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# **The Myths of National Identity in Former Soviet Tajikistan**

M Kamolzoda

November 2018



## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the national identity of the Tajik nation from the beginning of the twentieth century to the present, with background on ninth and nineteenth centuries. The major part of the thesis concentrates on periods characterised by heightened emphasis on questions of national identity: 1) the beginning of the Soviet era, when the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was created; 2) post-independence, including the civil war and consequent activities related to nationalism. Two questions guide my research. Firstly, how did people on the territory of Tajikistan come to identify themselves as a Tajik nation? Secondly, what are the different backgrounds and influences that drive ideas of national identity in contemporary Tajikistan?

After the Introduction in Chapter 1, the first part of my thesis addresses the first question. Chapter 2 examines theories of nationalism – primordialism, ethno-symbolism and modernism. I conclude that modernism best fits the Tajik nation. Chapters 3 and 4 examine the Soviet period's influence, arguing that the Soviet impact was instrumental in creating the Tajik nation, thus making it a modernist construct. I attribute this to Lenin and Stalin's national differentiation policies. Chapter 5 examines clans and their relationship to Tajik national identity.

The second part examines the role of elites in developing national identity in post-Soviet Tajikistan. Chapter 6 analyses the Tajik civil war, its causes and elite and clan influences. Chapter 7 reviews the post-civil-war period and its impact on nationalist politics. Chapter 8 investigates the role of the Tajik president. Finally, Chapter 9 explores how the elite uses educational tools, such as history books, to promote nationalist politics.

In conclusion, I attribute the prominence of nationalist politics in modern Tajikistan to the Soviet heritage of the elite. The Tajik nation is a Soviet construct, and contemporary elites use Soviet heritage to promote primordial ideas about the ancientness of the Tajik nation's origins.

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### **Statement of Copyright**

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## **1 Introduction**

### **1.1 Aim of research**

Fundamental change has occurred in the post-Soviet Central Asian region, and too often over-generalising about post-Soviet Central Asian states fails to do justice to the region or to promote cooperation with the rest of the world. This study focuses on the smallest (by land area) of the Central Asian countries – the Republic of Tajikistan, as it is the least studied of the post-Soviet Central Asian states. It is important to understand more about Tajikistan, because of its geopolitical situation as well as its former communist history. There is very little known in the world about this state, perhaps because of its war-zone past and conflicted neighbourhood. The country has a very fragile border with Afghanistan, which increases its vulnerability. Moreover, Tajikistan has few natural resources and a weak national economy, while other Central Asian country leaders use natural resources, such as oil and gas, to strengthen their position in the world and to develop industries. Consequently, the formation of the Tajik state has been different to other former Russian colonies; the country has had to follow a different path from the time of the formation of the Soviet Union until its independence. Scholarly investigations into former Soviet nations continue, but few challenge the existing view of the former Soviet national identities. This thesis aims to challenge the current understanding of the national identity of Tajikistan.

This research has sought to understand the way that the Tajik nation has been built and the myth of national identity in Tajikistan, using primary and secondary sources. The hypothesis is formed that the Tajik national identity is a myth created through the combination of various political and cultural influences over a relatively short period. I argue that the national identity of Tajikistan is a modern Soviet construct created in the 1920s for various reasons, primarily to divide and control Central Asia, to influence Persian-speaking neighbours, to weaken Turkic groups in Central Asia and to meet the demands of local intelligentsia. Even though the current government proclaims the Tajiks to be a very ancient nation, this nation was developed during the twentieth century. This study determines why people have come to identify themselves as part of the Tajik nation, the impact of the influence of the Soviet Union, and the Tajik elite's nationalistic politics.

## 1.2 Research questions

This thesis is a theoretically grounded empirical analysis of Tajik nationalism and national identity, examining the nature of Tajik identity in Tajik politics from the top down. Masses make a nation, but elites shape the nation and direct it to their specific needs. Therefore, I have concentrated on the elite's actions and motives. Throughout this thesis we see how the Tajik government has employed national symbols and has re-written history to affirm its uniqueness and independence. The ability of an elite to promote a sense of belonging and capture the imagination of its people is important in shaping the nation. The Tajik government and intelligentsia declare that the Tajik nation has thousands of years of history. However, all Tajik national symbols were created during the Soviet time. These symbols have played an important role in the current president's nationalist manifestos. It is advantageous for the Tajik government to have a strong national foundation to establish itself in the global community of countries. Thus, it endeavours to create national myths.

The study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What national identity theory is the most applicable to the Tajik nation?
2. How did people on the territory of Tajikistan come to identify themselves as a Tajik nation?
3. What are the different backgrounds and various influences that drive ideas of national identity in contemporary Tajikistan?
4. How does the clan system in Tajikistan co-exist with the Tajik national identity?
5. What was the impact of the Tajik civil war on Tajik national identity?

To effectively understand the complexities of constructing a national identity in Central Asia—an area including contemporary Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan—it is first necessary to determine the appropriate definition of 'nation'. 'To create unified and distinctive nations and impart a sense of common destiny to their members, nation-builders unearth, appropriate, and exploit the ethno-symbolic resources at their disposal (e.g., customs, toponyms and ethnonyms, heroes, myths, state iconography).'

<sup>1</sup> Myths provide a sense of correlation with the place, therefore, 'all nations seem to create their own myth of origins in an attempt to provide a sense of common identity and cultural uniformity and continuity.'<sup>2</sup> As such, being a part of one group leads to the sense of

homogeneity and distinction. Aggressively legitimising one's common identity to justify the nation's existence can be especially necessary for postcolonial nations, which may have an unstable position on the global stage, as they are anxious about claims of belonging to other nations' history and culture. Consequently, many newly established states, such as Central Asian states, enter an explicit nation building-process.

Nationalist manifestos can cause conflicts with neighbouring countries, for Tajikistan, the greatest conflicts have been with Uzbekistan. Nationalist motives were also present in the Tajik civil war. National identity issues have caused conflicts in many parts of the world. For example, the Nazi invasions in the 1930s and 1940s, the Sri Lankan civil war of 1983-2009, the Chechen war in Russia in 1994-99, the Yugoslav wars of 1990-2000, and the Kashmir conflict from 1948-present. It is important to learn about nation formation and how best to manage tensions with neighbours during the process to avoid future conflict and to reduce the risk of disputes about the borders between those countries.<sup>3</sup>

There is extensive literature on nationalism and theories are passionately challenged, as are justifications about the essence of the nation and its emergence. Nationalism has developed and flourished in states with different structures, from democracy to monarchy. Nationalist movements, whether modern or ancient, can bring negativity, such as chauvinism and xenophobia. Nationalism appeals to masses of people sharing the same culture and history, unifying them under the same nationalist symbols on the same territory.<sup>4</sup> It is a political power that has defined and redefined the borders of numerous countries in the world. Nationalist movements divided large empires, such as the Ottoman Empire or the Soviet Union, and created many new nations.

Although there are many different opinions as to the definition of nationalism and nation, most authors agree that nationalism is a modern concept. In its political and social sense, the term 'nationalism' was first used at the end of the eighteenth century by the German philosopher Johann Gottfried Herder and the French cleric, the Abbé Augustin de Barruel. The initial meaning of nationalism was the idea that some nations are selected by the power of God. Only in the twentieth century did it become the universal doctrine of nations.<sup>5</sup> Although Herder did not give a definition for the nation, he identified it as having five characteristics: language, character, territory, political agency and formative influence.<sup>6</sup> The definition is cultural and linguistic and related to Gellner's definition as discussed in the



Chapter 2. Anthony Smith defines nationalism as ‘a language and symbolism, socio-political movement and an ideology of the nation’.<sup>7</sup> Yet, Benedict Anderson argues that it is wrong to define nationalism as an ideology, because nationalism is more related to ‘kinship’, ‘religion’ and ‘age’, rather than to such definitions as ‘liberalism’.<sup>8</sup> However, nationalism can be an ideology, because ideologies link political and social spheres for people, they help us to make sense of the world, although not necessarily the best or correct sense.<sup>9</sup> Thus, nationalism helps us to make sense of the nation.

I analyse and compare three contextual frameworks of nation building: primordialism, ethno-symbolism and modernism, and apply the most appropriate to the Tajik nation. Ozkirimli briefly defines all three theories in the following way: ‘the common denominator of the modernists is their conviction in the modernity of nations and nationalism; that of the ethno-symbolists is the stress they lay in their explanations on ethnic pasts and cultures; finally, that of the primordialists is their belief in the antiquity and naturalness of nations.’<sup>10</sup> National identity in Tajikistan has not been studied in detail previously. Is it really an ancient nation that stretches a thousand years into the past, thus conforming with primordial theory? Or is it a modernist construct, created by the Soviets, i.e. Russians, and thus easily manipulated by them? Or perhaps, it had an ethnicity at its core out of which the nation has emerged and thus, it fits with the ethno-symbolism theory?

Many Central Asian Soviet and post-Soviet pro-government experts and historians define nation building in Central Asia through the contextual framework of primordialism.<sup>11</sup> Primordialism is a nationalism theory arguing that nations have always existed, and their historical entity can be linked to their traditions, cultures, and histories. This school of nationalist thought results from the ‘givens’ of ‘social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them, given-ness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices.’<sup>12</sup>

I analyse all relevant aspects of Tajik national identity to show that modernism is the theory that best fits the reality of Tajikistan. Utilising modernism as a basis for national identity has its own benefits. Modernism could lessen tensions between former ‘brotherly’ current rival nations in Central Asia. Each promotes its own form of ethnic history, proclaiming its nation to be the most important and ancient in Central Asia. Constructively learning about the

creation of the nations in this region can show that their arguments are less important and therefore less dangerous. Second, it can alleviate the internal tensions relating to the apparent betrayal of nation when discussing national language and history. It can also ease the sense of non-belonging for national minorities in countries with strong national ideology.

The time-frame for this thesis is 1924-2015, from the start of the Soviet period in Tajikistan and through Tajikistan's period of independence following the collapse of the USSR, with details about earlier periods when necessary to explain the background to contemporary symbolism and history. The Soviet period is important because it formed the basis for the development of independent Tajikistan. The territory of Tajikistan was previously variously part of the Persian Empire, part of a Russian colony and part of one of the khanates in Central Asia. Therefore, in this thesis I cover Central Asia and touch on Russian and Iranian influence.

### **1.3 Literature Review**

#### *1.3.1 Introduction*

This literature review discusses the different perspectives on nationalism in the Soviet Union described in relevant academic literature, to provide a background to the information and analysis presented in the rest of this thesis relating to Central Asia and Tajikistan in particular. It focusses on the period from the 1920s to the 1990s, as this was when the Central Asian states were formed and developed under Soviet influence and control.

This review shows that the Soviet government's management of its nations was complex and multidimensional, rather than the simple 'divide and rule' strategy often cited. The Soviet government made peculiar efforts to develop nationality policies despite its anti-individualism and pro-single-socialist identity propaganda. However, these policies were aimed only at developing a superficial expression of nationalism without diminishing the Soviet central government's power. At the same time, their earlier efforts were genuine and based on the idealistic outlook on nationalism.

The countries that are usually considered in Soviet/post-Soviet studies are Russia, Ukraine and the Baltic republics, while Central Asia and the Caucasus are discussed to a lesser degree. There is a moderate amount of research on post-Soviet Central Asia, but less on Tajikistan specifically. Nevertheless, by examining the literature on nationalism in Central

Asia and the wider Soviet Union, we can form ideas about the background factors that influenced the development of the Tajik nation because Soviet countries have a common history and, in some cases, such as the Central Asian countries, a common culture.

This literature review explores the research on post-Soviet Central Asian countries and the development of their national identity. It seeks to answer the research question: What are the different backgrounds and various influences that drive ideas of national identity in the Soviet Union? Through understanding the Soviet Union's nationality policy, it is easier to understand their actions in the Soviet Tajikistan. The review could help to clarify the thesis main objectives by answering following questions: What are the effects of the Soviet nationality policies on the Central Asian nations? Has the development of nationalities in the Soviet Union been similar and simultaneous? What has been the main driver of national identity politics in all Central Asian countries? The answers to these questions can help to identify whether there is a common factor in the development of the Soviet nations. This could explain general trends and nationalist tendencies in the region that affect the politics and society of Tajikistan.

I chose to analyse a few authors whose works are the most suitable to answer the questions above. There is no capacity in this thesis to analyse more authors than this, neither there are vast amounts of authors specialising on nations in the Soviet Union. The first subsection examines the reasons of the development of national identity politics in the early Soviet Union. The second subsection addresses the influence of nationalism on the collapse of the Soviet Union. The third subsection addresses specifically the Soviet Central Asian nationalist politics and its place in the Soviet studies.

### *1.3.2 Constructed national republics: Early Soviet nationalities policies*

Terry Martin, the professor of Russian studies at Harvard University, states that instead of stopping the development of nationalities, the Soviets not only helped them to develop, but also created nations where they had not existed earlier.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, they were not 'imagined', as Benedict Anderson<sup>14</sup> would claim, but engineered. Tishkov, an academician, a member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who advances a diverse character of ethnicity, also states that the Soviet nations are not genetic, but a modern construct.<sup>15</sup> These propositions oppose the standard Soviet practice of primordial explanation of the Soviet nations. Tishkov believes that ethnicities can be fabricated, influenced and acquired for the

purposes of political mobilisation, commanding their assets or to help them to heal from the injuries suffered from previous authorities.<sup>16</sup> For example, Buryats, who speak Russian at home and at work, for patriotic reasons claim that their native language is Buryati, which they only use for official purposes. Speaking the Buryati language, even though only on special occasions, helps them mobilise themselves as a separate ethnic group with their own resources.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, Mark R. Beissinger, the Professor of the Soviet Union politics at Princeton University, also asserts that Soviet nationalism was artificial, i.e. the nations did not pre-exist and claim their identities to obtain a state, but were created after the fact of the Soviet Union's foundation. The groups of people were modified according to set of conditions and, sometimes, according to the chaos of events. For example, Central Asian elites took an advantage of the mayhem in the 1920s to join growing nationalist movements.<sup>18</sup>

Ronald Grigor Suny, Emeritus professor of political science at the University of Chicago, also argues that the notion of the pre-Soviet non-Russian national self-identification was inflated. Most of their national consciousness was developed by the communists after the Soviet Union was established.<sup>19</sup> During the tsarist regime, there was no specific nationality policy, which leads to a conclusion that non-Russian ethnicities were not prominent enough to take measures about. This contrasts with the Austro-Hungarian empire, which defensively offered compromises to nationalities; the Soviet government decided to control the situation rather than respond to it. Thus, it energetically assisted national identity building among non-Russian groups of people in the former Russian empire.<sup>20</sup>

Terry Martin calls this process 'The Affirmative Action Empire', which is the name of his book. The lasting objective of the Soviets was that the nationalities would harmoniously develop along with the all-socialist culture, which would eventually override all nationalities.<sup>21</sup> Affirmative action, or nationalities politics, was not meant to be the central aim of the Bolsheviks, but a controversial tool serving their main goals, such as state building and international relations. However, these policies were aimed only to be a superficial expression of nationalism; they were not meant to diminish the Soviet central government's power. Martin doesn't examine the expressions of nations in the Soviet Union. Instead he analyses the Soviet government's efforts to produce nationality policies.<sup>22</sup> Martin echoes Yuri Slezkine's term 'affirmative action', which Slezkine uses to separate an ethnicity-based action in non-Russian regions and class-based one in Russia.<sup>23</sup> Initially, this word was used

by Vladimir Lenin in 1913 in his obscure essay, where he criticised the very idea of 'affirmative action'.<sup>24</sup>

The early Soviet period of nation building is generally divided into two parts: the 1920s, during which nations were actively created, and the 1930s when there was a clash between policy on nationality and Russian chauvinism. For example, Martin at first, examines soft-line nationalities politics in the 1920s; then he shows how soft-line politics changed into hard-line in the 1930s when it clashed with the central goals of the Bolsheviks.<sup>25</sup> Like Martin, Slezkine, a Russian-born professor of Russian history at UC Berkley, divides the early Soviet nationalism into following sections: 1928-1932 - the spectacular promotion and at times creation of nations; mid 1930's - withdrawal from intensive creation of new nations, but continued development of the existing ones. He identifies an additional time-period of the 1940s - after the Great Patriotic War, the propaganda of nationality being above class and religiously worshipped nationalism in general.<sup>26</sup> This propaganda of nationality was real, yet it contradicted the communist ideology of defending the international proletariat.

In contrast to Martin and Slezkine, Suny's work is not a comprehensive chronicle of nationalist movements in the Soviet Union, but rather focusses on the relationship between class and nationality. These identities can be complex, combined and ambiguous in general. However, in a political sense, they were simplified by the Soviet government to become less paradoxical and easier to deal with in term of policy.<sup>27</sup> Suny also conducted a broad examination of conjectural incongruities related to nationalism in the Soviet regime. He proposes five typologies of national identities preceding and during the revolution distinguished by their level of national consciousness, class background, social and geographic divisions, etc. He claims that some pre-Soviet nationalities possessed either weak (e.g. Lithuanians) or strong (e.g. Armenians) national self-consciousness. These nationalist movements and their further development were heavily influenced by their class system.<sup>28</sup> Suny's works are assembled from a series of his lectures at Stanford University. While not judging his lectures, some topics in his book might benefit from further research. For example, his nationality categorisation is too basic and does not include all Soviet nationalities.

With regard to the class question, Martin considers the nation to be more important than class, since the Soviet Union has been transformed into independent nation-states and there

emerged various ethnic conflicts.<sup>29</sup> Slezkine views class as a side-issue: when it came to receiving favours from the central government, Russians had the advantage of being working-class, whereas non-Russians had the advantage of being non-Russian.<sup>30</sup> However, this is not entirely true, as *the Basmachi* uprising (discussed in chapter 4) in Central Asia demonstrates that class-based as well as religion-based wars occurred in non-Russian territories.

In contrast to these authors, Beissinger does not explain the advent of nationalism in the Soviet republics but rather the ways it disseminated from one republic to another and led to the collapse of the regime. For example, he identifies that nationalism spread from the Baltic countries, with their stronger recollections of pre-Soviet identities, to other regions.<sup>31</sup> Beissinger does not prioritise Lenin and Stalin's role in this dispersion. Martin, on the other hand, claims that Lenin and Stalin wanted to create a multinational anti-imperialist confederation, because they were disturbed by the strength of nationalism in the First World War.<sup>32</sup> In despite of proclaiming nationalities policy as a tool to serve their main goals, Martin portrays Stalin as a favourable contributor to multi-ethnic republics; setting up their territories, languages and cultures; as Stalin saw less danger in local nationalism than in 'Great Russian chauvinism'.<sup>33</sup>

For Martin, the 1930s rehabilitation period was not intended to completely Russify the Soviet Union and to create a Russian-presiding nationality. Rather, the Soviet leaders still regarded the Union as a multinational one with the Russian nationality and culture as a foundation for togetherness.<sup>34</sup> By 1932, the peasants' opposition towards collectivisation and the Russians' discontentment with nationalities policy resulted in the new policy, where minorities politics became almost a hazard. Russia was reinstated as the dominant nation.<sup>35</sup> Ethnic cleansing of 'enemy nations' raged in the 1930s, especially in regard to such ethnic groups as Poles, Koreans and Germans. The understanding of national identity as a social construct was abandoned and instead, the primordial origins of nationalities were championed.<sup>36</sup> In this period one would expect the nationality projects to halt and the Russian or Soviet identity to overtake, because nationality contradicted both of the newly-adopted strategies.

Martin expands on Slezkine's view that the advocacy of the newly-created or further developed nationalities with their primordially interpreted roots actively continued during

the 1930s, contrary to the constitution. So *korenitzatsiya* persisted but at a lower level, to avoid provoking the Russians. Furthermore, contrary to previous authors, Martin concludes that the constitution of 1936 did not necessitate a single united Soviet identity.<sup>37</sup> But this conclusion does not explain why the Soviet government and Stalin did not make greater efforts to build the all-socialist culture discussed earlier? Why did they persist with the *korenitzatsiya* and even fabricate primordial origins for the new nations? If they were driven during the 1920s to make the Soviet Union different to the Austro-Hungarian empire, why didn't their policies change with the ethnic conflicts and mobilisation of the 1930s? Were there not better alternatives to nationalities policies for delivering economic development and political peace? Were the roots of the collapse of the Soviet Union already established with the nationalities policies at the creation of the union? To explore these questions the next sub-section examines the work of authors who concentrate on the period of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

### 1.3.3 *Impact of late Soviet Elite's nationalities politics on the fall of the Soviet Union*

The late Soviet elite, and especially Gorbachev, are often blamed for the collapse of the Soviet Union. Tishkov, who analyses nationalism and conflict in and after the Soviet Union, focuses his attention on the late Soviet and post-Soviet elite. Tishkov was a Minister of Nationalities in 1992 under Yeltsin and therefore, his analysis mainly relates to events in the committee rooms and how they were affected by personalities rather than the nation building system in general. His research is not only based on personal accounts, as he also uses surveys conducted by the Russian Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology under his management. He places great weight on the power of the elite but disregards the influence or behaviour of wider populations on national self-identification. Nevertheless, his accounts are important in providing an insider's view of the Soviet elites.

Tishkov criticises ethnic studies in the West for “pressures of political correctness on the part of ideological warriors and watchdogs of academic “purity””. At the same time, he is discontented with former Soviet ethnic studies for ‘its internal inability to reconsider basic theoretical paradigms and vocabulary’.<sup>38</sup> There are other contradictions in his works. For example, he condemns federalisation and national separatism claiming them to be a threat to democracy and ‘not conducive to the establishment of civil society’.<sup>39</sup> Yet at the same time, he proposes an ‘asymmetric federalism’ or an additional division into even more ethnic

political units.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, his advocacy for the civic nation as opposed to ethnic nation merits further consideration. The concept of the civic nation is not new, but, coming from a person of Tishkov's position in the Russian government and academia, there is a possibility that the government could turn it into a practical plan.

Like Tishkov, Beissinger examines the late Soviet elite. He investigates the ways that non-Russian republics collaborated in confronting the Moscow government. Beissinger's examination of nationalism in the Soviet Union includes extensive quantitative analysis. He asserts that without Russia's involvement in nationalist activities in the 1980s, the Soviet Union could have continued in reduced form, i.e. without the Baltics or Caucasian republics. He surmises that Russian nationalism, where Russians stopped identifying with the state and the non-Russian states wanting independence were the main reasons for the collapse of the Union.<sup>41</sup> However, he does not analyse the root cause of the alienation of both Russians and non-Russians from the Soviet state.

Unlike the individual-oriented Tishkov, Beissinger disagrees with the view that it was Gorbachev's or Yeltsin's actions that led to the collapse.<sup>42</sup> Beissinger tackles the period after Martin and Slezkine and before Tishkov. He examines in detail the end of the Soviet Union between 1987 and 1992, including Gorbachev's rule and the nationalists' activities. He analyses 18 nationalities, paying particular attention to the western Soviet Union, such as the Baltic Republics. Contrary to Slezkine, Beissinger does not believe that the collapse of the Soviet Union was predetermined from the start. Beissinger's theory is that numerous ripples of nationalist 'tidal forces'<sup>43</sup> inevitably led to the collapse of the Soviet and that nothing could save the regime. He claims that without the nationalist tide from all over the Soviet Union, the regime would not have collapsed and that the Russian, Belorussian and Ukrainian elites, who had the closest association with Soviet identity, were influenced by the advance of nationalism and the catastrophic economic reforms. The rulers of these republics were the principal participants in the ending of the Soviet regime in 1991.<sup>44</sup>

Beissinger also assumes that the nationalist events become tidal because nationalist elites were in contact with each other across the republics' borders and thus influenced each other.<sup>45</sup> But the result of this interaction could vary with the elite's background and ethnic inclinations. Merely evaluating these events might be a clear way to draw conclusions about the whole regime and its people. But evaluating the policies and their root cause at the start



of the Soviet Union would also be important. In contrast to Martin's early Soviet archival records, Beissinger's database consists of the more recent records of more than 6000 protests and over 2000 conflicts between 1987 and 1992. Beissinger's statistical analysis of thousands of events could have concealed the significance of individual events, though he tries to make up for this through case studies.

In contrast to Beissinger, Suny states that the early Soviet *korenitzatsiya* (indigenisation), localism and the consequent strengthening of national identity caused the critical issue for Gorbachev's rule. The policy *korenizatsiya* was created in 1923 to advance non-Russian territories, their languages, cultures and elites.<sup>46</sup> The problem was that the Bolshevik idea of the group of people, socialist and content within a politically benign national form was misguided. When expressions of national identity were encouraged, they supported ethnic confidence among non-Russian elites. Thus, Suny claims that it had been a 'revenge from the past', which corresponds to the name of his book, rather than actions of the late-period Soviet elite.<sup>47</sup> Suny's conclusion correlates with Martin and Slezkine's analysis that early Soviet national development had a great impact on its further development, and eventually, the end.

Both of these theories for the collapse of the Soviet Union have some truth in their analysis. Due to Gorbachev's reforms, the Soviet Union did become absorbed with calls from nationalists for self-determination and sovereignty. But did the Soviet elite across the whole Soviet Union truly believe in national self-determination and liberal political ideology? Most current post-Soviet Central Asian elites are the old communist elite, who continue with their hard-line politics. Nationalist self-determination may have been used as a cover for those elites to attain more power; this possibility is not explored by Beissinger. At the same time, the early Soviet endeavours seemed to have instilled a firm national identification among the Soviet republics, as the post-Soviet nations strongly self-identify with those constructs. In Central Asia, national awareness has become very strong and the governments have continued the Soviet practice of *korenitzatsiya* to strengthen and legitimise their place in the post-Soviet turmoil.

#### 1.3.4 Tajikistan in Soviet Nationalities Studies

According to Martin, the main driver in the national politics of Central Asian countries was the 'affirmative action' that promoted the use of the minority languages and elevated

minority elites and at times led to issues. The commitment of the Moscow government to national minorities and their culture seemed to be not just a political tool to increase its power, but a sincerely held attitude that was shared by Stalin and Lenin.<sup>48</sup> Out of all the instruments for nation building, Slezkine prioritises the minority languages in Central Asia. According to him, the Soviet nationalities were created mainly on the basis of language; Soviet ethnographers chose language as the most reliable guide to ethnicity. In Central Asia, Slezkine concludes that this differentiation reached ludicrous level, because the existing peoples were taken out of existence - Central Asian *Sarts* (discussed in chapter 5) were replaced by 'Tajiks' in Pamir areas and Uzbeks in Turkic speaking areas of Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent. Slezkine uses inverted commas to name the Tajiks, as the term Tajik seemed to him even more unrealistic than Uzbek. Sometimes, when the language distinction was too blurred, ethnographers used architecture and clothing to differentiate nationalities, for example to distinguish Byelorussians from Russians. Iranian-speaking Ossetians and Talysh were differentiated as Northern Caucasians, it was their 'way of life', religion, 'ethnic culture' and 'emotional attachment to Caucasus' that assigned them to belong to this republic.<sup>49</sup> Of course, because the ethnic areas did not match the borders, various nationalities demanded other territories. For example, the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic demanded Tashkent in the 1920s.<sup>50</sup> Thus, the Central Committee in Moscow had to form arbitration commissions to sort out the turmoil that it had itself created.

As discussed earlier in this literature review, there were various reasons for creating the Soviet nations. Yet in the case of Tajikistan there is an additional reason. Martin argues that the Soviet government formed the Soviet nationalities with the aim of influencing people residing abroad but ethnically related to the Soviet people.<sup>51</sup> This foreign policy aspect, the Piedmont principle of the Affirmative Action of Martin Terry, corresponds to my theory of the influence of the Tajiks on the Persian neighbourhood (Afghanistan and Iran), neighbouring countries that had historical links with the territory of Tajikistan, (see Chapter 4). The Piedmont principle could have proved to be effective. However, according to Terry's findings it was reversed in 1933-38 with the change of foreign policy towards a more defensive approach or, as Martin calls it, 'Soviet xenophobia'<sup>52</sup>, with the central Soviet government trying to shield their nationalities from foreign influences.

As the nationalities were being formed in Central Asia, the Soviet authorities stumbled upon the issue of the lack of proletariat. The working class in Soviet Central Asia was almost non-

existent. About 90% of the population were nomadic, some agrarian, whereas those in the cities were primarily craftsmen or tradesmen. Muslims represented over 10% of the Soviet population and the majority of the Central Asian population in the 1920s and, therefore, the central government had to develop strategies to influence this region.<sup>53</sup>

The social system in Central Asia did not provide the communists with many ways of influencing the local population. Thus, the communists chose local women, as the most persecuted members of society who had no rights in this society, and created Zhenotdel (from Russian: *zhenshina* - woman, *otdel* - department).<sup>54</sup> Professor Gregory J. Masell's research revolves around the efforts of the Soviet authorities to influence local Muslim population through their most fragile link - women - by arranging their estrangement from the society, e.g. unveiling them, banning polygamy and forced marriages, diminishing religious power in marriage and teaching women about their rights to defend themselves. Muslim women were used to project the communist propaganda onto the local population, as well as their families.<sup>55</sup> These attempts although seemingly successful to start with went amiss, because the backlash from local men and society was violent and at times bloody, even from the party members, who did it covertly within the privacy of their houses. Women realised that there was not much support from the communist authorities and too much pressure from the local population. Many women had to go back to previous practices, such as veiling themselves and not studying or working.<sup>56</sup>

Masell's book<sup>57</sup> investigates how Soviet governmental authority was used to change local practices in Central Asia. Masell's work focuses only on Central Asia and does not compare it with Russian women or women from other Soviet countries. This is an observation and not a criticism – his main interest is not in Muslim women in the Soviet region, but on Central Asia, which is made clear in his title. He constructed his work from communist journals and newspapers, providing a good basis for those who would like to learn about the strategies of orchestrated social change in Central Asia in the 1920s.

An important question in Masell's work is the extent to which social change can be created in a fixed orthodox society and the scale and scope of the opposition of such societies to these changes. The nation building changes imposed on Central Asian society are of a larger scale than those promoting communism via local women, but we can still draw an analogy. In both cases, the Central Moscow government, with the help of local elite (freshly-created

by the same central government) imposed various strategies on the society, such as communist propaganda or nation building. His conclusion is that modernisation in Central Asia was not self-developed or even inflicted by local leaders.<sup>58</sup> It was the consequence of external ploys and objectives. This conclusion agrees with the conclusions of Martin, Slezkine and Suny that national identity has been externally inflicted on Central Asian societies.

Martin's work, however, does not analyse Central Asia as much as western Soviet countries and his work focusses mainly on contemporary Russian and Ukrainian nations. He only occasionally uses Soviet Central Asia examples in some chapters and Tajikistan is omitted altogether from his analysis. Moreover, he doesn't consider the full diversity of the Turkic national resistance or *the Basmachi* in Central Asia regarding nation building there. Beissinger does devote some examinations to Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan and Turkestan's invented nationalisms, and claims that nationalism movements failed altogether in Central Asia.<sup>59</sup> He uses the example of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan who have become close allies of Russia, while Uzbekistan has become a close ally of the USA and Turkmenistan is the only unaligned Central Asian nation. It is not clear why he considers nationalism to have failed in the countries that have aligned with Russia or the USA. Being an ally and developing national self-determination can go hand in hand. Suny's book does not mention Central Asian republics at all. They are not even listed in the typologies of national identities, perhaps, because Central Asian countries were not decision-makers, but former colonies moulded by the central Moscow government. Nevertheless, despite the fact that sometimes it is necessary to be selective, the analysis of these republics could have added useful contrasting examples.

### 1.3.5 Conclusions

Depending on the period that the author is considering, there are various theories of nation building in the Soviet Union. Some early Soviet period authors suggest that the division of the Soviet Union into national republics during its formation was the root cause of its eventual collapse. Some late Soviet period authors contend that nation building was not necessarily the primary cause for the fall of the union, but instead that the late Soviet elite was accountable. This suggests that championing only one approach may leave misunderstanding to the scholars and readers. Both hypotheses have some supporting

evidence and should be taken into account when researching in this area and perhaps, a new approach could be developed combining elements of both.

Looking in more detail for discussions of nation building in Central Asian, it becomes apparent that many researchers of Soviet studies have covered this region only briefly if at all. One exception is Gregory Massell, but his work is not specifically on nationalism, but on the role of women as a tool in the communist propaganda. Thus, there is not enough research done on Central Asian region by the experts on the Soviet Union.

Based on this review it is evident that there is a need for more research on nationality policies in Central Asia, and specifically on the causes and consequences of nation building during the Soviet time that have influenced the politics of the current Central Asian states. I believe, this thesis moderately contributes to this area of research.

#### **1.4 Methodology**

This research is based on a qualitative methodology. The data provided in this thesis are the product of human beings, changeable in nature as human beings are. There are no simple rules that can explain the behaviour of governments, political leaders and people. The recognition of such complexity draws on more and various types of reasoning and proof. Of course, the description of events cannot be free from bias, as human beings cannot secure absolute truth in abstract concepts. The researcher's background and experiences have an impact on the outcome of the research.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, it is best to be open and honest about the contexts which form our opinions.

There is a certain autobiographical element in this work that cannot be ignored. I am Tajik, a member of the Samarkandi clan; I was educated at a Russian-language university, and I lived through the Tajik civil war; all these aspects of my life relate to topics in this dissertation. One disadvantage of being an insider is that, as much as I have tried to be objective, my analysis will inevitably have been influenced by my experience. On the other hand, by being an insider, the researcher has more access to and greater understanding of local culture, mentality and traditions. Thus, I may be able to judge the roots and consequences of events based on details which could be missed by an outsider.

The reasons for events can be explained in different ways, no matter what the facts are, while the truth may not be unveiled at all by the external observers. This approach uses the opinions

of the researcher without claiming to have the correct answers to all questions. The way we perceive and understand the world around us is influenced by society and, depending on which society we grew up in and the countries we have lived in, our ideas and understanding change. I have lived away from Tajikistan for more than a decade, studying various subjects in both eastern (China, India) and western (United States and the United Kingdom) countries. My understanding of the world has broadened, and my understanding of Tajik society and politics has evolved to be less insular and more open-minded. I can take a more objective view of Tajikistan than members of the Tajik community while having greater understanding and insight than foreign researchers. Thus, the context matters very much in my approach.<sup>61</sup>

This context combined with culture is important in understanding the social situation in Tajikistan. For instance, the Turkish scholar, İdil Tunçer-Kılavuz, in his generalized analysis of Tajik and Uzbek clans, claims that Tajik clans are simply political factions. However, as shown in Chapter 5, apart from political relationships, Tajik clans also have cultural, regional and often kinship relationships, all of which I have experienced since childhood. Such knowledge would be difficult to obtain during a short field trip visiting only a few places in the country. While I have an innate understanding of Tajik clans, I have used the conceptual clan frameworks created by external investigators and academics to challenge and refine my understanding and to ensure the level of objectivity required in a PhD thesis.

I have adopted a modernist or interpretative approach to this research, using an inductive method, starting with data and building a theory about the phenomenon of interest from the observed facts. The initial data were obtained from books and articles from primary authors about the Tajik nation and history, and theories of national identity and nationalism obtained from original sources written primarily in Russian and Tajik and, in some cases, English. After comparing and analysing theories, the most applicable theory is chosen for this specific case and the hypothesis is formed about the modernist nature and myth-making of Tajik national identity. Consequently, two of the main research questions are identified: ‘Is modernism the most applicable theory for the Tajik nation?’ and ‘How did people on the territory of Tajikistan come to identify themselves as a Tajik nation?’ From this point data was collected on both nationalism theories and the Tajik nation to prove the hypothesis.

A combination of explanatory and descriptive research has been used to seek answers to ‘how’ and ‘what’ type of questions. The purpose of historical design is to represent and scrutinise events of the past over time. The method for qualitative design consists of the following stages: develop an idea; formulate research questions; map out a list of sources (e.g. libraries, archives, papers); assess the authenticity and reliability of data (primary sources, biases); generate a research outline; collect data. Analysis of the data requires combination of all data, detailed examination, removal of unnecessary information and resolving conflicting documentation. Outcomes can be presented chronologically or thematically in the format of a thesis.<sup>62</sup> Qualitative historical design is used partially to collect and organise data, develop concepts, examine findings that answer research questions and defend or refute the given hypothesis. Historical design cannot be fully used here, because it is usually applied to the past where persons involved are no longer alive and cannot give an account of events, whereas I am examining post-Soviet events and persons in Tajikistan up to 2016. When contemporary events and persons are included as well, historical design starts to overlap with a case study approach. A case study analyses contemporary events but the researcher cannot control behaviours or events. It uses the same methods as historical design, but as well as documents and artefacts it has two additional techniques available, namely direct observation and interviews.<sup>63</sup>

My research uses information about the development of the Tajik nation during the period 1924-2015 as well as the period around the ninth century when the Samanid Empire was at its peak and the period of the Tajik civil war in the 1990s. For the latter period, the following question is examined: ‘What was the impact of the Tajik civil war on national identity?’ I have also conducted research into the relationship of Tajikistan with Uzbekistan, since it is the closest nation to Tajikistan, both geographically and culturally. Understanding this relationship helps to understand the external influences on the current nationalism discourse while investigating the following question: ‘What are the different backgrounds and various influences that drive ideas of national identity in contemporary Tajikistan?’ Differences and similarities between Tajik clans, such as the Pamiri, Leninobodi, Kulyabi, etc. are examined, as are regional diversity and conflicts. This helped to examine plausible answers to the question: ‘How does the clan system in Tajikistan co-exist with the Tajik national identity?’

Appropriate evidence to answer the research questions identified above was firstly selected via library research investigating current academic literature, such as books, journals and

online articles. The library research involved examining archival data, secondary sources, information databases and records on national identity theories and Tajik nationalism written by the classic authors and contemporary scholars. By examining these documents, it was possible to sketch out a preliminary understanding before obtaining in-depth data through the examination of speeches, official records, reports and articles. Such data are reviewed through the university library and other places using a range of information sources, such as academic abstracts, databases and online search engines.

This approach to analysis is effective where interviewing or doing surveys is either too costly or too hazardous for the researcher and when secondary data is accessible at a degree of analysis appropriate for answering the research questions. There are some matters that this methodology may not help to explain. Interviews and questionnaires might be better for obtaining information about people's experiences, opinions and viewpoints or the degree of people's understanding of issues, or the similarities and differences between groups of people in various areas. These methods, however, are dangerous to undertake in Tajikistan because of the government's distrust of foreign research undertaken on its territory. Conducting interviews and surveys draws the attention of government officials; even if it is done covertly, there is still a chance that they would find out, particularly because interviews and surveys have to cover a wide range of population rather than a small circle of trusted people. For example, Alexander Sodiqov, a Tajik PhD student from Toronto University, was charged and arrested for treason and espionage in Tajikistan while undertaking field research, which included interviews and surveys, in June 2014. He is free and back in Canada now due to his supervisors and campaigning by Human Rights Watch, but the charges have not been dropped. Unfortunately, my background, female gender and family relations do not allow me to take such risks. Moreover, since my research investigates top-down nation building, the methods that I have adopted for this research will generate a better understanding of the research questions than bottom-up techniques such as interviews and questionnaires.

This research is one of the first studies of the Tajik nation through the theoretical lens of nationalism while looking at the nation-state ideology. If the primordialist approach had been chosen, then the primary sources would include Tajik descent research, archaeological findings and others, whereas the modernism approach would entail the investigation of such topics as Tajik development of education and culture, although some sources might have



overlapped with ethno-symbolist approach, since neither of theories is precisely clear cut. Since modernism has been chosen as the main framework, therefore, the relevant primary sources include Tajik history books and textbooks and officials' speeches and publications, especially presidential speeches, from which we can analyse the regime's influence on the population. Such national methods form national discourse that can help us to understand the interpretation and meaning of the nation.

Since this thesis investigates the Tajik nation-state ideology, I looked for expressions of this in primary research units – history books that are designed and approved by the regime. The history textbooks that are the most popular and widely used in Tajikistan were collected to gather primary source data. Such documents can reveal information about the social context in which they were created and the people and regime that produced them. I chose as my sample history books and textbooks from schools and universities in the capital, because other regions of the country follow the example established there. There are 3,836 schools in total in Tajikistan (see Figure 1-1), out of which 555 are in the capital. I phoned 10 major schools in Dushanbe (no. 1, no. 4, no. 9, no. 20, no. 21, no. 53, no. 54, private school Tajikistan, President's lytseum, Turkish lytseums (private schools supported by Turkish government)). All of them said that they have Bobojon Gafurov, the famous Tajik academician and politician's books *Tajiks I* and *Tajiks II*, books in their history curriculum. Gafurov's books are the primary books I use in this thesis.

**Муассисаҳои таълимии умумӣ ва маълумоти миёнаи умумӣ**  
**УЧРЕЖДЕНИЯ ОБЩЕГО СРЕДНЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ ПО ТИПУ ШКОЛЫ**

Намуни мактаб	Шумори мактабҳо Количество школ	Аз ҷумла - Итих					Шумори филиалҳо Количество филиалов		Тип школы
		Маълумоти ҷойгиршавӣ		Шақли молаққат		Шаҳр город	Деҳат село		
		Шаҳр город	Деҳат село	Давлатӣ Государственные	Хусусӣ частные				
Ибтидоӣ	456	10	446	455	1	0	12	начальная	
Асосӣ	577	19	558	577	0	0	17	основная	
Миёна (пурра)	2601	386	2215	2585	16	3	88	средняя	
Гимназия	85	55	30	62	23	0	0	гимназия	
Литсей	65	52	13	54	11	0	0	лицей	
Мактаб-интернати кӯдакони ҷетим	22	13	9	21	1	0	0	Школа-интернат для детей сирот	
Мактаб-интернати кӯдакони қар	2	1	1	2	0	0	0	Школа-интернат для глухих	
Мактаб - интернати санатори	3	0	3	3	0	0	0	Школа-интернат санаторного типа	
Мактаб-интернат барои баҷагонии шунавониҳои суғ ва дерқаршуда	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	Школа-интернат для слабослышащих и позднослышащих	
Мактаб-интернати кӯдакони нобино ва биовизион суғ	4	4	0	4	0	0	0	Школа-интернат для детей слепых и слабовидящих	
Мактаб-интернати ниҳомати маҳсуе (полиомеелит)	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	Школа-интернат специального назначения (полиомеелит)	
Мактаби маҳсуе (дувортарбия)	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	Специшкола (для трудновоспитуемых)	
Мактаб-интернати ғирасон (қӯдакони ақдан носолим)	4	3	1	4	0	0	0	Вспомогательная школа-интернат (слезливо-оспальные дети)	
Мактаб-қӯдакитон	5	5	0	3	2	0	0	Школа-сад	
Мактаб-интернати мусиқӣ	2	2	2	2	0	0	0	Музыкальная школа-интернат	
Мактаб-интернати варзиши	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	Спортивная школа-интернат	
Мактаб-интернати баҷаҳои ласқатманда	6	2	2	6	0	0	0	Школа-интернаты для одаренных детей	
Хамагӣ:	3836	555	3281	3782	54	3	118	Всего:	
*Интернати назди мактабӣ	32	3	29	32	0	0	0	Пришкольный интернат*	

\*Шумори хонадаҳои интернатҳои назди мактабӣ дар шумори умумӣ ворид карда шудаанд.  
\*Количество учащихся пришкольных интернатов включены в общий список.

Figure 1-1: State and private schools in Tajikistan arranged by types. Original document accessed from the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan in summer 2015. Please see the translation in reference. 64

I walked through all the large bookshops in Dushanbe that sell textbooks and inquired about the most popular and most used history books (see Figure 1-2). There are only five large bookshops in Dushanbe: Knizhnyi Magazin, Olami Kitob, Furug, Donish, Omar Khayam. There are also many small vendors that sell books spread on tables in markets or underground crossings. I did not collect information from them because their stock is dictated by the needs of schools and are similar to large shops, but with slightly lower prices as the vendors do not have to pay rent. I chose history textbooks that were approved for all schools and universities in Tajikistan by the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan. Therefore, their content is significant in the formation of national ideology among Tajiks from childhood. Moreover, I obtained the list of Tajik history textbooks for the curriculum of undergraduate students at my alma mater, the Russian Tajik Slavonic University. In this list, they still use books published during the Soviet time and often recommend the same author's books from all publications years. For example, Bobojon Gafurov's books were included under no. 5, 6, 7. (Figure 1-3).



Figure 1-2: Asking a shopkeeper about Tajik history textbooks and purchasing the most popular ones. In Olami Kitob bookshop, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, January 2015.

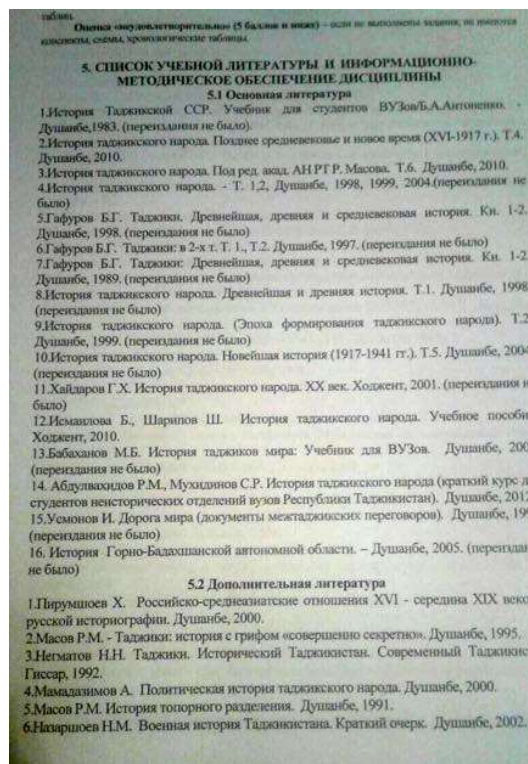


Figure 1-3: The List of Literature and Information-Methodological Supply. Russian-Tajik Slavonic University, Department of Native History (Translation in the reference)<sup>65</sup>

Gafurov’s books were included into my primary sources list without any hesitation. These books are not only the most bought and sought-after textbooks, but they can be found in the house of every Tajik family since the Soviet time. Asia Plus, the largest and the most popular media organisation in Tajikistan, provided a survey among bookshop keepers. They found

out that while the Tajik population rarely buys fiction books, it is the history books, and especially, Gafurov's books that are the most sought-after books in Tajikistan.<sup>66</sup> Another article wrote about 50 top books being read in Tajikistan. Here, Gafurov's books at the top were topped by the president Rahmon's three volume book about the Tajik history, religion, culture, etc.<sup>67</sup> It was a challenge to find Rahmon's books in the bookshops, because they were sold out. I had to wait until my next visit to obtain his books. However, I did not even have to look for Gafurov's books, as my parents had copies both in Russian and Tajik languages. These books and their author are treated with reverence and I was even asked by my parents not to leave them behind in England after finishing my studies.

The sample of books is not big, there are ten textbooks, but I have endeavoured to focus on the most important and widely read ones (going for quality rather than quantity) as it makes the analysis more accurate. I looked for specific words and phrases, such as 'national identity', 'national supremacy', 'great nation' and others. The context was also important in analysing texts without these key words, but which were also relevant to my topic of research. I did not use software to undertake the textual analysis, because the books I analysed were in Russian, Tajik and English languages, and no software was available capable of analysing this mix of languages. The study of these selected history textbooks illustrates the supremacy of nationalist ideology by representing the state's portrayal of the nation and its history. Content analysis of textbooks, recording notes and content analysis were used in conjunction with the documentary data. Such analysis can bring out the social and institutional context of the documentary data, allowing us to understand how the documents were written, where they came from, who wrote them and their purpose. Concepts and facts are assembled to understand the time and events of the research. I used the discourse analysis method for this purpose. Discourse analysis is a variety of approaches to analyse any form of language and its use. The significance of language lies in its ability to provide 'the evidence of social phenomena', such as 'aspects of society and social life'.<sup>68</sup> Discourse analysis may look at the content of language: topics and debates discussed in a speech or dialogue. Or it may look at the structure of language and how this structure helps figure out the implications in certain contexts.<sup>69</sup> Analysts can examine such forms of language as text, film, picture, oral and sign languages. Discourse analysis can be internally reliable, where the data collection is consistent, and externally reliable, where other researchers can replicate the study using the same procedures.<sup>70</sup> According to James Gee

there are two kinds of discourse analysis: descriptive and critical. Descriptive analysis describes how and why language works with the purpose of understanding it. Critical analysis relates not only to how language works but how to apply the results to the world in some ways. Those who use the descriptive approach criticise the critical approach for being not objective enough but influenced by their concern in changing some problem in the world. Whereas those using the critical approach denounce the descriptive one for eluding political or social responsibility.<sup>71</sup> Paltridge criticises discourse analysis in general stating that it is merely about words and does not consider people and is not practical enough. However, in politics, Dijk claims that political discourse analysis provides a critical outlook on political communication; it focuses on the reproduction and disputing of political power, and therefore, can have a practical application. Political discourse is related to political actors and organisations that are involved in political events and processes.<sup>72</sup> The approach I am using is mainly descriptive, but it can help other researchers who may choose to use it in applying some of the results in the real world. In a way my approach is critical, as it does illuminate some issues in Central Asia, based on which one could make judgements with consequences in the world.

In the method employed I analyse the language used in texts and context. For example, I examine the speeches of the President of Tajikistan between 1992-2015. A selected number of texts is to be identified. Each text is divided into sections and coded. Qualitative analysis is implemented using open, axial and selective coding techniques. In open coding the recognizable characteristics of concepts are identified and grouped together into categories. These categories are eventually developed into constructs. In selective coding the central category is identified and related to other categories. In axial coding the categories are gathered into hypotheses that can provisionally explain the argument. Used simultaneously all these types of coding help to speed and refine the research process. Concepts and facts are assembled to understand the time-lines and events of the research.

I also looked at the speeches of the President because, since Tajikistan is an authoritarian state, the President's orders and speeches have supreme influence and are cited in history books and textbooks. In the selection of speeches, I looked for the words 'national identity', 'national honour', 'national history', 'ancient Tajiks' repeating more than twice within the speech. If this research had been undertaken in a country where the president was not so powerful, then presidential speeches would not have been so relevant. In Tajikistan,

presidential speeches are usually broadcast in full on national television and all national channels get blocked during transmission. Thus, such speeches have an extreme capacity to influence the development of national consciousness. This leads on to the analysis of the president's cult, which is also a Soviet legacy. The cult of personality of the president of Tajikistan is assessed using qualitative methods, such as analysis of biographical documents and of images of the president exhibited around the country. Moreover, new reports had been published during the research, which reinforced the importance of chosen primary sources, specifically about President Emomali Rahmon's history books being included into school curricula. Textual documents, mainly biographies and history books referring to the president, are analysed using the coding approaches described above. Images, for example banners that portray the president encouraging the population to buy shares in the Rogun hydroelectric dam and other images produced by the regime and in the mass media, are investigated using social context and interpretations of meaning. This includes biographical data and information about how images are received by the population and the social, political and economic context at the time.

I examine and analyse many visual objects in this thesis, as they help to provide a more complex perspective on my subject of research. The approach that I use was taught to me by Dr Claire Sutherland during our meetings and correspondence. It has three stages: describe what the image shows; study what it means in context; assess the meaning. As Banks and Zeytlin state, one should be able to read 'both internal and external narrative' from a visual object.<sup>73</sup> There are images that I borrow and study from other sources, which I fully credit and reference. There are also images that I have generated. Within the last category are images of president Rahmon on the streets of Tajikistan. There are various methods of visual analysis. For example, the iconographical method is related to art history and investigates first who/what is depicted and then assesses what it signifies. Visual anthropology uses images to recount the present and past practices of a community. The Psychoanalytic method analyses images as dreams, visual expressions of what people find hard to express verbally. Content analysis examines the way social concerns are portrayed in social media. Social semiotic visual analysis investigates images in their social context in relation to interaction and composition of the text they include. In the ethnomethodology, the researcher analyses the active development of specific social practices where the relationship of images and non-verbal interaction is important. There is even an interdisciplinary field of cultural studies

that has its own approach of analysing images: it provides a list of questions and problems to focus on images.<sup>74</sup>

Some methodologies, such as social semiotic analysis, are too prescriptive, requiring the researcher to follow a long sequence of steps without allowing the author to use their initiative. In this thesis, I use the cultural studies approach, where I have specific questions and thesis arguments to explore, develop a conceptual framework and then choose the images that best answer my research questions. For example, I use the iconographical method for banknotes or monuments, where I describe who or what is in the image and what the meaning of a specific symbol is and its context. In other cases, I used ethnomethodology, where the object or location of the image does not matter as much as how their creator (in this case, indirectly, the president who allows/orders those portraits to be displayed) constructed the reality and whether there was any bias involved in creating the image. This method was mainly applied to the images of the president in relation to his cult or the Rogun dam. The choice of images depends on the research question. For example, to answer the question ‘What are the different backgrounds and various influences that drive ideas of national identity in contemporary Tajikistan?’ I examined President Rahmon’s cult of personality. At first, I travelled to Tajikistan’s capital and took pictures of available banners of the president and his sayings on the main streets. If I was unable to travel and needed a picture with a particular saying, I asked my sister to take the images, which she sent to me. Then I searched for the president’s images online and compared with mine and evaluated whether they are relevant to my research questions: Does the president use nationalistic slogans on the banners? Is he trying to convey a special message, such as the importance of Rogun dam? Did the banners/images change over time when I compare online and real-time? What are the differences and what caused them?

I also analyse and interpret the visual symbols on banknotes and coins to understand the system of ideas that underpins Tajik nationalist discourse. In this instance, the choice of images is straightforward, because all Tajik banknotes and coins contain nationalistic messages. Visual imagery depicted on Tajik banknotes and coins includes national heroes, both real and mythical or mythologised (i.e. giving more significance to the Tajik nation than it actually possesses). The images are analysed in terms of their visual presentation, choice of surroundings and any symbolism accompanying the heroes. As banknotes are an instrument of material culture, in this research I use them to learn the correlation between

banknotes and the regime's representation of Tajik identity. Moreover, the construction of Tajik collective memory via visual imagery of banknotes and coins is explored. Currency that depicts a shared past refers to how and why the Tajik people were presented to identify themselves as members of this nation. Although banknotes and coins are omnipresent in people's lives, since every new regime changes the visual imagery of its currency, they influence people's ideology, making these objects an appropriate example of banal nationalism (Billig 1995). I provide a quantitative analysis of currency including counting how many Somoni era, Soviet period and contemporary symbols are depicted, and use this analysis in relevant chapters.

Monuments are visual representations of the nation, as they provide a link between the nation and space. Monuments are a part of nation building by means of their representation and location. Being a part of banal nationalism, monuments are present in people's everyday lives and affect individuals directly. Moreover, in Tajikistan they are often featured in people's photographs, not only for touristic purposes but also wedding processions make special stops at national monuments and professional photographers take pictures of couples in front of them. Nationalism finds its expression in these monuments, which portray Tajik politicians, writers, poets, scientists and others. Analysis has been undertaken of these monuments, for example in terms of which period they were constructed in and which period they represent (i.e. Samonid, Soviet or contemporary).

Background reading and literature review has been an on-going process incorporated into all chapters, in some cases influencing the theoretical understanding during the research. Initial reading and analysis established the research objective of nation building via ethno-symbolism. I was going to employ an ethno-symbolist approach to analyse the national identity of Tajikistan. The choice of this approach was probably influenced by my background: being a Tajik educated in Tajikistan I wanted to connect the dots between the primordialist approach I was taught at school and modernist approach I had learnt in western universities. My theoretical understanding evolved during the research as I looked at the data. As more data have been obtained about Tajik history and the role of the clans, the ethno-symbolism approach to the Tajik nation did not seem as suitable. Ultimately the results of the data that I had gathered, and my analysis showed that the modernist approach better matches the reality of the Tajik nation. Therefore, towards the end of my research I changed



my theoretical framework, as the original choice was ultimately a poor fit to my empirical analysis.

## 1.5 Structure of this dissertation

This dissertation is in eight chapters. In Chapter 2 the thesis is established in terms of the theoretical framework and the argument described in this introduction is further elaborated. Chapters 3, 4 and 6 deal with the historical background and its impact on Tajik national identity. Chapter 5 describes clans in Tajikistan and the way that clan identity interacts with national identity. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 examine nationalist activities in independent Tajikistan and the role of the Tajik government and intelligentsia in its promotion. More detailed descriptions of each chapter are provided below.

Chapter 2 discusses national identity theories in detail and considers which one is most applicable to the Tajik nation. It also explores concepts of territory, state, language and economy in relation to the Tajik nation. The theory of Joseph Stalin on the nation and its features also plays an important role in the analysis, because the Central Asian nations were created during his rule and based on his concepts. After looking through ethno-symbolism and primordialism, and based on the Tajik nation's history and characteristics, I conclude that modernism is the most appropriate theory, although Central Asian historians have mainly adopted a primordialist approach.

Chapter 3 explores the historical background to Soviet Central Asia, primarily in the time frame 1917-1989, when the Central Asian nations were formed. The pre-Soviet period is also described to necessary background information, such as why the Russian Empire conquered Central Asia and the effect of Russian imperialism on Central Asia. I analyse the *Basmachi* resistance and Central Asian religious identity. Islam was strongly embedded in the local population's identity and was perhaps one of the primary causes uniting the *Basmachi* rebels who fought against Soviet power during the first twenty years of the Soviet Union's development. The territory of modern Tajikistan was partly in the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and partly in the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic; both were subsequently divided among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. The formation of these countries is discussed as it provides the context for the creation of Tajikistan.

Chapter 4 explores the historical background to, and the detailed timeline for, the creation of the Tajik nation during the Soviet period. I analyse why the Soviet regime created the nation and explore tensions between two competing and comparable nations, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, because of the close historic links between their people and because Tajikistan started as an autonomous region of Uzbekistan. I assess whether Soviet nationalist politics strengthened Tajik self-identification and how the concept of the ‘Soviet New Man’ affected the development of Tajik national identity.

Chapter 5 looks at clan relationships in Tajikistan. Nationalist politics in Soviet Tajikistan were made more complex because of the clan structure of the Tajik people. Some clans were unintentionally elevated in status due to Soviet economic policies; others were the legacy of historical city-state networks. I analyse what clan means in the case of the Tajiks and examine the relationship of clan identity with national identity and whether one precedes and influences the other. Finally, I describe the relationship between Tajik clans now and how this has influenced the development of the nation.

Chapter 6 considers the effect of the 1990s’ civil war in Tajikistan on nationalist politics. I examine the causes of the civil war, one of which is determined to be the lack of national identity. I also examine the transition of power between rival clans during the war and its implications for current political discourse. Finally, I determine that the mild cultural nationalism in the Soviet period was intentionally politicised following independence.

Chapter 7 analyses the reasons for the increased politicisation of nationalist discourse in the aftermath of the civil war. The reinforcement of national identity was not only needed internally by its people but was also influenced by the country’s foreign policy. I examine the post-civil war Tajik nationalist politics in general and in relation to its relationships with Russia, China and Uzbekistan.

Chapter 8 analyses the iconography of nationalism as used by the current Tajik regime. I argue that this iconography makes links mainly to the epoch of the creation of the Tajik *ethnie*, the Samanid Empire, and to the period of the creation of the Tajik nation in the Soviet period. These periods are important, as they mark the appearance of Tajik ethnicity and the formation of the Tajik nation. Chapter 8 also examines another important part of the iconography of the Tajik regime, the cult of the Tajik president, who has been compared to

an ancient Samanid king, Ismoili Somoni, and both proclaimed to be national heroes and saviours of the nation.

Chapter 9 examines the history textbooks of Tajikistan, paying particular attention to how models of Tajik identity presented in new textbooks redefine legitimate national culture for students. Furthermore, I draw a comparison between the Soviet and post-Soviet histories of Tajikistan, identifying the changes made. I argue that apart from the end of communist ideology and strengthened emphasis on the Samanid Empire and Zoroastrianism, no other changes have been made, with contemporary discourse continuing the Soviet discourse but adding greater political, rather than cultural, content. Since people should, inter-alia, have a common name to be identified as a nation or *ethnie*, I evaluate the historical origins of the term Tajik. Language is also one of the important attributes of the nation, therefore, I explore the formation of the Tajik language and identify whether pre-Soviet Tajik language was like Farsi. This similarity weakens one of the bases for the Tajik nation's claim to a long history.

## **2 Nation and national identity theories in relation to the Tajik nation**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter sets out to explore two key questions:

- which theory of nationalism is most applicable to the Tajik nation; and
- what is a nation and nationalism in the context of the Tajik nation?

It provides a theoretical and contextual framework analysing concepts of Tajik identity. I examine the main theories of nation building, including primordialism, ethno-symbolism and modernism. I analyse their differences and similarities and draw conclusions as to their applicability to Tajikistan.

Nation is a very ambiguous concept that can be interpreted in various ways. There are certain characteristics that can be taken as a basis for the concept of a nation, even though the term itself is ambiguous and scholars have diverse opinions about it. There are many definitions of nations and although it would be interesting to explore all of them, I only consider the most relevant and important ones in the first section of this chapter.

In section 2.2.1 I examine the definitions of the nation including Stalin and Lenin's statements and their importance. Then in Section 2.2.2 I explain the significance of language, which is one of Stalin's prerequisites for a nation. Since a nation and an ethnic group have many commonalities, I also explore their differences and similarities in Section 2.2.3. One of the main differences between them is territory and the state, to which I devote Section 2.2.4. Following that, in Section 2.2.5 I discuss the role an economic infrastructure plays an essential role in national development. Finally, public culture is a crucial attribute for a nation and a state, the significance of which I analyse in Section 2.2.6.

