

Lecture 4:

An Arc of Instability? - Security Dilemmas in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan

Topics: -

1. *Arcs of Instability, Zones of War?*
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1. Arcs of Instability, Zone of War?

From 1946-1989 the borders of the former Soviet Union represented some of the most **heavily fortified frontiers** in the world. From the Chinese border, along the frontiers of Iran and Turkey, this was a long and difficult zone of potential confrontation. Afghanistan was soon drawn into this Cold War game with the Soviet invasion of 1979. Afghanistan and Tajikistan remained subject to the legacies of **fierce civil wars** through the 1990s, and to different forms of **international intervention**. In some theories, this might be viewed as a **transnational arc of instability**, with **transnational problems** in Afghanistan and Tajikistan flowing in nearby states, with particular threats for Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and a related pattern of instability across the Caucasus into southern Russia and Chechnya (see Fredholm 2000; Bennigsen 1999). On this basis, the **region might be destabilised into an entrenched 'zone of war'**, rather than a zone of peaceful development. This has not eventuated, even through the troubled 2001-2007 period, but much needs to be done to reduce destabilising conflicts and their outcomes. Likewise, such examples of conflict remain a **negative factor for the stability of the entire region of 'Greater Central Asia'**. However, this stabilisation needs to consider the cross-impact for human rights, democratisation, and balanced development, issues that remain highly problematic for Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan (considered in later weeks).

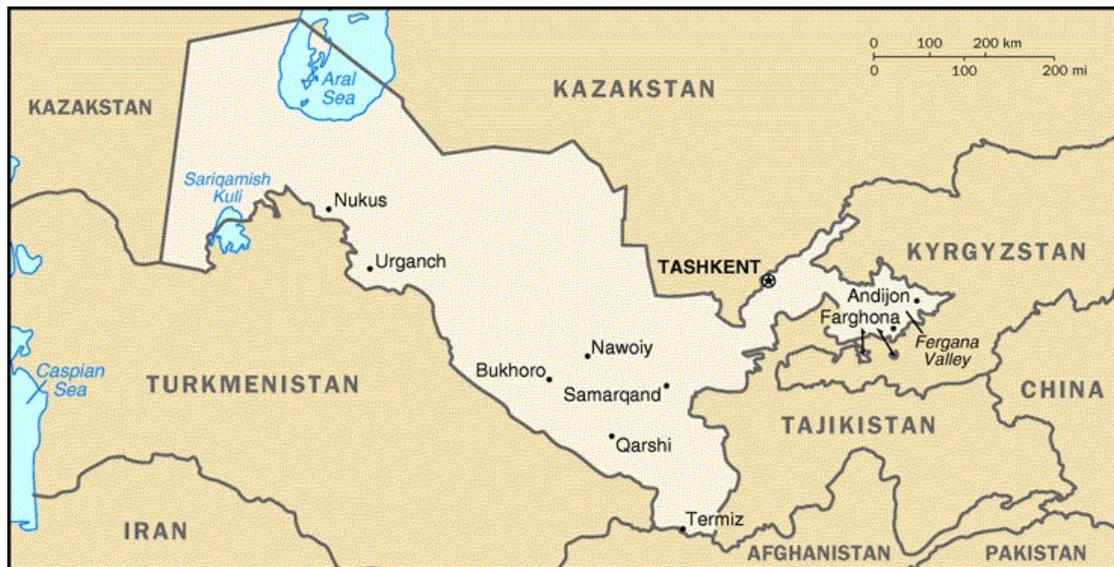
Uzbekistan represents a rather mixed legacy: though potentially a **major power regionally**, it has been prevented from taking up this role by **ethnic, economic and political liabilities**. At present, the pattern of development within Uzbekistan remains lopsided regionally and demographically (Hanks 2000). It has since been disturbed by both limits in its democratic process, as well as by the action of **Islamic militants**, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) which had been active in Uzbekistan and also launched raids in to Kyrgyzstan, through 1999-2001 (Rashid 2001), and which may have revived itself in different forms after 2002. These factors have led to increased cooperation among region states and security agenda run through the CSTO and SCO (see weeks 2-3), but now **premised on notions of stronger security and**

monitored borders. Likewise, **democratic liberties** have not yet been fully realised under the notion of ongoing security concerns, **leading to a major crack-down on dissidents through 2005,-2006 and some tilt of Uzbekistan back toward pro-Russian policies through 2006-2007.**

Through 2001-2007 the ongoing intervention in Afghanistan opened up **new possibilities for regional cooperation**, as well as **changing power balances** among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, the United States, while several European nations became, including Britain, France (see Blua 2002) and Germany (economically and diplomatically), while NATO has taken an ongoing role in Afghanistan. U.S. military cooperation with Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan was sustained through 2001-2004. The U.S. negotiated access to the Khanabad (Uzbekistan) and Manas (Kyrgyzstan) airbases as a staging point for operations against Afghanistan (Feifer 2002), as well as operating a forward command and operations centres (see further *Strategic Comments* 2004). However, through **2004-2006 Uzbekistan has been concerned by U.S. support for political reform** in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, leading to low level tensions between the two countries and US military withdrawal from Uzbekistan. Likewise, the control of illegal drug flows (Kohn 2001), smuggling (arms and people), illicit financial flows, coping with refugees, flows of economic migrants across borders (e.g., out of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, see McDougall 2006), and rebuilding nearby shattered nations have meant that **Uzbekistan abuts a region of relative instability in Central Asia.** To some degree it has **presented itself as a 'front-line' state**, whose economic and democratic transition must be taken slowly (the so-called '**Uzbek Model**' or '**Uzbek Road**', see below). It is uncertain, however, whether these policies will be enough to ensure a secure future for the country.

2. History of Uzbek Nationality

The earliest **origins of the Uzbeks** are uncertain: at first, they were **probably 'Tartar' warriors, probably of the Golden Horde**, who followed the Mongols into Central Asia, with the region itself having come under prior influence from the Persians and Huns (Allworth 1990, pp32-3; *Country Watch* 2003a). The Uzbeks enter known political history as **a powerful tribal Confederation which circa 1400 AD** controlled a large section of territory just north of the Caspian and Aral Sea, slightly north of current Uzbekistan (Allworth 1990, p7). The Uzbeks first sided with groups opposing both Russia and the empire of Timurid (founded by Amir Timur, reigning 1370-1405, known in the West as Tamerlane, who would later on be adopted as an Uzbek 'hero', Weisbrode 1997). They were feared for their fighting prowess, as well as noted for their hospitality and generosity (Allworth 1990, p20; see further Weisbrode 1997). Though other races sometimes viewed Uzbeks as 'villains', their 'conception of justice included a belief that the ruler would deal fairly and responsibly with his subjects, good and bad, high and low' (Allworth 1990, p8). These themes of justice and duty would later on be reinforced by the **impact of Islam, and particularly by the influence of Sufism (indigenous and mystical forms of Islam) upon Uzbek leaders** (Allworth 1990, pp63-4).



Map of Uzbekistan (Courtesy PCL Map Library)

As noted by Edward Allworth, after 'the major migration south at the end of the 15th century, large bodies of Uzbeks lived with different people, often distant kinsmen in Western Siberia, Turkistan, the khanates of Khwarazm and Qoqan plus the emirate of Bukhara, northern Afghanistan and Khurasan' (Allworth 1990, p12). In effect, **Uzbeks were spread across much of the old Silk Road trading route**, as well as in the current territory of Uzbekistan (for recent claims of ethnic oppression of Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan, see *Eurasianet* 2006a). Although not creating any large empire, they became a major regional force after the rule of their Abul Khayr Khan (1412-68 A.D.). It was **after the 15th century that the Uzbek ethnic identity began to separate from the Kazakh groups** (Allworth 1990, pp46-7) who occupied territory slightly to the north. In such a location, **the emirates of the Uzbeks were also trading cities**, with diplomacy and trade often linked (Allworth 1990, pp80-1). Independent khanates developed in Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand, with a mixture of Turkish, Persian and Arabian influences (*Country Watch* 2003a).

