

## **Chapter II**

### **From the stateless communities to post-communist independence**

Tajikistan has experienced two different types of political establishment throughout its existence. Neither was formed in a natural fashion as a result of historical political evolution. From the stateless communities to the construction of the Tajik state this country lacked certain evolutionary processes that in other cases have contributed to democratic political developments. After independence, conditioning aspects of the Soviet heritage, such as the clanic structure, withhold the Tajik path toward a course of peaceful and democratic reform.

In this chapter, an overview of the political developments during the administrations of Saint Petersburg and Moscow will be offered pointing out the elements that undermined the democratic political development of the post-communist Tajik nation and that, consequently, laid the ground for the conflict that rapidly exploded into civil war. Moreover, the political aftermath of independence and the republic's scenario before its breakdown will be reviewed. A brief account of the civil war will be offered. The perpetuation of the regional clan domination-structure by means of the utilization of the Soviet system during the communist era will be examined.

#### ***2.1 Czarist era (1865-1917)***

When Russian troops attacked and seized Muslim Tashkent holding ecclesiastical crosses in the name of Christianity –in 1865– a new period in affairs between Central Asia and

Russia began.<sup>1</sup> The fall of Tashkent can be considered as the starting point of the Russian Imperial presence in Central Asia though the relation dates back several hundred years.<sup>2</sup>

According to Edward Allworth, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century the Russian diplomats commenced to talk about the “opportunities to intervene directly in Central Asian affairs and to increase dissension there by arranging selective alliances which might aggravate tensions between local factions and thus weaken further the entire area’s defensive equilibrium.”<sup>3</sup> Additionally, there is sufficient evidence to affirm that the initial Russian interest in directly intervene Central Asian affairs was the commercial –trade routes– issue. Allworth suggests that it is possible that the cause of the Russian aggressive movement toward southwest in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was a kind of ‘blind inevitability’, an irrepressible urge to expand rooted in the ‘predatory Cossack spirit’ and the Russian merchant-adventurism. Nevertheless, Allworth also considers simpler reasons: Russia had grown stronger as her Central Asian neighbors became enfeebled. Thus, the justification for expansion lied in the supposed superiority of Russian civilization; the alleged provocations from the peoples of this area; and, from an ‘authentic’ Russian desire to bring peace and order to the region in order to achieve trade-equality while countering British competition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Allworth, ed., *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

<sup>2</sup> It is important to remember that no entity such as Tajikistan ever existed before the Soviet period and that the Persian speaking populations, Tajiks –in the Soviet sense–, were distributed between the plains (Bukhara and Samarqand, mainly) and the mountains (Badakhshan).

<sup>3</sup> Allworth, ed., *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance*.

<sup>4</sup> Allworth, ed., *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance*. This author emphasizes that it is striking that the parallel invasion of Mexican territory, which occurred exactly when Russia moved toward Central Asia in full force, also was spoken of as inevitable, as an expression of ‘Manifest Destiny’. For Allworth it would have been too honest to state that in those imperialistic days the strong stole openly from the weak. Some proponents of the Russian expansion saw it as a part of the Great Game –a struggle to attain control over the ‘Heartland of Eurasia’, as a way to compensate losses and to pressure Britain by playing on her concerns about the Russian threats to its position in India.

With the objective of attaining its regional goals, the Russian government bolstered migration toward Central Asia since the early 1850s. After the fall of Tashkent, the Russians established the *Guberniya* of Turkistan (Governorate General) as a central Russian (purely administrative) entity eventually including Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and much of present-day Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. It is clear that during the Czarist era no substantial efforts were made toward the consolidation of any kind of state structure across Central Asia.<sup>5</sup> Even though Russian rule brought important changes to the region's administrative structure, many of the elements of the traditional way of life – such as clans and regionally-based communities– scarcely changed.<sup>6</sup>

Concerning the current territory of Tajikistan it is important to clarify that the historical divide between the plains and the mountains has been ever present since –as has been explained earlier– the end of the Samanid Empire. Moreover, at the times of the Imperial conquest, Badakhshan (current province of Tajikistan) was a no man's land though it provided a mountainous haven for Persian speaking populations: a territory that belonged neither to any khanate nor to China or Afghanistan. Meanwhile, several thousand Tajiks lived under the rule of the Emirate of Bukhara which retained nominal independence from Saint Petersburg.<sup>7</sup> Shirin Akiner explains that during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there were several shifts of power resulting in the division, among different jurisdictions, of the territory of modern Tajikistan.

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<sup>5</sup> For instance, Russian authorities never compromised in an effort to improve the level of education in the region, which remained to a considerable extent the same during the czarist era.

<sup>6</sup> Tajikistan, (Dec. 25, 2004 [cited 15 May. 2005] Mongabay): available from [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/tajikistan/all.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/tajikistan/all.html)

<sup>7</sup> Since there was a widely accepted Russian assertion that while controlling Tashkent there was no need to go further into Central Asian lands to dominate the rest of the region, many ordinary inhabitants of what is now known as Tajikistan had limited contact with Russian officials or settlers before 1917.

This process began when the main regional powers on the plains – the Emirate of Bukhara to the west, and the Khanate of Kokand to the northeast – adopted aggressively expansionist policies towards the mountain principalities. There were by this time some ten small states, of which the largest were Hissar, adjacent to Bukhara; Karategin and Darvaz, which were often united; and Kulyab, close to Kokand. However, despite numerous attempts, neither Kokand nor Bukhara was able to establish more than a nominal hold in these principalities.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, according to Akiner, on the eve of the twentieth century the territory of modern Tajikistan was divided between the Tsarist Empire (the land north of the central mountain ranges and the Pamir plateau) and the Emirate of Bukhara (the mountain principalities of the centre-south). The area that remained under Russian control experienced incipient modernization.<sup>9</sup> By 1898 a unified Turkistan, divided into four *oblasti* (Sir Darya, Samarqand, Fergana, and Semirech'e) had become a regional political reality.<sup>10</sup>

There are two main elements that characterize the relations between Russia and Central Asia during this period: a) the economic ties, according to Allworth, constituted the most persistent link between the two areas; and b) the religious issue, that played an important role since the beginning of the relation.<sup>11</sup> Concerning the economy, as a result of what Raymond Pearson calls 'administrative russification'<sup>12</sup> by the mid 1870s the principal economic activity in the region was cotton cultivation. The pattern of switching land from grain cultivation to cotton cultivation –so common during the Soviet period–

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<sup>8</sup> Shirin Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration or Reconciliation?* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 2001), 10. It is important to note that the different location of the 'small' states described here was a prelude for the way the different regions were organized during the Soviet era.

<sup>9</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Hafeez Malik, ed., *Central Asia, its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects* (New York: SL Martin's Press, 1996), 5.

<sup>11</sup> Islam was considered as a backward religious practice that hindered the 'transition' path toward 'modernity'.

<sup>12</sup> Effort made by the Russian government to improve administration and to create a bureaucracy. Raymond Pearson, "Privileges, Rights and Russification," in *Civil Rights in Imperial Russia*, eds. Olga Crisp and Linda Edmonson (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

was firstly implemented at this time.<sup>13</sup> William M. Mandel expresses that the Russian economic policies aimed at cotton cultivation were the most important policies amongst a diverse set of policies designed to intervene in Central Asia's internal affairs.<sup>14</sup> Russia imported raw cotton from Central Asia and exported processed cotton to the region. The buyer-seller role gave Russia the ability to fix (set) prices, which from time to time caused unrest among different Central Asian economic groups. Russian economic policies soon proved to be disadvantageous, diminishing life standards and increasing poverty. As a consequence, some elements of opposition to Russian hegemony, like the *Jadidist* movement, which was a group of modernizers and nationalists that viewed Central Asia as a whole, sprung up in the late nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup>

As a consequence of the above, in addition to legislative misrepresentation of Central Asia in the imperial legislature in Saint Petersburg, by 1916, discontent with the effects of Russian rule had grown substantially. According to Mandel, it was during the First World War that central Asians showed their true feelings toward the imperial capital.<sup>16</sup> As a result of Russia's revocation of the Central Asians' traditional exemption from military service a set of violent reactions occurred in what is now Khujand, northern Tajikistan. Consequently, Bolsheviks gained support from the populations across the region. As Mandel suggests, the fact that eight of the eleven million natives participated, in one way or another, in the civil disobedience was an indicator of the political

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<sup>13</sup> Tajikistan, (Dec. 25, 2004 [cited 15 May. 2005] Mongabay): available from [http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country\\_studies/tajikistan/all.html](http://www.mongabay.com/reference/country_studies/tajikistan/all.html)

<sup>14</sup> William M. Mandel, "Soviet Central Asia," *Pacific Affairs* 15, no.4 (1942).

<sup>15</sup> Thus, *Jadidism* became the first major Central Asian movement of political resistance.