In section 2.3 I discuss three major nationalism theories. Whether a nation was invented based on tradition or invented wholesale is the crux of the modernist versus primordialist debate within nationalism studies. Central Asian historians believe that primordialism is most relevant to the Central Asian nations. That is why I examine this approach first. Ethno-symbolism stands between primordialism and modernism, having similarities to both. This approach is essential to mention because it was initially taken as the theoretical basis of this

thesis. However, my research shows that modernism is the more applicable theory to Tajik nation-formation, which I justify in this chapter.

## **2.2 What is a nation**

### *2.2.1 Definitions of nation*

Since the Soviet period was critical to the Tajik nation's development, the definition of nation used by Stalin and Lenin must be considered. Stalin, summing up Lenin's debate with the reformists, identified a nation as a 'historically evolved stable community. It is characterized by four main features: it is a community of language, of territory, of economic life, and of a psychological make-up manifested in a community of culture.'<sup>75</sup> According to Stalin, the existence of a nation requires all four features to be present: if one is absent then the nation would not exist.<sup>76</sup> Stalin's formulation of nation was used as the basis for creating the Central Asian republics in the 1920s. Yet I do not use Stalin's definition of the nation for reasons discussed in this section.

Modernists, such as Elie Kedourie, claim that people are not inherently divided into nations and it can be difficult to ascribe to the nation any definite characteristics, which would be related only to nation.<sup>77</sup> For Benedict Anderson the nation is 'an imagined community', meaning that people would never meet everyone within their nation, but imagine themselves to be united.<sup>78</sup> Eric Hobsbawm claims that the nation is a group with a collection of 'invented traditions' with its mythology and fitted history.<sup>79</sup> He does not actually mean that the nation is wholly invented, the same way as Anderson does not mean it to be completely imaginary. But they both discredit the idea that the nation is eternal. As such, these modernists support my argument that the Tajik nation did not have an existence prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Anderson suggests that communication within the nation is only imagined, because most members of the same nation would never meet each other.<sup>80</sup> This statement about the nation is problematic, because the same statement can be made about any sizeable community of people, such as tribes and clans, members of the European Union, religious groups, etc. However, Anderson is right that the influence of mass media and communications facilitates the spread of the idea of self-determination and therefore, strengthens nation-building. For example, Russia being a country with such a large territory would have difficulty in its

nationalistic propaganda, if it was not for its strongly nationalistic TV channels (RTR, ORT, Russia Today) and newspapers (*Rossiiskaya Gazeta*).

### 2.2.2 *The importance of language*

For some scholars, language is an important marker of identity for the nation. Hobsbawm states that the nation is a group of people sharing certain ‘criteria, such as language’ among other traits<sup>81</sup>. Karl Deutsch believes the nation takes form when people have a state and communicate with each other using a common language.<sup>82</sup> On the other hand, the creation of a national language from a multitude of dialects was a key role played by the ‘awakening’ nationalist intelligentsia, at least in industrialising, nineteenth century Europe.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the nationalist intelligentsia does not need a pre-existing language – they can create one themselves.

Kedourie claims that Germanic concepts of language homogeneity have nationalistic origins as well.<sup>84</sup> It is indeed important to understand each other to become a unified group of people. The members of the same nation are always supposed to be able to understand each other’s behaviour, jokes and stories, which have been built upon their common history.<sup>85</sup> Language is important for the continuation of the nation, but if there is no language as the evidence from the Tajik case suggests, it can be manufactured for a newly-forming nation.

Linguistic proof was one of the significant factors that Soviet social scientists used to draw borders between ethnicities. However, Central Asian people did not identify themselves by language and the borders were not actually drawn according to language/dialect, but for other reasons discussed later in this thesis. The Persian language, from which the Tajik language developed, was used as an intercultural language of communication throughout the territory of Central Asia, in much the same way as Latin was used in Western Europe in the middle ages. At the same time, both settled (*sarts*) and nomadic people spoke varieties of the Turkic language. Researchers state that several languages developed from the ninth century by the synthesis of different combinations of Arabic, Persian and Turkic languages, but all retaining Arabic script. It is believed that the modern Tajik language, which was called New Persian at that time, was part of this synthesis.<sup>86</sup> It was only from the sixteenth century that the Dari dialect or New Persian started to develop independently, incorporating many Turkic elements and thus becoming distinct from the Western Persian language. Yet

it did not have a separate political use and the writing system remained universally Arabic until the Soviet time.<sup>87</sup>

While language is an officially recognised form of communication, dialect differs by being politically utilised. For example, Kazakh and Kyrgyz are languages but Karakalpak and Pamiri are considered dialects. Dialects can grow into language with the emergence of a written form and nationalism.<sup>88</sup> Thus the Tajik language, having had the same Arabic written form as the Persian language and no associated nationalism would not have been considered a language until the Soviet period. During this time the Soviet academician, Sadriddin Ayni, put effort into developing the language, creating its own grammar and alphabet, which is Cyrillic with a few extra letters. Moreover, he was the one who started to write the first Tajik language novels in the 1930s. Therefore, it was only during the Soviet period that the Tajik language became officially known as Tajik and acquired its own written form and grammar.

Moreover, in other cases people who speak the same language are not necessarily in the same nation and people of the same nation can speak different languages. Armstrong defines language as a factor dependent on politics and religion<sup>89</sup>, thus changeable depending on circumstances. There are international languages, such as English, and ‘post-colonial’ languages, such as Russian, officially or non-officially spoken in former Soviet countries. There are states, such as Switzerland and Singapore, having four official languages and their people are still considered as being from one nation. The English-speaking peoples, such as Britons, Americans, Australians, etc., speak practically the same language, but constitute different nations. In addition, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Turkmen, Turkish and Uighur nations all speak varieties of Turkic languages, but nevertheless constitute different nations. Language being a key component of mutual comprehension is important for consolidating the sense of national identity. It does not have to be there when the nation is created but it can be used as a tool to develop it.

### 2.2.3 *Ethnicity*

Language, common history, and culture can just as well be characteristics of ethnicity. People sometimes confuse ethnicity with nationality. In fact, an ethnic group is a group of people with shared traditions, history and language. David Miller’s definition of the nation as a community that has ‘(1) shared belief and mutual commitment, [and is] (2) extended in history, (3) active in character, (4) connected to a particular territory and (5) marked off from

other communities by its distinct public culture'<sup>90</sup> is very similar to the definition of ethnicity. In comparison to the nation, however, ethnicity usually does not have a territory, political standing and public culture.<sup>91</sup> Ethnicities can be spread out in various countries and not necessarily reside on a defined physical territory. On the other hand, all nations unfailingly have a territory, a physical homeland. There are exceptions, such as ethnic groups that claim to be nations and nations purely consisting of various ethnic groups without a dominant one. Jews claim to have been a nation deprived of a homeland for centuries. However, they went to a great length to obtain a physical native land and are an exception no more. In the example of Switzerland and Belgium, their nations, in fact, predominantly consist of different ethnic groups whose physical homeland is elsewhere. For example, in Belgium the Flemish are ethnically closer to Holland and the Walloons to France. Thus, an ethnic group is a group of people that does not have to live in a physical country that it can call its own, but has common language, culture and traditions.

Abner Cohen opines that ethnic groups are 'a collectivity of people who (a) share some patterns of normative behaviour and (b) form a part of a larger population, interacting with people from other collectivities within the framework of a social system.'<sup>92</sup> The patterns of normative behaviour are represented through collective activities such as marriage, kinship, friendship and others. Cohen admits that such a definition is very wide and can be applied to groups that are not of ethnic character. Further, he specifies the ethnicity concept defining it as 'a form of interaction between culture groups operating within common social contexts'.<sup>93</sup> Comparably, Barth argues that there are four characteristics of ethnic groups. First, they reproduce biologically. Secondly, they have common cultural values. Thirdly, they have a shared 'field of communication and interaction'. Fourthly, they identify by 'self-definition and definition by others'.<sup>94</sup> Finally, Smith states that an ideal *ethnie* must have 'a collective proper name [,] a myth of common ancestry [,] differentiating elements of common culture [,] an association with specific "homeland" [,] a sense of solidarity for significant sectors of population [and] shared historical memories' or continuity.<sup>95</sup>

Ethnicity is one layer of identity that can have a layer of national identity over it or it can shape the national identity in the case of 'dominant *ethnie*', as Smith calls it<sup>96</sup>. National identity is generally considered an identity of a citizen of a state, with some exceptions discussed later. Indeed, Anthony Smith acknowledges that it is not impossible for individuals to decide which nation they want to belong to.<sup>97</sup> Some naturalised citizens give



up their previous national identity on gaining citizenship, although only if their original citizenship does not permit duality or if it must be given up for tax, business or other reasons. Their previous national identity becomes ethnic identity. Barfield states that dominant ethnicity is frequently taken for granted as naturally attached to national identity. For instance, Germany and Italy unified their people believing that groups that ‘share the same “race, language, and culture” constitute natural political units.’<sup>98</sup> Likewise, even the Soviet Union while regarding class division as the only genuine division of people, went along with European national ideology and formed ‘ethnic states’ of its own, the largest of them being in Central Asia.<sup>99</sup> In Central Asia both identities are in most cases merged into one because their ethnic identities were created by the Soviets and at once promoted into national identities. Roy agrees with this point of view stating that there is no distinction between ‘ethnic origin and political citizenship’ in Central Asian states. Thus, what we have in Central Asian states can be called ‘ethnic nationalism’.<sup>100</sup>

This ‘ethnic nationalism’ was fuelled by Stalin, whose definition of nation interestingly resembles Anthony Smith’s *continuity*, where the creation of the nation is a long-term project dating back to historically stable *ethnies*. Stalin defined the ‘nation’ as ‘a historically constituted, stable community of people’<sup>101</sup>. By this he meant that the nation is not a ‘tribe’ or ‘race’, but it is historically constituted from ‘diverse races and tribes’. By ‘stable’ he implied that a nation is not akin to the Mongol empire or Alexander the Great’s empire of ‘loosely-connected conglomerations of groups’ but a long-term project.<sup>102</sup> However, it is difficult to find this stability in the history of the Central Asian nations. Moreover, Stalin and Lenin did not respect the historical borders of various pre-existing formations, whether clans/tribe or others, but carved new borders across them. Therefore, it is difficult to draw borders between an ethnic group, a nation or a clan in former Soviet Central Asian states.

#### 2.2.4 Territory and the state

In contrast to *ethnie*, for Smith, the nation is the association between a homeland (even if perceived), recognizable public culture, shared history, and compliance with laws and customs of the state.<sup>103</sup> Montserrat Guibernau has issues with Smith’s definition that links nation to the state. She argues that the definition is flawed, because there are nations without a state.<sup>104</sup> Walker Connor also criticises the use of state and nation in the same context, emphasising that while a state is one of the biggest political actors, a nation is an abstract

category where people are connected together through their emotions.<sup>105</sup> However, I show below that people who call themselves nations without a state strive to have a state that would allow them to become a ‘proper’ nation, i.e. to be recognised.

Territorialism is another main feature of Stalin’s concept of nationalism: each Soviet nation had to possess its own territory. However, because the Central Asian nations did not have a defined national territory until the Soviet Union divided them, can we conclude that they were not nations before? If the territory is one of the essential components of a nation, does it mean that being/becoming a nation depends on having a territory? What is the difference between having a territory and a state and how would it influence national identity?

According to Hutchinson, merely having a physical territory would not be sufficient to become a nation. His is a civic model of the nation as a territorial community mixed with the ethnic model as a cultural/historical community that is an essential component that makes the nation.<sup>106</sup> Territory in this context means the space shared by the citizens. Indeed, nations in this model consist of ‘politically mobilized people’<sup>107</sup>. At the same time, in contrast to civic nationalism, ethnic nationalism bases nations on cultural division, which is advocated by earlier works of Ernest Gellner.<sup>108</sup> For the ethnic nationalism model, territory resonates with heritage and ancestry, and the drivers of national independence are of the same ethnic or language group. The examples of civic nationalism are the United Kingdom and the USA, whereas the examples of ethnic nationalism are Germany, Italy and Japan.

While territory by itself is only a physical area; defined borders and the addition of people plus system of rules makes it a state. State is a community with a government and institutions as a defining element; state is also a territorially defined people with their own set of laws. Michael Mann asserts that before the eighteenth century the state was mainly engaged in diplomacy and wars.<sup>109</sup> As the military burden increased, states started to impose taxation and the mobilisation of citizens. The engagement of the state with religious and class struggle forced the state to be involved in social life, thus producing social identity. In Western Europe by the nineteenth century, industrial capitalism brought a new range of state services, including communications and mass education and health systems. By the twentieth century, large-scale wars brought about economic planning and national welfare.<sup>110</sup> This way the interdependence of the state and nation was completed.

The education system is one of the main mechanisms by which the state feeds the people nationalistic ideas.<sup>111</sup> Other mechanisms include a national army, national holidays and national icons. Thus, the state provides a political identity for the nation and the nation associates itself with the state and its language, overriding religious and cultural affiliations.<sup>112</sup> Shared religion, language and culture may make people feel more united. However, a nation is not a group of people that merely has a common territory, language and religion; there are nations that do not have such commonalities.<sup>113</sup> Indeed, people can become a nation without sharing these characteristics, as in the case of France, Russia and Switzerland.

Kedourie describes nationalism as the nation and the state intertwined, where the existence of one without another would be constantly challenged.<sup>114</sup> Very often, it is the government that makes people take part in national affairs, thus creating nationalism, which feeds on itself and grows<sup>115</sup>. Hans Kohn's assertion that nationalism 'presupposes an existence... of a centralized form of government over a large and distinct territory'<sup>116</sup> denies that a nation can exist without any sort of governing structure or state. The state and people who aspire to be a nation can exist independently, although this is rare. In such cases either the state aspires to create a nation, or an ethnic group aspires to form a state and thus become a nation. For example, Scotland, Quebec and Catalonia all had separate identities before being absorbed into their current states. Now being within new socio-political circumstances, they revive past identities and aspire to be independent nation-states. Similarly, Kurds who live in three separate states – Iraq, Iran and Turkey – claim to be from one nation and desire their own territory. Many of these nations are becoming more self-assertive, sometimes due to being less politically or economically dependent on their states.<sup>117</sup> The development of nationality in this case leads to the emotional attachment of the individual to his or her people through the propaganda created by the leading elite. The 'consciousness of unity, the sense of belonging together [...] develop independent of state', as was the case with the Polish people between 1772 and 1918.<sup>118</sup> All of these politically motivated ethnic groups or sub-state nations desire and strive to have a state of their own. It is this desire to form their own political territory in these examples that legitimizes them as a nation. If these nations become independent nation-states, instead of continuing to exist in present circumstances, their exceptionality or distinct phenomena will cease to exist. The reason they aspire to have a state is that a nation needs a state to be recognised as sovereign (thus as much as Kurds claim

to be a nation, legally, they remain ethnic groups within different states), as it requires a ‘consolidated homeland’<sup>119</sup>. This is because it is through its state affiliation that a nation is recognised by other states.<sup>120</sup> Without this state affiliation there is always an ambiguity in its definition and relationship with the international community in business and political spheres.

Many political organisations, such as the United Nations and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, are based on this nation-state system. Connie McNeely defines the nation-state as ‘a constructed reality’, where international organisations play an important role in state-building.<sup>121</sup> For example, membership of the United Nations is determined only when existing state-members recognise and affirm a new ‘peace-loving’ state-applicant, and one of the primary purposes of this organisation is ‘to develop friendly relations among nations’.<sup>122</sup> When Kosovo declared itself independent, it was not recognised by all states. However, major powers like the United States and many European Union states as well as the International Monetary Fund and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development formally recognised it as an independent and sovereign state, thus it is officially called a nation-state.<sup>123</sup> As the philosopher, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel said, ‘world history takes account only of those nations which have formed themselves into states’.<sup>124</sup>

Even though many newly formed nation-states declare their independence, they still must join other larger coalitions to be sustainable. For example, after going through the collapse of Soviet Union and the civil war, Tajikistan joined the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the International Monetary Fund and others to gain global recognition as well as to apply for humanitarian help. At the same time, by joining some international alliances countries may lose their external sovereignty and therefore, some of their internal sovereignty. Hobsbawm asserts that this striving for recognition that leads to joining ‘larger politico-economic entities’ defeats the purpose of becoming an ‘independent and sovereign nation-state’, where a country becomes dependent on the decisions of bigger powers in the entities.<sup>125</sup> However, by joining large international unions and organisations, the newly formed country gains recognition and gains economic, political and defence benefits from membership.

Thus, becoming a nation leads to the necessity of not only having the physical territory but also ruling it independently. Some states might not have had a distinct nation before becoming a state. But they necessarily form and consolidate one. An ethnicity does not require a state to be an ethnicity. But when the ethnicity strives to have a state, it is a precursor to forming a nation-state. In the case of the Tajik nation, having a state was a precursor to forming a nation.

#### *2.2.5 Economic infrastructure or industrialism*

Apart from statehood, social scientists regard industrialisation, capitalism and a market economy as economic processes that have been core pre-requisites of nationalism since the nineteenth century.<sup>126</sup> Ernest Gellner also asserts that as a society moves from being an agrarian society to an industrial society, it needs one collective educated culture to support it and that through this process nationalism is born.<sup>127</sup> Gellner includes science and reason into the predecessor processes of industrialisation as well.<sup>128</sup> According to him, 'industrialism ensures that the modern world must be a world of nations'.<sup>129</sup> However, Gellner's relationship between industrialism and nations is criticised because it does not identify the motive for which the nation is created. One motive is the recognition of the wish and capability of actors, i.e. the elite, and their need to create the nation. Most importantly, these actors create nations out of cultural needs, rather than economic.<sup>130</sup> The elite subsequently uses the masses to accept the truth of and become a part of the developmental goals established for the bourgeoisie.<sup>131</sup> Thus, industrialisation is not necessarily the pre-requisite of nationalism.

Another criticism of Gellner's theory is that in some societies, such as in South America and the Balkans, nationalism developed without industrialisation.<sup>132</sup> For example, unlike many Eurocentrists, Benedict Anderson argues that nationalism originated in 18-19<sup>th</sup> century Latin America with the help of Creole functionaries and provincial creole printmen but without any economic interest.<sup>133</sup> Moreover, other nationalists, like Gandhi in India, refused westernisation and therefore, opposed industrialisation.<sup>134</sup> Also, some developing countries seek the benefits of industrialisation, i.e. better living standards, and use nationalism as a tool to achieve their goals rather than waiting for it to become a natural outcome of industrialisation.<sup>135</sup> Yet, Gellner argues that 'his theory focuses on the emergence rather than the subsequent diffusion of nationalism'.<sup>136</sup> At the same time, he says that when the

industrialisation comes to other places at a later time, it finds cultural differentiation to trigger nationalism, which sometimes works and sometimes does not.<sup>137</sup>

Gellner's industrialisation theory is only related to ethnic nationalism, where a singular ethnic nation created the state to serve its interests. Civic nationalism, in contrast, is defined by common citizenship and political equality rather than culture.<sup>138</sup> However, in the former Soviet Central Asian republics, even though their nationalism was ethnic, these states were first created by the central government in Moscow and then their nations as well as their industries developed. The subsequent industrialisation helped to spread nationalistic ideas. At the same time, Soviet Tajikistan might not have been created without the inclusion of the industrially more developed Khudjand in its territory. This not only increased the country's territory, but also boosted its economy. Yet this was an artificial use of the boost of industrialisation rather than gradual development of nationalism out of industrialisation. This was done because Lenin identified the nation with its material conditions and resolved that the key to the national issue, i.e. the right to self-determination for oppressed nations, is in altering those conditions, for example by further industrialisation.<sup>139</sup> Thus, in this case it was not 'nationalism [that] serve[d] as an instrument of industrialisation'<sup>140</sup>, but industrialisation was the tool of nationalism.

The Moscow government also created a unified education system, imposed taxes, and created a common legal system in the newly created republics, thus weakening local clan ties. According to Gellner the government provides standard culture via mass education using standardised language – all of which happens within industrial society. The combination of these activities creates nations.<sup>141</sup> The combination of industrialisation with education has been successfully used in the Tajik case to develop the nation. However, again, it was not an organic process but an artificial one manufactured by the Soviet government after it has created the Tajik nation in the first place.

For Stalin, it was the division of labour, the progress of means of communication and the rise of capitalism that tie a nation together. He used the example of the Georgian people (being a Georgian himself), who although they lived in the same territory, were not economically bound together until the emancipation of the serfs in 1861 and the consequent economic growth that led to specialisation and the division of labour. This, together with the simultaneous improvement of communications and the rise of capitalism, led to better

integration of principalities. All this made the Georgians into a nation before the formation of the Soviet Union.<sup>142</sup> Although it might be true for the Georgians, the Tajik nation did not have such a prerequisite before the existence of the Soviet Union. The economic infrastructure of the Soviet Tajikistan was boosted after the nation was created specifically for their further nation-building.

### 2.2.6 Public culture and nation

Another factor that facilitates nation-building is a strong public culture. Public culture is associated not only with the behaviour of the nation, but also with its political culture, i.e. 'how a society and a collection of leaders and citizens choses [...] to approach national political decision'.<sup>143</sup> Public culture is also mass culture and includes consumerism; the literary sphere, mass media and tangible objects.<sup>144</sup> Public culture overlaps with popular culture and reflects the perspectives and principles of people through various means that are unrestricted and non-compulsory.

Stalin's closest concept to public culture is 'national character', i.e. the culture, mentality and 'conditions of existence' of the nation.<sup>145</sup> National character is how the nation identifies itself. Stalin defines the psychological make-up as something 'intangible' that 'leaves its impress on the physiognomy of the nation'.<sup>146</sup> To achieve Stalin's nationality question the Party was to 'develop and strengthen their own Soviet statehood in a form that would correspond to the national physiognomy of these [backward] people'.<sup>147</sup> Thus, the Soviet scholars attempted to map the physiognomy of ethnic groups, as part of their mapping of ethnic groups. Apenchenko and Bruk in their work *Atlas of Peoples of the World* discuss in great detail the racial difference of people, the reasons for those differences and incongruity among members of the same race who speak different languages and vice versa. They suggest that geographical area and historical events have an influence on their physical, i.e. racial type. Finally, the languages of these people are the main distinct symbol of their national character.<sup>148</sup> Stalin's term for national character is related to collective self-determination. David Miller emphasises that the difference between the modern concept of the nation and the old one [i.e. *ethnie*] is that of its 'collective self-determination'.<sup>149</sup> Yet such a collective self-determination can be intrinsic for various social divisions of people that are not a nation. Moreover, it does not include such aspects of public culture as the

literary sphere, mass media and education. Thus, Stalin's national character, or self-determination, is a part of public culture, but it does not fully encompass it.

Nation and state, public culture and nation building are closely interconnected. The teaching of history, a key component of public culture, is critical in establishing the understanding of nation and state and of the connection between them in the minds of the next generation, as well as forming the collective memories of people.<sup>150</sup> Indeed, history education is often a 'national project' of the nation-state.<sup>151</sup> One does not automatically identify oneself with the state and nation, this identification is crafted by the state through various mediums, especially education and socialisation.<sup>152</sup> Nationalistic propaganda in history education undoubtedly influences the younger generation and shapes their group identity.

In the case of the Tajik nation, its public culture was artificially created by the Soviet government. It can be compared to Gellner's later statement, 'nations [...with] navels thrust upon them' (which made it possible to include civic model into his nationalism theory<sup>153</sup>). After Tajikistan gained independence, its government took up the Soviet tradition and continued to enforce the national project in all spheres of public culture, which is akin to Gellner's statement, where 'some nations achieve navels'<sup>154</sup>. In the last three chapters of this thesis, I analyse the symbols and mythology used by the Tajik government to influence Tajik public culture and their importance for the theory of nationalism as it applies to the Tajik nation.

### *2.2.7 Conclusions*

For the purposes of this thesis, the concept of the nation I have chosen is: a group of people living on the same territory, governed by the same ruler(s), sharing the same laws, economic infrastructure, history and public culture, regardless of their ethnicity, religion, rank or economic position. This is the definition I used to define the modern Tajik nation. This definition fits most closely with the work of modernists and partially, ethno-symbolists. I do not agree with all statements of ethno-symbolists or even modernists but find many of them logical and useful for the purposes of my thesis. In the next section I discuss the ongoing debates among modernists, ethno-symbolists and primordialists and how they apply to the Tajik nation.



### 2.3 Theories of national identity

In this section, I examine primordialism and modernism, two theories of nationalism, as well as ethno-symbolism, advocated by Anthony Smith, which tries to bridge the gap between them. Primordialism regards nations as ancient and innate. Primordialism traces the origin of nations back to an ancient time, stating that a given nation has always existed in the past, thus justifying its existence in the present.<sup>155</sup> The Tajik government and historians consider the Tajiks to be an ancient nation that was formed in the Middle Ages and has been in continuous existence to the modern day. Ethno-symbolism connects nations with past ethnicities and cultures. Ethno-symbolism reasons that all nations have a symbolic ethnic group as their basis, that is modern nations were not created out of nowhere but are based on rather ancient *ethnies*.<sup>156</sup> Finally, modernists argue that nations are a modern construct developed through industrialisation and urbanisation.<sup>157</sup> I consider the Tajik nation to have been created by the Soviet Union and thus that it is a modern construct. However, while these different theories all have strengths and provide useful models for analysing nations, real nations are more complex and cannot be explained fully by any of them. This is particularly true for post-Soviet countries such as Tajikistan which are unlikely to have been a central consideration when developing the various theories of nationalism.

#### 2.3.1 Primordialism

Many Central Asian Soviet and post-Soviet pro-government experts and historians define nation-building in Central Asia through the contextual framework of primordialism.<sup>158</sup> This school of nationalist thought results from the ‘givens’ of ‘social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them, given-ness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices’.<sup>159</sup> According to primordialist theory, the relationships between traditions, blood, language, and so on are viewed as having an indescribable and, at times, all embracing, forcible, and dominating nature in and of themselves.<sup>160</sup> Moreover, there is a connectedness of kin, neighbour and religion resulting from more than practical essentials, personal feelings, obligation, or interest. This connectivity derives from the effect of some unknown and ‘unaccountable absolute import attributed to the very tie itself’.<sup>161</sup> As such, those subscribing to the primordial philosophy maintain that because the nation has always existed, individuals acquire their national identities as soon as they are born, thus national identity is predestined and does not

change.<sup>162</sup> All post-Soviet leaders have inherited a primordialist point of view from Soviet scholars. The late Uzbek president, Usmon Karimov, subscribed to this view, as did other Central Asian leaders. Acting on his orders, Uzbek scholars reconstructed Uzbek history; even Uzbek cooks honour the Uzbek identity with meals derived from other ethnic groups or meals that are considered Central Asian in general.<sup>163</sup> Thus, primordialism dominates in almost all spheres of life in Central Asian republics.

Joseph Stalin together with Vladimir Lenin advocated primordialism mixed with ethno-symbolism, although what they did to groups of people in the Soviet Central Asia fits better with modernism. Stalin and Lenin were the main constructors of the Soviet nations. Their ideas were used to create nations on the territory of the Russian Empire, which they inherited from tsarism. These ideas not only defined the territory of these nations, but also invented or advanced national languages and cultures, as well as educated national elites. Stalin's significance in this thesis in general lies in his role as a leader of the Soviet Union who ordered the nationality commissions (discussed in Chapter 3) to be formed and their recommendations to be followed through creating the Soviet nations with his and Lenin's nationality concept.

Lenin lobbied for the 'recognition of the right to self-determination for all nations forming part of the state'<sup>164</sup>. However, he did not mean to support every request for self-determination,<sup>165</sup> only the ones that suited their political agenda. He received resistance from the Polish Socialist Party, who named the idea of 'nationality, language and culture' as 'bourgeois inventions'.<sup>166</sup> He dismissed their accusations and called for national peace, which he claimed could only happen with the help of the non-capitalist, democratic government that does not impose an official language.<sup>167</sup> However, his statements did not stand and the Russian language was imposed as an official language throughout the Soviet Union.

So why did Lenin and Stalin want self-determination and recognition for selected nations? Lenin claimed the reason was that the union of workers of all nationalities were against international capitalism, which covered up 'their anti-proletarian aspirations with the slogan of "national culture"'.<sup>168</sup> He also claimed it overturned the tsarist policy that suppressed all attempts for self-determination for fear of secession. It seems that Lenin was sure that self-determination supported by socialism would not lead to secession and claimed that any

attempts at secession would be decided on their own merits.<sup>169</sup> The more pragmatic reason for the creation of the Soviet nations, apart from the divide and control strategy, was the desire to control nationalism, i.e. to direct the process of its development instead of letting it grow by itself and lead to the same consequences they had witnessed with the breakdown of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.<sup>170</sup> Thus Stalin implemented national self-determination in theory, but in practice the nationalism of the main ethnic group, Russians, was prioritised over the nationalism of other subordinated groups. Also, Stalin surmised that these subordinated groups would want to develop their nationalism anyway, and therefore, opted to guide them in this direction to diminish the threat of separatism.<sup>171</sup>

In the case of Soviet Central Asia, the nations were formed by the orders of the Soviet government, based on Stalin's definition and guided by his and Lenin's leadership of the Soviet Union, specifically by the decrees of Joseph Stalin, who supervised the Central Asian 'territorial committee' administered by the Latvian Otto Karklin<sup>172</sup> (further details on this period are provided in Chapter 3).

Yet, if we apply Stalin's definition of the nation (discussed in Section 2.2) to the Tajik nation before the formation of the Soviet Union, it would not be suitable. The Tajik nation did not have an economic life or defined territory before the Soviet Union. The language was a dialect of Farsi, whereas the psychological make-up (culture and customs) was quite like that of Turkic ethnic groups in Central Asia, as well as that of the Persians. Nevertheless, Stalin's definition of the nation fits the contemporary Tajik nation – nowadays they have an economic life, official language and culture, as well as defined territory. Thus, I suggest that the Tajik nation was developed based on Stalin's principles of nation in twentieth century but did not exist before. However, the Tajik government claims that the Tajik nation has existed for hundreds of years and is primordial in its nature. I discuss both my suggestion and the Tajik government's claims further in this and other chapters.

A sense of common *destiny* of nation, despite being associated with forward-looking civic nationalism, features in Tajik primordialism. The word *destiny* itself leaves the individual no other choice but to submit to the predetermined fate. As such, being a part of nationality becomes a rigid condition that cannot be changed, which is demonstrably untrue for many people. The Tajik government views its mission as ensuring that the ancient Tajik nation continues to flourish as it seemingly has done for many centuries of uninterrupted history.

Moreover, although they admit that the Tajik nation has changed through history, in the same way as any other group of people, their idea of the origin of the nation is obscure and partially concealed. For example, they admit in Tajik history textbooks that the Soviet Union defined the territory of the Tajik Soviet Republic, but they do not acknowledge the Soviet regime's primary role in building the Tajik nation.

Well-known historians of Tajik Soviet Republic Boris Litvinskii and Ahror Mukhtarov state in their textbook *The History of the Tajik People* that the Tajik people have a very rich history going back to amazingly distant times, 800,000 years. They discuss why and how various socio-economic formations succeeded each other whilst Tajik and other Central Asian heroes fought against foreign invasions. They adopt Stalin's nationalist theory of territory, economic life, psychological mind-set and language and devote much attention to describing Tajik people's level of economic development and culture during all epochs.<sup>173</sup> The Tajik contemporary government takes these historians' claims as their primary nationalist source. The main claim made by the contemporary Tajik government states that the nation-state was born in the Middle Ages in the form of the Samanid Empire (in the ninth century) and merely reborn in the twentieth century, a part of its destiny. This rebirth is like the ethno-symbolist characteristic described further below.

As much as it serves to legitimise the nation-state, primordialism limits understanding of the historical evolution of an ethnicity. For the purposes of justifying the ancient origin of a nation, primordialists often mask true facts or do not reveal all details of history and political events. Moreover, primordialism may lead to conflict between the nations that historically share a similar cultural legacy but were made into separate nations for political reasons. For example, Tajik historians claim that the Tajik nation was the most ancient nation in Central Asia, formed in about the ninth century and tracing its ethnic origins to even earlier times. Stalin helped this claim by his famous proclamation that 'it is not Uzbeks, not Kyrgyzs, but Tajiks are the most ancient people in Central Asia [...] – the bearers of the crown'<sup>174</sup>. However, as I show in the next chapters, all contemporary Central Asian nations were interrelated in the past and none had a sense of nationality until the Soviet period. Primordialism in this case leads to unhealthy competition for 'who came first' to the region and what nation therefore, is the most significant and embedded. Although Tajik historical discourse subscribes to this notion for the justification of their territory, it would be better to focus on dealing with current economic and social issues.

### 2.3.2 Ethno-symbolism

Both primordialists and ethno-symbolists agree that a feeling of unique identity is essential for modern nations. Symbolism, shared memories and mythology play an important role in ethno-symbolism. The ethno-symbolism approach or paradigm, ‘while not neglecting external political, geopolitical and economic factors...’ addresses ‘the vital symbolic issues of ethnic identity, myth and memory’.<sup>175</sup> In ethno-symbolist discourse, nations are derived from *ethnie*, which consists of a shared memory of culture, language, and history associated with specific territory extending into the past that creates not only links within the group, the antecedent to nationhood, but a sense of differentiation from other groups of the same type.<sup>176</sup>

Ethno-symbolists believe that modern nations are connected to older *ethnies* that link the nation with an ancient land of origin and provide the nation with most of its unique culture, symbolism and mythology. Interestingly, Anthony Smith, the inventor of ethno-symbolism, in his earlier work recognizes that if such nations do not have these features, they should adopt such characteristics for their own use; otherwise, they would be in danger of disintegration.<sup>177</sup> Thus, in his earlier work, Smith takes a pragmatic view that nations need an ethnic basis to survive, and if none exists, it needs to be created. This necessity to contrive such a nationalist agenda without an underlying ethnic basis relates to the modernist approach, whereas ethno-symbolism implies that the unique culture of a nation has already existed in the past.

In his later work though, Anthony Smith describes the nation as ‘a named human population occupying historic territory or homeland and sharing common myths and memories’<sup>178</sup>. But many nations only appeared in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries,<sup>179</sup> so sharing common myths and memories would be difficult for many newly-established nations. To justify their existence, they must indeed invent those myths and memories. Sharing a historic territory can be difficult as well, because many groups of people left their territory or were invaded by a more dominant group in the past. Thus, it is more appropriate to say, a common territory rather than historic. Another ethno-symbolist, John Hutchinson, defines the nation as a modern political group whose nationhood is based on symbolism, such as memories and myths, of older ethnic groups.<sup>180</sup> For example, one ethno-religious group, the Jewish one, built its ethnic core on the reminiscence of its ancient holy centre, Jerusalem. Although states

in the past were not centred on the concept of the nation, John Armstrong also maintains that pre-historical ethnic groups existed based on shared memories and symbolism.<sup>181</sup> The Tajik nation's symbolism and shared memories, on the other hand, do not pre-date the Soviet time, even if the Tajik government claims otherwise. The Persian language that the Tajiks use as their official language since the Soviet time, does pre-date the Soviet time, but it has been a widely-used language within the region of contemporary Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iran

Ethno-symbolists may disagree with one another about what composes nationalism but agree that it demonstrates the evolution of nationhood in the modern era and is not an unavoidable addition of ancient historical and cultural links. The longevity or *la longue durée* plays an important role for ethno-symbolists, who believe that the emergence of modern nations was the result of long process of symbolically identifying themselves with pre-modern ethnic groups.

Interestingly, Joseph Stalin subscribes to *la longue durée* as well in his article where he defines a nation to be 'a result of lengthy and systematic intercourse, because of people living together [on the same territory] generation after generation'<sup>182</sup>. This, however, could not be applied to the Tajik nation, because, for example, most Tajik leaders moved to the Tajik territory from Uzbek territory (discussed more in Chapter 3). While primordialism's longevity makes the process between an ancient nation and modern nation continuous, as is the case with the official Tajik nationalism ideology, for ethno-symbolists an ethnic identity and its symbolism in this process at times dissolves, at times re-emerges. This ethno-symbolist narrative is sometimes used as well by the current president of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, in his speeches (discussed in Chapter 8). In the contemporary official Tajik historic discourse, myth and memory are intertwined. Tajik historians and politicians claim to have one main historical ancestor, Ismoili Somoni, who united their nation at some point in history, and many others who contributed to the nation building. Such heroes were included in the Tajik history textbooks to become the 'fathers' of the current Tajik nation (discussed in Chapters 8 and 9). Thus, the Soviet and subsequently, the Tajik government and historians use a mix of primordial and ethno-symbolist theories.

Ethno-symbolists view nationalism as a modern concept and nations to be an outcome of more ancient ethnic groups. Regarding the Tajik people, there is no proof in history that it is an ancient ethnic group. As I examine in Chapter 3, this nation dates to the twentieth century.

In world history, there is no suggestion that the Tajik nation has continuity into the past. Very frequently, people on this territory had a foreign ruler, who imposed his own culture and norms on local people. For example, the Chagatai khanate in Central Asia (the territory of modern Tajikistan was in the middle of this khanate, see Figure 2-1) was created and ruled by Mongols, such as Chagatai Khan, second son of Genghis Khan, and his descendants between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. People who lived under the rule of Mongols did not have a strong sense of identity. As examined in further chapters, the people on the territory of contemporary Tajikistan were merely part of various kingdoms at different periods. They had nomadic or settled lifestyles and used either Persian or Turkic languages depending on the situation. There was no sense of continuity connecting them to the past, until the Soviet history-writers unearthed heroes and rulers from various periods around the same territory and connected them to the modern Tajik nation. Indeed, a hero called Ismoili Somoni did exist and created a large empire out of a small kingdom (discussed further in Chapter 7). However, there was no notion of his intentions to unite specifically the Tajik nation. There was no understanding of the Tajik nation or any nation then. The concept of the Tajik nation appeared only in twentieth century with the help of the Soviet government, which helped the Tajik nation to create its language, history, economic life and other aspects. Thus, the Tajik nation is a modernist construct created to legitimise Soviet policies regarding nationalisation.

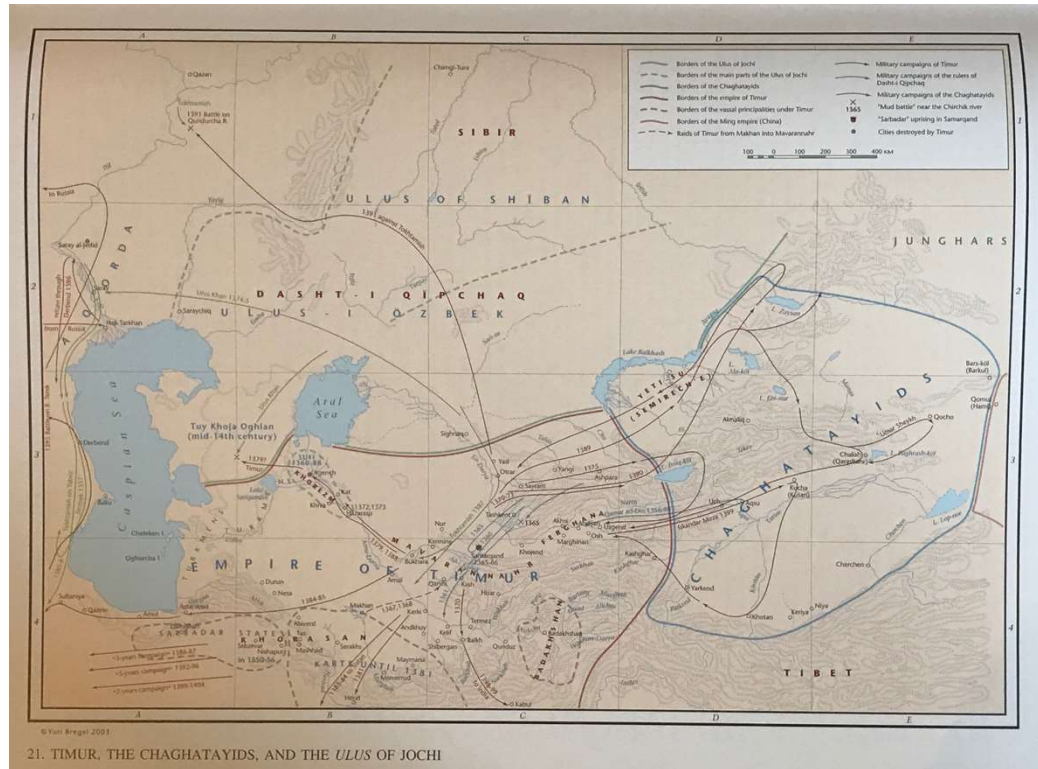


Figure 2-1: Timur, The Chaghatayids, and the Ulus of Jochi from Yuri Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, Brill, Leiden Boston, 2003, p. 43.

Nevertheless, the ethno-symbolist approach is partially suitable for my definition of the Tajik nation, because it helps to understand why nationalism has such a strong appeal to the population. Although initially people are influenced by their elite, they enthusiastically respond to nationalistic slogans. Smith believes that this is not due to material benefits, but rather to excitement that their vernacular culture is finally being valued.<sup>183</sup> Ethno-symbolism also emphasises the role of myths and symbols in nation-building, such as education in the national language, protection of ancient sites, promoting traditional dresses, having national schools, etc.<sup>184</sup> In my opinion, these aspects of Tajik nationalism are more to do with constructing the Tajik nation than celebrating historical fact. This is because, before the construction of this nation, these memories and myths either did not exist or were part of a tribe's traditions.

### 2.3.3 Modernism

Since the Tajik nation's creation was directly influenced by the leadership of the Soviet Union, instead of ethno-symbolism or primordialism, the theory of modernism is the best fit to the Tajik nation. The term 'modernism' is used throughout this research and it is important



to note that the term covers a diversity of opinions and incorporates a range of alternative ideas.

According to the political trend of modernism, at the analytical level, nations and nationalism stem from the political elite's employment of national ideologies to keep its power, along with the benefits associated with that power, thus being motivated by pragmatism. In this case, a determination for a national future culminates in the formation of a state that is taken hold of by political pragmatists.<sup>185</sup> From this perspective, Tajik national identity is a regulatory project executed by the political elite that tries to ensure power by 'mobilizing followers on the basis of nationalist ideology.'<sup>186</sup> The nation, according to this trend, is invented by elites in the political realm in order to provide legitimacy to their power or as means to achieve power.

Central Asian national-territorial delimitation was primarily a project created by Soviet leaders, such as Lenin and Stalin (discussed in the Chapter 3). Although Uzbek and Kazakh elites had been pro-active in creating their own republics, it was not the case for other Central Asian ethnicities, such as Tajik and Kyrgyz. The local Tajik elite did not have much power to push for creating the nation. Moreover, there was no anti-Soviet Tajik nationalism and no Tajik intellectuals resisted Soviet imperialism. On the other hand, the elite that ruled the Tajik Autonomous Republic in 1920s did try its best to create the separate national republic, as it would benefit them economically as well as politically. The Soviet government did not accept all requests for autonomous republics to become national republics. Yet, as discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4, the Soviet government accepted the request for the Tajik Autonomous Republic to become the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic for its own purposes rather than in response to requests from the Tajik elite. It is at the end of the Soviet era, when Tajik intellectuals had absorbed the nationalistic ideology inculcated into them by the Soviets, that the perestroika period induced the Tajik elite to mobilise around nationalism. Thus, the political trend of modernism fits the Tajik nation.

The most important ideas over which modernists differ include the actions of the elite and the common people's support for nationalist movements. For modernists, such as Gellner, nationalism originates from a series of actions taken in order to achieve social change, modernisation, and increasing class consciousness that generates a new feeling of cultural uniformity.<sup>187</sup> Modernists claim that nationalism and the nations of 19<sup>th</sup> century result from

capitalism, industrial revolution, and secularism.<sup>188</sup> Unlike primordialism, modernism insists that history, culture, and traditions are inventions and constructs used by particular sections of society with the goal of reaching specific aims such as legitimisation of their regimes in front of other already established governments and protection of power. Indeed, following the industrial revolution and secularism brought by the Soviet government, the Tajik nation was formed in the 1920s. Thus, it can be called a Soviet construct. The modernist theory is relevant to the Tajik nation because the nation was recognized and legitimized after the fact: that is, after its boundaries were set and its nationhood established, the Soviet government and the Tajik historians made the claim that it always existed.

According to Alter, who is also a proponent of modernism, nationalism is a movement of people who have or want to have their own state and try to promote their culture, history, language, traditions, etc. on the local and global level to consolidate their nation-ness.<sup>189</sup> But it is not always the people who have or want to have their own state. Sometimes, the state is created for those people, such as in the Soviet Central Asia. But in both cases, modernism asserts that nationalism is not a natural human condition but coerced on people by governments; consequently, patriotism is a forced or acquired attitude.<sup>190</sup>

Benedict Anderson, one of modernism's advocates, attributes the rise of national consciousness to economic and technical developments, namely print capitalism (by which nationalist ideas spread via the printing press under a system of capitalism) and industrialisation<sup>191</sup>, that help to develop the ideas of national territory and citizenship. He states that the 'members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members...yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'.<sup>192</sup> For him, technology is an important factor for the development of the nation. Media and print literature helped circulate and propagate national languages and ideologies across territories previously unconnected by shared identity. Anderson suggests that the feeling of being united comes through media and education.<sup>193</sup> For example, when a person reads a newspaper in the morning, he/she imagines their countryman reading the same newspaper and can feel outraged or excited about the common news to the discussions of their nation.<sup>194</sup>

It is indeed true in the case of the Tajik nation that education and media have been the primary sources for instilling a sense of national identity. Even though print-capitalism is produced by capitalism, it was employed in the communist Central Asia as well. However,

it did not emerge from the capitalist marketplace, but a common language and discourse were generated from the use of printing presses provided by the Soviets. As the population of the newly formed Soviet Tajikistan was over 99% illiterate in the 1920s, establishing universal education in the vernacular language was critical to facilitate nation-building and propaganda processes via means of literary and media communication.<sup>195</sup> Such literature and broadcasting not only honoured national heroes and events, but also developed ideas that supported the unification of nation and self.

Anderson makes uniform conclusions and ignores class social order in his theoretical approach, but he considers the Western world's development, Europe and the Americas, and applies the same standard to each and all including colonies. He is criticised for being too materialistic, while Chatterjee introduces spiritual or cultural nationalism.<sup>196</sup> Another criticism of Anderson's definition is that it might lead to the perception of people as passive actors. Print-capitalism and industrialisation assumes that people, such as workers or peasants, are predestined to become a nation under external influences. However, some people do have the free will that can make them active actors, whether it is due to their refusals of innovations or because they choose to be passive. Even in the case of Central Asia there was resistance to the Soviet's control and consequently, to the national demarcation. When the Soviet government started national-territorial delineation in Central Asia, it commenced active industrialisation and print-capitalism, which rapidly formed the Tajik nation from diverse local Persian/Turkic groups. However, there was resistance from the anti-Soviet, pro-religious and pro-monarchic groups of people called *Basmachi*, discussed in Chapter 4. Nevertheless, despite this resistance, the Soviet's national development plans in Central Asia continued successfully.

A modernist, Elie Kedourie, sees nationalism as a movement that disunites people, who used to live in peace when they see themselves as part of this or another group. He considers nationalism as 'part of the tragic unfolding of modernity in world history'<sup>197</sup>. Kedourie's focus is Arab nationalism, but it could be applied to Central Asian nationalism as well. The Soviet Union carved up the territory of Central Asia to create separate states, and thus forever disunited its people. However, even though Kedourie has a point, there have never been periods in history with complete harmony. There were always conflicts, such as the massacre of Armenians within the Ottoman Empire in 1915-17; and independence movements, such as the Greek revolution against the Ottoman Empire in 1821-32.

Another reason to assign the Tajik nation to modernism is its public life and specifically, its national symbols, history and literature. After its territory and economic life was established in 1920s, Soviet Tajikistan lacked the authentic history and culture needed to be called a nation. To correct this, history books, describing the life of the Tajiks since 1000 BC were commissioned and written in the 1940s and 1950s. Also, Sadriiddin Ayni, an intellectual and journalist, created the Tajik language out of a Persian dialect spoken in the area and wrote books in this dialect. Ayni was born on the territory of modern Uzbekistan and spent most of his life there<sup>198</sup>, but for his achievements with the language he was made the President of the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Tajikistan. This creation of Tajik history and culture gave a basis to validate and justify the existence of the nation. Education in the newly-formed Tajik language, as well as the Russian language, taught the people about the newly written Tajik history and culture. The government-built monuments dedicated to ancient philosophers, scientists and writers who lived around the area of modern Tajikistan. The national flag and national emblem were created, and national hymns written and sung at every state and school related event. National broadcasting companies and publishing houses were created to disseminate national ideas. There are many examples of the Tajik national symbols in further chapters, especially Chapters 8 and 9.

Overall, the evidence collected in this thesis provides support for the modernist theory and perspective. The invention of tradition started in Tajikistan during the Soviet time. The development of a modern state on this territory brought new laws, policing of those laws and a sense of citizenship. The introduction of a national language and mass education enabled the development of mass culture and national consciousness. Nowadays, the Tajik state invented by the Soviets thrives into its own continuity as an independent state. At the same time, the Tajik authorities take a primordial approach, claiming that the Tajik nation has roots stretching back into ancient history. Yet, sometimes, they have an ethno-symbolic approach, where they claim that the Tajik nation revived from cultural identities in the past. However, they do not have substantial evidence for their arguments, basing it on history books written in the Soviet era and emotional slogans used by the government in mass media. Later chapters of this thesis are dedicated to the argument that modernism is the best fit to explain the emergence of the Tajik nation.

## **2.4 Conclusions**

For a post-colonial country, such as Tajikistan, none of the main theories of nationalism alone seem to provide a good fit, due to the complications introduced by the power relationship between the Soviet centre in Moscow and periphery in Tajikistan. This was akin to coloniser and colonised, though it was more nuanced, as discussed further in Chapters 3 and 4.

According to primordialists, this nation is a historic being based on kinship, sharing of traditions and culture, and people's understanding of the notion of nation. But modernists see it as a recent invention based on the struggle for power, subsequent industrialisation, and the utilisation of public culture that perpetuates the idea of nation. One can also argue that the Tajik nation is a product of ethno-symbolical approach 'not created in ex nihilo' but it has rediscovered 'pre-modern antecedents'<sup>199</sup> represented in the nation's common myths and memories. However, most common myths and memories were created by the Soviet government in the early twentieth century. Indeed, the Soviet modernisation was paramount in the Tajik nation's formation. Further illustrations of this are provided in later chapters.

The concept of a nation I have derived for this thesis is 'a group of people living on the same territory governed by the same ruler(s), the same legislation and economic infrastructure, sharing history and public culture'. Whereas language, although an important tool of communication, it is not an essential attribute for the concept of the Tajik nation, but a supporting one for the further development of this nation. I expand on this in Chapter 9.

The Tajik nation, along with its territory, laws, history and public culture was created during the Soviet time by the decree of Soviet politicians, initially led by Joseph Stalin. Notwithstanding this some scholars argue that because Central Asia had been shielded or guarded from the forces of modernisation and globalism by the Soviet Union, nation formation would be inconceivable, especially considering the prominence of traditions and 'the inability of the people to undergo the ontological shift necessary to "think the nation".'<sup>200</sup> However, it was the Soviet government that has led to the promotion of Central Asian national identity. These issues of the historical development of Central Asia are explored in the next chapter.

### **3 Historical background to Soviet Central Asia: National self-identification policy vs New Soviet Person**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

‘What are “Central Asian studies”? It is when you study Central Asia from the centre not from edges’, by Unknown<sup>201</sup>.

Some scholars believe that because Central Asia had been isolated from modern ideas and international influences, nation building would be highly unlikely, particularly taking into account the importance of traditions and ‘the inability of the people to undergo the ontological shift necessary to “think the nation”.’<sup>202</sup> Having said which, it was the Soviet government that engineered the emergence of Central Asian national identities, especially that of the Tajik nation. Central Asia, which was ruled by the Russian Empire from the mid-nineteenth century, was inherited by the Bolsheviks, who defined the borders of the contemporary Central Asian countries and created new nations.

In the first section I discuss the terms and consequences of Russian colonial expansion in Central Asia during the transition period at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The creation of the Central Asian nations is usually explained by the theory of divide-and-rule. However, the suppression of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism also played an important role in the formation of these nations.

In the second section I analyse the *Basmachi* resistance and Central Asian religious identity. Islam was strongly embedded in the local population’s identity and was perhaps one of the primary causes uniting the *Basmachi* rebels in their fight against Soviet power during the first twenty years of the Soviet Union’s development.

Stalin’s and Lenin’s writings on nation building shed light on the thoughts that led to the division of Central Asia, which I discuss in the third section. These writings stated that to undergo the sovietisation process, the Soviet peoples had to be formed into nations. Consequently, the nation building practice in Central Asia followed socialist concepts of the pioneers of the Soviet Union.

In the last section I discuss the controversy between the nation building policy of the Soviet Union republics and the ideology of the New Soviet Person/Man. The chapter ends with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, with nationalism prevailing over the New Man ideology.

The chapter explores the historical background of Soviet Central Asia primarily in the period from 1917 to the 1980s, as this is when Central Asian nations were formed, although there are digressions into earlier times. This is necessary to explain some background related to the arguments, such as the why the Russian Empire conquered Central Asia and the effect of Russian imperialism on Central Asia in comparison to the Soviet regime.

The territory of modern Tajikistan was originally part of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic and Bukhara People's Soviet Republic, both of which are now divided among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Therefore, it is important to investigate the formation of all Central Asian countries before turning to Tajikistan in Chapter 4.

### **3.2 The terms and consequences of Russian colonialist expansion**

Chekalin asserted that it was tsarist Russia's 'military-feudal imperialism' that suppressed the Central Asian people's culture and economics, enforced Russification and prevented Central Asians from developing distinct nations.<sup>203</sup> The people who are called Tajiks nowadays had been living in the eastern mountainous part of the Bukhara Khanate. Although there was neither a concept of nation, nor people perceiving themselves as a nation, in the 1950s the Soviet historian, Dmitrii Chumichev stated that those ancient 'Tajiks' had been an oppressed national minority, who were in the situation of double-colonisation, primarily by the emir and secondarily by Russian imperialists.<sup>204</sup> I argue that the political and social consequences of the Russian Empire's invasion of Central Asia were less intrusive than subsequent Soviet policies.

At the time of Russian colonisation, the Central Asian region consisted of Bukhara and the Khorasm or Khiva Khanates in the South-West and the Turkestan Governorate-General in the North-East (see Figure 3-1). The territory of Turkestan, Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva was 1,699,000 square km (1/3 of the size of the European territory of Russia). In the 1897 census, this area was 97 percent Muslim and occupied 89 percent by Turkic people. Tajik people were mentioned as Iranian people and their number was only added to make up

the 97% of Muslim census. This does not give the evidence to primordialism, because Iranian people on this census could have been Iranian minorities from Iran or any Persian speaking ethnic group on this territory. People on this territory shared similar appearance, languages and life environment apart from ‘the cattle-breeding, agricultural and urban way of life’; also ‘dialects were formed under the greater or smaller influence of the Persian and Arabic languages, with terms borrowed from them.’<sup>205</sup> Before the formation of the Soviet Union, Central Asian people identified themselves mainly by religion (Zoroastrian, Buddhist, Jew and Muslim – Hanafi Sunni, Ishmaelite Shi’ite and Sufi), by clan (Samarkandi, Bukhari, Khudjandi, etc.), by their residency within a certain city (Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand, etc.) or alternatively, by their nomadic lifestyle. The population was very mixed, and people could easily move and join different groups, which was essential for survival.<sup>206</sup>



Figure 3-1: The Second Half of the Nineteenth Century: The Russian Conquest of Western Turkestan. Yuri Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, Brill, Leiden Boston, 2003, p. 65.

A Soviet historian, Chekalin, states that about 72 percent of the population, instead of the figure of 89 percent from the census, were Turkomans (Turkic-speaking people). They were



divided into many clans without precisely defined territory and constantly in conflict with each other. Chekalin, who later would propagate the idea of the 'liberation' of Central Asian 'nations' from the yoke of monarchism, initially contradicts himself, stating that nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle, tribal division, a primitive economy and no consolidation into distinct nations were indeed the characteristics of Central Asian people at the beginning of twentieth century.<sup>207</sup> Central Asian people were tribal, religious and did not have any awareness of nation in a sense that Western countries have used it.<sup>208</sup> For example, some people shared the same language but were not of the same ethnic group, others spoke different languages but belonged to the same clan. As discussed in the previous chapter, language does not define ethnicity, but shared territory, traditions and culture do.

In the middle of the 19th century, the Russian Empire started its invasion of Central Asia for several reasons. One was the appearance of the British Empire on the borders of Central Asia. British forces being too close to the Russian empire's own borders worried it. In the 1880's the chairman of the British Royal Geographic Society stated that: 'The Russians never thought of Merv [a major oasis-city in Central Asia, located near today's Mary in Turkmenistan] until the British began to talk of it'.<sup>209</sup> At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century the same society commented with commendation on the significance of their member A. Vambery's trip to the Central Asian cities of Khiva, Bokhara and Samarkand, due to its great political importance for the British Empire. They stated that the British panicked at the advance of Russians from today's Kyrgyzstan to their Indian frontiers twenty-five years earlier. However, the Russian advance had been slower than expected. In twenty-five years, the British advanced from the Sutlej River in Punjab to today's northern borders of Pakistan, and Russians from today's Kyrgyzstan to the southern borders of modern Tajikistan (see Figure 3-2).

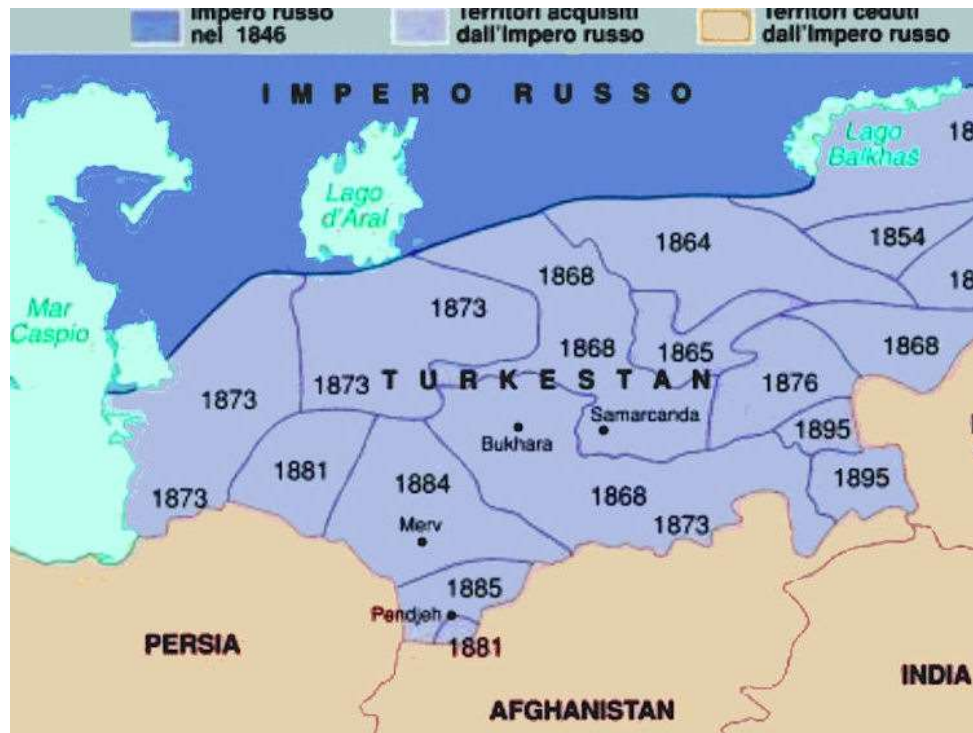


Figure 3-2: Map of Russian Empire's conquered regions in Central Asia, 1895. Accessed May 2016, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/russia/images/map-russia-1895.jpg>

At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the distance between the Russian and British frontiers was only five or six hundred miles: the British were in the Punjab, Scinde and Peshawar in the north of today's Pakistan and Afghanistan, while the Russians had reached Lake Aral, the Jaxartes River (today's Syr Darya), and the Oxus (today's Amu Darya) in contemporary Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.<sup>210</sup> The British did not seem especially concerned, because the Russian advance was slowed by the Central Asian people: the Russian advance 300 miles into Khiva incurred loss of 30,000 men, thus the distance of 4000 miles to India would be very challenging.<sup>211</sup> In regards to the Turkomans/Central Asians themselves, between 1883 and 1884 one military officer, who was defeated by the Russians in Geok Tepe and fled to Merv, told Edmund O'Donovan that he would rather surrender to the Russians than the British, only because the Russians were three days march off, but the British were twelve.<sup>212</sup> Some inhabitants of Merv even believed that English troops would march via Herat and drive the Russians back to the Caspian.<sup>213</sup>

British explorers claim that the rivalry between Russia and Great Britain was primarily driven by commerce. The Russian Empire's aim was to gain a rich base of raw resources in this region and a market for its own goods. In terms of commerce and industry the rule of the Russian Empire was to some extent beneficial for Central Asia. The region of Central

Asia that used to be on the Silk Road route had lost its importance as Europeans found sea routes to India and China and had been declining economically. The Russian invasion provided some trade benefits to the region and developed cotton production as a replacement for subsistence agriculture<sup>214</sup>. Cotton had been already produced in Bukhara and Khiva, from whence Russians exported it to St Petersburg and it even found its way to England. Russians though strived to teach Central Asians to prepare better-quality cotton with machinery.<sup>215</sup> Besides cotton, Russians imported large amounts of fur, silk, camel-hair products, horses and semi-precious stones (mainly lapis lazuli and turquoises) from Central Asia. Russian exports to Central Asia included iron-ware, copper, tin, refined sugar, damask, gold and silver ware, tea-urns, porcelain and muslin, as well as foreign goods from other parts of Europe, such as Italian coral, Swiss clocks, German bright blue fabric, etc. At the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a British explorer could find only Russian goods in Khiva, Bukhara, and Samarkand. Each year about 8,000 camels carrying Russian goods made their way to Central Asian cities.<sup>216</sup> Another source stated that about 30,000 camels left for Russia with imported goods and only 3,000 returned to export Russian and European goods to Central Asia. Russian gold and silver coins were the only foreign currency in circulation in this region.<sup>217</sup> In any case, Russian trade with Central Asia seemed beneficial for the Central Asian population, because it revived their Silk Road trade.

