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[TAJIKISTAN]**

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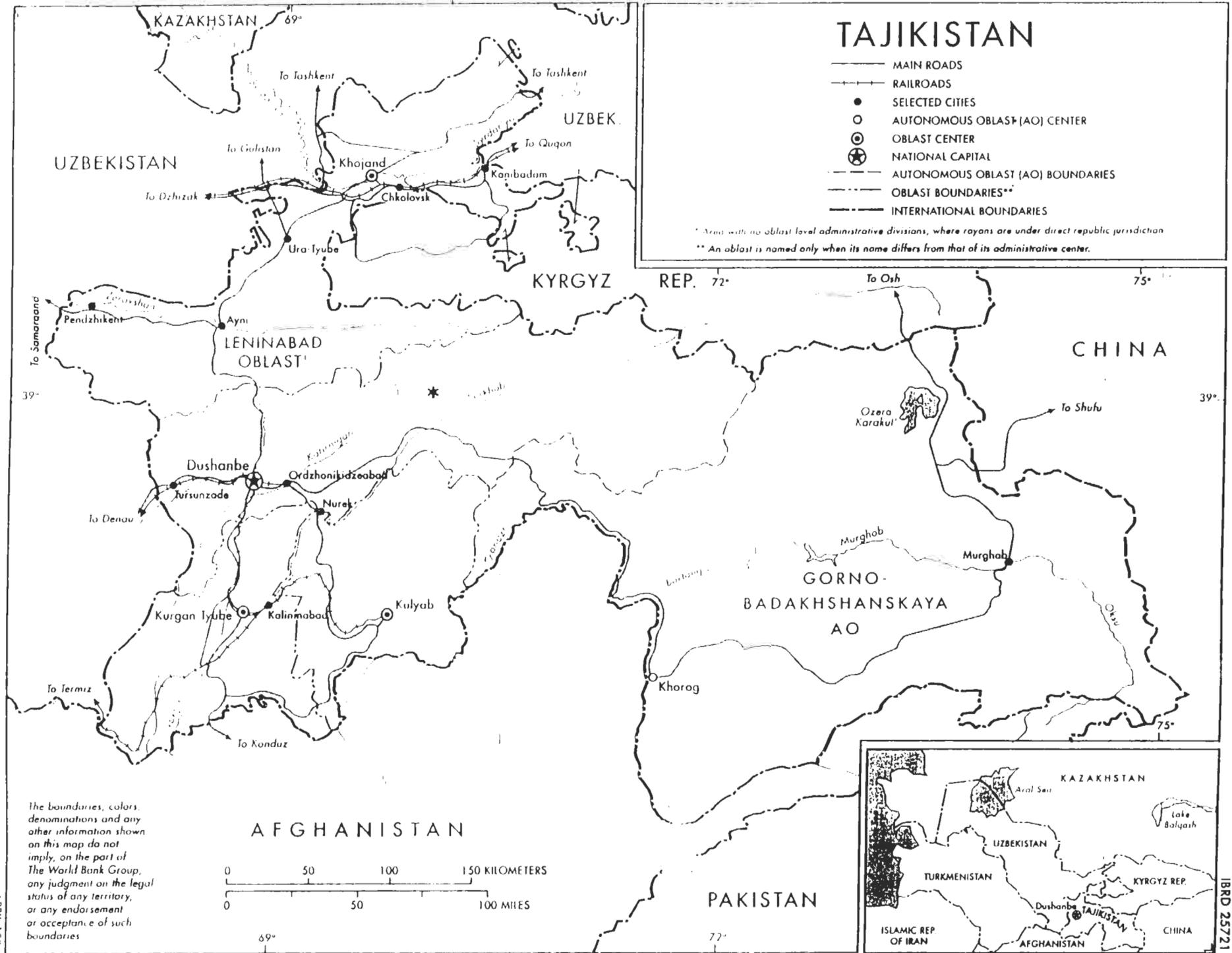
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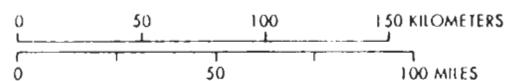
TAJIKISTAN

- MAIN ROADS
- +— RAILROADS
- SELECTED CITIES
- AUTONOMOUS OBLAST (AO) CENTER
- ⊙ OBLAST CENTER
- ★ NATIONAL CAPITAL
- - - AUTONOMOUS OBLAST (AO) BOUNDARIES
- - - OBLAST BOUNDARIES**
- - - INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARIES

* Area with no oblast level administrative divisions, where rayons are under direct republic jurisdiction
 ** An oblast is named only when its name differs from that of its administrative center.



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NATIONAL RECONCILIATION: THE IMPERFECT WHIM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh

Because of the existence of different groups with their own political, ethnic and regional interests, and with growing incentives encouraging the hardening of their irreconcilable positions, "National Reconciliation" remains an ideal often talked about in Tajikistan but not a goal within easy reach. Two years after the war, the forced talk of "national reconciliation" comes at a time of more and more fragmentation of previous groups, formation of new ones, and the strengthening of an authoritarian isolated government. Although a "command peace" has been imposed from above following the November presidential elections, regional competitions, ethnic problems, internal and external organized opposition and poverty combine to threaten the long-term durability of the present government as well as the stability of the region. The international community would do well to encourage the UN-sponsored inter-Tajik dialogue on a political resolution of the conflict on the one hand, and to encourage peace by being cautious about giving incentives for renewed competition between different groups on the other.

"National reconciliation" has different meanings for the main parties involved in the Tajik conflict: The external Opposition would like to see the return of the refugees, the establishment of a Provision Government with the participation of neutral elements, and presidential and parliamentary elections in which everyone would participate. In the absence of these steps, the Opposition sees more incentives in remaining as a military force outside of the country than a weakened compromising one inside. For the internal opposition, the defeated Khujandis of the presidential race, "national reconciliation" is no longer as tempting as concentrating on the advancement of the rich northern province of Leninobod. For the original winners of the 1992 civil war, the Kulobis, who are now in effect monopolizing the government, "national reconciliation" was a slogan by which they sought to legitimize their rule before and after the elections: members of the opposing groups are free to participate in the political life of society, but on the Kulobis' terms. In effect, the Government has been able to block all mechanisms for sharing power with dissenting groups.

Although the Government continues to adhere to its commitment to holding a dialogue with the external Opposition, the recent victories of a presidential and parliamentary elections

in favor of the Kulobi elements and the ratification of a new Constitution, leave no room for the Opposition, both internal and external, to manoeuvre within the existing political structure. In this light, "national reconciliation" remains an abstract concept without the existence of mechanisms for its implementation. Although the Government has not been able to unify the country, it has successfully imposed a "command peace" and legitimacy from above by 1) controlling its former allies, armed formations that have now infiltrated the power ministries, 2) manipulating symbols of nationalism and 3) evoking the fear of a "third enemy."

But internal factors that are present as serious obstacles to national reconciliation include 1) a competition of regions including a new north/south cleavage, 2) ethnic problems and 3) continued fighting between the Opposition and the Government with the refugee problems that it has caused. The Central Government does not have the means nor the power to unite the different regions of the country, each of which has its own separate identity. Furthermore, Uzbek and Russian minorities, which have sometimes backed the Government side in the 1992 civil war against the Opposition, are now also becoming difficult to include within the framework of the new Kulobi-conceived "Tajik nation."

Given the reasons for a lack of national reconciliation in Tajikistan, in the meantime, one should consider whether economic reforms would further create competition and lack of harmony among the groups already in discord. What created the chaos in the first place was the lack of national-based power sharing mechanisms for different regional/political/ethnic groups in Tajikistan. Experience shows that in Tajikistan, political opening can create ethnic and regional bloody competition among the local population, who are in turn recruited by politicians in their search for support. Economic competition in the near future, brought about by reforms, could prolong and even intensify local feuds given the existing ethnic and regional diversities. Yet, the most critical problem today remains the shortage of money within the republic. Wages have not been paid since May 1994 in almost all government jobs. Economic reforms, therefore, are badly needed in the country. The shortage of food could eventually exasperate the social situation and create more dissatisfaction and unrest. The economic situation could, in the best sense, create a new basis of loyalties for capable leaders, and in the worse case, a new class of opposition among wider groups of people.

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION: THE IMPERFECT WHIM

By Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh

"Ghuvai Mo dar vahdat va yagonagii hamai sokinoni Jumhurist"

"Our power is in the unity and oneness of all the inhabitants of the republic".

President Emomali Rahmonov's slogan of national unity flutters on blue banners in the streets of Dushanbe while war rages on the eastern Badakhshan border, and the north is slowly beginning to draw a program of economic and political isolation. "National reconciliation" is an ideal often talked about in Government and Opposition circles, but hardly a goal within easy reach.