<sup>16</sup> Mandel, "Soviet Central Asia,". Cited in Isabel Castro, *Kirguistán: el descenso gradual hacia el autoritarismo* (Santa Catarina Martir, Cholula, Puebla: Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, 2004). Undergraduate final paper.

awakening of the central Asian masses.<sup>17</sup> By 1917 various political movements in towns such as Khujand and Uroteppa were conformed by native and immigrant population.<sup>18</sup>

## ***2.2 The communist times (1917-1991)***

*We cannot do without the petroleum of Azerbaijan or the cotton of Turkistan. We take those products not as former exploiters, but as old brothers bearing the torch of civilization.*  
– Grigori Zinoviev<sup>19</sup>

### **2.2.1 The Genesis**

By November 1917, as soon as the Bolsheviks gained power over the imperial core, the shadow of communism rapidly expanded over the areas where Saint Petersburg once had exercised administrative control. Nevertheless, the expansion of Lenin's political movement found, in Central Asia, strong, aggressive resistance: the *basmachi* bands. These groups were the result of a spontaneous indigenous resistance against the Bolshevik presence and a weakened continuation of the political awakening outlined in the civil rebellion against the Czar of the early 1917. According to Edward Allworth, the general pattern of these bands was that of local warlords heading armies that varied from few hundred to several thousand men.<sup>20</sup> However, *basmachis* were informal, disordered, non-structured groups that hardly ever coordinated their actions; after the initial crescendo, the tactics of the Red Army forced the resistance to escape into the mountains

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<sup>17</sup> Mandel, "Soviet Central Asia," Cited in Isabel Castro, *Kirguistán: el descenso gradual*.

<sup>18</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 11.

<sup>19</sup> Zinoviev was one of Lenin's closest collaborators that returned to Russia with him after the February 1917 revolution. Grigori Evseyevich Zinoviev was later executed by the Stalin regime accused of conspiring to overthrow the government.

<sup>20</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 11.

in the search for a secure haven. Except for remote spots of resistance, the guerrilla uprising ended, in Tajikistan, by 1925.<sup>21</sup>

Apparently, these informal and disordered paramilitary groups were not the principal obstacle that the Bolsheviks were to confront. The sporadic armed skirmishes generated by these conspicuous opposition groups concealed a more profound and complex element that Russians were to find as an obstacle that led them to establish Soviet rule instead of fully creating a Soviet society in Central Asia: the Islamic trend.

According to Hafeez Malik, since the creation of the Turkistan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in 1918, Bolsheviks perceived “Muslim ethnocentrism and its religious based identification as a threat”.<sup>22</sup> Suspected pan-Islamic and pan-Turkic trends cultivated an image of Central Asia as a culturally homogenous or religious bloc that could jointly collaborate in anti-Soviet uprisings.<sup>23</sup> Active resistance and ideological issues, added to the pre-Soviet assertion of how to intervene directly in Central Asian affairs by weakening the entire area’s equilibrium, convinced Lenin and later Stalin to speed up the process of fragmenting Muslim unity. Malik explains that this motivation led them to carve up Central Asia into five different republics and to “gerrymander”<sup>24</sup> boundaries to place diverse ethnic and linguistic groups within each republic. With the objective of shattering the supposed unity and creating the Soviet man, language policies<sup>25</sup> and antireligious campaigns were implemented.

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<sup>21</sup> In the following years these guerrilla groups, from time to time, made armed incursions into downhill cities. They were harshly repressed by the Soviet Army.

<sup>22</sup> Malik, ed., *Central Asia, its Strategic Importance*.

<sup>23</sup> Malik, ed., *Central Asia, its Strategic Importance*.

<sup>24</sup> To divide (a geographic area) into voting districts so as to give unfair advantage to one party in elections. For further information on this concept visit: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerrymander>

<sup>25</sup> Latinization (and then Russification) of the Turkic and Persian languages were attempted.

Akiner explains that it was not until 1929 –after a capricious planning by the Central Executive Committee of the USSR– that the current borders were established. He affirms that several of the problems that are encountered today: regional hostilities, divided loyalties, irredentist grievances, date from this period. However, he suggests that in spite of the “capricious design”, borders were based primarily on ethno-linguistic distribution.<sup>26</sup> Nevertheless, the Tajik experience was somewhat different. Tajikistan, as created in 1924, was given the status of an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and was subordinated to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic. Tajik cultural centers such as Samarqand and Bukhara –left outside Tajikistan by the border design committee– were subjected directly to Uzbek rule.

Concerning the case of Tajikistan, Barnett R. Rubin explains that,

[I]f nationalism is the political belief that ethnic and territorial boundaries should coincide; the Tajiks were uniquely unsuited for it. For Tajiks even more than for other Central Asians, the difficulty was not that borders were drawn incorrectly, but that no borders could have been “correct” in a national sense.<sup>27</sup>

It is ironic that the harshest opposition to the idea of upgrading Tajikistan arose from within the Tajik elite. According to Akiner, some ‘uzbekified’ Tajiks argued that since Tajiks did not have their own schools, official language or governmental structure, they should be treated as an ethnic minority rather than as one of the principal indigenous peoples of the region. For Akiner, there were several reasons why some Tajiks opposed the creation of a republic that would unite the ‘entire’ Tajik-speaking population and the traditional territory of Tajik settlement.

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<sup>26</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 43.

<sup>27</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery. Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan,” in *Post Soviet Political Order. Conflict and State Building*, eds. Barnett R. Rubin and Jack Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998), 132-52.

First, the Tajiks of the plains were not only bilingual but also formed part of a unique fusion of Turkic and Iranian cultures. Secondly, for centuries urban Tajiks had constituted the core of the governing bureaucracy of the khanates, working in tandem with the local Turkic rulers. Thus, in 1920s they continued to envisage a future in Uzbekistan rather than in a mountain region that was quite alien to them. Thirdly, prior to the Soviet period many had been *Jadidists* sympathetic to the political and religious ideals of the pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism; consequently, they were predisposed to ally themselves with Uzbeks.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1924 and 1929 several harsh measures were implemented against the property regime, social structure, and Islam. The new provisions that limited the competence of the *Shari'a* tribunals and began to require that traditional procedures come into line with those of the Soviet courts, can be taken as an example. Soviet organizational institutions that were design to foster Soviet ideology and put an end to the supposed Islamic unity did transform Central Asian society. Moreover, this transformation of the way of life and thought, this split with the Islamic community and the past, this dislocation of Central Asia, was not very 'easy' to impose upon the indigenous population, however.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, this social transformation was superficial.

For Russians, Soviet institutions in Central Asia represented an instrument to eradicate, by means of the 'torch of civilization', primitive rituals, religious prejudices, and ways of social organization such as clans. However, for central Asians, Soviet institutions represented nothing more than a new administrative structure.<sup>30</sup> Moreover, as Kathleen Collins argues, "seven decades of Soviet rule did transform Central Asian clan identity, most notably by breaking up large tribal structures into smaller clan based units.

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<sup>28</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 35.

<sup>29</sup> H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse, "The National Republics Lose Their Independence," in *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance, A Historical Overview*, ed. Edward Allworth (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> This administrative structure, as it will be shown later in this section, was adopted to perpetuate and sustain the complex web of relations in which Central Asian societies lied.

Nevertheless, despite the history of suppression clans remain a salient everyday reality”.<sup>31</sup>

In spite of outspoken criticisms, on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1929 Tajikistan became the seventeenth republic of the Soviet Union. As a ‘retribution’ for the loss of the mainly Tajik cities allocated to Uzbekistan, Khujand, a mostly Uzbek province was annexed to Tajikistan. Nevertheless, the issue of the Uzbek-Tajik Samarqand has remained an acute cause of grievance between the two republics. Rubin argues that Moscow decided to upgrade Tajikistan membership to a full Union Republic for reasons that might be related to foreign policy. He explains that Stalin wanted a Persian speaking republic as a means of influencing the large area of Persian cultural influence from Iran to India.

### **2.2.2 Soviet Tajikistan: 1930 – 1950**

According to H el ene Carr ere d'Encausse, developments in Central Asia from 1924 to 1936 were thus divided into two periods which overlap everywhere within the USSR in almost the same way. Institution building and forced cooperation began in 1924 and ended in 1928-29 due to the heyday of the Soviet conviction that Central Asian societies were pre-modern and disloyal. These assertions led the Soviet administration to liquidate the national elites. The next step forward in the Stalin’s irrepressible urge to align Central Asian bureaucracy along Soviet ways of organization was the collectivization drive that took place between 1930 and 1936.<sup>32</sup> This period is considered one of deep Russification

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<sup>31</sup> Kathleen Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia,” *Journal of Democracy* 13, no.3 (2002): 141-42.

<sup>32</sup> The process of establishing collective farms is called collectivization. The [Soviet Union](#) undertook the world’s first campaign of mass collectivization in [1929–1933](#). Soviet peasants in collective farms received a type of dividend after compulsory deliveries were made to the state. Collective farming was an organizational unit in [agriculture](#) in which [peasants](#) were not paid [wages](#), but rather received a share of the farm’s [net output](#). Collectivization, (Mar. 31, 2006 [cited 5 Apr. 2006] Wikipedia): available from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivization>

and was furthered by the immigration of Russian cadres to replace the purged local ones. Industrialization policies were also radicalized; the Fergana valley developed.

