Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities—Sources and Solutions

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Introduction

The breakup of the Soviet Union was one of the most historic, yet unexpected, phenomena of the twentieth century. It has been compared to the demise of the Ottoman and Habsburg empires during World War I. This phenomenon left much of the international community in confusion and uncertainty. A series of institutional monoliths with thousands of experts and researchers created for the study and destabilization of the Soviet Union were also left in the cold. They were nearly discredited for their inability to foretell the crumbling of an ideological entity, which had acted for decades as their raison d’être. None among the international players, however, were more in a state of shock and ontological disarray than the five Central Asian republics that had primarily gained independence or ‘decolonization by default’. According to Gorbachev, the final dissolution of the Soviet Union, through the action taken by its three Slavic republics in Minsk, Belarus, in the summer of 1991, ‘faced the Central Asian republics with a fait accompli’. In his opinion, the dissolving of the USSR ‘was an insult to [the] sovereignty and national dignity’ of the Central Asian republics.

Throughout the 1980s and with the introduction of the Gorbachev-led new Soviet policies of glasnost and perestroika, some level of open conflict had begun within the member republics, yet violent conflict with accompanying casualties in the thousands only began after the breakup of the Union and the declaration of independence by individual states. This paper addresses the case of Tajikistan, one of the five independent states of Central Asia, and one of the few among the former Soviet republics that encountered a violent turn of events soon after independence. The civil war that befell Tajikistan led to the deaths of about 1% of its population and the displacement of more than 10%—approximately 50,000 people died and more than 500,000 became refugees. In addition, an equivalent of several billion dollars of damages was exerted on the country’s infrastructure. Consequently, the Tajik economy in 2001 is thought to be half the size of what it was a decade ago (see Figure 1).

An attempt will be made in this paper to answer two broad inquiries: what were and still remain the causes of conflict in Tajikistan? Moreover, what are the impending and potential solutions to preventing further conflict in Tajikistan? In attempting to satisfactorily respond to these inquiries, it is argued here that the concepts of nationalism, ethnicity and socio-economic disparity need to be analyzed.
Historical Background

The end of pax-Britannica accompanied the retiring of a class of British ‘soldier–explorer–scholars’ who for more than a hundred years had provided valuable description about Central Asia. This, in conjunction with the Soviet government’s paranoiac prevention of its subjects from communicating in any way with the outside world during much of the lifetime of the USSR led to little Western and non-Soviet contact, which further diminished significantly the amount of reliable scholarly work on the region. By the 1980s, however, all this began to change. The dawn of the high-tech information age, an element of globalization, caused a dramatic shift within the Soviet Union. Moscow was no longer willing or able to maintain a monopoly on information. Likewise, Gorbachev, who represented a significant generation change in Soviet thinking, began to promote the policy of glasnost, allowing for both open discussions on social and political issues and relatively free dissemination of news and information. As one result of glasnost, the ‘nationality question’, discussion of which was previously considered taboo, was allowed into the open. Perestroika and glasnost also affected, inter alia, peoples’ religious lives. The number of officially sanctioned mosques in Central Asia, for example, is thought to have increased fivefold during that period.

As in all post-imperial worlds, the post-Soviet era resulted in accidental borders, much of it drawn in the early years of the Bolshevik Revolution by people working with poor maps, far away from the delimited territories, and without much scientific basis or consultation with the local population. According to Molotov, a high-ranking Soviet official, the creation of the Central Asian republics, with their accompanying borders, ‘was entirely [Stalin’s] doing’. As a result of Stalin’s cartographic whim, Tajikistan, for example, has been described as resembling the shape of a country in post-colonial Africa, having been assigned an impossible terrain and disparate population, and its great historical centers deliberately left out of its boundaries. Without its ‘two sacred cultural centers’ of Samarkhand and Bokhara, Tajikistan has been compared to a France without Paris.
Unlike the Russian literary figures of the nineteenth century, such as Dostoevsky and Tiutech, with their ‘irrational nationalism’, Lenin saw his philosophy of anti-imperialism and national liberation as one of ‘rational internationalism’. This, combined with the Soviet policy of forming titular ethnic republics, acted as a double-edged sword. On the one hand, the Soviet system encouraged an internationalist set of traits and political culture with shared socialist values. On the other hand, it promoted the ‘flourishing’ of nationalities and their individual national awareness. It would seem logical that a symbiotic relationship between nationalism and internationalism could not last forever. Communist authorities had wrongly assumed the ‘naturally superior’ pull of international communism. As late as 1986, for example, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) had declared that the ‘nationality question … inherited from the past had been successfully solved’. Nationalism, religion and culture are not easily reversible phenomena, however. Before the dissolution of the USSR Wimbush had written: ‘common sense suggests that fourteen centuries of brilliant Irano-Turkic-Islamic culture cannot be quickly swept away by sixty-eight years of Russian-dominated Marxist–Leninist pseudo-culture’.

By 1991, mother Russia herself had caught the nationalist bug. One of the last efforts to save the crumbling empire was the August putsch of that year, which was easily put down by pro-Yeltsin pro-independence forces. In Central Asia, reactions to the failed coup were similar, but for different underlying reasons. All five republics declared ‘departyization’ and eventual independence, but for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, it was done for fear of a possible return of hard-liners in Moscow. Whereas for Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, severing ties with the CPSU and the declaring of independence were means to stay aside from the Moscow reformers who might have wanted to impose even greater change on them.

Before the abortive 1991 Moscow putsch, there were virtually no indigenous independence movements or national liberators in the Central Asian republics. For example, having had opposed a Tajik version of a Soviet-style ‘popular front’ opposition in 1988, ‘Friends of Perestroika’, Tajikistan’s Communist Party Secretary, Qahhar Mahkamov, had supported the aborted August coup. The failed putsch and Tajikistan’s declaration of independence soon afterwards, on 9 September, brought various political antagonisms into the open. Mahkamov, who had been ‘irretrievably discredited’ by his support of the coup, was forced to resign from office by a temporary coalition of former communists, Islamists and democrats, who were influential in placing Ghadreddin Aslonov as temporary Chairman of the Tajik Supreme Soviet. Yet, despite the breakup of the Soviet Union, Aslonov is also known to have said: ‘But it is quite obvious that a normal life is totally unimaginable unless we preserve the integrity of the Union of Sovereign States [sic]’—aka the USSR.

Despite his desire to hold a Soviet-type alliance with other republics, Aslonov gained some popularity with the people due to some perceived nationalistic tendencies. In addition to not being a native of Leninabad, for example, Aslonov boldly allowed the banning of the Communist Party and the toppling of the capital’s Lenin statue in the main square of Dushanbe. These moves, however, did not go well with the parliament, which soon appointed a former hard-line Communist Party first secretary, Rahmon Nabiye, as the President of Tajikistan. This was a symbolic communist backlash. Not surprisingly, shortly thereafter, Nabiye attempted to shut out the Islamists and democrats from political participation and to remove the ban imposed on the Communist Party. Massive rallies were organized by the Islamists and democrats in the capital, Dushanbe, in the spring of 1992. By May, the opposition made some headway. The
Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) was accepted into a coalition government, with one of its members, Davlat Usmon, as Prime Minister. By September 1992, however, an all out civil war had broken out, and Nabiyev was forced at gunpoint to resign. In November, a temporary opposition government was formed, but forced out by supporters of former communists through violence unleashed by the Popular Front (which consisted of large numbers of heavily armed, loosely-held-together supporters of the former communists) and by assistance from Uzbekistan and the Russian-dominated Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) forces in Tajikistan. The current president, Emomali Rahmonov, a native of Danghara of southern Kulob region, was then appointed to the presidential seat. He later won presidential terms in two disputed elections in 1994 and 1999.