The Russian Empire did not touch the social or political structure of Central Asia. The only exceptions were reducing religious tax (zakat) and restricting pilgrimages to Mecca, which led to riots in Andizhan in 1898.<sup>218</sup> Russians even brought about a sort of unification on the territory by helping the emir of Bukhara to conquer smaller kingdoms and adsorb them into his Khanate.<sup>219</sup> The Russian Empire did not care to create any categories or subcategories of nationalities for local people in contrast to the Soviet government. Thus, it left people to freely develop at their own pace within their own communities.

### **3.3 The Basmachi Resistance or Central Asian religious identity**

In contrast to the Russian imperialists, the Bolsheviks interfered at all levels with Central Asian livelihoods. Historically, Central Asia had a conservative version of Islam practiced by settled people. At the same time, nomadic people did not practice Islam until the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even then, it was often a mystical type of Islam – Sufism, sometimes mixed with shamanism.<sup>220</sup> As for the Bolsheviks, they wanted to create an atheistic Union. Despite

not having a rigid religious structure, the Central Asian people did not easily accept the changes imposed by the Bolsheviks on their religion, social structure and traditions. This was one of the reasons for the rise of an armed conflict named the *Basmachi* that lasted for 6 years (1918-24) with flare ups until 1933. Figure 3-3 shows their movements in the first 4 years. Thus, it is possible to deduce that initially the natural self-determination effort of native people in Central Asia was more religious than ethnic.

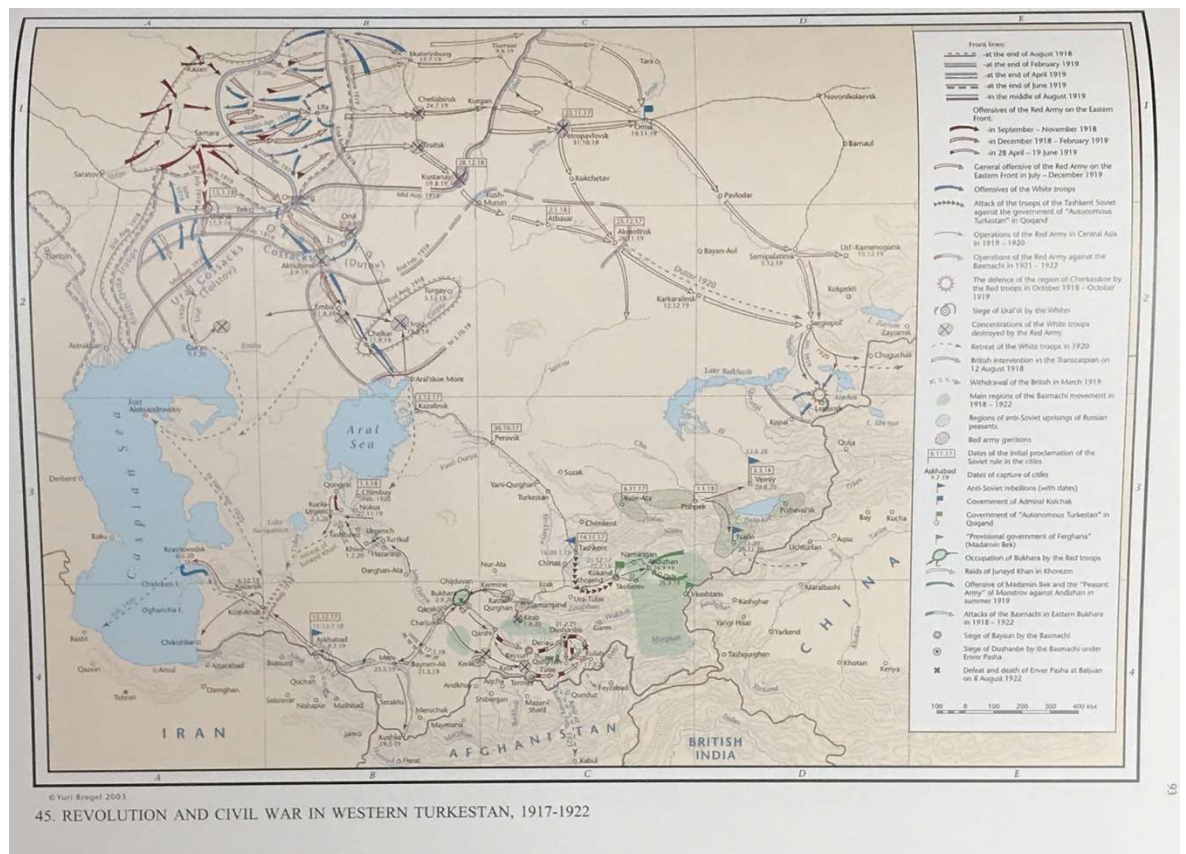


Figure 3-3: Revolution and Civil War in Turkestan, 1917-1922, Yuri Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, Brill, Leiden Boston, 2003, p. 93.

Before the *Basmachi* conflict there were several instances of opposition during the formation of the Soviet regime in Central Asia. During the First World War there was a Pan-Turkism movement of the Azeris in the region, who were inclined towards the Ottoman Empire. In 1916 there was a rebellion against conscription in the territory of modern Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Finally, in 1917 there was an anti-colonist aristocracy movement Alash-Orda on the territory of modern Kazakhstan.<sup>221</sup> The Islamic population of Central Asia was not involved in the October Revolution in 1917. However, the White movement<sup>222</sup> influenced Central Asian nobility in predominantly Islamic areas. Clan leaders and clan nobility organised the *Basmachi* movement, resembling in a way the White movement, against the

Bolsheviks in the Upper Ferghana Valley, Southern Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.<sup>223</sup> The Basmachi's motivation, in the same way as the White movement's, was anti-communist. At the same time, they had another important reason for fighting against the new atheist regime, to protect the Central Asian religious identity.

Indeed, the native people of Central Asia regarded themselves more as a religious entity rather than ethnicities. When the Soviets took control in 1917, the Bolsheviks immediately nationalised all land, including clerical land (*waqf*), outlawed *Shari-a* (Islamic) courts and closed Islamic schools. The same year Central Asian people divided into two groups, *Shuro-i-Islam* (Islamic Council, formerly known as *Dzhadidi*<sup>224</sup>) and *Ulema Jemyeti* (Board of Learned Men), both of which united in the National Centre that was committed to create an autonomous Muslim Central Asia. In practice it was an elite alliance that had little impact on populations. The National Centre disintegrated after the October revolution, as its supporters could not agree on supporting the new regime (*Shuro-i-Islam* wanted a Muslim regime, while *Ulema Jemyeti* supported the idea of a communist one). In December of the 1917, both groups re-joined forces to become the *Ittifaq-ul-Muslimin* (the Union of Muslims) and declared Turkestan to be an autonomous region governed by *Shari'a* law and claiming their right to self-determination.<sup>225</sup>

The Tashkent Russian railroad workers seized power in the name of the Bolsheviks in the region, opposing the religious group. The Red Army supported the Tashkent Soviet and successfully attacked and expelled Muslim leaders from Kokand city.<sup>226</sup> Also, in 1918, the clergy of Bukhara declared a 'holy war' against the Tashkent Soviet government when it tried to remove the Emir.<sup>227</sup> Resistance continued in Fergana region. Russians named it the *Basmachi* (from Turkic 'to plunder'), while the resistance named itself different names ranging from *Beklar Harekati* (from Turkic 'bek or freeman's movement') to Islamic Army.<sup>228</sup>

While the Turkestan Muslim resistance gave birth to the *Basmachi* movement, the movement in Khiva and Bukhara Khanates was directed against the Soviet invaders but did not necessarily have a very perceptible religious motive.<sup>229</sup> In the Khanate of Khiva, which was a protectorate of Russia, the Khan's power was weakened by the Young Khivan party (consisting of *Dzhadidi*, Pan-Turks and nationalists) and the Turkmen tribal leader, Dzhunaid Khan, who became de facto leader from 1916. In 1920 the Khan was officially

dethroned by the Soviets, after which Turkmens fought irregularly with the Soviets until Dzhunaid organised units of fighters in Karakum desert. These fighters were in touch with fighters in Bukhara and Ferghana and were also called *Basmachi* by Soviets. The *Basmachi* did not fight for abstract concepts, such as nation or a common Muslim community. They did defend Islam, but what they were actually defending was ‘the customary way of life that was threatened equally by Russians and by urban reformist Muslims’.<sup>230</sup>

The Soviet historian Chumichev named the *Basmachi* a bandit movement claiming that it consisted of those who lost their wealth, fought against the new regime, robbed and killed peaceful local people and prevented agricultural reforms. Chumichev was also determined to claim that the *Basmachi* groups were armed by British forces and/or the emir in Afghanistan. Thus, the defeat of the *Basmachi* six years later was considered the rightful victory of the communists, bringing order to the region.<sup>231</sup> However, this could be merely communist propaganda, re-written history for future Soviet generations. The following is a short description of the khan of Bukhara Khanate’s resistance against the Soviets described by Chumichev in his early Soviet history book in 1954:

The emir of Bukhara Khanate, Said Alim-khan, [...] although a vassal of the Russian tsar, independently ruled his own kingdom. The power-lusting and poor-people-persecuting emir was not inclined to support the socialist ideas of newly arrived into power Soviets, as they would strip him of his lands and persecute him. In 1918 Turkestan became an Autonomous Soviet Socialistic republic and was included into the Russian Soviet Federation of Socialist Republics. After this event the emir of Bukhara unsuccessfully attempted to invade Turkestan, although he had had a peace agreement with the Soviet government.<sup>232</sup> In 1920 the emir of Bukhara was equipped by British weapons and was going to march out against the Soviets, however, peasants of his kingdom joined the Soviet forces against him. The pro-Soviet Bukharan Peoples Soviet republic was established. The Emir fled from his capital Bukhara city in Western Bukhara to Dushanbe in Eastern Bukhara [capital of modern Tajikistan, but merely a small town/village then] and then to Afghanistan.<sup>233</sup>

This shows that the *Basmachi* resistance was presented as a class struggle. The fact that the Russian Empire and the British Empire had been fighting for the Central Asian territory was omitted. Moreover, the fact that some of the population, including peasants, supported the *Basmachi* and the emir was also omitted. Thus, it was propaganda for future generations of



Tajiks and other Soviet peoples. Since initially, most of the Tajik population was illiterate, propaganda reached them through speeches made by party officials and teachers.

The Soviet analysis of events during the *Basmachi* resistance in Bukhara Khanate might not reveal the full complexity. The primary goal of communist historians was to portray the class struggle and evil intentions of affluent landlords (kulaks) and rulers. As it was simple to inspire people to follow their traditional ruler and fight for their traditional values, it was relatively easy to sway part of the local population using communist propaganda and make them fight their ruler. Most of the population was uneducated and easily influenced: by 1926 there were only three schools with 152 students on the territory of the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Republic for a population of about 1 million people. Only around 0.4% of the population were educated, mainly the children of some well-to-do people<sup>234</sup>. Moreover, peasant's living conditions were extremely difficult: they were taxed for everything including marriages, deaths, births, etc.; persecuted by corrupt clerks, clergy, etc.; and had no advanced agriculture equipment, not even a carriage.<sup>235</sup> Promises of a better life made by the Soviets appealed greatly to the local population which help the Red Army fight against its former rulers.



Figure 3-4: V.V. Stepanov, "Basmachi Movement in the South of Kazakhstan and Central Asia", *History of Kazakhstan*, 28 October 2016, accessed September 2018, accessed online from: <http://e-history.kz/en/contents/view/1631>

A contemporary Tajik historian, Alimardonî, also declares that the *Basmachi* movement had a purely criminal character. He argues that the *Basmachi* mostly consisted of illegal bands that did not care about liberation but only wanted violence and resurrection of feudal despotism.<sup>236</sup> Pictures of *Basmachi* groups often showed them looking like bandits (see Figure 3-4).

While some facts about some of the *Basmachi* groups' activities and motivation could be true, a historical approval of the *Basmachi* movement would not be beneficial to the modern Tajik state. The liberation of the *Basmachi* was targeted towards liberation from atheists. The modern Tajik government is secular and does its utmost to remain so in the eyes of the international community (anti-religious activities are discussed in Chapter 6). Thus, a government-approved historian would not justify the *Basmachi* movement. Moreover, the *Basmachi* tried to create a united Turkestan, where there was no mentioning of Tajiks. Therefore, there are no reasons for modern Tajikistan to glorify this movement.

Even if the *Basmachi* consisted of some bandit groups, other reasons united all levels of Central Asian society in this fight. Efforts to restructure the political administration as well as the Muslim society in Central Asia were not welcomed by any layers of Central Asian society, not only local aristocrats, tribal leaders, clergy and merchants, but also peasants. The resulting *Basmachi* movement was supported by Muslim reformers (*Dzhadidi*) and Pan-Turkists. Among the confusion in Bukhara region there were the pro-emir and anti-emir groups of people who had various economic and religious reasons for supporting either group. The clergy, who could not live in an anti-religious state, as well as merchants, court people, etc., who apart from their religious allegiance, had some property and rights during the previous regime, were easily induced by the emir from Afghanistan to fight against the Soviets in Bukhara.

Various measures, including transformation of social and economic policies, were employed by the Soviets to end the *Basmachi* revolt. In 1919, the Turkestan Commission (Turkcomissiya) was asked to investigate causes of the *Basmachi* revolt. Their investigation concluded the reason to be the tensions between the *Basmachi* and the Russian Tashkent Soviets. Consequently, a Provisional Central Committee consisting of Russian and Turkestan Bolshevik proponents replaced the Tashkent Soviets to politically pacify the *Basmachi*. Other means to end the revolt were tackling the famine that had arisen during the Russian Civil War. Apart from delivering grain to the region, the New Economic Policy (NEP) was introduced to the region, abolishing full nationalisation and forced land and grain requisition. Amnesty and housing were offered to those of the *Basmachi* who capitulated. However, Tomsy, a member of the Politburo and Turkcommision, claimed that the measures were not working, because the Bolsheviks were considered a danger to Islam in



the region. As a result, in 1921 *Shari-a* law was temporarily restored.<sup>237</sup> Thus, religion, as a part of self-determination, seemed to be more important for local people than economics.

The *Basmachi* movement was decentralised, with short-lived coalitions of the Ulema faction and moderate Muslim groups, as well as a longer coalition of the *Basmachi*-Russian group (Madamin Bek, commander of 'Muslim Peoples' together with a commander of Russian rebellious 'Peasant Army', Monstrov). This decentralisation was one of the reasons for their defeat.<sup>238</sup> Yet despite this the movement continued sporadically for more than a decade.

In 1921, the arrival of Enver Pasha to Eastern Bukhara revived the *Basmachi* movement. He was an Ottoman military officer, former Minister of War, who moved (or was sent, allegedly even influenced by Germany, as he was depicted with the German flag in the background in Figure 3-5) to Russia to observe Lenin's movement. Then he was sent to Bukhara to spread communist propaganda among local Muslims. Instead, he joined the *Basmachi* and helped to centralise the movement by creating a united army and introducing Western-style command. He had a vision of Turkestan as a centre of a Pan-Turkic confederation that would include other Turkic-speaking regions, such as Turkey, Afghanistan and Western China. Generally speaking, he wanted to extend the Ottoman Empire to Central Asia.<sup>239</sup>

Enver managed to convince many Soviet supporters in Khiva and Bukhara to join the *Basmachi* movement, because they were beginning to become disenchanted by the Soviet reforms and realised that concessions to their religion were only temporary. They realised that they shared more values, such as religion, with their tribal leaders than with the Bolsheviks. Thus, they were convinced that their religious and cultural homogeneity was threatened by the Soviets.<sup>240</sup> Perhaps for the same reason, Sufi religion followers also maintained and supported the *Basmachi* movement around Samarkand.



Figure 3-5: Enver Pasha portrait with Turkish, German, Hungarian flags in the background. *Warfare, Belligerents and Participants in World War One: The Ottoman Empire (Turkey)*, accessed May 2016, <http://www.metropostcard.com/war7b-turkey.html>

The *Basmachi* controlled Western Bukhara until 1921, when they were pushed back to Eastern Bukhara (modern Tajikistan). By 1922 Enver helped the *Basmachi* to reoccupy the whole Eastern Bukhara and most of Western Bukhara. He also re-established links with Afghans, who allegedly were supplying arms to the *Basmachi*.<sup>241</sup> Interestingly, while the Soviet writers clearly link Afghan support with the British Empire, contemporary western researchers, such as Olcott, for some reason do not mention whether British or any other Western power backed those Afghans.

The Russian Communist Party (the Bolsheviks) (RCP(b)) decided to weaken again its anti-religious grip in Bukhara. The party not only offered the *Basmachi* leaders pardons and restricted tribal self-government, but also returned clerical lands, legitimised Islamic schools and extended self-rule of *Shari-a* courts. In this way, the Soviets tried to persuade Muslim clergy that the regime could co-exist with Islam. But the RCP warned that if the clergy did not accept the regime, anti-religious measures would be tightened. Also, by 1923 the distribution of land and cotton production weakened the *Basmachi*'s options for obtaining food and increased the popularity of the Soviets among the local population.<sup>242</sup>

Although the movement was strong, it did not have a very strong idea behind it – people did not have a uniting sense, such as of national identity, to help them cope with adversities. Enver was one of the main threads that kept it together. The Soviets, fearing Enver's rapid progress, sent a crusade against him, which ended in his death.<sup>243</sup> Although he was replaced by other leaders, thereafter the movement lacked his spirit. In 1923 Enver's chief lieutenant,

Selim Pasha, who replaced Enver Pasha, fled to Afghanistan and by 1924 only scattered fragments of the *Basmachi* remained in Eastern Bukhara. The Lokai tribal leader, Ibrahim Bek, attempted an unsuccessful attack in 1926 and fled to Afghanistan as well. The anti-religious grip was not loosened in Khiva Khanate, as in 1923 the Khorezm SSR announced segregation of religion and state, nationalisation of clerical lands and withdrawal of clerical voting rights. In response, by 1924 Dzhunaid Khan gained the support of clerics and merchants to control the Khiva city. He was pushed back to the desert by the Soviets but continued his attacks until he fled to Iran in 1927.<sup>244</sup> Religion was indeed so prominent in the lives of Khivans and Khorezmians that they did not stop their opposition despite losing their focus with Enver's death. However, the loss of their leader weakened the momentum of the movement and the lack of a centralised uniting idea did not bring it back.

The only unifying idea in the region of contemporary Tajikistan seemed to be religion. However, it was not a strong enough part of their identity to overpower the new regime. As discussed in Chapter 2, the suppression of religion can lead to the birth of national identity. Thus, the suppression of *Basmachi* and Islam made it easier for the Soviet regime to create Central Asian nationalities.

As Soviets regained control of Central Asia from the *Basmachi*, they reverted to their anti-religious policies and continued social change, such as restricting and subsequently banning Islamic schools. In 1925, the clergy and bourgeoisie were officially prohibited from public office. In 1927 *Shari-a* courts were also closed. In 1927, clerical lands were minimised and in 1928 completely nationalised. Soviets took these anti-religious measures because they believed that the Muslim clergy delayed social advancement and economic development. In 1928 collectivisation started, where individual labour and landholding was merged into collective farms – *kolkhoz* (collective farm) and *sovkhoz* (Soviet farm). This led to a short revival of the *Basmachi* movement between 1929-1933 led by Dzhunaid Khan and Ibrahim Bek that hampered collectivisation in eastern Bukhara and western Turkmenistan. However, Ibrahim Bek was arrested on the territory of Soviet Tajikistan in 1931 and Dzhunaid Khan was defeated in Karakum desert in 1933.<sup>245</sup> We can see that almost each revival of *Basmachi* movement was related to religious oppression. Therefore, despite Soviet and contemporary Tajik historians proclaiming it to be a bandit movement, it was indeed the movement of resistance to the regime of the Soviet Union, caused by opposition to atheism among other reasons.

During this time, Stalin proclaimed that for local people there are only two choices: to be together with Russia and thus to liberate working people from imperialist oppression or to be together with the Triple Entente and therefore, under the imperialist yoke. 'There is no third choice', declared Stalin.<sup>246</sup> This fight for control of these territories between the Russian and British Empires is named the 'Great Game'. Interestingly, the Great Game is discussed in detail in older Soviet history books (dated 1950s), but less so in later Tajik Soviet history books (dated 1970s), even less in contemporary Tajik history books. It is possible that the Soviet propaganda embellished the involvement of the West to justify its invasion of the region. At the same time, there are reports from British explorers of the Royal Geographic Society which, despite their policy of being non-political, mention the competition between Russia and the British in Central Asia. A better understanding of the Great Game could help the contemporary Tajik nation to realise some of the reasons for the creation of their nation, in terms of competition with the Imperialist British Empire for territory and resources, and for influence on Afghanistan, which are covered in subsequent chapters.

Before the *Basmachi* revolt people in Central Asia did not have an overarching collective identity apart from identifying themselves as Muslims, though individuals had a variety of other identities in terms of clan/tribe and city/village. The extended fight united local people together, because the *Basmachi* linked people from different levels and parts of society together against a common foe. As they were fighting against an enemy, their social divisions were temporarily forgotten. People realised that they shared traditions, culture, languages and religion that differed from those being imposed by the Russian regime. Thus, the foundations were laid of nationalist feelings and a shared consciousness and a somewhat basic political identity formed. Olcott calls this emerging sense of shared identity 'pragmatic or experimental rather than ideological' but it did establish the basis for the national awareness that appeared in the Soviet period. She even names the *Basmachi* 'national heroes' of the pre-Soviet era.<sup>247</sup>

This awareness was a shared consciousness of all Central Asian people together and it was weakened when the Russians divided Central Asia into five separate republics, in each of which a separate national identity was subsequently cultivated. The Soviets had learned that Islam was more than just a religion in Central Asia and that it posed a direct threat to Soviet rule in the region. Thus, one of the reasons for the Soviet government to divide Central Asia

into separate nations and republics is likely to have been to suppress the Pan-Islamist movement. This division is discussed further in the next section.

According to Wilsonian definition there are three forces empowering national self-determination: decolonization, revolution and ‘the intervention of outside powers’.<sup>248</sup> Outside powers intervened in 19<sup>th</sup> century Central Asia when Russians made an expansion to the South starting from the fortress of Orenburg in the Kazakh steppes. But this intervention did not cause nationalist movements to develop due to the general political instability and rivalry between Central Asian khanates (Khorazm, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Kokand), steppe nomads, etc.<sup>249</sup> The socialist revolution gave rise to the unification of Central Asian people around their religion to fight off atheist communists. However, as discussed earlier, this unification did not last long, and the Red Army defeated the *Basmachi*. On the other hand, the rule of the Soviet Union and its collapse, may be called decolonization in the case of Central Asia. This has indeed, induced the Tajik people to seek national self-determination. Therefore, we can regard the Soviet ruling of Central Asia as a unique colonisation period, although the Bolsheviks were opposed to calling themselves colonisers. What makes it unique is that Russian ‘colonisers’ created Central Asian nations and on paper, considered them equal to themselves.

### 3.4 The Division of Central Asia into Separate Soviet Republics

The Soviet regime endeavoured to develop nations in underdeveloped former Russian colonies based on socialism only and to bypass the capitalist economy step, which was essential for the formation of nations in the Western world.<sup>250</sup> Even the Soviet activist Chekalin admits that before the October Socialist Revolution many people ‘on the borders of former tsarist Russia...were not crystallized into nations’. Capitalism, including ‘the development of the productive forces and unified national market’, was the basis for the formation of European nations.<sup>251</sup> The Soviet regime strived to eliminate tsarist colonialism and to build a union based on the European model of national division minus the European economy.<sup>252</sup> Central Asian nations skipped the traditional step in their accelerated artificial national formation. Thus, from the semi-nomadic lifestyle and simplistic economy the Central Asian people were forced directly into a socialist economy.

When integrating the vast territories of the Russian Empire into the newly formed Soviet Union, the Soviet government was reluctant to follow ‘the colonizer and colonized’ system

of the West. The government developed its own programme based on Marx's 'stages of human development'.<sup>253</sup> In 1917 the Soviet government published its 'Declaration of rights of the peoples of Russia', where it stated the main principles of the national politics of the Soviet power. Firstly, it was the equality and sovereignty of the peoples of Russia. Secondly, the rights of people to the free self-determination up to the delimitation and creation of an independent state. Thirdly, an abolishment of all national and national-religious privileges and limitations. Finally, free development of national minorities and ethnographic groups on the territory of Russia.<sup>254</sup> The term 'nation' for the Soviets was used as a definition 'that places diverse population into standardized knowable categories [...] these categories were neither primordial nor totally artificial but were labels that became meaningful through a combination of official policies, expert input and local initiatives', while people who were manipulated into nations were not passive but used circumstances for their own benefit.<sup>255</sup> This involvement into the livelihoods of tribes and clans was not done to liberate the Central Asian people, but was supposed to connect them more firmly with the central government.<sup>256</sup>

As I discussed in the first chapter, Stalin's definition of nation stated that it must have pre-existing common territory, common economy, common culture and language. Yet, Chekalin, who quotes Stalin's nationality statements to a great extent, has to admit that people like Turkmens did not have any of these characteristics. They existed as 'many kindred clans and tribes having distinct peculiarities in language..., [i.e.] many tribal dialects..., mode of life, etc.'<sup>257</sup> The Soviet regime gave them defined territory and changed their economy according to socialist principles. The Soviets opened collective farms, created large irrigation constructions, opened new plants and factories, such as sulphur, silk, cotton, candy, flour mills, window glass, printing, meat-packing, etc. During the national delimitation, Turkmenistan did not have any common literary language. Only in 1928 was the Turkmen language developed, the first literary works of Turkmen published, and 1377 primary and secondary schools and four institutions opened. Thus, Turkmenistan, as well as other Central Asian republics, 'acquired' its common territory, economy, culture and language with the help of the Soviet government. Chekalin justifies this by saying that parts of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were artificially split apart by Russian imperialism and were not able to develop until the Soviets gave them this opportunity.<sup>258</sup>

There were various considerations in setting up the national-territorial delimitation reform. Both Stalin and Lenin believed in equality of nations. For them, nations could be different

in size – small and super-power nations; different in development – progressive or ‘civilised’ and ‘backward’ nations (Stalin’s terms); different in economic prosperity or class – ‘oppressors’ and ‘oppressed’. Nevertheless, they considered all these varieties of nations equal in rights.<sup>259</sup> Yet which peoples of former tsarist Russia could be considered ‘progressed enough’ and which ones ‘not enough’ was a matter of long debates. The People’s Commissariat of Nationalities (Narkomnats) insisted that the Soviet Union should be divided according to ethnographic boundaries, to avoid the centre exploiting ‘backward’ people in colonized lands. They went so far as to proclaim that nations should be created in the place where they did not exist before to ensure equal power relationships. Also, they disclaimed the economic delimitation suggested by the State Planning Commission (GosPlan), because Narkomnats associated economic unification with imperialist exploitation. In 1923, the Twelfth Party Congress reflected Narkomnats’ ideas of national-territorial delimitation of the post-Russian Empire territory.<sup>260</sup>

The congress issued a ‘liberating’ nationality policy that Anastas Mikoian, Central Committee member, later declared as a strategy ‘to help individual tribes to become nations’.<sup>261</sup> On 31 December 1924 the ratification of the Soviet constitution met both Narkomnats and Gosplan halfway and it was decided to have the delimitation of the Soviet Republics by overlapping economic and national-territorial areas.<sup>262</sup> Soviet administrators specified some nations as advanced (Russians, Ukrainians, Georgians, etc.) and others as backward (Uzbek, Byelorussians, etc.) and planned to help both categories to form Soviet nations and states. They did not do it for the sake of nations themselves but for the sake of consolidating the Soviet Union and ‘for assimilating the diverse population into a rapidly modernizing state preparing for the transition to socialism’.<sup>263</sup>

In May 1917, pan-Islamism and pan-Turkism were the main topics of discussion in the first all-Russian Muslim Congress of the newly born Soviet Union. Since the religion served as a main indicator of identity, an Islamic nation (*umma*) was supposed to be the main goal of all Russian Muslims. However, in fear of being devoured by dominant Tatar Muslims, Turkestan (Central Asian) Muslims, including Mullah Abdulla Khodjaev, Dosmuhhammadov, and Validov, stated their wish to have their own separate autonomy to preserve their territorial identity and gain political power.<sup>264</sup> However, their wish for autonomy was for the autonomy of the whole of Central Asia without dividing it into separate countries.

Essentially, in Central Asia state-building preceded nation-building. The populations living on the territory of then Turkestan – a Russian colony – became nations after being incorporated into the Soviet Union. As Graham Smith stated, it was not a primordial ambition of Central Asian people to become nations, but rather the communist regime that took the first step in carrying out an action of creating ‘national administrative units’ that is Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Turkmen and Tajik nations.<sup>265</sup>

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1918 the People’s Commissariat of Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic on Nationality Problems followed Lenin’s doctrine on the self-identification of workers. At first it adopted Regulations of Self-Determination in the Tatar-and-Bashkiria Soviet republic and then other Soviet Republics. The government of Turkestan received a telegram signed by the People’s Commissar on Nationality Problems, Stalin, and Commissar on Muslims’ internal affairs in Russia, Nur Vakhitov, about similar regulations that were to apply in Central Asia.<sup>266</sup> Consequently, in 1919 the central government in Moscow sent the Turkcommission (Turkestan Commission) to Central Asia, as the government’s representatives. The Turkcommission’s members were mainly Russians. They arrived from Moscow charged with taking on authority and management of all aspects of life in Turkestan on behalf of the Central Committee of Russia. Lenin formed the Commission by a Resolution of the All-Russia Central Executive Committee and the Council of People’s Commissars of Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republics (8 October 1919), which included the Chairman Sh Z Eliava and members M V Frunze, V V Kuibyshev, Ya E Rudzutak, G I Bokiy, F I Goloschyokin and others. The Turkcommission submitted a resolution to divide Turkestan into three Soviet Republics but due to the complexity of the matter sent a delegation to the Russian Communist Party for assistance.<sup>267</sup> In Moscow the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party created a separate Commission consisting of members of Central Asian origins – Turkdelegation (Turkestan Delegation), headed by Turar Ryskulov (born in Almaty oblast<sup>268</sup>, modern Kazakhstan) – to conduct an inquiry into the division of Turkestan.

The Turkdelegation confirmed that the division of Turkestan would be impractical due to the scarcity of water and complex water rights in the region. It would harm cattle breeding and agriculture since dividing the territory into separate countries would break long-established water rights. The raw-material exchange between cattle-breeding and agricultural clans and their distribution on Turkestan territory would be difficult to change.



<sup>269</sup> Indeed, the 1926 land and irrigation reforms affected clan relationships and disrupted clan chieftains' power of water distribution, thus weakening clan links. <sup>270</sup> Also, Turkdelegation asserted that 'the division of Turkestan would break the uniform plan of railway and post-and-telegraphic communication, and the regular supervision over international and currency accounts with neighbouring Asian states and foreign trade.'<sup>271</sup> Thus it was clear that the division of Turkestan into separate republics would weaken it economically and would diminish the possibility of financial management independence. Through weakening already established communities and their leaders, the Bolsheviks could gain more control over the local population.

The Central Communist Party in Moscow had been enthusiastically involved in the Turkestan division process and Moscow made all the final resolutions by itself. To be specific, in May and in June 1920, the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party including Vladimir Lenin, brought up for consideration the matter of Turkestan four times. Furthermore, the Organizing Bureau of the Central Committee of the Russian Communist Party discussed the Turkestan issue repeatedly. On the sides of the sheet of paper with the preliminary version of the Resolution 'On tasks of the Russian Communist Party of the Bolsheviks in Turkestan' Lenin made a note: 'It is necessary, to my mind, to reject the project of comrade Ryskulov, the project of the Commission [Turkcommission] should be adopted...'.<sup>272</sup> Consequently, Lenin disregarded economic implications of the division on Turkestan.

Lenin suggested a point-by-point check of the options for joining together or dividing up the territory, at the same time he emphasized that delimitation of the republics into three parts should not be established in advance. He also proposed that ethnographic and other maps of Turkestan with distinct divisions into Uzbekia, Kirgizia and Turkmenia should be drawn up. Thus, in the mid-1920s the Party and Bolshevik leadership of RSFSR resolved the dilemma of the national and territorial state division of people of Turkestan in Moscow, directed by the slogan 'national self-determination' of indigenous peoples of Turkestan, and in complete opposition to the statements made by the Turkestan representatives, the Turkdelegation.<sup>273</sup> In effect, the Turkdelegation was merely a bureaucratic formality, while the division was planned despite the local population's sentiments and without paying attention to their opinion on the border delineation.

The representatives of Turkestan declared their position against the demarcation. On 10 March 1924, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan, the Presidium of the Turkestan Central Executive Committee and Party and Soviet officials of Tashkent had a collective meeting. S. Khodjanov and N. A. Paskutskiy gave a speech at the meeting where it was asserted that Turkestan was harmoniously joined together and should not be divided into individual national republics. Moreover, as a matter of fact, they said, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kazakhs and so on are not nations, but they were an ‘all-Muslim Turkic nation’.<sup>274</sup> Paskutskiy, Khodjanov and others took up the cudgels for the political unification of Central Asia into a single republic, as in the TransCaucasian Federative Republic, which was founded at that time. In addition, they supported the establishment of a united economic foundation for the whole of Central Asia.<sup>275</sup>

Nevertheless, the full session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan on 23-24 March 1924, after debating over the question ‘On national and territorial delimitation of the Turkestan Republic’<sup>276</sup>, could not contradict Lenin and concluded that Turkestan should be divided into three Soviet Republics — the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic with Tajik autonomous oblast, the Kirghiz (modern Kazakh) Soviet Socialist Republic with Kara-Kirgiz (modern Kyrgyz) autonomous oblast and the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>277</sup> Special commissions were formed under the Central Committees of the Communist Parties of Turkestan and Bukhara including the Sredazburo (from Russian language – Central Asian bureau) commission. The Sredazburo commission established Uzbek (including Tajik autonomous region representatives), Kyrgyz (including Kara-Kyrgyz autonomous region representatives) and Turkmen national sub-commissions. The sub-commissions focussed on outlining the borders of the subsequent republics in Turkestan, the selection of capital cities and cultural and economic centres of republics and autonomous oblasts.<sup>278</sup>

During the division process focus groups of the people to be divided revealed many different perspectives on nation formation. To resolve these issues, the Central Asian Bureau set up special technical commissions. Some records of these commissions were marked ‘Top Secret’ and only revealed after the collapse of the Soviet Union. From the document ‘Materials on more precise definition of frontiers’ we learn that the division of Central Asia in relation to nationality was delayed because Central Asian peoples lived in narrow strips of land suitable for agriculture interspersed with large areas of flat un-forested grasslands

and waterless desolate lands fit only for livestock.<sup>279</sup> Peoples of Central Asia lived in those lands, where one clan or tribe would be living on various strips of the land while other clans lived on the strips of lands between them. For example, the Tajik districts separated the Ferghana fertile lands from the rest of Uzbekistan; in the same way, lands possessed by the nomadic Kazakhs and one Turkmen divided farmed lands belonging to Khorezmian Uzbeks from fertile lands owned by Bukharan Uzbeks.<sup>280</sup>

In July 1924, the Khorezm region was included in the Turkestan demarcation because it was noted by contemporary Soviet historiographers that people in the Khorezm region were exposed to ‘the bourgeois-and-nationalistic and Trotskyist elements, [who] hampered the forming of new Republics’.<sup>281</sup> These territorial machinations put at risk the normality in Central Asia, the lands consisting of alternating strips of lands, where agricultural and cattle-breeding clans with specific economic (trade) and cultural relationships were well established through history. As Ryskulov warned earlier in 1920, the chief principles underpinning the division of Central Asia – national-territorial and economic – were wrong from the very beginning.<sup>282</sup>

In spite of these controversies, the Joint Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Turkestan (CPT), Central Coordinating Committee (TsKK) of the CPT, and the Revision Commission officially agreed with the detail of the national-and-territorial state division of Central Asia.<sup>283</sup> On 27 October 1924, the second session of the Central Executive Committee of the USSR granted the request of the Central Asian Central Committees - Turkestan Central Executive Committee (TsIK), the fifth All-Bukharian Kurultai of the Soviets and the fifth All-Khorezmian Kurultai of the Soviets – on national and territorial division into new Soviet Socialist Republics and autonomous districts.<sup>284</sup>

On 15 September 1924, the Central Executive Committee of the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (TASSR) issued an edict to establish Central Asian national republics.<sup>285</sup> The Resolution on the forming of the delimitation of Turkestan republics was adopted. Soviet Central Asia was initially divided into three republics – Soviet Kazakhstan, Uzbekia and Turkmenia – later the Soviet government created two more republics. Shortly afterwards, the Central Committee of Russian Communist Party (RCP CC) in Moscow converted the Tajik Autonomous oblast in Uzbek SSR/Uzbekia into the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Tajik ASSR).<sup>286</sup> In 1929 the Tajik ASSR, being an autonomous

district of Uzbekistan, was upgraded into a separate Soviet republic. Tajikistan was not unique in being seceded from another republic. In 1924, the modern Kazakh people (who were called Kirghiz or Kirghiz-Kazakh at that time) and were included in the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republics as the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast (renamed Kirghiz afterwards, modern Kyrgyzstan or Kirgizia) was attached to Kirghiz SSR. In 1924, the Moscow RCP CC considered the Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Oblast to have sufficient qualities to become the Kara-Kirghiz Autonomous Socialist Republic and to be directly included into the RSFSR. In 1936 after 'the mass collectivization of cereal, cotton, and cattle-breeding farms was virtually completed' the Kirghiz Autonomous Soviet Republic was upgraded and renamed the Kazakh Soviet Socialist Republic. Kara-Kirghiz was also upgraded and to add to the confusion, was renamed as the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>287</sup>

Carving Central Asia into separate countries ensued in remarkable numbers of peoples belonging to clans or ethnicities discovering themselves in new countries and with new nationalities. For instance, 433,000 people speaking the Uzbek dialect of the Turkic language found themselves outside the borders of the Soviet Uzbekistan: 120,000 in Kyrgyzstan, 98,000 in Tajikistan, 78,000 in Kazakhstan and 64,000 in Turkmenistan.<sup>288</sup> Soviet Uzbekistan included about 82% of all Uzbek-speaking people, and Tajikistan 75.2% of Persian-speaking people.<sup>289</sup>

Although these nationalities and republics were entirely new, some terms that were used by the Soviets to name the new Central Asian nationalities had existed before. At the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century, Kazakhs and Turkmens were mentioned as separate entities by the British military explorers.<sup>290</sup> Until the 1930s, Russians called Kirghiz those people who are named Kazakhs nowadays, thus creating a confusion of historical terms. It is not clear whether the British explorers expected to encounter modern Kazakhs or Kirgiz in the Turkoman steppe between the Caspian Sea and Amu Darya (modern Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). Cossacks are also mentioned, who could be either Russian Cossacks or an alternative homonym for Kazakhs. In any case, the names that are used nowadays for Kazakh and Kirghiz nations already existed and were in use by outsiders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The approximate region of the usage of these names overlaps with modern Kazakhstan. Thus Kazakhs (or/and possibly Kirgiz) have a continuity of their national name into the past, at least in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The same can be said about Turkmens, who are often named

Turkomans by British explorers. Lt. Col. C. E. Stewart described Turkomans as people inhabiting the area between the river Oxus (Amu Darya) and the Caspian Sea, a country without a general name. He also noted that their language was a variety of the Turkic language with slight differences from other Turkic people.<sup>291</sup> However, the same term Turkoman was sometimes applied to Central Asia in general.<sup>292</sup> The name Uzbek was not mentioned by the same British explorers. However, as mentioned in the Chapter 4, Ozbek was a name of a nomadic tribe that used to attack the Timurid dynasty in the fifteenth century. We can thus see some continuity of the names of tribes in the names of modern Central Asian nations from the recent pre-Soviet past, which means that their names were not entirely new constructs but derived from pre-existing ethnic cores.

Yet the term Tajik was not used by most 19<sup>th</sup> century British explorers. For example, when Lt. Col. C. E. Stewart visited Hissar village in the Turkoman region, he named the local people Turkomans. The only equivalent of the name in this region is the ancient Hisor village located in modern Tajikistan.<sup>293</sup> This village/town was already known in the eleventh century, when it was in a more independent part of the Samanid Empire. Also, those Turkomans lived in yurts<sup>294</sup>, which is typical nomadic accommodation, but does not feature in Tajik history. Thus, either the Hisor village mentioned by the British was not on the territory of modern Tajikistan, but Turkmenistan, which might mean that British explorers rarely managed to visit the territory of modern Tajikistan in the past. Alternatively, it could be indeed Hisor village on the territory of modern Tajikistan. In this case, the people who would become the Tajik nation did not bear the same name or were not prominent in the central part of modern Tajikistan in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

As for other tribes living on the territory of Central Asia, such as the Kara-Kalpaks, Pamiri, Lakai, Chuvash, Djungan, Tarachin, etc., they were completely neglected by most people, including the Turkcommission, which nonetheless regarded Central Asia's newly created nations as ancient formations.<sup>295</sup> This information was also noted in one of the final reports sent by Turkdelegation member, Ryskulov, on 16 June 1920 to Lenin in Moscow, namely that the existence of these tribes will limit the national self-determination, if Turkestan is divided only into its initial three republics (Turkmen, Kazakh and Uzbek),<sup>296</sup> but Ryskulov's statement was overlooked by the Turkcommission. The history of these tribes/clans was to be erased and they were to become a part of other 'real' nations in Central Asia. Thus, some

groups were supposed to become primary nationalities, others secondary and new national histories were to be crafted for each nation in their republics. People who had lived for many years on one territory suddenly would find themselves citizens of countries forced upon them, with which they had to identify. Some found their relatives to be of different nationalities because they lived just across the border. While helping backward nations to achieve the same level as advanced ones, the Soviet government refused 'national rights' to minorities that they regarded as not 'ethnographically distinct'.<sup>297</sup> Thus the so-called equalisation of advanced and backward people proposed by Lenin and Stalin, as discussed earlier in this section, did not quite work. While new advanced/ex-backward people quickly and pragmatically realised the benefit of stating their rights and claims through their newly acquired nationhood, many smaller tribes were overlooked and discriminated against (some were resettled and lost their land and usual sources of income as described Chapter 4).

After the official delimitation of Central Asian borders in 1926, the All-Union Census in Tashkent showed that people identified themselves as combined nationalities, such as Tajik-Uzbek, Kazakh-Uzbek. Census takers actually had to help local population to identify their nationality.<sup>298</sup> The Soviet ideas about nationality and nation-states were initially quite foreign to the Central Asian population after many centuries of being divided up by different empires and kingdoms. Some individuals took a pragmatic view of the benefits of being a member of a certain republic rather than claiming allegiance to a certain group. So many records were not accurate. On numerous occasions, members of the same family could register as different nationalities. Officials complained about these issues and the Communist Party of Turkestan, through the magazine *Mushtum*, even produced a criticism in print mocking the Soviet policy of national differentiation. The cartoon pictures a border of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on both sides of which sit two men filling the registration form. A man on the Uzbekistan side of the border has Kazakh/Mongol-like features and attire but registers himself in an identification book as Uzbek. On the other side, a man on the Kazakhstan side of the border who has typical Tajik/Persian features and dress registers himself as a Kazak (see Figure 3-6). This cartoon suggests that the stereotypes about 'typical' attire and features already existed, i.e. Persian-speaking people had lower cheekbones and did not have Mongol-shaped eyes or Uzbek/Tajik people had slightly different outfits from Kazakhs/Kirgiz/Turkic population. However, all Persian-speaking people who looked in this way did not identify themselves as Tajiks and all people who

dressed in a Turkic-style dress did not identify themselves as a part, for example, of the Kazakh nation. Also, often in modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan or Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen areas people looked and dressed almost indistinguishably.

Central Asian ethnicities are composed of heterogeneous elements, such as tribes and clans that have evolved during a history of invasions and migrations over many centuries. Despite the primordial approach adopted by most Russian and Central Asian experts, before the Russian colonisation in Central Asia there were no ethnic-national identities as there are nowadays. Based on this complex history, historian and anthropologist Sergey Abashin believes that the modernist perspective, like modernism, best fits Central Asia. He further states that ‘the main divides used to differentiate “one of us” from someone “foreign” were based on position in the social hierarchy, religious separation into Sunni, Shi’ite or Ishmaelite, membership of different Sufi brotherhoods, economic-cultural categorisation between settled, mountainous, nomadic or semi-nomadic groups, family or tribal distinctions, or by regional classification.’<sup>299</sup> Since Central Asian people categorised themselves into a much larger number of groups than the Soviets classified them, this led to confusion during the official registration of individuals. Settled people categorised themselves by the place they originated from, which was very much related to their clan identity. Consequently, very often the political borders did not coincide with linguistic and cultural borders. Barthold also argues that the main type of categorisation used by Central Asian inhabitants was by religion and by place of birth or region. Thus, it was only through the European ideological influences on Russians and via Russian means, that Central Asian people were divided into national categories.<sup>300</sup>



Figure 3-6: Source: *Mushtom*, Journal no. 11, October 3, 1924. Cited in Allworth 1990: 204.

In part, the imported European national categories that were imposed on Central Asian people were used for demographic reasons and to build republic governments.<sup>301</sup> Russian revolutionaries, being ‘enlightened’ by European ideas, were keen on using the same categories in less developed regions of their newly formed ‘kingdom’. There were many groups on the territory of Central Asia, who had been forming an ethnic core over time by sharing the same customs, traditions and language. Primarily, there were Persian-speaking Iranian-origin ones with territorial clan division and nomads with largely tribal division. Russians short-listed the largest of these groups that were known to them and used the most



common names with which they identified these people. As a result, the concept of national identity was inflicted on Central Asia from the outside.

Barfield notes that the primary reason that the Soviets divided Central Asia into uneven countries was to eliminate old political, cultural and economic ties. It divided and effaced older khanates and regional clans that had historical foundations on this territory.<sup>302</sup> In addition, a secondary reason for the formation of Central Asian nations could be that the Soviet government wanted to create a sense of identity. During the Russian tsarist rule, Central Asian colonies did not have a sense of belonging.<sup>303</sup> Now that they had become separate nationalities, 'liberated' by the Soviets, the needed nations to develop a sense of patriotism and affiliation to the Soviets and to their ideology.

None of the Soviet republics or nationalities had any actual independence. As much as Soviet government proclaimed that Soviet nationalities are all equal, there was never actual equality. All these new nations were created to gain stability within the ex-empire. They had to obey the central government in Moscow from where high officials were appointed to the national governments and decisions were made about each country on the regulations of not only politics and economics, but also culture. For example, in the 1960s Uzbek academician Ibrohim Muminov was dismissed from the Uzbek Academy of Sciences because he singled out Amir Timur (Tamerlane) as playing an extra important role in Uzbek history, without consulting the Academy of Sciences in Moscow.<sup>304</sup> The Soviet regime not only formed the borders of its states, but also controlled and formed all their spheres, including social life and cultural affairs.

To sum up, before the division of Central Asia by the Soviet regime, people had several identities in Central Asia – religious, clan/tribe, economic, city-state - but did not subscribe themselves to nationalities. 'Until the advent of Soviet power and the popularisation of the idea that "official" nationalities could monopolize land and resources, most inhabitants of former Turkestan, Bukhara and Khiva did not define themselves in national terms.'<sup>305</sup> Stalin's nationality policy towards Central Asia stated, 'the time has now come when these scattered fragments can be re-united into independent states'.<sup>306</sup> However, independent Central Asian states had never existed before and thus could not be 're-united'. Central Asian states were born under the Soviet system, became 'teenagers' after the collapse of the Soviet Union and perhaps finally reached maturity in the 1990s. Only now can we talk about truly

independent Central Asian states, though they are trying to justify themselves by claims to have been ancient nations. As discussed in Chapter 7, these countries have worked to build separate national histories, though in reality their histories are intertwined.

### **3.5 National self-identification politics vs the New Soviet Person**

As the Soviet Union was established, the Soviet government undertook large scale reform of the economic, political and cultural aspects of society. One reform, discussed in the previous section, was the national-territorial delimitation. At the same time, the Soviet government was propagating a non-nationalistic agenda. It strove to create a standard Soviet person or the New Soviet Person/Man, i.e. to melt all Soviet people in one melting pot and create a ‘sovetskii chelovek’ (Soviet person). This concept was synonymous with the New Man, a new philosophical idealist idea of forging people into one proletariat working class. The nationalisation policy contradicted the policy of fusion of all Soviet nations into one New Soviet Person. On the one hand, the Bolsheviks wished non-Russian nations to develop their own cultures and languages. On the other hand, Stalin expressed the ‘Soviet intentions to overcome national differences’.<sup>307</sup> This statement can explain Stalin’s policy about Soviet national culture, ‘as national in form and socialist in content’.<sup>308</sup> The question comes to mind: Why did Stalin believe that newly created nations would dwell on the invention of their cultures and would not go further to politicise their nations?

Party leaders promoted the New Soviet Person concept to make people forget old conventions and replace them with communist standards led by a national harmony but without any individualist tendencies (see Figure 3-7).<sup>309</sup> Therefore, one of the reasons the Soviets gave tribes and clans in Central Asia their nationhood was to lead them to the ‘imagined road to socialism’, where a nation being only ‘a transitional stage’ would melt into ‘a socialist union of denationalized people’.<sup>310</sup> The Soviet government did want an ultimate unity of all its people but went about it in a complicated way. In the long run this route proved to be unsuccessful. While by promoting the idea of the New Soviet Person the Soviets suppressed individualist tendencies that could lead to dissent, it was nationalist tendencies that became one of the causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union. It is necessary in this research to explore the New Soviet Person subject as it is a part of the Soviet mass mobilisation policies that influenced the nation-building process in Tajikistan.



Figure 3-7: By the Siberian Times Reporter, "Scientists Map the DNA of Ethnic Groups in Former Soviet Union", 19 February 2015, *The Siberian Times*, accessed September 2018, available online from: <https://siberiantimes.com/science/casestudy/news/n0124-scientists-map-the-dna-of-ethnic-groups-in-former-soviet-union/>

The Bolsheviks and Lenin wished to create a progressive Communist society by transforming people through psychology. Engels and Marx's ideas on class inequality stated that the only way of getting rid of this unfair state of society is to create a unified society free of class differences and hostility.<sup>311</sup> Their ideas were taken as the conceptual basis for the Bolsheviks to create a new idealistic Soviet society. Another theory by the German philosopher Bernice Rosenthal states that the idea of the New Soviet Person was inspired by Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathushtra*, which developed the idea of the *Übermensch* (Superman).<sup>312</sup> Nietzsche wrote about *Übermensch* as 'those who do not first seek behind the stars for a reason to go under and be a sacrifice' or 'him whose soul is overfull so that he forgets himself and all things are in him.'<sup>313</sup> Jon Savage compares this statement with Trotsky's statement on the New Soviet Person: 'Emancipated man will want to attain a greater equilibrium...in order to reduce the fear of death to a rational reaction of the organism towards danger' and 'Man will make it his purpose to master his own feelings, to raise his instincts to the heights of consciousness...to create a higher biological type, or, if you please, a *superman*'.<sup>314</sup> Through this comparison between the New Soviet Person and Superman's characteristics, we can see that the Bolsheviks could be inspired by Nietzsche as well as Marx and Engels.

Before instilling the New Soviet Person ideology, the Communist regime had to get rid of the old ideologies of the previous regime. As described by the Soviet writer Andrei Sinyavskii in *Soviet Civilization*, the move into a new ideology of pure Communism included persistent persuasion of the population about the new social philosophy that 'would require the creation of utterly new conditions of existence'.<sup>315</sup> The Bolsheviks used mass

mobilisation tools, such as education, mass media and art forms to instil their new ideology. They uprooted the former education systems and created new ones based on heavy indoctrination of communist ideology. Peter Kenez states that the ‘propaganda state...had to win over people for the new goals: social construction, and the creation of a socialist human being’.<sup>316</sup> Fritzsche and Hellbeck assert that the Soviet regime also established a proletariat culture (Proletcult) in the hope of spreading their ideas of the New Person and to ‘bring about a spiritual revolution, renewing the consciousness of the working class’<sup>317</sup>.

Another way to induce people from any republic to become a part and a driver of the New Soviet Person ideology was membership in the Komsomol (a youth organization controlled by the Communist Party). This organisation, although open, had an elitist aura that induced the Soviet people to strive to be a part of it. The requirements to enter the organisation were to fully embrace Soviet values. Membership gave an opportunity for social mobility via obtaining higher bureaucratic positions. Most young working-class people strived to gain membership of this elite organisation, which gave them the New Soviet Person’s status. Consequently, they became politically educated and educated their peers (see Figure 3-8). This chain reaction converted large numbers of people to the new ideology.<sup>318</sup> However, at the beginning of the Soviet era Tajik people had very little understanding of such memberships. For example, one Tajik communist said that he joined the communist party in 1930s because he had heard that it would give him the right to buy fabric. After he was told that ‘anyone can buy fabric, it does not depend on party membership’, he said: ‘Good, then you can exclude me from the party now’.<sup>319</sup> It took at least three decades for such ideas to be instilled in the local population.

Another method for instilling the ideology of the New Soviet Person was industrial reform. In the 1960s industrial reforms gained momentum in Central Asia and Tajikistan became the third largest cotton producing republic. Its heavy industry, especially aluminium production, was developed as well. Factories, plants and kolkhozes were beautified in literature and arts and represented as a symbol of concentration of the system of beliefs of the Soviet regime. People who worked in such places were presented as perfect examples of the *Proletariat Superman*.<sup>320</sup> For example, the statue Worker and Kolkhoz Woman was used as a symbol of a *Super Couple* (see Figure 3-9 and Figure 3-10). The use of industrial and technological innovations in promoting ideology were inspired by the teaching Marx and Engels. They stated that social surroundings cause socialists ‘to consider themselves far superior to all

class antagonisms'.<sup>321</sup> The economic sector of society was used to influence people about the superiority of the New Soviet Person and to infuse 'disorganized human individuals into a gigantic collective machine'.<sup>322</sup>



Figure 3-8: Youth Organisation of the Communist Party of the USSR. The title on the books 'Lenin. Stalin'. The commentary below: 'Young builders of Communism! Advance to new successes in work and study!', dated 1949. The Museum of History, Kochkov School, accessed September 2018, available from: <http://lew.kochki.edusite.ru/p6aa1.html>



Figure 3-9: Mosfilm Logo – 1979, Russell Pinkston, "Tropes in the Media: Worker", History of Graphic Design, NC State University, accessed September 2018, available online from: <https://go.distance.ncsu.edu/gd203/?p=23061>



Figure 3-10: Worker and Kolkhoz Woman on postmarks of various years. Accessed May 2016, <http://arcticaov.ru/fb.ru/misc/i/gallery/20665/446684.jpg>

Nation building in each Soviet Republic seemed to be another methodology for creating these utterly new conditions that would lead to the ultimate New Soviet Person. The same methods of education and mass media were used to instil individual nationalist ideas within each republic. Each had its national history rewritten, national literature created, national language reformed, national magazines newspapers published. Communist ideology was required to be ingrained within these individual nationalist literature, history and publications. Such fusion of two ideologies seems strange because they do not necessarily complement each other.

Fragner points out that Soviets actually ‘resisted autonomous nationalism’, in fear of separatism, while they promoted ‘Soviet nationalism’.<sup>323</sup> Nationalism both Soviet and autonomous was important as a ‘mobilizing tool’ for the Soviet regime. Nationalism usually assembles masses together and provides an opportunity to rule them through emotional appeals.<sup>324</sup> Soviet nationalism aimed to support the national groups created by the Soviet government. These groups had to become conscious of themselves as nations under the Soviet system but to prevent any thought of independence and sovereignty.<sup>325</sup> Instead they were to dissolve into the New Soviet Person.

There were alternative opinions within the early Soviet government on the structure of the Soviet Union. Trotsky and Bukharin were for the idea of the New Soviet Person, but against some methodologies used to attain it. They seemed to advocate one united country – ‘Great-State’ – without the formation of national republics and regions. This could more likely make the New Soviet Person concept a reality. They argued that the level of development of many people on the territory of former tsarist Russia was not advanced enough and giving these people autonomies would only bring conflict. However, their prescient point of view was presumed chauvinistic and not accepted.<sup>326</sup>

There were other forms of criticism in the Soviet literature from the very beginning to the end of the Soviet regime. For example, Mikhail Bulgakov wrote a book entitled *Heart of a Dog* in 1925, which was published only in 1987 due to Soviet censorship, while its English version was published in 1968 by Harvill Press. The book shows the experiment of social and medical transformation of a dog Sharik to a man Sharikov, who is supposed to embrace the Soviet values. However, the dog fails to embrace them and turns against his makers. In the end he asks to be converted back to a dog.<sup>327</sup> The dog is a symbol of an uneducated working class whose torturers are compared with the Soviet government. The transformed dog is a satirical representation of a transformed proletariat embracing the idea of the New Soviet Person.<sup>328</sup> As most direct criticism was banned, there were other works such as Aleksandr Zinoviev's book *Homo Sovietikus* written in exile in Paris and published in 1986. The book makes fun of the New Soviet Person idea by bringing up such negative aspects such as indifference to common property and to the results of labour; lack of initiative and responsibility due to hierarchy; passive acceptance of hierarchical orders, etc.<sup>329</sup> Since the Soviet regime was based on hierarchy and dictatorship, such individual opinions were not considered but were actively suppressed and prohibited. The regime went on trying to promote its ideology using the strategies discussed earlier in this section.

Sergei Khodorovich states that the New Soviet Person's society 'was to be free of ethnic affiliations'.<sup>330</sup> Thus the Bolsheviks used national-territorial delimitation in Central Asia as a tool to suppress Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism among other reasons. They hoped that nationalism would work as a mobilising tool as well as turning Central Asians against each other rather than against Moscow in their small quarrels. In the end, they perhaps hoped to suppress nationalistic ideas by emphasizing communist ideology strongly in the region. Yet if this was the goal, the Soviet regime should not have developed any nationalistic ideas in its republics, as it went against joining Russians and Marxist ideology and instead led Central Asians to develop their own national paths. Nation-building worked more effectively in this region than the New Soviet Person. People who never identified themselves as a nation before, developed connections with each other through autonomous nationalism-threaded education and mass media. They could not be free of ethnic affiliations any longer. For example, in the 1970s the revival of Islam and the strengthening of nationalism in Tajikistan even led to anti-migrant protests. In 1978, there was an anti-Russian riot in which 13,000



people took part.<sup>331</sup> Thus nationalism was the main reason for obstructing the embedding of the New Soviet Person concept.

The nationalist politics of the Soviet regime aimed to separate culture from politics in individual republics. It emphasized the cultural traditions and roots of the nation without referring to any ideas of a separate statehood. Depoliticised Soviet nationalism led to the strengthening of attachment for the symbols of ethnic identity, which also led to the realization of self-distinctness. Consequently, self-realization made people think of themselves as different from others. Naturally, people began to ask questions about the ruling authority of those who were different from them. In Soviet Tajikistan unlike some other Soviet Republics, nationalism existed but it did not motivate people to separate their republic, as they were too economically dependent on the rest of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the idea of the New Soviet Man did not take a bold hold either.<sup>332</sup>

The main importance of including Central Asia in Russian-controlled territory, according to some Soviet historians, was that it led to the introduction and inculcation of Marxism into indigenous Central Asian people, who thus were able to join the advanced Russian culture and tie their lives to the revolutionary fight of the Russian proletariat.<sup>333</sup> In Tajikistan the New Soviet Person has been inculcated in the form of a Russified Soviet Person, which meant that people adopted Russian culture and language. By the end of the Soviet regime this was successfully instilled only in urban areas among some middle-class intelligentsia in Tajikistan, but not so much in rural areas. Few people, mainly urban dwellers, still use the Russian language as a main tool of communication and identify themselves as bearers of Russian values. One of the reasons behind most Tajik people not assimilating with Russians, and therefore, not becoming the New Soviet Person, was their immobile lifestyle. Russian people willingly moved from their country to other Soviet Republics and tended more easily to intermarry with the local population.<sup>334</sup> Central Asian people, especially Tajik people, were quite satisfied with their situation in kolkhozes and were not willing to move into physically difficult environments, such as the Far East, or to unfamiliar places where they would not have any kinship ties.<sup>335</sup> Moreover, in Tajikistan the family has served as a main anchor keeping Tajik people inside the country. Family connections and taking care of elderly relatives is a prominent feature of Tajik culture. This reluctance to leave their region during the Soviet Union was one of the factors bolstering the development of a stronger national identity compared to Soviet identity in Tajikistan.



