

THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR: 1992-1997

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ABSTRACT

THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR: 1992-1997

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This study aims to analyzing the role of Islam, regionalism, and external factors (the involvement of the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Iran) in the Tajik Civil War (1992-97). It analyzes all these three factors one by one. In the thesis, it is argued that all of the three factors played an active and equal role in the emergence of the war and that in the case of the absence of any of these factors, the Tajik Civil War would not erupt. As such, none of the factors is considered to be the only player on its own and none of the factors is considered to be the basic result of other two factors.

Keywords: The Tajik Civil War, Tajikistan, Islam, Regionalism, External Factors

ÖZ

TACİKİSTAN İÇ SAVAŞI: 1992-97

Shapoatov, Sayfiddin

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Bu çalışmanın amacı, Tacikistan İç Savaşında (1992-97) İslam, bölgecilik ve dış etkenlerin (Rusya Federasyonu, Özbekistan, Afganistan ve İran'ın müdahaleleri) rollerini incelemektir. Bu çalışmada yukarıda adı geçen üç etken tek tek incelenmiştir. Tezde her üç faktörün de aktif ve eşit derecede rol oynadıkları ve bu üç faktörden herhangi birinin olmaması durumunda İç Savaşın patlak vermeyeceği vurgulanmaktadır. Etkenlerden hiç biri Tacik İç Savaşında tek başına belirleyici olmamıştır ve bu bağlamda hiç birinin diğer iki etkenin uzantısı olmadığı sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Tacik İç Savaşı, Tacikistan, İslam, Bölgecilik, Dış Etkenler

To my mother, for her patience

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I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The goal of this thesis is to analyze the role of Islam, regionalism¹ and external factors in the Tajik Civil War. The Tajik Civil War erupted in 1992 and lasted for five years. The war fortunately was resolved in June 1997 by a Peace Treaty signed by the two opposing groups of President Rahmonov's regime and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). It is estimated that at least 100,000 people died and about 1,000,000 were displaced from their places as a result of the Civil War.² Despite this high level of casualty, the Tajik Civil War did not attract the attention of Western countries. These countries did not want to or could not interfere in the events taking place within the sphere of influence of the former Soviet Union, in order not to freeze relations with the Russian Federation. This was obvious especially in the case of Central Asia that was too far from Europe.

Describing the Tajik Civil War as an only case within the territories of the former Soviet Union would not be an exaggeration. First of all, it was the first and only civil war erupted in former Soviet republics. While Chechens were fighting against Russians, Armenians against Azeris, Ossetians against Georgians, Tajiks were fighting against each other. Consequently the War was dubbed as "*Jangi Barodarkushi*" by the Tajikistani people, meaning that it was a conflict in which brothers killed their own brothers.

¹ In this thesis, the term "regionalism" is used to indicate the feeling of loyalty to a particular part of a country and the aim of realizing political autonomy and/or independence for that region. As such, it is used in a different perspective than regionalism in international relations.

² Kuzmin, A.I. 'The Causes and Lessons of the Civil War'. In Alexei Vassiliev (Ed.), **Central Asia: political and economic challenges in the post-Soviet era**, Saqi Books, London, 2001, p. 175

Secondly, the casualties were very high. As was mentioned above, according to official sources, 100,000 people were killed. But according to opposition sources, this number was as high as 300,000, that is more than 5% of Tajikistan's population.³ In addition to the human loss, the economy of Tajikistan was seriously ruined. Tajikistan, being the poorest republic of the former Soviet Union, was heavily dependent on the subsidies coming from Moscow. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, this flow of subsidies was cut off. This was a serious blow to the Tajik economy. The eruption of the Civil War within less than a year, hampered the economy further. During the five-year Civil War all sectors were shrinking. It was reported that:

after declining an estimated 40 percent between 1990 and 1993, industrial production dropped another 31 percent in 1994. Declines in the Dushanbe and Sughd regions exceeded that figure. The most serious declines were in chemicals, engineering, metal processing, building materials, light industry, and food processing. According to government reports, production declines generally were greater in privately owned industries than in state enterprises.⁴

Thirdly, for the first time in post-Soviet Central Asia the “fundamentalists” or “Wahhabis” managed to come to power in government structures. The official media of Central Asian countries and the Russian Federation always tried to use these terms while mentioning about anti-governmental religious groups of Tajikistan. Indeed, anti-governmental forces were predominantly united under the banner of Islam and were mobilized by the support of religious figures. How could a religious opposition emerge in a country that was ruled by an atheist regime for seven decades? The Soviet regime had always boasted that Soviet nations were merging (*sliyanie*) with each other, resulting in the emergence of the “Soviet People” who were freed from prejudices, religious dogmas, local cultures, and national feelings. If that was true, then how could a nation like that change its direction within several months? The Tajiks, who were believed to be communists and atheists, as all other nations of the former Soviet Union, started to be called as

³ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoj Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, 1993, p. 87

⁴ Zickel, Raymond. **Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan**, U.S. Library of Congress, US, 1996, <http://countrystudies.us/tajikistan/>

“fundamentalist” or “Wahhabis”. Soon after Tajikistan became independent on 9 September 1991, the new Tajik government was challenged by the Islamic-democratic bloc. This development shocked the former Soviet Tajik *nomenklatura*, which were not accustomed to see anti-government factions that were predominantly mobilized by Islamic tendencies. Who were the “Wahhabis” or “fundamentalists”? How could they survive in a country that was ruled by atheist regime? Were they really Wahhabis? If that was the case, how did they emerge in a society that followed the Hanefi sect of Islam that was against Wahhabism? History has witnessed armed conflicts between the Hanefis and the Wahhabis. Then, how could the followers of an antagonistic sect emerge in Tajikistan as leading figures of religious factions, get the support of Tajikistani Muslims, and force the Tajik government to share power with them? In general it would not be exaggeration to claim that the Tajikistani people still followed the principles of Islam. Should this fact be ascribed to the weakness of communist ideology or to the strength of Islam? Interestingly, despite several anti-religious campaigns, in 1999 97% of the Tajikistani people declared themselves to be believers.⁵ In this thesis this fact will also be analyzed.

Fourthly, the Tajik Civil War caused Russia to continue to get involved in Central Asia. Russia used to regard the region as an impediment for its own development, and wanted to end its relations with the Central Asian countries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union as soon as possible. But the eruption of the Tajik Civil War and the advance of “Wahhabis” and “fundamentalists” in Tajikistan forced Russia to reevaluate its foreign policy. Instead of orienting only towards the West, Moscow decided to keep its foothold in Tajikistan in order to be able to prevent the emergence of any situation against Russia’s national interests.

Fifthly, because of the Civil War that weakened central authority in Tajikistan, drug trafficking increased dramatically. As main routes of drug trafficking passed through Tajikistan, the instability in the country directly resulted in the increase in drug trade. During the Soviet era, the drug traders were not able to transport drugs produced in Afghanistan to lucrative Western markets through Central Asian

⁵ Olimova, Saodat. ‘**Politicheskiy Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)**’, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 5, Sweden, 1999, http://www.cac.org/journal/cac-05-1999/contcac_5_99.shtml

republics. However, with the collapse of the Soviet Union the transport of drugs through Central Asia increased dramatically. Most of these transports, due to the lack of central control in Tajikistan as a result of the Civil War, started to be realized through Tajikistan.

Sixthly, the war ended by a successful Peace Treaty. Despite atrocities, the opposing factions predominantly abided to the codes of the treaty. Consequently, after the Peace Treaty, except some small armed conflicts, Tajikistan became a stable country. In most cases, after a civil war, the opposing groups can not easily come together and start to rule the country together. But this was realized in Tajikistan. As Saida Nazarova, a journalist in Dushanbe, has suggested Tajikistani reconciliation could be a model for the neighboring Afghanistan. She writes that “Tajikistan is providing inspiration for international organizations and local politicians endeavoring to build a stable future in Afghanistan.”⁶ Finally, it must also be emphasized that for the first time and only in Tajikistan, in the post-Soviet Central Asia, a religious party was officially included in the governmental structure.

Because it was the only case within the territories of the former Soviet Union, the Tajik Civil War has attracted the attention of several scholars. Oliver Roy, Saodat Olimova, Muzaffar Olimov, Aziz Niyazi, V.I. Bushkov, D.V. Mikulskiy, Lena Johnson, Bernett B. Rubbin, Muriel Atkin, Iver B. Neumann and Sergey V. Solodovnik are some of the scholars who have produced important studies related with the Tajik Civil War. Although sometimes they indicate rather different factors as the causes of the war, all of them believe that regionalism played an important role. For example, according to Oliver Roy one of the principal reasons of the Civil War was regionalism. He states that:

the principal explanation of the structure of the conflict was “regionalism”. Tajik national identity is weak; more important is membership in regional “clans.” The Gharmis (a term that includes natives of the areas of Qarategin, Wakhiha, and Darwoz) and Pomiris (natives of Gorno-Badakhshan) supported the opposition. The Sughdi (Leninabadi) clan which had dominated the communist nomenklatura, led the government, while the Kulobi and Hisori clans (the latter heavily Uzbek) provided the

⁶ Nazarova, Saida. ‘**A model of reconciliation: Post-conflict Tajikistan could offer valuable lessons to her war-torn neighbour Afghanistan**’, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, London, 28 Jun 2002, http://www.iwpr.net/index.pl?archive/rca/rca_200206_127_3_eng.txt

armed forces that won the war.⁷

According to Davlat Khudonazarov, again there is the role of regionalism. He writes that:

this conflict is an inter-regional with the “communists” strong in Leninobod province (which came to be the predominant province during the Soviet era and which seeks to retain this role) and in Kulob on the one hand. And the “Islamists” strong in those provinces (particularly Gorno-Badakhshon and Gharm) which were victimized by Moscow and its Tajik collaborators in the past and which seek to alter the Soviet-era provincial pecking order on the other.⁸

Another issue that was discussed among the scholars was related to the ideological rivalries leading up to the Tajik Civil War and its aftermath. In this issue, however, not all scholars agree with each other. Although many scholars have argued that the ideological rivalry between communism and Islam did play a role in the Civil War⁹, none of them mention about this rivalry as one of the main factors that led to the war and shaped the developments emerged afterwards. The factor of ideological rivalry has been generally analyzed within the general factor of regionalism. Regarding this issue, Aziz Niyazi writes the following:

Regional rivalries are the main factor in the conflict. This factor has been shaping the process in Tajikistan. As a result talking about the role of ideology in Tajik politics is not accurate. All political allies and parties, except Communist Party, were established for the maximization of interests of certain regions.¹⁰

Ambassador Stanley T. Escudero, the United States’ chief representative in Dushanbe, who had spent three years there, shared the same view. According to him, the war was not an ideological war at all. He stated that:

⁷ Roy, Oliver. 'Civil war in Tajikistan'. Cited in Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, Columbia University, US, 1995, p.50

⁸ Davlat Khudonazarov, **The Conflict in Tajikistan: Questions of Regionalism**, in Sagdeev and Eisenhower, eds., Central Asia, p. 249-63. in Mark N. Katz, **Tajikistan and Russia: Sources of Instability in Central Asia**, 1997 <http://ourworld.compuserve.com/homepages/usazerb/243.htm>

⁹ Atkin, Muriel. '**Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential**', produced by the Swiss Peace Foundation for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), 1999, http://www.isn.ethz.ch/publihouse/fast/crp/atkin_99.htm

¹⁰ Niyazi Aziz. '**Tadjikistan. Ot Sistemnogo Krizisa k Ustoychivomu Razvitiyu (From Systematic Crisis to Stabilized Development)**', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 9, Sweden, 1997, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/09-1997/st_10_niyazi.shtml

the war in Tajikistan is not about ideology--communists vs. Islamists or democracy vs. autocracy. It is not an ideological conflict at all. It is a battle for power between two groups that represent different regions of the country. There is an Islamic aspect to the conflict (represented by the Islam-oriented parties in the opposition). Also, some members of the government were members of the Communist Party. Yet, some in the opposition were also party members, or achieved their positions by Soviet government appointment, making it impossible to distinguish between communists and noncommunists in this war. This war is not, a good guy-bad guy situation.¹¹

Thus some scholars claim that Islamic and democratic principles were used as instruments by some regional elites for their own regional interests. As Islam and democracy were used for the interests of certain regions, these ideologies could not be disseminated to whole country. Anna Matveeva shares this view. She states that in Tajikistan Islam was used (although not much successfully) in order to mask the interests of regional groups.¹² Iver Neumann and Sergey Solodovnik are also among those who believe that the Tajik Civil War was not a war of ideologies. Similar to Matveeva, they claim that Islamic and democratic slogans were used for maximization of regional interests. They indicated that:

the last years of *perestroika* and the Soviet Union saw a power struggle erupt between the Leninabadis, the Kulyabis and eventually the Hisoris on the one hand ('the communists' reorganised in a new People's Front), and the Gharmis and the Gorno-Badakhshanis on the other ('the opposition'). Since liberal intellectuals and Muslim elders made up the leadership of the opposition, the latter camp is often referred to as an alliance of democrats and Islamists. This should not, however, be taken to indicate that this was basically a struggle of ideas. Rather, various ideological movements like communism, democracy and Islamism served as nests or power containers for identity-region politics.¹³

In addition to these factors, experts of the region, directly or indirectly, mention about the interference of two external powers: Russia and Uzbekistan.¹⁴ Some

¹¹ Ambassador Escudero Stanley, the United States' chief representative in Dushanbe, **Speech in a Forum on Tajikistani Conflict**, organized by United States Institute of Peace, June 6, 1995.

¹² Matveeva, Anna. **'Ugroza Islamizma v Postsovetskoy Evrazii (Threat of Islamism in Post-Soviet Eurasia)'**, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 5, Sweden, 1999, http://www.cac.org/journal/cac-05-1999/st_16_matveeva.shtml

¹³ Neumann, Iver. & Solodovnik, Sergey. **'Russian and CIS peace enforcement in Tajikistan'**. In Lena Jonson & Clive Archer (Ed.), **Russian and CIS Peacekeeping**, Centre of Russian Studies, Westview, Publication no. 1 - 1995.

¹⁴ Atkin, Muriel. **'Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential'**.

experts also mention about Iran and Afghanistan as other two players¹⁵. Although there were different explanations for their interferences, their roles in the Tajik Civil War were regarded as significant. For example, Sergei Gretski, Professor of Political Science at the Catholic University of America and Deputy Editor of the Central Asia and the Caucasus Journal published in Sweden, states that Tajikistan had become victim of a political game that was predominantly directed from outside the country.¹⁶ Patricia Carley, one of the organizers of the forum on the Tajikistani conflict, at the United States Institute of Peace, has a similar view. According to her, there were three external powers (Russia, Uzbekistan and Iran) that had interfered in the Tajik Civil War. She writes that:

without a doubt, the Russians want to maintain a presence in Tajikistan, as it is their last foothold in Central Asia. The neighboring Central Asian state of Uzbekistan, fearing a spillover of Islamic activism and Tajik nationalism, initially backed Russia's policy of supporting the old-guard forces in the Tajikistan conflict. Now that the Uzbek leadership has eliminated virtually all opposition in its own country and sees no danger from the events in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan is hoping to become the broker of a resolution to the Tajik conflict. Iran, which takes a pragmatic stance toward Tajikistan, has always supported Russian involvement, as it has no interest in seeing any other influence there, either from Turkey or the other Turkic states in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan.¹⁷

On the other hand, Muriel Atkin argues that although Russia's and Uzbekistan's involvement are certain, the roles played by Afghanistan and Iran in the Tajik Civil War are debatable. She writes that:

Although Tajikistan now deals with many states around the globe, its relations with four are particularly important: Russia; Uzbekistan; Afghanistan; and Iran. The first two have played an active role in Tajikistani affairs, and have occasionally competed with each other for influence there. The role the other two play or might play is the subject of much speculation and concern, not all of which is justified.¹⁸

In general, therefore, almost all of the scholars argue that a combination of

¹⁵ Rubin, Bennett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, Columbia University, US, 1995, p.50

¹⁶ Gretski, Sergei. **'Comments on Presentation'**, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 4, Sweden, 1999, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-05-1999/st_22_gretsky.shtml

¹⁷ Carley, Patricia. **Forum on Tajikistani Conflict**, organized by United States Institute of Peace, June 6, 1995.

¹⁸ Atkin, Muriel. **'Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential'**.

various factors shaped the developments on the eve, during and after the Tajik Civil War. However, different scholars emphasize on different factors. Many of these scholars agree about the role of regionalism. Other factors, in general, are analyzed within the context of regionalism. For example according to Irina Zviagelskaya the conflict-generating factors were frictions between clans inside Tajikistan; inter-ethnic and quasi inter-ethnic tensions and ideological confrontation (the conservatives, including the adherents of communist ideology, versus the Democrats and the Islamists).¹⁹ She uses the term “clan” while mentioning about regional interest groups. According to Muriel Atkin, at the heart of the conflict was the struggle for power. Later, she continues, other factors enter the picture such as “ideology (both secular and religious), regional and ethnic rivalries, personal ambition, the influence of other states, and the bitterness engendered by the conflict itself”.²⁰

If one analyzes the Tajik Civil War thoroughly, he/she can discern that it was more than struggle for power. Indeed Islam had been embraced as an alternative ideology to communism. Although the number of Islamists (who were the leaders in the resistance against the government) was not significant, they played an important role in the development of events. Thus Islam had indeed become an alternative ideology to communism.

As I tried to explain above Islam, regionalism, and external factors cannot be the only player in the Tajik Civil War on their own. My argument is that all of these three factors played an active and equal role in the War. In the case of an absence of *any of* these factors, Tajik Civil War would not take place. Consequently in this thesis, Islam, regionalism and external powers are taken as the three main factors that led to the eruption of the Tajik Civil War and that shaped the events before, during and after the Civil War.

This thesis is based on articles, books, journals and opinion polls published in

¹⁹ Zviagelskaya, Irina. **The Tajik Conflict**, Russian Center for Strategic Research, United Kingdom, 1997, p.1

²⁰ Atkin, Muriel. ‘**Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential**’.

Tajik, Uzbek, Russian and English languages. It attempts to explain the Tajik Civil War by analyzing the views of local (Tajikistani), Russian, Uzbek and Western scholars. The thesis is composed of six chapters. Following the introduction, the second chapter gives a general picture of the historical developments that led to the Civil War and its aftermath, in a chronological way. The third chapter is devoted to Islam in Tajikistan and its role before, during and after the Tajik Civil War in shaping the events in the country. In this chapter two waves of Islamization and their impact on the Tajikistani Muslims are evaluated. Also Tajikistani Muslims before the Russian conquest, during the Soviet era and after the collapse of the Soviet Union are analyzed thoroughly. In the fourth chapter, the reasons of the emergence of regionalism in Tajikistan and its role before, during and after the Tajik Civil War in shaping the events in Tajikistan are explained. The fifth chapter is devoted to the analysis of the roles of external powers in the Tajik Civil War. In this chapter Russian, Uzbekistani, Iranian and Afghanistani concerns regarding the Tajik Civil War are evaluated separately. The last chapter is the conclusion of the thesis, which discusses the three basic factors of Islam, regionalism and external factors in an interactive and interconnected way.

CHAPTER 2

THE CIVIL WAR

In this chapter, the Tajik Civil War is analyzed within a historical context. First, brief information about the country and the development that led to the Civil War are given. Then, the negotiations that ended in the signature of the Peace Treaty in June 1997 are discussed.

2.1 Historical Background

Tajikistan is a mountainous country in Central Asia. It shares borders with China to the east, with Afghanistan to the south, with Kyrgyzstan to the north and with Uzbekistan to the west. Its border with Afghanistan increased its geopolitical importance. Both the Soviet Union and today's Russian Federation saw southern borders of Tajikistan as the dividing line between Islamists of the south and their countries. The capital city is Dushanbe. 90% of its 6,863,752 (July 2003 est.) million population is Muslims and 65% of the population is Tajiks. Second largest population is Uzbeks who comprise 25% of the population.²¹ Russian population started to decrease since the late 1980s, as Russian exodus to the Russian Federation reached its peak during the Tajik Civil War. The term "Taj-ik" means "crown" and traditionally was used to distinguish Persian speakers from Turkic-speaking populations of Central Asia. Modern Tajik language is a dialect of West Persian language. In the country there are also people who use East Persian language. They live at high mountains of Pomir and are known as Pomiris. Except Pomiris who are Ismaili, a branch of Shii Islam, all Tajiks are followers of Hanefi School of Sunni sect.

²¹CIA FACTBOOK, 1998, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/taj.htm>

Tajiks' first stage of becoming a nation was realized under the Samanid Dynasty (903-993). The Samanid Dynasty ruled part of today's Tajikistan from Bukhara of present day Uzbekistan. After the collapse of Samanid Dynasty, Tajiks did not have their own independent state up until 1991.

Before the Russian conquest, Turkestan was being ruled by three Khanates: Bukharan Khanate, Khivan Khanate and Qoqand Khanate. Modern Tajikistan was mostly established in the eastern territories of the Bukharan Khanate. Only its northern part was under the jurisdiction of the Qoqand Khanate. Consequently, the developments within Bukhara city played an important role in the shaping of Tajik nationality. Local reformist intellectuals, few in number like in all Turkestan, had united under the roof of an organization called "Young Bukharians". Many of these reformists, who were against the Emir of Bukhara, decided to support the Bolsheviks, who were promising many liberties to the non-Russian subjects of Tsarist Russia. Because of fierce resistance of the local people, the Bolsheviks could not get control of Bukhara in their first attempt. Consequently, they decided to preserve the autonomy of the Bukharan Khanate. However the autonomy of the Bukharan Khanate did not last much. On 2 September 1920 Bukhara city was captured and its last Emir, Said Olim Khon, the last Manghit (a Turkic tribe) ruler of the Khanate, fled to Eastern Bukhara. The Emirate of Bukhara was transformed to the People's Republic of Bukhara immediately after the conquest. Because of their help to the Bolsheviks, Young Bukharans were awarded with some key posts in the newly established republic.²²

With the consolidation of the Bolshevik power in the region, radical changes were started. The Bolshevik administration in Central Asia was adjusted according to the first adopted Soviet federal constitution of 1924.²³ This reorganization became known as *natsionalnoe razmezhevanie* (national delimitation). While the Kazakh and Kyrgyz areas were preserved within the Russian Socialist Federated Soviet Republic (RSFSR), two new republics of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan

²²Becker, Seymour. **Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924**, Harvard University Press, Massachusetts, United States of America, 1968, p.206

²³ Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. **Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia; the Case of Tajikistan**, The Johns Hopkins Press, Baltimore, United States of America, 1970, p. 27

were created in the territories of the former Bukharan and Khivan People's Republics. Eastern Bukhara was named Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) and was incorporated under the jurisdiction of Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic (UzSSR). In 1925, the Pamir region that was inhabited by Ismailis gained formal autonomy as the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous *Oblast* (GBAO). The Soviet Republics were intended to be "national in form, socialist in content". According to this definition the new political community "should build socialism with due regard to national differences but that final aim was to overcome these differences by a merging of all nationalities in a common Soviet and Socialist identity".²⁴

Later in 1929 Tajik ASSR was transformed to Tajik SSR. It was made a union republic. Consequently, it was not under the jurisdiction of the Uzbek SSR any more. With the incorporation of Khujand, northern part of modern Tajikistan, the region became ready to meet the requirements of being a union republic. According to the Soviet Constitution, for a nation to be a union republic, three criteria were required: having a specific territory, constituting a majority of the whole population living in that territory and finally having a population of at least one million.²⁵ After the incorporation of Khujand, population of Tajikistan reached one million.

Like all other Soviet republics, Tajikistan started to be ruled by the Communist Party. Any opposing view to communism was not tolerated up until Gorbachev's reign. In 1986 Gorbachev, last First Secretary of Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU), launched policies of *perestroika* (restructuring) and *glasnost* (openness) in order to strengthen the Soviet Union. Gorbachev introduced *perestroika* in order to improve the Soviet economy that was deteriorating year by year. The launch of this new policy

²⁴ Coppieters, Bruno. '**Form and Content in Soviet and Post-Soviet Nationality and Regional Policies**'. In Waller Michael, Coppieters Bruno & Malashenko, Alexei **Conflicting Loyalties and the State in post-Soviet Russia and Eurasia**, Frank Cass, London, Portland, 1998, p.18

²⁵ Stalin, Joseph. '**Report to the Eight all-Union congress of the Soviets**'. In Marxism and the National Question, in Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. **Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia**, The Johns Hopkins Press, 1970, p. 30

was an attempt to reform economic mechanism (power relationships in the economy) by devolving greater decision-making power to management and labor. Workers were to be drawn into decision making to an extent never before envisaged under a command-administrative system.²⁶

Glasnost was introduced in order to prevent corruption of high-ranking officials, which was entrenched in the Union, with the help of citizens' open criticisms. However Gorbachev's policies led to the collapse of the Union instead of enhancing it. Because of *glasnost*, different national groups started to revive their distinctive features. *Glasnost* and *perestroika* policies of Gorbachev also led to the proliferation of new political organizations. In this context, Tajik intellectuals also initiated revival movements or movements for more autonomy as well. Most of these movements had nationalist wings and sometimes demanded complete independence. Tajikistan's largest nationalist organization was *Rastokhez* (rebirth). Members of this organization advocated strengthening ties between Tajiks and Iranians by replacing Cyrillic alphabet with a Persian-Arabic one. Moreover, it encouraged nationalization of Tajik history, which had already developed in the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences, as part of the creation of the Tajik "nationality". Some members perceived Tajikistan as a part of "Greater Iran" and included the "lost" cities of Bukhara and Samarqand.²⁷ Pomiris had established their own organization called *La'li Badakhson* (Ruby of Badakhson) in order to get more autonomous status for the Badakhshon Autonomous Republic (BAR).

The government, in order to neutralize these movements, adopted a nationalist path. The Tajik Supreme Soviet enacted a law in 1989 which made Tajik the state language and opened the way for gradual transformation to Perso-Arabic script. However, because of the Civil War, this process could not continue.

Another outcome of the changes that started during *perestroika* was Islamic movements. The most popular religious figure at the time was Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, who was the head of the official Islamic institution and also a member of the Supreme Soviet. He demanded the inclusion of religious courses to

²⁶ McCauley, Martin. **Gorbachev**, Addison Wesley Longman Limited, United Kingdom, 1998, p. 262

²⁷ Rubin, Bennett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**.

school curriculum and the adoption of Islamic festivals as official festivals. With the financial aids of some Muslim countries and Islamic groups, he initiated building of mosques and *madrasas* (Islamic schools).²⁸ Majority of these activities were taking place in Gharm and Qarategin regions. To realize these activities, many people from other Muslim countries came to Tajikistan.

By the Communist Party of Soviet Union's (CPSU) renouncement of monopoly of political power in 1990, the movements that had emerged during *perestroika* gained an opportunity to share political power. Islamists established the *Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan* (IRPT) while nationalists gathered under the roof of *Democratic Party of Tajikistan* (DPT). The DPT was largely aided by the Baltic popular fronts and it registered as an official party soon. But the IRPT could register only in late 1991. Some members of *Rastokhez* supported DPT while others remained closer to government. The IRPT largely recruited Gharmi youth through a network of unofficial mullahs, mosques and *madrasas*.

