, 151. Similarly, Igor Rotar remarks that “Karategin is a very special region of Tajikistan. People here are much more religious than elsewhere in the whole of Central Asia.” See: Igor Rotar, ‘View Central Asia through the eyes of journalist Igor Rotar’, Ferghana News Information Agency, 26 April 2011. Accessed online May 2001: <http://enews.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=2708>



This is a good question. As a matter of fact, at the time when our organisation or movement was coming into being, one is amazed as to why it originated in, or why it was established in, that place. I think that the main reason is this, that 60% of the inhabitants of the Vakhsh Valley are composed of people from the Qarategin and Vakhyo Valleys [i.e., the former Gharm province], and from ancient times, compared with people of the other areas of *Movarounnahr* [Central Asia], they more so fell in love with Islam, were involved with Islam, and established the revealed religion of Islam – and amongst them were many scholars of *sharia* studies. On the other hand, these people had a boundless/incomparable desire, striving and love for the religion of Islam – their children more so took to Islamic studies and education. And in this way they continued. Another reason is that these people, as a result of ability and hard work, had become very well-off and wealthy and sent their children to the city of Dushanbe and other Islamic cultural centres. As a result, these students advanced and became skilled. From Dushanbe, where a majority of the young students of the Vakhsh Valley studied Islamic science and education, they returned to their places of birth. Amongst them were very many enlightened and freedom-loving people.<sup>239</sup>

Others point instead to political and economic reasons for the Gharmi dominance in the IRP. Dudoignon argues that an important event occurred around mid-1990 when the government introduced export restrictions and price controls on farm products – changes that hurt the farming communities of the Vakhsh Valley. After this, “young radical activists” of the IRP (as well as of the DPT) began to “openly advocate” for the resettled population of the Vakhsh and for the mountain populations– both of which are predominantly Gharmi – against the “technocrats of the planned economy.”<sup>240</sup> By late 1991

The *Nahzat* [IRP] changed quickly its social status during and after the November 1991 presidential elections, transforming itself from a mass organization of urban youth in [*sic*] a party of sufi notables with a strong basis in the Dushanbe-Kafirnihan region and in Qarategin [Gharm].<sup>241</sup>

However, Dudoignon does not say whether this was a simple IRP strategy to gain more support in this community or if it was a reflection of the IRP leadership’s region of origin. Niyazi certainly is of the opinion that many religious leaders had a Gharmi regional agenda, even if it was borne of the noblest intentions:

...the political struggle of Islamic nonconformists was not conducted to establish the rule of the clergy, but in the first instance for a wider representation of the mountain-dwellers in the structures of power and against the violence being done by the industry minded elite on traditional culture.<sup>242</sup>

<sup>239</sup> Sayid Abdullo Nuri, ‘Hizbe, ki resha dar ormoni mardum dorad’, interview by Qiyomiddin Sattori (2 February 2003) 157. The question was prompted by Nuri’s singling out of Qurghonteppa city and the Vakhsh Valley as his group’s centre. See: *ibid.*, 156.

<sup>240</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 12.

<sup>241</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 16-7. Dudoignon continues: “But in doing so, the *Nahzat* lost all interest as a political instrument for Moscow. From then on, Russia would deal mainly with the technocrats and the liberal intellectuals of the elder generation, who appeared to the Kremlin as the best possible advocates of continuity, in front of the now combined threats of nationalism and fundamentalism.”

<sup>242</sup> Niyazi, ‘Islam and Tajikistan’s Human and Ecological Crisis’, 190. Niyazi speaks glowingly of Gharm: “The mullahs and ishans here have become renowned for their knowledge of Islamic sciences,

More cynical political motivations on the part of Gharimi government elites from outside the IRP are cited by authors such as Olimova, who argues that the Gharimi/Qarotegini “regional elites, having achieved economic clout, sought to change the balance of forces in their own interest and used the newly emerging opposition movements to this end.”<sup>243</sup> Regional elites from the Pamirs and Gharm increasingly began to use the political parties and the Gorbachev reforms as a vehicle to make political gains as the government appointed mostly Pamiri and Gharimi reformists to the newly vacated positions. Soon, according to Olimova, “regional origin exerted a major influence on the choice of behavioural strategy of the new elites” while support or opposition to the “Soviet imperial centre” was “determined by regional affiliation.”<sup>244</sup> The strength of the IRP among Gharimis was matched by the dominance of Gharimis in the leadership of the IRP. For example, the three most powerful party leaders (Nuri, Himmatzoda and Usmon) were all Gharimi Tajiks.<sup>245</sup> With many Gharimi elites being in the IRP and the base of support being largely Gharimi, the party soon became a vehicle for the interests of Gharimis. The ideology of the IRP mixed with regional political issues, leading members from other regions to withdraw from the party.<sup>246</sup>

### **Part 3: Street Demonstrations – February 1990 to Spring 1992**

#### **February 1990 Demonstration and Riots**

Shahidon (‘Martyrs’) square – which was to become an important location for the 1992 opposition rallies – was renamed in memory of the demonstrators/rioters killed

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and the population is notable for its piety. More than 95% of Garm Tajiks are peasants or craftsmen. Communal and patriarchal ties are strong. Traditional morals – *adab* – are honored. It was no accident that in the 1980s the crime rate in this region was the lowest in the republic.” See: *ibid*, 189.

<sup>243</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 249. Olimova also notes this strategy among Pamiri elites.

<sup>244</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 249.

<sup>245</sup> These leaders are: Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda, Davlat Usmon, and Abdullo Nuri. See: Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 158-9, 258-9, 368-9.

<sup>246</sup> Olimova and Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party’, 26; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 156; Erica Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’, *Silk Road Paper*, October 2006, 106. Elsewhere, Olimova makes the case for seeing the use of the IRP as a tool: “The counter-elite was in need of a counter-ideology. Islam, the antagonist of communism throughout the seventy years of Soviet rule, eased naturally into this role.” See: Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 250.

there and elsewhere in the city during the events of February 1990.<sup>247</sup> On February 10-11 up to 300 young demonstrators gathered in front of the Communist Party Central Committee building in Dushanbe and demanded an explanation from the government – and from First Secretary Qahhor Mahkamov in particular – in regards to the rumours that Armenian refugees from Baku would be given priority housing in Dushanbe amidst a housing crisis. As the government evaded answering, the crowd grew in size over the next few days until as many as 3,000 people were in the streets when violence started. Very quickly the Soviet military arrived to restore order amidst looting, vandalism and attacks on ethnic Russians and other non-Tajiks.<sup>248</sup> Late in the day on February 13, demonstrators nominated a new group named the Provisional People's Committee, also known as *Vahdat* (Unity), to negotiate. Niyazi describes this group:

It comprised top state officials, leaders of the unofficial social-political organisation, *Rastokhez*, representatives of the intelligentsia, businessmen, one mullah and a worker. The Committee was headed by the Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and the Chairman of the Republic's Planning Board, [Buri] Karimov. [...] The *Vahdat* representing the demonstrators put forward a number of demands including the resignation of the government. The committee warned that if this demand were not met there would be even worse violence.<sup>249</sup>

The various demands of the protesters included the expulsion of Armenian refugees, the resignation of the government and the removal of the Communist Party, the closure of an aluminium smelter in western Tajikistan for environmental reasons, equitable distribution of profits from cotton production, and the release of 25 protesters taken into custody.<sup>250</sup> The attempt to secure the resignation of the government of the Tajik SSR, whether planned well before the demonstration and riots or hastily planned as a response to the opportunity offered by the chaotic situation, was nearly successful. According to Niyazi, on the February 14 the First Secretary, the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet and the Chairman of the Council of Ministers “agreed to sign a protocol with the *Vahdat* on the resignation of the government.”<sup>251</sup> However, according to Niyazi, later in the same day a meeting of “Dushanbe party and economic functionaries including members of the Central Committee and the Bureau” declared the protocol invalid on the grounds that it contradicted the decisions of the 16th Plenary Meeting of

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<sup>247</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 148; M. Kalishevsky, ‘From Lenin square to Shakhidon square: 20 years after February massacre in Dushanbe’, Ferghana news Information Agency (16 February 2010), accessed online May 2011: <http://enews.ferghananews.com/article.php?id=2608>

<sup>248</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 22-5; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 97-101; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 131-2; Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264. Atkin stresses that the February 1990 demonstrations were anti-government, not anti-Armenian. See: Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 610.

<sup>249</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264-6.

<sup>250</sup> Esther B. Fein, ‘Upheaval in the East’, *New York Times* (14 February 1990).

<sup>251</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264-6.

the Central Committee.<sup>252</sup> At this time Soviet Interior Ministry troops were moving into the city, and by February 15 the police and military had Dushanbe under control. On February 15 and 16 the 17th Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee was convened, where the members voted to reject the resignation of the First Secretary and gave their vote of confidence.<sup>253</sup>

Reports on the number of deaths vary – with the official number being five and unofficial accounts listing from 16 to 22 deaths.<sup>254</sup> Predictably, accounts differ with each side blaming the other for instigating the conflict. Zartman blames the government for the outbreak of violence, arguing that the “extremely small and short-lived protest gave way to large-scale riots without any political goals.”<sup>255</sup> Schoeberlein blames the government for the escalation by its tactic of violent suppression<sup>256</sup> while opposition member Gavhar Juraeva draws on Nazi analogies (“Reichstag fire” and, possibly, the “Armenian question”) to blame the government for instigating the demonstrations, which then backfired on them.<sup>257</sup> The opposition’s talking points refer to those in positions of power:

Unofficial explanations also accuse anti-perestroika forces but identify them as those in power. They are said to have provoked the turmoil in order to reinforce their own position, establish a dictatorship and suppress all opposition. There is also the suggestion that the events were the result of the destructive activities of some sinister all-Union centre initiating national and social riots in different areas of the USSR with the same intention. In general the opposition tends to highlight social, economic and political reasons for the riots including the intrigues and perfidy of the ruling clans.<sup>258</sup>

Niyazi, writing the most comprehensive account of the events, portrays both sides as reckless and violent.<sup>259</sup> For example, he singles out *Rastokhez* members and their incoherent tactics:

Thus between 11 and 18 February many members of *Rastokhez* did their best to transform the stormy riots into a peaceful political dialogue, to dampen emotions and prevent violence. But at the same time a number of *Rastokhez* leaders, pursuing their personal and collective ambitions regardless of the consequences, inflamed the crowd with populist and chauvinistic slogans...<sup>260</sup>

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<sup>252</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264-6.

<sup>253</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264-6.

<sup>254</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 22-5; Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 272; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 97-101; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 131-2; Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264.

<sup>255</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 99.

<sup>256</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 23.

<sup>257</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 261.

<sup>258</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 265-6. Niyazi points to official publications of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and *Rastokhez*.

<sup>259</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, esp. 264.

<sup>260</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 276-7.

In terms of the rioters and demonstrators, Schoeberlein and Kilavuz both note that many Dushanbe residents, both Russian and Central Asian, blamed out-of-town young men for the rioting and looting.<sup>261</sup> Residents claimed that unnamed persons transported young men to the city and gave them “money, drugs, and alcohol to encourage them to riot.”<sup>262</sup> Yaacov Ro’i cites one rumour in which “bearded strangers”, some allegedly (and implausibly) ethnic Azeris, gave alcohol to school boys and paid them in order to incite the riot. At the same time the Tajik Komsomol press asked, in regards to the demonstrators/rioters: “Who could have doped them with drugs and nationalist slogans?”<sup>263</sup> These views are completely in line with the varied narratives of blame for riots and demonstrations throughout Central Asia around this time. Ro’i finds many factors are included in the assignment of blame throughout the region, including: extremism, nationalism, criminal motivations, conniving local officials, foreign meddling, etc... However, in nearly every case there is cited by officials, the Soviet press or citizens – amongst the rumours, facts, accusations and poor reporting that circulated – the factor of the manipulative use of drugs and/or alcohol.<sup>264</sup>

The official government explanation casts blame widely. On 16 February the 17th Plenary Meeting of the Central Committee expressed its confidence in the First

<sup>261</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 23; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 131, n. 14. John Anderson stresses that “the potential political force of Islamic activists was made apparent during these events as in some rural areas local mullahs played a role in mobilizing young men and directing them to the capital.” See: Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 167, citing B. Brown, ‘Unrest in Tajikistan’, RFE/RL, *Report on the USSR* (23 February 1990) 28-31; Moscow Home Service 1930gmt (3 March 1990) in SWB SU/0705 (6 March 1990) B/6-7. However, the BBC summary says nothing about Mullahs while Bess Brown only mentions a possible “religious element” in the riots evidenced, in her opinion, by the beating of girls who were not wearing headscarves. Niyazi (‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 264, 270) also mentions the out-of-town element, but only as a statement of fact.

<sup>262</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 23.

<sup>263</sup> Yaacov Ro’i, ‘Central Asia Riots and Disturbances: Causes and Context’, *Central Asia Survey*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (1991), 34-5.

<sup>264</sup> Ro’i, ‘Central Asia Riots and Disturbances: Causes and Context.’ Examples: In December 1990 in Namangan, Uzbekistan local officials blame drunken MVD servicemen for starting a riot in which four MVD soldiers were killed by locals; In June 1990 the Kyrgyz Interior Minister said that right before the large-scale ethnic riots between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz broke out, local stores had their stocks of alcohol increased (BBC World Broadcasts, June 8, 1990); In March 1990 the local police chief in Parkent, Uzbekistan blamed “extremists” and “drug addicts” for riots that left 4 dead and 70 wounded (Moscow News, No. 15, 1990); in regards to the anti-Meskhet pogroms of May 1989 in Uzbekistan, *Pravda Vostoka* wrote that Uzbek rioters had been “unscrupulously intoxicated” (*Pravda Vostoka*, June 11), a sentiment echoed by Soviet leader Nikolai Ryzhkov, who blamed local officials for giving assistance and “vodka to the youngsters” and by MVD investigator who concluded that rioters were paid and “doped with drugs and alcohol” (Ro’i, *ibid*, 27, 29); and in Kazakhstan the riots of 1986 in response to the removal of the ethnic Kazakh leader Kunaev and his replacement with a Russian were blamed, in the official Soviet press, on “young Kazakh nationalists, whose extremist views were heightened by drugs and alcohol” (Human Rights Watch, ‘Conflict in the Soviet Union: The Untold Story of the Clashes in Kazakhstan’, 1). In regards to the riots in Osh, which lasted several days and resulted in 300 deaths, Russian anthropologist Valery Tishkov does stress the role of alcohol in the clashes. However, he writes nothing to indicate that the young men’s drinking was not of their own accord. See: Valery Tishkov ‘Don’t Kill Me, I’m a Kyrgyz!’: An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict’, *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 2 (1995), 138, 141, 148.

Secretary and the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. It also issued a statement regarding the violence that

blamed a conspiracy of *anti-perestroika* forces aimed at destabilising the situation, seizing leading positions and redistributing portfolios. The anti-perestroika forces were seen as comprising a group of apparatchiks (professional party men) craving power and acting in concert with criminal groups, members of the unofficial organisation *Rastokhez* and Islamic fundamentalists.<sup>265</sup>

The government may have reached this conclusion partly based on the negotiating group mentioned above that formed to represent the demonstrators.

While the blame for the violence is hard to place, the effects of the violence are clear. Atkin writes that

this outburst of violence in the capital of the republic heightened political anxieties. Various elements of Tajikistani society, including Tajik reformers, supporters of the old Soviet order, and members of the Russian minority, saw the February events as a warning that their worst fears, ranging from the stifling of reform and perpetuation of repression to Islamic revolution and the persecution of non-Muslims.<sup>266</sup>

Schoeberlein writes similarly in regards to ethnic Russians, noting that the violence “undermined the confidence of many Russians” and resulted in emigration from Tajikistan to Russia and elsewhere.<sup>267</sup> Niyazi writes of the demonstration effect:

The February events were the first blow against the stability of the ruling group. They showed its lack of competence and inability to negotiate with people or to act without recourse to the usual party methods. As the analysis of large mass movements in the non-Soviet Middle East shows, such blows are not necessarily recognized immediately. Their effects are 'stored'. The results of the riots are transferred to the political sphere and become really apparent only after the ruling regime considers the crisis to have ended. Here much depends on the personal qualities and political abilities of the ruling elite.<sup>268</sup>

The effects on elite politics are even clearer, as the violence “had the effect of strengthening the existing leadership, by enabling it to eliminate opposition within the party.”<sup>269</sup> Similarly, Niyazi notes the increased “authoritarian” style of administration after February 1990, including the merging of the First Secretary and Chairman of the Supreme Soviet positions. When Qahhor Mahkamov was elected President on 30 November 1990 he then held executive and legislative powers. His legislative authority was certainly helped by the outcome of the “closely supervised” Supreme Soviet elections of late February 1990 where the Communist Party won 94% of the seats.<sup>270</sup> Outside of the Communist Party, the government blamed opposition movements of the

<sup>265</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 265-6.

<sup>266</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 610.

<sup>267</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 24.

<sup>268</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 273.

<sup>269</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 9, see also 132.

<sup>270</sup> Niyazi, ‘The Year of Tumult: Tajikistan after February 1990’, 272-3.

nationalist or Islamist persuasion for the violence and restricted their freedom to operate even further. In particular, the IRP was not able to gain official recognition until the end of 1991.<sup>271</sup> Schoeberlein writes that between February 1990 and August 1991 the incumbents in the government strengthened their hold on government by introducing emergency measures that included “curfews and harassment of the opposition, as well as the usual censorship of the media and Communist party supervision of enterprises, universities and institutes.”<sup>272</sup>

### **Independence to November 1991 elections**

President Mahkamov’s mishandling in Tajikistan of the August 1991 attempted coup against Gorbachev – when, according to both Markowitz and Schoeberlein, he supported the coup – led to protests that ended in his resignation.<sup>273</sup> When asked by the opposition who he had sided with during the failed putsch against Gorbachev, Mahkamov claimed that he was not being informed about the unfolding events.<sup>274</sup> Kilavuz’s opinion is that Mahkamov’s actions around the time of the coup were neither in support nor rejection, but rather cautious non-involvement and then denial once it was clear that the coup had failed. Whatever the case, the opposition used this as an opportunity to accuse the government of supporting the coup. In response, the opposition held a large rally in Dushanbe’s Shahidon square and demanded Mahkamov’s resignation. On August 31 the Tajik Supreme Soviet passed a vote of no confidence, which culminated in the resignation of Mahkamov. Ten days later the government of Tajikistan declared independence.<sup>275</sup>

On 31 August 1991 the Supreme Soviet elected the Gharmi Tajik Qadriddin Aslonov – its current Chairman – to serve as interim president until the November 24 presidential elections.<sup>276</sup> However, instead of merely acting as a caretaker, Aslonov implemented major reforms – including banning the Communist Party and its activities while legalising the IRP – that “would destabilize the political situation, and polarize

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<sup>271</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 145; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 24-5.

<sup>272</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 25.

<sup>273</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 104; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 26-7.

<sup>274</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 150-1.

<sup>275</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 146-8; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 25.

<sup>276</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 148; Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 104-5. Markowitz uses different language, writing that Mahkamov appointed Aslonov interim leader as he was resigning.

different forces in the republic.”<sup>277</sup> In banning the Communist Party, Aslonov was attacking the tool with which the Leninobodis distributed patronage. Previously, the removal of the Interior Minister and the purge of Kulobis in law enforcement and security bodies were also significant as these actions removed the Kulobis’ guarantee of law enforcement protection. Now their farm bosses and regional politicians were “vulnerable to future reforms.”<sup>278</sup> Markowitz cites this vulnerability as the key in the shift from “disaffection” to defensive mobilisation.<sup>279</sup> The beginnings of a security dilemma are clear in this situation.

On 21 September, the IRP brought its supporters by bus from the Vakhsh Valley and from the mountain to the city where they camped.<sup>280</sup> In response, on 22 September Aslonov “decided to accommodate the crowds by placing a ban on the activities of the Communist Party and by seizing all its property.”<sup>281</sup> Soon after Aslonov’s decree the demonstrators cheered as the statue of Lenin was removed.<sup>282</sup> The response of the overwhelming Communist majority (94%) in the Supreme Soviet to Aslonov’s reforms – reforms which were reached without any consensus among Communist leaders – was to force Aslonov out of office on September 23 during an emergency session of the

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<sup>277</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 148. Kilavuz also mentions the removal of the statue of Lenin in Dushanbe – with the approval of mayor Maqsud Ikramov – as a significant event during the brief time Aslonov was in office.

<sup>278</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 104-5.

<sup>279</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 104-5. In regards to the Interior Ministry, Markowitz writes: “Prior to Makhkamov’s appointment of Leninabai K. Polatov (1986-89), a member of Kuliab’s provincial elite, Ismail Kurbonov, held the office (from 1980-86). Kurbonov was born and educated in Kuliab, worked in party and komsomol organs in Kuliab (1957-73), then as Farkhar Raikom First Secretary (1970-73) in Kuliab, then as Kumsangir Raikom First Secretary (1973-78), before suddenly being vaulted into national office with no experience outside the province as Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs (1978-80). Given his sudden rise from raikom first secretary to head of Tajikistan’s MVD, it is likely that he benefited from a shift in the power-sharing agreement between Leninabad and Kuliab.” See also: Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 17-8. Zviagelskaya (*The Tajik Conflict*, n.p.) quotes V.I. Bushkov and D.V. Mikulsky (‘Tajikistan: chto proiskhodit v respublike?’), Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Moscow, 1992-3, 25-26): “Until recently (the year 1991. - I.Z.) the rank-and file and sergeants of the internal security forces were recruited mostly from the Kulyabis. When M. Navjuvonov, a Pamiri, became Minister of the Interior, his compatriots began to drive the Kulyabis out of this sphere.” This would have been a gradual process, as Navjuvonov was appointed as minister in 1989. See: Said Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II: The Regional Conflict in Confessional and International Context’, in *Conflicting Loyalties and the State in Post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia*. Edited by Michael Waller, Bruno Coppieters and Alexei Malashenko. (London: Frank Cass, 1998) 175. Niyazi provides a similar time line: “From 1990 [Pamiris] made a rather impressive addition to the personnel of the Interior Ministry, in the police.” See: Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I’, 151.

<sup>280</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 151. Whitlock describes the city as being alien to the protesters and the protesters in traditional clothes being alien to the people of Dushanbe. In Spring 1992 the sight of rural men in tradition clothing was still a shock to some urbanites. Whitlock writes: “I looked from our balcony,’ remembers the son of an elite communist family living on the square, ‘and I saw more and more of them. I had never seen such people before! All those old men with turbans. I could not image what they wanted in our city.” See: *ibid*, 157.

<sup>281</sup> Flemming Splidsboel-Hansen, ‘The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War: Neo-Realism and the Case of Tajikistan’, *Civil Wars*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1999) 7.

<sup>282</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 152; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 148.



Supreme Soviet and to appoint Rahmon Nabiev, a previous First Secretary of the Tajik SSR, to the Chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet and to the position of interim president. The Supreme Soviet immediately moved to reverse the Aslonov reforms – re-banning the IRP while reinstating the Communist Party. In response, the opposition restarted their demonstrations in Dushanbe, this time for three weeks.<sup>283</sup>

After the resignation of Aslonov – starting on 23 September – a new round of opposition protests began in Dushanbe, with opposition supporters protesting the changes in leadership and demanding new elections.<sup>284</sup> The state of emergency had no effect in Dushanbe as thousands moved into the city to join the protests. This failure on the part of the government is no surprise considering not only the Tajik government's lack of effective security forces, but also considering that the Soviet military announced that it would not enforce the state of emergency. In response, deputies in the Supreme Soviet voted to end the state of emergency on 30 September 1991.<sup>285</sup> Nabiev later attempted, beginning with a decree on 24 December 1991, to create the 'Tajikistan National Guard' in order to fill the desperate need for Tajik President-controlled security forces.<sup>286</sup>

For the presidential election of 24 November 1991 the incumbent candidate Rahmon Nabiev was not unfamiliar with top-level leadership, as he had been First Secretary of the Tajik SSR from 1982 until 1985 when Gorbachev removed him due to his lack of enthusiasm for planned reforms.<sup>287</sup> Whitlock assesses the then 59 year old unfavourably, stating that he had heart issues, a drinking problem and a poor work

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<sup>283</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 106; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 125-6, 148-9, 163-4; Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 106; Splidsboel-Hansen, 'The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War', 7-8.

<sup>284</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 149.

<sup>285</sup> Splidsboel-Hansen, 'The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War', 8. The reason given for the Soviet military's non-involvement, according to Splidsboel-Hansen, is that "the all-Union institutions found themselves in a process of dissolution and therefore decided not to get involved in what was seen as an internal dispute." During the state of emergency the military authorities in charge of the 201<sup>st</sup> MRD garrison in Dushanbe stated publicly that the military would not intervene: "(?Alimjon Sabirov) [Olimjon Sobirov], commandant of the Dushanbe garrison, said that on the morning of September 23 instructions were received from Col. Gen. Fuzhenko, commander of the Turkestan Military District, to the effect that the army should not intervene in the internal affairs of Tajikistan. Armoured personnel carriers and tanks will not go out onto the streets, nor will soldiers, Sabirov said." See: Central Television 1800gmt (23 September 1991) in SWB SU/1186 (25 September 1991) B/7.

<sup>286</sup> On 24 December 1991 President Nabiev decreed the creation of the "Tajikistan National Guard," a unit that was to number 700 men and be subordinate directly to the president. Major General Bahrom Rahmonov (age 42), the "former chairman of the defence support organisation" is appointed commander, as well as being appointed Nabiev's "defence, national security and law enforcement adviser." The tasks of the National Guard: "ensure security of state installations and officials, maintain order in society, and take part in state ceremonies." See: TASS World Service 1333gmt (24 December 1991) in SWB SU/1266 (31 December 1991) B/15.

<sup>287</sup> Frank Bliss, *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs (Gorno-Badakhshan, Tajikistan)*, (New York: Routledge, 2006) 272.

ethic.<sup>288</sup> On the other side, the opposition united around the ethnic Pamiri cinematographer and USSR Supreme Soviet deputy Davlat Khudonazarov. Despite the united front and a boost in strength thanks to the endorsement and work of the well-known mayor of St. Petersburg, the Russian independent reform politician Anatoly Sobchak,<sup>289</sup> Khudonazarov received only 30% of the vote versus Nabiev's 58%. The opposition immediately alleged electoral fraud, claiming that Khudonazarov had actually received 40%. Kilavuz states the obvious in her assessment that the elections and the accusations surrounding them "further polarized forces in the republic."<sup>290</sup> Nabiev and the "old guard," perceiving themselves as "powerful and unchallengeable [...] began a crackdown against the entire opposition."<sup>291</sup> Nabiev's strategy was to initiate a broad attack against both his internal competition within the Communist Party and all the opposition parties at the same time. However, his purges pushed some government figures into the opposition while his attacks on opposition figures and parties served to help unite them against the political leadership of Tajikistan. The end result was a larger and more united opposition.<sup>292</sup>

### Spring 1992 Protests

At the beginning of 1992 the government strengthened its campaign against the opposition parties. The government began legal proceedings against members of the DPT, Rastokhez and the IRP. In addition, the government passed new laws restricting press freedoms and the right to assemble in public. Freedom of expression was also curtailed, with government prosecutors charging various opposition leaders with insulting government leaders.<sup>293</sup> At the end of March 1992, Safarali Kenjaev – Chairman of the Supreme Soviet – led televised investigations into the Interior Ministry, particularly its failure to act against anti-government demonstrators in September 1991. Kenjaev's efforts were focused on the head of the Ministry, Navjuvonov – an ethnic

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<sup>288</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 153.

<sup>289</sup> Zviagelskaya, *The Tajik Conflict*, n.p.

<sup>290</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 149-50.

<sup>291</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 125-6, also 9-10, 163.

<sup>292</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 125-6, 150, 163-5, 205-6. As an example of purging, Nabiev removed Aslonov as Chair of the Supreme Soviet and replaced his with his own "client" – Safarali Kenjaev. See: *ibid*, 150.

<sup>293</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 150. Kilavuz: "In particular, the law on the press adopted in spring 1992 made criticism of the government a crime. Mirbobo Mirrahim, one of the leaders of Rastokhez, was put on probation for allegedly insulting Kenjaev. Legal proceedings were brought against the leader of the DPT, Shadmon Yusuf, for insulting the honor and dignity of President Nabiev. The mayor of Dushanbe, Maqsud Ikromov, was arrested on March 6, 1992 on corruption charges, but according to many, the real reason was related to the removal of the Lenin statue."

Pamiri. The government attacks on Navjuvonov, including allegations of corruption, led several hundred Pamiri members of La'li Badakhshon<sup>294</sup> – who viewed the firing of Navjuvonov as an “intolerable insult to their nationality”<sup>295</sup> – to start demonstrating against the government.<sup>296</sup> Navjuvonov also framed his case in regional-ethnic terms and “accused the Government of persecution towards the Badakhshani [Pamiri] people.”<sup>297</sup> These demonstrators were soon joined by supporters of other opposition parties, including the DPT and the IRP.<sup>298</sup> This began the next phase of the opposition alliance, the first being for the November 1991 presidential elections.<sup>299</sup> The ability of the opposition to coordinate in a unified manner against the government – in addition to being a by-product of the government attacking all elements of the opposition at once<sup>300</sup> – was, in the opinion of Kilavuz, thanks to the mediating efforts of *Qozi* Turajonzoda “who established links between formerly unrelated opposition groups. In so doing, he

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<sup>294</sup> La'li Badakhshon was an “overwhelmingly Pamiri” political organization founded by the ethnic Pamiri Amirbek Atobekov that “advocated reforms which would benefit Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, which was inhabited mainly by Pamiris.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 140-1.

<sup>295</sup> Bess Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 24 (12 June 1992) 2. See also: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 150. Also, the firing of Navjuvonov could lead the ethnic Pamiris in the Ministry vulnerable to a purge. On Pamiri domination in the ranks of the Ministry, see: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37; Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 7. Regarding anti-Pamiri rhetoric, this was not the first instance. Kilavuz writes: “The Communists also used Islamic rhetoric against their opponents. One of the important parties in the opposition front was Lali Badakhshan, which was overwhelmingly composed of Pamiri people. Against this party, the pro-government forces used an Islamic discourse and portrayed Pamiris as “kafirs” (“infidels”) for being from a different sect of Islam than the majority of Tajikistan’s Muslim population. Pro-Communists used this argument against Khudonazarov during the presidential election campaign, labelling him a “Badakhshani kafir” because he was a Pamiri Ismaili.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 198. Mahkamov also notes the use of “kafir” in IRP rhetoric: “Unlike other parties and political organizations, the IRP had declared that any Muslim residing in Tajikistan could join the party. Those who refused to support this Islamic party were declared infidels (*Kafirs*).” See: Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 201.

<sup>296</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 265; Schoeberlein, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 139-40. Juraeva stresses that Pamiris “were also outraged by what they consider Kenjaev’s dismissive remarks concerning their ethnic group.”

<sup>297</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 240. See also: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 179.

<sup>298</sup> Schoeberlein, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37; Tajik Radio, 1200 and 1700gmt (31 March 1992) in SWB Third Series SU/1345 (2 April 1992) B/8. Schoeberlein notes another factor in the protests: the arrest of Maqsud Ikramov, the mayor of Dushanbe. Ikramov had ordered the removal of the statue of Lenin during the September 1991 protests, an act that “won him favor with the opposition and rancor from the Communists.” On March 6 the government arrested Ikramov, charging him with corruption. See: Schoeberlein, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 36-7.

<sup>299</sup> Kilavuz writes: “My informants confirmed that the meetings in Shahidon Square brought together the opposition against the government. As one opposition leader said: “There were some differences of opinion between the Islamists and the democratic opposition. On some issues we had cooperated before. Earlier Rastokhez, the DP, La'li Badakhshan, and the IRP were working separately, sometimes cooperating. But the main alliance began during the meetings in Shahidan. The IRP and the democratic opposition united in order to oppose the government.” Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 151.

<sup>300</sup> In regards to the government attacking the entire opposition, see: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 125-6, also 163.

turned the opposition into a strong force, united against the government.”<sup>301</sup> However, the IRP contributed the most to the demonstrations at Shahidon square,<sup>302</sup> as this organisation had a network extending into many rural areas, unlike their allies. The IRP leadership was able to mobilise support through mullahs at mosques and collective farms, with the *Turkmeniston* farm – the home base for then IRP third-in-charge Sayid Abdullo Nuri – being mentioned most prominently.<sup>303</sup> While some demonstrators came to Shahidon willingly – and expressed their enthusiasm<sup>304</sup> – IRP-affiliated mullahs coerced those less enthusiastic with threats of religious penalties.<sup>305</sup>

The leaders of the political groups that developed during the 1980s were, according to Akiner, “inexperienced and prone to adopt extreme, uncompromising positions.”<sup>306</sup> These tactics were employed by the opposition at Shahidon square. The opposition’s main demands included the firing of Kenjaev, the reinstatement of Navjuvonov and the dismantling of the Supreme Soviet. However, by mid-April the opposition began to make increasingly radical demands, including the resignation of Nabiev and the creation of a new constitution.<sup>307</sup> Demonstrators were soon able to affect

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<sup>301</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 167, also 168. Kilavuz writes: “Turajonzoda had relations with both “official” and “unofficial” mullahs, and was the link between the nationalist and Islamic opposition. Because of his position, he was able to mediate among the different opposition groups. Turajonzoda was not a member of any political party. He did not join any of the parties within the united opposition. Rather, he played the role of major link uniting opposition groups.” Turajonzoda had played the role of a ‘uniter’ as early as the November 1991 elections, when he persuaded all the opposition parties to field one single candidate – Khudonazarov – against Nabiev. See: *ibid*, 172.

<sup>302</sup> Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, 3.

<sup>303</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 179. See also: Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 175. Kilavuz mentions the Qurghonteppa region as the primary source of IRP demonstrators, with Kulob a secondary mention. Rubin mentions sources of support for the opposition, but does not disaggregate the parties: “The DPT and IRP made use of ties of members of the intelligentsia to their places of origin and also networks of mullahs, small “businessmen,” and brigade of kolkhoz leaders.” See: Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 153.

<sup>304</sup> This included the broad expression of enthusiasm that can be found in the slogans at the demonstration. For example, a woman at Shahidon yelled “This is what we want: Islam, bread, and democracy!” See: Gillian Tett, ‘Poverty brings Tajikistan's political tension to the fore’, *Financial Times*, 28 April 1992, International Page 2. Others interviewed expressed their concerns in a calmer fashion. For example, one man remarked: “We came because we thought this was the way to a better life. We earned just pennies in the kolkhoz, and we came because we were desperate for flour, oil, and clothes for our children.” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 156.

<sup>305</sup> For example, Whitlock and Kilavuz provide examples of demonstrators going to Shahidon or providing material support because mullahs had threatened to religiously annul their marriages and/or declare them a non-Muslim. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 156; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 193.

<sup>306</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 3. Akiner does not specify parties.

<sup>307</sup> Splidsboel-Hansen, ‘The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War’, 10-1; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 151-2; Tajik Radio, 1200 and 1700gmt (31 March 1992) in SWB SU/1345 (2 April 1992) B/8; Postfactum, 0945gmt (30 March 1992) in SWB SU/1345 (2 April 1992) B/8. Demonstrators’ demands included dissolution of parliament, resignation of Kenjaev, “establishment of national *majlis*”, resignation of the government and formation of coalition government, land redistribution, “distribution” of factories and plants to workers, 50% price cut in all goods produced in Tajikistan, removal of amendments to press freedom law, “end to persecution of democratic forces”, etc... Tajik Radio, 1700gmt (7 April 1992) in SWB SU/1352 (10 April 1992) B/1.

government business in Dushanbe. In particular, the new session of the Tajik Supreme Soviet started on April 11 but immediately voted to suspend until the demonstration ended.<sup>308</sup> By April 12, Nabiev – increasingly frustrated with the negotiating tactics of the opposition – remarked on radio that their demands “are increasing day-by-day.”<sup>309</sup> On April 19 Nabiev gave demonstrators an ultimatum to leave by the next morning or security forces would use “more drastic measures.”<sup>310</sup> However, no ‘drastic measures’ materialised, either because security forces were unwilling or because Nabiev was bluffing. Whatever the case, Nabiev would likely have appeared increasingly ineffective and weak.

On April 21 the Supreme Soviet passed a vote of confidence in Kenjaev (“against his resignation”). In response, unnamed members of the opposition took several deputies of Supreme Soviet hostage. Kenjaev, either as a response to the taking of hostages or as a result of his inability to control the capital, resigned. On the morning of April 22 the hostages were released<sup>311</sup> and the opposition was granted many of their other demands,<sup>312</sup> besides just the resignation of Kenjaev. While these concessions ended the opposition’s round of protests, they also initiated pro-government demonstrations which began on April 24 in Ozodi square, where protesters – many of them Kulobis mobilised by the Kulobi mullah Haydar Sharifzoda and the Kulobi underworld figure Sangak Safarov – demanded Kenjaev’s reinstatement, the removal of

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<sup>308</sup> ITAR-TASS (11 April 1992) in SWB SU/1355 (14 April 1992) i.

<sup>309</sup> Nabiev mentions the opposition leaders that he held direct talks with as Himmatzoda (IRP), Usmon (IRP), Yusuf (DPT), Abdujabbor (Rastokhez) and Turajonzoda (*Qazi Kalon*). No mention is made of La’li Badakhshon. See: Tajik Radio, 1300gmt (12 April 1992) in SWB SU/1358 (17 April 1992) B/1. According to Flemming Splidsboel-Hansen, the opposition made progressively stronger demands as it was emboldened by “earlier concessions” on the part of the government and by the “offence advantages” it had. This included the fact that the opposition was initially “more determined to change the status quo than the pro-government side was on preserving it, and thus willing to take greater risks.” See: Splidsboel-Hansen, ‘The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War’, 10-2.

<sup>310</sup> Interfax (20 April 1992) in SWB SU/1360 (21 April 1992) i. Earlier tactics had clearly been unsuccessful. For example, the Dushanbe City Executive Committee had attempted to block all entrances to the city and search incoming traffic due to the “big influx into the city of supporters of the opposition.” See: Russia’s radio 1200gmt (7 April 1992) in SWB SU/1352 (10 April 1992) B/1.

<sup>311</sup> ITAR-TASS (22 April 1992) in SWB SU/1362 (23 April 1992) i. According to Kenjaev, he resigned “to preserve the unity of the nation and avoid bloodshed.”

<sup>312</sup> Tajik government and opposition leaders reached this comprehensive agreement: Kenjaev’s resignation is confirmed, law on “rallies, meetings and gatherings” will be revoked, amendments to article 104 of the criminal code adopted during 12th session will be revoked, date for parliamentary elections will be set, 5 opposition members will be added to the Constitutional Commission, president will pardon all participants at Shahidon, the arrest of Mayor Ikramov for bribery will be reviewed, committee investigating Navjuvonov will report as soon as possible, and the Supreme Soviet will consider “the issue of changing the Gornyy Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast into the Badakhshan Autonomous Republic.” In return the opposition will vacate Shahidon square by April 24 and will refrain from holding future rallies, except pre-election rallies and observe laws of the republic. See: Tajik Radio, 1200gmt (22 April 1992) in SWB SU/1362 (23 April 1992) B/2.

Turajonzoda as *Qozi* of Tajikistan and the rescinding of concessions granted to the opposition.<sup>313</sup>

As a response to the Ozodi square demonstrations, the government appointed Kenjaev to the chair of the National Security Committee (the KGB successor).<sup>314</sup> Kenjaev replaced Anatoly Stroykin, who was blamed by Vice President Narzullo Dustov for not preventing the taking of Deputies as hostages.<sup>315</sup> Kenjaev's appointment resulted in the opposition restarting its demonstrations at Shahidon square. At this point there were now two sustained demonstrations in the capital making demands from the government in opposition to each other.<sup>316</sup> By April 29, when the Supreme Soviet finally met – and postponed the session the same day due to lack of sufficient number of deputies<sup>317</sup> – as many as 100,000 people were on the streets demonstrating. At the same time a third demonstration with about 7,000 people was initiated by a group of Dushanbe residents and tertiary students at Sadriddin Ayni Square demanding an end to the first two demonstrations.<sup>318</sup>

### **Regional Nature of Political Competition and Protests**

Kalyvas' 'alliance' is seen clearly in the rural and regional nature of the opposing protest groups. The counter-demonstrators, who set up close to the opposition

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<sup>313</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 241; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 151-2, 179-80; Postfactum, 1219gmt (25 April 1992) in SWB SU/1365 (27 April 1992) B/3. Postfactum notes 500 people at Ozodi on the first night and several times more by the next day. Whitlock argues that the counter-demonstration was initiated by Kenjaev: "Nabiev's inner circle took a decisive step. Two days after the mujahedin moved into Kabul, they sent to the countryside for counter-demonstrators to face down the crowd at Shahidan. Nabiev himself, according to men close to him, was drinking heavily at this time and had little grip on events. According to most accounts, it was Safarali Kenjaev who made many of the decisions, probably in conjunction with hidden advisers..." See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 159. Similarly, Tett writes: "[Kenjaev's] well-organised supporters were brought by bus into the capital. They are bitterly opposed to the republic's powerful religious leader, Kazi Akbar Turajonzoda, and support Mullah Haidar Sharif, who is sympathetic to the government. Moreover, they believe that the opposition plans to create an Islamic government." See: Gillian Tett, 'Poverty brings Tajikistan's political tension to the fore', *Financial Times*, 28 April 1992, International Page 2. Gavhar Juraeva, an academic who was active in the opposition, accuses Kenjaev of escalating the conflict by "hiring mercenaries from Kulob" and transporting them to Ozodi Square. See: Juraeva, 'Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan', 265.

<sup>314</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 151-2.

<sup>315</sup> Postfactum, 1219gmt (25 April 1992) in SWB SU/1365 (27 April 1992) B/3.

<sup>316</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 151-2.

<sup>317</sup> RIA 1507gmt (29 April 1992) in SWB SU/1369 (1 May 1992) B/2. The additional reason given for the postponement was that Nabiev and Turajonzoda were "still discussing their problems."

<sup>318</sup> Radio-1 (29 April 1992) in SWB SU/1368 (30 April 1992) i. This estimate is according to the Supreme Soviet's official press service; ITAR-TASS (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1369 (1 May 1992) i. Panfilov describes the third demonstration as being composed mainly of neutral tertiary students from Dushanbe educational institutes. See: Oleg Panfilov, 'Tajikistan', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/3 and Brown, 'Whither Tajikistan', 3. Postfactum provides smaller numbers: Ozodi square on 29 April had 10,000 while Shahidon square had 35,000 (including 7,000 white bandana opposition "guard members" surrounding the presidential palace. See: Postfactum 0615gmt (1 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/5-6.

demonstrators, were brought in mainly from Kulob, Hisor and Leninobod.<sup>319</sup> Roy portrays the regional origins of the protesters in a more comprehensive manner:

It was enough to look at the out-of-town numberplates and the names on the placards to see that this was a localist mobilisation. Shahidan Square brought together Garmis from Karategin and Kurgan-Teppe, people from Ramit and Kafirnehan, Darwazis, Pamiris and people from Zarafshan (who came individually). To Liberty [Ozodi] Square, on the other hand, came people from Kulab, Leninabad, Hissar, Shahrinai, Tursunzade, Lenin and Varzab.<sup>320</sup>

Numerous writers focus on the prominent role of Kulobis at the counter-opposition demonstrations, some in very explicit regional terms. Roy, for example, writes that the “Leninabadis then received back-up from the Kulabis”<sup>321</sup> while Rubin notes that “Since the Khujandis had no forces in the south to counter the mobilization of Garmis and Pamiris by the DPT and IRP, they called on the Kulabis.”<sup>322</sup> When, on May 1, Nabiev declared a state of emergency he relied on men from Kulob to man his newly formed ‘Presidential Guard.’<sup>323</sup> Atkin focuses on one particular Kulobi – stressing that Nabiev relied on Sangak Safarov to lead the counter-demonstration at Ozodi square.<sup>324</sup> Parviz Mullojonov also emphasises the presence of Kulobis, noting that earlier in April thousands of counter-demonstrators arrived in Dushanbe from Kulob with the assistance of Sangak Safarov and the Kulobi mullah Haydar Sharifzoda.<sup>325</sup> Kilavuz expands the geographical base of mobilisation and notes that Safarov was also able to bring demonstrators from the Qurghonteppa region as well.<sup>326</sup> While some express puzzlement at the alliance between the incumbents and these prominent Kulobis,<sup>327</sup> this

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<sup>319</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 107-8. In regards to Leninobod, Kilavuz writes: “The Khujandi elite was not unified, and did not act as a group. Many of its members did not support Nabiev, come to the squares during the demonstrations, or become involved in the war.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 185.

<sup>320</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140. Kilavuz qualifies the presence of northerners at the protests: “The Khujandi elite was not unified, and did not act as a group. Many of its members did not support Nabiev, come to the squares during the demonstrations, or become involved in the war.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 185.

<sup>321</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140.

<sup>322</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 153.

<sup>323</sup> Bess A. Brown, ‘The Civil War in Tajikistan, 1992-1993’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. Edited by Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1997), 90, as cited in Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 107-8; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 153.

<sup>324</sup> Muriel Atkin, ‘A President and his rivals’, in *Power and Change in Central Asia*. Edited by Sally N. Cummings (London/New York: Routledge, 2002), 102. Markowitz also writes that during the demonstrations Safarov emerged as a prominent leader of the pro-government forces. See: Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 107.

<sup>325</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 241. See also: Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, 3.

<sup>326</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 179-80. This of course does not mean that the demonstrators from Qurghonteppa were not Kulobis, as plenty of Tajiks from the Kulob region were sent to the Vakhsh Valley during the Soviet migration schemes.

<sup>327</sup> For example: Said Akhmedov shares Aleksandra Lugovaya’s puzzlement over the Kulob-Leninobodi/Khujandi alliance. Akhmedov’s best guesses are that the population of Kulob was instilled

arrangement with Kulobi power-brokers was likely a continuation from the political arrangements leading up to the November 1991, when Sangak Safarov and Akbar Mirzoev<sup>328</sup> – a client of Nabiev and the Chairman of the Kulob Province Executive Committee – mobilised support for Nabiev’s election campaign.<sup>329</sup>

Whitlock, among many others, mentions that the ‘pro-government’ side did not organise demonstrations to challenge the opposition’s presence in the street until very late. In contrast, she notes the early opposition success in mobilising Pamiris and Gharmis.<sup>330</sup> This successful mobilisation showed resilience over time, and as late as April 30 large vehicle convoys bound for Shahidon were leaving Gharmi and Pamiri areas of eastern Tajikistan.<sup>331</sup> These anti-government demonstrators had one particular reason for feeling safe in Dushanbe. Schoeberlein writes that because most of the police in Dushanbe were Pamiris, “many in the city believed that this would deter Nabiev and his predominantly Leninabadi government from staging a violent crackdown.”<sup>332</sup> However, the security dilemma would soon be in full effect regardless. On May 2 Nabiev circumvented the security forces and formed a ‘National Guard’ (AKA ‘Presidential Guard’) by distributing weapons to the counter-demonstrators while unnamed persons also distributed weapons to the demonstrators at Shahidon.<sup>333</sup> Schoeberlein portrays this action as Nabiev having “pushed the situation over the brink”

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with a “pro-Soviet mood,” a fear of an Islamic state and the presence of “religious contradictions” between Gharm/Qarotegin and Kulob, or the possibility that the savvy Khujandi leaders took advantage of Kulob’s “naivety.” See: Akhmedov, “Tajikistan II: The Regional Conflict in Confessional and International Context”, 174, citing Aleksandra Lugovaya, ‘Politicheskii krizis v Tadjikistane byl neizbezhen’, in *Tadjikistan v ogne* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993/4).

<sup>328</sup> For his efforts, Mirzoev was rewarded with the position of Chairman of the Council of Ministers. See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 178.

<sup>329</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 178. Note: Obviously this election effort by Safarov and Mirzoev would be mostly confined to their home region of Kulob, and perhaps Qurghonteppa as well.

<sup>330</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161. Whitlock points to one factor mentioned in Russian newspaper (*Komsomolskaya pravda*, 22 May 1992) that explains why the opposition had the early success in mobilizing their demonstrations, this being the “presence of a mighty idea in the minds of some, and its absence in that of others.” This quip may sound meaningless, but it can be elaborated upon using what is referred to in sociology and political science as ‘frames.’ Framing theory is defined by M. N. Zald as “strategic framing of injustice and grievances, their causes, motivations, and associated templates for collective action.” See: 261 in M.N. Zald, ‘Culture, Ideology, and Strategic Framing’, in *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements. Political Opportunities, Mobilising Structures, and Cultural Framings*, Edited by D. McAdam, J. McCarthy and M.N. Zald (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). For an application of frames to Central Asia, see: Fumagalli, ‘Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation in Central Asia.’ Alternately, one could just posit an “offensive advantage” on the part of the opposition. According to Flemming Splidsboel-Hansen, this included the fact that the opposition was initially “more determined to change the status quo than the pro-government side was on preserving it, and thus willing to take greater risks.” See: Splidsboel-Hansen, ‘The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War’, 10-2.

<sup>331</sup> Panfilov reported that on April 30 a 100 vehicle convoy left Khorogh (Pamirs) while 30 vehicles left Tojikobod (upper Qarotegin/Gharm). See: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Tajikistan’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/3.

<sup>332</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37.

<sup>333</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 107-8. Markowitz does not name the source for weapons at Shahidon.



by using the emergency powers passed by parliament three days earlier. Schoeberlein explicitly labels the newly formed and armed National Guard as being composed of out-of-town “Kulobi demonstrators.”<sup>334</sup> After several days of clashes, with the state unable to control the violence, the counter-demonstrators retreated from Dushanbe. As a result, Nabiev wavered and entered into a power-sharing agreement with the opposition in the form of the ‘Government of National Reconciliation’ (GNR) that included many Gharmis and Pamiris.<sup>335</sup>

Schoeberlein takes a dim view of the counter-demonstrators’ motivations and individual agency. He notes that previous pro-government demonstrations had been quite small, and had been composed mostly of Dushanbe-based students following orders from their institutions’ Communist Party organisations. Describing the Ozodi square demonstrators, Schoeberlein argues that the Kulobis who arrived by bus were “brought in on orders of their collective farm bosses and were paid for their time – were much more dangerous and ready to do the regime’s bidding.”<sup>336</sup> He does not describe the pro-opposition demonstrators at Shahidon in this manner, but Kilavuz’s research in one Qurghonteppa farm shows that Gharmi Tajiks came to Shahidon both by persuasion and by force.<sup>337</sup> Roy’s description focuses on the merging of agendas; the central government incumbents – supported by Kulobi demonstrators – wanted to stay in power while the rural Gharmi demonstrators attempted to change the status quo. He mentions the local conflicts over resources in the south and argues that these “localist conflicts were exported to the capital. They [Kulobis and Gharmis] came up from the *kolkhoz* in

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<sup>334</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 38, citing Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan?’, 1-6.

<sup>335</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 107-8.

<sup>336</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37-8, 54, n. 39. Schoeberlein’s view reflects that of the opposition, which claimed that the Ozodi demonstration was funded by the government. See: Russia’s Radio (28 April 1992) in SWB SU/1368 (30 April 1992) i. This claim is backed up in regards to mobilisation of government supporters from amongst workers in Leninobod, some of whom stated that their bosses were giving them leave from work and expenses to join the demonstration at Ozodi. The tactic of mobilising workers was less successful in one factory in Dushanbe where managers who urged support for the government were ignored by their workers, who joined the opposition demonstration at Shahidon. See: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Tajikistan’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/3. As for Kulobis, Brown writes that the Kulobi presence was more about Kulobi solidarity than about the “communist-dominated government.” See: Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, 3.

<sup>337</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 190-1. One informant in the *Turkmenistan kolkhoz* relayed this to Kilavuz: “The majority is from Karategin in this village. This sovkhos supported the opposition. People who did not, left the village. Many people from this village went to the square in Dushanbe. There were men who came to the village. They called for people to get together, and ordered them to go. They took the unwilling ones by force. The men who gathered people were men from the opposition. Some men were from here, but also men came from outside to recruit men for the square.” Markowitz points to this *kolkhoz* as being a key mobiliser for the opposition. See: Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 124.

buses and tractors to support their various factions.”<sup>338</sup> Whitlock writes that so many Gharmis came to Shahidon at the request of the IRP leaders that “people called it a ‘Gharmi’ protest.”<sup>339</sup>

Kilavuz cites ‘regionalism’ as a tool in this process to mobilise people for the demonstrations on both sides, arguing that “government and opposition leaders recruited people based on regional identities, loyalties, and networks.”<sup>340</sup> She writes that government leaders mobilised Kulobis by persuading them that they were under threat as Kulobis from the Pamiris and Gharmis while opposition leaders used the same tactic.<sup>341</sup> Concerning security dilemmas, Rubin and Zartman also note that the likelihood of violence increased as the leaders turned to regional networks for support.<sup>342</sup>

In regards to political parties and regional interests, one of the main criticisms of the political parties in Tajikistan is that they served the interests of regional elites. For example, Eden Naby argued that the political parties in contention had “regional origins with (hidden) regional agendas.”<sup>343</sup> Schoeberlein contradicts this, noting that the opposition parties sought support in all regions of Tajikistan and that their agenda was not a “regional agenda.”<sup>344</sup> This may have been true at an early stage in the political competition, but eventually, according to Olimova, the “[Qarotegin/Gharm and] Badakhshon regional elites, having achieved economic clout, sought to change the balance of forces in their own interest and used the newly emerging opposition movements to this end.”<sup>345</sup> Dudoignon argues that this occurred in mid- to late 1990 when IRP and DPT activists, who were at the time supporting the policies of “anti-

<sup>338</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140.

<sup>339</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 156. Whitlock, without elaborating writes that the Gharmis came from both the mountains and from the Vakhsh Valley. However, all other authors stress the presence of Gharmis from the Vakhsh Valley. Note: this Gharmi dominance should not be taken to mean that the IRP did not have supporters in the Kulob region. The IRP presence in Kulob will be analysed in the section on regionalization. Regarding Kulobi IRP supporters at Shahidon, Kilavuz writes that “some” IRP supporters from Kulob came while from Qurghontepa it was “many.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 179.

<sup>340</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90.

<sup>341</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90. Based on her interviews in Kolkhozes, Kilavuz noted the use of a discourse that included the argument “that Garmis and Pamiris were against Kulyabis and “their” people in Dushanbe needed them. Both sides to the conflict did this.”

<sup>342</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 107-8; Barnett R. Rubin, ‘The Fragmentation of Tajikistan’, *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1993) 78. Zartman writes that the “threat of violence rose as mobilization based on regional networks subsumed grievance-based protests.”

<sup>343</sup> Naby, ‘Tajik Political Legitimacy and Political Parties’, 10-12. As for demands for regional autonomy, this applied to the GBAO and La’li Badakhshon, but elsewhere country-wide only 10% wanted regional autonomy in 1992. The highest was 25.8% in Leninabad, with only 13.9% in Qurghontepa. See: Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 136, citing *Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviakh stanovleniia gosudarstvennosti (Opit sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy v Tadzhikistane, Kazakhstane, Rossii i na Ukraine)* (Moscow, Russian Academy of management, 1992) 29-43.

<sup>344</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 6.

<sup>345</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan’, 249.

*nomenklatura* economic liberalism,” started to advocate for the “interests of *muhajir* communities and the Kuhistanian [mountain] people at large against the northern and southern technocrats of the planned economy.”<sup>346</sup>

### Protests transitioning to violence

With a majority of the opposition-aligned deputies absent, the Supreme Soviet voted on April 30 to confer special presidential powers upon Nabiev for the next six months. These powers included: control over the legislative, executive and judicial branches, the right to “suspend” any political party or organization, and the right to end rallies and demonstrations.<sup>347</sup> The opposition soon publicly restated its demand for the resignation of Nabiev at a May 2 press conference.<sup>348</sup>

On May 3 the Supreme Soviet reappointed Kenjaev as its chair (a position he will hold in addition to remaining chair of the National Security Committee), scheduled new *Qoziyot* elections for May 14, and recommended that Turajonzoda be arrested. At the same time Nabiev decreed the creation of a “national guard corps,” (alternately ‘President’s Guards’ or ‘National Guards within the Presidency’; hereafter ‘National Guards’) to be created within 2 weeks. In response, Ozodi square demonstrators, “Intoxicated with first major victory,” demanded the repeal of all earlier concessions given to opposition.<sup>349</sup> The timeline for the creation of the National Guards was shortened drastically when, on the same day, the government armed anywhere from 400-3000 demonstrators at Ozodi square. This armed unit – dominated by Kulobis – was to presumably report directly to Nabiev and Kenjaev.<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>346</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 12. Dudoignon leads into this sentence by noting that during “The summer and autumn of 1990 constituted a particularly important chronological turn, since it was also the time when *muhajir* [migrant] communities of the lower Wakhsh began to suffer from measures taken by the Tajik government to prohibit the export of agricultural products outside the limits of the republic. This caused a direct and great damage to *muhajir* cultivators, whose kolkhoz units usually sent to Russia their surplus and products of individual plots of land. Moreover, *muhajir* spokesmen began at the same time to accuse the Tajik government of cutting the price of products from the private plots.”

<sup>347</sup> ITAR-TASS 1640gmt (30 April 1992) and ITAR-TASS 0900gmt (1 May 1992) in SWB SU/1370 (2 May 1992) B/9.

<sup>348</sup> Postfactum, 1154gmt (2 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/4. Yusuf read the statement while Turajonzoda was in attendance

<sup>349</sup> ITAR TASS (3 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) i; Postfactum 1639gmt (3 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/5; Tajik Radio 0400gmt (1 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/4-5. Procurator General Nurullo Khuvaydullov declined to press charges against Turajonzoda, saying that there “were no grounds to initiate criminal proceedings.” See: Postfactum 1639gmt (3 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/5.

<sup>350</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 266; Postfactum, 1154gmt (2 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/4; Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, 3. Juraeva claims 1,700 weapons were handed out at Ozodi

Later in the day, on the night of May 3-4, the Shahidon demonstrators attempted to enter the presidential palace, but were stopped by security forces. The Ozodi demonstrators then tried to move on Shahidon square, but were also stopped by security forces and turned back.<sup>351</sup> On May 5, a state of emergency signed by Nabiev was declared on radio. This included: a curfew from 9pm to 5am, demonstrations and strikes were prohibited, the activities of political parties, “popular movements” and “other social organizations” were banned, and the city of Dushanbe area of responsibility was to be put under the control of the military commissar of Tajikistan – Major General Mamadjonov.<sup>352</sup>

At this time (midday on the 5th) there were 100,000 demonstrators in Dushanbe. It was on this same day (May 5) that the violent conflict started, but not in the city. Several people were killed in a shooting at a blockade outside the city at the Yovon district at the Lenin (Rudaki) district crossroads. Soon after, shooting started in the city.<sup>353</sup> Overnight the opposition took control of the TV building, the presidential palace, the railway station, the main roads and, briefly, the airport.<sup>354</sup> By the morning of May 6, all main routes into the city were blocked by “opposition patrols” checking incoming and outgoing cars.<sup>355</sup> On the same day some members of the Supreme Soviet attempted to flee the city while opposition supporters took four deputies hostage.<sup>356</sup> As for Nabiev, he took refuge in the blockaded Supreme Soviet building.<sup>357</sup> During the previous night “the power ministries – that is, those whose personnel had the right to carry arms – took sides.”<sup>358</sup> At 10pm guardsmen at the Presidential Palace joined the demonstrators. At 2am “a large number of Interior Ministry men – the police force – came over to the opposition, bringing with them their arsenal. The Security Ministry,

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while Postfactum provides a wide-ranging estimate for the number of national guards at 400-3000. Note: Brown gives May 2 as the day on which weapons were distributed.

<sup>351</sup> Interfax (4 May 1992) in SWB SU/1372 (5 May 1992) i.

<sup>352</sup> Tajik Radio 1712gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/1. The top two in the Interior Ministry (Rajabov and Kaharov) were named his deputies

<sup>353</sup> This incident is further analysed in a later section in this chapter.

<sup>354</sup> Postfactum 1050gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/3; ITAR-TASS 0756gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1-2. The National Guards were able to quickly take back the airport. The opposition took over the TV broadcasts, but the signal was cut off outside the city and the government maintained control over radio. See: Tajik Radio 1750 and 1900gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>355</sup> Postfactum 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2. Opposition forces at roadblocks were stopping vehicles carrying food from going to Kulob.

<sup>356</sup> Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 1100gmt 6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>357</sup> ITAR-TASS 0835gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992).

<sup>358</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163.

still generally known as the KGB, stayed with the government.”<sup>359</sup> According to a report by the HD Centre, the opposition forces rapidly gained momentum and resources:

If the opposition’s arsenal was initially nothing more than a few hunting rifles and some Molotov cocktails, it quickly developed. For example, when they occupied the Presidential Palace, the opposition forces already had 250 automatic weapons and one tank. Also, on May 5, an entire OMON unit (Special Forces) of the Ministry of the Interior joined the opposition. This contributed 12 tanks, and 600 Kalashnikovs. Local police stations also quickly became a good source of weapon procurement.<sup>360</sup>

On May 6, Major General Bahrom Rahmonov, an advisor to President Nabiev and the man picked to lead the National Guards, joined the opposition.<sup>361</sup> The next day, the top two in the Interior Ministry also joined the opposition. This was especially significant in the capital as the deputy leader in the ministry was the commandant of Dushanbe.<sup>362</sup>

According to Zartman, Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) military officers forcefully persuaded the government and opposition to compromise.<sup>363</sup> In particular, Colonel Vyacheslav Zabolotnyy of the CIS 201<sup>st</sup> MRD forces – an ethnic Belorussian – demanded that the opposing sides meet and threatened the leaders of both sides with arrest if they did not reach an agreement.<sup>364</sup> On the morning of May 7 the preliminary agreement was announced on the radio. The initial protocols on the ‘Government of National Reconciliation’ (GNR), which were signed by all the main government leaders – including Nabiev and Kenjaev – and opposition leaders plus Khudonazarov, included: bilateral disarmament, dissolution of the National Guards, the halting of all ongoing investigations, the removal of blockades from all building and facilities, no prohibitions on parties and organisations, dissolution of the Presidium and Presidential Council, the placing of the Committee for National Security and the Committee for Defence under the control of the GNR, the banning of all further rallies,

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<sup>359</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163. Whitlock notes that senior officers were non-Tajik, while one official told her that there were “more Islamic Party members than communists” in the rank and file of the KGB (Committee on National Security) in 1992. Gillian Tett also reports that forces of the Ministry of the Interior also joined the opposition. See: Gillian Tett: ‘Tajikistan opposition militia seizes control of capital’, *Financial Times* (7 May 1992) 2.

<sup>360</sup> HD Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 14-5.

<sup>361</sup> Postfactum, 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2-3; ITAR-TASS 0835gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/4; ITAR-TASS 1808gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/4; RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 21 (22 May 1992) 76-7. Zartman (*Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 108-9) portrays Gen. Rahmonov’s move favourably: “In one of many efforts to prevent conflict escalation, Nabiev’s military advisor General Bahrom Rakhmonov, went over to the side of the opposition and Nabiev’s government temporarily collapsed.” Zartman cites Juraeva (‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 266). However, she merely states that he joined the opposition.

<sup>362</sup> Russia’s Radio 0100gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/5. The head of the ministry was Navjuvonov, and Major General Kakharov was the deputy.

<sup>363</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 108-9.

<sup>364</sup> Michael Orr, ‘The Russian Army and the War in Tajikistan’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, edited by M.-R. Djalili, F. Grare and S. Akiner (London: Curzon Press, 1998) 152.

including the ending of both demonstrations.<sup>365</sup> Immediately after the signing of the GNR agreement many of the pro-government demonstrators started to leave Ozodi.<sup>366</sup>

Later in the day Nabiev decreed the end of the state of emergency and announced a plan for the disarmament process.<sup>367</sup> Meanwhile, opposition demonstrators remained at Shahidon square and demanded the resignation of Nabiev. By May 10 there were – with negotiations ongoing – still thousands of demonstrators at Shahidon, amid a “mood of irreconcilability.”<sup>368</sup> The leaders of DPT, La’li Badakhshon and Rastokhez called for an end to the Shahidon square demonstrations. However, “radical activists”<sup>369</sup> of the IRP continued their protests at Shahidon, demanding the removal of Nabiev and his cabinet, the dissolution of the Supreme Soviet and trials for the government leaders, demands which were not supported by IRP leader Himmatzoda.<sup>370</sup> In fact, the entire opposition leadership rejected the demand for Nabiev’s immediate resignation for reasons of stability.<sup>371</sup>

On May 11, after further negotiations mediated by Zabolotnyy, Nabiev signed a decree on the GNR coalition government, with 8 of 24 cabinet positions going to the opposition and Nabiev remaining in office. After the announcement an unstated number of the remaining protesters at Shahidon square began to leave.<sup>372</sup> However, some

<sup>365</sup> Tajik Radio 1015gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>366</sup> Radio-1, Moscow 1500gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>367</sup> Tajik Radio 1345 7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/2.