It is important to take into account that during this collectivization drive, the settlers of what was recently known as Tajikistan fiercely opposed the reallocation of property. The Tajik SSR saw a rebirth of the *basmachi* movement. Hundreds of peasants joined the rebels in the mountains. The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) argued that the subsistence of these bands was clear evidence that high ranks of the Tajik bureaucracy ‘lacked vigilance’. Moreover, the President of the Republic and his Prime Minister were convicted for harboring national, chauvinistic and anti-Russian feelings.<sup>33</sup>

By the late 1930s, collectivization had succeeded. This agricultural drive was slightly different in Central Asia: although the transfer of land and agricultural property from pre-Soviet forms of ownership to collectives of peasants took place everywhere, in Central Asia, the traditional communities –now the new collectives– were not dismembered. Thus, Central Asian peasantry –accustomed to familial labor networks– adopted the collective farm scheme as a continuation of their family-based labor structure.

In this sense, Collins explains that collectivization, a Soviet institution designed to overwhelm old clannish, tribal, and regional affiliations with a new larger national identity, did not wipe that kind of social organization but instead pushed their members together onto the same state-run farms, a situation that put new levers into the hands of

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<sup>33</sup> Hélène Carrère d'Encausse, “The National Republics Lose Their Independence,”.

clan-based networks. As a consequence, clan members soon learned to use Soviet affirmative-action policies as channels for promoting family within the Soviet system.<sup>34</sup>

Even though Tajikistan's social structure differed from that of the greater Turkic clans, the process of collectivization and the administrative policies that the Soviets implemented in all Central Asian republics shaped the way in which Tajik society accessed the state's assets and resources. Regional-based networks developed given the inexistence of mayor clans. Ironically, the severity of the Soviet attempt to eradicate clan-based structures in Central Asia made them stronger. Clans, according to Collins, adapted and survived. If we understand the role of a clan as a mechanism through which diverse social groups exploited their place within the Soviet structure,<sup>35</sup> it is possible to argue, as the case of Tajikistan suggests, that Soviet institutions actually fostered the creation of clan-like structures.

As the formal soviet administrative structure consolidated, hard times of collectivization and Russification ended, thus opening a window of opportunity for regional cadres to rise. The existence of a soviet regional intelligentsia was, by 1940, a relevant element of the political reality. Hence, by the early 1940s, a member of the Leninabadis –a group that came from the 'uzbekified' Tajik region of Khujand–became the First Secretary of the CP of Tajikistan. Thereafter, this group dominated both the party nomenklatura and the economic management of the republic. It has to be stated that the prominence of Leninabadis was not casual. Khujand, located in the northwest part of the republic, dominated the entrance to the Fergana valley. This area has been historically influenced by trade and since the advent of the Russians was 'modernized' and became a

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<sup>34</sup> Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics," 144.

<sup>35</sup> Graeme Gill, *Democracy and Post-Communism: Political Change in the Post-Communist World* (London: Routledge, 2002), 102.

highly industrialized enclave. Khujand has always been the most developed area of Tajikistan. Thus, the first Tajik clan – that flourished under the Soviet structure– was the Leninabadi clan, and the organs around which it was organized were the nomenklatura of the Central Committees of Tajikistan CP and the Leninabad oblast.<sup>36</sup>

Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone<sup>37</sup> explains the way in which the Leninabadi clan exercised power:

Leaders of the local power clusters at all levels (starting with the kolkhozes and kishlaks and ending in the Party's Central Committee) based their selection, distribution, and transfer of personnel on traditional, familial, friendly relations and cultural obligations, and on the need to secure followers.<sup>38</sup>

According to Barnett R. Rubin, the structure of the Soviet state was designed to be controlled from above. Tajikistan, explains Rubin, was divided in 'raions' that directly responded to the republican administration. Hence no other political group controlled institutions for collective action larger than a raion. This kind of structure discouraged political participation; kept opposition fragmented<sup>39</sup> and prevented common action to challenge the Leninabadi position.<sup>40</sup>

In the absence of any indigenous educated class, the most serious obstacle to establishing power in Tajikistan was, for decades, the lack of cadres. As Soviet institutions developed, this structural flaw faded away. Educational opportunities expanded significantly in the 1950s, creating a 'new stratum' of professionals who

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<sup>36</sup> Rubin, "Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,".

<sup>37</sup> Nationalism and ethnic politics researcher.

<sup>38</sup> Cited in Rubin, "Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,".

<sup>39</sup> Rubin argues that the fragmenting of potential opposition through administrative measures that promoted micro-segmentation is a familiar policy in the area.

<sup>40</sup> Rubin, "Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown," 8.

profited from a wave of indigenization in the early Brezhnev years. This allowed the rise of potential local competitors.<sup>41</sup>

### **2.2.3 Unofficial second level autonomy**

According to Kathleen Collins, during the three decades under Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev, Moscow intervened relatively little in Central Asia's republic-level politics; therefore, regional based groups were able to maintain and further their networks with resources from the Soviet state.<sup>42</sup> The distance from the imperial core and the absence of a harsh doctrinal and economic climate resulted in an informal autonomy that fostered the development of *sub rosa* social and political organizations.

It was during these decades –under a Soviet administration ran by ‘disloyal’ locals– that, according to Edward Allworth, two different hierarchies developed for mutual benefit: outsiders and insiders.<sup>43</sup> Allworth argues that “this cautiously nurtured understanding between the two gave some hidden autonomy to Central Asian politicians in their homeland”.<sup>44</sup> In Tajikistan, indigenous control over administration during the 1950s and 1960s fostered widespread clientelism that made local soviet institutions entirely subservient to the interests of the ‘clanic’ establishment.

Allworth suggests that, in addition to the educational drive, by the 1970s the domestication of regional CP's and the development of traditional structures under the shelter of Soviet administration revived and strengthened Central Asian self-awareness and self-interest. In Tajikistan, however, the rise of possible competitors became real. Kulyabis and Garmis furthered their participation into the administrative structure. Rubin

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<sup>41</sup> Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,” 9.

<sup>42</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics,” 144.

<sup>43</sup> Outsiders were attracted by the lack of vigilance over political and economic matters.

<sup>44</sup> Allworth, ed., *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance*.

claims that it was in response to the rise of potential political competitors that Leninabadis developed patronage relations with Kulyabis.<sup>45</sup> By the mid-70s Leninabadis began delegating relevant administrative duties and power to Kulyabis, which enabled them to gain control over the southern local administration. However, Leninabadis remained in control of the party apparatus, republican administration, and the union's economic assets.<sup>46</sup> As Kulyabis were controlling local administration, they grew stronger and became an energetic cluster that rapidly took advantage of its position; hence engaging in a wide variety of underground activities. Kulyabis were renowned by their ability to mobilize violence.

Meanwhile, Garmis, on the other hand, excluded from political participation, seized opportunities in education and trade. Garmis, according to Rubin, flooded the Tajik language higher institutions that opened and expanded in the 1960s, thus, forming a new Tajik intelligentsia in Dushanbe and Central Tajikistan that also challenged Leninabadis.

Allworth argues that the unofficial networks that developed through Central Asia permeated social life setting economic priorities, deciding political appointments, controlling housing allocations, and other related matters.<sup>47</sup> This unofficial 'second level autonomy' developed approximately between 1965 and 1980.

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<sup>45</sup> Perhaps, the rise in power of Kulyabis resulted from their strategic geographic position and from the productive relations with Leninabadis due to the processing of cotton. The assassination of two consecutive CP regional leaders appointed by Khujand and from non-Kulyabi origin also strengthened the rise of Kulyab as an opposition pole.

<sup>46</sup> Rubin, "Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown," 7.

<sup>47</sup> Allworth, ed., *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance*.

#### **2.2.4 1980s: decline and awakening**

After Brezhnev's death in 1982, the decline of the Soviet Union brought instability to Central Asia. Moscow implemented purges of the dominant cadres in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan and installed Russian cadres in positions of political and economic power. In Tajikistan, by contrast, there was never a full muscovite purge. The Soviet concerns about Tajikistan dealt with the supposed liaison between the Soviet Tajiks and their ethnic cousins in northern Afghanistan. To combat the possible threat, the Soviets backed the Leninabadis and maintained them as the dominant group of this highly unstable system.<sup>48</sup>

When analyzing the political developments of Tajikistan after 1985 Mavlon Makhamov highlights: a) economic condition; b) regionalism; c) the rise of Islam-oriented political parties; and d) external influences, particularly those of the neighboring states. Even before the generalized all-Union decay, in Tajikistan, teachers, professionals and scientists received very low salaries. Makhamov presents this as one of the reasons of why opposition parties and political movements first appeared in research institutes: students and intellectuals were becoming politically active. Makhamov suggests that harsh economic conditions impelled some groups to ask for political participation, especially among the Garmis.

Regionalism played such an important role as the economic conditions. From Kulyabi underground activities to Pamiri isolation and Garmi recent political mobilization challenged the Leninabadi's privileged position. Clan rivalries corroded the will of the ruling circle of the state. From spring 1987, as a prelude of the factional fight over the state's assets and resources, high government officials thwarted the attempts of

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<sup>48</sup> Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics," 144.

law enforcement bodies to root out criminal organizations (mafias), especially those operating under the auspices of the Leninabadi network.<sup>49</sup> Akiner refers to these cases as the most extreme examples of the corruption of the state. Consequently, state authorities lost prestige and could no longer influence the population. “Parallel power structures and economies evolved that operated quite independently of official bodies. Thus, behind the façade of national unity the country was split into informal fiefdoms that were outside the law, answerable to no public authority.”<sup>50</sup> Leninabadi apparatchiks were losing control.