First violence in Tajikistan erupted in February 1990 by demonstrations held against the arrival of Armenian refugees to the country. The demonstration was organized by the followers of *Rastokhez*. The demonstrators asked the government to send these refugees away from Dushanbe. These demonstrations led to the emergence of three new figures in the political arena of Tajikistan: Buri Karimov, Davlat Khudonazarov and Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda.²⁹ Davlat Khudonazarov, a Pomiri filmmaker and member of CPSU, cut his visit to Germany and returned to Tajikistan due to this demonstration. In order to calm the situation, the government asked *Qozi Kalon* (Chief Judge) of Tajikistan, Turajonzoda, to meet face to face with the demonstrators. Another person who was asked to meet with the demonstrators was the Deputy Chairman of the Presidium of Supreme Soviet of the time, Buri Karimov. Qahhor Mahkamov, the First Secretary of Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT), asked Buri Karimov to establish the People's Committee, which would act as an intermediary between the demonstrators and

²⁸ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 98

²⁹ Ayubzod, Salimi. **Sad Rang Sad Sol: Tojikiston dar Qarni Bistum (Hundred Colors and Hundred Years: Tajikistan in 20th Century)**, Post Skriptum Imprimatur, Prague, 2002, p.240

the government. Neither Turajonzoda nor Karimov, however, could satisfy the demonstrators. The demonstrations did not end. To scatter away the crowd, the government decided to use force. As a result, 26 people died and 127 people were injured in clashes with the militia.³⁰ This action of government further decreased its support among most Tajikistani people, especially the non-Sughdis. President Mahkamov was reluctant to conduct the upcoming elections in a fair, open fashion. The opposition candidates were banned from competing for presidency in the election that was planned to be conducted on 25 February 1990, as the president would be elected by the Supreme Soviet. The only rival to Mahkamov was Rahmon Nabiev, who was the ex-First Secretary of CPT and a Sughdi like Mahkamov. Mahkamov won the election and became first President of Tajikistan, “first” because up until this time the head of Tajikistan had the title of First Secretary of CPT.

After the elections, Shodmon Yusuf, the founder of Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), initiated a hunger strike in order to protest the elections and the use of force by the government against the demonstrators. The strike gave positive results. On 21 June 1991, DPT and *Rastokhez* were officially registered by the Ministry of Justice.

In the coup attempt of hard line communists on 19 August 1991 against Mikhail Gorbachev, Mahkamov declared his support for the hardliners. Mahkamov further lost his reputation among the Tajikistani people after the failure of coup. Ten days later on 29 August 1991, demonstrators gathered again in front of the Parliament and blamed the supporters of the coup against Gorbachev. They demanded the resignation of President Mahkamov, Chairman of the Parliament Qadriddin Aslonov and Prime Minister Izatulloh Hayoyev.³¹ Also, a majority of the parliamentarians voted for the resignation of Mahkamov. Qadriddin Aslonov replaced him as an acting president up until the election that would be held soon. On 9 September 1991 Tajikistan declared its independence.

On 21 September 1991 a crowd of people gathered in the central square of

³⁰ Ibid., p.241

³¹ Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginnings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chronology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran**, Central Asian Studies, University of Minnesota, 2001

Dushanbe in order to topple down a statute of Lenin. The statute was toppled down as soon as Aslonov denounced the CPT and confiscated its assets. This event became an impetus for the meeting of supporters of the CPT in *Ozodi (Freedom) Square* that was in the centre of Dushanbe. The followers of CPT blamed Aslonov because of his confiscation of assets of the party and protested the registration of IRPT and *Rastokhez*. With the help of these demonstrators, CPT forced the Supreme Soviet to dismiss Aslanov, institute a curfew and stop the activities of the IRPT.³² The parliament elected Rahmon Nabiev as the First Secretary of CPT. During this parliamentary session, Nurulloh Huvaydullov, Attorney General of the Republic, asked members of the parliament to permit him to arrest the mayor of Dushanbe Maqsud Ikromov, who was accused of corruption.³³

After these developments, supporters of Qadriddin Aslonov and Maqsud Ikromov started to gather in front of the Central Committee building. The supporters of these two leaders were mainly the followers of DPT, IRPT and *Rastokhez*. Although the meeting in the *Ozodi Square* had ended in one day, this protest lasted for about 15 days. The demonstrators demanded the resignation of Nabiev. On 4 October 1991, with the interference of Gorbachev, the issue was temporarily resolved; IRPT was allowed to register officially. Moreover due to this demonstration, Nabiev was forced to hold presidential elections in November 1991. DPT and IRPT supported Davlat Khudonazarov in his campaign for presidency. Thus everyone who opposed monopoly of the Sughdis on political power tried to give his/her vote to him. Davlat Khudonazarov could get 30% of votes while his crucial rival Rahmon Nabiev managed to get 58% of the votes.³⁴ As Rahmon Nabiev was also from Sughd, Sughdi leadership would continue for another period.

Rahmon Nabiev's presidency was not accepted by Gharmis and Pomiris who argued that there was fraud in the election. Safarali Kenjaev, a Sughdi politician,

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Neumann, Iver. & Solodovnik, Sergey. **'Russian and CIS peace enforcement in Tajikistan'**.

was assigned as the Chairman of Supreme Soviet. The post of Prime Ministry was given to a Sughdi businessman Abdumalik Abdullahjonov. In March 1992 antagonism between Nabiev's regime and the opposition bloc reached its peak. After the appointment of his close associates to the key posts in the government, President Nabiev started to attack the opposition. On 6 March 1992, Maqsud Ikromov, who had become a prominent figure in DPT, was arrested. Five days later, one of the leaders of *Rastokhez*, Mirbobo Mirrahimov, was sentenced to two years of imprisonment.

Following these arrests DPT and IRPT gathered in *Shahidon (Martyrs) Square* to hold demonstrations against President Nabiev. The accusation of Kenjaev of Mamadayoz Navjuvanov, a Pomiri and Minister of Internal Affairs, in the parliament that was broadcasted alive angered Pomiris further. These events radicalized both nationalist and Islamic groups. The *Shahidon Square* later turned into a meeting place for the opposition groups. The DPT and IRPT used their members' regional ties in order to gather support for their activities. The demonstrators demanded resignation of Kenjaev and the whole parliament, the adoption of a new constitution, holding new elections to the parliament, establishment of a multiparty system, and ending the harassment of opposition figures.³⁵

On 1 April 1992, the supporters of the pro-government *Social Committee for Preserving Constitutional Government* started to gather in *Ozodi Square*. However, soon after the end of *Ramadan*, more than 50,000 people moved from rural areas to the *Shohidon Square*.³⁶ This flow of rural people to Dushanbe frightened Nabiev. In order to satisfy the demonstrators, he promised to dismiss Kenjaev and to adopt some reforms required by the opposition groups. In fact, Nabiev wanted to gain some time for making an accurate plan to end the demonstrations. Consequently, despite his promises to meet the demands of opposing groups, he did not give up his attacks against them. However Nabiev, in a short time, realized that he could not resist the opposition groups that were

³⁵ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 71

³⁶ Ibid.

recruiting more supporters everyday coming from the rural areas. These people were activated by rural religious figures. Despite Nabiev's request to resign, Kenjaev did not give up his post. Instead, he intensified his intimidation against the demonstrators. As a retaliation, on 21 April 1992, the opposition bloc announced an ultimatum to Kenjaev to give up his post within 24 hours. The members of the parliament, however, did not want Kenjaev's resignation and announced their full support for him. To realize their aim, the opposing groups established armed militias to attack the parliament.

The parliament, in order to avoid this attack, voted for the inclusion of Turajonzoda and Asliddin Sohibnazarov (Deputy Chairman of DPT) to the Supreme Soviet. However, this decision could not stop the opposition, which was considered as late. On 21 April 1992, the opposition groups took 17 people as hostages, among whom there were members of the parliament, including Deputy Prime Ministers.³⁷ After this event Kenjaev resigned from his post but soon he was assigned as the head of National Security (KGB). To show their support to Kenjaev, some Kulobis arrived at Dushanbe. Sughdis, who had little ties with southerners (except Kulobis), in order to control activities of Pomiris and Gharmis decided to cooperate with their only partner, Kulobis. The president's supporters gathered in *Ozodi Square* in order to organize a counter-demonstration. Kulobis were organized by Sangak Safarov (a native Kulobi with criminal past) and Mulloh Haydar Sharifzoda (a Kulobi clergy who had competed with Turajonzoda to the post of *Qozi Kalon*). This support increased the confidence of the Sughdis. Consequently on 29 April 1992, Kenjaev was reelected as the Chairman of Supreme Soviet. Opposition forces took the control of the television station and all entrances to the city. The National Security Committee and the Ministry of Internal Affairs also supported the opposition groups. Following this development, President Nabiev decided to end the opposition once and for all. On 1 May 1992, he released a decree on the establishment of a special battalion (on the advice of Turkmenistan's President Saparmurad Niyazov) and provided the pro-government

³⁷ Salimi Ayubzod. **Sad Rangi Sad Sol: Tojikiston dar Qarni Bistum(Hundred Colors and Hundred Years: Tajikistan in 20th Century**, p.253

demonstrators gathered in *Ozodi Square* with about 2000 Kalashnikov rifles.³⁸ On the same day, the special battalion started to use force against the demonstrators gathered in the *Shahidon Square*. As the result of these armed attacks, several people were killed or injured. As a retaliation, the opposition forces seized the control of airport, train station and presidential building. Nabiev was forced to initiate negotiations with opposition forces, but could not succeed in realizing an effective solution. The government lost control over the country. In Dushanbe, clashes erupted between the special battalion and opposing forces. The opposition demanded the creation of a coalition government and resignations of Kenjaev, Prime Minister Nurulloh Dustov, Attorney General Nurulloh Huvaydulloev, Head of Television and Radio Committee Sayfulloev, and Head of Defense Committee Niyazov. On 7 May 1992, Nabiev signed a protocol that assured to meet the demands of the opposition forces. On the same day, pro-government demonstrators gathered in *Ozodi Square* started to leave Dushanbe to Kulob.

The negotiations between the opposition forces and the government continued despite armed clashes between the groups. Opposition forces started to demand the resignation of President Nabiev, abolition of the Supreme Soviet and transfer of its authority to the *Mejlis* (National Soviet) that would be created soon. Shodmon Yusuf and Davlat Usmon, Deputy Chairman of the IRPT, stated that assets of Russian troops should be nationalized and arrival of CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) forces should be blocked. On the same day, a coalition government was formed. One third of this coalition government was represented by opposition forces.³⁹ Negotiations brought a temporary peace by giving 8 of the 24 cabinet posts to the opposition. Nabiev remained as president until 6 December 1992, when new presidential elections would be held. Davlat Usmon was appointed Deputy Prime Minister in charge of the republic's law enforcement. Other key figures of the former government Kenjaev, Dustov and Abdullahjonov left the capital city.

Anti-governmental demonstrators who were gathered in *Shahidon Square*

³⁸ Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

³⁹ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 74

started to leave Dushanbe and go back to their villages. Consequently, armed struggle between opponent groups was transported to rural areas. The participants of *Shahidon* and *Ozodi Squares* continued their enmities in the rural areas. Soon, bitter clashes erupted in Kulob and Qurghon Tapa. The local Soviet of Sughd Province decided declaring independence from Tajikistan. The Sughdi officials did not recognize Dushanbe any more.

Starting in 28 June 1992, the armed clashes between Kulobis and Islamists obtained a systematic and bloody form. The coalition government asked the 201st Motor Rifle Division (MRD) of Russia to protect strategic places, such as the Nurek Dam. On 26 July 1992, representatives of the coalition government, parties, and political movements met in Khorog, the centre of Badakhshon Autonomous Republic (BAR). Representatives from Kulob, Qurghon Tapa and Gharm, as well as members of the IPRT, DPT, and *Rastokhez* participated in this meeting. The coalition government was represented by the new Chairman of Supreme Soviet, Akbarsho Iskandarov. In this meeting, the opposition groups formulated plans for a cease-fire. Following this event, a general cease-fire was announced. The truce, however, could not be implemented because of the demands of Sangak Safarov and Shodmon Yusuf. Safarov stated that his fighters would not put down their arms until the dismissal of the coalition government. Yusuf, on the other hand, demanded the withdrawal of Russian and CIS troops from Tajikistan.⁴⁰ Consequently, the bitter clashes in the rural areas did not cease. As a result of these clashes, many people were replaced from their places.

On 11 August 1992, the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan convened. In this meeting, the limitation of President's authority was discussed. On 24 August 1992, Nurulloh Huvayduloev, Attorney General of the Republic, and his chauffeur was killed by unidentified people. The attackers

had broken into Huvayduloev's office in June demanding that the prosecutor should drop a bribery case against the former mayor of Dushanbe, Maqsud Ikromov. This connection suggests Opposition involvement, especially in relation to Nabiev's attempt at removing opposition sympathizers from the National Security State and Defense Committees. More importantly, it suggests that the third and last pillar of

⁴⁰ Ibid

Nabiev's support- Dustov and Kenjaev being the other two- is now destroyed.⁴¹

The assassination triggered intensive protests of population. In Sughd province (where Huvaydulloev was born) and Kulob large demonstrations were held by local people. In these demonstrations, the coalition government was severely criticized.

Meanwhile in Dushanbe an armed group of opposition forces demanded a face-to face meeting with President Nabiev. Nabiev, concerned about his own life, had found asylum in the settlement of the 201st MRD. The armed group could not find Nabiev. Instead, they started to take refugees from Kulobis and Sughdis. By using refugees, the armed groups aimed to force Nabiev to resign. In Sughd province, armed groups started to unite under the roof of the newly established Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT). The bloody clashes between Kulobis and the opposition forces intensified further in Qurghon Tepa. Nabiev accused opposition forces on cutting relations with Russia and CIS countries and creating disorder in Tajikistan with their "criminal" activities. On 7 September 1992, Nabiev attempted to leave Dushanbe to Khujand (capital city of Sughd) secretly. However in the airport, he was captured by the opposition forces. Nabiev was forced to declare his resignation. After his resignation, the Chairman of the Parliament Akbarsho Iskandarov, a Pomiri, became the acting president while Usmon was assigned as Deputy Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, the Kulobi fighters were advancing toward Dushanbe. They demanded a reevaluation of Nabiev's resignation and dismissal of the Deputy Prime Minister Usmon, Tajik Radio and TV Chairman Mirbobob Mirrahimov, and the Deputy Chairman of National Security Davlat Aminov and Turajonzoda from the coalition government. Local Soviet of Sughd Province accepted the resignation of Nabiev in order to satisfy the coalition government. Sughdis asked the coalition government to assign Abdulmalik Abdullahjonov as the Prime Minister.

In the meanwhile arm smuggling increased in Tajik-Afghan border. Significant amount of opposition weaponry was being obtained from

⁴¹Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

Afghanistan.⁴² To cut the flow of arms from Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Russia sent additional border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border. The coalition government could not bring stability in Kulob and Qurghon Tepa. It did not have any control over the Sughd Province. In addition to this, PFT was advancing to Dushanbe. This development increased disorder in the capital. Consequently, support of the coalition government decreased among Tajikistani people. Turajonzoda started to be seen as the main initiator of the armed struggles.

Representatives of Kulob, Hisor, Sughd and Uzbeks organized a meeting in Khujand, capital city of Sughd Province. In the meeting, the plans for ending the Civil War and establishing a new government were discussed. Uzbekistan and Russia promised their total supports for PFT. The coalition government was renounced. Imomali Rahmonov, an active Kulobi member of PFT, was assigned as the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet. Abdullahjonov was given the post of Prime Ministry. Immediately after the meeting, the fight for seizure of Dushanbe intensified. On 10 December 1992, fighters of PFT entered Dushanbe, and started killing Pomiris and Gharmis indiscriminately. The new government, which was established under the leadership of Imomali Rahmonov, began to systematically arrest or kill the followers of Islamic-democratic bloc. Kulobis started to consolidate their power in the republic by capturing almost all parts of country. The opposition forces were forced to leave Dushanbe. Gharm and Tavildara regions became new centers of clashes between the new Tajik government forces and opposition forces. These regions were seized by governmental forces, as well. Opposition forces fled to Badakhshon and Afghanistan. On 23 December 1992, the Supreme Soviet Chairman Rahmonov appealed to the Badakhshonians on Tajik TV, who had unilaterally declared an independent status, not to act against the integrity of the Tajik Republic. Soon the Rahmonov government captured Panj, the closest region of Tajikistan to Afghanistan. Many people escaped to the neighboring countries. In June 1993, Badakhshon gave up its aim of independence. In the same month, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan banned four opposition parties and movements (IRPT, DPT, Rastokhez and Lali Badakhshon)

⁴² Iskandarov, Qosimsho. 'Vliyanie Afganskogo Krizisa na Situatsiyu v Tajikistane (The Impact of Afghan Crisis on the Situation in Tajikistan)', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 13, Sweden, 1997, www.ca-c.org

and confiscated their assets. Their leaders were charged in absence. Hisori Mufti Fathullo Sharifzoda was assigned to the post of Turajonzoda. The new religious leader promised to stay away from politics.⁴³

As a result of these developments, almost 1,000,000 people were replaced. Refugees who were accommodated in Afghanistan started to support opposition forces from this country.⁴⁴ Some of the high-ranking religious leaders were also in Afghanistan and had been organizing anti-government activities. Bitter clashes between the government and opposition forces continued near the Afghan-Tajik border.

Externally, opposition groups, which were predominantly composed of Gharmis and Pomiris, were supported by “Iran, as well as Mujahidins in northern Afghanistan, Arab and Pakistani Islamic groups”.⁴⁵ Sughdis and Kulobis, on the other hand, were predominantly supported by Russia and Uzbekistan.

It was almost impossible to prevent the eruption of Civil War in 1992. Because rivalries, dislikes, hatred toward other regions had been accumulating for seven decades. As people did not have political means to express their opinions, they chose the only remaining alternative, violence.

2.2 Negotiations

Negotiations, which aimed to stop the Tajik Civil War, started in a hostile environment. Initially the new government did not want to give any concession to the opposition, while opposition forces did not aim to cease their attacks. Thus there was a stalemate. But because of harsh attacks to the governmental and Russian forces, both within and outside of the country, Kulobis were forced to give some concessions. Moreover, Kulobis were being left alone by their former allies, Sughdis and native Uzbeks. Both communities had realized that Kulobis were relegating them. They understood that, they had been deprived of their share in the government. Thus Uzbeks and Sughdis started to leave the Kulobis alone.

⁴³Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

⁴⁴ Kuzmin, A.I. ‘**The Causes and Lessons of the Civil War**’, p. 191

⁴⁵ Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.50

Finally, continued tensions within Tajikistan had attracted the attention of Uzbekistan, Russia and Iran. They feared that the tension would spillover to their own countries, if not solved immediately. As there was a potential threat of Islamic extremism in both Russia and Uzbekistan, these countries forced Imomali Rahmonov to start negotiations with opposition groups that were united under the umbrella of United Tajik Opposition (UTO). Because of these developments, the government initiated negotiations with UTO.

The first round of the negotiations, between the Tajik government and UTO, was held in Moscow in April 1994, under the supervision of the United Nations. The participant countries were Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. As the Tajik Civil War was an international issue from the beginning the first round of negotiations was attended by seven foreign countries. Three issues were aimed to be solved during this round: the refugee problem, cessation of hostilities and disarmament, and the political future of Tajikistan.⁴⁶ The sides agreed on the return of the refugees, who had left their homes and went to Afghanistan and reached an agreement on the cease-fire. But no agreement was reached on the political future of Tajikistan. After the agreement, thousands of refugees returned to their homes and a relatively stable condition was established in the country.

During the negotiations the most sensitive issue was the issue of power sharing in the future. In fact, the negotiations revolved around this issue. Other issues were relegated to secondary positions. This fact was obvious even during the eruption of Civil War in 1992. One scholar clarifies this fact as follows:

As soon as the armed conflict was over it transpired that a more fair division of power among the country's regions was a major prerequisite for restoring stability. In November 1992, when the country was ravaged by the civil war, the Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev came up with the initiative of creating a State Council in Tajikistan, which would include representative from all regions on a parity basis.⁴⁷

The proposal called for establishment of a government in which all regions of the country should be represented. But in the early years of the Civil War, it

⁴⁶ Zviagelskaya, Irina. **The Tajik Conflict**, p.10

⁴⁷ Nezavisimaya Gazeta, March 19, 1994. In Zviagelskaya, Irina. **The Tajik Conflict**, Russian Center for Strategic Research, United Kingdom, 1997, p.11

seemed impossible. Because Kulobi-Sughdi bloc was determined to put a lethal blow on the opposition. But foreign countries did not believe that the conflict would be resolved in this way. Thus they forced the government to solve the problem by including the elites of the conflicting regions into the decision-making process and economic facilities. Thus, the creation of a representative government was always the crucial issue in every round of negotiations.

At the first round of the talks, which was held in Moscow, this issue was raised by the opposition. UTO leaders proposed the creation of a Council of National Accord (CNA). It would be a provisional council for two years and to which every regional representative would participate. It would also have the right to make legislative proposals and was expected to form a provisional government of neutral people. The opposition's aim was that, the Council should adopt a new constitution and organize democratic multi-party elections. The transition period was supported by both parts because this was accepted to be a necessity. The issue, however, was sensitive and difficult to be solved, because this proposal required the dismissal of the existing government from power and its replacement with a more representative government.

As the negotiations went on, new issues requiring immediate solutions emerged. The negotiations gained a new impetus when Imomali Rahmonov and Abdullah Nuri, head and representative of UTO, started to meet face-to-face. Up until this stage, both sides were being represented by lower-ranking people. After May 1995, Rahmonov and Nuri began to sign several important agreements. They "extended the temporary cease-fire agreement for another three months; they also pledged that the two sides would continue the peace process in order to resolve the conflict by political means".⁴⁸

As a result of another internal development, Rahmonov and Nuri again met directly. The 19th session of the Tajikistan Supreme Soviet, held on 30 July 1994, approved a referendum on a new constitution and presidential elections to be held in September 1994. This meant that the UTO members would not be represented

⁴⁸ Gretskey, Sergei. 'Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments and Prospects for Peace', The Eisenhower Institute, Washington, US, 1995, <http://www.eisenhowerinstitute.org/programs/globalpartnerships/securityandterrorism/coalition/regionalrelations/ConflictBook/Gretskey.htm>

in the new government, as they were still in exile. To protest this decision, the UTO fighters increased their attacks both within the country and across the border with Afghanistan. Thus Rahmonov decided to meet directly with the UTO leader, Abdullah Nuri, in order to cool the tensions until the elections.⁴⁹

But these face-to face meetings could not solve the conflict, either. The situation further deteriorated because of lack of agreements. This turmoil in the country attracted attention of the United Nations. To solve this problem, the UN General Secretary, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, submitted a report to the Security Council, in which continuation of inter-Tajik negotiations was advised.

The international pressure forced Dushanbe to postpone the elections until November 1994. Next important round of talks was held in October 1994 in Islamabad. A protocol on a joint commission for the implementation of the temporary cease-fire agreement was signed and a joint communiqué was issued. But again, issues concerning power sharing were not solved. The opposition stated that the conditions needed for its participation in elections were not provided even during this round. Opposition demanded access to the media and the return of the remaining refugees to participate in elections. But these proposals of UTO were not met totally.

The government, however, was not able to postpone elections and the referendum again, because the old Soviet parliament had to dissolve itself at the end of March 1995. This meant that if the elections were not held, the government would lose its legitimacy to exist.

Thus presidential elections in Tajikistan were held as scheduled in November 1994. Surprisingly Imomali Rahmonov was not challenged by the opposition, but was challenged by Kulobis' close ally Sughd. Sughdis were being represented by Abdumalik Abdullahjonov, who was Tajikistan's ambassador to Russia and former Prime Minister. This attitude of Abdullahjonov spoiled the relations between Kulobis and Sughdis. Rahmonov emerged as a winner from this election and immediately resorted to purge Abdullahjonov's supporters.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Gretsky, Sergei. **Russia's Policy Toward Central Asia**. Moscow Center Carnegie, Moscow. 1997.

Parliamentary elections in Tajikistan were held in February 1995. Opposition was invited to participate in these elections. But they refused to participate, because their parties (IRPT and DPT) were not registered and access to press was not yet provided for them. UTO continued to demand the establishment of a Council of National Accord to rule the country during a transition period. It would be in charge of the Radio and Television Committee and the Public Prosecutor's Office. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Economic Relations would be under the twin control of both the Council and the government. As one can see from these demands, the Council would act as a new government by controlling almost all key posts. As Rahmonov's government had already been recognized by many states, to meet this demand was obviously very difficult.

Intensified guerilla wars of opposition and Russia's increasing pressure, which was losing its prestige in Central Asia due its inability to solve the conflict in Tajikistan, forced Dushanbe to continue the negotiations with the UTO.

Finally, after these negotiation rounds, on 27 June 1997 a General Agreement on Peace and National Accord was signed in Moscow, by President Imomali Rahmonov, UTO leader Said Abdullah Nuri, and UN envoy for Tajikistan, Gerd-Dietrich Merrem. The National Reconciliation Commission (NRC) chaired by Said Abdullah Nuri was planned to

consist of 26 people, split equally between opposition and government representatives. New parliamentary elections will be held after a transition period of 12 to 18 months but, until the transition period is over, at least 30 percent of the portfolios in the Tajik government will be occupied by opposition representatives. Opposition forces are to be integrated into government force structures, and 460 armed opposition fighters will go to Dushanbe to protect opposition leaders.⁵¹

Thanks to this peace agreement, finally, the Tajik Civil War was ended officially leaving about 100,000 deaths and 1,000,000 refugees behind.⁵² Although some small skirmishes continued within the country, the Peace Agreement, in general, provided stability in Tajikistan. As such, the agreement was a success on the part of Tajik leaders.

⁵¹ Itar-Tass, June 27, 1997, Prism, July 11, 1997. In Zviagelskaya, Irina. **The Tajik Conflict**, p.12

⁵² Kuzmin, A.I. 'The Causes and Lessons of the Civil War', p. 191

The provisional government was shared between former Rahmonov government and the UTO members. According to the Peace Agreement 30% of the government ministries would be represented by the UTO members. Although it was not totally implemented, 13 ministries and state committees were given to UTO members. However most of the middle and low ranking UTO members were not provided with what they were promised. The leaders of UTO were given the following high-ranking posts:

- Deputy Ministry to Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda
- Deputy Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Democratic Party of Tajikistan's leader, Abdunabi Sattorzoda
- Ministry of Emergency Situations to a prominent member of IRPT and head of UTO forces, Mirzo Ziyoyev.⁵³

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), which formed the main opposition for several years, now became part of the government after signing the Peace Agreement. In time, however, the participation of the IRPT to the government decreased its influence over its initial supporters who are still critical about the government. This decrease in support was reflected in the post-Civil War presidential and parliament elections. For example in the first post-Civil War presidential election held on 6 November 1999 in Tajikistan, no alternative candidate to Rahmonov was allowed to participate. Tajikistan's Central Electoral Commission refused to register Davlat Usmon as candidate for the elections, claiming that he failed to obtain the required 145,000 signatures. Rahmonov was reelected as the President for next period with 96% of the vote.⁵⁴ The OSCE did not send observers to the election, claiming that it lacked democratic conditions. In elections to the new bicameral Parliament in February-March 2000, the IRPT could win only two seats in the lower chamber.⁵⁵ After these two elections NRC was dissolved officially.