<sup>368</sup> ITAR-TASS 0917gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1377 (11 May 1992).

<sup>369</sup> Unnamed in the Postfactum citation below, but likely referring to IRP Mullah/Ishon Qiyomiddin, “an organizer of the opposition’s national guard.” On 12 May he said that Nabiev could not be part of the new government and called for him to be prosecuted. See: ITAR-TASS 0903gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>370</sup> Postfactum 1545gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/1-2.

<sup>371</sup> Correspondent Sergei Shatunov gave an explanation for the opposition leadership not wanting to remove Nabiev. Leaving Nabiev in office would: (1) preserve Nabiev’s regional base of Leninobod as part of the republic, which is needed for its economy, (2) leave a familiar face for foreign affairs, and (3) leave a weakened and compliant leader in the presidency to the benefit of the opposition. See: Channel 1 TV, Moscow 1800gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/4. On May 12 Turajonzoda said that Nabiev’s resignation is not “under consideration.” Turajonzoda remarked that “He is behind the times, he has the old mentality, but the president is guarantor of the integrity of Tajikistan.” See: ITAR-TASS 0903gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/1. Turajonzoda stressed that it was a group decision by the opposition leadership. See: Bess Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 38 (25 September 1992) 13. See also: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 21 (22 May 1992) 76-7; Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, 3, At a press conference DPT leader Yusuf says that Nabiev must resign, but not until after the parliament is replaced and the new government is formed, since he guarantees the republic’s territorial integrity. See: Interfax (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) i. The earlier language used by ‘Ayneddin Sadykov’ (Ayniddin Sodiqov?), an ‘activist’ in the DPT was somewhat less clear: “We can’t say that the victory is total and final. The struggle is continuing. We have beheaded the dragon, but his poisonous tail and claws are still here. We aim to stop the bloodshed, restore stability and create conditions for normal living and work.” See: Larry Ryckman, ‘Muslims take control of Tajikistan capital’, *Houston Chronicle* (9 May 1992) 20.

<sup>372</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 164; ITAR-TASS 0600gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/1; Tajik Radio 1430gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/1. Opposition cabinet portfolios included Chair of the Defence Committee, Chair of the State Radio and Television Committee, Chair of the Republican Bank, Sport and Tourism, The State Statistics Committee,

demonstrators stayed on the square. On May 13, with negotiations ongoing, the opposition-controlled state TV channel urged demonstrators to stay in Shahidon square for the next few days. Finally, on May 14 the opposition demonstrators left Shahidon.<sup>373</sup>

Both Kilavuz and Zartman make a note of the opposition receiving only one-third of cabinet positions, after remarking that the opposition had forcefully taken the capital. Both frame the concessions as the opposition failing to make significant gains.<sup>374</sup>

Nourzhanov is of the opposite position, writing that the GNR was “dominated by representatives of Gharm and Badakhshan. Its legitimacy was immediately rejected by Kulob and Leninobod.”<sup>375</sup> In many spheres, most importantly security, the opposition did in fact dominate, or at least make significant gains. Examples include:

- On May 12 the government announced that elections for the head *Qozi* were cancelled, keeping safe the position of Turajonzoda – a man the counter-demonstrators had the most grievances with and who was arguably the most influential opposition member.<sup>376</sup>
- On May 12, after negotiations, Nabiev decreed that a *Majlis* (national assembly) would be formed. This 80-person assembly, which was to be split evenly between the government and opposition, was supposed to have functioned until new elections on December 6.<sup>377</sup>

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and Minister of Education. According to Zabolotnyy, at the May 11 meeting he said to Nabiev, Mirzoev and opposition leaders: “Authorized as the garrison’s commander I will arrest all of you, and no one will leave this study until you finally resolve all the disputable questions among yourself.” He said the agreement on the GNR was reached. He also stressed his unit’s continued neutrality. Zabolotnyy then, according to his version, noted that talks continued on May 12, this time without his presence. See: Postfactum 1703gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>373</sup> Russia’s Radio 0000gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2; Interfax 1553gmt (14 May 1992) in SWB SU/1382 (16 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>374</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 108-9. Specifically, Zartman, in regards to the opposition, writes that: “This small coalition participation does not justify any claim that they “seized power.”” Others give a higher proportion for the opposition in the new cabinet: 8 of 20 portfolios. See: Timur Kadyr, ‘Hot Spot: Powder keg under the roof of the world’, *Megapolis-Express* (16 September 1992) 20, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992).

<sup>375</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 111-2. Similarly, Kilavuz writes: “However, the local governments in Leninabad and Kulyab did not recognize Nabiev’s concessions, or the legitimacy of the new government.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152.

<sup>376</sup> Interfax 1616gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/6. For example, see previous mentions of Turajonzoda in this section. For more extreme examples of anger against Turajonzoda, particularly a portrayal of him as the opposition mastermind, see: G. Khaidarov and M. Inomov, *Tajikistan: tragedy and anguish of the nation* (St. Petersburg: Linko, 1993). For a more accessible source, See: Gillian Tett, ‘Poverty brings Tajikistan’s political tension to the fore’, *Financial Times*, 28 April 1992, International Page 2. As an example of, Turajonzoda’s power and influence, see earlier references to his role as a power-broker and mediator within the opposition. Furthermore, by May 7 the opposition headquarters were stationed at the Qoziyot headquarters. See ITAR-TASS 0750gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/6.

<sup>377</sup> ITAR-TASS 1756gmt (12 May 1992) and Tajik Radio 1635gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/1; Interfax (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) i; Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2. One source puts the proposed number of *Majlis* deputies at 70 with a 35-35 split. See: Thomas Ginsberg, ‘Rival Muslim Groups Clash in South as Tajikistan Forms New Government’, *The Associated Press* (12 May 1992).

- On May 13 Davlat Usmon, the deputy leader of the IRP, gained the position of deputy premiere, as the deputy president position was abandoned. Usmon's duties entailed him being required to "oversee" the National Security Committee (KGB), the Procuracy Office<sup>378</sup> and the Defence Committee. In addition he "would be responsible for the law enforcement bodies."<sup>379</sup>
- On May 13, as part of the announcement of new cabinet positions, Navjuvonov regained the position of Interior Minister, with Kenjaev losing the position.<sup>380</sup>
- The head of Rastokhez took over state TV and radio, allowing the opposition to control the airwaves.<sup>381</sup>
- Rezo Tursunov, recently appointed Chair of the Committee for National Security, burned the top secret archives and then disappeared immediately after the GNR was announced.<sup>382</sup>
- On May 13 the opposition announced that Kenjaev and the Vice-President Narzullo Dustov (a Kulobi) both fled the city after the GNR agreement.<sup>383</sup>
- The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet decided to appoint Akbarsho Iskandarov, an ethnic Pamiri, to what had been Kenjaev's position – chair of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>384</sup>
- Opposition forces captured the three main leaders of the counter-demonstrators, all of whom were Kulobis and at least one of whom was tortured for an extended period of time.<sup>385</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> The Procuracy Office – or *Prokurator* – was an institution independent from local authorities that could initiate investigations and bring criminal charges against government officials. For an analysis of the Procuracy in the late Soviet era, see: Gordon B. Smith, 'Procuracy, Citizens' Rights and Legal Reform', *Columbia Journal of Transnational Law*, Vol. 28 (1990); Gordon B. Smith, *The Soviet Procuracy and the Supervision of Administration*. Netherlands: Sijthoff & Noordhoff, 1978.

<sup>379</sup> Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2; Interfax (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) i.

<sup>380</sup> Tajik Radio 1430gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/1. A day previously he was mentioned as the new minister. See: Postfactum 1545gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/2. The following day Navjuvonov was not mentioned in the list of cabinet appointees. However, he was mentioned as head of the ministry later in the summer. See: RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 24 (28 August 1992).

<sup>381</sup> Tajik Radio 1430gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>382</sup> Russia's Radio 1900gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 14 May 1992) C1/7; Aleksandr Karpov and Otakhon Latifi, 'Actions of Dushanbe garrison command deemed absolutely correct', *Izvestiya* (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2-3. Specifically, Tursunov – after only a week in office – burned the documents on the February 1990 incident, when he was then deputy KGB leader. The replacement for Tursunov was A. Solibaev.

<sup>383</sup> Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2; Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 1400gmt (14 May 1992) in SWB SU/1382 (16 May 1992) C1/1. Kenjaev left Tajikistan for Uzbekistan and Dustov left to Kulob and then onwards to Khujand.

<sup>384</sup> Interfax 1855gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/5. Atkin ('Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war', 615) notes that Iskandarov, while a Pamiri, was actually an ally of Nabiev. Nevertheless, this still represents the loss of a strong pro-incumbent leader and his replacement with a weak one. "Pro-government" forces in Kulob, Hisor and Leninobod were clearly not impressed by the fact that Nabiev and an ally retained control over the top two positions in government – evidenced by the fact that they rejected the authority of the central government and lost faith completely in Nabiev, as will be illustrated in the next chapter.



- As noted above, Major General Bahrom Rahmonov – as well as many in the Interior Ministry – had joined the opposition. On May 11 Rahmonov announced at a press conference that the armed forces of Tajikistan consisted wholly of those present at Shahidon square.<sup>386</sup>
- The armed (and unarmed) Kulobis at Ozodi square had left Dushanbe defeated while opposition supporters celebrated.<sup>387</sup>

### Incendiary Rhetoric and Security Dilemmas

Throughout the protests both sides engaged in inflammatory rhetoric and the spreading of rumours.<sup>388</sup> However, some accusations were based on leaders' actual statements, which were often hastily retracted. DPT leader Yusuf was especially guilty of this, demonstrated by his veiled threats against non-Tajik ethnicities<sup>389</sup> and his

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<sup>385</sup> These three were Sangak Safarov, Mullah Sharifzoda and Rustam Abdurrahimov. The imprisonment lasted for five days and ended thanks to the intervention of Nabiev and/or Turajonzoda. See: Gretskey, 'Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda', 22; G. Khaidarov and M. Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation* (St. Petersburg: LINKO, 1993) 33. For more information, see the section on Safarov in the next chapter.

<sup>386</sup> Tajik Radio 1850gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/5.

<sup>387</sup> For an example of early celebrations, see: ITAR-TASS 0503gmt (9 May 1992) in SWB SU/1377 (11 May 1992) C1/1. Oleg Panfilov, Tajikistan-born Russian reporter partial to the opposition, writes that the Kulobi Presidential Guards were defeated because of their shortage of weapons. See: Oleg Panfilov, 'Tajikistan: the opposing sides open a second front', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (22 September 1992) 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 38 (21 October 1992).

<sup>388</sup> Examples: Jumhuriyat newspaper quoted DPT leader Yusuf as saying demonstrators will retaliate with arms if attacked. Vice President Dustov countered that "such statements are extremely thoughtless and will make the situation more tense." Tajik Radio, 1200 and 1700gmt (31 March 1992) in SWB SU/1345 (2 April 1992) B/9; IRP leaders blame the US, and Secretary of State James Baker in particular, for "police rule and suppression of opposition." Postfactum, 0945gmt (30 March 1992) in SWB SU/1345 (2 April 1992) B/9; On April 7 DPT leader Shodmon Yusuf, repeating a report by Izvestia from April 3, claimed that "Internal Troops of the Republic of Kazakhstan" had arrived in Dushanbe. Kazakh Radio 0100gmt (9 April 1992) and Tajik Radio 1700gmt (9 April 1992) in SWB SU/1353 (11 April 1992) B/7. Abdullo Ochilov (Chairman of the organizing committee of the Republican Party) and "leader of the pro-government rally" in TV interview labels DPT and Rastokhez as "terrorist organisations." RIA (27 April 1992) in SWB SU/1366 (28 April 1992) i; the opposition headquarters appealed to workers of the National Security Committee, saying to ignore the "mafia" and "schemers" and that the opposition "invite[s] you to the side of the people." Tajik Radio 0800gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/4-5; Some opposition supporters were wearing white bandanas that read "freedom or death." ITAR-TASS (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1369 (1 May 1992) i; Oleg Panfilov reported that rumours of "several thousand Lokaytsy [Loqay Uzbeks] horsemen..., who are supporters of the government, have set out for Dushanbe from Kulob oblast are unconfirmed" and that, according to a "reliable source," Haydar Sharifov [Sharifzoda] "imam of the Kulyab mosque" has made a list of DPT and IRP members to be "persecuted." And "one victim is already known – *Mardi Khudo* [*sic*, lit. 'Man of God'], who has had his ears cut off." He notes further that opposition members are getting "their children out of the way, fearing for their lives." Oleg Panfilov, 'Tajikistan', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/3; Bess Brown reported the rumour that President Nabiev was secretly an ethnic Uzbek. See: Brown, 'Whither Tajikistan', 4.

<sup>389</sup> Shodmon Yusuf said this in Russian on Tajik Radio: "... crude [Russian] interference in our affairs..." [...] "I want again to warn the cold leaders of the CIS that there are a large number of Russian speakers in the town. [...] I would absolutely and utterly not want, in the wake of events, this [...] to weigh on inter-ethnic relations in the town." See: Tajik Radio 1635gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/3. A representative for the Russian 'Migration Society' said that 70,000 ethnic Russians had left

suggestion that Afghanistan may have a role to play in supporting the opposition.<sup>390</sup> Yusuf's position on Afghanistan was briefly shared by General Rahmonov, who then also retracted his statements.<sup>391</sup> The likely force behind the retractions and apologies of various opposition figures was Turajonzoda, who would usually contradict the more extreme positions in the opposition and attempt to reassure the public.<sup>392</sup> The discourse on the role of Islam was also a destabilising factor in spring 1992. Statements on the opposition side concerning the establishment of an Islamic state had to be refuted, with Turajonzoda again having to get involved in moderating IRP statements.<sup>393</sup> As part of the GNR the IRP "had to tone down its fundamentalist slogans" as it was now a partner with Rastokhez and the DPT.<sup>394</sup> The opposition also accused the pro-government demonstrators at Ozodi square of being against Islam – accusations that the Supreme

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Tajikistan in the previous three years, and 20,000 in the month of May 1992. He specifically blamed Shodmon Yusuf's statement, which he/she interpreted as Yusuf saying that minorities "could well be used as hostages." See: Interfax 1315gmt (9 June 1992) and Radio Moscow 0700gmt (10 June 1992) in SWB SU/1405 (12 June 1992) B/6. The Coordinating Council of National Associations of Tajikistan condemns Yusuf for his comments on non-Tajiks. See: ITAR-TASS 1342gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB 1379 (13 May 1992) C1/5.

<sup>390</sup> After Nabiev declared the state of emergency and armed National Guard, DPT leader Shodmon Yusuf declared in a statement that the opposition "had the right to ask" for help from neighbours, especially Afghanistan. He later appeared on TV and apologized and tried to reassure the public that this was not the case. See: Brown, 'Whither Tajikistan', 5. Among those condemning Yusuf's statements was the Coordinating Council of National Associations of Tajikistan. See: Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2. Perceptions of Afghan involvement at this early state were likely not helped by opposition members who "admitted that the mujahideen victory in Afghanistan had provided inspiration" (RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 21 (22 May 1992) 76-7), neither by the fact that Afghanistan's President Rabbani sent a telegram of support to Turajonzoda, saying that Afghanistan's leaders would protect him, (Postfactum (2 May 1992) SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) i), and nor by Yusuf's qualified apology whereby he inserted the statement that mujahideen leader Ahmad Shah Massoud was a "great son of the Tajik people" (Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2).

<sup>391</sup> Bahrom Rahmonov initially said that assistance from Afghanistan would not be ruled out. A day later he announced that assistance from Iran and Afghanistan is "ruled out, the more so – military assistance." See: Tajik Radio (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) i; Postfactum 1136gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/4.

<sup>392</sup> Example: Turajonzoda met with representatives of Dushanbe's Russian community to reassure them that nobody in Tajikistan would be allowed to express "anti-Russian sentiments" or "perpetrate anti-Russian actions." See: Russia's Radio 1900gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/7. On Turajonzoda as a mediator, see: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 167-8, 172.

<sup>393</sup> IRP leader Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda said "that he will work for the creation of an Islamic republic in Tajikistan. However, he said that the question of changing the social structure of the state must be decided by the people, not at a demonstration." See: Interfax 1553gmt (14 May 1992) in SWB SU/1382 (16 May 1992) C1/1. Turajonzoda – not a member of the IRP at this time – provided an opposing view on the establishment of an Islamic government: "Only in a democratic society can religion develop normally in a non-violent way, by means of freedom of choice. So we do not make it our aim to create, to organize in Tajikistan a theocratic state, a religious state. We are all for a secular society." See: Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 1800gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/4. Davlat Usmon, the Vice-Premiere and deputy leader of the IRP, said in an interview that he "shared the view" of Turajonzoda that "the decades of communist rule have killed the trust of many people in God, and they would apparently take more than a year to accept the idea of an Islamic republic on their own." However, his statement only qualifies the timeline for the establishment on an Islamic state. See: Interfax 1047gmt (5 June 1992) in SWB SU/1400 (6 June 1992) B/5.

<sup>394</sup> Dudoignon, 'Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993', 67.

Soviet condemned as lies.<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, both sides made threats of violence against the other.<sup>396</sup>

As early as the first half of April this type of rhetoric did not escape the notice of President Nabiev, who said in a radio address:

Today we have two alternatives. We can either listen to common sense or whip our horse of emotions. [...] At the meetings slogans have appeared which are of a provocative nature. The more we had hindered them the louder these slogans would have sounded. Those slogans from which comes the scent of war and blood cannot under any circumstance be connected to democracy.<sup>397</sup>

However, Nabiev's warning was not heeded by either side to the increasingly rancorous political conflict in the capital. For example, RIA reported that "government supporters in Ozodi square had threatened to kill [Turajonzoda].... And issued an ultimatum for the opposition to clear Shahidan square or they would empty it themselves."<sup>398</sup> Also, Whitlock reported that "Some Azadi demonstrators shouted wildly that Turajanzada was a criminal, and should be put on trial."<sup>399</sup> One incident is credited as particularly reckless. This occurred when Mullah Qiyomiddin announced at Shahidon square that opposition demonstrators were armed with 27,000 weapons,<sup>400</sup> a move that opposition member Gavhar Juraeva argues was "an attempt to forestall officially sanctioned violence against the opposition."<sup>401</sup> On April 24 the IRP chairman denied the rumours about 27,000 armed men, saying only "self-defence groups" had been formed.<sup>402</sup> Sulton Hammad, a security adviser to the opposition, later said that "It was a bold rather than a realistic number. But his declaration ignited rumours that both sides were arming their people, which forced each side to think about the need to actually arm their people."<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>395</sup> According to unnamed sources, the following slogans were heard at Ozodi: "Down with Islam," "Down with democracy which split the Soviet Union," and "Long Live Safarali Kenjaev." Postfactum, 0615gmt (1 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/6. In response, the Supreme Soviet issued a statement thanking demonstrators at Ozodi and condemning rumours spread by opposition that Ozodi protestors are against "Islam and the Shari'ah." The statement stressed that Ozodi demonstrators were "indeed Muslim believers." Tajik Radio, 0800gmt (4 May 1992) in SWB SU/1372 (5 May 1992) B/7. See also: Olimova and Olimov, 'The Islamic Renaissance Party.'

<sup>396</sup> Davlat Usmon of the IRP said that if war breaks out "the current government of Tajikistan will be wiped out" (Interfax (27 April 1992) in SWB SU/1367 (29 April 1992) i. Also, Whitlock reported that "One government man initially in sympathy with the Shahidan group froze in horror when someone there yelled 'Burn the communists' houses and let them suffocate in the smoke!' He was not alone in feeling that things had gone too far, and that people had begun to play dangerous parts." See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161.

<sup>397</sup> Tajik Radio 1300gmt (12 April 1992) in SWB SU/ 1358 (17 April 1992) B/3.

<sup>398</sup> RIA (27 April 1992) in SWB SU/1367 (29 April 1992) ii.

<sup>399</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161.

<sup>400</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, 'Humanitarian engagement with armed groups', 13. Qiyomiddin was also known as Ishon Qiyomiddin, Qori Qiyomiddin Ghozi and Said Gaziev.

<sup>401</sup> Juraeva, 'Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan', 266.

<sup>402</sup> RIA, 1229gmt (24 April 1992) in SWB SU/1365 (27 April 1992) B/4. He also denied that the IRP had relations with Afghan mujahideen.

<sup>403</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, 'Humanitarian engagement with armed groups', 13.

Zartman calls this a “classic security dilemma,” in that he believes the mullah was attempting to deter a forceful government response to the opposition demonstrators.<sup>404</sup>

Davlat Usmon, at the time the IRP leader, later explained what happened:

Before May 1992 we did not think of taking up arms. But, when on April 27–28 a rumour appeared that the government was preparing an armed militia we also started to act. We armed the first 40–50 people. All they had for weapons were one pistol, two grenades and 30–40 hunting rifles. We then started to prepare Molotov cocktails.<sup>405</sup>

Soon after, on May 2, the demonstrators at Ozodi square matched the opposition rhetoric on weapons when Mullah Haydar Sharifzoda called for the Ozodi crowd to be given weapons to defend against opposition demonstrators.<sup>406</sup> A while later the CIS garrison commander in Dushanbe had to deny Turajonzoda’s allegation that a CIS armoury in Kulob had lost its weapons.<sup>407</sup> On May 3 the security dilemma was in full effect as, according to opposition member Juraeva, the government distributed 1,700 weapons to pro-government demonstrators at Ozodi square.<sup>408</sup> Over the next two days speculation over the threat that the other side posed continued to escalate.<sup>409</sup>

### **Fighting in Dushanbe**

Both the police and military present in Dushanbe made claims of neutrality. Col. Vyacheslav Zabolotnyy, the head of Dushanbe garrison of the CIS 201<sup>st</sup> MRD said that his unit would only act on orders of the top CIS commander and that his unit – in which only officers and warrant officers were armed – was “adhering strictly to a policy of neutrality.”<sup>410</sup> On the police side, a Slav commander in OMON – a special police unit within the Interior Ministry – announced on May 6 that OMON units would be

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<sup>404</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 107-8. Zartman also conveys the opposition’s talking points, writing that “Kenjaev ordered a few public murders and violence escalated. Pamiris, a CIS officer and some journalists were shot.”

<sup>405</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 13. Usmon continues: Before the attack on the Presidential Palace, during the night from May 4, when two officers of the government forces come to the demonstration, I asked one of them: ‘Major, do you see a war?’ and I asked the demonstrators to show their weapons. They showed bottles with inflammable oil. There were about 1500–2000 bottles.

<sup>406</sup> Interfax 1246gmt (2 May 1992) in SWB SU/1372 (5 May 1992) B/9.

<sup>407</sup> ITAR-TASS 0750gmt (3 May 1992) in SWB SU/1372 (5 May 1992) B/9. Commander Zabolotnyy said unsuccessful attempts by unknown persons had been made to bribe for or steal weapons.

<sup>408</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 266.

<sup>409</sup> For example: Russian TV reported that both sides were “setting up their own fighting formations.” See: Russian TV 1600gmt (4 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/7; another report noted that Nabiev had signed a decree to break up the demonstration at Shahidon, and that the opposition was aware and was setting up “counter-measures.” See: Russia’s Radio 0100gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/7.

<sup>410</sup> ITAR-TASS 0750gmt (3 May 1992) in SWB SU/1372 (5 May 1992) B/9; Postfactum 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2.

maintaining neutrality, only guarding their locations and patrolling the city. However, on the same day they did repel an attempt by the opposition to take over a local radio station.<sup>411</sup> And, as earlier mentioned by Whitlock, an OMON unit did join the opposition.

As noted above – and aside from earlier minor incidents<sup>412</sup> – fighting started on May 5 in the outskirts of Dushanbe (with alternate versions blaming either side<sup>413</sup>) and then spread overnight with shooting between armed opposition forces and National Guards.<sup>414</sup> The violence continued throughout the next day, including deaths at Ozodi.<sup>415</sup> On the same day the security forces offered no resistance as the opposition demonstrators – now in possession of Interior Ministry weapons and armoured vehicles – took over the presidential palace and airport on May 6.<sup>416</sup> Elsewhere in the now-paralysed city, fighting at the state radio building left a CIS Lieutenant Colonel dead while a separate fire fight was underway at the now opposition-controlled TV centre.<sup>417</sup>

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<sup>411</sup> Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 1100gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/4; ITAR-TASS 1808gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/4; Interfax 1740gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/5. The commander's name was Sergei Vasilenko

<sup>412</sup> For example, according to an opposition spokesman, unnamed authorities arrested two young Kulob for an attempted arson at Turajonzoda's house. See: Oleg Panfilov 'Tajikistan', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (30 April 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/3. Also, the opposition displayed a year 11 student from Kulob at press conference who admitted to being paid to attempt to throw a grenade into the Shahidon square crowd. See: Postfactum, 1154gmt (2 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/4.

<sup>413</sup> These sources state that the National Guards shot at opposition supporters who were attempting to block Kulobis from entering Dushanbe: Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 1700gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1; Postfactum 1818gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1; ITAR-TASS, 0765gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1-2; Postfactum (1628gmt 6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2. On the other side, Whitlock writes that the first instance of violent conflict happened as a convoy of counter-demonstrators were arriving in Dushanbe from Kulob. In her version, unknown persons fired on the convoy, an incident that the opposition leaders maintain did not involve their supporters. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161.

<sup>414</sup> ITAR-TASS 1808gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/4; Postfactum 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2.

<sup>415</sup> On May 6, unknown people threw a grenade into Ozodi square from an ambulance and then shooting started. During the fighting unknown shooters killed a Supreme Soviet deputy at Ozodi square on the stairs of the Supreme Soviet. The deputy was Nurullo Sheraliev, the editor of the *Sado-yi Mardum (Golos Naroda)* newspaper. See: Postfactum 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2; Postfactum 1539gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/4; Russia's Radio 0800gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>416</sup> Postfactum 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163.

<sup>417</sup> Zabolotnyy blames National Guards for firing on a UAZ-469 (Soviet jeep) in which Lt. Col. Georgiy Dyadik and Private Rustamov were killed at 10pm on May 6 in the area of Radio centre – which was being shelled by APCs. Note: the sources do not say who was controlling the APCs, but it is safe to assume that the government controlled building was being attacked by opposition sympathizers. See: Postfactum 1539gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/4; Russia's Radio 0800gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3. On May 7 Russia's radio reported a growing number of killed and wounded in Dushanbe over the previous 24 hours with 14 people having sought treatment for gunshot wounds, entrances to city blocked, cars being searched, and the city generally being shut down (schools, enterprises, etc). See: Russia's Radio 0800gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3.

As mentioned above, on May 6 Major General Bahrom Rahmonov joined the opposition. However, it soon became clear that Rahmonov had brought little to the opposition other than himself. Rahmonov – promoted to the Chair of the National Defence Committee – admitted as much at a press conference on May 11. While he spoke forcefully (e.g., “...we must raise the people to fight against all the filth which surrounds us”), when asked about manpower he gave an honest answer:

Q: “...what forces do the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Tajikistan have at its disposal at present and what do you have under your command at the moment?”

A: “I can say unambiguously that at present the armed forces of the Republic of Tajikistan consist of all the people present here in the [Shahidon] square at the moment. I can’t say more than that just now.”<sup>418</sup>

Rahmonov, while having had good relations with the opposition and local journalists,<sup>419</sup> unsurprisingly admitted that relations between Nabiev and himself were poor, and that if conflicts regarding his own authority arise in the future he would resign.<sup>420</sup>

One media outlet reported that demonstrators at Ozodi started to leave the city on May 7 immediately after the announcement of the preliminary GNR agreement was announced.<sup>421</sup> However, Whitlock describes what sounds more like a negotiated military retreat:

Strengthened by the windfall of the Interior Ministry guns and armoured personnel carriers, [opposition supporters] headed for Azadi Square where the parliament building stood. Leaders of the rival demonstrations struck a deal, allowing the Kulabis to leave the square and return home and giving them an escort until they were beyond the Dushanbe city boundary. As there was heavy shooting at Azadi in the meantime and several men were killed, the Kulabis kept their guns to cover their withdrawal.<sup>422</sup>

While a “deal” may have been reached – in Whitlock’s version – it clearly did not apply to the Kulobi leaders at Ozodi, all of whom were imprisoned by the opposition.<sup>423</sup> By late in the day on May 7 – with the pro-government forces at Ozodi square defeated and

<sup>418</sup> Tajik Radio 1850gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/5.

<sup>419</sup> An undetermined number of journalists applauded Rahmonov at press conference after one reporter used his/her question to thank him. A second questioner from TajikFilm then thanked him profusely. See: Tajik Radio 1850gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/5. In their early enthusiasm, unnamed opposition leaders declared Rahmonov the “general of the people.” See: Postfactum 1628gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>420</sup> Postfactum 1136gmt (12 May 1992) and Russian TV 1900gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/5-6.

<sup>421</sup> Radio-1, Moscow 1500gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>422</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163. The military from a “local garrison” searched a column leaving for Kulob and confiscated weapons. See: Radio-1, Moscow 1500gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3. Also, Interfax describes an armed government supporter at Ozodi shooting off what he called a “farewell salute” at the square before leaving while accurately predicting “we’ll be back.” See: Interfax 1316gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/5.

<sup>423</sup> These three were Sangak Safarov, Mullah Sharifzoda and Rustam Abdurrahimov. The imprisonment lasted for five days and ended thanks to the intervention of Nabiev and/or Turajonzoda. See: Gretskey, ‘Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda’, 22; Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation*, 33. For more information, see the section on Safarov in the next chapter.

having left the city – the only “centre of power” not controlled by the opposition was the National Security Committee building, where Nabiev and Kenjaev were being sheltered by the CIS 201<sup>st</sup> MRD.<sup>424</sup>

By the night of May 8-9 the city was mostly calm, with APCs flying green flags driving through city and opposition supporters celebrating.<sup>425</sup> However, violent conflict restarted on May 10 when opposition supporters surrounded the National Security Committee building – where President Nabiev was taking refuge. In the stand-off and resulting violence, as many as 10 people in the opposition crowd were killed.<sup>426</sup> The opposing sides assigned blame in irreconcilable narratives, with each side the villain in the other’s version.<sup>427</sup> After this incident – with as many as 74 deaths<sup>428</sup> in Dushanbe over a period of five days – the demonstrators, in Kilavuz’s words, “returned to their

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<sup>424</sup> Russia’s Radio 0800gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163. Whitlock describes an atmosphere of confusion: “...no clear leader emerged on the opposition side. Someone appeared on televisions announcing that a ‘revolutionary council’ had been set up – five hours later, a second announcement cancelled the first.” Whitlock also describes the 201<sup>st</sup> as “supposedly neutral” – apparently considering their refusal to hand over the president to a crowd of possibly armed opposition supporters as a violation of their stated neutrality. Some in the opposition clearly felt that the 201<sup>st</sup> was working against them. For example, on May 12 the DPT leader Yusuf apologised to the Dushanbe CIS garrison for accusing of them of breaching neutrality. See: Interfax 0851gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/6.

<sup>425</sup> ITAR-TASS 0503gmt (9 May 1992) in SWB SU/1377 (11 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>426</sup> Tajik Radio 0400gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/4-5; *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 21 (22 May 1992) 76-7; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163.

<sup>427</sup> Tajik Radio, now under opposition control, maintains that the crowds outside were unarmed and blame the “barbaric and inhumane action on the part of the KGB forces...” See: Tajik Radio 0400gmt (11 May 1992) SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/4-5. Tajik Radio makes no mention of any attempt to enter the building on the part of the crowd, which RFE/RL reports. See: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 21 (22 May 1992) 76-7. An anonymous KGB officer provides another version, saying that three people were killed when armed IRP gunmen followed by protesters approached the building. He further claims that two APCs and armed gunmen opened fire on the building, which housed the KGB and the Interior Ministry. See: RIA 1733gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/5. Local witness of unknown sympathies said that a group approached building escorted by ten OMON troops with white flag and list of demands to convey, and that people inside building opened fire. See: RIA 1917gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/5. An OMON commander said that he was tasked to stop demonstrators advancing, but that they were unarmed from his perspective. However, unknown shooters shot him in the leg. See: Russian TV 1000gmt (11 May 1992) SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/2-3. Major General Martovitskiy, head of local branch of Central Asian Border District – whose headquarters were housed inside the building – said that demonstrators were asked to leave but that they refused. The OMON fired warning shots and someone in the crowd fired back. He also mentions that APCs from the garrison (not clear if 201<sup>st</sup> garrison or Border District garrison) then showed up. See: Russian TV 1000gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/2-3; Interfax 0850gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>428</sup> On May 11 Tajik Radio reported a total of 74 deaths in Dushanbe. See: Tajik Radio 0800gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/4. For earlier tallies, see: Radio-1, Moscow 1500gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3; *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 21 (22 May 1992) 76-7. The exact count could be complicated since, as noted earlier by a police spokesman, locals might bury their deceased without informing the authorities. See: John-Thor Dahlburg, ‘Dissidents Rout Tajikistan’s Hard-Line Leader Central Asia’, *Los Angeles Times* (7 May 1992) 23.

hometowns, at which point fights began in these regions.”<sup>429</sup> By mid-May the violence in the capital ceased.<sup>430</sup> However, this was not to last for long.

## Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that the pattern of escalating political competition in Tajikistan became increasingly based on regional affiliation. The relatively open political and social environment allowed for groups and individuals to mobilise and demand changes to the structure of the state and society – whether through elections, bureaucratic appointments or through large demonstrations in the capital. Regional elites who were Gharmi and Pamiri were especially likely to back the Gorbachev reforms and, later, the Tajik opposition parties against the northern elites – and their secondary allies from Kulob and Hisor – who dominated the central government. At stake for regional elites were not just powerful positions in the capital, but local administrative and collective farm positions that involved the distribution and control over local economic resources. In Qurghonteppa this resulted in competition between Gharmi Tajiks who backed the opposition and Kulobi Tajiks who backed the government and worked against the reforms.

The use of mass demonstrations in the capital, and the accompanying threats of violence, brought the political competition into the streets and increasingly into the hands of reckless individuals who were prepared for the use of force. By the time the government weakened and violent conflict started in May 1992, the only willing and able factions were the Gharmi Tajik-dominated IRP and their Pamiri allies in the security forces on one side and the Kulobi and Hisor-based actors on the other. While at this time there were still numerous exceptions to the rule of region or origin determining political loyalty, it is clear that the factions had a strong regional base and composition, especially for those in leadership positions. This regional factor was to increase steadily as the levels of violence increased throughout southern Tajikistan in the summer and fall of 1992 as local conflicts attached to national level issues in a pattern of ‘alliance.’

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<sup>429</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152.

<sup>430</sup> Aleksandr Karpov, ‘Tajikistan: There was shooting in the capital, and now there’s shooting in the provinces’, *Izvestia* (11 June 1992) 2, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 23 (8 July 1992). Like Kilavuz, Karpov also cites the transfer of violent conflict from Dushanbe to Qurghonteppa and Kulob.



## Chapter 4

### The Civil War of 1992

#### Introduction

In May of 1992 the political competition and street protests in Dushanbe transitioned into an extended period of violent conflict, with the worst of the violence occurring over the next 7-9 months. The central government – now an uneasy power sharing compromise – became largely irrelevant as killing, looting, and destruction of property spread throughout southern Tajikistan, driving people to flee to any location safer than their homes. At first much of the violence lacked coordination as no ready armed forces with acknowledged leadership existed at the outbreak of the civil war. The political leadership of the opposition and central government had very little control, if any, over the people apparently fighting in their name. As the conflict worsened, leaders of the militias emerged – very few of them familiar to those outside their home areas. Men of various backgrounds rose to prominence based on their ability to recruit, arm and lead men in the war. They would successfully use a variety of recruiting and mobilising techniques based on pre-existing structures, networks and loyalties.

At the beginning of the conflict the issues of regional identities being politicised was readily apparent, with Kulobi Tajiks prominent in pro-government demonstrations and with Gharmi Tajiks over-represented in the religious wing of the opposition. The issue of ‘region of origin’ (e.g., Kulobi and Gharmi) would quickly become an issue of life or death as militias and even neighbours began to kill based on a person’s origin. This would apply also to ethnicity in the case of Uzbeks and Pamiris, who came to be identified with the pro-government and opposition sides, respectively. With the logic of mobilising for conflict based on these identities, the cleavages between Islamists, democrats, and incumbent ‘Communists’ became increasingly less valuable in terms of analytical value.

This chapter will provide a narrative for the first phase of violent conflict, roughly until early spring 1993. This includes an analysis of the increasing weakness of the central government and the spread of fighting through southern Tajikistan and, finally, the counter-opposition forces’ capture of Dushanbe at the end of the year. A full and detailed analysis of the motivations and actions of leaders and followers in the

armed conflict, including the increasing significance of ethnicity and region of origin, will follow in the next chapter.

### **The Government of National Reconciliation**

“A political vacuum has worsened after the demotion of President Rahmon Nabiev to figurehead status, distrusted by his new coalition partners and branded a traitor by the once loyal stalwarts of the old Soviet system.”

- *The Independent*, June 1992.<sup>1</sup>

“Tajikistan is virtually divided right now. No-one knows who represents the real government. All you have is a bunch of senior officials speaking out their personal views on behalf of the government.”

- Foreign diplomat in Dushanbe, October 1992.<sup>2</sup>

While the most devastating phase of the civil war in Tajikistan was fought in the rural south, the capital managed to escape the worst of the conflict. In Dushanbe an extremely weak and ineffective government attempted to carry out its duties. On 11 May 1992 pro-opposition crowds started to leave Shahidon square after the Government of National Reconciliation (GNR) was announced and the opposition received a share of power.<sup>3</sup> However, the coalition government was an overwhelming failure. Whitlock summarises the ineptitude of the GNR in Dushanbe and the enormous obstacles that it faced:

The Tajik Government of National Reconciliation represented by far the most radical political experiment by any state of the former Soviet Union. It faced enormous odds. The men in charge of the country – which was only six months old – had no reason to trust one another, and had no experience of managing public affairs beyond the Soviet system or underground organisations. The president was befuddled by drink and had been shown to be powerless. The parliament, made up mainly of old communists, refused to meet. There was still no army. The 201<sup>st</sup> division, standing in place of an army, was commanded by the former colonial power. There was no calculable economy. The Tajik SSR had depended on Moscow for aid, and in 1990 – the last full year of the Soviet Union – had received 762 million roubles, which was reduced to only 25 million devalued roubles in 1991; in 1992, subsidies ended. The allocation of a third

<sup>1</sup> Hugh Pope, ‘Rudderless republic heads for the rocks’, *The Independent* (27 June 1992) 14. Note: spelling of Rahmon’s name changed from original.

<sup>2</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Grim bloodletting gives Tajik government the shivers’, Reuters News (5 October 1992). Neither the diplomat’s identity nor nationality is provided in the report.

<sup>3</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 164. Kilavuz on the agreement: “...the majority of the newly established coalition government went to the ruling elite, with few positions going to the opposition. Among those few were Davlat Usmon (deputy chairman of IRP), who became deputy Prime Minister. Also Mirbobob Mirrahim of Rastokhez, and the deputy chair of the Tajik Language Foundation, became Chairman of the State Television and Radio Committee.”: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152.

of government positions only applied in the capital, leaving the opposition unrepresented in the countryside, not least in the southern and mountainous provinces in which it had real support. Worst of all, region had been set against region. Khujand declared at once that it would not take orders from the new government. Kulob followed suit. Dushanbe stood exposed as a rootless city with no tradition of government over the plains and valleys around it.<sup>4</sup>

President Nabiev's base rapidly eroded after the announcement of the GNR. He had neither the support of most Leninobodi elites, nor even of some Khujandi leaders in the capital, despite being a Khujandi himself.<sup>5</sup> As for Nabiev's former partners, despite the numerous references to anti-opposition fighters using variations on a 'pro-Nabiev' label,<sup>6</sup> Kulob officials announced that the GNR is a violation of the constitution and many Kulobis renounced Nabiev.<sup>7</sup> On May 15 the Kulob City Soviet "threatened to make the city independent."<sup>8</sup> And on May 20 Kulob and Leninobod provincial authorities announced their refusal to recognize the new government. Deputies from Leninobod and Kulob Provinces in the Supreme Soviet (i.e., parliament) announced that they would not participate in the new government. Kulob provincial authorities called for a Constitutional Oversight Committee to review recent decrees and decisions by the new national government. At the same time, unnamed provincial authorities made threats, or bluffs, of separation. Leninobod authorities threatened to ask Uzbekistan to annex them while Kulob authorities "threatened to create an independent state."<sup>9</sup> In late June an agreement was reached between the leadership of the Leninobod province and the central government that included, on paper, Leninobodi recognition of the central

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<sup>4</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 164-5. Bess Brown also reports the rumour that Nabiev was a "heavy drinker." See: Brown, 'Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev'.

<sup>5</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 185.

<sup>6</sup> A good example is this *Krasnaya zvezda* article, which divides the combatants into "supporters of President Nabiev" and "antinabievskiy" forces. See: Anatoly Ladin, 'Goryachaya tochka: Ne stanet li Tadzhikistan novym Afganistanom?', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 221 (29 September 1992). For similar uses of Nabiev as the focal point of support or opposition, see: Brown, 'Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev'; Associated Press, 'Embattled president of Tajikistan blasts religious chief in ouster bid', *San Antonio Express-News* (7 September 1992) 3.A; Steven Erlanger, 'After Week of Turmoil, Tajik President Is Forced Out', *New York Times* (8 September 1992); Steve LeVine, 'Private armies bring instability to Tajikistan: A Central Asian power struggle', *Financial Times* (2 November 1992) 3.

<sup>7</sup> Bess Brown, 'Whither Tajikistan', *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 24 (12 June 1992) 5. As an example, Qurbon Mirzoaliev, Chairman of Kulob Provincial Executive Committee, announces that the provincial Soviet does not recognise the GNR. See: Asal Azamova, 'Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars', *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9 in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992). However, once Nabiev was forced to resign some unnamed Kulobi leaders demanded that he be reinstated. See: Carey Goldberg, 'Ousted Leader's Supporters Seize Control in Tajikistan', *Los Angeles Times* (25 October 1992) 20. This did not include the all-important commander Sangak Safarov. Kulobis renouncing Nabiev included Safarov. After Nabiev was ousted in September, Safarov was paraphrased as saying that Nabiev "was no longer a credible leader." See: 'Kurgan-Tyube', *Agence France-Presse* (13 November 1992).

<sup>8</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 22 (29 May 1992) 70.

<sup>9</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 23 (5 June 1992) 76.

government in exchange for devolution of powers to the northern province.<sup>10</sup> The districts of the Hisor Valley were in a situation similar to the provinces of Kulob and Leninobod in early summer 1992. The political leadership in all three areas had, beyond refusing to recognise the central government, taken control over state-run enterprises as well as halted the export of resources and products from their regions. And in terms of security, the local leadership subordinated the local police to their administrations. By mid-1992 Tajikistan's state structures had degenerated into multiple "fiefdoms," far from the control of the central government in Dushanbe.<sup>11</sup>

Near the end of June, Muslim leaders in Kulob followed their secular counterparts and withdrew from the national *Qoziyot*. The Kulobi Muslim leaders announced the formation of an equivalent institution under the leadership of the Kulobi mullah Haydar Sharifzoda.<sup>12</sup> The rhetoric from local leaders continued into autumn, as demonstrated by former Kulob Interior Ministry head J. Rizoiev, the new Chair of the Kulob Province Executive Committee, who stated that there would be no compromise with the GNR and its "gambling" on an "Iranian pattern of state system."<sup>13</sup>

The national government in Dushanbe continued to exhibit severe dysfunction throughout the summer and early fall. Examples include:

- In late June, Nabiev ordered all illegally held weapons confiscated and sent instructions to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Committee for National Security, the Defence Committee and the *Prokuratura* (the republic's top prosecutor) to form "combat groups for disarming illicit armed groups."<sup>14</sup> No groups were formed and the attempt at disarmament is a total failure.<sup>15</sup>

<sup>10</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 63-4. The authors describe this power-sharing structure as a type of *regionalnoe dvoevlastie*.

<sup>11</sup> Niyazi, 'Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimensions of Conflict', 146, 161-2. As an example of these local leaders who refused to recognize the central government, Niyazi points to Qurbonali Mirzoaliev, the Chairman of the Kulob Province Executive Committee.

<sup>12</sup> RIA news agency 1606gmt (24 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/7. Later, on September 1, Oleg Panfilov reported that Haydar Sharifzoda convened an "Islamic conference" in Kulob which included representatives from around Kulob plus one each from Qurghonteppe and Khujand. They resolved, among other uncited issues, to support the introduction of outside peacekeepers. See: Panfilov, 'Will Shaposhnikov save Nabiev?: The Russian marshal's strange visit to Tajikistan', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (1 September 1992) in SWB SU/1476 (3 September 1992) B/3.

<sup>13</sup> Mayak Radio 1100gmt (10 October 1992) in SWB SU/1509 (12 October 1992) B/4. Rizoiev's first name is given in alternate versions as Jienkhon, Jurakhon, Jonkhon and Jahonkhon. Rizoiev replaced Qurbonali Mirzoaliev in unknown circumstances. Mirzoaliev apparently resigned on September 28. See: ITAR-TASS (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1498 (29 September 1992) i.

<sup>14</sup> ITAR-TASS 0640gmt (25 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/6. A longer discussion on attempts at disarmament can be found in the previous section.

<sup>15</sup> Ministry of Internal Affairs stated that there was no progress in disarmament since the Khorogh agreement and that only 160 weapons had been turned in. The ministry estimated that there are 15,000 weapons in the "hands of population." See: Tajik Radio 1700gmt (30 July 1992) in SWB SU/1448 (1 August 1992) B/7. On August 6 the Ministry of Internal Affairs gave an even grimmer number: only 19 of an estimated 17,000 weapons had been turned in by the August 3 deadline. A new plan to buy weapons from the armed groups is announced. See: ITAR-TASS 1544gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/5. The estimate by Minister of Internal Affairs Navjuvanov for weapons held by the

- One month later Nabiev admits that the government does not have the power to disarm the militias, even as he orders the creation of a new government department to focus on disarmament.<sup>16</sup>
- By late July opposition parties and their supporters were demanding Nabiev's resignation.<sup>17</sup>
- On August 4 Nabiev fired career officer Col. Alijon Solibaev, the chair of the National Security Committee several days after firing General Bahrom Rahmonov from Chair of Defence Committee. Members of National Security Committee protested his dismissal and refused to recognise the new chair.<sup>18</sup>
- Emergency session of the Supreme Soviet – previously postponed as deputies feared for their safety – starts August 11. Opposition-controlled Tajik Radio claims that over two-thirds of the Deputies were present. However, ITAR-TASS reports that the Deputies were lethargic, except when exchanging “accusations of parochialism” and engaging in “scholastic disputes.”<sup>19</sup>
- On August 31 opposition supporters blockade the presidential palace and/or take hostages, depending on which account is relied upon. Presidential palace hostage takers wanted to trade hostages for General Rahim Nurullobekov (an ethnic Pamiri), who was being held by the National Security Committee (KGB) on suspicion of involvement in the murder of Nurullo Khuvayduloev, the state *Prokurator*.<sup>20</sup>
- On September 2 Interior Minister Navjuvonov resigned, saying that he could not “take part in fratricidal feuds.”<sup>21</sup>
- On September 4, only 80 deputies show up to Supreme Soviet; 154 are needed for a quorum. None of the Deputies who attend are from Kulob or Leninobod.<sup>22</sup>

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various armed groups in late September, see: Vladimir Gondusov, ITAR-TASS 1125gmt (25 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/2. Another plan to form a commission to buy weapons from the militias in announced in late September See: ITAR-TASS 1606gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/8.

<sup>16</sup> A. Ladin, ‘This power struggle is humiliating’, *Krasnaya zvezda* (15 July 1992) in SWB SU/1435 (17 July 1992) B/9; Russia’s Radio, 0100gmt (12 July 1992) in SWB SU/1435 (17 July 1992) B/11.

<sup>17</sup> Tajik radio 0700gmt (28 July) in SWB SU/1447 (31 July 1992) B/4-5; Oleg Panfilov, ‘Col. Gen. Nabiyev remains Tajikistan’s President – but he seeks support from Russian Federation’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (22 August 1992), 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 34 (23 September 1992); ITAR-TASS 1502gmt (31 August 1992) in SWB SU/1474 (1 September 1992) B/3.

<sup>18</sup> ITAR-TASS 1617gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1451 (5 August 1992) B/3-4; Tajik Radio 1200gmt (4 August 1992) and ITAR-TASS 0831gmt (5 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/5. His name is mistakenly reported by these sources as “Selekhbaev.”

<sup>19</sup> ITAR-TASS (6 August 1992) in SWB SU/1454 (8 August 1992) i-ii; Tajik Radio (11 August 1992) and ITAR-TASS (11 August 1992) in SWB SU/1457 (12 August 1992) i.

<sup>20</sup> ITAR-TASS 1502gmt (31 August 1992) and ITAR-TASS 1757gmt (31 August 1992) in SWB SU/1474 (1 September 1992) B/3; ‘Foes of Tajik Leader Take Officials Hostage’, *New York Times* (1 September 1992). Tajik Radio named the hostages, including Jamshed Karimov. It further reported that the people involved in the incident at the presidential palace are “those youths of Dushanbe,” but says they have “no leader and no organization has taken [...] responsibility for the action.” This could likely be a reference to the “Youths of Dushanbe” group that would later force the resignation of Nabiev. See: Tajik Radio 0000gmt (1 September 1992) in SWB SU/1474 (1 September 1992) B/3. The DPT claimed that the hostage takers were displaced refugees from the south. However, this was refuted by Russia’s Radio, which reported that the hostage takers were, in fact, members of the opposition parties. See: Russia’s Radio 0900gmt (1 September 1992) in SWB SU/1474 (1 September 1992) B/4.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Tajik parliament expresses no confidence in President’, Associated Press via *The Globe and Mail* [Toronto] (03 September 1992) A.12.

- By early September, President Nabiev was attempting to secretly hide in the Dushanbe garrison of the 201st. When asked why he was hiding in a telephone interview he answered: “My residence has been seized by armed men, I am not allowed to work in the Supreme Soviet. Where, in your opinion, should the president be?”<sup>23</sup>

Dudoignon describes at length<sup>24</sup> how ill-suited the members of the IRP, DPT and Rastokhez were to govern in 1992. First, they failed completely in their attempt to take control of the economic and industrial sector. Privatisation had reduced the amount of control that government had over the economy, leaving the opposition alliance with no significant government coffers.<sup>25</sup> This was despite several poorly coordinated and violent attempts to take control of certain economic assets. Even the pro-opposition Pamiri allies of La’li Badakhshon kept the central government away from the GBAO’s economic assets; second, members of the opposition had insufficient skills to manage bureaucracies, government organs and economic assets. This was hardly surprising considering the human resources of the opposition: the IRP with its rural mullahs and the DPT with its academics from the humanities, mainly literature; third, the increasingly radical ideology espoused by the opposition was ill-suited to a society undergoing a perilous drop in the standard of living. For example, the nationalist rhetoric of Iranian-Persian-Tajik glory and Tajik irredentism<sup>26</sup> was a failure as a motivational tool to mobilise the people. The result of these short-comings was “disillusion and apathy” on the part of the population of Dushanbe, and a resignation to the likelihood that there would be a return to the old leadership.<sup>27</sup> By early September

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<sup>22</sup> ITAR-TASS (4 September 1992) SU/1478 (5 September 1992) I; Mark Trevelyan, ‘Tajik radio says at least 30 killed in fresh fighting’, Reuters News (4 September 1992). Trevelyan reports that the session was called in order to “vote on a joint decision by the cabinet and parliamentary leadership this week to strip the former Communist Party boss of his powers.”

<sup>23</sup> Aleksandra Lugovskaya, ‘R. Nabiev: I remain president of Tajikistan’, *Izvestia* (4 September 1992) in SWB SU/1478 (5 September 1992) C1/2. Commander Ashurov initially denied allegations that Nabiev was hiding in the 201<sup>st</sup> garrison in Dushanbe. See: Russia’s Radio 0900gmt (1 September 1992) in SWB SU/1474 (1 September 1992) B/4; ITAR-TASS 0655gmt (2 September 1992) in SWB SU/1476 (3 September 1992) B/5. However, on September 5<sup>th</sup> Ashurov finally confirmed that Nabiev was in the 201<sup>st</sup> base. See: *Izvestia* (5 September 1992) in SWB SU/1481 (9 September 1992) C1/1.

<sup>24</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 19-22.

<sup>25</sup> Privatisation had started at least 5 years before, and it had been a lop-sided process: “The technocrats of the economy were the first who abandoned the ship of political liberalization. Indeed as soon as 1987 if not earlier, economy *nomenklatura* had begun its own redeployment to business, in Tajikistan as everywhere else in the USSR. A social and soon political division appeared between those who had the means of assuming this professional transition and intended to keep their monopoly on productive wealth, and those who remained more or less completely deprived of these means and would try to get them by any possible way. In Tajikistan as elsewhere in Soviet Central Asia, this division opposed the adversaries and supporters of a political and economical divorce with Moscow.” See: Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 12-3.

<sup>26</sup> For example: Samarqand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan.

<sup>27</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 19-22.

the support for the DPT was greatly diminished while Rastokhez support was almost non-existent, leaving the IRP as the main opposition force.<sup>28</sup>

On the excesses of the opposition, Schoeberlein writes that even though the opposition only held one-third of ministries in the coalition government (and Nabiev held the presidency), the “chaos and abuses of the government during summer 1992 were attributed to the opposition, and they lost much of their popularity thanks to their own failures...”<sup>29</sup> Schoeberlein makes a related comment on the “armed supporters” of the opposition, noting that Gharmi and Pamiri forces gained a reputation for robbery and killing in Dushanbe in the second half of 1992.<sup>30</sup> Meanwhile, Nourzhanov writes that the “GNR had no authority even among its own armed supporters, who took Cabinet members hostage and plundered the capital city at will.”<sup>31</sup>

The continued opposition political attacks that were concentrated on Nabiev served, in Dudoignon words, as a “diversion manoeuvre” which gave political space for others on his side to maintain and even strengthen their positions.<sup>32</sup> By September Nabiev had lost too much support. Parliament and the IRP both called for his resignation. On September 7, Nabiev attempted to return to Khujand and submit his resignation from his home region. However, at the airport opposition supporters surrounded the terminal and forced him to sign his resignation – possibly at gunpoint if Nabiev is to be believed. Later that night he went home to Khujand and never returned.<sup>33</sup> Akbarsho Iskandarov, the successor to Kenjaev as speaker of the Supreme Soviet, became acting president after Nabiev resigned. Iskandarov, an ally of Nabiev

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<sup>28</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 69-70.

<sup>29</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 40-1.

<sup>30</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 40. Schoeberlein also notes that there was harassment and occasional attacks on Tajik women in Dushanbe who had short hair or western clothing. The fact that this was not strongly condemned by the opposition made it appear to some as if they were condoning this behaviour.

<sup>31</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 20.

<sup>33</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 185; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168-70. See also: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 41. Brown makes no mention of armed men being at airport for resignation, but does cite a crowd of about 1500 people outside the airport. See: Bess Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 38 (25 September 1992) 12. Bushkov and Mikulsky report that after the airport was surrounded the security services arrived to protect Nabiev, and that he signed his resignation after meeting with members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet. Nabiev himself said that he signed the document at gunpoint: “It was purely and simply a coup. [...] I had no choice but to sign the resignation statement they gave me. If I hadn't, dozens would have died.” See: ‘Rakhman N. Nabiyev Dies at 62; Led Tajikistan Under Communism’, *New York Times* (12 April 1993). A possible illustration of how fully Nabiev's authority had collapsed, his car trip out of Dushanbe to Khujand, according to Whitlock, involved being “hidden, apparently, in the boot.” However, other sources mention an exit by plane after leaving the area escorted by forces of the 201<sup>st</sup> and the Interior Ministry. See: Steven Erlanger, ‘After Week of Turmoil, Tajik President Is Forced Out’, *New York Times*, (8 September 1992); Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 68-9.

despite being Pamiri, had been supportive of the “old order,” as he had benefited from it.<sup>34</sup>

Iskandarov did attempt some measures to stabilise Tajikistan. For example, on September 18, Iskandarov attempted to start a process of consolidating the security organs of the state. He decreed the formation of a new Ministry of Defence which would incorporate the Defence Committee, Military Commissariat and Civil Defence Headquarters of the Republic of Tajikistan.<sup>35</sup> And on September 23, Iskandarov appointed Mahmadmurod Saidmurodov as “commander of the National Guard.”<sup>36</sup> However, on September 24, Jurabek Aminov, the Deputy Chairman of the National Security Committee (KGB), blamed the failure of the state to force the warring parties to comply with the disarmament process partly on Tajikistan’s lack of necessary military assets. Aminov complained that Russia had agreed to sell military hardware from the 201<sup>st</sup> to the government of Tajikistan for posting in the areas of armed conflict, but that Russia had reneged late in the process. For its part, the “assistant to commander” of the CIS forces in Tajikistan was willing to give military hardware to Tajik government forces, but only on the orders of the Russian President Boris Yeltsin<sup>37</sup> – a clear demonstration of Russian Federation authority over the CIS forces in Tajikistan. Later, on October 5, Turajonzoda gave his approval to a proposal for foreign peacekeepers, but only from Kyrgyzstan and explicitly not from Uzbekistan or Russia. He specifically blamed Russia for destabilising Tajikistan and asked why Russia had not supplied government forces, particularly the weaponless National Guard, with military hardware. Turajonzoda said that the “paralysis of the power structure is being sharply felt” and singled out the army, National Security Committee, and Interior Ministry as being totally “demoralized.”<sup>38</sup> Iskandarov’s time in office lasted less than six weeks until a special session of the Supreme Soviet was held in Khujand to select a new head of state.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 615. Iskandarov then appointed the Leninobodi Abdumalik Abdullojonov as Prime Minister. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 173, 176; Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, p. 615; Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Russia and the new states of Eurasia: the politics of upheaval* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), Appendix B, 326; Conciliation Resources, ‘Tajikistan Chronology’, website online at: <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/chronology.php>

<sup>35</sup> Tajik Radio 1200gmt (18 September 1992) in SWB SU/1491 (21 September 1992) B/2.

<sup>36</sup> Tajik Radio (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1494 (24 September 1992) i.

<sup>37</sup> Interfax 1549gmt (24 September 1992) in SWB SU/1496 (26 September 1992) B/5-6.

<sup>38</sup> Interfax 1648gmt (5 October 1992) in SWB SU/1505 (7 October 1992) B/6.

<sup>39</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 173, 176; Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 615; Dawisha and Parrott, *Russia and the new states of Eurasia*. Appendix B, 326; Conciliation Resources, ‘Tajikistan Chronology.’



## The IRP, Turajonzoda and the GNR

According to Sergei Gretskey, the foreign policy advisor to Turajonzoda in 1992 and 1993, during the opposition protests of April and May the *Qoziyot* under Turajonzoda became the headquarters of the opposition with Turajonzoda providing the “overall leadership.”<sup>40</sup> However, Gretskey notes that as soon as the agreement on the GNR was reached the opposition parties left the *Qoziyot* headquarters. Furthermore, once the conflict turned violent, Turajonzoda was able to exert no control at all over field commanders (despite claims to the contrary by some outside observers<sup>41</sup>). Meanwhile, the *Qoziyot* under Turajonzoda lost many of its members and its activities in some areas ceased.<sup>42</sup> Turajonzoda eventually fled Dushanbe in late October 1992 right before Safarali Kenjaev attempted and failed to take the city. Unfortunately for Turajonzoda, during the summer and fall he was in a position where he had no control over the opposition forces, yet was being blamed for their actions.<sup>43</sup> Turajonzoda as the main focus of anger is clear throughout the late spring, summer and fall of 1992.<sup>44</sup> Even in the zone of violent conflict in the south where, as noted above, Turajonzoda had no operational control, some were blaming him for the violence. A man in the town of Vakhsh, identifying who he believed tortured and burned his 22-year-old son to death, simply stated “The gangs of the Qazi [Turajonzoda] did it.”<sup>45</sup> Meanwhile in late August, far from the main zone of conflict in the northernmost part of Tajikistan, young men in

<sup>40</sup> Gretskey, ‘Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda’, 23.

<sup>41</sup> For example, this favourable passage in the *Financial Times*: “Until now Tajikistan’s paramount Islamic leader, Qazi [Turajonzoda], was perhaps its most important political force. The republic’s competing political factions were said to consider him a rational moderate capable of solving differences between political rivals. Mr [Turajonzoda’s] well-armed military force put muscle behind his words.” See: S. LeVine, ‘Communist old guard turns the tables on Moslems in Tajikistan’, *Financial Times* (26 Nov. 1992) 4. Six weeks earlier the same reporter argued that the secular allies in the opposition coalition had been marginalised, leaving the IRP and Turajonzoda as the most powerful actors in Tajikistan. See: S. LeVine, ‘Tajikistan peace force planned’, *Financial Times* (9 Oct. 1992) 6.

<sup>42</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 70.

<sup>43</sup> Gretskey, ‘Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda’, 23; Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 70. An example: Asal Azamova posed this question to Turajonzoda: “In Dushanbe people say that the kazi has armed militants, that “the kazi’s people took part in assassinations”...” Turajonzoda’s answer: “That is slander. We have official bodyguards, provided to us by the government after an attempt, to blow up the kazi. Neither we, nor the Islamic Renaissance Party, has any armed forces to contend with.” See: Asal Azamova, “...The Iranian model of an Islamic republic is probably not likely to fit Tajikistan”, *Moscow News* (2 September 1992).

<sup>44</sup> During the protests, some at Ozodi square chanted for Turajonzoda’s arrest and/or execution. See: Asal Azamova, “...The Iranian model of an Islamic republic is probably not likely to fit Tajikistan”, *Moscow News* (2 September 1992); Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161; Gretskey, ‘Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda’, 23; RIA (27 April 1992) in SWB SU/1367 (29 April 1992) ii. Nabiev blamed Turajonzoda for the “coup,” the attempt to create an “Islamic state,” and for the ongoing crisis in general. See: Associated Press, ‘Embattled president of Tajikistan blasts religious chief in ouster bid’, *San Antonio Express-News* (7 September 1992) 3.A. See also: Adam Kelliher, ‘Gangs bring anarchy to old Soviet south’, *The Sunday Times* (2 August 1992).

<sup>45</sup> Adam Kelliher, ‘Gangs bring anarchy to old Soviet south’, *The Sunday Times* (2 August 1992).

the hometown of state *prokurator* Khuvaydullov called for burning down the village mosque (likely *Qoziyot*- or even IRP-affiliated), blaming Turajonzoda for the recent murder of the *prokurator*.<sup>46</sup>

With so much attention focused on Turajonzoda, he was continually sought for his opinion, especially by reporters, until he left Tajikistan in late October. On the subject of the political role for Islam in Tajikistan, Turajonzoda was consistently cautious, stating that Tajikistan was unprepared for having Islam as a form of governance. The earliest timeline he gave for the implementation of an Islamic state was 20 years, a timeline he gave during an August interview.<sup>47</sup> In other interviews he gave a much longer timeline – 40 to 50 years, and stressed that opposition forces were fighting for a secular democracy.<sup>48</sup> Beyond the lack of public enthusiasm for an Islamic state,<sup>49</sup> there were the issues of implementation. Turajonzoda stressed that the establishment on an Islamic form of governance was impractical:

Let's assume, we would have seized power and proclaimed an Islamic republic. What next? Where would we get so many specialists needed to replace the secular officials – the machinery of state is, after all, a most intricate mechanism and cannot be run by the people of the street. What Islamic republic can possibly exist, if a mere 3 per cent of the population can read the namaz [prayers] the real way?<sup>50</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 138. This occurred during the funeral for Khuvaydullov. Authorities and elders were able to persuade the young men not to burn down the mosque. Instead, local members of the DPT, Rastokhez and the IRP were made to vow publicly that they would not act against local authorities. One Rastokhez member refused and, as a result, was renounced by his father and then shaved bald in public. Earlier (pp. 66-7) the author noted that the mosque was closed, some unspecified mosque property was burned and the activities of the mosque leadership stopped locally.

<sup>47</sup> Adam Kelliher, 'Gangs bring anarchy to old Soviet south', *The Sunday Times* (2 August 1992). Turajonzoda responded: "People are not ready for an Islamic state yet. Tadjikistan is a country that everyone is trying to influence. Russia, Western countries, Iran, Turkey. I assure you, none of these countries will have influence. None of these systems suit us 100%. We will find our own way."