Akbarzadeh states that the religion and customs were the main reasons for reluctance to migrate from Central Asia.<sup>336</sup> Religion indeed could be another reason for the New Soviet Person concept not fully embedding in the Central Asian people. The New Soviet Person was supposed to be 'a-religious' in a traditional religious sense, but 'to believe wholeheartedly in and be devoted to the ideology, the Party and its leaders'.<sup>337</sup> Yet religion was embedded into Central Asian culture, it was in everyday rituals and traditions, secretly kept up by people at home during the Soviet period. For example, Tajik people pretended to be devoted members of Komsomol or the Communist party, but at home, they still practiced old religious customs.<sup>338</sup> From the 1970s Islam experienced a revival and further proliferated in Tajikistan. There were a few religious schools, which although unofficial were not banned. Muhammadjon Hindustani held one of these schools in his house in the Silk Factory quarter of Dushanbe. His students were Said Abdullo Nuri and Muhammadsharif Himmatzoda,<sup>339</sup> who played prominent roles in the Tajik civil war (see Chapter 6). These religious activities impeded the New Soviet Person concept, because they were difficult to fully absorb through this double life.

After about seventy years this plan of creating cultural national identity through dividing territory, constructing language and history went out of control.<sup>340</sup> Nations on the territory of the Soviet Union not only felt that they were separate cultural nations, but also started to have a political sense of nation; hence separatist movements would soon be expected to develop. Russian chauvinism was the main topic of complaints by most Soviet republics from the beginning of the Soviet Union, but by the 1980s the nationalization policy became a dominant theme. The Soviet nationalization policy was akin to a time bomb created right at the start of the Soviet era. The Soviets mobilising nationalism, but only allowing cultural nationalism in individual republics or the promotion of the New Soviet Person did not prevent separatist movements forming in the Soviet Republics.

Separatist nationalist movements started in the Soviet republics during perestroika in the 1980s. Ukraine, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia and Georgia were all demanding political and cultural autonomy. Nationalist movements became even stronger from 1985, when Mikhail Gorbachev became General Secretary of the Communist Party. Nationalist riots and meetings happened in Russia itself, calling for the protection of the Russian populations in non-Russian republics.<sup>341</sup> Tajikistan was not among these countries, however, as it had not

declared a wish for independence, primarily due to its economic dependence on the wider Soviet system.

The liberalization of the Soviet system by Gorbachev was one of the factors increasing nationalist movements. Under the strict dictatorship of early Soviet leaders, people in republics were afraid to protest, for fear of exile or forced migration. As soon as the government started to decentralise, other political parties felt they had the same rights as the Moscow Communist Party to make decisions about themselves.<sup>342</sup> At the same time, Soviet peoples started to anticipate greater and greater freedom as they became more aware of the wider world. Consequently, nationalist movements became more and more daring. Lastly, the Russification of the whole Soviet Union fuelled a request for official status to be given to native languages and national symbols; which was finally granted in 1989.<sup>343</sup> The same year, the Tajik SSR made the Tajik language the national language of Tajikistan, one of the first republics to do so. These nationalist movements were one of the reasons for the collapse of the Soviet Union and Central Asian republics for the first time remained to govern on their own. By drawing the borders, constructing national languages and advancing education, the Soviets ‘created the foundations of a modern nation’ in Tajikistan, as well as in other Central Asian countries.<sup>344</sup>

Geiss declares that the national identity linked to Soviet identity was not important, because the Soviets avoided its politicisation and restricted the scope of this identity’s conceivable illustrations and evaluation.<sup>345</sup> Yet although the foundation of territorial and bureaucratic systems in Central Asian states gave rise to loyalty to the Soviet regime, the national-territorial component outlived the Union itself.<sup>346</sup> The influence of the Soviet Union on Central Asia earlier in the century appeared rapid and successful. However, when the Soviet Union collapsed, it was apparent that the concept of the New Soviet Person was not embedded in the populations of these countries. Central Asian countries returned to the principles of regionalism, protectionism, and a kinship-based system of promotion in all spheres of society.<sup>347</sup> Even though the relative rapidity of the rise and fall of the Soviet regime did not let some of the New Soviet Person concept become firmly rooted in these cultures, the ideas of national identity became engraved in the self-identification of people in this region.

### **3.6 Conclusions**

The Soviet Regime vastly changed the perception of the Central Asian people about themselves and the world around them. Through the division of the geographic area into countries; the creation of national cultures, literature and art styles; educating populations in ideas of nationalism; using mass media to broadcast nationalism themes; and registration of people as citizens of a country which they could not change; people developed a consciousness about their national identity. People started to identify themselves with a certain state, language, history, and art style. Hundreds of years of European development were compressed into several decades in the Central Asian states: their industrial, and agricultural structures completely transformed; their education and medical services drastically change and improved; their cultural activities converted into European ones, such as theatre, cinema, etc.; their patriarchy and gender segregation changed to some extent; finally, their self-consciousness redefined and categorised.

The shape of the Central Asian countries originated from decisions of the Soviet Union government, which disregarded the complex inter-relationships between people in Central Asia, and defined new nations based on Lenin's and Stalin's nationalist policies and strategies for international affairs. On the one hand, the Soviet Union tried to suppress the idea of nationalism through the statement of the equality of all people driven by the idea of creating the New Soviet Person. On the other hand, the Soviet Union supported the development of nationalistic ideas by creating new states out of its colonies instead of making them Russian regions. The clash of these two strategies ultimately was one of the causes of the collapse of the Soviet Union.

## **4 The reasons for creating the Tajik SSR**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Chapter 3 discussed the circumstances of the creation of all the Central Asian countries. In this chapter, I primarily concentrate on Tajikistan, as the main topic of this thesis, exploring the historical background of Tajikistan primarily in the period from 1917 to the 1930s, as this is when Tajikistan was formed. As soon as the Tajik nation was created, its historians and politicians, along with the Soviet leader Stalin, claimed that it was the most ancient Central Asian nation. I argue that it was primarily created in the 1920s based on existing clans and tribes who shared culture and territory but did not have any notion of nationality or of the Tajik state until then.

In the second section I explain why it is surprising that the Tajik people were granted SSR status. In the rest of the Chapter I discuss the reasons for the creation of the Tajik nation. One was the desire of the Bolsheviks to influence other Persian-speaking countries. Some proportion of the Turkestan population spoke the Persian language, so it seemed a good opportunity to create a Persian-speaking communist 'brother' for Persia (Iran) and Afghanistan. This is discussed in the third section, where I focus on Tajikistan's creation as a product of wider Soviet foreign policy. Another reason for the creation of Tajikistan was the suppression of Pan-Turkism which was threatening the newly created Soviet government, discussed in the fourth section. Finally, in the fifth section I discuss the local elite's fight with the Uzbek government for power and economic resources which boosted Tajik nationalistic movements.

Please note that the country that is now called Iran was known as Persia for many centuries, though its people have referred to themselves as Iranian and the territory they inhabited as Iran for an equally long time. In 1935 the then Shah of Persia asked that the country should be referred to as Iran, but the sources examined when preparing this thesis have used the two names interchangeably. I have generally used the name Persia for pre-1935 references and Iran for later references, but where quoting original sources I have used the same name as the source quoted, which sometimes results in post 1935 references to Persia.

## 4.2 'Privileged' vs 'unprivileged' republics

The Tajik ASSR was detached from the Uzbek SSR, thus making it privileged. Initially, the Soviet government did not consider Tajiks to be the main nationality: firstly, because there was not enough population to create a separate nation; secondly, because they were intermixed with Uzbeks and it was difficult to differentiate these two groups; and thirdly, because Soviet Central Asia was predominantly Turkic, so the Tajiks were a minority and could have been treated as such. These issues meant that creation of the Tajik state was presented with various challenges discussed in the later parts of this chapter. Nevertheless, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was created in 1929 and continued in existence throughout the whole Soviet period and thereafter.

This period of establishment of the Tajik Soviet Republic is not elaborated much in Tajik academic books of the Soviet period. The 142 dissertations of the Tajik State University department of history written in the 1950s and 1960s on Tajik history entirely skip any description of the creation of the Tajik Republic. The timeline in the collection of these dissertations jumps from the feudal nineteenth-century directly to Soviet industrial, agricultural and cultural achievements, communist propaganda, typical *pyatiletka* (five-year plan) accomplishments of the 1920s and further on the territory of Soviet Tajikistan.<sup>348</sup> None of the dissertations mentioned the circumstances or reasons for the establishment of the republic. It is my argument that academics were not encouraged to research and write about this topic in case they revealed contradictions between the Soviet ideology of 'liberating' 'nationalities' in Central Asia, and the fact that people there had neither nationalities nor needed liberation.

The 'privilege' of forming a separate Soviet Socialist Republic was not granted to all large nationalities/ethnic groups/clans/tribes on the territory of the ex-Russian Empire. One of the Soviet national delimitation requirements was to have at least one million people of the same ethnicity to become a separate Soviet Socialist Republic.<sup>349</sup> However, the national and territorial delimitation of the Soviet Union was driven by larger economic, geopolitical and international reasons as well. The Soviet activist, Chekalin compares 'backward economy', nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyle and tribes of Central Asian people with other people, such as Udmurtians, Kalmuks, Komis, Yakutians, Chuvashes and others, who did not have any consolidated national self-awareness during tsarist Russia. He believes that these groups would assimilate and thus the individual groups would become extinct if not for the help of

the Soviet regime.<sup>350</sup> Yet regardless of the equality of status and background of these people in the eyes of Russians, some were made main nationalities, others merely sub-groups.

Hence, for example, in 1920 there were 1,062,005 Chuvash people, which would be enough to create a titular nation according to Soviet policies.<sup>351</sup> The Soviet government upgraded the Chuvash district into the Chuvash ASSR within the RSFSR (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republics) in 1925 but did not make it a separate Soviet republic. In spite of street protests in support of autonomy in Mordvinian villages, Mordvinians were also only promoted to the Mordvinian Autonomous Oblast in 1929,<sup>352</sup> when their population had been 1,167,537 in 1920.<sup>353</sup> Other ethnicities with more than one million people that were not made a separate Soviet Socialist Republic were Jews (1,842,384 in 1920) and Volga Tatars (2,265,000 in 1920).<sup>354</sup> In the case of Jews, it was perhaps the additional lack of common territory that did not create for them a separate republic, since their population was spread around the whole former Russian Empire. Also, upgrading these regions into separate Soviet Socialist republics would not have provided Soviet economic and political benefits or addressed the Russian civil war (1917-1922) tactical concerns.<sup>355</sup> Moreover, both Chuvash and Mordvins did not have an external border with foreign countries and would not have played any role in international affairs.

In contrast to Jews, Chuvashes and Mordvins, Tajiks were one of those minorities who did not have any distinct sense of united identity. The first time Tajiks were mentioned using this name by the Soviet government was in reports of the Executive Bureau of the Central Committee of the Bukhara Communist Party in 1924. It stated that the Tajik people inhabited a rather small territory of the Match, Karategin and Garm regions (mountainous regions of modern Tajikistan) in the Tajik autonomous region in Uzbekistan – Bukhara.<sup>356</sup> The population of Tajiks was only 871,532 in 1924<sup>357</sup>, so in terms of population, Tajiks did not meet the requirement for becoming a republic.

Also, during the national delimitation, Tajiks were considered to be among the backward, disunited tribes, such as Turkmens. Chekalin blames this disunity and backwardness on Russian military-feudal imperialism, as well as on oppression by the Emir of Bukhara. He implies that without this oppression these tribes would thrive and form consolidated nation-states.<sup>358</sup> Yet I have shown in Chapter 3 that the Russian Empire's non-intervention in the

social life of Central Asian's was, on the contrary, positive, and also that the criticism of the emir was primarily Soviet anti-bourgeoisie propaganda.

At the same time, Chekalin believes that Tajiks had a 'rich historical and cultural past', because their language was used by famous poets Firdausi and Saadi, and the encyclopaedist and scientist Avicenna.<sup>359</sup> Yet in 1926 according to the Soviet census only 4% of men and 0.1% of women were literate on the Tajik territory.<sup>360</sup> Again, the only proof of the ancient and rich cultural heritage of Tajiks is their language and literature, which as discussed earlier was shared by many other peoples on the territory of Central Asia, no matter what their ethnic background. While language and literature were such an important feature for Soviet nationalists, Tajik literacy levels at that time show that it was unimportant to the local population. This shows that the cultural part of the Tajik identity was underdeveloped and could not play a primary role in their being given a separate republic.

Yet Tajiks who were like Chuvashes and other small groups of people on the territory of Soviet Union were made a distinct nation. It was not so much their common culture, delineated historical territory or psychological mind-set that played a role but their location and the affinity of their language to other Persians. To become a Union Republic there was another prerequisite, namely having an outside border with a foreign country. This prerequisite was important in acquiring the highest position of Union republic within USSR. Some autonomous territories within the RSFSR had more territory than those granted to become Union Republics but did not gain the same status.<sup>361</sup> Upgrading a Persian-speaking territory into a republic could have potentially influenced other Persian-speaking countries, such as Afghanistan and Iran, which the Soviet Union undoubtedly wanted to include not necessarily into the union but into the communist fraternity. This is discussed further in the following section.

### **4.3 The Persian influence**

In this section I focus on Tajikistan's creation as a product of wider Soviet foreign policy. I examine the Soviet relationship with Iran and Afghanistan and draw conclusions about how it influenced the decision to create the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic.

All fifteen Soviet Republics were designed in a way that they each bordered a foreign country and each of them had a Ministry of Foreign Affairs, although quite a nominal one,

as the main decisions were made in Moscow. The Central Asian Soviet Republics, such as Tajikistan, were created more for foreign policy than for any other reasons. During its first decades, the Soviet Union tried to encourage Persian-speaking people in Iran and Afghanistan to be inspired by their ‘brothers’ in the neighbouring Soviet country – Tajikistan. Although Soviet Tajikistan was ‘a much smaller and less important constituent republic’ than other Central Asian countries, it was politically important due to its geographical location bordering with Afghanistan.<sup>362</sup> The Soviet government even tried to persuade Persian and Turkic-speaking people in Persia and Afghanistan ‘to regard themselves as belonging to the newly formed [Soviet] national republics’.<sup>363</sup> In terms of economics, the only industries of note in Soviet Tajikistan were cotton and rare metal (e.g. uranium) extraction, but these were not highly successful; in the 1940s Tajikistan’s industry plans, as well as its agricultural and education plans, were not achieved.<sup>364</sup> This supports the view that creating a separate Tajik republic was driven more by political than economic considerations for the government in Moscow. The creation of a Persian-speaking Soviet republic was supposed to establish a gateway to other Persian speaking people in Afghanistan and Iran, and even North India ‘to provide a socialist model to Eastern countries’.<sup>365</sup>

The Soviet Union’s interest in Persia and Afghanistan was a legacy of the Russian Empire. The Bolsheviks that came to power in place of the Russian Empire did not abandon hopes of conquering Persian-speaking territory whether by ideology or by military force, as they ‘inherited the empire and expansionist ambitions of tsarist Russia... [and were] determined not only to regain and hold the old imperial territories but to extend them’.<sup>366</sup> Some even speculated that the Soviet Union planned to apply the same policy models to Afghanistan and Iran that it had used in Russian Central Asia if it managed to conquer them. These models primarily consisted of dividing the country on ethnic and cultural grounds, giving each its own language and schooling; and with adoption of the Russian language as *lingua franca*. More importantly, ‘the Central Asian model’ that had already been used in Soviet Central Asia was supposed ‘to disintegrate the cultural and religious ties between different tribes and ethnic groups ... [which would lead the country] towards increased fragmentation, atomization, alienation, and ultimate social disintegration under centralized Soviet dominance’.<sup>367</sup> Therefore, should Russia have conquered Afghanistan and Iran, they would have followed the same process of delimitation as in Russian Central Asia.



The creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic could indeed be justified by the long-term interest of Russians in Persian-speaking territories. Russians had been interested in occupying Persian territory at least since the eighteenth century and in the nineteenth century seized contemporary Georgia, Armenia and northern Azerbaijan from the Persian Empire.<sup>368</sup> There were multiple wars between Persian and Russian Empires between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In the eighteenth century the Russian advance almost succeeded and, in 1914, the northern (richer) half of Persia almost became a part of Russian Empire or at least a protectorate.<sup>369</sup> Moreover, Russia tried, mostly successfully, to wrest the Ottoman region, Caspian region and Caucasus from Persian control. In the nineteenth century when the Russian Empire was conquering Central Asia, the conquest made it possible to get to Persia from the north-east. In 1839 when Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson explored Persian Kurdistan and northern Afghanistan, he noted that Russia was trying to conquer Merv, on the route to the Caspian and Northern Khorasan (modern north-eastern Iran), but the Persian frontier was impassable for them.<sup>370</sup> Gaining Central Asia would provide a strategic base for Russians to go forward into the region or to mount a defensive of their own borders. The Russian conquest of Central Asia was in some ways lucrative for Persia though, as it freed them from Turkomans' slave-capturing and raids.<sup>371</sup> The modern Iranian territory would have been next on Russia's list for conquest if it was not for the October Revolution of 1917.

Afghanistan had also long been a territory of interest to the Russian Empire.<sup>372</sup> At the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century it served as a buffer zone between the Russian and British Empires' expansionist forces. During and after the Socialist Revolution the Afghan leader, Amir Amanullah, had been dancing around the Soviet, British and German forces to have a balance of power. At this time, the British Ambassador to Afghanistan, Francis Humphrys, argued that the Soviet Union was gradually enticing Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkomans in Afghanistan into the Soviet ideology to turn the north of Afghanistan into a Russian province, causing the country to disintegrate. Initially, the young Soviet government did not engage in direct expansionistic behaviour but tried to influence the Persian-speaking countries through primarily peaceful measures. When peaceful measures were not successful the communists resorted to more violent methods, discussed later in this section.

The creation of the Tajik Republic was a model for the Persian-speaking world, a jumping off point from where new socialist revolutions would emerge in the East influenced by Persian-speaking Soviet Tajikistan. The northern part of Afghanistan has had ‘the presence of a large Tajik racial minority’<sup>373</sup>, who have little ethnic unity and primarily associate themselves with the region or city they are coming from rather than ethnicity.<sup>374</sup> Tajiks are the second largest national minority now in Afghanistan, with about 8 million in 2011, 27% of Afghanistan’s population. This exceeds the population of Tajikistan itself.<sup>375</sup> The distribution of the Tajik minority in Afghanistan is shown in Figure 4-1. Also, the *Basmachi* movement in 1919-1933 resulted in fifty thousand to perhaps many times as many Tajiks and Uzbeks seeking refuge in northern Afghanistan, as either members of the *Basmachi* or merely fleeing from Soviet control.<sup>376</sup> These refugees kept in touch with their relatives and friends left over the border,<sup>377</sup> increasing the possibility of the Tajik SSR’s ideology influencing Tajik refugees in Afghanistan. The creation and promotion of the national Tajik language based on the Persian language made it easier for the local government to relay orders from the central government to the masses, while the central government in Moscow hoped for the dissemination of Soviet ideals to the Persian-speaking neighbourhood of Tajikistan – Afghanistan and Iran.

In addition, just before the creation of the Tajik ASSR and Tajik SSR, there were some further factors that might have contributed to the decision of the government in Moscow. For example, the Soviet-Persian relationship in 1919-1924, which went through several controversial steps, could have played a part. Initially, in 1917 the Bolsheviks expressed the sentiment that Persia, which had been invaded by the Russian and British imperialists, should be liberated and the Persian people should choose their own destiny. However, in 1919 when Persia came increasingly under the influence of the British and ended any relationship with the Soviet government, the Bolsheviks issued an appeal ‘To the Workers and Peasants of Persia’. This was aimed at motivating a proletarian revolution in Persia. In 1920, they also occupied the Persian city of Anzali in Gilan province (see Figure 4-2) and established the Soviet Republic of Gilan under the Azerbaijani flag, falsely denying the Soviet central government’s involvement in this. Eventually, Anzali was surrendered by the Soviet government, supposedly because it went against its policies on anti-tsarism. The Soviet-Persian Treaty was signed in 1921, which stated that the Soviets would return Anzali to Persia, but could re-enter the country, if it hosted any individual or organisation engaged

in war against the Soviet Union. Yet, despite this treaty, the Bolsheviki still wanted to exercise influence over Persia. Lev Karakhan, Deputy People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, suggested direct intervention into Persia and the formation of a socialist government.<sup>378</sup> Instead of this radical option, which could have been implemented many times, another suggestion was adopted, to gradually develop relations with Persia via non-violent measures.<sup>379</sup> These events took place just before the creation of the Tajik ASSR in 1924, the formation of which was not considered earlier. Thus perhaps, this decision had been influenced by the recent Persian-Soviet affairs.

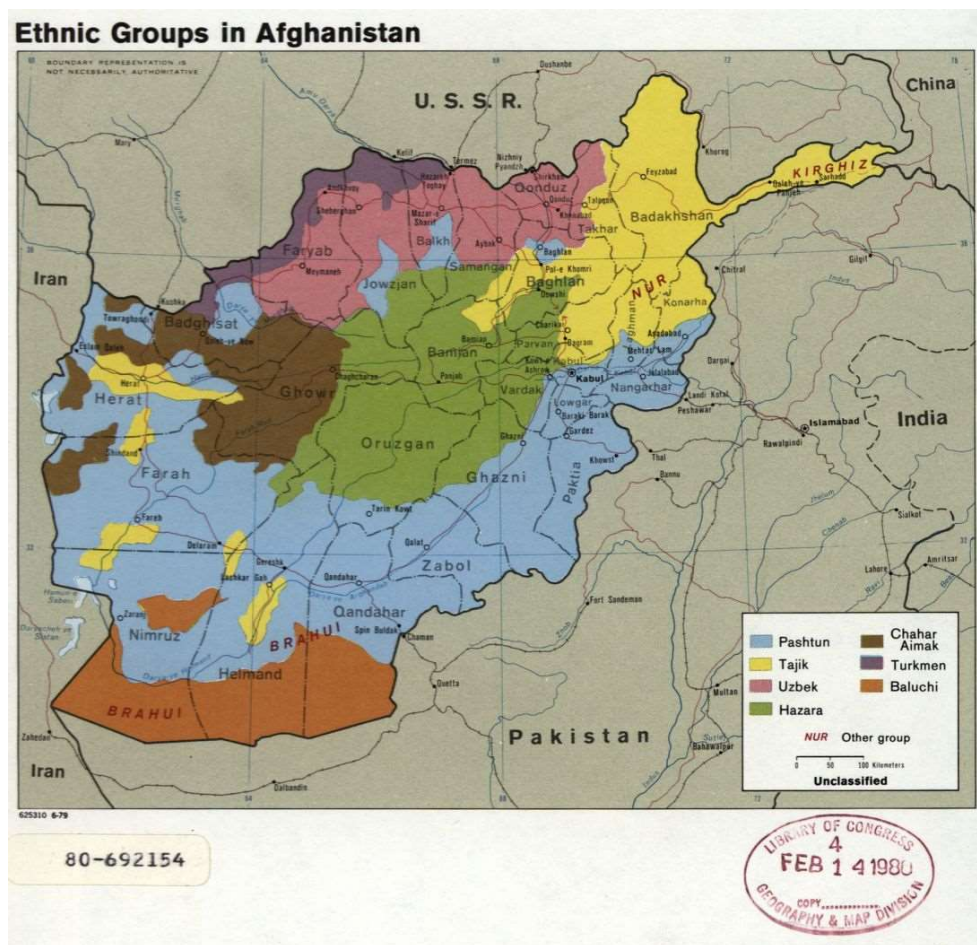


Figure 4-1: Library of Congress, "Afghanistan Ethnic Groups", accessed June 2016, available online from: <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g7631e.ct001105/>



Figure 4-2: Ezilon Maps, Road Map of Iran, accessed June 2016, available online from: <http://www.ezilon.com/maps/images/asia/Iranian-road-map.gif>

Moreover, in 1929, in the same year that the Tajik ASSR was upgraded to the Tajik SSR, the king Habibullah or Bacha-i-Saqa (son of a water carrier), described by contemporary historians as a Tajik bandit, seized power from the Pashtun tribes who had always been dominant in the region. Khan's reign only lasted for nine months, during January-October 1929, when the Pashtuns took power back with the help of the British and executed him.<sup>380</sup> In June of the same year, Abdur Rahim, another Tajik tribe member from Koh-I Damanin in Afghanistan, seized Herat and governed there until 1935.<sup>381</sup> There was a speculation that the Soviet government had a good diplomatic relationship with Habibullah and even gained a promise of mining concessions on the Afghan territory bordering Turkestan.<sup>382</sup> Others even go so far as to suggest that Habibullah was 'a Soviet-supported candidate'.<sup>383</sup> At the same time, Agabekov describes the unsuccessful Soviet military invasion to help the defeated King Amanullah in Afghanistan in 1929.<sup>384</sup> During the same year, there was heated discussion about creating the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, which finally concluded in

December 1929. The rule of the Amir from the Tajik tribe in Afghanistan might have given hope to the Soviet government that they could connect better with Afghanistan's Tajik tribal leaders through the creation of the Tajik SSR, thus influencing the decision to create it.

Also, in April 1929 Persian military forces concentrated on the Afghan-Persian border and the Soviet Union was afraid that Persia would occupy the Herat province. The Soviet government issued a warning to the Persian government that should such intervention take place supported by foreign forces, there would be heavy consequences for the political independence of Persia and it would be isolated from other friendly Eastern countries.<sup>385</sup> The Soviet government was afraid that Persia and possible foreign instigators would not stop in Afghanistan but would proceed to Russian Central Asia. Persia did not proceed with the intervention though. Persia's true motives were to try to break out from both Russian and British influences.<sup>386</sup> Yet, creating the Tajik SSR the same year could have been affected by these events in its Persian neighbourhood. Having a seemingly separate Persian-speaking republic, the Soviet government could have hoped to attract Persians to the Soviet ideology, showing them how Persian-speaking people happily lived within a communist country.

The attempts to influence Persia and Afghanistan were not successful for several reasons. The first was that the Soviet government did not seem to be aware of the ethnic, tribal and religious differences among the Persian-speaking people. *Narkomnats* (People's Commissariat of Nationalities) had a department of Persian national minority for the peoples of Central Asia. It considered Persian-speaking people in Central Asia to be a single homogeneous group. *Narkomnats* was striving to promote the Persian language in schools and to publish more literature in Persian. For this reason, one migrant Persian representative, Said Riza Alizoda, established *Shuloi Inkilob*, 'The Flame of Revolution', a newspaper published in Persian in Samarkand, in modern Uzbekistan.<sup>387</sup> In one of its issues *Shuloi Inkilob* described the Persian department of *Narkomnats* as a combined department of Persians, Afghans and Tajiks. But this was far from reality. There was a small group that had recently migrated from Persia, spoke the Western Persian dialect and were of the Shiite faith. A Tajik historian Masov claims that these Persians were not Tajiks at all, but migrants from Merv at the end of eighteenth century.<sup>388</sup> One might argue in this case, that some ancestors of Tajiks were also Persian migrants. There were Afghans who spoke the Western Persian dialect, professed Sunnism and were divided into many tribes. There were, 'valley Tajiks' who had lived in the region for many centuries, spoke the Western Persian dialect

(with some adopted Turkic elements in their language) and professed a Sunni faith. The major part of this group had been intermixed with the Turkic population (Uzbeks) and they were called Sarts (discussed further in Section 4.4). Finally, there were the Pamiri people who had lived in the mountainous region for many centuries, spoke Eastern Persian dialect and professed a branch of Shiite faith – Ismailism. These various groups historically have not shared much sympathy with each other, primarily due to religious and tribal differences. A contemporary young Tajik historian, Alimardon, openly expressed disdain and contempt when mentioning a Persian migrated minority versus Tajik ethnicity during the formation of Soviet Tajikistan. He pointed out that there is a sharp difference between Persians and Tajiks based on religion so these two groups cannot easily be amalgamated.<sup>389</sup> The fact that even in the civil war in the 1990s (discussed in Chapter 4), the Pamiri – Ismaili people, members of a Shiite denomination that follows the Aga Khan, were persecuted by other Tajiks provides evidence of the strength and long standing of these views. Central Asian governments are still highly suspicious of Iranian influence on their Shiite populations.<sup>390</sup> These religious differences are the second important reason why the Tajik SSR did not have any influence on other Persian-speaking countries during its existence.

Another way of attracting Persian speakers and Muslims in general was through statements of liberation from capitalism and imperialism. The Bolsheviks endeavoured to represent their revolution and subsequent activities aimed at liberation of the Eastern countries, especially Muslims. For example, in 1919 the Seventh All-Russian Congress of Soviets proclaimed: ‘the conviction has penetrated the Muslim East that the RSFSR, located as it is between capitalist Europe and the peoples of Asia enslaved by imperialism, is their stronghold in their struggle for liberation from national oppression’.<sup>391</sup> With such statements the Soviet government strove to persuade Asian people that it endorsed their independence both inside and outside Russian territory. In another instance, before the Afghan ambassador, Muhammad Wali’s arrival in Tashkent in 1919, the Soviets broadcasted ‘to the revolutionary Proletariat’ of Eastern countries, calling ‘to take the government into your hands’. It was a direct call to Afghanistan as well as Persia: ‘We hope to stand shoulder to shoulder with you in the final fight against world capitalism, and especially against the British, who choke all native races...’<sup>392</sup>. The Afghans’ reply was favourable at that time, stating that they preferred the Soviets to the British, because the Soviets presumably provided them with religious freedom and the Soviets also strove for the liberation of all Muslims in the world.<sup>393</sup> But the

Soviet anti-religious policies pushed Afghans away. During the Soviet-Afghan war in 1979, the majority of Afghans who took up arms against the Soviets, were ‘practitioners of what one might call “village Islam”, which scorned atheism’.<sup>394</sup> Since the Soviets were atheists, this ‘damned them and their associates in the eyes of many Afghan[s ...].’<sup>395</sup> At the beginning of the Soviet era, the Afghans were trying to decide between the Soviets and the British, claiming the latter ones to be anti-Muslim, only to find the Soviets to be atheistic. Similar policies caused conflict in Soviet Central Asia and led to the outbreak of the *Basmachi* movement discussed in Chapter 3. This again shows that the lack of religious freedom is another reason why Soviet Tajikistan did not seem an attractive model to Afghans and Persians in the end.

Other non-violent measures to attract Afghanistan to the communist ‘brotherhood’ included duty-free access of Afghan goods to the USSR and cultural trips for Afghan and other Asian intellectuals. The Soviet regime tried to seduce Persian and Turkic-speaking populations by improved cultural and living conditions in Soviet Central Asia. Afghan, Iranian, Chinese and Turkish delegations (the last one declined) were invited to visit Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara in 1950. The Afghans and Iranians could speak Persian there, saying that ‘[local population] spoke Persian, but with their Uzbek dialect’,<sup>396</sup> which reinforces my earlier statement that Uzbeks and Tajiks were generally mixed tribes interchangeably speaking Persian and Turkic languages. The Afghans intelligentsia, a poet and a university professor among them, described their visit as quite enjoyable. Yet they expressed a satisfied opinion that Soviet Central Asians were not free [to move and speak], while in contrast to them the Afghans were independent.<sup>397</sup> We can conclude that as much as they found the conditions in the north better industrially than in their own countries, they would not have liked similar ones due to the restrictions of freedom of speech and movement.

The Soviets not only tried to influence the main nationalities of Persia and Afghanistan, but also national minorities or tribes, such as Kurds, Armenians, Arabs, Azeris and Turks. The location of those minorities in relation to the Soviet borders can be seen in the image below (Figure 4-3). For example, Sir Reader Bullard stated that Soviet consuls in Kermanshah and Awaz in Persia expressed their ‘assurances of friendship [to Kurds...] more than is necessary for their work’.<sup>398</sup> Armenians in Persia were of interest to Russians who frequently kept in contact with them, even when the Soviet consulates were closed in Persia. When the consulate in Isfahan was re-opened in 1942, Russians took even more interest in Armenians



of Julfa: they pressured Reza Shah to re-open Armenian schools in Persia. Also, there was a special show of a film about the life of Lenin in Armenian language at one of Isfahan's cinemas, where only Armenians were invited. Apart from that there were separate presentations, which contained an anti-Hitler speech in Armenian but open to the public.<sup>399</sup> Also, the Soviet consulate in Isfahan seemed to want to ingratiate themselves with poorer classes.<sup>400</sup> As Wheeler states, 'the Soviet authorities genuinely thought that the minorities in Persia and Afghanistan were anxious and ready to be liberated from Persian and Afghan rule'.<sup>401</sup> Unlike Afghanistan, the Tajik tribe did not exist as a national minority in Persia (and there does not seem to be any debate about this); Tajiks are considered the descendants of Eastern Persian inhabitants of Central Asia.<sup>402</sup> Thus the creation of Tajik SSR would be directly influencing Persians rather than their national minorities.



Figure 4-3: Diversity in Iran, Philip Carl Salzman, "Persians and Others: Iran's Minority Politics", *Middle East Strategy at Harvard*, Harvard University, accessed September 2018, available online from: <https://blogs.harvard.edu/mesh/2009/04/persians-and-others-irans-minority-politics/>

The early Soviet government did not entirely abandon its less peaceful methods of conquering Persia and Afghanistan. Initially, the communist regime was hesitant and perhaps disorganised in its attempts to invade either Persia or Afghanistan, at times advancing, at times retreating. There was evidence that somewhat more hostile measures were used at the beginning as well. Through G.S. Agabekov, a Soviet Armenian secret agent, who abandoned the Soviet Union in favour of the West in 1930, and his memoirs, *OGPU, the Secret Red Terror*, we can see some attempts of the Soviet government to subvert and involve itself in the affairs of Persia and Afghanistan. For example, Agabekov describes how



in 1926 the Soviet Counsel General in Mashhad (North Khorosan province, Persia) tried to use an open rebellion of the Persian garrison positioned in Bojnurd (North Khorosan province, Persia ).<sup>403</sup> Also in another instance, in the Afghan-Soviet treaty of 1921 the Bolsheviks promised to return a northern Afghan territory, Panjdeh, which was conquered by the Russian Empire in 1885. However, Panjdeh ended up being included in the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic instead.<sup>404</sup> This shows that although creating the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was one of the measures of the Soviets' early peaceful approach, the government in Moscow was running alternative strategies or perhaps uncoordinated ones.

There were other controversial instances that help to understand the reasons for the creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic. To reassure Muslims that Lenin had good intentions, the Soviet government signed treaties with Bukhara and Khiva Khanates in 1921, acknowledging their independence. It encouraged Afghan shah, 'Amannullah's pan-Islamic leadership ambitions'.<sup>405</sup> Yet the treaties were not honoured, as the Soviet forces continued military attempts. The Soviet government did undertake minor attacks on the Afghan territory at the beginning of its regime. Between 1919 and 1922 Afghan king Amanullah supported the *Basmachi* rebels in Bukhara and Khiva claiming that 'the Soviet government [has] to act on its promise to respect the independence of these Islamic states' and it failed to do so.<sup>406</sup> An island of Yangi Qala (Darqad) in Amu Darya (Oxus) river bordering with contemporary Tajikistan had housed one hundred and fifty Tajiks and one thousand Uzbeks who moved there during the *Basmachi* rebellion. One of Amannullah's goals seemed to be to extend his territory into Russian Central Asia. The island was also the base of the *Basmachi* rebels raiding the Soviet territory. This contributed to the worsening relationship between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan. In 1925, Soviet troops invaded this island. But Soviet Minister Leonide Starke framed it just as a misunderstanding.<sup>407</sup> The Soviets returned the island to Afghanistan in 1926. Ludwig Adamec confirms my view that the Soviets changed their foreign policy to use peaceful means to penetrate Afghanistan. He thinks the reason was the Soviets' belief that they had been able to develop a good relationship with the Afghans already. In its turn this was due to Afghans seeing the Soviets as a counterbalance to the British as well as accepting Russian help in suppressing tribal revolts via air force (Germany was unable and Britain unwilling to support in this issue).<sup>408</sup> The Soviet government also helped Afghanistan with its military forces and was first to recognise

its independence to suppress the economic and political dominance of Britain on the Afghan territory.<sup>409</sup>

Despite Moscow's endeavours, its efforts conflicted with the nationalistic politics of both Afghanistan and Persia in the 1930s. At the same time, in Soviet Tajikistan, Muslim communists were mocked for publicly practicing Islam and misunderstanding Soviet goals.<sup>410</sup> These circumstances could not inspire Afghans and Persians to become communist. The Soviet authorities reduced their focus on liberating national minorities until the 1940s. Peaceful measures did not work and forceful interventions by the Soviet government in Persia took place in the 1940s when the economic and political relationship between the Soviet Union and Persia was becoming worse and worse. During the Second World War the governments of both the Soviet Union and the Britain demanded the expulsion of German agents from Persia. Since the expulsion did not take place, acting under clause 6 of the Treaty of 1921, these two countries temporarily occupied the territory of Persia. This caused Reza Shah to abdicate in favour of his son Mohammad Reza,<sup>411</sup> who was much more pro-Soviet or rather feared their power. British diplomatic sources in the 1940s pointed out that Persia was still of interest to the Soviet Union, because it could serve 'not only as a bulwark against foreign penetration into the Russian zone, but also seem[ed] to constitute part of a long-term policy for the purpose of reinforcing Russian interests' in this country.<sup>412</sup> The Soviet Union was more than happy 'to induce the [Persian] masses to embrace spontaneously some form of regime which offers improved conditions and a golden era to follow'.<sup>413</sup> Yet both countries were perhaps primarily interested in the economic resources of Persia, primarily oil. Figure 4-4 satirically expresses the context of the invasion. Again, the Persian Government could affirm its power and the Soviet 'forces of liberation' were compelled to withdraw.<sup>414</sup>

Nevertheless, the Soviets kept aiming communist propaganda in Soviet Tajikistan at peoples in Afghanistan and Persia, in the hope that Persian-speaking people would approve and start to stir in the same direction. Afghans were indeed briefly influenced by the communist ideology in the 1960s and 1970s, but it did not last long and ended with the Soviet-Afghan war. There were some cases though, such as establishing the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan in 1965, whose leading member, Babrak Karmal, was allegedly a KGB agent at that time (he became Afghanistan's president after the Soviet invasion). While having a relatively simple constitution for a national democratic government, the party had also

prepared ‘a secret constitution which spelled out its unswerving loyalty and dedication to Marxism-Leninism.’<sup>415</sup> In the 1970s, the Soviet regime was initially hopeful but ultimately disillusioned by Mohammad Daoud Khan, the Afghan President between 1973-1978, who allegedly gained his position with the help of the Soviet regime, but did not follow through with socialist reforms. The 1980s saw the infamous Soviet-Afghan war, which could have been a product of the Soviet’s recognition of their inability to have a peaceful influence over the region and ‘the abandonment of any pretence of détente’.<sup>416</sup> This attack was the first ‘direct and massive use of Soviet armed forces in an area outside the Warsaw Pact’.<sup>417</sup>



Figure 4-4: *Blight in Persian Garden*. Accessed June 2016 from <https://www.tcd.ie/history/undergraduate/modules/sophister/near-east.php>

In the end, all attempts by the Soviet government to influence Persia and Afghanistan through Tajikistan or via force were unsuccessful. They clashed with the Soviets’ goal of contesting with the West ‘for the favours of Persian [and] Afghan’ governments.<sup>418</sup> To make matters worse, it seems that in the 1980s there may have been influences in the other direction, with Afghans influencing Central Asians. Evidence for this comes from an Afghan named Safdari, a member of the Revolutionary Council of the Association of Islamic Afghan

Fighters, who claimed that they were in touch with Muslim organisations in Central Asia, where ‘there was anti-Soviet feeling which could be exploited’.<sup>419</sup> But the Soviet-Afghan war in 1979 alienated Afghans from Tajiks and vice versa, because many Tajiks were sent with the Red Army to fight against the Afghans. In the end, there were no strong anti-Soviet feeling in Tajikistan, explored further in the discussion of the civil war in Chapter 6.

Thus, ultimately, attempts by the Soviet government to influence the Persian neighbourhood were not successful. The creation of soviet Tajikistan failed to influence Afghanistan and Iran and left the Tajik people alienated from their Persian neighbours for the reasons discussed earlier in this chapter. Furthermore, the establishment of the soviet Tajik republic, which the government (both Soviet and Tajik) strove to make linguistically and culturally distinct, broke the historically close cultural and family ties to the peoples of the other Soviet Central Asian republics, which all shared the Turkic culture.

#### **4.4 Pan-Turkism suppression**

Tajiks and Uzbeks, although having different historical origins, have enjoyed close cultural and family links since at least the nineteenth century. The Uzbek nomadic people are believed to have arrived in the territory of modern Uzbekistan from north of the Aral Sea in the sixteenth century. They subsequently mixed with the local population, which included descendants of early Persian migrants, remnants of Mongol and Greek invasions, and others. The amalgamation was so successful with valley Persian speakers that when Uzbek and Tajik republics were created, many people found it difficult to decide which to identify with. Since Chapter 3 discusses the delimitation of Soviet Central Asia as a whole, this section focusses specifically on the Tajik SSR, with some examination of the Uzbek SSR where directly relevant, as the Tajik SSR was detached from it.

From the sixteenth century, Tajiks were called *Sarts*<sup>420</sup> by Mughal historiographers and early Soviet ethnographers (*sart* meaning settled or urban in Turkic, but it has had shifting meanings over time). To make the matter more complicated, at times, Uzbeks were also called *Sarts*. During the national delimitation process in Central Asia, before the Tajik SSR was created, Ivan Zarubin, a scientist of Soviet Iranian studies (concentrating on Pamiri and Tajik studies and Iranian ethnography on the territory of the whole Soviet Union) states that Turkic speaking Iranian people were called *Sarts* by others. They did not create any specific ethnical definition for themselves. He continues that due to the national-delimitation process

(meaning the formation of Soviet Central Asia), there came a time when they had to define themselves ethnically. The most progressive or advanced groups of *Sart* society preferred to get rid of the *Sart* name and called themselves Uzbeks. Thus, he concludes that people of Turkic-Iranian origin Turkified into the general Uzbek mass. Zarubin suggests for scientific analysis purposes to divide the Uzbek nation into composite groups, one of which would be Turkified Iranians who conceptually can be named Sarts.<sup>421</sup> Earlier a Soviet geographer, Magidovich suggested that differences between Uzbeks and Sarts have become almost non-existent and their amalgamation may happen in a not very distant future. His suggestion was that Sarts would gradually be absorbed by Uzbeks.<sup>422</sup> Thus the progressive Sarts named themselves Uzbek to be on the side of the group that has power, while the less progressive ones carried on being *Sarts*. These remnant *Sarts* were perhaps eventually categorised as Tajiks. Tajik (primarily valley people, not Pamiri) and Uzbek groups had few differences and their ethnic categorisation could swing either way.

At the same time, there were smaller numbers of local Persian-speaking people living on the territory of Yagnob and Pamir (modern Central and Eastern Tajikistan), who spoke ancient Eastern Persian, which was different from Turkified *Sarts*' Persian dialect. Tajik historian, Alimardoni, argues that the *Sarts*, whose population was about 3 million at that time, should have been named Tajiks rather than Uzbeks due to the similarity of their traditions with Eastern Persian speakers. This would have “rightfully” increased the number of Tajiks and made them automatically eligible for a separate national republic.<sup>423</sup> For the purposes of my research, I conclude that there were primarily three groups of people inhabiting the territory of modern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: 1) modern Uzbeks, descendants of nomadic people, who primarily spoke the Turkic language and lived on the territory of modern Uzbekistan mixed with modern Tajiks; 2) Western Persian-speaking settled people of Sunni religion, who lived on the territories of both modern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and spoke both languages; and 3) a smaller group of modern Tajiks – Eastern Persian speaking people professing primarily a Shiite faith. While *Sarts* seemed to be an amorphous group of people, the Eastern-Persian speaking population including Pamiri formed the main ethnic core group who were more distinct from others and could have called themselves its core, but political disagreements and the elite's fight for power prevented it. The Tajik ASSR would possibly not have been formed if it was not for the special Pamiri district (discussed in the next section), leaving the people who are called Tajiks nowadays merely a part of a Turkic

republic surrounded by other Soviet Turkic states. This would have raised the possibility of further pan-Turkism unification, which was perceived as a threat by the government in Moscow.

Therefore, as well as the motivation to develop Persian-speaking groups in the Soviet Union to influence Persian neighbours, another reason for granting the petition of Tajiks to create a separate Soviet republic was to reduce the mood of Pan-Turkism in the region. The Soviets were unwilling to let the Turkic unity in Central Asia thwart their politics.<sup>424</sup> The formation of a separate Persian-speaking country disrupted the pan-Turkism movement and the unification of the Central Asian people based on their common Turkic identity.

Pan-Turkists and Pan-Islamists advocated the union of Turkic people in Central Asia and did not see any justification for consolidating separate groups of people into nationalities.<sup>425</sup> A Soviet activist in the 1930s, Chekalin, claims that it was the Uzbek and Tatar bourgeoisie that did not want national self-determination for the less developed Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kirghiz, etc., because they did not want the class development of these 'weaker nations'.<sup>426</sup> The post-Soviet Tajik historian, Masov, also claims that Tajiks, in spite of their aboriginality and multitude, were simply forgotten on purpose by Turkic nationalists.<sup>427</sup> Another late post-Soviet Tajik historian, Alimardonov, went so far as to say that Tajiks were actively persecuted by the Turkic population (primarily Uzbeks), for example the usage of the Tajik language was banned and subject to fines in 1920, when the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic was created.<sup>428</sup> Yet Tajik ethnicity was at the time seen as so small and/or unimportant that it was not even mentioned in materials of congresses and committees in Eastern Bukhara (the territory of modern Tajikistan). This omission is bitterly complained about by the most nationalist Tajik historian, Rahim Masov.<sup>429</sup>

The Soviet government was keen to suppress the Turkic bourgeoisie (most of the bourgeoisie were Turkic, because Tajik territory was generally poor and primarily inhabited by peasants), so creating a non-Turkic nation in Central Asia was useful for this purpose. But it did not happen until 1924. In 1919, the third Regional Muslim Conference and fifth Regional Conference of RCP (B) issued a decree acknowledging the Republic of Turkestan as a republic for Turkic people and the Turkestan Communist Party as a Turkic communist party.<sup>430</sup> Between 1917 and 1924, Narkomnats headed by Stalin, dealt with various national minorities yet Tajiks were not among them. In 1920, the constitution of the Turkestan ASSR

identified aboriginal people as Uzbek, Turkmen and Kazakh, but there were no Tajiks.<sup>431</sup> In 1920, when the Russian civil war required less of Lenin's attention, he was able to concentrate on the suppression of Pan-Turkism. He reshuffled personnel, replacing the head of the Turkcommission with M. V. Kaganovich and adding new members Georgyi Safarov and Yakov Peters. Their main task was to clear the party of pan-Turkists.<sup>432</sup> It was at this point that the Persian department was established, and further delimitation of Soviet Central Asia was considered.

Thus, creating the Tajik SSR was part of the Soviet strategy for eliminating Pan-Turkism. As soon as a separate political unit was created, it gave rise to political and economic aspirations within the newly-formed Tajik elite, which started to contend with the Uzbek SSR to gain more territory and economic privileges.

## **4.5 The role of Tajik political leaders**

### *4.5.1 The formation of the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (ASSR)*

The early political elite of what is now Tajikistan seem to have only played a minor role in the period up until the formation of the Tajik ASSR, perhaps because any Tajik intelligentsia or elite at this stage was embryonic at best in this period. The contemporary Tajik historian Alimardonov blames the Tajik intelligentsia of the 1920s for not being able (or even not wanting) to gather all Persian-speaking territories of Central Asia within the Tajik SSR. He claims that instead of uniting all territories populated by Tajiks, they preferred to register as being of other nationalities. Even though initially the commission for national-territorial delimitation of Central Asia was not planning a Tajik republic and only later created the Tajik oblast consisting of three mountainous regions – Karategin, Match and Darwaz – for Alimardonov the exclusion of Tajiks happened simply due to ‘Tajik’ ‘deserters’. He believes that the Tajik intelligentsia remembered their original ‘blood’ only later when it was too late to unite all Tajiks.<sup>433</sup> Yet as stated earlier, Central Asian people had great difficulty to defining their nationality due to the absence of such a concept in the region. Furthermore, in the 1920s the Tajik ‘intelligentsia’ was almost non-existent; the only Tajik elite were those working in the Tajik Communist Party in Dushanbe and they had been either exiled to Dushanbe from elsewhere or had risen to such positions from their usual agricultural labours because of the socialist revolution.

For example, Nusratullo Mahsum worked as a porter and farmer before becoming a revolutionary and joining the Central Committee of Bukhara People's Republic to deal with the matter of Eastern Bukhara (modern Tajikistan). Sadriddin Ayni, a famous Tajik writer and poet, was originally from Uzbekistan and most of his earlier works created before the establishment of the Tajik ASSR were written in Uzbek. Ayni's second novel, *Ghulomon* (Slaves), an epic of the Tajik man, subsequently taught in Tajik Soviet and post-Soviet schools, was first written in Uzbek under the title *Qullar* (Slaves) in 1934 and only in 1935 was translated into Tajik. Moreover, in the early 1920s, Ayni worked as a journalist for both the Uzbek *Mehnatkashlar Tovushi* (Voice of the Working People) and the Persian, *Shulai Inkilob* (Flame of Revolution) magazines.<sup>434</sup> Thus holding the Tajik intelligentsia of the 1920s responsible for the limited territory of Tajikistan is unreasonable, as the Tajik intelligentsia had not had time to coalesce.

Initially, the embryonic Tajik elite did not have much ambition for creating a separate country. In 1917 'there was little, if any, sense of distinct national identity among the educated Tadjiks, which would have separated them from their fellow Uzbeks in terms of political activity.'<sup>435</sup> To justify the lack of call for Tajik national self-determination, in December 1928 Nisar Mukhamedov, a leading official in the Tajik ASSR, asserted that Tajiks initially backed the pan-Turkism movement in Central Asia because they allegedly wanted to break the rule of Europeans, meaning Russians.<sup>436</sup> Also, during the national-territorial delimitation at the beginning of the 1920s, Tajik and Uzbek spokesmen maintained that they were historically and culturally related.<sup>437</sup> Yet, as economic and political changes progressed, the Tajik elite changed its pro-Turkic sympathy.

In 1924, the Fifth All-Bukhara Congress announced that the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic was a socialist republic and issued a decree about its national-territorial delimitation. The second session of the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union approved the petitions of the Turk Central Executive Committee, the Fifth All-Bukhara Congress, the Fifth All-Khorezm Congress and the second session of All-Russia Central Executive Committee to have a national-territorial delimitation and to create new Soviet republics. Its resolution stated that the petition was approved because 'the will of working people is the highest law'.<sup>438</sup> The Uzbek bureau decided to include such districts as Pendjikent and Ura-Tyube from the Turkestan ASSR and the BPSR (The Bukharan People's Soviet Republic) into the Tajik ASSR. In October 1924, the politburo of the Central



Committee of the Russian Communist Party issued a decree creating a Tajik ASSR within the Uzbek SSR which was itself within the Turkestan ASSR within the Russian SSR. In the same month, it decreed that the Central Asian republics could dissolve the Turkestan ASSR (and therefore, separate from the Russian SSR) and become national republics and districts.<sup>439</sup> Figure 4-5 below shows the resulting map of Central Asia in 1924-1925.

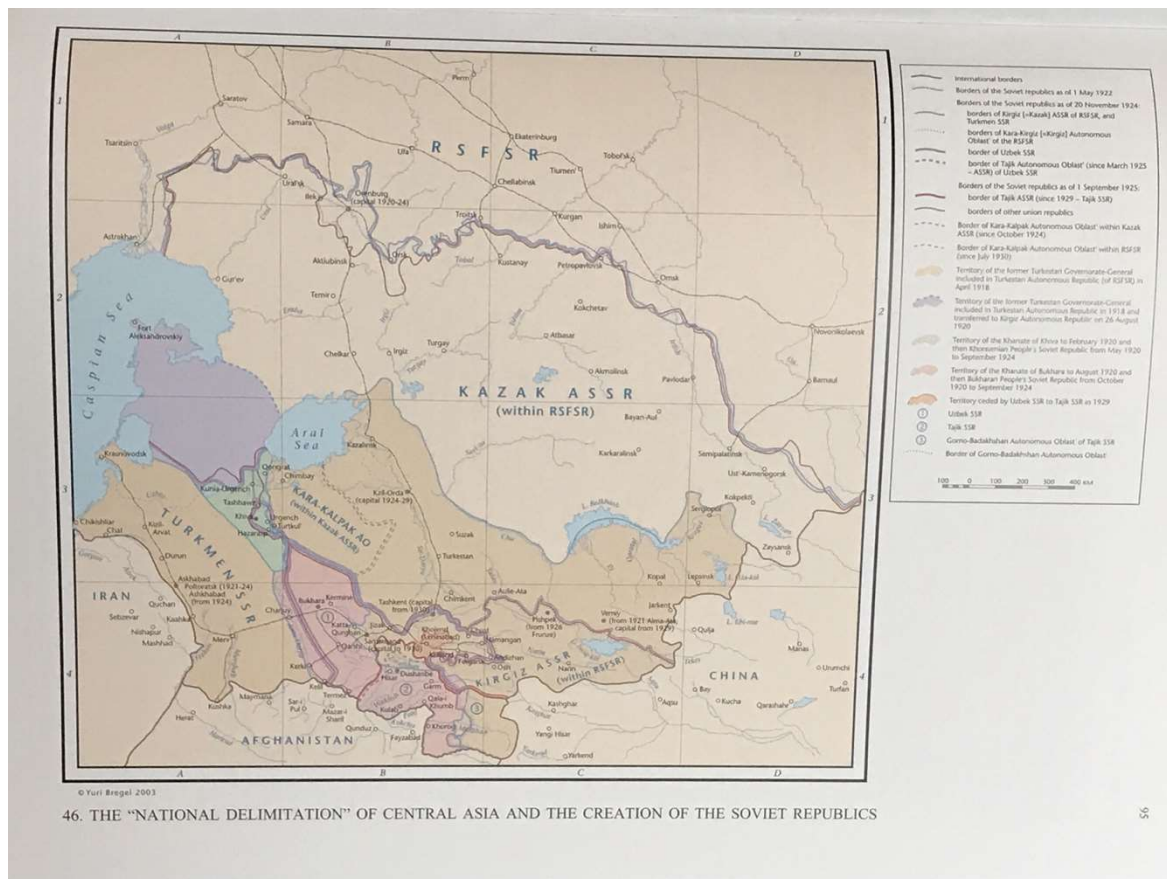


Figure 4-5: The "National Delimitation of Central Asia and the Creation of the Soviet Republics, Yuri Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, Brill, Leiden Boston, 2003, p. 95.

At first, the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic (BPSR) wanted to create solely a Tajik autonomous district or oblast. However, there was a special Pamir Autonomous District (special due to its Shiite population, while the rest of Central Asia was Sunni) created in 1925, which BPSR decided to include in the Tajik district. One autonomous district cannot be a part of another district. Thus, it was decided to create an Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic instead.<sup>440</sup> Another accelerator for creation of a Tajik ASSR instead of a Tajik district may have been was the petition of Nusratullo Mahsum (originally from the Garm region in modern Tajikistan), who was the chairman of the Eastern Bukhara District Executive Committee in 1923-1924. He wrote a petition to the Central Committee of the

Russian Communist Party (b) in the name of Stalin. He stated that many Tajik-speaking regions happened to be on the territory of Uzbekistan at that time and it limited the self-determination of the Tajiks in comparison to the Uzbeks and the Turkmens. Mahsum suggested inclusion of Ura-Tyube, Khodjent, Soha, Rishtan, Uchkurgan cities and other Tajik-speaking regions to the Tajik district. He also requested that Tajiks should be allowed to develop independently from Uzbeks, claiming that Tajiks met both geographic and population size requirements for an independent republic.<sup>441</sup> However, the description of this specific request and of the life of Mahsum himself are depicted in a book published by contemporary Tajik historians and it could be an inflated version of what actually happened at that time. The primary author of the book is Rahim Masov, with additional material contributed by Rahim Abdulhaev, Mirzo Naimov, Namoz Hotamov, etc. Masov being a strong advocate of Tajik nationalism and the unfairness of the territorial delimitation might have influenced the contents of the book. Yet there is a degree of truth, even if exaggerated, that shows that the local elite indeed wanted more power. For example, as soon as the Tajik ASSR became the Tajik SSR, Mahsum was promoted to Chairman of the Central Executive Committee of Tajikistan, one of the highest roles in the republic.

#### 4.5.2 *The transition to the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR)*

The Tajik elite played a much greater part in the transition from the Tajik ASSR to the Tajik SSR. During the five years (1924-1929) when Tajikistan was the Tajik ASSR, party members on its territory were unhappy with their lack of political or economic power. From the very beginning of the separation of the Tajik ASSR from the Uzbek SSR, Tajik officials complained that Uzbeks neglected Tajiks and very little awareness of the state of the Tajik economy, agriculture and trade. Tajik officials claimed that they were suppressed by the Uzbek elite and wanted more political and economic control. The Tajik autonomous district was economically disadvantaged; officials sent there saw it almost as being exiled, and their financial rewards were much less than officials in the Uzbek SSR. As a result, many petitions were sent to the central government in Moscow calling for the creation of a separate Tajik SSR.<sup>442</sup>

Once the Tajiks were awarded ASSR status within the Uzbek SSR, they did not want to remain subordinate to the Uzbek SSR, with limited political and economic autonomy and the newly-created Tajik elite started to complain that their rights were being undermined.

This indicates the aspiration for more power, as they this new elite did not have a strong base of ethnicity and territory to rely upon to create a strong national republic. For example, they claimed that they were not allowed to speak Persian on the territory of Uzbek SSR when they travelled there; and there were many Persian-speaking people who lived permanently on the territory of Uzbek SSR. Moreover, while in the Tajik ASSR the economy was very poor and living conditions were terrible, Uzbeks were taking advantage of the Persian-speaking cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, which Tajiks claimed should have belonged to the Persian-speaking region of the Tajik ASSR.<sup>443</sup> They expressed dissatisfaction that the Uzbek government was using the political weakness of the Tajik ASSR to increase its importance relative to other republics, yet it did not share any economic benefits with Tajik SSR.<sup>444</sup> In 1925 there was an informational note from the Tajik ASSR stating that there were disagreements between the Tajik ASSR and the Uzbek SSR, especially due to the amount of economic support assigned by Moscow to both republics.<sup>445</sup> In 1927 the Tajik delegation complained again to the Council of People's Commissars of the Tajik ASSR in Moscow that the Uzbek government had systematically ignored the Tajik ASSR while building its own economy. They claimed that the Uzbek government was using money that belonged to the Tajik ASSR to meet Uzbek needs.<sup>446</sup> Had the Uzbek government been more generous to the Tajik ASSR in its benefit distribution and economic development, then perhaps there would have been less pressure from Tajik political elites to create the Tajik SSR.

Economic life, which is one of the pre-requisites of being a nation as defined by Stalin, was transformed by the Soviet government for the Tajik nation as well as for other Soviet nations. Before becoming the Soviet republic, economic life on what became Soviet Tajikistan's territory was essentially feudal and unsustainable by itself. During the first five years of its existence in Soviet Tajikistan, while it was still an autonomous republic attached to Uzbekistan, the division of labour was created by alienating the rich from the poor, discrediting the clergy and emancipating women.<sup>447</sup> The means of communication were improved by constructing new roads to mountainous regions, especially Machah and Karategin, which were isolated due to lack of roads.<sup>448</sup> Economic reforms were launched; initiating industries, rebuilding irrigation networks, reforming financial subsidies, redistributing land and transitioning to collectivised agriculture.<sup>449</sup> For example, in 1925-26 a water and land reform and division of labour were implemented by re-settling mostly wealthy Russian and Ukrainian households, taking land from non-working households and

re-distributing 337,000 acres of their land to 42,000 native peasants, agriculture workers and nomads. Such re-settlements and re-distributions contributed to strengthen local clans (discussed in Chapter 5).