⁵³ International Crisis Group (ICG). '**Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace**', Asia Report, No 30, 24 December, 2001, p.6

⁵⁴ Bashiri, Iraj, **Beginnings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chronology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

⁵⁵ Olimova, Saodat. '**Political Islam**', Forum on Early Warning and Early Response, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology of Russian Academy of Sciences, Russian Federation, July 2001.

CHAPTER 3

ISLAM AND THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR

98% of the Tajikistani Muslims follow the Hanefi Sect of Islam, which was founded by Imam al-A'zam in the 8th century. Hanefi Sect is one of the four sects of *Ehli Sunneh ve-l Jemaah*, shortly *Sunnis*. The other three sects are Maliki, Shafii and Hanbeli, which are named after their founders. These three schools are not practiced in Tajikistan. Another big sect of Islam, Twelver Shia, also does not have followers in Tajikistan. There are only about 300,000 Fiver Shias or Ismailis which is a little more than 4% of whole Tajikistani population.⁵⁶ Ismailis predominantly live in the high regions of Badakhshon.

Tajiks are from Persian origin. They share the same ethnic root with Iranians. As Central Asia was on the Silk Road, it attracted the attention of many nations, communities or empires. Iranian, Macedonian, Arabic, Turkish, Mongolian and Russian empires conquered the region because of its special importance. First comers to Central Asia were Persians. They lived a sedentary life and controlled the trade routes between Far East and West. With the help of trade taxes, the Persians were able to build powerful empires and beautiful cities. Samarqand and Bukhara are the examples to those cities. Persians and Turkic tribes, who started to come to Central Asia in the middle of the 6th century, were living in Central Asia before the Arabic conquests.⁵⁷ Islamisation of Tajiks was triggered by Arabic conquerors, and it was completed by the clerics of Sufi *tariqats* (religious mystic

⁵⁶ Niyazi, Aziz. '**Vozrojdenie Islama v Tadjikistane: Traditsiya i Politika (Revival of Islam in Tajikistan: Tradition and Politics)**', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 6, Sweden, 1999, <http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-06-1999/nijazi.shtml>

⁵⁷ Bartol'd, Vasilii Vladimirovich. **Turkistan Down to the Mongol Invasion**, Reprinted by Southern Materials Center, INC, Taipei, The Republic of China, 1968, p. 178

orders).

According to Gibb, Arabs first encountered with the people living in Mavarounnehir in 642 when they were following Yazdigurdi III (the last emperor of Sassanid Empire) who was fleeing to northern Iran.⁵⁸ This was during the reign of second caliph, Umar. In 651, Yazdigurdi III arrived at Merv, which is within the territory of modern Turkmenistan. To get him, the Muslims attacked Merv and occupied the city. Later Mavarounnehir, the region between Amudarya and Syrdarya, was attacked. The Muslim conquerors had the tradition of moving with their family to the battlegrounds. During the first attacks, 50.000 Arab families moved from Kufa and Basra to Khorasan, located in today's Turkmenistan and northern Iran. This was done in order to enhance security in the conquered places and to gather new forces for future conquests. In 673 Ubeydullah bin Ziyad, chief commander of Muslims in Khorasan, heavily attacked Mavarounnehir and captured the surroundings of Bukhara.⁵⁹

The first wave of Islamization, which was triggered by these Arabic conquests, could not establish Islam completely in Central Asia. The old traditions, as a reaction to attacks, continued to be practiced. It is claimed that up until the 10th century, there were Tajiks who still practiced Zardushti (the common pre-Islamic religion of Persians that was based on praying to fire) rituals. There were even some Tajik leaders who wanted to reestablish Zardushti. These kinds of people, in order to avoid heavy taxes, pretended to be Muslim.⁶⁰

But the second wave, which was triggered by the Sufi clerics, established Islam completely in the region. After this process, Islam became the only religion of Tajiks. This process made Central Asia as the cradle of Sufi *tariqats*. The Sufi clerics affected the Tajiks more than the impositions of Arab conquerors. Sufism became an important part of Tajik culture. This process helped to change and Islamize most of the remaining pre-Islamic life-cycle rituals. The impact of Sufism on Tajik Muslims was very deep. As such, Sufism remained alive during

⁵⁸ Gibb, Hamilton Alexander Rosskeen. **The Arab Conquests in Central Asia**, AMS Press, New York, 1970, p.5

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.17-18

⁶⁰ Gafurov, Bobojon. **Tojikon (The Tajiks)**, Nauka, Moscow, 1987, p. 445

the Soviet rule and led to the revival of Islam in Tajikistan, during the *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies of Gorbachev. As the whole history of Islam in Tajikistan is not the subject of this thesis, in this chapter I will analyze the history of Islam in Tajikistan since the Russian conquests of Central Asia. This period is analyzed under two headings: a) Young Bukharian Movement and b) Islam in Soviet Tajikistan and its aftermath.

3.1 Young Bukharian Movement

By the end of the 19th century whole Central Asia was conquered by the Russian Empire, which had started its expansion to the south in the early 18th century. As there was not a united regime in Central Asia, Russian Empire did not face serious resistance. Before the Russian conquest, there were three Khanates in Turkistan; Qoqand, Bukhara and Khiva Khanates. Because of the disunity among these units, they could not establish a serious resistance. Moreover during this conquest there was political and ideological unrest in the region. Conservative circles were facing severe criticisms for the first time. This was not the case only in Central Asia. Similar social, psychological and political upheavals were endemic within all Muslim societies of the time. Muslim societies were looking for ways of liberating their lands from colonialists. Religious, intellectual and political elites of these societies were formulating new ideologies and methods in order to end exploitation.

Central Asian young intellectuals, who had good religious knowledge, were now advocating the reformation of dogmatic understanding of religion. Reform, according to them, was revival of Islam that the Prophet and his followers had lived, Islam which was different from religious dogmas that were prevailing in the 18th and 19th centuries. These arguments of reformists angered traditionalists who were aiming to keep status quo.

First Muslim reformists such as Jamalladin Afghani, Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida and Dr. Muhammad Iqbol were advocating that the “gate of *ijtihad* [exercise of independent judgment] is open for renovation which helps the Muslim people to solve the problems of community”.⁶¹ These ideologies of reform

⁶¹Abduvakhitov, Abdujabbor. ‘**The Jadid Movement and its Impact on Central Asia**’. In Hafeez

become base of *Jadid* (renovation) movement that was functioning within the Russian Empire. Ismail Bey Gaspirali, a Crimean Tatar, played a crucial role in the formation of this movement. The main aim of the movement was to unite all Turkish Muslim subjects of Russian Empire.⁶² Ismail Bey Gaspirali transcended his views through the use of modern schools and newspapers. *Jadids* managed to open schools in Central Asia, as well.⁶³ The *Jadids* of Central Asia split into two: Turkistani and Bukharan *Jadids*. This split was due to the independence of the Bukharan Emirate from the Russian Empire. Turkistan was now totally under control of the Russian Empire.

Later, Bukharan *Jadids* deviated from the methods of their Tatar masters. They decided to go through the route of Young Turks who were functioning in the Ottoman Empire. Thus they named themselves “Young Bukharans” by drawing an analogy between Young Turks’ activities and their own. Abdulrauf Fitrat, Fayzulloh Khojaev, Usmon Khojaev, Sadriddin Ayni, and Abdullah Qodiriy were among the main activists of the movement.

3.1.1 Young Bukharians as Reformists

Young Bukharians’ main goal was to find a solution to the crises existing within the Muslim world. In searching for the origins of these crises they naturally, first of all, looked at the case of Bukhara then expanded their thought to all Muslim world.

According to Young Bukharians, the crises originated due to the deviation from the old Islamic state. This deviation led to the spiritual collapse in Islamic societies.⁶⁴ Consequently the conquests of “infidels” could not be resisted seriously. Young Bukharians were proud of their Islamic past. For example, Abdulrauf Fitrat’s writings about Bukhara reflected this tendency:

Malik (Ed.), **Central Asia: its strategic importance and future prospects**, St. Martin’s Press, New York, 1994, p.72

⁶² Bashiri, Iraj. ‘**Islam and Communism: Tajikistan in Transition**’, The University of Minnesota, Department of Slavic and Central Asian Languages and Literatures, 1996, <http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Manghit/Manghits.html>

⁶³ Zickel, Raymond. **Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.**

⁶⁴ Ibid.

O unhappy Bukhara, thou who hast known such spirits as Abu Ali Sina al-Arabi (Avicenna), in these days of distress thou art bereft of motion. Yet this is the same Bukhara that, in the past, through the prestige of its knowledge and its faith, won recognition for its exceptional dignity. How low has thou fallen?' He adds that if the same conditions persist Islam can disappear from Bukhara.⁶⁵

Young Bukharians described the Bukharan state of their time as corrupt, violent and exploitative. Those who were responsible for this decline were traditional clerics, who had replaced the religion of Prophet with their own perceptions. Their own perception of Islam was an “ossified religion, immobile and hostile to all dynamism and all progress”.⁶⁶ They denounced the people who followed and obeyed the traditional clerics without questioning them. They dubbed these people as *taqlidchi* (imitator). According to the Young Bukharians this was why the Muslim world had become isolated from the progressing modern world.

Dogmas of traditional clerics were seen in the education system, as well. Although Bukhara had been the cradle of science in the past, at the time of Young Bukharians the education system had almost collapsed. The curriculum of *madrasas* did not contain any natural sciences. Education was based on learning by heart but not on reasoning.

Young Bukharians did not solely criticize the Muslim societies. After analyzing the decline, they proposed some solutions, some “ways in which their country and the entire Islamic community could escape from this crisis and restore God’s Kingdom on earth”.⁶⁷ Young Bukharians stated that, individually, every Muslim should be educated. As societies were composed of individuals, education was a must. According to Young Bukharians knowledge should be useful in both worldly and spiritual lives of individuals. Thus, knowledge should not be restricted to the material world. They advocated that every new knowledge should be subjected to intellectual criticism and not accepted blindly. Young Bukharians

⁶⁵Abduvakhitov, Abdujabbor. ‘**The Jadid Movement and its Impact on Central Asia**’, p.72

⁶⁶ Carraere d’Encausse, Helene. **Islam and the Russian Empire**, University of California Press, London, 1988, p. 106

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 110

also argued that knowledge should be obtained from wherever it could be gained. However, they also denied that Islam needed to borrow from the West, either as inspiration or as imitation. The temporal greatness of the West actually came from Islam. In short, they argued that Muslims should take back their culture and civilization from the West.⁶⁸

In the issue of politics, Young Bukharians wanted a total transformation of the governmental structure. They blamed all bureaucrats and wealthy *begs* (lords) to be corrupt.⁶⁹ Thus all these bureaucrats should be overturned in order to transform the established order, and priority should be given to economic and social development. Because, according to Young Bukharians, spiritual requirements could be totally met only in a welfare state. Muslim societies should adapt to the progressing modern world through the guidance of a new political order.

In short, according to Young Bukharians, the progress of Muslim societies depended on the spiritual revival, which had to be developed by dramatic educational, political and social changes that would save people from blind obedience. If these requirements were met, then Muslim societies could catch up with modern world.

As was mentioned above, Ismail Gaspirali had managed to open schools in Turkistan, the students of which carried on dissemination of his ideologies in the region. Because of different circumstances, more or less, different reformist organizations emerged in Central Asia. Although all of these reformist organizations had similar aims, they had chosen different routes for achieving their aims.

Jamiyati Tarbiyati Atfal (Society for the Education of Youth) was one of these organizations. It was created on 2 December 1910 and was headed by active reformists such as Mirza Abd al-Vahidov, Usmon Khodjaev, Ahmad Makhdum and Hamid Khojaev Mihri. As soon as it was established, the Society managed to unite all of the already existing reformist organizations. Abdulrauf Fitrat's

⁶⁸ Fitrat. 'Rasskazy'. In Carraere d'Encausse, Helene, **Islam and the Russian Empire**, p. 106

⁶⁹ Bashiri, Iraj. **From the Manghits to the Soviets**, The University of Minnesota, Department of Slavic and Central Asian Languages and Literatures, 1996
<http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Manghit/Manghits.html>

organization *Society for Disseminating Knowledge among the Masses* was one of these organizations. The organization's main purpose was to send native students to Turkey.⁷⁰

Jamiyati Tarbiyati Atfal's main job was dissemination of knowledge by the introduction of natural sciences. For practical reasons the society was functioning through two branches; *Maarifat* (Talent) and *Barakat* (Blessing). *Maarifat* was headed by Fitrat and Usmon Khodjaev. Its function was "to carry the spirit of reform among the masses by organizing the distribution of books and the establishment of political clubs".⁷¹ *Barakat*'s job was to import necessary material for mass education and propaganda. The society, in a short time, proved itself to be the best-structured reformist organization. However a year later after its establishment, the society was criticized by the traditionalists. To avoid direct confrontations, the organization went underground, and the Young Bukharians decided to carry on their activities secretly. New admissions to the society were now being done under strict rules and by the references of the members of the society.

To achieve the society's aim in the long run the Young Bukharians, first of all, opened new schools in Bukhara. These schools achieved considerable successes between 1910 and 1914, although they were strictly followed and attacked by the traditionalists. Secondly, in order to disseminate their ideology, the Young Bukharans started to publish a newspaper, *Bukhoroi Sharif* (Noble Bukhara). The third instrument for the dissemination of reformist ideas was the *Jadid* circles. Young Bukharans by gathering in one of the comrades' house were reading published newspapers and books, both imported and native. Especially Fitrat's works were widely read in these schools and many Young Bukharans knew his main works by heart. Fitrat's main works were copied and distributed in the Emirate and Turkestan thanks to these circles. Fourth instrument was the theatre. The works of active reformists, such as Mufti Bihdudi, Fitrat and Chulpon were

⁷⁰ Arsharuni and Gabdulin. 'Ocherki'. In Seymour Becker, **Russia's Protectorates in Central Asia: Bukhara and Khiva, 1865-1924**, Harvard University Press, Massachusset, 1968, p.206

⁷¹ Togan, Zeki Velidi. 'Bügünkü Türkili (Türkistan) ve yakin Tarihi'. In Carraere d'Encausse, Helene. **Islam and the Russian Empire**, p. 110

being played in the theatre.

At the time of the revolution in 1917, a majority of the Young Bukharians decided to collaborate with the Bolsheviks as they had promised equality among nations and equal religious, cultural and linguistic rights.⁷² Unfortunately neither Lenin nor Stalin kept such promises. It was believed that Lenin's promise was for pragmatic reasons in order to attract the support of non-Russian subjects of the Russian Empire against the Tsar. Later, most of the Young Bukharians were accused by Stalin to be "nationalists".⁷³ The accused Young Bukharians were executed, imprisoned or sent into exile. They were annihilated but their works remained in the hearts of their followers. Even today these people and their ideas are still attracting the attention of new generations.

3.2 Islam in Soviet Tajikistan and Aftermath

Soviet ideology was predominantly based on Lenin's interpretations of Marxism. As Marxism was a materialist ideology, it was against religion. According to Marx, religion was related to the "private conceptions of men about their own nature and external nature surrounding them", as such, it would wither away with the advancement of human being, by proletarian revolution. Religion was also described as an instrument of exploitation. By promising heavenly rewards, the exploiters aimed to keep masses submissive and patient, therefore, according to Marx, religion was the opium of the people.⁷⁴ In order to protect the proletarian class from the effects of religion, Marxists argued that its roots should be eradicated. As Marx and Engels believed that religion would lose its function automatically after the proletarian revolution, they had not focused much on how to fight against religion.

⁷² Bashiri, Iraj, **From the Manghits to the Soviets**, The University of Minnesota, Department of Slavic and Central Asian Languages and Literatures, 1996
<http://www.angelfire.com/rnb/bashiri/Manghit/Manghits.html>

⁷³ Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov, **Intelligentsiya Drevnyaya i Novaya Obrazovanniy Klass Tadjikistana v Perepiyatyah XX v (Ancient and New Intellegentsia: Elite Class of Tajikistan in 20th century)**
http://www.infotaj.com/history/articles/1074516994_213877b8b92592238b2c5bfd09a63b96.pdf

⁷⁴ Haghayeghi, Mehrdad. **Islam and Politics in Central Asia**, New York : St. Martin's Press, 1995, p. 12

After the October revolution in 1917 Lenin and his comrades witnessed that Marx and Engels were not accurate in their predictions about religion. Christianity did not disappear in Russia. In order to put an end to the functioning of religion within the territories of Soviet Union, Lenin and his comrades decided to eradicate religion systematically instead of waiting for its automatic disappearance. Lenin stated that:

We must combat religion- that is the ABC of all materialism, and consequently of Marxism. But Marxism is not a materialism which has stopped at ABC. Marxism goes further and says: We must know how to combat religion among the masses in a materialist way. The combating of religion cannot be confined to abstract ideological preaching... it must be linked up with the concrete practice of the class movement, which aims at elimination of the social roots of religion.⁷⁵

Therefore, religion would be eradicated by expanding materialist education and by physical attacks against the Russian Orthodox Church, the number one enemy of materialism and supporter of pro-Tsarist forces, or White Russians. In Central Asia, as there were not enough educated cadres of communists, Lenin had to implement a pragmatic policy toward Islam. In order to get the support of Muslims in his fight against the Whites, Lenin promised to liberate the Muslims from the oppression of the Tsar. Bolsheviks “issued a decree granting a number of political concessions that included such rights as equality and sovereignty of all people, the right of self-determination, and even secession”.⁷⁶

Immediately after strengthening their positions in Central Asia, Bolsheviks started to purge, despite their promises, religious establishments of the region. Harsh policies of Bolsheviks against the Muslims resulted in the emergence of *Basmachi* Movement, which basically had an Islamic nature.⁷⁷

In general Moscow’s policies toward Islam fluctuated between harsh treatment against religious establishment and concessions to Muslims. However Islam could

⁷⁵ Ibid., p 14

⁷⁶ Paksoy, H.B. ‘Excerpts from the Memoirs of Zeki Velidi Togan’. In H.B. Paksoy (Ed.), **Central Asia Reader: The Rediscovery of History**, Armonk-New York, London-England, 1994, p. 148

⁷⁷ Roy, Oliver. ‘**Islamic Militancy: Religion and Conflict in Central Asia**’, Searching for Peace in Central and South Asia, 2002, http://www.euconflict.org/dev/ECCP/ECCPSurveys_v0_10.nsf/0/1E55D3A7F099C1A6C1256C4F0033C3F9?opendocument

not be eradicated completely due to the domestic and international developments. During the Second World War Stalin, in order to get the support of the Muslims in his fight against the Nazi Germany, relaxed his anti-religious policies. Although the Soviet ideology was based on atheism, Stalin ordered the establishment of four Muslim Spiritual Directorates that would represent the four different regions of the Union, where Muslim populations resided.⁷⁸ These regions were: Central Asia and Kazakhstan, European Russia and Siberia, Northern Caucasus and Dagestan, and Transcaucasia. By establishing these directorates, Stalin on the one hand aimed to camouflage Moscow's anti-religious policies, on the other hand he wanted to take the activities of religious establishment under control. Another reason of relaxation of anti-religious policies was related with the international stance of the Soviet Union that had strengthened because of the victory over the Nazi Germany. The Soviet Union, after the Second World War had become one of the two super powers, that could balance the United States, or the capitalist world. As such, Moscow decided to use the Soviet Muslims as an instrument of propaganda. Some religious rituals were now allowed, and a limited number of Soviet Muslims were sent for Hajj (Pilgrimage) to Mecca in order to show how "liberated" Soviet Muslims were. Many conferences on religious and political issues that could interest the Muslim countries were held in Tashkent in order to strengthen ties with these countries.

Successors of Stalin pursued similar religious policies. They pursued anti-religious campaigns on the one hand and allowed official clerics to organize religious rituals on the other. Within this framework, Islam in Tajikistan can be analyzed under three categories: a) official Islam, b) parallel or unofficial Islam, and c) political Islam.

3.2.1 Official Islam

As was mentioned above, in order to take the activities of the Muslim believers in the Soviet Union under control, Stalin had decided to establish four

⁷⁸Abduvakhitov, Abdujabbor. '**Islamic Revivilism in Uzbekistan**'. In Dale F.Eickelman (Ed.), **Russia's Muslim Frontiers**, Indiana University Press, 1993, p.80

religious directorates in 1943.⁷⁹ Although initially the main aim of establishing the religious directorates in an atheist regime was to mobilize believers of the Soviet Union against the Nazi Germany, after The Second World War Moscow aimed to control believers and use the Soviet Muslims as an instrument of propaganda for international purposes.

These four directorates had their own responsible regions. SADUM (*Sredneaziatskoe Duhovnoe Upravlenie Musulman*/Spiritual Directorate of the Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan) was responsible from the religious affairs of Central Asian Muslims. SADUM's center was situated in Tashkent. All the Muslim Union Republics were represented by local *Qozis*, learned theologians who had authority to interpret Islamic law. The SADUM's functions were

the management of religious matters among the Muslims of Central Asia and satisfying their needs in religious issues; determining the spiritual directorate's sources of income and prescribing its expenses; confirming its personnel at the center in Tashkent and delegating representatives to the union republics to satisfy believers' needs and establish a leadership for mosques in the more distant areas of those republics.⁸⁰

The SADUM officials were responsible from registered or official mosques. The cadres required were educated in the two official *madrasas* that were functioning in Bukhara and Tashkent. Like religious schools, the official mosques were not enough to satisfy the needs of all believers of Central Asia. To satisfy these needs, Muslims usually asked for help to unregistered or unofficial *mullahs*, who were always more than the official ones in the region. According to the *Qoziyat* of Tajikistan, in 1992, there were about 2000 functioning mosques in Tajikistan.⁸¹ However according to the official numbers, official mosques in Tajikistan did never exceed two dozen.

The SADUM, like all three other directorates, could not become the “soul and

⁷⁹ Malashenko, Alexei. *‘Islamskoe Vozrazhdenie v Sovremennom Rossii, (Islamic Revival in Modern Russia)’*, Moscow Center Carnegie, Moscow, 1998.

⁸⁰ Z. Babakhonov, **Information**, sent to N.I. Inogamov, 17 August, 1956; Ts GAUz, d.2456, 0.1, d.184, 1.59, in Ro'i, Yaacov. **Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev**, Hurst and Company, London, 2000, p. 396

⁸¹ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 97

heart” of Central Asian Muslims. The directorate was regarded as a strange entity by a majority of believers. As theological system in Islam had emerged as an independent system, writes B. Bobojonov, it did not obey to any “upper institution”.⁸²

The conformist feature of SADUM was regularly criticized by a majority of believers. Other than international conferences, the officials of directorate were never as active as the activists of unofficial Islam. Criticisms and dissatisfactions were not openly demonstrated up until Gorbachev’s reign, because of the “iron fist” of Moscow. In the late 1980s, Soviet Muslims started to openly demonstrate their dissatisfaction with SADUM’s clerics. In Uzbekistan, for example, a crowd of Muslims led by unofficial clerics openly demanded the resignation of existing head of the directorate. Due to the pressure of this popular unrest, Shamsiddin Bobokhonov, the grandson of the first mufti of SADUM Eshon Bobokhonov, had to resign. He was replaced by Muhammad Sodiq Muhammad Yusuf, who had been educated in both unofficial (religious schools and mosques) and official institutes.

In Tajikistan the personality of Qozi Akbar Turajonzoda prevented the emergence of such anti-Qoziyat demonstrations. As the son of a Sufi clergy, Eshon Turakhon, and being educated in official institutes, Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda was well aware of both the weaknesses of the directorate and strength of the unofficial religious entities among the believers in Tajikistan. During *perestroika* and *glasnost* he asked the Communist Party to adopt Muslim festivals as official festivals and forbid the sale of non-helal (not permitted by Islam) products in markets. These demands of Turajonzoda increased his popularity among the Muslims in Tajikistan and changed the image of Qoziyat that was criticized to be conformist.

Due to the inability of SADUM to satisfy the needs of Central Asian Muslims, unofficial religious entities and clerics were always supported by local Muslims. The activities and strength of unofficial clerics were always camouflaged by the Soviet regime. Their real strength could be understood only during *perestroika*

⁸² Bobojonov, Bahtiyor. ‘**The Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia (SADUM): Background and Consequences of Collapse**’. In Malashenko Aleksei & Martha Brill Olcott (Ed.), **Multi-Dimensional Borders of Central Asia**, Moscow Center Carnegie, Moscow, April 2000, <http://www.carnegie.ru/en/pubs/books/36267.htm#content>

and its aftermath.

3.2.2 Unofficial/Parallel Islam

As was mentioned earlier almost all population of Central Asia belong to the Hanefi sect, the most tolerant sect of Islam.⁸³ It is frequently pointed out that Islam, unlike other religions, regulates almost all aspects of life of a devout Muslim. It determines the behavior of believers according to the teachings of Koran and sayings and activities of Prophet. As imitating Prophet is praised in Islam, a devout Muslim tries to imitate Prophet's actions in a detailed way. Because of this feature, Islam has deep roots in the social and individual lives of Central Asian Muslims, especially those of Tajiks and Uzbeks. Islam was uprooted more among these two nations of Central Asia, because of their sedentary life style with more systematic and sophisticated educating institutes. As education system of Central Asian Muslims was predominantly determined by Islamic principles, religion became more important among these two nations.

In spite of seven decades of anti-religious campaigns, a majority of the local Central Asians continued to identify themselves as Muslims⁸⁴ even though they did not practice the five pillars of Islam. Interestingly enough, even those who were active within the Communist Party identified themselves as believers. For example according to an opinion poll conducted by the International Foundation for Election Systems (IFES) in 1996, 97% of residents of Tajikistan stated that they believed in the existence of God, 90% of adults (18 years and older) identified themselves as Muslims. 13% of Muslims identified themselves as active believers, 19% as active enough and 59% as non-active believers.⁸⁵ It must however also be kept in mind that, seven-decades of atheist regime has dramatically changed the role of Islam. Majority of Tajikistani Muslims know

⁸³ Muminov, Ashurbek Kurbanovich. '**Traditsionnie i Sovremennie Religiozno-Teologicheskie Shkoli v Tsentralnoy Azii (Traditional and Modern Religio-Theological Schools in Central Asia)**', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 5, Sweden, 1999, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-05-1999/st_13_muminov.shtml

⁸⁴ Abdullaev, Evgeniy. '**Islam i Islamskiy Faktor v Sovremennom Uzbekistane (Islam and Islamic Factor in Modern Uzbekistan)**', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 6, Sweden, 1997, <http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-05-1999>

⁸⁵ Olimova, Saodat. '**Political Islam**'.

little about principles of Islam. Identifying themselves as Muslims is directly related with flexibility of the Hanefi sect. According to this, regardless of a Muslim's sins, he/she is still a Muslim, not an atheist, unless he/she openly declares to be so. He/she is only a sinful Muslim. Because of this principle of the Hanefi sect, unofficial clerics did not close their doors even to Communist Party members. To understand the persistence of Muslim consciousness among the Muslims of Tajikistan, in this part I will analyze the roles of a) Sufi clerics, b) *mazars* c) family and community and d) life cycle rituals in keeping this consciousness alive.