<sup>48</sup> Justin Burke, 'Tajiks Struggle For National Identity', *Christian Science Monitor* (30 Sept 1992).

<sup>49</sup> In one poll, only 6% supported the creation of an Islamic state, while 77% supported a secular state. The levels of support for an Islamic state were higher in Qurghonteppa Province and in Dushanbe, at 18.6% and 14.7%, respectively. See: Kosach, 'Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space', 135-6, citing Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviiakh stanovleniia gosudarstvennosti (Oput sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy v Tadjikistane, Kazakhstane, Rossii i na Ukraine) (Moscow, Russian Academy of management, 1992) 29-43. For more information on this poll see the longer discussion on the same issue in the previous chapter. See also: Cherif Cordahi, 'Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government', Inter Press Service (22 October 1992). Cordahi problematically states that "at least" 75% do not support the creation of an Islamic state. This may lead to the impression that 25% do. However, as shown above, only 6% support the creation of an Islamic state.

<sup>50</sup> Asal Azamova, "...The Iranian model of an Islamic republic is probably not likely to fit Tajikistan", *Moscow News* (2 September 1992). Similarly, Turajonzoda said in another interview that "Our society isn't prepared to live according to Islamic law. We've strayed far from Islam over the past 70 years. [...] We will become an Islamic state, but it will take 40 to 50 years. We have to train a new generation. [...] Introducing any ideology by force is a mistake." See: Justin Burke, 'Tajiks Struggle For National Identity', *The Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 1992). Acting President Akbarsho Iskandarov, an Ismaili, said nearly the same thing at a public celebration on the one-year anniversary of Tajikistan's independence. See: Chris Bowers, 'Islamic republic 'not an option' for Tajikistan', *The Guardian* (10 September 1992). Another opposition member, Asliddin Sohbnazarov (deputy DPT leader) made a similar comment: Asliddin Sohbnazarov, the deputy leader of the secular DPT, made a comparison to aid a foreign reporter: "For fundamentalism to spread, we would need to value Islam more. It would be easier

Asal Azamova, the reporter who interviewed Turajonzoda for the above quote, was sceptical of Turajonzoda, stressing that she believed he was a skilled interviewee who did not always express his true views. She pressed him further on his goals for Tajikistan's system of government:

Q: What would you prefer Tajikistan to look like?

A: A law-abiding, parliamentary state in which people of different creeds and political principles would tolerate each other.

Q: Kazi-Mullo, the Western and Moscow correspondents who happened to interview you, consider you a very interesting interlocutor. I believe that the secret is that you say whatever the listener wants to hear from you. For example, you constantly say that you are an advocate of a secular state. You abide by the norms of the shariat and believe that Islam is the solely correct faith, so wouldn't you like your people to live by the same norms and the shariat to become a state religion?

A: Sometimes there is a big gap between a wish and reality. I dream that some time in the future if my people want it to be that way, there will be an Islamic state here. For the time being that is impossible. People have lost their faith during the 70 years of the Soviet regime. Now the republic needs peace more than anything else.<sup>51</sup>

While he was consistent on his views about the establishment of an Islamic state, by autumn his rhetoric in other aspects became increasingly inflammatory and non-conciliatory. After Nabiev's resignation, Turajonzoda addressed a conference of "Islamic officials and scholars from Iran, Afghanistan and Europe" in Dushanbe and stated that the current conflict in Tajikistan could now be called a "jihad."<sup>52</sup> During the first week of October Turajonzoda stated, as noted previously, that there was no possibility of compromise as "too much blood has been spilled."<sup>53</sup>

Dudoignon argues that as a member of the GNR the IRP "had to tone down its fundamentalist slogans" as it was now a partner with Rastokhez and the DPT.<sup>54</sup> On the role that Islam should play in the state, there was still the issue of general statements

to build communism in America than to create an Islamic republic in Tajikistan." See: Chris Bowers and John Rettie, 'Russia reinforces embattled Tajik garrison', *The Guardian* (30 September 1992).

<sup>51</sup> Asal Azamova, "...The Iranian model of an Islamic republic is probably not likely to fit Tajikistan", *Moscow News* (2 September 1992).

<sup>52</sup> Juliet O'Neill, 'Tajikistan: Bloody war, by any name; Conflict labelled 'jihad,' or holy war, as death toll mounts', *The Ottawa Citizen* (16 September 1992) A.2. In a follow-up interview Turajonzoda clarified his view, stating that he was not calling for a holy war, but just stating the obvious: "The Communists came to Kurgan-Tyube with demands that Tajik radio stop broadcasting calls to prayer, that all mosques be closed and that all clergymen should be killed as those who are striving to establish an Islamic state. [...] Under these circumstances, this kind of war, according to Islamic legal norms, is called, in Arabic, a jihad." He framed the jihad as defensive in another interview: "The Communists want to close mosques ... and persecute mullahs. [...] This kind of war has to be classified as a jihad {holy war}." See: Justin Burke, 'Tajiks Struggle For National Identity', *The Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 1992)

<sup>53</sup> Interfax 1648gmt (5 October 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1505 (7 October 1992) B/6.

<sup>54</sup> Dudoignon, 'Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993', 67.

that lacked specifics about law and governance. IRP leader Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda expressed his desire for a “pure” Islamic state in Tajikistan: “The pure, old, good and fundamental Islam of the Prophet (Mohammed) will be the foundation stone of our new state. [...] There will be changes in virtually every sphere of life.”<sup>55</sup> However, he did not provide any specifics, beyond saying that this would be achieved through an election victory and a referendum on the issue. And, in a comment that could only help his critics, he said that the clerics in Iran had made too many compromises that have made the Islamic state there less “pure.”<sup>56</sup> Himmatzoda made similar comments to a reporter from the official publication of the Russian/CIS Defence Ministry, with the added belief that it was the dream of every Muslim in Tajikistan to live under the laws of Islam, and with a peaceful path to that destination.<sup>57</sup> However, other religious leaders undermined the public messages of people like Turajonzoda and Himmatzoda. Outside the city of Qurghonteppa city one Reuters reporter filed a story in early October that began with an anecdote that illustrates how some opposition commanders were off-message from what the IRP wanted to publicly convey:

The burly Tajik mullah waving a stick of dynamite declared: "This is a Jihad (holy war) against all communists, Russia and Commonwealth forces. In the name of God, we will fight to the end."

"What good has 75 years of communism done us?" he asked with disgust. "We are Moslems and we need sharia (an Islamic state) [*sic*]." <sup>58</sup>

Concerning the ongoing violence, Davlat Usmon, the deputy leader of the IRP, was speaking very forcefully by the beginning of October. He framed the conflict as a battle between “freedom-loving forces” and those who would help Russia colonise Tajikistan, as well as between Islam and unbelievers. He commented further: “If I may say it openly, it is a war between Russia and Tajikistan. The Russian army ought to be withdrawn from here. There is no other way out.”<sup>59</sup> Earlier, starting in mid-May when he was appointed Deputy Prime Minister, Usmon had adopted a conciliatory approach

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<sup>55</sup> Canadian Press, ‘Central Asians return to Muslim faith: Tajikistan may become first ‘pure’ Islamic state’, *The Windsor Star* [Ontario] (4 July 1992) E.6; Jim Sheppard, ‘Tajikistan could become a bastion of Islam’, *The Gazette*, [Montreal] (13 June 1992) B.3. An unnamed western diplomat who was a specialist in Central Asia was quoted in the first article as saying “There’s no doubt little Tajikistan is the one place where establishment of an Islamic state is possible.”

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Anatoly Ladin, ‘Goryachaya tochka: Ne stanet li Tadzhhikistan novym Afganistanom?’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 221 (29 September 1992). The reporter stressed that Tajiks often stress the compatibility, even beneficial mutual relationship, between Islam and democracy. He also adds that Himmatzoda stated that the Islamic state in Tajikistan would be achieved through non-violent means.

<sup>58</sup> E. Kaban, ‘Mullahs wage holy war against Tajik communists’, Reuters (3 October 1992). Parentheses in original; the brackets are mine. See also: Elif Kaban, ‘Hundreds flee fierce fighting in Tajik flashpoint’, Reuters (3 October 1992).

<sup>59</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Mullahs wage holy war against Tajik communists’, Reuters News (3 October 1992).

in an attempt to stop the fighting in the Qurghonteppa Province. This soft approach angered some unnamed IRP leaders and, as a result, throughout the summer rumours and accusations circulated in the IRP that Usmon was a KGB informer. Later that summer anti-opposition forces killed Usmon's family members, including his father.<sup>60</sup>

### War Narrative

“It was our mistake to keep Nabiev as president. This peace is just an interim period. Things will get worse.”

- IRP leader Himmatzoda, 27 June 1992.<sup>61</sup>

Several authors describe the outbreak of violence in Kulob and Qurghonteppa as a direct result of the protesters from both sides of the May 1992 demonstrations returning home and bringing the conflict with them.<sup>62</sup> There were attempts to stop the violence. In June, President Nabiev had travelled to Kulob and tried unsuccessfully to persuade the armed groups there to disarm.<sup>63</sup> Also in June, former presidential candidate Davlat Khudonazarov travelled to Danghara in Kulob for talks with “opposing groups” who promise to enter negotiations. Khudonazarov announced that “armed groups of political parties” released prisoners of war while removing roadblocks – and that flights to Kulob and Qurghonteppa could resume.<sup>64</sup> However, the passage of time showed that the intensity and scale of conflict still increased after this point. There was even a Presidential decree in July that granted amnesty for all participants at Ozodi and

<sup>60</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 115-6, 137. The authors are not clear regarding to which KGB they are referring: the local Tajik KGB or the Russian/CIS central KGB.

<sup>61</sup> Hugh Pope, ‘Rudderless republic heads for the rocks’, *The Independent* (27 June 1992) 14. Note: Spelling of Nabiev's name changed from original.

<sup>62</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 111-2; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152, 181; Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood: Civil War and State Reconstruction in Tajikistan’, 17.

<sup>63</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111; Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, 13.

<sup>64</sup> Interfax 1832gmt (6 July 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1428 (9 July 1992) B/5. Very likely referring to the same agreement, RFE/RL reported that on 7 July 1992 a ‘cease-fire’ was reached in the south. See: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1 No. 30 (24 July 1992) 79. Asal Azamova of the English-language Moscow News writes a short hagiography of Khudonazarov wherein she points to this mission as a success and notes his recent appointment as ‘Main State Counselor’, an event Azamova argues is a sign of the government's intention to find a peaceful compromise. Khudonazarov himself acknowledges that the Kulobis have some legitimate demands. See: Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: dramatis personae’, *Moscow News* (28 October 1992). A sample: “He is known as a persistent champion of civil peace in the republic. His peace-making mission in June prevented military hostilities and made possible the conclusion of the Khorog agreement. His credo: “I shall always be with the people who are being oppressed.”” See also: Interfax 1126gmt (26 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) B/11; Interfax 1328gmt (30 June 1992) in SWB SU/1422 (2 July 1992) B/5.

Shahidon squares that was “aimed at stabilizing [the] situation.”<sup>65</sup> Other larger-scale initiatives aimed at stopping the violence were equally unsuccessful. Opposition and Kulobi leaders agreed to truces on 29 June in Qurghonteppa and on 27 July in Khorogh (GBAO).<sup>66</sup> However, these truces were immediately broken in both cases by “independent field commanders.”<sup>67</sup> One good example would be Sangak Safarov, who declared the ceasefire reached on July 27-28 to be illegal, and that accordingly his men would not surrender their weapons.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, reporter Alisher Khojaev stated the obvious: “The main reason for the failure to surrender weapons is the mistrust the warring sides have of each other. Each side is afraid that, left without weapons, it theoretically may be attacked by the other side.”<sup>69</sup> The problem of credible commitment is clear in this situation. At the beginning of August, Davlat Usmon, Deputy Prime Minister and deputy leader of the IRP, announced the formation of a 1,000 man regiment set up to forcibly disarm the armed groups. However, he did admit that people were unwilling to part with their weapons as “some of them were purchased for purposes of self defence.”<sup>70</sup> Little had changed by early September when Turajonzoda

<sup>65</sup> ITAR-TASS 0852gmt (8 July 1992) in BBS SWB SU/1429 (10 July 1992) B/6.

<sup>66</sup> On July 27 in Khorogh the “reconciliation agreement signed” after three days of talks included the signatures of the Deputy Chair of Parliament Iskandarov and leaders of DPT, IRP and Rastokhez, plus representatives from the Kulob and Leninobod local administrations, religious leaders, plus “leaders of armed groups.” They agreed to a ceasefire within 24 hours, the freeing of hostages and “disbandment of armed formations.” A clause was included that stated that by August 3 non-compliant parties would be targeted for disarmament by “special forces.” See: Tajik radio 1400gmt (28 July 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1445 (29 July 1992) i, B/1; RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 32 (14 August 1992) 79. There was only 24 hours of calm after the Khorogh agreement. See: Mayak Radio, Moscow 1245gmt (28 July 1992); Ostankino Channel 1 TV, Moscow 1400gmt (28 July 1992); ITAR-TASS 1503gmt (29 July 1992); all in SWB SU/1447 (31 July 1992) B/3-4. The points of agreement for the agreement: demobilization of armed groups, surrender of weapons, release of hostages, dismantling of roadblocks, the release of all occupied facilities, etc. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 65-6. In regards to smaller scale initiatives, there were meetings in Qurghonteppa between republic and provincial “Commission on Observation of the reconciliation Agreement” which were attended by representatives from Kulobi “leadership and social movements.” See: Tajik Radio 1200gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992).

<sup>67</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 112. Example: A battle in the Vakhsh district of Qurghonteppa occurred on June 27 – one day after a truce was agreed to in Kulob between “self-defence attachments and supporters of the current government.” See: Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars’, *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992). See also: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 66.

<sup>68</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 65-6. Brown also points to Safarov as the prime example of cease-fire violators. Brown writes: “since May, the pro-communist forces had consistently backed out of peace negotiations or broken agreements on ending hostilities. One of the worst offenders in this respect was Sangak Safarov.” See: Bess Brown, ‘The Conservatives Triumph’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 2, No. 7 (12 February 1993) 11. Oleg Panfilov also blames Safarov, see: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Dushanbe captured by New Ministry of Internal Affairs’, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (11 Dec 1992) 1, *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 50 (13 Jan 1993).

<sup>69</sup> ITAR-TASS 1544gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/5.

<sup>70</sup> Mayak Radio, Moscow 1220gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/6; ITAR-TASS 1544gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/5.

spoke of Khudonazarov's participation in the Khorogh agreements and his subsequent role as the head of a 'State Council' tasked with disarmament:

He has been trying to reconcile the warring sides, calling for dialogue, sometimes at the peril of his life: on more than one occasion he came under fire during shootouts. His prestige runs very high. If Khudonazarov had several helicopters and armoured vehicles, plus 600-700 armed militants, he would be able -- either by persuasions or through the blockade of groupings -- to disarm them. Nobody will surrender arms voluntarily -- we have to be realistic about that!<sup>71</sup>

There were additional attempts by individuals and groups to stop the violence.<sup>72</sup> However, aside from a small success regarding the exchange of hostages,<sup>73</sup> the various attempts from August through October were failures.<sup>74</sup> On 21 September 1992 Akbarsho Iskandarov, the new president, issued a statement to leaders of armed groups stating that if they didn't cease fighting by the 24<sup>th</sup> they would "be proclaimed traitors to the nation, force will be used against them, they will be forcibly disarmed and punished according to the law."<sup>75</sup>

The local leaders of armed groups continued to not respect the ceasefires reached at the political level. For example, on 15 October 1992 Kulobi forces broke a ceasefire after just hours when they seized a bridge over the Vakhsh in an attempt to end

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<sup>71</sup> Asal Azamova, "...The Iranian model of an Islamic republic is probably not likely to fit Tajikistan", *Moscow News* (2 September 1992).

<sup>72</sup> For example, professor Sh. Akramov, leader of the 'Arab Community in Tajikistan' organisation, and other Arab leaders travelled from Dushanbe to the Qurghonteppa Province and attempted to mediate the opposing sides. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 159-60.

<sup>73</sup> On 4 August 1992 ITAR-TASS reported that there were no reports of fighting in last "few days" and that armed posts on roads and in towns in the "conflict zone" removed, with both sides "completing the exchange of hostages" (only 20 of 300 hostages were still being held). See: ITAR-TASS 1544gmt (4 Aug 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1452 (6 Aug 1992) B/5. The removal of some armed posts and the lull in fighting would be a very short positive trend, as subsequent events demonstrate.

<sup>74</sup> For example, at the end of July the Supreme Soviet formed a "47 man commission" from parties, organisations, government, and other parts of society to "assist in ending mistrust between opposing sides" and help in the disarming process. See: Tajik Radio 1200gmt (30 July 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1448 (1 August 1992) B/7. However, by 4 August 1992 RFE/RL reported that only "few weapons" were handed over. See: RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 32 (14 August 1992) 79. On 22 August 1992 there was a 4<sup>th</sup> announcement of a disarmament group, similar to the previous three. It included a broad list of members from all sides – official and non-official. Disagreement with Nabiev led Khudonazarov, Yusuf and Rastokhez leader Abdujabbor to boycott it (note: these three had no control over or relation to armed forces and can be considered insignificant by this time). The first meeting was scheduled for 15 August 1992. See: Oleg Panfilov, 'Col. Gen. Nabiyev remains Tajikistan's President – but he seeks support from Russian Federation', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (22 August 1992) in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 34 (23 September 1992) 3. But by the end of August Minister of Internal Affairs Navjuvanov declared that the Khorogh agreement "had little effect." See: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 24 (28 August 1992). In regards to a peace mission Qurghonteppa that failed to do anything, see: Mark Trevelyan, 'Tajik radio says at least 30 killed in fresh fighting', *Reuters News* (4 September 1992).

<sup>75</sup> Iskandarov also threatened "local leaders" for "not implementing state laws" and stated they will be "severely punished" if they continued to do so: ITAR-TASS 0500gmt (21 September 1992) in SWB SU/1493 (23 September 1992) B/8. A day later AFP reported that envoys from the Supreme Soviet travelled to Kulob for negotiations with unnamed leaders there, inaccurately labelling the Kulobis as supporters of Nabiev. See: Agence France-Presse, 'Tajik envoys seek talks with pro-communist rebels', (22 September 1992).

the blockade of their region.<sup>76</sup> This trend was clear as early as September when, according to Nourzhanov, “it became clear that field commanders were no longer controlled by anyone.”<sup>77</sup> By late September and early October the leadership on both sides of the conflict stated that there would be no peaceful resolution. On 22 September 1992 Sangak Safarov stated in an interview that the only route to disarmament would be with the guarantee and presence of CIS peacekeeping forces. The need for a third party to provide a credible commitment is obvious in this situation. Safarov further remarked that “the time for peaceful negotiations between the opposing fighting groups has passed.”<sup>78</sup> During the first week of October his rhetoric was matched by Turajonzoda who stated that there was no possibility of compromise as “too much blood has been spilled.”<sup>79</sup>

However, there were still leaders desperately attempting new peace initiatives. The last major initiative was on November 5-6 when President Iskandarov announced plans for the formation of the ‘State Council of the Republic of Tajikistan’, a body tasked with finding a peaceful resolution. The State Council was to consist of Iskandarov at the head, and with Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullojonov and Muhridin Ashurov, commander of the 201<sup>st</sup> MRD, as vice-chairs. This proposal was to be approved at the upcoming session of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>80</sup> Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev flew to Qurghonteppa and Kulob in support of this initiative. However, Safarov and newly-installed Kulob Province Executive Committee Chairman, Emomali Rahmon, rejected Kozyrev’s attempt to convince them to support the proposed State Council. They insisted on an arrangement similar to the pre-GNR government.<sup>81</sup>

The city of Khujand and the surrounding northern Sughd (Leninobod) region, with half of Tajikistan’s economy,<sup>82</sup> was spared the military conflict of 1992-93. This was mostly thanks to its geographic isolation, with only one road fully within the country connecting Leninobod to the capital Dushanbe and the rest of Tajikistan over

<sup>76</sup> *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 43 (30 October 1992) 71.

<sup>77</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116.

<sup>78</sup> Interfax 1815gmt (22 September 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/2-3.

<sup>79</sup> Interfax 1648gmt (5 October 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1505 (7 October 1992) B/6. Safarov and Turajonzoda had actually met for talks in July at Turajonzoda’s home in Dushanbe. See: Arkady Dubnov, ‘Despite Armistice Feuding Continues’, *New Times International* [i.e., *Novoe Vremya*] 2/93 (January 1993) 10-13, as cited in: Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110.

<sup>80</sup> Igor Rotar, ‘Tajikistan will have a state council’, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (6 November 1992) 1, 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 49 (6 January 1993); ‘(Dushanbe)’, *Agence France-Presse* (6 November 1992). According to the AFP report, the State Council’s mission was “re-establishing public order, guaranteeing individual rights and freedoms, creating conditions for the resumption of state bodies and preparing democratic parliamentary elections.”

<sup>81</sup> Igor Rotar, ‘Two days in the life of Andrei Kozyrev’, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (7 November 1992), 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 49 (6 January 1993).

<sup>82</sup> Schoeberlein, ‘Bones of Contention: Conflicts over Resources’, 88.



the Anzob pass on the Zarafshon mountain range, a road that is only open for much of the year due to snow. The Khujandis further isolated themselves in May 1992 when they blockaded the Anzob pass.<sup>83</sup> Also worth mentioning is that the government had not transferred Gharmis, Kulobis and Pamiris – groups heavily involved in the conflict – to the north as they did to the Vakhsh Valley. The battlegrounds were mainly in the province of Qurghonteppa, to a lesser extent in the province of Kulob, and to an even lesser extent in the lower Hisor valley west of Dushanbe. Towards the end of the conflict in 1992 – with the steady military gains of the counter-opposition – the focus switched to the capital city of Dushanbe.

### **The Consolidation of Kulob Province**

After the pro-government demonstrators left Dushanbe, Kulobi law enforcement, criminal groups and local politicians cooperated in forcing anybody associated with the opposition (or suspected of being so) out of Kulob regardless of region of origin.<sup>84</sup> However, there were some minor events before this time in Kulob Province. Opposition supporters in Kulob were being harassed and evicted as early as the end of April. One imam who led a mosque in Danghara was driven out of town and left on the side of the road with his family and belongings. Turajonzoda also claimed that at this time two Qoziyot-affiliated mosques in Kulob were under siege by armed men.<sup>85</sup> By May 7 a rally was held in Kulob by locals demanding weapons from the local CIS forces.<sup>86</sup> However, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, commenting on the extended May 20 deadline to hand in weapons, stated that 1500 assault rifles had been handed out

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<sup>83</sup> Niyazi, 'Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimension of Conflict', 148; Fumagalli, *The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-political Mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, 47. A connecting tunnel has now been built; Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons?', 112, 122; Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 132; Sergei Gretskey, 'Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments, and Prospects for Peace', in *Central Asia: Conflict, Resolution, and Change*. Edited by Roald Z. Sagdeev and Susan Eisenhower (Chevy Chase, Maryland: CPSS Press, 1995), 220. Note: According to Jurabek Aminov, the authorities in Khujand created a "defence force" of 1.500 men. See: Elif Kaban, 'Grim bloodletting gives Tajik government the shivers', Reuters News (5 October 1992).

<sup>84</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111-2; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5; Naumkin, 'Experience and Prospects for Settlement of Ethno-National Conflicts in Central Asia and Transcaucasia', 182; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228; Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42.

<sup>85</sup> Oleg Panfilov, 'Tajikistan', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (30 April 1992) and Postfactum 1154gmt (2 May 1992) in SWB SU/1371 (4 May 1992) B/3-4.

<sup>86</sup> Postfactum 1539gmt (7 May 1992) in SWB SU/1376 (9 May 1992) C1/3. Almost one week later "former national guards" (i.e., those armed demonstrators/fighters who had been at Ozodi) demanded weapons from the Moskva border guard detachment. See: Postfactum 0836gmt (14 May 1992) and RIA 1029gmt (14 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/4.

at Ozodi square, and that most of these weapons made it out of Dushanbe.<sup>87</sup> By May 11, according to ITAR-TASS, “local defense forces” were being formed in Kulob.<sup>88</sup> Matveeva writes that harassment was enough to chase opposition supporters out of the Kulob region.<sup>89</sup>

However, more violent means were soon being employed. On May 12 the first reports of fighting in Kulob emerged.<sup>90</sup> From May 10-13 four people were killed in Kulob city and the surrounding area in an atmosphere of “mass disorder.”<sup>91</sup> One local source stated that eight people had died and described the fighting as between two groups camped in opposing mosques in Kulob city which were alternately affiliated and opposed to the opposition.<sup>92</sup> During the summer of 1992, Mullah Haydar Sharifzoda, the leader of the main Kulob Province mosque and a rival of Turajonzoda, started planning and coordinating attacks against the supporters of Turajonzoda and the opposition in Kulob Province as soon the counter-opposition forces returned defeated from Dushanbe. By late May there was the beginning of a “mass exodus” of opposition supporters from Kulob Province.<sup>93</sup> In early June, the number of opposition supporters who feared attack by Mullah Sharifzoda or Sangak Safarov – whether they were IRP, DPT or Rastokhez supporters – fleeing Kulob Province increased drastically.<sup>94</sup> However, in other cases the persecution was much less discriminating. For example, one woman in Kulob recounted how non-Kulobis were attacked:

During the war they came to get my husband who fortunately wasn't home at that time. They wanted to kill him because his roots are in another region that was against our city. He had never lived there and had no connections with that region. They recognised him by his face and his nose. Many people were executed like that.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> ITAR-TASS 1606gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1381 (15 May 1992) C1/1.

<sup>88</sup> ITAR-TASS 0917gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1377 (11 May 1992). ITAR-TASS reports that by this time the two opposing sides in Tajikistan possessed “thousands of firearms.”

<sup>89</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 18.

<sup>90</sup> Russia's Radio (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1379 (13 May 1992) i.

<sup>91</sup> Interfax 1855gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/4; Interfax 1855gmt (13 May 1992) SU/1381 (15 May 1992) C1/4. At the same time thousands of people were protesting in Kulob.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Ginsberg, ‘Rival Muslim Groups Clash in South as Tajikistan Forms New Government’, The Associated Press (12 May 1992). The local source is named as Mullah Abdurahim Karimov. It is not clear if this is the same Kulobi Mullah Abdurahim who was an IRP supporter. On the opposition Mullah Abdurahim, see: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 90.

<sup>93</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 156; ‘Central Asia: Islamic Revival’, OxResearch (31 August 1992) 1.

<sup>94</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 63-4.

<sup>95</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 10.

However, Kilavuz argues that opposition affiliation was the main criteria. She writes that as a first priority the counter-opposition under the leadership of Sangak Safarov violently attacked dissenters,<sup>96</sup> including fellow Kulobis.<sup>97</sup>

In one round of fighting between the two sides on June 7-8 in the outskirts of Kulob city 21 people were killed. In response the government ordered a detachment of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to deploy to Kulob.<sup>98</sup> In some cases there were non-central government initiatives, such as in Kulob Province's Sovietsky District (now Timurmaliq) where police and *Afgantsy* (Soviet-Afghan war veterans) from Kulob attempted to reassure the local population that an attack on them was not being planned.<sup>99</sup> However, the assurances likely would not have helped as the violence steadily increased. In Mid-June "former president's guardsmen" (i.e., the Kulobi counter-opposition) killed 50 opposition supporters in Kulob and refugees continued to flee to Dushanbe.<sup>100</sup> By the end of June the opposition presence was completely destroyed in Kulob.<sup>101</sup>

### The Struggle for Qurghonteppa

"We used to watch the scenes from Afghanistan on television. We thought, 'How terrible! That could never happen here!' But it has."

-Zabir, a pro-opposition commander in Qurghonteppa.<sup>102</sup>

As mentioned previously, several authors describe the outbreak of violence in Kulob and Qurghonteppa Provinces as a direct result of the protesters from both sides of

<sup>96</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5.

<sup>97</sup> Kilavuz quotes one informant: "I was in Kulyab during the war. Safarov was the strongest man there at the time. He could do whatever he wanted. I am a Kulyabi myself. He was killing the people opposed the government, regardless of their region. The people who were against their aims were tortured and killed by the Popular Front. I was tortured, I am a Kulyabi. They killed Jienkhan Rizaev who was the Kulyab obkom secretary, a Kulyabi. Because he was against them." See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5.

<sup>98</sup> RFE/RL Research Report Vol. 1, No. 25 (19 June 1992) 80; '21 dead in fighting between Tajik guards and opposition', Agence France-Presse (9 June 1992).

<sup>99</sup> Tajik Radio, Dushanbe 1700gmt (12 June 1992) in SWB SU/1411 (19 June 1992) B/6. It is not clear from the report whether the local population being referred to were opposition supporters.

<sup>100</sup> ITAR-TASS World Service 0748gmt (16 June 1992) in SWB SU/1411 (19 June 1992) B/5. On June 19 these refugees from Kulob rallied at Shahidon square, demanding that the president end the conflict. The protestors issued a statement saying that if Nabiev does not perform his duty "they preserve the right to call on their Afghan brothers for help." See: Russia's Radio 0700gmt (21 June 1992) in SWB SU/1414 (23 June 1992) B3/4. One report in early October estimated that half of Kulob city's 80,000 people had fled to Dushanbe and beyond. See: Cherif Cordahi, 'Tajikistan: starvation threatens as blockade continues', Inter Press Service (7 October 1992).

<sup>101</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5.

<sup>102</sup> Michael Hetzer, 'Tajikistan: defenders of Kurgan Tyube battle the old regime', Inter Press Service (9 October 1992).

the May 1992 demonstrations returning home and bringing the conflict with them.<sup>103</sup> As described in Kalyvas' concept of 'alliance,' local conflicts were easily attached to the national level fragmentation. In Qurghonteppa, Kulobi Tajiks and local Uzbeks were on the run in early summer 1992. At an early point, in mid to late May, one newspaper described a "mass exodus of Uzbeks and Russians" from Qurghonteppa Province due to "rumours of the imminent "Islamization" of the republic and punishment of those who resisted the opposition."<sup>104</sup> Zartman describes the Gharmi attacks on Uzbeks and Kulobis in Qurghonteppa as being "revenge" attacks for the "bloody purge of democratic sympathizers" by Kulobi Popular Front Forces in Kulob.<sup>105</sup> On June 21 at an emergency meeting the Supreme Soviet declared that the situation in Qurghonteppa Province had "sharply deteriorated" and that the "region is divided into influence spheres by armed groups" of both sides.<sup>106</sup> Indeed, by this time at least one Russian news outlet was describing the confrontation in Qurghonteppa Province as having moved from political to military.<sup>107</sup> Throughout June and July thousands of Kulobi Tajiks and Uzbeks fled Qurghonteppa to Kulob and Uzbekistan, and their houses were looted and destroyed. HRW cites a government number of 133,000 displaced Kulobis and Uzbeks during summer 1992.<sup>108</sup> These numbers are similar in other sources as well. Nourzhanov cites 90,000 IDPs fleeing opposition-controlled areas for Kulob and 30,000 Uzbeks from Qurghonteppa also fleeing, mostly for Hisor. Many of these IDPs joined militias or formed new ones.<sup>109</sup> Even the opposition press acknowledged this refugee

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<sup>103</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 111-2; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152, 181; Anna Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood', 17. In regards to Qurghonteppa, Matveeva blames Gharmis and Pamiris for the outbreak of conflict. Matveeva uses explicitly regional terms: "After the demonstrators from the rival squares went home, 'Islamists' (Gharmis and Pamiris [*sic*]) in Kurgan-Tyube took their frustration out on the Kulyabi residents of the area." The parentheses around 'Islamist' are Matveeva's. I assume she is disowning the term, especially as it does not apply to Pamiris in this case. However, she provides no specifics or timelines.

<sup>104</sup> ITAR-TASS World Service 1202gmt (23 May 1992) in SWB SU/1395 (1 June 1992) B/6. The paper cited is Tajikistan's *Narodnaya gazeta*.

<sup>105</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228.

<sup>106</sup> Russia's Radio 0700gmt (21 June 1992) in SWB SU/1414 (23 June 1992) B/3.

<sup>107</sup> Russia's Radio, Moscow 0500gmt (21 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/6. The same source notes that the local airport and some enterprises had shut down.

<sup>108</sup> Human Rights Watch, 'Return to Tajikistan', n.p. Numbers cited from The Department of Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Labour of Tajikistan. HRW writes that these Kulobis and Uzbeks fled to Kulob and Uzbekistan, respectively. HRW is faulty in mentioning only Uzbekistan as a destination. For example, Whitlock writes, in reference to mixed families: "Intermarried families had to decide which way to go – that is, who it was safest to be. Uzbeks made for Uzbek-populated areas – west to Hisar, north to Khujand, and across the border to Uzbekistan." See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168. Bushkov and Mikulsky give a similar number, 132,000. The timeframe they provide is for June and July. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 66. Opposition-controlled Tajik Radio reported that there were 150,000 IDPs in Kulob. See: Tajik Radio 1400gmt (25 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>109</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 116. Numbers for Kulobis from *Izvestiia* (5 September 1992), for Uzbeks from *Russkaia mysl* (25 September 1992). Some acknowledge this only with qualification: "On a much more limited scale, the opposition forces

flow in July, but along with an attempt to frame the displacement of people (the sources names a long list of various ethnicities) as due not to violence, but to the “general insecurity of daily life.”<sup>110</sup> On June 23 the GNR and the opposition made attempts, ultimately futile, to gain more control over the deteriorating situation in Qurghonteppa Province. Opposition-controlled radio reported that the goal of the newly formed Committee for National Salvation – under the leadership of DPT head Shodmon Yusuf – is to organise ties with Qurghonteppa city and the districts of Qurghonteppa Province.<sup>111</sup> On the same day there was a “presidential directive” appointing Nurali Qurbonov as acting chairman of the executive committee of Qurghonteppa Province.<sup>112</sup>

The first major incident of violence on a large scale in Qurghonteppa Province was on June 27 at a collective farm in the Vakhsh district. At 5am two armed groups engaged each other, leaving at least 30 people dead,<sup>113</sup> before an OMON (special police unit of the Interior Ministry) arrived from Dushanbe to separate the two sides by 11am.<sup>114</sup> One Russian source immediately blamed the “Islamic Opposition” for the attack,<sup>115</sup> a claim that was also echoed by an unnamed source in the Interior Ministry who pointed at the IRP specifically.<sup>116</sup> These accusations were immediately denied by the IRP.<sup>117</sup> Akhmedov also writes about the incident, placing blame on the opposition in a much more specific manner, blaming local “Islamist” opposition forces of the

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also attacked innocent civilians, usually Kulobi.” See: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39. For a brief mention of Uzbeks and Tatars fleeing Qurghonteppa along with Russians in Spring 1992, see: Aleksandr Pilipchuk, ‘B Tupike stoit echelon s bezhentsami b Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 249 (31 October 1992).

<sup>110</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 66, citing *Najot*, No. 6 (July 1992) 1. Another opposition news outlet was blaming the displacement of populations on the “cruel armed members of the National Guard” (i.e., armed Kulobis). In particular they cited an incident where 1000 IDPs fled Vakhsh rayon and “took refuge in Lenin collective farm in Kolkhozobod rayon.” See: Tajik Radio 0400gmt (24 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/6.

<sup>111</sup> Tajik Radio in Russian (23 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/6; Tajik Radio 1200gmt (22 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/4.

<sup>112</sup> Tajik Radio 0007gmt (24 June 1992) in SWB SU/1417 (26 June 1992) B/6. This report says that Qurbonov was appointed to the top of the Executive Committee of Qurghonteppa city. However, all subsequent reports say he was named top provincial administrator.

<sup>113</sup> Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars’, *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992); Channel One TV (27 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) i. The Interior Ministry first reported 8-10 dead, before revising its figures to 30. See: ITAR-TASS (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) i; Russia’s Radio (29 June 1992) in SWB SU/1420 (30 June 1992) i. Azamova provides an estimate of anywhere from 600 to 3,000 fighters being involved.

<sup>114</sup> Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars’, *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992); ITAR-TASS (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) I; ‘More than 100 killed, hundreds wounded as violence flares in Tajikistan’, Agence France-Presse (27 June 1992).

<sup>115</sup> Channel One TV (27 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) I; ‘More than 100 killed, hundreds wounded as violence flares in Tajikistan’, Agence France-Presse (27 June 1992).

<sup>116</sup> Interfax (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1420 (30 June 1992) i.

<sup>117</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 28 (10 July 1992) 80; Interfax (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1420 (30 June 1992) i.

Headquarters for the Salvation of the Homeland (i.e., *Najoti Vatan*<sup>118</sup>) of attacking Kulobi *kolkhozes* and villages in the Vakhsh District and destroying their self-defence militias.<sup>119</sup> The complete opposite is argued by Zartman, who blames Kulobis for the attack,<sup>120</sup> citing an unnamed journalist interviewed by Human Rights Watch.<sup>121</sup> The same unnamed source cited by Human Rights Watch, him/herself citing three “onlookers” also says that one “Russian” (i.e., CIS 201<sup>st</sup> MRD) tank and 3 “Russian” APCs of the same were used in the fighting. Other sources just mention the same amount of military vehicles, minus commentary of ownership and who was using them.<sup>122</sup> AFP points to a source (a Russian TV channel) that places the blame for the attack and the ownership of the major weapons squarely on one side, reporting that the fighting happened at the Leningrad *kolkhoz* “where opposition forces massed more than 1,500 submachine guns, three armoured vehicles and one tank, according to a television correspondent there.”<sup>123</sup> However, assigning ownership for the heavy weapons to the opposition in this incident, or any other,<sup>124</sup> is extremely problematic, as is any assumption (e.g., Zartman’s<sup>125</sup>) that the “Russian” tank and APCs were being used at the behest of the Kulobis in this operation. During late spring and summer of 1992 the 201<sup>st</sup> forces were not yet aligned and fighters on both sides reported using their services

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<sup>118</sup> Akhmedov writes, in Russian, “headquarters of “Salvation of the Motherland.”” I have gone with the translation from Tajik for the group (*Najoti Vatan*) that was officially formed 4 days earlier.

<sup>119</sup> Said Akhmedov, ‘Konflikty v Tadjikistane: Prichiny i Posledstviya’, in *Etnicheskie i regionalnye konflikty v Yevrazii*. Volume 1: Tsentralnaya Aziya i Kavkaz . Edited by Alexei Malashenko, Bruno Coppieters and Dmitri Trenin (Moscow: Ves Mir, 1997) n.p. Online: <http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/etni-1/akhmedov.htm> Matveeva also cites Akhmedov: Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 17. Matveeva marks this as the point at which large numbers of people became IDPs. Note: The English version of Akhmedov’s article, when the volume was translated and published one year later, is a shortened version and excludes a discussion of the events of June 27. See: Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II: The Regional Conflict in Confessional and International Context.’

<sup>120</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110.

<sup>121</sup> Erika Dailey, ‘War or Peace?: Human Rights and Russian Military Involvement in the “Near Abroad,” Human Rights Watch, Vol. 5, No. 22 (December 1993).

<sup>122</sup> Channel One TV (27 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) i.

<sup>123</sup> ‘More than 100 killed, hundreds wounded as violence flares in Tajikistan’, AFP (27 June 1992).

<sup>124</sup> For example: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 67-8. In this source the author assigns the success of the opposition in an ambush of Sangak Safarov and his men on September 2 to their use of armoured vehicles.

<sup>125</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 145, n. 91.

and equipment for a price.<sup>126</sup> Adding to the confusion, local forces built their own ‘APCs’ and ‘tanks,’ by welding steel plates to heavy machinery such as bulldozers.<sup>127</sup>

As for the exact identification of the fighters, some sources at the time use caution and reported that the identity of the two groups was unknown, as were their motivations.<sup>128</sup> The unnamed IRP official who denied the involvement of his party in the fighting gave a slightly more specific version, citing the fighting in Vakhsh as “an ordinary clash between self-defence forces of villages of different orientations.”<sup>129</sup> Davlat Khudonazarov, the former presidential candidate and current member of the National Salvation Headquarters, said that the fighting here was a “local conflict” between Kulobis and Gharmis that was “born” 50 years previously with population transfers.<sup>130</sup> One day after the fighting in Vakhsh, Deputy Prime Minister Jamshed Karimov declared to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet that “Civil war has begun in Tajikistan.”<sup>131</sup> A few days later officials in Kulob Province reported that the number of refugees from Vakhsh Valley in Kulob – in homes, schools, mosques and clubs – was over 20,000. The leadership of Kulob region expressed their concern that the conflict, which they framed as being between Kulobi and Gharmi Tajiks, may become more severe. They stated that almost all of the Kulobi men who had evacuated their families from the Vakhsh Valley had returned to “take revenge on the offenders.”<sup>132</sup>

For most of July little was reported from Qurghonteppa Province, aside from some fighting at the beginning of the month in Kalininobod (Sarband) and a negotiated exchange of hostages.<sup>133</sup> On July 27 there was heavy fighting in the Bokhtar District,

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<sup>126</sup> For example, Whitlock relays the story of two young men, a Gharmi and a Kulobi: ““The Russians sold us their bullets,” Daler remembers “and a few guns as well.....Then we went to the Russians and paid them to come with us in their tanks and shoot Sangak’s men. We used to rent them for an hour or so, for about a million roubles [~\$US1000 circa 1992]. Sometimes more.” The Kulabi militia did the same. “The Russians would shoot at us for about a week sometimes. Then they would turn around and shoot the Gharmis,” says Jafar. “The more they changed sides, the higher they could drive the price.”” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 167.

<sup>127</sup> For example, see the photo inserts in: Narzullo Dustov, *Zakhm bar Jismi Vatan* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1994); Hikmatullo Nasriddinov, *Tarkish* (Dushanbe: Afsona, 1995).

<sup>128</sup> Example: Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars’, *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992); and Deputy Interior Minister Sherali Khayrulloev quoted by ITAR-TASS (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1419 (28 June 1992) i.

<sup>129</sup> Interfax (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1420 (30 June 1992) i.

<sup>130</sup> Interfax 1328gmt (30 June 1992) in SWB SU/1422 (2 July 1992) B5/6.

<sup>131</sup> ‘Tajikistan’s deputy premier speaks of civil war’, Agence France-Presse (28 June 1992).

<sup>132</sup> Interfax 1328gmt (30 June 1992) in SWB SU/1422 (2 July 1992) B5/6.

<sup>133</sup> *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (3 July 1992) in SWB SU/1424 (4 July 1992). The paper reported fighting between “opposition supporters and Kulyab armed formations” in Kalininobod in eastern Qurghonteppa Province on the night of July 2-3. A couple of days later Asal Azamova reported that at a meeting in Kulob Safarov handed over Qaro Ibrahim – imam of Qurghonteppa mosque and a supporter of Turajonzoda – to Davlat Khudonazarov in exchange for other unnamed hostages. See: Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars’, *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992).

leaving dozens dead.<sup>134</sup> Fighting continued in Qurghonteppa Province, especially after mid-August.<sup>135</sup> On August 20 President Nabiev travelled to Qurghonteppa Province to attend a “session of the republican headquarters on disarmament” where “The participants in the headquarters’ meeting agreed on one thing: things couldn’t get worse.”<sup>136</sup> Obviously, things got worse. On August 24 the *Oshkoro*<sup>137</sup> group demanded that the opposition leave Qurghonteppa Province within three days. And on August 27 in Qurghonteppa counter-opposition forces attacked opposition members in the Qurghonteppa city administration, killing five members of the DPT in their offices and three La’li Badakhshon members in their homes.<sup>138</sup> Immediately after the killings, more armed clashes leaving well over 100 dead occurred as Tajiks traveled from Kulob to join in the fighting.<sup>139</sup>

After this round of fighting subsided Sangak Safarov traveled to Qurghonteppa city on September 2 and gave a speech wherein he demanded that the opposition end its occupation of the Presidential Palace in Dushanbe. However, about 1000 opposition supporters attended the impromptu speech and began to exercise their right to a

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<sup>134</sup> Tajik Radio 1400gmt (28 July 1992) in SWB SU/1445 (29 July 1992) i, B/1. The opposition claims that Russian troops were involved. See: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Col. Gen. Nabiyev remains Tajikistan’s President – but he seeks support from Russian Federation’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (22 August 1992), 3, *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 34 (23 September 1992). Major General Ashurov, commander of the CIS forces, denies that 201<sup>st</sup> troops were involved in fighting in Bokhtar district on behalf of either side on July 27. He says up to 1,700 “armed men” fought each other in Saripul, Kuybyshev and elsewhere in Bokhtar, and that the 201<sup>st</sup> arrived to separate the two sides. See: Tajik Radio 1700gmt (30 July 1992) in SWB SU/1448 (1 August 1992) B/7. The opposition continued to make accusations about the fighting in Bokhtar as the opposition “National Salvation Committee - Alliance of Popular Forces” accused “Russian troops” of having “slaughtered innocents” in Bokhtar. Tajik Radio 1700gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1451 (5 August 1992) B/4. Ashurov threatened to make a criminal complaint against Shodmon Yusuf for his claim regarding Bokhtar. He rejects Yusuf’s wording of “the Russian troops” and “the foreign military contingent.” Ashurov stresses that 90% of 201<sup>st</sup> are soldiers and sergeants from Tajikistan, the majority of them being ethnic Tajik. See: ITAR-TASS 1629gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/6.

<sup>135</sup> Interfax (24 August 1992) in SWB SU/1468 (25 August 1992) i; Interfax 1854gmt (18 August 1992) in SWB SU/1466 (22 August 1992) B/2; RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 38 (25 September 1992) 78. There was even fighting on the 18<sup>th</sup> when Nabiev visited Qurghonteppa. See: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Col. Gen. Nabiyev remains Tajikistan’s President – but he seeks support from Russian Federation’, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (22 August 1992), 3, *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 34 (23 September 1992). Another source gives the date for the visit as the 20<sup>th</sup>. See: Ostankino Channel 1 TV, Moscow 1400gmt (20 August 1992) in SWB SU/1466 (22 Aug 1992) B/1.

<sup>136</sup> Ostankino Channel 1 TV 1400gmt (20 August 1992) in SWB SU/1466 (22 August 1992) B/1.

<sup>137</sup> *Oshkoro* here is the Kulob-based political group under the leadership of Rustam Abdurahimov, a prominent Kulobi field commander.

<sup>138</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 36 (11 September 1992) 80; ‘Communists kill 8 members of democratic opposition in Tajikistan’, Agence France-Presse (27 August 1992); Bess Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 38 (25 September 1992) 16-7. The second source generically (and problematically) describes the perpetrators as “pro-communist supporters.” Brown describes the opposition members as being part of the “city government.,” with the DPT in particular controlling the administration.

<sup>139</sup> Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, 16; ‘Agreement on CIS intervention force as town attacked in south’, AFP (28 August 1992). Two witnesses cited in the second source guesstimate that about 1000 fighter from Kulob were involved. As usual, unnamed opposition members accused CIS forces of fighting against the opposition.



heckler's veto. At about 5:30pm this fragmented rally turned violent as someone fired a first shot. Safarov and his partisans (including Langari Langariev) retreated to the nearby Urgut Uzbek mahalla. Here, according to an opposition commander and the deputy head of the local branch of the National Security Council (KGB), Safarov joined forces with Uzbek fighters in the fight against opposition gunmen.<sup>140</sup> The end result was the defeat of the counter-opposition forces in the Urgut mahalla and the destruction of the neighbourhood by opposition forces. This battle produced thousands of refugees, specifically Urgut Uzbeks.<sup>141</sup> Local opposition fighters deny that they were involved, instead claiming that Russians in disguise committed the killings in the Urgut mahalla, for reasons unspecified.<sup>142</sup> Over the next four days fighting continued<sup>143</sup> in Qurghonteppa city as Rustam Abdurahimov, the head of *Oshkoro* in Kulob, announced on local radio that weapons would be issued to those who want to fight in Qurghonteppa.<sup>144</sup> By September 6 fighting in Qurghonteppa city included mortars and APCs. According to one report, the police were not operating and the dead were buried in "courtyards and gardens" as every neighbourhood had "been turned into a closed fortress where the residents defend their homes and families themselves."<sup>145</sup> By this time only 20,000 of an original 70-80,000 population remained.<sup>146</sup>

Opposition gunmen maintained a hold over the city and the opposition maintained its headquarters in the city government building. As a result of this round of

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<sup>140</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 67; Bryan Brumley, 'Tajik City Residents Terrified of War They Don't Understand', *The Associated Press* (6 September 1992). The second version relies on Vladimir Yermashin, the deputy commander of the local Committee for National Security (KGB). The opposition commander cited is Abdul Satar Mirzoev. Bushkov and Mikulsky name the opposition supporters as being affiliated with the IRP and the DPT. For a version that puts the entire blame on the opposition, see: Sergey Dyshev, 'Krovavye dni Kurgan-Tyube', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 227(6 October 1992). There is some inconsistency in the dates. One of the above sources gives the date as September 1. A western reporter relays the version of one official from Qurghonteppa (Vajuddin Khojaev): "He says "armed bandits and thieves" from the neighboring Kulyab region came Sept. 2, held a demonstration demanding bread, flour and butter supplies, and then seized the district government building, triggering the latest spiral of fighting that began in the countryside in June." See: Juliet O'Neill, 'Tajikistan: Bloody war, by any name; Conflict labelled 'jihad,' or holy war, as death toll mounts', *The Ottawa Citizen* (16 September 1992) A.2.

<sup>141</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 67-8; Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, 'Cartridges instead of Bread', *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992) 10-11; Sergey Dyshev, 'Krovavye dni Kurgan-Tyube', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 227(6 October 1992). Bushkov and Mikulsky write that Uzbeks and others had fled to Lomonosov to shelter in the local 201<sup>st</sup> garrison (the 191st).

<sup>142</sup> Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, 'Cartridges instead of Bread', *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992) 10-11.

<sup>143</sup> ITAR-TASS 1201gmt (6 September 1992) in SWB SU/1480 (8 September 1992) C1/2.

<sup>144</sup> Radio Moscow 2100gmt (6 September 1992) in SWB SU/1480 (8 September 1992) C1/2.

<sup>145</sup> Mayak Radio 0439gmt (7 September 1992) in SWB SU/1480 (8 September 1992). Whitlock writes something similar: "Tajik and Uzbek families had no one to protect them. They sent their sons out to man barricades of bed-frames and tractors they had built to guard their mahallas or neighbourhoods." See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 172.

<sup>146</sup> Interfax 1549gmt (6 September 1992) in SWB SU/1480 (8 September 1992) C1/2.

fighting, an additional 5000 people fled the city of Qurghonteppa having to first exit through an opposition roadblock at the north of the city and then through one final opposition checkpoint and then two 201<sup>st</sup> checkpoints.<sup>147</sup> One IRP commander, Muhammadrasul Salamov, controlled the Qurghonteppa Province Regional Executive Committee Building and claimed a force of 1000 men, including members of the IRP, DPT, Rastokhez, as well as non-affiliated fighters.<sup>148</sup> However, one reporter who visited Qurghonteppa at the time described all the opposition fighters he saw as “Islamic activists.”<sup>149</sup> These opposition forces were able to make steady gains, and by September 8 the powerful Kulobi commander Langari Langariev and his forces abandoned Qurghonteppa city<sup>150</sup> while Safarov continued to lose ground.<sup>151</sup> Over the next few days the levels of violence subsided as Kulobi forces continued to withdraw from Qurghonteppa.<sup>152</sup>

Continual efforts were made to separate the fighting forces or to broker a cease fire.<sup>153</sup> By mid-September a local cease-fire was agreed to, and complied with, in Qurghonteppa city, but with some small scale local fighting at the Kuybyshev state farm in Bokhtar District by armed men not under the command of the main commanders.<sup>154</sup> The continual fighting of the type on the Kuybyshev state farm, outside any sort of

<sup>147</sup> Bryan Brumley, ‘Tajik City Residents Terrified of War They Don’t Understand’, The Associated Press (6 September 1992).

<sup>148</sup> Interfax 1549gmt (6 September 1992) in SWB SU/1480 (8 September 1992) C1/2.

<sup>149</sup> Bryan Brumley, ‘Tajik City Residents Terrified of War They Don’t Understand’, The Associated Press (6 September 1992). He reports this anecdote, as one example: “From the square, Khori Mohammedjan, a heavysset Islamic activist, dispatched small groups of gunmen around the city. Wearing a long robe and white flak jacket, he waved his arms, growled at the Americans and sent an armored personnel carrier and several cars full of men to fend off a reported attack by Sangak’s forces against school No. 11. “Allahu akbar! (God is great!)” the men shouted as they sped off, brandishing their weapons.”

<sup>150</sup> Interfax 1342gmt (8 September 1992) in SWB SU/1882 (10 September 1992) C1/1.

<sup>151</sup> Ostankino Channel 1 TV, Moscow 2000gmt (8 September 1992) in SWB SU 1882 (10 September 1992) C1/1. This source claim that opposition forces were preparing to assault Kalininobod (Sarband), a city 10km east of Qurghonteppa city.

<sup>152</sup> K. Belyaninova and A. Korzun, ‘Presidents don’t go away just like that’, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (10 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 36 (7 October 1992). The drop in violence allowed for the delivery of humanitarian aid from Uzbekistan. See: *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (9 September 1992) in SWB SU/1483 (11 September 1992) C1/1.

<sup>153</sup> Earlier, in late July, the 201<sup>st</sup> had attempted to separate the local factions – leading the opposition to accuse the CIS forces of taking the sides of the counter-opposition. See: Tajik Radio 1700gmt (30 July 1992) in SWB SU/1448 (1 August 1992) B/7. During one of the battles in earlier September a much smaller force of 30 “special police” (likely OMON troops) from Kulob had attempted to separate the two sides in Qurghonteppa, resulting in the death of 20 officers. See: K. Belyaninova and A. Korzun, ‘Presidents don’t go away just like that’, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (10 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 36 (7 October 1992). There is no opposition statement on this incident, but it is likely that they would not view police officers from Kulob as a disinterested party to the conflict.

<sup>154</sup> Tajik Radio 1400gmt (14 September 1992) in SWB SU/1487 (16 September 1992) B/3. On September 13-14 there was fighting in Bokhtar District at Kuybyshev state farm and near the technical college. A later report, citing “Sharifov,” Chairman of the Committee for National Security (KGB), reported the exact same thing. See: ITAR-TASS (17 September 1992) in SWB SU/1489 (18 September 1992) i. See also: Tajik Radio 1200gmt (17 September 1992) SU/1490 (19 September 1992) B/4-5.

'chain of command,' is worth analysing further. Bushkov and Mikulsky noted that by mid-September the fighting in Qurghonteppa Province was gradually acquiring increasingly non-political characteristics.<sup>155</sup> Roy agrees on the non-ideological fault lines, and provides the Turkmeniston (now Haqiqat) collective farm in the Vakhsh district as an example of regional fault lines determining the pattern of conflict. This farm, which was established in 1953 with a Gharmi majority and Kulobi minority, became a self-contained battleground in summer 1992. In June the Gharmi Tajiks forced out the Kulobi Tajiks, who fled their mahalla (Maskinobod) to the nearby majority-Kulobi Moskva collective farm. From June to November these two farms became bases for Kulobi-Gharmi fighting.<sup>156</sup> At the Kuybyshev state farm (pop. 25,000) in Bokhtar District, the fault lines followed the same pattern. Fighters in sections/divisions Number One and Two, dominated by Kulobis, clashed with opposition supporters (very likely Gharmis<sup>157</sup>) in Number Three and Four.<sup>158</sup>

On September 18 fighting was reported near Qurghonteppa, but also further to the east in the smaller city of Kalininobod. At the same time, local negotiations were ongoing. However, these talks were likely harmed when opposition forces attacked Kulobi forces on the Shar-Shar pass in northern Kulob Province.<sup>159</sup> Four days later the fighting in Qurghonteppa Province was continuing to increase in intensity<sup>160</sup> as

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<sup>155</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 69. An example given on this page is "blood revenge." However, the book as a whole has many examples of local, non-ideologically influenced fighting that is far removed from Dushanbe's politics.

<sup>156</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 95.

<sup>157</sup> I base this on the fact that many refugees from Bokhtar fled to Gharm. See: Jennifer McLean and Thomas Greene, 'Turmoil in Tajikistan: Addressing the Crisis of Internal Displacement', *The Forsaken People: Case Studies of the Internally Displaced*. Edited by Roberta Cohen and Francis M. Deng (Washington: Brookings, 1998) 326-7.

<sup>158</sup> Ralph Boulton, 'Cotton fields war raises spectre of Central Asia conflict', Reuters News (2 September 1992). Numerous sources mention the fighting at Kuybyshev, as well as mentioning other farms (Vakhsh, Karl Marx, Dusti and Sabzavot [*sic*, may be referring to one of the preceding farms as a *sabzavot* (vegetable) farm]) near Qurghonteppa city being the scenes of violent conflict. See: Tajik Radio 1200gmt (8 September 1992) in SWB SU 1882 (10 September 1992); Ostankino TV (20 September 1992) in SWB SU/1491 (21 September 1992) ii; ITAR-TASS 1942gmt (19 September 1992) SU/1491 (21 September 1992) B/1; Tajik Radio 1700gmt (21 September 1992) in SWB SU/1493 (23 September 1992) B/9; Tajik Radio (22 September 1992) in SWB SU/1494 (24 September 1992) I; Tajik Radio (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1495 (25 September 1992) i. Note: the sections that were fighting each other may not be numbered correctly in the Reuters article. Oleg Panfilov, reporting on the deaths of 19 people at Kuybyshev, wrote that the "Residents of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> divisions" of Kuybyshev state farm in Bokhtar fought each other. See: Oleg Panfilov, 'Col. Gen. Nabiyeu remains Tajikistan's President – but he seeks support from Russian Federation', *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (22 August 1992), 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 34 (23 September 1992). However, Tajik Radio referred to the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> "units" as having been controlled by Kulobi commanders. See: Tajik Radio 1000gmt (26 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>159</sup> ITAR-TASS 1049gmt (19 Sept 1992) in SWB SU/1491 (21 Sept 1992) B/1. The opinion that negotiations were harmed by the fighting at Shar-Shar is that of the ITAR-TASS correspondent.

<sup>160</sup> Aleksandr Pelts, 'Tadjikistan: bratoubiystvennaya vojna prodolzhaetsya', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 215 (22 September 1992); ITAR-TASS (20 September 1992) in SWB SU/1492 (22 September 1992) i.

representatives of both sides publicly stated that their goal was total victory. On September 22 Aleksandr Pelts reported that:

The mutual distrust and, if we are to speak honestly, the mutually hostile feelings are so strong that even an attempt to merely sit down for peace negotiations is not possible. As stated by the representatives of the so-called opposition, they will fight until the last Kulobi is knocked out of the area. And the opposing side is just as firm and uncompromising. "Peace in our land will not be reached until the opposition, which illegally came to power, lays down its weapons" was the evaluation of the situation by the Kulobi warlords Rustam [Abdurahimov] and Langar [Langariev].<sup>161</sup>

On September 23 two opposition mullah-commanders (very likely Mullah Abdullo and Mullah Amruddin<sup>162</sup>) abducted Nurali Qurbonov, the Chairman of the Qurghonteppa Province Executive Committee since June, as well as the local leader of the Ministry of the Interior and another high ranking security official, and held them hostage at the Kuybyshev state farm. The hostages were hastily released, reportedly due to threats from the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>163</sup> However, it is also likely that opposition leaders would have seen this action as a terrible idea and persuaded the mullahs to release the men. Whatever the case may be, this incident is a good illustration of the deeply fragmented nature of power locally. At this time the local government bodies were still attempting to consolidate control over the security sector. Seven hours later the same source reported that Qurbonov announced the formation of a local headquarters whose purpose would be to "protect citizens" of Qurghonteppa Province and stated that "law enforcement bodies, parties and popular organizations joined the headquarters."<sup>164</sup> Later this was approved at a higher level when the new interim President Akbarsho Iskandarov decreed that a new "joint headquarters" would be set up in Qurghonteppa, encompassing "law enforcement bodies" with volunteers to be drawn from the 201<sup>st</sup> and the Ministry of the Interior.<sup>165</sup> However, subsequent events show that this new headquarters – whether it actually functioned or not – clearly had no positive affect whatsoever on the deteriorating security situation in Qurghonteppa Province. And on

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<sup>161</sup> Aleksandr Pelts, 'Tadzhikistan: bratoubiystvennaya voyna prodolzhaetsya', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 215 (22 September 1992).

<sup>162</sup> The source below gives their names in brackets with question marks, indicating that the transcriber of the radio broadcast is not completely confident. However, I have found that most names and locations that are qualified in this manner from the radio broadcasts almost always make sense in hindsight. It is not clear if this Mullah Abdullo is the well known opposition commander of the same name (Mullah Abdullo Rahimov) who refused to recognize the 1997 peace treaty and who is constantly cited even in 2010 as an insurgent in the east of the country and on the Afghan border. See his entry here: Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 295.

<sup>163</sup> Tajik Radio in Russian 1000gmt (21 September 1992) in SWB SU/1493 (23 September 1992) B/9. The two abducted security officials are named as "Ahmedov, head of Internal Affairs directorate" and "Col. Sayed Hasanov," whose affiliation is not provided.

<sup>164</sup> Tajik Radio 1700gmt (21 September 1992) in SWB SU/1493 (23 September 1992) B/9.

<sup>165</sup> Interfax 1258gmt (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1496 (26 September 1992) B/4.

October 8 the government replaced Chairman Qurbonov with the Gharmi Tajik and former interim President Qadriddin Aslonov.<sup>166</sup>

The renewed efforts by Kulobi forces did not deliver the results they had hoped for. On September 22 they showed their desperation by demanding from their foes, the “Islamists,” that they stop their offensive in Qurghonteppa Province or the Kulobis would destroy the large fertiliser factory, along with its explosive contents, as well as the Qurghonteppa railway station and the sewage system.<sup>167</sup> This bluff had no effect on the opposition as heavy fighting continued throughout the next day.<sup>168</sup> The opposition gains were reported jubilantly on opposition-controlled Tajik Radio. A Tajik Radio report on September 23 declared that the “mujahideen” of the “Qurghonteppa National Salvation Guard” had defeated the Kulobis (the “renegade gangs” of Rustam Abdurahimov, Langari Langariev and Fayzali Saidov\*) and the “forces of darkness.”<sup>169</sup>

The opposition claimed military gains against the forces of Rustam Abdurahimov and Sangak Safarov as early as September 26 with the taking of the Kulobi-controlled units of Kuybyshev state farm in Bokhtar District and Lomonosovo,<sup>170</sup> which houses the 191<sup>st</sup> garrison of the 201<sup>st</sup>, plus the capture of 100 armed opponents.<sup>171</sup> However, the capture of Lomonosovo is alternately described, depending on the source, as the defeat of Kulobi forces or the massacre of a refugee camp. Bushkov and Mikulsky, generally critical of both sides, refer to the attack (beginning on September 25) by “Islamists” on the Lomonosovo area, where the majority of the local refugees were staying, as a massacre.<sup>172</sup> By September 15 as many as 16,000 refugees, mostly Uzbek but also including Slavs, were sheltering in Lomonosovo.<sup>173</sup> However, at this time two Russian reporters had noted that most of those people sheltering in Lomonosovo had left towards Kulob, so the number of

<sup>166</sup> Tajik Radio 1700gmt (8 October 1992) in SWB SU/1508 (10 October 1992) B/1-2.

<sup>167</sup> ITAR-TASS (22 September 1992) in SWB SU/1494 (24 September 1992) i.

<sup>168</sup> Tajik Radio (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1494 (24 September 1992) i.

<sup>169</sup> Tajik Radio (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1495 (25 September 1992) i. For good measure, Tajik Radio also cited the defeat of “foreign mercenaries.” \*Note: The report does not identify Fayzali Saidov, but rather “Faizali Kurbonov.” However, there is no mention elsewhere of a commander by this name. But there are numerous mentions of Fayzali Saidov, and some sources at the time did not seem to know his surname, so I assume this report is referring to him.

<sup>170</sup> Locals refer to it as the Lomonos neighbourhood. It is close to the centre of Qurghonteppa city and is not, like reported in numerous outlets, a “village” or a settlement near Qurghonteppa. Personal observations in Qurghonteppa, September 2009. Current satellite view of the base: <http://bit.ly/gZhnru>

<sup>171</sup> Tajik Radio 1000gmt (26 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1. The opposition referred to its armed allies as “forces supporting the government.” See also: ‘Nationalists take two Tajik towns’, Agence France-Presse (26 September 1992).

<sup>172</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 70.