The rulers of Bukhara and Khiva at first tried to cooperate with the **growing power of the Russian state**, but soon found their caravans and outer districts attacked by Russian Cossacks and other allies, while Russian diplomats collected military intelligence on the cities of Central Asia (Allworth 1990, p88). In the 18th century, the Russians also became convinced of the illusion that Central Asia was awash with resources of easily mined gold, helping motivate further intervention (Allworth 1990, p93, p98). Although some of these cities began to modernise in the late 19th century (casting better cannon and bringing in printing presses), they would **eventually fall under effective Russian control by 1895**.

Faced with the realities of this defeat, that **Islamic reformers** within the region created the **Jadid movement** during the early 20th century, hoping to link modern humanitarian and scientific education to a tolerant, though religiously strict, form of Islam (Allworth 1990, pp146-7). They opened 'new schools', performed plays, and opened some 23 newspapers and journals before 1917 (Allworth 1990, p152). In Khiva, they also sought to force a constitutional monarchy on the Khan. For a short

time, the Soviet state favoured an enlightened nationalities policy, declaring the equality of all 'toiling people' during the 1917-1918 period (Hosking 1992, pp98-99), but this would soon be reversed. The declaration of the Turkestan Autonomous Government, based on Qoqan, certain not survive once it was crushed by Soviet forces during the turbulent period of 1917-20 (Hosking 1992, pp108-113; Allworth 1990, pp172-3).

Unfortunately, any Russian tendency to tolerate these modernising movements was not sustained when **nationalism seemed to clash with communist internationalism**. By 1923 the Bolsheviks had reversed such policies and Soviet leaders **regarded such nationalist movements with suspicion**. Local leaders, such as Sultan Galiev, were arrested and eventually sent to concentration camps or executed. **The modernising trend in local Islam was repressed by the Russians** and then the Soviets, as well as opposed by orthodox clergy. After this, **Basmachi and Qorbashi fighters** would wage a guerilla war against the Soviets through the 1920s and early 30s. The Soviets would also decide in time that a unified Turkestan (incorporating all of Central Asia) was not a good idea, **from 1924 dividing the region into the separate republics** (with some further boundary alterations) which we have today. These borders not only created complex, multi-ethnic states, but also left complex and difficult borders divisions, e.g. across the Fergana Valley (*Strategic Comments* 2000). Likewise, they engaged in a **policy to crush religious 'superstition', eradicate Islamic religious traditions**, and to 'liberate and modernise' Muslim women (Keller 1998). These programs were of limited success.

After this time, **the Soviets used the issue of ethnicity as a political tool**: -

Communist officials, brandishing accusations of creating ethnic conflict, beat down Central Asia efforts to form new heterogeneous states based on existing relationships among local subgroups. The political authorities blamed Central Asians with independent ideas for exacerbating ethnic tensions in the region. *Ethnic tension* became a code phrase to condemn any local government initiative outside Russian-controlled structures. (Allworth 1990, p195)

With tools such as these Stalin sought to **repress nationalist movements**, and emasculate a rising intellectual class which might challenge the Communist Party. This was aided, right through until the early 1980s, by a thorough and effective system of state censorship. Such rhetoric would be repeated in the late 1980s, when Gorbachev at first opposed self-determination movements, arguing that nationalist leaders were nothing more than selfish thugs stirring up ethnic conflict.

Yet all these efforts **could not destroy an enduring Uzbek sense of identity**, and pride in the heritage of Central Asia. The 2,500 year anniversary of **Samarkand**, the capital of the empire created by Timur (Tamerlane, 1336-1405, a Turkmen-Mongol conqueror who created an inland empire in the region), was celebrated in 1968 (Allworth 1992, p245). The **conqueror Timur would be adopted a part of national culture** (see Weisbrode 1997), **as would Islamic and Sufi saints**, whose tombs remained secretly venerated. These issues have been revived as part of a national identity project: -

The effort in Uzbekistan chiefly involves turning Timur into a national "Uzbek" hero. Monuments to Timur and his grandson Ulugbek have risen where statues of Lenin once stood. The new indoctrination attempts not only to fill the void left by communism's fall but to reinforce the notion of Uzbekistan as a naturally evolving nation-state with deep roots in the past. (Feif 2002)

As early as 1961 Said Shermuhamedaw could proudly speak of **Uzbek national traits** which included 'patriotism, heroism, amicability, humanitarianism, and industriousness', with Uzbeks especially notable for 'hospitality, courtesy, and love of children, along with musicality and poetic nature' (Allworth 1992, p276). Likewise, Uzbeks can draw on certain social traditions which helped them negotiate their way through the post-Soviet world, e.g. the custom of the *bazam*, a formal intellectual conversation in which all sit in a circle, all equal, though a special guest might sit in the position facing the entrance to the room (Allworth 1990, p290). It remains to be seen, however, how far this sense of **Uzbek nationalism** can be mobilised to support the government in the early 21st century (see below).

3. Uzbekistan: Conflict and Modernisation

Uzbekistan is not only the **most populous state in Central Asia**, with over 25 million, but has **considerable ethnic diversity**: 71% are Uzbeks, with Russian (6%), Tajik (5%), Kazakh, Tartar and Karakalpal minorities, along with ethnic Koreans (perhaps as large as 7%), and smaller numbers of Germans and Poles (DFAT 2001; Feif 2002; Vatanka 2003). It is also one of the states most affected in the struggle throughout the early 1990s between **Islam**, partly influenced by the Arab Wahabism sect as well as the opposing Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), and the **authoritarian government of President Islam Karimov** (Rashid 1994, pp78-81, p99, p101). Since 1989, the republic has also been shaken by **ethnic violence** (1989, against Meskhetian Turks) and riots against inflation (mostly by students, from 1992). Likewise, a **major crack-down against dissent occurred in May 2005**, especially focused in the city of **Andijon**, leading to condemnation by groups such as Human Rights Watch, HRW, as well as criticism of a relatively mild U.S. response to these trends (Saidazimova 2006b). The follow on from the **Andijan protest has moved Uzbekistan towards a stronger internal security regime through 2006-2007** (see below).

In part, the **border and ethnic tensions of the entire region** were engineered by Stalin's intentional division of the area into republics which were heterogeneous, thereby ensuring that diverse tribal, cultural and language groups would be placed together in one republic. The most classic statement of this is the division of the most fertile agricultural land in the region, the **Fergana valley**, between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Rashid 1994, p89, p100). One of the ironies of the region is that due to extremely mountainous, desert, or cold terrain, there are only limited pockets of naturally fertile land in Central Asia (approximately on 15% of the entire region is arable). This means that **conflicts over control of fertile valley land** were possible, and remained a fear through 2000-2006. Furthermore, through 1999-2001, the Fergana valley was an area where **flows of drugs and the movement of militant Islamic groups managed to partly destabilise** Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, though cooperation in the long-term was rebuilt (*Strategic Comments*

2000). Concerns have been raised that this **transnational instability has continued through 2005-2007.**

Soviet agricultural policies, as we have seen, created large irrigation schemes that boosted cotton production helped destroy much fertile land in the northeast through salination, excessive use of fertilisers, and has also resulted in the almost complete **destruction of the Aral Sea**. This problem effected Uzbekistan especially, where **cotton production** rose from 2.24 to 9.10 million tons between 1940 and 1980 (Rashid 1994, p91). As of the mid-1990s, Uzbekistan produced 20% of the world's cotton (Jones 1995b) and with high prices in the mid-90s, hoped to maintain good cash flows into the country (Vatanka 2003). However, low international prices at the end of the 1990s and poor crops in 2000 reduced income through 2001, while there were also increases in the price of local food stuffs (DFAT 2001). As we have seen (lecture 3), problems in water usage, irrigation, and damage to the Aral Sea has had a **negative impact the ability of the country to rely too strongly on cotton production**. Through 2003 growth was slow, only 1.5% growth in GDP, with some rebound to 3.5% in 2005 (DFAT 2005).