The main problem is the existence of different groups with their own social, political, national, cultural and regional interests, coexisting with an increasingly authoritarian and monopolizing government. Rahmonov's slogan insists on the unity and oneness of "all the inhabitants of the republic," excluding, in a sense, large numbers of refugees living in the CIS and in Afghanistan. The "inhabitants of the republic", if not taken literally, could also include expatriates abroad who at one time were living indeed in Tajikistan but have had to "temporarily" move to other countries at the onset of the 1992 civil war. In this case, however, Russians and Bukharan Jews who have been emigrating out of the country by choice since 1990 should also be accounted for, although their case is closed as far as the present needs for reconciliation are concerned. The slogan thus refers primarily to the need to unify the different regions of Tajikistan, and not the population which has been dispersed for its political views. There is a need for the reconciliation of the different regions today, because, even though the cleavages that began the 1992-1993 civil war may have been ideological (nationalist/democrats versus conservatives), and religious (so-called Islamists versus so-called Communists), yet the most important catalyst of violence was the competition of different regions, mainly the northern province of Leninobod and the south-eastern Oblast (province) of Kulob versus the eastern autonomous region of Badakhshan and the central valleys of Gharm and Qarotegin.¹

¹ For an explanation of the causes of the civil war, refer to: Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "Causes and Consequences of the Civil War," Central Asia Monitor, No.1 (January 1993), Keith Martin, "Tajikistan: Civil War Without End?" (RFE/RL Research Report, 22 (July 1993); Olivier Roy, "The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications," Report of the United States Institute of Peace (December 1993), Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "The Bloody Path of Change: The Case of Post-Soviet Tajikistan," The Harriman Institute Forum, Vol.6, No. 11 (July 1993); Barnett Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," Survival, Vol. 35, No.4 (Winter 1993-1994).

Two years after the war, the forced talk of "national reconciliation" comes at a time of more and more fragmentation of previous groups, formation of new ones, and the general hardening of irreconcilable positions of feuding sides. Incentives from events within and outside the country reinforce identities and dictate new actions. As incentives change, so do group formations or self-identifications of existing group. The war in Chechnya and the favorable attention of the West to the plight of minorities fighting against Russia have encouraged the Tajik Opposition. The 1994 presidential and 1995 parliamentary elections have strengthened the weight of the representatives of Kulob (thus referred to as Kulobis), the victorious elements of the war, within the central government. An unexpected defeat at the presidential elections, yet at the same time the strengthening of the economic base through increased foreign investment, have alienated the political actors of the northern province of Khujand from the center. Within these three groups, the Opposition, the Kulobis and the internal opposition (the Khujandis), power, or the possibility of attaining it, initiates further fragmentation.

Meanwhile, the inter-Tajik dialogue on a political resolution of the conflict mediated by the United Nations is seriously faltering, given the lack of either incentives on both sides and/or mechanisms for sharing power. A dialogue is the only commitment the Government has to give to Russians and Uzbekistan in order to show that it seeks compromise. But the recent victories, i.e., a presidential and parliamentary elections in favor of the Kulobi elements and the ratification of a new constitution, leave no room for the Opposition, both internal and external, to manoeuvre within the existing political structure. The only way for both opposition to carve themselves a piece of the system would be to do so on the terms of the present government. In this light, the "national reconciliation" remains an abstract concept without the existence of mechanisms for its implementation.

What remains is the monopolization of the Kulobi elements within the government and the power structures, the further militarization of the external opposition, and the eloignement of Khujand. All of this will continue the impoverishment of central and southern Tajikistan, which in the long run, will be hazardous to the existence of the current regime and perhaps even the country as it is known today. Another civil war will probably not be in the scenario. Instead, what will be more plausible is the continuation of forced stability within a larger picture of instability in the region and a serious impoverishment of the country which could isolate and discredit the current Government.

A Problem of Identification

Students of the Tajik conflict have sought the principle causes for the 1992 Civil War in the polarization of extremist ideologies, "Islamic Fundamentalism" versus "Communism", or in clashes between nationalist, democratic, pro-reform and conservative forces rooted in different regions of Tajikistan.² These categorizations were thought of after the war in order to simplify the explanation of what really was a multi-dimensional conflict. Rubin best summarized the circumstances in testimony to the Congress of the United States as a "vacuum of institutions and plethora of arms"³. One could also add renewed competition for released power. The break-up of the Soviet Union increased the pie to be divided among regional authorities. For the first time in more than seventy years, different socio-political groups saw the possibility of touching some of the power that had hitherto remained in the hands of a nomenklatura chosen by Moscow. An important explanation of the war therefore could be that the first opportunity to gain power coincided with the break-down of mechanisms for governing a newly independent country. To this was added the widespread availability of arms given by outsiders with their ulterior motives. Poverty and economic dependence, a mixed ethnicity competing for local resources, the unwillingness of the Military Industrial Complex to remain idle after the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the proximity of a chaotic Afghanistan all provided favorable conditions for the war to break out in Tajikistan.⁴ Russia and the countries of the CIS saw in the conflict the problem of Afghanistan from where there would be a flow of arms and of "Islamic fundamentalism." For the Tajik nationalists, democrats and reformers, it was a chance to challenge the rule of the nomenklatura and demand a larger share of the pie.

Ethnic, religious and regional competition existed within the Soviet system as well, but emphasis lay more on center and periphery relations than on the inner workings within the republic. There was no power to be had, so the animosity was down-played. When it was possible to challenge the ruling monopoly, the competition became bloody, given the availability of arms from everywhere. Different regions and different ethnic groups within the regions formed bases of loyalty and battled each other. Regionalism (Mahalgaroi), therefore, was in fact a consequence of the distribution of power, not a cause of the conflict per se. After the war, the bases of loyalty and the self-identification of different groups solidified as incentives grew or appeared, making the co-existence of groups difficult. Thus, a successful

² Ibid.

³ Barnett R. Rubin in Testimony before the Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the United States House of Representatives, September 22, 1994.

⁴ See Barnett R. Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," Survival, Vol. 35, No.4 (Winter 1993-1994) for the discussion of some of these elements.

conflict resolution should make peace between communities by halting the metamorphosis of ethnic, socio-political, regional and religious groups. New incentives can further split the groups if they are not planned out in harmony to reflect the benefit of a united nation. Why peace is not a tangible solution in Tajikistan lies in fact in the nature of changing identities, group formations, and loyalties.

Since the war, the process of development and the consolidation of group identities have been a point of departure from their initial motivations. Initially, groups who went to Afghanistan, whether they were members of the secular Democratic Party, Rastokhez nationalist Front, La'le Badakhshan or the Islamic Revivalist Party, became known as "Islamic Guerrillas", or "Vovchiks", a derivation of the word Wahhabi, which referred to a broad category of militant Islam in Central Asia. Those victorious groups who were helped by the Russian military complex to gain and remain in power became known as "Communists," "old-guards", "conservatives", and "Yurchiks", short for the Russian name "Yuri". Both sides contested the labels. After the war, the winning side used an increasingly nationalist and Islamic discourse fitted to reflect a post-Soviet Tajik identity. That the Kulobis relied increasingly on nationalism is not surprising. All over Central Asia, post-communist ruling elites adopted such a discourse in an effort to create viable nation-states, and to consolidate their rule over the entire country. In Tajikistan, the ruling faction thus presented itself as a "national" and "nationalist" Tajik government, locked in a dispute with an "Islamic" opposition to the south, and with an "Uzbekified" Khujandi nomenklatura in the north.

The Opposition, on the other hand, was further split along southern (Gharmi, Badakhshani) and northern (Zarafshoni, Leninobodi) loyalties. The Opposition was also portrayed in the Russian and western press as split between a democratic wing, lobbying in the West and in Moscow, and a militant, armed one, fighting along the Tajik-Afghan border. Yet, in an effort to stay together and to give the appearances of a united opposition, the "Islamist" elements introduced secular and democratic elements in their speeches⁵, while the "Democrats" merged Islamic elements in their nationalist discourse. The Badakhshani wing of the external opposition became increasingly oriented towards the world leader of the Ismaili Sect, the Agha Khan, who fed them in most difficult circumstances.⁶ The Badakhshanis

⁵ During his trip to the United States (January 27-February 10, 1995), the Qazi repeated in his speeches at the National Democratic Institute and at the United States Institute of Peace that his movement was not for the establishment of an Islamic republic in Tajikistan, but of liberating the country from oppressors.

⁶ The Agha Khan Foundation initiated an emergency humanitarian assistance in the autonomous region of Gorno-Badakhshan in late 1992 and has since moved to the implementation of a medium-term development programme for the region.

gradually moved away from the united opposition called the "National Islamic Movement of Tajikistan", which they sometimes accused of seeking to create an Islamic (especially Sunni) republic, despite the continued negation by the two main leaders, Seyed Abdullo Nuri and the former Qazi of Tajikistan, Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda. This split could, if it evolves, introduce a new and Shiia/Sunni dispute in the region.

I. The Path to National Reconciliation

Meanwhile, the prospects for the creation of a Tajik nation with a unified identity remains difficult. Tajik society is dispersed and fragmented, a mosaic of political, ethnic and social groups. A general compromise, reconciliation and the harmonious participation of all socio-political and ethnic groups in the internal political system is, according to the Tajik press both within and outside the country, the only solution for the unity of a fragmented society. To this end, both the Government and the Opposition believe that a political solution and concession to dialogue, and not war, is the only path toward the peaceful resolution of a conflict that has already cost the lives of tens of thousands of Tajiks.

