CHAPTER - 4
ETHNO-NATIONALISM IN TAJIKISTAN
The process of Tajik ethno-national consciousness is relatively a new phenomenon. Tajikistan is a new nation, which was created in 1928 by the Soviet authorities under their territorial delimitation policies. According to Oliver Roy, “Most of the difficulties of present-day Tajikistan are linked to the very definition of what is Tajikistan and what is a Tajik” (Roy 1993: 13). In fact the word Tajik has been used in different connotation by historians at different times. The historians have been presenting the meaning of the word to have been used simply to refer to ‘Arab’ or ‘Muslim’ Persian speakers. It is even referred to be derived from the word Taj meaning the crown as the people are settled at a very high altitude. However, the ethno-regional groups living in the foothills and mountains are known as Galcha.

The reasons for the rise of ethno-national consciousness in Tajikistan can be studied under the following headings: - ethnic composition, national geography, history, political, education, and economic development based on regional lines. The study of ethno-nationalism in Tajikistan requires not only investigating the inter-Tajik ethno-regional relations and relations of Tajiks with other ethnic minorities but also examining the role of Afghanistan, Iran, Russia and Uzbekistan in redefining the present day sub-national ethnic identities.

ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF TAJIKISTAN

According to State Statistical Committee of Tajikistan on 1 January 2003, the total population of Tajikistan was 6.5 million, of which 1.7 million people (26.4 per cent) live in urban areas and 4.8 million (73.6 per cent) are in rural areas. According to the national census (carried out by State Statistical Agency with the support of World Bank), as on 20 January 2000, the ethnic composition of Tajikistan was, Tajiks are 79.9%, and Uzbeks 15.3% (State Statistical Committee of Tajikistan 2003). However, Uzbeks claim to constitute around 25% of the total population and they allege that they have been wrongly projected in the national data to marginalize Uzbeks in Tajikistan. In fact, it is likely that the Uzbeks in Tajikistan got themselves registered as Tajiks to get economic and other concessions.

Other minorities include Russians 1.1%, Kyrgyz 0.3% and some 75 ethnic groups, including Tatars, Kazakhs and Koreans. The official language of Tajikistan is Tajiki and Russian is the language of international communication. Badakshanis speak at least six
different dialects of eastern Iranian language, which are distinct from Tajiki of other parts which use western Iraninian dialect. All ethnic groups and nationalities living in Tajikistan have the right to use their native language freely and have equal political, economic and social rights and freedom. This equality is only in words. Safarov Saduloevich says that, “It is not possible for an ethnic minority like Uzbek or Russian or Kyrgyz to become the leader of the nation as the Tajiks will not accept them coming to power” (Saduloevich 2007).

The religion practiced in Tajikistan is Islam with 85% Sunni Muslim and 5% Shiite Muslim follower of Aga Khan. Other faiths practicing are Christianity, Shamanism (survived in Islamic form), Zoroastrianism, etc. by the remaining 10% of the total population (State Statistical Committee of Tajikistan 2004; Central Intelligence Agency 2007).

Geographically, GBAO is furthest from Dushanbe and surrounded by Pamir mountain range that separates the oblast from the rest of Tajikistan. Economically this region is least developed. To the north east of Dushanbe lies Gharm valley that is primarily involved in agriculture. Gharmis are known for being the most religious ethno-regional group in Tajikistan. Economically the most developed regions are Gissar and Sogd with Uzbek forming a substantial ethnic minority. Traditionally, communist party ruling elite came from Sogd. This situation was altered after Tajikistan declared its sovereign status. At present the ruling elite comes from the Khatlon.

Tajikistan’s has two provinces i.e.; Sogd and Khatlon, and one autonomous province GBAO. Other than this there is Dushanbe and its Subordinate Rayon has been given a district level status. All the regions differ from each other with respect to culture, topography and economic development.

Geo-politically Tajiks are divided into seven regional groups- the northern (Sogd Region), the people of Kulyab (in the eastern part of Khatlon Region), the people of Qurghonteppa (the western part of Khatlon Region), the people of Gharm (several districts subordinate to the centre located to the east of Dushanbe), the people of Gissar (several districts subordinate to the centre located to the west of Dushanbe), the people of Dushanbe (those living in the capital and two adjoining districts), and the people of Badakshan (the Badakshan Autonomous Region). The geographical set-up of ethno-regional groups and their corresponding interplay of political, ethnic, religious and economic factors are crucial in determining loyalties. The presence of regionalism is due to the cultural diversity where
ethno-regional groups have their own distinct culture and psychological association making grounds for politicians and administrators to benefit from the economic and ethnic differentiations. These economic and cultural differences are also because of the geographical disadvantage thus preventing development of uniform urban centers and intermixing of people of different regions.

HISTORY

Tajiks do not have any history of any ethno-national movement for the promotion or preservation of a separate identity. Historically Islam and Persian identity form the common identity of Tajiks. Islam was introduced in the region with the invasion of Arabs in the eighth century. The evolution of Tajik cultural identity began with the Samanid period in the tenth century. The Persian culture was established and Tajiki became the common language of the region. At the same time Ismailism was also introduced in the region.

Persians and Turkic ethnic groups have worked together for the functioning of the state. Under the Ghaznavid, Mongol and Timurid rule, Persian language continued to occupy important place. Tajiks even participated in the Jadid movement that was dominated by the Turkic Uzbeks aimed at the introduction of “new method” of teaching in maktabs. Sadradin Ayni51 (1874-1937), the founder of ‘modern Tajik literature’, along with F.Abdurauf (1886-1937) and N.Siddiki (1865-1933) were regarded as prominent jadidi figures and described the Samanids epoch as the standard of developed state that created preconditions for national revival and they worked on this historical boom of Tajik statehood (Gafurov, 1999: 34-35). At the same time Tajiks and Turks maintained social distance. To quote Olivier Roy “In the event of marriage and dispute you will often hear the proverb... ‘Turk o Tajik yek kas ast/ Turk wa Uzbek dushman ast’ (‘the Turks and Tajiks are as one, the Turks and the Uzbeks are enemies’)” (Roy 2000: 22). Thus one can state that politically and administratively Tajiks and Turks worked together for the state functioning, but socially they maintained their exclusivity.

In 1920s, the Tajik intellectuals from Samarkand and Bukhara, like Abdurrauf Firat and Biktâsh, supported the Turkish national movement against the partition of Ottoman Empire. It shows that Tajiks were never threatened by the establishment of ‘Turkish’ nationalism. The Uzbek and Tajik relations witnessed a change in late 1920s when there was

51 Sadruddin Ayni never left Bukhara to live in Tajikistan.
forced alteration of ethnic Tajiks to Uzbeks by the Uzbekistan Soviet Socialist Republic to prevent the creation of Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in the region where Persian Tajiks formed an ethnic majority. On the one hand the new territorial demarcation facilitated the development of the Tajik identity based on language, on the other hand Tajiks were denied of their cultural capitals Samarkand and Bukhara thus preventing the Tajiks to have a cohesive national identity based on their rich language and culture.

During the Soviet period a centralized administrative system was established. Russian language became a common language of interaction. In addition, modern Soviet educational system was introduced and religion got marginalized. An effort was made to create an egalitarian society.

Despite collectivization and forced labor migration from mountains to the plains, the interaction amongst the groups was not smooth. On the contrary the immigrants maintained their own enclaves and preserved their culture. A common Tajik continued to identify himself according to his place of birth. The people don’t marry outside their community.

The ruling and administrative Khojandi elite have generally restricted the people of other regions to occupy important positions as it was easier to communicate and accomplish the tasks through the people of same community. Consequently, the northern region maintained their exclusive control over the entire region and was economically developed, whereas other regions remained backward. The centre-periphery relation between Dushanbe and other oblast remained apparent. Presently the ruling elite from Khatlon is blamed for continuing the regionalist policies. The exclusive development of culture, religion and regional identities created a fractured development of Tajik ethno-national identity. In the post-Soviet Tajikistan certain portions of the history books have been written to glorify the Tajik Persian culture. The President Rahmon has lately written a book on Tajik history titled “Tajikistan in the Mirror of History”. This is done in order to form ethnic communion and ethnic ancestors as the bases of ethnic accord. Such researches also helped in creating political mythology around Kulyabi where they were presented as the descendents of Bactrians and Sogdian of Aryan lineage.