Aside from cotton, Uzbekistan does have a **range of other natural resources** that need further development, along with **gas and some oil resources**. As noted by Ahmed Rashid, much gas still goes via Russian pipelines: -

Uzbekistan has a large natural gas industry, which produced 41 billion cubic metres in 1991, much of it from the Mubarek gas fields. Uzbek gas is still exported along a pipeline that stretches from Bukhara to the Urals. Uzbekistan's petroleum production in 1990 was 2.8 million tons and a large oilfield was discovered in the Ferghana valley in March 1992. (Rashid 1994, p94)

The country also **exports gold, chemicals and some machinery** and manufactured goods, and the country has been able to sustain GDP real growth of over 7% for the 2004-2006 period (DFAT 2006). Uzbekistan, however, like nearby Kazakhstan, has the problem of how to export its oil and gas onto the world market, and at but still **relies in large part on Russian infrastructure and pipelines, though in the long-term in may be able to network with project eastward pipelines from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to PRC**. At present, it produces more than enough oil for its own needs, and has large gas fields that **if developed would make it the eight-largest gas producer globally** (Feif 2002). It has had some problems in mobilising resources and investment for future modernisation of its fields (Feif 2002). Through 2004-2007 new pipeline routes have come on line for the region (through Turkey, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline), but this will initially be of most benefit to Azerbaijan and then Kazakhstan (see Seminar 3; for one negative view of the safety and environmental problems surrounding the pipeline, see Kochladze 2005). **Russia remains a major route for gas exports**, 'with Gazprom in 2003 secured a monopoly over the export of natural gas from Uzbekistan', while 'Gazprom and UzbekNefteGaz (UNG) signed an agreement covering 2003-2012, with the Russian giant taking 2.5 BCM/year in 2003 and 2004' (*APS Review Gas Market Trends* 2004). In the future Ukraine may also become an importer of Uzbek gas, though at near market prices from early 2006, and in the long term Belarus and Western Europe could become importers (*APS Review Gas Market Trends* 2004).

Through 2005 'gas export income should account for 35% of the country's total revenue, compared with less than 10% in 2000' (*APS Review Gas Market Trends* 2004). **Russian companies such as Gazprom and Lukoil have lucrative deals in the country, sustaining Russian economic influence**, and it has been suggested that Russia might write off \$500 million in debts in return for control of two aircraft factories (Torbakov 2005)

The country also has some **metallic resources**, including sizeable gold reserves underground, and an **industrial base** which includes a quite well-skilled base of technicians and workers, although this has been eroded by some 1.7 million Russians leaving since 1988 (Rashid 1994, p95; literacy in the country verges on 100%). Another main problem had been the slowness of development of the private sector through the early and mid-1990s, with a mere 5-9% of gross national product accounted for in late 1992, though many joint ventures were planned (Rashid 1994, pp95-6). **Foreign investment** has only begun in earnest in Uzbekistan during the last ten years and remained relatively low in regional terms through 2003 (Vatanka 2003), while the **World Bank and the International Monetary Fund** initially only pledged some \$300 million in aid. The result was rather uneven economic development through the 1990s: "the government began a reform program in 1994, including tight monetary policies, privatisation of government-owned enterprises and improving the investment environment. Inflation continued to be a problem - it topped over 40 percent in 1996, was 58.8% in 1997, although it has dropped to 29 percent in 1999, but was still 27% in 2001 (Vatanka 2003). The IMF suspended lending to the country in 1996, failed to replace its official there for a time in 2001, and through 2002-2003 was **concerned about government economic policies and currency stability**, issues that were discussed under the IMF Staff Monitored Program of 2002 (Vatanka 2003).

This situation improved somewhat through 2004-2007. Foreign investment remained limited, in part through **concerns over corruption, government control of resources, and concerns over an overly strong set level for the currency** (the *som*), which made it not freely convertible, e.g. held for a time at the official rate of 430 som per American dollar, compared to the black market rate of 1,200 in 2002 (Feif 2002; through early 2002 the som moved to around 960 to the dollar). Through 2002, however, there was a serious **improvement in the rate of privatisation**: 'A total of 1,912 enterprises were privatized in 2002, 30% more than in 2001' (*Interfax* 2003a). The Asian Development Bank (ADB) also announced that it 'plans to provide Uzbekistan with over \$500 million in credits in 2003-2005 to implement 11 investment projects' (*Interfax* 2003b). **Through 2006-2007, the IMF viewed the monetary situation as stabilising**, in part due to export earnings, increased national reserves, though inflation remained quite high at around 20% through 2005-2006 (DFAT 2006; IMF 2006).

These trends may conceal **serious underemployment and rural poverty**. The government has attempted to pull back land under cotton production, and **become more self-sufficient in food** (Hans 2000, pp356-357), but as of 1994 there had been no serious attempt to reform land ownership, because the issue might have been explosive in the Fergana valley region (Rashid 1994, p96). Plans were set up in 1995-6 to establish long-term private leases for up to 40% of the irrigated land, but

have been slow in implementation (see Pomfret 2000). Aside from cotton, the country also exports tobacco, and can produce more food for internal consumption. However, Uzbekistan must also face both **relatively high population growth and the fact that a large number of young people will try to enter its work-force in the next decade** (60% of the population are under 25 years of age). As a result, **the economy must grow at a very fast rate to ensure social stability** (Hanks 2000, p351). It is possible that by the year 2015 Uzbekistan might have a population of 36 million (Hanks 2000, p357). In large part, the country will rely on foreign direct investment (FDI) to stimulate such growth, but through the late 1990s the geographical spread of such investment tends were unbalanced, focusing on Tashkent region (Hanks 2000, p360). Poverty reduction programs have been running in the country since 2002 with new programs launched from 2005 with the advice of the IMF, World Bank, UNDP, and Asian Development Bank (ADB). However through 2003, **poverty rates remained around 22.5% in urban areas, and 30.5% in rural areas** with those living in small country towns often being in high risk of limited access to resources (IMF 2005).

Reform in the economy is based on a kind of **gradualism**, characterised as the '**Uzbek Road**': -

Stability, the early principal goal, is to be secured by pro-employment economic policies, public education, child allowances, and welfare allotments to neighborhood associations (mahallah) run by elders. Once self-sufficiency in energy and food has been secured, government guidance and investments will pursue growth by developing backward linkages into more extensive cotton processing, textiles, food processing, petrochemicals and plastics, and agricultural machinery. Imported equipment and technology are essential to this investment strategy, which if successful would increase exports of semi-fabricated and manufactured goods. (Spechler 2000)

The **main elements of this "Uzbek Road" include**: -

- Gradual reform, while maintaining social and political stability
- State role preserved in shaping industrialization priorities
- Self-sufficiency in energy and food
- Legal basis established for reforms and private sector
- Social protection of rural, dependent, and low-income groups (Spechler 2000)

This path, however, relies on 'rising government subsidies to buttress the industrial production and the social welfare network', as well as avoid social dislocation (Vatanka 2003). To be sustainable, **such a model needs a sound economy, effective taxation base, and non-corrupt government legal system**. With GDP per capita around US\$535 in 2006, equivalent to \$1,983 per capita in adjusted local purchasing power (PPP) terms, **development has been slow to reach all segments of the population** (DFAT 2004; DFAT 2005), this may be a difficult goal.

Uzbekistan is one of the few states in the region that has ensured that it has a strong military presence, cooperating with Russia at first in CIS defence

arrangements, then asserting a **more independent posture** since February 2000 (*Country Watch* 2003a). As noted by Rashid: -

<President> Karimov has created a National Guard of some seven hundred men and a new Ministry of Defence, staffed largely by Russian officers. The National Guard is being rapidly expanded. In early 1992 the government began to take over Russian military installations in agreement with Moscow, and in May all Uzbek soldiers serving outside Uzbekistan were recalled home to serve under a joint CIS-Uzbek military command which has 15,000 troops and 280 tanks as well as a large, modern air force. This command works closely with Moscow, as was seen by the military help given by Tashkent to pro-communist Tajik forces who defeated the Tajik Islamic opposition in December 1992.

While the civil war in Tajikistan preoccupied all Central Asia leaders, Karimov publicly proclaimed that he wanted Russia 'to be the guarantor of security in Central Asia'. (Rashid 1994, pp102-3)

In other words, Uzbekistan had at first favoured the CIS arrangement as a security guarantee, but it was reluctant to go all the way with Russia and has resisted initiatives for a new Eurasian Union. Uzbekistan has managed to build up a **regionally-strong national force**, as of 1995 including 20,000 in the army, a **small but modern airforce** including over 30 MiG-29s and plus Su-27s (Chipman 2005). By 1998, this had been strengthened further, with some 50,000 in the army, 17-19,000 Internal Security Troops, and 1,000 in the national guard (Chipman 1998, p164). Through 2006, there was an active defence force of 55,000, with **20,000 internal security and national-guard troops backed by 136 combat aircraft** (Chipman 2006).