As the economic situation worsened, social unrest increased. Akiner explains that the most acute problems arose in areas where resources, particularly those of water and arable land,<sup>51</sup> were limited and employment opportunities scarce. In 1989 ethnic conflicts erupted all over the country. The first incident to be widely known was a clash between Tajiks and Kyrgyz in the Isfara valley. Continued sociopolitical and property stratification complicated the situation of the republic causing a widespread sense of deprivation. These conditions generated a crisis and encouraged the development of opposition political parties and movements by 1989, especially in cities and large towns.<sup>52</sup>

The broadening of political activity in Tajikistan was closely related to the political processes that were taking place in other republics of the former Soviet Union (Perestroika and Glasnost). Thus, intense political mobilization in Tajikistan should be placed in the broader context of the mobilization triggered by ‘Reform’ in Russia and the

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<sup>49</sup> Mavlon Makhamov, “Islam and Political Development of Tajikistan After 1985,” in *Central Asia, its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: SL Martin’s Press, 1996).

<sup>50</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 27.

<sup>51</sup> Violent demographic growth strained the carrying capacity of land and other natural resources.

<sup>52</sup> Mavlon Makhamov, “Islam and Political Development of Tajikistan,” 196.

Baltic nationalism during 1989-90.<sup>53</sup> According to Akiner, the key development of the pre-conflict period was the emergence of independent (non-communist) sociopolitical movements. In Tajikistan, contrasting the Central Asian trend, a genuine political debate began to take place. New personalities and ideas appeared on the horizon.<sup>54</sup> For a brief period there was a hope that from the ferment of the Tajik sociopolitical crisis a multi-party system that would have fostered openness, plurality and an arranged change of regime could have emerged.

By 1990, the most conspicuous secular organizations, nominally ‘democratic’, opposing the government were: *Rastokhez* (Rebirth) National Front; the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DP); and, *La’l-I Badakhshan* (The Ruby of Badakhshan). These organizations were a mere product of Gorbachev’s Perestroika era. *Rastokhez* called for the creation of a ‘truly’ democratic law-based state. Its leaders argued that the state and the communist party had lost the capacity to represent the interests of the population. The leaders of these political organizations were conscious of the weakness of their movements and sought to involve Islamic parties and movements of democratic orientation.<sup>55</sup> Makhamov affirms that the lack of unity and mass support, and the rivalry among the leaders of the ‘democratic’ opposition prevented them from seriously challenging the CP. The Tajik society was fragmented, thus exacerbating the tendency of its propensity to engage in intraregional conflict. On the other hand, Islamic opposition functioned much more successfully. A notable non-secular organization that fiercely opposed the government was the Islamic Rebirth Party (IRP) of Tajikistan that originated from the obscure ‘Reformist Islam’ of the 1970s.

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<sup>53</sup> Mavlon Makhamov, “Islam and Political Development of Tajikistan,” 198.

<sup>54</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 33.

<sup>55</sup> Mavlon Makhamov, “Islam and Political Development of Tajikistan,” 201.

#### 2.2.4.1 Soviet Political Islam

Selectively, successive generations of Muslim parents transmitted Islamic and traditional values to their children, blocking out all values or information deemed contrary to their faith. According to Malik, it was within this framework of “Islamic Traditionalism” that Central Asians adapted to the Soviet rule. For Malik, it can be claimed that Islam defeated Russian Marxism and the CPSU’s ideology. He argues that a diarchy of structures in the Central Asian administration had developed long before the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. In other words, “official structures [Party Committee, Kolkhozes, courts, etc.] were functioning on the surface, but in reality, all of them are no more than outward forms of traditional Islamic structures.”<sup>56</sup>

Akiner points out that a significant political and ideological development in the period leading up to the civil war was the re-emergence of Islam as a potent force in society.<sup>57</sup> In Soviet Tajikistan, moreover, Islam survived under somewhat better conditions than in most other parts of the region. There are at least four important factors that helped the survival of Islam in Tajikistan. The first has been already mentioned: Islamic and traditional values transmitted from parents to their children. The second, according to Akiner, is the physical remoteness of many parts of the country; which afforded certain protection. The third was that some of the pre-Soviet generation of Central Asian Muslim scholars sought refuge in Tajikistan. Clandestinely, they began teaching the young. The fourth was the perpetuation, by lineal descent, of religious leaders.

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<sup>56</sup> Malik, ed., *Central Asia, its Strategic Importance*.

<sup>57</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 28.

As has been pointed out earlier in this thesis, the Islamic faith has proven difficult to crush; it remains a potent cultural force. For Akiner, the shift in the antireligious policies that took place between 1988 and 1990 that resulted in the permission for public religious activity and in the great increase of the religious building (mosques and schools) construction rate “caused concern more because they highlighted the shortcomings in the work of the CP activists than because they indicated a rise in Islamic consciousness”.<sup>58</sup> However, a plethora of political organizations emerged during that period, their goals were quite similar: acquiring independence and political and economic reform to foster national unity. When the *coup d’Etat* overthrew Mikhail Gorbachev from power, the CP of Tajikistan was the strongest and more organized party in the region. Notwithstanding, the party was banned by a Supreme Soviet that sought accommodation to the pressures for change in October 1991. Nevertheless, it was re-legalized in December when the Tajik hardliners succeeded in overthrowing the reformists, leaving the communist Rahmon Nabiyeu as president of the republic. The CP showed how unwilling it was to tolerate the existence of any opposition. Ironically, after arguing strongly for the need to reestablish the Soviet Union, it ended up advocating independence together with democracy and a market economy in order to get international support.

Tajiks, and other Central Asians, endured several decades of political, cultural and economic deprivation. Marxists, cultural ideologists and Soviet government officials imposed by Moscow merely drove, rather than led, Central Asian societies during the communist times. Furthermore, the Russian presence recurrently interrupted the normal cycle of creating and replacing indigenous leaders.<sup>59</sup> According to Allworth, those

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<sup>58</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> Allworth, ed., *Central Asia. 130 Years of Russian Dominance*.

deprivations condemned the people of the area to an indefinite period of elementary self-discovery and a difficult adjustment to rapidly changing conditions. However, the importance of the creation of opposition parties and the rise of Islamic political activity during the last period of the Soviet rule must be stressed as an important political development that affected the immediate 'independent' period.

According to Collins, Central Asian transitional pacts preserved a certain balance of power among the ruling elites and allowed the imposition of a new regime type; apparently, these pacts had little effect over the inclination, whether democratic or authoritarian, of the regimes. For Collins, the conclusion that can be extracted from the transitional period is that "if no pact is forthcoming, any subsequent regime transition will probably be unstable"<sup>60</sup>: that seems to be the case of Tajikistan.

### ***2.3 Political scenario immediately after independence: the prelude to conflict***

There are as yet various authors that seriously contemplated the prospect of democratic change in post-independence Tajikistan by mid- 1991. Gregory Gleason suggests that the reasons for this kind of enthusiasm were based on Tajikistan's ancient heritage of Persian civility mixed with the egalitarian values of the Soviet era; Tajikistan's multinational, well educated, population; and, the country's well endowed land.<sup>61</sup> It was argued that given the conditions in 1991, Tajikistan was a country that could easily have set itself on a course of peaceful, democratic, socially responsible market-oriented reform.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Collins, "Clans, Pacts, and Politics," 145.

<sup>61</sup> Gregory Gleason, "Why Russia is in Tajikistan," *Comparative Strategy* 20, (2001).

<sup>62</sup> Such irresponsible view was promoted, according to Carothers, by enthusiastic policy makers of the Department of State of the United States in the mid-1980s, such as George Shultz, former head of that

Nevertheless, the expectations about democracy rapidly vanished as soon as critical aspects of the internal dynamics of Tajikistan became apparent. Those critical aspects were: forced political modernization, enforced (Soviet designed – Soviet alchemy) political communities, no natural state formation process, clan-based politics, authoritarian practices, lack of self-government experience and unfamiliarity with democratic ideals.

It is important to underline that, as there are very few known first-hand reports, there is no fully authoritative account of the Tajik civil war. Consequently, it is difficult to work out something of an impartial account of that war. However, in order to stir away this shortcoming I will try to present an account based on several points of view and approaches from different authors. In the following paragraphs and in the next section different explanations on the causes and developments of the Civil War will be offered. There are two mainstream theses that are commonly used to try to explain Tajikistan's plight: civil war as a fight between government and Islamic opposition; and, civil war as a factional struggle between regional networks in order to obtain a bigger share of the state's resources. Based on authors such as Rubin, Atkin, Lynch and Akiner I will contend that civil strife in Tajikistan was an outcome of the internal dynamics of the country and the power vacuum that the fall of communism left. I will try to depict the conflict as a complex phenomenon that can be better understood if we take those two theses and combine them. This is what I do in the following.