“The Ismai’lis of Tajikistan are among the staunchest supporters of the propagation of Persian and Tajik. Three reasons have persuaded them into this position: Persian is the liturgical language of the Isma’ilis rather than Arabic; Persian/ Tajik has served as the inter-
ethnic language for the multi-lingual Isma’ili community for much of its history; and Isma’ili suffered disproportionately from Uzbek overlords who discriminated against them on religious grounds and, according to Soviet period writings, exploited the Isma’ilis lead the effort to preserve Persian/Tajik, to build ties with fellow Persian speakers, especially among the Iranian post-revolutionary dispora, and oppose compromise with Uzbeks. Isma’ilis naturally remain suspicious of Islamic revivalist activity and, if anything, forming a politically autonomous republic in eastern Tajikistan out of the old autonomous Gorno-Badakshan district.” (Naby 1993: 159)

In accordance to article 6 “Language of Education” Article 2 and 3 forms the integral part of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On Education”. According to Article 2, “Republic of Tajikistan guarantees to the citizens freedom of choice of language of education and provides obtaining of general secondary education in the state language, and in place of compact residing of the citizens of other nationality- on their native language.” Article 3 states that “Freedom of choice of language of education is provided through creation of necessary number of the applicable educational institutions, classes, groups and necessary conditions for their functioning” (National Policy of the State 2002: 18).

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have been working with Tajikistan’s Ministry of Education to develop an advanced curriculum to fill-in the gap between the demand and supply of the professionals.

According to the data of the Ministry of education of the Republic of Tajikistan, in schools the medium of instruction is in the following languages- Tajiki-57124 classes, Russian- 1478 classes, Uzbek- 18897 classes, Kyrgyz- 899 classes, and Turkmen-137 classes. In addition, in 1996 the Tajik-Russian Slavonic University was established in Dushanbe (Bozrikova 2003: 70). It is done in order to inculcate respective national identity of the people. Although the government has provided opportunities for the development of education system for minority community, such language schools have significantly reduced over time because of non-availability of textbooks and reduction of subsidies by the state. But there is considerable decline in the number of students opting for Uzbek as a medium of instruction because of limited opportunities. Further, it is taught in Cyrillic script in Tajikistan and in Latin script in Uzbekistan therefore they cannot get employment in Uzbekistan apart from Tajikistan. Lack of knowledge of Russian language further reduces
their opportunities to work in other Russian speaking countries. In addition, according to Bozrikova “Everything is much more difficult for Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Turkmen youth. This problem is closely interlaced with preparation and availability of staff possessing these languages. Preparations of personnel in some of the pedagogical specialties are conducted by Tajik State Pedagogical University named after K.Juraev, Khujand State University and Kurgan-Tyube State University. Specialists knowing Kyrgyz and Turkmen languages are predominantly prepared in Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan or they are trained in high schools of the republic of Russian and Tajik language” (Bozrikova 2003: 74-75).

According to Article 6 “Right of the National and Ethnic Groups” of the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On culture” determines, that “representatives of all national and ethnic groups living on the territory of the Republic of Tajikistan have the right for preservation, development and protection of their national culture, and also for creation of institutions, organizations, affiliations, centres and societies of the national cultures.”

The Pamiris are amongst the most skilled people of Tajikistan due to the efforts of Aga Khan Humanitarian Program (AKHP). Even during the Soviet times Dushanbe and Khorog had the best of education facilities.

The Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Committee (ITREC) is a jamaat institution (a religious institution only for Tajik Ismailis), which amongst other things has been working to develop educational curriculum in concurrence with the education system developed by the Tajik government. As the youth is at the most impressionable age. In the growing economic insecurity and the ideological vacuum created after the Soviet collapse, the radical Islam can easily take roots. Close proximity to Afghanistan further makes the situation fragile.

In a research conducted by Jonah Steinberg “ITREC Kohrog is, from dawn to dusk, teeming with Pamiri Isma'ilis with questions about religious practice and doctrine. They come from far and wide, often visible in their own valley's style of garments....... with questions on weddings, funerals, and other rites of passage; they come to hear or read the farmans or decree of the Aga Khan (which, from time to time, could be seen sitting on the fax machine; they come for general advice on life decisions; and they come simply, for company with other Isma'ilis....Isma'ilis from Badakshan explained to me that the function of ITREC is to prescribe the proper form for some Pamiri Isma'ili rituals, and to discourage
the practice of others.” (Steinberg, 2006: 146). Most of the workings of the ITREC are guided by Ismaili Tariqah and Religious Education Board (ITREB), officially established in 1987. At the same time the people of Badakshon are developing their own Isma’ili cultural institutions based on their culture and traditions and social norms. Qarategnis still prefer Islamic madrassas training. The Islamic schools are also very popular in Isfara in Ferghana Valley.

**POLITICAL POLICIES**

Tajik ethno-national identity was recognized when Tajikistan was carved out of Uzbekistan. The policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* led to a profound euphoria amongst the cultural elites to rediscover their heritage. It led to the formation of mass socio-political parties aimed at reviving Tajik culture and tradition like *Rastokhez Popular Movement*\(^2\) of the intellectuals that was popular amongst the Tajiks in late 1980s. It lost grounds after it supported the Islamist in their fight against the Communist.

Among other political parties active in Tajikistan were Democratic Party of Tajikistan, under Shodmon Yusuf, had support among the non-Tajiks; Popular Front of Tajikistan (PFT) initially known as National Guard, was a loose coalition of mostly Kulyabi and ethnic Uzbek militia supported by Gissaris and the local Arabs; and The Islamic Revival Party (IRP) of Tajikistan of unregistered Mullahs was operated in the villages particularly in Qarateginies. Even when Soviet atheist policy was at its peak, IRP came into prominence under Said Abdullo Nuri in late 1980s. These newly formed leaders and parties got involved in the power struggle after independence leading to civil war.

Tajiks under the *Rastokhez Popular Movement* united to pass a language and culture law. It was the first time that the Tajiks were mobilized together towards the establishment of their distinct ethnic identity based on language and culture. It is interesting to note that Tajikistan was the only republic in Central Asia where the nationalist movement was mobilized at social and political level. Tohir Abdwjabar, leader of *Rastokhez* organized a movement to restore Tajik language and culture. President Imomali Rahmon has earmarked

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\(^2\) *Rastokez Party*, comprised of Tajik intelligentsia, aimed at revival of spiritual values of their nation and their culture and language. They believed that Tajiks are not aware of their past and are not aware of their present rights and freedom. They wanted fundamental changes in the system by making it democratic through real elections which will fulfill demands and will of the people. At the same time they wanted that Article 68 of the Tajik SSR Constitution and Article 76 of the USSR constitution, which recognized Tajikistan as a sovereign state, should not remain on paper. Rastokhez took the lead in agitating for the language law, which was enacted at the end of 1989.
huge sums of money and material to commission works for the revival of Tajik history, culture and identity. This includes employing historians, artists, academicians, and publicists etc. to work towards the development of Tajik Persian past and to do research on the ethnic origin of the Tajiks.

The Tajik political circles have popularized the Aryan descent at national and international platform. In 1989-91 the Rastokhez Popular Movement pulled down the statue of Lenin and replaced it with the statue of Firdausi. The present government replaced the statue with the statue of Ismail Sonomi, founder of the Samanid Dynasty. The national flag and the seven stars above the crown of Ismail Somoni and the Tajik emblem based on Swastika represent the institutionalization of Aryan symbols.

Pulat Shozimov points out that the Aryan symbols are promoted by the ruling elite in order to present an alternative identity for Tajiks and in order to marginalize the position of the Islamic opposition. “One of main goals of the Aryan project is to prevent the possibility of Islamization or Turkification of Tajik society. At the same time, there is a danger that if the Aryan project is radicalized, it could lead not to unity within Tajik society but to fragmentation. In particular, this risk is greatest in the northern region of Tajikistan, which is heavily Uzbek-populated and considered by the Tajik nationalist elites as the region of the country where the process of Turkification has progressed furthest and poses a threat to the state.” He further writes that “...if the constructors of the Aryan project are able to avoid ethno-nationalist radicalization and can show the influence of Zoroastrianism on Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the form of strengthening coexistence, this could help avoiding increasing tension on the ethno-national and religious basis. At the same time, the Government would be well-advised to recall the experience of Iran, where as a result of a radical implementation of a similar Zoroastrian- and Aryan-based project by the monarchy, an Islamic revolution took place in 1979” (Shozimov 2005).

The out-migration of non native population was particularly due to political, social and economic destabilization in the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. The language law furthered the process of out-migration. As regarded by many, the mass departure of the non-native population was not necessarily because of the language policy as the implementation of such policy requires lot of time and infrastructure and Tajikistan had none. The implementation of such law would have required teachers to get trained in Tajik language,
books, syllabus and fixation of a diverse Tajik language (Tajiki is spoken in different dialects in country). Tajikistan was financially and infrastructurally not prepared to implement the law on language especially with limited resources and crumbling Soviet economy. The deteriorating economic and social situation in Soviet Union as well as in Tajikistan, developments in Afghanistan could create a fragile economic and social security for Russians.