In late 1999, Uzbekistan once again re-affirmed its **military cooperation with Russia** in a **Russo-Uzbek military cooperation agreement** designed to deepen coordination in a number of areas including military-technical cooperation. The agreement was signed for the 'sake of ensuring military security, fighting international terrorism, bolstering cooperation in the development and production of armaments and military equipment, and training military personnel for the Russian and Uzbek armed forces' (*ITAR/TASS* 1999). **A new round of intensified defence cooperation with Russia was formalised in late 2005**. This was formalised in an '**allied relations' treaty between the two countries in November 2005**, indicating a strong tilt towards Moscow and away from the West (see further below; Chipman 2006).

Uzbekistan has also had **tensions over its borders and border crossings with nearby states** due to 'smuggling' and outflows of capital from the economy: thus border crossings into Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan were closed in December 2002, even though any border disputes in theory had been resolved in negotiations through 2000-2002 (Vatanka 2003; *Country Watch* 2003a). Through **May 2005 tensions continued over refugee flows across the border to Kyrgyzstan**, with the border having been closed to flows. Uzbekistan has cooperated with the SCO, and through 2004 has called for an extension of security cooperation to areas of 'economic cooperation and cooperation in transport and communications' (*Xinhua* 2004a).

Uzbekistan's importance was further increased strategically once the United States and its allies decided to engage in military action against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda bases in Afghanistan. After negotiations with both Uzbekistan and Russia, **bases and facilities in Uzbekistan were used to set up communication, command**

and control centres, as well use of the major airbase at Khanabad (*Strategic Comments* 2004). As a result, this country in a sense became part of the 'front line' against terrorism, with its government also gaining de facto support for its hardline policies against Islam generally. Likewise, Uzbekistan hoped that its engagement as an ally of the United States will also result in long term economic and diplomatic benefits. Through 2002-2003 this resulted in **increased military aid and cooperation, worth initially \$160 million but soon totalling across all areas some \$508 million from 2002** (Feif 2002; Leech 2006, p84). This has led to some Russian fears that Uzbekistan might become 'another Turkey', cooperating with the U.S. and NATO (e.g. through the Partnership for Peace program, with joint exercises in the region in 1998 and 2000), but this time in the heart of Eurasia (Feif 2002). However, critics have noted that Karimov had been making only slow economic and political reform, in spite of commitments made in a March 2002 'strategic partnership agreement' (see Blua 2004). Through 2003-2004, U.S. Congress became concerned that this military cooperation should become **connected to improvements in human rights, democratisation, and good governance**, and the U.S. State Department does not regard the Uzbekistan as committed to human rights (Nazarov 2004; *Strategic Comments* 2004). **From late-2005 this relationship seriously declined:**

In October, in protest at the actions at Andijan <see below> the US blocked a \$23 billion aid payment to Uzbekistan. The EU, for its part, imposed an embargo on arms sales to Uzbekistan, and denied visas to Uzbek officials wishing to travel to Europe. Earlier, Uzbekistan decided not to renew the Status of Forces Agreement governing the US presence at Khanabad-Qarshi airbase; Washington had to close the base by the end of 2005. (Chipman 2006, p217).

Through 2005-2007 this has opened up the **opportunity for Russia to gain access to forward operating bases in Uzbekistan** (Torbakov 2005). Through early 2007 this led to: -

- Russian access to the airfield at Navoi in the centre of the country
- Uzbekistan will become part of a revived CIS Unified Air Defence system
- The Navoi base is near major uranium production and enrichment centres, in which Russia has interests
- Russia, if called upon, could deploy quickly to support regime stability in Central Asia in future (see Blank 2007)

Uzbekistan, then, remains an **important linchpin of Central Asia**, bordering most of the countries of Central Asia and also hosting many of its problems. Its **progress towards economic and social stability**, or the lack of such progress, is crucial in determining the future of Eurasian stability.

In spite of government preference for a secular style of government, there is no doubt that faith in **Islam has been growing within the country** - in 1993 the country only had some 200 mosques, in 1995 it could claim approximately 5,000 (Jones 1995b). Yet the **opposition parties, Birlik (Unity) and Erk parties had been banned from participating in elections** until 2003, with only the government People's Democratic Party and 'official' (co-opted) Fatherland Progress Party holding dominance in the 250 seats in the Parliament, technically the Oly Majlis or Supreme Assembly (Jones

1995b; Vatanka 2003). This trend continued through 2002-2005, though by 2004 both the Birlık (Unity) party, led by Turgunpulat Daminov, and the Erk (Freedom) opposition group had hoped to become more active politically in parliamentary elections planned for late 2004, while the next presidential elections will not be held till December 2007 (*Country Watch* 2003a). However, through December 2004 these independent parties, 'Erk (Freedom), Birlık (Unity), and Ozod Dehqonlar (Free Peasants) - have been banned from taking part', with **only pro-government parties effectively registered**, and only limited OSCE and CIS election monitoring (Eurasianet 2004). Erk's leader, Muhammad Solih, was living in exile in Europe (Eurasianet 2004). The government claimed that 70% of voters turned out in the 2004 elections, a claim not fully accepted by external commentators (Eurasianet 2004). Indeed, technically, the president's second and last term should have ended in January 2007, but **interpretation of parliamentary laws has allowed elections to be delayed till December 2007, with fears that constitutional amendments might allow a third term** or an indefinite extension of Karimov's position (Pannier 2007).

From the late 1990s **Uzbekistan began stepping up its operations against Muslim groups**, in particular against the **IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan)**, which it claimed had been involved in a February 1999 bombing outside the Parliament in Tashkent, killing 16, but not harming President Karimov, who may have been the target (Feif 2002). The **IMU had its origins in Islamic religious and social movements, especially in the Fergana Valley**: -

The IMU began as a small group of local imams, known as Adolat (justice), who in 1991 attempted to impose Islamic law to counter widespread corruption in Namangan, a city in the Fergana Valley, Uzbekistan's most fertile, densely populated, and conservative area. But Adolat turned toward extremism and began seeking the overthrow of the government the following year, when an official crackdown forced its members to flee to Tajikistan and Afghanistan. There they trained with Afghan mujahideen and built strong ties to both the Northern Alliance and the Taliban. The movement then gained popular Uzbek support when the state expanded its crackdown to include any practicing Muslims and their extended families; by 1997, for example, Uzbeks could be arrested simply for wearing traditional Muslim clothing, having a beard, or possessing Islamic literature. When bombs were set off in Tashkent in February 1999, allegedly by the IMU, although the charges remain unproven, mass arrests followed. But the state's heavy-handed tactics ended up convincing even moderate Islamists that only further violence could get the regime to change its ways. (Jones Luong & Weinthal 2002)

Since that time forces in Uzbekistan have been engaged in suppressing the IMU, which has also been involved in conflict in Kyrgyzstan, as well as drawing in recruits from Tajikistan and possibly even in China (Feif 2002). The IMU, **operating in the country side and transnationally**, may have had between 1,000-9,000 supporters, some of them trained in Afghanistan (Feif 2002). However, IMU has been **unable to gain strong support in the cities**, and had its ability to gain support from Afghanistan eroded after the 2001 US-led invasion. Its leader Juma Namangani may have been killed during 2002 in Afghanistan (Feif 2002), but the IMU is a rather decentralised organisation, not relying on a single leader. Through 2005 **the IMU may survive in a fragmented form** in Pakistan, Tajikistan, and underground to a limited degree in Uzbekistan, possibly now using the name Islamic Movement of Turkestan, perhaps indicating a more regional focus.