<sup>173</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 69; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 172; RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 37 (18 September 1992) 72. The source for the number of refugees in the RFE/RL report is from the Russian Foreign Minister. See also: Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, 18.

refugees here is not clear. They also reported that armed men in cars were coming into Lomonosovo, which they describe as “not a fortress,” and abducting people. The armed forces of the 191st Regiment were limited to 40 CIS 201<sup>st</sup> officers (enlisted men and NCOs were not issued weapons<sup>174</sup>) who were focused on guarding their equipment,<sup>175</sup> as well as their families.<sup>176</sup> A Russian Ministry of Defence official was clear about the orders given to the 201<sup>st</sup>: “They were instructed resolutely to rebuff attempts to seize arms, ammunition and military equipment as well as illegal actions of the warring sides against the servicemen and their families.”<sup>177</sup>

Sergey Dyshev, a reporter for the official publication of the Russian Ministry of Defence, offers a more detailed, if one-sided,<sup>178</sup> analysis of what happened at Lomonosovo at the end of September. He reconstructs events based on statements from the refugees at Lomonosovo and, presumably, from CIS forces. The refugees had fled to safety of the 191<sup>st</sup> Regiment’s compound and the Lomonosov neighbourhood at the beginning of September, where they were accommodated at School No. 7 (one source put their number at 5,000 in late September<sup>179</sup>). Opposition fighters (“Vovchiks”) claimed that several dozen Kulobi fighters were also sheltering in Lomonosovo, a neighbourhood that include a section for the families of CIS officers. An agreement was reached – with the approval of 191<sup>st</sup> commander Lt. Col. Evgeny Merkulov – for the opposition forces to inspect Lomonosovo with the participation of representatives of the Ministry of the Interior, the National Security Committee (KGB) and the 201<sup>st</sup>.

Opposition forces under the command of *domullo* Abdughafforov<sup>180</sup> used this as an opportunity (“deception”) to attack into Lomonosovo and pushed aside the KGB officers. They immediately attacked a local “self-defence” detachment – men whose weapons included two or three hunting rifles, an athletic javelin and sticks. Dyshev refutes the official number of seven people killed. He writes that mass executions and

<sup>174</sup> Numerous sources make this point. For example: Interfax 1644gmt (27 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/5.

<sup>175</sup> Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992) 10-11.

<sup>176</sup> Numerous sources mention the focus of the Officers on protecting their families. For Example: Ostankino Channel 1 TV 1100gmt (26 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1; M. J. Orr, ‘The Russian Garrison in Tajikistan: 201st Gatchina Twice Red Banner Motor Rifle Division’, Conflict Studies Research Centre, Occasional Brief No. 85, 18 October 2001; Michael Orr, ‘The Civil War in Tadjikistan’, *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (April 1993) 183; Chris Bowers and John Rettie, ‘Russia reinforces embattled Tajik garrison’, *The Guardian* (30 Sept 1992).

<sup>177</sup> Anatoly Verbin, ‘Hundreds reported killed or wounded in Tajikistan’, Reuters (28 Sept 1992).

<sup>178</sup> I.e., no more or less one-sided than the reports that focused on the Kulobi and Uzbek attacks on Gharri Tajiks and Pamiris.

<sup>179</sup> Ostankino Channel 1 TV 1100gmt (26 Sept 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>180</sup> Sergey Dyshev, ‘Krovavyye dni Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 227 (6 October 1992). It is not clear if this commander is the same as Abdughaffor Khudoydov, a Vakhsh Valley local who played a prominent role in fighting in Dushanbe.

looting began right after this as people were brought out of the buildings. Specifically targeted were the principal and the head teacher of a school that was sheltering the refugees. Other men, about 60, were taken to the Executive Committee building where they were tortured and executed. Later, a Russian Major named Sergey Rebrov was kidnapped by the eventually victorious Kulobi forces and taken to the airport to ensure that he saw a *Kamaz* transport vehicle full of mutilated corpses – Tajik, Uzbek and Russian – left by the opposition fighters.<sup>181</sup> As for Abdughafforov, he was evacuated from Qurghonteppa with CIS military forces providing a security guarantee for him – as part of a deal whereby he agrees to enter into peace talks.<sup>182</sup>

The opposition claimed that Qurghonteppa on September 26 was “relatively calm.”<sup>183</sup> However, by the next day heavy fighting began at Lomonosovo.<sup>184</sup> This was the beginning of a Kulobi counter-attack – assisted by newly acquired armour from the 191st Regiment at Lomonosovo – that would not be stopped. Some sources state that Kulobi forces were in control of, or close to controlling, Qurghonteppa city as early as September 27-28.<sup>185</sup> The targets of the tank-assisted offensive by Safarov, Langariev and Abdurahimov included the National Security Committee building, the Kuybyshev state farm, and the bridge over the Vakhsh River at Qizilqala.<sup>186</sup> Other sources state that while the Kulobi forces were dominant, there was still some ongoing fighting over the next week,<sup>187</sup> leading to the outflow of thousands of additional refugees<sup>188</sup> and the destruction of some buildings in town.<sup>189</sup> The night of October 1 passed without any shooting and on the next day the Kulobi forces issued a security guarantee to the deputies and employees of the city and provincial government administrations and

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<sup>181</sup> Sergey Dyshev, ‘Krovavye dni Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 227 (6 October 1992). Dyshev uses the term “Vovchiks” for the opposition, but after introducing the term sceptically and using doubtful parentheses around the word.

<sup>182</sup> Sergey Dyshev, ‘Krovavye dni Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 227 (6 October 1992).

<sup>183</sup> Tajik Radio 1000gmt (26 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1

<sup>184</sup> Russia’s Radio 0900gmt (27 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>185</sup> ‘Death toll soars in Tajikistan’, Reuters News (28 September 1992); Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 70. Bushkov and Mikulsky cite Langari Langariev as the main commander and give the date as the 27th. The Reuters story cites the opinion of an unnamed Russian army commander and gives the date as the 28th.

<sup>186</sup> Tajik Radio 0500gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/4-5; Ostankino Channel 1 TV 1500gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/5. Tajik Radio described the fighting as being between “Langariev’s criminals” and “self-defense units.” Tajik Radio refers to Abdurahimov as “Rakhimov” in this report,

<sup>187</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 40 (9 October 1992) 74. RFE/RL, working off the reports of several Tajik and Russian news outlets, stated that “proNabiev forces from Kulob oblast” control the city of Qurghonteppa on September 29. Ostankino TV reports that Qurghonteppa city is in Kulobi hands on October 2. See: Ostankino Channel 1 TV 1200gmt (2 October 1992) in SWB SU/1504 (6 October 1992) C2/2. However, Tajik Radio reports on the same day that fighting in the city continues. See: Tajik Radio 1200gmt (2 October 1992) in SWB SU/1504 (6 October 1992) C2/3.

<sup>188</sup> For example, about 3,000 refugees from Qurghonteppa arrived in Dushanbe on September 28. ‘(Moscow)’, Agence France-Presse (29 September 1992).

<sup>189</sup> Ostankino TV (29 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) i.

urged them to return to work.<sup>190</sup> Earlier, on September 28, the director of the city forces of the Ministry of the Interior was killed along with 12 of his police officers during the fighting.<sup>191</sup> Nurali Qurbonov was quick to place the blame, saying that “pro-Nabiev forces from Kulob” killed the officers.<sup>192</sup> However, the overwhelming amount of attention was paid to the issue of the neutrality, or lack thereof, of the CIS 201st MRD garrison in Qurghonteppa. Numerous sources blamed the 201<sup>st</sup> MRD for the opposition’s defeat. A Central Asian (probably Tajik) journalist at a Russian paper sympathetic to the opposition later claimed that the 201<sup>st</sup> actually lead the offensive against the opposition in Qurghonteppa city starting on September 27.<sup>193</sup> Others were less sure. Tajikistan’s Foreign Minister Khudoberdi Kholiqnazarov, an opposition member,<sup>194</sup> stated that the 201<sup>st</sup> forces are “unfortunately, acting one-sidedly, supporting mainly the Kulob units. [This information is] unconfirmed, but nevertheless it is circulating.”<sup>195</sup> Meanwhile, interim President Iskandarov said that Kulobi forces seized tanks and APCs from “Russian troops” and sent a protest note to the Russian government of Boris Yeltsin over the incident.<sup>196</sup> Nurali Qurbonov was more certain, and claimed that the 201<sup>st</sup> forces were supporting the offensive against the opposition forces in Qurghonteppa and demanded that the CIS forces withdraw from Qurghonteppa. Furthermore, he rejected any suggestion that the tanks and armoured vehicles had been stolen.<sup>197</sup> Tajik Radio interviewed Qurbonov and he blamed the “interference” by “Russian forces.”<sup>198</sup> He further stated that Kulobi leaders avoiding peace talks, and named the Kulobi commanders he held responsible: Sangak Safarov, Langari Langariev and Rustam Abdurahimov.<sup>199</sup> Opposition-controlled Tajik Radio was very active in condemning the incident. They specified that “Russian soldiers” gave

<sup>190</sup> A. Ladin, ‘Kurgan-Tyube: Pervaya noch bez bystrelov’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 224 (2 Oct 1992).

<sup>191</sup> ‘(Moscow)’, Agence France-Presse (29 September 1992). Director’s name: Azam Dodikhudoyev.

<sup>192</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 40 (9 October 1992) 73-4; ‘Death toll soars in Tajikistan’, Reuters News (28 September 1992). The second source reports they were “shot at point blank range.” See also: Tajik Radio 050gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/4.

<sup>193</sup> Khudonazar Usmanov, ‘An ally for some, a gendarme for others’, *Moskovskiye novosti* (24 January 1993), A12, The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press. Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993).

<sup>194</sup> Khaliknazarov was the chairman of the Pamiri cultural organisation *Nosiri Khisrav*. See: Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II: The Regional Conflict in Confessional and International Context’, 175

<sup>195</sup> Interfax 1945gmt (5 October 1992) in SWB SU/1505 (7 October 1992) B/6. He referred to the forces from Kulob as “bandits.”

<sup>196</sup> ‘Death toll soars in Tajikistan’, Reuters News (28 September 1992); Anatoly Verbin, ‘Hundreds reported killed or wounded in Tajikistan’, Reuters News (28 September 1992).

<sup>197</sup> ‘Death toll soars in Tajikistan’, Reuters (28 September 1992); Anatoly Verbin, ‘Hundreds reported killed or wounded in Tajikistan’, Reuters (28 September 1992). Qurbonov commented: “The most modern heavy military hardware was used against innocent and defenceless people and against the defenders of Kurgan-Tyube. [...] As a result of this barbaric attack hundreds of people were killed and wounded.”

<sup>198</sup> Tajik Radio 1300gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/6.

<sup>199</sup> Tajik Radio 1300gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/6.



four tanks and seven other vehicles to Langariev, while also blaming Safarov and Abdurahimov. Tajik Radio further reports that “Langariev’s criminals” and the “traitors of the nation” (the three as a group) are to be blamed for the destruction in Qurghonteppa.<sup>200</sup> One unnamed Qurghonteppa Province official blamed 201<sup>st</sup> commander Muhridin Ashurov and Lt. Col. Evgeny Merkulov, the 191<sup>st</sup> Regiment commander, for “betrayals”, claiming that military equipment could only have been taken only with their permission.<sup>201</sup> Ashurov stated that the three tanks and several armoured vehicles had been stolen, but that his forces were focused on protecting their equipment and their families and that they would “continue to observe strict neutrality and will not take any action that could have serious political consequences.”<sup>202</sup> The Russian Ministry of Defence stated that three tanks and one APC had been stolen by local officers (i.e., ethnic Central Asians serving in the 201st) at 4am on September 27.

However, the reporters relaying the comments of the Russian Ministry of Defence were sceptical that the tanks had been stolen. They wrote that the tanks and APCs were driven to Kalininobod, given to the Kulobi militias and used in the offensive a few hours later.<sup>203</sup> Anatoly Ladin, writing in the official publication of the CIS/Russian Ministry of Defence reported something similar, except that he specified a “Tajik” officer was responsible.<sup>204</sup> This is correct in the sense that the officer was an indigenous local nationality. Ladin later reported that that the perpetrators were ethnic Tajik and Uzbek members of the 201<sup>st</sup>: four officers, one warrant officer and two soldiers.<sup>205</sup> Others reported only that Uzbek officers were responsible for the theft.<sup>206</sup> Mahmud Khudoyberdiev, the officer that was likely the leader of the operation, was actually a local Loqay Uzbek whose exact ethnic mix is given numerous descriptions.<sup>207</sup>

<sup>200</sup> Tajik Radio 0500gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/4.

<sup>201</sup> Tajik Radio 1300gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/7.

<sup>202</sup> ‘(Moscow)’, Agence France-Presse (29 September 1992).

<sup>203</sup> U. Babakhanov and A. Khokhlov, ‘Tajikistan: The tanks know the truth’, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, (29 Sept 1992), 1, *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 39 (28 Oct 1992) 27.

<sup>204</sup> Anatoly Ladin, ‘Kurgan-Tyube: Pervaya noch bez bystrelov’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 224 (2 October 1992). See also: Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: starvation threatens as blockade continues’, Inter Press Service (7 October 1992). Cordahi writes: “Ethnic Tajiks in the CIS forces, supportive of the Kuliabis, had handed arms over to them – giving them the upper hand in the battle for Kurgan Tyube.” Cordahi later modified the description to “sympathetic ethnic Uzbek officers.” See: Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press Service (22 October 1992).

<sup>205</sup> Anatoly Ladin, ‘Kurgan-Tyube: Ocherednaya peredyschka pered novym stolknoveniyami?’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 223 (1 October 1992).

<sup>206</sup> Cherif J. Corhahi, ‘Tajikistan: old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press Service (22 October 1992); Cherif J. Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: situation worsens as government forces fall back’, Inter Press Service (16 October 1992).

<sup>207</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh refers to Khudoyberdiev’s “ethnic Uzbek maternal family connection” while Whitlock and Payam Foroughi describe him as half Uzbek, Half Tajik. See: Shahram Akbarzadeh, ‘Abdullajanov and the ‘third force’’, in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catharine Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 30; Whitlock,

At the time Khudoyberdiev was a young (early thirties according to Akiner<sup>208</sup>) captain in the 201<sup>st</sup> MRD who also served as the Deputy Military Commissioner of Qurghonteppa.<sup>209</sup> Whitlock writes that he “joined the war simply by driving three or four tanks out of the Qurghan Teppa garrison with the help of a few friends.”<sup>210</sup> However, all of this information about Khudoyberdiev did not become widely known until later, as he was at the time an unknown figure and the focus remained on the Kulobi commanders after this incident. Khudoyberdiev would later become a powerful figure nationally.

The issue of stolen/borrowed/gifted armour soon turned to claims and reports that the CIS forces managed to destroy the tanks and other armoured vehicles that had fallen out of their hands. Ashurov claimed that his forces had destroyed the “stolen” armour, including two T-72 tanks.<sup>211</sup> Elsewhere Ashurov is indirectly quoted as saying that the tanks taken by the Kulobi armed groups “have been neutralized.”<sup>212</sup> On October 1 Ladin reported that only one tank remained at large.<sup>213</sup> And, on October 2, even a correspondent from opposition-controlled Tajik Radio reported that “the last tank has surrendered to the Russian forces.”<sup>214</sup> However, on October 6 one foreign journalist voiced scepticism of CIS military claims that the tanks and APCs had been returned or destroyed, and noted that journalists visiting Qurghonteppa city outskirts “reported

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*Land Beyond the River*, p. 171; Foroughi, ‘Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities - Sources and Solutions’, 50. Journalists Igor Rotar and Carlotta Gall both refer to Khudoyberdiev as half Uzbek with no mention of the other half. See: Igor Rotar, ‘Uprising Quashed in Tajikistan: Further Cataclysms Expected’, *Prism*, Vol. 4, Issue 23 (27 November 1998); Carlotta Gall, ‘Tajikistan Stumbles Down Dark Road to Chaos’, *The Moscow Times*, 13 February 1996. Available online at: <http://www.themoscowtimes.com/stories/1996/02/13/017.html>. However, Matteo Fumagalli writes: “Khudoberdiev was commonly referred to as an ethnic Uzbek, despite being a Lokay.” See: Fumagalli, ‘Framing ethnic minority mobilization in Central Asia’, 583. Nourzhanov and Akiner describe him as a Lokay Uzbek. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 89-90; Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 115.

<sup>208</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 89-90.

<sup>209</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 115, 119; Vladislav Shuzygin, ‘Nastoiashchii polkovnik’, *Zautza*, 12 August 1997 as cited in *ibid*, 115.

<sup>210</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 171. Whitlock incorrectly refers to Khudoyberdiev as a Lieutenant.

<sup>211</sup> ‘(Moscow)’, Agence France-Presse (30 September 1992).

<sup>212</sup> Ostankino Channel 1 TV 1200gmt (2 October 1992) in SWB SU/1504 (6 Oct 1992) C2/2. See also: ‘(Moscow)’, Agence France-Presse (30 September 1992). For an earlier report of the 201<sup>st</sup> destroying a stolen tank, see: ITAR-TASS 1424gmt (27 Sept 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 Sept 1992) B/5.

<sup>213</sup> Anatoly Ladin, ‘Kurgan-Tyube: Ocherednaya peredyshka pered novym stolknoveniyami?’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No, 223 (1 October 1992).

<sup>214</sup> Tajik Radio 1200gmt (2 October 1992) in SWB SU/1504 (6 October 1992) C2/3.

hearing tanks in action.”<sup>215</sup> Possessing tanks and or APCs was an obvious advantage in a war where the combatants were this poorly armed.<sup>216</sup>

On October 6 Tajik Radio reported that a Ministry of Interior force was being deployed to Qurghonteppa to “reinforce” the “voluntary units.”<sup>217</sup> Either they never arrived or they made no difference when they did. The same source reported two days later that shooting in Qurghonteppa city was continuing, and that the provincial government and law enforcement bodies had fled the city.<sup>218</sup> During the first week of October, fighting continued in Qurghonteppa city and surrounding areas, but with the Kulobi fighters holding the best defensive positions and having captured more weapons, versus the comparatively poorly armed opposition fighters.<sup>219</sup> Refugees arriving in Dushanbe reported that the Kulobis controlled the city and blamed Safarov’s forces for the violence.<sup>220</sup> Estimates of the original 75-80,000 population remaining in Qurghonteppa city varied: 10,000 at the end of September<sup>221</sup>; “no one left” and only “defence units remain” at the end of September<sup>222</sup>; 16,000 after the first week of October<sup>223</sup>; 2-3% after mid-October<sup>224</sup>; half by mid-November.<sup>225</sup> In late October one pro-opposition commander stated that “Only the young men have stayed, and they have stayed to fight.”<sup>226</sup> The state of the city and the infrastructure in the surrounding area were also given grim assessments: hundreds of dead bodies on the roads, no electricity and “almost complete destruction of infrastructure in the Vakhsh Valley”<sup>227</sup>; 50% drop in crude cotton deliveries in the Vakhsh Valley<sup>228</sup>; and the destruction or damage of

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<sup>215</sup> Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: starvation threatens as blockade continues’, Inter Press (7 October 1992). Russian generals, unfazed by the recent thefts of military equipment, declared that fewer weapons were getting to the warring sides now that the border and the military bases were more secure. See: Chris Bowers, ‘Hatred runs deep in war of the clans’, The Guardian (3 October 1992).

<sup>216</sup> Michael Hetzer, ‘Tajikistan: defenders of Kurgan Tyube battle the old regime’, Inter Press Service (9 October 1992). Hetzer writes: “In such a poorly armed war, a single tank can make the difference between victory and defeat.”

<sup>217</sup> Tajik Radio 1200gmt (6 October 1992) in SWB SU/1506 (8 October 1992) B/3.

<sup>218</sup> Tajik Radio 1200gmt (8 October 1992) in SWB SU/1508 (10 October 1992) B/1.

<sup>219</sup> Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: starvation threatens as blockade continues’, Inter Press Service (7 October 1992). See also: Russia’s Radio 0100gmt (2 October 1992) in SWB SU/1502 (3 October 1992) B/1; Tajik Radio 1200gmt (6 October 1992) in SWB SU/1506 (8 October 1992) B/3.

<sup>220</sup> ITAR-TASS 1627gmt (30 September 1992) in SWB SU/1501 (2 October 1992) B/7; Brown, ‘The Conservatives Triumph.’

<sup>221</sup> ITAR-TASS 1627gmt (30 September 1992) in SWB SU/1501 (2 October 1992) B/7.

<sup>222</sup> Tajik Radio 0500gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/4.

<sup>223</sup> Tajik Radio 1200gmt (8 October 1992) in SWB SU/1508 (10 October 1992) B/1.

<sup>224</sup> Aleksandr Pelts and Valery Sukov, ‘Tadzhikistan: razgul terrora prodolzhaetsya’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 239 (20 October 1992).

<sup>225</sup> ‘(Kurgan-Tyube)’, Agence France-Presse (13 November 1992).

<sup>226</sup> C. Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press (22 October 1992).

<sup>227</sup> Aleksandr Pelts and Valery Sukov, ‘Tadzhikistan: razgul terrora prodolzhaetsya’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 239 (20 October 1992).

<sup>228</sup> ‘Cotton left in the field - civil war’, NOVECON (9 December 1992).

many public building and other structures in the city.<sup>229</sup> Later, by mid-November, the situation in Qurghonteppa city was reported as having settled and with activities in the city “returning to normal.”<sup>230</sup>

Throughout October the offensive expanded beyond Qurghonteppa city as the counter-opposition forces gained momentum. By October 4 the focus of fighting had shifted to the outskirts of Qurghonteppa city and the collective and state farms of Vakhsh and Bokhtar districts, where fighting was reported as late as October 12.<sup>231</sup> Opposition fighters further south had control of some strategic locations at the beginning of October, for example the bridge over the Vakhsh River west of Kolkhozobod (i.e., Jilikul).<sup>232</sup> By October 11 Kulobi forces had surrounded the city of Kolkhozobod, 30km to the south of Qurghonteppa city, where the provincial officials had fled to.<sup>233</sup> The next day heavy fighting was reported around Kolkhozobod.<sup>234</sup> A week later fighting was still being reported and the situation in Kolkhozobod remained “extremely tense.”<sup>235</sup> Whitlock writes that on October 15 the Popular Front seized Jilikul and Kolkhozobod.<sup>236</sup> However, if Whitlock is right, the hold over Kolkhozobod must have been temporary, as Kulobi forces mounted an offensive towards Kolkhozobod on October 22, with the local flour mill as the priority target.<sup>237</sup> At the end of October the counter-opposition forces attacked the Afghan river-border town of Panj, reported to be last key location for the opposition forces.<sup>238</sup> The new (appointed October 8) Chairman of the Qurghonteppa Province Executive Committee, Qadriddin Aslonov – the former interim president of Tajikistan and a Gharmi Tajik from the Vakhsh Valley – was kidnapped/arrested by an unnamed group of Uzbeks on about October 29/30 and

<sup>229</sup> ‘(Kurgan-Tyube)’, Agence France-Presse (13 November 1992); Christopher Boian, ‘Tajikistan's "partisan war": Two sides with a multitude of grievances’, Agence France-Presse (4 October 1992).

<sup>230</sup> ‘(Kurgan-Tyube)’, Agence France-Presse (13 November 1992). The report states that some people were returning to the city while others still wanted to leave, citing the 800 Uzbeks and Russians who had been camping at the train station waiting for seven weeks for a chance to leave.

<sup>231</sup> Christopher Boian, ‘Tajikistan's "partisan war": Two sides with a multitude of grievances’, Agence France-Presse (4 October 1992). On 12 October Tajik Radio was reporting heavy fighting between the “voluntary units” on one side and Safarov and Abdurahimov on the other side. Locations of fighting included Bokhtar District and the Moscow state farm in Vakhsh District. See: Tajik Radio 1200gmt (12 October 1992) in SWB SU/1511 (14 October 1992) B/3.

<sup>232</sup> ‘(Vakhsh River Valley)’, Agence France-Presse (4 October 1992). The correspondent for the AFP reported that opposition fighters refused to let a CIS military convoy bound for Panj cross the bridge, relenting only when three armoured vehicles were dispatched to their position.

<sup>233</sup> Russia’s Radio 0230gmt (11 October 1992) in SWB SU/1509 (12 October 1992) B/4.

<sup>234</sup> Interfax 1718gmt (12 October 1992) in SWB SU/1511 (14 October 1992) B/3.

<sup>235</sup> Aleksandr Pelts and Valery Sukov, ‘Tadzhikistan: razgul terrora prodolzhaetsya’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 239 (20 October 1992).

<sup>236</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 173.

<sup>237</sup> C. Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press (22 Oct. 1992).

<sup>238</sup> ‘Tajik pro-communists attack border town’, Agence France-Presse (31 October 1992).

held near Panj before being taken to Kulob.<sup>239</sup> In Kulob, Sangak Safarov ordered his execution.<sup>240</sup> On 11 November the Popular Front took Qabodiyon and Shahrtuz, both of which were accommodating numerous Gharmi IDPs (internally displaced persons). In early December, Popular Front troops continued their campaign, which included extensive looting and burning of houses. Safarali Kenjaev, aligned with the counter-opposition forces of Kulob and Qurghonteppa, is mentioned prominently in the operations in Qabodiyon and Shahrtuz.<sup>241</sup> Around this time Qurghonteppa city had stabilised<sup>242</sup> and the focus move elsewhere. Kenjaev, based west of Dushanbe in the Hisor Valley, was late to arrive to fight in the south. His first goal had been to take Dushanbe, and in late October he and several Kulobi commanders attempted to take the city.

### The Capture of Dushanbe

In late September there were occasional fire-fights in Dushanbe.<sup>243</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky's bleak assessment is that in late September in Dushanbe there was "continued criminal lawlessness, the looting of stores, and the theft of automobiles. The authorities were not able to control the situation. Industry had been virtually paralyzed and agriculture destroyed."<sup>244</sup> Meanwhile, the counter-opposition forces had advanced toward Dushanbe as far as the approach to Yovon by September 22 (60km from the capital). There were various and contradictory reports on the number of counter-opposition troops and the extent of their arms. In anticipation of the counter-opposition advance, "self-defence units" were forming 10 km east from Dushanbe in the city of

<sup>239</sup> Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 70; 'Tajik pro-communists attack border town', Agence France-Presse (31 October 1992); 'Uzbeks kidnap local government official in Tajikistan', Reuters News (1 November 1992). The details of his capture and transfer to Kulob in the AFP and Reuters report rely on Valery Gritsan, the commander of the border guards.

<sup>240</sup> Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 70; Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation*, 45. The anti-opposition writers Khaidarov and Inomov cited Safarov as having issued the order. Elsewhere, Safarov is quoted as saying to Russian Defence Minister Grachev: "In three months I have executed the leaders of two provinces." See: Editor's note in Guljahon Sangakzoda, 'Sangak Safarov: Peshvoi fronti khalqiro jahor soat mekushtand', *SSSR*, No. 30 (27 July 2009). Accessed online (September 2010) at ASIA-Plus website: <http://asiaplus.tj/tj/articles/50/3896.html> Note: Guljahon Sangakzoda is Safarov's daughter. The note is inserted when she neglects mentioning how Aslonov died.

<sup>241</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 175-7; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110-114.

<sup>242</sup> '(Kurgan-Tyube)', Agence France-Presse (13 November 1992).

<sup>243</sup> E.g., "sporadic shooting in Dushanbe" reported on September 20. See: ITAR-TASS (20 September 1992) in SWB SU/1492 (22 September 1992) i.

<sup>244</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 70.

Kofarnihon (Vahdat).<sup>245</sup> In mid-October the instability continued in Dushanbe. The Kulobi and Popular Front gains of the first half of October “prompted angry anti-Russian demonstrations,”<sup>246</sup> and, in one dramatic episode, armed opposition supporters entered a school and held ethnic Russian school children and/or teachers hostage for one hour.<sup>247</sup> After mid-October the security situation in Dushanbe continued to deteriorate, with nobody on the streets by early evening and occasional gunfire during the night.<sup>248</sup> On October 20 two journalists described Dushanbe as being “swamped by acts of terrorism.”<sup>249</sup> Safarali Kenjaev, based in Hisor, had cut off the capital from the west. Dushanbe, its population increased with approximately 100,000 IDPs, experienced hardship with the routes to the west cut.<sup>250</sup> By October 22 the counter-opposition forces, now organised and named the ‘Popular Front’, continued to advance towards Dushanbe. Sangak Safarov was now confident enough to promise an October Revolution military parade on November 7 in the capital.<sup>251</sup> The roads to Dushanbe were now open and the Popular Front forces continued to make easy advances assisted by their tanks and APCs. As one opposition supporter said, “How are we supposed to fight tanks? With our bare hands?”<sup>252</sup> On October 23 acting president Iskandarov, citing fighting in the south and rampant, uncontrollable criminal activities in Dushanbe, declared a state of emergency and instituted a curfew. Also likely a factor was the open secret of the planned imminent capture of Dushanbe by Popular Front forces.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Agence France-Presse, ‘Tajik envoys seek talks with pro-communist rebels’, (22 September 1992). AFP reports that the “self-defence units” were “poorly armed with a disparate collection of Kalashnikovs and hunting rifles.”

<sup>246</sup> Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press Service (22 October 1992). The reporter does not specify if the demonstrations were anti-Russian government, anti-ethnic-Russian, or both. The reporter puts the Russian population of Dushanbe at 35%.

<sup>247</sup> Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press Service (22 October 1992); Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation*, 68. Khaidarov and Inomov mention only teachers being held at School No. 8, and they note that the teachers were all released after negotiations.

<sup>248</sup> C. Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press (22 Oct. 1992).

<sup>249</sup> Aleksandr Pelts and Valery Sukov, ‘Tadzhikistan: razgul terrora. Gibnut rossiyskie pogrannichniki’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 239 (20 October 1992). They cite as one prominent example an attempt on the life of mullah/*domullo* “Abdugafforov.”

<sup>250</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 174-5.

<sup>251</sup> Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press Service (22 October 1992). Note: November 7 is the anniversary date for the October Revolution (25 October 1917 in the Old Style Julian Calendar).

<sup>252</sup> C. Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press (22 October 1992).

<sup>253</sup> Carey Goldberg, ‘Ousted Leader's Supporters Seize Control in Tajikistan’, *Los Angeles Times* (25 Oct. 1992) 20; Ramziya Mirzobekova and Daler Gufronov, ‘Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go’, *Asia-Plus* (30 October 2009). Accessed online (September 2010) at: <http://www.asiaplus.tj/articles/96/4191.html> Mirzobekova and Gufronov cite the memoirs of the then Deputy PM Asliddin Sohibnazar, who spoke of the coming attack as an open secret, known even to Iskandarov. However, those in government believed that the attack would come on October 27-28.

At approximately 6am on October 24, Popular Front forces (tanks, APCs and buses full of fighters) commanded by Safarali Kenjaev and Rustam Abdurahimov entered Dushanbe from the west.<sup>254</sup> By 9am Popular Front forces captured the Supreme Soviet, the presidential palace, the Cabinet (Presidium) offices, the *Qoziyot* offices and the Radio and TV building.<sup>255</sup> Meanwhile, on the same day, Popular Front forces from Kulob under the command of Sangak Safarov capture the strategically important city of Norak.<sup>256</sup> A Popular Front group under Abdurahimov's control seized the Radio and TV Centre with the intent to control the airwaves. However, there was a lack of available technicians to transmit over television, so only a radio address was issued. Abdurahimov announced an appeal for calm while also asking ethnic Russians not to flee. He also emphasized the goal of a secular state. But most importantly, he announced that Safarali Kenjaev was the new President of Tajikistan.<sup>257</sup>

Pro-opposition forces resisted strongly and heavy fighting (including the use of tanks) was reported throughout the city on October 24.<sup>258</sup> Battles were fought near the Putovsky street bridge, the Hotel Vakhsh, the Cinema Vatan and elsewhere throughout the city, leaving an estimated 100 dead on the first day.<sup>259</sup> Later in the day, a "special unit" (probably OMON,<sup>260</sup> and very likely Pamiris) of the Interior Ministry unsuccessfully assaulted the Popular Front forces holding the Supreme Soviet building.<sup>261</sup> By the next day, Interfax was reporting that an estimated 1,000 to 2,000 opposition fighters were regrouping 20km to the east in the city of Kofarnihon (Vahdat).<sup>262</sup> Further north from Dushanbe, journalists travelling through the Anzob pass reported opposition fighters destroying a "strategic" bridge, cutting off the northern part

<sup>254</sup> Mirzobekova and Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.'; 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital, Seize Key Government Buildings', Associated Press (24 October 1992); Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 174-5.

<sup>255</sup> 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital, Seize Key Government Buildings', Associated Press (24 Oct 1992); Vanora Bennett, 'Tajik government fails to retake parliament', Reuters News (24 Oct 1992); Serge Schmemann, 'Coup by Ex-Communists Is Reported in Tajikistan', *New York Times* (25 Oct 1992).

<sup>256</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Communal warfare tears Tajikistan apart', Reuters News (27 October 1992); Ralph Boulton, 'Fighting in Tajik capital produces no clear victor', Reuters News (25 October 1992). Twelve deaths are reported in Norak. The city is built next to a large hydroelectric facility and is also at a geographical chokepoint next to two low mountain passes on the road from Dushanbe to Kulob.

<sup>257</sup> 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital, Seize Key Government Buildings', Associated Press (24 Oct 1992); Mirzobekova and Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.'; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 174-5.

<sup>258</sup> For example: Serge Schmemann, 'Coup by Ex-Communists Is Reported in Tajikistan', *New York Times* (25 October 1992); 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital', Associated Press (24 October 1992); Vanora Bennett, 'Tajik government fails to retake parliament', Reuters (24 October 1992); Carey Goldberg, 'Ousted Leader's Supporters Seize Control in Tajikistan', *Los Angeles Times* (25 October 1992) 20.

<sup>259</sup> Mirzobekova and Daler Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.'

<sup>260</sup> OMON – *Otryad Militsii Osobogo Naznacheniya* (Special Purpose Police Unit).

<sup>261</sup> 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital, Seize Key Government Buildings', The Associated Press (24 October 1992); Vanora Bennett, 'Tajik government fails to retake parliament', Reuters News (24 October 1992). This included the use of grenade launchers.

<sup>262</sup> Serge Schmemann, 'Coup by Ex-Communists Is Reported in Tajikistan', *New York Times* (25 October 1992); 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital, Seize Key Government Buildings', The Associated Press (24 October 1992); Vanora Bennett, 'Tajik government fails to retake parliament', Reuters News (24 October 1992).

of Tajikistan from access to the capital.<sup>263</sup> On October 25 numerous sources were reporting the defeat and withdrawal of Popular Front forces, as well as the deaths of two important Kulobi commanders; Rustam Abdurahimov and Langari Langariev [*sic*].<sup>264</sup> Col. Alijon Solibaev, the head of the National Security Committee, stated that the Kulobis were fleeing and that over 150 were being held prisoner. Local TV reported that Popular Front forces, suffering from ammunition and food shortages, were withdrawing from the Presidential Palace and the Supreme Soviet.<sup>265</sup> As Popular Front forces attempted to withdraw they were forced to break through roadblocks and opposition-controlled areas.<sup>266</sup>

Credit for the containment and/or defeat of Popular Front forces is spread widely. As mentioned above, Ministry of Interior forces were involved in fighting the Popular Front in Dushanbe.<sup>267</sup> However, forces outside of the official state security structures were more involved. For example, in and near the Shah Mansur neighbourhood armed supporters of the opposition, formed on the basis of traditional local youth associations, were an important force in the fight against the Popular Front forces attempting to take the city on October 24-25. Other armed opposition supporters included the Youth of Dushanbe and those fighters headquartered in Depot No. 3, as well as in mosques in the Yuzhny, Ovul and Ispechak neighbourhoods.<sup>268</sup> Col. Solibaev partially credited the victory to the arrival in Dushanbe of 500 “pro-government [i.e., pro-opposition] volunteers from the Pamir Mountains.”<sup>269</sup> Similarly, opposition member Gavhar Juraeva credits “armed youths” from the Pamirs and “young people from Dushanbe” (i.e., Youth of Dushanbe) with defeating the Popular Front forces in the city.<sup>270</sup> Steve LeVine was more specific about those in Dushanbe who fought the Kulobi

<sup>263</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Government forces take key areas in Tajik capital’, Reuters News (26 October 1992).

<sup>264</sup> For example: Elif Kaban, ‘Tajik rebel forces withdrawing, Tass says’, Reuters (25 Oct 1992); ‘Pro-communist forces routed in Tajikistan, security officer says’, AFP (25 Oct 1992). Abdurahimov reportedly died on the morning of October 25. Langariev was later revealed to have been wounded. See: Steve LeVine, ‘Dushanbe quiet after defeat of Nabiyevo troops’, *Financial Times* (27 Oct 1992) 8.

<sup>265</sup> ‘Pro-communist forces routed in Tajikistan, security officer says’, AFP (25 October 1992); ‘Rebels in Tajikistan Appear to Withdraw From Seized Offices’, *New York Times* (26 October 1992).

<sup>266</sup> ‘Pro-communist forces routed in Tajikistan, security officer says’, Agence France-Presse (25 October 1992); Elif Kaban, ‘Tajik rebel forces withdrawing, Tass says’, Reuters News (25 Oct 1992).

<sup>267</sup> See also: Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II’, 175.

<sup>268</sup> Mirzobekova and Gufronov, ‘Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.’; Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 146-7. Bushkov and Mikulsky note that the areas south of Putovskiy (Shah Mansur) market are pro-opposition dominated neighbourhoods formed on the basis of towns in the Dushanbe area: Ispechak, Ovul and Kazikhon. Kenjaev plays down the fighting in this area and claims only 1 death and 3 casualties on his side. He states that the opposition supporters here were defeated and then his group split into three in order to take different objectives (Presidential Offices, Supreme Soviet and radio/TV Centre) See: Mirzobekova and Gufronov, ‘Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.’

<sup>269</sup> ‘Pro-communist forces routed in Tajikistan, security officer says’, AFP (25 October 1992).

<sup>270</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 268. Akhmedov maintains that the Pamiris who fought Kenjaev in Dushanbe were subordinated to La’li Badakhshon. See: Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II’, 175.



forces, noting that they were mostly Gharmi Tajiks.<sup>271</sup> Levine later provided a more in-depth analysis, and focused on Jumakhon (Buydokov) and his group, the Youth of Tajikistan. Jumakhon's forces, possessing APCs and tanks, had earlier forced the resignation of President Nabiev. During the battles in Dushanbe that started on October 24, the Youth of Tajikistan fighters participated in the military defeat of Popular Front forces in the city. After this victory, Jumakhon's heavily armed forces controlled checkpoints around the city and he became one of "the most powerful men in Dushanbe."<sup>272</sup>

Some sources reported at the time that the withdrawal of Popular Front forces was a negotiated agreement between President Iskandarov and Kenjaev, both of whom had met in the 201<sup>st</sup> base in the city for talks. Reportedly, Iskandarov had agreed to hold an emergency session of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>273</sup> Iskandarov states that Kenjaev agreed to talk only after Iskandarov called President Karimov of Uzbekistan and asked for his assistance. The agenda for the session was to be a proposal for the resignation of acting President Iskandarov and the government of Prime Minister Abdullojonov. Kenjaev and Iskandarov both provide different versions for the outcome. Iskandarov claims that Kenjaev was defeated and fled Dushanbe, while Kenjaev claims he left voluntarily after negotiations.<sup>274</sup> Two days later, Kenjaev was reported to be in Tursunzoda, close to the order with Uzbekistan.<sup>275</sup> Mirhuseyn Nazriev, Kenjaev's successor in the leadership position of the Socialist Party of Tajikistan,<sup>276</sup> portrays Kenjaev's offensive as being successful in that the goal was to force the government to agree to hold a session of the Supreme Soviet in Khujand, a demand that was granted.<sup>277</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Steve LeVine and J. Lloyd, 'Tajik rebels 'pulling out of capital'', *Financial Times* (26 Oct 1992) 3.

<sup>272</sup> Steve LeVine, 'Private armies bring instability to Tajikistan', *Financial Times* (2 November 1992) 3. LeVine writes that Jumakhon already had APCs and tanks when Nabiev was forced to resign at the beginning of September. Levine adds that "Recently, he [Jumakhon] boasted to reporters that he had bought three Soviet tanks and 10 armoured personnel carriers."

<sup>273</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Tajik rebel forces withdrawing, Tass says', *Reuters News* (25 October 1992); 'Rebels in Tajikistan Appear to Withdraw From Seized Offices', *New York Times* (26 October 1992); Elif Kaban, 'Government forces take key areas in Tajik capital', *Reuters News* (26 October 1992); Elif Kaban, 'Tajikistan chaos threatens to cross borders', *Reuters News* (27 October 1992). The date for the emergency session was to be on October 26, just one day after the talks. However, not enough deputies showed up for the session to go ahead. Mirzobekova and Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.'

<sup>274</sup> Mirzobekova and Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go', n.p.

<sup>275</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Tajikistan chaos threatens to cross borders', *Reuters News* (27 October 1992).

<sup>276</sup> Formed 15 June 1996. For more information, see; Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 330.

<sup>277</sup> Mirzobekova and Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.'

## Russian Military Involvement

On the first day of the Popular Front's attempt to take Dushanbe a Russian commander in Tajikistan, Col. Svyatoslav Nabzdorov, stated that Russian military forces were remaining neutral, but that they were securing vital points of infrastructure such as the airport, the railway station and the TV building.<sup>278</sup> This was confirmed by independent sources who noted that these actions were taken at the request of Iskandarov. However, the Nabzdorov stated that his forces would not come between the two fighting sides.<sup>279</sup> Steve LeVine provides a dissenting argument. Referring, as did many journalists in 1992, to the Popular Front and counter-opposition forces as "rebels," LeVine writes:

The CIS garrison in Dushanbe provided tacit support to the Tajik government during the coup attempt. Though taking no part in the battle, the 201st CIS Division took control of virtually all of the capital's strategic points. It blocked roads leading into Dushanbe, preventing the entry of rebel reinforcements, and defended the railway station, the television station and the airport.<sup>280</sup>

Indeed, many figures in the GNR government stated their approval of how CIS/Russian forces responded during the two-day conflict in Dushanbe. Colonel Alijon Solibaev, the head of the National Security Council and a man who had the support of many in the opposition,<sup>281</sup> publicly gave his thanks to the Russian/CIS forces for remaining neutral

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<sup>278</sup> 'Rebels Enter Tajik Capital, Seize Key Government Buildings', The Associated Press (24 October 1992). He is referred to in this source incorrectly as "chief of staff of the Russian military in Tajikistan." Another source refers to him as a "division commander." See: Vanora Bennett, 'Tajik government fails to retake parliament', Reuters News (24 October 1992). A representative of the Russian border troops based in Dushanbe stated the same thing as Nabzdorov, and added a hydro-electric dam to the list. See: Ralph Boulton, 'Fighting in Tajik capital produces no clear victor', Reuters News (25 October 1992).

<sup>279</sup> Vanora Bennett, 'Tajik government fails to retake parliament', Reuters News (24 October 1992); Serge Schmemmann, 'Coup by Ex-Communists Is Reported in Tajikistan', New York Times (25 October 1992). One journalist reported that Iskandarov, anticipating the Popular front offensive, had requested that the 201<sup>st</sup> secure the facilities before the offensive started. See: Serge Schmemmann, 'Coup by Ex-Communists Is Reported in Tajikistan', *New York Times* (25 October 1992). Col. Gen. Vorobyev reported that unnamed forces shelled Russian military vehicles and the base in Dushanbe on October 25. See: Elif Kaban, 'Tajik rebel forces withdrawing, Tass says', Reuters News (25 October 1992).

<sup>280</sup> Steve LeVine, 'Dushanbe quiet after defeat of Nabiyeu troops', *Financial Times* (27 October 1992). Whitlock mistakenly takes this argument even further, stating that during fighting the Russian 201st MRD "intercepted" another Popular Front column that was advancing from the south, and that the 201st then chased out Kenjaev's group and forced them to retreat to Hisor. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 174. However, nobody else provides a similar narrative of events.

<sup>281</sup> Colonel Alijon Solibaev was appointed to the head of the National Security Council (renamed from KGB in January 1992) after Reso Tursunov had burned documents in the KGB archives and fled Dushanbe. Nabiev attempted to replace Solibaev on August 4 with Shakhob Sharifov. However, there was massive resistance to this move from within the Council. Three deputies and other rank-and-file signed a statement of grievance addressing President Nabiev, complaining that their organisation had been headed by four different leaders over a four month period (Anatoli Stroykin [28 June 1991 to 23 April 1992], Kenjaev, Tursunov and Solibaev). The statement also praised Solibaev and said that his removal would aggravate the situation in Tajikistan. The men of the NSC then refused to recognize Sharifov when he arrived. Later, on August 20, the NSC deputy leader Jurabek Aminov praised Solibaev as a man "loyal to democratic reforms and values" and noted that he had the support of all opposition political parties, as well as that of many intellectuals and Muslim *ulema*. However, at the beginning of

over the two day battle.<sup>282</sup> Davlat Khudonazarov, the former presidential candidate for the opposition and current adviser to acting President Iskandarov, stated that the Russian forces were ensuring the “total defence” of Dushanbe and helping to maintain security within the city.<sup>283</sup> Iskandarov appeared on TV on the night of October 24 and appealed to CIS leaders to quickly deploy “peacekeeping forces” to stop the conflict.<sup>284</sup> Opposition member Gavhar Juraeva provided a different narrative for the actions of the 201<sup>st</sup> when she later wrote that “Although the CIS forces in Tajikistan remained officially neutral, they effectively prevented the coalition government's supporters from coming to its defense.”<sup>285</sup>

The role of Russia in the failed attempt to capture Dushanbe became somewhat clearer later, but only in regards to a prominent Russian military commander. In Kenjaev’s memoirs it was revealed that Russian Colonel-General Eduard Vorobyev, the deputy commander of Russian land forces, had not only played a part in planning the Popular Front capture of Dushanbe, but had been a powerful enough figure in the planning group that he was able to veto the participation of Sangak Safarov in the operation. Kenjaev hosted a meeting in Tursunzoda on October 14 to discuss Popular Front plans to take Dushanbe. The prominent Kulobis at the meeting were Rustam Abdurahimov, Piri Huseynov (Interior Ministry Colonel), and Jonkhon Rizoiev (Chair of the Kulob Province Executive Committee). All three, especially Rizoiev, lobbied for Safarov’s participation. However, Vorobyev was adamant about Safarov. With the approval of other unnamed participants, Vorobyev brushed aside the views of Kenjaev and the three Kulobis. The initial plan for the operation to take place on October 17 was cancelled the day before due to a lack of preparedness and coordination, which Kenjaev blames on Rizoiev (Kenjaev claims that all in the planning group agreed that Rizoiev was irresponsible and careless in the planning for the cancelled October 17 operation).

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September Nabiev was forced from office and Solibaev returned to his post. See: Martin Ebon, *KGB: Death and Rebirth* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1994) 162-3. Note: Jurabek Aminov claimed on August 20 that Solibaev had intended to resign on August 5, and that Nabiev had pre-empted this by firing him a day before. For more on the firing of Solibaev, see: See: ITAR-TASS 1617gmt (4 August 1992) in SWB SU/1451 (5 August 1992) B/3-4; Tajik Radio 1200gmt (4 August 1992) and ITAR-TASS 0831gmt (5 August 1992) in SWB SU/1452 (6 August 1992) B/5. His name is mistakenly reported by some of these sources as “Selekhbaev.”

<sup>282</sup> ‘Pro-communist forces routed in Tajikistan, security officer says’, AFP (25 October 1992).

<sup>283</sup> ‘(Dushanbe)’, Agence France-Presse (4 November 1992).

<sup>284</sup> Vanora Bennett, ‘Tajik government fails to retake parliament’, Reuters News (24 October 1992). Even the Russian government appealed for CIS and UN peacekeeping efforts. The Russian Foreign Minister stated the need for an urgent session of Russia’s Security Council to be convened to discuss the issue of ethnic Russians. The Russian Foreign Ministry stated that “The destiny of Russian citizens...in that country is a matter of particular concern.” See: Elif Kaban, ‘Tajik rebel forces withdrawing, Tass says’, Reuters News (25 October 1992).

<sup>285</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 269.

Another meeting with the same group was held in Tursunzoda on October 19 and the operation was rescheduled to October 23, a date which was again pushed back another day. One last time Kenjaev argued for the participation of Safarov and once again Vorobyev was adamant that Safarov's presence would lead to unacceptable levels of violence in Dushanbe.<sup>286</sup> Despite the participation of Vorobyev in the planning, the 201<sup>st</sup> remained neutral. Davlat Usmon argues that the 201<sup>st</sup> (which he argues was under the authority of Vorobyev) was a partner of Kenjaev in the fight for Dushanbe. He argues that the Russian military only backed out once it was clear that the operation was failing.<sup>287</sup>

### **Dushanbe after October**

On November 4-5, amid rumours that Popular Front forces from Kulob would soon attempt another operation in Dushanbe, General Ashurov attempted to reassure the public that the newly-reinforced 201<sup>st</sup> would use force to stop any armed group from entering Dushanbe. Meanwhile, Russian Foreign Minister Andrey Kozyrev, visiting Dushanbe and preparing to visit Kulob, called for the formation of new, more inclusive, coalition government in an effort to end the conflict.<sup>288</sup> Five days later, on November 10, acting President Iskandarov, the government and the presidium of the Supreme Soviet submitted a group resignation.<sup>289</sup> Immediately after the resignation of Iskandarov and his government, an unnamed armed opposition group near Kofarnihon (Vahdat) launched an offensive against Kulobi forces through the Chermozak pass and into Norak, pushing the Kulobis past the Vakhsh River.<sup>290</sup> Several days later the fighting restarted in Norak and even in Hisor, in violation of a ceasefire agreed to in the lead up to the emergency Supreme Soviet session.<sup>291</sup> By late November 24-26 the population of Dushanbe and the 100,000 refugees that were living in the city were experiencing serious hardship after two months of blockade. There were food shortages,

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<sup>286</sup> Safarali Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston – Kitobi ceyum* (Dushanbe/Tashkent: Fondi Kenjaev/nashriyoti “Uzbekiston,” 1995) 96-110, esp. 96-7 and 109-10. Note: participants at the planning meetings included the above mentioned people, as well as “military experts, intermediaries/arbitrators, academics, CIS delegates Rikov, Vorobyev, Matsur, Aziz and others.”

<sup>287</sup> Mirzobekova and Gufronov, ‘Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.’

<sup>288</sup> ‘(Dushanbe)’, Agence France-Presse (4 November 1992); Mina Rad, ‘Deshanbe paralyzed amid fears of pro-communist coup’, Agence France-Presse (5 November 1992). Kozyrev also urged the different factions to come to a peace summit in Almaty, Kazakhstan.

<sup>289</sup> Mina Rad, ‘Pro-communists pledge to force out Islamic forces’, Agence France-Presse (13 November 1992). Iskandarov stated that the government and the state council would remain in office until the November 16 session of the Supreme Soviet convenes in Khujand.

<sup>290</sup> Anatoly Ladin and Aleksandr Pelts, ‘Tadzhikistan: shans dogovoritsya o peremirii. No on posledny’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 258 (12 November 1992).

<sup>291</sup> ‘(Dushanbe)’, Agence France-Presse (15 November 1992).

no gas or hot water, schools and factories were closed, and public transport was mostly shut down.<sup>292</sup> On November 26 a new ceasefire was reached by the commanders of the opposing sides. Popular Front forces opened the Qurghonteppa to Dushanbe road and a spokesman for the National Security Committee was optimistic that the road to Uzbekistan would be opened in a day or two. Meanwhile, the new session of the Supreme Soviet issued a pardon to the fighters of both sides.<sup>293</sup>

### **Rise of Safarov**

One major change after the failed attempt to capture Dushanbe was the rise of Sangak Safarov, a powerful commander who had been excluded from the October 24-26 offensive. As for the failure of the Popular Front in the attempt to capture Dushanbe in October, former IRP deputy leader and GNR member Davlat Usmon maintains that they would have succeeded if Kenjaev had cooperated with Safarov, and that he did not do so as he refused to recognize Safarov as “an influential figure.”<sup>294</sup> His influence and power would continue to rise, partially thanks to the failure of his allies. LeVine points to the death of Abdurahimov and the incapacitation of Langariev as a boost to Safarov, as it left him as the most prominent field commander.<sup>295</sup> By November 26, LeVine was describing Safarov as the “power behind the throne.”<sup>296</sup> The military leaders invited to the Supreme Soviet session in Khujand starting on November 16 gave a good indication of who the most powerful remaining commanders were. Representing the Kulobi side was Safarov and his deputy Yaqub Salimov; on the opposing Dushanbe-based side were Jumakhon Buydokhov and Tohir Mirzoev, with Safarov and Buydokhov as the acknowledged leaders of each side. However, disarmament was not discussed as the military commanders met for two hours.<sup>297</sup> Despite this important detail left unsettled, on November 25, at the conclusion of the emergency session of the Supreme Soviet in Khujand, Sangak Safarov and Jumakhon Buydokhov from Dushanbe were asked by the

<sup>292</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 48 (4 December 1992); Steve LeVine, ‘Communist old guard turns the tables on Moslems in Tajikistan’, *Financial Times* (26 November 1992) 4.

<sup>293</sup> Elif Kaban. ‘Rebels ease blockade of Tajik capital after truce’, Reuters News (26 November 1992).

<sup>294</sup> Mirzobekova and Gufronov, ‘Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go.’

<sup>295</sup> Steve LeVine, ‘Dushanbe quiet after defeat of Nabiyeov troops’, *Financial Times* (27 October 1992) 8; Steve LeVine, ‘Private armies bring instability to Tajikistan’, *Financial Times* (2 November 1992) 3. Indeed, Safarov had often been described alongside Rustam Abdurahimov and Langari Langariev as one of the three main commanders, not the top commander. For example, see: Asal Azamova, ‘Criminals as a tool in Tajikistan's politics’, *Moscow News* (16 September 1992).

<sup>296</sup> Steve LeVine, ‘Communist old guard turns the tables on Moslems in Tajikistan: A setback for Islamic militants’, *Financial Times* (26 November 1992) 4.

<sup>297</sup> Anatoly Ladin, ‘Strelyat drug v druga Tadzhikestane, vozmozhno ne budut’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 271 (27 November 1992). Twenty-two military commanders came to Khujand; 16 from Dushanbe and 6 from Kulob.

new leader Emomali Rahmon to publicly embrace as a demonstration of peace.<sup>298</sup> By the next day the two sides agreed to a ceasefire.<sup>299</sup> This peace would be temporary.

### The New Government of Emomali Rahmon

During the fall of 1992, the Kulobi leadership continued to state its various demands of the GNR, including the demand for the next session (the 16th) of the Supreme Soviet to be in the northern city of Khujand – a move that was granted.<sup>300</sup> The meeting scheduled for mid-November, which was held partly due to pressure from the governments of Uzbekistan and Russia, was attended by representatives from both of those countries as well as by the leaders of the People's Front (including Safarov) and its allies.<sup>301</sup> The main purpose of the session in Khujand was to select a new speaker for the legislature – a position Whitlock called “President-in-waiting.”<sup>302</sup> The position of president was eliminated, making the speaker of the legislature the *de facto* head of state.<sup>303</sup> On November 19 the members of the Supreme Soviet – a legislative body with 211 deputies<sup>304</sup> – selected Emomali Rahmon, the leader of Kulob Province, on a vote of 186 to 11.<sup>305</sup> Michael Hall remarks that Rahmon was viewed by Popular Front commanders as “someone they could easily control.”<sup>306</sup> Zartman argues that Safarov put

<sup>298</sup> Mina Rad, ‘Tajikistan warlords pledge to halt fighting’, Agence France-Presse (25 November 1992). This report names Safarov and Jumakhon as the military leaders of the respective sides.

<sup>299</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Rebels ease blockade of Tajik capital after truce’, Reuters News (26 November 1992).

<sup>300</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 69. The Kulobi demands included: scheduling the next session of the Supreme Soviet in Khujand, creating an arbitration panel that would determine the administrative relationship between Kulob and Qurghonteppa Provinces, including local representatives from all region in the delegation of Tajikistan to the next CIS heads of government meeting, the cessation of the call to prayer on the radio, the removal from the GNR of Deputy Prime Minister and IRP second-in-command Davlat Usmon, Turajonzoda, Rastokhez member and Chairman of the State Radio and Television Committee Mirbobo Mirrahimov, and National Security Committee Deputy Chairman Jurabek Aminov. One of the demands was also for the restoration of Nabiev. However, when it came time to nominate a leader the Kulobis put forth Emomali Rahmon, a fellow Kulobi.

<sup>301</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 176-7. In regards to outside influences, Whitlock argues that the Russian leadership preferred a Kulobi leader in order to lessen the influence of Uzbekistan. Whitlock presents the choice of a Kulobi as an alternative to an ethnic Uzbek, who would then presumably have a special relationship with the government of Uzbekistan. However, Safarali Kenjaev – of Yaghnoibi origins, raised by a Tajik family and a Leninobodi by patronage network – would also be a prospective client of Uzbekistan, as would any Leninobodi – Uzbek or Tajik.

<sup>302</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 176-7. On 27 November 27, the Supreme Soviet abolished the presidential system or rule and voted for a “parliamentary republic,” making Rahmon the clear leader of Tajikistan. See: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 49 (11 December 1992) 71.

<sup>303</sup> Steve LeVine, ‘Communist old guard turns the tables on Moslems in Tajikistan: A setback for Islamic militants’, *Financial Times* (26 November 1992) 4.

<sup>304</sup> Mark Trevelyan, ‘Tajikistan paralysed as fighting rages’, Reuters News (4 September 1992).

<sup>305</sup> *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 48 (4 December 1992) 66. The total number of seats in the Supreme Soviet was 230. AFP reported that “pro-communists” controlled 120 of those seats. See: ‘(Khojant)’, Agence France-Presse (20 November 1992).

<sup>306</sup> Michael Hall, ‘Tajikistan at the Crossroads of Democracy and Authoritarianism’, in *Prospects for Democracy in Central Asia*. Edited by Birgit N. Schlyter (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute in Istanbul, 2005) 26.

Rahmon “in the office as his client because, as a career criminal who turned 65 in 1992, he could not have become speaker of the legislature himself.”<sup>307</sup> This explanation would require that Safarov was a strict adherent to constitutional law. Other possibilities include an acceptance on the part of Safarov that he had no political experience and no idea how to control a large bureaucracy, as well as the likelihood that he knew he was totally unacceptable as a candidate domestically and internationally.

Despite the open warfare of 1992 and the accompanied political turmoil, including the resignation of Nabiev, the Khujandi elites never lost their (over)confidence. Kilavuz argues that this was due to the recent historical pattern of only ever facing rivals within their faction for the leadership of Tajikistan. The idea of a challenger from outside of the northern elite seemed outside the realm of possibility due to their lack of formal qualifications. And when the Khujandis lost out to Emomali Rahmon, a Kulobi, they thought that this would be only a temporary deviation until which time they would recover the top position.<sup>308</sup> Atkin describes Rahmon’s quick rise:

Rahmonov’s main qualification for leadership, at least at first, was his insignificance. Within a few months in 1992, this man who was not yet forty went from being director of the sovkhos (state farm) where he grew up, to the speaker of Tajikistan’s Supreme Soviet, at the time, the highest office in the state.<sup>309</sup>

The view of Rahmon as a weak player was apparently widespread. Hall argues that the field commanders of the Popular Front viewed Rahmon as weak political personality who could be managed, while the Leninobodi elites saw his position as only a “temporary aberration.”<sup>310</sup> An unidentified man who rose to a position of power under Rahmon said that after Rahmon came to power at the Khujand meeting the perception was that “Those [Kulobi] farmboys won’t be able to keep Dushanbe – they’ll be out in six months!”<sup>311</sup> However, while being a ‘farmboy’ may result in a person being

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<sup>307</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 112.

<sup>308</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152-4. Kilavuz bases her argument on interviews with various elites and intellectuals, some of whom were closely involved in events at the time. Two quotes by informants illustrate the Khujandi thinking: “Khujandis did not participate in the war. They waited, and thought that Garmis and Kulyabis would fight, and exhaust each other; and then at the end, the Khujandis would intervene and be the leaders again.”; “Even at the end the Leninabadi elite did not lose this self-confidence. The Leninabadi elite waited for the Kulyabis to offer them to be president. The Leninabadis expected to be asked to assume political leadership. Even if people from other regions were to come to power, the Leninabadis were confident that it would soon become apparent that they were incapable of running the country, and that the new regime would have to call on the services of the Khujandis.”; “[Khujandis] thought that the Kulyabis still need to deal with the opposition who had kept Dushanbe. After the Kulyabis finished off the opposition, they would come to power. However in the end they were eliminated, [...]. Things did not happen as Khujandis expected”

<sup>309</sup> Atkin, ‘A President and his rivals’, 97.

<sup>310</sup> Hall, ‘Tajikistan at the Crossroads of Democracy and Authoritarianism’, 26.

<sup>311</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 185-6.

unsophisticated and lacking in cosmopolitan traits, a war fought mainly in rural areas and mostly by small town men produces a different power structure whereby knowledge of and skill with navigating local and informal power structures is an asset. Whitlock explains:

Rahmonov...As a kolkhoz man, he knew the bones of his country better than most members of the urban elite could. His relative youth and lack of political baggage was also in a sense an advantage. He gathered about him the men – mainly country people like himself – who had fought hardest in the war that had brought him to power.<sup>312</sup>

The Kulobis were the clear victors in the political and military struggles of late 1992. Accordingly, many of the most important positions in the government went to Kulobis.<sup>313</sup> A prominent example is Sangak Safarov's deputy Yaqub Salimov, who became Minister of Interior.<sup>314</sup> Additionally, the provinces of Kulob and Qurghonteppa were combined to create the Khatlon Province, a move widely interpreted as a victory for Kulobi forces.<sup>315</sup> The new parliament voted to create a Council of War, and to directly subordinate the Ministry of Interior, the National Security Committee and the Ministry of Defence directly to the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet, Emomali Rahmon.<sup>316</sup>

### **Capture of Dushanbe**

On November 30 there were clashes on the outskirts of Dushanbe, reportedly involving a few tanks and APCs.<sup>317</sup> On December 8, as artillery could be heard firing in the western approaches to Dushanbe, Reuters reported that "Islamic guerrillas" were setting up blockades in the city's centre using fallen trees and vehicles.<sup>318</sup> These defenders would be on their own, as their former allies, the ethnic Pamiri fighters, had left Dushanbe in an orderly fashion before the Popular Front took Dushanbe, returning to the Pamirs where they fell apart as an organised group.<sup>319</sup> Even with the subtraction

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<sup>312</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 191.

<sup>313</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, 'Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia', 40-1.

<sup>314</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Tajiks form new government, clashes rage near capital', Reuters News (3 December 1992). The article incorrectly names Rashid Alimov, the former Komsomol leader who became Foreign Minister, as a Kulobi. Rather, he is a Khujandi who was born in Dushanbe. See: Abdullaev and Akbarzadeh, *Historical Dictionary of Tajikistan*, 59.

<sup>315</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Tajiks form new government, clashes rage near capital', Reuters News (3 Dec 1992).

<sup>316</sup> Aleksandr Pelts, 'Nesmotrya vozobnovlenie boev, v Tadzhikestane segodnya budet prazdnik', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 290 (19 December 1992).

<sup>317</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Tajiks form new government, clashes rage near capital', Reuters News (3 Dec 1992).

<sup>318</sup> Elif Kaban, 'Islamic guerrillas throw up barricades in Tajik capital', Reuters News (8 December 1992). December 9 was calm, allowing for Russian forces to gather over 50 abandoned corpses from around Dushanbe for burial. See: Anatoly Ladin and Alexandr Pelts, 'Tadzhikestani: nikto ne khochet razoruzhatsya pervym', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 282 (10 December 1992).

<sup>319</sup> Akhmedov, 'Tajikistan II', 175.



of Pamiri forces there was still not a coherent force defending Dushanbe for the opposition. *Krasnaya zvezda* noted on December 10 that the opposition forces in Dushanbe were by then identifying themselves as the People's Democratic Front, but that there were three main factions – each with its own command structure and goals.<sup>320</sup>

On December 10, Popular Front forces flying the flag of Tajikistan moved into Dushanbe with tanks, APCs and helicopters, seizing the main government buildings and industrial infrastructure.<sup>321</sup> The forces of the 201<sup>st</sup> did not interfere, but they did move into a position that blocked any potential opposition counter-attack.<sup>322</sup> Military forces from Uzbekistan were also involved in taking Dushanbe on December 10, as well as in suppressing opposition forces in Kofarnihon (Vahdat).<sup>323</sup> The opposition forces retreated to the south-eastern suburbs (e.g., Yuzhny) as fighting continued throughout the afternoon of December 10. By December 12 local media declared the Popular Front forces victorious, and Tajikistan's new leader arrived in the capital, accompanied by PM Abdullojonov.<sup>324</sup> However, small scale attacks by the opposition continued in the city throughout the day. And in the suburb of Ovul the opposition continued to resist strongly.<sup>325</sup> By December 15 the city was calmer – despite some fighting in and around the neighbourhood of Zarafshon – as the Interior Ministry, the National Security Committee and the Popular Front forces patrolled the street.<sup>326</sup> However, gunfire was

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<sup>320</sup> Anatoly Ladin and Alexandr Pelts, 'Tadzhikistan: nikto ne khochet razoruzhatsya pervym', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 282 (10 December 1992).