The language and cultural policy not only directed to changing of names but also led to the transliterating of the names of the cities and people from Russian system to Tajik system. In late 1980s, a referendum was passed whereby the old names of the towns were restored throughout the republic. For example, In Dushanbe it is very difficult to reach a place if you just know the address as the people are not aware of the new names allotted to the streets. Even the taxi drivers and the bus conductors would not be able to guide you if you ask them the location of a particular address. In addition, Russian “dzh” became “j”, “kh” was changed to “h” and “a” was changed to “о” thus Khodzhent became Khojand.

“In the past people often added the name of their family’s place of origin to their first names, as in Rudaki Samarqandi, meaning ‘Rudaki from Samarqand’. This practice ended quite a while ago, although in private conversations people sometimes still identity colleagues by their place of origin. During the Soviet era, names underwent major changes when they were Russianized. There are no last names or traditional family names in Tajik culture. So the Soviets created a family name by taking the father’s name and adding a Russian ending -ov or -ev for males and -ova or -eva for females.” (Abazov 2006: 97)

In March 1997 Tajik President passes a resolution whereby he dropped Russian suffix from his surname. Thus Rakhmanov became Rahmon. He even made it compulsory for all the children born since 2007 to be registered with names without using Russian suffix.

In October 2000, new currency was introduced by the government whereby Somoni replaced the Tajik Ruble. The new currency was named after Ismaili Somoni. The Rahmon government constructed a huge statue of Ismaili Somoni in front of the Tajik parliament.

In fact the Tajik renaissance has the strong undercurrent of the religious revival. The Tajik renaissance is developing at the time when the development of Islam, both politically and socially, is seen with suspicion in the international political environment. According to K. Warikoo, “Whereas language and religion are seen as the symbols of nationhood, there is
also concern over the negative and destabilizing influence of Islamic fundamentalism” (Warikoo 1995: 32).

Presently, government has undertaken some measure whereby internal migration is done in order to marginalize the minorities, particularly Uzbeks on its western borders. For example, the government migrated the Tajiks to Tursunzoda in order to alter the demography of the region. According to Shorkirjon Hakimov, "This is an artificial measure to transfer the traditions of people from one region to another [region] through resettlement," Hakimov says. "Of course, the goal is clear. In the Tursunzadah region, [the population is] mainly -- about 80 percent -- Uzbeks, and the region borders the Republic of Uzbekistan. So [authorities] want there to be more Tajiks in the Uzbek border region." (Pannier: 2006).

CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS

In early 1990s small groups with potential pan-Iranian tendencies emerged in Tajikistan like the Great Aryana in 1991 to unify the Persian speakers of Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan and to safeguard the Persian language. In his book, Oranski, used three different terms to define one language (Persian)-Farsi, or Persian of Iran, Tajik, and Dari, or Afghan Persian (Roy 2000: 64). Roy points out that “The arrogance of Iranians towards Tajiks (‘Hey, do you speak Persian?’, or ‘How do you say such-and-such in your dialect?’), the heavy ideology of TV broadcasts to Tajikistan, and the Iranians’ lack of interest in anything that may have been written in Persian outside Iran and the Shiite world, broke the myth of Iran. Persian-ness in Tajikistan is defended outside the terms of the Iranian model (Roy 2000: 124). The realization of these visions were regarded as nearly impossible due to political division among the leaders of Iran on the subject of how far it should allow the rehabilitation of pre-Islamic Iranian tradition and Iranian nationalism. Secondly, the emphasis on Iranian ethnicity and culture at the expense of Islam would inevitably undermine the regime’s claim to leadership of the Muslim community. Thirdly the sectarian differences as Iranians are Shiite and Tajiks and Afghans are Sunni that weakens the language and cultural bonds. Finally, the Uzbeks, the Pashtuns, and their Saudi and Pakistani allies, plus Russia, Turkey and the West would resist pan-Iranian sentiments even in a cultural sense (Hunter 1994: 32-33).

“The small literary magazine, *Mujda* (‘happy story’), published in Vilnius (Lithuania) by the exiled Tajik poet Isander Khatlani, proposes a contact with ‘the whole world’s Persian
public’. Finally, the leaders of the Kurush-i Kabir Society (‘Cyrus the Great’) intended promoting the ‘reunion of dispersed Iranian populations (Tajiks, Ossetians, Kurds and Iraninans) into a centralized and democratic state’. This objective is shared by the association’s newspaper, Saman, a monthly created by the Persian-Tajik Language Foundation. In September 1991, Mehr and Kurush-i Kabir Society formed a new association, Aryan-yi Buzurg (‘Great Iran’) to defend the Persian language from Russian and Turkic influences, and unify Persian speakers. It published the magazine Mihtra (or mehr, ‘light’). However, it must be emphasized that all these initiatives had a very small following, forming and collapsing (as some have already) mainly within the closed circles of the elite......The Tajik Cultural Foundation established the journal Payvand (‘connection’ in Persian), aiming it at ‘Iranians in Tehran and the diaspora’. The Mehr Association, founded by Rastokhez supporters, had as its objective the installation of even closer relations with ‘Tajiks and Tajik speakers abroad’ through the publication of the monthly journal Sogdiana (published in Moscow in Russian)” (Capisani 2000: 165).


Recently, in Jan 2008 an agreement is signed between the Academy of Science of the Republic of Tajikistan (ASRT) and Iran’s Cultural Heritage, Tourism and Handicrafts Organisation (CHTHO), leading to a series of comprehensive programs including seminars and literary festivals have been arranged to be held in several Iranian cities and in the city of Dushanbe. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation also plans to commemorate Rudaki through holding projects with the support of Afghanistan, Iran, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan.
STRONGER SUB-REGIONAL IDENTITY

The features of traditional society are very strong in the political life of Tajikistan. According to Olimova, “As an individual in Tajikistan one can be independent in private or spiritual life, but must be completely and always be a part of his/her community, which in turn is a part of some ethno-regional group. Here, a person is not just a citizen with his/her rights and responsibilities; he/she is also an integral member of some community. Consequently, every political opinion belongs to one’s ethno-regional group. They become some social organisms of the political scene of Tajikistan lead by regional elite representatives, sometimes named as clans by our respondents....More often regionalism is seen when looking for a job. In parallel, with massive unemployment, people have to face supplementary obstacles set by institutions based on their internal environment. A national poll held by the International Foundation for Election Systems in 1996 reported that 68.3% of Tajiks consider themselves a part of some clan (avlod). A consolidated number of avlods had predecessors buried at the home territory of the mother from one ethno-regional group. Strong family and regional ties and mutual support make it easier to find a job for low class members of local groups. Any governmental official prefers to build a team of trustworthy people from his own region. For instance, if I was appointed as the Chairman of Khukumat I would also build my team on an ethno-regional basis. This helps at work. I can punish and encourage him/her and give any task and be sure that it will be executed anyway” (Olimova 2006: 89).

Ethno-regional differences within Tajiks are apparently inherent amongst the youth. A university student cited an example where he mentioned that “If there is a fight between two students it becomes a fight between two clan groups. When I talk to my father he tells that in his young days also the fight would get brutal but there were always someone to pacify the situation. But now no third group is ready to mediate” (Firdausi 2007).

The civil war was the result of power struggle between the communist National Guards of Kulyab and Sogdh against the emerging joint political opposition of democrats, nationalist, revivalists and Islamist parties drawing support from Qarategin-Gharm and Pamir. The opposition paramilitary forces were organized along ethnic lines. The political and economic domination of Khojandi, thus putting clan interest over national interest, as reflected in the placement and promotion of its representatives, not only led to constant
competition and opposition between groups to maintain or acquire resources but also led to the creation of insecurity, poverty, unemployment, lack of ethnic-representation at all levels.

There was a change in the political composition during the civil war and thereafter. The traditional political structure was formed by Khojandis. The first coalition was formed in 1992 when the Khojandis sought Kulyabi military support. The Kulyabi militia was formed of the economic leaders and crime bosses like Khudoberdiev, Ibod and Sangak Safarov etc.. The Khojand-Kulyab faction united against the rising Islamic-democratic opposition of Garmis and Badakshonis as they were slowly mobilizing the masses at the centre. In one of the declaration read out on republican radio, the leader of Kulyab, Rustam Abdurakhimov, said that “weapons will be handed out to those who will fight with participants in unlawful actions in Kurgan-Tyube”, where a state of emergency was announced. (SWB, SU/1180, 1992).