According to Jack Snyder, in the wake of Soviet collapse, people sought to adapt to the institutional wreckage of the empire to survive the challenges that social

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department, without analyzing the particularities of each state. Thomas Carothers, "The End of the Transition Paradigm," *Journal of Democracy* 13, no.1 (2002): 6-21.

transformation implies.<sup>63</sup> He points out three security challenges: the first is the scramble for individual security. As anarchy banishes coercive structures, people look for alternative structures to survive under new and potentially dangerous circumstances. A second post-imperial challenge is that with no effective institutional framework to channel social mobilization and demands, political participation tends toward direct action –confrontation, strikes, coups, and civil war. Third, the collapse of the Soviet economy ended the command system and the central subsidies, resulting in an anxious search for economic survival and reform. In the case of Tajikistan, as Rubin shows, “institutional incapacity... to manage the abrupt disappearance of subsidies triggered a Hobbesian struggle for economic survival among a heterogeneous mix of groups.”<sup>64</sup>

As a result of weak institutional structure, the Tajik conflict was primordially a contest over control of power in the new state.<sup>65</sup> The widely heard, rather simplistic, characterization of this power struggle was that it was being disputed by two diametrically opposed sides: one representing secularism and stability, led by former Soviet elites; and, the other representing radical Islamism.<sup>66</sup> Dov Lynch argues that the very definition of the new state was between the ‘secular and conservative state’ and the pro-democratic and ‘potentially’ Islamic led ‘new state’, with broad regional representation. However, Atkin contends that according to this view promoted by communists, there was no middle ground. The conflict was allegedly due to the actions of radical Islamists attempting to overthrow the legitimate Tajik government and transform

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<sup>63</sup> Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,” 7.

<sup>64</sup> By the end of the Soviet era nearly 47 percent of the republic’s budget was paid by federal subsidies. Loss of subsidies predictable placed the various patronage networks in conflict over the scarce resources. Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,” 8.

<sup>65</sup> Dov Lynch, “The Tajik Civil War and the Peace Process,” *Civil Wars* 4, no. 4 (Winter 2001): 51.

<sup>66</sup> Muriel Atkin, “The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan,” in *Central Asia, its Strategic Importance and Future Prospects*, ed. Hafeez Malik (New York: SL Martin’s Press, 1996), 211.

this small republic into an Islamic state like Iran that would pose a threat to all neighboring states.<sup>67</sup>

In order to understand the origin and structure of the Tajik Civil War we should take into account the nature of political developments during the Soviet era, stressing the way in which the TajSSR structured the recruitment of different elites and counter elites along regional lines.<sup>68</sup> In this respect, Rubin explains that there is still no statistical study of the composition of the elites, but some general facts are agreed upon. Some elites had a more or less uniform regional character, while others were split. Links of patronage and solidarity based on regionalism made possible the mobilization of supporters and fighters by elites engaged in what started as an ideological and social struggle in the capital.<sup>69</sup> “The clans that went to war in Tajikistan, then, were solidarity groups or parallel power networks organized around the administrative and economic assets of the Soviet state.”<sup>70</sup> For Atkin, however, to say that this political turmoil was just about the rivalry among contending factions is another misperception. He claims that the definition of contending camps by such non-ideological factors as region, extended family, patron-client networks, and even criminal mobs was a partial depiction of the belligerents. Akiner supports this view by stating that “[c]ompetition between regional groups was another element... Regional based group identities were still potent. Nevertheless, their importance should not be overestimated”.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> The Manichaean view of secularism being assailed by religious fundamentalism was proposed by former communists unreconciled with the idea of the loss of the Soviet monopoly and the privileges it gave them. It was an attempt to play on the fears of those who would not want to see a radical regime raising in Tajikistan and that could possibly intervene in favor of the old guard government. Muriel Atkin, “The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan,”.

<sup>68</sup> Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,” 9.

<sup>69</sup> Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,” 11.

<sup>70</sup> Rubin, “Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown,” 148.

<sup>71</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 41.

Therefore, it is possible to identify several elements that influenced the conformation of the unstable political situation of the months preceding civil war. Elements such as regional and intraregional fighting over resources, the rise of open political opposition to the regime, and the awakening of some Islamic oriented organizations contributed to the erosion of state control and opened up tense competition, which rapidly deteriorated into conflict. In a more deterministic tone, Rubin claims that the underlying cause of the armed conflict was not the existence of ethnic, religious, or political movements. Rather, it was the breakup of the Soviet Union itself that created the anarchic situation in which these groups had little alternative but to arm themselves and to engage into a violent competition over the few resources that remained.<sup>72</sup> In this case, Hobbesian struggle is wholly attributed to the extinction of the Soviet *Leviathan*.

From a probabilistic, as opposed to a deterministic, standpoint, one need not think that the civil war was an accident waiting to happen, but rather, that every step of the way the opportunities to avoid it were recurrently squandered. From this standpoint one can assume that, to paraphrase Juan J. Linz, a desirable outcome need not be unattainable merely because certain conditions that contribute to attain it, have deteriorated. Rather, that regardless of the conditions, one should consider how the features and actions of both key individuals and institutions can enhance or diminish the probabilities of desirable outcomes.<sup>73</sup> In line with this view, I organize some of the observations made by different authors suggesting that the Tajik regime very much paved the way to civil war by closing every space for the opposition to freely participate in the electoral processes and share in political power.

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<sup>72</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, "Introduction: The Tajikistan Peace Agreement," (1998 [cited 4 Apr. 2005]): available from <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/regional/rubinintro.html>

<sup>73</sup> Juan J. Linz, *La quiebra de las democracias* (Madrid: Editorial Alianza Universidad, 1987), 25.

Akiner suggests that the prelude of the conflict began in August 1991, when Kakhar Makhkamov, regarded by intellectuals as a hardliner, was still First Party Secretary. The Tajik party apparatus, led by him, supported the abortive coup against Gorbachev and advocated the prevalence of the Soviet Union. In the following confusing and chaotic interregnum, 'democratic' forces called for the demise of the Soviet regime and for free elections. In reaction to this, the Supreme Soviet declared the country's independence (September 9) and scheduled a nine-candidate presidential election for November.<sup>74</sup> The Democratic Party, Rastokhez, representatives of 'Official Islam', and some members of the Islamic opposition put forward the joint candidacy of the all-Union famous film-maker Davlat Khudonazarov to run against Nabiev, the CP candidate.<sup>75</sup>

By the time of the elections, anticommunists were embittered by the hardliners' repression at the end of the Soviet era and the first year of independence. According to Atkin<sup>76</sup>, a turning point was the clash in Dushanbe in February 1990, when a government attack on peaceful demonstrators voicing economic and political grievances provoked riots. Twenty-five people died and more than 800 were injured. The regime reacted to the February troubles by imposing a prolonged state of emergency, which was used not only to stop the rioting but also to repress the opposition.

Atkin notes that the regime's readiness to kill citizens of Tajikistan and manipulate investigations deeply scarred republican politics. In early September 1991, as demonstrators in Dushanbe pressured the regime to make reforms, they portrayed February troubles as a grievance in its own right and symbol of long-standing oppression.

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<sup>74</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 86.

<sup>75</sup> Atkin, "The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan," 214.

<sup>76</sup> The following is an account of the political developments that led Tajikistan to civil war based mainly on information offered by Muriel Atkin and Barnet R. Rubin.

As resentment against the old order became increasingly open and intense after August 1991, people recalled the 1990 troubles as an example of the regime's hostility toward its own citizens and its readiness to shed their blood. Although elsewhere in the Soviet Union non-communist parties were granted legal status, in Tajikistan this was denied to some parties from mid-to late 1991.<sup>77</sup> Hardliners went as far as arresting and eliminating some opposition leaders regardless of the legal status of their parties.

After the elections of February 1990, 95 percent of the seats in Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet were held by Communists; though that was no proof of public support for the party, since organized political opposition was still illegal when the ballots were cast. The legislative representatives elected at that time refused to allow their mandate to be put to a real test.

The election of November 24, 1991, provided scarcely more legitimacy than the legislative election. According to the official returns, Nabiev won with 58 percent of the vote; Khudonazarov came in second with 30 percent. Atkin clarifies that some of the vote for Nabiev was a vote against Gorbachev for the economic hardship caused by his reforms, the inertia resulting from nearly 70 years of Communist rule in the republic, and the hardliners substantial control over the mass media. However, the outcome was also the result of electoral fraud. Khudonazarov charged the regime with ballot stuffing and voter intimidation. He did not claim that he would have won the election, but did contend that he actually received the 37 percent of the vote. Atkin remarks that Khudonazarov's share of the vote "was not an inconsiderable vote against an entrenched political establishment in the country's first direct presidential election".<sup>78</sup> It is worth noting that

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<sup>77</sup> Atkin, "The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan," 218.

<sup>78</sup> Atkin, "The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan," 222.

these results stand in stark contrast to the monumental majorities received by other Central Asian leaders in the 1990s.

After their return to power, the hardliners showed how unwilling they were to tolerate the existence of any opposition. For example, the more time passed, the more dissenting voices could be heard in Tajikistan's press. In reaction to that, a new press law was enacted in spring 1992; it contained the kind of wording that facilitates a crackdown on press. The law seemed designed to provide a convenient device for harassing those who expressed opinions displeasing to the regime.<sup>79</sup>

Several members of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Rastokhez, and the Islamic Rebirth Party were arrested in first months of 1992. Akiner suggests that Nabiev's government could have had a rapprochement with the US Department of State that buoyed up the state apparatus to try to undermine the opposition.<sup>80</sup> According to some accounts, in May 1992, government forces opened fire against demonstrators, without warning. It was claimed that eight people were killed in the event. In reaction to this, some opposition members strongly called for Nabiev's ouster. However, others wanted Nabiev to remain in office due to 'stability' reasons.