3.2.2.1 Sufi Clerics

Sufi *tariqats* and their followers played an important role in the Islamization of Muslim societies throughout history. The *tariqats*, because of their sophisticated networks, could mobilize resistance forces against invaders. Thus fierce resistance against the Russian invasion was led by the Sufi clerics. Because of their anti-Tsarist and anti-Bolshevik campaigns, the followers of the Sufi *tariqats* were declared the number one enemy of the communist regime. The regime, especially during Stalin's "Great Purges", imprisoned, executed or sent to exile many followers of these *tariqats*. Because of the harsh treatment of the Soviet regime, the Sufis had anti-Soviet feelings. During the Soviet period, they propagated against the atheist regime.⁸⁶ They did this generally through increasing their *murids* (adepts). By enlisting new *murids*, the Sufi clerics increased both their influence and religious (thus anti-Soviet) feelings among Tajikistani Muslims. Because of their role as the custodians of Islam and protector of the poor from the unjust policies of rulers, the clerics of *tariqats* had been respected by Tajikistani Muslims throughout history. Especially the clerics of the Naqshbandi *tariqat* that flourished during the Timurid dynasty could several times play the role of a mediator between the ruling elites and the people, protecting the right of the masses.⁸⁷ As respect toward the Sufi clerics continued even during the Soviet

⁸⁶ Mullojonov, Parviz. 'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan'. In Stephane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (Ed.), *Islam and Politics in Russia and Central Asia*, Kegan Paul International Limited, London, 2001, p. 221-250

⁸⁷ Niyazi, Aziz. 'Vozrojdenie Islama v Tadjikistane: Traditsiya i Politika (Revival of Islam in

regime, they could infiltrate among the people and run their underground institutions. Sometimes the activities of these clerics could be reported by the Soviet regime. For example in a particular case it was indicated that:

eshans (Sufi clerics usually were dubbed like that in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) went around rural areas in late 1940s enlisting murids. One Kolkhoz chairman in Tajikistan invited a well-known *eshan* from another *oblast*, offering him good conditions and even building him a house. Two further *eshans* wielded considerable influence in the central parts of the republic in the early 1950s: one who was over seventy and did no traveling, but was visited at his *kishlak* (village) by a large number of *murids*; and another who traveled around Vaksh Valley and was thought to have between 500 and 1000 *murids*.⁸⁸

The murids were educated in unofficial schools. Any place could serve as a secret gathering place for the Sufis: private houses of members, teahouses, underground mosques, and even open places. The *murids* got education, performed their *zikrs* (recitation of the attributes of God), read Koran and Hadith, listened to the speeches of *eshans* and to pray collectively in these places.

Some *eshans* educated youngsters without any charge. The risk of being imprisoned plus rejecting any material rewards from the parents of youngsters increased the respect for *eshans* among Tajikistani Muslims. An example to those kinds of *eshans* is mullah Abdusamad, who gave education to almost 100 students that were accommodated at the house of clergy's neighbors. In addition to accommodation this clergy provided his students free meal as well. Any reward brought by parents of the students upset him. It is said that he took care of his students individually, one by one.⁸⁹ Students of these kinds of unofficial schools, after graduation became competent in Arabic, in translating Koran and Hadith, even in *Fikih* (Islamic jurisprudence).

One feature of the Sufi clerics was the inheritance of their title from their ancestry. Every *eshan* in turn, tried to educate his offspring in theology. As these practices were kept alive for centuries, the members of these families had a

Tajikistan: Tradition and Politics).

⁸⁸ Ro'i, Yaacov. **Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev**, Hurst and Company, London, 2000, p. 396

⁸⁹ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 98

respectful position in the Tajik society. These families are regarded to be the descendants of Prophet, the *Sahabis* (friends of Prophet), and famous Sufi clerics. Many influential religious figures of Tajikistan are from these kinds of families, including Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda and Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda. Due to this tradition, anti-communist feelings of *eshans* could be passed to their offspring and could disseminate among the Tajikistani Muslims.

3.2.2.2 Mazars (Holy Shrines)

In Central Asia the graves of those regarded as saints have been enshrined by local people. It is believed that enshrining of graveyards is one of the pre-Islamic rituals of Central Asians. Central Asian Muslims usually visited these kinds of *mazars* and requested help from the souls of those buried in these tombs. The attitudes of Central Asian Muslims are usually criticized by Muslims of other countries, especially by Middle Eastern Muslims. They regard such an exaggerated respect toward *mazars* as *shirk* (polytheism), which is the main violation of fundamentals of Islam. Unlike other sects, however, the Hanefi sect has Islamized this pre-Islamic tradition of Central Asian Muslims. Masses were regularly enlightened by clerics about how to make a *ziyaret* (visit) to a *mazar* within the framework of Islam. These *ziyarets*, according to some, were equal to Hajj to Mecca. Interestingly, respect to *mazars* that was regarded to be against the fundamental principles of Islam, played an important role in keeping Muslim identity of Central Asians alive during the Soviet era.

One of the popular *mazars* belongs to Hoja Ahmad Yasevi, the founder of the *Yasaviya tariqat*, who lived in the 11th century. His *mazar*, which was ruined during the Mongolian invasions, was reconstructed by the initiatives of Timur. The keepers of *mazars* were given waqf ⁹⁰ lands in order to meet their and their visitors' needs. These lands could not be sold and belonged only to the descendants of keepers of the *mazar*. The sheikhs, as keepers of the *mazars*, played an important role in keeping alive the parallel Islam. Although a majority of these *mazars* were destructed by the Soviet regime, there was at least one

⁹⁰used in Islam in the meaning of holding certain property and preserving it for the confined benefit of certain philanthropy and prohibiting any use or disposition of it outside that specific objective, see http://islamic-world.net/economic/waqf/waqaf_mainpage.html

mazar in almost all settlements.⁹¹

Sometimes visits to these kinds of *mazars* increased so dramatically that Soviet regime resorted to destructing these places or resorted to the help of political Islamists. Political Islamists, majority of whom were affected by Middle Eastern intellectuals, such as Addualo Mavdudi and Sayyid Qutub, declared that some rituals conducted during the *ziyarets* were against the fundamentals of Islam. However, the use of political Islamists against the Sufi clerics and sheikhs of *mazars* strengthened the position of these Islamists in the society. Later, the Soviet officials realized that Islamists were more non-conformist than sheikhs or Sufis.⁹²

3.2.2.3 Family and Community

As was mentioned above, the anti-religious campaigns of Soviet state could not eradicate practicing of Islamic rituals in Tajikistan. The anti-religious campaigns could be conducted only in official places. However, students who were taught principles of communism at school, behaved according to the principles of their own religious customs while they were at home or within their community. In rural areas of Tajikistan the supporters of the communist ideology were alienated by their community. As the majority of the Tajiks were rural, even the party members had no other chance but obeying the local customs. Thus it is usually claimed that during the Soviet era Tajiks had two different identities: a communist identity in work place and a Muslim identity in native community. In addition to being alienated, those who did not respect local customs were threatened not to be buried according to Islamic rituals or their sons not being circumcised⁹³. Bearing in mind the fact that even the majority of party members were believers, it was a harsh punishment for a Tajik. In other words:

it was this pressure, combined with the need of every individual to be an integral part of the community in which he lived, that perhaps explains why even officials and party members of the Muslim nationalities, especially in the regions where they

⁹¹ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoj Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 96

⁹² Mullojonov, Parviz. **'The Islamic Clergy in Tajikistan'**, p. 221-250

⁹³ Ro'i, Yaacov. **Islam in the Soviet Union: From the Second World War to Gorbachev**, p. 509

comprised the indigenous population, frequently observed these rites.⁹⁴

Some families, in order to avoid the “negative” effects of Soviet schools, did not let their children to attend these schools. Instead of official schools the children were sent to unofficial religious schools. The children, who were enrolled in Soviet schools, in order to avoid punishments of the regime, were taken out as soon as possible. One way of putting an end to the education of a child was marrying him/her at an early age.⁹⁵

3.2.2.4 Life-Cycle Rituals

Although the majority of Central Asian Muslims did not perform principal pillars of Islam, almost all of them tried to marry their children, circumcise their sons and bury their dead relatives according to local traditions, which were predominantly shaped by Islam. According to Islam, every couple should openly announce their marriage in front of a clergy and people. This ritual is called *Imom Nikohi*. Without this performance, almost no marriage could be realized in Tajikistan. Although Islam forbids lavish weddings, Muslims of Tajikistan spent significant sums for these kinds of organizations. These features of Tajik Muslims were criticized several times both by political Islamists and official clerics. The necessity of a clergy during the wedding ceremony increased the role of the clergy within society. Circumcision was another ritual that was performed by almost all Muslims of Tajikistan. Those who were not circumcised were alienated from the community. During the ceremony, again clerics were invited to regulate the necessary rituals. Another ritual that was performed almost by all Muslims of the Soviet Union was related to the burial of dead people according to the rituals of Islam. A clergy was invited to read recitals from the Koran. According to local traditions the relatives of the death gather several times after burial. They gather at the 7th and 40th days and the first year to remember the dead.⁹⁶ During these

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Curtis E. Glenn, **Tajikistan**, 1997, <http://reference.allrefer.com/country-guide-study/tajikistan/tajikistan0.html>

⁹⁶ Malashenko, Alexei. ‘**Islamskoe Vozrazdenie v Sovremennom Rossii, (Islamic Revival in Modern Russia)**’.

gatherings, again recitals from the Koran are read.

Soviet regime could never directly interfere in the performance of these rituals. Furthermore direct interference of Soviet regime in the performance of these rituals would increase anti-Soviet and anti-Russian feelings among the Muslims. Instead of direct interference or prohibition of performance of these rituals, Soviet regime tried to “enlighten” masses about the negative effects of these rituals. For example, huge expenditures for weddings, and harms of the unhealthy circumcisions were criticized several times through Soviet propaganda means. Despite the propaganda, however the Tajiks continued to perform such life-cycle rituals.

3.2.3 Political Islam

In this thesis the term “political Islamist” or “Islamist” is used to define those Muslim activists who aim to replace the existing the socio-political order with an Islamic one.⁹⁷ Political Islamist thinkers and activists are “creatively deploying selected elements of the Islamic tradition, combined with ideas, techniques, institutions, and commodities of the present and recent past, to cope with specifically modern predicaments: political, social, economic, and cultural issues”.⁹⁸ In Central Asia political Islam emerged during Gorbachev’s era. Islamic groups that had gone underground due to the repression of the Soviet government found an opportunity to express themselves and demand some concessions from the regime in order to be able to practice rituals of Islam. These demands were made by the leaders and followers of Sufi *tariqats*, as well. But the methods, advocated by political Islamists, to achieve these goals were different than those methods advocated by Sufi *tariqats*. Political Islamists were inclined to use political means, even physical force if necessary, to achieve their goals.

⁹⁷ Zubaida, Sami. ‘**Trajectories of Political Islam: Egypt, Iran and Turkey**’, The Political Quarterly, Vol. 71, No. s1, Blackwell Publishers Ltd., Oxford, United Kindom and Boston, United States of America, August 2000.

⁹⁸ Beinin, Joel & Stork, Joe. ‘**On the Modernity, Historical Specificity, and International Context of Political Islam**’. In Joel Beinin & Joe Stork (Ed.), **Political Islam: Essays from Middle East Report**, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1997, p. 4

3.2.3.1 Factors that led to the Emergence of Political Islam

There are several theories about the emergence of political Islam in Central Asia in general, and in Tajikistan in particular. Emergence of political Islam in Tajikistan attracted the attention of several scholars⁹⁹, who tried to find an explanation for this development. In this part, the reasons for the emergence of political Islam in Tajikistan are analyzed under five headings: a) effects of modernization, b) traditionalism, c) regional rivalries, d) collapse of governing structures, and e) contact with Muslim world.

First of all, rapid industrialization and modernization policies of the Soviet Union were imposed on Tajikistan, as well as other republics. As the modernization was not initiated by domestic initiatives but realized especially by external forces, it was seen as something strange by Tajikistani Muslims. People living in Tajikistan were not ready for this process.¹⁰⁰ To secure their cultures from the perceived negative effects of modernization, they initially decided to continue their lives in rural areas. By doing so, they could save a majority of their cultural ties that were, of course, predominantly shaped by Islam. Later, however, local residents started to move to urban areas in order to get better jobs. To these urban areas, they brought not only their material belongings but their cultural features as well. This in turn led to the “ruralization” of the urban areas.

This process is not specific for Tajikistan. It was and still is seen in many other Muslim countries. The immigrants to the urban areas immigrated with their own cultural features. Istanbul and Cairo are good examples to those kinds of metropolitan Muslim cities. The move to the urban areas, more or less, decreased the influence of traditional Islamic clerics over the new “urban” populations. Their functions were overtaken by newly emerged Islamic intellectuals. According to Aziz Niyazi, the director of Institute of Middle East of Russian Academy of Sciences,

Tajik orientalists were more knowledgeable than traditional Muslim clerics, in the

⁹⁹ Matveeva, Anna. ‘Ugroza Islamizmu v Postsovetsoy Evrazii (Threat of Islamism in Post-Soviet Eurasia)’.

¹⁰⁰ Olimova, Saodat. ‘Politicheskiy Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)’.

areas of Arabic, Middle Ages and classical Islamic sciences. The demands for help of self-learned mullahs in these areas were not rare. Majority of the theoretical bases of IRPT were prepared by members of Tajik Academy of Sciences.¹⁰¹

Despite rapid modernization policies of the Soviet Union Tajikistan did not benefit much from these centrally directed industrialization policies. In general, Central Asia's industrial development was not favored by Moscow. Central Asia, should basically be the provider of agricultural products, while other Soviet republics located in the European parts of the Union would be producers of industrial products. Kazakhstan's more industrialized position was achieved by the transfer of some factories to the region during the Second World War in order to protect them from the Nazi Germany. According to the IFES in 1996 72.6% of the population of Tajikistan lived in rural areas.¹⁰² As in rural areas keeping traditions were easier than in urban areas, the majority of Tajikistani population remained conservative. One feature of local traditions was having high birth rates. With the development of medical services, death rates decreased. This in turn led to the population increase. Tajikistan had the highest birth rate among the former Soviet Republics. Despite the Civil War and economic difficulties after independence, Tajikistan still has highest birth rates among the former communist republics. For example in 1995, while the birth rate was 0.93% in Russia, 1.16% in Georgia, 1.3% in Armenia, 1.67% in Kazakhstan, and 2.6 % in Kyrgyzstan, the ratio was 2.86% in Tajikistan.¹⁰³ Moscow did not make a serious attempt to solve the problem of unemployment that was the direct result of overpopulation. After independence, unemployment and other economic problems decreased the legitimacy of the secular government. As an alternative ideology, the conservative Tajik youth, turned its face toward Islamism, in other words to political Islam. This development was similar to other Muslim countries, especially in Middle East. But the ideologies were different. While in most Arabic countries, Islamists

¹⁰¹ Niyazi, Aziz. **‘Vozrojdenie Islama v Tadjikistane: Traditsiya i Politika (Revival of Islam in Tajikistan: Tradition and Politics)’**.

¹⁰² Olimova, Saodat. **‘Politicheskiy Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)’**.

¹⁰³ Sokolova, Ludmila. **‘Demograficheskoe Razvitie Respubliki Tajikistan v Perehodniy Period (Demographic development of Republic of Tajikistan in Transitory Period)’** Central Asia and the Caucasus № 14, Sweden, 1998, www.ca-c.org

mobilized against nationalists and socialists, in Tajikistan the “scapegoats” were communists.

Because of the existence of regionalism, in which people from certain regions control certain sectors, in Tajikistan the Sughdis did not let other regional elites to take part in the governing structures of the republic during the Soviet era. The Gharmis, who could only find occupations within the trade sector, suddenly became an influential force due to the *perestroika* policies of Gorbachev that gave them the right of running private enterprises. Economically strengthened Gharmis, in order to get some share in the governing structures, started to search for alternative ideologies and allies against communism and Sughdis.¹⁰⁴ Islamism was chosen as an alternative ideology to communism, while Badakhshonis, who were also not given high-ranking posts, was chosen as an ally against Sughdis. Saodat Olimova points out a resemblance between the Gharmis and *bozoris* of Iran who were economically powerful but not satisfied with the policies of Shah.¹⁰⁵ Khomeini was significantly supported by this class during his anti-Shah campaign.

After independence, Dushanbe lost a significant source of income for its economy and security, subsidies which were provided by Moscow. By using these subsidies, the Sughdis could secure their posts by a “stick and carrot” policy. Their allies were economically rewarded, while opponents were punished. With the significant decrease of the Red Army’s support instability in Tajikistan erupted. Tajikistan became unable to provide the two main functions of a state: security and economic welfare. Local people started to search for alternative authorities. Among Tajikistani Muslims, *eshans*’ authorities increased. *Eshans* became a source of solution in the eyes of Muslims. Although the majority of them were moderate traditionalists¹⁰⁶ who tried not to interfere in politics, there were some *eshans* who played important roles in the politicization of Islam.

External forces were another factor that led to the emergence of political Islam

¹⁰⁴ Zviagelskaya, Irina. **The Tajik Conflict**, p.13

¹⁰⁵ Olimova, Saodat. ‘**Politicheskiy Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)**’.

¹⁰⁶ Niyazi, Aziz. ‘**Vozrojdenie Islama v Tadjikistane: Traditsiya i Politika (Revival of Islam in Tajikistan: Tradition and Politics)**’.

in Tajikistan. Despite the “iron curtain”, some Muslims of Soviet Union could establish contacts with their co-believers who lived outside the country. As such, they could witness different Islamic interpretations. Recent studies of modern Islamic intellectuals could be found in Tajikistan, even before the Soviet Union’s intervention to Afghanistan. The contacts with the Muslim world were kept alive, first of all, due to Moscow’s permission to Muslims to practice the Hajj. Although it was under strict supervision it is most probable that infiltration of modern Islamic publications were realized by the Hajjis. Members of an underground youth organization that was established by Said Abdullah Nuri in 1978 (even before the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan) were reading and disseminating the ideas of Sheikh Hassan Banna, Said and Muhammad Qutb, Said Havva and Abul’alo Mavdudi.¹⁰⁷ Almost all of these ideologists support politicization of Islam. Although Mavdudi’s and Said Qutb’s ideologies differ from Hasan Banna’s (the founder of Muslim Brethren of Egypt) about the methods of achieving the aim, they all support politicization and militarization of Islamic organizations if necessary. After the intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the flow of Islamic publications into Central Asia dramatically increased. These Islamic publications were translated to local languages and were copied through *samizdat* (unofficial circulation of publications that were distributed outside the Soviet censorship) methods. With independence, Islamic emissaries from various Islamic organizations came to the newly independent countries, bringing with them money for building mosques and publications of their own movements/organizations.¹⁰⁸

3.2.3.2 Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IPRT)

Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country where an Islamic party, the IRPT, shares political power. As was mentioned above, this party was the continuation of an underground organization that was established in 1978 by a group of

¹⁰⁷ Olimova, Saodat. ‘**Politicheskiy Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)**’.

¹⁰⁸ Bobojonov, Bahtiyor. ‘**Ferganskaya Dolina: Istochnik ili Jertva Islamskogo Fundamentalizma (Ferghana Valley: Source or Victim of Islamic Fundamentalism)**’, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 4, Sweden, 1999, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-05-1999/st_21_babajanov.shtml

youngsters. The head of the group was Said Abdullah Nuri, who got Islamic knowledge in unofficial educational institutions. It is interesting to note that like the activists of political Islamic groups in Middle East, Abdullah Nuri was an engineer, not a clergy. The members of the organization read and disseminated ideas of modern Islamic intellectuals.¹⁰⁹

The members of the organization were blamed to be “Wahhabis” by the government. The use of the term “Wahhabi” to describe Central Asian puritan Islamists is not accurate. It is true that members of this kind organization criticized some rituals of “parallel Islam” and conformist position of formal religious figures. The “puritan Islamists” however advocated a return to the Islamic practices at the age of the Prophet. These views were elaborated and propagated by the reformists of the 19th century and ideologists of modern Islamic movements. That is why members of these kinds of movements dubbed themselves as “mujaddadiye” but not Wahhabi.¹¹⁰ Russian and Central Asian officials, usually call Islamists as Wahhabi or fundamentalist. These words are usually used interchangeably by Russian and Central Asian media to define political Islamists.¹¹¹ The root of the “mujaddadiye” is “*Jadid*” which means “new” in Arabic. The “puritan Islamists”, according to them, advocated renewal of Islam, not reform. Because of their criticisms against the official religious figures, the followers of Abdullah Nuri and his followers were arrested by the Soviet government. Some of them were sent to exile.¹¹²

Nuri’s organization had close contacts with the *eshans*. With the help of these *eshans* the organization managed to increase its followers. The teahouses, unofficial schools and mosques started to be used as meeting places. Despite the differences between traditional *eshans* and Nuri’s followers, the organization

¹⁰⁹ Olimova, Saodat. ‘**Politicheskii Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)**’.

¹¹⁰ Bobojonov, Bahtiyor. ‘**The Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Central Asia (SADUM): Background and Consequences of Collapse**’.

¹¹¹ Matveeva, Anna. ‘**Ugroza Islamizmu v Postsovetskoy Evrazii (Threat of Islamism in Post-Soviet Eurasia)**’.

¹¹² See <http://www.centrasia.ru/person.php4>

managed to find common points that would unite them. The consolidation of various religious groups, intensified through underground publication. It was pointed out that:

in 1983 with the publication of the first underground Islamic magazine of “Hidoyat” the consolidation of Islamic groups that operated in the country intensified. Starting from 1991 and until the overtake of Dushanbe by PFT (Popular Front of Tajikistan that was established by Sughdi-Kulobi-Hisori bloc) in early December 1992, IPRT had been publishing its weekly newspaper Najot (liberation).¹¹³

Nuri’s organization became more active during *perestroika* and *glasnost* policies of Gorbachev. During this period, the idea of establishing an all-Union Muslim organization had become popular among the Muslims of former Soviet Union. To realize this goal on 9 June 1990, an all-Union Congress of Soviet Muslims was held in Astrakhan, Russian Federation, as the first congress of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Soviet Union (IRP). In this congress, the chairman and deputy chairman of the IRP were elected. Ahmadvadi Ahtaev (a Dagestani) was elected as *Amir* (Chairman) while Geydar Jemal (an Azeri) was elected as his deputy. During this congress, delegates from Tajikistan, especially Davlat Usmon who later became deputy director of Tajik branch of IRP, had played an active role.

After returning to Tajikistan, Tajik delegation to the Astrakhan congress, established the Tajik branch of the IRP. The members of the Tajik branch asked permission from the government to hold their local congress on 6 October 1990. The officials did not give permission claiming that religious oriented organizations could not be established. Despite the refusal of Tajik officials, local congress of the Tajik IRP was held on the announced date in a village named Chortut near Dushanbe. There were about 500 local members of the organization. The Congress was attended by other people from different republics of the Union as well.¹¹⁴ Soon after the congress, some members of the organization were detained and punished.

¹¹³ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 112

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

After independence, the members of the Tajik IRP decided to establish their own independent party. The party was named as Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IPRT). The first congress of IRPT was held in Dushanbe. The congress was attended by 650 members and 310 guests from other republics. Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda was elected as the Chairman of the party, Davlat Usmon was assigned as First Deputy Chairman and Saidibrohim Gado was assigned as Second Deputy Chairman. Soon after the congress, the IRPT was registered as an independent social organization by the Ministry of Justice.¹¹⁵ At that time the IRPT had 2000 members.¹¹⁶ At the congress, the goals and functions of the Party were formulated. Some of the main goals specified in the party program were revival of religious consciousness of citizens, and achieving economic and political independence of the republic. On the other hand, the functions of IRPT were specified as propagation and dissemination of Islam among the citizens of the republic through available mass media means, stimulating participation of Muslims in economic, political and religious activities, and establishing youth organizations.¹¹⁷

By obtaining legal status, the IRPT became the first and only functioning legal Islamic party in Central Asia. It became the main part of the opposition bloc against the Sughdis. In the 1991 presidential elections, the party (beside DPT, Rastakhez and Lali Badakhshon) supported the candidacy of a Badakhshoni filmmaker, Davlat Khudonazarov. Although Davlat Khudonazarov was an Ismaili and had a negative attitude toward Islam, he managed to attract the support of the IRPT members. The support to Khudonazarov was related with regionalism but not with ideology. One can say that any non-Sughdi candidate could get support of IRPT members, majority of whom were Gharmis and had enmity toward Sughdis.

The IRPT played an active role in demonstrations held in the *Shahidon Square*. The members actively used mosques and teahouses to get supporters. The

¹¹⁵ Kuzmin, A.I. **'The Causes and Lessons of the Civil War'**, p. 183

¹¹⁶ Olimova, Saodat. **'Politicheskiy Islam i Konflikt v Tajikistane (Political Islam and Conflict in Tajikistan)'**.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

network of *eshans* made this job easier. Large number of people from rural areas moved to Dushanbe and gathered in *Shahidon Square*. Leaders of the IRPT managed to attract Turajonzoda to their side. In addition to Turajonzoda, influential *eshans* started to propagate against the government. As was mentioned above, with the increase of tensions, the demonstrations culminated into an armed struggle. The Islamic-democratic bloc managed to get one third of the seats within the coalition government on 13 May 1992. Deputy Chairman of the party, Davlat Usmon, was assigned as the Vice-Prime Minister of the new government. However, because of regional rivalries, the coalition government could not control those territories outside Gharm and Badakhshon. With the entrance of the PFT in Dushanbe, members of the IRPT had to leave the capital city, some of them even the country. While the members of secular opposition groups predominantly escaped to Russia and other CIS countries, members of the IRPT predominantly found asylum in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

The opposition forces stationing in Afghanistan attempted to establish a government in exile in 1993 in order to get, first of all, official recognition from Muslim countries. As no country wanted to recognize this Tajik government in exile, this attempt of opposition forces failed. However, unofficial support of Muslim countries (such as Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan) to opposition forces continued.¹¹⁸ The armed struggle of opposition forces against Rahmonov's regime was mobilized and led by Movement for Islamic Revival in Tajikistan (MIRT) that was established in late 1993 in the Afghanistani Province, Tahor. The movement included IRPT and non-party Islamic opposition groups. Said Abdullah Nuri became the head of the movement while Himmatzoda and Turajonzoda became his deputies. In addition to MIRT, the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) was established to combine all opposition groups, both religious and secular, under one roof. UTO was also chaired by Said Abdullah Nuri.

Turajonzoda's active role within the movement increased the movement's prestige in the international arena. As he had worked at the international department of SADUM, Turajonzoda had significant experience in diplomacy.

¹¹⁸ Niyazi, Aziz. 'Vozrojdenie Islama v Tadjikistane: Traditsiya i Politika (Revival of Islam in Tajikistan: Tradition and Politics)'.

According to Aziz Niyazi, it was Turajonzoda who had changed the tactics of MIRT. He writes that:

skilful diplomat Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda managed to convince leaders of MIRT to give up their one sided orientation toward Muslim World and to establish good contacts with other countries and international organizations, as well. Starting from 1995 permanent contacts with UN, OSCE and humanitarian sub-groups were established. In February, 1995 Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda and Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda visited United States, and met with some official bureaucrats, heads of NGOs and important American figures. In April of the same year a delegation of opposition visited Paris and Brussels. During this visit the delegation met with head of Ismailis Aga Khan, some French diplomats and the heads of CIS department of European Union.¹¹⁹

The MIRT also established contacts with officials from Russia and Uzbekistan. In April 1995 Turajonzoda did not hesitate to meet with Uzbekistani President Islam Karimov, once an open opponent of Islamic groups of Tajikistan. In this meeting, Uzbekistan's support for a peace agreement between the Tajik government and opposition was guaranteed. The contacts with the Islamic world were also intensified. Because of the active and pragmatic diplomacy of the MIRT, the image of Islamic opposition of Tajikistan changed. It started to be seen as a moderate movement.