<sup>321</sup> 'Ousted Tajik Leader's Army Enters Capital', *New York Times* (11 December 1992); 'Dushanbe captured by communists', *The Times* (12 December 1992). Note: The NYT article does not specify what type of helicopter(s).

<sup>322</sup> Poujol, 'Some Reflections on Russian Involvement in the Tajik Conflict, 1992 -1993', 114. Poujol does not provide specifics, but any "counter-attack" would have to have been in the form of opposition reinforcements from Kofarnihon, east of Dushanbe.

<sup>323</sup> Examples: one soldier involved in the offensive openly told a journalist that he was from Ferghana valley, Uzbekistan. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 180; the NYT reported that a Russian Colonel confirmed that opposition forces shot down a helicopter from Uzbekistan over Dushanbe on December 19. in addition, he also confirmed that Uzbekistan air power was used to attack opposition defences in Kofarnihon, east of Dushanbe. See: 'Militant Muslims kill two in shoot-out over Tajikistan', *New York Times* (20 December 1992); Bushkov and Mikulsky's account matches with the NYT report. See: Bushkov and Mikulskiy, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 158. Military analyst Michael Orr writes that the December 10 Popular Front offensive against the opposition in Dushanbe was "was led by a 'special forces battalion' [possibly OMON] of the Ministry of Internal Security [i.e., Interior Ministry], which had been trained and equipped in Uzbekistan and was provided with air support from Uzbekistan." See: Orr, 'The Russian Army and the War in Tajikistan', 154. Orr notes that this was preceded by the meeting of the defence ministers of Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in Termez, Uzbekistan on November 30. Orr suggests that an understanding on involvement by Uzbekistan and Russia was reached at this meeting.

<sup>324</sup> 'Ousted Tajik Leader's Army Enters Capital', *New York Times* (11 December 1992); 'Dushanbe captured by communists', *The Times* (12 December 1992).

<sup>325</sup> 'Guerrillas burn Tajik capital', *The Windsor Star* (14 December 1992) D6.

<sup>326</sup> Aleksandr Pelts, 'V Tadzhikistane ostalos tri ochaga napryazhennosti', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 286 (15 December 1992); Aleksandr Pelts, 'Nesmotrya vozobnovlenie boev, v Tadzhikistane segodnya budet prazdnik', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 290 (19 December 1992).

still heard throughout the city, contrasting with reports by local media – now under the effective control of the new government.<sup>327</sup>

Soon the first reports of targeted killing began to emerge; Popular Front forces were targeting Pamiris and Gharmi/Qarotegini Tajiks,<sup>328</sup> a phenomenon that is widely agreed upon.<sup>329</sup> This was later revealed to be a tactic from the very beginning of the offensive in Dushanbe when the Popular Front had attacked the Qarotegini population and houses in the opposition-dominated neighbourhoods of Ispechak, Ovul and Kazikhon, where some of the opposition forces had been based.<sup>330</sup>

By late December the sound of occasional gunfire was a nightly occurrence.<sup>331</sup> However, by February 1993 the worst of the conflict had subsided. But government forces were still focused on opposition forces in Gharm and Tavildara, as well as along the Afghan border areas of Kulob and Qurghonteppa.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>327</sup> For example, Rahmon stated that “any newspaper publishing lies will be prosecuted.” See: ‘Summary executions in capital's streets’, Agence France-Presse (16 December 1992).

<sup>328</sup> ‘Summary executions in capital's streets’, Agence France-Presse (16 December 1992).

<sup>329</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 136; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 180; Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 117; Gillian Tett, ‘The Night that Friends Turned into Murderers’, *Financial Times*, 19 February 1994, 13.

<sup>330</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 71, 146-7; N. Sammakia, ‘Tajik Government Extends Arms Deadline, Tales of Killings Mount’, Associated Press (28 Dec 1992).

<sup>331</sup> Nejla Sammakia, ‘Tajik Government Extends Arms Deadline, Tales of Killings Mount’, Associated Press (28 December 1992).

<sup>332</sup> Bushkov and Mikulskiy, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 71; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39-41.

## Chapter 5

### Mobilisation, Islam, Ethnicity and the Regionalisation of Forces

At the beginning of the civil war, leaders of armed groups quickly rose to prominence – many from positions of obscurity. How they recruited and armed their forces is a subject that is vital to understanding how pre-existing social structures played role in determining the characteristics of the armed formations. An analysis of the process of mobilisation requires an outline of the field commanders that led the combatants, as well as a discussion of the networks and structures that they utilised. The motivations of both leaders and followers will be analysed. Furthermore, the ‘regionalisation’<sup>1</sup> and ethnicisation of armed units and factions will be shown to be both a result of the structure of society in Tajikistan and a logical strategy – both on the part of elites and non-elites involved in the conflict due to the mutual security dilemmas present. As part of this, an analysis on how leaders, elites and journalists framed the conflict to the public will be included.

#### Part 1: Recruitment and Mobilisation

“Government forces are getting weaker and weaker whereas illegal armed forces are getting stronger. [...] If the present government fails it will be impossible to form another government in Tajikistan and all these illegal military groups will do whatever they want.”

- Jurabek Aminov.<sup>2</sup>

On October 5 Jurabek Aminov, the deputy leader of Tajikistan’s National Security Committee (KGB), estimated the size of the militias: 4,000 Kulobis; 7,000 on the “Islamic” opposition side; 3,000 Pamiris in Badakhshon; and 1,500 under the authority of the local government leaders in Khujand.<sup>3</sup> As for the counter-opposition, Markowitz notes how quickly the forces that would go on to form the Popular Front had

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<sup>1</sup> For use here, ‘regionalisation’ is defined as the increased significance of region of origin in political and military decision-making (including selection of allies and foes based on region of origin).

<sup>2</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Grim bloodletting gives Tajik government the shivers’, Reuters (5 October 1992).

<sup>3</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Grim bloodletting gives Tajik government the shivers’, Reuters (5 October 1992).

mobilised. He argues that this rapid mobilisation among a diverse group of people (“from a wide range of professions and backgrounds”) has its basis in the “relationships that had formed during the final years of the Soviet Union.”<sup>4</sup> Markowitz argues that the “Ties linking farm chairs, political elites, law enforcement officials, and organized crime, which crystallized on the eve of the breakup of the USSR, created ready pools of recruits for the local militias that would make up the Popular Front.”<sup>5</sup> In regards to all sides in the conflict, Nourzhanov writes that as Tajikistan had no army, “powerbrokers in the regions had to rely on other sources to build systems of defence, protection and control. The most important among them were traditional solidarity institutions, the police and organised crime.”<sup>6</sup>

### Security forces

During the protests of spring 1992 in Dushanbe the various sides to the conflict prepared for the possibility of violent conflict. On the opposition side Gharmi Tajiks and Pamiris within the military and police quickly mobilised to support the opposition and moved into Dushanbe at the same time Kulobis and Khujandis were arriving at the protests.<sup>7</sup> With the central government’s authority collapsing, the members of the security forces (military, police, KGB) were an obvious resource to be used. On May 5, Nabiev declared a state of emergency and a curfew. That night, in the words of BBC journalist Monica Whitlock, many members of the security ministries (the parts of the state structure whose members are armed) chose sides. At 10pm guardsmen at the Presidential Palace joined the opposition demonstrators. At 2am “a large number” of police from the Interior Ministry joined the opposition with their weapons. Whitlock notes that the National Security Council (KGB) stayed on the government side while mentioning that the senior members were not Tajik.<sup>8</sup> Besides ethnicity (i.e., Pamiri

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<sup>4</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111. Markowitz refers to the counter-opposition as the Popular Front and gives too short of a timeline (one month), which may give the misleading impression that the Popular Front was operating efficiently by June 1992. The Popular Front was not a coherent force with an acknowledged overall leader until November 1992, six months after the start of violent conflict. While elements of Safarov and Kenjaev’s forces may have quickly mobilized, one month is too generous of a figure. On the Popular Front not being a coherent single force until November, see: Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 117.

<sup>5</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 101.

<sup>6</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 113.

<sup>7</sup> Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I: The Regional Dimension of Conflict’, 158-61.

<sup>8</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 163. Whitlock notes that senior officers were non-Tajik, while one official told her that there were “more Islamic Party members than communists” in the rank and file in

security force members joining the opposition), region of origin was also playing a part. Whitlock briefly profiled one anonymous Tajik Gharmi senior KGB officer – an exception to Whitlock’s rule regarding the KGB – who justified joining the opposition by saying “I had to side with my own people. I was threatened all the time because I was born in the mountains, and I had to protect my children.”<sup>9</sup>

However, region of origin was no guarantee of loyalty. A valuable man for the opposition to have had on their side would be Colonel (later Major General) Muhriddin Ashurov, a Gharmi Tajik who was in charge of the CIS 201<sup>st</sup> MRD garrison in Dushanbe and who chose to remain a part of the CIS army (which later transitioned to Russian command).<sup>10</sup> Whitlock is uncharitable in her assessment of Ashurov, who remained neutral and even sheltered President Nabiev in his garrison starting in September. She writes that Ashurov “admitted privately to friends that he did not know what to do, and so did nothing.”<sup>11</sup> Roy gives Ashurov more credit, arguing incorrectly<sup>12</sup> that while all other garrisons of the 201<sup>st</sup> immediately gave their support to the incumbent government, Ashurov remained neutral.<sup>13</sup> However, remaining neutral is not always an act of indecision. He explicitly chose not to support the opposition, which had a large degree of support from his home region. This resulted in opposition fighters branding Ashurov as a traitor to Gharmi Tajiks.<sup>14</sup>

Colonel Jurabek Aminov, the Deputy Chairman of the National Security Council (KGB) of Tajikistan, provides an example of a security sector professional who stayed in his position, yet was partial to one side in the conflict. Aminov’s name appears only briefly in western media reports and academic literature. In one case his opinion is used to refute the idea that ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ was a threat to Tajikistan, but was

1992. As for the police in Dushanbe, Schoeberlein writes that there were mostly from the Pamir region. See: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 37.

<sup>9</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 167.

<sup>10</sup> Ashurov is identified as a Gharmi by Olivier Roy and Monica Whitlock. See Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 108, 140; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 169. Ashurov went on to serve in the North Caucasus and was eventually declared Hero of the Russian Federation. See his obituary: ‘M.A. Ashurov’, *Krasnaya zvezda* (28 July 2007). Online: [http://www.redstar.ru/2007/07/28\\_07/3\\_04.html](http://www.redstar.ru/2007/07/28_07/3_04.html)

<sup>11</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 169

<sup>12</sup> The initial neutrality of the CIS/Russian forces is outlined in chapter 4.

<sup>13</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts throughout Central Asia?’, 136. Roy also notes: “...the relative neutrality of the Russian 201st Division, based in Dushanbe, when the opposition seized power in May 1992, is explained more by the fact that its head, General Ashurov, was a Gharmi (despite his ‘Soviet’ identity) than by instructions from Moscow.” What is left unsaid here is what the make-up of the men under his command was. It is very possible that if Ashurov went over to the opposition he would only have been able to bring himself and the clothes on his back. In regards to Roy’s claim that the other units of the 201<sup>st</sup> immediately supported the pro-government side, this did not happen until after summer 1992, and not in regards to Kenjaev’s forces.

<sup>14</sup> Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992). The reporters state that “Vovchiks” put a five million ruble bounty on Ashurov’s head.

rather just a tool used by the incumbents to appeal to Russian and western policy-makers.<sup>15</sup> Elsewhere he was described as a “senior politician who had tried to broker a peace between Islamic fundamentalists and pro-Communist forces.”<sup>16</sup> In another article Aminov is named again as a “senior politician,” but one who “had good relations with the Muslim militants.”<sup>17</sup>

LeVine wrote at the time that Aminov was one of Tajikistan’s “most articulate and effective leaders, [and] probably the most skilled military organiser for the anti-Communist coalition of Islamists and secular moderates”<sup>18</sup> While this assessment of his military role is an exaggeration,<sup>19</sup> his importance is reflected in the selection of leaders the counter-opposition wanted out of government. The counter-opposition forces who rejected the GNR listed their conditions for a resolution to the conflict. One of the conditions was the removal of four individuals who, they believed, formed the core of the religious faction of the opposition. Two of the individuals are obvious choices: *Qozi Turajonzoda* and *Davlat Usmon*, with *Mirbobob Mirrahim* of *Rastokhez* also listed. However, the fourth person listed was not a man who had been directly involved in politics, but rather *Jurabek Aminov*.<sup>20</sup> The counter-opposition eventually removed him by force. Unknown attackers armed with assault rifles and RPGs ambushed and killed Aminov in Dushanbe on November 19, just hours after the Supreme Soviet session in *Khujand* voted to elect *Emomali Rahmon* to Tajikistan’s highest leadership post.<sup>21</sup>

Outside of the capital, members of the police, security forces and military made their decisions as the conflict worsened. *Akiner* describes the movement of Tajik conscripts out of the 201<sup>st</sup> as “mass desertion.”<sup>22</sup> As for active duty soldiers, it was not just local members of the Tajikistan-based 201<sup>st</sup>. One example given by *Whitlock* is of ‘*Daler*,’ a young *Gharmi* Tajik soldier from the ‘*Rohi Lenin*’ *kolkhoz* (a mixed *kolkhoz*). He had left for his Soviet army duty in the Russian SSR and found himself in the

<sup>15</sup> *Atkin*, *Islam as Faith, Politics, and Bogeyman in Tajikistan*, 252, citing *A. Azamova*, ‘Tadzhikistan: ‘Afganskiy variant ne isklyuchen,’ *Moskovskie novosti* (6 September 1992) 9.

<sup>16</sup> ‘Tajik Secret Police Official Slain; New Violence Feared’, *Los Angeles Times* (20 Nov 1992).

<sup>17</sup> ‘New Clashes Feared In Tajikistan War’, *The Washington Post* (20 November 1992) a.42.

<sup>18</sup> *Steve LeVine*, ‘Tajikistan KGB chief killed’, *Financial Times* (20 November 1992) 4.

<sup>19</sup> The *Henry Dunant Centre* uses much weaker language in describing Aminov’s pro-opposition views, writing that he was “supposed to be sympathetic to the Islamic Forces.” See: *Henry Dunant Centre*, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Bushkov and Mikulsky*, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 69.

<sup>21</sup> ‘Tajik Secret Police Official Slain; New Violence Feared’, *Los Angeles Times* (20 November 1992); ‘New Clashes Feared In Tajikistan War’, *The Washington Post* (20 November 1992) a.42; ‘(Khojant)’, *Agence France-Presse* (19 November 1992); *Steve LeVine*, ‘Tajikistan KGB chief killed’, *Financial Times* (20 November 1992) 4. The sources are cautious in describing the attackers, with none attempting to guess their affiliation. However, in the *AFP* report the Interior Minister, commenting on the incident, is paraphrased as saying that “some men in the security sector were pro-communist National Front supporters.”

<sup>22</sup> *Akiner*, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 46.

Russian army when the Soviet Union dissolved. His father had sent for him on pretence as he felt his son was needed at home as the situation deteriorated. He arrived back in the Vakhsh Valley in June. Whitlock writes that

There were constant rumours of friction between local Gharmis, Kulabis and Uzbeks, some of whom had been in Dushanbe at the rallies, and even talk of shootings – though it was impossible to judge which stories were true. Daler says that at one point, Kulabi men came and stole weapons from a local police station. ‘Our people were afraid. They took up spades and hunting guns. I had to protect my family. I knew how to handle a gun – I had been in the army. We crossed the river into Afghanistan with some carpets, some cows and some horses and swapped them for better guns, Kalashnikovs. Guns were very cheap there.’<sup>23</sup>

These positive decisions to join a side or arm oneself were not confined to those at the bottom rungs of authority. One important officer to mention is the Popular Front ally Mahmud Khudoyberdiev,<sup>24</sup> who was a Captain in the 191<sup>st</sup> Regiment of the 201<sup>st</sup> in Qurghonteppa when the conflict started. Beyond active duty soldiers there would be an obvious demand for anybody who had relevant military experience in the past. Former Soviet paratrooper Rizvon Sodirov, at one point the body guard for Turajonzoda and an opposition field commander later on, provides one good example.<sup>25</sup> At a higher rank there was a former Soviet lieutenant-colonel who was training opposition recruits in Qurghonteppa city to fight against the Kulobis.<sup>26</sup>

The police inevitably found themselves in a war, demonstrated clearly at the end of September when the Interior Ministry commander of Qurghonteppa was killed along with 12 of his men.<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere the police had a better relationship with the counter-opposition forces that would go on to become the Popular Front. For example, police Colonel Fayzullo Abdulloev, the Head of the Interior Department of the Hissor region, brought his entire unit to the local government (i.e., Popular Front) side.<sup>28</sup> And, for Kulobi examples, Piri Huseynov (an Interior Ministry Colonel) and Jonkhon Rizoiev (the Chair of the Kulob Province Executive Committee and top Interior Ministry commander in Kulob Province until the end of September 1992) both attended the

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<sup>23</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 165-6.

<sup>24</sup> His role as a Popular Front ally is given a full description in the section on commanders.

<sup>25</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 90.

<sup>26</sup> Mark Trevelyan, ‘Tajik fighters dig in for battle with ex-communists’, Reuters News (6 Sept 1992).

<sup>27</sup> ‘(Moscow)’, Agence France-Presse (29 September 1992).

<sup>28</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 114. Colonel Abdulloev was clearly valuable to the local (anti-opposition) government. Nourzhanov writes that “In June 1992, several hundred of Abdulloev’s officers sealed off Hissor’s administrative borders and took under their protection several camps of refugees from Qurghonteppa.” *Ibid.*, 128, n. 33

October 14 Kenjaev-Vorobyev meeting in Tursunzoda to plan the Popular Front capture of Dushanbe.<sup>29</sup>

### Government figures and structures

Government figures outside of the security ministries also played a role in recruiting and mobilising for the conflict. Kilavuz analyses the relationships within the pro-government side and uses ‘network activation’ to define the elites’ crisis strategy of

...calling upon and obtaining the support of others with whom they are connected in some way. While these networks have regional bases [...], regional allegiance was not the only factor in their formation. Common interest, career contacts, and work experiences were also important. The networks included non-kin and people from other regions as well. The activation of such networks by the elites in Tajikistan was what ignited the violence there.<sup>30</sup>

The most important of these on the anti-opposition side at an early point was Safarali Kenjaev, the former Chairman of the Supreme Soviet who recruited militias through his patronage networks, specifically in Hisor.<sup>31</sup> In Kulob the government figures still in place locally<sup>32</sup> set about recruiting fighters. For example, President Rahmon, during his time as a local official in Kulob, recruited and mobilised for the Popular Front under the authority of Sangak Safarov.<sup>33</sup> The chairmen of collective farms had a great deal of authority locally and were deeply involved in the war effort. Markowitz writes that the leadership of collective farms and their “patrons” in the regional government “facilitated if not coordinated militias.”<sup>34</sup> A report by the Small Arms Survey finds most fighters say that they decide of their own accord to join militias – while also mentioning the promise of benefits for recruits. But the report then notes community pressures to join, plus the declarations by the local “authorities” in Hisor and Kulob to join the Popular Front. The Survey also notes the role of *voenkomats* – local military draft

<sup>29</sup> Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston – Kitobi ceyum*, 96-110. Note: Rizoiev replaced Qurbonali Mirzoaliev in unknown circumstances. Mirzoaliev apparently resigned on September 28. See: ITAR-TASS (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1498 (29 September 1992) i.

<sup>30</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 177. Kilavuz writes further: “I identify [network activation] as an important mechanism because it represented the first significant mobilization of regional networks, bringing people in from regions and significantly contributing to the eruption of civil war.” See *ibid*, 167.

<sup>31</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 180.

<sup>32</sup> Markowitz, while not speaking specifically to recruitment, argues that during this period the Kulobi local elites were able to operate efficiently as they had regained their positions after the reforms targeted at Kulob ended in 1990. See: Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 112.

<sup>33</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 112.

<sup>34</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 113.



committees left over from the Soviet era – in the Popular Front recruiting efforts.<sup>35</sup> The use of *voenkomats* was not the exclusive tool of the forces that were to eventually coalesce into the Popular Front. For example, in Qurghonteppa city armed opposition groups, calling themselves “national self-defence forces,” announced the call-up of nearly 1400 men through the “local military registration and enlistment offices” using their military service cards.<sup>36</sup> Of course, as the transition to conflict included a rapid mobilisation by both sides,<sup>37</sup> the process included both volunteer and forced recruitment.<sup>38</sup>

The armed phase of the conflict was fought, in Dudoignon’s words, by “local community leaders” who had aligned with one side or the other.<sup>39</sup> Some of the leaders were incumbents in local government offices or were serving in some official government capacity. This was true even of the opposition side. Nourzhanov writes that the “newly established local power structures – usually called ‘headquarters’ – operated under the auspices of existing administrative bodies or at least comprised their representatives.”<sup>40</sup> In the Jirghatol district, in the opposition stronghold of Gharm, the local branch of the opposition ‘Headquarters of Fatherland’s/Homeland’s Salvation’ was comprised of the following:

- Deputy Chairman of the district Executive Committee (the overall leader)
- Chief of police
- Military Commissar (head of the *voenkomat*)
- Director of the local agro-industrial association
- A delegate from the Spiritual Directorate (*Qoziyot*)
- An officer of the Committee of State Security (KGB)<sup>41</sup>

However, the Headquarters was not confined to a leadership consisting only of incumbent administrators or government representatives. In this location the Headquarters’ leadership included a representative each from the DPT and the IRP, as

<sup>35</sup> Stina Torjesen, Christina Wille and S. Neil MacFarlane, ‘Tajikistan’s Road to Stability: Reduction in Small Arms Proliferation and Remaining Challenges’, An Occasional Paper of the Small Arms Survey, No. 17 (2005) 69. These were not entirely effective as some young men left to Russia or Kyrgyzstan

<sup>36</sup> Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992). The article also claims that weapons were distributed through the *voenkomat* in Qurghonteppa. This is repeated here: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 67-8.

<sup>37</sup> For example: Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111.

<sup>38</sup> In regard to the militias on both sides, Kilavuz writes that “Men whom militias deemed eligible to fight were drafted regardless of whether they wanted to be involved. Both among the volunteers and those forcefully drafted, some did not take up arms, but worked in support positions such as taxi drivers. As one informant in Qurghonteppa put it, “Some people joined of their own will, some by force. There was pressure and compulsion for people to join.”” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 177.

<sup>39</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 70. Dudoignon describes these leaders as “impervious to the ideological arguments in Dushanbe.”

<sup>40</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116.

<sup>41</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116.

well as the editor of a local newspaper. On the opposite side, the ‘Headquarters of the National Guard’ in Kulob was organised via the offices of the Chairman of the Kulob Regional Soviet’s Executive Committee, Qurbonali Mirzoaliev.<sup>42</sup> Markowitz also writes of the early involvement of local government figures in the formation of militias, particularly the Popular Front. He writes that “Local and regional politicians were involved to varying degrees – either by remaining “dangerously neutral,” providing informal support to particular armed groups, or directly funding and leading them.”<sup>43</sup> For example, in Qurghonteppa the Vakhsh District Chairman Fayzullo Kuvvatov acted early by calling a meeting in order to organise against the opposition’s growing strength in Qurghonteppa, a process that included the formation of armed units.<sup>44</sup> Markowitz writes that “Other regions [in Qurghonteppa Province] quickly followed, concentrating their forces around local institutional bases. Districts and even collective farms, therefore, became openly split along patronage lines.”<sup>45</sup>

However, Markowitz does not describe the pro-government (counter-opposition) side as all members of the state apparatus. He provides an example of one diverse group of men from Kulob who had, after the demonstrations in Dushanbe, felt as if they, or specifically their careers and/or livelihoods, were threatened by being Kulobi. These men went on to organise militias that eventually became the Kulobi element of the Popular Front:

- Sangak Safarov
- Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev, Deputy Chairman of Kulob Province Executive Committee
- Rustam Abdurahimov, musician and head of *Oshkoro*
- Mullah Haydar Sharifzoda
- Langari Langariev, former Interior Ministry police officer
- Qimat Rustamov, Member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet.<sup>46</sup>

Markowitz makes the point of noting that “patterns of mobilization on both sides tended to reflect which patronage group had occupied the district apparatus—and which had

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<sup>42</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116. In regards to the other pro-government stronghold, Nourzhanov writes that “The paramilitaries in the Hissor Valley nominally answered to the Executive Committee of the city of Tursunzoda.” Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 110. Markowitz provides an example: “A division of the Popular Front, for example, was headed by Mahmudsaid Ubaidullaev, Deputy Chair of Kuliab's Oblispolkom since 1990. Having made his career in statistical offices in Kuliab Province since 1974, Ubaidullaev rose to prominence within the province on the coattails of Mirzoshoev's appointment as governor of Kuliab in 1990.” Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 124-5, cit. Kenjaev, *Perevorot v Tadzhikistane*, 25-3, 262. The doubtful parentheses around “self-defense” are in the original text.

<sup>45</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 125.

<sup>46</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 109.

not.”<sup>47</sup> Districts in the south where Kulobi or Leninobodi clients controlled the local government (and used it to organise fighters) were the locations where opposition supporters had to use mosques or *kolkhozes* to mobilise.<sup>48</sup>

### **Family networks and solidarity groups**

At the elite level, kin connections were important in some circumstances, including at the very top of the IRP where some in the leadership had family connections between each other.<sup>49</sup> At a lower level, family and kin ties were another important factor in drawing young men into joining militias. The Small Arms Survey report noted, among several factors, the relevance of blood relations. One former fighter – whose affiliation was not mentioned – said it would be humiliating to not join the fighting as friends and relatives had. Speaking specifically of opposition fighters, the same report found that the young men spoke of their desire to defend their families and their property when joining the fight. But the report goes on to note that some fighters said they were forced by family networks (in addition to individual commanders) to join.<sup>50</sup> Unsurprisingly, the survey found that fighters from the same village or the same extended family were placed in the same units.<sup>51</sup> In regards to the opposition fighters, a report by the HD Centre finds that in the villages “Informal leaders recruited people they personally knew or who were family members.”<sup>52</sup> There were divides between family members during the early political competition of 1992, mostly generational.

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<sup>47</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 124.

<sup>48</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 124. Markowitz gives the pro-government district administrations as Vakhsh, Kolkhozobod, Kommunist, Kumsangir, and Jilikul. The opposition mobilized using: “Turkmenistan Sovkhoz in Vakhsh District; at various points surrounding the center of Kalinabad District; the Kurgan-Teppe Province mosque, and the mosques of Kolkhozobod, Kumsangir, and Jiliqul Districts.” Citing Safarali Kenjaev, *Perevorot v Tadzhikistan*, (Dushanbe: 1996, no publisher), no page cited.

<sup>49</sup> Kirill Nourzhanov, ‘Seeking Peace in Tajikistan: Who is the Odd Man Out?’, *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 6, 1998, 16. Nourzhanov writes that “This applies to the IRP Chairman, Mohammadsharif Himmatzoda, his deputy, Davlat Usmon, and ... Turajonzoda.” See *ibid.*, 22, n. 7. Citing Bushkov and Mikuslki, *Tadzhikskaya Revolyutsiya*, 1995, 47

<sup>50</sup> Torjesen, Wille and MacFarlane, ‘Tajikistan’s Road to Stability’, 69. Speaking of the dilemma of young men, the report notes: “Many stressed that it had been a question of survival: either accept the arms offered and join the opposition, or the government or opposition groups would kill you.”

<sup>51</sup> Torjesen, Wille and MacFarlane, ‘Tajikistan’s Road to Stability’, 70.

<sup>52</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 13. The report continues: “The number of these units increased as the Tajik civil war developed. Their task was to defend their village against the government forces.”

However, Bushkov and Mikulsky stress that differences of opinion in politics were mostly between in-laws, rather than between blood relations.<sup>53</sup>

Concerning how loyalties were determined in the conflict, the Tajik scholar Kamoludin Abdullaev argued for the relevance of the *avlod* system, which he defines as the “basic unit of traditionally sedentary Tajik society and dominant institution of power [...] - an ascent patriarchal extended family that sometimes can be developed into a clan based on patrilineage.”<sup>54</sup> He speaks of political loyalties in a broad sense for the conflict:

In the Soviet era (1917- 1991) the *avlod* system was considerably eroded, yet existed as a parallel - to a quasi-national government - system of power. Exactly this community-oriented identity and clan network determined political loyalty during the civil war in 1992-1993 and later.<sup>55</sup>

At a lower level, several scholars stress the importance of the *avlod*<sup>56</sup> in the process of mobilising for conflict. Most prominent are the Tajik scholars Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov. Olimova’s assessment is that *avloids* have “enormous power over the behavior of individuals,” which is an important point since approximately 80% of the population in the Kulob and Qurghonteppa Provinces consider themselves to be a member of an *avlod*.<sup>57</sup> Based on surveys of conflict participants, Olimov and Olimova note the importance of the *avlod* in the process of people joining in the violence, and state that *avlod* loyalties “dragged” people into the conflict – people that had no previous involvement in politics. Hence, people that had no strong political opinions were directed by highly trusted *avlod* leaders to fight.<sup>58</sup> Akiner acknowledges the importance of the *avlod*, but she adds some qualifications, notably that there were additional “cross-cutting” determinants that determined loyalties.<sup>59</sup> The above analysis

<sup>53</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 137-9.

<sup>54</sup> Abdullaev, ‘Current Local Government Policy Situation in Tajikistan’, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Abdullaev, ‘Current Local Government Policy Situation in Tajikistan’, 8.

<sup>56</sup> For a full discussion, see the analysis of *avloids* in chapter 2.

<sup>57</sup> Saodat Olimova, ‘Mezhtadzhikskiy konflikt v tsentral’noaziatskom kontekste’, in *Mezhtadzhikskiy konflikt: put’ k miru*. Edited by M. Olimov (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1998) 37. In the survey referred to the number for Tajikistan as a whole is 68.3%.

<sup>58</sup> Muzaffar Olimov and Saodat Olimova, ‘Sotsial’naya struktura Tadjikistana’ in *Mezhtadzhikskiy konflikt: put’ k miru*. Edited by M. Olimov (Moscow: Rossiyskaya Akademiya Nauk, 1998) 84-5. On a related note, Nourzhanov provides description of attacks on rival groups: “One of the peculiarities of the primary community group in Tajikistan (the *avlod*) is the understanding that a man should always keep his word, but only within the confines of this community. Practically any deed beneficial to one’s community (or harmful to the competing entity) can be morally justified.” See: Nourzhanov, ‘Seeking Peace in Tajikistan’, 17.

<sup>59</sup> Akiner’s comments: “Some analysts have seen a causal link between areas of fighting and the high incidence of *avloids* (extended family networks). Yet the conflict was not primarily between *avloids*. A more relevant correlation might be that these informal structures were particularly strong in the immigrant communities, especially among the Karateginis and Darvazis, where they helped to maintain the ‘otherness’ of the incomers and created the mutual support systems that facilitated group success. During the civil war, they were a conduit for mobilizing group action. However, group pressure was also exerted

makes clear that family ties were important in the process of mobilization, but not as the one guiding variable: people joined for family reasons, but as one of several determining factors.

### **Criminal networks and the informal economy**

Many scholars discuss the importance of certain powerful members of the informal and criminal economy – and the networks they operated within. One aspect of their importance was in the funding for the conflict, at least at an early point.<sup>60</sup> Another source points to their ability to pay bribes in order to secure the transfer of weapons.<sup>61</sup> However, their largest role by far was in mobilising for and participating in violent conflict. For example, Barnett Rubin mentions the collapse of state institutions of social control elevating the importance of alternate sources of power. He specifically cites how the Kulobi “underworld’s ability to mobilize violence became crucial.”<sup>62</sup> This assessment fits within Nourzhanov’s description that cites organised crime as one of the three most important sources of “defence, protection and control” for the “powerbrokers.”<sup>63</sup> The need to quickly set up a powerful military-political faction mixed criminal with government figures and led to some seemingly counterintuitive allied formations. For example, Kenjaev’s Popular Front – Hisor Faction (formally founded 8 September 1992) was composed of the following:

- Safarali Kenjaev (former Chair of the Supreme Soviet, judge and prosecutor)
- Izzatullo Bobokalonov (collective farm boss)
- Rauf Soliev (criminal)
- Ibod Boimatov (criminal)
- Colonel Amirqul Azimov (criminal prosecutor in the State *Prokuratura*)<sup>64</sup>

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through other, cross-cutting, forms of association. Consequently, members of a single family sometimes took different sides.” See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42. Akiner does not name the scholars she is referring to, nor does she provide examples for family members on different sides.

<sup>60</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 18. Matveeva writes: “Anecdotal accounts suggest that initially funding for the conflict came from criminal groups, businessmen who accumulated cash due to economic liberalisation during *perestroika*, and from looting the population – especially the Uzbeks, who had a reputation for being better off than Tajiks... but it is hard to obtain solid proof.”

<sup>61</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 10. Matveeva writes: “Tajik criminal bosses from the south then appealed to the central all-Union criminal network to facilitate purchases of Russian weapons in Tajikistan. The network responded by providing funds and paying bribes to military officials in Moscow to sanction such arms transfers.”

<sup>62</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 151.

<sup>63</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 113.

<sup>64</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 117.

While relationships between police and criminals may seem unlikely, elements of these two groups did conduct some business with each other in the USSR.<sup>65</sup>

Kilavuz provides one of the most complete analyses of criminal actors in the conflict – men who she terms ‘violence specialists.’ She describes the criminal groups as “mafia-like groups who controlled the shadow sectors of the local economies, and who cultivated client-like relations with political figures in the state and party apparatus.”<sup>66</sup> Unnamed high level government leaders had, especially since early 1987, blocked the attempts of law enforcement agencies to go after certain criminal groups.<sup>67</sup> According to Asal Azamova, a journalist highly critical of the counter-opposition, in spring 1992 “a number of hard-core criminals” were amnestied and went on to be active in Qurghonteppa.<sup>68</sup> Azamova finds this to be part of a pattern whereby Nabiev turned to criminal groups to assist him.<sup>69</sup> Kilavuz specifically points to Nabiev and Kenjaev as responsible for mobilising these types of groups to commit violence on behalf of their own their political aims. She is harsh in her assessment of the militias that formed, calling the leaders “criminals” and their followers “thugs, former inmates, and other criminals.”<sup>70</sup> In particular, Kilavuz analyses the role of the leaders of ‘criminal groups’ in the outbreak of civil war. She points to militia leaders Sangak Safarov and Yaqubjon Salimov in particular, known as the ‘Kulobi mafia’ before the war, and their relations with Nabiev and Kenjaev. She describes the importance of the leaders of criminal groups:

Their followers mainly consisted of thugs and former inmates (during the war they recruited people by liberating prisoners from jail), and were organized into region-based networks. Their role in the shadow economy involved things like offering protection to people doing illicit business, settling disputes when they arose, and collecting debts. In this way they accumulated economic and political power. They were well-connected, and enjoyed close relationships with local and republic-level political authorities (who often dealt in the shadow economy). During the civil war, politicians turned to such groups.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> For example, Galeotti outlines the “endemic” corruption and bribery amongst the membership of the Soviet police and military structures, with a particular focus on Russia. See: Mark Galeotti, ‘The Criminalisation of Russian State Security’, *Global Crime*, Vol. 7, No. 3 (2006), esp. 473-4.

<sup>66</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 207-8. By 1990 there were 1226 “recidivists” (repeat offenders) in Tajikistan. See: Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan’, 22, citing *Kommunist Tadzhikistana*, 5 April 1991.

<sup>67</sup> Mahkamov, ‘Islam and the Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985’, 198.

<sup>68</sup> Asal Azamova, ‘Criminals as a tool in Tajikistan's politics’, *Moscow News* (16 September 1992). Azamova does name any of these amnestied criminals.

<sup>69</sup> Asal Azamova, ‘Criminals as a tool in Tajikistan's politics’, *Moscow News* (16 September 1992).

<sup>70</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 207-8, also 167. This view can also be found on the ground in Tajikistan. For example, Reuters reported the words of a Tajik man fleeing Kuybyshev: “The Kulyab (fighters) are bandits, drug addicts, criminals.” Brackets in original. See: Elif Kaban, ‘Tajiks flee as civil war spreads’, Reuters News (4 October 1992).

<sup>71</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 181-2. Kilavuz continues: “The conflict resulted in the activation of networks linking criminal groups with political elites, ranging from obkom officials to

Kilavuz discusses the role of criminal networks in recruiting for the conflict and the criminal motivations of participants:

The motivations of combatants were complex. Many joined out of compulsion; some, out of a desire to revenge death of relatives killed in the war; others (often criminal elements) seem to have been primarily motivated by the opportunity to engage in robbery and looting. As noted above, in order to increase their ranks, the militias freed murderers and other criminals from jails, and made them soldiers. According to some accounts, the Kulyab militia freed around 400<sup>72</sup> people from prisons in Qurghonteppa who are said to have joined them. Many people in Qurghonteppa also mentioned this act of freeing of prisoners during the interviews. Informants from Qurghonteppa claim that militias on both sides engaged in such practices, and that even front commanders included many ex-criminals: One informant said: “Murderers, criminals... they took these people out of jail and made them soldiers. In Qurghonteppa, both sides did this. Narcotic users and alcoholics became soldiers.”<sup>73</sup>

Kilavuz’s analysis is focused on the role of the abovementioned men in the outbreak of conflict. However, she does not claim to be analysing the background of every commander on the Popular Front side. Erica Marat arrives at a somewhat different conclusion. Her argument is similar – that the imperative to recruit the maximum number of fighters led both sides in the conflict to recruit former criminals.<sup>74</sup> And she notes the criminal backgrounds and activities of many commanders, particularly of the pro-government side. However, she refutes the idea that most civil war participants were criminals, even if both sides in the conflict recruited “criminals of the Soviet breed.”<sup>75</sup> She stresses that most field commanders had “civilian backgrounds” and had no criminal associations before the war.<sup>76</sup> And in regards to the prisoners-turned-soldiers, two serious qualifications are required. The first is that both sides in the conflict engaged in freeing and recruiting prisoners.<sup>77</sup> And the second is that only a

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kolkhoz leaders. These networks connected Nabiev and Kenjaev to Mirzoev, and to Safarov and Salimov. These relationships are revealed in the list of field commanders.”

<sup>72</sup> Note: Another source provides a number of 300 prisoners and notes that only 30 of these were classified as “dangerous recidivists.” See: Mayak Radio 1000gmt (1 October 1992) in SWB SU/1502 (3 October 1992) B/2. For another source that cites 300 men, see: ITAR-TASS 1424gmt (27 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/5.

<sup>73</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 191-2. On the 400 prisoners’ number, Kilavuz cites: FBIS Report Central Eurasia, 16 October 1992, 99.

<sup>74</sup> Erica Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia: State Weakness, Organized Crime, and Corruption in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan’, *Silk Road Paper* (October 2006) 106.

<sup>75</sup> Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia’, 114.

<sup>76</sup> Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia’, 114.

<sup>77</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 191-2. See also: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 43. Alexander Pelts reports one incident of 200 prisoners being freed near Kofarnihon on the night of December 14, but the brief mention lack enough details to identify the perpetrators. See: Aleksandr Pelts, ‘V Tadjikistane ostalos tri ochaga napryazhennosti’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 286 (15 December 1992). For another unfortunately vague report of a failed jailbreak, see: Anatoly Ladin and Aleksandr Pelts, ‘Tadjikistan: nikto ne khochet razoruzhatsya pervym’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 282 (10 December 1992).

small fraction of those freed were dangerous and violent repeat offenders – with the additional caveat that there is no confirmation of what percentage of those freed prisoners actually joined a militia.<sup>78</sup>

### Collective farms

*Kolkhozes* (collective farms) and *sovkhozes*<sup>79</sup> (state farms) played a prominent role in mobilizing for the protests in Dushanbe. Kilavuz illustrates this through the examples of two *kolkhozes*. The first is that of the Turkmeniston *kolkhoz*, with a Gharmi majority and a Kulobi minority – at least until the Gharmis forced the Kulobis out. Located in the Vakhsh District of Qurghonteppa, this *kolkhoz* was home to the eventual IRP leader Abdullo Nuri and attracted many outside opposition supporters. This *kolkhoz* provided – through persuasion or force – many protestors for the opposition demonstration in Dushanbe.<sup>80</sup> Meanwhile, further north in a Kulobi-majority *kolkhoz* that was home to a man – Fayzali Saidov – that would later become an important local player, similar activities were underway that led to many from this farm going to Dushanbe or assisting the pro-government protest effort. Government officials with connections in the *kolkhoz* asked for demonstrators to come to Dushanbe, as well as to provide food, supplies, transportation and money.<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> As an example, of the 300 prisoners freed by Kulobi militias in Qurghonteppa, only 30 of these were classified as “dangerous recidivists.” See: Mayak Radio 1000gmt (1 October 1992) in SWB SU/1502 (3 October 1992) B/2. On the identity of who freed the prisoners, see: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 191-2. Note: Kilavuz is non-committal as to whether or not these men actually joined a militia. Another source gives an even smaller percentage. Putovsky reports that Fayzali Saidov freed 750 criminals in Qurghonteppa and Yovon, 28 of whom were “especially dangerous repeat offenders.” See: Cheslav Putovsky, ‘What is the Tajikistan People’s Front’, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (16 December 1992) 1, 3 in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 50 (13 January 1993). For an anecdote of 200 prisoners serving sentences for “particularly dangerous crimes,” see: Aleksandr Pelts, ‘V Tadjikistane ostalos tri ochaga napryazhennosti’, *Krasanaya zvezda*, No. 286 (15 December 1992). Unfortunately, the off-handed mention provides very few details. The way it is written it seems that Pelts assumes that all prisoners must be dangerous criminals – something that is contradicted by the above anecdotes.

<sup>79</sup> Note: farms that are actually *sovkhozes* are occasionally referred to as *kolkhozes* in some sources. Other authors refer to all farms as *kolkhozes*, despite some being *sovkhozes*.

<sup>80</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 190-1. One informant in the Turkmenistan *kolkhoz* relayed this to Kilavuz: “The majority is from Karategin in this village. This *sovkhos* supported the opposition. People who did not, left the village. Many people from this village went to the square in Dushanbe. There were men who came to the village. They called for people to get together, and ordered them to go. They took the unwilling ones by force. The men who gathered people were men from the opposition. Some men were from here, but also men came from outside to recruit men for the square. Problems began in the mahalla. Before, there was no such thing like the problem of where you are from. This started after the meetings in Dushanbe. ‘You are from Karategin, you are from Kulyab’ began in this period.” Markowitz points to this *kolkhoz* as being a key mobiliser for the opposition. See: Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 124.

<sup>81</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 191.



Markowitz portrays the *kolkhoz* as a significant mobilising structure for the conflict. As mentioned previously, Markowitz writes that the *kolkhoz* leaders and “their patrons within the regional apparatus facilitated if not coordinated militias that spearheaded the conflict.”<sup>82</sup> Roy’s work is also notable for focusing on the role of the *kolkhoz* in the conflict:

...each *kolkhoz* represents the interests of a local population group (clans, ethnic groups, factions) and [took] sides at the national level according to local conflicts and systems of alliances. The *kolkhozes* are the new tribes, and as such play the leading part in political and armed mobilisation, through the creation of *kolkhoz* militias.<sup>83</sup>

While Roy’s analysis focuses on *kolkhozes* as solidarity groups, he does extensively acknowledge that the conflict was often intra-*kolkhoz*. As an example he uses the Navruz *sovkhos* of the Vakhsh District, which was until 1986 a unit of the Turkmeniston (now named Haqiqat) *kolkhoz*. The Turkmeniston *kolkhoz* was established in 1953 as a mixed Kulobi and Gharmi settlement, with the Gharmis in the majority. Roy labels the Navruz *kolkhoz* as an opposition “stronghold”, terms the Gharmi *kolkhoz* leaders and the Gharmi Tajiks here as Islamists, and notes that Nuri had a mosque located here.<sup>84</sup> In June 1992, Gharmis of the Turkmeniston *kolkhoz* expelled the Kulobis from their mahalla, leaving them no choice but to take up residence in the nearby Moskva *kolkhoz*, which was majority Kulobi. The two sides in the Turkmenistan and Moskva *kolkhozes*, now firmly Gharmi and Kulobi, fought each other from June until November, when Kulobi forces arrived and defeated the Gharmis of the Turkmeniston *kolkhoz*. Roy writes that in 1993 all the managers of the Turkmenistan *kolkhoz* were Kulobis and that the remaining Gharmis who were not expelled by the new leaders became low-level agricultural workers.<sup>85</sup> This incident is a clear example of

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<sup>82</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 113. Whitlock provides an example of a *kolkhoz* boss that is a financier for the conflict rather than a militia leader: “The purchase and distribution of weapons among the Gharmis was handled by Hezb-e Nahzat-e Islami, which had a house in each village. The local financier was the man who had managed the [Roh-i Lenin] *kolkhoz* for the past forty years, ‘Kabud’ (‘Blue’) Saifuddin, who held the Lenin prize for record-breaking levels of cotton production and had grown rich on the profits.” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 166.

<sup>83</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts throughout Central Asia’, 147.

<sup>84</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 95.

<sup>85</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 95. Roy continues in describing the complete defeat of Gharmi Tajiks of the Turkmeniston *kolkhoz*: “In several instances, Gharmi refugees returning under the auspices of the UN High Commission for Refugees were taken on with this status of déclassé waged workers, while the victorious Kulabis took possession of good-quality housing and land. After the victory, a number of Kulabi families came from overpopulated *kolkhoz* in the province of Kulab and installed themselves, together with their tractors and livestock, in the newly conquered *kolkhoz*. Thus what one had here was the reconstitution of a social differentiation arising out of the combined effects of war, predation and neo-tribalism.” See also: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 139-40.

Kalyvas' concept of 'alliance' at work – local agendas attached to national level politics during civil war.

Kilavuz's research in the Qurghonteppa region indicates that *kolkhozes* and villages that were mixed in a minority-majority region of origin pattern were more likely to be involved in the conflict and at an earlier point. In contrast, settlements that were evenly split stayed out of the conflict longer, with "one or two" managing to stay neutral for the entire conflict. Kilavuz's informants note that when Gharmi forces came to a settlement with an even split the local Gharmis would dissuade them from aggressive action. Local Kulobis would also do the same when Kulobi forces approached.<sup>86</sup> Another more cynical possibility here is that in an evenly split settlement both sides would perceive the cost of expelling the other side as high, while in a settlement with a small minority the task of expulsion would not be costly in terms of effort and loss of life for the majority side.

### **Religious institutions, networks and leaders**

Most of the IRP-affiliated field commanders in the south were mullahs. The IRP was able to reach out to its network of local unofficial mullahs, each of whom could recruit their followers into militias.<sup>87</sup> However, mullahs were not as a rule loyal to the IRP. Roy explains:

The 'ideological' reading turns out to be still more limited because it is wrong to say that mullahs in general were on the side of the IRP while 'apparatchiks' supported the regime. Further more, in the civil war, *kolkhoz* presidents and mullahs from the same *kolkhoz* usually found themselves in the same camp: Islamic-democrat if they were 'Garmis', conservatives if they were 'Kulyabis', [...] The local mullahs usually followed, rather than led, the groups they belonged to. In a word, mullahs and collective farm presidents could end up together, to the extent that they joined not an ideological camp but a local faction. The mosque only opposed the Executive Committee of a *Kolkhoz* when the *kolkhoz* was divided ethnically, or into local factions, and one took a secular approach while the other adopted an Islamic orientation.<sup>88</sup>

<sup>86</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 76-7.

<sup>87</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 182; Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 160, n. 68. Examples include: Abdullo Abdurrahim, Saidashraf Abdulahadov, Qari Qiyomiddin Muhammadjon, Mullah Amriddin and Mullah Abdughaffor. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42, n. 14; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 182, citing Safarali Kenjaev, *Tojikistonda To'ntarish*, Vol.1 (Uzbekistan, 1994). Unsurprisingly, Akiner writes "The political-ideological leaders of the government and the UTO did not usually participate directly in the fights. Initially, the active combatants were members of semi-formal local militias. These merged later into larger units and eventually formed the basis for the government and UTO armies." See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 43

<sup>88</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia', 134-5.

As examples of notable religious notables who supported the incumbent side, Roy point to the Kulobi mullah Sharifzoda and the unrelated Fathullah Khan Sharifzoda – a Naqshbandi from Hisor and the eventual Mufti of Tajikistan. Roy notes that, aside from a few individuals, the mullahs of Kulob and Hisor supported the incumbent side.<sup>89</sup>

### **Economic Motivations and Resource Mobilisation**

Schoeberlein asks where the two sides secured the resources necessary to arm and pay their supporters during the early phase of the civil war. He stresses the importance of local resources, especially on the “plundering of the economy,” which includes factories and other businesses (at a later point some faction leaders sought to generate resources by operating seized enterprises rather than looting them).<sup>90</sup> Nourzhanov specifies the assets that combatants fought for:

As the spiral of internal violence unfolded, guerrilla 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. [...] Control over lucrative enterprises, such as cotton plantations, oil refineries and motor depots, was a major attraction to them.<sup>91</sup>

Kilavuz also mentions the economic and power aspirations of some combatants as a motivating factor.<sup>92</sup> Markowitz provides a similar analysis, arguing that combat operations in Qurghonteppa did not start with large-scale killings of civilians, nor were the regional government structures a target. Rather, field commanders were focused on controlling economic assets, especially once the conflict turned into a low-intensity affair, in a bid to secure political power. His basic argument is that Qurghonteppa’s

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<sup>89</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134-5, 139-40. Regarding the mullahs of Kulob and Hisor, Roy argues that they justified their stance by developing “an Islamic rationale for this, often based on the idea of a national and traditional Islam heavily imbued with Naqshbandi Sufism, as opposed to the ‘innovative’ Islam imported by the ‘Wahhabis’ (a generic and pejorative term used for Islamists, whether or not of Saudi allegiance).

<sup>90</sup> Schoeberlein, ‘Bones of Contention: Conflicts over Resources’, 89-90, 95-6. On a related note, Zartman stresses that the opposition had a meagre resource base, in terms of both population and economic and material resources. See: Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228-9.

<sup>91</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 112. Nourzhanov even provides an example of infighting amongst allies: Kolkhozobod – a valuable cotton industry centre – ‘changed hands’ six times in November 1992 alone, each time between militias that were “nominally subordinated to headquarters in Kulob.”

<sup>92</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 194. Kilavuz writes: “One informant reported that a police chief had admitted fighting to get his job. “People fought for their own aims. I talked to a police chief. He said, ‘I fought to get this post.’ People fought for their own interests, in order to benefit from the opportunity to grab.”

economy, especially its agriculture sector, made it a highly valued prize for the two sides to fight over. However, Markowitz is focused mostly on national level competition. He argues that patronage networks from Leninobod, Kulob and the Qarotegin valley (Gharm) had “penetrated and divided” the Qurghonteppa region and that the competing networks can be seen in the actions of local elites.<sup>93</sup> Markowitz posits that if patronage had “not been allocated in a manner that divided the provincial elite and the enterprise managers under them, it is unlikely that Kurgan-Teppe Province would not have been the center of the civil war.”<sup>94</sup> Schoeberlein is more neutral and argues that whether or not the fight for control of resources was the cause of the civil war, the war quickly turned into a battle for resources that shaped the conflict from an early point and promoted the continuation of the conflict.<sup>95</sup> However, not all fighting was focused on such lofty goals as controlling large enterprises and other economic assets. Kilavuz concedes that there were lesser economic goals, such as control of land, but that often people were killed for only “small gains,” in one anecdote even as little as the clothing a person was wearing.<sup>96</sup> Concerning the fighting and looting, one man in Qurghonteppa confirmed the motivation to steal, while remarking “Of course, everyone needed money. How else could we live?”<sup>97</sup> According to combatants, the opposing factions both had some involvement in criminal activity, resulting in overlap and blurring between political goals and mundane criminal activity such as looting and robbery.<sup>98</sup>

## Commanders

An analysis of the civil war commanders prominent in 1992 will help to better illuminate the patterns of mobilisation during the first phase of the conflict. The field commanders of the Tajik civil war, whether referred to as ‘warlords,’ ‘strongmen’ or

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<sup>93</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 128-9. As examples, Markowitz cites a cotton factory, a dairy factory and the Norak hydroelectric dam being taken over by field commanders in the month of September.

<sup>94</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 128-9.

<sup>95</sup> Schoeberlein, ‘Bones of Contention’, 85-6. Schoeberlein notes: “...members of the Popular Front, in the absence of any state power that can prevent them from robbing, killing, occupying houses, appropriating positions in the state apparatus, and taking control of state and private enterprises and their assets.” See: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 43.

<sup>96</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 193.

<sup>97</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168. The man continued: “And, to be honest, some people got a high out of shooting. You’d go home after a raid with a kick like adrenaline, and then everything would go fall flat. So you’d go again. I know because I was high as can be.”

<sup>98</sup> Torjesen, Wille and MacFarlane, ‘Tajikistan’s Road to Stability’, 70. These interviews include combatants on both sides of the conflict.

‘commanders,’ enjoyed a certain level of legitimacy. Nourzhanov writes that they “tend to act in the interests of communities as well as for self-aggrandisement.”<sup>99</sup> He supports this argument by noting that during the conflict “large segments of the population have had to depend on various strongmen as far as their livelihood, security and often very existence are concerned.”<sup>100</sup> Rashid Abdullo, noting their “strong and charismatic personalities”, argues that they “typically enjoyed the full loyalty of those who served with them, as well as the support of the population in the territories they controlled.”<sup>101</sup> Kamoludin Abdullaev mostly agrees, writing that they “succeeded to various degrees in securing popular support in respective areas.”<sup>102</sup> Little information is available on the defeated opposition commanders active in 1992. In contrast, there is much more analysis on the commanders active in or allied to the Popular Front. The following sections will profile three of those commanders.

### Sangak Safarov

“In three months I have executed the leaders of two provinces.”

- Safarov speaking to Russian Defence Minister Pavel Grachev.<sup>103</sup>

Sangak Safarov, a Kulobi by birth,<sup>104</sup> was for a short time, the most powerful commander in Tajikistan. Besides his regional affiliation, one of the first things

<sup>99</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 110.

<sup>100</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 109.

<sup>101</sup> Rashid G. Abdullo, ‘Implementation of the 1997 General Agreement’, in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Edited by Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catharine Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 51. In regards to the power and ability of field commanders to recruit, Abdullo writes that “were never merely the followers of political leaders; they were a political power in themselves. Most had strong and charismatic personalities and were able to form armed units from people they recruited.”

<sup>102</sup> Abdullaev, ‘Current Local Government Policy Situation in Tajikistan’, 11.

<sup>103</sup> Editor’s note in Guljahon Sangakzoda, ‘Sangak Safarov: Peshvoi fronti khalqiro jahor soat mekushtand’, *SSSR*, No. 30 (27 July 2009). Accessed online (September 2010) at ASIA-Plus website:

<http://asiaplus.tj/tj/articles/50/3896.html>

<sup>104</sup> Roy (*The New Central Asia*, p. 49) gives a very specific location for his birth: “He was born in 1928 in Khawaling (village of Sharq-i Shârdi, district of Shugnaw, Yakhsu Valley in the province of Kulob)...” Roy’s version cites two authors (Reinhard Eisener, ‘Zum Bürgerkrieg in Tadshikistan’, *Osteuropa Zeitschrift für Gegenwartsfragen des ostens*, Stuttgart, 1994, 777f; Stephane Dudoignon, ‘Chronique bibliographique’, *CEMOTI*, No. 16, 1993, 393f) who both cite the Russian journalist Vladimir Medvedev and his interview with Safarov (‘Saga o Bobo Sangake, voine’, *Druzhba Narodov*, 1993, No. 6, pp 188-205). In this Russian-language interview (p. 188) Safarov says that he is born in Farki Shody, in Shugnou. So Roy either corrected or directly quoted the authors who misread Medvedev. Either way, both versions put his birthplace in the Shugnau [Shugnaw/Shugnav] area of Kulob. Akiner, likely confusing his place of birth with his family’s origin, puts his birthplace in Vakhio, Darvoz. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 52, 90.

mentioned by authors when introducing Safarov is his criminal history.<sup>105</sup> In particular, it is noted that by the age of 50 he had spent 23 years in prison and has as many as six convictions. Safarov's convictions, while not known with absolute certainty, include: auto theft (1951); three year sentence for killing a pedestrian with his vehicle (1957); knifing to death a man in a fight at the Dushanbe restaurant where he was employed as a cook (1960 or 1964); an additional six to seven years added – most in solitary confinement – to his existing conviction for organising a prisoner uprising and committing acts of violence in a labour camp prison in the Sovietsky district of Kulob Province.<sup>106</sup> After his final release in 1977 or 1978, Safarov's ostensible profession leading up to independence was as a bar owner in Kulob, an occupation that was not only “extremely lucrative” according to Nourzhanov, but also allowed him to create a powerful network.<sup>107</sup> In regards to Safarov, Rubin notes that the categories of ‘businessman’ and ‘criminal’ “overlapped considerably in Soviet Central Asia, as in any society where private enterprise fulfils social needs but is illegal.”<sup>108</sup> Dudoignon provides a colourful description for Safarov that highlights his relations with power figures, calling him a “pivot of the parallel economy and hatchet man of local communists.”<sup>109</sup> But one local source describes the relationship between Safarov and powerful figures in government in a manner that makes clear Safarov was no mere ‘hatchet man,’ but rather someone who was deeply respected by the most powerful men

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<sup>105</sup> Roy even mentions that Safarov's father was arrested in 1935. However, Roy neither states the offense – criminal or political – nor the sentence. See: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 49. Akiner writes that in 1935 his father was either sent to a labour camp or he died. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 90.

<sup>106</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 63-4; Vladimir Yemelyanenko, ‘Sangak Safarov, Also Known As The Tajik Robin Hood’, *Moscow News*, 31 March 1993; Rakhmon Aziz and Timur Kadyr, ‘Sangak Safarov: The Tajik Chapayev’, *Megapolis-express* (24 February 1993) 8, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993); ‘Tadschikistan: Stalins Blut’, *Der Spiegel* (25 January 1993) 147; Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 110; Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 90. The list of convictions is a compromise between the different sources. In one interview, when asked about his convictions he attempted to play down his criminal past: “I never stole, I never killed, I never raped anyone. But youth is youth, and I could never stand by when my honor was challenged. Maybe it was because I was an orphan from age 7. Whatever it was, an initial sentence for a fight was repeatedly extended for leading strikes in prisons and labor camps. Even in the criminal world there are far-sighted, conscientious and decent people.” See: Serge Schmemmann, ‘War Bleeds Ex-Soviet Land at Central Asia's Heart’, *New York Times* (21 February 1993).

<sup>107</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons?’, 116. Akiner says his business was a liquor shop, and that he had been operating it since the late 1970s. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 90.

<sup>108</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 160, n. 68.

<sup>109</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 7. Bushkov and Mikulsky also give Safarov a position (*khuligan*) in the lower echelons of the criminal world. However, they may be considering his position in the Soviet Union as a whole. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 63-4, 166-7 n. 53.

in Kulob.<sup>110</sup> On Safarov's rank in the underworld, Nourzhanov writes that he "was not a 'thief-in-law'—the highest informal rank in the Soviet underworld," but that "his authority amongst criminal figures not only in Tajikistan and Central Asia, but also elsewhere in the Soviet Union was exceptionally high."<sup>111</sup> In Kulob, Safarov had cooperated closely with Akbar Mirzoev, the Chair of the Kulob Province Executive Committee and a "client" of Nabiev, to secure votes for Nabiev during the Presidential election of November 1991.<sup>112</sup>

So how did Safarov, just one of among many powerful or influential men, become so important as the central government deteriorated? Nourzhanov describes his influence and networks:

The phenomenon of Safarov underlined the complex nature of political exchange in modern Tajikistan, where traditional patterns of authority are complemented by netherworld activities and closely linked with official government organs by business, conjugal and patrimonial ties. Born in 1928, Safarov, because of his connections, age and life experience was the leader of a number of neighbourhood communities in the city of Kulob. He also claimed to be a *sayyed*, i.e. descendant of the Prophet Mohammad. Safarov headed a cluster of traditional male unions, or *gashtaks*, which provided him with human resources for political and military action. Across Kulob, Safarov was respectfully known as *bobo* Sangak, i.e. the 'grandfather'.<sup>113</sup>

Markowitz marks Safarov's rise to national prominence as occurring during the spring 1992 round of protests in Dushanbe, where he "emerged as a leader" for the anti-opposition, pro-incumbent demonstration at Ozodi square.<sup>114</sup> Whitlock writes of Safarov's role at the demonstration, focusing on Safarov's Kulobi-centric rhetoric: "Safarov took the helm at Azadi. He worked the crowds skilfully, scratching at their rawest fears and supplying a flattering solution. 'Fifty Kulabis' could restore order to

<sup>110</sup> Nourzhanov quotes Nozir Yodgori, author of *Saddi otash* (Dushanbe: Firdavs, 1993), 82, as writing that Qurbonali Mirzoaliev, the top government administrator in the Kulob region, was honoured that Safarov addressed him as 'brother.' See: Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 116. Whitlock writes about Safarov: "According to friends, he read widely in jail and educated himself. He was not a pious man, nor a 'communist' [...] but a tough, self-made survivor. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 160.

<sup>111</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 115-6, citing Vladimir Medvedev, 'Saga o bobo Sangake, voine', *Druzhba narodov*, No 6, 1993, 190.

<sup>112</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 178. Mirzoev, a Kulobi, became Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister) once Nabiev was elected. Served as PM from January to November 1992. See: 'Mirzoyev, Akbar', *Who's Who in the Commonwealth of Independent States* (1 November 1992). Noteworthy is that during the spring protests the opposition was not asking for his resignation. See: Postfactum 1545gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/2.

<sup>113</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 115. For a description of male unions in Central Asian society, Nourzhanov points to G.P. Snesev, 'O relikhtakh muzhskikh soiuзов v istorii narodov Srednei Azii', in *VII Mezhdunarodnyi kongress antropologicheskikh i etnograficheskikh nauk* (Moscow: Nauka, 1964), 1-6.

<sup>114</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 107, 110-1.

Dushanbe, he boasted.”<sup>115</sup> Nourzhanov also stresses Safarov’s Kulobi strategy, referring to him as a “fervent patriot of Kulob” and citing one source that notes that in April 1992 Safarov called a meeting of Kulob’s “formal and informal” leadership, during which he said “We and you shall become one. . . . All leaders born in the Kulob Valley must unite in these days of hardship and do whatever it takes to help the people of Kulob.”<sup>116</sup> However, Safarov’s organising skills at Ozodi square were not enough to overcome the opposition momentum and this counter-protest failed. Gretsky writes that after violence broke out in May 1992 Turajonzoda saved the lives of Safarov, along with those of the Kulobi mullah Haydar Sharifzoda and Rustam Abdurahimov, the head of *Oshkoro* in Kulob.<sup>117</sup> Authors more favourable to Safarov – and very hostile to Turajonzoda – write that he was captured by the opposition on 7 May along with other Kulobi leaders and was tortured for five days, and released only because of threats made by Nabiev’s people to his captors.<sup>118</sup> A Russian journalist’s eyewitness account – as part of an unfavourable portrayal of Safarov – backs the claim of torture.<sup>119</sup> This period of detention, torture and humiliation hardened Safarov’s disposition towards the opposition even further.<sup>120</sup> After his release he is quoted as saying “Fundamentalists don’t understand normal human language. Cruelty must be answered with cruelty.”<sup>121</sup>

Once returning home to Kulob, Safarov quickly became the leader of the forces that were to become the Popular Front. As noted in the section on the regionalisation of the conflict, Safarov assisted in purging the Kulob region of dissenters upon his return home. Kulobi law enforcement, criminal groups and local politicians cooperated in

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<sup>115</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 160. Whitlock writes that although Safarov was pro-government, he did, during one speech at Ozodi square, “[curse] the communists for ‘killing his [fore]fathers.’” Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116. Citing: Hikmatullo Nasriddinov, *Tarkish* (Dushanbe: Afsona, 1995), 288–289.