In some cases, it was not initiating but resuming colonial industries that were destroyed during the anti-Soviet war in 1918-1922 and related conflicts continuing throughout the 1920s. These industries included the export of cotton for the central Russian textile industry and the import of grain and manufactured merchandise.<sup>450</sup> Collectivisation of land and re-settlement was aimed at destroying the private farming system, i.e. wealthy landlords – *kulaks*. The state became the owner of the land and re-distributed work among the peasants, who, except for the heads of collective farms, did not gain any economic benefits from the re-distribution.<sup>451</sup>

In 1929, the government in Moscow agreed to consider Tajik claims based on the Tajik ASSR being economically, nationally and territorially distinct from the Uzbek SSR. This period of consideration opportunely overlapped with the Soviet government's international aspirations to attract Persia<sup>452</sup> (discussed in Section 4.3) and suppress Pan-Turkism (discussed in Section 4.4). In June 1929, after the railroad expansion reached Dushanbe – the capital of the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic – the case of Tajik ASSR was sufficiently reconsidered for the district to be detached from the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic and to be transformed into the Tajik SSR (see Figure 4-6). However, the Tajik SSR lacked the required population of one million.<sup>453</sup> In the letter written by twenty-eight Tajik communist party workers to the Politburo of Central Committee of Russian Communist Party in 1928, they asserted that in reality, according to the Bukhara emirate's military-demographic census, the population of Tajiks was 3.4 million in Central Asia.<sup>454</sup> Yet the census itself does not figure in those sources. Moreover, since people were so ambiguous about their national self-identification in 1920s, it would not be possible for them to have defined themselves as Tajiks earlier. The Tajik population not being large enough, the Soviet government decided to enlarge it by artificial methods.



Figure 4-6: The Territory of Sogd [Khudjand] region Akin a Peninsula goes inside Uzbekistan [marked green, Khudjand marked as a black dot], Aziz Rustaov (Khudjand), “Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: Can the Relationship of Two Countries Change?”, 20 October, 2016, Fergana News, accessed September 2018, available online from: <http://www.fergananews.com/articles/9131>

Following the edict which transformed the Tajik ASSR into SSR, the special border-control commission created by the highest governing body in the Soviet Union – the Central Executive Committee (Tsentralnyi Ispolnitelnyi Komitet - TsIK) – was assembled to settle Tajik demands and determine the border of the new Tajik SSR.<sup>455</sup> In 1929, after these reforms had completed, and after the predominantly Tajik-speaking Ferghana Valley region, Khudjand, was attached to it, Tajikistan was promoted to become a union republic. The Khudjand region had been economically prosperous since the 9<sup>th</sup> century, being located on trading routes to Samarkand, Sas (modern Tashkent) and the Ferghana Valley’s vineyards, gardens and mines.<sup>456</sup> Teresa Rakowska-Harmstone considers this attachment to be decisive, as without the economic prosperity of Khudjand region, the Tajik Soviet Autonomous Republic would not have met the economic requirements to become a union republic and therefore, a nation.<sup>457</sup> These terms can be used interchangeably in the Tajik context because according to Soviet national policy every nation was to have a republic and vice versa.

The Khudjand district was mainly populated by Persian-speaking people (1,156,015 people, 78% Persian-speaking) but it was part of the Uzbek SSR.<sup>458</sup> The special commission of the Tajik ASSR reassessed the Tajik-Uzbek borders and a part of Fergana Valley, Khudjand district, was given to the Tajik ASSR to qualify it as a separate Republic.<sup>459</sup> Bergne suggests that another reason for adding Khudjand to Tajikistan was to weaken the Uzbek SSR, as it was becoming too powerful<sup>460</sup>, which takes us back to the Pan-Turkism suppression argument. The Tajik ASSR had previously claimed Khudjand in 1924, but its claim was rejected due to three mountainous ridges which territorially divided this region from the Tajik ASSR.<sup>461</sup> But in 1929 those ridges were not considered that important any more. Therefore, Bergne’s suggestion could have played a role in Moscow’s decisions.

Tajik demands to add more territory, such as the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, were refused by the Uzbek government.<sup>462</sup> Since then Bukhara and Samarkand have been an ongoing source of Tajik nationalistic demands. Over time the division of Central Asia into separate states made these historic political and cultural centres, such as Bukhara, Samarkand and Khiva, lose their prominence and influence, which have not been regained since. Nowadays they are of interest primarily for tourism and for historical explorations. Tashkent (the capital of Uzbekistan), the centre of Soviet society consisting mainly of Russians, became the new hub for the region.<sup>463</sup> It is not to say that this is the fault of the Uzbek government, but it is due to the reconfiguration of the whole region.

Tajik-Uzbek territorial disagreements intensified at the end of the 1920s. During the debate about the division of Central Asia into nations and territory, Faizulla Khodjaev, the Chairman of the Council of Nazirs of the Bukhara and Khorezm People's Soviet Republics declared: 'Concerning the Tajiks there are two variants: either they should be included in our republic (the Uzbek SSR) as an independent area, or they could obtain entire independence; concerning this issue we have no opinion of the Tajiks themselves.'<sup>464</sup>, meaning that the Tajiks had not expressed their opinion on the matter. It was not exactly that they did not have an opinion. In 1929 Moscow created a special commission chaired by Makeev to discuss the issue of Surkhandarya region (in modern Uzbekistan, see Figure 4-7). Apart from the Surkhandarya region, Uzbeks led by Islamov demanded Kurgan-Tyube (in modern Tajikistan), as well as Kanibadam and Isfara (both in modern Tajikistan) be returned to Uzbekistan, based on the census signed by A. Hadjibaev in 1926, which showed it was primarily populated by Uzbeks. The response of Tajiks led by the chairman of the Union of People's Commissariat of Tajik ASSR, Abdurahim Hodjibaev (from the Khudjand region, a former agronomist, who in 1929 became the chairman of the Soviet People's Commissariat) was not based on facts, but on the statement that it was 'nonsense'. He claimed that when the census was taken, Tajiks were too modest to demand their rights and to declare themselves Tajiks. He continued that, due to activities of the party the population identifying as Tajik grew to 30,604 compared to 20,000 Uzbeks.<sup>465</sup> In essence, this was because the population did not have fixed identities as Tajiks or Uzbeks, rather they identified as one or the other according to the political and economic context.



Figure 4-7: Surkhandarya Region [marked with red contour; Dushanbe is marked with the largest letters], “Four People Died in a Road Accident in Surkhandarya”, 21 February 2018, *Gazeta.uz*, accessed September 2018, available online from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2018/02/21/dtp/>

The Tajik side claimed the Surkhandarya region as well as Kurgan-Tyube, Kanibadam and Isfara were part of Eastern Bukhara, where the emir had his summer residency in Dushanbe. When the Russian military office did a military-demographic census it described Bukhara as a Persian not an Uzbek state.<sup>466</sup> Yet Tajiks did not provide any evidence or date for this statement. Also, Hadjibaev claimed that even if the full Surkhandarya region was not included in the Tajik SSR, then at least its main city Termez (near the border with Afghanistan) should be. Yet he had to admit that Termez had neither a Tajik nor Uzbek majority – it was primarily populated by Russians. The Tajiks wanted Termez due to its convenient location for transportation along the Vakhsh and Pyandj rivers and because they were building a railroad between Dushanbe and Termez that was to be finished in the same year as the dispute.<sup>467</sup>

Eventually this dispute was ended by the chairman of the Central Asian Economic Council and a member of the commission for separating Tajikistan from Uzbekistan, Makeev (of Russian nationality), who concluded that both the Tajiks and the Uzbeks were behaving as representatives of their countries, but not as members of the Communist Party.<sup>468</sup> Perhaps, he meant that instead of petty territorial disputes they should think about the higher ideological goals of the Soviet national-territorial delimitation.

Another dispute occurred on the same subject one month later in 1929. This time the Tajik side was represented by the chairman of the Union of People’s Commissariat of the Tajik ASSR, Abdulkadyr Muhiddinov (originally from Bukhara) and the vice-dean of the Eastern Faculty of the Central Asian State University in Tashkent (modern Uzbekistan) Nissar

Muhammedov (originally from Afghanistan, and who later became a peoples' commissar of education in the Tajik SSR in 1930) and on the Uzbek side by Irismetov. This shows the diverse background of the Tajik political elite, as indeed there was no real Tajik nation at that time. Two Russian experts, Belov and Karpov prepared a report about Surkhandarya region. The report from this dispute seemed to be favourable to the Tajik position, concluding that there were more Tajiks in the disputed territories (though without giving numbers) and recommending that they should be assigned to the Tajik SSR. However, Makeev did not accept the recommendations, but instead closed the discussion suggesting that the Tajiks should directly petition the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union (CECSU) if they were not content with this outcome. While Makeev and Irismetov signed the final resolution, the Tajik side refused to certify it<sup>469</sup> and Muhiddinov wrote to the Central Asian bureau requesting that it review the matter. Finally, in 1930, the CECSU decided to give the Surkhandarya region to the Tajik SSR. However, the Uzbek SSR appealed, on the basis that information on economic and ethnic composition gathered by the committee was incomplete, asking for the arguments for leaving the Surkhandarya region within the Uzbek SSR to be reconsidered. Following the requested review, the CECSU concluded that the region should remain within the Uzbek SSR.<sup>470</sup> Masov suggests that this decision was primarily because, if the region was removed, then the Uzbek SSR would have no external border, a pre-requisite for achieving SSR status, so the status of the Uzbek SSR would be weakened or completely undermined.

These arguments highlight the complexity of agreeing the boundaries between Tajik and Uzbek tribes during the division of these republics. During, and even after, the delimitation, Tajik representatives from diverse backgrounds fought for the expansion of the Tajik SSR, driven by a desire for greater benefits for their government and for themselves. In the end, their efforts, coupled with the Soviet government's policies to influence its Persian-speaking neighbours (which was ultimately unsuccessful) and to suppress Pan-Turkism (which had much more long-term success), resulted in the establishment of the Union Republic, which subsequently became an independent country for the first time in its history. Yet from the initial creation of the Tajik ASSR through to the current day, the complex interrelationship between the Tajik and Uzbek peoples and the consequent difficulty in establishing borders between their respective territories has caused repeated disagreements and disputes, demonstrating both the inefficiency of artificial national constructs and the compromises



made in the Soviet national delineation processes. As the shared economy of the Soviet Union was abolished, the Uzbek-Tajik relationship escalated into a much more serious economic and political conflict. The Soviet regime itself did not survive and some of the republics it created deteriorated into continuous disagreements. Nevertheless, the national identity artificially embedded into these republics survived and thrived.

After the Soviet Union's disintegration, national ideologies became even more important for strengthening the position of the new states. The former comradely Soviet nations in Central Asia became rivals for economic resources and cultural heritage, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The strengthening of nationalistic attitudes might be viewed as one of the main outcomes of the 'cold war' between Uzbeks and Tajiks, due to territorial disputes and continuous accusations about the appropriation of cultural heritage. I discuss the contemporary consequences of these disagreements in Chapter 7.

The economic changes reinforced Soviet power over the region and made the Soviets more determined to implement their communist and nationalist projects in the region. The economic reforms undertaken in Central Asia during the national-territorial delineation did not make these republics economically independent. Despite creating ostensibly sovereign republics and nations, the central government kept them subordinate to Moscow. The republics each specialised in specific areas, supplying raw materials to European parts of the Union. For example, Uzbekistan was forced to produce cotton, with all other agricultural pursuits being given up, so that by 1932 fifty percent of investments were in cotton and fifteen percent in irrigation.<sup>471</sup> Such economic growth was one-sided, and the republics were kept economically interdependent. However, without these changes economic life in each republic would have been unsustainable. Without improved irrigation people would still have settled mainly near rivers, and there would have been little communication between regions cut off by mountains. Without the development of the education system, there would have been no exposure to national symbols via media and everyday nationalism, and there would have been no research into history and culture. Thus, the economic life of the Tajik nation was boosted for the specific purpose of building the Tajik nation. This further supports the view that the Tajik nation is best understood from a modernist perspective.

#### **4.6 Conclusions**

The Tajik people were granted the privilege of becoming a Soviet Socialist Republic and thus becoming a nation, while other ethnic groups and tribes, arguably with an equal claim, were not. I have analysed the possible reasons for this. Firstly, the Soviet Union's foreign policy in relation to its Persian speaking neighbours drove the Moscow government to create the Persian-speaking Tajik republic to try to influence Afghanistan and Iran, although ultimately this policy failed to provide the influence desired because of the Soviet Union's antipathy to the Muslim religion, restrictions on freedom of movement and speech, and lack of understanding of the differences between the different Persian-speaking peoples. Secondly, anti-Turkic politics motivated the Soviet government to form a Persian-speaking country in Central Asia – internal conflicts about heritage and territory distracted local peoples' attention from creating an all-Turkic republic of Central Asia, as discussed in Chapter 3. Finally, a Tajik elite started to form as the initial discussions about forming a Tajik entity were taking place and they started to claim more territory and better economic and political privileges for the emerging nation and itself, since the Tajik autonomous region was poor and was considered 'backward'. Eventually, the newly-created Tajik nation embraced the propaganda about its ancient roots and firmly believed in the primordial history of the Tajik nation and state. However, this newly-created Tajik nation still has clan divisions. In Chapter 5 I examine how Tajik people differentiate between their clan and national identities and the meaning of the term clan in the Tajik context.



## 5 Clans and national identity in pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet Tajikistan

### 5.1 Introduction

“Clans, regional elites, and financial magnates are a formidable presence in the politics of all Central Asian countries. Working behind the scenes, they have placed leaders in power for over forty years and define the nature of politics today.” S. Frederick Starr<sup>472</sup>

This chapter attempts to find answers to the following research questions: 1) ‘How does the clan system in Tajikistan co-exist with the Tajik national identity?’; 2) ‘How did people on the territory of Tajikistan come to identify themselves as a Tajik nation?’; and 3) a secondary question: ‘Why is it important to explore clan relationships in relation to nation and state building in Tajikistan?’

The Tajik nation being a construct of the Soviets nevertheless has the clan self-identification, which overlaps with its national identity. This clan identity dates from pre-Soviet times and differs from the concept of ethnicity. I examine the meaning of the term *clan* regarding Tajik clans in this introductory section of this chapter. More importantly, it is essential to learn about clan identity to understand how clans have influenced the formation of the nation-state of Tajikistan.

Clans are important bodies in the social system of Central Asia, where they seek to maximise the interests of their clan members. A state with weak institutions becomes a domain for such informal groups of interconnected people to compete in their own interests, rather than seeking to obtain the best outcomes for all the people. Consequently, acting illicitly at times, clans divide the political and economic power of the country among themselves. As Collins rightly states, the eventual outcome of such a regime can be called ‘a clan hegemony’.<sup>473</sup> In Section 6.2 I examine the relationship of this clan hegemony to the national identity in Tajikistan. While Tajikistan is claimed to be a democracy, in reality, due to such clan interactions, it is neither a democracy nor ‘a classically authoritarian political order.’<sup>474</sup> Therefore, to understand the intricacies of nation building in a regime such as Tajikistan, it is important to investigate both the clan system and national identity issues.

While it is important to understand ethnic conflicts, interethnic problems, such as clan tensions, go even deeper yet are mostly unknown to the outside world. Clans are generally

divided by regions and powerful regional identities cause the formation of multiple centres competing for control of economic assets. Thus, there can be a special sort of independence from the centre and participation in political activities by major clans. Such powerful clans obstruct economic, political and social growth, as these elites mainly care about their own prosperity. They 'also make internal stability highly dependent on the status quo'.<sup>475</sup> Therefore, it is essential to examine various Tajik clans more thoroughly in the fourth subchapter. In comparison to ethnicity, clans are different sort of identity and I attempt to define what is clan in the following section.

## **5.2 Clan identity and national identity**

People can easily have several overlapping identities, with one identity, such as ethnicity, overshadowing other identities. Tullbergs identifies this as an ethnocentrism, where 'other group identities may fade away to let the ethnic one dominate'.<sup>476</sup> Nation-states frequently have ethnocentric societies as opposed to multi-ethnic countries, such as the United States or United Kingdom. Barfield notes that nowadays ethnicity has become one of the most prevailing identities in the world, replacing clan and tribal identities.<sup>477</sup> Indeed, there is no escape from ethnic or national identity even in the presence of global cosmopolitanism.

Clans share some the same characteristics as ethnicity. Clans reproduce biologically; they have common cultural values; they have a shared dialect, they self-define and are recognised by others. In addition, clans have assumed or real kinship and mutual support systems. overall, ethnic identity and clan identity have many similarities and people in Central Asia juggle with these identities depending on whether the context is at the micro or macro level. At the micro level (individual or small group) clan identity is more prominent. At the macro level (nation or state) ethnic identity is utilised. Grozin for example, states that patriotism in Kyrgyz understanding is related to clan and territorial affiliation rather than national affiliation. Even the Kyrgyz term 'aeli' means both nation and clan. For example, when one says 'Kyrgyz aeli', it means Kyrgyz nation. But when one says 'Aelin kaysi?' it means what clan are you from?<sup>478</sup> The main difference between these identities in Central Asia is that nationalities/ethnicities are formal and created and defined by the state whereas clans are information. The network of kinship and interdependence is not a defining feature of the ethnicity or nation.<sup>479</sup>

Roy states that both clan and ethnicity in Central Asia do not ‘refer to ongoing historical human groupings that have been produced over long periods of time’.<sup>480</sup> While this is true for ethnicity in Central Asia, which is a modern construct and more the creation of political strategists than history, it does not seem to be true for clans. Although the clan power relationship was in some ways controlled and mediated by the central government during the Soviet regime, regional factions already existed in the Central Asian society. For example, one of the *Basmachi* leaders, Ibrahim Bek (1889-1931) in his official testimony given in Tashkent, in 1931, stated that he was descended from the tribe ‘Isan Khadja’ and the clan of the ‘Kuktash Laqays’. He did initially mention that he was of Uzbek nationality, but then added ‘i.e. Laqay’.<sup>481</sup> This means that the identity of Laqay clan was there long before the concept of Uzbek nationality, which was created in 1924. In addition, for the Kazakh clans (which have existed at least since the sixteenth century), in the nineteenth century all Tsarist attempts to reform the Kazakh ‘traditional system of power distribution inside the nomadic society’ had little effect before the socialist revolution, because the Kazakh clan structure was deeply enough entrenched to be able to adapt itself to these innovations.<sup>482</sup> Indeed, Max Weber examined the role of clans in society, politics and economics in most of Asia and the Middle East in the premodern era. He predicted the extinction of clans, due to modernisation and the rise of states.<sup>483</sup> However, surprisingly, it did not happen. When the Soviets made it complicated by imposing the national categories by force, they used the Dictionary of Nationalities ‘to combine clan, tribal, dynastic and local identities into officially recognized nationalities’.<sup>484</sup> One of the reasons why the Soviets overrode clan and tribal identities, may have been because these identities were linked with ‘religious and nobility hierarchies that the Soviets fought hard to extinguish’.<sup>485</sup> Nevertheless, clan networks survived and flourished under the nationalities constructs.

Soviet efforts to create distinct ethnic identities in Central Asia and to rewrite their histories in ethnic terms have gradually taken root despite clan identity remaining strong in the region. The consciousness of national identity was instilled through national mass media, such as national television and newspapers, national education, national symbols, such as the flag and coat of arms, national language and literature. Internal national passports also served as strong national self-identification. After registering and receiving a passport, individuals could not change their nationality later.<sup>486</sup> As a result, people started to self-identify as Tajiks, Uzbeks and others.

These various identities combine themselves differently; there is no strict order to which all groups adhere. For example, one might name themselves first a Tajik on a macro level and Khudjandi on a micro level, while another will be first Pamiri and then Tajik. A person whose roots can be traced back to Samarkand can be a Samarkandi regardless of what language they speak or whether they live in Uzbekistan or Tajikistan. A member of the Laqay clan can be firstly Laqay and then Uzbek. At the same time, in the far south of Uzbekistan, people rarely refer to their clan identity (such as Kungrats, Barlas, etc) as their ethnic identity seems to be more important to them in the present.<sup>487</sup> This could be due to their clans being far from the political and economic centres, such as Tashkent and Samarkand, and perhaps, not being able to exercise their clan power relationship makes it weaken. Or perhaps, their clan identity was not strong in the first place, but rather akin to *avlod* identity (see further below).

Despite the Soviet government's efforts to weaken clans' self-awareness in Central Asia by dividing the region into several disproportioned countries and forcing people to accept new ethnic or national identities, clan identities have remained unbroken and dominated the politics and societies of these countries.<sup>488</sup> The population continued to assemble around old power groups of clans. As Frederic Barth states, when the state organisation inflicts ethnicity, people either rapidly adapt for practical reasons or become subject to oppression, if their reaction is negative.<sup>489</sup> Central Asian clans have adapted and managed to continue their power games, only this time with a bigger extra-player.

There was an external threat to clans in Central Asia, not one that united them all within one country against Moscow, but where clans separately fought against the clan favoured by Moscow.<sup>490</sup> When Gorbachev rose to power in the 1980s he created a revolution among Soviet Central Asian leaders 'in the name of anti-corruption and the restoration of "Soviet norms,"'. Between 1982 and 1986 all five Central Asian leaders were replaced by Gorbachev's favourites, either through death, retirement, or being fired. Unfortunately, those favourites did not prove capable of maintaining the old balances or sustaining the local economies.<sup>491</sup> During Gorbachev's perestroika 'clans reasserted themselves, seizing opportunities to coordinate against Moscow and show that they would no longer remain quiet under its heavy hand.'<sup>492</sup> For example, clan elites in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan orchestrated informal agreements to recover their power. Ethnic turmoil and rioting were useful for them to withdraw legitimacy from Gorbachev's favourites in Central Asia and to

advance their own candidates for the position of the first secretary of the republic, broadly equivalent to modern presidents but with the authority of Moscow above them. This is how Akayev, the first secretary of Kyrgyzstan, and Karimov, the first secretary of Uzbekistan, achieved power and became presidents of those republics following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Akayev grasped the right set of circumstances and in August 1991 established a democratic system before any opposing clans could join against him. In the same way, Karimov forced 'democratic' absolutism. Moreover, as well as acting according to clan interests, he formed new institutions relying on him in opposition to the Soviet party arrangement and communist system of ideas.<sup>493</sup> Thus perestroika helped some Central Asian clans to firmly re-establish themselves through a broadly peaceful process.

Thus, national and clan identities are intertwined and interrelated in Central Asia. While leaders actively advocate national unity and cooperation, in reality they are dependent on their clan power and must support their clan members. Since clan identity plays such an important role in Central Asia and rules its politics, I examine the meaning of the term clan in more detail in Section 5.3, to help to understand power dynamics within a clan.

### **5.3 What is a clan in Central Asia and specifically in Tajikistan?**

We must first define what a clan is. According to Collins, 'a clan is an informal social institution in which actual or notional kinship based on blood or marriage forms the central bond among members.'<sup>494</sup> In its original meaning, the term refers to 'unilineal descent groups which unite a series of lineages descended from a theoretical common ancestor, the genealogical links to whom are often either not remembered or may be purely mythological'.<sup>495</sup> Also, Collins defines clan as 'an informal organization comprising a network of individuals linked by kin and fictive kin identities'.<sup>496</sup> Yet for Jan and Birgitta Tullbergs, clan is 'a social construction to fuse the interest of kin with the power of group egoism [...], a semi-modern invention that sacrifices strict kin selection through a dualism of clan versus non-clan'.<sup>497</sup> Tajik clans tend to include their extended families in their circles, no matter how far extended they are. Having said that, it is true that while for Tajik clans it is important to include their kin, the group cohesion may be formed of unrelated members. These unrelated members tend to originate from the same region/village/city and share similar traditions and culture. Tajik clans vary in size, and modern clans can consist of any



number between 2000 and 20,000 members that, according to Starr, ‘makes them much smaller than the large tribal confederations of the nomadic period.’<sup>498</sup>

Clan members, indeed, can be not only tied to each other by the mutual trust of being related, as Collins suggests their ‘horizontal’ nature, but also vertically, as clans include into their system of networking both established and non-established members having different positions and wealth in the society.<sup>499</sup> Clans usually honour and boast about having influential and prosperous elite clan members. Those elite members gain such status either by coming from aristocratic families where older members were heads of clan, or sometimes, they achieve high status by their own merits in business, politics, trade and other fields. Clan members are bound to show their loyalty to the clan elites and clan elders either by speech or by gifts, sometimes, by both, to have a chance of promotions in politics, society and business. These expressions of loyalty in turn help the leaders to strengthen their positions in society. Such reciprocity, according to Tullbergs, is not necessarily extended primarily to kin, as the more beneficial cousin may have more priority over the less reciprocal brother.<sup>500</sup>

Clans heavily influence the political and economic situation in Central Asia. During the Soviet time, clan ties existed within the government, Kolkhoz (collective farms) and Sovkhoz (soviet farms). The job market and distribution of goods were influenced by hidden clan relationships. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, although the Central Asian countries adopted democratic constitutions, with elected parliaments and presidents, these are mostly ‘to gain compliance and to be accepted as a reliable counterpart in the global arena’<sup>501</sup>, while the clan hierarchy and rule remains the same. Collins believes that clans are equal in power to economic institutions and state administrations. The ties of trust and mutual benefit that form between members of a clan allows them to make agreements that continue over a long time, sometimes a lifetime.<sup>502</sup> Thus clans might disable meritocracy in their society and impede or slow down general progress.

Central Asian clans have an ancient historical past. There were nomad and settled clans and tribes, then settled colonial ones, then Soviet nomenclature, then contemporary post-Soviet clans (elite or non-elite). Before the Soviet Union, clans had clear geographic borders and differences in customs, but during the Soviet period geographical and other borders became less and less clear. Clan members started to move from region to region, republic to republic for new work opportunities or other reasons and their clan affiliation became less distinct to

outsiders. This made it easier for the Soviet government to create nations in Central Asia. However, clan affiliations did not disappear but only hampered the political and economic development of Central Asian states during the Soviet and especially, the post-Soviet times.<sup>503</sup> These clan relationships exist in every country of Central Asia, although the dynamics may slightly differ. Each clan has its own accent or dialect, and its own strength in certain occupations, such as politics, economics or culture.

The Uzbeks along with the Kyrgyz and the Kazakh were tribal federations pulled together from diverse groups before the fifteenth century. The fifteenth century tribal confederation speaking primarily Qipchak dialects (an extinct Turkic dialect) took the name of Uzbek (Uzbek) and conquered Transoxiana (the part of Central Asia approximately equivalent to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, southern Kyrgyzstan and southwest Kazakhstan). The settled Turkic speaking population saw Uzbeks as foreign but gradually ended up calling themselves Uzbeks as well. However, they did not start using the Qipchak dialects but retained their own Chagatay language, which subsequently became known as the Turkic language in the nineteenth century. In the 1930s Soviet linguists called it 'Old Uzbek', and thus it became the language of the Uzbek nation, which supposedly has always spoken it.<sup>504</sup> The Kazakhs made a political choice to break with the Uzbek confederation and retain their nomadic lifestyle. The Kyrgyz were part of Kazakh groups. Turkmens, who spoke the Oghuz language, and chose to maintain a nomadic lifestyle.

With regard to Tajiks, the word itself is a term related to Sunni Muslims of Central Asia who spoke Persian. The word *Taj*, which Tajiks use to name themselves, means 'crown' in Persian. The word Tajik could probably, however, originate from the word *That* that was the name of the sedentary Persian population in Central Asia, in contrast to the Turkish population, *Tuks*. Tajiks and Uzbeks have grown very close over time and they have very similar traditions and customs within most of their clans and tribes, although Uzbeks originate from nomadic groups, while Tajiks originate from sedentary groups.

Clans on the territory of contemporary Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are more bound to one location (city or village), while in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan, they were more tribal and bound by blood. Tuncer-Kilavuz claims that Tajik and Uzbek clans do not have a tribal past, while Kazakhs, Kyrgyzs and Turkmens tribes do have such a past.<sup>505</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, Uzbeks originated from tribal confederations, which settled

in the region and grew distant from their tribal past. For example, the Qatagan-Uzbeks socio-political structure was conical, i.e. tribes were composed of hierarchically divided genealogies united together by assumed descent from a common ancestor. The leader of the tribe usually has the highest ranked lineage, while the supreme leader of the whole Qatagan confederation was the Amir of Kunduz.<sup>506</sup> Members of clans in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan share common traditions, dialect and culture, although not necessarily an ancestor, mythological or otherwise. Nevertheless, they assume that they are somehow related. In many cases, they are indeed related distantly, not necessarily by blood. For example, in the Samarkandi clan, a child of a niece of one's parents-in-law is still assumed to be a relative. This existing or assumed blood relationship is one of the main defining features of clans. It is a sign of divisions and relations based on one's relatives and the original location of one's ancestors.

The terms tribe and clan have a slightly different meaning in Central Asia. "Tribe" refers to a group of clans (for example, northern tribes that re-group a number of smaller clans) whereas 'clan' refers to the basic unit in which Central Asian societies are grouped.<sup>507</sup> Another difference between clan and tribe is that the tribe has a descent based on the male line. This descent can be real or mythical and the loyalty to the tribe is based on this ancestry. Clans, on the other hand, do not always have a patrilineal descent although contemporary kinship is assumed. There is no mythology tying together the members of Tajik and Uzbek clans. They are mainly connected by assumed, although at times real, kinship, dialect, and customs. Each clan member believes that they are somehow related to other clan members. Despite this real or assumed kinship, clan members do not necessarily have a common ancestor.

Another difference between clans and tribes is stated to be territorial. According to Grozin, tribes, such as Kazakh ones, don't have distinct territorial delineation because they have too many subgroups, while clans, such as Uzbek ones, have more territorial differentiation. Grozin also claims that in a territorial clan, a representative of another country cannot be a member of the clan.<sup>508</sup> However, the Samarkandi and Bukhari clans in Tajikistan as well as in other Central Asian countries prove that clan members can live in other countries. They keep the same dialect and traditions and frequently communicate with members of their clan elsewhere. Territorial distinction of clans does not prevent clan members from living elsewhere, like tribes.

Tuncer-Kilavuz also claims that there is much more to the regional relationships in Central Asia than clans. He states that apart from clan relationships, there are also family, friendship, colleague and neighbour relationships. He especially pays attention to neighbour relationships in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, *mahallagaroi/mahallac* (in Uzbek) or *mahalla/guzar* (in Tajik), claiming that people identify themselves by the place from where they come, thus clientilism is also based on *mahalla*.<sup>509</sup> The *Mahalla* concept does exist in Tajikistan, but nowadays it is mostly applied to the good relationship between neighbours of the same part of the city/town/village. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, he claims also have a different concept of clan, which is named *avlod* or *urugh* (only in Uzbek). He claims that the term *avlod* can also be applied both to blood relatives and assumed relatives.<sup>510</sup> However, among the Tajik people, this term is only used for blood relatives or a few branches of blood-related people connected by a common ancestor by paternal line (wives join their husbands' *avlod*).<sup>511</sup> Clans are not just *avlods* – they include *avlods* as well as fellow villagers (or town/city dwellers). Here the terms can get a bit muddled, because *avlod* and *mahalla* members also live very densely in the same village/town. The difference is that *avlods* are only blood related and cannot be as large as clans. *Mahalla* members are not blood related but have only close-proximity neighbourly relationships.

Tuncer-Kilavuz goes even further to assert that using the term 'clan' in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan gives the wrong idea. He claims that in these countries clans actually 'are more akin to patron-client networks, which may or may not involve kinship ties among members of the network. These groups are primarily instruments for their members to increase their power and wealth.'<sup>512</sup> Using Collins term 'vertical' system of clans, clan members are expected to have a patron-client network, where more influential members of the clan stick together and provide help to other members of the clan in return for some favour or status. Thus, clans in Tajikistan have much more than merely patron-client or relatives, their relationship is more complex, as discussed below.

Further, Tunçer-Kılavuz claims that what is commonly called a 'Samarkand clan' or 'Khujandi clan', are not clans but 'political factions composed of cadres from a particular region, who may have been born, or worked or received an education there, and it may include people from other regions who are linked to this group. It is a political network created among cadres, not the categorical or demographic group which is implied by the word "clan".'<sup>513</sup> Let us look back to the definition of the clan. Clan is a group of people who

may or may not be related by blood, share the same traditions and dialect, have client-patron relationships, if there is an influential member of the clan in a vertical system of clan relationship. In this case, clan members show their loyalty by speech or gifts to obtain promotions. This elevates the status of the giver and puts the receiver 'in debt' even if gifts have already changed hands. However, clan leaders do not have to give their members political promotion if it is not in their interests. Clan definition does not imply political promotion and therefore, may not necessarily extend to a strong political network, although in most cases it does. Therefore, Tajik political factions are indeed clans originating in particular regions of Tajikistan.

As a proof of his point, Tunçer-Kılavuz brings an example of some clan members who changed their loyalty and shifted to politically help another clan when they assumed that the benefit was on the other side.<sup>514</sup> Nevertheless, they only demonstrate that the political network is not very strong among clan members during difficult times. As Tunçer-Kılavuz himself states, 'personal networks, factions, and self-interest play important roles'<sup>515</sup> in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It is quite normal for a Tajik or even Uzbek society to ignore their clan loyalty for personal benefit, because corruption and pragmatism are habitual ways of life.

Although clan loyalty can be ignored, some researchers claim that individuals cannot enter or exit a clan, since the ties of assumed kinship and ties in clans are strong.<sup>516</sup> When a woman marries a man in another clan, she remains an outsider, though her children will belong to this new clan. In case of a man, if his wife's clan is more powerful, than he can enter it through marriage and his children will belong to his wife's clan.

Lastly, Tunçer-Kılavuz's research on clans in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan mainly focused on Uzbek cities and less so on Tajik cities.<sup>517</sup> Therefore, his conclusions might be based more on the Uzbek clan system and more generalized regarding Tajik clans. After all, although Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are closely related through history, according to Akerman, their post-Soviet political systems are different. Tajikistan is a hybrid/transitional state 'in which a limited institutional development and some democratic and free-market characteristics exist alongside a high degree of authoritarianism, corporatism, cronyism and state involvement in economic life.'<sup>518</sup> On the other hand, Uzbekistan has a consolidated autocracy and fully statist economic system.<sup>519</sup> Therefore, the two countries have evolved

differently during and after the Soviet regime, and this evolution might either be dictated by different clan structures or the political processes may have changed the clan structures.

Furthermore, Tunçer-Kılavuz does not consider that each clan in Tajikistan originates from the same place/region/city, even though clan members may disperse and move to other cities. He makes a distinction between clan and regional identities, stating that ‘relationships among people from the same locality or region should not be confused with clans. It is based on being from the same *mahalla*, *qishlok*, district or region. They may or may not be from the same family, relatives or *avlod*.’<sup>520</sup> However, as mentioned earlier, Tajik clan members do not have to be related by blood. Being a member of one clan and being originally from the same locality is very much interlinked in Tajikistan. Indeed, even if the member of the clan is born in another city but his grandparents are originally from a clan based in another region, this member will reply that he is from their ancestral region. For example, if a Konibodomi man’s family has lived in Dushanbe for three generations, he will reply that he was born in Dushanbe, but he is Konibodomi. As Tunçer-Kılavuz himself admits ‘when asked where they are from, people generally give their grandfather’s place of origin rather than their own birthplace, when these are different.’<sup>521</sup>

Family and friendship relationships are often formed on the other interesting feature of Tajik clans, the *raftu omad* basis within clans, which literally means ‘coming and going’. Neighbours also have *raftu omad*, but there are usually no promotions or marriage alliances discussed. The clan members are always in touch with each other, visit each other, sometimes even without announcement, to share information, gossip, to promote some member of their family, to match-make for their children, and many other reasons. *Raftu omad* is especially important during festivities, weddings and funerals. The failure by close clan relatives or important clan members to attend such events without legitimate reason may be seen as an insult to the family. Weddings play a connecting role for patronage relationships within clans. Clan members strive to marry within the clan, choosing the most prominent family for their son or daughter.

Clan relationship is still the most important in Tajikistan in the work/business environment as well. Professional relationships at work are based on clientelism, where each clan promotes its clan members in the organization/office. The Soviet system had a contradictory effect on the dynamics of local power relationships, because it created national leaders out

of local clan leaders. Thus, such dynamics made clan competition almost impossible. Nevertheless, Starr claims that clans, despite being ‘in conflict with one another locally [...] had a common interest in protecting their republics from Moscow.’<sup>522</sup> Starr states that during the 1920s and the 1930s the newly formed Soviet government made attempts to control and repress local political networks in Central Asia. However, after the oppressive period of Stalin, the Soviet regime let them have more freedom in their local affairs if they fulfilled their share of production and did not threaten the ideology and authority of Moscow.<sup>523</sup>

The kolkhoz, the collective farms in the former Soviet Union, were a system where clans enjoyed even more freedom, ‘representing regional factionalism in their state capitals’.<sup>524</sup> Most former clan leaders and local aristocrats were killed or fled the region during the formation of the Central Asian Soviet Republics in the 1920s and the purges in 1937. However, those that remained managed to keep their leadership status, although in a different system. Kolkhoz chiefs were formed of clan leaders and led the community in almost the same way as they used to lead their clan, distributing economic and administrative supplies, and acting almost like clan leaders or *bey*s<sup>525</sup> before the Soviet system.<sup>526</sup>

In post-Soviet times, Central Asian presidents who have obligations to their own ‘powerful but largely invisible regional, clan, and economic power brokers’ control the government.<sup>527</sup> These countries have insufficient government, as high officials do not have enough assets to deliver competent governance and welfare and lower civil servants are not qualified for their posts and, being underpaid, are dependent on bribes.<sup>528</sup> These clan obligations have caused other issues. For example, the presidents of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, while being able to privatise small and medium businesses, recoil from the demands of international donors to privatise larger businesses, as it would disrupt the delicate balance between the president and those whom he owes. Thus, presidents have restrictions on their power, while the local elite and their clan relations oversee various industries making them influential over the whole economic sector. Starr suggests that ‘the weaker they felt themselves to be, the more they tried to exploit national symbols to generate centripetal force.’<sup>529</sup> Therefore, ‘to elevate the voice of the capital and their own authority, the presidents all promoted nationalism (Rokhmonov’s [president of Tajikistan, current name – Rahmon] cult of the Samanids, Karimov’s [president of Uzbekistan] cult of Timur, and Niyazov’s cult of himself [president of Turkmenistan], not to mention Akaev’s [president of Kyrgyzstan] cult of Manas, and Nazarbayev’s [president of Kazakhstan] new capital at

Astana) and undertook populist policies that reached over the main power blocs directly to the people.<sup>530</sup>

Since I have examined what a clan is in the Tajik context and its connection to the national identity, Section 5.4 looks at the various Tajik clans and their power relationships as these relationships played a role in forming the current Tajik society and its identity.

#### **5.4 Clans in Tajikistan and their relationship from the 1920s to the 1990s**

According to Collins, clans ‘are extremely powerful, reflecting the diverse emirates and local power centres of earlier centuries.’<sup>531</sup> The largest clans in Tajikistan are the Khudjandi (alternatively, Leninobodi, Khodjandi, Hudjandi) from the historically more prosperous north of Tajikistan (see Figure 5-1), the Kulyabi (alternatively, Kulobi, Kulabi) from the more agricultural and military south of Tajikistan, the Pamiri (alternatively, Pomiri/Badakhshani) from the economically poor east of Tajikistan, and the Garmi from the grassland central region of Karategin. These clans have played the biggest role in politics and they were the main players in the confrontation during the Tajik civil war. There are smaller clans, including: the Samarkandi, divided between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, mainly situated in Samarkand city in Uzbekistan, largely involved in trade and business; the Bukhari, similarly divided between Bukhara city in Uzbekistan and Dushanbe in Tajikistan; the Hissari, from the central part of Tajikistan, who usually ally themselves with Kulyabi, and are 60% Uzbek-speaking and 40% Tajik-speaking<sup>532</sup>; the Darwazi from the south and the Panjakenti and Konibodomi from the north. The most powerful clans are the Khudjandi, Kulyabi, Karategini and Pamiri. There is a Tajik saying: ‘Leninabad rules, Kulyab guards, Pamir dances and Karategin trades’.<sup>533</sup> The saying clearly displays power relationship between clans during the Soviet time.



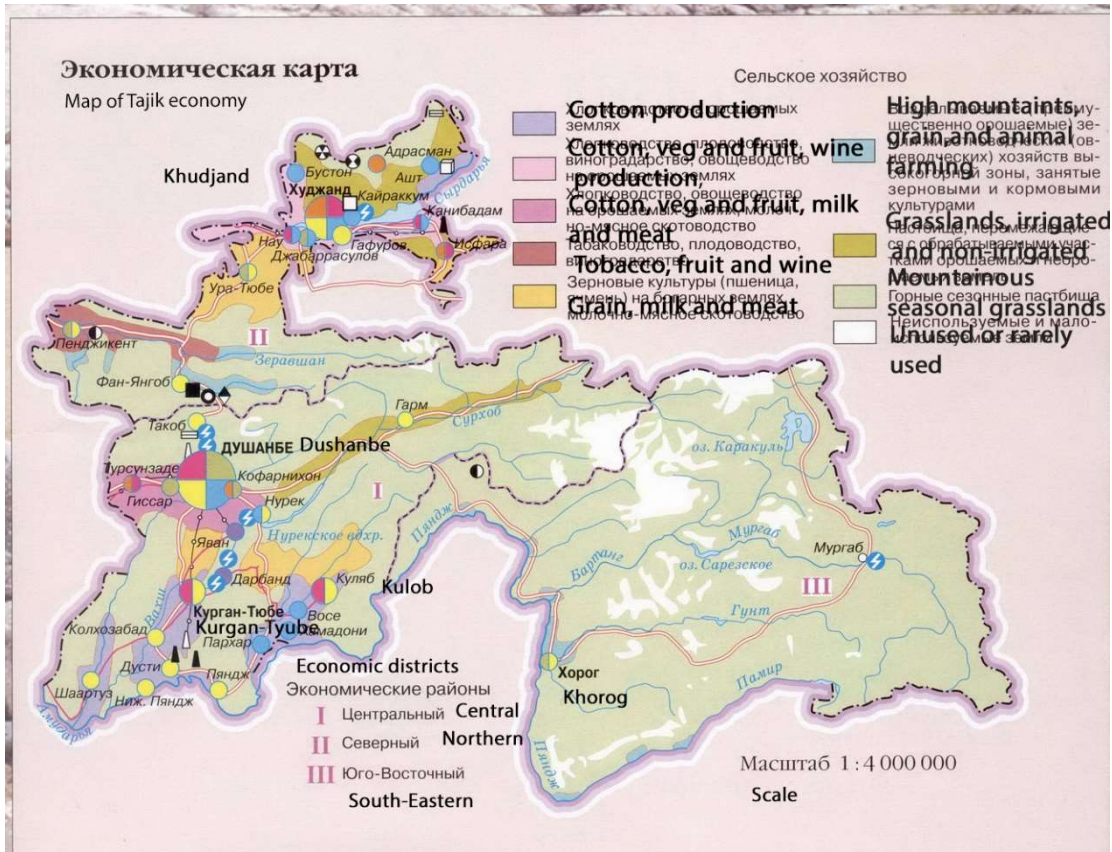


Figure 5-1: Konturnye karty i rabochie tetradi, accessed February 2017, available online from: <http://konturmap.ru/tadjik-economic.html>

Tajik people can feel stronger about their clan identities than their national identities. Inside Tajikistan, Tajiks, first and foremost identify themselves through regional differentiation. One of the first questions newly introduced Tajiks ask each other is ‘*Tu kujoi*?’ (Which part of the country are you from?). Then depending on the answer people behave and talk accordingly. Sometimes it is done to avoid insulting the member of a certain region by some mocking remarks, although sometimes it is vice versa. As ‘clans in the largely nomadic structure of Turkestan were sources of identity for their members’<sup>534</sup>, they remain an essential part of the Tajik peoples’ self-identification. Another example, the Bukhari clan, Tajik people from Bukhara, being torn between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, identify themselves firstly as Bukhari people and then either a citizen of Uzbekistan or Tajikistan.

Indeed, the concept of nation for Tajiks became ‘an extension of their regional, tribal and religious identities.’<sup>535</sup> There are still many Samarkandi people who are ambivalent regarding their belonging to the Tajik or Uzbek nations – Samarkand City is on the territory of Uzbekistan; large Samarkandi groups also live in Dushanbe and in some parts of Tajikistan, but no matter of their place of living, all of them are usually fluent in either

languages. Nevertheless, their clan identity is always clear for them. The Samarkandi clan even published a book, celebrating the notable people from the clan across both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (see Figure 5-2).

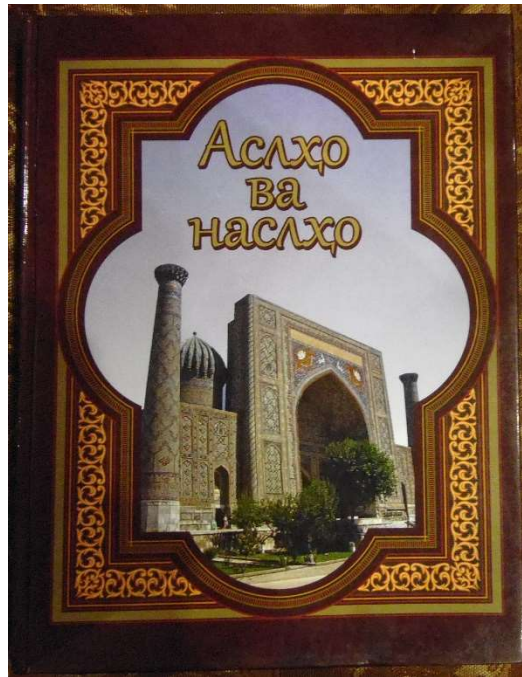


Figure 5-2: Narzikul Obidov, *Aslho va Naslho (The Origins and Generations)*, Poligraf-Group, Dushanbe, 2013. The picture on the cover is the famous Registan madrasah in Samarkand.

Pamiri people are slightly different from other clans, therefore, I examine them further in this section. Pamiri people always refer to themselves as Pamiri and very rarely as the Tajiks. Pamiri people have had separatist intentions primarily during and soon after the civil war in the 1990s. This is because they acutely feel the differences in language, religion and culture between other Tajiks and themselves. Pamiri people live on the territory of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (see Figure 5-3), which accounts for around 45% of the territory of Tajikistan, but it is sparsely populated, with around 3% of the Tajik population, because of the high mountains, which are linked to the Himalayas. This region is poorer and less industrialised than the rest of Tajikistan. The Pamiri people follow the Ismaili branch of Shiite Muslims, whose religious leader is the Aga Khan, the Imam of Nizari; all other Tajik clans adhere to the Sunni branch of Islam. The Pamiri people have had a high degree of autonomy since the formation of the Tajik Soviet Republic, being called Gorno-Badakhshanskaya Avtonomonaya Oblast (Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region), albeit their autonomy is mostly on paper, because they do not have control over such things as taxation or regional investment. The Pamiri group do not have an existing state to reunite

with, although they have asked on several occasions for more political autonomy. In 1993 the Pamiri party Lali Badakhshan attempted to claim independence for the Pamir Gorno-Badakhshan region and unsuccessfully tried to obtain the Aga Khan's support, while others sought the support of Russia.<sup>536</sup> Apart from a violent clash in 2012, which was related to the purge of the former opposition<sup>537</sup>, there have not been any significant political events in this area since 1993.

Alter states that 'regional economic differentiation' acts 'as a generator of regionalism'<sup>538</sup>. However, in the case of Pamir, Tajikistan does not exploit it as an economic resource due to its mountainous landscape and basic infrastructure, so there is no obvious economic reason for the regional differentiation. The Pamiri people do not have their own industry and depend on other regions. Even though regionalists do not always pursue the creation of their own states, the Pamiri people may have had such intentions, if the Tajik government had let them go or, more importantly, if they could be economically sustainable on their own. On the last point, the Aga Khan Foundation has done a lot of work to develop the area, bringing educational institutions and development activities into the region for Pamiri people. The separation from other Tajiks could be related to a sense of neglect, since the Tajik government does not actively participate in helping the region economically or culturally. Finally, the population of Pamiri people is only 3% of the Tajik population (perhaps between 200,000 and 250,000) which is probably too small to become a viable independent nation-state. If, however, the Pamir region became independent, Tajikistan would lose almost half of its territory, which is undesirable for the Tajik government.

The Pamiri clan relationship is not well integrated and has not formed a separate identity due to slight differences in customs and dialects across its region. Indeed, people on the territory of Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region are not united. Pamir consists of seven subdivisions or rayons: Darvoz, Vanj, Rushon, Shughnon, Ishkoshim, Murgob and Roshtkala. While Darvoz and Vanj are populated by Sunni Muslims, the other five are populated by Ismaili Muslims. Because of the religious differentiation, the former two subdivisions are considered to be closer to the Khatlon region rather than Pamir. Although this indicates that religion plays an important role in self-identification of the Pamiri people, Davlatshoev claims that Darvoz and Vanj were forced to convert to Sunni Islam by the Bukhara emirate in the nineteenth century. Thus, according to Davlatshoev's reasoning these two subdivisions are still historically Pamiri 'ethnicity', as he names them.<sup>539</sup> Pamiri people

speak a very distinct dialect of Eastern Persian, without any written form, that is incomprehensible to other Tajiks. The dialect, however, varies somewhat from one subdivision to another. These differences among groups of Pamiri people might serve against attempts to oppose the central government. Moreover, it is possible to surmise that there is no one Pamiri clan, but many small clans within the Pamiri group of people.



Figure 5-3: Angela King and Brad Cole, “Map of Tajikistan” [the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous region is coloured in orange], website of the seminar Politics of Post communism: Russian, East-Central Europe and Central Asia, accessed September 2018, available online from: <https://exhibits.lafayette.edu/ppc/items/show/149>

Roy considers that the reason of drama of clan elites is because their first leaders were not originally from the region itself.<sup>540</sup> The Soviet Tajik intelligentsia had been previously based in Samarkand and Bukhara cities rather than on the territory of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic itself, they then moved or were sent to the Tajik territory either for personal idealistic reasons to develop the new territory or as if for an exile (since the Tajik territory was poor). For example, the first leader of the Council of People’s Commissars – Sovnarkom – in the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (1925-29) was Abdullah Muhiddinov,



originally from the Samarkandi clan. The first elite was chosen among Samarkandi (Urunbey Ashurov one of them) and Ferghana valley clans. Afterwards, the elite was selected from the Pamiri people. For example, Shirinsho Shotemur was chosen to be the chairman of the Central Executive Committee of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in 1933-37, which basically meant that he was the president of the republic. The Pamiri clan could have been chosen at that time, because they were not economically prosperous, nor as religious as Sunni people, and could have been seen as better pawns for the Soviets. This seemed not to work out, as in 1937 they were purged.<sup>541</sup>

Bobojon Gafurov, the same historian who wrote history books *Tajiks I and Tajiks II*, was an inaugurator of the Khudjandi clan into power. In 1944-46 he was the second secretary of the Tajik Communist Party and in 1946-56 he was chosen to be the first secretary. The first secretaries following after him were all from the same clan: Tursunboy Uljavabayev (1956-61), Jabbar Rassulov (1956-82), Rahmon Nabiyeu (1982-85) and Kahhor Mahkamov (1985-91).<sup>542</sup> Accordingly, a Tajik academician said that ‘the first secretary, prime ministers, key ministers, finance, economy: these were all from Khujand during the Soviet period.’<sup>543</sup> All in all, it seems that the central government in Moscow did try to switch cliques in Tajikistan at the beginning, continued to do so in other Central Asian countries, but did not proceed with the same politics in Tajikistan. In Roy’s view this happened due to the Khudjandi clan being conquered by the Russians in 1864, earlier than other parts of Tajikistan. The Khudjandi faction was therefore more developed and russified, thus more trustworthy in the eyes of Moscow.<sup>544</sup>

Tajik elite clans followed Moscow’s guidance and did not strive to re-assert themselves at the end of *perestroika*, as Khidjandi felt secure in their political and economic dependence on Moscow. As Collins states, during the Soviet epoch, Moscow’s usual practice in Central Asia was to remove elite factions from time to time to maintained rivalry between the groups, following the rule of ‘divide and rule’. In Tajikistan, Moscow did not undertake any significant purges apart from of the Pamiri, and there was no obvious opposition to Moscow’s rule. The Leninobodi clan remained the favourite of Moscow. Nevertheless, the Soviet government had a long-term distrust of Tajik religiousness, concerned that the Tajiks could move towards more radical Islam. This was especially true during the Soviet-Afghan war, when Moscow was concerned about the relationship of Soviet Tajiks with Tajiks in northern Afghanistan. The Politburo and Committee for State Security - KGB (*Komitet*

*gosudarstvennoy bezopasnosti*) depended particularly on the industrially developed Khudjandi clan from the north, because it was most russified and hence most trusted. Due to its support by the Soviet government, the Khudjandi clan became unusually dominant during the Soviet period and, unlike in pre-Soviet times, did not need to enter into agreements with other clans.<sup>545</sup>

Nevertheless, the rule of the Khudjandi clan was not completely unchallenged. In 1974, the Khudjandi president of the Kulyab Soviet council was murdered and was replaced by a Kulyabi, thus making Kulyabi rule its own region. In 1976, to counterbalance Kulyab, Kurgan Tyube was raised to the status of a province. Kurgan Tybe is mainly inhabited by Garmi and Uzbeks. The same Tajik informant states that 'in the 1980s representatives of other regions – Kulyab, Karategin, Badakhshan – also had representatives in the government, but key ministers continued to be from Khujand. The people from other regions were given mid-level positions; high positions went to Khujandis.'<sup>546</sup>

By 1980s the ruling clan, Khudjandi, was controlling the centre of the government and its own region while other clans had less prominent positions. All the first secretaries of the Tajik communist party between 1946 and 1992 originated from the north. The Kulyabi clan (Khatlon province, Kulob city) was controlling its region, but the north had an economic alliance with the cotton-producing Kulobi. The Pamiri clan was made stronger in its region (bordering with Afghanistan) by the Soviets due to the war in Afghanistan and possible conflicts. The Leninobod-Kulob alliance dominated other weaker regions, but Russians, Garmi and Pamiri (in the Ministry of Internal Affairs) also held crucial positions.<sup>547</sup> This was the clan arrangement at the end of the Soviet regime.

Khudjandi did have to surrender some of their power to other clans. In 1985-90, the president of the Council of Ministers was a Kulyabi, Izzatullo Khayeyev. The war in Afghanistan also returned the Pamiri clan into more power. Roy argues that Garmis were one of the few large clans that were left out of power, thus leading them to become more political using Islam during the civil war.<sup>548</sup> Chelnokov and Poltoranin also state that Karategins/Garmis organised financial support for Islamists on the brink of the civil war. At the same time, Pamiris organised a democratic movement in the country.<sup>549</sup>

The Kulyabi clan and the Hissari, initially with the support of the Khudjandi clan, were opposed to the democratic and Islamist movements of the Pamiris and Karategins.<sup>550</sup> During

and after the civil war in the 1990s, Emomali Rahmon, from one of the minor Kulyabi clan subdivisions – Dangara – was brought into power with the help of Moscow. Rahmon filled the government with representatives from his own clan and ousted the elite Khudjandi clan from ruling positions, including the Khudjandi Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullojanov in 1995. Backed by Russia, Rahmon does not feel any need or obligation to share power with other clans. As Collins affirms, not only has the Kulyabi clan driven the Khudjandi clan out of governing positions the, but also the Garmi, Pamiri, Hissari, Uzbek ethnic minorities and others.<sup>551</sup> The Pamiri became more involved in education, mainly through the help of the Central Asian University, which was established by the Aga Khan's Foundation. As a result, many Pamiri people gain scholarships and study abroad. Khudjand is still the second industrial centre of Tajikistan after Dushanbe, but it has obviously lost its power in politics. Many Karategins moved to the capital, thus making it more religious due to their more traditional and conservative lifestyle. The new Tajik saying might be changed into: 'Kulyab rules, Khudjand manufactures, Pamir learns and Karategin prays'.

Clan relationships played a strong role in the politics of Tajikistan. While Moscow did interfere, changing the ruling clans at the beginning of the Soviet era and at the end, there was a longer period between 1950s and 1980s when only the Khudjandi clan dominated the country. This changed in the 1980s during *perestroika* (reconstruction) when other clans gained power. These clan clashes were one of the causes of the civil war in Tajikistan, which is discussed in Chapter 6. While the concept of national identity was not strong in the 1980s and 1990s, it has been strongly reinforced by the new Kulyabi to justify the country's existence.

## 5.5 Conclusions

I defined clan in Tajikistan as an informal association of people united by real or assumed kinship, originating from the same region, speaking the same dialect, sometimes but not always the same language, and having the same culture and traditions. Using this definition, the regional factions and clans in Tajikistan are similar. People inside Tajikistan firstly identify with their clan and secondly, mainly on the international field, identify themselves as Tajik.

Looking at the Tajik nation using modernism, its clan system can be classified as a unit of the national identity that has helped to form the ethnic core. Modernism theory still fits the

Tajik nation and clan system, because people can simultaneously have various identities. Some identities, such as ethnicity and nationality are at the macro (national) level, while clan and tribal identities are at the micro level. All in all, the Tajik clan identity plays an important role in Tajik politics and, for many Tajiks, comes before their national identity.

Clan identity is not openly discussed by official sources, which proclaim the national unity concept to be the only identity. Nation and ethnicity can convey different notions elsewhere, but in Central Asia they have the same meaning, while clans do not figure in any official discourse. However, behind the scenes it is the clan relationship that governs Tajik politics. This is because clans were the pre-existing identity before the Soviets created ethnic identities and upgraded them into national identities during the formation of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government's actions in playing off different clan actors to further its own politics not only preserved clan distinctiveness, but also deepened clan rivalries.

Informal clan identities play a very important role in Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan. The geographic extent of clans in Central Asia do not always coincide with the borders of national identity. Some clans, such as Samarkandi and Bukhari, that cross international borders, are included into the ethnic core of both Tajik and Uzbek nations. Other clans, such as Pamiri, are restricted to regions within countries, which reduces their power. Overall, clan politics is very important and must be considered in any research on Tajikistan.

Clan tensions and conflicts are said to be one of the main reasons for the Tajik civil war. Clan conflicts are similar to ethnic conflicts but regarded less seriously. Jan and Brigitte Tullberg explain ethnic conflict as an ethnocentrism. Since kinship or being related is not the main connecting factor of ethnocentrism as some writers describe<sup>552</sup>, Tullbergs label it as 'group egoism'.<sup>553</sup> Richard Alexander points out that ethnic conflicts arise due to competition of interests. This competition or conflict between interests of the group is caused by the 'competition of individuals with each other' which leads to the 'competition of groups or societies of men with each other [...] in the endeavour to satisfy human needs'<sup>554</sup>, as basic as sexual needs, food and shelter. In the same fashion, clan conflicts have similar roots that we can call 'clan egoism'. There is further discussion of clan tensions and whether they were the reason for the Tajik civil war in Chapter 6.





## **6 Post-Soviet Tajikistan. Did lack of nationalism cause the civil war?**

### **6.1 Introduction**

From the beginning, Soviet Tajikistan was regionally and culturally divided mainly into clans, the major ones being, Northerners, who are perceived as industrially developed and intellectuals with major representation in the past Soviet government, and Southerners, who were primarily engaged in agriculture and the military during the Soviet period. During the Soviet era, no clans strongly challenged the Khudjandi dominance. Therefore, the Khudjandi clan did not want to compromise when issues were raised by the opposition after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1992. The conflict between them, which escalated into the civil war, went on until 1997, when it was ended with the help of the United Nations, the Russian Federation and Uzbekistan. The civil war reduced economic activity, bringing hunger and distress to the population.

Chapter 6 looks at the post-Soviet civil war in Tajikistan. The complexity of the discourse of the nation cannot be understood without understanding a crucial factor – political power. The current political course of Tajikistan has been greatly influenced by its Soviet and post-Soviet experience. Tajikistan's post-Soviet experience was one of the most challenging among all post-Soviet republics. Once independent, Tajikistan was faced with disputed boundaries, an unstable political system, insecure economic foundations and regionalism. After being independent for less than a year, Tajikistan was submerged into the civil war. The participants and their motivations were complicated and changed over time. According to the United Nations, by the end of the war in 1997 over 50,000 people had been killed and 1.2 million had become refugees or internally displaced.<sup>555</sup> Barnett Rubin compares the scale of the disorder and the resulting human disaster in Tajikistan to Afghanistan, Somalia, Bosnia and Liberia.<sup>556</sup> By learning about the conflict in Tajikistan and its causes and effects we can also compare it with similar conflicts in other countries. Moreover, it will help to understand whether the lack of a strong national identity was a cause for the civil war and how the civil war affected the Tajik national identity.

Mobilisation of elites and populations through wars to ward off the 'Other' helps to increase the sense of shared identity.<sup>557</sup> In the case of a civil war, the Other is internal, and it should have divided people, as people took sides. But because the Tajik civil war was clan-related, those sides were already in perpetual competition before the war. By the end of the war, the

Tajik opposition consisted of clans opposing the Kulobi clan, pro-Islamists and others. Despite the opposition being Tajik too, after the civil war, it was presented as Others in this conflict, where elites were warding them off to remain in control. The winners were presented as the side that unified and strengthened the Tajik nation. The government's strong control over competitors and propaganda of elites reinforced the significance of Tajik identity after the civil war. Sacrifice and wars can serve to build the sense of uniqueness and mutual reliance and to strengthen 'the shared culture, memories and myths of common ancestry that together define a sense of ethnic community.'<sup>558</sup> As a result, when the new government, primarily consisting of the Kulobi clan, emerged after the civil war, it emphasised its 'heroic' struggle with the opposition and put a great deal of effort into accelerating the promotion of Tajik national identity. The opposition was temporarily reintegrated into government but presented as the 'bad guy'. Gradually, over two decades of the same government in power, the opposition was destroyed. The civil war became one of the symbols used by the current elite. The symbol was a negative one, but it was used to strengthen national identity and to build consensus against going through another war. Thus, the civil war created new shared memories and myths that have strengthened the Tajik national identity.