**Nationalism**

Tajikistan is a relatively new phenomenon. Before 1924, there existed no entity called by that name or by its current spatial settings. As mentioned earlier, the current borders of Tajikistan are a creation of Soviet planners, and have only been in place since 1929. Nationalism in Tajikistan is purely modern, where prior to the existence of mass education, print and media—all introduced during the Soviet era—there was nothing that can be described as nationalism in the region. Up until the first quintile of the twentieth century, the Emir of Bokhara, who was considered both a dynastic and religious figure, ruled over much of today’s Tajikistan within the greater Bokhara Khanate. The far majority of the people (mostly being of Uzbek and Tajik ethnicities) were illiterate, living under an agrarian system and holding traditional and religious beliefs. Society was stratified horizontally, with the majority being farmers and herders, and with a minority class of small merchants, religious clerics and military. All this corresponds well to Anderson’s constructivist and even Gellner’s instrumentalist models of nationalism. Furthermore, since its inception and more within the past decade, Tajikistan has been experiencing two varieties of nationalisms: civic nationalism and ethnic or ‘ethno-regional’ nationalism. Civic nationalism began with the Soviet formation of the state of Tajikistan in 1924 and is being continued by the current government in its nation-building efforts, which is a daily and ongoing process. Ethnic or ethno-regional nationalism is what led to the 1992–1997 civil war and is the more dangerous of the two. If not properly contained, ethno-regional nationalism could potentially lead to further conflict in the form of inter-regional conflict within Tajikistan or inter-state conflict with Tajikistan’s traditional rival, the titular state of Uzbekistan.

What today constitutes as Tajikistan has been a fluid entity in the past century and a half, with its political confines having changed several times under various regimes and titles. It should still be possible to encounter elderly folk exceeding 85 years of age in the Leninabad region, for example, who were born in what was considered Russian Turkestan, a semi-independent region of Central Asia under Imperial Russian rule. By the early 1920s, these same people found themselves part of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic, and by 1929 they became citizens of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. Moreover, by 1991, these same elderly folk saw themselves part of the newly independent Tajikistan. Most of these people may have seldom ventured far from their village or district capital, yet, ironically, they have seen their nationality or citizenship, and possibly their state-determined ethnicity, change three times during their lifetimes.

Soviet domination over the region was not easily achieved. It encountered tough resistance especially by the Basmachi movement, a supra-ethnic loose alliance, with
primarily ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks among its adherents. Anti-Bolshevik and anti-modernist stances allowed the Basmachi movement to attempt to unite a disparate group of Muslims against Soviet-style ethnic nationalism. The Basmachi advocated pan-Islamism instead. They did so, while one of the movement’s de facto leaders, the Turkish General Enver Pasha, likely envisioned an ethnic Turkic umbrella over pan-Islamism. Despite the defeat of the Basmachi, their doughty resistance, combined with the inhospitable terrain facing the Bolsheviks, prevented more Bolshevik-led ‘revolutionary wars’ further in the East, as in Afghanistan, India or China.

Upon declaring independence in 1991, history ‘returned with a vengeance’ to Central Asia. This was especially so for Tajikistan. If the Soviet Union had tried to mix modernism with a certain degree of traditionalism in the individual republics, after its breakup, traditionalism was mixed with nationalism instead. In Tajikistan, there occurred what can be described as a ‘collapse of time’, where ancient heroes and old enemies were revived. For example, in the center of Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan, the largest statue of Lenin in the country was replaced with an equally gigantic figure of Firdawsi (or ‘Ferdowsi’ as pronounced by Iranians), a Persian poet of the ninth century whose main work, ‘Shahnameh’, is a Royal tribute in which the mythical warrior, Rostam, roams through eastern Iran and Central Asia in search of enemies, war and glory. The symbol of Firdawsi, in essence, became one of the intangible (non-economic and non-political) symbols or avatars of Tajik nationalism. More recently, Firdawsi’s literary avatar has been demoted in favor of the political avatar of the Samanid dynasty (which ruled over much of the region for about 170 years in the ninth and tenth centuries), with a fanciful image of the Samanid king, Ismail, having replaced it in the capital’s main square. In addition, the new national currency, having replaced the Tajik ruble, is called the ‘somoni’.

Central Asian nationalisms, as the Tajik example illustrates, have been the inadvertent result of Soviet planning. Despite their internationalist claims, Soviet planners were not immune from accepting, utilizing and promoting nationalism, a phenomenon born in the late eighteenth century. Stalin promoted a version of ethnic nationalism, what Smith refers to as the forging of nations based on ‘pre-existing ethnies’. According to Gellner, however, it is a myth to think of nations as a natural way of classifying people or think that they are ‘an inherent, though long-delayed political destiny’. The promotion of artificial allegiances by Soviet planners among the primarily Muslim peoples of Central Asia was a way to undermine any pan-Turkic and pan-Islamic aspirations, which, in view of the Soviets, might have had the potential to unite the region and destabilize the newly formed Soviet Socialist state. Ironically, this Soviet attempt to divert pan-nationalism, by its much-orchestrated mode, led to today’s Central Asian nationalisms.

The formation of nation-states in Central Asia, where none existed prior to the Bolshevik revolution, was for Soviet propaganda purposes, the promotion of federalism. Despite the republics’ lack of real autonomy, they possessed the apparent political infrastructure of independence, such as their own supreme soviets, foreign ministries, academies of sciences, etc., and in the case of the Baltic republics, their own embassies in foreign countries, as well. This pseudo-federalism remained so and became more of a real federation by the dawn of perestroika in the late 1980s, which allowed for significant amounts of influence by the various republican communist elite, and eventually led to the formation of post-Soviet nationalism.

There have been a variety of theories of post-Soviet nationalism. One, according to Park, is ‘the effect of unfreezing’, which implies the undoing of the totalitarian hold of
communism that used to maintain artificial social and political stability. This theory finds it natural that ‘long-suppressed animosities’, as in Yugoslavia or Tajikistan, came to the surface because of moves toward democratization or independence. The theory holds that ‘ethnic peace’ under communism was anything but genuine harmony. Peace was enforced brutally. Moreover, communism, with its accompanying repression, was only a temporary solution to ethnic animosity, with nationalism lurking beneath the surface, like ‘fire under the ashes’. There is also the ‘swing theory’ by Minogue and Williams, which holds that the ‘force-fed universalism’ expounded by Soviet communism provided for a swing toward the convenient particularism of nationalism. The resistance to Soviet expansion might have not occurred if it were not for the perception by the periphery of the center’s ulterior motives, that of the ‘imperialist expansion’ of ‘messianic Russian nationalists’. If the primarily ethnic Slavic promoters of Marxism had genuinely cooperated with the local populations, and promoted their Marxist–Leninist ideology by example rather than force, hypothetically speaking, the Soviet Union would have expanded naturally and would have endured in perpetuity. According to Gellner, communism’s repressive tactics of destruction of local civil society eventually led to a ‘social and moral vacuum’, which the increasingly industrialized and highly literate society could not tolerate. Nationalism was the most readily available candidate—and in the case of Central Asia, a Soviet-nurtured phenomenon—which could fill the moral void.