As the political confrontation intensified in the spring of 1992, many of the opposition's moves were reactions to threatening gestures by the Nabiev regime.

The end of April and beginning of May 1992 saw ominous moves by the old guard. The Supreme Soviet authorized Nabiev to rule by decree, and he threatened a crackdown on the still-peaceful opposition demonstrators. This effort at intimidation

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<sup>79</sup> Atkin, "The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan," 225.

<sup>80</sup> Akiner argues that it is widely believed that the US Secretary of State had indicated that if the Tajik leader resisted 'fundamentalism' and Iranian influence, he would have US support. Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 36.

proved counterproductive. The opposition reacted by marshaling its own armed supporters in Dushanbe and holding its ground. It is widely assumed that this reaction marks the beginning of the Tajik Civil War. By mid- to late 1992, as the crisis deepened, the opposition was more willing to fiercely initiate violence.

So far the probabilistic approach enabled us to identify a sequence of actions that undermined cooperation on the part of the opposition: i) the repression of the Dushanbe peaceful demonstration in February 1990 and the state of emergence declared after it; ii) the denial of registration to non-communist parties before the legislative elections in February 1990; iii) The electoral fraud in the November 1991 presidential election; iv) the arrest of Rastokhez and IRP members in 1992.

These actions against the opposition very much undermined the stability of the country making it necessary for Nabiev to rule by decree and to resort to more comprehensive forms of repression. One can think that cooperation on the part of the government after events *i* or *ii* could have still allowed it to accommodate the opposition within the new institutions and foreclose in that way the prospects of radicalization and civil war.

However, the clan factor forces us to consider a much wider set of events and above all to adopt an understanding of cooperation that does not entirely adhere to the logic of reciprocity. According to Collins what was at stake in Central Asian states between the last years of Gorbachev and the first years of independence was not the typical challenge faced by authoritarian rulers who must countenance, and learn to share their power with, their opponents. Rather what was at stake was which clan would rule the country, and this was not a decision to be arrived at through Western procedures like

casting a vote or setting up a round table negotiation process with all the parties likely to be affected by the issue at hand. This was merely a juncture in which clans would stake a claim on the leadership of their country including other clans and openly excluding others.

The term ‘transition pact’ put forward by Collins attempts to capture what is otherwise a process in which a clan selects itself for exercising the dominant position in the country and bids for the support of other influential clans in exchange for their total subordination. Collins claims that the need to negotiate these transitional pacts became emerged well before the collapse of the USSR since Gorbachev removed the members of the elites of Central Asian states and replaced them with Russian cadres. While she points out that this process affected Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, there is also evidence that it affected the elite of Kazakhstan.<sup>81</sup> In reaction to this trend Collins states that “clan elites brokered informal pacts to reclaim power” using “the ethnic unrest and riots of 1989-90 to delegitimize Gorbachev’s appointees and put forward their own candidates for the high post of first secretary.”<sup>82</sup> All this entails that the outcomes of the 1991 Presidential elections in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan turned out winners that had been previously chosen by the clan elites of their countries.

Moscow –according to Collins– spared the Tajikistan elite from the process it subjected the above mentioned countries for strategic reasons related to the threat of Islamic fundamentalism revival. Moscow decided to back the Tajik dominant clan. Hence, argues Collins, the Khujandis had “no incentive to pact with other clans.”<sup>83</sup> The

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<sup>81</sup> Ana Irene Contreras, *Kazajstán: evaluación de riesgos y posibilidades de la democracia*. (Santa Catarina Martir, Cholula, Puebla: Universidad de las Americas, Puebla, 2004). Undergraduate final paper.

<sup>82</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics,” 144.

<sup>83</sup> Collins, “Clans, Pacts, and Politics,” 144.

collapse of the Soviet Union would then leave the Khujandis to face the November 1991 elections in an extremely vulnerable position.

Once we bring clan politics into the picture we can understand why the Tajik government did not seek the cooperation of the opposition and why it embarked in a repressive drive against it. Nabiev's problem was not that he did not win the 1991 elections but that he belonged to the wrong clan. He belonged to one that could not stake a claim on the country's leadership and elicit the support of other powerful clans. And since there was no clan that could plausibly stake a claim there was no alternative to civil war.

## ***2.4 Civil War***

After coming close to being ousted in May 1992, Nabiev appeared to agree to power sharing and joined the coalition Government of National Reconciliation (GNR). This joint agreement included that eight government positions were to go to members of the coalition that advocated change. Even though these positions accounted for only one-third of the cabinet, they included many of the key offices, including those that controlled the security forces and broadcasting<sup>84</sup>. Both sides accorded to disarm. The Supreme Soviet was to be replaced by a new legislature, a National Assembly, in which members of the opposition would have half the seats; this was to exist until the new legislative

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<sup>84</sup> The Islamic bloc in the GNR pushed measures such as broadcasting the *azan* (a Muslim call to prayer) five times a day. Akiner points out that this action caused unease among seculars. They saw it as a first step toward the establishment of an Islamic oriented state.

elections could be held at the end of the year.<sup>85</sup> However, hardliners were soon at work at undermining the coalition government.<sup>86</sup>

By late May the conflict had spread away from the capital and shifted toward the south. According to Akiner, the GNR, led by the opposition bloc, inflamed the crisis by imposing a punitive road blockade against Kulyab, the bastion of resistance to the GNR. Consequently, Kulyabi gang and mafias attacked regional sympathizers of the new ‘opposition’ government; the latter were not slow to retaliate.

One of the most important and scary moves of the regime was that not happy with using existing law enforcement bodies for purposes of political repression, Nabiev tried to organize a private army answerable directly to him to crush his opponents. He used his patron-client network to create these groups in various parts of Tajikistan. This took the form of a national guard and local militias.<sup>87</sup> The head of the pro-Nabiev militia (Popular Front) in the southern province of Kulyab was Sangak Safarov a, 64-year-old, ‘career criminal’ who, according to Rubin, transformed his experience as murderer and prison inmate into a position as a beloved leader and savior of the country in a matter of months –he was leader of the Popular Front that, supposedly, won the civil war in 1992.

Much of the worst political violence in the country during 1992 took place in the southern province of Qurghonteppa, where support for the reformers was strong. The violence was largely the doing of the pro-Nabiev militia.<sup>88</sup> Atkin argues that hardliners’ bad faith was demonstrated over the next few months by engaging into bloodshed in

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<sup>85</sup> Atkin, “The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan,” 214.

<sup>86</sup> The proposed National Assembly never got off the ground. The Supreme Soviet refused to give way to it. Nabiev denied having agreed to the assembly’s creation, accused the opposition of violating the terms of the May agreement by advocating its creation, and claimed that such a body could not be created unless the Supreme Soviet voted to do so.

<sup>87</sup> Atkin, “The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan,” 218.

<sup>88</sup> Tajikistani television, then controlled by reformers, claimed that the fighting in the southern part of the country caused 18,500 deaths in the half year following the May 1992 crisis.

Qurghonteppa and by reneging on the May power-sharing agreement. Therefore, by July there was open warfare between rival factions throughout most of the country.<sup>89</sup> On August 31, 1992, opposition demonstrators seized the presidential palace as well as the offices of the Council of Ministers and took hostages, the principal demand was the ouster of Nabiev.

Nabiev was finally forced from office, at gunpoint, on September 7, 1992, and captured by opposition demonstrators; Dushanbe was controlled by disordered opposition factions. He was succeeded by a veteran communist representative of the group that by the end of the Soviet era sought accommodation with non-Communists: Akbarshoh Iskandarov, at the age of 42, became acting president of Tajikistan. On October 24, 1992, the Popular Front, reputedly with assistance from Uzbekistan, pushed northwards and attacked Dushanbe in an attempt to restore Nabiev's power. Therefore, in the wake of nation-wide violence, in an attempt to end the civil confrontation, Iskandarov announced his resignation by November 1992, so that the Supreme Soviet could name a new government that would call for new elections.

Ironically, the legislature met in Khujand, the hardliner stronghold, then, after defeating the GNR, formed a new government composed of hardliners. Emomali Rakhmonov, a Kulyabi, was elected head of government and state, thus, encouraging the perception that the early violent phase of the civil confrontation was won by the political coalition based in Kulyab; meanwhile, the battle for control in the south intensified.

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<sup>89</sup> It is important to take into account that the Soviet policies of forced re-settlement favored post-independence intraregional struggle due to non-local affiliations.

The old guard finally seized the city by December of that year and launched a brutal ‘ethnic cleansing’ against Pamiris, Garmis and Karateginis in the city.<sup>90</sup> According to Atkin, the situation in Tajikistan during the first year of independence was desolate. The fighting continued even after the old guard captured Dushanbe. Consequently, national agricultural production decreased sharply. Atkin explains that both factors combined to threaten thousands of people with hunger as well as violence as winter approached. “By cruel irony, the old guard’s obstinacy and double dealing had the greatest potential to strengthen the hitherto small camp of Islamicizing radicals, against whom the old guard claimed to be the best defense”.<sup>91</sup>

The new government led by Rakhmonov rapidly took steps to consolidate its position. It allocated the main posts predominantly to natives of Kulyab and to a lesser extent Leninabad. Soon, the opposition parties were banned as well as the publications that supported the GNR. Several measures that were considered by opposition and international media as regressive and retrograde were implemented.<sup>92</sup> A national army was created on the basis of the Popular Front. Once Dushanbe was secure the government renewed its offensive toward the south. Mass retaliation against opposition supporters forced them to migrate, mostly to Afghanistan. For some author as Rubin, this exodus marks the end of the conventional war within the country. Skirmishes over the next several years were considered as a type of guerrilla fighting characterized by sporadic incursions.