This chapter attempts to answer the following research questions: What was the impact of the Tajik civil war on national identity? What are the different backgrounds and various influences that drive ideas of national identity in contemporary Tajikistan? How does the clan system in Tajikistan co-exist with the Tajik national identity? Section 6.2 gives the background to the civil war and explores the shift of power between clans during the fighting. It also examines in greater detail the relationship between ideologies and clans in this war. Section 6.3 discusses how, despite having nationalisation processes, Tajikistan was economically dependent on the Soviet system and did not pursue separatism during perestroika. Clan competition for political power and economic resources was fostered during the Soviet time. Tajikistan, being the poorest of the Soviet Socialist Republics in Central Asia and the most economically dependent on the Soviet Union, consequently suffered the most after the collapse of the Union. Regionalism intertwined with the fight for resources, ideological battles and elite competition for power led to the civil war.

## **6.2 The civil war**

Central Asian countries including Tajikistan did not participate in the 1991 coup in Moscow and accepted freedom from control only after Russia declared independence. After the decision to remain in the reformed Soviet Union in March 1991, the coup that happened in Moscow made Tajikistan an independent country on 9 September 1991. After the break-up of the Soviet Union at the end of the same year, Tajikistan along with ten other Soviet republics became a member of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent Countries). In comparison to other Soviet republics, Tajikistan's dependence on the Soviet economy meant it needed more time and development to feel a real urge for political independence.

Most Tajik clan members belonged to the same party, because as explained in the previous chapter, once a prominent member of a clan joins an organisation, he (normally male, due to gender prejudices, i.e. women being housewives) pulls the rest of the clan into the organisation. The actors of the war had different interests and formed alliances, some of which originated during the Soviet period. The clans from the north, Khudjand City, who were an old political elite, entered into a union with the clans from the South, Kulob region, and Hissori Uzbeks. The Khudjandi clan, being part of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, represented the ex-communist 'old guard' who wanted to maintain the same ruling order as during the Soviet period. The government functioned like a nominally democratic parliamentary system, but the parliament did not have any real power over the president. The Kulobi and Hissori were initially Khudjandi's allies but moved to represent pro-democrats through the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan created in 1993 (which nowadays is the dominant party in Tajikistan, led by the Kulobi president, Rahmon). The Kulob region, while being underrepresented in the government, played a key role in the military, and was able to gather armed forces. The opposition to this government consisted of people from Karategin, Gharm and Pamir and other regions.

These opposition groups were loosely comprised of different parties with different agendas, some more religious, others more nationalistic or democratic. The biggest was the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) that joined forces with Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT), Rastokhez – intellectuals with nationalistic motives, La'li Badakhshan – predominantly Pamiri people calling for greater autonomy of the Badakhshan region - and other smaller parties. The United Tajik Opposition (UTO) was formed from these parties to combine military resources and negotiate with the government.<sup>559</sup> However, communication between

the regions was slow and difficult due to the mountainous country and bad roads. For this reason, the intermingling and cooperation of regions or parties did not take place anywhere but in the capital. Consequently, the regions could not easily join forces during the war, which in the end was one of the reasons of the failures of the UTO.

Starr states that ‘the transfer of power from north (Khudjand) to south (Kulob) led to civil war.’<sup>560</sup> While the war had a more complicated character than the transfer of power from north to south, the fact that the northern clans followed the old communist ideology and did not want to give up its power, while other clans wanted to seize the opportunity to promote democratisation and Islamism, did lead to the conflict. It is interesting to note that after the short period when the opposition was in control, power was transferred from Khudjand to their allies Kulobi. I examine all these events and nuances in this section.

At first, after independence was declared, the nationalist intelligentsia, pro-democrats and religious activists held peaceful public demonstrations in Dushanbe. These activists were represented by various clans apart from the ruling Khudjandi clan. Among other things they demanded de-partisation (getting rid of the Communist party), changing all laws infringing human rights, freedom of mass information and the resignation of the last First Secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan and the first president of the Republic of Tajikistan, Qahhor Mahkamov (Khudjandi) due to his support for a failed Moscow anti-reformist coup in August 1991.<sup>561</sup> Mahkamov resigned in August 1991 but the other reforms were still to be implemented. These peaceful public demonstrations were an indication ‘of a burgeoning and indigenous civil society’.<sup>562</sup> Jawad and Tadjbakhsh even described the demonstrations of autumn 1991 and spring 1992 as a ‘Tajik Spring’.<sup>563</sup> The first multi-party election was held and the former leader of the Communist Party, Rahmon Nabiev (Khudjandi), a former First Secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan who had been expelled due to a corruption scandal (1982-1985), beat nine other candidates and was elected president of Tajikistan in December of the same year (December 1991 – September 1992). However, other parties disputed the legitimacy of this election. The agitation grew, and the factions started armed confrontation. Both leaders of the transition period were communist hardliners from the leading elite of Khudjandi. This fact did not satisfy the opposition who were already seeing the effects of reform in the rest of the Soviet region.

During the unrest at the beginning of the 1990s, Rahmon Nabiev did not attempt to make pacts with other clans, apart from securing the military support of the Kulobi clan, thus he swiftly lost control of the inter-clan struggle for power.<sup>564</sup> As Nourzhanov put it, Nabiev's 'major failure was his inability to restore and maintain consensus between distinctive cultural regions of the country'.<sup>565</sup> Nabiev made an effort to follow the democratisation course of Akayev and Karimov but he was in favour of communist ideology more than other Central Asian leaders. Moreover, he did not have an inter-clan agreement to aid him in his fight.<sup>566</sup> The lasting monopoly of the Khudjandi clan in Tajikistan, which not only had political power but also economic benefits, created a great dissatisfaction among other clans that led to the civil strife.<sup>567</sup>

Nabiev's anti-reformist politics and declarations about the revival of the Soviet Union had a radicalising effect on the people.<sup>568</sup> The democratic and Islamist opposition, which included the Democratic Party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, the La'li Badakhshon and other political organisations with mixed religious and cultural agendas, gathered together people from rural areas and some representatives in the Supreme Soviet.<sup>569</sup> This opposition, on behalf of the highest Islamic authority in Tajikistan, Akbar Turajonzoda (from the Vakhdat region), an independent deputy elected to the Supreme Soviet, demanded a complete separation from the Soviet past and the closure of the Communist party.<sup>570</sup> The Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT) founded by Shodmon Yusuf (from Kurgan-Tyube clan) in 1990, together with other parties, took part in more successful public demonstrations against the Tajik Communist Party represented primarily by Khudjandi.<sup>571</sup> The DPT, however, did not hold a strong position afterwards as it was impaired by the civil war and played a smaller role in the opposition in comparison to the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP).<sup>572</sup> In the DPT's place the Kulobi-ruled, People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan took the primary spot. We can see that in the rise of war ideology seemed to be as important as clan politics.

In 1991, Nabiev formed a National Guard and distributed 1,000 rifles to pro-government demonstrators and gathered his armed supporters in southern Qurgonteppa province and eastern Pamir region. In response, the opposition was armed too, which in May 1992 led to bloodshed. At the same time, people in rural areas of most regions were very proactive in military participation in the form of guerrilla warfare. Russian military forces stationed in Dushanbe supported the Khudjandi-Kulobi alliance and interfered as a peacemaker. Opposition and government leaders were brought together and both sides formed a coalition

government. The opposition, however, wanted to have control and worked towards overturning the coalition and creating a new legislature. This resulted in battles mainly in Qurgonteppa region.<sup>573</sup> In September 1992 when President Nabiev was about to fly to Khudjand, his hometown, he was captured by the opposition group of youth and made to sign his resignation at gunpoint. The Khudjand-Kulob-Hissar alliance lost all its key positions. Akbarsho Iskandarov (of Pamiri origin), the acting chairman of parliament, took the post of acting president for about a month.<sup>574</sup> Iskandarov, however, had little influence over the Khudjandi-Kulobi alliance due to his origin and little influence over the opposition due to being close to Nabiev of the Khudjandi clan.<sup>575</sup>

In November 1992, Sangak Safarov, a criminal from Kulob, formed the National Front, armed it with stolen Russian military weapons, and fought against the opposition, making the Iskandarov coalition government surrender. These events resulted in most leaders of the opposition moving abroad to Afghanistan, Iran or Russia. The assembly abolished the office of the president and changed Tajikistan into a parliamentary republic. The office of Prime Minister was given to Abdumalik Abdullojonov from the Khudjandi region. The opposition was repressed and Turajonzoda and two other leading members of the opposition were accused of treason and forced into exile. Mass arrests were made, and some people were executed without being formally charged.<sup>576</sup> Although Khudjandi Abdullojonov was the Prime Minister for a short period (1992-1993), the power moved to the hands of the Kulobi, who were Khudjandi's allies and pro-Communists, and at length detached themselves from the old Khudjandi elite and communist ideology.<sup>577</sup>

At the end of the day, the civil war was not primarily about ideology but more about the clans, factions and warlords and their hunger for power and resources. Driscoll argues that the civil war was primarily led by warlords, who wanted 'to form a coalition, lay claim to the capital city, and act like a unifying force – re-appropriating symbols and rituals from defunct Soviet institutions long enough to convincingly masquerade as a government. [... Thus,] they could gain access to the foreign aid and recognition.'<sup>578</sup> The reason why this occurred in Tajikistan is because the elite was weak and could not react fast enough to change and stop the quickly escalating conflict. Some members of the elite made a mistake of forming allies with warlords and failing already due to the very nature of alliance.

As much as hard-line ideology was important for the Khudjandi elite, it was not as important to their Kulobi allies. The Kulobi's armed protest led by the warlord Sangak Safarov are thought to have been organised and financed by the Khudjandi only because the Khudjandi could not bring their supporters from the north to Dushanbe because of logistical difficulties. It takes only 4 hours to drive from Kulob, but it takes more than 8 hours to go over the mountain passes from the North. Since the Kulobi served as a military power during the rule of Khudjandi through the Soviet time,<sup>579</sup> Khudjandi may have used the Kulobi as a lever with no intention to give them any power. However, the turbulent time of upheaval had brought to the front the Kulobi leader, who then did not give positions back to the Khudjandi. There is also a suggestion that Khudjandi gave up their power in 1992 in order to retain autonomy in 'running their own affairs' in Khudjand region.<sup>580</sup> However, Khudjandi would not have voluntarily given up their power, if it was not for the coup and their inability to control the armed forces that mainly consisted of Kulobi and ethnic Uzbeks.

Kulobi warlords selected as their leader someone they hoped to be able to control as a marionette. The assembly voted in an open ballot for Emomali Rahmon, from Dangara, a town near Kulob, who became the speaker of parliament and de facto head of government. The rise of Rahmon from a former collective farm director (state-owned farm in the Soviet Union) to chairmanship of the Kulob region and further to the Parliament was significant but also easy due to the turbulent atmosphere.<sup>581</sup> It is suggested that at the beginning of his leadership, Rahmon's government relied on Kulobi warlords a great deal, because his status was not yet established among the Kulobi people. Apart from Sangak Safarov, the warlords included leaders who were popular among Kulobi: Yaqubjon Salimov, Ghaffor Mirzoev, and the Cholov brothers. The Kulobi allies were warlords of Uzbek ethnicity from Qurgonteppa and Hissor, such as Mahmud Khudoyberdyev and Ibodullo Boimatov.<sup>582</sup> Rahmon turned out to be more than a marionette and purged the warlords at the first opportunity after the civil war and took control of his clan and the country.

Fighting continued on a smaller scale until the United Nations organised peace talks in 1994. In November 1994, the government of Tajikistan adopted a new Constitution and held presidential elections. Ex-communist and now pro-democrat Rahmon won the elections and became the president of the country. Phillips called the elections non-democratic, as 'unofficial observers reported many violations and intimidation of rival supporters' and there was 'the absence of a free press, of the fair participation of opposing political groups, and



with a decree in effect banning political parties, their newspapers and independent media'.<sup>583</sup> The opposition had based itself on the northern borders of Afghanistan while armed fights took place in the eastern mountainous areas of Tajikistan. Even though Rahmon did not seek any compromise with the opposition, the government took part in peace-making talks renewed by the United Nations, while sporadic fights and ceasefires continued until 1997.

The experience of isolation within the Soviet Union seemed to lead to a new isolation during the civil war. On the other hand, Tajikistan was not fully isolated, as there were outside actors who took part in aiding the war or negotiating the peacekeeping, such as Russia, the United Nations, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Peace was finally officially established in June 1997 after heavy persuasion from the United Nations, Russia and Iran to sign the peacekeeping agreement.<sup>584</sup> But political bloodshed continued until 2001 when armed groups and self-governing commanders were forced to leave or eliminated.<sup>585</sup> The civil war killed about 50,000 people, destroyed 35,723 houses and led to 1.2 million people seek refuge in neighbouring countries as well as Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia.<sup>586</sup> In addition, 300,000 Russians and other Slavs fled from Tajikistan at the beginning of the civil war.<sup>587</sup>

After the war, the opposition was very often portrayed as the threat to the unity of the nation and the main cause of the conflict. The new elite took many measures to undermine the opposition's influence and raise its own status. President Rahmon promised to include 30% of the opposition in the government and indeed Turajonzoda became the Deputy Prime Minister from 1998 to 2005 and Abdullo Nuri remained the leader of the IRP until his death in 2006. However, despite this promise and a few granted positions, the president gradually 'whittled away his guarantee' to give the opposition power.<sup>588</sup> Rahmon put his collaborators and relatives in key government positions everywhere in the country including the northern cities. The situation with Kulobi leadership in the capital made the Khudjandi closer to the opposition, such as the Pamiri people. Moreover, the leader of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, Jumaboi Niyazov was based in Khudjand, which was a clear sign of Khudjandis agreeing on opposition to the Kulobi.<sup>589</sup>

In response to being detached from power, Khudjand and Ura Tyube held demonstrations and Khudjand proclaimed itself an economically independent zone in 1996, which was never approved by the parliament in Dushanbe. Khudjand could have potentially become an independent territory, because it had easier access to the Uzbek markets than the south of

the Tajikistan.<sup>590</sup> However, the demonstrations were suppressed, and government security forces arrested hundreds of people. In 1998 there was a revolt lasting five days in Khudjand where, according to the BBC, the rebels demanded ‘that northern Tajiks be given a larger say in the government in Dushanbe’, but the revolt was suppressed, leaving 500 injured and unknown numbers killed.<sup>591</sup>

In 1997, there was an attempt to murder Rahmon when he visited Khudjand. Those who attempted the murder were arrested; many people were tortured and even disappeared. Khudjandi politician Abdullojanov (the former Prime Minister), who ran against Rahmon during elections and was excluded from the new government coalition, was accused of initiating the attempt. This helped to eliminate possible rivals to the president, especially from the Khudjandi side. Abdullojanov, however, left Tajikistan in 1994 before the attempted murder, first for Russia, then for the United States, which makes him an unlikely candidate for the attempt. He was not extradited but remains living in the United States.<sup>592</sup> A rare example of a Khudjandi politician is Ibrohim Usmanov, who was able to rise in politics by taking part in reconciliation in the 1990s and served as the president’s advisor over the period 2000-2004. He published works including considerable political and historical analysis and was finally removed from the government in 2006. Such an example could be explained by the fact that the new elite clan needed the intelligentsia on their side to work in promoting their ideology.

The principle of clan loyalty generally works vertically; those on the bottom are absolutely faithful to the head of the clan. Being at the top, Rahmon perceived those below him as gaining too much control and thus being competitors for his power. Rahmon disposed of his supporters – warlords – as well. For example, between 1992 and 1998 Yaqubjon Salimov’s career progressed from Minister of Interior to diplomatic banishment in Turkey to the customs chief and then to the criminal.<sup>593</sup> The riddance of political opponents, from both opposition parties and his own party/clan, served to consolidate the political power of the new elite. This new political power strived to propagate national unity, patriotism and a shared belief in independence to the masses, in order to remain in power and prevent further clan conflicts.

The brief description of the civil war and its actors gives a background from which to analyse the causes of the civil war. The next section concentrates on various factors, such as the lack

of nationalism, poor economy and clash of ideologies. Also, it analyses how nationalist processes could have influenced the outset of the war and whether they lasted after the end of the war.

### 6.3 Causes of the civil war

Nationalist discourse developed in Tajikistan during the formation of the Soviet Union and strengthened after independence. Some scholars argue that the initial reason for the Tajik civil war was the lack of nation building processes, whereas others state that it was economic and political weakness. Yet another argument sees ideological conflict and religious extremism as the main reason for the war. As discussed in Chapter 5, the Soviet regime helped to create and promote the competition of regional factions for internal power in Tajikistan. Among ideological, political and economic factors, clan clashes for control of the state and economic resources seem to be one of the main factors that caused the escalation of the conflict in Tajikistan to the level of civil war. At the same time, nationalism discourse was not strong or politicised enough to unite the nation during the transition. The nation building process had been going on in Tajikistan since the formation of the Soviet Union, and by the end of the regime, Tajiks were firmly aware of their national identity. However, only the cultural aspects of national identity had been promoted. Following independence and the civil war, nation-building in Tajikistan has changed to become more politicised. In this section analyse nationalism and other possible reasons for the civil war.

#### 6.3.1 Battle of ideologies or lack of nationalisation

The potential causes of the civil war include clan conflicts and poor economic conditions and also the clash of ideologies, such as communism, democracy, Islamism, separatism and finally, nationalism. Barthold thinks that although the label of Tajik ethnicity was easily put on the Persian-speaking population of Central Asia, there was still a lack of sense of national unity that led to the civil war.<sup>594</sup> During *perestroika* the lack of political nationalism prompted the Tajik intelligentsia to advocate the promotion of a more assertive and politicised nationalist discourse that the Soviet government was opposed to. Alan Philips suggests that Tajikistan did not have a ‘sense of national harmony’ at the start of the civil war.<sup>595</sup> Akbarzadeh also believes that the Tajik ‘state’s [meaning Mahkamov’s government] rejection of political sovereignty and failure to uphold Tajik nationalism’ was the main reason for the civil war.<sup>596</sup> At that time the government was headed by the pro-communist

Qahhor Mahkamov (of the Khudjandi clan), who presided only between 1990-91 and was made to resign by the Tajiks because he did not support the August Coup of 1991 in Moscow, which suggests that he did not really want independence for Tajikistan. Afterwards, for a year, the government changed hands a few times until 'pro-democrat' Emomali Rahmon's (Kulobi clan) appointment. Philips' statement echoes the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon's view, who in his speech in 2002 stated that not only 'one of the reasons for the Civil War was the gap between the social classes and the decline in political consciousness', but also 'the insufficient feeling of pride for the culture and history of our country' that 'can only hinder the strengthening process of our national consciousness'.<sup>597</sup>

The civil war in Tajikistan and its causes could be compared to other post-Soviet countries, such as Georgia and Azerbaijan, which also had civil wars following the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, these countries had very different circumstances to Tajikistan's history and geopolitics. Azerbaijan's war was a secessionist war with the involvement of Armenia. Georgia's civil war, a much shorter affair (1991-1993), also started with separatist movements, which turned into coup d'état and the consequent resurgence. While Georgia has a strong national identity<sup>598</sup>, its separatist movement was inspired by other factors, including external ones. Azerbaijan also has a strong national identity, but the civil war there had lingered since the beginning of the twentieth century conflict, starting from the Nagorno Karabakh area populated by Armenian national minorities.<sup>599</sup> That is why we cannot compare their national identity relationship to civil war.

On the other hand, according to Akbarzadeh, who compares Tajikistan to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in 1992-1996 'Tajikistan seems to pay little attention to constructing and popularizing the ideal of "Tajik national identity" [...] unlike the case in the former two republics, travellers to Tajikistan are not greeted with symbols of Tajik greatness, billboards announcing Tajik political sovereignty or the "national" flag of Tajikistan'.<sup>600</sup> Furthermore, Akbarzadeh claims that nationalization did not take strong roots during the Soviet time and 'the elite in Tajikistan overlooked the emotional appeal of nationalism... neglected the sense of mission and legitimacy that the ideal of "nation-state" could confer', which may have contributed to the social disturbances and as a corollary led to the civil war.<sup>601</sup> Indeed in 2002 the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon admitted: 'it is difficult to confess that we did not previously have any symbols that could verify the existence of the Tajik Nation.'<sup>602</sup> Thus

this view conjectured by foreign and Tajik academicians is supported by the official state rhetoric.

As soon as peace was restored, the government did become greatly preoccupied with national symbols and 'Tajik greatness'. Yet it is also a signal that the Tajik national identity has been a recent development, which did not exist in the past. Tajik national symbols did not exist in the past because the Tajik nation itself did not exist. The construction of this nation during the Soviet time was subtler and included fewer symbols, because it was homogenised with the *Homo Sovietikus* strategy discussed in Chapter 4.

Immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Tajik elite was not inclined to lean towards nationalism and religious revival, as did Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The Tajik Khudjandi clan was in favour of 'internationalism' and remaining under the 'status quo' and this might be also due to the dominance of Russian and Uzbek politics and elites (both Russian and Uzbek languages prevailed among the Khudjandi clan). Pro-national religious opposition, some of whom have been educated in Middle East and in some cases, had resided there, regarded the politics of Khudjandi clan as weak and dependent on Russia and Uzbekistan.<sup>603</sup>

On the other hand, there was not a complete lack of a sense of identity. By the time of the fall of the Soviet regime all clans of Tajikistan regarded themselves as Tajiks apart from some Pamiri exceptions discussed in the previous chapter. The tensions between the government and the opposition was on the surface caused by a struggle for central power and the political and economic rivalry throughout the Soviet time. The group that was principally engaged with nationalistic activities was the intelligentsia, especially by the end of the Soviet regime. It made up only a small part of the opposition during the war, since the intelligentsia itself had small numbers. The relatively low education levels in Tajikistan, discussed previously, could not produce a large intelligentsia, nationalistic or otherwise.

Nationalism has existed from the beginning of the formation of the Central Asian Soviet republics but increased at the end of the regime. The Soviet government promoted national identity in Central Asia, albeit only the cultural aspects, intending 'to ease the transition to a class-conscious, socialist orientation in the long term'.<sup>604</sup> The Soviet ideology created a dogma that each titular nation had to be connected through its history to a specific territory 'that is the natural patrimony of that nation'.<sup>605</sup> The ruling elite and intelligentsia of Soviet

Tajikistan aimed to unearth the Tajik culture and create a distinct link with the newly formed nation. Language, literature and culture were indeed ethno-symbolically repurposed with the help of such writers as Mirzo Tursunzoda and Sadriddin Ayni in order to make it seem as if they had been a part of the Tajik nation for many centuries. The historian and politician Bobojon Gafurov worked out a nationalist version of the Tajik history. However, all of this was done to strengthen cultural nationalism – a sense of people’s distinct culture.

During *perestroika*, the Tajik intelligentsia agreed with Gorbachev’s reforms and national priorities, but they did not aim to separate Tajikistan from the Soviet Union before the Moscow coup in 1991. Following the lead of the Baltic republics, political nationalistic tendencies became relatively strong in Central Asia at the end of the 1980s. Nonetheless, these countries were not ready for complete independence, since they have never had an independence before in form of current republics divided into nations. For example, the national movement Birlik in Uzbekistan ‘was more concerned with cultural and environmental issues, such as the acceptance of Uzbek as the official language of the state, the cotton monoculture and the plight of the Aral Sea’.<sup>606</sup> In Tajikistan, perhaps the Iranian revolution in 1979 could have influenced the Tajik political nationalistic activities, as it provided the Tajiks with a politicised anti-imperialist discourse,<sup>607</sup> but it did not cause separatist movements, since Tajikistan was never an independent country before the Soviet Union. The intelligentsia’s disagreement with national territorial delimitation (discussed in Chapter 7 using the example of Masov’s rhetoric) during the early Soviet period represented those few nationalistic tendencies at that time, but it had never escalated to a conflict.<sup>608</sup> Nevertheless, nationalistic albeit not secessionist discourse increased in Tajikistan during *perestroika*. The Tajik intelligentsia wanted to be recognised as a dignified ancient Tajik nation, but they did not want to leave the economic and political protection of the central Soviet government.

The reform of the Soviet political system, i.e. *perestroika*, allowed the creation of a number of political organisations and parties in Tajikistan, although the Tajik leadership did not approve of their activities. In 1988 Tajik intellectuals, such as writers, journalists and academics, founded the first unofficial organisation, *Yavaroni Bozsozi* (Friends of Reconstruction and Restoration) that demanded Farsi should become Tajikistan’s state language, democratisation of state structure, the setting up of a market economy, privatisation of land, and reconstruction of the environment. Since the government, as many

similar ones, was conservative and rigid, the First Secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan (December 1985 - September 1991) and the first President of Tajikistan (November 1990 - August 1991), Qahor Makhkamov, suppressed the organisation and stopped its activity. Another organisation *Marifat* (Insight) demanded similar things and was similarly discontinued.<sup>609</sup> Other democratic movements with nationalist agendas included *Rastokhez*, *Ru ba Ru* (Face to Face) and *Vakhdat* (Unity).<sup>610</sup> The discussion group *Ru ba Ru* created by *Komsomol* (an organisation for communist youth in the Soviet Union) in 1989 discussed national issues, such as the destruction of traditional values. Nationalistic and even xenophobic slogans, such as 'Tajikistan for Tajiks' were proclaimed during demonstrations<sup>611</sup> but mainly due to the housing conflict with Armenians discussed later.

The democratically inclined party *Rastokhez* (Renaissance/Rebirth/Resurrection) was the most active in nationalist discourse. Nationalist intelligentsia formed the party in 1989. Its programme called for the reconstruction of national self-esteem and self-awareness in the first issue of its journal in 1990.<sup>612</sup> The leader of the party was an Afghanistan veteran Tahir Abdojabbar and the organisation used a slogan of old Zoroastrian origin: 'Good Words, Good Thoughts, Good Deeds'. The nationalistic activities of these intellectuals were not without success. As a result of *Rastokhez*' activity, the ancient Persian New Year, Nawruz was declared an official holiday of the republic in 1990. The same year another link to the ancient history was the celebration of the mythical Persian musician Borbad.<sup>613</sup>

Due to these activities, the Tajik language became the state language in 1989. The motivators of this are suggested to be the Tajik interpreters and translators, who had to serve in the Afghan war in 1979 to 1989. Wennberg suggests that when the interpreters had returned from the war, they opened a debate about the Tajik language, which started the whole rhetoric of the state language. Joining the interpreters, the intelligentsia endeavoured to promote the Tajik language in all areas of the republic where the Russian language prevailed. They also strived for the purification of the Tajik language, as it had assimilated a lot of Uzbek and Russian words, thus becoming different from the Persian-rooted languages of Iran and Afghanistan.<sup>614</sup> Turning the Tajik language into an official language has made the Tajik nation linguistically separate from other Persian-speaking countries.

Nationalistic activities were becoming less peaceful closer to the disintegration of the USSR. In February 1990, there was a riot taking ethnic character in which two dozen people died.

This took place due to speculation spreading in the capital that the government had given Armenian refugees housing priorities. Ethnic Russians testified to seeing demonstrators ransacking stores and attacking people on the streets. However, the government blamed *Rastokhez* as an initiator of riots instead of confirming ethnic tensions.<sup>615</sup> Such tensions can be an indication of nationalistic moods within the Tajik ethnicity, but they can also be the indication of difficult economic conditions and the fight for basic needs.

As the war progressed *Rastokhez* joined forces with other ideologically differing parties to form the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). As a result, the party, which was small, lost its voice and became less and less prominent. When the war ended and the UTO signed the peace agreement *Rastokhez* ceased its activity altogether because of the lack of organisational structure and long-term strategies.<sup>616</sup> Their structural difficulties were not eased by the fact that in 1992 their leader had left the country for Iran and then Kyrgyzstan due to persecution, returning to Tajikistan only in 2005 when the party was no more. Most of its members joined the Democratic Party at the time of the peace agreement in 1997,<sup>617</sup> as this was the party that could have potentially stood up for their interests.

The Islamic revival at the end of the Soviet regime had a connection to the national revival. Schnabel and Hjerm point out that the stronger the relationship between religion and state, the stronger national identity can be.<sup>618</sup> Aziz Niyazi argues that Islamic revival had a direct connection to the crisis in the 1990's.<sup>619</sup> Forced migration due to the industrialisation of Garm and Pamir regions during the Soviet time, caused Garmi migrants to react against the unfairness of their resettlement and losing their houses by turning against the Soviet atheistic dogmas – to political Islam. Islam did not disappear with the atheistic regime of the Soviets but was observed and taught especially in Garm by unofficial imams (up to 1500 of them by the end of the 1980s) or family members, but there was no official institution teaching the religion. In the 1980s, when the Soviet regime decreased the religious persecution, alongside 130 official Friday mosques the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan was founded by scholars based on research done about the academic side of Islam. At the end of the 1980s intellectual studies of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences concentrated its subject primarily on national renaissance that included Islamic renaissance as well. Niyazi claims that the Institute was temporarily closed following this research.<sup>620</sup> The institute's website does not confirm any temporary closures during that time, perhaps omitted on purpose. The institute does confirm though



that since its foundation in 1932 it has been working on the history of the Tajik people, Tajik literature and language, the place of Tajiks in the history of Afghanistan, history, culture and religion of people in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Iran, India, Pakistan and Middle Eastern countries.<sup>621</sup> Religious resurgence is not related to the nationalist discourse in this case though, because they could study these subjects independently, without a nationalist agenda.

However, the Islamic party had a lot of influence and power perhaps because Islamic values suppressed by communists during the Soviet time held more appeal to the population. Islamic movements were based on underground activities in the 1970s, initiated by the Qarategin people who were forcibly resettled to cotton fields in Qurgonteppa, Vakhsh valley and turned to the religion as their refuge from injustice. These people formed the core of the Islamic Renaissance Party during the civil war.<sup>622</sup> Islamic propaganda spread by the Iranian embassy in Moscow after the Iranian revolution plus the war in Afghanistan may have played a role in re-examining the Tajik religious heritage.<sup>623</sup> These underground movements having more radical religious motives led by Said Abdullo Nuri joined forces with the state-controlled religious foundation led by Khoji Akbar Turajonzoda. Abdullo Nuri became the leader and Turajonzoda the deputy leader of the loose coalition of nationalists, democrats and Islamists allied as the United Tajik Opposition. Tajiks predominantly consider themselves Muslims (85% Sunni Muslims, 5% Shia Muslims<sup>624</sup>), even if many of them do not practice the religion. Despite their Islamic values, people did not endorse the establishment of an Islamic state that was proposed by some religious leaders who had conflicting opinions about this subject with others.<sup>625</sup> Nevertheless, Islamists in contrast to nationalist intelligentsia played one of the most prominent roles in opposing the elite during the civil war.

An interesting concept is suggested by Nourzhanov, that the reasons for escalation of the conflict are the symbolic concepts present in the traditional culture of Tajiks. The protection of honour (*nomus*) or dignity (*nang*) plays an important role in the value system of Tajiks. This concept entails all men seeking revenge and self-assertion if anything happens to their families or wider relations. When the opposition and their opponents created illegal military formations, many families were hurt in the process. As a consequence, distressed civilian men joined against the side that maltreated them. For example, Davlat Usmon, Deputy Chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party, joined one of the two major fighting factions,

due to the murder of several of his relatives.<sup>626</sup> Thus traditional values were as important as ideological values and the wish for reforms.

### 6.3.2 *Clan control by the Soviets*

The lack of political nationalism can be related to clan politics in Tajikistan. Politics depended on the local regional loyalty to factions who organised the government and distributed the most powerful positions among its own elite. These regional factions or clans ‘supported and promoted their own regional clients to such an extent that it was the regional identity that took precedence over the ethnic identity.’<sup>627</sup> The power clashes between the clans were the basis of the civil war from Roy’s point of view as well.<sup>628</sup> Indeed, clan confrontations were part of the intricate mosaic of the civil war, as proved by the description of the civil war in the previous section.

During the war, government forces consisted mainly of the Khudjandi and their allies the Kulobi. The Khudjandi, having been in power since the Soviet time, were pro-Communists. Opposing forces consisted of an alliance of parties and their armed supporters. Most of these parties had different ideologies and regional frameworks – supporters of each party were from a specific region,<sup>629</sup> overlapping with clans that were also from specific regions. Ideology in this case was most likely a cover for basic needs and lack of national unity of regional interest groups. Glenn *et al* believe that it was the conflict of ideologies that caused the civil war in Tajikistan. The argument brought forward is that the ex-communist hard-liners did not want to give up their position to coalition forces, while coalition forces could not decide what form the new regime of Tajikistan would take – nationalist, Islamist state or parliamentary democracy. However, they admit that the ‘old guard’ (Khudjandi clan) chiefly wanted to continue the monopoly of receiving benefits as they did during the Soviet time.<sup>630</sup> This indeed makes the ideology a front for clan and regional interests. For example, the head of the Ministry of the Interior, Mamadaez Navzhuvanov who was of Pamiri origin, in spite of being a government figure and driven by their ideology, moved to the opposition bringing a large portion of the ministry’s forces to help the Pamiri party La’li Badakhshon<sup>631</sup>, because he was of Pamiri origin. Moreover, the ‘old guard’ consisted of primarily Khudjandi with their right hand Kulobi, but the Kulobi at the end turned against the Khudjandi communist-hard-liners towards parliamentary democracy and the strengthening of nationalist discourse.

This clan fight for power is often called regionalism in Tajikistan, as it associates regional identities with clans. Tim Epkehans examines regionalism as one of the main reasons for the 1990s' split in Tajikistan. However, he concludes that regional solidarity networks are not well developed in the works of the advocates for regionalism in the Tajik civil war. Regionalism is merely used as a term to justify the outbreak of the conflict. He asserts that causes, such as 'organized crime, the absence of the rule of law, contingent personal interests or external influences [... as well as ], economic crisis' are most prominent in the Tajik civil war discourse.<sup>632</sup> While regionalism or clan conflict is one of the important factors to consider in the civil war discussion, other factors were at least as significant, if not more so.

### *6.3.3 Poor economy*

Indeed, another cause of the civil war could be economic crisis and struggle for resources. During Soviet rule, the Central Asian region was isolated, and the only connection with the outside world was through the government in Moscow. Consequently, modern Tajikistan did not have the economic resources to allow it to be self-sustaining. Moreover, the Soviet economy was centrally controlled and specialized by region. This segmented economy, where each country was the producer of certain types of product, did not make it easier for the Soviet republics to become economically independent. While the Baltic republics demanded that their factories be used for their own good, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic did not have many plants in the first place, apart from the aluminium factory near the capital and the uranium factory in the north. Other larger Soviet countries had more resources and therefore more specialization and Tajikistan's role was to process raw materials, such as cotton, while Russia's role was to provide technical skills and finances.<sup>633</sup> Tajikistan depended on credit from the Soviet Union and customised markets of other Soviet republics.<sup>634</sup> Until the early 1980s the Tajik economy was relatively strong and growing, but building hydroelectric plants and other industries was required labour from other republics, because of the lack of local training and skills, thus increasing the unemployment of Tajiks to 25%. Corruption escalated as well and Tajiks, especially young ones, became drawn to criminal activities. Bribery, nepotism and theft made a good basis for the emergence of a mafia which was involved in wide-ranging illegal economic activities involving corrupt officials. These mafias gained more power during the civil war by having more opportunities to be involved in trafficking of narcotics from Afghanistan.<sup>635</sup> Thus Tajikistan's economy was already suffering before independence.

Jesse Driscoll argues that the war in Tajikistan can be understood as ‘a more general scramble for Soviet spoils’.<sup>636</sup> This economic struggle had serious consequences as the Soviet political system crumbled. By 1991, 47% of Tajikistan’s revenue came from the Soviet Union’s budget and it had the largest deficit in comparison to other republics.<sup>637</sup> When the Soviet Union collapsed, ethnic Russians and other ethnicities, such as Armenians, Tatars, etc., started to depart to the Russian Federation leaving the country without a skilled workforce. In 1992, the production of cotton dropped to half of the level of 1989.<sup>638</sup> People were left in political and economic uncertainty and it may have led them to rely on ‘collective action and self-defence’, specifically armed struggle based on ‘clan affiliations and aid from whatever external sources were willing to give it’,<sup>639</sup> meaning Afghan mujahedin who cooperated with Pamiri people in Khorog, providing them supplies and weapons<sup>640</sup>. Heathershaw explains this as political economy, i.e. ‘war in terms of greed (of elites) and need (of their followers)’.<sup>641</sup> Lynch supports the point of economic motivation versus political motivation stating that regional groups fought for land and resources.<sup>642</sup> For example, in 1992, ‘the town of Kolkhozobod to the south of Qurghonteppa, the centre of long-staple cotton production, changed hands six times as a result of infighting amongst militias nominally subordinated to the headquarters in Kulob’.<sup>643</sup> Niyazi also lays out economic reasons, such as forced migration of some villages made by the Soviet government for the kolkhoz and agricultural purposes, population growth (3.1 percent per year), and shortages of water, land, food and energy as reasons for the civil war.<sup>644</sup> Indeed, the struggle for resources was one of the complex reasons for the Tajik civil war in addition to the amalgam of ideological and regional clashes.

To sum up, a combination of the ideological, regional and economic reasons resulted in the conflict of the 1990s. Indeed, the elite, ideology and economy orchestration by the Soviets and the fall of the empire pushed the country into civil war. As Heathershaw states, ‘the inter-Tajik war can be properly understood not as a civil war (narrowly defined) but as a post-Soviet conflict, a complex crisis of decolonisation’.<sup>645</sup> The lack of political nationalism was one of the additional ideological reasons provoking the conflict. The transition from the Soviet regime was exacerbated to an even greater extent by the regional conflict and incompetence of the government to deal with the political and economic crisis of the country. In conclusion, while nationalistic discourse was one part of the driving forces of the conflict,

other elements, such as economic issues, religious resurgence and elite clan competition played an equal, if not more important role.

Finally, the ‘political success for elites during the Soviet Union was only possible through a solidarity group *at the national level* of interpersonal networks, which extends across tribal and regional divisions, as well a constituency *within republican boundary*’.<sup>646</sup> Research indicates that it was not the suppression of regionalism but the redirection of regional elite networks’ competition ‘in civilian form and into official spaces’ that was the cause of the end of the war in Tajikistan.<sup>647</sup> Thus sub-state regionalism developed in the state that lacked politicised nationalism discourse and became one of the triggers of the civil war. Nevertheless, the nation-state that re-emerged after the conflict also provided a point of resolution of the conflict, as the efforts of the new elite have become directed towards consolidating the nation.

#### **6.4 Conclusions**

Since Soviet time, it has been general practice to use the elite discourse on national identity in the Tajik intellectual sphere and neither Gorbachev’s reforms in 1980s nor independence changed this practice. Indeed, it became even more intense. The distribution of power changed during the war and the Kulobi took the reins of control, while the Khudjandi became marginalised in the government. None of the previous elite came forward to become a head of the government, but Emomali Rahmon backed by the Kulobi warlords. Since then the government’s politics has been very nationalistic, to help to justify and strengthen the position of the economically poor war-torn country among its neighbours. The transition into a more aggressive nationalism was also important in order to justify and legitimise contemporary Tajikistan in the eyes of international donors that have provided the country with loans and support. Since the lack of nationalisation was one of the reasons for the civil war, the new regime putting much effort into promoting nationalistic process might avoid another such war. In the next chapter I examine the consequences of the civil war and the elite’s efforts to build a national identity.

## **7 The nationalistic politics of Tajikistan in the post-civil war period and its international context**

This chapter attempts to answer the following research questions: What was the impact of the Tajik civil war on national identity? How does the nation building process influence the Tajik foreign policy? After the civil war the politics of Tajikistan turned towards strengthening the sense of its national identity. I analyse the increase in politicisation of nationalism discourse as an aftermath of the civil war. The need for strengthening of national identity can be explained by the traumatic experience of the civil war. It can also be explained by the relative youth of this country and its people that needed a justification of their place and position on the global stage. Lastly, it can be ascribed to the leadership that has sought to find means to strengthen its position through an ideology that interconnects the people and their leader with stronger ties than the Soviet heritage. Thus, the Tajik government has had pragmatic reasons for justifying its current borders and asserting itself on the global arena. The reinforcing of national identity was not only needed internally, for its people, but also to support the country's foreign policy. I examine the post-civil war Tajik nationalist politics in general and in relation to its foreign policy. In Section 7.2 I briefly discuss the Tajik government's relationship with its affiliates or opponents, namely Russia, China and Uzbekistan, as it affects Tajik national identity.

In case of Uzbekistan, in Section 7.3 I elaborate more on the Tajik-Uzbek relationship due to their shared history as discussed in Chapter 3. According to Gurr and Harff between seven and sixteen million people died in ethnic conflicts from World War II to the 1980s.<sup>648</sup> Hence, in the second section I look into the relationship of Tajik and Uzbek 'ethnicities' and the causes of conflicts between them. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have an analogous history, some interconnected clans, similar culture and traditions, yet different official languages and frequent political tensions since the formation of the Soviet Union. These countries are historically closely related neighbours, which have had rivalry and disputes since the foundation of Soviet Central Asian republics. The post-civil war relationship of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan has become more intense and has had an impact on their peoples' self-identity. At the same time, although some argue that the historical Tajikistan consisted of a much larger territory, apart from a minority among the Tajik intelligentsia, the Tajik government does not attempt to regain those territories that are primarily in Uzbekistan. I

argue that while both countries have strived to contest their cultural and at times territorial legacy, this has boosted the sense of national identity of both the Tajik and Uzbek people.

### **7.1 An overview of Tajik national politics in the post-civil war period**

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Central Asian states were left with enforced national identities. However, by this time these identities were already embedded in people and their governments sought to reinforce the basis for their existence as nationalities.<sup>649</sup> In this way, Central Asian countries emphasised the importance of their boundaries and carried on adding more celebrated details to the histories of their ethnicities created by the Soviets. The main cause of this was perhaps to justify their uniqueness and organise themselves politically for pragmatic reasons. Turkmenistan President for Life, Saparmurat Niyazov went so far as to create a mythological personal cult related to Turkmen ethnicity. Other Central Asian countries primarily confined themselves to the - typical for most nations - justification of their identities through reinforcing their ethnic histories and culture.

The legitimization of the nation and state through strengthening of national identity has been a common pattern in newly established Tajikistan. As ‘the language of nationalism was forged in late eighteenth-century Europe’<sup>650</sup>, similarly, it has been built in Tajikistan in various degrees in the twentieth and the twenty-first centuries. There were no particularly strong nationalistic movements in Tajikistan before the civil war apart from a few movements organised by intelligentsia pre-civil war, discussed in the previous chapter. There was only something akin to a Tajik cultural nationalism<sup>651</sup>, which was introduced and developed by the Soviets through history-writing, education, print and media. Prior to the Soviet era, Tajikistan was a part of the Emirate of Bukhara, where the majority of people were illiterate, very religious and lived in an agrarian-based economy. The transformation from this to Soviet-introduced industrialism (although Tajikistan had little industry, but it was more than in the pre-Soviet period) correlates with Gellner's nationalism theory where standardised education in the industrialised community brings about social mobility.<sup>652</sup> Social mobility plus mass literacy and development of print and media gradually developed the sense of national identity in the Tajik population during the Soviet period. The civil war gave a rapid push to the increase of national identity promotion in Tajikistan. Nationalistic attitudes can sometimes emerge when old states collapse, and new states have their economy unmanageable and their borders and independence unresolved. Thus, in order to cover such

deficiencies, these states escalate the fervour of nationalistic attitudes.<sup>653</sup> Therefore, the post-Soviet Tajik government advanced both cultural and political nationalist tendencies.

It might be thought to be difficult for the Tajik government to have a nationalist line of politics, because the territory of the republic is only a small part of the ancient Persian-speaking Samanid Empire, which the Tajik government claims to be the foundation of the Tajik nation. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, on the other hand, whose territory includes ancient cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Merv, have more arguments and facts to support their roots. Moreover, due to having a weak economy and a large external debt of \$3.821 billion (2014)<sup>654</sup>, Tajikistan depends on the aid of other countries, such as Russia, the USA, and the European Union. Thus, Tajikistan has no certainty neither in its economy and political stability (civil war aftermath) nor in its real proof of being an ancient nation. However, in spite of, or perhaps due to this vulnerability, the Tajik government fervently continues to develop its nationalistic politics and to fortify the homogeneity of its people.

After the civil war, the Tajik government sought to strengthen national identity and through it the peacebuilding and unity of clans or regional factions. It has done so through creating national symbols, such as the ancient ruler, Ismoili Somoni, national signifiers, such as National Unity and National Statehood that are repeatedly used in speeches and banners on the streets, through national celebrations of various ancient intellectuals, writers and poets, whom it proclaimed to be Tajik, and through claiming that the Tajiks as descendants of Aryans, and thus the most ancient nation in Central Asia. The civil war itself has not been forgotten but is mentioned at every opportunity as a factor that almost dispersed the Tajik nation and something from which people should learn and never go back. All these factors help to build the unity of the nation and inculcate a belief in the strong and ancient Tajik nation.

As soon as the peace talks ended, the new Tajik government followed the politics of other Central Asian leaders: the course of establishing a new nation-state and reinforcing its authority. In fact, because all these states are young and fragile, Central Asian presidents claim that authoritarian power is important for the creation of a strong nation-state.<sup>655</sup> In establishing a strong nation-state, Rahmon's regime has used the help of intellectuals to unearth and create a new iconography, especially one not related to Islamic religious identity. Further research into the history of this region was encouraged by the president in



his book *Tajiks in the Mirror of History* stating that ‘if we have known in detail the rise and fall of our nation, we could learn from the mistakes made by our ancestors, then the lethal hurricane of civil war, forced on Tajik people would not likely take on such a tragic scale’.<sup>656</sup> For the Tajik government, a strong nation-state and strengthening of authority are means to avoid falling back into the conflict.

Indeed, after gaining independence and going through the war, the new government needed to legitimise itself and thus moved towards nation-building. Gellner argues that after the Soviet Union’s disintegration, nationalism was a vacuum-filler for the Central Asian states,<sup>657</sup> as they felt like infants left without parental care. Interestingly, Tajik President Rahmon also refers to a vacuum produced after the fall of the Soviet Union, which resulted in efforts to fill the void with all kind of extremism.<sup>658</sup> Nation building that existed during the Soviet time was only in cultural terms, as ‘Soviet power obviated its politicisation and limited the range of possible public representations and interpretations of this identity’.<sup>659</sup> The Tajik elite publications often feature the advantage and greatness of the national statehood, thereby continuing the efforts of the Soviet government of Tajikistan to create a historical legacy for the nation created by the Soviets, or as Wennberg put it ‘the secular anachronistic mythologization provided by Soviet historiography’.<sup>660</sup> The difference is that after the civil war, nationalisation took a politicised turn, which was not present during Soviet times.

On the other hand, the new regime does not want to return to the Soviet communist past. However, Soviet practices and policies have been rooted in the system, producing a hybrid political system of an authoritarian regime where legitimacy is not questioned and the elite gets its benefits through the system.<sup>661</sup> Soviet-educated politicians continue the same practices in post-colonial times although justifying it as a democracy. The Tajik elite continues with Soviet nationalisation politics, despite the multiplicity of identity layers, in order to ‘secure their political pre-eminence within the new citizen-polities’.<sup>662</sup> This way the Tajik government is a nationalistic regime, one ‘that has inherited its form and many of its tropes from the Soviet era’.<sup>663</sup> Thus, while the new regime does not go back to its Soviet past in party politics terms, it does so by politicising nationalist discourse via authoritarian means.

Heathershaw identifies certain signifiers of the public debate over the nation-state of Tajikistan. Firstly, it is the connection to the Samanid Empire, as Tajikistan tries to justify and legitimate itself via presenting the Tajik regime as ‘the inheritor of the Somoni legacy’.<sup>664</sup> The Samanid dynasty became a national icon embodied in the ‘recreated’ image of its leader Ismoili Somoni. His image has not only been used on banknotes, but also in 1999 the government constructed a monument veiled by a large arch and a memorial in the back (the Samanid Empire is discussed in more detail in Chapter 9). The second signifier is the ‘Unity of the Nation (*Vahdati Milli*) – typically described as the key factor for the survival and existence of Tajik National Statehood.’<sup>665</sup> The final signifier is the National Statehood (*Davlatdorii Milli*), usually depicted as crucial ‘for the survival and development of Tajik nation and culture’.<sup>666</sup> The Tajik regime is a regime ‘of and for particular core’ nation, the ‘nationalising state’ model used to describe the new Central Asian countries.<sup>667</sup> The National Statehood and the Unity of the Nation have become especially emphasized by the government to stress the importance of peacebuilding. Those national icons and signifiers link the nationalism of Tajikistan to ethno-symbolism. The signifiers provide symbolism for the continuity of the Tajik ethnic core.

The end of the civil war and peacebuilding processes led to the speedy development and promotion of national symbols. As the government of Tajikistan has taken a course of action towards confirming the validity of Tajik nationhood, it uses various iconographies; it includes not only the Samanid Empire but also other prominent figures who lived in this region in ancient times. Continuing the practice of Soviet times, the actions comprise cultural and ideological projects but have taken a more politicised and large-scale turn. Rahmon developed the idea of a big celebration ‘to reunite the nation and mark the start of a new era’.<sup>668</sup> The celebration of the Samanid state’s 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary took place in 1999 along with the publication of books on the history of Tajikistan, the creation of plays, mass spectacles, parades, and songs. Other celebrations included anniversaries of allegedly Tajik ancient intellectuals who had lived on the territory of Central Asia and Iran, such as 1150 years of Abu Abdullo Rudaki, 1025 years of Abu Ali ibn Sino (Avicenna), 545 years of Kamoliddin Behzod, 800 years of Jaloliddin Rumi, 1310 years of Imam A’zam, 100 years since the creation of *Shahname* by Firdawsi, and more modern ones, such as 100 years of Bobodjon Gafurov and Shirinsho Shotemur. Many monographs and books were published to commemorate these historical dates.<sup>669</sup> Most of the mass spectacles were created with

forced participation of children and students, very often depriving them of classes for an extended period for rehearsals. Public buildings were renovated and new roads and tunnels, such as a tunnel in Hissar Mountains and the road via Khorog to the Chinese border, were constructed as a part of the jubilee to provide better access between regions. For the same reason, new railway extensions were built from Qurgonteppa to Kulob. All these initiatives were excessive in terms of cost but had ‘psychological effect’, creating a ‘vigorous surge of optimism’,<sup>670</sup> interconnection of regions and reinforcement of nationhood symbols.

When it comes to the pre-Samanid iconography, the efforts to reunite the nation did not completely overcome tensions among regional/clan allegiances. On a much smaller, milder scale, tensions include historical disputes, such as that the regional elites see the nation’s ancient presence on contemporary territory in dissimilar ways. This issue is ‘an elemental matrix of national discourse’ of all post-Soviet countries including Tajikistan.<sup>671</sup> The ethno-nationalist discourse that seeks to identify the pre-Samanid origins of Tajik nation and language takes two varying forms. The first one identifies the ‘genuine’ ancestors of Tajiks as Bactrian from the South of modern Tajikistan. This approach is common among intelligentsia from Kulob and Vaksh regions, the South of the country. The second one distinguishes Tajik origins coming from the Sogd, the north of modern Tajikistan. This concept appeals to Northern clans, such as Khudjandi. This intellectual rivalry is subtle and comes up only among educated people.<sup>672</sup> Apart from academic level, the debate around Tajik origins in Bactria or Sogd that takes place between northern and southern clans, is not very prominent in general public discourse.

Both theories as well as the Samanid Empire historically link Tajiks to East-Iranian people. For example, the theory that Tajiks originate from Sogd (contemporary Leninobod/Khudjand province) makes them successors of East-Iranian people, as Sogd was an Iranian province. Further formulation of this theory is that the first Tajik state, formed either in Sogd or Bactria Tajik ethnos, was created during the Samanid dynasty. This dynasty has a prominent position in Iran’s history as well; it is the time of illustrious poets and writers and when the New Persian language was created. Iranian people do not connect the formation of their ethnos or nation to any of these empires or epochs.<sup>673</sup> In addition, Tajiks do not emphasise the direct link of Samanids or Sogdians with the Iranian nation. Such a link would indeed diminish the uniqueness of Tajik nationhood.

Looking into the pre-Islamic presence of the Samanid Empire, President Rahmon, whose views are widely publicised, believes that Zoroaster, pre-Islamic founder of Zoroastrianism dominant in the region (from approximately 550 BCE until 8 AD), was originally from Bactria<sup>674</sup>, the South of Tajikistan, from where the President himself originates. In the first volume of his book *The Tajiks in Mirror of History*, entitled *From Aryans to the Samanids*, Rahmon compares the already established national symbol of Samanids with Aryans.<sup>675</sup> Thus the promotion of Aryans and Zoroastrianism took place via historic discourse but also through mass celebrations, such as 2700 of Avesta and 3700 years of Zoroastrian culture. The year of Aryan culture was celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of independent Tajikistan and commemorated in the third volume of *Essays on History and Culture of Tajik People*, especially devoted to this subject.<sup>676</sup> Aryans are believed to be people who settled in ancient Iran and the Indian subcontinent and spoke an archaic Indo-European language, which was used in the sacred book of Zoroastrians – Avesta.<sup>677</sup> The connection of Aryans to Bactria and therefore, to the modern Kulob region, makes the Kulobi clan seem more prominent than other clans. However, this correlation is not emphasised in the publications, as clan politics are almost non-existent in official academic publications.

The promotion of Zoroastrianism and Aryanism might also represent the regime's anti-Islamic, ethnological and anti-Turkic course.<sup>678</sup> Indeed, there is a 'widely held belief that without their own national statehood Tajik people are doomed to assimilation in a predominantly Turkic region'.<sup>679</sup> An example of such Turkic threat had more political than ethnic connotations. In November 1998, the Uzbek ethnic ex-warlord Makhmud Khudoberdiyev with 1000 men including Afghan and Uzbek mercenaries, allegedly paid for by Abdullojonov from Khudjandi clan, occupied Khudjand from Uzbekistan (in 1997 he had taken refuge in Uzbekistan after challenging the Tajik government to change the terms of the delayed peace agreement in favour of the opposition). After a week of fighting this invasion was stopped by government forces.<sup>680</sup> His victory would presumably have made an important part of Tajikistan belong to Turkic speaking Khudoiberdiyev and the Khudjandi clan. Another reason for Aryan 'ancestors', mythological and historical figures being used to emphasise Tajik identity is the eradication of the rise of Islamic religiousness, as religious leaders were a major part of the opposition during the war.<sup>681</sup> This emphasis on pre-Islamic history and religion via means of public speeches, books and media indeed weakens the status of Islam in Tajikistan.

The anti-Islamic discourse takes a step further by representing Islamists as the threat – the Other – for the nation. For example, the long border with Afghanistan, about 1300 km, is indeed portrayed as a military front not only to counter terrorism and drug-trafficking, but also Islamic fundamentalism. This security peril assures the interest and support of international donors, especially Russia and the United States.<sup>682</sup> In 2002 Tajikistan joined NATO's Partnership for Peace to collaborate against terrorism by providing a space for French military aircraft in Dushanbe and acting as a transit for NATO-International Security Assistance Force campaigns in Afghanistan.<sup>683</sup> Also, in 2001 the Tajik government banned the underground Islamic organisation *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, which settled its branch in the north of Tajikistan, on the grounds that it presented a threat to the stability of the country. About 100 activists of the movement, who distributed leaflets and books containing disapproving statements on the government, were sentenced to prison between 1999 and 2002.<sup>684</sup> Heathershaw identifies this approach as the Tajik regime making a comparison between peaceful and nationally united 'us', Tajiks, with the 'transnational terrorists' - 'them'. In this context, although Afghanistan is historically and ethnically related to Tajikistan, it is now 'a backward and primitive place' that should be left in the past of Tajiks.<sup>685</sup> The government presents itself as a defender of stability, the fighter against Islamic fundamentalists and thus, the preserver of the nation-state.

The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), which is the only official religious party in Central Asia, is one of the main targets to the regime's anti-religious discourse. As one of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan's (PDPT, Rahmon's party) officials, Muso Asozoda put it, the Islamic Party's 'only aim is the creation of an Islamic State. But we say that the religion is separated from the government'.<sup>686</sup> This rhetoric is generally believed by the government, which sees PDPT as a potential powerful competitor. In March 2015, IRP lost its seat in the parliament due to not reaching the threshold of 5% required to gain a seat. This followed mass resignations of its members, who recorded their resignations on video and declared that they were going to join PDPT. Party leaders state that all resignations were made under pressure by the government.<sup>687</sup> Moreover, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) that monitored the elections proclaimed that the loss of the parliamentary seat was due to 'widespread fraud, ballot-box stuffing, and intimidation of opposition candidates during the campaign'.<sup>688</sup> In such a context, the opposition of civil war,

a large part of which had consisted of Islamists, becomes the Other, from which the current regime 'saved' or is still saving the nation.

Going back to signifiers, *National Statehood* is a concept where the national community is united under the state that brings them 'stability' and 'authority'. In other words, the state claims that only its leadership can guarantee security and stability, especially during transition. This trend takes place across Central Asian countries including Tajikistan.<sup>689</sup> Such elite discourse implies that without the nation-state authority stability will not be possible and the country will drown again in conflict. Rahmon often draws a parallel between the state building of the Somoni epoch and the contemporary regime. The Somoni regime is prescribed with the mission to bring stability and security to the ancient Aryan land. All their conquests are deemed to be inspired by the 'Tajik idea' of uniting the nation rather than 'personal survival or exploitation of local population'.<sup>690</sup> Analogously, the elite discourse strongly suggests that the new state of Tajiks has a similar mission of uniting Tajiks.

Manifold layers of Tajik identity complicate the *National Unity* concept; it may seem that the strong presence of clan identity (discussed in Chapter 5), which 'served as vehicles for the war',<sup>691</sup> would disrupt the unity of the nation. Nourzhanov states that as the civil war ended, 'the spirit of Tajik nationhood has been bolstered' but Tajik regionalism or clan divisions obstinately continue to cause issues hiding beneath a thin veneer of pan-Tajik reconstruction and reconciliation'.<sup>692</sup> Leading clan networks retained their political status and economic advantage through the Soviet era and redirected it towards state control and military actions. Kulobi (or Danghara) clan domination in government positions helps in reinstating the authority of the president, as we have presented before, a head of the clan has almost complete loyalty from his clan members. Regional tensions have been more obvious in top-level government positions, civil service, and large commercial organisations. Rahmon allowed or gave these posts to his supporters from Kulob and his hometown Dangara (near Kulob), especially those who took part in the National Front. As a result, 'Kulobisation' took place: in 1996, Kulobi held 13 out of 18 top-level positions in the government.<sup>693</sup> After the peace agreement, quotas of posts had to go to the representatives of the opposition, but it has changed the parameters to only a limited extent. Starting from the 1999 elections the opposition has lost most of its posts. Kulobi got the niche previously occupied by Khudjandi and took the best of their potential rivals. Just as the Khudjandi did

previously, the Kulobi have started to form strategic partnerships with elite members of other clans via marriage, shared business enterprises and other means. Thus, the new ruling elite has extended its power through these ‘horizontal socio-political linkages’.<sup>694</sup>

Most of the Tajik new elite had not been a part of intelligentsia during the Soviet period, they differed from the old elite in terms of its social status and education. Consequently, they have tried to establish their own position not only regionally but also reaching throughout the whole nation.<sup>695</sup> Regional tensions decentralised the state and to a certain extent disrupted the promotion of national unity in the early years after the war. For Akiner, national integrity is only a ‘cosmetic veneer’, which in 2001 she predicted might split into ‘virtually autonomous fiefdoms under the sway of rent-seeking warlords and their protectors’.<sup>696</sup> Interestingly, national integrity has remained intact until this day; this could be attributed to war-weariness and the fact that the new government had its armed forces under control. Another reason could be that the ruling elite took care to get rid of its competitors as well as ex-warlords or former armed opposition, such as was the case with the former commander Mirzo Ziyoev from Rasht province in 2009 and Tolib Ayombekov, former rebel leader from Badakhshon region in 2012.<sup>697</sup> To sum up, regional tensions have not seemed to supersede the consolidation of control over the nation-state.

The presence of a few foreign actors that participated in the civil war and peacebuilding process, could have been helpful in establishing the ‘others’ versus the nation-state. The Russian presence has been strong, as it supplied Tajikistan with military presence during the war and has had almost indissoluble economic, political and cultural relationship with the current government. Uzbekistan also played a strong role in the peacekeeping process. China did not play any role in the civil war but has become active in trade since the war ended.