Yet, each side has its own understanding of what reconciliation means. While agreeing to the UN sponsored talks and adopting a discourse of unity, the Government also followed a solid path that dissolved all mechanisms for power sharing. The reconciliation meant a working relationship between different regions, and not necessarily concessions to those who had left the country. The latter were given no choice but to accept reconciliation on the terms of an increasingly strengthened Government. The Opposition, on the other hand, sought the participation of large parts of the population in the political processes of the country, i.e. the presidential elections, the adoption of the constitution (November 1994) and the parliamentary elections (February 1995). This meant the return and repatriation of refugees first, then the lifting of the existing ban on political groups. Otherwise, the Opposition believed, the hastily organized elections on the constitution and the presidency had the potential of exasperating the differences between regional, political and ethnic groups.

For the Opposition, the steps leading to national reconciliation were the following: 1) general amnesty for all political prisoners and prisoners of war, 2) enforcement of a decisive cease-fire, 3) disarmament of all irregulars, 4) repatriation of refugees, 5) return of confiscated

lands 6) freedom of the press and 7) a public repentance of all those involved in the conflict.⁷ Sharifiddin Imomov, a former member of the Rastokhez National Front, in an article published in Moscow, examined whether there could be a consensus around a national government in Tajikistan, democratic enough to have a broad understanding of pluralism.⁸ He proposed that the Tajik leadership 1) reform the power structures of the republic, getting rid of criminal elements and replacing them with professional cadres, 2) reappoint the heads of local soviets and administrations which came to power by force, 3) disarm and completely disband all groups outside the government structures, 4) create new regional branches of the central power ministries, 5) lend full support to the national culture and the national intelligentsia 6) revise the decision of the Supreme Soviet to ban the activities of the alternative political parties and fronts, 7) free political prisoners and 8) guarantee freedom of movement within the republic. Imomov and other members of the Opposition suggested the creation of a Council of National Reconciliation with the goal of establishing a dialogue within and outside the country. Imomov further proposed the creation of a Constituent Assembly, with the participation of representatives of all regional, generational, social, professional, cultural, ethnic and confessional groups whose priority would be the defense of national interests. For the Constituent Assembly to be legitimate, wrote Imomov, it must definitely include representatives of the Tajik diaspora as well as those of "friendly countries" and international organizations. Imomov, as the rest of the Opposition, hoped that the new constitution would be ratified with the participation of the refugees, and that only then would presidential and then parliamentary elections ensue. Afterwards, and only then, should/could this Constituent Assembly decide on such legal matters as the revision of the administrative territorial divisions of the republic of Tajikistan.⁹

Peace versus Unity

As a lack of harmony in the agendas on national reconciliation of the two sides demonstrated, an important point of contention remained the difference in perception on whether there should be peace before unity and reconciliation. The November presidential elections, for example, despite the warnings of the opposition, brought peace inside the country, but it did not lead to unity at all. Immediately after the elections, the authorities made a sustainable effort to bring law and order to the capital by disarming irregulars and cracking

⁷ Based on series of interviews conducted with Abdunabi Sattorzoda (Acting Director of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan in Moscow) and Otokhon Latifi (Head of the Coordination Committee of Democratic Forces of Tajikistan in the CIS) in Moscow, Russia (July-December 1994).

⁸ Sharifiddin Imomov, "Put' k Natsional'nomu Soglasiiu," Novoe Vremia, No. 24 (1994).

⁹ Ibid.

down on crime. Peace, albeit what many considered to be an uneasy and fragile one, was achieved through force. A "command peace" demonstrated not the unity of the nation, but the degree to which the Government had control over mafia structures and armed formations that had infiltrated into the power ministries (the Ministries of Defense, Interior and Security, formerly the KGB). Before the elections, the Speaker of the Supreme Soviet Emomali Rahmonov presented himself as the candidate for peace and unity, while his rival, then Tajik Ambassador to Russia Abdulmalik Abdullojonov, the candidate for reform. This said, had Abdullojonov won the elections, the armed formations who had supported the Kulobis in the government would not have ceded power without a fight: Rahmonov was indeed a candidate for peace.

Though the Government was capable of establishing "command peace" and control without unity, it did nevertheless concentrate on a discourse for unity and reconciliation in order to touch on more pertinent agendas. The recipe for unity involved the manipulation of a little bit of nationalism, an outside enemy referred to as "the third force" and promises of economic improvement. The Government thus made a case for imposing control and strengthening its legitimacy.

Nationalism

The Tajik nationalism that the Kulobis try to promote is directed against the northern part of Tajikistan, traditionally known for being closer to Uzbekistan. The winning side of both the civil war and the presidential elections wraps itself in symbols of nationalism to justify what it deems a national liberation struggle against outsiders, i.e., an Opposition close to the Islamic world, and the Khujandis allied to Uzbekistan. Tajik nationalism is further founded on the basis that Tajikistan, as an independent nation, has a "Tajik" government for the first time.¹⁰ Collective consciousness paints the nation in three difficult periods: the last years of the rule of the Iranians in Central Asia during the 10th century Samanid empire; the time of the "unjust" division of the national delimitations in 1924; and during a "meaningless and suicidal war" in 1992.¹¹ In each period, writes the Minister of Press, a danger of dispersion and disappearance threatened the Tajik people but they again resisted the divisions and created unity, peace and mutual understanding.

¹⁰ Interview with Abdumajid Dustiev, "Ba Davlati Buzurg, Shakhshiiati Buzurg Rohbari Mekunad," *Jumhurriat* (6 August 1994): 2. Dustiev has been quoted on several occasions as saying: "This is the first time in the history of our country that we have created a nation in the name of our people, and we have to protect that nation which is called Tajikistan like the jewel of our eyes."

¹¹ Editorial by Bobokhon Mahmudov, then Minister of Press, in the first issue of the newspaper of the Journalists' Union *Posukh* (18 November 1994): 1.

The Third Enemy

The third force, which is said to prevent the progress of the Tajik nation, is another element manipulated to promote control, by alleviating responsibility on the one hand, and exaggerating the difficulties on the other. Government officials are often quoted in the local press as saying, "If they had not made us fight with each other" (Agar moro jang nemiandokhtand). The third enemy is almost never specified, it is an abstract "dark force" which could mean Russia, Uzbekistan, the West, the Muslim world, or even a combination of them all, according to different circumstances.¹² This conspiracy theory reveals the Tajiks' abstract understanding of the national interests of regional and international actors. The notion of the isolated nation facing vague but dangerous enemies can be an excuse for reconciliation and unity, as well as for the exaggeration of the might of the Government: the third enemy can only be dealt with by a strong national government.

II. What Prevents National Reconciliation

The internal factors that are serious obstacles to national reconciliation include 1) competition of regions including a new north/south cleavage, 2) ethnic problems and 3) continued fighting between the Opposition and the Government.

1) Regional competition

The main problem hampering the course of reconciliation remains a fierce economic and political competition between different regions of Tajikistan. Political loyalties are based on geographical origins, where the administrative regions (Oblasts) provide a base for political alignments. These groupings around regions, which may have been formed before the Soviet annexation, nevertheless have learned from their Soviet experience the traditional way of exercising power, the only way possible to maintain a small share of the pie: gaining supporters through extended families, client patron networks exclusively within the category of common geographical origin. The national elite had thus gathered and kept its followers within the Soviet apparatus.

¹² Talk of the "third enemy" (doshmani savvom) or "dark forces" (ghuvahoi siohkor) was especially evident during the 1992 civil war. The newspapers of the time attributed much of the destruction in war ravaged areas to this abstract enemy. See also the memoirs of Safarali Kenjaev, Tabadduloti Tojikiston Vols.I and II (Dushanbe: Fondi Kenjaev, 1993).

Mahalgaroi (regionalism), during the Soviet period, had translated in local politics into the distribution of power and privilege based on regional loyalties. It was a form of nepotism where the kin, in this case formed around a geographic location, played an important role in the placement of cadres. Heads of rayons tried to appoint their relatives or people of their land of origin to high appointed jobs. The national political elite was chosen from the northern province of Khujand because they were more educated and more urban on average. They were also a bilingual, Uzbekified population due to their proximity with Uzbekistan. Most of the recent Secretaries of the Communist Party were from Khujand. The Khujandis traditionally enjoyed a clientele relationship with the town of Kulob in the south, a militant support base for the Communist Party. The "have-nots", who later formed the basis for the political opposition, consisted of representatives of the south and central Tajikistan, as well as the Badakhshan self-proclaimed Autonomous Republic in the east.

Thus, the client-patron relationships are not new to the post-Soviet period. but when the pie of power grew considerably after Moscow lost the reigns of control, local competition between different regions became much more noticeable. Unlike what is written by many scholars, however, regional loyalties are not created because of the absence of a national identity, but within it. Instead, mechanisms to incorporate these loyalties within the pie are nonexistent. Power during the Soviet period had been distributed among a small group; when, after the break-up of the Union, power and privilege were tossed into the air, competition for a larger share brought about tested methods of gathering loyalty.