The period during the civil war was a period of formation of new absolute clout of Kulyab where Khojandis were marginalized. This new situation arose soon after Kulyabis were given important political positions and Imomali Rahmon was named head of state in December 1992. In the new government Kulyabis formed a majority, what was viewed as a temporary arrangement by the Khojandis. Failure of Nabiev to prevent the rise of Islamists and opposition not only disrupted Khojandis political calculations but also marginalized them. The role of international actors was also responsible for the creation of a new political elite group. Russia and Uzbekistan pitched their support to Rahmon that led to formation of ruling pro-Kulyab Peoples Party of Tajikistan by Abdulmajid Dostiev, Rahmon’s first deputy, in 1993. Russian President Boris Yeltsin not only congratulated Rahmon on his appointment as Chairman of Supreme Soviet he also showed his confidence in the new leadership to resolve the political and security crisis and would start the process of national reconciliation (SWB, SU/1549, 1992).

Within the new arrangement, tensions emerged between the Khojandi and the Kulyabi elites due to Khojandis’ virtual loss of power status and presence of several armed militia groups. The priority of the Khojand nomenclatura was to bring an end to the war, so that their traditionally wealthy region could begin the task of economic reconstruction. For this purpose they tended to be more conciliatory in negotiations with the opposition than to the newly dominant Kulyabis. Those irritants surfaced at the end of 1993, when Rahmon
eventually forced the dismissal of the Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajonov, a powerful Khujandi political leader. The Justice Ministry called for a ban on the People’s Unity Party, which was led by Abdullojonov, one of the alleged ringleaders of the uprising in the north of Tajikistan. He never aligned himself with the United Tajik Opposition and always wanted to be regarded as a third force in mid-1990s. It led the Kulyab government to disown Abdumalik Abdullojonov, who had not been living in Tajikistan and was ignoring the views of the party’s ordinary members. All documents signed by Abdullojonov during his tenure were not considered or coordinated with the board members. Most political and security officials in the province of Leninabad (Sogdh) were sacked and replaced by Kulyabis (Salim & Hodizoda 2002).

According to Marat Mamadshoyev, many of the reputed bosses in the new ministry were prominent commanders during Tajikistan’s bloody civil war since 1992. When the fighting ceased, the victorious Popular Front commander divided Dushanbe into their respective areas of influence. Six pro-government commanders of an elite brigade of Interior Ministry troops took controls of a large part of Dushanbe; Gen. Gaffor Mirzoyev commanded the Presidential Guard; two brothers Faizal and Bakhtiyor Langariyev, led a Special Rapid Development Force, and Said Shamolov and Kurbon Cholov, commanded special border patrol formations (Mamadshoyev 2000).

In the post-civil war the Khojandis lost their power status to the Kulyabis. Their marginalization led to insecurity dilemma amongst Khojandis. The inability to establish political accommodation weakened the existing state institutions and put the country into bitter civil war. It also led to the struggle for sphere of influence among different semi-criminal groups marking their territories in Tajikistan.

The sudden loss of power made Khojandis anxious and in the initial years of independence, the leadership of Khujand toyed with the idea of creating of a northern republic of Tajikistan. Since the Uzbeks were the majority in Khojand sharing bonds with the neighboring Uzbekistan, it made some to conclude that the northern region might join Uzbekistan. The issue of Sogdh’s separation from Tajikistan was officially voiced at the sittings of the Soviets and even at the session of the Leninabad Oblast Soviet of Peoples

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53 Socialist Party of Tajikistan expelled another suspected ringleader in the revolt, former Deputy Transport Minister, Narzullo Dustov, as he had no contacts with the party since he left Tajikistan and was expelled for his “collaboration with the rebels”.

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Deputies. But such proposals failed to succeed as it did not receive support of the majority of people’s deputies and the absolute majority of the residents of the Oblast.

Ethnic Khojandis often organized rallies opposing the domination of the southern Kulyabis in the politics, administration, judiciary, and economic structures of their region where the demonstrators received the backing of hundreds of protestors from two towns of Shakhristan and Isfara in the region. The demonstrators’ demanded the sacking of local officials from southern ethnic clans and reinstatement of the regional heads, who were often summarily removed by Kulyabis “for drawbacks in work”. There were also instances when these protests led to the dismissed of law-enforcement officials and leaders of towns and districts, many of them being from President Rahmon’s area. Initially, the demands of the protesters were met with after “intensive talks” between the rally organizers and representatives of the Central Government. After the conclusion of the civil war, the opposition demonstrated against the discriminatory and undemocratic policies of the government but the demonstrators were severely suppressed. That led to complete elimination of open opposition.

In a report by Galina Gridneva, leaders of Leninabad had also sent a telegram to Tajik President that they would only carry out those presidential and government directives which did not contradict the constitution thus, reserving the right to determine for themselves the legality or illegality of all subsequent presidential decrees and government decisions. All efforts to pacify them produced no positive results (SWB, SU/1391, 1992).

The tension between the Khojandis and the Kulyabis touched a new height when Abdulhafiz Abdullaiev, the brother of the leader of National Revival Movement, one of the main opposition movements in Tajikistan, was accused of making an attempt on the life of President Rahmon in May 1997 and he was sentenced to death by firing squad. 54

Since the Sogd province is economically most prosperous, with all the important factories located in the region, the ruling Kulyabis are maintaining control over the region by regularly rearranging the heads of the institutions.

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54 It was noted that Abdulhafiz, headed the Leninabad province between 1994 and 1997, was initially arrested on charges of possession of narcotics but soon he was sentenced due to his alleged involvement in an attempt to assassinate both his successor as regional govern and Tajik President Emomali Rahmo.
Even the southern Tajik town of Kurgan-Tyube did not lose any chance from benefiting from the unstable political and social situation and organized demonstrations against the local appointment and government actions against former Interior Minister Yoqub Salimov. Supporters of Salimov, a pro-Communist militia commander in the 1992-93 civil wars who was sacked as interior minister in 1995, wanted the charges against him to be withdrawn and that he should be reinstated. The rallies were also organized for establishing government anti-terrorist unit under Suhrob Qosimov. The UN office in Dushanbe said that “the demonstrators were demanding the appointment of local people to the post in the region and the separation of the Kurgan-Tyube area from Kulyab, with which it was merged in 1993 to form Khatlon region” (SWB, SU/2858, 1997).

According to Olivier Roy, the peace treaty concluded between the government and the opposition in 1997 excluded the Khojandis and the Badakshanis, both inhabited by significant degree of non-Tajik population. In Khujand the Uzbeks accounts for 40% of the total population and in Badakshan the Pamiris, who have a distinct Tajik identity, are in majority (Roy 2000). During the peace process, the meetings between the government and the opposition mostly took place in the countries enjoying the observer status. However, some of the important peace negotiations between the government and the opposition took place in and around Khujand and Khorog.

The opposition consisting largely of Gharmi, Karategni and Pamiri ethno-regional groups tried to benefit from the disintegration of Soviet system and the subsequent decline of the Khojandi-Kulyabi ruling coalition. In April 1991 Gorno Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), where the influence of the opposition was strong, was successful in acquiring an autonomous status. It is widely observed that the process of fragmentation of Tajikistan started with autonomous status awarded to GBAO in the Pamir Mountains. According to political observers it is inevitable that the events in neighboring Afghanistan which has ethnic and religious ties with Tajikistan have influenced ethno-national process in Tajikistan.

In the present times, countries economy is controlled by a particular ethnic group. Saodat Olimova writes that “cotton mafia is headed by a coalition of governing ethno-regional groups - Kulobi and Hissori control the production and processing of cotton, owning

55 The countries having observer status in the meetings under the aegis of UN were Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.
most cotton refineries: according to regulatory and law papers agricultural producers are attached to cotton refineries and have no right to independently sell cotton...... Future contracts are strangling us. For three years we have not been paid for produced cotton. We cannot fight with them taking into account that they are relatives of high officials. We can’t sell our cotton due to prohibition. But, we need to survive” (Olimova 2006: 91).

CIVIL UNREST

The first ethno-national xenophobic movement was reported on 12 February 1990, following the rumors about the arrival of several thousand Armenian refugees that had supposedly arrived in Dushanbe and were being housed in new homes, thus encroaching upon the rights of indigenous inhabitants who were waiting their turn. However, according to reports there were only 39 Armenians (SWB, SU/0688, 1990) and all of them were settled in their relatives, friends and acquaintances homes. Under the leadership of Yakub Salimov56 several thousand young people and students gathered around the building of the CP of Tajikistan Central Committee, chanting slogans: “Down with Armenians”. These demonstrations led to an immediate deportation of Armenians from Dushanbe.

The sensitive security situation surrounding Dushanbe made a large number of people from Kurgan-Tyube came to Dushanbe in buses to evacuate students from the capital’s higher educational establishments, where classes were interrupted. It also led to the formation of self-defence detachments consisting of teachers, senior students and parents. The units of people’s self-defence were working in the central rayon of the city of Dushanbe made of representatives of other ethnic groups- Russians, Uzbeks, and Germans- and were not only involved in the protection of residential houses and schools but also took initiative to rebuild infrastructure and economy. These self-defence forces subsequently became active during the civil war.