Nationalist movements are not made of mere street demonstrations and feelings of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Serving as catalyst for nationalism are nationalist leaders. Soviet policy towards potential nationalist leaders had been Stalinist executions, imprisonment or exile; or towards the end of the Soviet era, co-option of regional leaders into official voices of the socialist center, with putative representation of the ethnic periphery. Rewards were doled out in a skewed manner in favor of party officials. Moscow’s co-option of the periphery also led to corruption among the elite, some of whom used their favored positions to build personal power and wealth. Glasnost, however, led to a faltering of Moscow’s policy toward nationalist leaders, with generally liberal nationalist ‘popular fronts’ forming in most of the Union republics. In Tajikistan, regional nationalist leaders, both of the reformed communist and anticommunist types, only rose toward the very end of the Soviet implosion. In addition, as mentioned earlier, what eventually became known as the Popular Front in Tajikistan was anything but liberal, having been primarily formed of anti-Islamic and anti-democratic pro-government violent armed gangs. Nevertheless, as in much of the rest of the Soviet Union, the nomenklatura of Central Asia were able to gradually borrow much of the demands of the nationalists, transforming them into palatable forms, such as the changing of street names, and inter alia, dismounting of Lenin statues. By doing so, they were able to manipulate the rising nationalism in their own favor. In Tajikistan, for example, among other things, ‘Mt. Communism’ has now been changed into ‘Mt. Somoni’. More importantly, Tajiki is by law the official language of the republic.

Ethnicity and Regionalism

During Gorbachev’s time in office, it is said that the ten times or so that he became angry to the point of shouting, had all to do with the question of ethnicity. Though Gorbachev and in all likelihood a good percentage of the population of the whole Union had shared and were indoctrinated into one political culture and could have
been labeled as ‘Homo Sovieticus’, the majority of the constituency he was leading and representing increasingly identified themselves in terms of nationality and ethnicity. Soviet propaganda spoke of geographically neatly packed populations living in harmony within the wider country of the USSR. In reality, the various nationalities in Central Asia have never been confined to contiguous geographical territories. Most ethnic Tajiks of Central Asia, for example, live outside of Tajikistan, mainly in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.\(^{44}\) Officially, only about 5% of the population of Uzbekistan are ethnic Tajiks; however, the actual figure is thought to be between 10% and 15%.\(^ {45}\) This puts the number of ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan at nearly 3 million, while the number of ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan exceeds 1.5 million. Despite having been assigned two separate titular nation-states, however, according to Ghafurov, one of the literary giants of Tajikistan, Tajiks and Uzbeks are from the same ethnic root, that of Central Asian Iranian.\(^ {46}\)

As in many parts of the world, ethnicity in Tajikistan is not a clear-cut phenomenon. Aside from their languages, for example, there is virtually no difference between the Uzbek and Tajik ethnic groups. Language, too, may not be a distinguishing feature. In some parts of the Leninabad region, for example, due to widespread bilingualism and intermarriage, no clear differences exist between Tajik and Uzbek ethnicities.\(^ {47}\) It is thought also that some ethnic Uzbeks and Tajiks declared themselves as being of the other ethnicity in government censuses in order to feel welcome in the titular republic in which they live.\(^ {48}\) Moreover, in the case of Tajikistan, Soviet planners left a major part of the titular population and the main part of the physical history out of its borders. Today, although there exists a tendency towards mono-nationalism, primarily due to the exodus of Russians—the highest rate of emigration in the former Soviet Union—Tajikistan’s titular population still constitutes only about 65% of its 6.3 million inhabitants. Another 23% are ethnic Uzbeks, and the remainder are Russians, Tatars, Turkmens, Kyrgyz, Koreans, Arabs and others. Figure 2 shows the ethnic breakdown of 1020 randomly selected households as reported by a nationwide survey conducted in

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**Figure 2. Ethnicity by Region. Source:** P. Foroughi, *1998 Socio-Economic Survey of Households, Farms, and Bazaars in Tajikistan*, Washington, DC: SCF and USAID, 1999 (draft).
1998. As can be seen, the southern region of Qurghonteppa was found to be the most ethnically heterogeneous region in Tajikistan.\textsuperscript{50}

Regional rivalries and ethnocentrism have always existed among various ethnic groups in the region. In the 1920 constitution of the short-lived Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, for example, in which the Turkic Communists were highly influential, the only ‘indigenous nationalities’ mentioned were those of Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Turkmens.\textsuperscript{51} At the same time, the Tajik population, itself, cannot be said to be homogeneous, with major regional differences in dialect and appearance. The spoken ‘‘Tajiki’’ of Badakhshan Province, for example, is nearly incomprehensible to other Tajiks throughout the country. More important, regional interests or regionalism (‘mahalla-garoi’ in Tajiki) is thought to be of extreme importance in Tajikistan, more so than religion, political ideology and nationalism.\textsuperscript{52}

Ethnicity and regionalism, together, have played a clear role in the politics of Tajikistan. For example, though he was a communist appartment, Rahmonov’s appointment was nevertheless a break from 60 years of Leninabadi-dominated political leadership in Tajikistan. The new leadership, therefore, had its regional-ideological constituents not only from mainly ethnic Tajiks (with tacit and at times active support of ethnic Uzbeks, especially of the Tursunzoda and Hisor districts) living in or originally from the Leninabad region, but from the Kulobis and the Kulob region as well. The opposition, in turn, had regional-ideological characteristics. The Islamists were primarily formed of ethnic Tajiks of, or originally from, the Garm and Qarateguine Valleys to the east of Dushanbe, collectively referred to as Garmis. Due to Soviet resettlement schemes, many of the ethnic Garmis live in the Qurghonteppa region. The democrats, in turn, were primarily formed of ethnic Pamiris, many of whom were living in the capital city, Dushanbe.

More people died in the Tajik civil war conflict than in the all the other conflicts in the former Soviet Union prior to the outbreak of the tragic war in Chechnya.\textsuperscript{53} In addition, the epicenters of violence during the civil war and its accompanying reign of terror (primarily by the government forces) were the city of Dushanbe and the Qurghonteppa region. The majority of the people killed during the civil war were ethnic Tajiks of Garmi and Pamiri origins. Thousands of homes in the Qurghonteppa region were burnt and looted by mainly pro-government forces and sympathizers. In addition, unknown numbers of people were systematically shot to death during random roadblocks purely based on their ethnic-regional origin. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes and become refugees in Afghanistan and in their own country—what has been euphemistically referred to by the UN as ‘internally displaced people’ or IDPs. It is estimated that 65% of the refugees or more than 500,000 people became internally displaced, mainly fleeing Qurghonteppa to Dushanbe (and some to Badakhshan), with another 26% or 200,000 people leaving for security and economic reasons to the rest of the CIS, and the remaining 9% or 70,000 people having fled to Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{54} In some cases, former refugees returning to their homes were met with renewed violence, even assassination and murder.