Old communist slogans of "friendship of the People" and "internationalism" are a far cry from the present day uneasy relationships between the regions. Three main poles are driving the country apart: Badakhshan, Leninobod and Khatlon. The main contention is the distribution of positions within a political system that is monolithic. Political power remains in the hands of the victorious elements of the civil war, the Kulobis, who took over the government and distributed portfolios to others of the same region. Yet, the Kulobis do not have a good record of coexistence with a number of other people of the mountains (Kuhiston), especially with those with whom they competed. The early 1970s student riots which broke out in the university dormitories in Dushanbe soured the relationship between Kulobis and Badakhshanis. During the war, young Pamiri men were targeted extensively by the Kulobis both in Dushanbe and in Qorghon Teppa. One can explain this phenomenon by looking at the competition between these two groups that was created under the Soviet regime. The Kulobis, mountainous and especially poor, were mainly given positions in the armed forces. But beginning with the early 80s and the invasion of Afghanistan, more and more positions within the Ministry of the Interior went to the Badakhshanis in order, perhaps, to gain loyalty from people who shared a

large border with Afghanistan.¹³ The Minister of Interior, Navjavanov, whose televised criticism by Safarali Kenjaev, speaker of the Supreme Soviet in 1992 drew large crowds to the squares for what was the beginning of 50 day demonstrations, was a Badakhshani. Beginning with the 1980s, therefore, Pamiris crowded the original share of the pie of the Kulobis, for which the latter took revenge during the civil war. When the Badakhshanis were represented in large numbers in the KGB in the 1980s, they also mainly targeted the Kulobis who operated within mafia structures. While these two groups battled within the KGB and the Ministry of the Interior, none had been admitted within the high ranks of the Party apparatus which was then indigenous to the representatives of the Leninobod Province.

The danger in Tajikistan, therefore, is that competition and lack of cooperation between different regions would lead to the federalization of the country, a grave objective, given that most industries are located in the north, while the south is poor.

The only way to avoid the fragmentation of Tajikistan would be to build enterprises in various parts which would be inter-linked and interdependent, and to concentrate on the creation of an infrastructure in the south. Since many of the regions are not even linked by road, the first priorities should be the completion of the Anzob tunnel on the road from Dushanbe to Khujand (for now one has to go through Uzbekistan in the winter), and the opening of the road from Khatlon to Badakhshan.¹⁴

Survey of the Three Main Regions:

The Province of Badakhshan: The Autonomous Mountainous Province of Badakhshan is a zone of strategic interest for Tajikistan and for the CIS, located close to China, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Oblast has turned into a trafficking base for the supply of narcotics for the near abroad and in the countries of Western Europe. It represents 3% of the population of Tajikistan, of which 150 thousand people were living in Dushanbe before the civil war. Famine continues to be a serious threat; were it not for the help of Agha Khan, the local population believes it would not have survived the three winters since the war. Although the Agha Khan Foundation and its Program of Help and Development are funded by a number of

¹³ Olivier Roy, in "The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications," Report of the United States Institute of Peace (December 1993) develops the theory of the compromise between the Ministry of the Interior and Badakhshan. His guess, however, is refuted by all the Badakhshanis whom the author interviewed.

¹⁴ The planning of the construction of the route from Pamir to Badakhshan via Shurobod in the Khatlon province was reactivated in the first week of April 1995.

international donors such as the European Community and the USAID, the local population associates the much needed aid to the Agha Khan personally.¹⁵

The main issue for the poorest and most mountainous region in Tajikistan is autonomy. Should they compromise with the Kulobis, should they let themselves be annexed by Russia or should they create, with the help of the Agha Khan, an independent, neutral region which could be the only exclusively Ismaili country of the world. These three options, however, are not necessarily incompatible. A concession to the Kulobi government is actually being encouraged by the Russians, who would like to see the opening of an eventual Kulob-Badakhshan road. The Agha Khan is also encouraging the Badakhshanis to establish close mutual relations with Russia.¹⁶ This year marked the 100th anniversary of the "voluntary annexation" of the Pamir by Russia, an event that was celebrated together with the 70th anniversary of the existence of the Communist Party of Tajikistan. At this occasion, the Communist Party of Badakhshan gave full support to the position of the Central Committee on the restoration of the Soviet Union, and proclaimed its "readiness to actively participate in the republican and social movements for the unification of the fraternal family of the Soviet people."¹⁷

Badakhshani fighters, meanwhile, are considered part of the external opposition, but have their own needs and demands and had no representative in the Inter-Tajik dialogue group until recently. More specific to the Badakhshan branch of the Opposition is the status of the field commanders who each operate in specific areas of Tajikistan.¹⁸ These field commanders apparently do sympathize with the forces of the leadership of the National Islamic Movement of Tajikistan, but, unlike the Opposition in Afghanistan, the commanders operate within the borders of Tajikistan. In mid-April 1994, well-coordinated attacks on the border regions demonstrated that the Opposition in Afghanistan is trying to consolidate in the Gorno Badakhshan region and create there a base for the transfer of military activities to the interior of the country. The fighters within or outside of Tajikistan joined forces to eradicate the

¹⁵ A paper discussing the role of the International Community is being prepared for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research.

¹⁶ According to a number of Badakhshani members of the Opposition that the author interviewed in Moscow (February 1995), including Ulfat Momoedshoeva, the representative of the Pamiri "Mujaheddin" in Moscow.

¹⁷ See the newspaper of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, Golos Tadjikistana (16-22 November 1994) 1.

¹⁸ Junior field commanders tend to come from within the ranks of the former Ministry of Interior (MVD) forces while the more senior ones are usually drifters who may have had more important connections (trade, drug mafia, sport, etc.) before the war. Commander Salam, for example, was a wrestling champion at the USSR level, had been arrested a few times for petty crimes, and had quit the Selkhoz (Agrarian) Institute in Dushanbe before obtaining a diploma. See Arkadii Dubnov, "Na Kryshe Mira Net," Novoe Vremia, No. 38 (1994): 15-17; and Timur Klychev, "Krov', Opium, Voina, Islam, Vybory," Kommersant Daily (6 November 1994): 3.

common enemy, the regime in Dushanbe. Yet, even though they are part of the Opposition, some Badakhshani fighters nevertheless have good relations with the Russian border guards. After all, even if the regime in Dushanbe leaves, the border guards will remain to guarantee the impermeability of the borders of the CIS. The Russian border guards make periodical appeals to the people of Badakhshan to remind them of this fact and the links that are created for the future.¹⁹

The question remains whether the Badakhshanis, communist or opposition, with new options open to them and having lost so many men during the civil war,²⁰ still consider themselves part of the Tajik nation. Ironically, while many of those interviewed by the author talked of compromise and the unity of the country, they continued to refer to themselves as Badakhshanis first, and, while traveling to Dushanbe, they mentioned they were going to "Tajikistan". But staying in Badakhshan is also no longer desirable for the hundreds of unemployed, hungry young men who could, for lack of better things to do, engage in the local trade of drug trafficking, even if the flight of hundreds of students and teachers from Dushanbe has recently prompted the opening of a new university in Khorog.

The North South Fault line: The Province of Leninobod

The real challenge of the ruling faction is how to compete successfully with the province of Leninobod and its capital Khujand while preventing it from breaking away from the center.

One month after the presidential elections, President Rahmonov appointed the economist Jamshid Karimov from the Leninobod Province as his Prime Minister. Karimov formerly represented Tajikistan in the Coordination Committee of the CIS. The appointment of Karimov was Rahmonov's effort to find a compromise with the internal opposition, as well as a gesture toward Moscow. Yet, the Khujandi and the Kulobi ruling elites remain in fierce psychological battle, each supported by a mafia structure that, among other things, seeks to control the amount of help that comes from outside. They compete for influence outside of their spheres, as well as finding a common language with the Opposition.

But even though during the presidential elections Leninobod stood opposite Kulob, those members of society who belonged to a social group felt obliged to cast a vote according to their professional rather than regional loyalties. For example, Rahmonov received the support of the Republican Union of Youth. As a result, the Leninobodi chapter of the Union of Youth

¹⁹ The head of the Border guards of the Russian federation in Tajikistan, General Lieutenant A. Chechulin appealed to the people of Badakhshan to cooperate with his troops in "Murojeatnoma," *Jumhuriyat* (23 November 1994): 1.