The next stage of the consolidation of ethno-national identity began with the independence of Tajikistan and the ensuing civil war that was fought at two levels regional, i.e., within Tajiks from different geographical regions and between ethnic groups, i.e., with the ethnic minorities like Uzbeks, Russians, Jews, Arabs, and Kyrgyzs, who over a period of long stay in the region had assimilated themselves with the local population and lost strong

56 Salimov, was detained and later went on to become one of the "field commanders" of the pro-Communist National Front and, following the party's subsequent became the Minister of Internal Affairs of the Tajik Republic
connections with the place of their ethnic origin. The result of regional identities, its development over a period of time and the unwillingness of the ruling elites to share the power and authority with other groups led to one of the bitterest struggles that not only led to ethnic cleansing but was also responsible for long lasting ethnic segregation supported by nation’s geography and development of ethnic history. The war was the result of, what most political analysts believed, lay in the historical developments and lack of common unifying national ideology to replace communism. The thinning of traditional communism as an ideology and the introduction of alien democracy determined position for the political Islamist philosophy. Islam as a political philosophy is not only difficult to interpret but is also new like democracy for the Tajiks.

During the course of fighting it was difficult to distinguish between the offensive and defensive forces as both sides committed atrocities, including disappearances, hostage-taking, murder, burning and looting of homes.

The regional clan tensions in Tajik society were evident following a March 1992 meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan, broadcasted live on Tajik television, at which its Chairman Safarali Kendzhaev, accused the head of the republican Ministry of Internal Affairs, Navdzhuvanov, of exploiting his position for personal gain. Kendzhaev specifically insulted Navdzhuvanov’s Pamir ethnicity. In response, Pamir clan organized protests in Dushanbe. These disputes precipitated a series of rallies in which the followers of the Democratic bloc supported the people of Pamir origin. Those rallies lasted for almost a month where thousands of people participated demanding Kendzhaev’s resignation. To counter these rallies, the leaders of Kulyab pro-Communist movement organized an alternative demonstration in Dushanbe where the protesters used slogans such as "Long Live CPSU! (Communist Party of the Soviet Union)"; "Death to Islam"; "Death to Turadzhonzoda" and to Yusuf"; etc. One of the prominent leaders of the Leninabad clan, Abdumalik Abdullozhano, offered considerable financial and organizational support to the Kulyab realists. Both Leninabad and Kulyab clans worried that their positions would be undermined by the success of the opposition Pamir and Gharm regional clans. The hostility

57 Kendzhayev, a Yaghnobi born in Gissar raised by the father of Qazi Turajanzade, followed a Persian tradition of ‘twinning’ a child from good family with a child from less favored circumstances (Roy 2000: 139)

58 The chief Mufti of Tajikistan who supported the opposition
during the two sets of rallies led to chaos within the Tajik government, which struggled to conform to the mutually selective demands of the competing groups. In the end, President Nabiev formed a 'Presidential Battalion' comprising of the pro-Communist Kulyabs, and armed them with 1,700 machine-guns. Those weapons were taken from the arsenal of the 201st Motorized Armored Division of Russian forces, according to a Russian colonel in that division (Charogi Ruz 1994). Soon the fierce skirmishes erupted between the battalion and the supporters of the opposition. They constituted the beginning of the civil war in Tajikistan. It also marked the beginning of Russia’s military intervention into the civil strife in Tajikistan. At first, these interventions were spontaneous, but over time Russia became active in the civil war.

In May, 1992, Democratic Party Chairman, Shodmon Yusufov in a statement warned that the non-Tajik population would become a hostage to the internal political conflict in the republic. He threatened that he would seek aid from Afghanistan to counter the interference by CIS forces in the internal political conflict of the republic. At the same time he warned that the presence of CIS tanks would affect the security of the Russian population in the republic. Those statements reflected the strong internal tensions compounded by playing the international card to justify the offensive action.

Rustam Abdurakhim, leader of Kulyab forces, condemned the remarks of Shodom Yusupov, Haji Akbar Turadzhonzoda and Davlat Usman for saying their threat to expel the other ethnic groups from Tajikistan, including the Kulyab people whom they did not recognize as Muslims and the Leninabad people. Abdurakhim also mentioned that Kulyab received help from Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan when it was put under economic blockade by Haji Akbar Turadzhonzoda. He supported the groups of Sangak Safarov, Langari Langariyev, Fayzali, Afghanov, Dzhorazkham Oripov, Ibrakhim Ismayilov and many others, fighting against the democratic-Islamist forces, and who had unlawfully formed the government after the May coup (SWB, SU/1521, 1992). These statements reflected the resentment amongst the ethnic groups. In other words, the republic was sitting on an ethnic volcano which could erupt any time.

Initially, ethnic minorities appealed against the speeches that threatened their security. The Coordination Council of National Associations in Tajikistan, a council made up of leaders of the Russian community and societies of Jews, Osetians, Crimean Tatars, Germans,
Armenians and other nationalities living in Tajikistan, protested against such provocative statements. In an appeal, the Council of ethnic communities requested the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the Council for Security and Conflict in Europe (CSCE) to depute observers to monitor the violation of human rights in Tajikistan (SWB, SU/1180, 1992).

The democratic-Islamist alliances formed a coalition government from May 1992 to November 1992. Davlat Usman, Deputy Chairman of IRPT, was appointed as Deputy Prime Minister. According to Oliver Roy, “during this period the IRPT retained a close relationship with Iran. After the coalition’s defeat and the flight of tens of thousands of refugees to Afghanistan, two trends are noticeable. First, during the armed struggle waged from Afghanistan, the IRPT’s connections with Iran lost importance as its Sunni connections-mainly with Pakistan and Afghanistan- gained favor. Second, the IRPT avoided declarations of jihad against Russia, even though there had been many skirmishes between its fighters and the Russian border-guards in Tajikistan. The IRPT remained eager to keep contact with the Russian government” (Roy 2000: 18). The then acting commander to the Russian Border Troops59 in Tajikistan, Colonel Vladimir Novikov, confirmed at a press conference in Dushanbe on August 19, 1994 that the Tajik opposition had swelled its ranks with mercenaries from Afghanistan and other Arab countries (SWB, SU/2084, 1994). Russians were not only attacked by the opposition militia but were also taken hostage.

During the regime of the democratic-Islamist alliances, the territory of Vakhsh was used to launch attacks against the supporters of the former ruling elites. It led to thousands of Kulyabis and Uzbeks temporarily flee to Khatlon, Leninabad and Uzbekistan in June and July 1992, where they were accommodated in schools, mosques and clubs. According to the Department of Refugee Affairs of the Ministry of Labor of Tajikistan estimate, 133,000 Kulyabis and Uzbeks fled the region during the summer of 1992 (Human Rights Watch May 1995). These persecutions were regarded to have been rooted not only “in a local conflict” but also in the history of hostility between the Kulyab and Gharm groups.

Soon after becoming the president of Tajikistan, Imomali Rahmon consolidated his position by launching a campaign of reprisal and prosecution against the opposition. Popular

59 The Russian Border Troops in Tajikistan were established on October 19, 1992 on the basis of the military element of the old Central Asian Border District (Nezavisimaya Gazeta 2003: 8). The agreement on the status of the Russian border troops in Tajikistan was signed on May 25, 2007.
Front forces, supporters of Rahmon, carried out ethnic cleansing in Khatlon Oblast against Garmis-Qarategnis and Pamiris. In his defence, Chairman of Tajik Popular Front, Sangak Safarov, said that the front was fighting Islamic fundamentalists. Safarov said that all attempts to set up kangaroo courts based on ethnic grounds were abolished by the local Popular Front leadership (SWB, SU/1594, 1993). According to 1992, Human Rights Report, people were dragged out of their beds at night and were shot in the streets. Hundreds of women were raped and children saw their parents being shot before their eyes. Most of the victims were the supporters of IRPT, DPT and Ismailis (Human Rights Report 1992, 2006).

According to eyewitness interviewed by the Moscow-based human rights group called Memorial and Helsinki Watch, noted that the pro-government forces checked buses and trolley buses, people on streets, and deployed forces at the Dushanbe airport. Such measures were taken to check individuals’ documents indicating their ethnic origin. Pamiris and Ghannis were killed, taken away or simply became missing. Mass graves were discovered in and around Dushanbe (Human Rights Watch 1993).

While some members of opposition remained in Tajikistan, its leading supporters fled from the country. The government maintained that it was trying to bring various groups under its control. Thus, the government banned all the opposition publications and initiated criminal proceedings against the opposition leaders. In addition, President Rahmon abolished the militia of Popular Front; whose members came from Kulyab region. They were absorbed in the regular army of Tajikistan thus, converting their criminal status to personnel of armed forces.