Indeed, the main symbolic protagonists of the conflict—President Rahmonov, the opposition leader, Abdullo Nouri, and former internal opposition leader, Abdulmalik Abdullajanov\textsuperscript{55}—are all ethnic Tajiks, but represent different regions. Not surprisingly, violence during the civil war was much more acute in areas with high regional mix, especially the Qurghonteppa region of southern Tajikistan. Figure 3 shows the regional origin of households in the Kulob and Qurghonteppa regions (or zones) of the southern Khatlon Province. As can be seen, there is a higher diversity of people in terms of
regional origin in Qurghonteppa vs. Kulob. Furthermore, close to one-fifth of the households in Qurghonteppa identified their regional origin as that of Ghrarm region, which was heavily dominated by supporters of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), whose perceived followers are thought to have comprised much of the victims of the civil war.

Despite the end of the civil war and the signing of a peace accord between the government and the Opposition in 1997, regionalism still plays a significant role in Tajikistan. According to Akbarzadeh, stability in Tajikistan is ‘at the mercy of the perpetuating politics of patronage’.\(^5\) Due to the weak political system in the country, one of the government’s main goals has been self-preservation. To that end, representation in the government apparatus has a disproportionately higher number of people from the Kulob region, where president Rahmonov is from.

Ethnicity has also been used by the titular republics’ leaders while dabbling in the international arena. Immediately after independence, for example, Central Asian countries began playing their ethnic cards when attempting to conduct foreign policy. Relations with Turkey for the nominally Turkic republics and with Iran for Tajikistan were eagerly established. Yet, there have been limits to cooperation.\(^5\) Tajikistan has practiced restraint when dealing with Iran because of its substantial political and economic ties with the primary power of the region, Russia, and its concern over the preservation of the secular nature of the country.

Despite highly structured and shared anti-religious policies implemented by the Soviet system in all the republics, the strength of Islam as a religious and social institution has varied significantly throughout the former Soviet Union.\(^5\) It is thought, for example, that the Islamist movements in the Caucasus have more following, on a per capita basis, than those in Central Asia, including Tajikistan. If the results of the February 2000 parliamentary elections in Tajikistan are to be considered as reliable, the Islamists as represented by the IRP have the support of only 8% of voters, having finished third behind the Communist Party and the pro-government People’s Democratic Party.\(^5\) IRP’s poor showing in the polls demonstrates that its overall support,
especially among urban-dwellers and in a country with more than six decades of communist influence, is not as much as originally thought. A factor influencing IRP’s poor showing has been its publicized internal feuds between its Chairman Nouri and former Vice President Akbar Turajonzoda.\(^{60}\)

The challenge in the twenty-first century for Tajikistan is to contain the extreme forms of nationalisms, especially of the ethnic or ethno-regional variety. If government policies are perceived as favoring particular regions and ethnicities and excluding others, the potential for conflict always exists. The promotion of civic nationalism, in conjunction with regional cooperation is by far the most logical solution. More elaboration on solutions in prevention of future conflict will be made towards the end of this paper. Furthermore, some of the specific causes of conflict that led to the 1992–1997 civil war are elaborated below.

**Sources of Conflict**

Conflict and bloodshed in Tajikistan have been the results of a series of factors, among which are: competition over resources, historical precedence, proximity to an epicenter of violence, and the drug trade.

*Competition over Resources*

Contrary to its ideological rhetoric, the centralized socialist command economy of the Soviet Union was ‘exceptionally efficient in alienating one communist nation from another’,\(^{61}\) in that at times of shortages, ‘non-natives’ were blamed for consumption of what had ought to be the right of the natives. Inter-republic and inter-ethnic solidarity during the Soviet era never reached the socialist ideal. Simplicity of peace and cooperation was achieved via force and a relatively successful centrally planned economy. Towards the end of the USSR, when freedom of expression was more-or-less allowed, underlying ethnic discords became evident when there was perception of competition over resources. The 1990 anti-Armenian riot in Dushanbe, despite its rumor-based formation, is one such example, with the Armenian ‘foreigners’ being blamed for housing shortages of the locals. A more brutal example is that of the mostly anti-Moskitian riots of 1989 in Uzbekistan’s segment of the Ferghana Valley, where at least 100 people were murdered (presumably by ethnic Uzbeks), and another 30,000 emigrated to Russia. Another example is that of the 1990 events of the Ferghana Valley in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan, where anywhere between 220 and 1200 people died as a result of fighting between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz.\(^{62}\)

Shortage of, and competition over, natural resources, primarily land and water, are thought to have been the precursor to the violent incidences in the Ferghana Valley.\(^{63}\) The violence is also said to have been as a result of unemployment, especially among the younger generation, with the ‘indigenous youth’ having turned against people with higher standards of living.\(^{64}\) There are also historical animosities and demographic pressures as roots of violence. With regards to the Kyrgyz Osh region 1990 incidence, for example, in 1924, when ‘Turkestan’ was officially eliminated by Stalin to make way for the titular republics, the city of Osh had been made part of Uzbekistan and the majority of the people, as much as 70% of the inhabitants of the region, were ethnic Uzbeks. By 1936 and at the whim of Stalin, however, Osh became part of Kyrgyzstan, which subsequently lead to the settling of ethnic Kyrgyz, as opposed to Uzbeks, in newly irrigated agricultural lands. By 1992, the demographic and ethnic composition of
the Osh region had dramatically changed. It had more than 2 million inhabitants and ethnic Uzbeks were now the minority, constituting a mere 35% of the population.\textsuperscript{65}

In Tajikistan, a somewhat similar historical case had occurred. Beginning from the mid-1920s, thousands of households from the highlands of Gharm region, the relatively densely populated regions of the Ferghana Valley, and workers from other Central Asian republics and even Russia, were resettled in the Kulob and Qurghonteppa lowlands, especially the Vakhsh Valley. They were sent there to cultivate cotton for the Soviet Union in newly irrigated lands, in what is today called Khatlon Province. One explanation behind the high rate of violence in rural areas in the Vakhsh Valley during the civil war is that a large number of these ‘cotton and irrigation migrants’,\textsuperscript{66} who had emigrated from their homes by force or due to economic incentive, had not easily melted into new Soviet identities,\textsuperscript{67} while settling in mainly ethnic enclaves. Consequently, mistrust and misunderstandings with other ethnic groups remained through the decades, leading to violent outbreaks at a time of a central government power vacuum, high rural unemployment and general economic decline of post-Soviet Union. From this perspective, therefore, what has created animosity among peoples has primarily not been ideology, but competition over perceived limited resources by differing ethnic or regional groups. People previously living in the Vakhsh Valley or who had been resettled there prior to the arrival of the Gharmis saw the latter as having been treated preferentially and given superior agricultural lands.\textsuperscript{68} This, combined with the national political divides of the Opposition parties vs. the ex-communists, with their leaders being from Gharm and Kulob regions, respectively, made for a deadly stew.