²⁰ Badakhshanis the author interviewed in Moscow (February 1995) give the estimate of the loss of 2% of the population of their province in the civil war.

had to come out publicly and endorse Rahmonov as well, in order not to contradict the decision of its republican counterpart.²¹ In some cases, the regional chapter was forced into a compromising position. For example, a number of Leninobodi Communists had to back a key Kulobi politician against the leadership of their Party in a letter published in both government newspapers in April 1994.²² They spoke out in favor of Dustiev, head of the Organizational Committee of the People's Party, who had accused the leadership of the Communist Party of preventing the formation of new parties in the republic.²³ Although the letter was signed by a number of workers from different cities of the province of Leninobod, the criticism echoed in fact the grievances of representatives of the Kulobi ruling groups. The letter accused the leaders of the Communist Party of egoism, corruption and cowardice, of having deliberately saved the north while letting the south burn. "You say that it is thanks to us "leaders" that those terrible things happened in the south and not in Leninobod.. but had you in fact prevented the formation of a gap [between the regions of the republic] in time, there would have been no bloodshed in Tajikistan... You were not neutral in the crisis. Even if you were not in the front, you were monitoring events from behind the curtain, always thinking of yourself." The content and the tone of the letter hinted that the Kulobis resented the fact that they were used by the Leninobodis to wage a war that destroyed and impoverished the south, while now, Khujand was suggesting its own presidential candidate and even threatening to sever its ties with the rest of the republic.

Leninobod can indeed detach itself from the rest of the republic, especially from a physical point of view. The road between Dushanbe and Khujand goes through a mountain pass at Anzob which remains closed from October to May: the only way to reach the northern province of Leninobod is to make a difficult detour via Uzbekistan. The construction of a tunnel at Anzob which began during the Soviet period halted in recent years. Recognizing the problems of the existence of a North/South separating line, Rahmonov in his April speech to the first session of the new parliament (the Majlis Oli) called for the completion of the project. With an increasing rate of foreign investment, and with the presence of a leadership interested in reforms, Leninobod can potentially survive in a separate economic zone. For now, however,

²¹ Declaration of the Leninobod Chapter of the Union of the Youth of Tajikistan in "Murojijatnomai Ittifoqi Javononi Viloiati Leninobod ba Kulli Javononi Jumhurii," Jumhuriyat (2 November 1994): 1.

²² The letter, entitled "Letter of the Communists of the Province of Leninobod to the Leadership of the Party" appeared in Jumhuriyat (2 April 1994): 2, and was signed by 36 workers of different small factories. The letter was rejected by Nidoi Ranjbar, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, and was published initially in Sadoi Mardum, the newspaper of the Supreme Soviet.

²³ The leadership answered Dustiev's criticism in the weekly E'tiqod, the publication of the Leninobodi Chapter of the Communist Party of Tajikistan.

the Head of the Executive Committee of the Oblast, Abduljalil Hamidov broke his political and family ties with Abdullojonov²⁴ and aligned himself with Rahmonov days before the presidential elections. In his view, Leninobod could and should play an active role in creating interdependent relationships with the other regions in order to help the country out of the crisis.²⁵ As long as the Dushanbe Government keeps its own allies in key positions, it will be able to slow the process of alienation of Leninobod.²⁶ Even though only 20 percent of the population voted for the president, Hamidov personally thanked those who took part in the elections and invited them to Unity, friendship and cooperation.²⁷

Qorghan Teppa and Kulob: The Province of Khatlon

The present province of Khatlon was created in early 1993 out of the former provinces of Kulob, home of the main victorious groups, and that of Qorghan Teppa, where most of the battles took place. Regional affiliation and ethnicity are mixed in this oblast, and reconciliation between communities is very difficult. In the summer of 1992, when the Kulobi supporters of then President Rahmon Nabiev returned from the Dushanbe demonstrations to their homes in Qorghan Teppa, they were harassed and even killed by the local Gharmi population of the province. Hence, young men came from the province of Kulob to the aid of their compatriots in the neighboring region. As the Gharmis fled Qorghan Teppa, the Uzbeks and the Arabs, who had been settled in the region first, began a systematic raid of abandoned houses. Most of the Gharmi settled villages around Qabodion, Shaartuz and Qorghan Teppa are completely devastated, their population having left en masse to Afghanistan, or returning with the aid of the UNHCR.²⁸ In one village labeled Arabneshin (meaning the place where Arabs live), individual houses of Arabs and Uzbeks stand while the house next door where a Gharmi had lived is razed to the ground.

What created and will continue to create animosity among the local population is not ideological preferences of "democracy" or "communism", but competition for resources. Interviews with some Uzbeks revealed that the latter saw themselves as the local people

²⁴ Abdullojonov's daughter and Hamidov's son divorced before the elections, severing the ties between these two powerful Khujandis.

²⁵ Interview of N. Maksimova with A. Hamidov, Head of the Executive Committee of the Leninobod Province in "Sila Zakona-Velikaia Sila," *Biznes i Politika* No.34 (November 1994): 1.

²⁶ For now, defeated local politicians of the Leninobod province have to echo Rahmonov. See *Biznes i Politika*, No. 34 (November 1994):1 where Gulafzo Safritdinova, Representative of the Executive Committee of Isfara, denies charges of clan-based politics and reiterates the slogan of the union and reconciliation of the country, a position also taken by the Head of the Executive Committee of Konibodom.

²⁷ Interview with Abduljalil Hamidov, *Jumhuriyat* (16 November 1994):1.

²⁸ The author visited Qorghan Teppa, Qabodion and Shaartuz on April 5-7, 1995.

(mestnye liudi) as opposed to the Gharmis who were settled later, and who, in the former's eyes, had become rich by confiscating the best lands and positions.²⁹ The Gharmis were in fact settled by force in the Vakhsh valley of Qorghan Teppa in the 1960s in order to cultivate the Egyptian cotton in the fertile lands.³⁰ That the Gharmis had indeed managed to have good living standards after an initial period of maladjustment is attributed among the Gharmi population to the fact that they are a people who like to work (mehnatdust).³¹

Today, however, having lost their lives and their homes during the 1992 civil war, they are among the most vulnerable and needy populations of the south. As a result, international NGOs and UN agencies pay special attention to these groups, rendering relief as well as income generating assistance. Here again, exclusive attention to one group, i.e., the vulnerable Gharmi population, tends to create feelings of resentment. As the Gharmis return from Afghanistan and once again work on the land, renewed competition mixes with revenge and resentment, creating a potentially explosive situation. The task of building peacefully coexisting mixed ethnic communities in the former Qorghan Teppa province is very difficult indeed. Although the competition clearly has an ethnic coloring in this part of Tajikistan, it remains to be seen to what extent the Uzbek/Tajik strife could grow nationally: much will depend on the direction of the growing influence of Uzbekistan.

The situation in Kulob, the eastern part of the Khatlon province, is quite different: Even though the Kulobis initially rose to defend what they considered to be their "honor" (nomus)³², they took revenge outside of their province, and after they won the war, they managed to consolidate their power nationally. As a result, first of all, the city of Kulob and its surroundings are not destroyed, and second, a number of ethnic Kulobis, formerly of the paramilitary formation called the Popular Front, have managed to gather a lot of wealth and positions in the capital.

The presidential elections demonstrated that the Kulobis would not simply give their lives to preserve the power of the Khujandis, but that they would themselves want to rule. They

²⁹ Interview of the author with a number of Uzbeks in Qabodion, April 6-7, 1995.

³⁰ For a history of migrations, refer to Sh. I. Kurbanova, *Pereseleniie: Kak Eto Bylo* (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993).

³¹ In Moscow and St. Petersburg for examples, Gharmi traders and merchants appear in important numbers in local bazaars. A post-war Gharmi anecdote illustrates the point: A Kulobi raided the house of rich people in the region then boasted to his Gharmi neighbor that he acquired a television set, two cars and a refrigerator. The Gharmi then asked for one thing: that he bring the rich person's shovel so that he'd work the land and make as much money.

³² "Nomus" (honor) is an important word in the post-war Kulobi discourse. A book that gives the biographies of hundreds of young men killed in Vakhsh and in the Oblast of Kulob during the civil war is appropriately called *Nomus* (Dushanbe: Paik, 1994).

fought the war, now they would like the booty. When he was Prime Minister, Abdullojonov praised the Kulobi people for showing courage: "In the path to freedom, the Kulobis were the vanguard. Now that the time has come for the development of the nation, they should once again be at the head of the line."³³ The Kulobis had been the "first to raise the flag of justice and truth", to "come to the defense of the freedom and independence of the motherland" and that "from the beginning, the truth was on the side of the Kulobis." Yet, he stressed that the northern province of Leninobod was ready at all times to "volunteer to take arms and to fight with the Kulobis", and that it had rendered financial assistance for their common cause. A year later, Abdullojonov presented himself as the only rival to the representative of the Kulobi people in the presidential elections.

2) Ethnic Clashes

Can national reconciliation alleviate the danger of ethnic confrontation? The minorities of Tajikistan are caught between an increasingly hostile environment within the republic and an unsure one outside. In the new constitution, Russian and Uzbek languages are cited as secondary languages of the administration, while Tajik remains the official state language.³⁴ The issue of double citizenship will be resolved only on the basis of the creation of a complete legal Union of the governments of the CIS.