The MIRT, however, did not give up use of force against Rahmonov's regime. As a result of several attacks of MIRT forces against Russian guards, Moscow had to change its policy in Tajikistan. After some of its soldiers were killed in Tajikistan, Moscow increased its pressure on Dushanbe to accept, as much as possible, the demands of the opposition forces.

As was mentioned above, after several rounds of negotiations, Rahmonov's regime and the UTO signed a General Agreement on National Accord on 27 June 1997 in Moscow. The UTO members were given 30% share in the governing structure and Turajonzoda was assigned as the Deputy Prime Minister.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

REGIOANALISM AND THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR

One of the main factors which initiated the Civil War in Tajikistan was regionalism. In this chapter, I will focus on five main factors that can explain regionalism in Tajikistan and the Civil War: a) four regions, b) political regionalism, c) economic regionalism, d) Soviet-Afghan War and the emergence of different political forces in Tajikistan, e) continuing regionalism during and after the Civil War

4.1 Regions of Tajikistan

Tajikistan consists of four *oblasts* (administrative regions), which are more or less different from each other. These *oblasts* are Capital City Dushanbe and its surroundings, Badakhshon Autonomous Region (BAR), the Sughd Region (until recently Leninabad) and Khatlon Region (created in 1993 by uniting Qurghon Tapa and Kulob Regions). These *oblasts* in turn, are divided into 62 *raions* (districts) and cities. There are 47 towns and 354 villages within *raions* and cities.¹²⁰ Cities are administrative centers of *oblasts* and some *raions*. This is the general administrative division of today's Tajikistan. The scheme is:

¹²⁰ Ilolov, Mamadsho & Khudoiev, Mirodasan. 'Local Government in Tajikistan, Developing New Races in the Old Environment', Open Society Institute, Hungary, 2001, <http://lgi.osi.hu/publications/2001/84/Ch11-Tadjikistan.pdf>, p.606

Table 4.1. Republic of Tajikistan

| Republic of Tajikistan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------------------------|----------|--------|----------|---------------|----------|--------|----------|---------------|----------|--------|----------|---------------|----------|--------|----------|
| Dushanbe | | | | BAR | | | | Khatlon | | | | Sughd | | | |
| <i>raions</i> | | cities | | <i>raions</i> | | cities | | <i>raions</i> | | cities | | <i>raions</i> | | cities | |
| towns | villages | towns | villages | towns | villages | towns | villages | towns | villages | towns | villages | towns | villages | towns | villages |

This division is based on regional differences historically existing in Tajikistan and it is protected by Tajik constitution, which was amended on 27 September 1999. This division is realized in order to solve regionalism by giving more administrative autonomy to the residents of *oblasts*. Each *oblast*, *raion* and city has its own *Khukumat* (administrative unit).¹²¹ Only upper house of Parliament has authority to dissolve or amend the boundaries of Regions. Now let's analyze regions one by one and try to understand extent of regionalism existing in the country.

4.1.1 Capital City Dushanbe

Dushanbe is situated in the western part of Tajikistan. Its population is 700.000.¹²² It is divided into subordinate *raions* (districts). The Law of on Local Public Administration has given it the status of an *oblast* (region).¹²³ Cities and *raions* (with data on populations) under the administration of Dushanbe *Oblast* are as follows:

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 609

¹²² King John, Noble John and Humphreys, Andrew. **Central Asia, A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit**, Lonely Planet Publications, Oakland, 1996, p. 428
p. 428

¹²³ Ilolov, Mamadsho & Khudoiev, Mirodasan. '**Local Government in Tajikistan, Developing New Races in the Old Environment**', p.610

Table 4.2. Cities and *raions* under the administration of Dushanbe *Oblast*¹²⁴

| Cities | <i>Raions</i> |
|--|--|
| Dushanbe (700,000), Kofarnikhon (44,000), Roghun (8,000), Tursunzoda (39,000) | Darband (54,000), Jilikul (50,000), Fayzabod (68,000), Gharm (80,000), Hisor (196,000), Kofarnikhon (185,000), Leninskiy (268,000), Roghun (20,000), Shahrinav (80,000), Tojikobod (31,000), Tavildara (13,000), Varzob (51,000), Tursunzoda (151,000), |

All these districts are autonomous from the center in their regional activities.

Dushanbe has a short history. Almost 80 years ago the city was only known by its bazaar that was held on Mondays. Dushanbe means Monday. It was named after this bazaar that was held there weekly. In 1920 the last Emir of Bukhara, who was escaping from the Bolsheviks, arrived at Dushanbe which was situated in his own Emirate's eastern part. But just one year later, as Bolsheviks were advancing to the region, he was forced to leave Dushanbe, and later Tajikistan. Enver Pasha, an Ottoman officer, with the help of *Basmachis* who were fighting against Bolsheviks, managed to expel Bolsheviks from the region. But after the death of Enver Pasha, the city was reoccupied by the Bolsheviks in 1922.¹²⁵ After the construction of railroad in 1929, Dushanbe was made the capital of the newly established Soviet Tajik Republic. But at that time its name was not Dushanbe, the city was named after Stalin, as Stalinobod. However Khrushchev, who was known for his anti-Stalinist attitude, changed the name of Stalinobod back to Dushanbe. The city was designed as a cotton and silk processing center. As the city had a small number of local residents, the Bolsheviks started to promote settlements to the region. Consequently "tens of thousands of people were relocated here, turning the rural village into a large, urban administrative and industrial center".¹²⁶ Many Tajiks from Bukhara and Samarqand (both of which was given to Uzbekistan) started to settle in the capital of the new republic.

Dushanbe, like other Central Asian Capital cities, became home for emigrant

¹²⁴ Gwillim, Law. 'Raions of Tajikistan', 1999, <http://www.statoids.com/ytj.html>

¹²⁵ King John, Noble John and Humphreys, Andrew. **Central Asia, A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit**, p. 429

¹²⁶ Ibid

Russian workers. Of course there were Russians in other Tajik cities as well, but majority of Russians lived in the capital city. For example in 1959 only 13% of the people in the city were Tajiks. As a result of *korenizatsiya* (nativization) policies, native urban population increased in the city. New native intellectuals started to settle in this city but the ratio of Tajiks did not change much up until 1989. Although the republic as a whole was composed by a ratio of 62% Tajik, Tajiks were still a minority (39.1%) in the capital. Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, and Belorussians) constituted 37% of Dushanbe's population, while non-Central Asians Soviet nationalities as a whole constituted 48%. In other words, half of Tajikistan's Slavic population lived in Dushanbe. Uzbeks who were the second largest ethnic groups in Tajikistan constituted 10% of Dushanbe's population.¹²⁷ Majority of the residents of Dushanbe were industrial workers, teachers, doctors and party members.

Today the situation in the capital is different. Majority of the Russians left the country after the collapse of the USSR and especially during the Tajik Civil War which erupted in 1992. In 1989 Russians constituted 7.6% of whole Tajikistan's population. In 2003 they constituted only a little more than 1% of whole population.¹²⁸

In Dushanbe there had been relatively peaceful environment for 70 years. But as was described earlier, in 1990, this peaceful environment was disturbed by the riot triggered by rumors about giving houses to Armenian refugees in Dushanbe. Several people were killed in clashes with the militia. Later this demonstration was followed by the uprisings of dissatisfied opposition groups. In May 1992 these demonstrations culminated into the Civil War which lasted for five years. Since the Peace Agreement, which was signed in 1997 the situation in the city is calm again.

¹²⁷ Zickel, Raymond. **Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.**

¹²⁸ Tukmakov, Denis & Aleksandrov, Vasilii. '**Tisyacha Vtoraya Noch. Jizn Posli Skazki (One Thousand and Second Evening. Life After Fairy Tale)**', *Zaftra* 10(485), Russian Federation, March 2003, <http://zavtra.ru/cgi/veil/data/zavtra/03/485/451.html>

4.1.2 Badakhshon Autonomous Region (BAR)

Badakhshon Autonomous Region (BAR) is in the eastern part of Tajikistan. People of this region live at the high mountains of Pomir. Pomir Mountains are called as Bomi Dunyo (the roof of the World). Second highest peak of the world is located in this region and named after founder of the Samanid dynasty, Ismail Somoni. The Pomir Mountains are the node from which several of the world's highest ranges radiate, including the Karakoram and Himalayas to the south, the Hindu Kush to the west and Tian Shan straddling the Kyrgyz-Chinese border to the north-east. The highest peak Ismoil Somoni is 7495 meters high. Most parts of the region are too high for settlement. Thus it has the least population as compared to other three regions of Tajikistan. Although it accounts for 45% of Tajikistan's territory, its population accounts only for 3% of the country's population as a whole.¹²⁹

The capital town of BAR is Khorog. It is a small mountain-valley city and has only 28,000 people. It lies 2000 meters high above sea level, strung out irregularly along the slopes on either side of the dashing Gunt River. A few kilometers downstream, the Gunt merges with the Pyanj, the river that marks the border with Afghanistan. The town was established in 1932 in order to control foreign interventions to the USSR. To realize this aim, Soviet regime encouraged settlements to this town. But the regime did not attempt to provide the settlers with jobs. Today unemployment is dramatically high there. People who are working are employed by Aga Khan, last prince of Ismailis. In the region there are 300,000 Ismailis. Ismaili is a sect of Shii Islam and its followers predominantly live in Pakistan. As a whole, BAR is subdivided into seven *raions* and one city. These *raions* and city are as follows:

¹²⁹ King John, Noble John and Humphreys, Andrew. **Central Asia, A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit**, p. 429

Table 4.3. Cities and *raions* under the administration of BAR¹³⁰

| City | <i>Raions</i> |
|-----------------|--|
| Khorog (28,000) | Darwoz (24,000), Iskoshim (26,000), Murghob (16,000), Roshtkalin (24,000), Rushan (24,000), Shughnon (36,000), Vanj (28,000) |

Although there are Uzbeks almost in every part of Tajikistan, there is no Uzbek population in BAR. Thus, unlike other regions of the country, BAR is not exposed to Uzbek influence.¹³¹

Because of difficulties in reaching the Pomir Mountains, the region was isolated from its surroundings for centuries. Thus its people were not influenced much from the developments that were occurring in other areas. Pomiri people, because of their settlements at high mountains, preserved most of their cultural features. For example they, unlike other Tajiks, speak an eastern dialect of Persian. An ordinary Tajik cannot understand their speech. Again unlike other Tajiks, they are non-Hanefi Muslims. In general Tajiks are influenced from their Turkic neighbors. But this influence is almost not seen among the Pomiris.

Almost every young Pomiri visits Dushanbe to enroll in a higher education institution. Most of those who come to Dushanbe try to settle in this city. Due to their emphasis on education, nowadays Pomiris constitute a significant part of the Tajik academicians, artists and poets.

4.1.3 Khatlon Region

Khatlon Region is located in the south of Tajikistan. Khatlon is subdivided into 24 *raions* and four cities.¹³² These *raions* and cities are as follows:

¹³⁰ Gwillim, Law. 'Raions of Tajikistan'.

¹³¹ IMF, **Economic Review: Tajikistan**, Washington, DC: IMF, May 1992, p.2

¹³² Ilolov, Mamadsho & Khudoiev, Mirodasan. 'Local Government in Tajikistan, Developing New Races in the Old Environment', p.610

Table 4.4. Cities and *raions* under the administration of Khatlon *Oblast*¹³³

| Cities | <i>Raions</i> |
|---|---|
| Kulob (72,000), Norak (19,000), Sarband (11,000), Qurghon Tapa (60,000) | Baljuvon (20,000), Beshkent (22,000), Bokhtar (174,000), Danghara (96,000), Jilicul (74,000), Ghozimalik (72,000), Hojamaston (107,000), Yovon (134,000), Qobodiyon (120,000), Shurobod (39,000), Qumsangir (85,000), Norak (21,000), Farkhor (112,000), Shartuz (82,000), Kolkhozobod (126,000), Kulob (78,000), Vose (149,000), Sovetskiy (49,000), Hovaling (37,000), Panj (79,000), Vakhsh (125,000), Moskovskiy (106,000), Sarband (18,000), Muminobod (64,000), |

Khatlon, with the decision of Rahmonov regime, was created during the Tajik Civil War by the unification of two regions; Kulob and Qurghon Tapa. For the first time these two regions were united in 1988. But in 1990 they were separated again. In December 1992 they were unified again. The reason for unification was to improve use of natural and economic recourses and to accelerate its development in all directions especially in solving many social problems.¹³⁴

Starting from the 1920s many Tajiks who were living in mountains moved to lower, irrigated places. Most of these people came from the Gharm region (including the old *bekliks* of Qarotegin and Darwoz), Badakhshon (in the Pomir Mountains) and Mastchoh sub-district in the upper Zarafshan Valley.¹³⁵ Majority of this population was moved to Qurghon Tapa, where mostly nomadic Turkic tribes lived. Massive agricultural policies made this region an important agricultural center of the country. The *raison d'être* of encouraging settlement to this region was to increase cotton production. As cotton production required high labor force, Soviet regime was settling more and more people to the region:

the 1926 census of the Tajikistan Autonomous Republic counted a population of 33678 in Qurghon Tapa. Of this population 57% were classified as Uzbeks, 16% as

¹³³ Gwillim, Law. 'Raions of Tajikistan'.

¹³⁴ See the web page <http://www.apmp.tojikiston.com/info14.htm>

¹³⁵ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. *Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)*, p. 28

Tajiks (plus 8% as Central Asian Arabs, classified as Tajiks in subsequent censuses), 12% Turkmen, and 4% Kazakhs'.¹³⁶

So the area was largely inhabited by the nomadic Turkic tribes. But the demographic situation changed dramatically after these population transfers. For example according to the 1989 census, Qurghon Tapa's population has increased to 1,044,920 having grown at an annual average rate of 5.5%, which included both natural increase and net immigration. Tajik population increased to 59%, while Uzbek population ratio decreased to 32%. Today, majority of Tajikistan's population live in Khatlon. Khatlon population constitutes 35.1% of the republic's population as a whole.¹³⁷ As Khatlon was created recently, it is difficult to speak about it as a single region. Kulob and Qurghon Tapa were united in 1993, but the two regions still have distinct identities.¹³⁸ Kulob identity is stronger than Qurghon Tapa one because of two reasons: less proportion of Uzbeks and more proportion of local people. While in Qurghon Tapa Uzbek population ratio is 32% in Kulob it is only 14%. Because of less population ratio of Uzbeks in Kulob effects of ethnic Uzbeks on Kulobis is less than on ethnic Tajiks of Qurghon Tapa. While in Kulob more than 90% of population declared to be local residents of the region in Qurghon Teppa this ratio is only 15%. In Kulob there is no Gharmi while 17% of population of Qurghon Teppa identified their regional origin as that of Gharm *raion* and 11% of population declared to be Kulobi.¹³⁹ As one can see from the statistics in Qurghon Tapa ethnic and regional mix is significantly higher than it is in Kulob. Because of this high ethnic and regional mix, during the Civil War, most of the bitter clashes took place in Qurghon Tapa.

The Khatlon Region is not industrialized as compared to Dushanbe and Sughd Regions. It is predominantly agricultural. During the Soviet era a majority of its

¹³⁶ Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.14

¹³⁷ Atkins. '**Ancient Nation. New Politics**'. Cited in Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.15

¹³⁸ International Crisis Group (ICG). '**Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace**', p.5

¹³⁹ Foroughi, Payam. '**Tajikistan: Nationalism, Ethnicity, Conflict, and Socio-economic Disparities—Sources and Solutions**', Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Vol. 22, No. 1, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 2002,
<http://taylorandfrancis.metapress.com/media/9B6KWLWTMKWHA4K2UX4G/Contributions/0/D/W/T/0DWTMWGKNUGXGMJ3.pdf>

population were peasants. However, after the collapse of the USSR, things started to change. Today, the Kulobis, who were one of the winners of Civil War, constitute majority of Tajik bureaucrats.

4.1.4 Sughd Region

Sughd Region is located in the northern part of Tajikistan. Its pre-Soviet name was Khujand. During the Soviet era its name was changed to Leninabad. But in 2000, Leninabad was renamed as Sughd. Sughd is so close to Uzbekistan that sometimes, especially in winters, people of other Tajik regions have to travel through Uzbekistan in order to arrive at the region. The only route binding Sughd with other parts of Tajikistan becomes impassable in winters. The Sughd region is subdivided to 14 *raions* and 8 cities.¹⁴⁰ These *raions* and cities are as follows:

Table 4.5. Cities and *raions* under the administration of Sughd *Oblast*¹⁴¹

| Cities | <i>Raions</i> |
|--|--|
| Khujand (164,500), Isfara (37,000), Panjakent (33,000), Qayraqum (32,000) Chkalovsk (25,000), Konibodom (45,000), Taboshar (12,000), Uro Teppa (51,000) | Asht (110,000), Isfara (160,000), Konibodom (114,000), Naus (97,000), Mastchoh (84,000), Panjakent (167,000), Shahriston (28,000) , Ganchin (112,000), Zafarobod (48,000), Ajnin (65,000), Uro Teppa (128,000), Kuhistoni Mastchoh (17,000), Bobojon Gafurov (258,000), Jabbor Rassulov (98,000), |

The capital city of Sughd is Khujand. It is one of the oldest cities and the second largest city of the country. It is believed that it was established by Alexander the Great.¹⁴² Khujand is located in the famous Ferghana Valley which is shared between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Khujand's population at present is 164,500.¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ Ilolov, Mamadsho & Khudoiev, Mirodasan. 'Local Government in Tajikistan, Developing New Races in the Old Environment', p.610

¹⁴¹ Gwillim, Law. 'Raions of Tajikistan'.

¹⁴² King John, Noble John and Humphreys, Andrew. **Central Asia, A Lonely Planet Travel Survival Kit**, p. 437

¹⁴³ Ibid

Sughd was the first Tajik region where the Bolsheviks arrived. Thus, the majority of the Tajik Communist Party members were from this region. These communists were members of Uzbek Communist Party up until 1929, when Tajik SSR was established. In order to control “the large area of Persian cultural influence from Iran to India”¹⁴⁴ the Soviet regime decided to make Tajikistan a Union Republic. But total Tajik population was less than one million, which was a prerequisite for establishing a Soviet Socialist Republic. To solve this problem, Stalin attached Khujand, which was part of Uzbekistan’s Ferghana Region, to Tajik ASSR. Khujand, unlike other regions of Tajikistan which were under the administration of Bukhara Khanate, was part of the Qoqand Khanate. Thus, it was under direct Russian rule since 1860. As Qoqand Khanate was the first to be conquered by Russians, the Sughdis established more contacts with the Russians than their southern counterparts. It was more developed than other parts of the republic because they were the first people to become familiar with European advancements. Khujand in 1926 was 32.4% urban which is almost equal to all of Tajikistan in 1989.¹⁴⁵

According to the 1926 Soviet census, the Tajiks constituted 58% of the region’s population. Uzbeks constituted the second largest population with a ratio of 38%. Khujand became the largest city of Tajikistan because Dushanbe at that time was too small. Population of Khujand was 37,480 while Dushanbe’s was only 5,607, of whom “38% were Russian (the largest ethnic group) and 80% were male, presumably mostly soldiers and police. As a whole Sughd Region provided first, second, third and fourth largest cities to Tajikistan which were Khujand (37,480) Uro Tapa (21,050), Konibodom (19,254) and Isfara (8,307)”¹⁴⁶

Consequently, as was mentioned above, the majority of the Tajik Communist Party members were recruited from the Sughd region. All First Secretaries of the Party were Sughdis, after 1946. They did not want to share this post with other Tajiks from the other three regions.

¹⁴⁴ Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. **Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia**, p. 77

¹⁴⁵ Rubin, Bennett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.21

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.22

Because of its geographic location, Sughd remained isolated from the other three regions of the Tajik SSR. Instead, it had more contacts with the neighboring Uzbekistan.¹⁴⁷ Sughd was and still is the most industrialized region of Tajikistan. Thus, in relative terms, more of its population are industrial workers.

In 1992 the monopoly of Sughd leadership was challenged by the southerners who demanded more opportunity for political representation. These challenges intensified in time and finally resulted in the Civil War. Although Sughdis were one of the winners of the war, they could not maintain power that they enjoyed during the Soviet era.

4.2 Political Regionalism

Geographical and historical isolations of Tajikistan's regions had certain repercussions on the political sphere of the country as well. Sughdis, throughout Soviet regime, controlled administrative organs of the country. As was mentioned above, every First Secretary of Tajik Communist Party since 1946 had always been from north. How could they manage to control this position for almost five decades? What features made them the ruling elites of Tajikistan? In other words, what features distinguished them from other Tajiks?

One of the main causes of the Tajik Civil War was the recruitment of elites based on regional origins. This policy led to the monopolization of a certain sector by certain regional elites. For instance, the Communist Party was dominated by the Sughdis while the newly emerging "free" market (due to the *perestroika*) was predominantly dominated by the Gharmis. Gharmis and Pomiris who gained some power due to their monopolized activities, started to challenge the monopoly of Sughdis in political administration. As was mentioned above, this led to the Civil War.

Soviet regime had encountered a shortage of competent cadres in establishing the communist system in Tajikistan. To meet this shortage, it was decided to recruit regional elites. These elites could be found only in Sughd, because the other three regions of Tajikistan were backward with a little educated class. Although there were some *ulema* (religious learned figures) there was no *Jadid* or

¹⁴⁷ Gretskey, Sergei. 'Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments and Prospects for Peace'.

Young Bukharan to cooperate with the Bolsheviks in the region. These regions (Eastern Bukhara), had served as a base for the armed resistance of the Amir of Bukhara and later for the campaigns of Enver Pasha and Ibrahim Beg (a native of Qurghon Tepa and one of the leaders of *Basmachi* movement).¹⁴⁸ According to the 1926 census, Tajik Autonomous Republic was only 5% urban. Urban people lived in Gharm whose population was only 6,040 people. However, out of this number Russians constituted 40%.¹⁴⁹

Initially, the Tajik Communist Party was a branch of the Uzbek Communist Party. Bukharan and Samarqandi émigrés constituted the main portion of the educated class and it was they who laid the foundations of the Tajik national identity in the Soviet era. Tajikistan's indigenous intelligentsia emerged only in 1929, when Khujand was attached to the Tajik ASSR in order to create the Tajik SSR.¹⁵⁰ Khujand had been only the seventh largest city in Uzbekistan. But it became the largest in Tajikistan.

As was mentioned above, Sughd was under the administration of Qoqand Khanate which was the first Khanate to establish contact with the Russians. Consequently, at that time, modern education was functioning only in this region of Tajikistan. Modern education system, before the Bolshevik Revolution, produced some native *Jadids*. *Jadids'* main purpose was to change the social life of Muslim societies. In other words, they were Muslim reformists. These local *Jadids* started to gradually dominate the Tajik Communist Party starting from 1929. The 1930s were "a period of Russification under a Russian First Secretary, who purged nearly all the Bukharan cadres for 'bourgeoisie nationalism' and other flows".¹⁵¹ Later, the Bukharan cadres were replaced by Sughdis. In 1946, the post of First Secretary of Tajik Communist Party was given to a Sughdi, Abdul

¹⁴⁸ Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

¹⁴⁹ Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.22

¹⁵⁰ Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. **Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia**, p. 77

¹⁵¹ Saodat Olimova and Muzaffar Olimov, **Intelligentsiya Drevnyaya i Novaya Obrazovanniy Klass Tadjikistana v Perepiyatyah XX v (Ancient and New Intellegentsia: Elite Class of Tajikistan in 20th century)**
http://www.infotaj.com/history/articles/1074516994_213877b8b92592238b2c5bfd09a63b96.pdf

Ghaffur Ghaffurov. Since then, every First Secretary of the Communist Party was recruited from the Sughd Region. Sughdis managed to dominate both the party *nomenklatura* and the economic power of the republic. They established direct links with Moscow, in addition to Tashkent. For example, this link can be seen in the case of dismissal of Ghaffurov by Khrushchev in 1956. Although he was removed, he was not relegated to the lowest positions or put to trial but “was appointed as head of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Soviet Academy of Science”.¹⁵²

Consequently Sughdi identity became dominant as compared to other identities of the three regions. Sughdis organized around Tajik Communist Party *nomenklatura* so systematically that, usually, even Moscow could not dissolve them. In the case of the dismissal of Ghaffurov, this fact could be observed. Rakowska-Harmstone described the mode through which Sughdis exercised power as follows:

Leader of local power clusters at all levels (starting with kolkhozes and *kishlaks* (village) and ending in the party’s Central Committee) based their selection, distribution, and transfer of personnel on traditional familiar, friendly relations and cultural obligations, and on the need to secure followers.¹⁵³

The formation of power networks provided the Sughdis the guarantee to succeed each other in the prestigious posts. They expanded the legal and economic position of the Sughd Region. For some time, the Republic of Tajikistan abolished all *oblast* level administrative units of southern Tajikistan.¹⁵⁴ Thus this area was directly under the control of republican administration. Although these regions were often ruled by local elites, they had to obey the Sughdis if they wanted to keep their position. Moreover, the southern Tajiks could not say much in the areas outside their regions. This factionalism kept them isolated from each other and prevented them to act together against the Sughdis. It was for advantage of the Sughdis who pursued policies of seclusion toward other regions. It is noteworthy to mention that, this was not a special case for Tajikistan. This organized network

¹⁵² Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.44

¹⁵³ Rakowska-Harmstone, Teresa. **Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia**, p. 172-173

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p.183

could be encountered in all Central Asian republics. Thus one can say that, Moscow was as much responsible as local communists in the creation of such political networks in Tajikistan in particular and in Central Asia in general. Soviet administrative system lacked regulations that could prevent organization of such political-client networks. As John P. Willerton argues Soviet administrative system provided ruling elites with extensive authority over the ruled mass. He writes that:

Coalitions of protégés and clients representing various interests and institutions have provided a leader- a *patron*- with the support to develop and undertake a policy program. In national level politics, patronage ties enhanced the ability of the communist Party General Secretary to consolidate power, to build a governing coalition, and to fashion a comprehensive policy program. The Soviet system gave leaders at both national and sub national levels significant discretion and initiative within their own bailiwicks.¹⁵⁵

Only in the 1970s some small number of Kulobi and Qurghon Tapa elites could climb to power as partners of Sughdis. Up until that time, Sughdis cooperated with a considerable number of Russians to exercise their power over the whole republic. However with the dramatic expansion of local educational opportunities after 1950s, many new local cadres emerged within the republic. This new generation enjoyed the opportunities of second wave of *korenizatsia* (nativization), which was initiated during the Brezhnev era. However, as *raions* of Gharm and Hisor were directly subordinated to Dushanbe, their promotion to governmental structures were effectively blocked by Sughdis.

This increase of local cadres intensified the already existing competition between northerners and southerners. That may be the reason of Sughdis' cooperation with Kulobis, starting from 1970s. But there are other explanations about this cooperation. Sughdis ruled the republic without sharing political power with any of the remaining Tajik regions up until 1970s. But then they started to share some administrative and military power. It was argued that "patronage relations between the two regions developed because Leninabad processed raw cotton from Kulob".¹⁵⁶ As a result, the Kulobis started to enjoy some political

¹⁵⁵ Willerton P. John. **Patronage and Politics in the USSR**, Cambridge University Press, Great Britain, 1992, p.3

¹⁵⁶ Dudoignon. '**Segmentation**'. Cited in Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil**

power since 1970s. They gained control of the local administrations of the south, while the Sughdis controlled the Communist Party, republican administration as a whole and economic means.