The mass execution of the Pamir people living in Dushanbe and nearby areas led to an influx of refugees. Most internally displaced persons (IDPs) sought safe haven in their former habitat in the Gharm Valley and GBAO. Most of them took refuge in public buildings rather than in camps or special settlements. The cut in subsidies and the housing and heating problem caused environmental hazards. Many feared that if the persecution of Pamiris continued and that if government troops were brought to GBAO it could cause Pamiri immigration to Afghanistan. A Gharmi returning to Kabodian from Afghanistan told that “the Uzbeks had looted and burned all of our homes. You ask about occupied homes, but there are none here, they were all destroyed” (Human Rights Watch May 1995).
In Afghanistan the Tajik refugees mainly settled in Konduz and Taloqan where posters of Said Abdullo Nuri, the leader of IRPT, were common. Tajik authorities reported in April 1993 that there were around 80,000 refugees in the Pamir area (GBAO). Virtually all of them were Pamiris who lived outside the GBAO and were forced to flee their homes after the coalition government was deposed (SWB, SU/1668, 1993). On their return, under the resettlement campaign, they were many times harassed or threatened.

After the formation of government under Rahmon, the Popular Front was divided between the units from Kulyab under Sangak Safarov and units from Gissar under Jamoliddin Mansurov. The reason for the rivalry between the two factions of Popular Front militia arose because the Gissar faction felt that they were not adequately represented in the newly formed government. Further the exclusion of Gissaris from the Tajik army, which was exclusively formed of the Kulyabis, heightened their tension. For Kulyabis the well-armed and highly cohesive Gissar group could be a potential future threat to the government. There were plans to create Gissar as an autonomous entity to be headed by Mansurov, which were never implemented. Two simultaneous events, i.e. the appointment of Mansurov as Mayor of Dushanbe, which was resented by Kulyabis and the death of Fayzali Saidov and Sangak Safarov under mysterious circumstances (both Popular Front leaders from Kulyab- having personality clashes) added a new dimension to the struggle between the Kulyab and Gissar factions. Safarov’s death led to a further change in the ministry. The new government and the armed units were exclusively of Kulyabis. Consequently, Gissar faction was alienated. It led to a new struggle for power.

In 1993 Kulyab was merged with Kurgan-Tyube to form Khatlon. According to international observers merging of the two regions into one was done basically to keep the opposition forces under the pro-government Kulyab militia. As in Kurgan-Tyube, the resettled people from Pamir supported the Islamic-democratic opposition. The substantial Uzbek population of the region feared that these often impoverished settlers might provide the basis for future religious extremist threat. Consequently, sociopolitical situation became explosive and many clashes between Uzbeks and Tajiks were reported in the region.

During the civil war, the opposition strongholds in Tavildara, Kafarnihon, Pyanj, Rogun, Obigram, and Kalakhum on the border with Afghanistan, came under military offensive by the government forces. According to Saidamir Zukhrov, Chairman of the
Committee of National Security of Tajikistan, the aim of the operation was to confiscate the weapons from the anti-government groupings and to put an end to the acts of lawlessness perpetrated by bandit formations in these populated areas.

Pamiris who had left Dushanbe after the Rahmonov troops took the capital on 10 December 1992, organized armed groupings. Many stated that these groups were organized against the hostile population of Kulyab and Gissar. Rizvon, a local field commander of Pamir region, and fighters loyal to him continued to carry out small armed provocations and raids on government posts.

There were not only clashes between the members of various regional groups for maximizing their power but there was also clash within the regional groups. After the signing of General Agreement of Peace in June 1997, the democratic-Islamists forces of United Tajik Opposition (UTO) were integrated in official structures thus marginalizing the strong armed opposition. It led to many of the commanders of the government getting involved in the struggle for influence. Amongst them Mahmadruzi Iskandrov, Khudoberdiyev and Ibod Baiimitov emerged as the new player from various districts of Kulyab region (Mamadshoyev 2000). In places like Gharm and the Qarategin Valley in central Tajikistan, the government failed to control field commanders who did not accept the 1997 peace accord. Armed bands intimidated the population at will.

Persecution of Uzbeks

It was not just the inter-ethnic rivalry between the Tajiks and Uzbeks that needed to be sorted but there was also an inter-ethnic fight between the Uzbeks and other ethnic minorities. For example, in June 1989, on a disagreement between an Uzbek vendor and a Meskhetian Turk buyer in market sparked widespread violence that spread to several cities in the Ferghana valley that lasted for a week. Around 100 people were killed and 600 to 800 wounded. The victims were mainly Meskhetians Turks and the perpetrators mainly Uzbeks. Hundreds of homes and government buildings were burned. Several thousand troops were sent in to quell the violence. Subsequently, Moscow evacuated 17,000 Meskhetians.

In November 1992, a large group of Uzbeks in Pandzh district fought on one side of Kulyab units against the Tajiks who came from Qarategin district. The Uzbek community of Pyandz maintained that the local leadership “unleashed genocide” against the Uzbeks (SWB, SU/1534, 1992). On 25 November 1992, the Uzbeks of Kumsagiri and Pyandz had to flee to
their native homeland in Vakshskyi district in Kurgan-Tyube after the attack on them by IRPT militants. The Russian Border Troops headquarters reported that the militants also included Afghan *mojahideens* (SWB, SU/1549, 1992).

During the course of disarmament campaign, Uzbeks living in Panj region were subjected to illegal house searches and harassed, detained and beaten by forces of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. A number of Uzbeks reportedly fled the region as a result of these abuses. In predominantly populated Uzbek regions such as Shahrtuz and Kabodian where Uzbeks control local government and police, there were instances of mistreatment of Tajik returnees by Uzbeks. For example, in two separate incidents in March and July 1994, Uzbeks attacked Tajik returnees (Human Rights Watch 1994). The disarmament of Pyanj was regarded by many to have been directed against the Uzbeks. It was due to the tension between the Uzbeks and Kulyabi Tajiks in this region.

Even in the post-civil war era, Human Rights Practice report of February 2001 noted, "Since the signing of the peace treaty in 1997, there have been multiple murders of ethnic Uzbeks in the Panj district. Some of these cases appear to be a matter of retaliation by returned ethnic Tajik refugees for injuries done to them by ethnic Uzbeks during the civil war. As a result of these attacks, some ethnic Uzbek families have moved to other locations in the district where Uzbeks predominate or to neighboring countries formerly part of Soviet Union" (Bureau of Democracy and Human Rights 2001).

It was even noted that the music cassettes in Uzbek language were attacked by the Tajiks in many parts of Tajikistan. There are not many Uzbek newspapers.

The desecration of Christian graves, arson against churches and violence against Uzbeks and Russian-speaking population in the Oblast had prompted around 20,000 ethnic Uzbeks and Turkmens to leave for Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (SWB, SU/1484, 1992). There were clashes between the Tajiks and Uzbeks in Kurgan-Tyube. That made the situation in the region “particularly explosive” after the killing of the filed commander of Peoples Front, Talat Mirusmanov in early 1994.

The United Nations Secretary General recognized the delicate equation between the Tajiks and Uzbeks living in Tajikistan. According to one of his report, “Another alarming dimension is the danger of confrontation along ethnic lines. Serious tensions already existed in the southern Tajik province of Khatlon, and a confrontation between Tajiks and Uzbeks in
Afghanistan could easily spill over to Tajikistan and other Central Asian States” (S/1994/379: 2). In Gissar rayon and surrounding rayons, which are in the west of republic near the border with Uzbekistan, there were arms-smuggling that also led to acute Tajik-Uzbek rivalry, as both groups were suspicious of each other.

In one of the interview with Rahim Hashimov, the deputy chairman of the Uzbek society in Tajikistan, said that, “Tajikistan is at the brink of a conflict between Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks and that a large group of Uzbek community of Pyandzh district fought on the side of Kulyab units against Tajiks who come from Qarategin district, while the Uzbek community of Pyandzh maintained that the local leadership ‘unleashed genocide’ against it” (Interfax 1992).

In Jilikul, Khoja Karimov, who had been a prominent member of Popular Front maintained ties with the local government, was responsible for series of serious clashes in March 1994. On March 20, Karimov led a group of thirty armed men into the local bazaar, where they harassed residents and beat up the chief of police (an Uzbek) and a young boy. Shortly thereafter, they invaded a New Year’s celebration attended mostly by returnees, where they began shooting in the air and beating up individuals at random. They also threatened to set fire to the house of the head of the local executive committee, also an Uzbek, if he did not vacate his position. The chief of police was replaced by a Kulyabi a few days later, and the head of the executive committee subsequently resigned his positions (Human Rights Watch 1994).