\textit{Historical Precedence}

Tajikistan’s 1992–1993 civil war had historical parallels. Immediately after the breakup of Russia’s Romanoff dynasty and the triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution, the forces which exerted themselves intellectually and militarily in the area currently covering Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were threefold: (a) the mainly ethnic Russian and Slavic Soviets who sought to expand their new revolutionary Union; (b) the liberal, mostly Muslim, intelligentsia of Bokhara, known as Jadidists, who sought modernization and the abolition of the archaic rule of the Emir of Bokhara; and (c) the traditionalists (primarily Islamists) who favored the Emir and the status quo, yet had pan-Islamist aspirations, and who formed a loose guerrilla army, the Basmachi, which frustrated the Soviets as late as 1935.\textsuperscript{69} In turn, the 1992–1993 civil war was fought by ‘neo-communists’ against a coalition of ‘democrats’ and ‘Muslim fundamentalists’—mimicking the past. This remaking of ideological divides in the early 1990s expressed itself in regional alliances as well, where various regions of Tajikistan perceived themselves enmeshed in an economic and political competition. The phenomenon of regional competition in Tajikistan has been considered as ‘the most important catalyst of violence’, with a coalition having been formed of the northern province of Leninabad and the southeastern province of Kulob versus the coalition of the eastern autonomous region of Badakhshan and the central Valley of Gharm.\textsuperscript{70} Hence, ideological divide and regional fragmentation have gone hand in hand in Tajikistan, in conjunction with an historical existence of a similar ideological divide.

\textit{Proximity to an Epicenter of Violence}

The southern border of Tajikistan with Afghanistan is the \textit{Amudarya} (Amu River),
originating in the Pamir Mountains and ultimately draining itself in the Aral Sea. This natural, yet politically determined, border was established in 1895 between the Khanate of Bokhara, which was a Russian protectorate, and Imperial Afghanistan, which was aligned with the British. Much of the populations of northeast Afghanistan and southern Tajikistan, therefore, are part of the same ethnic, cultural and religious continuities, whose political and socio-economic development was determined by circumstances largely out of their control, one group having remained part of Imperial rule, the other continuing under communism. Aside from the eastern part of the two countries’ borders, both of which have provinces named ‘Badakhshan’ with primarily Ismaili Muslims, the ethnic composition throughout southern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan is anything but homogeneous. Furthermore, ethnic identities in southern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan, due to centuries of cultural commingling, as in the Ferghana Valley, are at times difficult to determine and categorize. For a variety of reasons, including policies of Afghan Emirs and migration as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution, northern Afghanistan is inhabited by Persian speakers (among whom there have been some ethnic Pashtuns, Sunni Tajiks, Shia Hazaras, Persian speaking Arabs, Persian speaking Tatars, and Baluchis), Pashtu speakers and Turkic speakers (Uzbeks and Turkmens). However, the primary identification has not been with language, but with clan ties, some members of which speak different languages as in the immigrant Bokhara’is, many being Tajik speakers, others Uzbek. According to Roy, the identities of people in northern Afghanistan are shaped by social and political constraints, often discarding linguistic, racial and historical features.

The civil war of Tajikistan was brought about, *inter alia*, because of unique socio-political circumstances, which provided the settings for a ‘vacuum of institutions and plethora of arms’. The ready availability of guns was a result of the infelicitous opportunity of sharing the longest border in the region, about 1400 km, with one of the foremost global epicenters of violence, i.e. Afghanistan, the Soviet–American experimental graveyard of confrontation. For a dozen years preceding the Tajik civil war, Afghanistan had been the repository of several billion dollars of high-tech and low-tech armaments, anywhere from World War I surplus rifles to Stinger missiles, all carried by donkeys over the Hindu Kush mountain passes by ‘freedom fighters’ confronting the forces of the ‘evil empire’. It is also important to keep in mind that much of the still internationally recognized leadership of Afghanistan, namely, President Rabbani and his military commander, Ahmad Shah Masoud, ethnic Tajiks. After the height of the Tajik civil war, thousands of the opposition fighters, then part of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), and tens of thousands of their primarily ethnic Gharmi constituencies wound up as refugees in Afghanistan. The UTO forces were able to train in mujahedeen-provided military camps. Conflict in Tajikistan, therefore, was and continues to be connected to a more entrenched one in Afghanistan.

The Soviet involvement in Afghanistan also provided the opportunity for elements of future Tajik civil war to gain exposure to violence. Soviet recruits from Tajikistan were used in both infantry and as translators and cultural visitors. Former General Mahmoud Khodoyberdiyev, who led the first motorized infantry brigade of Tajikistan up until fleeing the country in 1997, is a case in point. Khodoyberdiyev, a Tajik–Uzbek ethnic *mélange*, played a key role in the Tajik civil war, having sided with the former communists and later having led several mini armed uprisings and two failed *putsches*. Khodoyberdiyev’s use of violence to convey his dissatisfaction with government policies, including his attempted control of the Tursonzoda aluminum smelter, were most likely influenced by his military training and his experiences in the war in Afghanistan.
His last foray into Tajikistan in November 1998 was a relatively well-orchestrated invasion with as many as 1000 armed men (some of whom were ethnic Uzbeks from Afghanistan) into the Leninabad province of Tajikistan from neighboring Uzbekistan in what apparently was an attempt to negotiate a power deal with the central government in Dushanbe. That move, however, backfired on Khodoyberdiyev. The invasion forced the first ever cooperation of the Tajik government troops and the former UTO fighters in routing Khodoyberdiyev’s men out of Leninabad, while having killed and arrested hundreds of them.

The Drug Trade

This is also a dimension of proximity to Afghanistan. Yet, as the level of violence has to a large extent subsided in Tajikistan, the trade in illicit drugs has been on the rise. As a result of a lucrative drug trade flowing from Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been described as having ‘the most criminalized economy in the region’. One estimate considers as much as 30% of the economic activity of Tajikistan to be due to the trafficking of drugs. Afghanistan produces as much as three-quarters of the world’s illicit opium and an increasing amount of this trade is via the Central Asian corridor, of which Tajikistan is a large part. According to the United Nations, opium production in Afghanistan saw a reduction of 28% in 2000, due to a regional drought and the ruling Taliban’s apparent willingness to enforce anti-opium cultivation policies, which included a UN-sponsored drug-substitution program. However, the already high stockpiles and the dire economic situation of the region, in addition to European appetite for refined opium (heroin), all point to the direction of continued and potentially intensified drug trade.

A new security threat for Tajikistan and the region is that of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The IMU, led by Juma Namangani, may have as many as 3000 well-armed, battle-experienced fighters who wish to enter Uzbekistan via Kyrgyzstan and are currently based in northern Afghanistan and eastern Tajikistan. There are accusations that the IMU is involved in drug trafficking as well. Despite signs to the contrary, the Tajik government has categorically denied the existence of any IMU camps in its territory. This denial is in line with the general political-speak in the region, where, Russia and Tajikistan, for example, have repeatedly denied assisting the Afghan Northern Alliance with arms and logistics. Similarly, despite evidence to the contrary, Uzbekistan has denied involvement in the 1998 incursion into Leninabad by Khodoyberdiyev’s army.