Some Kulobi elites started to abuse their posts for their own private advantage. They had formed illegal underground organizations, or simply “mafia”, which had engaged in several criminal cases. During the Civil War, the leaders or members of these organizations were brought to the leading posts. Sanghak Safarov and Yoqub Salimov could be good examples to such people. Sanghak Safarov who had spent several years in prison was made the dominant leader of the Popular Front of Tajikistan which had been fighting against the opposition groups at that time. Yoqub Salimov was also the head of Kulobi “mafia”, groups in Dushanbe. He too, had been jailed for five years during the Soviet period. During the Civil War, he became the Minister of Interior.¹⁵⁷

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political power of the Sughdis was dismantled, as Moscow was their main source of power. However the Kulobis proved to be more powerful. They did not have the image of hardliner communists, who since *perestroika* had been criticized for economic decadence and accused to be “puppets of Moscow”, among the local Tajiks. Instead, they had the image of traditionalists who had no chance but cooperate with the communists.

Gharmis who lived in the regions of Qarategin, Wakhan, Darwoz, and Qurghon Tepa, however, were not given any share in neither political nor economic structures. Their places of origin were divided into small regions, and were under the control of the Sughdis. Those Gharmis living in Qurghon Tepa was under the control of Kulobi dominated administrations. Thus they had little chance to climb upward. Majority of them established their way in Academic of Sciences and the newly emerging market economy.

Perestroika gave the Gharmis the opportunity to form their own political parties. They gathered around the Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) and the Islamic Renaissance Party. By joining these parties, they could stand up against the Sughdis and Kulobis.

War in Tajikistan, p.45

¹⁵⁷ Gretskey, Sergei. ‘Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments and Prospects for Peace’.

Pomiris too, like Gharmis, were excluded from political and economic opportunities.¹⁵⁸ Their region received little investment and was not industrialized. They too, found education as one of the few opportunities left for climbing higher on the social strata. Thus they became influential in Academy of Sciences. Moreover they were being recruited as KGB and Ministry of Interior members by the initiatives of Soviet leader Andropov. Andropov was from KGB himself and was famous for his anti corruption campaigns. He, as a KGB member, was well aware of the widespread corruption within the USSR. Even high-level officials, including Brezhnev, were being involved in such illegal conducts so, he could not do much until he became the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the USSR. Immediately after coming to power, he triggered a policy of revealing the corrupt party members, both central and local ones. Tajikistan, as all Soviet republics, was affected from this change. Andropov, in order to control corruptions of Sughdis and Kulobis, decided to use the Pomiris as watchdogs. Consequently, in time, the Ministry of Interior became dominated by the Pomiris. In addition to this, Pomiris played an important role in the Soviet-Afghan War, where their Ismaili co-believers were fighting against the devoutly Sunni Afghan mujahidins.¹⁵⁹

After the description of this general picture of political fragmentation of Tajikistan, the nature of regional solidarities can be better understood. One group of scholars categorized such solidarities as mafia-like relationship¹⁶⁰, the others, named them as clan relationship¹⁶¹. However “one must distinguish between a clan or mafia attached to a unit of administration as a phenomenon within the party or state apparatus, which appeared, throughout the USSR, and its use for purposes of patronage and mobilization, which appears to be stronger in Central Asia”.¹⁶² According to many analysts the main reasons behind the emerging of these clans were the collectivization policies and agricultural Central Asian

¹⁵⁸ Roy, Oliver. **‘Islamic Militancy: Religion and Conflict in Central Asia’**.

¹⁵⁹ Neumann, Iver. & Solodovnik, Sergey. **‘Russian and CIS peace enforcement in Tajikistan’**.

¹⁶⁰ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 108

¹⁶¹ Zviagelskaya, Irina. **The Tajik Conflict**, p.1

¹⁶² Rubin, Bennett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.35

economy. Every Central Asian predominantly identified himself/herself with a place, kolkhoz, sovkhos or any other work group rather than his/her national features. Each of these units had their own leaders who controlled the distribution of subsidies given by Moscow. Thus, territorial identities were also patronage networks competing for resources. More often these people, especially the resettled ones, based themselves on larger regions rather than on the micro-identities of a traditional clan that had prevailed in their own regions of origin.¹⁶³ In the industrialized parts of Soviet Union the situation was different. Because there, people were not dependant on subsidies and a majority of them worked in the industrial sector, which did not require regional solidarity in order to benefit from social opportunities. Thus one can argue that, isolated regional identities were intensified during the Soviet era by the policies of the regime itself.

4.3 Economic Regionalism

Tajikistan had many similarities with other colonized countries. There are different economic regions in Tajikistan, as is the case with politics. Two principal areas of the country, “the Ferghana Valley in the northern district of Leninabad (Khujand) and the Vakhsh, Kafarnihon-Panj Valleys in the south (crossing several administrative divisions, but mainly in Qurghon Tepa region) became part of the Central Asian cotton bowl”.¹⁶⁴ According to the 1980 census, Tajikistan with less than 2% of the Soviet Union’s population, produced about 11% of whole country’s cotton.¹⁶⁵ The Ferghana Valley received a big share of the investments on the establishment of industry for processing cotton textiles. The other region which received significant investment was the Dushanbe region, especially its Hisor district. One of the largest aluminum factories of the country was built in the Hisor Valley.

This path of development resulted in different social consequences which were similar in almost all Central Asian countries. This trend left local people

¹⁶³ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. **Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)**, p. 30

¹⁶⁴ Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.9

¹⁶⁵ IMF, Economic Review: Tajikistan ,Washington, DC: IMF, May 1992, p.2

predominantly attached to land while Europeans, especially Russians were provided with works within the sector of industry. Because of little investments in industry, Tajik economy could never become self-sufficient. Thus Tajiks were left dependant predominantly on subsidies.

Although there were some industrial investments in the urban parts of the republic, the rural parts could not benefit much from these investments. Existence of large families in Tajikistan, like in all Central Asian countries, differed from the European parts of the Soviet Union. Tajikistan had the highest birth rate of all Soviet Republics.¹⁶⁶ Increase in population required creation of new jobs. But this demand of rural parts of the country was ignored by both Dushanbe and Moscow. However this fact would soon reveal itself by the eruption of the Civil War.

After the Civil War, the economic condition of the country changed dramatically. Subsidies which had constituted a significant part of the republic's budget were already cut in late 1980s. This event automatically diminished the power of Sughdis who had the control over the distribution of these subsidies. Economically powerful regions emerged to fill the vacuum left by the Sughdis. The Kulobis managed to gain control of both politics and economy of the country. Kulob became a newly emerging powerful region in economy. Most of those investments which went to Sughd during the Soviet regime were now going to Kulob. Within the last ten years, an international airport and a hydroelectrically dam were built in the region. However one cannot say that Sughd lost its leading role in economy. As it was more industrialized and was not much affected by the Civil War, it still keeps its leading position in economic terms.

Badakhsan Autonomous Region is the least industrialized in the country. During the Soviet regime, and today as well, it is dependant on aids coming from the center.¹⁶⁷ As was mentioned above, unemployment is dramatically high in the region. Aga Khan Foundation is contributing significant amount of funds to the region. With the help of Aga Khan, within ten years, factories, schools, and even

¹⁶⁶ Sokolova, Ludmila. **‘Demograficheskoe Razvitie Respubliki Tajikistan v Perekhodniy Period (Demographic development of Republic of Tajikistan in Transitory Period)’**.

¹⁶⁷ Gretskey, Sergei. **‘Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments and Prospects for Peace’**.

an international university was established in the region.¹⁶⁸ But these initiatives are not enough for the development of the region. It is difficult for the Pomiris to survive, especially in winters when roads become impassable, which means cutting of aid coming from the center.

Living standards are higher in Dushanbe and its surroundings as compared to Khatlon and Badakhson. Wealth accumulated by Tajik workers abroad is predominantly flowing to the capital city and thus increasing living standards. Hisor Valley predominantly relies on the Tajik Aluminum Factory, which is located in its Regar city.

4.4 Soviet-Afghan War and the Emergence of Different Political Forces in Tajikistan

Soviet-Afghan War was basically an ideological war between Islam and communism. As there were 50 million Muslims in USSR, the war had a significant potential to change balances within the USSR in general, and Tajikistan in particular. Soviet-Afghan war pulled down the existing iron curtain between Tajik Muslims and their co-believers in the south. Many Tajikistani Muslims had sympathy to the Afghan mujahideens rather than to the Soviet troops. This fact is seen during the first years of invasion. Soviet Muslims, especially Central Asians, comprised 30-40 % of the invading force. But less than three months later, almost all Muslim soldiers were replaced by Slavic soldiers. The reason was the unreliability and defections of Soviet Muslim soldiers.¹⁶⁹ Some Soviet Muslim soldiers even fought against the Soviet troops after defecting to the mujahideens. This fact shows that Soviet-Afghan war really had a significant influence on Tajikistani Muslims.

First of all, after the eruption of the war, due to the “appearance of the cassette, of the video-cassette, of the more numerous and more powerful radio

¹⁶⁸ Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

¹⁶⁹ Warikoo, K. ‘**Cockpit of Central Asia:Afghanistan Factor in Tajikistan’s Crisis**’, Kashmir Information Network, Jamu-Kashmir, <http://www.kashmir-information.com/Afghanistan/Warikoo.html>

broadcast from abroad”¹⁷⁰ the iron curtain started to crumble. Consequently, Tajikistani Muslims started to think that they belonged to the Muslim society, which amounted to 800 million, rather than to Soviet Union, which had only 300 million populations and was ruled by Russians. In other words the “Elder Brother” status of Russians started to be questioned. Tajikistani Muslims preferred the ummah of 800 million¹⁷¹ in which they had equal status, to the Soviet Union where they were relegated to the second-class status.

Secondly, Tajik Muslims started to think that Russians and their puppet regimes could be defeated, if adequately resisted. The success of Afghan resistances encouraged them. The defeat and finally withdrawal of Soviet troops further encouraged not only the Tajik Muslims, but all Soviet Muslims to intensify their resistance against their “Elder Brothers”. As Benningsen claims, they started to “consider that in Iran the Iranians had succeeded to humiliate the famous ‘Sheytani Bozorg’- the ‘great devil’, the American devil- but in the Caucasus and in Turkistan, where nobody really cares about the Americans-- the Sheytani-the alien-- West is represented by the Russians, by the ‘Sheytani Dovvom’ (the ‘second devil’)”.¹⁷² In other words, Tajik Muslims claimed that if Iranians succeeded in doing this, there was nothing to prevent them from doing the same. In short, the war and defeat of Soviets in the war encouraged the Tajikistani Muslims in obtaining their rights.

Thirdly, Islam was started to be perceived younger, stronger and more dynamic than Marxism. It had stronger power to unite its followers than did Marxism. Tajik Muslims were sure that the Marxist-Leninist ideology could not compete with Islam and that soon CPSU would crumble.

Finally, Tajikistani Muslims started to rediscover their traditional past. As traditions of Tajik Muslims were predominantly shaped by Islam, it was in this sense a search for Islamic past. Tajik Muslims attempted to find their own heroes similar to the mujahideens who were successfully fighting against the Soviet

¹⁷⁰Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Benningsen, Alexandre & Lemarcier, Chantal. **The Afghan War and Soviet Central Asia**, METU, Turkey, 1986, p.7

¹⁷² Ibid., p.7

troops. The rediscovery and the rehabilitation of the traditional past became more common after the eruption of Soviet-Afghan war. With the war, Muslims started to “focus on the warriors, on the rulers, especially on those who had fought and preferably defeated the Russians”.¹⁷³ These rediscoveries enhanced the nationalist and anti-Russian feelings of Tajikistani Muslims. Consequently, this led to the emergence of Islamic and nationalist organizations, which mobilized against the Sughdis and started to demand independence from Moscow.

The organizations of Soviet Muslims, which were legalized after *perestroika*, started to criticize the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan. *Samizdat* Muslim literature increased enormously. Soviet Muslims by reading these publications became more religious and consequently started to refute communism and Sughdis who were regarded as local communists. Soviet-Afghan war promoted unofficial Islam and unofficial clerics, who were not under the control of the Soviet regime. Unofficial clerics started to build unregistered mosques and madrassas. The followers of these clerics then organized among themselves systematically and started to criticize official clerics and communist officials. The Soviet-Afghan war, in general, was a turning point for Soviet Muslims. As one Uzbek teacher, who had defected Soviet troops to join the Afghan mujahideens, claimed:

The Soviet Muslims did not forget their past and their lost freedom. They also remember the lives sacrificed to defend [this] lost liberty ... The Muslim people all aspire to freedom and want to liberate themselves from the [Soviets]. Because of this, the Soviet Muslims consider the war in Afghanistan as a constitution of the war that brought the subjugation of Central Asia. The Afghan nation is fighting for her freedom, and we, the Muslims of the Soviet Union, we know that the Afghan people will win, and their victory will bring liberation of Central Asia.¹⁷⁴

As one can see the Uzbek teacher is considering himself as a part of Muslim ummah. The division “we” (Muslims) and “they” (Christians) became ubiquitous in Soviet Muslim republics, during and after the war. As was mentioned above, In Dushanbe, the rumors of arrival of Armenians, who are Christians, to Tajikistan

¹⁷³ Ibid., p.8

¹⁷⁴ Rumor, Boris. ‘**The gathering storm in Central Asia**’, Orbis, vol 37, No1, 1993, p.105

led to the eruption of violent demonstration.¹⁷⁵ As this demonstration was held in 1990, it had significant effect to the resistance against Tajik communists. Nationalist and Islamists organizations used this event as a prelude to demonstrate against stronghold communists. In the end Tajik Islamists and nationalists gained significant popular support.

4.5 Continuing Regionalism During and After the Civil War

Although seven years have passed since the signing of the Peace Agreement, regionalism in Tajikistan is still a threat to peace. Kulobis, who were the partners of Sughdis in the struggle against the opposition groups, started to dismiss the Sughdis systematically after gaining more political power and replaced them with Kulobi elites. Most of the high ranking posts are now occupied by the Kulobis. The struggle between Kulobis and Sughdis intensified especially after Abdumalik Abdullahjonov (a Sughdi businessman) attempted to compete with Imomali Rahmonov, a Kulobi candidate, for presidency and after the Peace Agreement of 1997. Imomali Rahmonov was the winner in the elections held in 1994. Kulobis' exclusive policies angered Sughdis. For example Jumoboi Niyozov, a Sughdi and former chairman of the Democratic Party, argued that "regionalism as a political factor has intensified; whereas Kulobis earlier on were appointed to high-ranking positions by chance, such appointments have now taken on a systematic character".¹⁷⁶ Even prestigious posts in the Sughdi Region started to be given to Kulobis where they had no power during Soviet regime. Several local factory members were forced to resign from their jobs. These left jobs then were systematically occupied by Kulobis.

As all southerners, according to Sughdis, are backward and illiterate, the arrival of Kulobis to the north was not welcomed. They were perceived as condescending, uncivilized and pursuing private interests.¹⁷⁷ The assassination of

¹⁷⁵ Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

¹⁷⁶ International Crisis Group (ICG). '**Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace**', p.8

¹⁷⁷ Martin, Keith. '**Welcome to the Republic of Leninabad**', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 4, Sweden, 1997, http://www.ca-c.org/dataeng/st_06_martin.shtml

a popular 36 year old Sughdi businessman, Ahmad Ashurov, in 1996 by the by two Kulobis triggered demonstrations in Khujand. Dushanbe dismissed some Kulobis working there, but the picture did not change much.

The main reason of breakdown between the two old allies of Kulobis and Sughdis was Abdullahjonov's attempt to emerge as the president from 1994 the elections. Kulobis did not intend to delegate the post of presidency they had gained by armed struggle to Sughdis. Thus, the government used legal and illegal means to block Abdullahjonov's attempt. The campaign was marred by a climate of fear and fraud; the government allowed only sparse coverage of Abdullahjonov's campaign and those people who expressed their intention to vote for Abdullahjonov received death threats.¹⁷⁸ As was mentioned above, Rahmonov won the elections and became the formal president of Tajikistan, although some people questioned this success.

Following the elections, the new government initiated a campaign against the Sughdis, especially against the supporters of Abdullahjonov. Those supporters who held prestigious posts were dismissed from their jobs. For example, Deputy Chair of the Abdullahjonov's *Party of National Unity*, Habibullo Oripov was dismissed because he led and organized Abdullahjonov's election campaign. He was relegated to a lower post. According to him, and other members of the *Party of National Unity* "dozens of those who held governmental positions and who had openly shown their support for or actively participated in Abdullahjonov's campaign were fired or demoted solely on the basis of their association with Abdullahjonov's opposition bloc".¹⁷⁹

Immediately after the elections, Abdumalik Abdullahjonov left Dushanbe and went to Moscow. There he founded the *National Revival Party* (NRP)¹⁸⁰ together with two former primer ministers and some other Sughdi elites. The NRP demanded all regional representatives' participation in negotiations, which were

¹⁷⁸ See 'Tajik Presidential Election Conducted in Climate of Fear and Fraud'. National Reconciliation: the Imperfect whim', Central Asian Survey, 1996.

¹⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch (HRW). '**Leninabad: Crackdown in the north**', Vol. 10, No. 2 (D), New York, United States of America, April 1998, <http://www.hrw.org/reports98/tajikistan/>

¹⁸⁰ Roy, Oliver. **The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations**, New York University Press, New York, 2000. p. 142

being conducted by government and UTO. Abdullahjonov also demanded participation of Sughdis to these negotiations. To realize this goal, NRP appealed to UN with this request. After this event, the government intensified its campaign against Abdullahjonov. He and his close allies were blamed through media for illegal drug trades.

The dislike felt by Sughdis against Kulobis was clearly demonstrated by an assassination attempt on President Imomali Rahmonov in Khujand on April 1997. The event occurred during President Rahmonov's travel to Sughd to participate in celebration of 65th anniversary of Khujand State University. While he was approaching Kamol Sughdi Theatre, located at the center of the city, a grenade was thrown at him. President and officials who were accompanying him were wounded, but nobody died. This attempt triggered further arrests, press censorship, and attacks against the NRP.

Immediately after the assassination attempt, the police arrested some people who were alleged to be organizing this crime. The government accused Abdullahjonov regarding the event. In October 1997, criminal band "Tyson" was officially held responsible for the assassination attempt. Its several members were sentenced for varying time periods.

Opposition to Kulobis is also strong in BAR. Although Kulobis were enthusiastic to go to north, they did not desire much to go to Badakhson and to take key positions. The reason was the economic condition of Badakhson, which was poor, thus provided little profit. According to a local official:

The Pomiri people have not learned to give bribes. Officials here are not in position to make money from their positions as Pomir is the country's poorest region. Life is difficult and for that reason nobody wants to come here. In Leninabad (Sughd), however, officials can make money.¹⁸¹

Gharm and Qarotegin Valley remains to be a heaven for stronghold opposition groups of Kulobis. Local people of these regions are hostile to Kulobis but because of the Peace Agreement signed in 1997 they are controlled by the UTO commanders who are forcing them to obey the Agreement. These regions, as was mentioned above, are poor and not industrialized. Even today, Dushanbe has little

¹⁸¹ International Crisis Group (ICG). 'Tajikistan: An Uncertain Peace', p.9

control over these regions.

Since 2000, some changes are seen in the President Rahmonov's policies toward the regions. He has appointed some regional elites to high posts to represent their own regions. But these activities proved to be inadequate to satisfy the opposition groups. Because these high posts were given to those who were not members of opposition groups. Despite the announcement of a general amnesty after the Peace Agreement, the government is still trying to charge some leaders of opposition. This attitude may force the opposition groups to unite with other anti-government leaders such as Khudoyberdiev and Abdullahjonov against the Kulobi dominated government. In short, regionalism is still a threat to peace in Tajikistan. For the solution of this problem, some scholars, non-governmental organizations, states have recommended certain solutions focusing on rule of law, right for representation and inclusion of members of former opposition to the governing structures.¹⁸²

¹⁸² See Appendix A.

CHAPTER 5

EXTERNAL POWERS AND THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Central Asia again became a battle ground for the players of the “New Big Game”. While in the 19th century there had been only two players, British and Russian Empires, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the number of players increased. China, the United States, Iran, Turkey and the European Union were the new forces who wanted to fill the power vacuum. In the case of the Tajik Civil War, China, Turkey, United States and the European Union either did not want or were not able to play an active role. China was expected to play such a role because of economic and military power, and its long border with the countries of the region. However relations of China with the Central Asian countries in general and Tajikistan in particular remained rather limited. This was basically because of Chinese claims on some parts of Central Asian territories. Moreover China itself refrained from playing major role in the region that was still regarded to be within the zone of influence of Russia. The “stress on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) as the proper forum for settling the Tajik Civil War was a clear recognition of Russia’s ‘rights’ and Chinese limited interests in Central Asia.”¹⁸³

On the other hand, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, Turkey hurried to establish contacts with the newly independent Turkic states in order to increase its influence in the region and to get support of these countries that now had the right to vote in international organizations such as the United Nations. However, Turkey could not become an active player in Tajikistan, which was not

¹⁸³ Peimani, Hooman. **Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia**, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1998, p. 36

a Turkic state. Its influence was limited in the region because of several reasons. First of all, it had no borders with any of the Central Asian countries. Secondly, as Turkey was itself a developing country, it could not promise much in economic terms in their urgent need for foreign investments. Thirdly, it could not interfere in the security issues of the region in order not to cool relations with Russia. In other words, Turkey could not “afford confrontation with Russia, one of its main economic partners; over 90% of Turkey’s trade with the CIS states is with Russia”.¹⁸⁴ Because of these facts Turkey could not or did not want to interfere in the Tajik Civil War.

Similarly, the United States and the Western European countries were not very much interested in the Tajik Civil War that was taking place far away from their territories and in a region that was still regarded within the zone of influence of the Russian Federation.

However, Tajikistan was a strategically important region for Russia because of its long border with Afghanistan. This fact made it an important buffer between Afghanistan, which was the source of drug trafficking and Islamic radicalism, and fragile Russia. To control this route, Russia did play an important role in the Tajik conflict. Due to a large number of Uzbeks living in Tajikistan and fear of “Islamic radicalism” emphasized by President Islam Karimov, Uzbekistan was involved in the Civil War. The cultural, linguistic and religious ties of the Tajiks with Iranians and Afghani Tajiks also made Iran and Afghanistan to interfere in Tajikistan’s domestic issues. Consequently Russia, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Iran played important roles in shaping the events before, during and after the Tajik Civil War. In this chapter the conditions and factors which led these four countries to get involved in the war are analyzed.

5.1 The Role of Russia in the Eruption of the Tajik Civil War

Russia had several reasons to intervene in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. The internal disorder within Tajikistan was used by Russian Eurasianists, who always argued that Russia should keep its leading position as much as it could in

¹⁸⁴ Dannreuther. **Creating New States**, p.60 in Hooman Peimani, **Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia**, Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, London, 1998, p. 85

the territory of the former Soviet Union. After independence, Russia continued to exist as a military power in most of the former Soviet republics. Armenia and Georgia were two examples where Russian troops were stationed. However within those territories with more powerful, thus more stable countries, such as Uzbekistan, Ukraine, and Azerbaijan, Russia could not station its soldiers. Although Russia described those troops as “peacekeeping forces”, their actions and legal status do not correspond to the description of “peacekeeping force” of the UN.¹⁸⁵ According to the UN, these forces should be neutral. But if one analyzes the nature of activities of Russian troops during the Tajik Civil War he/she can easily discern that these troops were violating their self-defined duty. For example, the Russian troops openly supported the Kulobi-Sughdi-Hisori bloc by providing its fighters with arms and by training them in their bases.¹⁸⁶ Reasons for intervention of Russian Federation in the Tajik Civil War can be mainly analyzed within four categories: a) post-imperial security considerations or Islamic threat; b) drug trafficking; c) economic interests; and d) protection of Russian minority.

The overthrow of the communist regime in Tajikistan in April 1992 was seen as “the collapse of a state on the border where the USSR had fought its last war” against the Afghan mujahideens.¹⁸⁷ Since 1993 Russia had started to view the Tajik-Afghan border as its own border between the Islamic south. Russians due to the collapse of Soviet Union lost their strategic border with the south. The only borders with the south were now within the territories of the former Soviet Muslim republics or regions. Thus, in order to protect its territory from the Muslim south, Russia had to reestablish close ties with former Soviet Muslim republics. Consequently, Russia decided to formulate an official policy toward Tajikistan and thus became involved in the conflict. This new policy of Russia could be understood from one of Yeltsin’s speeches as well. He stated that, the

¹⁸⁵ Neumann, Iver. & Solodovnik, Sergey. ‘Russian and CIS peace enforcement in Tajikistan’.

¹⁸⁶ Tukmakov, Denis & Aleksandrov, Vasilii. ‘Tisyacha Vtoraya Noch. Jizn Posli Skazki (One Thousand and Second Evening. Life After Fairy Tale)’.

¹⁸⁷ Rubin, Bennett. *Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan*, p.54

Tajikistan-Afghanistan border is “in effect, Russia’s”.¹⁸⁸

According to Moscow one of the most important threats to its security was Islamic fundamentalism that started to emerge within the territories of the former Soviet Union. In order to prevent strengthening of fundamentalism, Moscow claimed that it should increase its military might in Central Asia. It was difficult to analyze the attitude of Russia toward the so-called “Islamic fundamentalists”. Was this threat used as a justification for intervention, or was it a real threat for Russia’s security? Of course, there are different opinions about that. According to Russian officials and pro-Moscow intellectuals, there was a real threat. According to some western intellectuals, however, the threat of Islamic fundamentalism was used in order to justify Russian intervention in the eyes of the West, especially the United States, which was regarded to be against everything related with Islamic fundamentalism.¹⁸⁹

According to Moscow, the long border between Tajikistan and unstable Afghanistan could not be guarded by the Tajik army alone. As the rise of Islamic fundamentalism could destabilize all Central Asia and even Russia, the border should be guarded by joint forces of all interested countries under the leadership of the Russian Federation. In November 1992, with the initiatives of Russia, leaders of Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan decided to establish a Collective Peace Keeping Force (CPKF) to block the rise of radicalism. The participation of Central Asian countries was symbolic, major responsibilities would be undertaken by Russia.¹⁹⁰ Although this self-defined peace keeping force should have been neutral, it directly intervened in the conflict by blocking and fighting against the members of the UTO. Russia argued that the fighters of UTO were trained, supported and financed by international Islamic fundamentalist organizations. By such a claim, Russia tried to attract both financial aid and to reduce the amount of criticisms coming from the West. According to Moscow,

¹⁸⁸ Warikoo, K. ‘Cockpit of Central Asia:Afghanistan Factor in Tajikistan’s Crisis’.

¹⁸⁹ Atkin, Muriel. ‘Russia and Tajikistan’, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 9, Sweden, 1997, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/09-1997/st_12_etkin.shtml

¹⁹⁰ Olimova, Saodat. ‘Tadjikistan-Rossiya: Ot “Razvoda” k Integratsii (Tajikistan-Russia: From Divergence toward Convergence)’, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 9, Sweden, 2000, <http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-09-2000/05.Olimova.shtml>

Russian troops were guarding not only Central Asia and the Russian Federation from fundamentalism, but also guarding Europe from that threat as well.¹⁹¹ Therefore, it should be applauded rather than criticized.