The Uzbek Minorities: The Uzbek population in Tajikistan, which represents between 26 and 30 percent of the post-civil war population,³⁵ lives in the northern province of Leninobod, in the region of Regar (formerly Tursunzoda) west of Dushanbe, and in western Khatlon (formerly the province of Qorghon Teppa). In the Zarafshon and the Gharm valleys, the Uzbek population is much more rare. The Uzbeks, many of whom were settled from Uzbekistan in the 1920s and 30s, are considered different from the original Turkic population, such as the Lakais and Qonghirats of Kulob for example, many of whom consider themselves Tajik by now.

The Uzbeks supported the Government side during the civil war and after, even lending key support at major turns of events: During three days in October 1992, when the Opposition-led government of national reconciliation ruled, the ex-speaker of the parliament and a

³³ Jumhuriyat (30-31 March 1993): 1.

³⁴ The Language Law, which was adopted on July 22, 1989 is presented in Qonuni Zaboni Jumhurii Tojikiston (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1993).

³⁵ In 1991, the Uzbeks represented 23% of the population, but it is difficult to estimate their numbers after the war. See Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War, (London: Minority Rights Group, 1995): 6.

Government supporter, Safarali Kenjaev launched a bloody attack on the capital with an army of Uzbek population from Regar and Hissor. In the summer of 1992, the Uzbek population allegedly looted and burned the houses of the Gharimi population of the former Qorghan teppa province. Furthermore, the Uzbek population backed Emomali Rahmonov during the presidential elections, following the advice of the President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov.

Yet, relations between the Tajik and Uzbek winners of the war are not always cordial. Since the war, there have been new clashes in the Hissor valley, and, during the disarmament campaign begun by the Government, the Kulobi security forces discriminated against Uzbek minorities in the Khatlon province. Human Rights groups protested illegal searches and detainments.³⁶ These acts may have been a cover for the Kulobi armed formations supporting the ruling faction to disarm their new, also victorious, rivals, ethnic Uzbeks. A week after the Uzbek population voted for Rahmonov in the November presidential elections, Hamidjon Hakimov, a key member of the Central Council of the Association of the Uzbeks of Tajikistan, and editor of the newspaper of the society Hak Suzi, was killed by unknown assailants in what may or may not be a political act.³⁷

The loyalties of the Uzbek population in Tajikistan are associated with those of their compatriots in Uzbekistan. During the Presidential Elections, for example, the position of Islam Karimov was not clear until the last minute; the results from among the Uzbek population of Regar were also last to come in. Yet, once the vote was cast, the armed formations of Regar were first to declare their willingness to disarm to the forces of the new President. The ties between the Uzbeks in and outside of Tajikistan is significant in view of the developments of two events: A potential danger of the separation of the northern province of Leninobod and its annexation by Uzbekistan, and the continued clashes between Uzbeks and Tajiks in Afghanistan. The eventual victory of the forces loyal to Uzbek General Dostum in Afghanistan could potentially encourage the Uzbeks of Tajikistan to reinforce their positions.

In the meantime, however, Rahmonov tries to appease ethnic tensions in the country. Although Uzbek does not have status as an official language, there are numerous publications in Uzbek. Since March 1993, Dustlik (friendship), the publication of the Council of People's

³⁶ See The State Department Annual Country Report on Human Rights: Tajikistan 1994 as well as the reports of Human Rights Watch/Helsinki.

³⁷ Hakimov was an ethnic Uzbek living in the Bokhtar region in the province of Khatlon, who had worked in the local newspapers Haqiqati Qorghan Teppa, Soviet Tojikistioni and in Haq Suzi since 1992.

Deputies, with a small tirage of 5200, has been published in the Khatlon Province.³⁸ Hitherto, there had only been a few pages in Uzbek in the regional newspapers Haqiqati Oorghon teppa, Haqiqati Khatlon and Navidi Vakhsh. In August 1994, the Uzbek poet Ulmas Jamal was congratulated by Rahmonov personally in a glorious celebration at the Writers' Union.³⁹ The President took the occasion to speak about the friendship of Uzbek and Tajik people, quoting from the words of a contemporary ideological poet Boki Rahimzoda to make his point:

"Farki Hama Odamoni digar oson,
Lekin shuda mo ba ham chunon ham naszdik
Binanda chunon savol orad ba mion
Ei jura, bigu, tu tojiki io uzbek.

"The difference between other peoples has become easy
But we have become so close to each other
that a viewer would come to question,
"Hey, friend, tell me, are you Tajik or Uzbek."

Rahmonov, and later at his inauguration, Karimov's envoy, the head of the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan, stressed that the two people spoke different languages, but that their customs, traditions, myths, literature and folklore were the same and that they shared each other's sorrows and happiness. Rahmonov, in his press conference during a trip to Uzbekistan in October 1994, praised the Uzbeks for helping in times of trouble and rendered economic and humanitarian assistance. "The friendship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is unsurpassable."⁴⁰

The Russian Minorities: In the same way that much of the future of the Uzbek minorities depends on the Uzbeks outside, so the fate of the Russians in Tajikistan concerns the leadership in the Russian Federation. The Russians presently represent 2% of the population of Tajikistan, and they are concentrated mainly in large cities. Dushanbe was, before Glasnost, considered to be a "Russian" city, not only for its predominance of Russians but especially of the Russian culture: i.e, schools, dress, use of language in the administration, etc. In 1959, 47.6% of the population in Dushanbe was Russian, while only 18.9% was Tajik. By 1989, as

³⁸ Interview of Iso Rahim with Shoimnazar Omonov, Editor of the newspaper "Dustlik" of the Khatlon province, "Hukumati Chorum Mahz Hamin Ruz a Dastgiri Nioz Dorad," Jumhuriyat (2 November 1994):2. Also see Qiroishoh Sharifzoda, "In Hamon 'Ovozi Tojik' Chun Haqiqat Shud Baland," Sadoi Mardum (4 November, 1994):3.

³⁹ "Ba Sharafi Jashni Shoir," Sadoi Mardum (17 August, 1994):1.

⁴⁰ Muhammadsharif Boboshoh, "Dustii Tojikistonu Uzbekiston Nogusastanist," Sadoi Mardum (12 October 1994): 1.

more Tajiks moved to the city for educational and employment opportunities and elevated the percentage of the Tajiks to 38.8%, Russians were still 32% of the population.⁴¹

In 1993, 30,420 Russians emigrated to the Russian Federation, and almost another 5,000 moved to other countries of the CIS.⁴² The Russian minorities are often depicted as industrial workers, health-care professionals, teachers in higher education institutions and administrators. Their exodus from the republic is seen as a heavy loss to the economy. Out of 500,000, an estimated 320,000 may have already left. In order to keep them, the leadership flirts with the question of dual citizenship, restoring the official status of the Russian language, as well as giving the Russian minorities representation quotas in the parliament. As of yet, none of these promises have been realized. The Russian language, in the meantime, remains the unofficial language of the government, especially since many of the politicians, people's deputies and intellectuals who, in the wake of the nationalist movement in 1989 lobbied for the adoption of Tajik as a state language, have either left the republic, or been silenced by the victors of the civil war. Parents once again send their children to Russian-language schools in the hope of a better education.

The conflict in Tajikistan did not have an ethnic basis as far as the Russian/Tajik relationship was concerned. While it is conceivable that the initial riots in February 1990 were fueled by anti-Russian (i.e. colonial) sentiments of the other republics of the former Soviet Union, the 1992 civil war did not target the Russians specifically. Shodmon Yussuf, head of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, made some threatening remarks against Russian civilians in order to protest the involvement of the 201st division of the Russian army in the internal strife, but his opinion was extremist and isolated. The more real problem is the difficulty of living under the conditions of war, which affects the entire population of Tajikistan. The breakdown of the infrastructure, related to the exodus of the Russians, is also another difficulty. While it is true that during the Soviet period many Russians specialists were brought to the republic, they more or less monopolized the management of all major factories. Local Tajiks were recruited as workers, but seldom trained to replace Russians in leading positions. As a result, a lack of good managers among the local population, as well as a general lack of money, is more debilitating than the general exodus of Russians. In the meantime, the protection of Russian

⁴¹ Refer to the table "Izmenenie Chislennosti Naseleniia Otdel'nykh Natsional'nostei po Gorody Dushanbe," in Kratkie Statisticheskie Svedeniia o Natsional'nom Sostave i Migratsii Naseleniia Goroda Dushanbe (Dushanbe: Ideologicheskie Otdel Dushanbinskogo Gorkoma Kompartii Tadjikistana, 1989): 7.

⁴² Table "Migratsionnyi Ottok Iz Respubliki Tadjikistana v Drugie Strany po Otdel'nykh Natsional'nostiam v 1993 Godu (Gorodskoe i Sel'skor Naseleniie)," Chislennost', Estestvennoe Dvizheniie i Migratsiia Naseleniia v 1994 Godu (Dushanbe: Ministerstvo Ekonomiki i Prognozirovaniia Respubliki Tadjikistan, 1994): 70.

monitories in Tajikistan has been one of the excuses used by Russian authorities in search of a legal basis for the presence of their troops within the country. More than a fear of the spread of so-called fundamentalism, the inflow to the Russian Federation of millions of Russian emigres and refugees demanding housing and employment could be a grave destabilizing factor.