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<sup>90</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 39.

<sup>91</sup> Atkin, “The Politics of Polarization in Tajikistan,”.

<sup>92</sup> For example, the religious title of Qazi (that belonged to Akbar Turajonzade) was abolished and a national Muftiate was reintroduced headed by a pro-government cleric.

By early 1993, the opposition parties formed a coalition, the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), which was mainly settled in northern Afghanistan and then launched several major offensives but failed to secure any bastion in Tajik territory. This situation persisted from the spring of 1993 till the end of the year; by late that year it was finally agreed that a CIS<sup>93</sup> peacekeeping force should be established to stop bloodshed.

Although political control was well established in Dushanbe and in Khujand, many other parts of the country remained under the lead of local warlords and military chieftains from 1993 onwards. The inherited and continued Tajik incapacity to govern large areas of the country was one of the most acute troubles that the new Kulyab-Khujand government had to face. Meanwhile, another threat to the future of Tajikistan was rising: Leninabad exhibited isolationist tendencies.

The fighting continued in 1994, though it assumed a more localized character. According to Akiner, both sides strove to consolidate their positions, but neither succeeded in extending their dominion beyond its areas of support. By the mid- 1990s, Tajikistan was virtually divided between government-held territory and opposition-held posts; the rest of the country was under the sway of local rulers.<sup>94</sup> By those days, the physical devastation of the republic's infrastructure was massive. Akiner explains that it was at this stage of 'mutual hurting stalemate' that the chief protagonists in the conflict finally accepted the need for compromise. In April 1994, the government and the UTO entered the first round of talks that finally led to the peace agreement in 1997.

Meanwhile, the strategy adopted by Rakhmonov's government was that of consolidating its power. According to Lynch, the rise of Kulyab as a national political

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<sup>93</sup> Community of Independent States.

<sup>94</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 40.

force marked a significant departure from the Soviet power structures. Whilst the first government was still a coalition between Khujandis and Kulyabis it collapsed by the elections of 1994-95. Rakhmonov took several measures to extend Kulyabi domination over the entire country such as merging regions and purging disloyal authorities. Despite the governmental efforts, by 1996, UTO military advances, external pressure, tensions between Dushanbe and Khujand, and economic crisis, were crucial elements leading Rakhmonov to seek compromise with the opposition.<sup>95</sup>

Lynch establishes six main developments that led Rakhmonov to seek compromise: First, the weakness of the Tajik regime to guarantee territorial control was exhibited by the effective advances of the UTO field commanders. Second, a shift in Russian attitude toward the conservative government was promoted by the successes and demands of the opposition. Russian pressure on Dushanbe forced Rakhmonov to enter the talks. The third determining factor was that Tajikistan's Central Asian neighbors turned away from supporting the policies adopted by Dushanbe, which, in their view, had further polarized the country increasing the risk of a spillover. Therefore, the Kazakh and Uzbek regimes stressed the need to reach an accommodation with the UTO. The fourth critical element that led Rakhmonov to seek accommodation was that, at the same time, external pressures were mixing with renewed internal resentment among non-UTO forces. Perhaps this was one of the most worrying alerts because the resurgence of armed clashes with non-UTO forces could have been interpreted as a return to the most violent phases of the civil war. Fifth, as a powerful symbol of discontent with Kulyabi dominance of regional politics, tensions erupted in Khujand. The final factor was the collapse of law and order and the decline of the Tajik economy. Economics had always

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<sup>95</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 57.

been a matter of disturbance for Tajik national development; moreover, when placed in combination with the five points cited above it becomes of much greater salience.<sup>96</sup>

By early 1997, the republic's infrastructure was strongly deteriorated; Tajik economy was in a catastrophic state with overwhelming inflation rates. It was clear that the collapse of the Soviet Union and the civil disruption of the following years had resulted in a life threatening situation for the majority of the population. Social services such as the health-care system were completely disintegrated increasing the risks of epidemic outbreaks due to the lack of potable water and medicines. According to a 1996 report by the UN Department for Humanitarian Affairs,

The armed conflict between the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) continued, however, and intensified during the past year. The destructive effects of continued fighting were compounded by the collapse of the country's economy and declining public and social services, resulting in increased vulnerability of large segments of the population.<sup>97</sup>

Lynch argues that at this point the fight between the government and the opposition was not that about the mere definition of the Tajik state, but a struggle over representation and power. The harshness of social situation and the continued economic crisis, ironically, set out a common ground in which the diverse political forces of the state agreed on the need to create a State Council to widen representation. The main question according to Lynch was that of when to do so and whom to include. The road to a peace agreement was almost entirely paved.

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<sup>96</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 58-60.

<sup>97</sup> UN Consolidated Inter-Agency Donor Alert on Urgent Humanitarian Needs in Tajikistan. UN Department of Humanitarian Affairs.(Nov. 13, 1996 [cited 15 Dec. 2005]): available from [http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha\\_ol/pub/appeals/96appeals/tajik/141196.html](http://www.reliefweb.int/ocha_ol/pub/appeals/96appeals/tajik/141196.html)

### 2.4.1 The Peace Agreement and Reconciliation Process

After an exhaustive confrontation that caused thousands of deaths and despite all the obstacles and difficulties of several years of war, warring factions (aided and pressured by international mediators) found a common ground for initiating negotiations toward a peaceful settlement. It is important to take into account that mediation in the Tajik conflict involved numerous state and non-state external actors.<sup>98</sup>

It seems to be a rather positive perception of the international mediation in the conflict. For authors such as Iji Tetsuro<sup>99</sup> the outcome of third-party involvement in the Tajik conflict represents a successful case in which the activities of external actors were “exceptionally well-coordinated”.<sup>100</sup> In relation to this, in his analysis of international involvement in the peace process, Akiner remarks that cooperation rather than hegemonic rivalry among the external players positively influenced the final outcome. Rubin explains that it was through talks sponsored by the UN, supported by the OSCE, and aided by a second-track dialogue process that the agreement was finally reached in June

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<sup>98</sup> Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan, as well as representatives from OSCE, were all accepted as mediators or observers in the inter-Tajik negotiations. The roles of Uzbekistan, the regional power, and Russia, the former imperial force, should not be underestimated. International involvement in Tajikistan’s affairs became clear by early 1993. Uzbekistan feared the potential spillover of the Tajik conflict. Any possible coalition government was seen as deeply threatening. Therefore, Islam Karimov, the Uzbek head of state, sought to reestablish Uzbek political dominance over Leninabad with the objective of reasserting the traditional Uzbek influence over Tajikistan. Lynch affirms that Uzbekistan provided crucial armed support, training and equipment to ‘pro-conservative’ regional militias, mainly in areas with important Uzbek minorities.

For Akiner, Russian involvement in Tajikistan was constrained by other priorities, including post-Soviet military conversion, the forging of workable CIS structures, the reshaping of relations with the West and the conduct of the Chechen war. Uzbekistan, the dominant regional power, was a very new state, its policies, domestic as well as foreign, still in flux. Anyway, neither side to the conflict could have survived had it not been shored up by external sponsors; yet such support was never sufficient to allow either side to gain absolute superiority.

<sup>99</sup> Multiparty mediation analyst from the Department of International Relations of the London School of Economics.

<sup>100</sup> Iji Tetsuro, “Multiparty Mediation in Tajikistan: The 1997 Peace Agreement,” *International Negotiations* 6, (2001) 357-85.

1997.<sup>101</sup> Nevertheless, out of the sight of international media, the government failed to fulfill the commitments that it acquired in the accords.

There were several rounds of the so-called inter-Tajik negotiations. The first round was held in Moscow, under the auspice of UN, on April 1994. The main objective of the first rapprochement was to set the negotiating agenda for subsequent rounds. The most acute problems that were to be resolved were: political settlement, refugees and internally displaced persons, and the structure of government in Tajikistan.

A following decisive round was held in Islamabad, Pakistan, in late October that year. The UTO and the Tajik government accorded to establish a ceasefire agreement from that month till February 1995 and signed a protocol providing the workings of a joint monitoring commission for that purpose.<sup>102</sup> However, as Tetsuro points out, the government's unwilling attitude to yield and to share power slowed down the peace process and fostered situations in which ceasefire violations were reported by both sides.

The round of negotiations held in Almaty, Kazakhstan, from May to June 1995 was significant in that, for the first time, dealt in depth with key issues of including the UTO into the government, although, in that regard, a lack of substantive progress was reported.<sup>103</sup> It was until Rakhmonov and Said Abdulloh Nuri, then leader of the UTO, decided to directly participate that the signing of a Protocol on the Fundamental Principles for Establishing Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was possible.

The Tajik negotiating encounter in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, (November 1995) resulted in the opposition's proposal to establish a Council of National Reconciliation

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<sup>101</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, "Introduction: The Tajikistan Peace Agreement," (1998 [cited 4 Apr. 2005]): available from <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/regional/rubinintro.html>

<sup>102</sup> Iji Tetsuro, "Multiparty Mediation in Tajikistan," 359.