Another reason for the intervention of Russia to the domestic affairs of Tajikistan was drug-trafficking. Afghanistan is regarded as the world's number one producer and exporter of heroin. The heroin cultivation in Afghanistan had increased during the Soviet-Afghan War. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Army, the production of heroin further increased.¹⁹² The products of Afghanistan were being exported to all over the world predominantly through Central Asia, but mainly via Tajikistan. The Russian Federation used this reality as another justification for its presence in Tajikistan. Indeed, like in all post-Soviet republics, drug addicted people dramatically increasing day by day in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Today the drug-business is considered to be a huge market. Major players, including some of the state officials, are also involved in this business¹⁹³. Russian border troops and 201st MRD are regarded as important players in this market,¹⁹⁴ as these troops are also directly involved in this trade.

Unlike other reasons for intervention, “protecting economic interests of Russia” was predominantly used within the Russian Federation in order to get domestic public support. Russian public, in general, were indifferent to the developments in Central Asia. Some of them questioned the presence of Russian soldiers in a Chechen-like Tajikistan. As Moscow was in a difficult situation due to the developments in Chechnya, it had to find a logical justification for its financial and material support to Rahmanov's regime. Economic potentials of Tajikistan were taken forefront. A high-ranking official Valeriy Serov, Minister for CIS cooperation and Deputy Prime Minister (1995-98), wrote the following:

In Tajikistan there are factories and plants that have been until recently providing

¹⁹¹ Warikoo, K. ‘Cockpit of Central Asia:Afghanistan Factor in Tajikistan's Crisis’.

¹⁹² International Crises Group (ICG). ‘CA: Drug and Conflict’, Asia Report, 26 November 2001, p. 1

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.4

Russia with aluminum, electric transformers, machines, textile machines etc. During the Soviet era, Tajikistan has been producing 900.000 tons of cotton annually. The cotton can be used in textile industries of Russian Federation. Tajikistan has huge potential of the production of qualified and cheap fruits that can be sold in Russian markets.¹⁹⁵

Official arguments were strengthened by mass media that are known by their pro-government and Eurasianist views. In some of the newspapers, for example, investments in the huge hydro electrical dams were being promoted.

Although both Dushanbe and Moscow officially attempted to increase Russian investors' interest in Tajikistan, these plans were not successfully implemented. The investments of Russians were far behind that of Western countries. In the case of foreign trade, the picture was not different. Tajikistan as a whole exported goods to the value of \$746 mln in 1997, with the 10 CIS countries accounting for only \$273 mln (37% of the total export). Among the CIS countries, Uzbekistan has a big share of Tajik foreign trade. While trade with Uzbekistan constitutes 66% of exports and 55% of imports, trade with Russia constitutes only 21% and 24% respectively.¹⁹⁶ Because of little success in practice one can say that Moscow was not sincere or not able to enhance bilateral economic relations.

Finally, Russia interfered to the domestic affairs of Tajikistan with the mission of "protecting Russian minority". During the Soviet era, Russians living in non-Slavic republics used to have prestigious professional occupations. As the Russian language was the official language of the Soviet Union, Russians did not attempt to learn languages and traditions of local people. When the Soviet Union suddenly collapsed, they were shocked. In the newly independent states they suddenly became a minority and foreigners. In the early years of independence, Moscow did not have any official policy toward the Russian minorities. But soon, it realized that these minorities could be a reasonable prelude for intervention, be it political or physical, in the domestic affairs of the former Soviet republics at the

¹⁹⁵ Serov, Valeriy. '**Stabilizatsiya Obstanovki v Tajikistane Otvechayut Interesam Rossii (Stability in Tajikistan is for the benefit of Russia's National Interests)**', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 10, Sweden, 1997, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/10-1997/st_08_serov.shtml

¹⁹⁶ Gafarly M.S., Chernikov V.D. & Semenova, N.N. '**The Economic Crisis**'. In Alexei Vassiliev, **Central Asia: political and economic challenges in the post-Soviet era**, Saqi Books, London, 2001., p. 229-30

time of necessity.¹⁹⁷

According to the 1989 census there were 470.000 Russians in Tajikistan. Exodus of Russians started in 1989, as a result of the rise of national-religious feelings and activities. Today the population of Russians in Tajikistan is not more than 70,000.¹⁹⁸ Despite this insignificant number (a little more than 1% of whole population), Moscow used the minority card as a justification for its intervention in Tajik Civil War.

Indeed, during the Civil War Russian troops were the only source of protection for the Russian minority. On the eve of the Civil War, there were serious attacks, both verbal and physical, against the Russians living in Tajikistan. Some nationalist leaders warned to take Russians as hostages if the Russian troops did not stop their active support to the Sughdi-Kulobi bloc.¹⁹⁹ Russian troops did not have any choice other than protecting the Russian residents of the republic. By doing so, the Russian troops became automatically involved in the events, although there was not any official command from Moscow. They decided to support the Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT) that was, unlike opposition forces, careful in the issue of non-Tajik residents of the country, against the Islamic-democratic bloc. Members of the PFT had promised to protect non-Tajiks' rights. Despite these kinds of official promises, Russians sometimes could be harassed by the fighters of PFT. Later, the issue of protection of Russians became ubiquitous in the officials' speeches. For example Minister of the Defense of the Russian Federation of the time, Pavel Grachev claimed that Russia would have to use force within the republics where minority rights of Russians are abused. He added that Russia would not wait the eruption of a conflict to do so.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Foye, Stephen . **'Russia and the Near Abroad'**, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Post Soviet Prospects, vol III, #12, Washington, United States of America, December 1995, <http://www.csis.org/ruseura/psp/pspiii12.html>

¹⁹⁸ Tukmakov, Denis & Aleksandrov, Vasiliy. **'Tisyacha Vtoraya Noch. Jizn Posli Skazki (One Thousand and Second Evening. Life After Fairy Tale)'**.

¹⁹⁹ Kuzmin, A.I. **'The Causes and Lessons of the Civil War'**, p. 218

²⁰⁰ FBIS, Daily Report. **'Central Eurasia'**,. In Atkin, Muriel. **'Russia and Tajikistan'**, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 9, Sweden, 1997, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/09-1997/st_12_etkin.shtml

5.1.1 Russia as an Active Player

On the eve of the Civil War, Russia did not have a definite policy toward Tajikistan. First of all, in that period Russian democrats were organizing against the communist *nomenklatura*. Thus any movement against the *nomenklatura*, in any region of former Soviet Union was being welcomed by Russian democrats. This was also the attitude of the Russian government, as the Boris Yeltsin's government in the early years after the collapse of the USSR was largely dominated by Western sympathizers or democrats. Secondly, Russian officials who had been pursuing pro-Western politics did not care much about the developments in former Soviet republics. Thirdly, during the early years of the Tajik Civil War, Russia was preoccupied by other issues²⁰¹ such as reevaluating its policies toward the West and preparing ground for transition to a market economy. Thus, initially Russian officials welcomed any policy that helped to end Russia's relations with Central Asian countries who had always demanded subsidies from Moscow. As Tajikistan was the poorest republic of the former Soviet Union, Russian officials did not want to have an official policy toward Tajikistan on the eve of the conflict. In December 1993, Russian parliamentary elections were held. Nationalists and Eurasianists managed to get the majority of votes. Consequently, the Russian Federation started to pursue neo-imperialist policies. The concept of "near abroad" was created during this period in relation to the former Soviet republics. This concept emphasized that former Soviet republics should remain within the sphere of influence of the Russian Federation. The "near abroad" policy, aimed to achieve the following: (1) protect the interests of Russians (and Russian speakers) living outside Russia in the newly independent states; (2) stop migration to Russia from those areas; and (3) maintain stability in those regions, especially on Russia's southern borders.²⁰² Thus Russian officials started to support their troops' existence in Tajikistan as an opportunity to reestablish its influence over Central Asian countries. Consequently, Russia became more closely involved in Tajikistan's internal affairs. More than 50,000

²⁰¹ Ahrari, Mohammed & Beal, James. **The New Great Game in Muslim Central Asia**, University Press of the Pacific Honolulu, Hawaii, 2002, p. 32

²⁰² Gretskey, Sergei. 'Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes, Developments and Prospects for Peace'.

Russian troops (25,000 Russian peace-keepers, including the 201st Motorized and Rifle Division, and 25,000 Russian border guards) became important political actors in the republic.²⁰³

Mainly because of the four reasons mentioned above and the victory of nationalists and Eurasianists in the 1993 Russian Parliamentary elections, Russia became officially involved in the Tajik Civil War. During the war, Russian policies toward Tajikistan were not consistent, as they changed according to new developments. At the first stage, Russia, with some help coming from the other CIS countries, supported Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT). 201st MRD delivered arms to PFT in their operations in toppling down the newly established coalition government. As was mentioned above, the Russian troops at that time acted with their own initiatives. But later on, as the fighting intensified and some Russian soldiers were being killed, especially near the border of Afghanistan, the issue of Tajikistan started to attract the attention of Moscow more and more.

After toppling down the coalition government, Rahmonov started to strengthen and legitimize his regime. In this development, Russia again overtook serious responsibilities. In addition to military support, as a part of “near abroad” policy, Russia returned to subsidize the fragile Tajik government. Exact figures are not available but various reports indicate that Russia could be subsidizing “over two third of Tajikistan’s budget, more than Moscow did during the Soviet period”.²⁰⁴ Kulobis, who were now being officially supported by Russia, strengthened their positions in the newly established Tajik government.

With the initiatives of Russia, fighting groups agreed to start negotiations. During the first round that was held in April 1994 in Russia, Moscow attempted to play the role of a judge but it could not succeed to do so because of its continuing support to one of the conflicting sides. It seemed that Russia was only aiming to pacify the opposition forces in order to gain time for legitimization of Rahmonov’s regime.

Despite the overthrow of coalition government, the problems for Russia did not end in Tajikistan. New clashes emerged among the PFT members.

²⁰³ Gretskey, Sergei. **Russia's Policy Toward Central Asia.**

²⁰⁴ Rubin, Bennett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan,** p.51

Rahmonov's supporters did not want to share power with Sughdis. With the interference of Russia and Uzbekistan Rahmonov, agreed in the participation of Abdumalik Abdulajonov in the presidential elections of November 1994. No oppositional candidate participated to this election. The two candidates represented two different regions: Rahmonov, the Kulob region; Abdullahjonov, the Sughd region. As Russia did not want any other power to intervene in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan, it decided to support only Rahmonov's regime which seemed to be most suitable one for its interests. Because of Sughdis' close ties with Uzbekistani officials and direct support of Karimov to Abdullahjonov, Russia did not want to support Sughdis during the elections. Rahmonov won the election.²⁰⁵

During the inter-Tajik negotiations of 1995, Rahmonov's attitude toward the UTO changed. Rahmonov now was the head of a legitimate government. This new government started to insist that negotiations should be carried within the framework of the constitution, by also claiming that the Tajik government aimed to avoid discussions about power sharing with the UTO. As a result of this change, opposition forces intensified their attacks within the territory of Tajikistan. Russia, which had been trapped in the Chechen quagmire, started to worry about the intensifying attacks of the UTO fighters. To avoid another Chechen-like problem in Tajikistan, Moscow decided to force Dushanbe to change its position toward the UTO during the negotiations. In November 1995, Dmitriy Rymkov, advisor of Yeltsin in international affairs, visited Dushanbe in order to meet with the high-ranking officials of Tajikistan and commanders of Russian troops. The visit of this high-ranking official to Dushanbe showed how seriously Moscow was concerned about the developments in Tajikistan. Tajik government accepted to sit on negotiation table with the UTO.

In the negotiation that was held in December 1995, UTO again insisted on power sharing and asked the CIS countries not to interfere in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. Soon after the negotiations, Moscow declared that demands of UTO were not acceptable. But one month later, in the meeting of CIS countries,

²⁰⁵ Bashiri, Iraj. **Beginings to AD 2000: A Comprehensive Chonology of Afghanistan, Central Asia and Iran.**

President Yeltsin openly criticized Rahmonov's regime and declared that Russia would not completely support Rahmonov's regime while Russian troops were being killed there.²⁰⁶ In this change of Russia's stance during this meeting, the criticisms of Central Asian countries (especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) played an important role. Nazarbayev and Karimov were concerned about the increasing disorder in Tajikistan. Complete support of Moscow to Rahmonov aggravated bilateral relations of Russia and Uzbekistan as well.

With the replacement of Andrey Kozyrev with Yevgeniy Primakov as the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation in January 1996, Moscow's policies toward Tajikistan changed significantly. As an expert on the Middle East, Primakov realized that if Tajik Civil War was not ended, the repercussions would be catastrophic for Central Asian countries and Russia. Because of the importance of the issue of Tajik conflict he made his first visit as the Minister of Foreign affairs of the Russian Federation to Dushanbe. He came to Tajikistan with other high ranking officials such as the heads of the Russian Border Troops, Andrei Nikolayev, the head of the External Intelligence (SVR, *Sluzhba Vneshnoy Razvedki*), Vyacheslav Trubnikov; the Minister on CIS Affairs Valeri Serov; and the deputy foreign ministers Boris Pastukhov and Aleksei Chernychev; and Defense Minister Grachev. In Dushanbe, Primakov stated that reconciliation with the opposition was a precondition for the stabilization between regions within the country, and for the solution of economic problems.²⁰⁷

In the next inter-Tajik negotiation that was held in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, in July 1996, Primakov decided to discuss with the UTO delegation privately. This decision showed that Moscow's policies toward Tajikistan had changed significantly. As the rivalry between Rahmonov and Abdullajonov intensified, Rahmonov's support had decreased significantly. Any change in Moscow's policy would have dramatic repercussions over Rahmonov's regime. Due to the pressure of Moscow, Rahmonov agreed to meet with Abdullah Nuri, now head of the UTO,

²⁰⁶ Jonson, Lena. 'The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy', The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London. Discussion Paper 74, 1998.

²⁰⁷ Jonson, Lena. 'Russian Politics in Dilemma?', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 2, Sweden, 1997, http://www.ca-c.org/dataeng/st_03_jonson.shtml

face to face. It was an important development because up until this time the delegations in negotiations were headed by smaller ranking representatives. Primakov's role in realizing this negotiation was significant. He knew that Tajik conflict could not be solved by military means. He replaced all hardliners who were related with Tajikistan in order to politicize the conflict. In order to change the minds of hardliners Primakov stressed on the increasing military expenditures to Tajikistan.²⁰⁸ Russian soldiers in Tajikistan had to be paid three times more than normal officers, according to the laws of the Russian Federation.²⁰⁹ Although to decrease that financial burden Russian military contingent predominantly recruited local residents as soldiers, the expenditure was still high for the already weakened Russian economy. Primakov could convince the hardliners on the necessity of getting positive results in Tajikistan by means other than physical power.

The advancement of Taliban in Afghanistan and increase in the Russian Federation of those who demanded the withdrawal of Russian troops from Tajikistan forced both Moscow and Dushanbe to achieve a compromise with the UTO. Dushanbe was now more inclined to share power with the UTO. In the last round of negotiation that was held in Moscow, Rahmonov's regime and the UTO signed the Peace Agreement of 27 June 1997. According to that agreement, the UTO was given 30% share in the provisional government.

It is therefore possible to suggest that without the support of Russia, the Kulobi-Sughdi bloc would not be able to rise against the coalition government of Nabiev and the opposition. Thus, probably there would be less loss and the Civil War could be prevented. In that sense, Russian role in the eruption of Tajik Civil War was significant.

5.2 The Role of Uzbekistan in the Eruption of the Tajik Civil War

Uzbekistan has many reasons similar to those of Russia in the issue of interference in Tajikistan's domestic affairs. Having the largest population in

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Tukmakov, Denis & Aleksandrov, Vasilii. 'Tisyacha Vtoraya Noch. Jizn Posli Skazki (One Thousand and Second Evening. Life After Fairy Tale)'.

Central Asia, Uzbek way of thinking significantly differs from that of other nationalities in Central Asia. Uzbeks regard themselves to be the leading nation of Central Asia. Population of Uzbekistan is 25,981,647 (July 2003 est.) million.²¹⁰ Moreover, there are sizeable Uzbek minorities in all Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has borders with all these countries. Because of these facts, since the collapse of USSR Uzbek officials have been formulating policies to make Uzbekistan the new leader of Central Asia. These policies sometimes clashed with the interests of Russia, who did not want to lose its influence in the region.

As was mentioned above, reasons of Uzbekistan's intervention in domestic affairs of Tajikistan were similar to those of Russia. In this part they are analyzed under three headings: a) Islamic threat, b) drug and arm trafficking and c) Uzbek minority.

Uzbeks, like Tajiks, are regarded as more religious and conservative than other three remaining nationalities of Central Asia. There is a potential of emergence of Islamic radicalism in the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan. In the early years of independence, there were clashes between Islamists and President Karimov's regime here. Islamists had enough grassroots support that let them declare Ferghana Valley's independence from Tashkent and the creation of an Islamic state there.²¹¹ Initially, Karimov decided to negotiate with the Islamists. But later he bitterly suppressed them.

For a country like Uzbekistan, which has such a large population, without interfering to the developments in Tajikistan would not be logical. When the Islamic-democratic bloc toppled down the communist regime and established a coalition government, Tashkent started to get concerned about the spillover effects of fundamentalism to Uzbekistan. Both Tajik Islamists' and nationalists' arguments were against the national interests of Uzbekistan. Karimov thought that Uzbek Islamists could imitate the Tajik religious groups and oppose his own regime in Uzbekistan. The victory of the Islamic-democratic bloc could stimulate

²¹⁰ CIA FACTBOOK, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/uz.html>

²¹¹ Bobojonov, Bahtiyor. '**Ferganskaya Dolina: Istochnik ili Jertva Islamskogo Fundamentalizma (Ferghana Valley: Source or Victim of Islamic Fundamentalism)**'.

Islamic movements in the Ferghana Valley and Tajik nationalism would spread to the large cities of Samarqand and Bukhara, where many Tajiks lived.²¹² To avoid these negative effects, Tashkent decided to support Kulobi-Sughdi bloc.

Like all Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan is also highly concerned about the drug and arms trafficking from Afghanistan. Drug addiction has seriously increased in Uzbekistan since the collapse of the USSR. It is regarded that some drug-trade routes pass through Uzbekistan. Majority of these routes pass via Tajikistan to Uzbekistan. In general the 450 km long Uzbek-Afghan border is well-guarded.²¹³ Despite this, the number of addicted people in Uzbekistan is increasing. There are more HIV and AIDS cases (as addicted people used to share needles), more corruption and more crime. All these detrimental results had negative effects on the stability in Uzbekistan.²¹⁴

Afghanistan is also a source of arms for the Islamists. Tashkent argued that poor protection of the Tajik-Afghan border eased the travel and contact of fighters of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)²¹⁵ with the Afghan mujahideens. Tashkent had several times accused the IMU in both drug and arms trafficking. According to Uzbek government, the IMU fighters have bases in some Tajik regions that were out of the control of Rahmonov's regime. Tashkent used the presence of IMU bases as a justification for its air bombings to the territories of Tajikistan.²¹⁶

Uzbek minority was another factor that triggered the intervention of Uzbekistan to the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. 25% of Tajikistan's population is Uzbek. Uzbeks predominantly live in Hisor, Qurghon Tepa and Khujand regions of Tajikistan. This gives Tashkent an important opportunity to interfere in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan, as it is beneficial for its national interest.

²¹² Horsman, Stuart. 'Uzbekistani Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic Considerations', Central Asian Survey, 18(1), 1999, p.41

²¹³ International Crises Group (ICG). 'CA: Drug and Conflict', p. 12

²¹⁴ Ibid

²¹⁵ IMU is an Islamic anti-Karimov movement headed by Juma Namangoni and Tohir Yoldosh, both are from Uzbekistan

²¹⁶ Bushkov, V.I. & Mikulsky D.V. *Anatomiya Grajdanskoy Voyni v Tadjikistane (Anatomy of Tajik Civil War)*, p. 84

Uzbekistan, however, did not generally use the card of Uzbek minority as a justification for its intervention unlike Russia. Probably Karimov feared that this card could be used by Dushanbe as retaliation.²¹⁷ Dushanbe's blaming the Karimov regime in the issue of minorities would be more realistic, because Karimov's regime has been repressing its own Taik minority by preventing the use of Tajik language and by closing down the Tajik schools functioning in Bukhara and Samarqand.²¹⁸

Karimov's regime armed the Uzbek minorities of Tajikistan against the Islamic-democratic bloc. According to Dushanbe, Mahmud Khudayberdiev and Ibod Boymatov's, local Uzbek warlords who were members of PFT, fighters were trained in Uzbekistan and they were allowed to pass the Uzbek-Tajik border when it was necessary.²¹⁹

5.2.1 Uzbekistan as an Active Player

Mainly because of the three reasons mentioned above, Uzbekistan interfered in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. Tashkent in order to regain its previously enjoyed control over Dushanbe, decided to support the Sughdis. Uzbekistan did not want other people in power in Tajikistan, because the Sughdis were loyal to Tashkent for decades. Uzbekistan feared that by opposition groups coming to power, Tashkent would lose its influence over Tajikistan. Consequently, Uzbeks of Tajikistan were propagated against the Islamic-democratic bloc.²²⁰ Uzbeks had significant influence within the PFT of Safarali Kenjaev. Faizali Saidov, Mahmud Khudoyberdiev and Ibod Boymatov were leaders of local Uzbek factions. After capturing Dushanbe on 10 December 1992, Uzbek forces were predominantly sent to Gharm and Badakhshon regions, while Kulobis predominantly remained in Dushanbe and consequently gained the lion share in power. As Russia did not want Uzbekistan to have a significant influence in Tajikistan, it supported the

²¹⁷ Horsman, Stuart. 'Uzbekistani Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic Considerations', p.41

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Atkin, Muriel. 'Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential'.

²²⁰ Ibid.

Kulobis to control the government.

After getting the control of government, struggle for power intensified among the PFT factions. Sughdis, who were supported by Uzbekistan, were left outside of government. Local Uzbeks also could not get what they had wanted. Because of this, there were uprisings against Rahmonov's regime. Boymatov and Khudoyberdiyev overtook the control of the Aluminum Plant. However, in a short time the government forces successfully controlled the uprising. Boymatov was killed while Khudoyberdiyev was forced to leave Tajikistan. After these developments, Uzbekistani influence in Tajikistan decreased significantly.

Uzbekistani policies toward Tajikistan had direct relations with its internal developments. In early years of independence, there were strong opposition parties to Karimov's regime. With the overthrow of Nabiev, Karimov started to fear about his own future. As the political developments in Uzbekistan were similar to those of Tajikistan, the disorder in this country was used as a justification for the harsh treatment of Karimov against his own Islamic-democratic opposition parties and movements. Karimov claimed that if Islamic-democratic bloc of Uzbekistan was not suppressed, the future of Uzbekistan would be similar to that of Tajikistan. Stuart Horsman wrote that:

as the war escalated, members of Uzbekistan's main democratic movements, Birlik and Erk, faced increased harassment by the security services; Ibrahim Pulatov, Birlik's co-chair, was seriously assaulted by unknown assailants; censorship of Erk's news paper was stepped up, and legislation on political parties was made more restrictive. All religious and ethnic oriented parties have been banned from registering, because the government argues that they promote divisive and destabilizing political platforms. Birlik's membership dropped from approximately 500,000 to 1,000, with a similar decline noticed by Erk.²²¹

Birlik and Erk parties were two significant democratic parties of Uzbekistan. Same faith awaited the Islamic movements and parties. After seriously repressing the opposition forces, Karimov's arena of maneuver increased. In order to secure its influence in Tajikistan, Tashkent decided to enhance relations between the UTO and Sughdi Abdulmalik Abdullahjonov. By doing so Uzbekistan would create a serious opposing force against Rahmonov's regime that was

²²¹ OMRI Daily Diges, Pt 1 No 5. 8/1/97. In Horsman, Stuart. 'Uzbekistani Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-97: Domestic Considerations', p.41

predominantly pro-Russian. It is interesting that even Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, once depicted by Karimov as the main destabilizing figure in Tajikistan, was invited to Tashkent as a result of changes in Karimov's policies. Karimov organized a meeting between Turajonzoda and Abdullahjonov in Tashkent. By doing so Tashkent attempted to include the "third force", which would be headed by Abdullahjonov in peace negotiations. However, Karimov's plan to include him did not work. Consequently, Tashkent's influence further decreased. Tajikistan was predominantly left to be under the influence of Iran and Russia.

5.3 The Role of Afghanistan in the Eruption of the Tajik Civil War

Central Asian nations had for centuries close relations with the Afghan people. However after the mid 1920s, the relations between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries were completely cut off. Central Asia was secluded from the rest of the world, by an "iron curtain". The Panj River was accepted as the border between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. But this demarcation was inaccurate, because many Tajik, Uzbek, Turkmen and other Central Asian nations were left in the territory of Afghanistan. Today in Afghanistan there are more Tajiks than in Tajikistan. They comprise 25% of Afghanistan's population (28,717,213 according to July 2003 estimates).²²² Tajiks of Afghanistan live in the northern parts of the country, near the Tajik border. Tajiks of Afghanistan were mobilized against the Soviet invaders, by their leaders Burhaneddin Rabbani and Ahmed Shah Masud. Mujahideens had also organized successful resistance against the Soviet troops.

As was mentioned above, the first contact of Soviet Central Asians, thus of Tajiks with the Afghan people were established during the early years of Soviet-Afghan War of 1979-89. On the eve of and during the Civil War, Tajik opposition was predominantly armed by the Afghan mujahideens. They wanted to see the IRPT in the government.

In Afghanistan, there is no central control of the government over the whole country. Consequently talking about an official systematic policy toward Tajikistan is not possible. Policies and activities toward Tajikistan are and were

²²² CIA Factbook, <http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/af.html>

directly related to the domestic developments within Afghanistan. They were shaped by the personal ambitions and activities of local warlords. The politics of Afghani originated groups in interfering in Tajikistani domestic affairs can be analyzed under three headings: a) supporting Islamic groups of Tajikistan; b) creation of “Bigger Tajikistan”; c) securing drug-trade routes.

It is surprising that the Tajik Civil War erupted in the same year with the overthrow of Soviet Union’s puppet regime headed by Mohammed Najibullah. In April 1992, united forces of Burhanneddin Rabbani, Ahmed Shah Masud, Abdurrashid Dostum, Mansoor Nadri and Gulbeddin Hekmetyar entered Kabul and managed to take its control. Rabbani became the President while Masud was assigned as the Minister of Defense. Masud and Rabbani were well known for their resistance during the Soviet invasion. The paratroops of Shah Masud were predominantly established by local Tajiks under the banner of Islam. The resistance against the Soviets was named as *jihad* while fighters were dubbed as mujahideens. All these were Islamic terminologies. In general, Shah Masud’s and Rabbani’s views regarding Islam significantly differ from the majority of Afghani Muslims who could be described as traditionalists. Rabbani and Shah Masud, similar to activists of *Muslim Brethren* of Arabic Middle East, support politicization of Islam.²²³

After Rabbani’s and Shah Masud’s occupation of Kabul, Islam became a more significant factor in determining both domestic and foreign affairs of Afghanistan. Mujahideens, as fierce enemies of Russians wanted Russian troops leave Central Asia. With the withdrawal of Russian troops Central Asian Muslims could easily overthrow the local ex-communist regimes. In the case of Tajikistan, as Islamic-democratic bloc was already mobilized against Sughdis, who were seen as Russia’s puppets, mujahideens decided to provide the opposition by arms and fighters.