However, in turn Karimov also **cracked down on all forms of opposition**, including civil rights groups and more moderate Islamic organisations. This includes the 'Party of Liberation' (**Hizb-ut-Tahrir**), which aimed at an Islamic state by peaceful means (Feif 2002; *Country Watch* 2003a). Hizb-ut-Tahrir (HT), (also transliterated as Hezb it-Tahrir) 'operates highly secretive decentralized cells in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan', but many of whose members were arrested in Uzbekistan (Rashid 2001). As part of this operation, up to 7,000 Muslim opponents have been imprisoned, with up to 30 dying during detention (Polat 2002). In Tajikistan, likewise, Hizb-ut-Tahrir has been accused of a car bombing in February 2005, though the evidence is purely circumstantial, with The London-based organisation repeating that it is 'an Islamic intellectual and political entity' that is purely non-violent, though fears have been raised that a splinter-group may have become frustrated with its peaceful approach (Eurasia Insight 2005a). **Hizb-ut-Tahrir has now emerged as a loose international organisation seeking a peaceful transition** towards a new transnational global order based on Islamic values (a major conference was held by this organisation in late January 2007 in Sydney, McNicoll 2007).

Likewise, members of the **Human Rights Society of Uzbekistan**, even though the government allowed registration of the organisation in March 2002 (*Country Watch* 2003a), have been harassed and tortured, as well as villagers in the zones where the IMU have made incursions, e.g. along the Tajikistan border (Feif 2002). Through 2004, there was ongoing concern that charges of religious and political affiliation were being used to silence criticisms of the government, e.g. protests against the use of torture, with up to 12 Uzbeks currently being held on various 'anti-state' charges (Nazarov 2004). These trends have led to strong criticisms from Human Rights Watch and Freedom House, as well as outspoken comments by the British Ambassador to Uzbekistan, Craig Murray. Likewise, members of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) have met with Uzbek opposition groups, and in 2003 pledge to make their investments contingent on 'impartiality and press freedom, freedom of independent and nongovernment organizations, and human rights' (Nazarov 2004; see also Vatanka 2003). Pressure from the U.S., Europe and USAID has helped the government to create an '**action plan against torture**', but this seems to have made slow process (Nazarov 2004). Generally, human and minority rights only seem well protected at government convenience. Through 2005 there were **6,000 'political and religious prisoners'** in the country, and some reports suggest that since 1991 some 4,000 persons have been killed by state authorities (Watson & Page 2005).

As of 2002-2006, only five political parties, all approved by President Karimov, including the dominant PDPU, the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, were allowed to effectively participate in elections (Polat 2002; Eurasianet 2004a). President Karimov had already weakened powerful clan leaders in his government from October 1998, sacking two senior ministers and replacing them with loyal followers (*Economist* 1998). **Karimov was re-elected on 9 January 2000 for his second term, indicting the primacy once again of Presidential rule in the region.** The OSCE was concerned that a range of factors undermined the fairness of the election, and declined to confirm its fairness (Feif 2002; *Country Watch* 2003a),

suggesting that the 91.9% vote for Karimov should be viewed critically. His 'opponent' in the election, Jalalov, in fact was a supporter of Karimov and voted for him, while receiving a token 4.17% himself (*Country Watch* 2003a). A referendum (January 2002) was held to reform the operation of the Parliament and to also extend the presidential term from 5 up to **7 years**. The proposal passed with a claimed 'yes' vote of 92%, but among **widespread cynicism, non-participation and confusion** among the electorate (see Machleder 2002; Feif 2002). This trend was repeated in **December 2004 parliamentary elections in which opposition groups could not effectively participate**: -

A parliamentary election that does not feature a single opposition candidate is casting fresh doubt on President Islam Karimov's commitment to democratization in Uzbekistan. Election officials have excluded all opposition parties from the December 26 poll, prompting opposition members to call on voters and international observers to boycott the election. (Marat 2004)

Likewise, claims that presidential powers were reduced by amendments in 2003 were largely 'window-dressing', and also clauses that would prevent ex-presidents from being prosecuted (see Vatanka 2003). In October 2005, Sanjar Umarov of the Sunshine Uzbekistan opposition 'group' was arrested on embezzlement charges that may have been 'politically motivated' (BBC 2005a). These factors suggest **serious limitations to real democratic process** in the country (see further Luong 2002). With no opposition parties in parliament, and with presidential control of all appointments of judges, there is **no genuine pluralistic sharing of political power** in the country. It seems likely that Karimov will seek some extension of his office or powers in late 2007.

These religious and **political tensions came to a head through May 2005 in the regional city of Andijan** (Andizhan), which has a population of 300,000 and is the regional centre of the Uzbek part of the fertile and divided Fergana valley. **In May 2005 armed rebels tried to free comrades charged with religious extremism, while at the same time some 3,000 people protested against President Karimov** (*Australian* 2005a). The gunmen took 10 hostages, but in turn police fired into the crowds, killing hundreds. Final estimates of death went up from 500 to over 800, far more than the total of 187 reported by Uzbekistan's authorities (*Australian* 2005a; Watson & Page 2005; Kendziro 2006). Riots and clashes occurred in other parts of the valley, **while several hundred at least tried to cross over into nearby Kyrgyzstan**, but were stopped by Kyrgyzstan's border guards (Watson & Page 2005). President **Karimov blamed the Islamist group Hizb ut-Tahrir**, though at least up till 2004 that organisation had used peaceful means to support its project of an Islamic state in the region. It has been suggested that **the Andijan uprising was also a wider protest triggered by a sluggish and uneven economy, and by ongoing political oppression of all opposition movements**. At this stage, the U.S. did become somewhat more critical, but fell short of the outright condemnation made by UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw (Watson & Page 2005). Since then, both the US and EU have demanded an 'independent investigation' of the Andijan crisis, but this has been rejected by Uzbekistan (Torbakov 2005). From November 2005 the **EU imposed arms-sales and visa restrictions for top officials for one year** (BBC 2005a). President Karimov has

gone on to **rejected the US democratisation strategy**, suggesting that there is no single universal model for democracy (Torbakov 2005).

The **spill-over from the Andijan crisis** has been very serious. Disturbances by Islamic militants in nearby Kyrgyzstan had been reported and suppressed through 2006 under a religious control policy under President Bakiyev, while in Uzbekistan's part of the Ferghana Valley a strong **clamp down has been in place on religious expression** (Khamidov 2007). The crisis also **created a flow of at least 2,000 refugees** into the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, with a total of several hundred refugees in Ukraine, the U.S., and the EU (*Eurasianet* 2006). Equally disturbing have been Uzbekistan's **claims of the sudden emergence of a new militant Islamic group they call Akromiya**, which they claim is a Hizb-ut-Tahrir splinter group that was responsible for the violence in Andijan (Kendzior 2006). However, this organisation was completely unknown prior to May 2005, uses profiles and descriptions previously used for other organisations, and **seems entirely based on 'propagandistic works' issues by the Uzbekistan government**, their officials and public prosecutors and has been used to further control journalists and crack down on independent Muslim movements (see Kendzior 2006). Others, however, such as Jamestown Foundation correspondent Igor Rotar believe differently: -

“We can consider Akromiya and Hizb-ut-Tahrir enemies of the United States and Western Civilization.” Most of the population remains secular, however. Rotar estimated that 70-80 percent of the population “don't want to live in an Islamic state.” Islamic radicals cannot take power under these conditions, although “they can provoke some destabilization.” (Registan 2007)

Uzbekistan has other concerns alongside the challenge of Islamists. The **ethnic rivalries** which emerged in the civil war in nearby Tajikistan after 1990 represent one of the worst possible models, with large numbers of deaths and large refugee outflows resulting from the move to crush Islamic ‘fundamentalism’. These moves may be based on a mistaken policy of Central Asian security emerging from Russia's big brother role (Juraeva 1994). This explains in part why **Uzbekistan has placed such an emphasis on a security and balancing its relationship with Russia**, but also on developing a strong regional role for themselves. Uzbekistan has also built up its own military power more quickly than neighbouring states. We will see this in more detail through the crisis in Tajikistan to understand the way **religion has been used politically**. But before doing this, we will need to briefly assess the pervasive influence of the civil war in Tajikistan. Ironically, Tajikistan through 1998-2006 may have been a somewhat more genuine democracy, but one also beset by poverty, the aftermath of civil war, and some renewed political oppression.