## **7.2 Foreign Actors**

### *7.2.1 Relationship with Russia*

Being a product of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan remains somewhat dependent on Russia’s influence in political, economic and domestic affairs. Although the Soviet Union was not an imperial government and Tajikistan was not officially a colony, their interaction in some ways resembled a colonialist one. Nowadays, Russia also plays a primary role in supporting Tajikistan with security issues, such as border control and drug trafficking from Afghanistan

as well as dealing with Islamic resurgence. Also, Russia has its own military base in Dushanbe.<sup>698</sup> The economic dependence on Russia has been substantial. Due to unemployment in Tajikistan, a vast number of Tajik men go to work in Russia for extended periods of time (legally, about 1.5 million in 2014, about 700,000 in 2015 – decreased due to the crisis in Russia<sup>699</sup> and about 800,000 in 2016<sup>700</sup>), and very often, illegally (no numbers). Tajik labour migrants' remittances amount to 47% of the country's GDP<sup>701</sup>. Thus, the Tajik economy has suffered adverse results due to Russia's recession in 2014 – depreciation of the Russian rouble against the dollar was a factor in the decline of remittances. The remittances went down to 44% in comparison to early 2014.<sup>702</sup> According to World Bank data the drop was even lower, down to 36.6% in 2014.<sup>1</sup> This shows that Tajikistan would have to consider Russia when it comes to Tajik political ambitions and nationalist pursuits.

However, in 2009, despite economic dependence on its big power player, Tajikistan abolished the official usage of Russian language in education and any government organization and changed all government documents into the Tajik language. This is in spite of the fact that the Russian language still serves as the lingua franca in all post-Soviet republics including Tajikistan. The Russian Federation is a primary country from whence the Tajik labour migrants' remittances flow. This does not reflect well on labour migration to Russia, most of whom are less educated young Tajiks from rural areas, who struggle without the knowledge of the Russian language. In order to restrict the rules of labour migration, Vladimir Putin even passed a migration law on the proficiency of Russian language and history for blue-collar workers.<sup>703</sup> Before leaving Tajikistan for Russia most Tajik migrants have fewer opportunities to learn the Russian language and therefore, have less well-paid jobs and send smaller amounts of money back home.<sup>704</sup> Moreover, the Tajik labour migrants already suffer from harsh discrimination (often racist and xenophobic) in the Russian Federation, whose citizens relate labour migration to crime rates, although only 20% of crime rates in Russia are related to the citizens of foreign countries and stateless people in general<sup>705</sup>. Tajik and other Central Asian migrants often get forced to work without knowing their rights, get beaten, attacked and even killed (21 killed and 178 wounded in an

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<sup>1</sup> Personal remittances received, Tajikistan, The World Bank Data, accessed September 2018, available online from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/BX.TRF.PWKR.DT.GD.ZS?end=2017&locations=TJ&start=2002&view=chart>



incident in 2013, while many are threatened and beaten)<sup>706</sup>. In the end, due to Tajik labour migrants' situation, the reduction in the usage of Russian language is not beneficial for the Tajik economy.<sup>707</sup> Thus, the abolition of the Russian language in Tajikistan, while the country is still heavily dependent on Russia, does not reflect well on the ease of the labour migration and assimilation, making the lives of the workers even harder.

Local media and broadcasting in the Russian language has been reduced and most radio and TV companies have been forced to use Tajik as their primary language. Also, the Russian media, which is hugely in demand in Tajikistan, has not been favoured by the Tajik government. Popular Russian channels, such as RTR-Planeta, Pervyi Kanal, TNT and NTV were blocked since 2009, allegedly due to debt. Russian news websites as well as western websites (surprisingly, the NHS website as well) have been temporarily blocked from time to time depending on what critical news they publish about Tajikistan. Tajik people still get to watch and read Russian media through satellite dishes and proxy websites. The Russian media indeed remains hugely popular in the country, with people getting their primary news and entertainment from Russian TV channels. But the Tajik government has grounds to consider Russian media with suspicion, because the Russian media ran a slander campaign against the Kyrgyz president Kurmanbek Bakiev prior to his downfall in 2010.<sup>708</sup>

The Tajik government considers the Tajik language 'the most important factor of the inviolability of the nation', which has 'a special status and position in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres'.<sup>709</sup> The Tajik government even created a Committee on the language and terminology, as it aims to protect and honour 'national values, including the language'.<sup>710</sup> This has not only cooled down the relationship with the Russian Federation, but also made many culturally Russified, Russian-speaking Tajik elites, many of whom had already migrated abroad during the civil war, to have fewer opportunities to get a job in the government. From a nationalistic point of view, however, emphasizing the importance of the Tajik language is understandable. Tajikistan is already dependent on Russia economically and politically; therefore, the cultural ties of the elite from the Soviet period with Russian language may pose the risk of an overly close attachment to the Russian Federation and weakening of independence.

### *7.2.2 China and Tajikistan*

China is another power-player in the economic affairs of Tajikistan. China has provided credit to Tajikistan and helped to develop transportation connections with Chinese north-western territories in Xinjiang. Roads, tunnels, power infrastructures on the government level and factories, plants, oil and gas exploration, gold mining on the entrepreneurial level are Chinese investments in the country.<sup>711</sup> In 2014 the total credit from China was about \$800 million.<sup>712</sup> The majority of ready-made goods and equipment are imported to Tajikistan from China (while food is primarily imported from Russia). The Chinese language has been widely promoted in Tajikistan through scholarships and grants provided by the Chinese government. This has enabled Tajik merchants to participate in trade with China and Chinese businessmen to come to Tajikistan on both small and large enterprises' level.

Despite reliance on big powers, such as China and Russia, or perhaps because of it, the Tajik government's nationalistic activities might be boosted by the fears that if it does not establish Tajik people as an ancient nation which has existed throughout hundreds of years, other countries would claim its territory. For example, China has already claimed 28.5 thousand square km due to China's invasion of the territory of Eastern Tajikistan in 1867. At that time the Russian Empire helped the local population to push back the invaders.<sup>713</sup> However, the Russian Empire and Chinese Qing dynasty did not quite define the border between them in the Pamir region and left large pieces of land unmarked.<sup>714</sup> In more recent times, in 1999 Tajikistan finally agreed to give China 200 square km. This did not satisfy the Chinese government and in 2002 Chinese diplomats negotiated to get even more – 1.1 thousand square km. This time the agreement was kept secret and only ratified by the parliament in 2010, probably for fear of what happened in Kyrgyzstan in similar circumstances (Kyrgyz president, Askar Akayev was challenged by Kyrgyz people in 1999, when his government too ceded its land to China).<sup>715</sup> In the Tajik case, the public outcry was not as strong because of the recent civil war experience that left people fearful of changing the government, as Kyrgyz people have done. Apart from Chinese historical claims, it is possible that the main reasons for agreeing to cede more land were economic and trade benefits with China. China has been the main investor in the energy and infrastructure sectors in independent Tajikistan.<sup>716</sup> The traumatic experience of the collapse of the Soviet Union and civil war urged the Tajik government to justify itself after losing a great powerful 'big brother' on

which the Tajik economy depended. Thus, Tajikistan may not want to lose new ‘big brothers’, such as China, who can help to grow its economy.

However, the statement from the Tajik President Emomali Rahmon’s speech in 2001 points to the direction of fearing of the destruction of the Tajik state: ‘[...] if the war were to proceed, the genofund of the nation would disappear and eventually lead to the destruction of both the state and the Tajik nation.’<sup>717</sup> He claims that although the Tajik nation has a very ancient history stretching back to the ‘golden page’ of the Samanid dynasty, the Samanid empire lasted only a hundred years, thus he calls for the lesson to be learnt by critically looking at the history of Tajik ‘ancestors’: ‘We look to the past in order to find a way to the future’.<sup>718</sup> He also comments on the continuity of the Tajiks by asserting that after the fall of the Samanid state, it took a thousand years for the Tajik people to become masters of their national state again. This statement indicates that Rahmon uses primordial declarations. Once the Tajik state ‘resurfaced’ in the history again, he would not want it to sink again.

However, in contrast to China claiming territory from each Soviet Central Asian country, the Central Asian countries themselves respect each other’s borders (apart from the Uzbek-Kyrgyz dispute on their undefined border). It is not to say that there are no conflicts in the region; because Central Asian countries did not exist before the Soviet Union, the new state of independence created many issues for each country. Independence sparked primarily internal conflicts, such as the Tajik civil war, authoritarian repressions in Uzbekistan (human rights abuses, torture in criminal justice system, child labour), revolutions in Kyrgyzstan (Tulip Revolution in 2005 and the Second Kyrgyz Revolution in 2010), and so on. Yet as Trenin points out, none of the countries has aggressively other challenged Central Asian nations’ borders.<sup>719</sup> Indeed, the modern national boundaries are observed by Central Asian leaders. Their Soviet education and thirst for power prevents them from wishing to unite the Central Asian countries into one state as it was during some periods in history. At the same time, the fear of starting a regional war prevents aggressive claims on each other’s territories. Any confrontations can be primarily seen in terms of criticisms about the appropriation of another nation’s cultural legacy. However, in the case of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan this confrontation often spills into political and economic complications.

### *7.2.3 The Uzbek-Tajik relationship*

Despite different re-written histories, the Uzbek and Tajik nations have a long and historically close relationship, yet currently the relationship is difficult for contemporary political reasons. Therefore, to understand the relationship between these two countries better, this subsection provides additional detail on the relationship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. At first it discusses political and economic conflicts between the countries, to give a context to historical disputes discussed later in this section.

The early Soviet Tajiks started to become firmly aware of themselves as Tajiks, while in the past they were Persian-speaking Turkoman, Persian or Sart people. Both groups of people who are called Uzbeks and Tajiks nowadays were quite intermixed (primarily in valley areas of Tajikistan) while mountain people differ from valley Tajiks or Uzbeks, due to more isolated geographic conditions) and without the national-territorial delimitation they could have co-existed on more peaceful terms. Yet the secession of Tajikistan from Uzbekistan created long-term tensions, which lasted through the Soviet period and into the independence of both republics.

Tajik and Uzbek conflicts started once the borders of the two republics were defined during the Soviet delineation of Central Asia, showing the unintended consequences of artificial national constructs. The divide-and-control strategy and the suppression of Pan-Turkism by the Soviet government continued throughout the Soviet regime's existence. As the shared economy of the Soviet Union collapsed, the Uzbek-Tajik relationship escalated into a much more serious economic and political conflict. Similar effects were seen between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, and, with greater violence, between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the territory of Nagorny Karabakh. While the Soviet regime itself did not survive, and some of its creations fell into continuous disagreements, the national identities artificially embedded into these republics survived and thrived.

After the Soviet Union's disintegration, the national ideologies became even more important for strengthening the position of new states. The former comradely Soviet nations in Central Asia became rivals for economic resources and cultural legacy, as is the case of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The strengthening of nationalistic attitudes might be one of the main outcomes of the 'cold war' between Uzbeks and Tajiks, due to territorial disputes and continuous accusations about the appropriation of cultural heritage. Also, there were other

complications worsening this relationship, including the involvement of Uzbekistan in the Tajik civil war. The Tajik government even accused Uzbeks of supporting the ethnic Uzbek warlord Khudoiberdiev in his attack on the Khudjand region. Moreover, the presence of Islamic extremists, such as *Hizbut-Tahrir* on the territory of northern Uzbekistan led the Uzbek government to believe that the Tajik government might be helping Islamic extremists to subvert Uzbekistan.

The conflicts between Tajiks and Uzbeks have not escalated to a large-scale war, but there have been many political and economic controversies between them. At the same time, these controversies increased patriotic appeals from the government. The more complicated was the dispute, the stronger were the patriotic calls. For example, there was a long-lasting conflict over the Rogun hydroelectric dam in Tajikistan (see Figure 7-1). The Rogun project started in 1976 but was halted by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Since 2009, the Tajik government has raised money by broadcasting strong patriotic slogans for Rogun and forcibly selling shares to the Tajik population to finish the project.<sup>720</sup> However, Uzbekistan has categorically appealed to stop the process. The reason for this is economic, that is to say agricultural: the Vakhsh River that is used for this dam irrigates Uzbek cotton fields and they would experience water shortages if its flow were blocked (see Figure 7-1). In 2012, the project was halted by Uzbekistan, so that the World Bank could assess the environmental risks of the dam. In 2014, the Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Affairs argued that the Rogun dam's studies sponsored by the World Bank did not meet independent and impartial international standards, since among environmental issues the studies were organised by the interested party – the government of the Republic of Tajikistan.<sup>721</sup> Tajikistan has had electricity shortages in winter (causing water to be rationed 8 hours a day) since the 1990s, although it can export electricity to Kyrgyzstan during the summer. The Rogun dam could potentially rescue Tajikistan from the power cuts and provide an opportunity to export more power to Kyrgyzstan and possibly to Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>722</sup> Thus in spite of the likely negative impact on the relationship with Uzbekistan, the Tajik government has been very keen to go ahead with the project and has used nationalistic exhortation to its people to succeed. The project was temporarily halted until 2016 and then an Italian company Salini Impregilio was commissioned to build the dam for a budget of \$3.9 billion (from an unknown source).<sup>723</sup> The planned height of the dam is 335 metres, which would make it the tallest dam in the world. This is despite a recommended ideal feasible height of 285 metres

for this dam.<sup>724</sup> This construction is presented as ‘a matter of national pride, a fundamental leap forward in national development’ and is far greater than merely securing energy – it is used to build the national identity of the country through this ‘mega-structure’.<sup>725</sup> The Tajik government turned the Rogun project into an anti-Uzbek and pro-Tajik nationalistic campaign by strongly appealing to its people to be patriotic and to support the building of the dam (see Section 8.1).

**Figure 4 – Rogun Dam, on the Vakhsh river**



Source: The Economist.

*Figure 7-1: Rogun Dam, European Parliamentary Research Blog, accessed June 2016, available online from: [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/571303/EPRS\\_BRI\(2015\)571303\\_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2015/571303/EPRS_BRI(2015)571303_EN.pdf)*

There have been other complications which have increased the call to strengthen the Tajik national identity. Following independence, Tajikistan has been economically disadvantaged by the Tajik-Uzbek conflict. Uzbekistan has cut the railroad network that used to go from Dushanbe via Uzbekistan to Russia, since the railroad bridge between the Uzbek city, Termez, and the Tajik city, Kurgan-Tyube, was blown up, allegedly by terrorists, but without injuries to any side – this fact made Tajiks accuse the Uzbeks of being behind the explosion (see the location of the explosion on the map above, Figure 7-1). In any case, the railroad still does not function, complicating the flow of goods and people in and out of Tajikistan. Also, since Soviet times, Uzbekistan has been the sole supplier of gas to Tajikistan. But after

the Tajik civil war, when the relationship between governments soured, Uzbekistan often cut the gas supply on the pretext of debt. In 2013 Uzbekistan cut the gas supply altogether.<sup>726</sup> This was perhaps motivated not only by the debt the Tajik government owed to Uzbekistan, but also by the Rogun dam conflict. In the same year, affected by these events, the Tajik president declared that because of the geopolitical situation, the first and foremost goal of the Tajik state is defence of the state and comprehensive development of national self-awareness and patriotic feelings.<sup>727</sup>

In addition, both Uzbek and Tajik governments often jail the other's or their own citizens for alleged spying for the other country, which disrupts trade relationships, and makes it difficult to visit relatives across the border (there are large number of ethnic Tajiks living in Uzbekistan and ethnic Uzbeks living in Tajikistan) as well as Bukhari and Samarkandi clans which exist in both countries. For example, an Uzbek citizen, Sharifjon Asrorov, who is married to a Tajik woman, was arrested and paraded as a traitor on Uzbek state television in April 2016.<sup>728</sup> Also, Uzbekistan is the only former Soviet country, apart from the Baltic states, that created a visa regime for its Tajik neighbours (in 2000), which again makes trade relationships between the two countries more complicated. The reason for the visa regime was possibly drug-trafficking from Afghanistan through the Tajik borders. Uzbekistan also discontinued air flights (the Dushanbe-Tashkent flight was cut off in 1992) and bus communication (discontinued in the 1990s) between Tajik and Uzbek cities (direct flights finally resumed in the summer of 2015 after some negotiations).<sup>729</sup> Most of the Tajik-Uzbek more tangible conflict situations (unlike the more academic dispute on Samarkand and Bukhara) started during the 1990's Tajik civil war. Uzbekistan purportedly tried to gain a decisive role by interfering in the Tajik civil war<sup>730</sup>. All these political and economic arguments between the two countries reinforced their national identities, because people have started to identify themselves more strongly as one united group against 'the Other'. It is quite a difficult task to achieve, because the Tajik and Uzbek people are very closely historically and literally related (many people have relatives on either side of the border). Thus, the strength of nationalistic propaganda must have been very strong.

There is one more factor that could contribute to the antipathy between the Tajik and Uzbek governments. The President of Tajikistan is from the Kulyabi faction/clan. This clan has not been particularly respected or favoured by northern clans. The Uzbek president, Islam Karimov, is from the Samarkandi clan, with an allegedly Tajik mother. The Samarkandi clan

is considered one of the northern clans and being present in Tajikistan as well, might not be well disposed towards the Kulyabi clan. This factor could influence the relationship of the Uzbek and Tajik governments and their nationalist politics.

As Tajik and Uzbek elites argued about their heritage, territory and economy, justifying their nationhood, they at the same time accelerated their nation building agenda by strengthening their peoples' national self-consciousness.<sup>731</sup> For example, as Tajik intellectuals claimed rights over Persian-speaking territories, they had to solidify their national history and culture in order to justify it to the outside world and to themselves.

As to history, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have competing and sometimes contradictory versions of their national histories. Tajik history looks beyond the borders of the current Tajik territory into the Uzbek territory. As Mohira Suyarkulova states, it 'has to do so in order to establish both the authentic Tajik identity and the claims (even if only sentimental and symbolic) to the lost 'promised land' of the ancestral homeland'.<sup>732</sup> At the same time, the Uzbek historiographers seek to legitimate their statehood by looking mainly into the current borders of Uzbekistan. Therefore, Tajik claims that the eastern territories of Uzbekistan are historical Tajik lands can threaten the Uzbek identity.<sup>733</sup> However, Suyarkulova's claim about the Uzbeks looking only into the current borders of Uzbekistan is contestable, as Uzbek historiographers actually look beyond their current territory as well.

Both Uzbek and Tajik look for their identities not only within but across the boundaries constructed in the twentieth century. Uzbekistan has built its ideology around the Uzbek ethnos as the most important nation in Central Asia, that originated in the Middle Ages, continued through the Russian colonisation and the Soviet regime and re-blossomed after the collapse. All other important historical figures on the territory of Central Asia were supposedly ancestors of Uzbeks. The Uzbek version of history does not care about other Central Asian versions of history and actively promotes its own version. Similarly, Tajikistan has promoted its own history, only a little later than Uzbeks, due to disruption caused by the civil war. The Tajik version of history has similar characteristics to the Uzbek one. Correspondingly, it claims that most significant historical rulers and literary figures of Central Asia who spoke Persian or were bilingual were Tajik. One of the issues with Tajik historical legacy is that most of its major historic centres of ethnic development are not on the territory of the Tajik state nowadays. Nevertheless, the Tajik government and historians



still name Persian-speaking Samarkand and Bukhara as Tajik cities in school texts and academic publications.<sup>734</sup> Both the Tajiks and the Uzbeks also still use the historical legacy and heroes unearthed during the Soviet time, thereby continuing the Soviet tradition of justifying post-Soviet countries.

It has been important for the government of both countries to find an ancient hero, who could justify the long-term existence of a nation.<sup>735</sup> For example, Amir Timur (alternative names: Temur, Tamerlane), in spite of being described as a ‘barbaric and expansionist leader’<sup>736</sup> in early Soviet history, was nevertheless made the hero of the Uzbek people, because he was born near Shahrisabz (in modern Uzbekistan) and lived in Samarkand and Bukhara (also in modern Uzbekistan, though contested by some Tajiks as Persian-speaking capitals) and became the founder of a vast empire in Central Asia and Persia. Thereafter, post-Soviet Uzbekistan turned the image of this hero into the ‘cornerstone of state legitimacy’<sup>737</sup>. However, the Timurid court was not even Uzbek, as the Timurid ruling dynasty used the term ‘Ozbek’ to identify nomads living on the northern side of the Aral Sea. In fact, Amir Timur constantly persecuted Ozbeks and they were the main reason for the downfall of the Timurid dynasty.<sup>738</sup> Needless to say, after promoting Timur as a national state-builder and defender of the Uzbek people, the Uzbek government would not refer to these facts, which would undermine its nation-building project. On the contrary they actively use the image of Amir Timur on coins and paintings and have devoted many statues and portraits to this historical figure (see Figure 7-2 and Figure 7-3). This mirrors Tajikistan’s creation and utilisation of their national symbols, such as the heroisation of another Central Asian historical figure – Ismoili Somoni, discussed in more detail in Chapters 8 and 9.



Figure 7-2: Statue of Amir Temur on horseback in the capital of Uzbekistan, Tashkent, accessed June 2016, available online from: [http://news.uzreport.uz/news\\_3\\_e\\_118404.html](http://news.uzreport.uz/news_3_e_118404.html)



Figure 7-3: 100 Som coin depicting Amir Temur on horseback with his dates of birth and death on two sides, accessed June 2016, available online from: <https://meshok.ru/pic.php?id=30036386>

The rivalry between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan in terms of their national historic heroes stems from the fact that both countries were part of the same empires and shared the same rulers and literati. In terms of the Tajik ancient clerisy, language has been an important tool of nation building for the Tajik government. Based on language prevalence, Tajik people claim that many ancient Central Asian Persian-speaking writers, poets and scientists as well as the two biggest cities of Uzbekistan, Persian-speaking Samarkand and Bukhara, belong

to and are populated by Tajik-speaking people. Hence many disputes developed between these two countries over the ownership of various matters. For instance, did Avicenna/Abu Ali Ibn Sino (who lived on the territory of modern Uzbekistan and Iran during the Samanid Empire) or Alisher Navoi (who lived on the territory of modern Afghanistan, Iran and Uzbekistan during the Timurid Empire) belong to the Tajik or Uzbek nations, since these writers used both languages in their works? Bilingualism in most parts of Central Asia makes it almost impossible to justify which nation many poets, writers and scientists belong to from their use of language. Also, this region has had many kingdoms and empires, with borders constantly changing, though never matching the current borders, so where a historic person lived or travelled cannot be used either.

The contention for territorial between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan sometimes goes deeper than just a debate – for some, such as the Tajik intelligentsia, ‘it reaches to the depth of national pride’.<sup>739</sup> There are radical nationalistic views among the contemporary Tajik intelligentsia, which could create a military conflict with the Uzbek government. One of the most fervent supporters of Tajik nationalism, the historian Rahim Masov, claims that the Tajik nation is original, whereas the Uzbeks merely usurped the Tajik territory. His works have radical characteristics and in many instances state that Tajiks have been given an excessively small territory, even being driven in to the mountains, which extends the nation’s isolation by breaking them into separate groups.<sup>740</sup> Also, Masov in his book *Tajiks: displacement and assimilation* again expresses great dissatisfaction with the way various invaders have treated Tajiks throughout the centuries after the celebrated Samanid dynasty. He claims that the Soviet regime treated Tajiks only a little better by slicing their territory with ‘an axe’. Thus, he claims the Tajiks became confined to mountain territories and deprived from their economically developed historical and cultural centres for which they have ‘rightful’ claims (meaning Bukhara and Samarkand territories).<sup>741</sup>

The argument that Persian-speaking cities should belong to Tajikistan is connected to the Samanid dynasty (819-999AD) – the most celebrated period in the history of Tajikistan. The Samanid dynasty occupied part of Central Asia and Greater Iran and their capital was Bukhara City, while Samarkand (both in contemporary Uzbekistan) was one of the main cities. By referring to the Samanid dynasty as the unifier of the Persian-speaking people and the foundation of the Tajik people, by frequently broadcasting about the Somoni ancestor in Tajik media and using his image on banknotes and other symbolical objects in Tajikistan,

one may think that contemporary Tajik people would have a claim on those territories. Indeed, many Tajiks when they convey their thoughts among friends and on unofficial forums<sup>742</sup> complain that Samarkand and Bukhara should be Tajik cities. Some members of the Tajik intelligentsia, such as Ph.D. candidate Mirbob Mirrahimov in the journal *Komsomoli Tojikiston* in 1988 even called for a border review to discuss the sore point between Tajiks and Uzbeks, that is the Persian-speaking Samarkand and Bukhara cities in Uzbekistan.<sup>743</sup>

However, the Tajik government does not act according to these radical wishes. The officials of Tajikistan did not accept this call. Consequently, the editor of the *Komsomoli Tojikiston*, where Mirrahimov's article was published, was discharged for accepting articles that harm international relations.<sup>744</sup> According to Akbarzadeh, books and manuscripts published by Masov, such as *History of a Crude Separation* and *History of a National Catastrophe*, did not spark great interest in the government at that time either.<sup>745</sup> On the one hand, the government wants to have legitimate proof of their ancient history on the territory of Tajikistan. On the other hand, they are unwilling to be bold and attack the Uzbek government. Such boldness would also be undesirable for other Central Asian countries and Russia, as it will make them question all their borders.<sup>746</sup>

Apart from ethical or strategic considerations, Tajikistan does not have the military power or economic resources to overpower Uzbekistan: the military forces of Tajikistan consisted of 16,300 personnel in 2015, while Uzbekistan had 68,000.<sup>747</sup> Apart from Kazakhstan, of the Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan spends the most on its defence – about \$2 billion in 2016<sup>748</sup>, while Tajikistan spends only about \$70 million (1% of GDP in 2015)<sup>749</sup>. Perhaps for these reasons the president Rahmon in his speech in 1999 asserted that Tajiks should not amalgamate the territory of modern Tajikistan with historical one: 'we must distinguish between modern Tajikistan and historical Tajikistan. Only short-sighted people can confuse these two terms, these two realities. The Samanid Empire, which embraced large territories of Great Chorasana, was part of historical Tajikistan. Our appeal to history does not imply the revival of the old political geography of historical Tajikistan. Only those who have improper goals would attach us to such an idea'.<sup>750</sup> This suggests that the Tajik government is wary of making aggressive territorial calls. Such actions, if taken, could lead to other countries making their own demands for the Tajik land. If people started claiming ancient historical territories, then any country around Tajikistan, or even so far away as Greece or

Macedonia could claim the territory of relatively small Tajikistan in its turn, as China has already successfully done.

Another statement from President Rahmon suggests the likelihood of his concern for the country to be somehow annexed or invaded by others, possibly Uzbeks, to whom he makes an allusion as ‘nomads’: ‘The Tajik people have gone through many terrible and tragic historic events, being invaded by Greeks, Macedonians, Arabs, Mongols and different nomads at least three times, and they were exposed to persecutions and unfair attitudes thousands of times. We should learn a lesson from the distant past and the previous periods of statehood and independence of the Tajiks so as not to neglect the destiny of the nation and its cultural achievements now’.<sup>751</sup> By the previous periods of statehood and independence of Tajiks, Rahmon implies the Samanid dynasty period. Learning the lessons of the past and therefore not being invaded again or losing independence is one of the major concerns of the post-colonial state. This fear of the fall of the state makes the Tajik government careful in claiming any neighbourhood territory, such as within Uzbekistan, as they are insufficiently equipped to attack others or fend off any possible attacks.

Since the end of the civil war, the Tajik state has strived to legitimate itself in the global sphere and has avoided disagreements with neighbouring states on matters of historical legacy, as it does not want to enter into another large-scale conflict. The analogies between the contemporary regime and the Samanid empire centre mainly on concepts, not on territory. Territorially, the Samanid Empire covered large parts of Central Asia and some parts of Persia (more on this in Chapter 9). Maps of the empire are usually not present or emphasised in the nationalist discourse apart from rare examples in history books. This highlights the non-territorial approach of the discourse. The main goal is to emphasise the characteristics unifying Tajik identity, such as language and the longevity of Tajik nationhood in history.<sup>752</sup> Thus the regime does not aspire to conquer historical territories, but the recurring theme is one of creating national unity.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

The Tajik nationalist ideology has been artificially grafted into public life, especially at the end of the twentieth century. Historically, people living on the territory of modern Tajikistan did not have nationalistic symbols. Only in the 1920s during the national-territorial demarcation did nationalistic ideas start to take root. Independence and the civil war have

heightened nationalistic ideas in public and state life due to the desire to build a new statehood on a stronger foundation. Therefore, nationalism in Tajikistan has quite modern roots mainly encouraged by the official state ideology. Overall, the national identity politics of post-civil war Tajikistan has become much stronger than during the Soviet time.

The nationalist ideology of the new state wants the Tajik people to be fully convinced by the idea that Tajikistan is an ancient nation with great leaders in the past and present. Some main contributing factors to strengthen this feeling are Tajikistan's international interactions with countries such as Russia, China and Uzbekistan. The country has had to justify its existence against fears of fragmentation or foreign invasion. Uzbekistan has become 'the Other' for the Tajiks and thus reinforced their feeling of unity.

The Uzbek-Tajik relationship has had many controversies, which are sometimes reflected in the nationalistic speeches of the Tajik president. President Rahmon's statements are of importance for the direction of national politics in Tajikistan. His decisions and statements are powerful not only because he has been the head of the country since 1992, but also because he has become a celebrity and hero of the country. In the next chapter I examine the cult of personality of the Tajik president and how it influences the nationalistic activities in the country.



## **8 Symbols of nation building in contemporary Tajikistan**

### **8.1 Introduction**

Another means of boosting the Tajik national identity and uniting people around one leader is the cult of personality of the president. I discuss this in Section 8.2, giving examples of how the president was elevated to the status of a hero of the nation. The president's cult of personality portrays him as the national hero similar to national heroes from the past. Such an image, although it may change like Stalin's cult did, is bound to be remembered by future generations but this is not Rahmon's main goal. The president's advisers and economists present him as a person who has re-united the Tajik nation. The president in his turn calls through his speeches for patriotism and devotion to the country. The nationalistic, patriotic and emotional appeals feature in president's speeches, banners, mass media and other means. Symbols of Rahmon's cult of personality as well as other national identity symbols are commissioned and reproduced as propaganda to the masses. The image of the president and the unity of the nation are linked together to make them inseparable in the eyes of people. This way the President can continue his reign almost undisputed by his people.

The advancement of national symbols is another essential method in strengthening the national identity of Tajikistan. Those symbols have been inculcated among the Tajik population and the international domain for a few reasons. The civil war experience proved that it was easy to disunite the Tajik people. Thus, their ethnic core needed stronger stimulus. Also, the country has had to establish its borders and its government on the global scene. For these reasons, various methods of advancing national symbols have been implemented by the Tajik government. These methods primarily involve using old (Soviet-made) national symbols and creating new ones. Since Rahmon and his government were Soviet-educated, they have utilised many methods that are similar to those used in the Soviet period. The methods include emphasizing and or unearthing ancient traditions and symbols of the region, the creation and promotion of visual objects, such as national currency, flag, monuments, paintings and others based on the Soviet-created (aka colonial) symbols. These methods have been used by many nationalists all over the world. For example, in Kenya the government created 'syncretic-colonial "African" traditions' using primordial methods manufactured during the colonial era.<sup>753</sup> Tajik primordialists also utilise non-visual methods that immortalise people and events. One of these methods is the creation of more holidays



related with anything to do with the independence of the republic, national heroes and ancient figures, local traditions and culture. All these symbols create continuity of the community and of the individual through the community, hence they boost the sense of national belonging. I examine some of the most widespread Tajik visual and other national symbols in Section 8.2.

There are three perspectives for analysing an image suggested by Gillian Rose: why/how it was produced, the image itself and the location where it 'has been seen by various audiences'.<sup>754</sup> These perspectives have different aspects or modalities: technological, compositional and social. Technological includes any forms of equipment that assist in creating an image or intensifying it. Compositional considers the image's colour, content and form. Social looks at the image's political, economic, social and other applications and practices. In this thesis, I analyse images mostly using social modality.<sup>755</sup> For my purposes, it is not important how the image was made or how much the colours have been enhanced or how unusual the composition is, unless it changes or is related to its political or social implications.

## **8.2 Cult of personality – the importance of creating a national hero for a newly born country**

This section concentrates on one more aspect of the myths of national identity – the cult of the Tajik national leader. In 1992 Rahmon reached the top of political ladder in Tajikistan and he has been making a great effort to stay in power. One of the ways to assure his continuation at the top was the development of the cult of personal identity. The cult is primarily based on the participation of Rahmon in the Tajik civil war. It has been developed through a variety of methods, which include mass media, publishing books, fine arts, visual symbols in public places, and so on. It is a pattern that most post-Soviet government leaders learnt from their Soviet experience and using these methods they strive to create an ideal and powerful public image of the ruler. In this section I examine how Rahmon's personal political myth has influenced the Tajik national identity.

Emomali Rahmon (former Rakhmonov<sup>756</sup>) was born in 1952 in Dangara, a village in the Kulob region, to a peasant family. Young Rahmon did not seem very ambitious. When he finished his pre-university education as a master-electrician, he started to work at an oil factory in Kurgan-Tyube in 1969. In 1971-74 he undertook mandatory army service in the

Soviet Pacific Ocean fleet, after which he started to work at the Soviet collective farm (sovkhoz) in Dangara. In 1976, his ambitions became more obvious or perhaps it was due to a confluence of circumstances, when he was chosen as secretary of the professional union's committee at the farm. Then, in 1982, he finished a part-time bachelor's degree in economics at the Tajik National University and selected as a chairman of the same committee and farm. In 1987, he became a director of the same farm. Finally, in 1990 he put himself forward and was selected as an MP of the Supreme Soviet of the Tajik SSR. Thus, Rahmon made his way from being an electrician at a Soviet farm to joining the government and being elected as the chairman of the Supreme Soviet, effectively head of the government in 1992 (when the former president R. Nabiyeu was made to resign in 1992, the new constitution reinstated the position of president only in 1994). Rahmon's coming to power was due to a combination of circumstances and help from the warlord Sangak Safarov, which was essential. He was able to achieve this position only because of the turbulent times and power vacuum caused by a lack of other strong leaders. But the fact that he has managed to stay in power and strengthen his position over such a long period indicates he was more than a simple pawn of circumstances. Indeed, he has used nationalistic discourse to reinforce his authority and power. In the national narrative, he has turned his own persona into the national saviour.

According to Jeremy Paltiel, cult of personality, 'leader-worship' or 'hero-worship' emerges from any popular mass movement attained under difficult circumstances.<sup>757</sup> The cult of personality can have different dimensions. For example, the Dalai Lama in Tibet was worshiped from infancy, even before accomplishing any achievements for his people. Thus, in religious terms, the cult of personality has a guiltless, even superpower, character assigned by masses to its bearers. In political terms, the deeds of the leader are exaggerated either by him and his followers or by masses that want and need a strong personality to follow, especially in difficult times. The leader, as Paltiel states, becomes 'the fountainhead of authority for an entire political system'.<sup>758</sup> Graeme Gill explains the emergence of the cult of personality as a competitiveness of party leaders in the framework of socialist societies.<sup>759</sup> Such cults supported their leaders by 'linking their principals with the success of the party' and 'all important achievements with their principles'.<sup>760</sup> Interestingly, the leader was also made essential in the foundation of the regime itself, 'a claim which effectively rooted the legitimacy of the individual in the legitimacy of the system'.<sup>761</sup> The personality cult,

therefore, closely interconnects the system with the leader and makes the leader infallible. Unless, of course, the system fails.

The cult of personality inherited by Tajiks as well as other post-Soviet leaders in Central Asia is a manifestation of authority consolidation in the president and his party. After the external threats, such as civil war, are removed, the cult aims to prevent the internal threats on the authority of the leader and his forces. The cult of personality is not unique to Tajikistan in Central Asia. In many cases the most convenient and advantageous approach for all Central Asian modern leaders was to rely on authoritarian leadership, as it was the only way of governing they have learnt from the Soviet past. Their cult might be used to prove that they are allowed to dictate, since their people seem to worship them.

The cult of their personalities is not necessarily subtle but can be directly dictated by the leader himself. For example, Turkmenbashi – the ‘President for Life’ of Turkmenistan, Saparmurat Niyazov (1991-2006), made very eccentric gestures, such as renaming the schools, airports, towns, and a meteorite after himself as well as some months and days of the week after himself and his relatives. He wrote *Ruhnama* (book for the soul), a sort of Bible for Turkmens, a book with revised history and a set of moral guidelines, which he made every citizen memorise. He also placed his portraits everywhere in public places, which seems to be a common practice for Central Asian leaders (see further in this section on Rahmon’s portraits). Moreover, in 1998 he built a 15-metre-high, gold-plated revolving (following the sun) statue of himself near the presidential palace. His successor Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov needed to create his own cult, so he removed the by-then non-revolving statue to the suburbs, thus marking the change of the dictatorship.<sup>762</sup> The President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon<sup>763</sup>, has not gone as far as Turkmenbashi in creating grand self-glorifying symbols, but his cult of personality has been flourishing as well.

Rahmon’s portraits have been an essential feature of all state organisations and even private ones. They hang in schools, factories, any state offices, such as Ministries and others. There are even carpets with his portraits on sale in central shops, such as Tsum (see Figure 8-1). Moreover, the portraits can be found even in random places, such as by the roadside on the side of a mountain (see Figure 8-2). In the past, the cult was not quite official, the portraits were hung as a tribute to the Soviet tradition of respecting (and fearing) the ruler. However, at the end of 2016 it became official – the mayor of Dushanbe, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev,

issued a decree to hang huge portraits of the president with the title ‘Our President – Our Leader [chief/head]’ on the streets of the capital. At the same time, ‘The President from the view of children’, a drawing competition among pre-school children, took place in Dushanbe. TV programmes were broadcasted about the President, articles written, theatre performances held, and sports competition devoted to him took place. All this was devoted to the Day of the President, on 16 November, that was passed by the legislature the same year.<sup>764</sup>

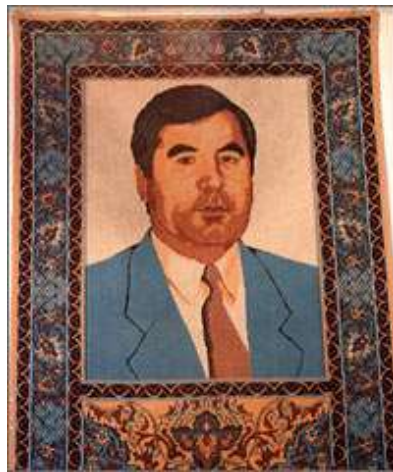


Figure 8-1: The Tajik President, Emomali Rahmon, portrayed on the carpet (such carpets can be ordered at the local carpet-making companies or bought in carpet shops or bazaars). Accessed March 2015, available online from: [http://news.ferghana.ru/photos/2009\\_05/rah.jpg](http://news.ferghana.ru/photos/2009_05/rah.jpg)



Figure 8-2: The portraits of the President can be found everywhere in the country, sometimes at an enormous scale; Portrait presented for the last inauguration of the president. Liliya Gaysina, “How Does Tajikistan See Emomali?” 16 November 2017, *Asia-Plus*, <http://s1.news.tj/news/tajikistan/20171116/kakim-v-tadzhikistane-vidyat-emomali-rahmona>

Emomali Rahmon has built his cult after the difficult times for Tajik people – the civil war. The cult is based on his ‘heroic’ ‘saving’ of the country and nation and establishing a new

country. Most achievements of this new country are attributed to him. Rahmon is proclaimed to be ‘a creator’, who ‘saved the nation from despair’, ‘led the way forward through hope and salvation, and gave hope for a brighter future’.<sup>765</sup> However, as discussed in Chapter 6 in the discussion of the civil war, Rahmon was initially only a tool in the peace-making process, which concluded with the help of the United Nations, Russia and even Uzbekistan. Yet in his official biography it is proclaimed that ‘in respect to his [Rahmon’s] suffering, world leaders recognized and showed great respect to this intelligent and capable president, a man who is a very experienced politician’.<sup>766</sup> Being an experienced politician is however an overstatement again, considering that Rahmon’s previous experience had been mainly in technical and agricultural fields. After the main conflict ended, the Tajik government or perhaps Rahmon himself, put effort into making a national hero and ‘saviour’ out of Rahmon’s identity. Declaring the President to be the National Hero, his biography states that ‘the most significant achievement of the President, without a doubt, was to bring peace and national unity to Tajikistan’.<sup>767</sup> Rahmon is described as a powerful leader who took the reins in his hands and saved the country: ‘By possessing the will to rule the country, Rakhmonov saved Tajikistan from the danger of collapsing [...and] he settled the war’.<sup>768</sup> Indeed during conflicts and wars there is a need for a leader to lead the masses and consolidate the state. Rahmon happened to be placed in the position of the ruler in the right place and time, which enabled him to continue his leadership for many years and probably with many more to come.

The Tajik president was made the civil war’s national hero, the one who fights against the enemies of the nation, and his cult of personality became one of the myths of Tajik national identity. Cult of personality can be equalled to a political myth, where although the facts are true, most details are embellished or even created. Thus, Rahmon is presented as someone who preserves ‘the territorial integrity of the state’ and defends ‘against enemies both inside and outside the country’.<sup>769</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 6, during the civil war the opposition was presented as the Other. Rahmon by being a leader of the government during and after the war, was named the ‘worthy leader’, who ‘has established himself’ ‘to protect’ the Tajik nation.<sup>770</sup>

In the following passage from Rahmon’s biography the words and expressions underlined are those that are often used as nationalistic rhetoric in describing the president’s heroic saving of the country:

‘At the time that the son of the nation, Emomali Rakhmonov, came to a governmental post, the newly independent Tajikistan was experiencing difficult times. Bloody wars and disputes between the Tajiks lead to the loss of many lives and property, which was a great threat to the country’s unity and the existence of the Tajik nation. By persisting bravely in his decisions and in the precautions he took, Emomali Rakhmonov saved the country from disaster. He brought together a scattered people who were suffering and made it possible for hundreds of thousands of refugees to return back to their homes. With the great effort of the President, ruins were turned into plentiful gardens within a short time, grand constructions were erected and motorways interconnecting all the parts of the country and connecting the country to nearby neighbouring countries were built. The most important success of the country became possible only because of the President’s courageous endeavours and dedication.’<sup>771</sup>

Rahmon is described as the one taking measures to keep future conflicts from happening again: ‘untiring efforts of our President, Emomali Rahmon, aimed at the establishment and strengthening peace and civil concord in the country’.<sup>772</sup> The strengthening of Rahmon’s image was important for the post-war Tajik society which needed to unite around one powerful leader. Rahmon’s panegyrics describe him as a person who ‘made safe basis for the creation of the new nation, ... brought about reforms in legislation, ... prepared the constitution of Tajikistan, and on 27 June 1997 he gave all his efforts to make it possible for the National Peace Agreement to be signed, serving as a unique example for the societies of the world by bringing peace to Tajikistan, and then starting important reforms within the country’.<sup>773</sup>

Yet the president’s eulogies do not reflect the real facts that have been happening since the collapse of the Soviet Union. They do not bring up international collaboration with the United Nations, Russia and Uzbekistan that made the Tajik peace happen in the 1990s. Neither do they refer to international loans and writing off \$99 million debt by IMF in 2006, due to Tajikistan’s status as one of the poorest countries in the world.<sup>774</sup> No mention is made of the brain drain where from the population of 7.7 million people, every year about 1000

students leave the country to study and work abroad and 70% of them do not come back home due to the shortage of jobs and low salaries in Tajikistan<sup>775</sup>. Student migration is part of a much larger labour migration of Tajik workers to Russia and neighbouring countries that, according to the International Organisation for Migration, was 18% of the adult population (identified as 15 years old and older) in 2003 and according to the Central Intelligence Agency Factbook 2013, out of 2.1 million Tajik people who are able to work, more than one million work abroad.<sup>776</sup> All in all, none of the many ongoing issues facing Tajikistan since 1992 are mentioned in panegyrics by the President.

For all this, the President remains in his position almost uncontested for which there are other reasons apart from the civil war. People who live in a collectivist society, such as Tajik people, usually look up to someone with power and status and consider him a father figure. In Tajik language, this sometimes referred to as *надари миллат, надари یتимон*, meaning the father of the nation, the father of orphans. Also, people often address the president as ‘Your majesty’ or ‘Leader’ instead of Mr President or his name.<sup>777</sup> People in the Central Asian region can sometimes overlook how inefficient a leader might be in ruling the country, as long as he is magisterial and patriarchal, because it is seen as a sign of strength in local culture with quite primordial values. For example, when referring to Rahmon, Tajik writers use words such as ‘authority and respect’<sup>778</sup>. Such qualities are supposed to make the Tajik people believe that their president is ‘the guarantor of the peace and security of an entire people’.<sup>779</sup> This strength is something that is assumed to forestall the development of any other conflict. Having a symbol of power in the community ‘distances the threat of anarchy’<sup>780</sup>, therefore, the enhancement of the president’s status and tributes to his achievements make him the leadership symbol of the new independent Tajik nation. Such symbols serve to strengthen the sense of national identity and unity.

Rahmon’s cult of personality led him to obtain a permanent, almost divine and almost hereditary status. In 2015 the president’s party, the People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan, proposed to give Rahmon the official status of Leader of the Nation for his merits. This was approved by the Parliament and has become the official term to call the president instead of his name or position.<sup>781</sup> With this title Rahmon and his family were also granted a permanent exemption from criminal investigation<sup>782</sup> (it seems that the president tries to take measures beforehand and has reasons to be afraid of prosecution). The speculations that the president’s title the Leader of the Nation would lead to his position becoming permanent came true in

May 2016. The referendum passed constitutional changes that allowed Rahmon to govern for life. In addition, the minimum age for being elected president was reduced from 35 to 30. The president's son, Rustam Rahmon, was 28 years old in 2016.<sup>783</sup> It is possible to conjecture that the father is preparing the position for his son, in case Rahmon himself cannot continue to rule for some reason. Such titles and privileges can be perceived as undemocratic and consolidate the state on its authoritarian path. Yet for Rahmon, as much as he pretends to deny his own cult of personality, it strengthens his status to the degree of infallibility making him a 'superhuman', the highest figure in the nation.

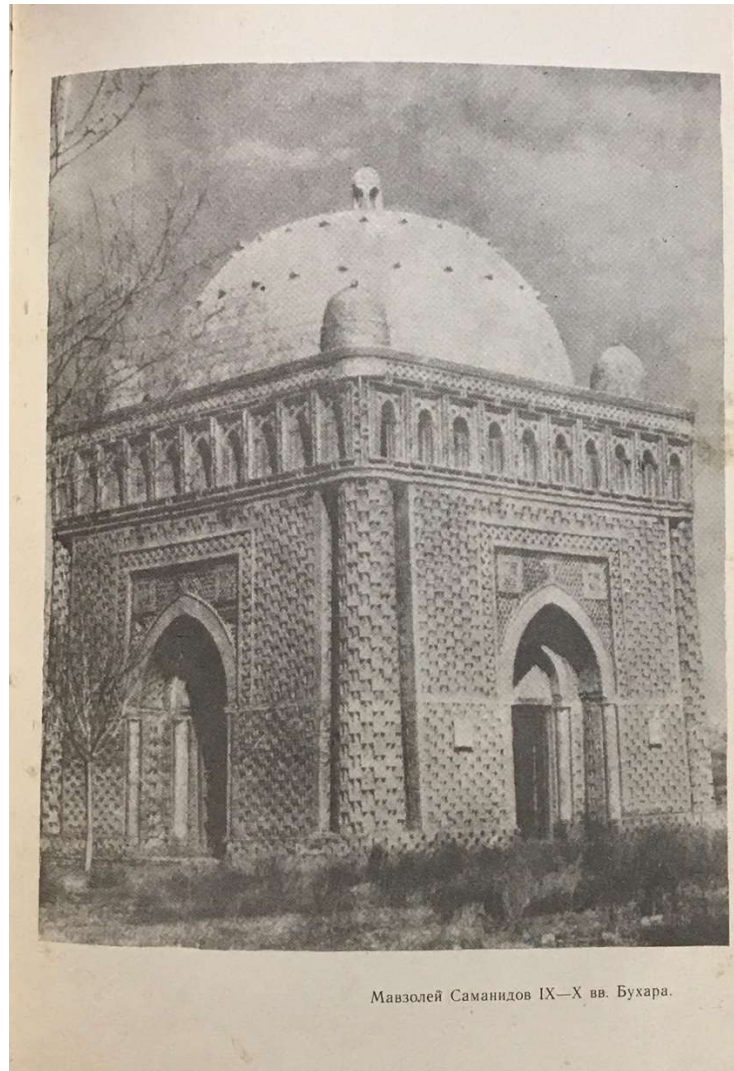
There are other ways in which the cult of the leader managed to be embedded in peoples' minds. As Gill states, for the illiterate and ill-educated masses it is easier to identify with a person rather than with an organisation or ideology; the leader provides a sense of authority<sup>784</sup>, a person who can advise and lead, so that people do not need to try. Although Tajikistan's official literacy rate seems to be higher nowadays<sup>785</sup>, during the civil war many schools and universities suffered from the brain drain and most of the time classes were cancelled leaving the pupils and students poorly educated. After the civil war, schools became predominantly bribe-based, which means that parents who are not able to afford bribes or to buy books cannot give their children a good education.<sup>786</sup> These facts suggest that the poorly-educated masses of Tajik people, especially in rural areas, can easily identify their new country with the propaganda of a new hero, and thus support the growth of his cult of personality. This leads them to believe that Rahmon is 'a real national leader' who helped the Tajik people to 'rediscover' for themselves 'their ancestors, their glories and heroic deeds'.<sup>787</sup> When the population is educated with a myth, the myth becomes a fact for them. The political myth or cult of a leader gradually grows and gains details through various methods. Those methods that feed the myth of Rahmon and shape public opinion include education, general publications, popular culture, radio and TV programmes sanctioned by the Tajik government and many other methods discussed further in this section.

Rahmon's portraits hang in all Tajik schools alongside modern and ancient Tajik 'national heroes', establishing continuity. Those heroes include the 9<sup>th</sup> century great 'liberator' of the 'ancient Tajik nation', Ismoili Somoni, the 20<sup>th</sup> century fighter for Tajik language, Sadridin Aini and the 20<sup>th</sup> century writer of Tajik history, Bobojon Gafurov. Thus, the Tajik president, Emomali Rahmon has been placed on the same level with the ancient heroes as well as the Soviet contributors to the creation of the nation and as his biography puts it – 'realized his



historical role in a very short time'<sup>788</sup>. He is also compared to the Tajik Soviet heroes of 1920-1930s – Nusratullo Mahsum, Abdurahim Hojibaev, Shirinsho Shotemur, Abduqadir Muhiddinov. The President appears to be the first to emerge after them as 'a statesman and patriot of the calibre of Emomali Rahmon' leading Tajik people to the ultimate goal of unity'<sup>789</sup>. This way Rahmon reinforces a myth of continuity, as if linked with a seamless narrative across the centuries. The continuity is often underlined in both presidential speeches and his biographies: 'after hundreds of years of historical success, Emomali Rakhmonov put the Tajik nation on a path to state control so that it could head towards a prominent future.'<sup>790</sup> It is indeed the way myths work that older set of myths layers on the newer set of myths, creating a blend, which Armstrong calls mythomoteur. This concept links one's identity to a state.<sup>791</sup> Similarly, Rahmon's identity is layered on top of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century heroes and amalgamated with the system and state.

Rahmon refers to the founder of the Samanid dynasty as a peace-maker, and being called the 'peacemaker' himself, a comparison with Ismoili Somoni can be easily derived. Ismail ibn Ahmad Somoni, who came to power in 892 is the most famous ruler of the Samanid dynasty and the Tajik government has made him the most famous historical figure in Tajik history. 'He was a very clear sighted and intelligent leader who took critical measures to eliminate internal conflicts and to provide internal and external security for the state'<sup>792</sup> – Rahmon implies comparison with himself when he speaks about consolidation of the alleged ancient Tajik nation at different times. Rahmon states that 'the centralization of state power was the main task for the Tajik state during the periods of its formation within different epochs, which are sometimes separated by hundreds or even thousands of years.'<sup>793</sup> He frequently proclaims the Samanid empire as a precursor to modern Tajikistan and compares the revival of the Tajik nation during the Samanid state to the revival of this nation nowadays. The underlying and distinct theme is a parallel between Ismoili Somoni being a wise leader who united the Tajiks and created the Tajik polity with Rahmon's contemporary leadership of the 'revived' Tajik state. Ismaili Samani's actual representations from ancient times have not been found and prior to 1990s his images were not produced at all. When this ruler was mentioned, it was only his mausoleum in Bukhara, Uzbekistan that was depicted both online and in books (Figure 8-3). Very similar looking portraits of Rahmon and Ismoili Somoni are often placed together in public places, especially during the celebration of 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Samanid Empire in 1999, making this comparison even more obvious.



*Figure 8-3: Mausoleum of Samanids, IX-X centuries Bukhara. From history textbook B. Gafurov, Tadjiki: The Most Ancient, Ancient and Middle Ages History, Dushanbe, Irfon, 1989, between pages 224-225.*

Presidential power and its influence on people's thoughts about nation building is greatly affirmed through visual iconography abundantly displayed in public places. Apart from being included among portraits of national heroes in educational establishments, this iconography is represented by Rahmon's images in single portraits and on banners and posters, where he is always dressed in an official suit, looking very serious and authoritative. The images are featured in a variety of places from schools to residential multi-storey buildings, from billboards to private offices and even construction sites, very often with proclamations about independence, unity and the greatness of the president (see Figure 8-4). Putting his portraits in private offices is an echo from the Soviet time when portraits of Stalin and Lenin were hung in all offices and sometimes even in people's homes. Some apartments in a residential multi-storey building in Khudjand have their light blocked by the president's

portrait. Ironically, the inscription on this portrait reads ‘The Future of Tajikistan is bright’ (see Figure 8-5). Such billboards in Khudjand, the northern province of Tajikistan ‘signify the consent by regional elites to the “colossal authority” of the President’.<sup>794</sup> On the main street of Dushanbe, Rudaki Street, which is about 12 kilometres long, alone, there are eleven portraits of the president on high schools and state buildings. One of the portraits near the Somoni square depicts the president in the middle of a wheat field holding wheat stems in his hands. This symbolises the fertility and productivity of Tajikistan and shows the president as the producer of goods. Under the painting there is Rahmon’s statement declaring that ‘National unity is the basis of the state’s independence’ (see Figure 8-6). Rahmon highlights the importance of the nation being united under his leadership, otherwise, he implies the state might lose its independence.



Figure 8-4: Construction site, Rudaki street. President’s portrait in banner. Text states ‘Our President – Our Leader’ surrounded by images of him in various ceremonies. Text on side states importance of independence and national self-learning. Image taken July 2016, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. By the author.



Figure 8-5: The Portrait of Emomali Rahmon in Khujand City. Asia-Plus Media Group, accessed September 2016, <http://news.tj/ru/node/175938>



Figure 8-6: Portrait of Emomali Rahmon above the entrance of the civil service building on Rudaki Street near Somoni square. Image taken July 2016, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. By the author.

Apart from portraits, there are many different presidential statements printed on large and small banners all over the country. The same Rudaki Street has about 42 banners with Rahmon's statements. Most of his statements are related to proclaiming the greatness of Tajik independence, the importance of peace and the significance of the Tajik nation. For example, the main post office building on Rudaki street features his statement on national



independence: ‘Independence is an honour and dignity of every liberal and respected nation’ (see Figure 8-7). Rahmon emphasises the seriousness of Tajik independence and urges people to preserve it. The president implies that he has been core to achieving and maintaining independence, thus encouraging people to believe that it would not be possible to survive without him. According to private conversations, even previously independent thinking young people have started to believe that the country would not survive if Rahmon goes, therefore they declare a *laissez-faire* attitude as the best strategy.<sup>795</sup> Thus the flood of the president’s portraits and his statements are seen as a normal occurrence in Tajikistan today.



Figure 8-7: The main Post Office of Dushanbe City, Rudaki Street. Image taken July 2016, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. By the author.

Publishing the president’s biographies and glorifying articles about him is another effective method of boosting his standing and reinforcing the cult of his personality. According to Paltiel, the political culture of the cult of personality must be ‘singular, undivided, ultimately personal, and backed by physical force’<sup>796</sup>, which might be possible to observe in Emomali Rahmon’s biographies. Rahmon’s chief advisor, journalist, academician and politician Zafar Saidzoda has written 55 books, among which at least eight are dedicated to Emomali Rahmon and his glory. Since 1994, 2256 novel-style non-political works have been written about Rahmon’s life and his achievements, in both prose and poetry.<sup>797</sup> These works were written not only by writers or politicians, but also by academicians and scientists. The collection of the names, brief essays and descriptions of all these works was published in an anthology *Emomali Rakhmon in Literature* in 2016. This is not all the works that have been

published about him. The previous anthology, *Emomali Rahmon. Autobiographic collection* includes the names of 5215 works (half of these are political in their nature) written about Rahmon as well as by Rahmon himself.<sup>798</sup> Rahmon indeed does not shy away from publicising himself and a lot of his rhetoric includes nationalistic content.

Some of these books have been translated into other languages, including Russian, English, Uzbek, French and Turkish. All were published with the approval of the President and consultancy from the State Advisors to the President. One, published by the Turkish editor Mehmet Mesut Ata, under the name *The Revival of a Nation and the Independence of Tajikistan* contains biographical details of the President which are identical to those on the President's website<sup>799</sup>, which means it is the most approved by the President. It notes that after Rahmon's re-election for a seven-year term in November 1999, he 'has been designated a National hero of Tajikistan...' for his achievements during the civil war<sup>800</sup>. The author claims that the President 'was adored by the citizens who were living in the country, as well as those living abroad'.<sup>801</sup> Such publications are one of the most obvious examples of the boost of the cult of personality that is approved by the president and his advisors.

Presidential biographers and advisors use a great deal of nationalistic rhetoric in their narratives. Most of the published panegyric is related to the civil war and the revival of the country's economy after the conflict. The official biography ascribes all positive measures taken during peacebuilding in the 1990s to the president. The way the book describes those measures sounds as if the president did them all by himself and that it was the prime goal of his life. The book claims that the president restored disabled governmental apparatus, the defence system including the national army and the border defence corps. Eventually, he seems to be the reason for preparing the grounds to fortify the government and the country.<sup>802</sup> The president's biographer asserts that the construction of motorways, tunnels, railways, dams, natural gas works, the modernisation of airports, reconstruction of residential areas, maintenance works of damaged bridges and roads, and joint ventures with foreign investors 'came into being mainly through the efforts of the nation's brightest personality – Emomali Rakhmonov'<sup>803</sup>. His other biographer even assigns the victory of Tajik athletes to Rahmon's doing<sup>804</sup>, although no particular governmental help has been directed towards sports. In the end, all Tajikistan's achievements in culture and science since its independence are attributed to the President's efforts.<sup>805</sup> Such phrases as 'the worthy head of state', 'a real national leader', 'the guarantor of peace and security of an entire people' are typical

expressions used to describe the president and academicians, such as Masov, do not hesitate to use them.<sup>806</sup>

Media is one of the most important tools for reinforcing the cult of personality and patriotism. Rahmon asserts that mass media must be used and indeed he does use it: 'Television, radio and all other types of mass media, as well as every other member of society should bring contributions of this kind to the fore.' Mass media provides formidable means of campaigning and spreading propaganda; thus, it is an essential tool in providing information to the public. As Rahmon's biography states all media, 'regardless of ownership, contribute to the improvement of the information of the country'.<sup>807</sup> This implies that most Tajik television channels whether funded by the government or not, are heavily censored or self-censored. When presidential speeches are broadcast throughout the country, they are effectively compulsory, since they replace all other programmes on state channels and all broadcasters temporarily switch off their other programmes. They can even block the transmission of the Russian channels. So, unless people have an expensive receiver for watching foreign channels, they are obliged to watch presidential speeches and programmes censored by the government. Presidential speeches are also made available in print for people who were unable to watch or listen to speeches as they were broadcast. By these mechanisms, the government ensures that presidential speeches and the wider ideological messages are delivered to the population.

Mass media controlled by the government plays a large role in reinforcing Rahmon's cult of personality and disseminating nationalistic propaganda. As we can recall, according to Benedict Anderson, mass media founded and ingrained the concept of 'the nation' in people, or as Anderson named it 'imagined community'.<sup>808</sup> Also, as Jack Snyder notes, 'this sense of community was consciously promoted by the state and other elite groups through propaganda, the dissemination of nationalistic versions of history and public education.'<sup>809</sup> As such, nationalistic or patriotic ideas first become available primarily through newspapers, internet, television, street banners and slogans as well as through books.<sup>810</sup> Strict control of media can be encountered frequently in Tajikistan. For example, in 2016, the Tajik branch of Russian newspaper *Komsomolskaya Pradva* was shut down due to its Russian branch correspondent comparing his trip to Tajikistan to a derisive Russian TV show about Tajik labour migrants. The most crucial reason for its closure was that the article was considered

indecent by the Tajik president.<sup>811</sup> Thus, in the same way that the Tajik government uses media for its patriotic propaganda, it also suppresses unfavourable content.