As was mentioned above, Russia and Uzbekistan used the threat of Islamic fundamentalism as a reason and justification for their intervention in Tajikistani domestic affairs. But according to some scholars, the threat of “export of Islamic

²²³ Roy, Oliver. **Islam and Resistance in Afghanistan**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge [England]; New York, 1990, p. 48

fundamentalism” from Afghanistan were exaggerated by both countries. Oliver Roy, a French scholar and former head of Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) mission in Tajikistan argues that:

Who and where are the fundamentalists? There are no revolution-exporting Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan, as no one in that country is interested in any spillover into Tajikistan. The factions fighting in Afghanistan have two main interests: (1) gaining power in Kabul for power over Afghanistan, not some “greater Tajikistan” (the case even for Afghan-Tajik leader Masud); and (2) securing access to communication with the outside world. The current government in Kabul is on bad terms with Pakistan, leaving Central Asia (including Tajikistan) the only direct route to the outside world.²²⁴

However it has also been suggested that Shah Masud had been involved in Islamic revival in Central Asia in general and in Tajikistan in particular even before the establishment of the all-Union IRP.²²⁵ In any case, it was clear that Rabbani’s regime was not controlling the whole country. Therefore, Afghanistan was a safe heaven for various international Islamic organizations, both radical and moderate, that tried to use uncontrolled Afghani territories as their bases. These organizations supervised their international activities within the territory of Afghanistan. Al-Qaeda can be a good example to those organizations. Pakistani and Arabian Islamic groups were actively training the Tajik refugees based in Afghanistan. As long as there were Tajik refugees in Afghanistan, Islamic fundamentalism could rise in Tajikistan. The refugee camps were convenient places for recruiting the future fundamentalists, as was the case of Afghan refugees who had found asylum in Pakistan. Refugees who had fled to Pakistan were trained and educated as fighters against the Soviet Union. Their views about Islam were much radical than the traditional Muslims of Afghanistan.

As Tajik opposition forces in Afghanistan did not support any fighting groups in that country, they were believed to be easily convincible to get the support of any fighting factions, regardless of their views about Islam. Turajonzoda’s answer to the question about UTO’s alleged cooperation with Taliban proves this

²²⁴ Roy, Oliver. **Speech in a Forum on Tajikistani Conflict**, organized by United States Institute of Peace, June 6, 1995

²²⁵ Akçalı, Pınar, ‘**Islam as a ‘common bond’ in Central Asia : Islamic Renaissance Party and the Afghan Mujahidin.**’, Central Asian Survey, Vol. 17, No. 2, 1998, p. 279

argument. Turajonzoda stated in 1997 that:

Taliban is a new political power in Afghanistan. But I do not believe in information that Taliban is a very radical and fundamentalist organization. First of all powers behind current regime that had fiercely resisted against Soviet invasion and against pro-communist regime in Kabul, had also fought under banner of Islam and with the aim of creating a theocratic state in Afghanistan. At that time they were also blamed to be fundamentalists but now they suddenly, because of emergence of Taliban movement, became as liberals in front of eyes of Russian officials. Consequently dividing all these groups into more or less Islamists, as Russian politicians used to do, is ridiculous.²²⁶

The Tajik opposition had bases within territories of both Northern Alliance and Taliban. These camps were functioning overtly despite the agreement, in which President of Afghanistan promised not to allow functioning of training camps within territory of Afghanistan, signed by Rabbani and Rahmonov in December, 1993 during Rabbani's visit to Dushanbe.

Creation of "Greater Tajikistan" was another factor that triggered the intervention of Afghanistani warlords in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. Under the banner of "Holy War" against the Soviet invasion, various ethnic groups of Afghanistan could unite. But this unification did not last long. Soon after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the country, these groups started to fight against each other. Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras started to increase their zone of influence. As all fighting factions were Muslims, in these clashes the rhetoric of nationalism started to be used more frequently.

Pashtuns, as the titular nation of Afghanistan, did not want to leave the control of Kabul to Tajik mujahideens. In order to decrease the influence of Tajiks, Gulbeddin Hekmetyar's Islamic Party of Afghanistan tried to use the card of Uzbek minority. Hekmetyar claimed that his strategic aim was to support the Islamic-nationalist Tajik opposition in order to enlarge the zone of fighting to Tajikistan that would finally increase the enmity between Tajiks and Uzbeks and lead to the break of Uzbek-Tajik unity in Kabul.²²⁷ Due to this break of unity, he

²²⁶ Interview of ca-c with Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, 'Mi ne Usmatrivaem Ekspansionizma v Planah Talibov (We do not see any expansionist plan of Taliban)', Central Asia and the Caucasus № 7, Sweden, 1997, www.ca-c.org/journal/07-1997/st_14_turadj.shtml

²²⁷ Nezavisimaya Gazeta, 04 May 1994. In Karimov, Rashid. 'Triugolnik Uzbekistan-Afganistan-Tajikistan kak Istochnik Destablizatsii (Triangle Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-

would be able to get the control of Kabul easily.

In reality, soon after the fall of Kabul to mujahideens, disagreement between Afghanistani Tajiks and Uzbeks increased. In their propaganda, both Shah Masud and Dostum mentioned about “Bigger Tajikistan” and “Bigger Uzbekistan”, respectively. While according to Masud “Bigger Tajikistan” would include Tajikistan, parts of Afghanistan, Samarqand and Bukhara, according to Dostum “Bigger Uzbekistan” would include Uzbekistan, parts of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan.²²⁸

This rather utopian rhetoric of Shah Masud increased the concerns of President Karimov. The camps established for training fighters to the Tajik opposition were seen as the first stage in realization of this aim, as a majority of these camps were within the territories controlled by Afghanistani Tajiks. Shah Masud’s argument about Samarqand and Bukhara forced Karimov’s regime to get involved in Afghanistani domestic affairs. Under the guidance of the Karimov’s regime, Dostum broke his coalition with Masud and tried to establish close contacts with Hekmetyar, once his number one enemy.²²⁹ In his visit to Tajikistan in December 1993, Rabbani had offered Dushanbe the Afghan gas, in order to increase contacts with Tajikistan. That was also seen by Tashkent as a step for the creation of “Bigger Tajikistan”. The sale of Afghan gas to Tajikistan would significantly decrease Tajikistan’s economic dependence on Uzbekistan. This in turn would decrease the influence of Uzbekistan on Tajikistan. To block this development Dostum increased his secessionist activities. This led to the increase of Pashtuns’ influence, initially Hekmetyar’s, later Taliban’s.

Dostum’s anti-Tajik fights were not limited only to Afghanistan. The fighting had been expanded to Tajikistan as well. It is reported that Dostum’s men fought

Tajikistan as source of Instability in Central Asia’, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 4, Sweden, 1999, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-04-1999/st_07_karimov.shtml

²²⁸ Hoffman, Antoni. ‘**Znachenie Afganistana dlya Tsentralnoy Azii (Importance of Afghanistan for Central Asia)**’, Central Asia and the Caucasus Review № 5, Sweden, 1999, www.ca-c.org

²²⁹ Karimov, Rashid. ‘**Triugolnik Uzbekistan-Afganistan-Tajikistan kak Istochnik Destablizatsii (Triangle Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan as source of Instability in Central Asia)**’, Central Asia and the Caucasus № 4, Sweden, 1999, http://www.ca-c.org/journal/cac-04-1999/st_07_karimov.shtml

against the Tajik opposition beside PFT.²³⁰ Dostum defined his mission in Afghanistan as a buffer between fundamentalists (he means Tajik Mujahideens) and Central Asian republics. He did not mention who assigned him to this mission. But it was obvious that Dostum was operating according to instructions of Karimov.

It was suggested that the rhetoric of Afghani Tajiks about the creation of “Bigger Tajikistan” was exaggerated. For example Qosimsho Iskandarov, wrote that:

Nobody takes seriously the rhetoric about creation of ‘Bigger Tajikistan’, and in our opinion too, it is not realistic. On the contrary, in the case of Uzbeks, many analysts indicate that there is an increasing tendency toward unification among the Uzbeks living in different countries.²³¹

Paradoxically, Karimov’s, thus Dostum’s, plan to block the Tajik “fundamentalists” helped Taliban movement that was regarded more radical than Tajik mujahideens, to increase its zone of influence in Afghanistan. As Shah Masud’s forces had fought against the Soviet invasion, Russian scholars and politicians kept their silence about Uzbekistan’s policy in Afghanistan.²³² Later, however, with the advancement of Taliban to the north, Uzbekistan’s and Russia’s concerns about this movement increased. Moscow now described the Taliban movement as the puppet of the United States and Pakistan, and believed that Taliban would be used as a “Trojan Horse” in order to get close to borders of China, thus decreasing Russia’s influence. The advancement of Taliban to the territories of Dostum and increasing attacks of opposition fighters against Rahmonov’s regime, both within and outside Tajikistan, made Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to rethink the issue. All three countries decided to support the Northern Alliance of Afghani Uzbeks and Tajiks against the Taliban movement. Afghani Tajiks who were once described as fundamentalists now had become allies against the “fundamentalist” Taliban movement. The advancement of the

²³⁰ Ibid.

²³¹ Iskandarov, Qosimsho. ‘Vliyanie Afganskogo Krizisa na Situatsiyu v Tajikistane (The Impact of Afghan Crisis on the Situation in Tajikistan)’.

²³² Ibid.

Taliban increased the initiatives for the Peace Agreement. Moscow pressured Dushanbe to sign the Peace Treaty with UTO as soon as possible. Thus, developments in Afghanistan accelerated the signing of Peace Agreement in 1997.

Securing drug and arm trade routes was another reason for the interference of Afghanistani warlords in Tajikistani domestic affairs. Due to more than 20 years of instability, Afghanistan has become a significant source of arms and narcotics. According to Dushanbe, Tashkent and Moscow, a majority of arms used by the fighters of the Tajik opposition were obtained from Afghanistan. Arms were provided both for ideological reasons and simply as means of barter for daily needs. Qosimsho Iskandorov claims that arms obtained from Afghanistan were one of the main reasons of the eruption of the Civil War. Because of the lack of governmental control over the Tajik-Afghan border, at the beginning of the 1990s, Afghanistan became the main market of arms for the newly emerging unofficial establishments in Tajikistan.²³³ During demonstrations in the central squares of Dushanbe, participators of demonstrations were being armed. The majority of these arms were obtained from Afghanistan.²³⁴

It is possible to suggest that these arms that were from Afghanistan played an important role in the eruption of the Civil War. During the Soviet era weapons were under the control of Sughdis. Consequently, people from other regions could not rise against them. With the arms obtained from Afghanistan, the physical balance changed in the country. Now those people, who were against the seven decades of Sughdi rule started to resort to arms in their resistance against the existing regime. This in turn led to the eruption of armed conflict.

As instability in Tajikistan also means lack of governmental control over drug-trade routes, this works for the benefit of drug-traders, if one takes into account the huge market with 70-75 billion US dollars on an annual turnover rate. According to International Crises Group (ICG) from the six main routes of drug-

²³³ Oliver Roy does not agree with these kinds of arguments. He claims that a majority of the arms of opposition groups were obtained from within Tajikistan but not from Afghanistan. In Roy, Oliver. **Speech in a Forum on Tajikistani Conflict**, organized by United States Institute of Peace, June 6, 1995

²³⁴ Iskandarov, Qosimsho. **‘Vliyanie Afganskogo Krizisa na Situatsiyu v Tajikistane (The Impact of Afghan Crisis on the Situation in Tajikistan)’**.

trafficking, three run through Tajikistan, one through Turkmenistan, two through Iran and Pakistan.²³⁵ Operating through Tajikistan is easier for drug-traders because of its long and ill-protected border with Afghanistan, impoverished economy, domestic instability and weak army. Several times Russian border guards were attacked by the drug-traders. Because of high unemployment in Tajikistan, the drug-traders can easily find couriers, who are ready to risk their lives. Armed clashes between the drug-traders and security forces have been playing a destabilizing role in Tajikistan.

5.4 The Role of Iran in the Eruption of the Tajik Civil War

As Tajiks are Persian speakers, the interest of Iran in Tajikistan was much higher than the other four Turkic Central Asian republics. Mutual official relationships between Iran and Tajikistan were established immediately after independence. The relations enhanced especially while the IRPT was sharing power in Dushanbe in late 1992. Iran was providing support to opposition forces in order to create a client government in Tajikistan.²³⁶ This policy of Iran initially deteriorated its good relations with Moscow, which supported the Kulobi-Sughdi bloc against the Iranian backed IRPT. But as Iran did not want to put its strategic relations with Moscow in danger, it later changed its attitude by officially declaring its policy as “non-interventionist”. But this was only in rhetoric, in reality Iran played an important role to persuade the Tajik government to start negotiations with the UTO. The shift of the Iranian policy was reported in *Kazakstanskaya Pravda* like this:

Tehran initially reacted ‘quite sharply’ to Russian backing for the communists, and in September 1992, Moscow cautioned Tehran against involvement in the Tajik crises, in a Foreign Ministry statement warning against outside interference. The Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister, however, announced that Tehran had not interfered in the ‘internal affairs of Tajikistan’, and did not intend to do so, and a few months later Rafsanjani himself reportedly gave similar assurance of ‘non-intervention’.²³⁷

²³⁵ International Crises Group (ICG). ‘CA: Drug and Conflict’, p. 6

²³⁶ Neumann, Iver. & Solodovnik, Sergey. ‘Russian and CIS peace enforcement in Tajikistan’.

²³⁷ Kazakstanskaya pravda, 8 September 1992, quoted in Rubin, Bernett. **Causes and Consequences of the Civil War in Tajikistan**, p.51

In reality, during the Civil War, Iran was supporting IRPT, DPT and Rastokhez by providing their members with accommodation and diplomatic support.²³⁸ The Kremlin was unhappy with this policy of Iran. However, it soon accepted that Iran's position, as an Islamic and Persian regime, required it to act like this. Both Moscow and Iran did not want to damage their bilateral relations due to the conflict in Tajikistan. Iran needed Russia, because Russia had become the primary source of arms for Iran. Russia, too, needed Iran. Because Iran's money for arms sale was needed for the hampered Russian economy. Thus, Russia and Iran decided to resolve the Tajik problem, which was the only controversial issue between the two. Russia asked Iran to persuade the UTO leaders to sit in negotiation table with the Tajik government.²³⁹ In the meeting between two Foreign Ministers, Velayeti and Premakov in March 1996, it was agreed that Iran would use its influence to encourage Tajik opposition forces to end the clashes. During this meeting, Iranian support to the UTO was mentioned, but they were totally attributed to nonofficial organizations, in order not to damage official relations.

In general Tehran refrained from playing a major role in the Tajik Civil War, both not to offend Moscow and its wish to maintain peace in the region.²⁴⁰ Consequently, Iran would play an important role in ending the conflict. Taliban advance to northern Afghanistan made Russia and Uzbekistan to join Iran in supporting Burhaneddin Rabbani, though he was actively supporting UTO. After this event in Afghanistan, all four major foreign players of Tajik Civil War united against the common enemy of Taliban. After this event, negotiations accelerated and finally the Peace Agreement was signed on 27 June 1997.

²³⁸ Atkin, Muriel. '**Tajikistan: A Case Study for Conflict Potential**'.

²³⁹ Zviagelskaya, **The Tajik Conflict**, Russian Center for Strategic Research, Joint Edition with Ithaca Press, United Kingdom, 1997, p.10

²⁴⁰ Peimani, Hooman. **Regional Security and the Future of Central Asia: The Competition of Iran, Turkey, and Russia**, p. 32

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

According to many scholars the sole reason of the Tajik Civil War was regionalism and that all other factors originated from regionalism. In other words, regionalism in Tajikistan led to both Islamic revivalism and the intervention of external powers in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. Some scholars argue that the Tajik Civil War erupted because of economic hardships²⁴¹ and that the war was not an ideological war. Of course, economic decadence increased the competition between regions. But again economic hardship cannot be regarded as the sole reason of the eruption of the Civil War. In Tajikistan, the armed struggle against Sughdis was predominantly legitimized by Islamic principles and the struggle was depicted as a resistance against “atheists”. In short, as I tried to analyze in the thesis in understanding the Tajik Civil War, all three factors- Islam, regionalism and external factors- should be considered, more or less, as intermingled phenomena. None of the three factors was the basic result of the other two factors. Thus in the case of absence of any of these three factors, the Tajik Civil War would not erupt. Consequently, in analyzing the Tajik Civil War one should not ignore any of these three factors. Absence of any of them will give an incomplete picture of the the Civil War. Similarly, none of the three factors that led to the Tajik Civil War and shaped events developed before, during and after the Civil War would lead to the Civil War alone.

As an example, it is possible to suggest that Uzbeks were also as religious as Tajiks. But no such war erupted in Uzbekistan, because there was no Afghani Tajik or Iran-like Turkic state or community that could provide support for Uzbek

²⁴¹ Tadjbakhsh, Shahrbanou. ‘**Economic Regionalism In Tajikistan**’, The Royal Institution of International Affairs, United Kingdom, March 1996.

opposition groups. Turkey that often emphasize cultural, linguistic and historic ties with Uzbekistan is a secular state. Consequently, its support for Islamists could not be imagined. Unlike Burhaneddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masud, Abdurashid Dostum (whose forces had been fierce shock-troops for the Soviet-controlled Najibullah regime) was not an Islamist. Consequently his support for Islamists and democrats of Uzbekistan could not be imagined. In addition to this, Dostum was not as powerful as Rabbani and Shah Masud, while Uzbekistan was not as weak as Tajikistan. Consequently, while Rabbani and Shah Masud could direct activities of opposition forces in Tajikistan, Dostum's activities were directed by Tashkent, but not vice versa. This shows that the revival of Islamists could not be enough for the eruption of the Civil War in Tajikistan unless supported by external forces. If there was no revival of Islam among Tajikistani Muslims since *perestroika* and *glasnost*, Gharmis would not be able to resort to Islamism in order to mobilize against their rival, Sughdis. In this case, Sughdis would be able to keep the *status quo* in which the upper strata of the pyramid would continue to be controlled by them. In the eve and during the Civil War, fighters of IRPT, majority of whom were Gharmi youths, played important roles in armed conflicts. That was because of the fact that their resort armed resistance against the government were legitimized by Islam that promised "heavenly rewards" to those that were killed in the conflict. According to them, they were fighting against "atheists", thus "infidels". By bearing this reality in mind, one can say that without the legitimization of Islam, opposition forces would not be mobilized so successfully. Moreover if a majority of the Tajikistani Muslims were not religious, from the start, they would not support IRPT. Finally, in the case of absence of Islam as the player in the Civil War Iran and Afghanistani Muslims would not be interested much in the domestic affairs of Tajikistan. Thus, without Islamism the Civil War might not erupt. Consequently, the role of Islam in Tajik Civil War cannot be ignored.

Similarly, regionalism cannot be the only factor that led to the eruption of Tajik Civil War, although many of the scholars that have analyzed the event try to show regionalism as the only factor that led to the Civil War and shaped the events during and after the war. This argument ignores the role of both Islam and

external powers. Analyzing the Tajik Civil War without referring to Islam and external factors is not accurate, thus cannot give whole picture of the event. Almost in all Central Asian countries there are problems of factionalism. In Uzbekistan, there is struggle for power between Tashkent and Samarqandi clans. In Kazakhstan, there is competition for power between the three Juzs (Big, Middle and Small Juzs). In Turkmenistan members of the Tekke tribe do not want to share power with members of other tribes. In the case of latter two countries, Islam was not used as a mobilizing force by dissatisfied groups. If it was used in that way, the developments could be different. Therefore in the absence of regionalism the war more probably would not erupt in Tajikistan. If there was no regionalism, all Tajikistani people would be able to participate in governmental structures. In that case rivalries would not be on regional basis but would be on ideological basis, such as democracy versus communism, Islam versus communism etc. As there would be no accumulated hatred between the members of different ideologies because of the dominance of only one ideology during the Soviet Union, the Civil War, although it could have erupted, most probably would not turn out to be that bloody. After several skirmishes, the stability could have been restored soon because of the lack of regional grassroots supports that were so crucial in the Tajik Civil War. Consequently, after a few small skirmishes, the conflict between the ideological rivals would probably be solved.

Without the interference of Russia and Uzbekistan, the coalition government established by the opposition and Nabiev's regime might be able to take control of whole Tajikistan. This coalition in long run could have expanded the governing structure by including representatives of all regional groups through peaceful methods. The coalition had this potential because it was already including representatives of Sughd, Gharm, Pomir and Dushanbe. But direct intervention of Russia and Uzbekistan did not allow the coalition government to realize such representation. Their support to PFT increased instability in Tajikistan and led to the eruption of brutal conflicts.

Similarly, the arms supported by Afghanistani Muslims to the Tajik opposition further aggravated the situation in Tajikistan. Thus if there was no involvement of Islamist Afghanistani Tajiks and Iranian Islamic regime, the future of Tajikistan

would have been different. If in Afghanistan the Tajik leaders had the attitude of Dostum and if Iran was a secular state, the faith of Tajikistan would more probably be similar to that of Uzbekistan. Without Iran's and Afghanistani Muslims' support, the Tajik opposition, first of all, would not be able to rise to power, and would not be able realize effective resistance both in political arena and in battlefield. Thus, without the interference of Russia, Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan, regardless of the revival of Islam among Tajikistani people and existence of regionalism in the country, the Civil War would not erupt. Indeed, in the case of the Tajik Civil War distinguishing domestic factors from external ones was almost impossible. In short, in the Tajik Civil War all the three factors that are analyzed in this thesis intermingled with each other. In the case of absence of any of them, the Civil War would not erupt.

As the bloody Civil War in general discouraged political participation of citizens in Tajikistan, interest in political Islam decreased in post-Civil War Tajikistan. In the 2000 parliamentary elections, IRPT could get only two seats in the lower chamber of the parliament. An opinion poll held by Tsentr Shark in October 2000 in Dushanbe and Khujand showed that 98% of the respondents are not interested in the activities of parties such as the IRPT. 78% of the respondents also said that state and religion should be separated.²⁴² Although interest in political Islam decreased significantly, the role of Islam in society is increasing dramatically. This trend, in the long run, can work to the benefit of IRPT that eventually aims to establish an Islamic state.²⁴³ As was envisaged by IRPT, during this process the society should be prepared for the change. In order to continue its existence, IRPT should revise some of its policies. Its grassroots supporters are changing their orientation toward other Islamic groups, such as Hizbut Tahrir. According to grassroots supporters, especially the new generation, IRPT is becoming too conformist, thus not meeting demands of its members.²⁴⁴ To reattract attention of these kinds of members IRPT should formulate new tactics

²⁴² Olimova, Saodat. **'Political Islam'**.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

and methods. Otherwise jobless youngsters will be more inclined in extremist and terrorist groups.

Today, Tajikistan is relatively stable. But because of economic decay, corruption, still powerful regionalism, warlords and inadequate international aid, another Civil War can erupt. To prevent such a conflict, international aid, which should be used for the economic development of the country have to be increased.

To solve the problem of regionalism in Tajikistan, the government should expand political participation, encourage freedom of press and speech and establish rule of law. Without these reforms, solving the problem of regionalism seems impossible. This was emphasized by the leader of Tajik IRP, Said Abdullah Nuri, as well. In one of his speeches he warned about another civil war if the government continues to harass old opposition groups' members.²⁴⁵ Those people who are being followed by the government can join the rebel Mahmud Khudoyberdiyev, who had launched an attack on Sughd region in 1999. Thus, regionalism is still a problem in Tajikistan the solution of which largely depends on the policies of the existing government in the longer run.

Externally, Tajikistan is still heavily dependant on Russian Federation. As was mentioned above a majority of Tajikistani budget is still provided by Russia. Uzbekistan's influence in Tajikistan has decreased after the Civil War. However in economic terms Tajikistan is still dependant on Uzbekistan. Consequently, Uzbekistan is still able to shape Tajikistani internal and external affairs by mostly using the card of economy. Afghanistani Tajiks due to the advance of Taliban had started to establish good contacts with Russia, thus with Dushanbe. Consequently, after the Peace Agreement, they gave up supporting one faction against another in Tajikistan. It means that, in foreseeable future, Afghanistani Tajiks will not play a destabilizing role in Tajikistan. After the Peace Agreement, Iran's role has increased further in Tajikistan. Due to its active role in negotiation process it won the confidence of Rahmonov regime and secured its close ties with the opposition bloc.

In short, there was a unique combination of several domestic and international

²⁴⁵ www.Ferghana.ru

factors, each of which played an important role in the emergence, development and ending of the Tajik Civil War.

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APPENDIX A

Recommendations for the Solution of Problem of Regionalism

There are many recommendations for the solution of regionalism existing in Tajikistan. Most of these recommendations are proposed by NGOs. Majority of them have similar recommendations. I will analyze two organizations' recommendations; Human Right Watch's (HRW) and International Crisis Group's (ICG).

Recommendations of HRW to the Government

- respect its obligations under international law regarding freedom of expression, and cease all forms of intimidation or harassment of the press;
- ensure that security and police forces' conduct respects international standards;
- cease the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment of individuals in custody;
- respect the right of all citizens to peacefully express their views;
- sign and ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Recommendations of ICG to the Government

- include former opposition figures at all levels of government as mandated in the 1997 peace agreement
- end the selective prosecution of former opposition members for crimes covered by the Amnesty Law of 1997
- end censorship and simplify media licensing procedures
- revise the Election Code to provide more transparent elections and greater legal protection for political parties
- make government hiring more transparent and professional to reduce the influence of corruption and clan connections

- establish an anti-corruption task-force with government, parliament, opposition, media, NGO and donor community participation
- continue efforts to extend law and order throughout the country, but with better control over and reform of security forces and law enforcement bodies;
- end harassment of Muslims under guise of combating extremist groups

As one can see from recommendations to government, both organizations emphasize on inclusion of representatives of regional-based opposition groups in the administration of government. This is an important point which was ignored by Sughdis during whole period of Soviet regime. Accumulated atrocities between different regional groups could be eliminated if they had been involved in administration of the republic. Then instead of resorting to arm struggle, they may have chosen peaceful methods for getting prestigious posts.

Existing government is predominantly ruled by one regional 'clan' which is Kulobi. Thus if government wants to keep existing peace it should expand political participation to representatives of every regions of the country

Second emphasized point is the liberalization of politics and press. If this condition is provided, people can easily express their problems, demands and opinions about any thing. This will make people to solve their problems through peaceful methods. If free speech is not promoted by the government, it will be difficult to detain problems of different regional people. Thus it will be impossible to solve their problems before they resort to violent methods to realize their demands. Thus state should promote liberalization of politics, press, free speech and other democratic features which provide peaceful means for solving the problems.

Third emphasized point is the establishment of rule of law. Without rule of law high-ranking officials may easily abuse their authorities and can arbitrarily arrest people. This in turn will increase tensions between regions. Today's government has made some arbitrary arrests in Sughd. These activities only increased hatred of Sughdis toward the government. Then rule of law is must in order to avoid this kind of tensions.

APPENDIX B

Map of Tajikistan



Source: <http://www.untj.org/undp/publications/nhdr/map.html>