4. Civil War and Reconstruction In Tajikistan

Tajikistan, ancient Bactria and Sogdiana, is one of the smaller states in the region with a population of approx. 6.7 million. It came under east Persian influence from the 7th century B.C., and later on was influenced by west Persian languages and by Islam (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p44). From the 16th century it came under Uzbek and then Russian influence, finally being absorbed by the Soviets in the 1920s. From the 1950s,

many Tajiks were forced to resettle in the south-west, resulting in **friction with a sizeable Uzbek minority in that region** (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p44). Anti-Russian feeling developed during the 1970s, with a reported demonstration of some 13,000 being repressed in 1978 (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p44). Occasional ethnic and civil unrest continued through the 1980s, with riots in 1990 protesting against scarce housing, and rumours that the Russians would settle Armenian refugees in Dushanbe (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p44). With the aid of Soviet Interior Ministry troops and local militia, these demonstrations were quelled, but with the death of at least 22 people and some 565 injured (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p45).

Tajikistan's post-Soviet transition was more violent than in most Central Asian states. In spite of reforms sweeping the USSR, **opposition parties** such as Rastokhez (Rebirth), the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and Islam Renaissance Party **were at first refused the right to participate in elections** (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p45). In the wake of the failed Anti-Gorbachev coupe, First Secretary Makkhamov was forced to resign, and public demonstrations demanded the dissolution of the Republic's Communist Party and the holding of new multi-party democratic elections.



Map Courtesy PCL Map Library (at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/commonwealth/tajikistan_re101.jpg)

Although a **state of emergency was declared**, the new leader, Rakhmon Nabyev, was forced to review his policies. As summarised by John Gardiner-Garden: -

The demonstrations, however, continued and Nabiyeu was soon obliged to rescind the state of emergency, suspend the Communist Party and legalise the banned Islamic . . . Party. A healthy multi-party system started to emerge - with non-communist parties including a moderate Islamic party, the Takij-nationalist Rastokhez party, the pro-Western Democratic Party of Tajikistan, and the Pamiri-separatist party Lale Badakhshon. In October 1991 Presidential elections the democratic candidate fared well but, amid allegations of electoral malpractice, he was defeated by Nabiyeu. In December 1991 Tajikistan became a founding member of the CIS.

Nabiyeu's attempts in early 1992 to consolidate the conservatives' hold on power brought the democratic, Islamic and Pamiri opposition out onto the streets. In April troops fired on demonstrators and in May the Republican secret police allegedly distributed weapons to the communist supporters (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p45).

The **political, ethnic divisions in the country** included a tendency for the **wealthier northern parts of the country**, including large parts of the Uzbek and Russian minorities, to support the reborn conservative government under Nabiyeu (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p45). The government was largely based on northern, more industrialised groups, the Khojandis, and their chief 'clients' in the south, the Kulyabis, who viewed themselves as the more educated groups and natural rulers of the opposing Pamiri and Garmi ethnic groups (Richter 1994, pp84-85). Although there were attempts to create a 'Government of National Reconciliation', this failed as further violence in the streets of Dushanbe escalated during August and September 1992. **The government was opposed by a loose Islamic-Democratic alliance**, in the south by the Tajik Popular Front (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p46), and by the Pamiri people of the eastern province of Gorny Badakhshan. Complicated faction fighting led to the **emerging leadership of Emomali Rakhmanov**, (sometimes transliterated as Imomali Rakhmonov), but the country was still divided, with a separatist Pamir republic being destroyed in early 1993. Supporters of the government included 'thuggish' militia elements (*Economist* 1994a) which committed many atrocities during the conflict.

In any terms, the **civil war was costly**. Estimates range from 20-150,000 deaths, with up to 650,000 displaced, and some 35,000 houses destroyed (Richter 1994, p81; Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p46; Borisov 2003). Some 100,000 refugees had fled to Afghanistan, creating a complex border situation with **insurgents able to re-enter Tajikistan until the border was more securely patrolled** after 1993. The **Rakhmanov government, in fact, became more authoritarian**, controlling the press, and outlawing opposition parties, while at the same time welcoming the presence of the Russian 201st Motorised Rifle Division, as well as CIS reinforcement of their **border guards** (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p46). The border with Afghanistan remained highly militarised. Some 20,000-25,000 Russian guards have controlled the border through 1991-2004 (Pannier 2004), with some partial replacement by Tajikistan's troops from 2002 and full withdrawal of Russian border guards in mid-2005 (BBC 2006a).

In November 1994 Emomali Rakhmanov won the Presidential election, and also ran a referendum **giving the president a stronger constitutional power base** - since the main Islamic opposition was not allowed to participate, the entire process has been **protested as non-democratic** (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p47). The only other candidate allowed to run was Abdumalik Abdulajanov, who came from the northern

industrial sector, which had supported the government in the civil war (*Economist* 1994b), fitting in with the pattern of a 'guided' democracy in which only coopted groups are allowed to participate politically. Parliamentary elections run in February 1995 were also dominated by the Rakhmanov's government view of guided democracy. Furthermore, several important clans, including the Khojand clan, and groups from the southern Kulyab region, retained a strong hold on power (Busvine 1996; Juraeva 1994, p16).

Attempts to stop the civil war resulted in a **slow and drawn out process**. An October 1994 negotiated cease-fire was broken by intense border fighting in April 1995, with some 30 CIS border guards and some 160 opposition fighters killed (Gardiner-Garden 1995b, p48). Although the UN arranged an Observer Mission to the country in 1994-5, and a cease-fire was in operation from 17 September 1994 (UN Chronicle 1995d), the total size of the UN mission was limited. The UN also ran an appeal to raise \$42 million to provide emergency humanitarian aid to the 600,000-plus refugees affected by the war (*UN Chronicle* 1995e). A series of talks between the government and opposition in 1994-1995 have did not resolve the crisis. A fifth round of talks held in Turkmenistan tried to reach agreement on power sharing (something Russia supports), but the Rakhmanov government refused to follow this path at that time (*Australian* 1996).

Russian policy seemed somewhat divided: at the military level, it recognised that it needed to remain involved in Tajikistan if it wished to control the **sensitive Tajik-Afghan border**, a trend only partially reversed through 2004-2006 with some Russian border forces being gradually by Tajik guards, at first along the eastern section, though concerns have been expressed about their level of training and lack of helicopters on their 560 kilometre section (Pannier 2004). At the same time, it has tried to put pressure on the Rakhmanov government to be less authoritarian, to hold fairer elections, and to engage in realistic peace talks (*Economist* 1994a). The Russians are well aware that their military aid being used by an authoritarian government for its own purposes. **Russia has now embedded its view of Tajikistan in a wider security approach**. Thus, via the Kant air base in nearby Kyrgyzstan, Russia can provide air support for a rapid deployment force that can support anti-terrorist operations. Thus is done within the **Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)**, including Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Tajikistan, as well as being generally compatible with **Shanghai Cooperation Organization military exercises** in 2003, held in China and Kazakhstan (Blua 2004). On this basis Russia has sought to increase military cooperation with Tajikistan through 2003-2005. Along with strengthen Tajik military abilities and reconstruction in Afghanistan, there are hopes that the border would be a less likely source of regional instability.

In December 1996 was a **peace accord signed between the government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO)** leader Said Abdullo Nuri (Pannier 1997b), with provisions for a power-sharing arrangement between the government and opposition, with free elections 1-2 years later. Peace arrived, but remained fragile. Both sides agreed to a cessation of hostilities, a general amnesty, full exchange of prisoners, while peace talks were to be conducted through 1997 to allow the formation of a

National Reconciliation Commission (Pannier 1997a). The Commission was to be made up of 40% government, 40% opposition, and 20% mixed groups (including the National Revival Movement, led by former Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajonov, Pannier 1997a). On 27 June *The General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan* was signed in Moscow, allowing strengthened **humanitarian aid programs** to continue in the country. In spite of the return home of most internally displaced persons (IDPs) and the resumption of the voluntary repatriation of Tajik refugees from Northern Afghanistan, major developmental and democratic reforms were slow to be fully implemented. In August 1997, armed clashes occurred between government and opposition forces, while during the year sporadic terrorist acts also undermined civilian security. In October 1997, both sides in the conflict still held several hundred prisoners, which would be released under the terms of the *General Agreement* in due course (*Relief Web* 1997).