In Gissar Safarali Kenjayev, an Uzbek, reportedly had much stronger armed forces than the government forces, due to which the situation in the region always remained fragile and explosive.

Tursunzoda, cotton producing area in southern Tajikistan was monopolized by Mahmud Khudoberdiyev, an ethnic Uzbek. His private army had control over the region. On 24 July 1997, he began his move to control southern and central Tajikistan after the establishment of Defence Council for South and Central Tajikistan on 18 July 1997 in Dushanbe. The meeting was attended by field commanders from the former pro-government Popular Front militia and leaders of some army units based in the southern Khatlon Region (SWB, SU/2981, 1997). Khudobrdiyev who organized a rebellion was allegedly having his
base in Uzbekistan. Later he was reportedly assisted by Abdullojanov and the Uzbek secret services in the intrusion in Tajikistan in 1998 (Parshin 2002).

Tajik Prime Minister Yahyo Azimov said that the uprising in the north of the republic in November 1998 was an attempt “to introduce another split in Tajik society and to counterpose the country’s northern region to the southern region” (SWB, SU/3408, 1998).

Relations between Tajiks and Uzbeks in Tajikistan were effected by the bitter relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and Uzbekistan’s policies towards Tajiks in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan wanted to maintain its influence in the region and arbitrarily control the Tajik-Uzbek border areas. They not only rejected the free passage to the Tajik immigrants from Afghanistan to Tajikistan through Termez, Uzbek-Afghan border, but also unilaterally mined the Tajik-Uzbek border. These policies had a negative impact on the relations between the two communities. Uzbekistan accused Tajikistan for providing safe-heavens to the Islamic militants. The Uzbekistan Presidents’ ambitions to build a greater Turkistan made the Tajiks suspicious. Moreover, Tajiks in Uzbekistan were severely persecuted for organizing protests and demonstrations against the suppression and non-recognition of their ethnic status. Further, the Tajiks are forcibly registered as Uzbeks in Samarkand, Bukhara and in the areas where Tajiks form the majority. The issues of supply of gas and water sharing between the two countries have also added to the ethnic-discord.

Persecution of Russians

During the February 1990 civil unrest the demonstrators raised slogans like “make the Russians answer for everything” (SWB, SU/0690, 1990) thus blaming the Russians for the ills of the country. The failure to punish those responsible for February 1990 tragedy alienated a significant portion of the Tajik public from the republican government. It in turn, fueled mounting radicalism among both Russian-speaking and native residents. The Russian population, in particular, perceived the crisis as a growing threat to their life and livelihood in Tajikistan. In fact, their emigration from Tajikistan increased tremendously, as they "started to feel themselves here as people of an inferior sort" (Nezavisimaya Gazeta, June 6, 1992). Moreover, they expressed their apprehension on the draft of the new republican constitution, which began with: "We, the Tajiks . . .," and made no mention of dual citizenship or Russian as an official language. Consequently, approximately 36,000 Russians and Russian speaking people left the republic. This figure later reached a few hundred thousand. The migrations led
to the shortage of specialists at industrial enterprises, medical and educational institutions (SWB, SU/0866, 1990). The rise of anti-Russian sentiments in the republic benefited the communist alliances as they received Russian support in its struggle against the local opposition, which was blamed for inciting such tensions. The subsequent intervention by the Soviet government led to the rise of anti-Russian sentiments in some parts of Tajik society. The Russian-speaking population in Rogun was terrorized by the opposition for their political ambitions (ITAR-TASS January 1993). A group of Russian-speaking refugees visited the Russian embassy in Tajikistan in connection with the intensification of anti-Russian feelings in the north-eastern regions of the republic and wanted Russia to take immediate action for their safety or assist in their repatriation.

Valeri Yushin, the chairman of the board of the Russian community in Tajikistan, in an interview mentioned that “Russians who have opted to throw their lot with Tajikistan do not want to fade away among the local population. At the same time they do not want to counterpoise themselves to the people of this Central Asian country.” He added that he hoped that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will draw an election law which would set a quota for ethnic minorities in the republic (SWB, SU/1955, 1994).

Russian-Tajik relations took a new dimension during the period May 1992 -August 1993. From May to November 1992, the democratic-Islamist had formed the de facto government at the centre. The new government was against the Russian military presence in the country and blamed them for taking sides in the war. According to the former commander of the 201st Russian Division, Vyacheslav Zabolotny, the Russian military forces were only following the commands of the then Tajik President Nabiev. The decisions regarding the involvement of Russian troops in the inter-Tajik conflict were made either by mid-level and junior military officers or via coordination between the Tajik government and the local Russian commanders (SWB, SU/1955, 1994). It was in May 1992, that Tajikistan signed Tashkent Treaty on Collective Security under which Tajikistan was eligible for military assistance in case of ‘external threat’. (Kreikemeyer and Zagorski 1996).

The escalation of the Russian military's involvement in the civil war in Tajikistan was the result of several factors. Those included the extremely chaotic and inconsistent nature of the domestic political terrain in Tajikistan, the inconsistencies of Moscow's policies toward Tajikistan, and the presence of substantial Russian population in Tajikistan. At times the
Russian military became involved as "independent suppliers" of military forces, while on other occasions it acted as a "junior partner" of the Tashkent military-political machine, paying lip-service to Moscow's official policy of neutrality. It was only as the Russian government began to gradually clarify its political priorities in the region (i.e., at the end of August 1993) that it became increasingly obvious to Moscow that the Russian troops in Tajikistan were one of the major sources of support for the pro-Communist (the Popular Front) movement (Dubnov 2007).

Russia withdrew its troops in 2005 from the Tajik territory. The Russians who remained are working at important technical positions. The recent pro-Uzbekistan tilt of Russia and the Russian policy towards the immigrants has soured the relations between the two countries.

**Persecution of Jews**

The civil war did not spare the Jewish community. It became the victim of the war leading to mass exodus. In 1989 through 2000, 10,800 Jews had made *aliyah*\(^{60}\) out of the 20,000 in the country. Approximately 900 Tajik Jews are still residing in Tajikistan. The people left behind are for the most part elderly, poverty-stricken and subject to anti-Semitic attacks and persecution. In 1995, a Dushanbe synagogue and several Jewish homes were broken and ransacked. Equipment and prayer books were stolen from synagogue. Many Jews resolved to emigrate under adverse circumstances. The one remaining synagogue, in Dushanbe was planned to be demolished in 2004 as part of city reconstruction plans. After the destruction of the community's *mikvah*,\(^{61}\) kosher butcher, and several classrooms, the international outcry led to halting the demolition. The Jewish community is now rebuilding the synagogue (Solame 2006; Union of Council for Jews in the Former Soviet Union 1998).

**Persecution of Afghan refugees**

Afghans informed the Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that they were constant targets of violent attacks, disappearance and harassment by Tajiks during 1993. While the frequency of such incidences declined significantly in 1994, there is still considerable fear among the community. Afghanistan is considered to be a key supporter of the Tajik opposition and thus,

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\(^{60}\) *Aliyah* was founded to rescue Jewish community from the anti-Semitic attacks. *Aliyah* villages continue to play an important role in the absorption of newcomers and for their rehabilitation.

\(^{61}\) *Mikvah* means "collection [of water]" is a specially constructed pool of water used for total immersion in a purification ceremony within Judaism.
responsible for the instability and clashes in Tajikistan. As a result, attacks against Afghans living in Tajikistan tended to increase whenever there were serious clashes along the Tajik-Afghan border. There is also resentment on the part of Tajiks, based on the belief that all Afghans in Tajikistan are successful businessmen and that the community is, therefore, uniformly wealthy. As a result, most Afghans reported that they do not speak in their native Dari in public, since their accents exposes their identity.

LACK OF ETHNIC ACCOMMODATION IN POST-RECONCILIATION

The end of civil war and the failure of the power elite to implement the political, economic and administrative accommodation have further demarcated the ethnic boundaries amongst the ethno-regional groups in the post-1997 nation building process.

According to Saodat Olimova, “The civil war, which took an interethnic character, taught people to control the conflict during periodic cessation of the ethnic conflict and to try to solve it. In Kabadian, Shaartuz and Panj regions a high level of stability in multicultural society with big potential for conflict has been reached. In these regions there are a lot of refugees; these are the poorest regions with the highest level of damages from the war. From 1995 the local government gradually started to conduct the practice of interethnic and social peace. No bloody and damaging conflicts happened since then. In this sense the region differs from the other regions in Tajikistan” (Olimova 2006).