Socio-economic Disparities

Economic Decline

Similar to other empires, the Soviet Union was affected by eventual stagnation. By the 1970s, ‘material and intellectual poverty, institutional rigidity, and apathy’ had begun to set in. Symptoms could be seen in the increasing rates of alcoholism, workplace absenteeism, crime and the absence of new ideas affecting the economic well-being of both the center and the periphery. This stagnation exacerbated people’s dissatisfaction and heightened the nationalistic tendencies. There are also purely economic reasons behind nationalism and violent conflict. There exists an inverse relationship between economic prosperity and nationalist dictatorship, with periods of hy-
per inflation leading to violent nationalism. Hyperinflation during the German Weimar Republic, for example, led to the rise of Hitler.\textsuperscript{85} Similarly, independence for Tajikistan came hand in hand with economic turmoil. Annual average consumer price inflation, which stood at a mere 4\% in 1990, reached 112\% in 1991, the year of national independence, and catapulted to 1157\% and 2195\% during the height of the civil war in 1992 and 1993, respectively.\textsuperscript{86}

Like the rest of the Central Asian republics, Tajikistan was poorer than Russia and the European and Caucasus Soviet states and was highly dependent on economic support from the Center. Tajikistan’s per capita GDP for 1990 was a reported 1341 rubles—the lowest in the USSR.\textsuperscript{87} By the time of the breakup of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan had the highest birth rate (near 3\%) and the lowest per capital GDP among the Soviet republics.\textsuperscript{88} Furthermore, compared to all the other Soviet states, as late as 1991, Tajikistan received the highest transfers from the Union budget as a percentage of its total government revenue (47\%).\textsuperscript{89} It also had the highest inter-republic trade deficit.\textsuperscript{90} And although Tajikistan had been primarily a rural and agricultural society—with 41\% of its 1990 work force being employed in agriculture (the highest in the USSR)—due to its highly mountainous condition, its per capita cereal production (42 kg/person/year) was one of the lowest in the Union, one-fourth that of Kyrgyzstan and one-fifth that of Kazakhstan, further contributing to its economically poor performance.\textsuperscript{91} Despite some improvements on the macro-level in the past four years, Tajikistan’s poor economic performance, especially on the household level, has continued in the post-Soviet era. The estimated GDP for 2001 is still only half that of 1990, and the estimated per capita income is a mere $175 per year.\textsuperscript{92}

A ‘Demographic Cauldron’

One of the lessons of the twentieth century was that ‘high birth-rates in the subject peoples are a mortal enemy of colonialism’.\textsuperscript{93} Tajikistan and the rest of the Central Asian republics, in some ways, resembled the colonies, providing raw materials for the Soviet industry in exchange for food, consumer goods and manufactured items.\textsuperscript{94} Several factors, according to Lewis, were exacerbated by this population increase: it led to an even greater rise in the rural population, the far majority of whom were (and remain) of the titular ethnic groups of individual republics; a significant rise in labor surplus or ‘redundancy of unskilled workers’\textsuperscript{95} was seen; and nearly no northward or out-migration was occurring, contributing to a lowering of the standard of living in the rural areas and increased use of natural resources and accompanying environmental degradation. Simultaneously, significant social and political developments in the form of national awareness, glasnost and perestroika were taking place, leading to increasingly higher expectations for change and well-being.\textsuperscript{96} If the Soviet Union was any other industrializing country, the uneven economic development and demographic trends would have led to population transfers from the regions of high surplus labor to those of labor deficit. Yet, this disparity in demographic trends between the Muslim-dominated regions and the rest of the Soviet Union did not result in nearly any inter-Soviet transmigration from the regions of labor surplus, such as Central Asia, to those of labor deficit.\textsuperscript{97} In fact, the only significant population transfers within the Soviet Union had been, inter alia, the Stalinist forced removal of mostly Muslim ethnic minorities from the Caucasus to the far east and Central Asia immediately after World War II and the settling of technically knowledgeable and mostly ethnic Slavs for the establishment of irrigation and industrial infrastructure in the Muslim borderlands.
Since the 1950s, population increase in the Central Asian republics had been at dramatically high rates of 3–4% per year. From 1945 to 1970, for example, the Muslim population of Central Asia increased by 45%, as compared to an average Soviet increase of 16% and a Russian increase of a mere 13%. Fertility rates in Central Asia during the 1980s were between four to six children per woman in the childbearing years, triple the rate of the Soviet average. This trend had led to serious job and housing shortages. Though this phenomenon was occurring throughout the southern tier of the Soviet Union, the increase in the rural population coupled with less economic opportunities had the most detrimental effect on Tajikistan, due to it having the lowest per capita arable land in the region. The growth of ethnic Tajiks in the Soviet Union (nearly 100% of whom live in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) was the highest in the 1970s and 1980s decades, with an estimated 36% and 46% increase, respectively.

There is evidence to believe that throughout Central Asia, two temporal phenomena affecting potential urban–rural migration—one inhibiting and another promoting—took place during the several decades before the breakup of the Soviet Union. During the 1960s to the early 1980s, agricultural mechanization and the availability of natural resources allowed the surplus rural population to find work on expanding cultivated lands and off-farm employment. Although, towards the mid- and late 1980s, less and less opportunities existed in rural areas, the continued increase in the rural population did not see a correspondingly high rate of rural–urban migration. What occurred, instead, was a drop in rural standards of living and an increase in competition over natural resources.

Tajikistan is a predominantly rural country, with more than 70% of the population living in rural areas. As opposed to many other developing countries, for the past 30 years the percentage of rural population has been on the increase. It is more rural today than it was two decades ago, when 65% of the population was rural. Traditionally, the far majority of the inhabitants of the more than 3000 villages in the country have tended not to migrate to cities. The 1979 census, for example, showed that about 81% of Tajikistan’s rural inhabitants were still living in their place of birth. The rural nature of the country is thought to have helped preserve the traditional social structure and values. Islam and religiosity, for example, survived 62 years of Soviet rule far better in the rural areas where they were nearly free from the urban-based regulatory powers of communism.

Economic Disparity

It is safe to posit that, as in other parts of the Soviet Union, people who emigrated from Tajikistan’s highlands of Gharm into the lowlands of the Qurghonteppa region’s Vakhsh Valley were poised to succeed, having tended to be young, and as most migrants are, were not among the poorest of the poor but the richest of the poor. A 1998 UN socio-economic survey of households in the Qurghonteppa region, where many of the former refugees live (the far majority of whom are of Gharmi regional ancestry), and that of the Kulob region, where nearly no households had been refugees, confirms an economic disparity between the two groups. Roughly speaking, Kulob households had homes with the total area of rooms averaging 920 square meters and Kurghonteppa households had homes averaging 1285 square meters. Hence, on the average, the territory of homes of former refugees (though by 1998, some of their rooms had been partially or totally destroyed and damaged) was 40% larger than the territory of homes of Kulob households of the Khatlon Province. It was also found that
homes of former refugees of the Qurghonteppa region, though mostly partially destroyed, had on the average 5.1 rooms (with an average of 2.9 rooms being fully damaged due to arson and theft during the civil war) and homes of non-refugees of the Kulob region had on the average 3.9 rooms with only an average of 0.3 rooms being damaged (mainly due to lack of maintenance and funds). Hence, if we count the damaged and destroyed rooms, on the average, former refugee households prior to the civil war had 1.2 rooms more or 31% more rooms than the non-refugee households. Households were also asked of the number of farm animals they possessed in 1998 and in 1991. Former refugee households were reported to have had 4.9 cows in 1991 as compared to 3.5 cows for non-refugee households or 40% more cows. In 1998, however, due to the consequences of the civil war, former refugees had on the average 0.6 cows as compared to 1.4 cows for non-refugee households or 57% fewer cows. The size of former refugee households was found to be on the average 9.9 persons as compared to 8.2 persons for non-refugee households, the difference of 1.7 persons per household or 21% larger households for former refugees as compared to non-refugees. Despite their larger household size, based on their home size, number of rooms and number of cows owned prior to the civil war, it appears that former refugees of Khatlon Province, the majority of whom were of Gharmi and some Badakhshani origin, were relatively better off as compared to the households in the Kulob region.