In large measure, the Rakhmanov government had indeed 'fallen into absolute dependence on Uzbekistan and Russia' (Juraeva 1994, p15). Although Rakhmanov had justified his policies under notions of 'regional stability', **the cost of such fragile stability should not be under-estimated**. Furthermore, the **Rakhmanov government had used the claimed threat of 'Islamic fundamentalism' to justify its harsh methods and retention of power** (Juraeva 1994).

The **fulfilment of the peace accords** began with the **elections in February 2000** for 'the lower house of the Tajik national parliament and to local representative power bodies' (*ITAR/TASS* 2000). Although **the peace has held**, there have been signs of tension in power sharing arrangements: -

Tajikistan is the only country in Central Asia in which an Islamic-oriented political party openly and actively participates in the country's social and political life. Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) members are represented in the various government institutions through a power-sharing agreement negotiated to end the country's 1992-97 civil war. However, this arrangement, under which opposition forces are entitled to a 30 percent share of government posts, has looked increasingly precarious of late. Some local political analysts say President Imomali Rahmonov has sent signals that he wants to use the specter of Islamist extremism in Central Asia to sideline his mainstream Islamic political opponents. (Iqushev & Mannonov 2003)

Reconstruction has begun to take effect through 2002-2006. Economic growth was at 10.2 percent in 2001, in 2002 around 9.1%, with projections for strong growth in 2003 (Borisov 2003). But this beginning operates from a very low baseline. Prior to this, destruction of cotton cultivation and disruption to aluminium exports (other resources include some gold, silver, lead and tungsten) had caused a plunge in GDP of 32.6% in the period 1991 to 1996 (Borisov 2003). In summary: -

Tajikistan is a poor country, with the lowest per capita GDP among the former Soviet republics. Agriculture is the predominant sector, with cotton the most important crop. Mineral resources are varied but small and include silver, gold, uranium, and tungsten. Heavy industry is represented by a large aluminium plant, hydropower facilities, and small, obsolete, former state-owned factories from the Soviet era. The Tajik economy was decimated by five years of civil war and by the loss of Russian subsidies and the Russian market. Tajikistan is dependent on substantial financial assistance, from Russia, Uzbekistan and the IMF. The country remains highly dependent on exports, which largely consist of aluminium, cotton and electricity. The

main agricultural export, cotton, has been subject to price fluctuations and its export revenue is falling.

GDP, while still below its level at the end of the Soviet era, has grown strongly over the last six years (10.6% real GDP growth in 2004 and 7.5% forecast for 2005-06). The future of Tajikistan's economy and the potential for attracting foreign investment will, to a large extent, depend on political stability. (DFAT 2005b)

Even now unemployment remains very high, with up to million **Tajiks travelling out of the country, especially in CIS countries, in search of jobs**, and the small country has a foreign debt of about one billion dollars (Borisov 2003). Some of these are illegal labour flows, causing particular tensions with Russia through 2001-2003: -

According to Russian officials, up to 4 million illegal immigrants worked in Russia in 2002. Only about 300,000 guest workers possessed proper documentation. New immigration legislation, which took effect November 1, expanded the powers of law-enforcement authorities to uncover undocumented laborers.

Russia has dealt with Tajik immigrants in a particularly rough manner, frequently carrying out summary deportations. In one instance in November, about 120 Tajiks were packed on to military transport planes and returned to Dushanbe. A few days later, Moscow deported another 80 Tajiks. . . .

Dushanbe's reaction to the deportations is connected in large part to Tajikistan's acute economic dependence on guest worker incomes. According to unofficial estimates, upwards of 800,000 Tajiks earn income illegally in Russia every year, remitting as much as \$400 million to relatives back home. The remittances are roughly double the most recent estimate of the state's annual expenditures in 2000 Given that many families depend on guest-worker income, Russia's deportations have emerged as a significant domestic political issue in Tajikistan. (*Eurasia Insight* 2003)

Other problems remain. Border areas with Uzbekistan are still covered in land-mines which the government cannot accord to remove - through early 2003 the OSCE moved to launch a project to fund the removal of these mines (Zakirova 2003). Likewise, there are still problems integrating former combatants into normal society. Small programs run by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have begun to 'reintegrate some 550 former combatants, amnestied detainees, displaced persons and unemployed young people back into their communities' (*UN OCHA* 2003), but much more needs to be done. **Overall poverty rates include 80% of the population.** Border delimitation talks also continued with Kyrgyzstan through late 2002, but the border between the two countries remained closely monitored and guarded through 2005.

Tajikistan Timeline 1999-2006 (BBC 2006a)

1999 - Rahmonov re-elected for second term with 96 % of the vote; UTO armed forces integrated into state army; Rahmonov awarded order of Hero of Tajikistan.

2000 - Last meeting of the National Reconciliation Commission held and a new bicameral parliament set up in March; a new national currency, the somoni, introduced; visas introduced for travel between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

2001 January - Minimum wage tripled to equivalent of just over one US dollar.

2001 April - Deputy Interior Minister Habib Sanginov assassinated in Dushanbe.

2001 June - Leaders of China, Russia and four Central Asian states launch the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and agree to fight ethnic and religious militancy while promoting trade and investment.

2001 August - Renegade warlord and former opposition commander Rahmon Sanginov, regarded by the government as one of its most wanted criminals, is killed in a gun battle with security forces.

19,000 prisoners amnestied to mark 10th anniversary of independence.

2001 September - Culture Minister Abdurakhim Rakhimov is shot dead by an unidentified gunman, the third senior official to be assassinated in a year. Tajikistan is quick to offer support to the US-led anti-terror coalition, set up after the September 11 attacks on the US.

2002 July - Tajikistan doubles the number of border guards along its 1,300-km frontier with Afghanistan to prevent al-Qaeda members from entering the country to escape US forces.

2003 February - Eleven Islamic militants sentenced to death and dozens to lengthy jail sentences for murder and kidnapping during and after the civil war of the 1990s.

2003 April - Russian President Vladimir Putin visits and announces plans to boost Russian military presence.

2003 June - Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov, deputy leader of the opposition Islamic Rebirth Party, arrested and charged with murder. Party leadership asserts that the arrest is politically motivated. Referendum vote goes in favour of allowing President Rahmonov to run for a further two consecutive seven-year terms when his current one ends in 2006. The opposition describes the referendum as a travesty of democracy.

2003 July - Parliament approves a draft law abolishing the death penalty for women and reducing the number of crimes for which men can face punishment. Supreme Court sentences Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov, deputy leader of opposition Islamic Rebirth Party, to 16 years in jail.

2004 July - Parliament approves moratorium on death penalty.

2004 October - Russia formally opens military base and takes back control over former Soviet space monitoring centre.

2004 December - Leader of opposition Democratic Party, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, arrested in Moscow at request of Tajik prosecutor's office. Tajik authorities seek his extradition, alleging involvement in terrorism and arms offences as well as corruption. His supporters say the move is politically motivated.

2005 January - Car blows up near government building in Dushanbe, killing at least one person. Official says it was a "terrorist attack". Fire at Security Ministry on same day blamed on electrical fault.

2005 February - Ruling party wins overwhelming victory in parliamentary elections. International observers say poll fails to meet acceptable standards.

2005 April - Opposition leader Mahmadrusi Iskandarov released in Moscow after extradition request turned down but kidnapped and rearrested in Tajikistan.

2005 June - Russian border guards complete withdrawal, handing the task over to Tajik forces.

2005 October - Opposition leader Mahmadrusi Iskandarov sentenced in Dushanbe to 23 years in jail on terrorism and corruption charges.

2006 May - Several killed when gunmen attack border post before crossing into Kyrgyzstan.

2006 August - Gaffor Mirzoyev, former top military commander, sentenced to life imprisonment after being convicted on charges of terrorism and plotting to overthrow the government. His supporters say the trial was politically motivated. Said Abdullo Nuri, leader of the opposition Islamic Revival Party, dies.

2006 November - President Rakhmonov wins a third term in office, in an election which international observers say is neither free nor fair.

