

Call for Papers: Abstract submission deadline: **23 May 2017**

Conference:

**“Tajikistan’s 1997 Peace Accord at Twenty:
Assessing the History and Politics of War and Peace”
6-7 July 2017, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**

Background: Before the commencement of the Chechen wars, Tajikistan’s civil war, which began in Spring 1992, was known as the bloodiest conflict in the post-Soviet space. Estimates of the number of dead during Tajikistan’s five year war (1992-1997) are anywhere from 40,000 to 100,000, with the far majority of casualties having occurred in the first year of the conflict. Despite the complicated nature of the war, what is generally accepted is that a combination of rapid economic decline in the already poorest former republic of the Soviet Union; perceived ethno-regional and ideological cleavages, much of it originating in the Soviet era; in addition to political disarray among the ruling elites were responsible for the commencement of the war.

Despite the brutality of the war with its human and economic devastations, the two warring sides, the Government of Tajikistan and the armed Islamist-led United Tajik Opposition (UTO), eventually attempted to resolve their differences through a series of negotiations (eight rounds and twenty meetings) lasting over three years with the primary intermediation of the United Nations, but also key diplomatic efforts by the governments of the Russian Federation, Iran and Afghanistan. Negotiations between the two warring sides, represented by Tajikistan’s President Emomali Rahmon and the UTO leader Said Abdullo Nuri (d. 2006), led to the signing on 27 June 1997 in Moscow of “The General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan.”

The 1997 Peace Accord involved the formation of the Commission of National Reconciliation and the formal commitment towards power-sharing, including: 30 percent of top government posts promised to UTO leaders; the unbanning of formerly banned parties, chief among them the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT); the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration of opposition fighters, including amnesty and release of prisoners of war; and the return to Tajikistan of tens of thousands of refugees, mostly Tajik citizens who had fled to the safety of northern Afghanistan. The UN Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT, 1994-2000), in turn, monitored the progress of the said objectives.

Since the signing of the 1997 Peace Accord, Tajikistan has held a number of presidential and parliamentary elections, none of which have been deemed to be fair and democratic by observers of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). More importantly, since September 2015, the largest political opposition, the IRPT, has been banned by order of Tajikistan’s Supreme Court, which declared the party as an extremist and terror organization. In addition, many IRPT followers have since been detained and sentenced to long prison terms, including at least 11 from among the party’s top leadership, a number of whom have been given sentences of as high as

28 years to life in prison. Hundreds of Tajik citizens, many supposedly from among IRPT members, have also sought asylum in European countries. The banning of the largest political opposition has been accompanied with a clampdown on dissenting media and journalists, and by constitutional amendments aimed at the monopolization of power by the executive branch of the government.

Despite the relative calm in the country, it is open to question if this system can guarantee stability in the mid and long run, given that the resilience of the Tajik population is severely threatened by an ongoing economic slowdown and unemployment, substantial reduction in remittance flows by Tajik citizens working mainly in Russia, and a slump in global cotton and aluminium prices (two key exports of Tajikistan). At the same time, brain drain and the attractiveness of radical Islam for an increasing number of marginalized Tajiks, as well as the continuing war in neighboring Afghanistan risk the weakening of social cohesion.

The Conference: Hosted by the OSCE Academy in Bishkek, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation and the French Institute for Central Asian Studies, and titled: “**Tajikistan’s 1997 Peace Accord at Twenty: Assessing the History and Politics of War and Peace,**” to be held on **6-7 July 2017**, the Conference is part of the annual Central Asia and Eurasia-focused international events held by the said host institutions. The 20th anniversary of the 1997 Peace Accord provides an opportunity to analyze the developments since the civil war, assess the successes and failures of peacebuilding and facilitate informed scholarly discussion on the lessons learnt from the past two decades.

Potential paper topics may include: Origins and causes of Tajikistan’s civil war; history and politics of the Tajik peace negotiations; achievements and failures of the 1997 Peace Accord; legacies of civil war on Tajikistan’s socioeconomic and political development; future scenarios of conflict and stability in Tajikistan; and the role of Russia, China, U.S. and neighboring countries therein. Topics may also include Tajikistan’s political economy and demographic developments; problems of patriarchy and gender; migration, brain drain and remittance flows; and the role of Islam and Islamism.

The keynote speaker for the Conference will be **Dr Alexey Malashenko, Chair of the Religion, Society and Security Program of the Carnegie Moscow Center and Chief Researcher at the Dialogue of Civilizations Institute of Germany.** Researchers, academics, and doctoral students worldwide interested on the theme of this Conference are encouraged to apply to participate in this event. The Conference will be held at the **OSCE Academy in Bishkek during 6-7 July 2017**, while on 8 July, participants will be taken on an excursion of the picturesque **Ala Archa National Park**, a short drive outside of Kyrgyzstan’s capital, Bishkek.

Selected Conference papers will be published in either a special edition of a reputable international peer-reviewed journal or an edited book volume dedicated to the theme of the 20th anniversary of Tajikistan’s 1997 Peace Accord. The working language of the Conference is English. Though we cannot finance international air travel or accommodations, we will provide a number of complimentary meals during the Conference time period. **Applicants should send their (a) Paper Abstract (150-200 words) and (b) Resume/CV to: Conference2017@osce-academy.net no later than 23 May 2017.**