<sup>103</sup> Iji Tetsuro, "Multiparty Mediation in Tajikistan," 362.

with real, but only transitional, power. This idea found hard reactions on the side of the government. Anyway, extension on the ceasefire accords was implemented.

In September 1996, the seizure of Kabul by the Taliban forces caused a sensation of urgency to unlock the stalemated Tajik negotiations not only to the Tajik parties themselves, but also to external actors. According to Tetsuro, an initial sign of renewed commitment to accommodation was evident at a working meeting of experts in Tehran on October, in which the parties commenced elaborating a draft agreement for signing by Rakhmonov and Nuri at their scheduled meeting in Moscow. On December they met and signed the initialed document. The agreement stipulated a time-table for the peace process<sup>104</sup> and provided for the establishment of the Commission of National Reconciliation (CNR) to function during the transition process and to be chaired by an UTO representative. It also prescribed a universal amnesty and a full exchange of prisoners of war. Moreover, the CNR would develop proposals for changes to the constitution to be submitted to national referendum, and would draft a new electoral law to be approved by Parliament. It would also facilitate the integration of the opposition and its military units into governmental executive and power structures. The CNR would consist of the same number of representatives from the government and from the UTO, leaving no seats for other Tajik parties.<sup>105</sup> Rakhmonov and Said Abdulloh Nuri signed the ‘General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan’ on June 27 1997 in Moscow.

According to Akiner, compared to other armed conflicts, the Tajik peace agreement was a remarkable outcome. He states two main social factors that contributed

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<sup>104</sup> The time-table called for the conclusion of a final agreement by 1 July 1997; and its implementation within a transition period of 12 to 18 months.

<sup>105</sup> Iji Tetsuro, “Multiparty Mediation in Tajikistan,”.

to this achievement. The first one is that as Tajiks do not have a militant culture, by tradition they have tended to peaceful occupations, they were culturally less apt to involve into deep and continued conflict. The second is that even though Tajik society is fragmented, indeed, there are no deep-seated group animosities. “Thus, although there was a certain degree of regionalization and ethnicization of the conflict, these were not dominant aspects of the struggle”.<sup>106</sup>

Moreover, several other specific factors fostered the peace process. These included leadership on both sides; cooperation rather than hegemonic rivalry among the external players, coupled with a sustained international support for the peace talks; and a continuous process of government as a result of which a limited degree of consistency in post-Soviet institution-building was maintained. Consequently, as there was at least the skeleton of a functioning bureaucracy, some progress was made with economic reform. These last two factors facilitated the transition from conflict to post-conflict reconstruction.<sup>107</sup>

One of the most important elements of the signing of the peace agreements was the conformation of the Commission of National Reconciliation. This instance mainly addressed issues of demobilization and disarmament, as well as the return of refugees and other political concerns.<sup>108</sup> It was divided into several sub-commissions.

The Political Sub-Commission, led by a government figure, was designed to work out the allocation of 30 percent of government posts to the UTO, the legislation of political parties and media freedom. The Refugee Sub-Commission, headed by an UTO secular leader, was to oversee an amnesty law, the release of prisoners of war, new

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<sup>106</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 96.

<sup>107</sup> Akiner, *Tajikistan Disintegration*, 97..

<sup>108</sup> Such as promoting the creation of new election laws and scheduling future elections.

electoral laws and the creation of a new Central Electoral Commission. The Military Sub-Commission, directed by an UTO leader, was to monitor the implementation of the Protocol on Military Issues, in coordination with the UN Observer Mission in Tajikistan (UNMOT). The military dimension included the registration of the UTO fighters into the Tajik armed forces and their subsequent oath of loyalty.<sup>109</sup>

According to Lynch, the peace process also made progress in its political and legal dimensions until the presidential and parliamentary elections in late 1999-early 2000. The presidential elections of November 1999 were not free and fair.<sup>110</sup> The opposition candidates were harassed and obstructed when promoting their candidacies. Thus, opposition candidates boycotted the election by abdicating to their political right of being elected. In support, the UTO withdrew from the CNR on October. Rakhmonov won the election with almost 97 percent of the vote with a turn-out 98 percent.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, it was only under intense pressure from the UTO in the CNR, that Rakhmonov did appoint the UTO to 30 percent of the highest level executive positions in the government as accorded.<sup>112</sup> The implementation of legal and political dimensions was incomplete because of the problems associated with power-sharing. Although UTO members were appointed to high executive posts, they remained excluded from lower levels of administration and state companies.<sup>113</sup>

By September 1999, the CNR was fully functioning and a referendum was held to amend the constitution. The proposal to create a two chamber parliament, with direct vote

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<sup>109</sup> In August 1999, Nuri announced that the UTO was no longer a military force, as all former UTO fighters had been officially integrated into the Tajik army. Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War,".

<sup>110</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War,".

<sup>111</sup> Martha Olcott, "Regional Study on Human Development and Human Rights in Central Asia," *Human Development Report 2000 Background Paper* (2000 [cited 4 Nov. 2005]): available from [http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications/background\\_papers/Olcott2000.html](http://hdr.undp.org/docs/publications/background_papers/Olcott2000.html)

<sup>112</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 54.

<sup>113</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 58.

to the lower house was accepted. The upper house would have 75 percent of the deputies taken from local councils and 25 percent appointed by the president. The presidential term extension from five to seven years without reelection was also approved.<sup>114</sup>

#### 2.4.1.1 Agreement weaknesses

As has been signaled before, the outcomes of the peace process are not representative of the entire population of Tajikistan. They represent only the interests and demands of the signing parts and it is clear that they do not control the entire Tajik territory. Since its inception, the failure to account for Khujand political forces and other national minorities was considered as a shortcoming.<sup>115</sup> Nevertheless, based on historical ties to neighboring Uzbekistan, it is possible to argue that Khujandis tacitly promoted their exclusion from the process in order to consolidate their position within their region. Lynch argues that, paradoxically, the peace process did progress based partially on Khujand's *de facto* autonomy from Dushanbe's affairs.<sup>116</sup>

Another striking problem in the wake of the civil war was that of the integration of the opposition fighters into the Tajik forces. The weak financial situation of the government prevented it from accomplishing various post-conflict commitments. The lack of resources to create jobs and to promote the reintegration of the former combatants to society left them to their own device. This added to the militarization of the Tajik society, exacerbated problems of law and order. Civil violence and criminality rapidly

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<sup>114</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 58.

<sup>115</sup> There have been some reported Khujandi uprisings demanding seats in the government from 1998 onwards.

<sup>116</sup> This situation strengthened the intervening capacity of Uzbekistan over the Tajik non-controlled territory arguing security reasons and not accounting to Dushanbe.

increased and hostage-taking and killings became common activities in which several non-integrated former UTO's were involved

The Secretary of the Tajik Security Council admitted in early 1997 that: "Against the background of weak law enforcement activities, crime has continued to grow, especially in its organized form, drug trafficking is flourishing, corruption sneaking into all levels of bodies of power and management. Rakhmonov stated in June 1998 that drug trafficking was "threatening not only the stability but to a certain degree is becoming an obstacle to the development of the country's statehood and independence."<sup>117</sup>

By 1999, this situation of insecurity, violence and criminality mixed with the state's incapacity to administer and secure the entire territory resulted in the empowerment of former military chiefs that were struggling for spheres of influence. These circumstances created a perfect haven for mafia encroachment and the expansion of drug trafficking while brought disincentives for these 'strong men' to disarm and support the strengthening of the Tajik state.<sup>118</sup>

Despite all progresses, by 1999 the peace process faced several problems. Food deficit, industrial collapse, energy dependence, and weak state institutions represented a difficult context for the implementation of any agreement. Lynch distinguishes between those problems associated with the implementation of the agreement and those related to the enduring weakness of the Tajik state and economy.<sup>119</sup> By 2004, Tajikistan stood within the world's 20 poorest states, with a per capita income under USD\$ 300.<sup>120</sup> He

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<sup>117</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 55.

<sup>118</sup> Dov Lynch, "The Tajik Civil War," 57.

<sup>119</sup> The international community has looked forward to develop programs that could help the generation of small-scale income projects to offset the general impoverishment of the population. While significant, these programs have proven limited when addressing the fundamental problems of the Tajik economy.

<sup>120</sup> "World Development Indicators Database", *World Bank* (July 2005 [cited 23 Jan. 2005]): available from [www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/GDP.pdf](http://www.worldbank.org/data/databytopic/GDP.pdf)

states that “while it is worth distinguishing between the two, the real danger for the long-term settlement of the conflict resides in the intertwining of these dimensions.”<sup>121</sup>

Finally, Rubin argues that the fundamental source of threat is that war resulted from a collapse of “redistributive mechanisms, leading to violent competition over power in the context of shrinking resources. This scarcity of resources has, if anything, become worse.”<sup>122</sup> Rubin suggested that further attempts to expand the ruling coalition, perhaps to the Uzbek minorities, could cause destabilization and set off new conflicts over the spoils of power.

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<sup>121</sup> Dov Lynch, “The Tajik Civil War,” 54.

<sup>122</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, “Introduction: The Tajikistan Peace Agreement,” (1998 [cited 4 Apr. 2005]): available from <http://www.eurasianet.org/resource/regional/rubinintro.html>