3) The Problem of the External Opposition

For the external Opposition, peace depends first and foremost on the unity of the nation, by which they also understand the reintegration of all outcasts and refugees into the political system.

If, during the Spring of 1992 demonstrations, the Opposition was a united front consisting of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, the Rastokhez Nationalist Movement, the La'le Badakhshan and the Islamic Revivalist Party⁴³, the formations today are drawn upon different lines. The most obvious one involves a geographic division: the "democratic/nationalist" wing has created a Coordination Committee of the Democratic Forces in the CIS, the Badakhshan front remains in the mountains of the Pamir, and an "Islamic" one resides in Afghanistan and consists of the National Islamic Movement of Tajikistan (NIMT) which supervises the activities of all the so-called Opposition. Within the nationalist/democratic front there are further splits between representatives of northern regions of Tajikistan (i.e, most of the leadership of the Coordination Committee are natives of the Zarafshon valley of the Leninobod province) and those of the Central and south-eastern ones. The regional split within the CIS wing of the Opposition affects the links with the current leadership of the Tajikistan: Shodmon Yusuf, Head of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan and a native of Gharm in Central Tajikistan, together with his Deputy, chose to congratulate Emomali Rahmonov on his presidential victory, and declared their willingness to work with the regime. Other members of the Democratic Party who were natives of Zarafshon and other regions of Tajikistan, gathered in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in December 1994 to refute the pronouncements of their leader. Although the Opposition formally boycotted the presidential elections, a number of individuals of northern origin showed interest in cooperating more closely with Abdullojonov had he won the elections.⁴⁴

⁴³ For a complete survey of the parties and people's movements existing before the war, see Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "The 'Tajik Spring of 1992'," Central Asian Monitor, No. 2 (March 1993).

⁴⁴ According to select members of the Opposition whom the author interviewed in Moscow, Russia (July-December 1994).

The leadership of the National Islamic Movement of Tajikistan, which is often portrayed in the Russian and western press as the armed Opposition, considers that "the best democracy and the most justice is in Islam," but Islam must first be accepted by individuals before it can spread in society.⁴⁵ Its leader, Seyed Abdullo Nuri, a native of the Vakhio valley of Gharm, has been under arrest since 1983 on charges of conspiring to incite the population to demand the creation of an Islamic republic. Nuri's Deputy, the former Qazi Kalon (Supreme Islamic Judge) of Tajikistan, Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda, has proved a charismatic leader who, in the past year alone, has conducted intense shuttle diplomacy in Moscow, Tehran, Washington, Paris, Tashkent and a number of Arab countries. He heads the Opposition delegation at the Inter-Tajik talks sponsored by the United Nations, and he was invited by Islam Karimov at the beginning of April 1995, to seek a political resolution for the conflict. A number of the Tajik refugees in Afghanistan are indeed under the command of the NIMT, but it is not clear to what extent the commanders obey the orders of the leadership. So far, the Opposition is presenting a united front: in mid-April 1995, in a show of force before an eventual round of UN sponsored negotiations, the Opposition carried out simultaneous attacks on the Tajik-Afghan border at Pianj (Khatlon), Kalaukhum (Darvaz region of Badakhshan) and in Khorog (the capital of Badakhshan).

So far, the Opposition as an entity seeks the replacement of the current regime with a government council made of neutral elements which will carry out the disarmament of fighters on both sides under UN monitoring. The return of the refugees residing outside of Tajikistan presents a vicious circle for the demands of the Opposition. So long as peace is not established, the Opposition claims, the refugees will not return. Yet, as long as the refugees remain in Afghanistan, they will continue to provide manpower for a military confrontation between the Opposition and the Russian and Tajik troops stationed on the border.

The Return of Refugees and National Reconciliation: During the civil war, over 90,000 people of primarily Gharmi and Pamiri origin fled to Afghanistan to avoid persecution by progovernment forces, and up to 500,000 were internally displaced within the republic. In 1994 large numbers of the refugees returned from Afghanistan with the help of UNHCR and internally displaced Persons were rehabilitated in their homes. Fewer numbers of incidents of harassment of refugees were reported, thanks to better cooperation between the Government and the UN agencies. UNHCR estimates that there remain today approximately 22,000 refugees in Afghanistan and another 16,000 internally displaced persons in Gorno Badakhshan.

⁴⁵ The biography of Seyed Abdullo Nuri (b. 1947) appears in -Sadoi Mujohed (November 1994): 2, a newspaper which circulates among the fighters in Badakhshan.

Although a June 1994 degree gave the refugees the right to work and move freely throughout the country, they returned mostly to their pre-war place of settlement, even though it might not have been their original place of birth. In Qabodion and Qorghan Teppa for example, Gharmi returnees from Afghanistan settled in their completely destroyed villages which had to be reconstructed from scratch, instead of in Gharm. Many no longer had homes or families in their native land since they had been settled in Qorghan Teppa from Gharm in the 1960s as part of a project of economic development. In their new environment, they had been made to work the land, an activity they and UN agencies hope they will once again engage in. But resettlement is not a happy story. Many return to devastated homes which stand next to an untouched domicile of their "enemies", an Arab or Uzbek. In many cases, the returnees' homes remain occupied by members of the victorious popular front, the Kulobis and the Uzbeks, who expropriated the land and the property of the losers, and whom the government sometimes does not have the power to evict.⁴⁶ In many cases, the refugees have to work under the management of a new leadership of collective farms and Raions (districts) who were drawn from the winning groups. Furthermore, the able-bodied men are needed for the leadership of the Opposition in Afghanistan. Among the Tajik diaspora, as well as among many others, there is a constant threat and disinformation against return to the homeland fostered by the fossilization of the memory of a country at the height of a war.

Thus, the question of the refugees continues to be a serious impediment to the process of national reconciliation. Yet, the UNHCR, the Government and some of its associations such as Peivand (Link) continue to promote nostalgia for the Homeland with audio visual tools. In a recent trip to Qabodion and Shaartuz, the author of this report was asked by many returnees to film them on sound-video while they reminded their compatriots in Afghanistan that they could also follow them back home. Radio programs broadcast the voices of refugees sending messages to their relatives in Tajikistan, as well as sentimental programs about the Homeland on the other side of the border.⁴⁷ Abdumajid Dustiev, Deputy Speaker of the Supreme Soviet and Head of the Commission on Cooperation with the Refugees, created a Joint Commission with the UNHCR for overseeing the reintegration, safe repatriation and welfare of the returnees. In sentimental letters published in the government newspapers, Dustiev appeals for their return: "The Tajik people have a broken heart without you."⁴⁸ He refers to their sense of patriotism, for the unity of the Tajiks, and their role in the creation of a nation called

⁴⁶ See the State Department Report on Human Rights in Tajikistan for 1994.

⁴⁷ People often repeat a saying that has been ingrained in the mass consciousness that Tajiks cannot live anywhere else but in Tajikistan.

⁴⁸ Abdumajid Dustiev, "Murojiiat ba Hamvatanoni Burunmarzi," Jumhuriyat (2 April 1994): 1.

Tajikistan. He also is careful not to lay blame on them, but to depict them as people who have been wronged and tricked.⁴⁹

III. What Has Been Done for National Reconciliation

a) Negotiations with the Opposition

Although the Opposition and the problem of refugees continue to be a sore point for real reconciliation, the Government makes a show of commitment to a political resolution of the conflict. It is important for the leadership, especially for the Kulobi faction, to present a reconciliatory front if it is to maintain credibility. Thus, another banner over the streets of Dushanbe, which preceded Rahmonov's slogan for unity, read: "Mo az solh goftegu dorem, dusti ro justegu dorem" (We talk of peace, we seek friendship).

Whether the Government believed that, indeed, there was no alternative but to negotiate a peaceful solution, or that the international community including Russia and Uzbekistan did not wish to lose any time in advancing reconciliation in such a strategic region, the inter-Tajik talks on a political settlement and national accord sponsored by the United Nations began in March 1994.⁵⁰ The UN Secretary General reiterated meanwhile that even though interested governments and the international community would provide assistance, primary responsibility for the resolution of the conflict fell on both Tajik parties themselves. The three rounds and their extensions that have already taken place have only led to the exchange of 27 prisoners of war of the Armed Forces of the Government and 27 political detainees of the Opposition, as well as the agreement of a cease-fire that has been violated repeatedly. The two sides have nevertheless agreed to a joint communique in which they reaffirm their "commitment to political dialogue as the only means of achieving national reconciliation," for what that is worth. The peace talks were supposed to bring about confidence-building measures within the

⁴⁹ The idea that the refugees are living in exile against their wish and were pawns in the hands of leaders appears in most articles printed in government newspapers. One Badakhshani refugee in Iran, for example, talks of having been sold by the leadership of the Democratic Party. "It is not a Jihad (holy war) in Tajikistan," he is quoted as saying, "but a war for positions that earn much money" in "Gurezagoni Tojik az Bozihoi Sarvaroni Khud Khasta Shudaand," *Jumhuriat* (23 November 1994): 4.