The Islamists and democrats were joined in their belief in egalitarianism and communal democracy, both features of holistic communities of their respective, primarily rural, regions. The civil war had made allies of the richest and poorest regions of the country, that of Leninabad and Kulob. Though Kulob was the poorest region prior to the civil war, that is no longer the case. The distinction of the poorest region goes to the opposition strongholds, those of the Gharm Valley and Qurghonteppa region, with the latter having been exposed to massive degrees of violence during the civil war.

Conclusion

I conclude the analysis of the current situation in Tajikistan by offering solutions for the prevention of further conflict in the country. These solutions fall in the following four categories: (1) conflict prevention and resolution, (2) humanitarian involvement, (3) economic development and assistance, and (4) regional security.

Conflicts Prevention and Resolution

A major sign of the formerly warring factions’ reconciliation came on 27 June 1997, when the Government of Tajikistan and the armed United Tajik Opposition signed their ‘final’ Peace Accord in Moscow. This historic agreement called for the exchange of all prisoners, power sharing and the holding of presidential and parliamentary elections. The government has nearly fulfilled all the requirements of the peace accord, albeit the 1999 presidential and 2000 parliamentary elections were enmeshed with irregularities. International mediation, mainly on the part of the UN and partially the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) and the governments of Iran and Russia, was highly influential in the signing of the Accord between the government and the UTO.

To prevent the repetition of inter-ethnic and inter-regional violence, the government in conjunction with the UN and international NGOs and local civil society should
implement innovative projects that encourage genuine interaction and cooperation among neighboring villages and regions of differing ethnic and regional origins. Furthermore, the government should uphold cultural pluralism in all its activities. A more inclusive attitude on the part of the government would be highly beneficial. To be sure, much progress has been made since the signing of the 1997 peace accord, which, among other things, required the assigning of 30% of all government posts to opposition-approved figures. A similar move to include proportional representation in central government bodies of the various regions and ethnicities in Tajikistan will be helpful. Special attention should be made that the rights of ethnic and regional minorities are guaranteed. Arrangements should be made that the Uzbek and other non-Tajik minorities can exercise their full cultural rights within the confines of Tajikistan. Local schooling in native tongues, in addition to radio, newspapers and other modes of cultural expressions should be fully permitted. Multilingual schooling, where pupils, regardless of their ethnic background, are able to learn several languages, such as Tajik, Uzbek and Russian, should be promoted. The extension of full cultural rights to ethnic minorities in Tajikistan will only encourage neighboring countries, such as Uzbekistan, to reciprocate with the treatment of Tajik minority in their territories.

Humanitarian Involvement

A severe drought currently faces the region. It is the worst in Tajikistan’s history. While the country requires at the minimum one million tons of grain per year, it was only able to produce less than a quarter of that figure in 2000. Grain production was down by 40% as compared to 1999. It is imperative that the UN World Food Program (WFP) continue and expand its generally successful program in Tajikistan. Without international assistance, there can be serious malnutrition and even starvation in Tajikistan. To prevent a culture of dependency, the majority of food aid should continue to involve community food-for-work projects, where workers receive in-kind wages in the form of flour and cooking oil while working on community-approved projects. International organizations and governments, such as the UN and the United States Agency for International Development, should pay special attention to conducting proper auditing of their programs to ensure full delivery of humanitarian commodities to the truly needy.

Economic Assistance

An area of potentially positive intervention by the international community is that of the international financial institutions, namely, the World Bank and IMF. While continuing on their development assistance, structural adjustment and market liberalization programs, both institutions should increasingly consider the incorporation by the government of non-economic issues (as in conflict resolution and upholding of human rights) as conditions for delivery of economic aid. Such a policy will contribute to peace and stability, without which no long-term economic development programs can succeed. It is to the interests of the US and the EU as well to promote similar conditional economic assistance whether bilaterally or multilaterally. Furthermore, institutions and the government should be weary of increasingly higher levels of debt burden for Tajikistan. The country is currently in debt to the international community by approximately $900 million. Furthermore, the World Bank should cease its inappropriate policy of funding international non-governmental organizations in Tajikistan through loans to the Tajik government. All development funds should be extended to
government agencies and independent local NGOs. Important sectors worthy of funding by international organizations are improvement of water and sanitation, without which other projects, such as those in the health sector, will not succeed; small-scale agricultural and business credit programs; environmental protection including promoting Costa Rican-style eco-tourism; and projects for the improvement of the courts, the judiciary and human rights training.

Regional Security and Cooperation

Cessation and prevention of conflicts in Tajikistan and the Central Asian region are dependent on regional and international factors. Experts feel, for example, that, ‘any conflict in Tajikistan can not end without the end of the civil war in Afghanistan’. Furthermore, the end of the Afghan conflict can only be hastened through a rapprochement between the supporters of the warring sides of that conflict, which include Russia, Iran, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and, by tacit approval, the United States.

In the 1920s, many who opposed the Bolshevik Revolution or were under the threat of execution due to their capitalist activities, among them being Tajiks, Uzbeks and even Bokharan Jews, crossed the Amu River into the relative safety of Afghanistan. Likewise, during the Tajik civil war, as many as 70,000 Tajiks sought refuge in Afghanistan. Despite the generally traumatic experience of being refugees, the material well-being of those people as refugees were well taken care of by both the Afghan community and the UN and other international organizations. The Tajik government, however, despite pleas by the UN and other international organizations, has so far refused to accept any new Afghan refugees into its territory. (The number of Afghan refugee households in Tajikistan is thought to be minimal.) Since October 2000, more than 10,000 Afghan refugees have been stranded in a no-man zone on an island in the Amu River between Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The condition of these people is reported to be rapidly deteriorating. Scores have died of exposure and related illnesses. Moreover, the Taliban on several occasions have been shelling and shooting at these defenseless people. The Tajik government should use this opportunity to gain concessions from the UN by obtaining a guarantee of cooperation and provision by that organization if it were to admit the refugees. The government’s acceptance of at least 20,000 desperate Afghan citizens fleeing the Taliban’s brutal and archaic rule, in addition to its moral–psychological benefits, will have positive ripple effects by making Tajikistan an honest broker in the international community, an image that is bound to bring additional material benefits in the near future.

[Postscript: The events of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent armed intervention of US forces in Afghanistan leading to the toppling of the Taliban regime, can potentially have positive consequences on Tajikistan. A friendly and potentially stable Afghanistan will in no doubt be beneficial for Tajikistan and the region. The main difficulty facing Tajikistan in the immediate future seems to be economic in nature. The continuing drought has had devastating effects, with large parts of the population facing malnutrition and even starvation. While focusing on Afghanistan, it is hoped that the international community not omit Tajikistan’s nutritional and material needs and well-being. In the end, however, political and socio-economic development in Tajikistan, and other post-communist states, remains a function of ideational rather than mere material change. Among other things, the Tajik government can facilitate the continuing transition to a form of market economy and open society by encouraging fair
and open privatization, attempting to stamp out corruption, allowing freedom of press, respecting basic human rights including the abolishment of the death penalty, and promoting tourism via eliminating visa requirements for passport holders from friendly and economically advanced countries.]