<sup>117</sup> Gretsky, ‘Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda’, 22.

<sup>118</sup> Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation*, 33.

<sup>119</sup> Vladimir Yemelyanenko, ‘Sangak Safarov, Also Known As The Tajik Robin Hood’, *Moscow News*, 31 March 1993. Yemelyanenko writes: “In the spring of 1992, incarcerated in a presidential dungeon, with part of his teeth knocked out and the mouth awash with blood, that man, nicknamed Sangak, did not look like a bandit and chieftan, commander of armed detachments, as the oppositionists branded him later. Scared stiff and more dead than alive, he reiterated: “I never killed anyone” in reply to all my questions.” See also: Rakhmon Aziz and Timur Kadyr, ‘Sangak Safarov: The Tajik Chapayev’, *Megapolis-express* (24 February 1993) 8, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993).

<sup>120</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 156; Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation*, 33.

<sup>121</sup> Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: Tragedy and Anguish of the Nation*, 33. Similarly, two other journalists reported that “Sangak admitted that the self-satisfied pensioner in him died and the fighter for “the just cause” awoke the moment he was thrown out a car at the Vaseiskaya [Vose] crossroads, an hour’s drive from his native Kulyab. Just before this, the Islamists from Shakhidon Square had kept Safarov and his younger brother Davlyat in the basement of the Presidential palace for several days, where they beat his brother without let up and threatened to shoot him.” See: Rakhmon Aziz and Timur Kadyr, ‘Sangak Safarov: The Tajik Chapayev’, *Megapolis-express* (24 February 1993) 8, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993).



forcing anybody associated with the opposition (or suspected of being so) out of Kulob regardless of region of origin. Safarov's campaign was successful, totally destroying the opposition presence there by the end of June.<sup>122</sup> The human resources of Safarov's rise to power in his home region and beyond are described by Nourzhanov:

The void left by the crumbling civil authority was quickly filled by the most powerful commanders. In Kulob, the consolidation of the HNGs, vigilante groups and various militias was achieved under the guidance of Sangak Safarov,....Safarov's closest comrades-in-arms were of equally diverse background: popular avenger Faizali Saidov, racketeer Yaqubjon Salimov (Rauf Soliev's top henchman in Dushanbe in the late 1980s), convicted criminals Qurbon Cholov, Ghaffor Mirzoev, Langari Langariev and Khuja Karimov, police Colonel Sherali Sabzov, and Mahmud Khudoberdyev.<sup>123</sup>

In June President Nabiev travelled to Kulob in an effort to persuade the local leaders to disarm. Markowitz argues that by this time the field commanders in Kulob were aided by the popular belief that the region's interests were being threatened by the new coalition government. Safarov's reply was that "the Kulyab volunteer guards will not hand in their weapons until law and order are restored in the republic."<sup>124</sup>

Many writers use 'Popular Front' or 'People's Front' to describe Safarov's forces from the very beginning. However, it wasn't until 6 October 1992 when Safarov's militia – under the name Headquarters of the National Guard – officially joined with Safarali Kenjaev's 'People's Front of Tajikistan-Hisor' to become the 'Popular Front,' or 'People's Front.'<sup>125</sup> However, Safarov's militia was active outside of Kulob well before this. In June his forces arrived in Qurghonteppa – where Safarov did some local recruiting – and fought against opposition forces in the region, with combat peaking in August and September.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>122</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111-2; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228; Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42. One informant remarked to Kilavuz: "I was in Kulyab during the war. Safarov was the strongest man there at the time. He could do whatever he wanted. I am a Kulyabi myself. He was killing the people opposed the government, regardless of their region. The people who were against their aims were tortured and killed by the Popular Front. I was tortured, I am a Kulyabi. They killed Jienkhan Rizaev who was the Kulyab obkom secretary, a Kulyabi. Because he was against them." Akiner describes the same process taking place in the IRP strongholds of Qarotegin (Gharm/Rasht) and Darvoz.

<sup>123</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 117.

<sup>124</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111. Quotation from 'Nabiyev Completes 'Unsuccessful' Trip to Kulyab,' ITAR-TASS as cited in FBIS-SOV-92-110, June 8, 1992.

<sup>125</sup> Safarali Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston*, Vol. 1 (Dushanbe: Fondi Kenjaev, 1993), 290, as cited in Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 117. Nourzhanov, still citing Kenjaev, writes: "Ten days later the Executive Committee of Hissor recognised the PFT as the only legitimate armed force in Tajikistan and obliged 'all Soviets of people's deputies, all factories and enterprises, organisations, and state and collective farms unconditionally support the People's Front of Tajikistan.'"

<sup>126</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 181.

As for Safarov's local competitors, Nourzhanov writes that when J. Rizoiev, the Chairman of the Kulob region, "refused to confer dictatorial power on the [Popular Front] in his region, he was shot by Safarov on 28 October 1992. The ascendance of warlords in the South and in the West of Tajikistan was complete."<sup>127</sup> Safarov's ability to effect change at the national level became apparent when his client Emomali Rahmon<sup>128</sup> became the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet (before becoming president). Rahmon, at the time still known as Rahmonov, was described by Muriel Atkin as a "protégé" of Sangak Safarov,<sup>129</sup> whose support likely played a key role in the rise of Rahmon.<sup>130</sup> Rahmon, who was born in Danghara in the Kulob region, was raised in Safarov's neighbourhood. Safarov, according to Nourzhanov, became Rahmon's patron.<sup>131</sup> During the early conflict, Rahmon, at the time a director of a *sovkhov*, organised Kulobi fighters for Safarov's militia<sup>132</sup> before becoming the Chairman of the

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<sup>127</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 117. According to Atkin, Safarov killed the incumbent governor in October 1992 for "being willing to reach an accommodation with the coalition government in Dushanbe." See: Atkin, 'A President and his rivals', 102, citing Rotar', 'Ob osvobozhdenii Dushanbe my podumaem pozzhe', *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 14 November 1992, p. 3. See also: Oleg Panfilov, 'Sangak and Faizali buried with honors', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (1 April 1993) 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 13 (28 April 1993); Mirzobekova and Gufronov, 'Trevozhnyy oktyabr 92-go', n.p. The impending clash between armed commanders and the civilian authorities in Kulob was hinted at by a Russian radio bulletin at the end of September that reported that the Kulob Province Executive Committee wanted an investigation into the "violence and mass gangsterism" in the province. See: Radio-1, Moscow 1900gmt (30 September 1992) in SWB SU/1504 (6 October 1992) C2/3. Note that Qurbonali Mirzoaliev resigned under unclear circumstances on September 28.

<sup>128</sup> Emomali Rahmon's family is originally from Norak. The government sent them as farmers to the lowlands to work on a sugar cane plantation. Due to hardship, the family moved to Danghara, Kulob, where Rahmon was born in 1952. Rahmon, after graduating in 1969 as an electrician from professional technical school #40 in Sarband, Qurghonteppa, went to work in an agricultural oil rendering factory in the city of Qurghonteppa. From 1971-1974 he did his military service in the Soviet Navy's Pacific Fleet. After finishing his term of service he returned to Danghara to work in the Lenin Kolkhoz. From 1976 to 1987 he served as the Secretary to the Chairman of the Trade Union Committee of his collective farm. In 1982, after five years of combining work with study, Rahmon graduated from the Tajik State University with a degree in economics. In 1987 or 1988 Rahmon was appointed the director of the same farm, now a *sovkhov* (an important position locally). In 1990 Rahmon entered the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan as a deputy. In early November 1992 he was selected as chair of the Kulob Provincial Soviet of People's Deputies. On 19 November 1992 Rahmon was elected chair of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan – the most powerful official position in the country – at the 16<sup>th</sup> session of the Supreme Soviet of the Republic of Tajikistan. In 1994 the office of president was reinstated and Rahmon was elected to that position. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 190; Prezidenti Tojikiston [Official Website of the President of Tajikistan] 'Emomali Rahmon: Prezidenti Jumhurii Tojikiston' Online: [http://www.president.tj/tarjumai\\_hol.htm](http://www.president.tj/tarjumai_hol.htm); Conciliation Resources, 'Profiles: President Emomali Rakhmonov', online: <http://www.c-r.org/our-work/accord/tajikistan/profiles.php>. Note: The sugarcane plantation was also home to Turajonzoda's grandparents.

<sup>129</sup> Atkin, 'Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war', 612.

<sup>130</sup> Conciliation Resources, 'Profiles: President Emomali Rakhmonov.'

<sup>131</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 129, n. 57.

<sup>132</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 112; Atkin, 'A President and his rivals', 102, cit. Pravda, (15 Mar 1994) 1; 'V reserve na vydvizhenie ne znachilsia', *Rossia* (6 Apr 1993) 4.

Executive Committee of the Kulob Province in early November 1992, after Safarov had killed the incumbent Rizoiev.<sup>133</sup>

At the Supreme Soviet session in Khujand it was clear that Safarov, while not seeking any official high position in government,<sup>134</sup> was a very powerful player, and not just in Kulob. Two reporters described the reactions when he spoke at the session:

The shocked Deputies heard Sangak's fiery speech in dead silence, but it became clear to them who was calling the tune. [...] As for the local authorities, there is no point in even talking about them. In the presence of the furious Sangak, they are quieter than water and lower than grass.<sup>135</sup>

Other sources referred to Safarov as the "power behind the throne"<sup>136</sup> and "the backbone of the government."<sup>137</sup> As a man with so much *de facto* power, his opinions were sought quite often by reporters. Safarov's views on what direction Tajikistan's government and society should go are available in his stated opinions and occasionally shouted quotes – most of which seem to have been uttered with little interest in a conciliatory public communication strategy. How he publicly portrayed his opponents is clear:

This is a new popular revolution. We have chased the Islamists from the region (of Kurgan-Tyube) and are starting a new life. We shall drive the fundamentalists out of Tajikistan and hoist the Red Flag over the Pamir mountains.<sup>138</sup>

This is not a resurgence of Communism, we just wanted to be free of Islamic fundamentalism. Those people wanted the place to be a colony of Iran. We are against excesses, but some people have committed too many crimes. As on the scene of battle, they should be shot.<sup>139</sup>

The fundamentalists - it's hard to find a dirtier word - have blackened the name of Islam.<sup>140</sup>

<sup>133</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 129, n. 57.

<sup>134</sup> Rakhmon Aziz and Timur Kadyr, 'Sangak Safarov: The Tajik Chapayev', *Megapolis-express* (24 February 1993) 8, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993). Abdulmalik Abdullojonov, the then-PM, said that Sangak "is not laying claim to a high post."

<sup>135</sup> Rakhmon Aziz and Timur Kadyr, 'Sangak Safarov: The Tajik Chapayev', *Megapolis-express* (24 February 1993) 8, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993). As for foreign observers, Safarov was equally as dominating. He "harshly cut off" Kyrgyzstan's Vice President Felix Kulov when he said that Safarov should pull out of Qurghonteppa. Safarov also vetoed Pavel Grachev's idea to form Tajikistan's army "on the basis of" the 201<sup>st</sup> in favour of doing the same on the basis of the Popular Front.

<sup>136</sup> Steve LeVine, 'Communist old guard turns the tables on Moslems in Tajikistan: A setback for Islamic militants', *Financial Times* (26 November 1992) 4.

<sup>137</sup> Nejla Sammakia, 'Tajik Government Extends Arms Deadline, Tales of Killings Mount', Associated Press (28 December 1992).

<sup>138</sup> Mina Rad, 'Pro-communists pledge to force out Islamic forces', Agence France-Presse (13 Nov. 1992). Similarly, Safarov said that "if they [armed "Muslim fundamentalists"] stay [in Tajikistan] our people will kill every one of them." See: Nejla Sammakia, 'Tajik Government Extends Arms Deadline, Tales of Killings Mount', Associated Press (28 December 1992).

<sup>139</sup> 'Tajiks keep faith with law of gun', *The Independent* – London (22 February 1993).

<sup>140</sup> Nejla Sammakia, 'Charred Villages, Abandoned Fields Mark Tajik Civil War', Associated Press (16 February 1993).

His feelings for the people he labelled 'Islamists' or 'fundamentalists' did not carry over to his views on the role of Islam in society, as he stated that he supports "moderate Islamic rule" as part of a "refined democratic path of development."<sup>141</sup> However, in terms of democracy, he had a limited system in mind. At one press conference Safarov yelled that "We do not want to have political parties in Tajikistan!," a statement that was quickly qualified by a government official: "He means the opposition must respect the constitution."<sup>142</sup> This hostility to political parties may have been just his views on the opposition alliance specifically or his views on a multi-party system in general. Safarov's hostility was illustrated clearly while speaking as a guest at the Supreme Soviet session in Khujand where he declared "we will cleanse Tajikistan of democratic rubbish."<sup>143</sup> Later, in February he had slightly changed his rhetoric, now attacking people he labelled "pseudo-democrats."<sup>144</sup> Despite not being an ideological communist, Safarov did like to use symbols of the old system. For example, at a news conference he gave an answer – or rather a tirade against those he termed "pseudo-Islamists" – with a bust of Lenin behind him.<sup>145</sup>

Safarov continued to be an enormously powerful figure in Tajikistan after the victory of the Popular Front.<sup>146</sup> Estimates on the number of fighters Safarov commanded varied from his own estimate of 8,000 to higher estimates of 20,000 to

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<sup>141</sup> Interfax 1815gmt (22 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/2-3.

<sup>142</sup> Nejla Sammakia, 'Charred Villages, Abandoned Fields Mark Tajik Civil War', Associated Press (16 February 1993). He also relied on a government official (the Prime Minister) to provide an answer for a question about how the economy should be structured. The answer was: "There is no way back to the planned or command-and-administer economy. We must boldly introduce market mechanisms." Safarov then determined the interview over after just this one question. See: Vladimir Yemelyanenko, 'Sangak Safarov, Also Known As The Tajik Robin Hood', *Moscow News*, 31 March 1993.

<sup>143</sup> Oleg Panfilov, 'Sangak Safarov: We will cleanse Tajikistan and Russia of democratic Rubbish!', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (5 December 1992) 1, 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 49 (6 January 1993). Panfilov reports that the statement was met with total silence.

<sup>144</sup> Serge Schmemann, 'War Bleeds Ex-Soviet Land at Central Asia's Heart', *New York Times* (21 February 1993).

<sup>145</sup> Safarov stated: "Where were you when the pseudo-Islamists shot women and children from a atop an armored personnel carrier? Where were you when they dumped bodies to be eaten by dogs? They burned everything, they stopped at nothing. Strong men would weep if they saw what I have had to see. Such crimes can never be forgotten." See: Serge Schmemann, 'War Bleeds Ex-Soviet Land at Central Asia's Heart', *New York Times* (21 February 1993). Another source mentions a bust of Lenin behind Safarov, perhaps at the same press conference. See: Nejla Sammakia, 'Charred Villages, Abandoned Fields Mark Tajik Civil War', Associated Press (16 February 1993).

<sup>146</sup> Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 118-9. Nourzhanov writes: "Regional strongmen from the North, the South and the Uzbek community achieved a power-sharing compromise from which defeated Gharmis and Pamiris were excluded. This compromise was approved by the national legislature, and ostensibly the new government possessed all traits of constitutional legitimacy. In reality, however, the role of the Cabinet, parliament, and other institutions of the state was tempered by the influence and capabilities wielded by the warlords, Safarov in particular. Not having any formal post in the government hierarchy, bobo Sangak toured the country, accompanied by the detachment of the PFT (renamed by then as the People's Army) dismissing officials whom he considered 'unreliable' and promoting his specific vision of the post-civil war Tajikistan."

35,000 for the Popular Front as a whole.<sup>147</sup> Nourzhanov provides a particular example of the power Safarov wielded, as well as the regional terms in which Safarov viewed the power arrangements. On 7 January 1993 he travelled to Qurghonteppa to the regional legislature where he made the following remarks:

The Kulobis are victors today. They have restored the state. . . . Do not hope that we will allow you to restore the status quo. Remember, the People's Army is here to stay. We shall purify our land from those who want to continue with their filthy deeds. . . . If someone wants to be with us, to live in peace with us, then he is welcome. But if he does not—we shall not forgive him, he will be severely punished. There will be no mercy and forgiveness.<sup>148</sup>

Earlier, at the end of the Supreme Soviet session in Khujand, a sheep was ritually slaughtered and Safarov announced: “May the blood of this animal be the last blood that is shed in our land.”<sup>149</sup> Unfortunately for Safarov, this was not to be the case. Safarov was killed in late April 1993 during a meeting with Fayzali Saidov, one of his Popular Front allies. After this, the Popular Front officially ceased to exist.<sup>150</sup>

### **Fayzali Saidov**

Concerning warlords, Nourzhanov cites the case of Fayzali Saidov as a typical case. In June 1992 Saidov led a small (10 person) self-defence unit in his collective farm near Qurghonteppa.<sup>151</sup> When opposition forces arrested his father he took 40 Gharmi Tajiks and held them in an attempt to negotiate for his father. He set the Gharmis free after being promised his father would be released. However, two days later he found the burnt and mutilated body of his father. Saidov immediately mobilised his male kin, former classmates and co-workers and went to Kulob where he secured weapons for his newly formed militia. Within his own community Saidov soon took on a hero status. Unsurprisingly, Saidov demonstrated a “pathological, unbound hatred of

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<sup>147</sup> On the number provided by Safarov himself, see: Carey Goldberg, ‘The Real Power in Tajikistan’, Los Angeles Times (30 January 1993) 11. For the 20,000 number for the entire Popular Front, see: Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 119. For the high estimate, see: Nejla Sammakia, ‘Tajik Government Extends Arms Deadline, Tales of Killings Mount’, Associated Press (28 December 1992).

<sup>148</sup> *Golos Tadjikistana*, 20 January 1993, as quoted in Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 118.

<sup>149</sup> U. Babakhanov, ‘Is the war over?’, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (27 November 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 49 (6 January 1993).

<sup>150</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 119.

<sup>151</sup> The collective farm is just south of the bridge over the Vakhsh river crossing at Qizilqala. A large sign by the road announces the farm (*khojagii dehqon*) as the birthplace of Saidov, while Qizilqala has a large memorial poster of Saidov with a garden at one of its main intersections. Personal observations, September 2009.

Gharmis and Pamiris.”<sup>152</sup> As for Saidov’s ethnicity, Roy writes that Saidov had an Uzbek mother;<sup>153</sup> Erica Marat plainly describes him as an ethnic Uzbek;<sup>154</sup> Gretskey labels him as a Lokay;<sup>155</sup> while Kenjaev gives his ethnicity as Tajik.<sup>156</sup> Rubin cautiously describes Saidov as having a Kulobi Tajik mother and a Loqay-Uzbek father from Qurghonteppa.<sup>157</sup> Whatever his exact ethnic make-up, Saidov became a close ally of Sangak Safarov.<sup>158</sup> However, these two allies soon entered into a violent disagreement that left both of them dead on the night of 29/30 March 1993.<sup>159</sup>

### **Mahmud Khudoyberdiev**

Mahmud Khudoyberdiev was an ethnic Loqay Uzbek commander whose exact ethnic mix is given numerous descriptions.<sup>160</sup> At the time when the civil war started Khudoyberdiev was a young (early thirties according to Akiner<sup>161</sup>) captain in the 201<sup>st</sup> MRD whose role was also as Deputy Military Commissioner of Qurghonteppa.<sup>162</sup> Nourzhanov writes that he “was the only warlord with solid military background.”<sup>163</sup>

<sup>152</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 114.

<sup>153</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 49.

<sup>154</sup> Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia’, 111.

<sup>155</sup> Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan’, 228.

<sup>156</sup> Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston – Kitobi duyum*, photo profiles inserted between pages 288-9.

<sup>157</sup> Barnett Richard Rubin, ‘Comments on Tajikistan events’, Central Asia Political Discussion List (4 Feb 1996). Accessed online 29 November 2010: <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/53/034.html> Rubin adds the qualifier “so they say” to his description of Saidov’s ethnic background.

<sup>158</sup> Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia’, 111. Panfilov reports that the two had fought together as allies in Yovon district and the Qarotegin Valley (possibly a reference to Kofarnihon). See: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Sangak and Faizali buried with honors’, *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (1 April 1993) 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 13 (28 April 1993).

<sup>159</sup> Nourzhanov cites *Slovo Kyrgyzstana* (2 April 1993) for a version of events whereby both men are killed by the other’s bodyguards. See: Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 118.

<sup>160</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh refers to Khudoyberdiev’s “ethnic Uzbek maternal family connection” while Whitlock and Payam Foroughi describe him as half Uzbek, Half Tajik. See: Shahram Akbarzadeh, ‘Abdullajanov and the ‘third force’’, in Kamoludin Abdullaev and Catharine Barnes (eds.), *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*, (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 30; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 171; Foroughi, ‘Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities - Sources and Solutions’, 50. Journalists Igor Rotar and Carlotta Gall both refer to Khudoyberdiev as half Uzbek with no mention of the other half. See: Igor Rotar, ‘Uprising Quashed in Tajikistan: Further Cataclysms Expected’, *Prism*, Vol. 4, Issue 23 (27 November 1998); Carlotta Gall, ‘Tajikistan Stumbles Down Dark Road to Chaos’, *The Moscow Times* (13 February 1996). However, Matteo Fumagalli writes: “Khudoberdiev was commonly referred to as an ethnic Uzbek, despite being a Lokay.” See: Fumagalli, ‘Framing ethnic minority mobilization in Central Asia’, 583. Nourzhanov and Akiner describe him as a Lokay Uzbek. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 89-90; Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 115.

<sup>161</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 89-90.

<sup>162</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 115, 119; Vladislav Shuzygin, ‘Nastoiashchii polkovnik’, *Zautza*, 12 August 1997 as cited in *ibid*, 115.

<sup>163</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 115. Nourzhanov writes that he ‘served with distinction’ in Afghanistan and the Caucasus. Whitlock writes that his service in Afghanistan was in Kunduz as part of the 40<sup>th</sup> Army. Whitlock also writes about the possible martial background of his family when she mentions one story that Khudoyberdiev’s father was

When the conflict reached Qurghonteppa in 1992, Khudoyberdiev took several tanks from the CIS/Russian army garrison that was stationed in Qurghonteppa and formed a powerful Popular Front aligned militia to protect the ethnic Uzbeks who had been attacked by the opposition forces.<sup>164</sup> Or, as another version has it, Khudoyberdiev moved against the opposition forces after his house was burned and his relatives killed in punishment for his refusal to join the opposition.<sup>165</sup> Regardless of motivations for joining the war, Khudoyberdiev gained a reputation as a protector of the local Uzbek community.<sup>166</sup> After a negotiated compromise, the government decreed the Uzbek population in the Qurghonteppa region and the city of Qurghonteppa to be under the command of the local Uzbek militia leaders.<sup>167</sup> Whitlock says Khudoyberdiev spoke Tajik with a “heavy Uzbek accent” and surrounded himself with Uzbeks and Turkmens. But his focus was not just on protecting Uzbeks. Whitlock writes that in Qurghonteppa Khudoyberdiev was “much admired” for keeping such services here (e.g., clean water) functioning during the war while they failed elsewhere.<sup>168</sup>

## IRP

The IRP, as the only political party to transition to a military force, deserves special attention. In autumn 1992 the IRP – along with the DPT, Rastokhez and La’li Badakhshon – formed *Najoti Vatan* (Salvation of the Homeland, AKA National Salvation Front), an attempt at forming a broader unified military-political

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an anti-Basmachi commander in the 1920s by the name of “The Black Commander.” She does concede that this would make “The Black Commander” very old when and if he fathered Khudoyberdiev. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 171, n.

<sup>164</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 115, 119, 121; Nourzhanov, ‘Seeking Peace in Tajikistan: Who is the Odd Man Out?’, 21-2. Whitlock writes that Khudoyberdiev, an officer with the 201<sup>st</sup> QT garrison, joined the conflict “simply by driving three or four tanks out of the Qughan Teppa garrison with the help of a few friends. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 171. Akiner mentions armoured vehicles in addition to tanks. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 89-90. Regarding local Uzbeks who had been attacked, Khudoyberdiev said this: “they come to me asking for weapons and shooting lessons. They have had enough of war. In this region alone—60,000 dead [sic]. They know that as long as we are here nobody will touch them.’ See: Vladislav Shuzygin, ‘Nastoiashchii polkovnik’, *Zautza*, 12 August 1997, as translated in Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons?’, 115.

<sup>165</sup> ASIA-Plus, nd. ‘Mahmud Khudoberdiev: I am the agent of my people’, Asia-Plus, Bulletin No. 21. Online: [http://web.archive.org/web/20021117101436/http://www.internews.ru/ASIA-PLUS/bulletin\\_21/who.html](http://web.archive.org/web/20021117101436/http://www.internews.ru/ASIA-PLUS/bulletin_21/who.html)

<sup>166</sup> Grant Smith, ‘Tajikistan: the rocky road to peace’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 2 (1999) 249-50.

<sup>167</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons?’, 118, 121,

<sup>168</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 171, n. Whitlock, in her relatively favourable assessment of Khudoyberdiev, describes him as “a sociable person and a sharp political analyst.” Torjesen *et al* write that “many of the men under him were ethnic Uzbeks with Tajik citizenship.” See: Torjesen, Wille and MacFarlane, ‘Tajikistan’s Road to Stability’, 64.

organisation.<sup>169</sup> The leadership of *Najoti Vatan* attempted to form arrangements with government institutions,<sup>170</sup> but the organisation was eventually, if not immediately, a failure.<sup>171</sup> In mid-October the leadership optimistically declared that the organisation had successfully achieved its aims and could now be dissolved.<sup>172</sup> In the Vakhsh Valley it was clear during the summer that one particular group in the opposition alliance was contributing more than the others. Dispensing with names of political parties and militias – and using explicit regional terms – Roy writes that Gharimi forces “expelled the Kulobis” from the Vakhsh Valley in June and July 1992, setting up their blockade of Kulob in July.<sup>173</sup> However, the Gharimi forces did have non-Gharimi assistance. In July, the government sent the Pamiri-dominated Independent Battalion of the Interior Ministry to Qurghonteppa to separate the two fighting sides. They disregarded their orders and attacked the Kulobi forces.<sup>174</sup>

As mentioned previously, most of the IRP-affiliated field commanders in the south were mullahs who had previously been linked to the IRP. These mullahs already had loyal followers whom they could recruit into militias.<sup>175</sup> After surveying former IRP leaders and fighters the HD Centre concluded that:

Local representatives of the Islamic Renaissance Party as well as some Islamic religious leaders played an important role in the formation of the armed units of the opposition.

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<sup>169</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 253. Olimova and Olimov accidentally give the wrong year (1991) for the formation of *Najot-i Vatan* in this source: Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party’, 26. In the first week of May, opposition groups initiated the formation of a similarly named organisation, the ‘State Committee of National Salvation.’ However, there was no further mention after the formation of the GNR. There does not seem to be a line of continuance from this group to the later initiative. See: John-Thor Dahlburg, ‘Dissidents Rout Tajikistan’s Hard-Line Leader Central Asia’, *Los Angeles Times* (7 May 1992) 23.

<sup>170</sup> *Najot-i Vatan*, the Dushanbe City Executive Committee, the city branch of the National Security Committee, and the Interior Ministry signed a security agreement on September 23 regarding Dushanbe. The agreement stipulated that “observation points” were to be set up at “important points” in Dushanbe and that all signatories were to participate. See: Tajik Radio (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1495 (25 September 1992) i.

<sup>171</sup> Davlat Khudonazarov blamed the failure on Kulobi officials who, unsurprisingly, declined to cooperate with *Najot-i Vatan*. See: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 42 (23 October 1992) 69.

<sup>172</sup> On 13 October Shodmon Yusuf announced that the “National Salvation Front was dissolving itself because it had fulfilled its task.” See: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 42 (23 October 1992) 69. Similarly, Radio-1 reported that the leader of Tajikistan National Salvation Front said the group was disbanding because they had succeeded in “destroying the communist regime and restoring democratic rule.” See: Radio-1 Moscow 1900gmt (12 October 1992) in SWB SU/1511 (14 October 1992) B/3.

<sup>173</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140.

<sup>174</sup> *Tadzhikistan v ogne* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993), 191, as cited in Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 114-5.

<sup>175</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 182; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 160, n. 68. Examples include: Abdullo Abdurrahim, Saidashraf Abdulahadov, Qori Qiyomiddin Muhammadjon, Mullah Amriddin and Mullah Abdughaffor. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42, n. 14; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 182, citing Safarali Kenjaev, *Tojikistonda To’ntarish*, Vol.1 (Uzbekistan, 1994). Unsurprisingly, Akiner writes “The political-ideological leaders of the government and the UTO did not usually participate directly in the fights. Initially, the active combatants were members of semi-formal local militias. These merged later into larger units and eventually formed the basis for the government and UTO armies.” See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 43.



Some mullahs, close to the IRP, preached about each Muslim's duty to fight for the jihad. Later, when many people were forced to flee to Afghanistan or Russia, many refugees became fighters, not necessarily voluntarily. Many young people seemed to have no other choice. Had they refused they would have been shunned by their community.<sup>176</sup>

However, not just mullahs or the occasional apparatchik served as commanders or organisers. For example, in Shahrtuz the IRP commander was 'Ali,' a man identified by locals as a "businessman or criminal," depending on who is asked.<sup>177</sup> Aside from a person's pre-existing standing in the community – religious or otherwise – the distribution of weapons by an individual commander solidified that person's importance at the beginning of the conflict.<sup>178</sup> However, access to weapons was just one of many problematic issues for newly formed militias. The HD Centre concludes that "The Islamic opposition's initial weakness and defeat of 1992 can be partially explained by its lack of a unified command structure, no central training facility and no experienced military personnel."<sup>179</sup>

## **Part 2: Patterns of Violent Conflict**

### **Inter- and Intra-Ethnic Conflict**

There is no description of the patterns of violent conflict that is applicable across all groups and individuals in Tajikistan. The civil war of 1992 was mainly between the Kulobis, southern Uzbeks (including Uzbek-speakers such as the Arabs, Qarluqs and Lokays) and Hisoris, organised later in the year as the Popular Front, and Gharmis/Qaroteginis and Ismaili Pamiris on the other side. Those from the northern province of Leninobod, both Uzbek and Tajik, avoided participating in the military conflict.<sup>180</sup> However, the groups mentioned above were not monolithic in their actions, nor were the sides to the conflict hardened into their positions based on identity right from the beginning of the conflict. As the conflict progressed the parties to the conflict

<sup>176</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, 'Humanitarian engagement with armed groups', 14.

<sup>177</sup> Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 160, n. 68. Rubin notes that these two categories "overlapped considerably in Soviet Central Asia."

<sup>178</sup> Torjesen, Wille and MacFarlane, 'Tajikistan's Road to Stability', 70.

<sup>179</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, 'Humanitarian engagement with armed groups', 14. Sulton Hammad, a security adviser for the IRP, stated that the opposition (i.e., the IRP fighters) improved their fighting abilities once they became refugees in Afghanistan.

<sup>180</sup> Roy 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?', 133-6; Roy, 'Islamic Militancy: Religion and Conflict in Central Asia', 101; Nourzhanov, 'Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan', 112, 117; Schoeberlein-Engel, 'Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia', 39; Rubin, 'Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery', 143-4.

went through a process of regionalisation (e.g., Kulobis versus Gharmis) and ethnicisation. The following sections will analyse the main lines of conflict, as well as some of the lesser prevalent patterns of conflict.

### **Intra-Tajik violence: Kulobis vs. Gharmis**

“We saw war only on our television screens before. We never thought Tajiks would be fighting Tajiks one day.”

- 70-year-old Tajik woman in Kuybushev.<sup>181</sup>

During the course of the civil war approximately 500,000 - 700,000 people became refugees within Tajikistan, or ‘internally displaced persons’ (IDPs), and 63,000 refugees fled to Afghanistan.<sup>182</sup> The discussion of refugees and IDPs of the civil war is overwhelmingly focused on Gharmi Tajiks and Pamiris. Human Rights Watch (HRW) does note that the Popular Front’s offensive in the south – beginning in August 1992 before there was a unified counter-opposition group – destroyed property, killed civilians and forced refugees to flee. However, HRW starts their analysis at an earlier point, and it is during this time that mostly Kulobi Tajiks and Uzbeks are the ones fleeing. The HRW report emphasizes that “During the course of the fighting, both sides committed atrocities, including murder, disappearances, hostage-taking, and burning and looting of homes.”<sup>183</sup> In June and July thousands of Kulobi Tajiks and Uzbeks fled Qurghonteppa to Kulob and Uzbekistan, and their houses were looted and destroyed. HRW cites a government number of 133,000 displaced Kulobis and Uzbeks during summer 1992.<sup>184</sup> One source puts the anti-Kulobi and anti-Uzbek actions month earlier

<sup>181</sup> Elif Kaban, ‘Tajiks flee as civil war spreads’, Reuters (4 October 1992). Similarly, a Russian woman in Qurghonteppa said: “The Tajik people are the salt of the earth. What happened to these people, (who) managed to set brother against brother? How have people been poisoned against each other? We cannot understand it.” See: Mark Trevelyan, ‘Tajik fighters dig in for battle with ex-communists’, Reuters News (6 September 1992). Trevelyan reports that she was with a group of women whose homes had been destroyed.

<sup>182</sup> McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan: Addressing the Crisis of Internal Displacement’, 326; Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan: Continued Regional and Ethnic Tensions’, Vol. 7, No. 9, May 1995, n.p.; UNHCR, ‘From one war to another’, *Refugees Magazine*, Issue 107, 1997, n.p. Online: <http://www.unhcr.org/3b66c5d09.html>

<sup>183</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan’, n.p. Bushkov and Mikulsky provide a long list of the different types of torture and sadistic, slow deaths inflicted during the war – acts which both sides deny they committed. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoj vojny v Tadjikistane*, 155-6. Similarly, see: Rakhmon Aziz and Timur Kadyr, ‘Sangak Safarov: The Tajik Chapayev’, *Megapolis-express* (24 February 1993) 8, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLV, No. 2 (10 February 1993).

<sup>184</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan’, n.p. Numbers cited from The Department of Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Labor of Tajikistan. HRW writes that these Kulobis and Uzbeks fled to Kulob

in May and June when Gharmis and Pamiris in Qurghonteppa Province worked to “appropriate lands” from the Kulobis and Uzbeks.<sup>185</sup> These numbers are similar in other sources as well. Nourzhanov cites 90,000 IDPs fleeing opposition-controlled areas for Kulob and 30,000 Uzbeks from Qurghonteppa also fleeing, mostly for Hisor. Many of these IDPs joined militias or formed new ones.<sup>186</sup> The high range of estimates comes from the Kulobi historian Gholib Ghoibov. His uncited claim is that by the end of June 100,000 to 140,000 IDPs had fled to Kulob from just the Vakhsh District alone.<sup>187</sup> Even the opposition press acknowledged this refugee flow in July, but along with an attempt to frame the displacement of people (the source names a long list of various ethnicities) as due not to violence, but euphemistically to the “general insecurity of daily life.”<sup>188</sup>

Popular Front troops killed people based on regional origin or perceived religious convictions or membership in political parties.<sup>189</sup> Refugees in Afghanistan stated that soldiers of the Popular Front were killing men, women and children “on the merest suspicion of IRP affiliation.”<sup>190</sup> Numerous writers note that during the civil war armed forces killed many people based on their region of origin, and that the most significant conflict was between Tajik regional groups, namely Gharmis and Kulobis.<sup>191</sup> Rubin is one of many analysts who dismiss the ideological aspect and notes that “the victorious militias chose men to kill not by indications of their ideology, but by

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and Uzbekistan, respectively. HRW is faulty in mentioning only Uzbekistan as a destination. For example, Whitlock writes, in reference to mixed families: “Intermarried families had to decide which way to go – that is, who it was safest to be. Uzbeks made for Uzbek-populated areas – west to Hisar, north to Khujand, and across the border to Uzbekistan.” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168. Bushkov and Mikulsky give a similar number, 132,000. The timeframe they provide is for June and July. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 66. Opposition-controlled Tajik Radio reported that there were 150,000 IDPs in Kulob. See: Tajik Radio 1400gmt (25 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>185</sup> Julien Thoni, *The Tajik Conflict: The Dialectic Between Internal Fragmentation and External Vulnerability 1991-1994* (Geneva: Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies, 1994), 29, citing the CSCE Report on Tajikistan August 1993, 8. Similarly, Roy writes that Gharmi forces “expelled the Kulobis” from the Vakhsh Valley in June and July 1992. See: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140.

<sup>186</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116. Numbers for Kulobis from *Izvestiia* (5 September 1992), for Uzbeks from *Russkaia mysl* (25 September 1992). Some acknowledge this only with qualification: “On a much more limited scale, the opposition forces also attacked innocent civilians, usually Kulobi.” See: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39. For a brief mention of Uzbeks and Tatars fleeing Qurghonteppa along with Russians in Spring 1992, see: Aleksandr Pilipchuk, ‘B Tupike stoit echelon s bezhentsami v Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 249 (31 October 1992).

<sup>187</sup> Gholib Ghoibov, *Ta’rikhi Khatlon as Oghoz to Imruz* (Dushanbe: Donish, 2006) 704-5.

<sup>188</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 66, citing *Najot*, No. 6 (July 1992) 1.

<sup>189</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 243.

<sup>190</sup> Atkin, ‘Tajikistan’s Relations with Iran and Afghanistan’, 109.

<sup>191</sup> For example: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 38-42; Payam Foroughi, ‘Nations in Transit 2004: Tajikistan’, *Freedom House Nations in Transit* (2004) 380; Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 128-9. Rubin goes on to downplay the Uzbek versus Tajik element of the conflict as less significant.

indications of the region where they were born.”<sup>192</sup> Akiner adds economic motivations as a factor in the violence, arguing that some locals, specifically Kulobi Tajiks, resented the relative wealth of the Qarotegini and Darvozi Tajiks (i.e., Gharmi Tajiks) who had been resettled in the Vakhsh Valley during the Soviet period. The economic resentment against the Gharmi Tajiks, combined with the “humiliation at the hands of the Islamists” during summer 1992 resulted in “an opportunity to take revenge.”<sup>193</sup>

While the Popular Front forces’ targeted killings of Pamiris and Gharmis in Dushanbe after the Kulobi-dominated militia captured the city is significant,<sup>194</sup> the worst of the conflict was in Qurghonteppa Province: in the Vakhsh Valley and nearby where the Kofarnihon River valley widens before reaching the Amu Darya. Most writers emphasize the attacks by Kulobi Popular Front forces against Pamiris and – especially – Gharmi Tajiks.<sup>195</sup> These descriptions are typical:

This was a savage war: massacres, rape, torture, looting and summary executions. The lower Vakhsh was the scene of Serb-style ethnic cleansing. The houses of Gharmis and Pamiris were systematically destroyed and the civilian populations fled towards the border with Afghanistan.<sup>196</sup>

The pro-Communist forces which emerged from Kulob Province displayed shocking brutality, destroying dozens of villages, mainly in Qurghonteppa Province, for their alleged support of the coalition government. They also summarily executed many thousands of civilians suspected of anti-Communist loyalties on the grounds that they spoke a Tajik dialect or held documents from regions of Tajikistan other than Leninobod and Kulob.<sup>197</sup>

The same *muhajir* communities [i.e., Gharmis] from lower Wakhsh [Vakhsh] and Qurghan-Teppa were also to be, in 1992, the main victim of the slaughters operated in the civil population by the “red” militias of the Kulabi warlord and leader of the pro-Communist Popular Front, Sangak Safar.<sup>198</sup>

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<sup>192</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 143.

<sup>193</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42. Both Roy and Harris discuss the wealth of Gharmi Tajiks in the Vakhsh Valley. However, Harris does not make any comparisons to neighbouring communities. See: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?’, 139; Harris, ‘Coping with daily life in post-Soviet Tajikistan’, 657-8.

<sup>194</sup> For example: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, p. 136; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 180.

<sup>195</sup> For example, Schoeberlein blames the Kulobi militias in particular for targeting Gharmis and Pamiri civilians – as these two groups dominated the membership of opposition groups – while downplaying opposition attacks on Kulobis. See: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39. Schoeberlein also notes the targeting of Kulobi civilians by opposition forces, but states that it was “on a much more limited scale.” An example of how some civilians were targeted is provided by a young man near Qurghonteppa whose brother had been shot by Kulobi fighters: They came up to him and wanted to know where he was from, [...] he said ‘Zanch’ so they shot him.” Note: Zanch is in the Qarotegin/Rasht valley, making the victim a Gharmi. See: Michael Hetzer, ‘Tajikistan: defenders of Kurgan Tyube battle the old regime’, Inter Press Service (9 October 1992).

<sup>196</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140.

<sup>197</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39.

<sup>198</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 7. Brackets mine.

In December 1992 and January 1993, after the government instigated an intense crackdown against opposition sympathizers and Kulobi warlords mounted further attacks against Gharmis and Pamiris in Khatlon, another large wave of displacement took place, including the flight of at least 60,000 Tajiks to Afghanistan. Long after these incidents, the crumbling mud walls of roofless houses in many Gharmi and Pamiri villages formed a stark contrast to the untouched Kulobi neighbourhoods nearby and bore testimony to the selectivity of destruction and the exile of specific populations.<sup>199</sup>

The violence that occurred is in line with the analysis of increased regionalisation as the conflict progressed. One example is given by Barnett Rubin, when reporting the statement of an Uzbek from Jilikul in the southern Vakhsh Valley who was asked why so many houses were destroyed: “When the Kulabis came, they destroyed all the houses of the Garmi Tajiks.”<sup>200</sup> Rubin stresses that the Uzbek said nothing of democracy, Islamic fundamentalism, or communism. Human Rights Watch (HRW) writes that some of those fleeing were deeply involved with the opposition, and not just as supporters or organisers, but as fighters. HRW goes on to note that the pro-government forces associated many people with the opposition merely by their ethnicity, meaning Pamiri and Gharmi.<sup>201</sup> However, some refugees fled not from the pro-government forces, but from forced conscription by opposition forces.<sup>202</sup>

While Safarov and his Kulobi militia get most of the blame, the Popular Front forces of Kenjaev from Hisor also get a mention for their offensive along the Kofarnihon River in far south-western Tajikistan. Kenjaev’s forces attacked Gharmi villages in the districts of Shahrtuz and Qabodiyon, forcing Gharmi civilians to flee or be killed, leaving the district to be demographically dominated by ethnic Uzbeks.<sup>203</sup> Whitlock interviewed one former IRP fighter who described the looting, raping and killing that occurred in Shahrtuz. He notes that locals were also involved in perpetrating

<sup>199</sup> McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan’, 326.

<sup>200</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 143. It’s not clear if the Uzbek is from the town of Jilikul or the surrounding district.

<sup>201</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan: Continued Regional and Ethnic Tensions.’ One example illustrates this well. An older refugee in Afghanistan was asked if he was a member of the opposition. He replied: “I was out in the fields. When I returned home I saw a wall of fire. It was my village burning. I ran towards it and met my neighbours running the other way. They said “Run! Run! Your family is dead already.” I turned and ran with them. I am a Muslim and I crossed the river. If that is what “opposition” means, then I am in the opposition.” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 195.

<sup>202</sup> UNHCR, ‘From one war to another’, n.p. For example, one 25 year-old man remarked: “We left only 10 days after our marriage. When the war started we tried not to get involved. But people just burst into our houses, thrust sub-machine guns into our hands and told us to fight. We didn’t want to, so we fled. We stayed near the Amu Darya river for four months, then crossed to Afghanistan.”

<sup>203</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110, 114. Zartman writes that the Popular Front forces ‘cleansed’ the two districts, a process that the opposition considered Uzbekistan-sponsored “‘pan-Turkic’ aggression.” The use of ‘pan-Turkic’ sounds as if it comes from the nationalist Rastokhez membership of the opposition.

killings and not many attempted to assist neighbours. He also said that that “People claimed they were Uzbeks, Arabs – anything to stay alive.”<sup>204</sup>

Those who fled the pro-government offensive had little choice in where to go. As the offensive divided the south, the refugees fled along whatever route was considered safest, meaning north to Dushanbe and the mountains (Gharm or GBAO) or south to Afghanistan.<sup>205</sup> For many of those Tajiks and Pamiris fleeing to the north and east, this meant a return to their region of origin.<sup>206</sup> The displacement of Gharmis and Pamiris sometime included entire villages fleeing. This would seem the case for some districts in the Vakhsh Valley. For example, the UNHCR’s numbers (likely including refugees/IDPs on all sides) show 90-95% of Bokhtar District fled, mostly to Gharm. A similar percentage also fled the Vakhsh District. Even the city of Qurghonteppa had a high number of displaced people (60%). The lower Kofarnihon was also affected; over 40% of Shahrtuz District fled.<sup>207</sup> As the Popular Front took control over the south, IDPs had no choice but to cross the river into Afghanistan as refugees. In early December tens of thousands crossed the river at Auvaj. At the end of December the Popular Front took the last opposition position in south near Panj and another 40,000 IDPs crossed the Amu.<sup>208</sup>

The return of IDPs and refugees was both quick in time and high in percentage of returnees. By March 1993 70% had returned to their homes in the south. By 1995 well over 90% had returned.<sup>209</sup> The quality of life for many returnees should be noted as it was, for many, wretched.<sup>210</sup> However, the numbers also need to be qualified. McLean and Greene note that in the Vakhsh district, for example, the percentages count only

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<sup>204</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 176.

<sup>205</sup> McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan’, 326.

<sup>206</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan: Continued Regional and Ethnic Tensions’, n.p.; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168; McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan’, 314, 326. Bushkov uses neutral language for the IDPs, indicating that some of them may have genuinely wanted to return to their regions of origin: “Beginning in 1992, when the civil war commenced, the former migrants to the south began to return to the places where they previously lived—the mountainous regions of the Kolab area and Qarategin, the kishlaqs of the Leninabad area, and the territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan.” See: Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan’, 155.

<sup>207</sup> McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan’, 326-7. Nourzhanov finds a source that gives an even higher percentage for Qurghonteppa, and notes that the city of Qurghonteppa – at this time in a state of constant Kulobi versus Gharmi fighting – had its population reduced from 70,000 to 5,000. See: Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, p. 116, 128, n. 50, citing *Tadzhikistan v ogne*, Ref 34, 193, 214.

<sup>208</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 178-80.

<sup>209</sup> McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan’, 327; Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan: Continued Regional and Ethnic Tensions’, n.p. Citing both government and UNHCR numbers, HRW gives a return figure of 93% by March 1995. McLean and Greene, using only UNHCR numbers cite 98% by the end of 1995.

<sup>210</sup> For example, Roy’s analysis (*The New Central Asia*, 95) of Gharmi returnees to a mixed kolkhoz becoming low-caste labourers. Also see HRW on returnees and the abuses and killings that some suffered: Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan: Continued Regional and Ethnic Tensions’, n.p.

those moving out and then those moving in, including newcomers from Kulob.<sup>211</sup> Bushkov also writes of newcomers replacing Tajiks who fled, in the case of Uzbeks from the Surkhan-Daryo region of Uzbekistan moving to southern Tajikistan to places from where Tajiks had fled.<sup>212</sup>

### Tajiks versus Pamiris

As noted above, the Popular Front attacked not just Gharmi Tajiks, but also Pamiris, a fact mentioned in numerous sources.<sup>213</sup> As will be discussed in the section on the regionalisation of the conflict, the Popular Front forces came to identify both Gharmis and Pamiris wholesale with the opposition and often killed them based on this.<sup>214</sup> From the beginning of 1992 the pro-incumbent side identified Pamiris as being affiliated wholesale with Gharmis and the IRP, and therefore being enemies of Kulobis and Khujandis.<sup>215</sup> Popular Front attacks on Pamiris occurred mainly during the counter-offensive in the second half of 1992 in the south of Tajikistan and in Dushanbe that winter as part of the reprisals when the Popular Front took the city.<sup>216</sup> The status of the Pamiris as being firmly associated with the opposition – via the exclusively Pamiri La'li Badakhshon Party and the Pamiri Interior Ministry troops that fought against the

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<sup>211</sup> McLean and Greene, 'Turmoil in Tajikistan', 327-8. Roy gives a specific example of Kulobis from an over-populated kolkhoz in Kulob moving to a kolkhoz in Qurghonteppa from where Gharmis had fled. See: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 95.

<sup>212</sup> Bushkov, 'Population Migration in Tajikistan', 155.

<sup>213</sup> For examples of attacks on Pamiris, see: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 180; Matveeva, 'The Perils of Emerging Statehood', 21; Gillian Tett, 'The Night that Friends Turned into Murderers', *Financial Times*, 19 February 1994, 13; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 186, 194-5; McLean and Greene, 'Turmoil in Tajikistan', 326; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110; Human Rights Watch, 'Return to Tajikistan', n.p.

<sup>214</sup> For example: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 186.

<sup>215</sup> Bliss, *Social and Economic Change in the Pamirs*, 276.

<sup>216</sup> Gillian Tett, 'The Night that Friends Turned into Murderers', *Financial Times*, 19 February 1994, 13. It is an anecdote from a region north of Dushanbe that provides one good view of how Pamiris were attacked outside of Dushanbe. The anthropologist Gillian Tett interviewed a woman from the Tajik community where she had done dissertation fieldwork before the civil war: "One day, after months of fighting, isolation and fear, government forces entered the valley. They asked Jamila's husband and the other village men to find the Pamiris. Terrified, the Tajiks descended on the houses of their Pamiri neighbours. And then, as darkness fell, they took them up into the hills and killed them. Exactly how they died, Jamila did not say. But the detail that kept recurring to me was that, when the Tajiks walked into their houses, the Pamiris had cheerfully asked them to stay for supper. [...] she said only: "What happened was very, very bad. They did not deserve it. "' Tett provides a fictional name for the community in her dissertation and in her articles. But she does say that it is approximately 2 hours north of Dushanbe, in an area that was historically under the semi-control of Hisor, down a valley from Yaghnobi speakers and near a dam. That leaves little doubt about its general location, but it adds to the complicated nature of the conflict in that the Tajiks here are neither Kulobis nor Gharmis. They were, however, pro-government and many men went to the protests at Ozodi square from this community. See: Gillian Tett, *Ambiguous Alliances: Marriage and Identity in a Muslim Village in Soviet Tajikistan*, Ph.D. Thesis; University of Cambridge, 1996.

counter-opposition – is clear, but other ethnic and regional groups beyond Pamiris, Gharmis and Kulobis were also involved.

## Uzbeks

“They want to clear all Uzbeks out of the area. They just came in the morning and told us: "All you Uzbeks must go, just leave here straight away.””

- Ethnic Uzbek refugee in Khujand.<sup>217</sup>

In the course of 1992 Gharmi Tajiks and Uzbeks fought each other in Qurghonteppa Province. During the civil war most Uzbeks throughout Tajikistan sided with the counter-opposition forces (‘Popular Front’ after early October).<sup>218</sup> There were some exceptions to the trend of Uzbeks joining the counter-opposition, and not just by remaining neutral. Whitlock writes, possibly in regards to an early phase of the conflict, that in “some places Uzbeks, for instance, stood alongside Arabs for fear of Gharmis, while in others they were shoulder to shoulder with Gharmis to save their village from Kulobis, depending on the make-up of the kolkhoz.”<sup>219</sup> However, the broad consensus is that the dominant trend was Uzbeks joining forces with the militias that would become the Popular Front – the Kulobi Tajik fighters of Qurghonteppa and Kulob Provinces, and the Hisori militia of Safarali Kenjaev.<sup>220</sup> By late 1992 the joint offensive by Safarov and Kenjaev routed the opposition forces and attacked Gharmi civilians. At this time reports of ethnic Uzbeks in Qurghonteppa conducting “pogroms” against Gharmi/Qarotegini Tajiks emerged.<sup>221</sup> As for the counter-opposition as a whole, their attacks against Gharmis in the latter half of 1992 were devastating, particularly when

<sup>217</sup> Ralph Boulton, ‘Floods of refugees in Tajikistan, fighting continues’, Reuters News (11 September 1992). The refugee is referring to the armed Tajiks that expelled them from their homes in the south.

<sup>218</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?’, 135-6. Elsewhere, Roy wrote: “...as a general rule the Uzbeks in Tajikistan have joined the conservative camp wherever they live: the Hissaris (west of Dushanbe) played a decisive part in the recapture of the capital and the Uzbeks from Kurgan-Tyube province all fought the Islamists. Along the same lines, the Uzbek population in Leninabad Province was indistinguishable from that of the Tajiks of the province, who were massively pro-conservative.” See: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 135.

<sup>219</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 167. Whitlock gives no time frame for this, but it is given in between along with other incidents that happened right near the beginning of the conflict. So it is possible that this is at an early point in the conflict.

<sup>220</sup> For a few of many examples, see: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?’, 135-6; Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan’, 227-8; Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 609; Gavhar Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 268; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 147, n. 115; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 46. Note: Whitlock is the only source I can find that mentions any Uzbek support for, or alliance with, either Gharmi Tajiks or the opposition.

<sup>221</sup> Bushkov and Mikulskiy, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 158.



analysing the destruction of property. The status of Uzbek property amongst the destruction is telling. For example, in late 1992 unnamed forces<sup>222</sup> attacked the village of ‘Socialism’, one of four in the ‘Communism’ collective farm in the Qabodiyon district, and destroyed all but 2 of 750 Gharmi houses. The two left undestroyed belonged to mixed Uzbek-Gharmi families.<sup>223</sup> Some houses, such as in the ‘Turkmeniston’ (now ‘Haqiqat’) farm, survived with “This is an Uzbek house, do not touch” written on them.<sup>224</sup> In another example, a Gharmi settlement was looted and then destroyed by counter-opposition forces while two miles away a mixed settlement of Uzbeks and non-Gharmi Tajiks was untouched.<sup>225</sup>

While the overwhelming support of Uzbeks for the Popular Front – or alternately their opposition to Gharmi Tajiks – is obvious, the reasons for this are less clear. Various hypotheses have been put forward to explain this phenomenon.

### **A Response to Tajik Nationalist Rhetoric?**

Atkin argues that “Propaganda from Uzbekistan and from the anti-reformists sent the message that the Opposition posed a threat to the Uzbek minority.”<sup>226</sup> However, other analysts have attempted to outline the ethnic Uzbek involvement as a response to threatening nationalist rhetoric employed by the opposition, not by outside propaganda. Zartman credits elements of Tajik nationalism in the opposition as a factor contributing to “the success of mobilizing Uzbeks on the side of the Popular Front.”<sup>227</sup> Similarly, Irina Zviagelskaya explains the ethnic Uzbek anti-opposition stance as a response to the rhetoric of some opposition members who had attempted to “steer inter-Tajik discord into the channel of Tajik-Uzbek contradictions, thus enhancing the conflict’s inter-ethnic dimension. This development was reminiscent of the notorious “search for the enemy”.”<sup>228</sup>

There are numerous examples of nationalist rhetoric against Uzbek and Turkic peoples. As an example, Zviagelskaya notes that in one televised incident the Rastokhez

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<sup>222</sup> The possibilities include locals or outside Popular Front forces.

<sup>223</sup> Colville, ‘Rebuilding Socialism’, n.p.

<sup>224</sup> Rachel Denber and Barnett Rubin, *Human Rights in Tajikistan: In the Wake of Civil War* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 1993) 32; Rubin, ‘The Fragmentation of Tajikistan’, 81; Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 177.

<sup>225</sup> Raymond Bonner, ‘Tajik Civil War Fades, but the Brutality Goes On’, *New York Times* (26 November 1993). The destroyed village is named as “Lenin Yuri,” [probably Lenin Yuli] while the name of the untouched settlement is given as “Shuyanshee.”

<sup>226</sup> Atkin ‘FAST Case Study: Tajikistan’, 6-7.

<sup>227</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 259, n. 93.

<sup>228</sup> Zviagelskaya, *The Tajik Conflict*, n.p.

representative Mirbobo Mirrahimov, who was appointed the television director under the Government of National Reconciliation, showed a group of men accused of crimes against the coalition government and emphasized their Uzbek identity.<sup>229</sup> Other personal attacks were focused on a person's alleged Uzbek heritage, as when unnamed opposition members accused President Nabiev of being an "Uzbek in disguise" in an attempt to "discredit" him.<sup>230</sup> This tactic is very similar to the earlier intellectual battles wherein the younger generation of Gharmi Tajik intellectuals accused their rival Khujandi and Samarqandi intellectuals of secretly being ethnic Uzbeks of foreign origin.<sup>231</sup> Whitlock notes that beyond intellectuals, even some imams were involved in similar rhetoric, such as in Dushanbe during early May – after the apparent opposition political successes – when "some imams taunted and insulted the Kulabi 'losers' and mocked the Uzbek minority at Friday prayers."<sup>232</sup>

The opposition parties and the affiliated forces in Tajikistan were clearly a force that was not welcoming of ethnic Uzbeks. Beyond the Gharmi Tajik-dominated Islamic Revival Party there were the Tajik nationalists of Rastokhez and the DPT. Shodmon Yusuf, the leader of the DPT was especially hostile to non-Tajiks. In an interview with reporter Igor Rotar he contrasted the spiritual superiority of the "purely" Persian-speaking Tajiks with the "inhuman acts" of the Leninobodi and Kulobi Tajiks, blaming their cruelty on their racial mixing with Turkic and Mongol peoples. Rotar mentions that other opposition members voiced similar opinions.<sup>233</sup>

### **Preservation of Soviet Era Benefits?**

Matteo Fumagalli also points to the fear of a Tajik nationalist opposition, but in combination with a strategy by Uzbeks to maintain the benefits they enjoyed during the

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<sup>229</sup> Zviagelskaya, *The Tajik Conflict*, n.p.

<sup>230</sup> Carlisle, 'Geopolitics and Ethnic Problems of Uzbekistan and Its Neighbours', 84, n. 18. Carlisle notes that against the former First Secretary of Uzbekistan Sharof Rashidov and current President of Uzbekistan Islom Karimov the accusation is that they are actually Tajik. Atkin and Brown note the exact same accusation against Nabiev. See: Atkin, 'Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war', 608; Brown, 'Whither Tajikistan', 4. Allworth makes the same point as Carlisle in regard to both Nabiev and President Karimov of Uzbekistan. See: Edward Allworth, 'The Hunger for Modern Leadership', in *Central Asia: 130 Years of Russian Domination: A Historical Overview*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Edited by Edward Allworth (Durham: Duke University Press, 1994) 577. Anderson makes this assertion as a matter of fact statement, albeit slightly altered in that he writes that Nabiev has "mixed Uzbek-Tajik heritage." See: Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 165.

<sup>231</sup> Dudoignon, 'Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', 18.

<sup>232</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 164.

<sup>233</sup> Igor Rotar, 'Myths and prejudice across the FSU', *Russia and Eurasia Review*, Volume 1, Issue 14 (17 December 2002) n.p. See also: Kadir Alimov, 'Are Central Asian Clans Still Playing a Political Role?', *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 4 (1994) 15.

Soviet era as part of the Khujand faction.<sup>234</sup> However, this would only be applicable in the north, an area almost entirely irrelevant to the military conflict.

### **An Opposition Response to the Role of Uzbekistan?**

Roy notes the continued anti-Uzbek rhetoric of Tajik nationalists in exile (after winter 1992-3), notably from Rastokhez members who saw the civil war as an “Uzbek plot to crush Tajik nationalism”,<sup>235</sup> though this could be more anti-Uzbekistan government than anti-Uzbek. Regarding the role of Uzbekistan, Whitlock argues that the Uzbek government repeatedly denied supplying arms to combatants in Tajikistan, but that few people in Tajikistan believed it. Whitlock asserts, without supporting her argument, that as a result, inside Tajikistan the “local 'Tajik' Uzbeks paid the price, as their neighbours – understanding no difference between 'Uzbeks' and 'Uzbekistan' – blamed them for fueling the war.”<sup>236</sup> Rowe notes a similar – but minority – opinion among his contacts after the end of the war. Referring to the Hisor Valley, informants told him that “the western end contained a substantial Uzbek population and they, with the silent backing of Uzbekistan, were an effective 5<sup>th</sup> column in the war trying to sabotage Tajikistan to ultimately pave the way for an Uzbek takeover.”<sup>237</sup> The problem with many of the above arguments is that, as will be shown further below, Uzbeks were being attacked and fleeing the Vakhsh Valley far before Uzbekistan became involved in the conflict. The role of Uzbekistan may help explain why there were sustained grievances against locals Uzbeks, but it fails to explain both the outbreak of violence and the early trend of Uzbeks joining the counter-opposition.

### **Influence of Kenjaev’s Recruiting Tactics?**

As for Uzbeks and Uzbek-speakers in Qurghonteppa and the Vakhsh Valley, it is possible that they were associated with the pro-government side at an early point in

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<sup>234</sup> Fumagalli, *The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-political Mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*, 217. Adeeb Khalid says nearly the same thing. See: Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 151.

<sup>235</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 135.

<sup>236</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 170-1.

<sup>237</sup> Rowe, *On the Edge of Empires: The Hisor Valley of Tajikistan*, 52. Rowe’s comments in their entirety: “Several contacts pointed out to me that the western end of the Valley suffered much less politically and economically in comparison to the eastern end. When asked why, their answer was invariably that the western end contained a substantial Uzbek population and they, with the silent backing of Uzbekistan, were an effective 5<sup>th</sup> column in the war trying to sabotage Tajikistan to ultimately pave the way for an Uzbek takeover. Many in Dushanbe dismiss this as paranoia and point out that the war affected the eastern end to a greater extent because of its proximity to Dushanbe and the western end had greater access to goods and food because of its proximity to Uzbekistan.”

part due to the recruiting tactics of Kenjaev. Early in the conflict Kenjaev, the former speaker of the legislature recruited heavily for the Popular Front among Uzbeks in Hisor, west of Dushanbe.<sup>238</sup> Sergei Gretskey, an adviser to Qazi Turajonzoda, breaks down the Hisori grouping into the districts of Tursunzoda, Hisor and Shahrinav, and emphasizes their “substantial Uzbek population” as a reason for Popular Front support from these areas.<sup>239</sup> Regarding Uzbeks in the capital, after Kenjaev’s failed October attempt to capture Dushanbe “the Uzbek population fled, fearing retribution”<sup>240</sup> As with the previous hypothesis, this one also suffers from not matching chronologically. Kenjaev’s offensives occurred well after the violence of summer 1992.

### **Strategies of Mobilisation?**

One explanation of ethnic Uzbek support for the Popular Front is provided by Schoeberlein, who argues that the “pro-Communist forces” in Qurghonteppa strategically “pitted” the Gharmis and Pamiris against the Uzbek-speaking Arabs, Loqays and Qarluqs.<sup>241</sup> However, he does not elaborate or provide an explanation for the mechanisms of strategic manipulation used here. Zartman focuses instead on the Uzbek community itself rather than on any possible external manipulation. He writes, unfortunately without further elaboration, that the “disproportionate role of Uzbeks on the government side represents the result of ethnic entrepreneurs exploiting solidarity networks in competition for resources in Qurghon-Teppe.”<sup>242</sup> The problem with Schoeberlein’s explanation is that if there was any ‘strategic pitting’ early in the conflict, it was done on the opposition side, as evidenced by the early conflict dynamics involving ethnic Uzbeks (see next section). Zartman’s explanation is more plausible, but

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<sup>238</sup> Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War* (London: Minority Rights Group, 1995) 16; Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 609; Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 268; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 147, n. 115.

<sup>239</sup> Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan’, 227-8.

<sup>240</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 268. See also: Elif Kaban, ‘Communal warfare tears Tajikistan apart’, Reuters News (27 October 1992). Kaban quotes an ethnic Uzbek university student: “Our neighbours became our enemies in a day. [...] This war will not stop. We are all planning to leave for Uzbekistan soon.” Kaban writes further: “Anti-Uzbek feelings are slowly gripping the capital after repeated broadcasts on state television that Uzbek-speakers were among the fighters that attacked Dushanbe. Many Russians, the next likely target, have already left. [...] Dark rumours already abound in the capital of attacks on Uzbek-speakers and each rumour of violence is certain to bring counter-violence.”

<sup>241</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 46. Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 350. He argues that this strategic manipulation was facilitated by overpopulation, resource shortage and economic crises in Qurghonteppa that were worsened after the 1980s and then the collapse of the USSR.

<sup>242</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 234.

not at an early point in the conflict when Uzbek actions were overwhelmingly defensive.