The peace agreement of 1997 provided for the 30 percent reservation for opposition party members in government structure. Though opposition was initially included in the political, administrative and government defence forces but the agreement was seldom implemented since 2000. Initially, under Russian pressure, the opposition militia was recruited in the regular army. However, they were dispersed so that they could not form a strong group. Moreover these opposition militiamen faced regular harassment in the hands of the Kulyab dominated forces. In addition, the recruits were not given salaries on time and no proper uniforms were provided to them. The vocational training they received during their services and availability of credit facilities encouraged them to leave armed forces in the existing inhospitable environment.

Even after the establishment of official peace in 1997, the political tension has not eased because of lack of political accommodation. In addition, there have been lingering economic problems. In fact, there are hardly any national and international efforts to
establish democracy and remove malpractices in elections. On the contrary the government has slowly been moving towards an authoritarian rule. Thus it has been endangering the country’s ‘hard-won peace and stability (Arman 2004).

The government faced a face-off when in early 2004 President Rahmon and former warlords increased tensions. For example, it was under Rahmon’s replacement drive to consolidate his position in the parliamentary elections scheduled for 2005, General Ghaffor Mirzoyev, in charge of Presidential Guard since 1995, was removed from his position in January 2004. He was replaced by Colonel Rajabali Rahmonaliyev from Dangara. There was an immediate threat of resignation by the officers of Presidential Guards leading to rumors about a potential military coup. It made the situation tensed particularly in Kulyab. It was only pacified after Mirzoyev was appointed as the head of the State Narcotics Control Agency. Soon he was put under detention on charges including murder, illegal use of bodyguards, possession of arms, and privatization of government property etc. Apparently, no major disturbances were reported on his arrest.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the new circumstances, Tajikistan needed to restructure its economy that could secure ethno-regional cooperation. The supply of the products from one rayon to the other was also blocked leading to fractured economy. There were regular breaches of an agreement between the two oblasts. For example, during the initial years of war there was no delivery of meat and cotton from Kulyab and Kurgan-Tyube and potatoes from Gharm and Tajikabad to Dushanbe. The government found the solution to the new problem by distributing all the economic portfolios to its loyalist Kulyabis. In addition, lack of resources and dependence of economic system of Tajikistan on Moscow and problem of seeking transit permission from Uzbekistan put Tajikistan under huge trade deficit and shortage of essential commodities.

The investments for developments are mainly done in Khatlon region, from where the members of the government come. Badakshon is the most neglected region, not only by the government but also by the international humanitarian organizations. Aga Khan’s FOCUS is the only international organization that is involved in the humanitarian and developmental aid. Sogdh is an important region and is self sustaining due to the presence of resources and industries.
Table 12 Poverty Rate in Tajikistan by Year and Regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Poverty Rate 1999</th>
<th>Poverty Rate 2003</th>
<th>Decline (%) point</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GBAO</td>
<td>197,000</td>
<td>97%</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sogd</td>
<td>2,123,000</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>-15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khatlon</td>
<td>2,169,000</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>-13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dushanbe</td>
<td>630,000</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>-12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RRS</td>
<td>1,553,000</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>-26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,672,000</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>-18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

RRS = Rayon of Republics Subordinate

Note: Poverty Assessment based on a poverty line of $2.15 at purchasing parity/capita/day

Source: World Bank 2005

The above figures reveal that there is a consistency in the fall of the poverty rate but regional variations are constant. There is also a huge difference in the poverty rate between the rayons for instance in GBAO the total poverty rate is 84% whereas in RRS it is 45%. The percentage rate at which the poverty is declining has also shown noticeable difference with 12% in Dushanbe and 13% in GBAO and Khatlon in contrast to -26% in RRS.

There is no middle class. The tendencies of favoritism have widened the gap between the have and have-not. The rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer. Traditional regional backing shaped professional mobility and fixed the future orientation of the young generation in Tajikistan. There is unhealthy competition in amongst the young generation that competes with the people of different regional background for the scarce resources rather than competing amongst all. Thus the relations between the regions are based on negative contest rather than healthy competition.

Karl Deutsch in a variant of his so called 'Communication theory', based on the 'nerves of the government' approach pointed out that 'Modernization may be inclined to strain or obliterate the unity of states whose populations are already separated into several

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**Note:** The class according to Marx is defined as people's relations with economic production. The upper class, or aristocracy, have historically been landowners. The middle classes have been owners of means of production and the lower class is formed of urban proletariat whose labor provides the profits for the middle classes and the rural peasantry whose labor enables aristocrats to live without producing (Bhagat 1996; Sabaine 1937).
groups with different languages or cultures or necessary way of life' (Deutsch 1961: 493-514). This is a relevant fact in Tajik society. The end of communism and introduction of democracy with open market has not changed the thinking process, neither among the political elites nor amongst the local population. The political elites continue to represent one clan and the local population continues to pay lip service to their masters. It is difficult to foresee any change and much difficult to anticipate any rebellion, leave alone the peaceful demonstration.

There is no institution of checks and balance. The regulation of all the systems required the control of the judicial system and military forces. The government has silenced all the opposition by taking judicial system in its own hands. With all the important government positions with the regional elites, law remains in the hands of Kulyabis wishes and command. President has often used the judicial system to declare opposition parties, having regional base in the regions other than Kulyab, as illegal and initiated criminal proceedings against opposition leaders. The concept of checks and balances does not exist in Tajikistan. Judiciary is a puppet in the hands of the ruling elites. The judicial system is so weak that it has discouraged the foreign investments as well.

The common man lives under two legacies that are the communist system and the civil war. Tajiks are always fearful of the repercussions of going against the authoritarian and clan based government. Underdeveloped civil society has failed to develop a democratic polity. The country has been divided on ethno-regional lines and therefore government has adopted a tighter control over the nation to keep it from disintegrating.

The civil war and the government repressive policies have discouraged the people to be openly critical about government’s oppressive and corrupt practices. In the existing socio-political environment even the young generation is fearful to talk openly about the apparent ethno-regional issues. It has helped the power elites to mobilize the local population in their favor. It has also facilitated the government to manipulate the issues that lead to political protests, regional rivalries and economic difficulties. In fact, the democracy has been forced on the elites and it is yet to develop as a political ethos in the country. The future of democracy seems bleak as the government is providing no opportunity for its growth.

Lack of intermixing of regional groups has led to the development of strong clan ties resulting in insufficient political and administrative accommodation and selective economic
development of the north and virtual poverty in the south. The Khojandi-Kulyabi alliances have played a dominant role in power structure where the ethno-regional communities have always played a subordinate role with no opportunity for progress. It has assisted in developing an economic and social divide. The economic development is supported by the availability of the material for production. Though Badakshon, the least productive region was treated as a blue-eyed baby under the Soviets, it could never grow as the economic contributor to the national economy. Although the Khatlon has fertile land, the region depends on the import of agricultural commodities. Sogd has the industries that depend upon other republics. Despite having the rich river network, the country faces water and electricity shortage.

The demographic imbalance due to the presence of resources and job opportunities has made the Khatlon and Sogd region more populated and dominant in comparison to Badakshon that forms one third of the territory and only 20 percent of the total population.

The patterns of marriage within different Tajik ethno-regional groups are not a norm thus discouraging development of sympathies and kinship ties. According to a Pamiri Ismaili Tajik “I got married to a girl from Dushanbe around five year back. We both tried to adjust with each other and made great effort to mingle with the respective families. But there is so much cultural gap that it is difficult for us to live together any more.”

The differences in the language and religious practices have also kept the Ismailis from their Sunni Tajiks and Uzbeks away from mixing with Tajiks. The relative sizes of immigrant ethnic groups have developed a unique pattern of competition, i.e., between regional groups rather than amongst all. The differential access to resources such as education, housing, and jobs has clearly played an important role in social stratification of ethno-regional groups where ethnic group have maintained strong boundaries. The internal movement is not an isolated movement but a movement where the ethno-regional grouping prefers to relocate themselves in group.

Presently, the heads of the regions are arbitrarily appointed or removed by the centre without taking approval of the regions. It has resulted in the complete marginalization of political, social and economic status of the regional communities. Even the GBAO, though enjoying autonomous status has no independent right to choose its representative and
requires approval of the Dushanbe regime. Thus, there is no regional representation in the decision making process.

To conclude, the economic conditions and restrictions as well as the negative policy approaches of governments to ethno-regional demands and accommodation are likely to transform the peaceful petition to the politicization of their demands, i.e., violent confrontation, autonomy or secessionism. The main ethno-national tendencies are related to regional representation at political, military, administrative and judicial level. The promotions are also based on one's place of birth. The prospects for stability seem bleak due to lack of political accommodation with regional and political opposition representation in decision making; further, there are no signs of development of democratic self-governing institutions. Even the political parties are lacking national outlook and are regionally based. The government also does not provide sufficient opportunities to develop democratic political culture where political parties and people have opportunities to exercise their rights.