NOTES

1. This paper was originally presented at the Sixth Annual Convention of the Association for the Study of Nationalities held at Columbia University in April 2001.
2. The translation of the introductory quote is as follows: ‘Oh hope of my dreams/Strength of my arms n’ light of my eyes/May your 10th anniversary be merry/May you see such holy days many, many!’ This is an excerpt from a poem by the renowned Iranian–Tajik poet, Abolqasem Lahooti, composed in 1939 in honor of the 10th anniversary of the formation of Soviet Tajikistan.
5. Ibid., p. 56.
16. Ibid.
26. Enver Pasha died in a battle with the Bolshevik forces in eastern Tajikistan in 1922. Despite the fact that his grave in Tajikistan could have been a source of income from tourism, in 1996 the Tajik government decided to allow the Turkish embassy to retrieve his body back to Turkey. See *Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*, ‘Enver Pasha’, 6th edn, 2000. Available online at <www.encyclopedia.com/articles/15430.html> (19 March 2001).
40. Gleason, ‘National Sentiment’, *op. cit.*
46. Atkin, ‘Religious, National, and Other Identities’, *op. cit.*
47. Roy, ‘Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model?’, *op. cit.*
49. By the time of the USSR’s breakup, there were an estimated 25 million ethnic Russians living outside of Russia in the other former Soviet republics. Among the Central Asian republics, Tajikistan has always had the lowest percentage of ethnic Russians. In 1989, ethnic Russians comprised 7.6% of Tajikistan’s total population—nearly 390,000—and 33% of Dushanbe’s population. See Jeff Chinn and Robert J. Kaiser, *Russians as the New Minority: Ethnicity and Nationalism in the Soviet Successor States*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1996, pp. 207–343. Between 1990 and 1994, Russian emigration from Central Asia totaled an estimated 1.15 million. Nearly 160,000 (14% of that figure) were Russian emigrants from Tajikistan. A 1991 survey on the
opinion of ethnic Russians in Central Asia, conducted by the National Center for the Study of Public Opinion, found that among the respondents who wanted to leave their respective republics, the highest percentage were of ethnic Russians residing in Tajikistan (36%). That figure increased to 66% in a 1992 survey. Tajikistan is reported as ‘the country that has lost the greatest percentage of its Russian population’. See Martha Brill Olcott, ‘Demographic Upheavals in Central Asia’, Orbis, Fall 1996, p. 544.


55. Abdullajanov is a powerful businessman from the second largest city of Tajikistan, Khujand, located in the Soghd (formerly Leninabad) province. Now thought to be in exile in Moscow, he ran and lost against the current president, Rahmonov, in the 1994 elections. Those elections and the parliamentary elections of February 1995 not only did not unify the country as the government had hoped, but created an ‘internal opposition’, with the symbolic leadership of Abdullajanov. See Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, ‘National Reconciliation: The Imperfect Whim’, *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 15, 1996, pp. 325–348. Abdullajanov has since been accused by the government of assisting Colonel Khodoyberdiyev and his troops in their invasion of the then Leninabad province in winter 1998. Despite the elections obvious shortcomings, the 2000 parliamentary elections were in all likelihood a better representation of the people’s will due to the ongoing implementation of the 1997 peace process and the inclusion of IRP candidates for parliamentary seats.


60. Malashenko, ‘Islam and Politics in the Southern Zone’, op. cit. As part of the peace accord, which required 30% of government posts to be filled by the UTO candidates (the IRP is the dominant and majority group in the UTO), Turajonzoda was appointed by the government to a V.P. position in President Rahmonov’s cabinet. Prior to the presidential elections of 1999, rather than supporting the candidate from the IRP, Turajonzoda backed Rahmonov’s candidacy instead. This lead to even a bigger rift in the IRP between the supporters of Chairman Nouri and V.P. Turajonzoda, and eventually resulted in the resigning of Turajonzoda from the IRP.


70. Tadjbakhsh, ‘National Reconciliation’, op. cit.


73. Ibid.
82. The EIU, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, op. cit.
84. Light, Lectures on the republics of the former Soviet Union, op. cit.
89. The next four highest were Uzbekistan at 43%, Kyrgyzstan at 36%, Kazakhstan at 23% and Turkmenistan at 22%. The Baltic states, Georgia and Azerbaijan did not receive any union budget transfers in 1991. See Rubin, ‘Tajikistan: From Soviet Republic’, op. cit.
90. The next four highest inter-republic trade deficits belonged to Moldova, Lithuania, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The states with inter-republic trade surpluses were Russia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. Ibid.
92. Based on an estimated GDP of $1.1 billion and a population of 6.3 million for 2000. See the EIU, Tajikistan and Kyrgyz Republic, op. cit.
96. Lewis, ‘Geographic Perspectives’, op. cit.
100. Lewis, ‘Geographic Perspectives’, op. cit.
101. Tajikistan’s arable land of 0.15 hectare per person is less than Uzbekistan’s 0.20 ha/person and much less than Kazakhstan’s 2.08 ha/person. See World Bank, World Development Indicators, op. cit.
102. During the 1970s, the top five highest increases among the ethnic groups of the Soviet Union were: Tajiks (36%), Uzbeks (36%), Turkmen (33%), Kyrgyz (31%) and Azeris (25%). During the 1980s, the top five increases were: Tajiks (46%), Uzbeks (34%), Turkmen (34%), Kyrgyz (33%) and Kazakhs (24%). See Nationalities Papers, ‘Appendix 4’, 1990, p. 93.
110. For the purposes of this comparison, the area of all rooms per sampled household, whether the rooms were damaged or not, were used.
111. Foroughi, Hope and Despair, op. cit.
113. A 1998 household survey found the average household monthly income in Tajikistan to be equivalent of $64. Households in Dushanbe had the highest income at an estimated $75 per month, and households in Qurghonteppa region had the lowest income at $55 per month. The categories of income combined to arrive at the average monthly income were: salaries and pensions (accounting for 28% of the average monthly income), household-consumed agricultural production (24%), business and agricultural production (22%), humanitarian aid (6%), borrowing (7%) and remittances from abroad (5%). See Foroughi, 1998 Socio-economic Survey, op. cit.
114. Tajikistan’s border with Afghanistan is perceived as of utmost security value for Russia. To prevent a Muslim fundamentalist takeover of Central Asia, Russia has sent nearly 15,000 ‘peacekeeping’ and border patrol forces to Tajikistan. They, in turn, are putting a strain on the already cash-strapped Russian government. However, the chances of Russian troops leaving Tajikistan as long as the Afghan conflict continues are very slim.
115. An example of such an approach was taken by the UK when it threatened to veto international financial assistance to Croatia due to the latter’s non-compliance to the Dayton Peace Accord. See John Kampfner, ‘UK Warns Croatia it Risks Losing Aid’, Financial Times, 31 July 1997, p. 2.
116. In one specific loan on rural housing construction, World Bank money was lent to the government only if it would extend the construction contract to several World Bank-approved international NGOs. In addition to the 25% ‘indirect cost’ that one of the international NGOs charged the government—that is, one-quarter of the World Bank loan never arrived to Tajikistan—the housing construction project was ridden with a variety of irregularities and possible corruption.
117. Light, Lectures on the republics of the former Soviet Union, op. cit.