### Defensive Actions by Uzbeks?

Several analysts focus on local factors (especially violent ones) in the areas of conflict as part of a process that drew Uzbeks into supporting the Popular Front. Nourzhanov and Shepherd both argue that Uzbek support in the south for the Popular Front was for protection from attacks by Gharmi Tajiks.<sup>243</sup> For example, Shepherd writes that during the civil war opposition forces in Qurghonteppa targeted ethnic Uzbek civilians – as well as anyone from the north – for rape, beatings, and even execution.<sup>244</sup> Local Uzbeks were fleeing Qurghonteppa starting in late spring 1992. At an early point, in mid to late May, one newspaper described a “mass exodus of Uzbeks and Russians” from Qurghonteppa Province due to “rumours of the imminent “Islamization” of the republic and punishment of those who resisted the opposition.”<sup>245</sup> Zartman describes the Gharmi attacks on Uzbeks and Kulobis in Qurghonteppa as being “revenge” attacks for the “bloody purge of democratic sympathizers” by Kulobi Popular Front Forces in Kulob.<sup>246</sup> Other motivations are also likely. In May and June, Gharmis and Pamiris in Qurghonteppa Province expropriated land from ethnic Uzbeks.<sup>247</sup> Throughout June and July thousands of Uzbeks fled Qurghonteppa, and their houses were looted and destroyed. HRW cites a government number of 133,000 displaced Kulobis and Uzbeks during summer 1992.<sup>248</sup> These numbers are similar in other sources

<sup>243</sup> Monika Shepherd, ‘Turf war erupts in Dushanbe, spreads west and south’, *The NIS Observed*, Vol. 2, No. 15 (20 August 1997), online at: [www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol2/ed15.html#monika](http://www.bu.edu/iscip/digest/vol2/ed15.html#monika); Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116.

<sup>244</sup> Shepherd, ‘Turf war erupts in Dushanbe, spreads west and south’, n.p. For violence against an Urgut Uzbek kolkhoz in Qurghonteppa see *Golos Tadjikistana*, 9/13/92, quoted in Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 127, n. 25. HRW notes that “During the course of the fighting, both sides committed atrocities, including murder, disappearances, hostage-taking, and burning and looting of homes.” See: Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan: Continued Regional and Ethnic Tensions’, Vol. 7, No. 9, May 1995, n.p. For some brief accounts by ethnic Uzbek refugees regarding their expulsion from the south, see: Ralph Boulton, ‘Floods of refugees in Tajikistan, fighting continues’, Reuters News (11 September 1992). See also: Brown, ‘The Civil War in Tajikistan’, 91.

<sup>245</sup> ITAR-TASS World Service 1202gmt (23 May 1992) in SWB SU/1395 (1 June 1992) B/6. The paper cited is Tajikistan’s *Narodnaya gazeta*.

<sup>246</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228.

<sup>247</sup> Julien Thoni, *The Tajik Conflict: The Dialectic Between Internal Fragmentation and External Vulnerability 1991-1994* (Geneva: Programme for Strategic and International Security Studies, 1994), 29, citing the CSCE Report on Tajikistan August 1993, 8. Similarly, Roy writes that Gharmi forces “expelled the Kulobis” from the Vakhsh Valley in June and July 1992. See: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140.

<sup>248</sup> Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan’, n.p. Numbers cited from The Department of Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Labor of Tajikistan. HRW writes that these Kulobis and Uzbeks fled to Kulob and Uzbekistan, respectively. HRW is faulty in mentioning only Uzbekistan as a destination. For example, Whitlock writes, in reference to mixed families: “Intermarried families had to decide which way

as well. Nourzhanov cites 90,000 IDPs fleeing opposition-controlled areas for Kulob and 30,000 Uzbeks from Qurghonteppa also fleeing, mostly for Hisor, but also to Khujand and Uzbekistan. Many of these IDPs joined militias or formed new ones.<sup>249</sup>

One specific example of violence against Uzbeks comes from the city of Qurghonteppa where an Urguti Uzbek<sup>250</sup> businessman was killed. Whitlock writes that in response fearful Urgutis formed a “self-defence force.”<sup>251</sup> This had the effect of scaring Tajiks in a neighbouring district (Vakhsh or Bokhtar) into believing that the Urgutis were set on revenge and had a death list of Tajik families. These Tajiks then forced their Uzbek neighbours out of their village and looted their homes.<sup>252</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky also provide an analysis that highlights the attacks against Uzbeks. At the beginning of September when the opposition forces took the city of Qurghonteppa they followed their opponents into the Urgut Uzbek neighbourhood and massacred civilians there.<sup>253</sup>

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to go – that is, who it was safest to be. Uzbeks made for Uzbek-populated areas – west to Hisar, north to Khujand, and across the border to Uzbekistan.” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168. Bushkov and Mikulsky give a similar number, 132,000. The timeframe they provide is for June and July. See: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 66. Opposition-controlled Tajik Radio reported that there were 150,000 IDPs in Kulob. See: Tajik Radio 1400gmt (25 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>249</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 167-8; Human Rights Watch, ‘Return to Tajikistan’, n.p.; Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 116. Numbers used by Nourzhanov for Kulobis from *Izvestiia* (5 September 1992), for Uzbeks from *Russkaia mysl* (25 September 1992). HRW notes that The Department of Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Labor of Tajikistan estimated 133,000 Kulobis and Uzbeks fled, but does not break down the two categories. In regards to those Uzbeks fleeing to Uzbekistan, most of them had family roots there. The Uzbek government noted in mid-July that most of the Uzbek refugees are “settling with their relatives” in Fergana and Tashkent. The Uzbek government did not provide a number for Uzbek refugees, instead noting that Uzbek and Russian-speaking refugees totalled about 5,000 people. See: Interfax 1320gmt (8 July 1992) in SWB SU/1429 (10 July 1992) B/6. By late 1994 the UN High Commission on Refugees estimated that 30,000 Uzbeks had left for Uzbekistan. See: Rupert Colville, ‘Rebuilding Socialism’, *Refugees Magazine*, Issue 98 (1 Dec 1994), n.p. Online: <http://www.unhcr.org/print/3b5421984.html> See also: Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan’, 155. For a brief mention of Uzbeks and Tatars fleeing Qurghonteppa along with Russians in Spring 1992, see: Aleksandr Pilipchuk, ‘B Tupike stoit echelon s bezhentsami b Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 249 (31 October 1992).

<sup>250</sup> Urguti (*Urgutlik*) Uzbeks are from the Samarqand province in Uzbekistan.

<sup>251</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168.

<sup>252</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 168. Whitlock reports that the Uzbek houses were then looted. See also: see *Golos Tadjikistana*, 9/13/92, as cited in Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 127.

<sup>253</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 67-8. Bushkov and Mikulsky write that Uzbeks and others had fled to Lomonosov to shelter in the local 201<sup>st</sup> garrison (the 191st). Local opposition fighters deny that they were involved, instead claiming that Russians in disguise committed the killings, for reasons unspecified. See: Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992).

## Pre-existing Gharmi-Uzbek Enmity

Another possibility is that the breakdown of law and order after the May demonstrations allowed for pre-existing conflicts to turn violent. As mentioned in an earlier chapter, Tajiks resettled from the mountainous areas, especially Gharm, found their interests in conflict with those populations already there.<sup>254</sup> Forced population transfers and sedentarisation in the early Soviet era put Uzbek Loqay, Kungrat and Durman in competition for resources with Tajiks in Qurghonteppa.<sup>255</sup> For those who did not immediately enter into problematic relations, the situation worsened later. According to Akiner, the original inhabitants of the Vakhsh Valley came to resent the eventual success of the immigrants to the region.<sup>256</sup> A later example in Qurghonteppa is from the 1960s when Gharmis and Uzbeks were involved in disputes over land and water.<sup>257</sup> Population demographics and a shortage of resources in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in further increased competition for resources among the groups in the Vakhsh Valley.<sup>258</sup> The likelihood of national level conflicts finding local cleavages to attach to was clearly present. These two levels of conflict quickly joined in an ‘alliance’ when the fighting began.

## The Loqays

One prominent group in the Qurghonteppa region was the Loqays, often identified as Uzbeks.<sup>259</sup> The Loqays’ primary concerns were the land disputes that brought them into conflict with the Gharmi Tajiks. Soon after independence the historically pastoral Loqays who had been deported from the Qurghonteppa region began to return and attempted to reclaim their historical land from the Tajiks who settled there. As a result, during the civil war the conflict in Qurghonteppa Province

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<sup>254</sup> For example: Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan*, 72.

<sup>255</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 96; Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia*, 261-2.

<sup>256</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan*, 42.

<sup>257</sup> Niyazi, ‘Tajikistan I’, 161; Roy, ‘Inter-regional dynamics of war.’

<sup>258</sup> Roy, ‘Inter-regional dynamics of war.’ Natural population growth and immigration from outside the Tajik SSR caused the population to increase from approximately 1.5 million in 1950 to 3.6 million in 1977. See: Bushkov, ‘Population Migration in Tajikistan’, 154.

<sup>259</sup> Upon Tajikistan’s independence the Association of Lokays of Tajikistan claimed to speak for the Lokay population of Tajikistan, which totals about 100,000 people. The Lokay Association demanded that Lokays be recognized as a distinct group from the Uzbeks and be granted autonomy within Tajikistan. Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments, and Prospects for Peace’, 228. I could find no other sources on the continued activities of the Association. Olimov and Olimova are of the view that in regards to their identity the Lokay had problematic relations with the Uzbek community. See: Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 257.

included an interethnic element as Loqays and Gharmi Tajiks fought each other here,<sup>260</sup> partly over the land issue but also because many Loqays supported the Popular Front in the civil war, probably in the hope that they would be rewarded with autonomy and a share of the power.<sup>261</sup> Whatever the motivations, in 1992 the Loqays in Qurghonteppa were “active supporters” of the Popular Front.<sup>262</sup> The opposition adviser Gretskey identifies the Popular Front as originally composed of Kulobis, Hisoris and Loqays,<sup>263</sup> giving the Loqays a prominent role. However, the two most well know Loqays are of mixed ethnicity. Abdulmajid Dostiev, the first man to serve as the deputy chair of the Supreme Soviet under Rahmon (1992-5), is Loqay paternally and Kulobi maternally<sup>264</sup> while Mahmud Khudoyberdiev was of a mixed background.<sup>265</sup>

### Other Ethnicities

The reasons for the anti-opposition forces’ execution of a group of Kyrgyz are not clear.<sup>266</sup> The reasons for other conflicts that fall on regional and ethnic lines are clearer. For example, a Tajik group known as the Ghazi Malek<sup>267</sup> was involved in the conflict, but not on the far periphery like those Tajiks described by Tett who killed their Pamiri neighbours. The Ghazi Malek instead live between Qabodiyon and Jilikul where a Ghazi Malek militia became prominent by switching sides from being first allied with Gharmis and then later with the Kulobis. Roy argues that their contribution “made the difference locally” and that they were rewarded with some spoils of war.<sup>268</sup> Moving away from Tajiks, the Central Asian Arabs of southern Tajikistan were also involved in

<sup>260</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘Ethnic Factors and Local Self-Government in Tajikistan’, 257.

<sup>261</sup> Polat, *Boundary Issues in Central Asia*, 91-2; Schoeberlein, ‘Bones of Contention: Conflicts over Resources’, 89.

<sup>262</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Seeking Peace in Tajikistan: Who is the Odd Man Out?’, 21.

<sup>263</sup> Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments, and Prospects for Peace’, 227-8.

<sup>264</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 48.

<sup>265</sup> See the description of Khudoberdiev in the section on commanders.

<sup>266</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 178-9. I use “anti-opposition forces” here as a Popular Front commanders confirmed the massacre, but blamed it on irregular forces from Uzbekistan, leaving open the possibility that the Popular Front was not responsible. I add the additional possibility that those identified as being from Uzbekistan may in fact have been Uzbeks from the Hisor valley under the command of Kenjaev. “Anti-opposition forces” covers all bases. Regarding the Kyrgyzs, in early December 1992 Kyrgyzs (approx. 150) were taken from an encampment of IDPs in Auvaj, south of Qabodiyon where the Kofarnihon River meets the Amu River, and executed along with hundreds of Gharmis.

<sup>267</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 22. Roy describes this group: “The specificity of this group is neither ethnic nor religious: it is Tajik and Sunni, but it cultivates a difference, which is simply that of being a *qawm* unto itself and of pursuing the interests of its own group above all others in relation to the state which is the basic source of power and potential incomes.”

<sup>268</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 22. Roy describes the Ghazi Malek’s post-1992 fortunes: “This group subsequently made the most of its role by establishing a quasi-monopoly over local power and taking control of the National Football League within the framework of distribution of perks between victors. It was subsequently laid low, in November 1995, by the arrest of its chief, Khwaja Karimov.”



conflict with neighbours during the civil war, and not for the first time. On 31 July 1991 there occurred a conflict between Arabs and Qaroteginis [Gharmis] in the Qabodiyon District of the Qurghonteppa Province, an area with a shortage of land. The Gharmi Tajiks who arrived to Qabodiyon from the 1930s to 1950s gradually entered into local positions of leadership. When, in 1991, taxes taken from all those living in Qabodiyon were used to build a new mosque, the local administration appointed a Gharmi Tajik as imam. Local non-*muhajir*<sup>269</sup> Tajiks were angered by the decision and publicly protested. The non-*muhajir* Tajiks were joined by local Uzbek-speaking Arabs who were also upset with the appointment of a Gharmi Tajik, as the Arabs believed themselves to be descendents of the prophet Muhammad and endowed with special religious legitimacy, in addition to being the rightful owners of the local land. In the end, the Arabs, in their own collective farm brigade, left the *kolkhoz* administration that they were in, taking their land with them.<sup>270</sup> During the civil war Arabs joined Kulobis and Uzbeks in attacking, forcing out and even massacring Gharmis.<sup>271</sup>

Many ethnic groups did manage to avoid the conflict. Roy argues that Jews, Jugis (Gypsies), Germans, Koreans and Russians<sup>272</sup> avoided the war thanks to the fact that “groups which have established themselves in economic niches where they do not compete with others are not the object of any vendetta.”<sup>273</sup> Roy notes that despite the presence of ethnic German and Korean *kolkhozes* in the south, the Germans avoided the conflict completely by emigrating and the Koreans by being in “highly specialized economic roles” that didn’t compete with other locals.<sup>274</sup> Also worth noting is that the above mentioned groups were not seeking a national level role either directly nor

<sup>269</sup> Local Tajiks who lived in the region before the Soviet population transfer schemes.

<sup>270</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 55-6, 159-60. The leader of the Arab Community of Tajikistan, an agricultural professor named Sh. Akramov, claimed the group had 16,000 members, even though only 216 of this possible number reported their ethnicity as Arab in the 1989 census.

<sup>271</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 158-60. The authors note that young Arabs forced their own Gharmi Tajik neighbours to flee under threat of violence. However, they note that the decision-making process of whom to commit violence against was not always clear. In one case two young Qarotegini/Gharmi men left unharmed after it was determined that they were family friends of a powerful Arab.

<sup>272</sup> Russian civilians will be analysed separately. In regards to fighters there are some exceptions.

<sup>273</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 144-5. Akiner notes the same phenomenon in very similar language: “It is noteworthy that direct violence was used mainly against those who were perceived to be competitors in the same ecological and social sphere: Slavs and other European immigrants, who occupied different niches, were caught up in the conflict almost accidentally.” See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42. Akiner does not cite Roy here. However, his work is in her bibliography.

<sup>274</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 145. *Krasnaya zvezda* reported that Germans “orderly” evacuated the south by February 1992, before the outbreak of violent conflict. See: Aleksandr Pilipchuk, ‘B Tupike stoit echelon s bezhentsami v Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 249 (31 Oct 1992). However, a few remained. For example, reporters talked to a desperate and despondent German woman in Qurghonteppa in early September. See: Bryan Brumley, ‘Tajik City Residents Terrified of War They Don’t Understand’, *The Associated Press* (6 Sept 1992).

through large scale support for an opposition or pro-government political party, nor did they initiate conflict as other groups did in order to make local gains.

### Russians and other Slavs

Even before the war, in the late 1980s and very early 1990s, hundreds of thousands of the non-indigenous population (e.g., Slavs, Germans, Jews,<sup>275</sup> etc...) left Tajikistan. Bushkov and Mikulsky demonstrate that the emigration of Russian-speakers (including Germans and Jews) increased after the violence of February 1990. When the civil war started in 1992 the emigration became an “avalanche.”<sup>276</sup> In regards to Russians, Whitlock briefly attempts to portray a society lacking in anti-Russian attitudes during the conflict<sup>277</sup> while Rowe’s post-conflict research finds “no overt antipathy towards Russians whatsoever.”<sup>278</sup> However, others describe a different attitude towards Slavs. Matveeva describes an environment in the lead up to civil war in which Russians were being harassed and growing uncomfortable with anti-Russian sentiments.<sup>279</sup> Others made similar points about all Slavs in general (including Belorussians and Ukrainians), mixed Slav-Tajiks and Russophones, stating that they felt increasingly unwelcome and wanted to leave Tajikistan.<sup>280</sup> Others stressed instead the economic hardships.<sup>281</sup> As for

<sup>275</sup> Aryeh Levin, the Israeli Ambassador to Russia, noted that Jews were still in the process of leaving Tajikistan when he visited Tajikistan in summer 1992. See: Aryeh Levin, *Envoy to Moscow: Memoirs of an Israeli Ambassador, 1988-92*, (London: Frank Cass, 1996) 357.

<sup>276</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadjikistane*, 32.

<sup>277</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 188. She goes on to quote the stepson of the Islamic scholar Hindustoni, Ubaidullo: “I’m sorry that the Russians left. They knew how to do things and they helped us build a country. They were good people. Everyone is sorry now, but it is too late.”

<sup>278</sup> Rowe, *On the Edge of Empires*, 146-7, 157, n. xviii. Rowe states further that “all Tajiks I interviewed lament the loss of the Russian minority.” Rowe uses these views to refute Rakowska-Harmstone’s earlier work (*Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*) that mentioned interethnic problem’s between Central Asians and Russians at the higher levels of authority in Central Asia. Note: Rowe’s experience is mainly in the Hisor Valley and Dushanbe.

<sup>279</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 15. Matveeva identifies local police officers as some of those who were harassing Slavs. One news report provides very similar analysis and argues that the problems for ethnic Russians started with the riots in February 1990, when Russians were beaten along with locals. The reporter argues further that with independence Russians faced “frank and open discrimination.” See: Olga Gorshunova, ‘Without the Aura of Inviolability’, *Rossiskiye vesti* (22 September 1992) 2, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 38 (21 October 1992). For Russians in the Central Asia region as a whole, see: Asal Azamova, ‘Decolonization?’, *Moscow News* (7 October 1992).

<sup>280</sup> Steven Erlanger, ‘Two Families in Tajikistan: An Empire’s Retreat Strands Exiles In a Place They Had Called Home’, *New York Times*, (7 June 1992); ‘Russians Flee War, Rising Intolerance: Tajikistan’s Slavs once enjoyed the colonial lifestyle; now they feel persecuted by the Muslim majority’, *The Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 1992). The CSM article noted that an NGO called ‘Migration’ was operating in Dushanbe, assisted those Slavs who wanted to leave Tajikistan.

<sup>281</sup> Feliks Ogo, the head of the local branch of ‘Russian Community’ organisation in Qurghonteppa remarked: “Many of our [ethnic Russian] countrymen were born and raised here, others, including myself, arrived here in time to help the republic with our technical expertise in order “to enter” into the twentieth century. Today we do not receive pensions or wages. I fear the cold weather...” See: Aleksandr Pilipchuk, ‘B Tupike stoit echelon s bezhentsami v Kurgan-Tyube’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 249 (31

outside support, Russia, with military forces under its command based in Tajikistan, did not have a clear and coherent policy during the first phase of the civil war.<sup>282</sup>

On May 10, DPT leader Shodmon Yusuf made a statement in Russian on Tajik Radio regarding “crude [Russian] interference in our affairs” that included this warning: “I want again to warn the cold leaders of the CIS that there are a large number of Russian speakers in the town. [...] I would absolutely and utterly not want, in the wake of events, this [...] to weigh on inter-ethnic relations in the town.”<sup>283</sup> These comments on the radio were broadly interpreted as a threat against ethnic Russians.<sup>284</sup> Russians’ fears were acknowledged by some opposition leaders, who attempted to remedy the situation. Turajonzoda met with representatives of Dushanbe’s Russian community to reassure them that nobody in the republic will be allowed to express “anti-Russian sentiments” or “perpetrate anti-Russian actions.”<sup>285</sup> IRP leader Davlat Usmon, himself a leader in a party whose followers were four times more likely to be in favour of Slavic emigration from Tajikistan than was the Tajik average,<sup>286</sup> travelled to Qurghonteppa to meet with ethnic Russians in an attempt to reassure them.<sup>287</sup> Concerning specifics, some reports mention either acts of anti-Russian vandalism<sup>288</sup> or the formation of ethnic

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October 1992). However, the article also notes that Russians were being subjected to “political pressure, threats and consumer discrimination.”

<sup>282</sup> Michael Orr, ‘The Russian Army and the War in Tajikistan’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, edited by Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (Surrey, UK: Curzon, 1998) 151; Arkady Yu. Dubnov, ‘Tadjikistan’, in *U.S. and Russian Policymaking With Respect to the Use of Force*. Edited by Jeremy R. Azrael and Emil A. Payin (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1996) 32.

<sup>283</sup> Tajik Radio 1635gmt (10 May 1992) in SWB SU/1378 (12 May 1992) C1/3.

<sup>284</sup> A representative for the Russian ‘Migration Society’ said that 70,000 ethnic Russians had left Tajikistan in the previous three years, and 20,000 in the month of May 1992. He specifically blamed Shodmon Yusuf’s statement, which he/she interpreted as Yusuf saying that minorities “could well be used as hostages.” See: Interfax 1315gmt (9 June 1992) and Radio Moscow 0700gmt (10 June 1992) in SWB SU/1405 (12 June 1992) B/6. The Coordinating Council of National Associations of Tajikistan condemns Yusuf for his comments on non-Tajiks. See: ITAR-TASS 1342gmt (11 May 1992) in SWB 1379 (13 May 1992) C1/5. See also: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 40.

<sup>285</sup> Russia’s Radio 1900gmt (12 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 14 May 1992) C1/7. For a non-detailed report on members of the new government meeting with representatives of the Russian community to reassure them and ask them to stay and keep their needed skills in Tajikistan, see: *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 23 (5 June 1992) 76.

<sup>286</sup> Overall 9.4 per cent “welcomed the emigration of Russians and Ukrainians from Tajikistan—the figure had increased by a third since the survey conducted in 1991. The proportion among IRP supporters was considerably higher (39 per cent), with 20 per cent of them favouring the departure of Uzbeks, and 24 per cent that of Germans, Jews and others. At the same time, some 24 per cent of the IRP’s supporters thought that people from the various regions of TJ should live in the places where they were born.” See: Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 136, citing *Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviakh stanovleniia gosudarstvennosti* (Moscow, Russian Academy of Management, 1992) 29-43.

<sup>287</sup> Olga Gorshunova, ‘Without the Aura of Inviolability’, *Rossiskiy vesti* (22 September 1992) 2, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 38 (21 October 1992).

<sup>288</sup> For a report on an arson attack on an Orthodox church and a ‘desecrated’ Russian graveyard [no locations given], see: Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 Oct 1992). The report states that Russians are fleeing and “All non-Tajiks” in Dushanbe are planning to leave.

Russian “self-defense detachments.”<sup>289</sup> The government itself did little to reassure Russians by way of bureaucratic decisions and new laws. Examples include constitutional changes to ban dual citizenship and provisions to phase out the Russian language from “social and political life,” acts which even one unnamed opposition member blamed for exacerbating the ethnic situation and leading to emigration from Tajikistan.<sup>290</sup> In late August ethnic Russians appealed to Nabiev, complaining of “persecutions and threats” against some in the community, and calling for reinstatement of dual citizenship. The appeal also cited accusations that Russian refugees were stealing from Tajikistan by taking their belongings with them.<sup>291</sup> Nabiev had earlier bemoaned the emigration – framing it as a loss of skilled workers and specialists – and blamed inflammatory statements by certain individuals and provocations by opposition-controlled TV and publications, though without naming names.<sup>292</sup>

However, some Russians remained through the summer and into autumn as the violent conflict continued south of the capital. Viktor Dubovitsky, an historian and the Deputy Chairman of the ‘Russian Community in Tajikistan,’ was interviewed in October. He stressed that no European nation had the long history of interaction with the Muslim world as did Russia. He went on to argue that ethnic heterogeneity throughout the former Soviet Union would guarantee stability, but that any “mutual deportation or internment of representatives of a hostile nation” would adversely affect relations between Tajikistan and Russia.<sup>293</sup> He expressed his desire, with some trepidation, for Russians to stay (as dual citizens). He said that it would be easy enough for Russians to leave, but that they do not want to do so, providing himself as an example. Dubovitsky went on to stress that it was easy to live in harmony with Tajiks.<sup>294</sup> Despite this generally positive assessment, the Russian embassy in Tajikistan

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<sup>289</sup> Olga Gorshunova, ‘Without the Aura of Inviolability’, *Rossiskiy vesti* (22 September 1992) 2, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 38 (21 October 1992). The formation of self defense units is dated to as early as May.

<sup>290</sup> ITAR-TASS World Service 1406gmt (7 July 1992) in SWB SU/1428 (9 July 1992) B/6. See also: RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 32 (14 August 1992).

<sup>291</sup> Russia’s Radio, Moscow 0800gmt (25 August 1992) in SWB SU/1471 (28 August 1992) B/4.

<sup>292</sup> RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 31 (31 July 1992). Concerning outside radio and television broadcasts, at the beginning of September Mirbobol Mirrahimov, the head of Tajik Television and Radio, blocked Uzbek and Russian radio and television. See: ITAR-TASS 0917gmt (2 September 1992) in SWB SU/1476 (3 September 1992) B/6; RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 37 (18 Sept 1992) 71. The Qoziyot had, in mid-July, called for Uzbek TV to be blocked in Tajikistan. The Qoziyot cited as a reason the blocking of Tajik TV in Uzbekistan and biased Uzbek TV broadcasts regarding the conflict in Tajikistan. See: Tajik Radio (17 July 1992) in SWB SU/1436 (18 July 1992) ii.

<sup>293</sup> D. Makarov, ‘Russkie v Tadzhikestane: “Ya nikuda ne poedy”’, *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 42 (28 October 1992) 4.

<sup>294</sup> Questions and answers between a report and Dubovitsky – Q: Is it difficult to live amongst Tajiks? A: No. They are a mild-mannered, respectful people. They have a culture of communication which includes many aspects that makes it possible to get along with people from other cultures. Q: Under what

confirmed the fears and/or desires of most ethnic Russians when it revealed that between July and December, 164,000 of what was left of Tajikistan's 388,000 ethnic Russians (1989 figures) had left the country.<sup>295</sup> However, not all Russians fled or sheltered themselves. Occasionally, local Russians joined the counter-opposition units.<sup>296</sup>

### General rhetoric and discourse

“Some people describe what is going on in Kurgan-Tyube as a war of Kulyab against Garm, while others think that the Reds are waging a war on Islam.”

- Reporter Asal Azamova.<sup>297</sup>

“May the barbarous servants of God never again return to Qurghonteppa!”

-Sangak Safarov, toasting (with alcohol) to the “Islamic fundamentalists.”<sup>298</sup>

circumstances would you personally leave here? A: I will stay here as long as there are no threats to my family's safety. See: D. Makarov, ‘Russkie v Tadjikistane: “Ya nikuda ne poedy”’, *Argumenty i fakty*, No. 42 (28 Oct 1992) 4. A similar sentiment was expressed by a 45-year-old Russian woman: “It's hard to leave Tajikistan. I spent the best days of my youth here. But I'm worried about the war. What can my children expect here but uncertainty?” See: Nejla Sammakia, ‘Tajikistan: War the only constant as thousands flee nation, others return’, *The Ottawa Citizen* (29 Dec 1992) A.5.

<sup>295</sup> Nejla Sammakia, ‘Tajikistan: War the only constant as thousands flee nation, others return’, *The Ottawa Citizen* (29 December 1992) A.5; Catherine Poujol, ‘Some Reflections on Russian Involvement in the Tajik Conflict, 1992 -1993’, in *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*. Edited by Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner (Surrey, UK: Curzon, 1998). According to Valery Yushin, the head of a mostly Russian NGO called ‘Society’ that promotes peaceful inter-ethnic relations and opposes emigration, a trend that had begun in the late 1980s. See: ‘Russians Flee War, Rising Intolerance: Tajikistan's Slavs once enjoyed the colonial lifestyle; now they feel persecuted by the Muslim majority’, *The Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 1992). Earlier, one source reported that 20,000 people of uncited ethnicity had left Tajikistan in the month of May alone. See: Russia's Radio 0700gmt (21 June 1992) in SWB SU/1414 (23 June 1992) B/4.

<sup>296</sup> Safarali Kenjaev lists, as one of over 1000 “martyrs,” twelve Russian men from the area around Hisor and Qurghonteppa Province killed while fighting against the opposition: See: Safarali Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston – Kitobi duyum* (Dushanbe/Tashkent: Fondi Kenjaev/nashriyoti “Uzbekiston,” 1994) 349, 357, and Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston – Kitobi ceyum*, 361-94. In another anecdote, a journalist questioned an ethnic Russian tank commander fighting alongside Kulobis. The Russian stated that he had joined the Kulobis to fight against the “Islamists” and their goal for an Islamic state. See: Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, Inter Press Service (22 October 1992). For a similar anecdotes, see: Christopher Boian, ‘Tajikistan's "partisan war": Two sides with a multitude of grievances’, Agence France-Presse (4 October 1992); ‘(Kurgan-Tyube)’, Agence France-Presse (4 October 1992). In the first anecdote, a Russian man in Qurghonteppa “privately confessed” that he joined the “Kulobi” militias “only because their ethnic diversity was his best bet for saving his own home and protecting his family.” In the second story, a Russian named Vladimir from Qurghonteppa says he joined with the Kulobis because opposition forces threatened to kill him if he did not leave. Zartman cites one reference to the possibility of ethnic Russians fighting in pro-opposition units in Romit from December 1992 to February 1993. However, the reference is vague. Zartman's translation of pro-opposition reporter Oleg Panfilov: “... the Ramit detachments, for example, are made up of members of the former Democratic Army of Tajikistan, whose ranks included a good many Russian residents of Dushanbe.” See: Oleg Panfilov, ‘Uzbek Aircraft Bomb Tajik Opposition’, *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, February 23, p. 3 in CDPSP XLV, no. 8 (1993) 19, as cited/translated in Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 113-4.

<sup>297</sup> Asal Azamova, ‘Criminals as a tool in Tajikistan's politics’, *Moscow News* (16 September 1992).

“My friend here comes from a farm, I am from the city so you could say that is a difference. [But] we are all united against the Kulyabi, who want Tajikistan to remain a colony of Russia.”

-Pro-opposition checkpoint guard in Qurghonteppa.<sup>299</sup>

“We’re for Islam, the communists are against that.”

-Pro-opposition fighter at Kuybyshev state farm.<sup>300</sup>

The four statements above are typical examples of how the opposing sides referred to each other when framing the conflict. Those who were pro-opposition often described their opponents as ‘Kulobis’<sup>301</sup> and/or ‘communists,’<sup>302</sup> and occasionally as ‘infidels.’<sup>303</sup> On the other side, the counter-opposition supporters described the opposition forces as Muslim extremists (using a broad range of terminology/epithets). Outsiders to the conflict (e.g., Western and Russian media outlets) often described, problematically, the counter-opposition as being ‘pro-Nabiev’<sup>304</sup> (despite numerous

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<sup>298</sup> ‘Tadschikistan: Stalins Blut’, *Der Spiegel* (25 January 1993) 143. This was Safarov’s reply when he was asked by a German newspaper reporter to comment on his (temporarily) defeated opponents.

<sup>299</sup> ‘(Kurgan-Tyube)’, Agence France-Presse (4 Oct 1992). Similarly, a woman identifying who killed her husband simply stated that armed Kulobis were responsible. See: Elif Kaban, ‘Mullahs wage holy war against Tajik communists’, Reuters News (3 Oct 1992); Elif Kaban, ‘Hundreds flee fierce fighting in Tajik flashpoint’, Reuters News (3 Oct 1992). A man in Dushanbe provides a good example with this quote: “I don’t know what caused this war. But if Kulyab forces come here I shall fight the enemy.” See: Elif Kaban, ‘Grim bloodletting gives Tajik government the shivers’, Reuters News (5 Oct 1992).

<sup>300</sup> Ralph Boulton, ‘Cotton fields war raises spectre of Central Asia conflict’, Reuters News (2 September 1992). Another fighter nearby added his thoughts: “We need firm order, like in Stalin’s time. If someone steals, their arm should be chopped off.”

<sup>301</sup> One of many examples, see: Elif Kaban, ‘Tajiks flee as civil war spreads’, Reuters (4 Oct 1992).

<sup>302</sup> For example, a quote by Turajonzoda: “The Communists came to Kurgan-Tyube with demands that Tajik radio stop broadcasting calls to prayer, that all mosques be closed and that all clergymen should be killed as those who are striving to establish an Islamic state.” See: Juliet O’Neill, ‘Tajikistan: Bloody war, by any name’, *The Ottawa Citizen* (16 September 1992) A.2. See also: Justin Burke, ‘Tajiks Struggle For National Identity’, *The Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 1992). For the use of “Kulobi Comrades” by pro-opposition fighters to describe their opponents, see: Ralph Boulton, ‘Cotton fields war raises spectre of Central Asia conflict’, Reuters (2 September 1992).

<sup>303</sup> For an example of the use of ‘kafir’ (infidel), see: Adam Kelliher, ‘Gangs bring anarchy to old Soviet south’, *The Sunday Times* (2 August 1992).

<sup>304</sup> Examples of articles referring to the counter-opposition forces as being supporters of Nabiev and vice versa: Mark Trevelyan, ‘Tajikistan threatened with break-up, hundreds killed’, Reuters News (5 September 1992); Bess Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 38 (25 September 1992); Associated Press, ‘Embattled president of Tajikistan blasts religious chief in ouster bid’, *San Antonio Express-News* (7 September 1992) 3.A; Steven Erlanger, ‘After Week of Turmoil, Tajik President Is Forced Out’, *New York Times* (8 September 1992); Steve LeVine, ‘Private armies bring instability to Tajikistan: A Central Asian power struggle’, *Financial Times* (2 November 1992) 3; ‘Tajikistan: Fragmentation Process’, *Oxford Analytica Daily Brief Service* (23 October 1992) 1; Ostankino Channel 1 TV 0900gmt (29 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/5; Mayak Radio, Moscow 1330gmt (14 September 1992) in SWB SU/1487 (16 September 1992) B/4; Aleksandr Pelts, ‘Tadjikistan: pobediteley ne budet’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 241 (22 October 1992). The article by Pelts even describes the opposition as “*antinabievsti*” and “*antinabievskiy*.” Another *Krasnaya zvezda* article also divides the combatants into “supporters of President Nabiev” and “*antinabievskiy*”

powerful Kulobis leaders renouncing Nabiev) and or ‘communist.’<sup>305</sup> Meanwhile, they very rarely used ‘Gharmi’ to describe pro-opposition fighters.<sup>306</sup> The impression that ideology played a significant role can in part be blamed on the language that some Tajiks<sup>307</sup> and even some scholars used (e.g., ‘neo-Soviet’ and ‘pro-Communist,’) to describe the Popular Front forces,<sup>308</sup> a usage that crosses over into describing opposition supporters.<sup>309</sup> Bess Brown is more careful in her terminology, writing that government supporters “have been described as pro-communist, but it is probably more accurate to describe them as anti-opposition.”<sup>310</sup> An antidote to this terminology is John Anderson’s description of the rhetorical references to ideology. He notes that the incumbents were “concerned less with preserving Marxist-Leninist ideology against a new philosophy than with protecting positions and influence built up over decades.”<sup>311</sup> The more fundamental fault lines can be seen in the composition of the various refugee flows and in the selection of victims by the two sides, i.e., Kulobi Tajiks and Uzbeks on one side and Gharmi Tajiks and Pamiris on the other, as well as opposition political party affiliation.

Kilavuz specifically discusses the discourses – based on Islam, ethnicity, regionalism and democracy – employed by both sides during the conflict to mobilize support, and which were used according to context and audience. Most importantly, she notes how mixed discourses were used:

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forces. See: Anatoly Ladin, ‘Goryachaya tochka: Ne stanet li Tadzhikistan novym Afganistanom?’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 221 (29 September 1992).

<sup>305</sup> For example: ‘Tajik pro-communists attack border town’, Agence France-Presse (31 Oct 1992).

<sup>306</sup> For example, these are the earliest outside sources I could find that described the conflict in Qurghonteppa as being between Kulobis and Gharmis: Asal Azamova, ‘Criminals as a tool in Tajikistan’s politics’, *Moscow News* (16 September 1992); Cherif Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: starvation threatens as blockade continues’, *Inter Press Service* (7 October 1992).

<sup>307</sup> For example. These quotes are from Tajiks fleeing Kuybyshev: “The communists will come and kill us. We don’t know where to go but we must leave” and “The communists are coming.” See: Elif Kaban, ‘Tajiks flee as civil war spreads’, *Reuters News* (4 October 1992).

<sup>308</sup> See, for example: Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war’, 612, 615; Atkin, ‘Thwarted Democratization in Tajikistan’, 291; Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 7; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110. Note: Their analysis does not focus on ideology, but their terminology is misleading. See also: Glenn E. Curtis, ed. *Tajikistan: A Country Study*. Washington: GPO for the Library of Congress, 1996, n.p. This language then carries over to descriptions of the opposition as ‘anti-Communist.’ See, for example: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 55, n. 47. A selective quoting of Roy can make ideology seem more important than it was: Roy notes that the ‘conservatives’ “emphasise their secularism”, Soviet “heritage” and argue for a close relationship with Russia. See: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134.

<sup>309</sup> For example: “Almost all the actively anti-Communist population of Tajikistan – and even many who were merely suspected of anti-Communist sympathies – were targeted for imprisonment or outright slaughter, or were forced to flee to Afghanistan.” See: Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 55, n. 47.

<sup>310</sup> Bess Brown, ‘National Security and Military Issues in Central Asia’, in *State Building and Military Power in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. Edited by B Parrott (London: M.E. Sharpe, 1995), 248.

<sup>311</sup> Anderson, *The International Politics of Central Asia*, 172-3.

People mixed together different discourses in their accounts. As one informant said: “There were many divisions: Leninabad and Kulyab versus Garm; Islam versus Communism; Wofchik versus Yurchik; Wahabis versus Communists. It was possible to hear all these divisions invoked as factors dividing the sides in the conflict.” The religious and regional discourses were mixed. Some informants, for example, asserted that “Garmis were religious fanatics. They were Wahabis.” In their accounts, the enemy was both Islamic fundamentalist and Garmi, while for others the enemy was both Kulyabi and Communist and unbeliever.<sup>312</sup>

Each side represented itself as champions of democracy and the opposing side as either Islamists or Communists fighting against democracy.<sup>313</sup> As for the discourse on Islam, the pro-government side branded opposition supporters as ‘Wahhabis’ (Islamists of an alleged Saudi influence) while the opposition replied with the disparaging epithet ‘Yurchik’ (a diminutive of the Russian name Yuri). Of course, the government – attempting to portray itself as the defender of democracy and human rights – described its opponents as “Islamic fundamentalists” seeking a state ruled by *sharia* law, as well as radical nationalists seeking the expulsion of all non-Tajiks.<sup>314</sup> Others were much less specific, such as a Kulobi commander at Kuybyshev who said “The opposition wants the victory of Islam. We cannot allow them to overthrow the elected president and we will fight.”<sup>315</sup> The powerful commander Safarov was especially partial to invoking the threats of Islamic extremism, saying that if the “Islamic forces” were not defeated in Tajikistan they would spread their campaign to the rest of Central Asia.<sup>316</sup> As for the opposition, Matveeva notes the increased use of “Islamic slogans” in the opposition at

<sup>312</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 195, 198-9.

<sup>313</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 197-8. For example, the Qurghonteppa “district council” [*sic*] leader Vajuddin Khojaev rejected Turajonzoda’s framing of the conflict as a jihad and instead stated that the fight was between “people who want the old totalitarian Communist system and those who want democracy.” See: Juliet O’Neill, ‘Tajikistan: Bloody war, by any name; Conflict labelled ‘jihad,’ or holy war, as death toll mounts’, *The Ottawa Citizen* (16 September 1992) A.2.

<sup>314</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 197-8. The epithet for ‘Wahhabi’ is ‘Wofchik’/‘Vovchik.’ For an example of a news article that uses ‘Yurchik’ and ‘Vovchik’ liberally – even as far as referring to the Ismaili (non-Sunni and therefore excluded from being ‘Wahhabi’) Pamiri opposition as ‘Vovchiks’ – see: Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992). Note that the article uses disowning quotation marks (“”) every time ‘Vovchik’ and ‘Yurchik’ are used. See also: Aleksandr Pelts, ‘Tadzhikistan: pobediteley ne budet’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 241 (22 October 1992); Adam Kelliher, ‘Gangs bring anarchy to old Soviet south’, *The Sunday Times* (2 August 1992). Bess Brown reports that opposition members referred to “Nabiev’s supporters” in Kulob as the “Kulob comrades.” See: Bess Brown, ‘Tajikistan: The Fall of Nabiev’, *RFE/RL Research Report*, Vol. 1, No. 38 (25 September 1992). See also: Khalid, *Islam After Communism*, 152. Accusations of Iranian involvement in helping to create an Islamic state, and a rebuttal by Turajonzoda and the Iranians, see: Asal Azamova, “...The Iranian model of an Islamic republic is probably not likely to fit Tajikistan”, *Moscow News* (2 September 1992); Justin Burke, ‘Tajiks Struggle For National Identity’, *The Christian Science Monitor* (30 September 1992); Kathy Lally, ‘Tajikistan: Post-Soviet Fragmentation’, *The Sun* [Baltimore], (13 September 1992) 1.C.

<sup>315</sup> Ralph Boulton, ‘Cotton fields war raises spectre of Central Asia conflict’, *Reuters* (2 Sept 1992).

<sup>316</sup> ‘Kurgan-Tyube’, *Agence France-Presse* (13 November 1992).



the expense of “democratic” ones.<sup>317</sup> And the discourse on the possibility of an Islamic state was used even by DPT leader Yusuf, if only as a bluff: “Today there is no basis for an Islamic state in Tajikistan. [...] That would change immediately with Russian army intervention. What may be 40 years away could then come in two years.”<sup>318</sup>

Beyond the negative branding of entire groups, there were verbal attacks and threats against individuals. A specific tactic that exacerbated regionalism was the series of personal attacks surrounding the firing of the ethnic Pamiri Mahmadayoz Navjuvanov. Kenjaev fired Navjuvanov from his position as Minister of the Interior in March 1992 for his refusal to move forcefully against anti-government demonstrators in September 1991. Navjuvanov in return accused Kenjaev of discriminating against Pamiris. The result was Pamiri supporters of Navjuvanov gathering in Shahidon square and calling for the resignation of Kenjaev.<sup>319</sup>

The escalating rhetoric, both during and immediately after the protests, increased tensions and hostilities between the opposition and the pro-government sides. Gavhar Juraeva, an academic active in the opposition, blames the government for regionalising the protest cycle by switching from rhetoric of “national unity” and “reconciliation,” which it used during the February 1990 protests to the playing of a “regional card.”<sup>320</sup> She also points to the government’s branding of Turajonzoda as an “enemy of the people” as a significant turning point in that it “had the unintended consequence of increasing both his prestige and the role of the religious wing within the opposition.”<sup>321</sup> Threats of imprisonment and even death became common, Whitlock reports:

Some Azadi demonstrators shouted wildly that Turajanzoda was a criminal, and should be put on trial. One government man initially in sympathy with the Shahidan group froze in horror when someone there yelled ‘Burn the communists’ houses and let them suffocate in the smoke!’ He was not alone in feeling that things had gone too far, and that people had begun to play dangerous parts.<sup>322</sup>

Turajonzoda later returned the insult at a rally in September 1992 when he and Himmatzoda referred to the opposition forces as the “Army of God” while naming the Kulobi forces and the religious leaders who supported them as the “Army of Satan.”<sup>323</sup>

One pro-government figure, Sangak Safarov, was one of the people at the protests already framing the situation in regional terms when he spoke of Kulobis being

<sup>317</sup> Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging Statehood’, 18.

<sup>318</sup> Ralph Boulton, ‘Cotton fields war raises spectre of Central Asia conflict’, Reuters (2 Sept 1992).

<sup>319</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 179. Kilavuz notes that although Kenjaev was raised in Hisor by Turajonzoda’s father, Leninobod was his ‘adopted’ region of origin thanks to being based there during his legal career and due to Nabiev being his patron.

<sup>320</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 266.

<sup>321</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 266.

<sup>322</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161.

<sup>323</sup> Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II’, 181.

able to restore order to the city.<sup>324</sup> Some in the opposition saw the issue in terms of ‘Kulobis’ as well. After the pro-government forces left Ozodi square the garbage-strewn area was shown on TV with a sign that read ‘Museum of Kulob’ and accompanied with a commentator who remarked “Look at how dirty these Kulobis made our city.”<sup>325</sup> Furthermore, according to Whitlock, TV reporters filmed a room in the basement of parliament filled with condoms and bottles while remarking “this is where the Kulobis took our girls and raped them.”<sup>326</sup> Similar rumours circulated in Kulob, where some speculated that Gharmis’ goals were to seize power and then take Kulobis’ daughters. Later, in May, some imams at Friday prayers took to taunting Kulobis as “losers” while also mocking Uzbeks.<sup>327</sup> Roy provides a similar analysis, noting that “from the first demonstrations, identity obtained over ideological denomination in both camps: in the sermons of the mullahs, ‘Kulabi’ was equivalent to ‘Kafir’ [infidel]...”<sup>328</sup> The opposition adviser Gretskey later acknowledged the mistake of rhetorically attacking all Kulobis. He argues that in May 1992 “some leaders of the opposition indulged in the vice of localism by stirring anti-Kulobi emotions that deeply offended Kulob sensibilities and made them more prone to fight the opposition to the end.”<sup>329</sup> Some officials, such as the Qurghonteppa Province Executive Committee Chairman Nurali Qurbonov at the end of September, were conciliatory when referring to Kulobis as a whole.<sup>330</sup> However, by this time it was too late.

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<sup>324</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 160.

<sup>325</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 164.

<sup>326</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 164.

<sup>327</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 160, 164.

<sup>328</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 136.

<sup>329</sup> Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments, and Prospects for Peace’, 222. He frames this as a response, albeit a poor one, to the pro-government side tactic of ‘exacerbating localism.’ However, some individuals attempted to de-emphasize regional cleavages. As an example, in early July *Moskoskiye novosti* reported that some in the government were intentionally not naming sides to the conflict in order to not draw in “local compatriots” by emphasising regional aspects of the violent conflict in the Vakhsh Valley. See: Asal Azamova, ‘Tajikistan: In flames of internecine wars’, *Moskoskiye novosti* (5 July 1992) 9, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 26 (29 July 1992).

<sup>330</sup> Tajik Radio 1300gmt (28 September 1992) in SWB SU/1499 (30 September 1992) B/6. Qurbonov’s comments on Tajik Radio: “We do not want to blame the people of Kulyab. The population of Kulyab, at large, support peace and want peace. However, those groups who are well known to us, their leaders being Sangak Safarov, Langari Langariev, and others, including Rustam Abdurakhim, were all involved in the bloodshed.”

## Security Dilemmas

“Both sides require their opponents to disarm. But no one wants to take the initiative and set an example.”

-Reporters’ paraphrase of a Russian Colonel’s assessment of negotiations.<sup>331</sup>

Referring to the political contestation and protests in the capital, Zartman remarks that “In each of the three major periods of escalating confrontation, the conflict in Tajikistan illustrates the rational-instrumental model and especially the security dilemma”<sup>332</sup> The dilemmas faced were not just those of physical violence. Markowitz provides a similar analysis, noting that the supporters of both sides “each intensified their efforts to advance a national agenda that undercut the power of the other. Mobilization responded to and drove these political maneuvers within the central leadership...”<sup>333</sup> Good examples are attacks on careers and assets. Kenjaev, once Nabiev appointed him to the Chair on National Security (the KGB successor) in early 1992, began the use of “judicial and administrative harassment” against all those who opposed Nabiev, including DPT and Rastokhez members and the prominent Pamiri Navjuvonov.<sup>334</sup> The opposition considered Nabiev’s subsequent appointment of Kenjaev to speaker of parliament as a “virtual declaration of war.”<sup>335</sup> Under the Government of National Reconciliation (GNR) that formed in May 1992, opposition members went after the assets of the pro-government bases. First, they nationalised Communist Party assets. Then they attempted to expropriate “joint ventures” that were created by Khujandis and Kulobis during winter 1991-1992.<sup>336</sup> Opposition IRP and DPT ministers also opened trials against former government figures, with the former Abdulmalik Abdullojonov of Khujand being the most notable.<sup>337</sup> Kulobi elites were

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<sup>331</sup> Anatoly Ladin and Alexandr Pelts, ‘Tadzhikistan: nikto ne khochet razoruzhatsya pervym’, *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 282 (10 December 1992).

<sup>332</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 226. Rubin uses “competitive mobilization”: “The descent into civil war mainly resulted from the breakdown of social control due to the dissolution of Soviet institutions. In the resulting insecurity, competitive mobilization led to escalation of conflict among patronage networks defined by then contours of elite recruitment in Soviet Tajikistan.” See: Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 153.

<sup>333</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 102.

<sup>334</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 264-5.

<sup>335</sup> Juraeva, ‘Ethnic Conflict in Tajikistan’, 264-5.

<sup>336</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 18-9. Dudoignon writes that the expropriation attempt failed “since those firms were now protected by the newly appointed Attorney General Nurullah Huwaydulayev (assassinated in August 1992).”

<sup>337</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 19. Dudoignon call Abdullojonov “a key figure of Tajik parallel economy, involved in various scandals linked with privatization since 1988, financier of the “Red” militias during the civil war and eventually

under threat as they were, according to Dudoignon, from a region that has little industry and is “economically dependent, [and] are at once still closely tied to the practices of the parallel economy and viscerally attached to preserving the workings and symbols of the old regime...”<sup>338</sup> Journalist Igor Rotar quotes the Kulobi Mullah Sharifzoda who said that the opposition “stands against the people of our province. [...] Kuliabis were the first to go out on the square, and that is why the opposition considers them their main enemy.”<sup>339</sup> Kulobi leaders, according to Markowitz, “had come to view themselves under attack as Kuliabis.”<sup>340</sup> The early September murder in or near Dushanbe of S. Sangov,<sup>341</sup> the Kulob Province Executive Committee Deputy Chairman, reinforced this belief.<sup>342</sup>

The first instance of violent conflict happened on May 5 as a convoy of counter-demonstrators were arriving in Dushanbe from Kulob. And, as in other incidents, there are two irreconcilable versions of ‘who shot first.’<sup>343</sup> Zartman argues that the key event (the “classic security dilemma”) began with “demonstrating Mullahs attempting to deter a government attack through a false claim of ‘27,000’ guns, which gave Nabiev justification to hand out automatic weapons to his Kulobi supporters.”<sup>344</sup> On 2 May 1992 President Nabiev formed a “presidential guard” (or ‘National Guard’) by arming his supporters; an event that Kilavuz says “brought the country to civil war.”<sup>345</sup> On 5 May the National Guard attempted to break up the Shahidon protests and ‘dozens’ died.

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Tajikistan's Prime Minister after the latter's victory, from October 1992 to December 1993.” Dudoignon goes on: “Abdullajanov was accused of having built his (considerable) fortune by exporting Tajikistan's raw materials at lower price, before "privatizing" Tajik CPOs assets during Gorbachev's era.” For more on Abdullojonov's career and his role in the economy and government, see Nourzhanov, ‘Alternative Social Institutions and the Politics of Neo-Patrimonialism in Tajikistan.’

<sup>338</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Political Parties and Forces in Tajikistan, 1989-1993’, 75-6.

<sup>339</sup> Igor Rotar, ‘Kommunist mozhet byt’ pravovernym musul'maninom, schitaet imam hatib Kuliabskii mecheti Khaidar Sharifzoda’, *Nezavisimaia gazeta* (June 5, 1992): 3, as cited in Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 109-10. Note only opposition members spoke out against Kulobis. In mid-September, one of Tajikistan's Prime Ministers, Jamshed Karimov, “accused people of Kulob Oblast of trying to internationalize the conflict.” See: Ostankino TV (17 September 1992) in SWB SU/1489 (18 September 1992) i.

<sup>340</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 109-10.

<sup>341</sup> Ostankino Channel 1 TV, Moscow 1445gmt (6 September 1992) in SWB SU/1480 (8 September 1992) C1/1. Ostankino TV reports that his body was found in a “river near Dushanbe.”

<sup>342</sup> In a February 1993 letter to Helsinki Watch, Emomali Rahmon pointed to the murders of Sangov and other prominent leaders, which he blamed on the opposition, as part of a “planned genocide” against Kulobis, Leninobodis, Uzbeks and Russians. See: Denber and Rubin, *Human Rights in Tajikistan*, 55.

<sup>343</sup> These sources state that the National Guards shot at opposition supporters who were attempting to block Kulobis from entering Dushanbe: Channel 1 TV, Moscow, 1700gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1; Postfactum 1818gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1; ITAR-TASS, 0765gmt (6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1374 (7 May 1992) C2/1-2; Postfactum (1628gmt 6 May 1992) in SWB SU/1375 (8 May 1992) C1/2. On the other side, Whitlock writes that the first instance of violent conflict happened as a convoy of counter-demonstrators were arriving in Dushanbe from Kulob. In her version, unknown persons fired on the convoy, an incident that the opposition leaders maintain did not involve their supporters. See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 161.

<sup>344</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 227.

<sup>345</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152

Soon after, about 60 people died in street battles in the capital.<sup>346</sup> Meanwhile, according to Markowitz, the conflict in the capital – followed by the power-sharing agreement under the GNR (immediately rejected by Kulobi elites) – turned “disaffection among Kuliab’s provincial elite into an overriding need to protect their interest through the use of force—through the formation of “self-defense” units.”<sup>347</sup> Their worries were likely not assuaged when a very partisan figure, the deputy leader of the IRP Davlat Usmon, was made deputy PM and tasked as the person to command a security unit that would in the future be in charge of disarming both sides.<sup>348</sup> The security dilemmas were soon in full force, in Markowitz’s words, “As the standoff between the two sides became more intense, each side was arming itself as quickly as possible”<sup>349</sup> In an address to Cabinet on 28 May 1992 Premier Akbar Mirzoev stated that

...peaceful [sic] political confrontation has been 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.<sup>350</sup>

A good example of the perceived security dilemmas is provided by an accountant in southern Tajikistan who had no political affiliations. The man, probably a Gharmi Tajik, stated:

I took up arms in September 1992, when I saw with my own eyes that the Uzbeks living in our area were arming themselves. [...] If we hadn’t taken these weapons for ourselves they would have killed us like they have killed a lot of people in Garm [Gharm].<sup>351</sup>

For those in the countryside, Whitlock portrays an environment suffering from an information vacuum. She writes that people had no access to news or telephones, and that roads were blocked. She quotes one young man in the Vakhsh Valley who remarked “Dushanbe? We knew nothing of Qurghon Teppa, let alone Dushanbe!”<sup>352</sup> It

<sup>346</sup> Walter Ruby, ‘Tajik President Creates Guard to Crush Protests’, *Christian Science Monitor* (6 May 1992); Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1997), 106, as cited in Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 152

<sup>347</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 102, 108-10. See also: Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 111-2.

<sup>348</sup> Splidsboel-Hansen, ‘The Outbreak and Settlement of Civil War’, 11.

<sup>349</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 125.

<sup>350</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 111-2, quoting/translating *Vechernii Dushanbe*, 29 May 1992.

<sup>351</sup> Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 13.

<sup>352</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 167. Similarly, *Izvestia* reported that most residents of Tajikistan were confused about the two sides and what they were fighting for. See: Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 Sept 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992). There was a possible mutual information vacuum in Dushanbe as well. Anna Matveeva writes: “Residents of Dushanbe had little information about the fighting in the south, since the mass media was in crisis and the remaining media outlets based in Dushanbe and Khujand did not cover events in the south.” See: Matveeva, ‘The Perils of Emerging

was in this environment in southern Tajikistan that “isolated home-grown vigilante groups” were forming.<sup>353</sup>

## Regionalism

Roy de-emphasises ethnicity and religion, instead stressing that the conflict was between “solidarity groups formed in networks.”<sup>354</sup> Kilavuz’s work focuses on the causes of the conflict, and she qualifies the importance of ‘regionalism.’ Her interviews overwhelmingly show that people believe there were good relations between people from different regions of origin, and that it was the war that caused the poor relations, not vice versa.<sup>355</sup> Her conclusions are as follows:

The civil war in Tajikistan was not caused by regional animosities. Rather, regionalization occurred in the course of the civil war. That is, the war regionalized the conflict. This took place by means of the activation of regional networks, and intensified during the violent conflict. Persecution by militias, and murders based on regional origin, made regional identity and regionalism salient in the war.<sup>356</sup>

Although regionalism was not the cause of the conflict, it became a tool for attracting support and mobilizing people for the war effort. The Communists and opposition forces used regional loyalties for their own aims, during the demonstrations and for the war effort.<sup>357</sup>

Dudoignon provides an analysis of the regional patronage networks that moves the debate away from whether or not regionalism was the/a causal mechanism for the conflict or not. Rather, he focuses on how the regional patterns of patronage networks provided the structure, or fault lines, for the conflict. Rubin refers to Dudoignon’s description of social cleavages in the conflict, and notes the Marxist and Weberian categories he uses:

...they are defined by the relations of different social groups to the means of production, exchange, domination and surveillance. He thus refers to various levels of

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Statehood’, 18. However, Matveeva does overstate the information vacuum in Dushanbe. Many Russian media outlets reported from the south. Additionally, so did Tajik outlets such as Tajik Radio.

<sup>353</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 167.

<sup>354</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 48. Similarly, Roy writes elsewhere: “Yet a closer study of political affiliations, on the national as well as local level, reveals that allegiance to a particular camp is determined, not by the militants’ political development, but by their membership of ethnic or inter-ethnic solidarity groups.” See: Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134.

<sup>355</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 187-8, 208-9.

<sup>356</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 208-9. See also: *ibid.*, 197.

<sup>357</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90. Kilavuz notes that Kenjaev, Navjuvanov and Nuri all did this. Although she does note that Nuri had supporters in Kulob and Khujand. Elsewhere, Kilavuz states: “Nevertheless, as has been shown, parties to the war were not composed of homogenous groups of people from the same region. Regionalism was exploited in the conflict in order to attract support and mobilize people for the war effort. Elites also used religious, ethnic, or other allegiances in order to mobilize people, when these were more suitable.” See: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 208-9.

our party apparatus, the economic and state technocrats, the political police, the cultural-literary intelligentsia, directors and members of collective farms, industrial workers, and mafias, in the restricted sense of groups of people engaged in clearly criminal activity such as narcotics smuggling. [...] These are the categories Dudoignon regards as fundamental. They are articulated, however, with others. The social cleavages are related to ideological ones in obvious ways, in so far as different groups saw their interests lying with or against the dissolution of the empire and other measures associated with the conflict over the nature of independent Tajikistan. Finally, each of the social categories had a particular regional pattern of recruitment. The regional ties of patronage became the mechanism of mobilization for the war that expressed the more fundamental cleavages defined by the relation of social actors to the assets of the disintegrating state.<sup>358</sup>

Specifically in regards to Qurghonteppa, Markowitz writes that the worst of the fighting in that province did not result from “submerged emotional ties of group identity” nor from “manipulation of regional and ethnic differences amidst shifting circumstances,” but rather from the political divisions within the “political elite” of Qurghonteppa Province in a competition for assets and resources that fell along lines of “regional identities.”<sup>359</sup>

### Islam and Regional Solidarity

“What is striking is the inability of the Islamists, just as in Afghanistan, to rise above national, ethnic and localist rifts.”

- Olivier Roy<sup>360</sup>

Roy repeats the often noted fact that the civil war in Tajikistan was not, on the whole, a war of ideology between communists and Islamists, but rather “between regionalist groupings whose antagonistic identity had been, if not created, at least reinforced by the Soviet system.”<sup>361</sup> As for those ‘Islamists,’ numerous authors mention the dominance of Gharmis in the IRP and the dominance of the IRP in the Gharmi

<sup>358</sup> Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 146. Citing Stephane Dudoignon, ‘Une segmentation peut en cacher une autre: regionalisms et clivages politico-economic au Tadjikistan’, in S.A. Dudoignon and G. Jahangiri (eds.) *Le Tadjikistan existe-t-il? Destins politiques d’une “nation imparfaite”*, special edition of *Cahiers d’Etudes sur la mediteranee orientale et le monde turco-iranien* (CEMOTI), 1994, Vol. 18, 78-130. Rubin summarises his own argument: “Tajiks are loyal not so much to their ill-defined nationality as to clans that developed out of the geography of the mountain and desert lands of Central Asia. The ideologies adopted and propagated in the civil war were means of legitimizing mobilization (and foreign support) in defense of clan interests. With the removal of the stabilizing imperial hand, clan relations reverted to anarchy, where each clan sought the maximum influence and power (or perhaps security) using whatever means it could.” See: Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, 144.

<sup>359</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 129-33. Markowitz writes that “The social cleavages fostered by these divisions determined which villages were destroyed and which were spared, as villages alongside one another met with very different fates, depending upon the perceived origins of their residents and who was thought to have backed the Opposition.” See: *Ibid.*, 130.

<sup>360</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 141.

<sup>361</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 48. See also: Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 250.

communities. The IRP did not hold much appeal to those outside of Gharmi Tajiks, even for mullahs. For example, Roy argues that “local mullahs usually followed, rather than led, the groups they belonged to.”<sup>362</sup> Kilavuz disagrees slightly and notes that there were numerous supporters of the opposition in Kulob, including the IRP, but that they were “repressed.” She specifically notes that the IRP branch in Kulob was well organised and controlled its own mosque.<sup>363</sup> One notable Kulobi mullah stuck with the IRP – Mullah Abdullo Abdurrahim (Rahimov), a Kulobi who was a founder of the IRP and later a member in exile in Afghanistan.<sup>364</sup>

As for members of the IRP in Kulob being ‘repressed,’ anecdotes do back up Kilavuz’s assertion – but they do not provide any evidence of widespread IRP membership in Kulob Province or amongst Kulobis elsewhere. For example, in early July 1992 unnamed attackers killed 12 IRP members in Kulob.<sup>365</sup> In Roy’s version, the power of regional affiliation eventually prevailed over whatever possible appeal the IRP may have held for the mullahs. Roy argues that all but one of the mullahs of Kulob, Hisor and Leninobod “violently condemned the IRP” and its alleged brand of imported Wahhabi Islam, juxtaposing it with a “national and traditional Islam heavily imbued with Naqshbandi Sufism.”<sup>366</sup> Roy and Mullojonov both note that it was a Kulobi mullah, Haydar Sharifzoda (Sharifov), the *imom-khotib* of Kulob Province, who first challenged Turajonzoda and his new strategy of allying with the IRP and the opposition.<sup>367</sup> From his base in Kulob, Haydar Sharifzoda (by now the rallying point for many Muslim leaders who had left the *Qoziyot*) called Turajonzoda a “Wahhabi” and an “enemy” of the Kulobi people.<sup>368</sup> In turn Haydar Sharifzoda was branded the “Red (i.e., Communist) Mullah.”<sup>369</sup> Kilavuz disagrees with Roy that Haydar Sharifzoda acted only out of regional loyalties. She instead stresses his personal rivalry with Turajonzoda as

<sup>362</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134-5.

<sup>363</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184. Kilavuz bases this on her interviews with IRP members. She also cites: Atkin, ‘Tajikistan: Reform, Reaction and Civil War’, 615; Muriel Atkin, ‘Tajikistan’s Civil War’, *Current History* (October 1997), 338; FBIS Soviet Union Daily Report, 30 September 1991, 97.

<sup>364</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42, n. 14. Akiner suggests that Sharifzoda’s anti-opposition zeal was reinforced by the poor treatment he felt that he received from the head of the *Qoziyot* and opposition figure Turajonzoda. See *ibid*, 32. See also: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184.

<sup>365</sup> Aleksandr Karpov, ‘Tajikistan: There was shooting in the capital, and now there’s shooting in the provinces’, *Izvestia* (11 June 1992) 2, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 23 (8 July 1992). Karpov gives a figure of 21 people killed in Kulob in the first week of July over “political disagreements.”

<sup>366</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134-6, 139-40.

<sup>367</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 238-9. Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134-6, 139-40; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 48.

<sup>368</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 238-9.

<sup>369</sup> Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 238-9.



being more important, an analysis she bases on Turajonzoda's advisor's writings.<sup>370</sup> Possible personal motivations aside, Haydar Sharifzoda's action once returning to Kulob reinforced the importance of regional affiliation.