⁵⁰ See the paper "The UN-Sponsored Inter-Tajik Dialogue" prepared for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research for further details.

country and an eventual national reconciliation, but no fundamental institutional issues have even reached the negotiating table.

Prospects for the future of constructive talks remain bleak, even though the Opposition and the Government conducted a preliminary preparation for the fourth round in Moscow at the end of April. For both sides, there is not much left to gain from negotiations. The different parties have taken their positions, where there is incentive for disunity: a consensus for peace does not really exist among the principals in the Tajik conflict. For the Government, the status quo is the best alternative. If before the November Presidential elections the Government was willing to be seen in reconciliatory positions, once it did receive its required legitimacy, it could abandon all intent. The responsibility for safeguarding the borders falls on the Russians in any case, and the Government can concentrate on the process of self-legitimization. So far, it has imposed a forced internal peace, fragile as it may be. The Government has also rewritten the Constitution, held a referendum, presidential and parliamentary elections, and taken complete control of the power ministries. The Opposition, on the other hand, given the lack of mechanism for incorporating dissenting views, prefers to operate outside of the political system, as a strong force. Yet, knowing that a military victory over the regime is not possible given the Russian presence on the border, the Opposition is also lobbying the international community for support.

b) The Election Campaign: "Intikhobot Boisi Vahdat Khohad Shod" (The Elections Will Lead to Unity)

One of the most effective means for the Government to consolidate its position, and therefore close all mechanisms for the participation of the Opposition in the internal political process, was to hold presidential (November 6, 1994) and parliamentary elections (February 26, 1995), before the negotiations could have produced a resolution of the conflict. These, and the referendum on the adoption of the Constitution, although they were supposed to be vehicles for the unification of the nation, led instead to the further fragmentation of the political scene.

Participation in the election explicitly, and casting a vote for Emomali Rahmonov implicitly, was advertised in the press as an act of "belief in democracy, durability of peace, unity and a desire for the progress of the country."⁵¹ One of the much repeated slogans of Rahmonov, "Vahdat - rahobakhshi millat" (unity is the salvation of the nation), reminded that

⁵¹ For example, a front page headline in Sadoi Mardum (4 November 1994) reads: "November 6 is the Day of the Referendum on the Adoption of the Constitution and the Elections for the President of the Republic. The Participation of Each Person is in the Benefit of the Growth of Democracy, Establishment of Peace, Unity and a Demonstration of Good Intentions Towards the Development of the Country."

by casting a vote for him, the Tajiks would demonstrate their trust in his capacity to bring about peace, national unity, progress and the growth of Tajikistan. In so-called random interviews carried out by the press in the days before the presidential elections, supporters of Rahmonov, who not surprisingly outnumbered those of Abdullojonov according to the censored government press, proclaimed their belief in the head of state for his capacity "to bring about peace and national unification, general amnesty and a dialogue with the Opposition."⁵² One of the few interviewed who expressed his desire to vote for Abdullojonov turned out to be a caricature of the man himself, a self-interested small businessman who said that only the khujandi could bring Tajikistan into the global market economy, establish beneficial trade relationships with other countries and feed the people."⁵³

If the Government portrayed the elections as the consolidating factor of the Tajik people, it could in turn not neglect the inclusion of the dozens of thousands, or perhaps hundred thousand refugees who reside outside the country. Rahmonov appealed on numerous occasions in the official press to the "compatriots outside the borders" (Hamvatanoni Burunmarzi) to urge them to vote in the embassies of Tajikistan in the cities of the CIS, or in polling stations created in Afghanistan for the occasion.⁵⁴ With the slogan that "Tajikistan is waiting for you", Rahmonov and his Deputy Abdumajid Dustiev launched numerous appeals, offering amnesty to all except those "who had been directly involved in the fighting." Knowing that without the full participation of all Tajik citizens, Rahmonov's duty towards his country could not be fully legitimate, the Government adopted a nationalist discourse designed to touch the emotions of the refugees. "The Tajiks have only one motherland. We all have to cherish it and contribute to its development".⁵⁵

For the Opposition however, although the elections were largely portrayed in the press as the occasion for the unity of the Tajik people,⁵⁶ it was clear from the onset that they would not be democratic, fair, and most important of all, that they would not necessarily lead to peace in the republic. In his speech to the Congress of the United States, the defeated 1991 presidential candidate on behalf of the Opposition, Davlat Khudonazarov, explained that "the elections are merely window-dressing that will strengthen the hand of one of the two factions

⁵² G. Kholiqova, "Vahdat - Rahobakhshi Millat," Sadoi Mardum (21 September 1994): 1.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ "Murojijatnoma ba Hamvatanoni Burunmarzi," Jumhuriyat (2 November 1994): 1. Also see an account of the refugee camps in Bandar Shirkhon in Sadoi Mardum (4 November 1994): 2.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Muhammadsharif Boboshoh, "Intikhobot Boisi Vahdat Khohad Gasht," Sadoi Mardum (20 August 1994):1.

within the ruling coalition."⁵⁷ Indeed, the north/south split which resulted from the elections created a new dissatisfied but economically powerful internal opposition in Leninobod.

Conclusion: Peace, Reconciliation, Reforms and the Future

In conclusion, the conflict in Tajikistan is slowly reaching a status quo, whereas imposed peace can eventually be brought about without real reconciliation. Perhaps even if desired by all sides, national reconciliation, given the conflicting agendas of different parties, is no longer possible. Even if the situation seems to be stable for now, the conflict per se cannot be resolved in the near future as each side has solidified its irreconcilable position. The Government does not want to sacrifice its short term gains for long term stability, which would mean making peace with the Opposition as well as creating mechanisms for integrating the different regions in the political process. The Opposition sees virtues in presenting itself as a military force.

In the same way that imposed peace can be achieved without reconciliation in the short term, there is a tendency to think that economic reforms do not have to wait for complete peace. Reforms, some argue, could in fact bring about the mechanism for reconciliation, as living standards would rise and more people would have more at stake and would therefore avoid war. To this end, further economic disintegration could be prevented if Rahmonov adopts a campaign of reforms. This argument, seen in Tajikistan as a Western approach⁵⁸, clashes with the Russians' and present regime's priority of stability in the short term. Given the reasons for a lack of national reconciliation in Tajikistan, however, one should consider that economic reforms would further create competition and lack of harmony among the groups already in discord. What created the chaos in the first place was the lack of national-based power sharing mechanisms for different regional/political/ethnic groups in Tajikistan. Today, if the north, encouraged by Uzbekistan, severs its ties with the rest of Tajikistan, it could eventually gain strength as a self-reliant nation with a consistent ethnicity and national identity. It will then introduce long needed reforms and prosper. But the rest of Tajikistan will continue to disintegrate into complete poverty and disunity. The existing paramilitary leaders and

⁵⁷ Testimony of Davlat Khudonazarov before the Foreign Affairs Committee, Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East of the United States House of Representatives, September 22, 1994.

⁵⁸ Based on discussions of the author with various members of the international community in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. (November 1994, April 1995).

warlords will battle each other over economic goods, and the Government will only have control over those on whom it relies for staying in power. So far, neither Government forces nor the Opposition have complete control over all the groups which are supposedly fighting on their behalf.

Experience shows that in Tajikistan, political opening can create ethnic and regional bloody competition among the local population, who are in turn recruited by politicians in their search for support. Economic competition in the near future, brought about by reforms, could prolong and even intensify local feuds given the existing ethnic and regional diversities. As it is, many Tajiks complain that the Uzbeks are running the stores in Dushanbe and controlling trade in bazaars throughout the country. The Uzbek population of the Khatlon province, meanwhile, claims that the Gharmis had become rich on their lands, for which they took revenge during the civil war. The main problem remains the artificiality of communities which have been ranged together to fit the demands of the Center (mostly Moscow), and have, as a result, not created any harmony between ethnic or regional groups. Forced settlement created competition which resulted in a bloody war.

In addition to the problem of an economic imbalance between different regions, the most critical problem remains the shortage of money within the republic.⁵⁹ Wages have not been paid since May 1994 in almost all government jobs. Economic reforms, therefore, are badly needed in the country. The shortage of food could eventually exacerbate the social situation and create more dissatisfaction and unrest. It could also be used as a political point for a leader who could gain immense popularity by proving capable of feeding the population. The economic situation could, in the best case, create a new basis of loyalties for capable leaders, and in the worse case, a new class of opposition among wider groups of people.⁶⁰ Therefore, in the same way that "command peace" and "command reconciliation" were imposed by the victorious side of the civil war to gain legitimacy, "command reforms" could also be the only way that the Government would be able to keep its hold on power.

⁵⁹ A paper on the economic situation is being prepared for the National Council for Soviet and East European Research.

⁶⁰ Olivier Roy writes "Pauperization might be more destabilizing in the end than the specter of Islamic fundamentalism" in "The Civil War in Tajikistan: Causes and Implications," Report of the United States Institute of Peace (December 1993): 26.