Political-power sharing and maintenance of a pluralistic democracy have also begun to be eroded. Through January 2004, there were concerns that the conviction of Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov (on charges of 'organizing a criminal gang, polygamy and illegal crossings of state borders'), deputy leader of the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), signalled a 'legalistic' crackdown on religious parties (Arman 2004). Journalists and political opposition figures in the IRP and the Tajik Democratic Party have also either recently lost their jobs or faced severe criminal charges that may be politically motivated. Likewise, **recent constitutional amendments** have allowed the President to seek office again until 2020, suggesting implicit efforts to sustain government power (Arman 2004).

Parliamentary elections in February 2005 **did not allow opposition parties, and opposition candidates had difficulties registering.** Thus, through January 2005: -

Registration of candidates for the 22 seats available on the basis of party lists ended last week. Muhibullo Dodojonov, the head of the commission on elections and referendums, announced the number of registered candidates on 14 January.

"As of 14 January, the candidates from party lists were as follows: the Democratic Party has four candidates [registered]; the Communist Party, nine candidates; the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan has 21; the Islamic Renaissance Party 15; the Socialist Party five, and the Social-Democratic Party seven," Dodojonov said.

The People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan, which controls 65 percent of the seats in parliament, seems poised for a clear victory. It is the largest party, boasting some 70,000 registered members. Only the Communist Party comes close with a declared 60,000 members.

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan claims to have some 20,000 members and none of the other three parties registered to take part in the February elections -- the Social-Democratic Party, Socialist Party and Democratic Party -- has 10,000 members.

At the other end of the spectrum is the Democratic Party of Tajikistan. The party can trace its origins back to the last days of the Soviet Union, but despite its 15-year history it still counts only about 4,500 members.

Its leader, Mahmudruzi Iskandarov, was detained in Moscow last month at the request of Tajik authorities. Dodojonov pointed out that his registration was rejected because he has criminal charges pending against him. (Pannier 2005)

Likewise, the Tarraqiyot (Development) Party remained unregistered, and its leader Sultan Kuvvatov faced legal charges (Pannier 2005). Even though Tajikistan is the only Central Asian country where Islamic parties can be registered, it now seems that

the **government is less tolerant** now that civil war seem unlikely to be renewed (Pannier 2005). The February **2005 parliamentary election, a government victory, was thus not accepted as fair** by international observers. Likewise, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, an opposition leader, was imprisoned on corruption and terrorism charges in October 2005 (BBC 2005b). Likewise, **presidential elections in November 2006 re-elected Rakhmonov under conditions that were neither fair nor competitive, with opposition parties boycotting what they felt was a managed democracy**, though the president may have retained some support with the successful end of the civil war period (BBC 2006a; BBC 2006b).

Tajikistan has sought to **broaden cooperation** beyond UN and INGO agencies. New links are being forged with the EU as well, with President Imomali Rakhmonov meeting 'in Dushanbe on 13 December with visiting EU officials' to expand cooperation beyond 'commerce, investment, and humanitarian aid' into a wider political dialogue (RFE 2002). Strong cooperation with France and the U.S. has also been planned (*Eurasia Insight* 2003), largely as part of American and European hopes for a stronger stabilisation of Central Asia as a whole, though in the end **Russia and its security-related frameworks remain dominant for the country**. Likewise, tensions over human rights and press freedom might readily undermine relations with the EU, and then with the U.S. During early 2006 **Tajikistan also sought to improve relations with Iran** in a number of areas: 'Tajik and Iranian leaders issued a Joint Declaration on Broader Relations, as well as signed agreements providing for Iranian assistance for several Tajik infrastructure projects, including construction of the Sangtuda-2 hydroelectric power station and the Shahrstan Tunnel' (Arman 2006).

Tajikistan remains **a poor state with enormous wounds** to be healed from this conflict. Aside from poor economic development (the most impoverished of the regional states), it remains under a virtual international protectorate and has massive problems in its small population, e.g. malnutrition and the re-emergence of tuberculosis (Foley 2001). Though there has been some reduction of the spread of tuberculosis in Russia through 2001-2005, the disease still kills 2-3 million people each year, mainly in Asia, Central Asia, and Africa. Tajikistan **relies on overseas aid to develop any level of stability**, though there has been some growth in the economy. It remains as a regional warning and indicator of how fragile regional stability had been throughout the 1990s, with only slow growth at the start of the 21st century. The full cost of reconstruction (as in Afghanistan) remain to be seen. Regional warlords and a 'pervasive narcotics industry' continue to destabilise poorer parts of the country (*Country Watch* 2003b).

5. Blockages to Regional Cooperation

The situations in Chechnya, Afghanistan (covered in later lectures), Tajikistan and Uzbekistan represent **serious problems for the further development of the entire region of Greater Central Asia**. Both the Afghanistan and Tajikistan conflicts highlight a more general international problem. With the end of the Cold War, the world has seen an increased amount of pressure on existing nation-states by ethnic and religious groups, as well as new transnational threats that cannot be managed by single

governments (for these issues generally, see Buzan 1983; Sorenson 1990; Camilleri 1992; Horseman & Marshall 1994). The key idea here is that rather than building states on narrow interest groups, that states should be encouraged to accept democracy and pluralism, i.e. represent diverse groups, all of whom share in power and have recognised rights (see Shehadi 1993). The problem with such a model, however, is that it will need the **heavy external involvement**, financially and often militarily, of other states and the international community to keep many of these states intact while they undergo economic and political transition. Uzbekistan, for example, seems to be following the traditional path of nation-building, securing economic and military strength, and seeking to ensure its borders through a strong involvement in regional conflicts, and centralising power on the current political leadership. However, **Uzbekistan has also sidelined both democratic and Islamic opposition groups, leading to a narrow power structure.** Likewise, **'failed' states or states with weak regimes** become embroiled in cross-border conflicts, as well as become hosts for extremist groups which they either are unable or choose not to control, e.g. Afghanistan under the Taliban. Other states sit on geo-political fracture lines that make them vulnerable to both transnational threats and international intervention, a major problem for Tajikistan through most the 1990s.

Alternatively, we can ask whether there are other ways to mediate between opposing groups in adjacent regions or within diverse nations. Another approach suggests that to safeguard regional or ethnic groups, it is important to **have strong supranational organisations and emerging civil society at the local level** which can put pressure on nation-states to be improve their treatment of minorities and ordinary citizens. To date organisations such as the European Union, NATO, CSTO, the SCO and the OSCE have only to a very small extent fulfilled this role in the Eurasian context. Further thought needs to be given to the issue of regional cooperation and regional links among civil society groups to solve these intense and protracted disputes. To date, **recent conflicts and possible future instability in Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan represent major stumbling blocks to a more peaceful and integrated international environment in Eurasia.** Tajikistan, for example, will need careful international support if it is to overcome past legacies. Policies including shared resource access and regional autonomy also need to be further developed. Uzbekistan, though able to suppress dissent at present, may even veer towards even more hardline forms of governance. **'Authoritarian' styles of government**, whether of the 'soft' or 'hard' variety are common throughout Central Asia, and need careful monitoring if they are to fit into a wider pattern of cooperative stabilisation.

Ironically, what was once a buffer zone between great powers, remains a **zone of relative instability.** With the intervention in Afghanistan it is possible that a more stable state within the heart of Central Asia might aid stability in nearby states such as Tajikistan. At present, however, the government of Hamid Karzai remains a compromise formation that still needs the support of international backers (*Eurasia Insight* 2004; we will examine regional prospects and dynamics in the later sessions). Stabilising Afghanistan, rebuilding Tajikistan and humanising the government policies of Uzbekistan are necessary steps to begin a new and more positive phase for Eurasian political development.

6. Bibliography and Further Resources

Resources

A useful package of resources on Afghanistan and Chechnya (and other areas needing humanitarian relief) will be found by searching the *Relief Web* at <http://www.reliefweb.int/w/rwb.nsf>

A range of useful civil society programs in Central Eurasia, as reported by the *Open Society Institute*, will be found at <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/regions/central-eurasia>

Western and European perspectives on Central Asia and Eurasia can be found on the *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty* Website at <http://www.rferl.org/>

A diversified and useful website on Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Balkans, the *Institute for War & Peace Reporting*, will be found at http://www.iwpr.net/home_index_new.html

Voluntary Further Reading: Items worth looking at include: -

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