Kilavuz argues that Turajonzoda – as an independent figure – was the key broker in bringing together official imams, political Islamists and Sufi notables. In particular she argues that it was Turajonzoda's prestigious Sufi lineage that won him support among Sufi sheikhs.<sup>371</sup> However, a prominent Naqshbandi Sufi leader from Hisor, Fathullokhon Sharifzoda, was firmly against both the IRP and Turajonzoda from the beginning.<sup>372</sup> Fathullo Sharifzoda's prominence led him to be selected as a rival mufti at a May 1992 conference in Kulob.<sup>373</sup> Fathullo Sharifzoda then assisted in recruiting for the Popular Front in the Hisor Valley. After Emomali Rahmon came to power, the *Qoziyot* was abolished and Fathullo Sharifzoda was appointed mufti of Tajikistan.<sup>374</sup> Turajonzoda's family's lineage may have brought him a certain level of legitimacy among Sufis, but clearly not enough to overcome the profane loyalties of religious leaders, as demonstrated by the overwhelming opposition to Turajonzoda and the IRP by the religious notables of Kulob and Hisor.<sup>375</sup> As noted by Oumar Arabov, "The Civil War showed that regionalism did not spare the Sufi milieu: Sufis were on both sides of the barricades."<sup>376</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 170. Kilavuz relies on the account of Sergei Gretskey, Turajonzoda's adviser. According to Gretskey, Sharifzoda was accused of corruption and Turajonzoda removed him from the post of *imam khotib* of Kulob. After returning to Kulob from his meeting with Turajonzoda he began a campaign against the Qazi. He accused him of being a "Wahhabi" and an enemy of the Kulobis. Sharifzoda was later to become an important figure in mobilizing fighters in Kulob for the Popular Front. See: Sergei Gretskey, 'Profile: Qadi Akbar Turajonzoda,' *Central Asia Monitor*, 1 (1994), 18. Similarly, Akiner suggests that Sharifzoda's anti-opposition zeal was reinforced by the poor treatment he felt that he received from Turajonzoda. See: Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 32. Note: Gretskey may have the version of events backwards. Mullojonov writes that after Turajonzoda entered into an alliance with the IRP, he and Sharifzoda entered into a political battle. In retaliation, the Qoziyot audited Sharifzoda and accused him of embezzling funds. An initial deal for amnesty in exchange for Haydar retiring to a mosque in his home village fell apart and he refused to vacate his office for Mullah Abdurahim, a leader "close to the IRP." See: Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 238-9.

<sup>371</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 170-1.

<sup>372</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia', 134; Niyazi, 'Islam and Tajikistan's Human and Ecological Crisis', 196, n. 13. Niyazi cites an opposition newspaper's claim that Sharifzoda had been a student of Turajonzoda. See: Niyazi, 'Islam and Tajikistan's Human and Ecological Crisis', 196, n. 13; Aziz Niyazi, 'Islam in Tajikistan: Tradition and modernity', *Religion, State and Society*, Vol. 26, No. 1 (1998), 48, n. 14. Both citing *Charogi Ruz*, No. 1(90), 1996.

<sup>373</sup> Felix Corley, 'Obituary: The Chief Mufti of Tajikistan', *The Independent*, 23 January 1996. Sharifzoda died violently at the hands of unknown gunmen in January 1996.

<sup>374</sup> Mullojonov, 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period', 246-7. Note: Ishon Turajon, the father of Turajonzoda, claims that Sharifzoda had been promised the highest position of religious leadership in Tajikistan as early as 1991.

<sup>375</sup> Roy, 'Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia', 139-40.

<sup>376</sup> Arabov, 'A note on Sufism in Tajikistan: what does it look like?', 347.

In reference to Gharmis who were not mullahs, Roy points to the trend of Gharmi “apparatchiks” and farm bosses joining the IRP. Roy states that “*kolkhoz* presidents and mullahs from the same *kolkhoz* usually found themselves in the same camp: Islamic-democrat if they were ‘Garmis’, conservatives if they were ‘Kulyabis.’”<sup>377</sup> The end result in Tajikistan for the IRP was for it to be, in Roy’s words, “discredited” not just for failing to protect the civilian population associated with it, but also for becoming synonymous with Gharmi interests.<sup>378</sup>

### **‘Regionalisation’: The Increased Significance of Regional Identity**

“Tajikistan was never a nation. We never liked to intermarry because we knew we had to keep our blood pure.”

- Kulobi fighter commenting on the conflict.<sup>379</sup>

“The Kuliabis are the lowest Tajiks. Every Tajik learns that from the time he is [a child].”

- A pro-opposition (and clearly Gharmi) commander from Kuybyshev.<sup>380</sup>

“We sat with them. We ate with them. We never cared whether they were Kuliabi or not.”

- Another fighter at Kuybyshev, hinting that this level of enmity is recent.<sup>381</sup>

Kilavuz’s argument on the subject of regional identity in the civil war is that “regional animosities” were not the cause of the war, but rather something that gradually increased as the sides to the conflict became more “regionally homogeneous” during violent conflict; Kulobis became identified with the pro-government side and

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<sup>377</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134-5, 139-140. Roy wrote further: “In a word, mullahs and collective farm presidents could end up together, to the extent that they joined not an ideological camp but a local faction. The mosque only opposed the Executive Committee of a *Kolkhoz* when the *kolkhoz* was divided ethnically, or into local factions, and one took a secular approach while the other adopted an Islamic orientation.” As an example of a Gharmi farm boss joining the IRP, Roy mentions Shadi Kabirovich of the Navruz sovkhoz.

<sup>378</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 134-5, 139-141.

<sup>379</sup> D. Ljunggren, ‘Uneasy calm in Tajikistan after virtual civil war’, Reuters News (28 Feb 1993).

<sup>380</sup> Michael Hetzer, ‘Tajikistan: defenders of Kurgan Tyube battle the old regime’, Inter Press Service (9 October 1992). Hetzer identifies the (defeated) fighter as “Haji Jamanakhmadob, a pro-government commander of 50 to 100 troops in the defense of the Kuybyshev Collective Farm.” Kuybyshev was the scene of Kulobi versus Gharmi fighting.

<sup>381</sup> Michael Hetzer, ‘Tajikistan: defenders of Kurgan Tyube battle the old regime’, Inter Press Service (9 October 1992). The man, somewhat ironically wearing a ‘Team USA’ baseball cap, is identified as “Makhmat Kahm,” a 41 year-old pro-opposition fighter.

Gharmis with the opposition, and were killed accordingly.<sup>382</sup> Similarly, Nourzhanov notes that it was regional affiliation, not Islam, democracy, or “constitutional order” that motivated people to join the conflict once the violence started.<sup>383</sup> Roy agrees, noting that despite the apparent ideological beginnings of the conflict, the combatants’ allegiances were determined by region of origin and by ethnicity.<sup>384</sup>

The decision to join the conflict was sometimes not a choice, but a result of coercion. Kilavuz writes that many informers told her that young men were given a choice to join a militia or die. At the same time families were targeted for not contributing money or sons to the militias. And prominent members of the community were not exempt. Kilavuz cites example of both Kulobis and Gharmis being killed by their own people for not contributing money.<sup>385</sup> Kilavuz argues that the worsening conflict resulted in the elimination of “moderate figures” and the rise of “aggressive ones” as people turned away from the more conciliatory voices.<sup>386</sup> She claims, for example, that Himmatzoda, the leader of the IRP, lost control over local leaders.<sup>387</sup> This is reflected in Himmatzoda’s increasingly obscure profile after the violent conflict started. He is not mentioned as a leader or organiser in any significant capacity.<sup>388</sup> In regards to Kulob, after the pro-government demonstrators left Dushanbe, Kulobi law enforcement, criminal groups and local politicians cooperated in forcing anybody

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<sup>382</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 186. Elsewhere (p. 196) Kilavuz summarises her argument: “...I have stressed the importance of regional identity in the network formation of elites. These networks were activated for the war effort, in which political and armed entrepreneurs made use of regional loyalties for mobilization purposes. In order to secure the support of local populations, they used the language of regionalism. The rural structure of the Republic embodied within the kolkhoz system, together with the regionally-based organization of elite networks, ensured that region would become a significant mobilization tool in the war.”

<sup>383</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 113. This view is supported by Akhmedov who notes that the high-level leaders of the individual factions and parties were predominantly from one region. See: Akhmedov, ‘Tajikistan II’, 184-5.

<sup>384</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?’, 133-5, 137-8; Roy, ‘Kolkhoz and Civil Society in the Independent States of Central Asia’, 109-112; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 85-100.

<sup>385</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 192-3. One informer told Kilavuz: “There were some families. They could not say they did not support the militias. But they did not send their kids, did not give money. They killed them. People could not say ‘we do not support’ because of fear. They obeyed them and did whatever they said.” Another remarked about a rich Gharmi: “He was from Garm. He was killed by Garmis. He had resisted them. They wanted money. He was rich. They came at night and took him from his house and killed him. There are many stories like this. Kulyabis also did this. If you did not obey, they would kill you. Many obeyed because they were afraid.” Note that these anecdotes are not dated.

<sup>386</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90.

<sup>387</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90. Kilavuz continues: “Central leaders such as IRP leader Himmatzoda lost their power over local leaders. Moderates were eliminated, sometimes physically, by the hardliners. For example, Jienkhan Rizaev [Jurakhon/Jahonkhon/Jienkhon/Jonkhon Rizoiev], (chairman of the Kulyab region and widely regarded as a moderate figure ready to compromise) was killed by Sangak Safarov. On the opposition side, such moderate leaders as Sadirov Rizvan were killed, and replaced by individuals advocating more radical positions.” Brackets mine.

<sup>388</sup> Himmatzoda would eventually be formally replaced by Nuri.

associated with the opposition (or suspected of being so) out of Kulob regardless of region of origin.<sup>389</sup> As a first priority the Kulobi militia under the leadership of Safarov violently attacked all dissenters at home, totally destroying the opposition presence there by the end of June.<sup>390</sup>

According to Iskander Asadulloev, the GNR blockaded Kulob in response to open warfare in Qurghonteppa.<sup>391</sup> Roy refers to the blockade on the Kulob Province as an “economic blockade,”<sup>392</sup> while Zartman interprets the ‘Gharmi’ blockade of Kulob as a response to the Popular Front’s “bloody purge of democratic sympathizers.”<sup>393</sup> Two analysts, Zviagelskaya and Akiner, attempt to explain the Kulobi counter-attack on the Qurghonteppa region as a result of the anger and desperation generated by the opposition’s blockade of Kulob. Akiner claims that the blockade of Kulob further “inflamed the crisis by giving a focus to Kulyabi fury.”<sup>394</sup> For example, N. Rustamov, Deputy Chairman of the Kulob Provincial Soviet Executive Committee remarked, in regards to the blockade tactic, that “A starving man – one who, moreover, has been driven into a corner – has only one option: to fight to the end.”<sup>395</sup> At a lower level, a Kulobi fighter stated “We are fighting to break the blockade. We have no bread. We want to eat. We want to eat in peace. Once we have won the battle we will lay down our arms and go home – once there is a just government.”<sup>396</sup>

Zviagelskaya provides a more detailed explanation. She claims that Kulob was at the “brink of famine” and that the opposition believed – incorrectly – that this pressure on the Kulobis would force them to make concessions to the opposition bloc.<sup>397</sup> Whitlock’s description – illustrated with the anecdotes of a young Gharmi and a young Kulobi – is somewhat less dramatic and mentions the defensive aspect of the blockades:

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<sup>389</sup> Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, 111-2; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5; Naumkin, ‘Experience and Prospects for Settlement of Ethno-National Conflicts in Central Asia and Transcaucasia’, 182; Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228; Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 42. Akiner describes the same process taking place in the IRP strongholds of Qarotegin (Gharm) and Darvoz.

<sup>390</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 184-5.

<sup>391</sup> Iskander Asadullaev, ‘The Tajikistan government’, in *Politics of Compromise: The Tajikistan Peace Process*. Edited by K. Abdullaev and C. Barnes (London: Conciliation Resources, 2001), 24.

<sup>392</sup> Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia’, 136. Other aspects of the blockade include cutting communication, which occurred on September 21 when all phone lines between Dushanbe and Kulob were cut halfway between Danghara and Dushanbe – except for an emergency link. See: Tajik Radio 1700gmt (21 September 1992) and 0800gmt (22 September 1992) in SWB SU/1493 (23 September 1992) B/8.

<sup>393</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 228.

<sup>394</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan: Disintegration or Reconciliation?*, 38.

<sup>395</sup> K. Belyaninova and A. Korzun, ‘Presidents don’t go away just like that’, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* (10 Sept 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 36 (7 October 1992).

<sup>396</sup> C. Cordahi, ‘Tajikistan: Old guard advances on rebel government’, *Inter Press* (22 Oct 1992).

<sup>397</sup> Zviagelskaya, *The Tajik Conflict*, n.p.

The combined self-defence forces of different kolkhozes blocked the road to Kulab with tractors and concrete slabs. 'We thought only to protect ourselves,' Daler says. Other Hezb-e Nahzat-e Islami [IRP] forces, seeking to defend what successes they had had in Dushanbe, also built blockades along the two roads between the capital and Kulab. [...]

Jafar (also not his real name) was on the Kulab side of the barricades. 'Of course, we took up arms to protect ourselves,' he also says. 'Every family put up a son to join Sangak Safarov's militia. From my family, I was that boy.' After security, there, the most pressing concern of ordinary Kulabis was food. With no reserves to fall back on, families were rendered destitute when the Dushanbe road was cut by the blockades. 'There was no soap, no flour, nothing,' says Jafar. 'The only way to get food was to go on raiding parties. Families sent their sons to fight, not for the glory of Kulab, or for power, or for Sangak, but because their boys might come back with some potatoes. And then they could manage for another day.'<sup>398</sup>

Safarov did indeed capitalise on the anger, declaring in late September that if the road to Dushanbe is not opened "we will do this ourselves, with weapons."<sup>399</sup> Qurbonali Mirzoaliev, the Chairman of the Kulob Province Executive Committee, described the situation in Kulob in mid-September, stressing the dire situation for the refugees, as well as medicine and food shortages that were resulting from the blockade.<sup>400</sup>

However, Zartman doubts the 'blockade of Kulob' version that claims Kulobis were suffering behind the blockade. He maintains that "Kulobi leaders created an image of humanitarian crisis from the blockade to elicit support from Russia."<sup>401</sup> He notes that the blockade lasted only from June to September 1992 when the Popular front destroyed the blockade [note that this does not apply to the road to Dushanbe, only to the road to Qurghonteppe, where the Kulobi forces were not victorious until October<sup>402</sup>] and that the hardship in Kulob was over-exaggerated,<sup>403</sup> contrary to media reports from 1992 that reported a level of suffering in Kulob that varied from "severe food shortages" to "brink of starvation."<sup>404</sup> While the blockade factor may be an exaggeration, it was

<sup>398</sup> Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 166.

<sup>399</sup> Interfax 1815gmt (22 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/2-3.

<sup>400</sup> Anatoly Ladin, 'Kulyab prosit o pomoshchi', *Krasnaya zvezda*, No. 213 (19 September 1992). His full remarks: "The situation in the province and especially in Kulob city is extremely difficult. In fact, we are under a complete economic and information blockade. For 30 days now the republic can not or will not provide the province and its centre with the necessary goods. We can pay salaries, in the city or the countryside. Every day 10 - 15 children die in hospitals due to the lack of necessary medicines, especially syringes. Refugees continue to arrive in Kulob city from the Qurghonteppe Province - Uzbeks, Uyghurs, Russians. There are more than eight thousand of them."

<sup>401</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 110.

<sup>402</sup> For example, ITAR-TASS on October 15 reported that a cease-fire was broken "after only a few hours" when Kulobis seized an unnamed bridge over the Vakhsh river in an attempt to end blockade of their province. See: RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 43 (30 October 1992) 71.

<sup>403</sup> Zartman writes "My Kulobi informants report that they did not suffer from lack of food and did not know anyone who did." See: Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 145, n. 93. Shodmon Yusuf actually announced the "economic blockade" of Kulob two weeks earlier. See: Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2.

<sup>404</sup> Examples: One reporter noted the possibility that that the population of Kulob may "face starvation" as winter approaches. But for the moment the report only mentioned that journalists in Kulob were noting shortages of fuel and bread. See: Cherif Cordahi, 'Tajikistan: starvation threatens as blockade continues',

obviously a long-term threat to the future livelihood of people in the Kulob region. Being cut off from Qurghonteppa and Dushanbe leaves Kulob with very little. The blockade must be considered as a motivating factor for Kulobis.

Concerning Qurghonteppa, Kilavuz notes that at the beginning of the conflict some Garmis sided with the 'Communist' government and were allied with Kulobis. She also notes that there were Kulobis who supported the IRP in Qurghonteppa. However, she also notes that they became a small minority as the process of conflict produced "more united regions," with the sides to the conflict acquiring a "more homogeneous nature", thanks partly to the suppression or killing of dissenters by actors such as Safarov.<sup>405</sup> More importantly, Kilavuz argues:

When the militias began to kill people according to their regional origin, the process itself made regional identity and regionalism one of the most important factors in war. Just being from Garm or the Pamirs became grounds for being killed by pro-government forces, while the opposition came to treat Kulyabis similarly. In order to create loyalty, the warring parties used regional identities and allegiances to create antagonism towards those from other regions, and thereby generate support for themselves. The process forced the majority to side with people from their own region.<sup>406</sup>

Dudoignon offers a similar analysis whereby "the evolution of the conflict conducted the protagonists toward further radicalization and regionalization."<sup>407</sup> Zartman's view is also similar, but he adds an emphasis on the process of efficient mobilisation, not just violence. He writes that "as escalating violence drove the imperatives of resource mobilization through regional loyalty the salience of ideology faded."<sup>408</sup> Schoeberlein makes a similar argument:

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Inter Press Service (7 October 1992); Cherif J. Corhahi, 'Tajikistan: old guard advances on rebel government', Inter Press Service (22 October 1992). RFE/RL reported that by late September in Tajikistan there were "severe food shortages, including in Kulob." See: RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 1, No. 24 (6 October 1992) 75. One story relayed the deaths of 45 people in Kulob Province due to food poisoning and mentions that the people in one collective farm (Path of Lenin) were "desperate for any food during a blockade during last year's fighting." See: Hugh Pope, 'Tajiks keep faith with law of gun', *The Independent* (22 February 1993) 8. ITAR-TASS reported the 800,000 people in Kulob Province being on the "brink" and "verge of starvation" by late September as a result of the blockade. See: ITAR-TASS 1049gmt (19 September 1992) in SWB SU/1491 (21 September 1992) B/1; ITAR-TASS 1201gmt (26 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1. The earlier article mentions the arrival on September 18 of a fifty vehicle humanitarian aid convoy with a military escort, presumably the 201<sup>st</sup>, arriving in Kulob. However, on September 26 General Ashurov of the 201<sup>st</sup> refused to provide escort for aid convoys to Kulob oblast because "armed groups" were blocking the pass. See: Russia TV channel, 1000gmt (26 September 1992) in SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/1.

<sup>405</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 185, 188-90.

<sup>406</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90. It wasn't always as extreme as killing. Kilavuz also notes: "Many informants in Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa stated that during the war in both regions, when Garmis took control of a region, Kulyabis could not pass through it, but Garmis could. In turn, when Kulyabis took control of a region, Garmis could not pass through it, but Kulyabis could."

<sup>407</sup> Dudoignon, 'Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia', 21. See also: Atkin, 'Tajikistan: reform, reaction, and civil war', 615.

<sup>408</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 116.

It is rather a different matter that once the struggle for power developed into a breakdown of central authority and armed clashes, certain groups held the upper hand in certain regions, a logical inevitability as opposed to an “agenda.” Subsequently, as the stand-off intensified, demagogues on both sides identified the enemy not as supporters of a political agenda but simply as members of regional groups. This regionalism was not a significant feature of the opposition movements, but rather grew out of the armed conflict.<sup>409</sup>

Kilavuz also points to more mundane motivations for people joining the conflict. She notes that some were getting involved to further their own personal interests, whether a long-term personal goal (securing a position that would provide power and wealth) or an immediate goal such as looting and theft. She also cites “personal enmities” as a motivating factor.<sup>410</sup> Kilavuz notes that this could of course be an enmity that pre-existed the conflict, but it could also be related to a more immediate enmity, namely revenge for the death of a family or friends. Kilavuz quotes a political scientist who lived in Qurghonteppa during the war: “As the war went on, people forgot about ideology. Ninety percent of people fought not because of religion, region, etc., but for local revenge, revenge for their relatives, friends.”<sup>411</sup> *Izvestia* reporters, focusing on the localised conflicts, stressed that “fighters on the opposing sides are acting according to the principal ‘They’re killing our people – we have to retaliate.’”<sup>412</sup> Nourzhanov relays the local perspective on revenge, in its idealised form:

...once cleansing on the basis of regional affiliation got underway and land confiscation, rape and pillage commenced, these acts affected the normative core of the Tajik traditional culture, epitomised in the concept of *nomus*, i.e. ‘honour’. The prescribed code of behaviour for the protection of honour (*nang*, or ‘dignity’) required all males in a patronymic association to exercise vengeance and self-assertion at all cost and under any circumstances.<sup>413</sup>

In the course of the conflict, some attacks were motivated by rivalries and vendettas.<sup>414</sup> These attacks unfortunately extended beyond fighters. During the summer of 1992 both

<sup>409</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 48, n. 5.

<sup>410</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 209.

<sup>411</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 193. Kilavuz writes further: “Some people joined to avenge relatives and friends who were killed in the war. Another informant in Qurghonteppa said: “Why were people participating? Because they killed his relatives, because of revenge.” Thus, some Kulyabis who supported the opposition before the war, eventually switched to the government side during the war, and fought for the Popular Front after their relatives had been killed by the opposition.”

<sup>412</sup> Vadim Belykh and Nikolai Burbyga, ‘Cartridges instead of Bread’, *Izvestia* (15 September 1992) 1, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 37 (14 October 1992).

<sup>413</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 113. Some Tajiks (presumably non-combatants) interviewed later expressed varying views on whether or not revenge was acceptable in Islam. See: Henry Dunant Centre, ‘Humanitarian engagement with armed groups’, 34. Two responses to whether revenge for murdered family members was justified: one 42 year old peasant from Kofarnihon: “There would be a wish to seek revenge but one shouldn’t do it. If my family member is killed, killing somebody else will not bring my parent back. That is how Islam is looking at these things”; while another respondent said “Of course!”

<sup>414</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 193. Kilavuz uses ‘personal enmities’ as a description.

sides used similar tactics, including targeting family members of the opposing side,<sup>415</sup> a tactic that had a certain level of approval from civilians. Nourzhanov explains that some believed “that only the terror could deter the other side and claimed that their violence was just an act of retaliation.”<sup>416</sup> Nourzhanov writes that vendettas arising out of the killing of relatives drew family and extended kin into the conflict. As an example in Qurghonteppa he cites Kulobis murdering relatives of Davlat Usmon, the Deputy Chairman of the IRP.<sup>417</sup> The targeting of family members and the resulting vendettas created a conflict that became increasingly intractable.<sup>418</sup>

Television coverage, while at times very uninformative,<sup>419</sup> became a divisive issue after during and after the upheavals of spring 1992. Aside from the issue of contentious Russian and Iranian broadcasting,<sup>420</sup> there were the previously mentioned

<sup>415</sup> Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39.

<sup>416</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 112-3.

<sup>417</sup> Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 112-3. The example of a Kulobi field commander seeking revenge is also cited. The commander had this to say: “...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 the 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.” See: G. Khaidarov and M. Inomov, *Tadzhikistan: tragediia i bol’ naroda* (St. Petersburg: Linko, 1993), 102-3, as quoted/translated in Nourzhanov, ‘Saviours of the nation or robber barons? Warlord politics in Tajikistan’, 112-3. Another English version (this one clumsy) is available in the English edition of the Russian-language book cited by Nourzhanov. See: Khaidarov and Inomov, *Tajikistan: tragedy and anguish of the nation*, 95. For more on the killing of Usmon’s relatives, see: Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 115-6, 137.

<sup>418</sup> Bushkov and Mikulsky, *Anatomiya grazhdanskoy voyny v Tadzhikistane*, 137.

<sup>419</sup> For example, it was reported on May 4 that local television broadcast singing and dancing instead of news on the street demonstrations. See: Channel 1 TV, Moscow 2005gmt (4 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/7.

<sup>420</sup> For example, Sherali Khayrulloev, the Deputy Interior Minister, protested what he said were grossly exaggerated and inflammatory accounts of small military skirmishes in the south being broadcast on CIS-wide Ostankino TV, a favourite of pro-reform Yeltsin supporters and a target for “hardliners” in Russia. See: Bruce Clark, ‘TV coverage of skirmishes in Tajikistan draws flak’, *The Times* (29 June 1992). Opposition-controlled Tajik Radio was even more upset with Russian television broadcasts, particularly that of the ‘Russia’ TV Channel which was relayed by Kulob TV to the Qurghonteppa Province. Tajik Radio stated that “This television station broadcasts only false and propagandistic news, indecent and violent films, which has caused resentment among the inhabitants of Vakhshanzamin [lit., ‘Land of the people of Vakhsh’].” See: Tajik Radio (24 September 1992) in SWB SU/1495 (25 September 1992) i. As for Kulob TV, it was used as a tool of the counter-opposition for “broadcasting widely against” the coalition government. See: Moukhabbat Khodjibaeva, ‘Television and the Tajik Conflict’, *Central Asia Monitor*, No. 1, 1999, 14. In regards to TV from Uzbekistan, the *Qoziyot* (Muslim Spiritual Board of Tajikistan) under the control of Turajonzoda protested the broadcasting of TV programmes from Uzbekistan in Tajikistan. The *Qoziyot* and other unnamed organisations sent a protest to the President and the Council of Ministers complaining that an Uzbek TV programme broadcast on July 14 had “falsified the truth” and “turned the Muslim peoples of the two fraternal republics against one another”, an act which amounted to external interference in Tajik affairs. See: Tajik Radio (17 July 1992) in SWB SU/1436 (18 July 1992) ii. In regards to opposition controlled Tajik TV, “Each night state television airs the Iranian news, a pastiche of veiled women, ranting mullahs and foreign coverage that shows American military exercises or riot police pummelling citizens in some Western capital. The announcer sits before a world map that neglects to show North America.” See: Adam Kelliher, ‘Gangs bring anarchy to old Soviet south’, *The Sunday Times* (2 August 1992). In addition to television, Iranian radio was also relayed



'Yellow Journalism' type attacks on Kulobi Tajiks. These tactics led Davlat Khudonazarov, an ethnic Pamiri, to declare that the government should accept Kulobi demands for the removal of the leadership of the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting, as their "one-sided position in the conflict has greatly harmed the prospects for a civil accord."<sup>421</sup> Moukhabbat Khodjibaeva, in her analysis of television in Tajikistan, argues that a serious mistake was made in regards to the content of the opposition-controlled TV broadcasting when the "opposition began openly calling all inhabitants of the Kulob region enemies of the nation, thereby losing any opportunity whatsoever of attracting people from that region to their side."<sup>422</sup>

## Summary

This chapter outlined the diversity in many aspects of the conflict and the inability to provide a single description that is true across time, location and individual or group. Most fitting of this description is the emergence of armed factions and their attempts to recruit members and arm them. The leaders who emerged were from a variety of backgrounds: civilian, military, police, government, criminal, religious, collective farm, etc. And their methods of recruiting varied as well. Formal and informal networks and structures were both employed to bring in recruits. The tactics employed in the recruitment process depended on the circumstances, as many fighters joined militias willingly while some were compelled by necessity or force. In regards resources and arms to support their armed factions, militia leaders relied on a variety of sources, both foreign and domestic.

At the outbreak of violent conflict there were not the solid cleavages between regional identities and ethnicities that existed half a year later. Ideological discourses of communism, Tajik nationalism, democracy and Islam proved to be insufficient in generating the required level of mobilisation, leaving regional loyalties as the soundest base for recruitment and for waging war. However, conflict entrepreneurs and political leaders in the opposition and in government had to work towards this polarised

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to Tajikistan via Tajik Radio. In one instance the news bulletin on the second station of Tajik Radio was replaced with a live broadcast of the programme 'World of Knowledge' of the Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran. See: Tajik Radio (23 September 1992) in SWB SU/1495 (25 September 1992) i.

<sup>421</sup> Asal Azamova, 'Tajikistan: dramatis personae', *Moscow News* (28 October 1992).

<sup>422</sup> Khodjibaeva, 'Television and the Tajik Conflict', 14. Khodjibaeva continued: "The TV screen began to be saturated with ultranationalist and extremist content, which frightened off the North and the non-Tajik speaking population of the country." She adds that the opposition reduced the amount of broadcasts from Russian and added "clerical Iranian" television programmes. Khodjibaeva further stresses that the pattern was repeated with the "anti-Karategin hysteria" broadcasts under new Kulobi bosses once the opposition fled the capital in December.

situation, ensuring benefits and power for themselves along the way. Starting with a significant level of political and economic relevance for regional and ethnic identities – with groups like Kulobis and Gharmis being over-represented on the incumbent and opposition sides, respectively – the violent conflict created security dilemmas whereby the most logical course of action was to side with your regional grouping while viewing other groups as a threat to your livelihood and/or your life. This created the logic of regional bases for conducting the war, both at the elite and non-elite level.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Conclusion: The Outbreak, Spread and Eventual Decline of Conflict**

This dissertation provided an analysis for the outbreak, spread and eventual decline of violent conflict in Tajikistan – covering the first, and most violent, round of conflict in the civil war. The ‘security dilemma’ and ‘credible commitment problem’ proved to be effective tools for analysing the logic behind the outbreak and continuation of conflict in Tajikistan. The analysis of the distinct regional and, in some cases ethnic, characteristics of the opposing armed groups demonstrated how the ‘mobilising structures’ were limited, or even captured, by the pre-existing networks and politically and economically relevant regional and ethnic identities in Tajikistan. The process whereby national-level political competition was intimately attached to local conflicts – resulting in the rapid spread of violence in rural areas – was clearly illustrated using the concept of ‘alliance’, a process whereby seemingly unrelated local agendas quickly attach to broader cleavages at the national level. And finally, explaining why indiscriminate violence was used against civilian populations and why it was eventually abandoned as a tactic, an adaption of the theory of ‘indiscriminate violence’ proved to be a useful analytical tool. The resulting analysis, combined with a complete narrative of 1992, fills a gap in the literature on the Tajik Civil War as other accounts focus primarily on the variables that resulted in the outbreak of conflict or on the peace process and post-conflict era.

#### **The Security Dilemma and the Credible Commitment Problem**

Numerous people have made comments or provided analysis on the security dilemmas present in Tajikistan that led to conflict. This includes observers on the ground, participants, journalists and analysts. However, these comments and analysis are predominantly of a superficial or pluralistic nature. Jonathan Zartman has provided a slightly more comprehensive and theoretical outline for the emergence of the security dilemma in Tajikistan, stating that “In each of the three major periods of escalating confrontation, the conflict in Tajikistan illustrates the rational-instrumental model and

especially the security dilemma.”<sup>1</sup> In the discussion that follows I will reiterate some of Zartman’s salient points, critically elaborated and adapted in this thesis. The security dilemmas were alluded to in the chapter on the transition to conflict, and more fully in chapter 5.

Before the onset of the security dilemma and the beginning of the civil war, there were ‘dilemmas’ of a non-security nature. The potential for loss of power, jobs, resources, access and prestige – already a real possibility during the replacement of cadres in the late 1980s – would surely have been on the minds of the incumbents and those within their patronage networks during the election and political intrigue of late 1991 through to the massive anti-government street demonstrations in the spring of 1992. And true to the dual nature of the abovementioned ‘dilemma,’ those in the opposition also had much to lose. This was most obvious in the arrests and harassment endured by opposition members in late 1991 and early 1992. As noted by Kilavuz, the attempt by President Nabiev to purge the ranks of his own party while simultaneously attacking the opposition resulted in a larger, more determined, and more united opposition.<sup>2</sup>

It was during the street demonstrations of the two rival sides that the security dilemma manifested. Throughout the demonstrations both sides spread rumours and made threats against each other, including thinly-veiled threats of violence. Accordingly, President Nabiev’s decision to distribute weapons to a hastily organised ‘National Guard’ composed of Kulobi Tajiks is most clear example of the security dilemma. After this point both sides assumed the other was mobilising for combat and responded accordingly.<sup>3</sup> Zartman continues to briefly describe the outbreak and escalation of violence in Qurghontepa Province as the result of a security dilemma.<sup>4</sup> With the opposition ascendant, ethnic Uzbeks and Kulobi Tajiks started to flee Qurghontepa Province, spurred both by rumours and by attacks on them by opposition supporters. The continuing small-scale violence finally erupted in late June with the first

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<sup>1</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 226.

<sup>2</sup> Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 125-6, 150, 163-5, 205-6.

<sup>3</sup> For example: Russian TV reported that both sides were “setting up their own fighting formations.” See: Russian TV 1600gmt (4 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/7; another report noted that Nabiev had signed a decree to break up the demonstration at Shahidon, and that the opposition was aware and was setting up “counter-measures.” See: Russia’s Radio 0100gmt (5 May 1992) in SWB SU/1373 (6 May 1992) B/7.

<sup>4</sup> Zartman, *Political Transition in Central Asian Republics*, 109-10. Zartman’s analysis: “Most descriptions of the civil war fighting paint the Kulobi Popular Front as the primary aggressors by describing the horrors and ferocity of the Kulobi destruction of Qurghon-Teppe-which came in September. However, Gharmi attacks against Uzbeks in Qurghon-Teppe and then against Kulob, even in revenge for the terror initiated by Kulobi attacks, show that a security dilemma caused conflict escalation.”

serious sustained round of violence at a collective farm in the Vakhsh District of Qurghonteppa Province. From this point the militarised mobilisation by the opposing sides made clear that the period of contentious politics had transitioned into open warfare.

With the conflict having transitioned from the streets and political arena of the capital, militia commanders increasingly gained power at the expense of local authorities and the government and opposition leaders in the capital. The clear need for mediation and a negotiated settlement resulted in numerous envoys, ceasefires and peace proposals during summer and fall 1992. However, the envoys were ignored, the cease-fires were immediately violated, and peace was not an option for those combatants in the field. There was a definite logic to the inability of those in the war zones to commit to a peaceful settlement. This is where the ‘credible commitment problem’ becomes relevant. Nobody had the ability to enforce or guarantee a peace agreement. The government was obviously too weak to enforce any sort of settlement, and the counter-opposition forces has sufficient reason to be suspicious of the new state structures at the republic level. While the granting of one-third of cabinet positions to the opposition and some top-level appointments to some non-cabinet positions may seem modest, other opposition gains were quite threatening to the counter-opposition forces. The mid-May appointment of the deputy IRP leader Davlat Usmon to the post of deputy PM would seem sufficient to induce a level of discomfort with the new government. But his authority went far beyond that of just a deputy PM as he was granted oversight over the KGB (National Security Council), the republic-level prosecutor’s office and the Defence Committee, as well as responsibility for law enforcement bodies.<sup>5</sup> While this *de jure* authority never manifested in practise, the granting of that authority surely could not have reassured the counter-opposition forces.

Independent local peace envoys attempted to mediate between the two sides. One such example was Davlat Khudonazarov. Unfortunately, the Kulobi militias did not trust the former opposition presidential candidate while the opposition militias found him “too tractable.”<sup>6</sup> Khudonazarov did have what initially appeared to be a success. Broad ceasefire agreements were reached at the end of June and at the end of July – and promptly violated. Forces in the field continued to fight each other with little regard for the cease-fire agreements. As fully outlined in the war summary chapter, further local

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<sup>5</sup> Postfactum 2043gmt (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) C1/2; Interfax (13 May 1992) in SWB SU/1380 (14 May 1992) i.

<sup>6</sup> Vitaly V. Naumkin, ‘Experience and Prospects for Settlement of Ethno-National Conflicts in Central Asia and Transcaucasia’, in *Central Asia and Transcaucasia: Ethnicity and Conflict*. Edited by Vitaly V. Naumkin (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994) 177.

ceasefires, envoys and commissions through September and October were all failures. Outside envoys from Russia and Kyrgyzstan also attempted to mediate, with no success. The possibility of CIS peacekeepers serving as a third party that could ensure a 'credible commitment' was mentioned numerous times. However, no outside intervention in the form of 'peacekeepers' would materialise until 1993. As far as any desire for peace, at the end of September the Kulobi militias and their allies began their successful counter-attack which led to a series of gains on the ground. After this point any enthusiasm on their side for a settlement was lost. By late September and early October leaders on both sides of the conflict stated that there would be no peaceful resolution.<sup>7</sup> When acting President Iskandarov, Prime Minister Abdullojonov and General Ashurov of the 201<sup>st</sup> Division formed a 'State Council' to seek a negotiated peace settlement in early November, the initiative was supported by Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev who travelled to Kulob and Qurghonteppa to support the initiative. However, the proposals were rejected by Safarov and Emomali Rahmon.<sup>8</sup> At this point there was obviously no willingness to seek any negotiated peace, especially on the part of the Popular Front which was making continuous gains. Serious negotiations, prompted by a 'mutually hurting stalemate'<sup>9</sup> and pressure from regional power brokers, would be years away.

### **Mobilising Structures and Framing**

Merely noting the cultural differences between Tajiks from different regions does not explain why so much of the violence of the civil war was between Gharmi and Kulobi Tajiks, nor do the differences between Uzbeks and Pamiris on one hand, and Tajiks on the other, explain the inter-ethnic dimension to the conflict. The politicisation and social-economic relevance of these identities is the key here. These factors were analysed at length throughout this dissertation. I will again briefly restate them for emphasis and connect them to the analytical framework of 'mobilising structures' and 'frames.'

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<sup>7</sup> Interfax 1815gmt (22 September 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1497 (28 September 1992) B/2-3; Interfax 1648gmt (5 October 1992) in BBC SWB SU/1505 (7 October 1992) B/6.

<sup>8</sup> Igor Rotar, 'Two days in the life of Andrei Kozyrev', *Nezavisimaya gazeta* (7 November 1992), 3, in *The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press*, Vol. XLIV, No. 49 (6 January 1993).

<sup>9</sup> The 'mutually hurting stalemate' is a well-established concept in the literature on conflict resolution, wherein both sides to the conflict reach a point in time where they both realise that they can not make satisfactory gains against each other at a reasonable cost. The moment where both sides realize this is referred to as a 'Ripe Moment.' See: I. William Zartman, 'The timing of peace initiatives: Hurting stalemates and ripe moments', *Ethnopolitics*, Vol. 1, No. 1 (2001).

The mass-migration to the Vakhsh Valley of Tajiks from the mountainous areas of what came to be commonly referred to as Gharm coupled with the simultaneous migration of Tajiks from the foothills and valleys of Kulob, and their segregation into separate neighbourhoods and settlements, provided for an environment where regional differentiation could be retained. But it was the politicisation of these regional differences that allowed for individuals – even a large number of individuals within a group – to see members of the other group, and their social, political and/or economic success as a threat to one’s own prosperity. These were the challenges faced by the organisations that sought to recruit the maximum number of followers. The Pamiri party La’li Badakhshon was obviously ethnically-constrained in terms of the limitations of its recruiting. Meanwhile, the nationalist party Rastokhez automatically limited itself to Tajiks – and its urban and intellectual bases further limited its potential. The Democratic Party of Tajikistan was similarly constrained with its urban and intelligentsia composition in a largely rural republic. The poor leadership of the DPT further hurt any small chance of popular appeal.<sup>10</sup>

This left the Islamic Revival Party as the only opposition party that had a realistic chance of recruiting across urban and rural constituents and across regional and ethnic divides (in regards to Sunnis). Obviously, party ideology would deter a certain number of Sunnis in Tajikistan from supporting the IRP. But more importantly, the IRP was itself a thinly-disguised party for the interests of Gharmi Tajiks. The top leadership in the IRP was Gharmi and its base was overwhelmingly Gharmi. Olimova argued that Gharmi elites ought to use the IRP to promote their own interests, leading to a regional agenda in the party.<sup>11</sup> However, the party was ‘captured’ by Gharmis long ago. The Kulobi membership amounted to a token at best, and in non-Gharmi areas where the IRP had support, such as Mastchoh and Khovaling,<sup>12</sup> IRP support was insignificant in terms of population and influence. This Gharmi base of support led to the party “openly advocating” for Gharmi interests both in Gharm and in the Vakhsh Valley.<sup>13</sup> Of course, a political party appealing to its base should be no surprise. But when a party has such a narrow base, appealing only to the interests of a narrow spectrum of society will not lead to popular support. And predictably, IRP support from non-Gharmis dropped as the

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<sup>10</sup> E.g., Shodmon Yusuf’s comment about non-Tajiks being in danger, and its wide interpretation by Russians as being a threat against them.

<sup>11</sup> Olimova, ‘Opposition in Tajikistan: Pro et Contra’, 249.

<sup>12</sup> Dudoignon points to IRP success in these two small areas: Dudoignon, ‘From Ambivalence to Ambiguity?’, 126.

<sup>13</sup> Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 12.

IRP regional strategy progressed.<sup>14</sup> The authors cited above who point to a Gharmi regional agenda in the IRP generally, with some exceptions,<sup>15</sup> do not provide details of how this pro-Gharmi agenda manifested during the latter half of 1991 and through late spring 1992. Since the IRP was not in any position of power until they received a share of the positions in the NGR, there were few opportunities to use government structures to benefit Gharmi interests. However, the perception of the IRP as a ‘vehicle’ of Gharmi interests would have been sufficient to discourage most non-Gharmis from joining. The overwhelming dominance of Gharmis in the leadership and in the base of support would suffice to create this perception. If there was any doubt about the IRP leadership’s regional agenda, the summer 1992 cleansing of Kulobis from IRP third-in-command Nuri’s home collective farm would most likely have removed any last doubt.

A party with a small base and a low level of popular support such as the IRP<sup>16</sup> can still play a part as a coalition member in politics, but the importance of street demonstrations and the outbreak of violent conflict both boosted the importance of the IRP significantly. The IRP’s ability to quickly mobilise significant numbers of people from nearby rural areas during the opposition’s street demonstrations significantly raised the prominence of the IRP. The drawback was that the people mobilised by the IRP were overwhelmingly Gharmi Tajiks.

When violent conflict broke out in the Vakhsh Valley, the opposition forces were associated with the Gharmi population as a whole. At the same time, the opposition forces associated the Uzbek and Kulobi Tajik population with the incumbent government. For the Kulobi Tajiks, the process of ‘capturing’ a social movement came later than did the Gharmi dominance in the IRP. And for Kulobi Tajiks, there would be no political party to use as a vehicle. Kulobis were mobilised by local elites to cast pro-incumbent votes for the government candidate in the presidential elections of November 1991. But their votes were just a part of the pro-incumbent votes that also would have come in large numbers from Leninobod Province, Dushanbe and Hisor. The significance of Kulobis in the political process would come when the ‘process’ was breaking down, namely during the large street demonstrations in April and May 1992.

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<sup>14</sup> Olimova and Olimov, ‘The Islamic Renaissance Party’, 26; Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 156; Marat, ‘The State-Crime Nexus in Central Asia’, 106.

<sup>15</sup> In Dushanbe, DPT and IRP activists, after joining the coalition government, attempted to nationalise the “joint ventures” created the previous winter by Khujandi and Kulobi elites. See: Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Levels of support in surveys in both November 1991 and June 1992 were at 6%. Note: the percentage of respondents in June 1992 who answered that they supported “no party” was 39%. See: Kosach, ‘Tajikistan: Political Parties in an Inchoate National Space’, 134-6, cit. *Ozhidaniia i nadezhdy liudei v usloviakh stanovleniia gosudarstvennosti (Opyt sotsiologicheskikh issledovaniy v Tadzhikistane, Kazakhstane, Rossii i na Ukraine)* (Moscow, Russian Academy of Management, 1992) 29-43.



Unable to rely on security forces in Dushanbe to end the opposition demonstrations, the government called on its networks – primarily along links that extended into Kulob Province – to provide counter-demonstrators.<sup>17</sup> The importance and power of the Kulobi ‘junior partners’ steadily increased after the political competition in the capital transitioned to violent conflict. The dominant Leninobod network was far removed from the capital in a geographic sense, and could not mobilise supporters in sufficient numbers for street demonstration—and not at all for military mobilisation. This left the incumbent-aligned networks in Hisor and Kulob as the only force which could fight the opposition (i.e., the Gharimi dominated IRP). The Hisori forces would be late to the fight in the Vakhsh Valley, leaving Kulobi militias (including Vakhsh Valley Kulobis) and some local Uzbeks to be the counter-opposition force here.

The above summary shows that the relevant ‘mobilising structures’ – including both networks and political parties – in Tajikistan were becoming synonymous with regional identities even before the outbreak of conflict. The process of mobilising further ‘regionalised’ the opposing sides. This was the case not just because of the pre-existing nature of the mobilising structures. Another very significant factor was how the leaders and main actors ‘framed’ the political and military struggle. In their rhetoric, they were framing the conflict in regional terms. First, certain Kulobi leaders stressed the Kulobi nature of the pro-incumbent demonstrations in Dushanbe.<sup>18</sup> And the Kulobi leaders portrayed the political battles in Dushanbe as a threat to all Kulobis.<sup>19</sup> Supporters of the opposition in return also stressed the Kulobi identity of their opponents. During and after the demonstrations the Kulobi demonstrators – especially after they had left the capital – were publicly mocked and denigrated as Kulobis by the opposition, a tactic that opposition adviser Sergei Gretskey acknowledged was a mistake. He admits that “some leaders of the opposition indulged in the vice of localism by stirring anti-Kulobi emotions that deeply offended Kulob sensibilities and made them more prone to fight the opposition to the end.”<sup>20</sup> Once the violent conflict began, the anti-Kulobi rhetoric of the opposition was overshadowed by the more immediate and serious physical<sup>21</sup> and economic<sup>22</sup> attacks against Kulobis by pro-opposition fighters.

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<sup>17</sup> For example, see: Mullojonov, ‘The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan since the End of the Soviet Period’, 241; Brown, ‘Whither Tajikistan’, 3; Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 179-80.

<sup>18</sup> E.g., as noted by Whitlock, “Safarov took the helm at Azadi. He worked the crowds skilfully, scratching at their rawest fears and supplying a flattering solution. ‘Fifty Kulabis’ could restore order to Dushanbe, he boasted.” See: Whitlock, *Land Beyond the River*, 160.

<sup>19</sup> See, for example: Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, 188-90.

<sup>20</sup> Gretskey, ‘Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments, and Prospects for Peace’, 222.

<sup>21</sup> E.g., see earlier references to the flow of Kulobi (and Uzbek) refugees from Qurghonteppa Province in May and June 1992.

Kulobi leaders and fighters, for their part, returned the insults – but did not publicly emphasise the Gharimi identity of their opponents. Instead they referred to them as Muslim extremists, using a variety of epithets (e.g., ‘Wahhabis’ or ‘fundamentalists’). This tactic may have been an attempt to frame the conflict to the outside, especially to Russia and the neighbouring Central Asian republics in a bid for support. Or it may have been more of a framing process aimed at scaring the population of Tajikistan away from the opposition. But despite the lack of anti-Gharimi rhetoric in how the Kulobi commanders and their supporters framed the conflict, their attacks against civilians were clearly targeting Gharimi Tajiks (as well as Pamiris to a lesser extent).

### **‘Alliance’: The Connection of Local and National Agendas and Cleavages**

The Vakhsh Valley was not an ‘empty vessel’ to be filled with national-level politics and grievances. There were plenty of local cleavages in Qurghonteppa Province that held great social and economic significance. The process in Tajikistan through which national-level political divisions were attached to local conflicts – resulting in the rapid spread of violence in rural areas – can be viewed clearly using the concept of ‘alliance’, the process of seemingly unrelated local agendas quickly being attached to broader cleavages at the national level. It is worth repeating Kalyvas, the author who outlined this theory:

....conflicts and violence “on the ground” often seem more related to local issues rather than the “master cleavage” that drives the civil war at the national level. This is the case despite the fact that local cleavages are usually framed in the discursive terminology of the master cleavage.<sup>23</sup>

Of course, the ‘master cleavages’ of ideology and religion fail completely to explain the violence in the Vakhsh Valley – as the violence here was along lines of regional and ethnic identity (i.e., predominantly Kulobis, Uzbeks and Gharmis fighting for control of collective farms, land, factories and infrastructure). The failure of the ‘master cleavages’ to account for the conflict in the Vakhsh Valley was noted immediately after the first significant round of fighting, far before any analyst or academic noted the same. Former opposition presidential candidate Khudonazarov immediately labelled the first large scale battle at a collective farm in the Vakhsh District in late June 1992 as a “local

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<sup>22</sup> See the analysis of the blockade of Kulob Province in chapter 5.

<sup>23</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil Wars*, 364.

conflict” between Kulobis and Gharmis that was “born” 50 years previous with population transfers.<sup>24</sup> An unnamed IRP official also commented, denying any IRP involvement in the fighting. He euphemistically described the outbreak of violence in the Vakhsh District as “an ordinary clash between self-defence forces of villages of different orientations.”<sup>25</sup> Both of these descriptions are correct in the sense that Kulobis and Gharmis were fighting each other here. However, the attempt to explain the violence as ‘local’ and to downplay its significance and lack of connectivity to a major national-level political party or group is very problematic.

Kalyvas convincingly demonstrates that local individuals and communities use the outbreak of civil war as an opportunity to pursue their own local agendas. These local conflicts, that usually pre-date the outbreak of war, are kept under control (i.e., they remain non-violent) until the opportunity arises to connect these local conflicts to the national-level conflict. If taken too far, this explanation could easily be included in the mostly discarded ‘ancient hatreds’ argument found in ‘primordialist’ or ‘essentialist’ explanations for ethnic conflict.<sup>26</sup> There were, of course, no ‘ancient hatreds.’ Instead there was very recent – and ongoing – bureaucratic fighting and economic competition for control over farms, jobs and other resources in the Vakhsh Valley. And, all importantly, in Qurghonteppa Province these cleavages fell along lines of region of origin.<sup>27</sup>

The connection (‘alliance’) of national and local issues was not a phenomenon that occurred suddenly. The networks that extended from the capital down to the level of collective farm went through the opposition on the Gharmi side and through the incumbent rulers on the Kulobi side. And these ties that went through the conduit of opposing political blocs were solidified quite recently. Kulobi elites were solidly connected to the incumbent elites, especially starting during the elections of November 1991. Meanwhile, Gharmi and Pamiri elites began using the opposition parties as a tool to promote their interests at the expense of their rivals right around the time of the arrival of independence in Tajikistan.<sup>28</sup> When the state began to fail (i.e., when armed men from the demonstrations in Dushanbe returned to the south in May 1992), local communities in the south were primed for conflict. That is to say, competition for limited resources within collective and state farms along lines of region or origin was an

<sup>24</sup> Interfax 1328gmt (30 June 1992) in SWB SU/1422 (2 July 1992) B5/6.

<sup>25</sup> Interfax (28 June 1992) in SWB SU/1420 (30 June 1992) i.

<sup>26</sup> For a full rejection of the ‘ancient hatreds’ explanation for ethnic conflict, see: Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

<sup>27</sup> See the section on regionalism in chapter 5.

<sup>28</sup> See chapter 3.

ongoing phenomenon. For locals to attach their agendas to national-level cleavages was not a new strategy, it was just particularly more noticeable once the fighting started.

### **Indiscriminate Violence**

The argument that ‘mass killings’ are part of a strategy to increase one side’s share of resources is quite common. As Esteban, Morelli and Rohner put it, mass killings are ‘designed’ not just to “reduce the size of the opponent’s group,” but to “gain a larger viable share of the new social arrangement.”<sup>29</sup> This description does generally work for Tajikistan. But in order to explain why the use of indiscriminate violence against the civilian population was used and then abandoned by the winning side, all within the first year of conflict, requires the application and modification of Kalyvas’ theory of indiscriminate violence.

There are some definite examples of targeted killings, such as those of IRP supporters in Kulob and of the state prosecutor and a Kulobi politician in the capital. However, the trend during summer and fall of 1992 was far less discriminate as both sides in Tajikistan used ‘indiscriminate violence’ against civilian populations that they believed, rightly or wrongly, supported their opponents. The criteria was region of origin (Kulobi and Gharmi), as well as ethnicity (Pamiri and Uzbek). It is clear that the vast majority of the killing in 1992 was indiscriminate and targeted against civilians. For example, the Popular Front claimed losses of between 468 and 525 fighters in 1992,<sup>30</sup> while overall deaths (including civilians) in 1992 were at a minimum 20,000. In 1993 overall deaths dropped to 1,500.<sup>31</sup> There is a broad consensus that the Popular Front militias indiscriminately attacked and killed civilians in from summer 1992 through early winter 1992-1993.<sup>32</sup> The opposition also attacked civilians. However, concerning the first phase of the civil war in Tajikistan, Human Rights Watch authors argued that “Neither side distinguished itself by humanitarian conduct in the war; ultimately, the side that won committed more atrocities.”<sup>33</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Esteban, Morelli and Rohner, ‘Strategic Mass Killings’, 4-5.

<sup>30</sup> Calculations based on fatalities listed here: Kenjaev, *Tabadduloti Tojikiston, Kitobi seyum*, 361-394. There is a range of fatalities given as some deaths are listed without a date.

<sup>31</sup> Mukomel’, ‘Demographic Consequences of Ethnic and Regional Conflicts in the CIS’, 23-4, table 1; Mukomel’, ‘Demograficheskie Posledstviya etnicheskikh i regional’nykh konfliktov v SNG’, table 1.

<sup>32</sup> For just a few of many examples: Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 140; Schoeberlein-Engel, ‘Conflict in Tajikistan and Central Asia’, 39; Dudoignon, ‘Communal Solidarity and Social Conflicts in Late 20<sup>th</sup> Century Central Asia’, 7; McLean and Greene, ‘Turmoil in Tajikistan’, 326.

<sup>33</sup> Denber and Rubin, *Human Rights in Tajikistan: In the Wake of Civil War*, xviii.

The question being analysed here is why the winning side abandoned those tactics, a phenomenon that matches with Kalyvas' observation that "Political actors are likely to gradually move from indiscriminate to selective violence."<sup>34</sup> While Kalyvas' argument that this shift usually occurs as a result of incumbents coming to the realisation that indiscriminate violence is ineffective in the face of a strong insurgency, the case in Tajikistan is different. First of all, it is not accurate to describe the combatants as 'incumbents' and 'insurgents' during 1992. This only applies after the Popular Front victory of December 1992 made *de facto* what the Supreme Soviet session in Khujand had made *de jure* in November. Neither the opposition parties nor the incumbent president and his allies had any significant control over forces in summer and fall 1992. There was certainly indiscriminate violence occurring as locals formed self-defense forces and battled each other for control of collective farms and neighbourhoods while evicting, looting and killing their neighbours. Even when these forces became more consolidated (e.g., after Sangak Safarov became an acknowledged top militia leader), the killings continued and expanded far beyond being between people who lived in close vicinity. During the final push against the opposition and their perceived supporters (i.e., Gharmis) is when the largest number of killings occurred.

The transition away from indiscriminate violence started in December and continued into 1993. There are several possible reasons for this. Moral considerations by the new government can not be discounted, but are impossible to analyse. More mundane strategic and tactical arguments have more explanatory value. One obvious reason is that the threat from the opposition had largely subsided by late December and early 1993. Opposition forces were heavily defeated and no hope of taking back the capital or any part of the Vakhsh Valley. This would reduce the need for killings of civilians associated with the opposition or suspected of being members or fighters affiliated with opposition forces (i.e., Gharmi Tajiks). Another reason would be international legitimacy. International recognition, cooperation and funding would come much easier to a state that is not massacring its own citizens. One reason for the end (or general subsidence) of indiscriminate violence that was discussed at the time centred on the status of refugees. This issue reveals other motives for the government to move towards protecting the Gharmi civilians rather than continuing with any further assaults. Concerning the refugees who had fled to Afghanistan, Emomali Rahmon issued statements in December and February in which he stressed that the refugees in Afghanistan must be repatriated, with Sangak Safarov playing a role as their guarantor

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<sup>34</sup> Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 169.

of safety. The motivation, according to Rahmon himself, is that if they stay for too long in Afghanistan they may be trained by Afghan mujahideen leaders and return as insurgents.<sup>35</sup> Later, Roy brings up the issue of refugee return, claiming that Safarov was in favour of Gharmi Tajiks refugee return while Fayzali Saidov was against it. Roy's premise here is that Safarov was worried about the "ethnic balance" shifting towards the Uzbeks.<sup>36</sup> Similarly, Rubin writes that Safarov supported refugee return because "flight of the refugees had tilted the balance of power towards Uzbeks."<sup>37</sup> Safarov appeared enthusiastic about carrying out Rahmon's (and his own) wishes. In front of a crowd of tearful refugees in Panj he stated that "The most important thing now is the refugees. We must do everything to bring peace. Enough blood has been spilled."<sup>38</sup> Safarov himself further reassured refugees by speaking to their representatives and personally guaranteeing their safety. Of course, not everyone was under the control of Rahmon and/or Safarov. So when Saidov's forces in Qurghonteppa abused returning refugees, Safarov went to meet personally with Saidov. The result was the famous death of both men in an argument-turned-shootout.<sup>39</sup>

To summarise, the counter-opposition forces initially broadly attacked civilians (i.e., Gharmis) while opposition forces also did the same to Kulobis and Uzbeks. Eventually, the counter-opposition forces of Safarov, Saidov, Kenjaev and others gained a decisive level of dominance in the war and the men under their command (as well as locals operating independently) attacked Gharmi and Pamiri civilians in a campaign that led to the bulk of deaths in the war. But once the opposition forces had been defeated and were scattered, the new incumbent government switched strategies and turned to protecting Gharmi civilians in order to (1) gain international legitimacy and support, (2) ensure that the local 'ethnic balance' did not veer too far towards ethnic Uzbeks in the absence of the Gharmis who had fled, and (3) encourage refugees to return from Afghanistan from where they may be radicalised, trained and returned as insurgents.

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<sup>35</sup> Nejla Sammakia, 'Tajik Government Extends Arms Deadline, Tales of Killings Mount', The Associated Press (28 December 1992); Marc Champion and Petya Yudin, 'Tajikistan: Warlords coax back refugees they originally drove out', Inter Press Service (24 February 1993).

<sup>36</sup> Roy, *The New Central Asia*, 49.

<sup>37</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, 'The Fragmentation of Tajikistan', *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (1993) 82. Rubin writes further that Rubin writes that Safarov supported refugee return and disarmament of the Popular Front while Saidov was "outside the new power structure" and therefore opposed these new actions, leading to the dispute.

<sup>38</sup> Carey Goldberg, 'The Real Power in Tajikistan', *Los Angeles Times* (30 January 1993) 11.

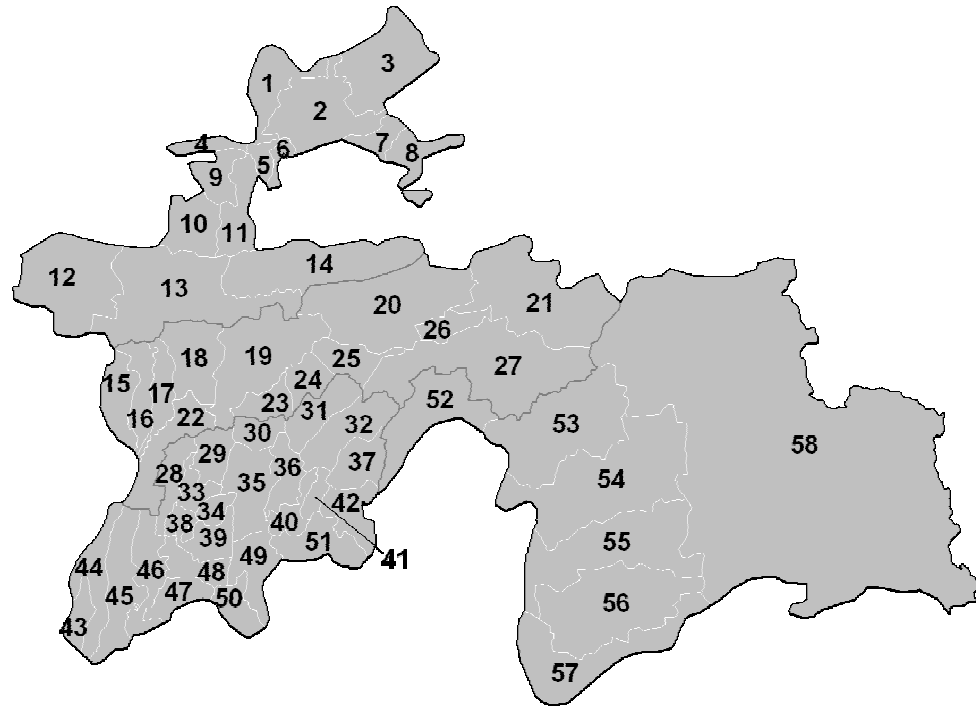
<sup>39</sup> 'Two Tajik Warlords Killed, Reportedly in Shootout', The Associated Press (30 March 1993). Human Rights Watch notes the positive attitude of Safarov towards returning refugees: "On March 24, Popular Front commander Sangak Safarov, who, despite his role in the civil war in the region, had sponsored the program of returning the refugees to their homes, visited Kabodion in an attempt to calm the situation. The returnees perceived Safarov as having been on their side." See: Denber and Rubin, *Human Rights in Tajikistan: In the Wake of Civil War*, 42.

## Summary

The analysis in this dissertation went beyond the variables that led to conflict and beyond the outbreak of conflict to a focus on what sustains the conflict, as well as on the historical and social factors that provided the fault lines and motivations for the civil war. In addition to filling the gap between analyses on Tajikistan that focus on the variables that led to conflict and on the post-conflict phase, this work has applicability to not just the wider region of Central Asia, but also beyond to other conflict zones – active or at risk of conflict. A broader focus on historical and social factors – including politics, economics, patronage, networks, kinship, migration, individual agency and multiple forms of identity – has been demonstrated to be quite important in influencing the composition and *modi operandi* of the warring organisations. The diverse and changing motivations, tactics and strategies of the combatants and their supporters challenge the popularly accepted descriptions of a conflict imbued with structural determinism. The attempts to prevent or end civil wars need to be informed by a broader set of factors that shape and drive the conflicts, as is shown clearly in the case of Tajikistan.

## Appendix

Map No. 4 – Districts of Tajikistan<sup>1</sup>



Note: former names in parentheses.

1. Mastchoh
2. Ghafurov
3. Asht
4. Zafarobod
5. Spitamen ('Nov' to 2003)
6. Rasulov
7. Konibodom
8. Isfara
9. Istaravshon (Uroteppa to 2000)
10. Shahrison
11. Ghonchi
12. Panjakent
13. Ayni
14. Kuhistoni Mastchoh
15. Tursunzoda (Regar to 1978)
16. Shahrinav
17. Hisor

<sup>1</sup> Creative Commons licensed image. Credit: <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Ahonc> and <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:Rarelibra>.



18. Varzob
19. Vahdat (Kofarnihon to 2003)
20. Rasht (Gharm)
21. Jirgatal
22. Rudaki (Leninsky to 2003)
23. Fayzobod
24. Roghun
25. Nurobod (Darband until 2003)
26. Tojikobod
27. Tavildara
28. Khuroson (Ghozimalik to 2003)
29. Yovon
30. Norak
31. Baljuvon
32. Khovaling
33. Jomi (Khojamaston to 2004, previously Kuybyshevsk)
34. Sarband
35. Danghara
36. Temurmalik (Sovetsky to 2004)
37. Muminobod (Leningradsky)
38. Bokhtar
39. Vakhsh
40. Vose
41. Kulob
42. Shuroobod
43. Nosiri Khusrav (Beshkent)
44. Shahrituz
45. Qabodiyon
46. Jilikul
47. Qumsangir
48. Rumi (Kolkhozobod to 2007)
49. Farkhor
50. Panj
51. Hamadoni (Moskovsky to 2004)
52. Darvoz (Qalai-Khumb)
53. Vanj
54. Rushon
55. Shughnon
56. Roshtqala
57. Ishkoshim
58. Murghob

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**Newspapers, Periodicals: (only listing main ones used)**

Christian Science Monitor  
Financial Times  
The Guardian  
The Independent  
Krasnaya zvezda  
Los Angeles Times  
Moscow News  
New York Times  
The Sunday Times

**News Agencies: (only listing main ones used)**

Agence France Press  
The Associated Press  
Inter Press Service  
Reuters

**Foreign-language broadcast, news agency and periodical summaries:**

BBC Summary of World Broadcasts – Former Soviet Union.  
The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press