Another instance of inspiring patriotism through the cult of Rahmon relates to the Rogun hydroelectric dam. The experience of the civil war and conflict seem to make the Tajik people more receptive to nationalistic ideology and the revival of national heroes. Emotional appeals are usually more effectively than reasoned arguments in nationalist propaganda. At the beginning of 2009 Russia postponed its participation in the Rogun construction, because it took the side of Uzbekistan that claimed the dam would have harmful ecological consequences in the region – it might ruin Uzbekistan’s irrigation system, about 60% of which is supplied by rivers flowing through Tajikistan. The Tajik government decided to issue shares in the dam totalling six billion Somoni (\$1.37 billion) to complete the project on its own. It wanted the Tajik people, mostly civil servants, workers, students, and peasants, to buy shares in the 347-metre-high hydroelectric plant. The President appealed to the people for a patriotic movement to support their country in the crisis, asking that ‘Each family, apart from the poor, should buy shares worth at least 3000 Somoni. The well-off should buy many more shares’<sup>812</sup>. However, few people chose voluntary to buy the shares, not least because 3000 Somoni was around \$685 (compared to GDP per head of around \$670 in 2009) and 47% of the population had income below the national poverty line<sup>813</sup>. As a result, many people who worked for the public sector – from schools to ministries – were simply made to buy shares by giving up part of their monthly salaries. However, the appeals via mass media and banners for people to demonstrate their patriotism by buying shares made no mention of compulsion. Campaigning was so strong that people even named their babies after the dam – Rogunshoh (King Rogun) or Sahmiyabon (Share). Despite the propaganda and enforcement, only about \$188 million was raised instead of the \$1.37 billion needed.<sup>814</sup> During the whole campaign the President’s images were used to appeal to people (Figure 8-8, Figure 8-9). The president was seen as the driver of the campaign, the one who was doing it “for the sake of the nation”.





Figure 8-8: “Reports Suggest Some Tajiks Are Forced to Buy Shares”, Rayhan Demitrie “Tajikistan Looks to solve Energy Crisis with Huge Dam”, 23 March 2010, BBC News. The statement on the image in Tajik language: “Rogun – the life and death of Tajikistan”. Accessed September 2018, available online from: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/asia-pacific/8580171.stm>



Figure 8-9: The President pointing at the Rogun location on the map. Smaller pictures of Rogun construction and the President’s visit of the construction. The statement in Tajik: “Rogun – the reason of worthy life”. Accessed September 2016, available from: <http://tadj.news.tj/sites/default/files/>

The President has, at times, called for praise of his personality to stop and in 2001, 2002 and 2009 he even ordered that his portraits should be taken down. However, the order was directed mainly at images showing him with other officials, to ‘prevent rank servility’. Portraits showing him alone were to be hung in coordination with the President’s apparatus<sup>815</sup>, they are still being hung in as many places as possible. Before the presidential elections in 2013, a ‘Day of Silence’ was declared, on which there were not supposed to be any visible signs or symbols of campaigning. However, the journalists Dikaev and Sharipov

found many billboards with pictures of the president and his citations in Dushanbe, Kulob and Khudjand (see Figure 8-10).<sup>816</sup> Since the President has the authority to have these portraits removed, yet they remained, his public criticism of his own cult might be mere window dressing.



Figure 8-10: Billboard of President Rahmon in Dushanbe. The statement reads: 'We are honouring the 21<sup>st</sup> century with the leadership'. Accessed July 2015, <http://news.tj/ru/node/175938>

The cult of personality fostered by the president and his supporters seems to bear fruit among the older urban generation and rural people in general. Both the President and his People's Democratic Party appear to have a very strong standing in the country, as Asozoda, the party's third-ranking official declared 'the position of the party became so strong when Emomali Sharipovich Rahmon... became our Chairman' and 'promised the Nation he would end the war' and 'resolve the problem of hunger'.<sup>817</sup> About 96% of voters voted to make Rahmon president for life in the May 2016 referendum, with only 3.3% voting against. At the same time, foreign observers claim that polling stations were mostly empty on the day of election, which could mean that many votes were falsified.<sup>818</sup> Most of the voters in the referendum were middle aged and older, while younger people abstained. Fifty-three-year-old voter Nazir Saidzoda explained his reasons for voting: 'Rahmon brought us peace, he ended the war, and he should rule the country for as long as he has the strength to'.<sup>819</sup> War-weariness, a wish to maintain the status quo or simple lack of awareness of better outcomes

makes the older generation and uneducated people in rural areas support the regime. The younger generation have a different opinion though. For example, 37-year-old Marifat Rakhimi stated on the topic of referendum that ‘Everything that is being done is for [the regime] to hold on to power for as long as possible,... [while] [w]e are waiting for a better economy and the disappearance of corruption.’<sup>820</sup> The younger citizens want more change and occasionally, like Rakhimi, they declare their views, although most prefer to abstain for reasons of personal safety.

From the iconography above we can see that the cult of Rahmon is directed at inspiring patriotism in his people. Patriotism ‘has been used over the centuries to strengthen or invoke love for the political institutions and the way of life that sustain the common liberty of a people, that is love of the republic’.<sup>821</sup> Patriotism is an important tool, especially for authoritarian governments, because through patriotism it may be possible to have very devoted citizens who can overlook hardships for love of their motherland. Tajik President Rahmon is no exception in using this tool, as he advocates patriotism in his speeches: ‘Our generation should inspire the younger one, the youth of the future, to experience sincere love for the motherland, to appreciate national relics and to be ready to serve the motherland.’<sup>822</sup> For all that, his rhetoric does not seem to inspire all Tajik youth, as noted above. This could be due to the exposure of middle-class youth to foreign education and media, which is more affordable for their families.

In conclusion, the cult of the president has had an impact on nation building for the Tajik nation. The president tries to present an image of a united and independent nation through various methods that at the same time boost his own cult. He links his personality with the stability and prosperity of the nation. Thus, he makes people believe that the welfare of the nation depends on the President. The parallel between himself and Ismoili Somoni, whom he calls the founder of the nation, leads to the idea and explicit statements that the revival of the nation has come about because of Rahmon’s actions. While some efforts are helpful in reaching unity, they do not reflect the historical truth or economic reality. Most Tajik people now believe that the Tajik nation, which was in reality created in the 1920s, is an ancient one with a long and culturally rich history. The cult of personality is one of the means that has been used to achieve this national identity and history.

The cult of the president uses a variety of national symbols and it can be suggested that as a result of the cult the president has himself become a national symbol. Mesut Ata notes that over the 14 years of Emomali Rakhmonov's rule, some of the symbols of progress, democracy and independence are that 'Tajikistan now has its own flag, emblem and national anthem'<sup>823</sup>. These symbols, as well as creating a national hero to whom people can look up, are designated to instil a sense of patriotism, 'to revive a sense of high patriotism and fill in the gaps with worthy national values and achievements of world experience'.<sup>824</sup> The president considers national symbols to be important and uses them wherever possible: 'the symbols of the independent Tajik government, that of the flag and the national emblem, [...] contributed so much to patriotic feelings and national pride.'<sup>825</sup> In the next section I discuss in more detail the various symbols of Tajik national identity, other than the president, used by the current government.

### **8.3 The symbols and myths of nation building in Tajikistan**

Ethnic identity symbols are not simply 'neutral intellectual concepts but symbols that agitate strong feelings and emotions'.<sup>826</sup>

Tajik history and culture, being constructs, are akin to national mythology. In this section I examine some of the objects that have been created or remodelled by the Tajik government to strengthen national identity. I also investigate what national myths are, and how they emerge, and give some examples of Tajik national 'myths' and their controversies. I examine these examples in detail, including history-writing, banknotes, monuments and the cult of personality as the most powerful and prevalent aspects of the top-down approach to nationalism, because the national symbols, myths and heroes are at the centre of regime's approach to nationalism. Furthermore, I look at how Soviet historians appropriated existing ancient heroes into the newly written national histories of the recently created Central Asian states. These heroes are not always mythological, but as the Soviet historians embellished them into 'the Fathers' of the nation, they have become part of national myths. The exploitation of these heroes has continued and expanded following the collapse of the Soviet Union, with Central Asian post-Soviet governments and scholars propagating these myths to the masses through history writing and other means.

William Bascom defines myth as a prose narrative of a traditional tale that is considered truthful and took place in the distant past.<sup>827</sup> This definition limits myths to oral stories of

the distant past. However, there are written records of myths that otherwise would be lost, and there are myths of contemporary events and people. This could be true even in the example of a contemporary person who has become a myth and whose portraits are ritualistically hung in many educational establishments around country, such as the Tajik historian Bobojon Gafurov and the Tajik president, Emomali Rahmon. Jane Harrison associates myths with stories involving rites or rituals.<sup>828</sup> Yet the more comprehensive definition of a myth is that of Bruce Lincoln, who defines a myth as ‘an ideology in narrative form’.<sup>829</sup> The affiliation of a myth to the nation and to love of the nation does not come naturally but through ideological influences. Moreover, since national myths are created with the help of individuals, the intelligentsia and bureaucrats<sup>830</sup>, nation building rises and acts via these human mediums. As John Armstrong defines, myth is a ‘coherent belief, whether true or false, that arouses strong widespread social effect’.<sup>831</sup> All in all, myths are tales created by the elite that can be related to people and events that happened both in the distant and recent past. National myths, though invented narratives, affect people’s understanding of their identity. With the help of the propaganda of the elite, national myths become national facts for common people.

National symbolism and mythology are sometimes regarded as insignificant in comparison to real economic and political events. However, nationalist symbols are often a cause or aftermath of serious conflicts, as can be observed both in history and the present day. As Rivkin-Fish and Trubina observe, ‘the threatened national symbol [...] can be used to [...] evoke feelings of superiority over the out-group and of the threat from it.’<sup>832</sup> Examples include the nationalist symbols of Nazi Germany during World War II and the violent destruction and replacement of tsarist symbols by the Soviet government in the 1920s. Most post-colonial countries, such as Vietnam effacing its French symbolism<sup>833</sup> or Ghana erasing its British past, strive to change the names of streets and buildings, to replace monuments erected by the former regime, to replace or re-purpose ceremonies and national days, to re-write history, and to change currency, flags and other national symbols to reflect new national and mythological heroes.<sup>834</sup>

Tajikistan behaved like most post-colonial countries, when it sought to remove many vestiges of Soviet symbolism following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. There were varied levels and timings of dismantling though, most probably because the civil war and turbulent events prevented much consideration about it. Moreover, Tajikistan was

not very keen on independence in the first place and therefore, removing all symbols was not as urgent as in more pro-independent countries, such as the Baltic republics. For example, even though the statue of Lenin was removed from Dushanbe's main square in 1990, it remained in Khujand until 2011.<sup>835</sup> During the Soviet regime, a change of symbolism took place with the change of leadership. For example, Dushanbe, the capital of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic from 1929, was renamed Stalinabad between 1929 and 1961.<sup>836</sup> The end of Stalin's personality cult motivated the change of the name back to Dushanbe. As time progressed, Tajikistan unearthed old myths and created new ones in the form of Soviet and post-Soviet political and literary heroes who had contributed to the formation of the Tajik nation.

The nascence of nation-states requires heroes and/or martyrs in its symbolism. Such heroes play the role of Originators. In some cases, there are no real Originators and heroes are unearthed from history or mythology, often with the deeds of historical heroes being modified to fit the needs of the new-born state. Anderson holds all nations to be imagined<sup>837</sup> and the word 'imagined' in these circumstances does not just entail 'invented' in the meaning of the construction of a myth of shared historical past, even though it is often used in this way; rather it indicates a modern faith in shared cultural or historical bonds and fate brought about by the myth. Myths can be communicated through history-writing or through photography, cinema, mass media, sports, theatre, 'all these can serve as a support to mythical speech'<sup>838</sup> with mass media being the most influential and effective. Nation-builders, intellectuals or politicians communicate the sense of common fate to the nation by bringing to light, allocating and using symbolic assets such as customs, heroes, iconography, ethnonyms and toponyms and myths.<sup>839</sup> Symbols certainly include material culture; for example, Armstrong identifies the dromedary as a symbol of identity for Muslim Arab cultures.<sup>840</sup>

On the other hand, Michael Billig has coined the term 'banal nationalism' through which he states that the flagging of nationhood can be seen not only via media but almost everywhere around us. It is taken for granted, becomes a 'form of life'.<sup>841</sup> For example, the police in some countries have emblems of their countries stitched onto their sleeves, or children are fond of buying bandanas with flags printed on them.<sup>842</sup> Banal nationalism can be observed on banknotes that we use every day, in the monuments that we pass daily or the slogans and images of the leader that we observe daily on banners and media. Popular history books and

textbooks that are found on the shelves of most families in Tajikistan also include banal nationalist symbols. Thus, everyday banal nationalism creates an affiliation with nation and homeland even without exposure to mass media.

According to the French philosopher Roland Barthes, nations do not have ‘historical reality’, but only a political myth.<sup>843</sup> He uses examples of national monuments constructed after the nation-state was formed, but memorialising ‘awakeners’ of the nation.<sup>844</sup> These nationalistic movements often call attention to the renaissance of the nation-state with a striking style to evoke strong feelings intended to ‘revive’ national awareness and attribution of people to the new state. Mythological themes are taken as the best means to express and/or influence people’s patriotic and national spirit. Politicians who have been portrayed as heroes and fighters for freedom by nationalistic historiographers, have sometimes been poets, linguists, or historians. This made it easier for them to juggle with facts and create new ‘truths’.<sup>845</sup> As a myth, a nation itself builds up on storytelling and recording these stories, serving to justify the pretensions of the newly formed state. These political myths, or *mythomoteurs*, as Armstrong names them, can have older myths in their foundation<sup>846</sup>. Gradually both myths intermix and the boundary between myth and history disappears.

Myths also provide a feeling of correlation with place, therefore, ‘all nations seem to create their own myth of origins in an attempt to provide a sense of common identity and cultural uniformity and continuity’.<sup>847</sup> Here the concept of shared continuity and shared memories of earlier times (real and mythical) create a collective cultural identity, which is an essential part of being a nation. Moreover, new nations are often anxious about their cultural identity being claimed by other nations. Perhaps for this reason many newly established states, such as the Central Asian states, enter into active nation building processes using myths, and embellished or partially silent history, as their foundation.

Nationalism, akin to religion, also provides immortality for the nation via nationalist symbols. In Tajikistan, most are used visually, for example they are portrayed through or on national currency, monuments, works of art or logos; others are expressed through printed word (media, literary and education works), audio or through national celebrations and commemorative events. Apart from typical flag, emblem and national anthem, symbols include Central Asian ancient heroes, rulers, scientists, writers and poets. National symbols immortalise not only the nation but also objects and subjects that are used as those symbols.

The symbols, described further below, have been created primarily by the state and are essential to boosting the national identity of Tajikistan.

Governments use everyday objects to remind people about their nationhood and patriotism, to create imaginative ties, such as suggested by Benedict Anderson<sup>848</sup> and to attach individuals to their communities. Moreover, they delineate the boundaries of the nation both in space and in time. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, as they analyse the statues of Marianne as well as civilian figures in the cities and rural areas of France after 1914-18, declare that monuments are visual instruments in the construction of a nation that tie the nation to its citizens.<sup>849</sup> Such objects are a part of Michael Billig's banal nationalism.<sup>850</sup> As such the work of these authors is consistent with the modernist theoretical framework I have adopted for my analysis of the Tajik nation.

Tajik monuments immortalise national heroes, writers, poets, scientists and politicians with whom Tajik people identify themselves, in the same way that statues of Marianne were used in France. As Tajikistan became independent it had to move away from communist symbols. The Tajik state redefined symbols and customs in line with its new nationalist agenda and built new monuments. There are more than two thousand historical monuments in Tajikistan left from the Soviet period and not only were some of them renovated but many new ones have been built. New monuments were built to writers and poets, such as ancient poet Khoja Kamoli Khudjandi, and recent national heroes, such as Bobojon Gafurov and Nusratullo Makhsom.





Figure 8-11: Monument and memorial of Ismoili Somoni, Dushanbe, Ozodi square, accessed April 2015, <http://forum.awd.ru/gallery/images/upload/d73/44b/d7344be0396cc05bfa9ad11edb33e687.jpg>

Ismoili Somoni, whose contemporary visual image resembles Rahmon (there were no previous images of Somoni in history), has obtained a prominent position in the country since independence, with a monumental complex and museum having been devoted to this ancient ruler. In September 1999 in honour of the anniversary of the Samanid dynasty the monument to ‘the greatest representative of this immortal dynasty’ – Ismoili Somoni – was built in Dushanbe (see Figure 8-11).<sup>851</sup> A statue of a tenth century Persian poet Abu l’Qosim Firdawsi (see Figure 8-12) replaced Lenin in the Dusti square (former Lenin square) in the 1990; it was moved in 1999 to the smaller Friendship of the People Square when it was replaced in the Dusti Square by a statue of Somoni. One of the city districts was renamed from Central to Firdawsi district, while the name Somoni was given to one of the four districts of the capital. Firdawsi is known for his book of long epic poems *Shahnameh* (Book of Kings), both historical and mythical, devoted to the epoch of heroes on the territory of the Persian Empire (including modern Central Asia and Afghanistan), beginning from the creation of the world until the seventh century. Figures, such as Firdawsi, were known and celebrated in Soviet Tajikistan as well, but they were not prioritised over the communist

symbolism. However, in the new millennium, the Tajik government prioritised the ruler over the writer for the following reasons.

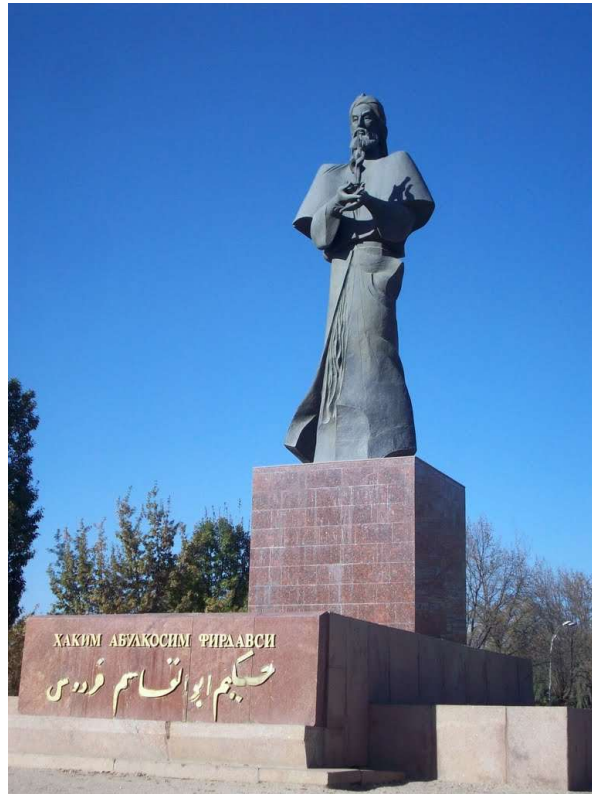


Figure 8-12: Monument of Abu l'Qasimi Firdawsi, Drujba narodov square, Dushanbe. Accessed April 2015, available online from: <http://static.panoramio.com/photos/large/32217155.jpg>

The architect and sculptor Zuhuriddinov<sup>852</sup>, who created the memorial arch and museum, admitted that the whole idea belongs to the president Rahmon who wanted to embody principles of the country's rebirth, recovering its former power and moral ascent. It was built not only to immortalise the memory of Ismoili Somoni but also as a symbol of Tajik statehood, comprising ideas of civil agreement, national reconciliation and unity. Unity because Somoni expanded his kingdom to cover a large part of Central Asia. Zuhuriddinov asserts that the foundation of the memorial and statue is one of the key symbols for national reconciliation after the civil war.<sup>853</sup> Tajikistan needed a symbol that could symbolise the unity of the nation as well as visually present it to the outside world akin to the Eiffel Tower in France, the British Royal Family in the UK, George Washington in the US, etc. Thus, Somoni was chosen to immortalise the Tajik nation.

According to Rahmon, the importance of this Samanid dynasty ruler lies 'in the fact that, having revived the traditions of the statehood of Tajiks, he founded a great state which

became a wide district uniting the Tajik people, giving way to unprecedented development in science and culture, as well as progress in the Tajik language'.<sup>854</sup> This statement has a few debatable points. In regard to the progress of Tajik language, as discussed earlier it has been merely a progress of a Persian dialect, which up until the Soviet era, no one claimed to belong to a specific nation. The term 'revived' would be arguable in this case, as there was no concept of Tajikness before Somoni but numerous groups in Central Asia as Bobojon Gafurov noted in his book *Tajiks*. As for uniting the Tajik people, the territory of the Samanid Empire covered not only modern Tajikistan but also Afghanistan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, by Rahmon's implication Tajik people have lived all over that territory. Yet, as discussed earlier, Tajiks being small disunited tribes lived only on the territory of modern Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, with small numbers in Kyrgyzstan. Therefore, the importance of the Somoni ruler lies only in promoting the nation building of the Tajik nation rather than any real significance to the contemporary nation.

A poet Rudaki became another representation of this sort. The year 2008 was announced as the Year of Rudaki due to the poet's 1150 anniversary and widely celebrated in Tajikistan. Since 2002 Tajikistan celebrates the Day of Rudaki every year on 22<sup>nd</sup> of September. Moreover, the main street of the capital has been renamed from Lenin to Rudaki. Abu Abdullo Rudaki was the Persian poet in 10<sup>th</sup> century who first started to write poems in the new Persian language following the decline of the Arab caliphate<sup>855</sup> to which the modern territories of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia belonged at that time. Rudaki was a court poet of the Samanid ruler Nasr II until he lost the court's favour and died in poverty. Tajiks claim Rudaki to be the founder of the Tajik-Persian classic literature who made a priceless contribution into the nation's heritage.<sup>856</sup>

Museums akin to monuments gained names or new status. The Firdavsi National Library of Tajikistan and the Behzod National Museum of Tajikistan gained national status instead of being privatised (privatisation would benefit their infrastructure and development). In 2011, a separate National Museum and National Library were built to honour the twentieth anniversary of state independence. Also, the first National Conservatory (Music School) of Tajikistan named after T. Sattorov was established.

In regard to national celebrations, there are a great number of those commemorating national symbols, national independence and even the national leader. Since 1989, every 22 of July had been celebrated as the Day of Native (Tajik) Language, because the law making the Tajik language the national language was approved on that day. The law of the state language as Tajik language was enacted in October 2009. Since then the Language Day was moved to October 5<sup>th</sup> as it enables schools to celebrate it during term-time, which makes it more commemorative.<sup>857</sup> The Day of Independence of Tajikistan was announced on the 9<sup>th</sup> of September 1991, when the Supreme Council of Tajikistan declared its independence. This day is widely and largely celebrated in the republic. The government makes all university freshmen plus many school-children and soldiers prepare costumes, dances and processions during three months of hot summer. The celebration usually takes place on the main Rudaki Street and Ozodi Square, where the statue of Ismoili Somoni and the President's ceremonial seat tower above the parade and people.

Other national holidays are less publicly celebrated but remain reminders of the nation's importance. Among them are the Day of National Reconciliation on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June, the Day of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan on the 6<sup>th</sup> of November, the Day of Commemoration for those who Died in Dushanbe during Mass Unrest of the civil war on 12-14<sup>th</sup> of February, and the Day of Flag on the 24<sup>th</sup> of November. Tajik historians claim that these national days of commemoration are created in order to strengthen peace.<sup>858</sup> Apart from those already mentioned, those are considered most important are the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Samanid state, the year of Aryan civilization, the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Istravshan, the 2500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Khudjand, the 2700<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Kulob city and others. In addition, there are anniversary celebrations of the Soviet intellectuals Bobojon Ghafurov, Nusratullo Makhsum, Shirinsho Shotemur, Mirzo Tursunzoda, Muhammad Osimi, etc., as well as ancient thinkers, such as Nosir Khisraw Qubodiyoni, Said Ali Hamadoni, Kamol Khudjandi and many others. These celebrations aim to heighten 'the spirit of pride and honour of the society for the immortal historical and literary treasures of its ancestors'.<sup>859</sup> Finally, the day of the Leader of the Nation was created by the Tajik Parliament in 2016. The date of the celebration has not yet been confirmed, but it is expected to be 6 October, on Rahmon's birthday.<sup>860</sup> All these celebrations are designed to strengthen the national identity of the Tajik people, as well as to increase their pride and develop a new understanding of their heritage.

Apart from the Day of Flag there is more to say about the flag of Tajikistan. The flag being a national symbol is so important for the government that they tried to glorify it. In 2011, for the twentieth anniversary of Tajikistan's independence, a flagpole 165 metres in height and weighing 310 tons was erected in the centre of Dushanbe (see Figure 8-13). It became the tallest flagpole in the world that year and was added to the Guinness World Records (Saudi Arabia succeeded Tajikistan in 2014 by erecting a 170-metre-high flagpole). The fabric of the flag itself is tremendously heavy and grand: it weighs 250 kg and is 30 metres high and 60 metres long. President Rahmon uses very emotional language when he describes the establishment of the flagpole. He asserts that the Tajik flag is one of the main symbols of the statehood of Tajikistan, the pride of each citizen of the republic, 'the reflection of sovereignty and happiness, unity and solidarity, honour and dignity, patriotism and national mentality of our ancient and civilized people, the brightness of its colours reflecting high goals and hopes of Tajiks'.<sup>861</sup> The celebration of the flag not only promoted the national symbol, but also served to promote the country's name, briefly giving it a glimpse of fame in the world. For a country which most people in the world might never have heard about, such glimpses can be important to improve its tourism and general status.



Figure 8-13: Tajik flagpole behind the Palace of Nations, Dushanbe, Tajikistan. Accessed April 2015, available from: <http://www.kloop.tj/wp-content/uploads/dvorets-Natsii.jpg>

Another important national symbol of Tajikistan is its national currency. National currency is a tool of material culture that exhibits the regime's representation of Tajik identity. Tajikistan used the Russian Rouble and kopeck until 1995, replacing it with its own version of Tajik Rouble and Kopeck until 2000. The currency was then highly inflated and was

replaced and renamed the Somoni (Tajik Rouble) and the Diram (Kopeck). Since Rouble (рубл) and kopeck (копейка) are Russian remnants meaning currency in Russian language, the increasing nationalization motivated the government to name the new currency using local symbols, such as Somoni and the ancient name for money - diram. As we can see, Somoni is the name which has been used on almost every nationally important object, location and symbol.

The Tajik bills and coins are full of contemporary national symbolism and national heritage which was created during the Soviet time. For example, the 5 Somoni bill (Figure 8-14) portrays the bust of Sadriddin Ayni (1878-1954), the founder of Tajik literature, while on the reverse (Figure 8-15) it depicts the mausoleum of Abu Abdullo Rudaki in the Pendjikent region, Tajikistan. Ayni along with writer and poet Mirzo Tursunzoda ‘[re]discovered a Tajik literature and cultural history which were incorporated into education and political discourse from the 1930s’.<sup>862</sup> Smaller objects on the bill are table, paper, pen and ink on the side of Ayni symbolizing his contribution to Tajik literature; traditional floral ornaments on both sides of the bill and coat of arms, flag, tulip and mountain symbol, which are present on all other bills as well. The mountain symbol represents its geographical relief – 93% of the country consists of mountains, which are the highest in Central Asia. Tulip is a common flower in Tajikistan covering its hills in springtime. The 20 Somoni bill (Figure 8-16) depicts Abu Abdullo ibn Sino or Avicenna (980-1037), a famous philosopher, doctor and scientist whose origins Tajiks claim to be Tajik. Next to Avicenna's portrait there is a picture of the bowl of Hygeia (Greek goddess of health), a chalice with a snake twined around it, an international symbol of pharmacy. On the other side of the bill (Figure 8-17) there is a Hissar fortress, a palace of one of the Bukhara emirate beys in the eighteenth century, one of the main tourist highlights of Tajikistan nowadays. Near the image of the fortress, there is a traditional hat and jug pictured, as these objects can be found inside the museum of the fortress. The 50 Somoni bill (Figure 8-18) portrays Bobojon Gafurov (1908-1977), scientist, writer and statesman of Tajikistan whose books *Tajiks I* and *Tajiks II* are the most popular history books in Tajikistan. On the reverse side (Figure 8-19) is the teahouse Sino in Isfara district; it does not seem to be connected with any important event apart from being a very traditional ornamented building and being named after Avicenna (Sino is a Tajik version of pronunciation). The 100 Somoni (Figure 8-20) depicts Ismoili Somoni (849-907) in a crown and regal attire with a building of his mausoleum in the background. The mausoleum itself



is located in Bukhara, Uzbekistan though, which manifests that the Tajik state crosses the boundaries of modern Tajikistan through its symbols. On the back of this bill (Figure 8-21), there is the President's palace in Dushanbe; this presumes the link between the current president and the ruler of the 10<sup>th</sup> century. Ismoil Somoni is portrayed again on the 50 diram bill (half of one Somoni) (Figure 8-22), this time in full body armour and heroically riding on a horse with a sword lifted in his hand. Finally, Abu Abdullo Rudaki is present again as a portrait of the poet himself on the biggest bill – 500 Somoni (Figure 8-23) – which is rarely used or distributed due to being of too much value.



Figure 8-14: Five Somoni, Sadridin Ayni. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-15: Five Somoni, reverse side, Abu Abdulloi Rudaki mausoleum. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-16: Twenty Somoni, Avicenna. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-17: Twenty Somoni, reverse side, Hissar fortress. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-18: Fifty Somoni, Bobojon Gafurov. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-19: Fifty Somoni, reverse side, Sino teahouse. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-20: Hundred Somoni, Ismoili Somoni. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)





Figure 8-21: Hundred Somoni, reverse side, President's Palace. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-22: Fifty Diram, Ismoil Somoni. Accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul\\_id=42&cul\\_ticker=TJS&currency\\_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc](https://www.economicdata.ru/currency.php?menu=europe-currency&cul_id=42&cul_ticker=TJS&currency_show=banknote&page=1&ysort=desc)



Figure 8-23: Five hundred Somoni. International Banknote Society, accessed September 2018, available online from: [https://www.theibns.org/joomla/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=224&catid=13&Itemid=51](https://www.theibns.org/joomla/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=224&catid=13&Itemid=51)

The Tajik government also directly involves its citizens in the promotion of the national identity. The involvement includes organising cultural and artistic competitions related to their identity. For example, a competition at national theatres such as *Motherland, I devote my life to you* and a *Mirror of History* competition among national museums<sup>863</sup>, children's art exhibitions *My motherland*, organised together with the United Nations and many others. Another interesting method of boosting national identity through citizens is rap music. This genre is supposed to be unconnected to the government's policies. From the first glance, this type of music comes from bottom up, from young people who usually put their frustration and hopes into this music. However, the amount of praise to the president and the usage of national symbols, such as Somoni, the Tajik flag and others in these songs may indicate that this trend has been facilitated by the government.<sup>864</sup> In fact, rap was banned by the Tajik

government when the Ministry of Education claimed that its tunes ‘do not conform to national culture’.<sup>865</sup> The rappers got the message and new Tajik rap is predominantly patriotic nowadays. Even though this rap is not on the state TV or radio, its website is not blocked by the government and it is widely spread among social networking websites.

All these examples of national symbols indicate the active involvement of the Tajik government in promoting the national identity ideology. The Soviet government provided the newly created nation with some symbolism, but the communist symbolism dominated the national one. Once the country became independent and the civil war ended, the new nationalist ideology became predominant through the efforts of Rahmon’s government.

#### **8.4 Conclusions**

The Tajik government has successfully used a number of methods to promote and instil a sense of national identity in its citizens. The president using his cult has encouraged patriotism amongst Tajiks and has bolstered the further development of Tajik history and literature. The new regime based its approach on Soviet-style cultural nationalism but adding a much greater emphasis on politics. Tajik national celebrations have regained their Soviet character in terms of scale. However, nationalistic iconography, such as Tajik historical and mythical heroes and culture have been emphasised many times more than during the Soviet time. National symbols seen and used by people on an everyday basis build and reinforce the Tajik peoples’ feeling of national unity. In the next chapter I discuss how textbooks have been used for the same purpose.



## 9 The Rewritten Tajik History

In this chapter I discuss one of the methods that the Tajik intelligentsia and the Tajik government have used to reinforce their national symbols and ancient roots. This involves written texts, namely academic publications, Soviet and post-Soviet school history textbooks and published presidential speeches. The importance of this medium lies in the fact that these texts are used to teach the new generations of Tajik citizens about their history and affirm their identity. The presence of such material in every school in Tajikistan, and the difficulty of obtaining information from other sources, suggest that it has a significant influence on new generations.

The sources referred to in this chapter consist of elite and academic discussions in Soviet and post-Soviet times. The main books used are the most famous history books in Tajikistan, *Tajiks I* and *Tajiks II* by the historian and first secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, Bobojon Gafurov (1908-1977). In addition, there are other Soviet-era and contemporary Tajik historians whose points of view do not differ much from Gafurov because they write based on his works. Contemporary elite discourse consists mainly of official transcripts of President Rahmon's speeches and books and articles written by the elites, including Rahmon's multi-volume work *The Tajiks in the Mirror of History*, which discusses Tajik history and national identity. Inter-textual analysis of this discourse has been conducted via citing sources of contemporary academic discourse that have taken ideas mainly from the Soviet studies of Gafurov and the contemporary elite discourse of Rahmon.

This chapter discusses why textbooks are re-written in nationalistic terms. One reason is to justify the Soviet-created borders, another is to replace communist ideology with a nationalist one. The government collaborates with the intelligentsia, such as academicians and lecturers, in writing and re-writing textbooks. The main 'super-stars' of historical discourse are academician Bobojon Gafurov and the Tajik president, Emomali Rahmon. Nationalist ideology includes Ismoil Somoni and Rahmon as key nationalist symbols. The specific target audience, apart from Tajik people in general, are children and adolescents, who absorb the propaganda through textbooks.

I discuss how Tajik historians and politicians present the Tajik nation's origins in re-written history using the primordial and ethno-symbolist approaches. Tajik historians using the primordial approach, stating that the Tajik nation has existed since the Middle Ages,

only recognising other groups of people with different names inhabiting Central Asia before the ninth century. Politicians and historians both claim that even though the Tajik state (meaning the Samanid Empire) disappeared in the ninth century, the nation has continued to exist despite difficulties throughout the centuries and has revived in the twentieth century.<sup>866</sup>

<sup>867</sup> This leads to an assumption that the Tajik national identity is a predestined and inherent condition, which does not change. Such a stance helps a government with relatively debatable state borders to justify its existence.

In contrast to some Soviet and post-Soviet Tajik historians, I reason that the Tajik nation did not exist before the Soviet Union. As established in Chapter 2, a nation is a group of people living on the same territory governed by the same ruler(s), obeying the same sets of law and sharing economic infrastructure, history and public culture; it is a group of people abiding by the same law regardless of their ethnicity, religion, rank or economic position. The ancient aristocracy living on this territory did not have an initial ethnic core, shared memories or public culture among other things. In the twentieth century, the Soviets used various clans to create the Tajik nation. Therefore, modernism rather than primordialism or pure ethno-symbolism fits better to the case of the Tajik nation.

### **9.1 History as a national myth**

There can be various histories: world history, where facts are provided by neutral historians, colonial history, where facts are written for the benefit of colonialists, and post-colonial history, where facts are written for the benefit of new post-colonial governments. Nationalist history is usually related to the local history, as it is easier to change facts at the local level, although the same historical facts may be interpreted from very different perspectives. The narrower the audience of the historiographers, the more myths can be written into the history and history is often tailored for the benefit of current rulers.<sup>868</sup> For this purpose, selective memory is used in writing Tajik history. There is no extensive methodological research to establish the truth behind propaganda. Indeed, nepotism and corruption, including the illegal sale of school and university degrees, mean that there is little or no tradition of disinterested scholarship, and local historians that identified historical and political falsifications would be unlikely to have their careers enhanced. This all means that myths and stories are easily interwoven into the fabric of Tajik national history and politics.

Nationalist myth-making in modern post-Soviet Tajikistan involves unearthing ancient heroes, who supposedly reunited the Tajiks about a thousand years ago (such as Ismoili Somoni); building memorials and monuments for national heroes, historical figures, writers, poets, philosophers, etc.; constructing propaganda from those features and people which helps to promote national identity; writing stories and poems about them, and incorporating all of these efforts into higher school education, media and art. The selective reconstruction of history also includes the reconstruction of the Soviet past. Many streets, buildings and parks that were named after famous Russian or Soviet heroes, writers, poets and scientists were changed into the pre-Soviet Tajik clerisy. Most Soviet-built monuments have been destroyed or stored and replaced by pre-Soviet ones. The current Tajik regime made its population believe in the heroic themes of Ismoili Somoni as the national unifier via paintings, bills, sculptures, books, and mass media. People who used to display the Tajik president's photo in their offices have started to add Somoni's portrait as well. Abu Abdullo Rudaki is a famous writer and poet used who is said to have supported Tajik nation building and was successfully proclaimed a Tajik poet belonging to the Tajik nation. Ironically, in the ninth century Rudaki had no concept of national consciousness.

Although Akbarzadeh states that the current Tajik government 'appeared less inclined to generate a historical legacy'<sup>869</sup>, the Soviet and modern Tajik governments did create an image of the state full of a glorified past and national heroes. Tajik history was rewritten first by the historian and politician, Bobojon Gafurov, who has himself been made a national hero; as Roland Barthes proclaims, 'myth is a type of speech, everything can be a myth, provided it is conveyed by a discourse'.<sup>870</sup> Gafurov's portraits hang along with the portraits of the president and Ismoili Somoni in all Tajik schools. Other examples of myth-making include building new monuments to national heroes, renaming places, changing Russian surname endings -ov/-ova into traditional endings -i, -zoda (for example, Olimova into Olimzoda) and commissioning broadcasting companies to create programmes and reports about the historical past and national heroes.

As a part of national myth-making, national history tends to bend historical events, sometimes overlooking facts that do not suit it, sometimes embellishing other facts. Nationalists set historians to write a unique nationalist history of the state or region especially for the local population. This kind of history-writing usually contains real, half-real and even mythological stories about the distant past of the nation to legitimise the nation.

Heroic deeds and periods are often remembered and celebrated to strengthen national awareness. Anything remotely related to past traditions, events and political structures can be revived, while not much attention is paid to scientific research. Sometimes, manuscripts can even be forged to 'prove' lost language or literature.<sup>871</sup> As it is said, 'history is a myth that men agree to believe'.<sup>872</sup> For example, Sherak, a hero from the sixth century BC who sacrificed his life to save his tribe, the Saks, from the invasion of Doro I, king of Akhemenids, has been celebrated as a Tajik hero since the Soviet time. Sherak's heroic story is printed in books for children and history books, such as Gafurov's history textbook<sup>873</sup>, and commemorated in plays and performances, such as a play by the Dushanbe Public Theatre in 2013, which was widely covered by the Tajik media.<sup>874</sup> However, apart from living on the territory of what is now Tajikistan, there is no historical indication that he is in any way related to the modern Tajik nation, as there was no territorial, cultural, economic or even linguistic mention of the Tajik nation at the time. Thus, nationalism uses history as its tool to create myths for its ideology.

Nationalist history discourse started during the early years of the Soviet period. In 1936, when the Central Asian Congress of Historians and Scholars in Samarkand discussed the historiography of Central Asian nations, it was decided that 'all the state formations that ever existed on the territory of the new republics' will be considered 'as part of their respective national histories'.<sup>875</sup> However, in 1938-1939, when Stalinist purges took place, historians were instructed to create separate heroes for each Central Asian republic. For Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, rulers from Samanid and Temurid dynasties met the criteria for heroes, being non-religious, apolitical and strong leaders not hostile to Russia.<sup>876</sup> The criteria of being a-religious or peaceful was not exactly met by Ismoil Somoni, as he promoted Islam on the territory of Samanid kingdom, or by another hero, Amir Temur, a descendant of Genghis Khan famous as a violent conqueror. As people of some newly established Central Asian nations were historically nomadic, this approach cannot provide detailed information about their history.<sup>877</sup> For example, since Tajiks regarded the intellectuals of Samanid and other periods living on Tajik/Uzbek territory as their ancestors, arguments rage about whether they should be regarded as Tajiks or Uzbeks.

Suyarkulova explains that the continuing debates as to whether certain dynasties and persona should be recognised as Uzbek or Tajik are due to the fact that 'Tajikistan adopted the ethnic principles, while Uzbekistan has used the territorial principle for its history writing'.<sup>878</sup>

While Uzbekistan's principles allow it to justify its borders, Tajikistan's principles allow it to justify the historical presence of its nation on the territory without accentuating borders. Since Soviet Tajikistan was separated from Soviet Uzbekistan and their history intertwines territorially, it would be difficult for Tajikistan to adopt the territorial principle without creating serious political conflict or undermining its legitimacy. Therefore, it is problematic for Central Asian people to determine which historical hero belongs to which nation.

Tajik and Uzbek nations often accuse each other of misappropriation of cultural legacy. For example, both Tajik and Uzbek nations claim the scientist and writer Abu Ali Ibn Sino (Avicenna) to be from their nation. The Uzbek Soviet Encyclopaedia (1981) asserted that Sino is a property<sup>879</sup> of the Uzbek People on the grounds that he was born in Bukhara City (modern day Uzbekistan). This was refuted by Loiqli Sherali, the secretary of the Tajik Writer's Union, who 'accused his neighbours of arrogance for attempting to hijack a historic figure who rightfully belonged to Tajiks', since Bukhara was mainly populated by Persian (Tajik) speaking population before the Russian Soviet government made it a part of the Soviet Uzbekistan.<sup>880</sup> These endeavours for legitimising their cultural heritage are important for both nations. However, since they are historically intermixed within their territory and culture, it is difficult to differentiate their ethnical legacy.

In the later days of the Soviet regime, to strengthen the national identity of the Tajik nation, a historian from Soviet Tajikistan, Bobojon Gafurov in *The Tajiks: Prehistory, Ancient and Medieval History* (1972), proposed that the Tajiks are descendants of the sedentary Iranians on the territory of Central Asia.<sup>881</sup> Since the Tajiks were not formed as a nation before the Soviet period, based on examined earlier primordialist discourse, this proposal gives contemporary Tajiks a basis to claim that they are the most ancient group of people in Central Asia without making territorial claims. However, such claims rest mainly on the use of Persian language on the territory of Central Asia. Since, as discussed earlier, Persian was an international medium of communication in that area in the Middle Ages, this statement is not accurate. Nevertheless, it does create a myth of national supremacy and justification of the modern Tajik nation-state's existence.

Tajik national myths and symbols are indeed ideology in narrative form that is thought to be true. They layer one on top of another, thus resembling Armstrong's *mythometres*<sup>882</sup>, and over time create the continuity that is needed for the nation to establish its longevity on the



territory where its ethnic group has developed. For example, the historian Bobojon Gafurov became famous because of his research into Tajik history. While his history can be contested, Gafurov has become a hero or myth himself because of his work during the birth of the Tajik nation.<sup>883</sup> National myths sometimes create tensions, such as is the case with shared Tajik-Uzbek myths. Finally, the primary goal of national myths is to legitimise the nation's presence on its territory and to prove its long-term right to govern, produce and multiply.

## 9.2 The utilisation of textbooks as a tool of influence in schools

Nation and state, school and textbook are closely interconnected and school textbooks are pivotal in the continuous interpretation of nation and state, the connection of the state with the nation, the instruction of the nation and helping the next generation to identify as citizens of the state, as well as constructing the collective memories of the people.<sup>884</sup> Indeed, textbooks are 'national projects' of the nation-state.<sup>885</sup> One does not automatically identify oneself with the state and nation, as such identification is crafted by the state through various mediums, especially education<sup>886</sup>, as well as via social contacts. National propaganda in textbooks being such a medium undoubtedly influences the younger generation and shapes their group identity. This particularly concerns textbooks in social sciences area, especially history textbooks.

Tajik school curricula are decided at the national level. Therefore, by analysing national textbooks, I analyse the nation-state's ideology. History is not a fixed and evidence-based discipline as some would argue. Indeed, it is just as easily influenced by fiction and mythologies, because 'new sources, methodologies, and social concerns allow for constant revision of the stories we tell'.<sup>887</sup> As any major political event happens, such as a change of political agenda or a peaceful or violent change of the government itself, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Tajik civil war, a new government rewrites history textbooks to suit its new course. It is a part of its reaction to a possible threat to its legitimacy. The Ministry of Education of Tajikistan has the right to approve or censor textbooks. Through this censorship, Tajik history textbooks present subtle or sometimes obvious political propaganda. The society uses textbooks as a medium for official education of its future generations. Thus, Tajik future generations are given a nationalist-infused education through these textbooks.

In Tajik textbooks, love of the homeland education is essential, as is the peoples' devotion to their country and its development. For example, the history textbook *History of Tajik People* by R. Nabieva, F. Zikriyoev, M. Zikriyoyeva, published in 2010, covers the period from 1900 to 2010 for high school and university students. In it they quote President Rahmon's foreword to Gafurov's book *Tajiks*, republished in 2011, where Rahmon states how important it is for people to know their history if they are to love their country and to learn from the past.<sup>888</sup> We can see that the President's speeches are influential and all other writers follow his lead in describing how the Tajik nation was formed.<sup>889</sup> Therefore, younger Tajik's knowledge about their identity and history is directed by President Rahmon, as discussed in more detail in the following sections.

History textbooks sanctioned by the state also introduce the events that happened in the past to Tajiks as a group. As most people crave certainty, it is important for them to know facts and dates about the events in the past that happened to their ancestors. Thus, we draw a connection with that group in the past and ourselves in the present and differentiate ourselves from others in other groups. This differentiation strengthens our self-identification and certainty about who we are. In the end, the state plays an important role in shaping our identity, whether it is through our histories or through our passports.<sup>890</sup> It may not be as clear-cut in other societies where academia and the state are more independent of each other. But in Tajikistan, academia depends on the state and is governed by official and unofficial policies; those who do not collaborate can face persecution and detention.<sup>891</sup> Thus, the state uses academia as one of the means to shape the identity of its people. The contemporary Tajik government did not invent this approach but inherited it from its Soviet experience.

### **9.3 Soviet and post-Soviet perspectives on history**

The newly created Soviet Central Asian states were required to develop their own history, language and culture. The Soviet governments set the local intelligentsia, as well as the Russian intelligentsia in these states, this task. The initial territorial, linguistic and literacy problem that the Tajik nation had during the formation of the Tajik Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic was solved by research about the history of the region and its people. Jahangiri discusses three types of journals that were established to promote nation building on the territory of the Tajik ASSR: firstly, related to intellectual history; secondly, to education; and thirdly, to Tajik-language only publications.<sup>892</sup> Through publications the

Tajik SSR did its utmost to commend the achievements and eminence of ancient Central Asian philologists, poets, historians and politicians, many of whom they linked directly to the Tajik nation to successfully validate the nation's claim to self-determination. However, the Tajik national history was told according to communist policies of class conditions peppered with socialist ideology. Thus, as Stalin puts it, it was 'national in form and socialist in content'.<sup>893</sup>

The dissemination of propaganda through academic publication and school textbooks has helped newly formed nationalities in Soviet Central Asia to develop their nationhood. For nationalization cases, such as in Central Asia, one can apply the Russian term *korenizatsiya*, which literally means 'to put down roots'. Indeed, the Tajik nation did put down its roots. Owing to the Soviet nationalization policy, people in Central Asia, including the Tajik people, accepted their own nationhood and adopted a sense of national pride for their motherland. The feeling was also enhanced by publications on the history and legacy of the Tajik nation and state, praising the beauty of their land and the achievements of the country and nation. This was achieved through various sources: history textbooks; academic work; journals, such as *Horpushtak* and *Firuz*, and literary works from members of the Tajikistan Writers Union.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union many former Soviet countries adjusted to their independence, while Tajikistan was engulfed by the civil war. After the civil war, Tajikistan needed as much non-aggressive national justification as possible. Most importantly, the Tajik government had to create a new ideology. Thus, it replaced communism with nationalism. The government reinforced the state and nation's position in the history of the region and re-wrote its own history to justify its status among other post-Soviet states and in the global context. Tajik historians have entertained primordial beliefs about the nation's origins, because primordialism is best suited to generating ancient roots for the nation. The civil war made the Tajik nation's position than the other states around it, thus the Tajik government and academicians made every effort to prove that the Tajiks have been living on their rightful territory for many centuries.

#### **9.4 The intelligentsia and the State**

Academics (in the case of this thesis, mostly historians) being nationalist intellectuals are essential in defining and rediscovering ancient symbols, myths and memories and often work

alongside or under political institutions. It is intellectuals that act as intermediaries between the nationalist political institutions and the people. Intellectuals, such as writers, journalists, teachers and others reach out to the rest of the population and promulgate nationalistic ideas.<sup>894</sup> Discussions of nationalist concepts and ideas by intellectuals, such as academic groups, reinforce the effects of the political elite in building national identity. Politics has had great influence on the intellectual domain and the 1980s' Gorbachevian liberalisation did not change much. On the contrary, the government today is becoming more 'paternalistic and authoritarian' in its methods.<sup>895</sup> Politics still greatly influences the intellectual sphere as it used to do during the Soviet times. Each Central Asian republic has a slightly different degree of political influence on education, but in all their academic publications these states are heavily influenced by presidential discourse, which is intertwined with the nationalist discourse. In essence, the president and his government 'assume the right to retell history, create 'places of memory' for the nation-state under construction, and invite the blossoming of a new 'officialese', the 'politology' (the local version of political science), centred on independence in 1991 as the only relevant object of study.'<sup>896</sup>

After the war, research into Tajik national history was further encouraged by the government, who engaged the Tajik intelligentsia in active nationalistic pursuits. The intelligentsia that demanded more nationalisation during the *perestroika* period could finally fulfil their wishes but under the guidance of the government. The editor of *Essays of History and Theory of Culture of Tajik People*, Askarali Radjabov writes in his book that 'independence and the growth of national consciousness of Tajiks in recent years created lively interest in the origins of their own history and culture, and the stages of its formation and development'.<sup>897</sup> For the Tajik president, Rahmon, as he has stated in his book, *Tajiks in Mirror of History*, research into Tajik history is important, because those who are not proud of their heroic past and cultural heritage would 'thoughtlessly worship everything foreign'.<sup>898</sup> Rahmon further asserts that all 'recent deeds and efforts and the self-denying work of the present generation' should be 'reflected in the mirror of history' in order 'to strengthen the feeling of national nobleness, consciousness, patriotism and love for the motherland'.<sup>899</sup> Thus the Tajik government and intelligentsia, led by the president, have been keen to craft the history and culture of Tajik people.

One of the most well-known representatives of both the intelligentsia and the government is the historian and former First Secretary, Bobojon Gafurov (1908-1977), who has been made

a national hero of Tajikistan. He created the myth of Tajik national identity, but himself became a part of the myth as well. Gafurov, originally from Khudjand region, was a Soviet party activist, the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Tajikistan (1946-1956), the historian and the director of the Institution of Oriental Studies at the Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Despite his busy political life, he managed to publish 500 works in Russian and Tajik languages. In 1948 Gafurov established the first State University and in 1951 the national Academy of Sciences in Tajikistan. He was 'one of the leading figures in crafting a creation myth for the Tajiks as an Eastern Iranian people whose culture predated that of the Persians'.<sup>900</sup>

Another more contemporary Tajik myth is that of the president Rahmon, whose influence shapes the publications and media of the country and thus impacts the development of the Tajik society's ideology. Post-Soviet Tajik historical accounts feature President Rahmon very frequently. Some historical works are written by the President's disciples, such as Abdufattoh Sharifzoda, the press secretary of the President, who co-wrote *The Tajik Recognised by the World, Tajikistan 20* among other books, Nasriddin Shamsiddinov, the Director of Khovar National Information Agency who has co-authored *The President, Emomali Rahmon – the follower of Tajik-Russian Friendship* and *The Year Equal to Centuries*. The President himself has apparently been actively participating in academic research concerning the history of the Tajik nation. However, due to his lack of relevant academic background and time-consuming job, this might be an agenda of his cult of personality (described in the Chapter 8). Most of his works are rumoured to be written by ghost-writers. Similar assumptions were recently made about Gafurov's works.

While Gafurov's earlier works, such as *Short History of Tajik people* (1947), were most probably written by himself, his more extended works on Tajik history, such as *Tajiks I, II* were edited and actively co-written by the Russian archaeologist, Boris Litvinskii (1923-2010). Litvinskii was born and studied in Soviet Uzbekistan; in 1951 with the help of Gafurov he moved to Soviet Tajikistan where Gafurov gave him better living conditions; during his last years, he moved to Russia. Litvinskii not only helped Gafurov, but also co-authored the textbook *History of Tajikistan* with M. Mukhtarov for 8-9<sup>th</sup> level at high school. Boris Litvinskii's name is not mentioned often in appraisals of the book *Tajiks* and his popularity as a writer is not comparable with Gafurov, the reason for which could be that being Russian, Litvinskii does not fit the role of the patriotic Tajik scientist presented to

general public as Gafurov does. Only in 2009, a year before his death, Litvinskii received a medal *Sharaf* from the Tajik government for the invaluable input into researching history of Tajik people.<sup>901</sup> Since Gafurov was busy with political activities, Litvinskii and his wife, the historian Elena Davidovich, might have not only edited, but actually done most of the research and analysis for Gafurov's books *Tajiks I*, *Tajiks II* and Gafurov only received the credit for it. This can be surmised from the statement of Litvinskii during an interview where he stated that he and his wife gave the Tajik people a gift – their history of full value. Unfortunately, the actual interview itself was edited and cropped on the Fergana website, but we can gather parts of it from the furious reaction of the Tajik intelligentsia and government. Some of this is reflected in a negative review by a Tajik writer, Djalol Ikrami, and another article by a Tajik academician, A Turson. In these reviews, we can see that Litvinskii not only stated that the real authorship of the books *Tajiks I*, *Tajiks II* are his and his wife's, but also that Gafurov had little command of formal Russian language and hired journalists or co-authors so that someone else did the original research and wrote most of his books.<sup>902, 903</sup> These speculations emphasize the suggestion that Gafurov was made a part of the myth of Tajik national identity as well as Rahmon. Their 'true' Tajik origins (one from the North, the other from the South) and participation in researching the history of the Tajiks to make the nation great are more suitable to make them the heroes of nationalist ideology.

The origin of researchers may be indeed important for the Tajik intelligentsia and government. If researchers are not originally from the area, they might not receive much credit (like Litvinskii) or their arguments might be disregarded. Numon Nematov, who followed Gafurov's lead in the history book *Samanid State* in assigning the Samanid dynasty an essential role in forming the Tajik nation, argues about the inaccuracy of Russian researchers in the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century. Nematov states that Russian researchers, V. V. Bartold and A. Y. Yakubovskii, the main researchers of the Central Asian region who revealed the most important facts on the history and culture of ancient history, could not come to in-depth conclusions about the importance of Samanids. But the academic Gafurov, according to Nematov, developed an innovative approach into the studies of the Samanids. Relying on Gafurov's writings on Samanids, Nematov delves deeper into the economics, agriculture and culture of that period, and since this book was published during the Soviet time in 1989, pays special attention to class conflicts and feudalism. The conclusion is that the Tajik historians indeed do not consider the Russian

historians patriotic enough to research Tajik history. The re-writing of history is much easier done when there are no outside researchers who can hinder alterations done for the benefit of the country.

The Tajik government is very actively involved in academic textual propaganda. It has commissioned about 200 history textbooks with a circulation of 18 million copies at a cost of 72 million Somoni. These books are in Tajik language, but the government is working on translating those textbooks into Kyrgyz, Turkmen and Uzbek languages.<sup>904</sup> Also, the government encouraged the publication of more than 300 course books and scientific recommendations of scientists of the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan. The aim of this academic research is to enhance ‘the patriotic spirit, national identity and moral [...] education of Tajik citizens.’<sup>905</sup> The government is actively helping scientists to do the historical research. The ongoing work *Ethnogenesis and ethnic history of the Tajik people* has been created with the support of the President of the country.<sup>906</sup> Tajik historiographers put great importance on the origin of the Tajik nation by publishing such works as the six-volume *History of Tajik People*.<sup>907</sup> In addition, series of books that promote the legacy of ‘Tajik’ historical ancestors have been published in the past two decades under the name *Stars of Morality* and *School Library*. The books are primarily for children and include *Shahname*, *Qabusname*, *Kimoyai Khirad* (Elixir of Wisdom), *Akhloqi Muhsini* (Ethics of Muhsini), *Tutinoma* (Book of parrot), *Guliston* (Flower Garden), *Buston* (Garden), *Shahmaqom* (Six Motifs) and others.<sup>908</sup> Through less academic books younger children can be influenced by the nationalistic ideology.

During the Soviet time, such publications were on much smaller scale. The book *Tajiks* was published in 1972 in a limited edition of 10,000 in Russian and Tajik languages, as Gafurov did not want the book ‘to gather dust on shelves’.<sup>909</sup> However, the demand was great – in a month there was already a shortage of this book and it had to be republished in larger (unknown) numbers.<sup>910</sup> It was not published without controversy. After the first publication in 1972, the book was censured by the Uzbek Soviet government who called it nationalistic and propaganda of the cult of Tajik people. The censors stated that Gafurov ‘gave’ all the culture of Central Asia to Tajiks.<sup>911</sup> Nevertheless, the book was republished without changes in 1989 and has remained the primary history book of Tajikistan to the current day.

Gafurov's works have become bestsellers since independence. In 2008, his centenary was widely celebrated in Tajikistan and the President of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, made a speech highly praising the academician.<sup>912</sup> The same year the President ordered the republication of Gafurov's books and wrote a foreword for the book himself. In 2011, 50,000 copies of the book were republished in Tajik and English languages.<sup>913</sup> In 2014, this book was uploaded into Google Play in the Tajik language and can be freely accessed online.<sup>914</sup> The increased publishing and translation of the book into international languages, such as English, shows how important this history book is for the Tajik government and the Tajik people, as well as the mythological status of Gafurov as the father of history.

Some Tajik historians can be overly aggressive in arguing about the cultural (or territorial) legacy of Tajiks. The academician Rahim Masov is one of those historians, whose publications are also important to analyse in this context. Masov, the Director of the Institute of history, archaeology and ethnography at the Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan between 1988-2015 is known for his strong opinions about the unfairness of the border division between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and about how the relatively smaller Tajik ethnic group suffered under the oppression of Pan-Turkism in Central Asia. Masov was also a part of the commission on discussing the claims of China on the territory of Tajikistan in 2011. He had not signed the Tajik-Chinese demarcation of 1100 square kilometres, stating that the government had made the wrong decision as there were no historical precedent.<sup>915</sup> It is relevant to consider Masov because his radical nationalistic ideas influence young Tajik people. His articles, as well as articles about him, have been often printed in newspapers and online media and his books are included in the curriculum of university students.<sup>916</sup>

For example, a young contemporary Tajik historian, Manuchehr Alimardoni is one of Masov and Gafurov's followers. Alimardoni claims that inaccuracy in history was the Soviet culture's deficiency. He argues that the richest Tajik culture (as well as lands) was squandered among other Central Asian people. For Alimardoni it is unfair that such scientists and writers as Abu Ali ibn Sino, Biruni and others were recognised as all-Central Asian cultural representatives rather than only as Tajiks. He claims that during the Soviet Union almost all Tajik cultural heritage was appropriated by other Central Asian countries. He also states that all attempts of Tajik scientists to restore the 'real historical picture' have been seen as attempts to commandeer the heritage of the whole region.<sup>917</sup>



Overall, most young academicians and students in general learn strong nationalistic rhetoric from three famous figures in history-writing, Gafurov, Massov and Rahmon. This indoctrination influences most academicians and through them all the schools and universities in Tajikistan. There is a relatively short history textbook, *Programme for the discipline of the 'History of Tajik People' for the students of 1, 2, 3 years of the department of History* (abbreviation - *'History of Tajik People'*), used at one of the popular universities of Dushanbe – the Russian Tajik Slavonic University. This is important because it was written with the approval of a Russian-Tajik committee and it reveals the history-writing methodology of both Russia and Tajikistan. Both of their outlooks are primordial. The historian and academician Mahmud Malikov (1939-, born in Kulyab region) composed and published this textbook in 2001 together with the reviewers, professor Mansur Babakhanov and professor Haidarsho Pirumshoev. Importantly, we can see in the syllabi of the history department of this university that Malikov, as well as other history lecturers of this university, recommend Gafurov's, Masov's and Rahmon's books as the main literature for their coursework.<sup>918</sup>

President Rahmon's words have almost become a prerequisite for newly published history books. For example, he wrote a foreword for the textbook *History of Tajik People* for ninth grade high school students by R. Nabieva and F. Zikriyoeva, covering 1900-1996, published to commemorate ten years of Tajik independence. In Rahmon's foreword, along with his portrait on the right side, he appeals to students: 'Know that the book is esteemed as much as the Mother and Motherland. Respect the book [...] as it will help you to achieve your goals. [...] From the correct learning of the knowledge from the book, you will respect the Motherland, become prouder of dear Tajikistan, love its every corner and regions.'<sup>919</sup> Patriotic claims and the visual image are both effective ways of influencing students who see the foreword every time they open the book. As for content of the book itself, it does not talk about the division of Central Asia into different nations during the Soviet time but refers to the Tajik people as the Tajik people from the very beginning, taking them through the history of the formation of the Soviet Union as if Tajikistan was already a formed nation. The book follows Masov's Pan-Turkism statement in explaining why Soviet Tajikistan was formed later than other republics.<sup>920</sup> Masov's outlook and Rahmon's foreword build the understanding of the Tajik history for schoolchildren in their important formative 14-15 years.

Rahmon's rhetoric not only shapes the history of the Tajik people, but also some historians seem to rely on his supposed expertise in bridging historical omissions. Tajik historians, R. Nabieva, F. Zikriyoev and M. Zikriyoyeva, claim that there were many gaps in the modern history of Tajikistan and now following the lead of Rahmon they have filled those gaps in their book. When talking about the exact gaps, they cover the reasons why heavy industry did not develop in Tajikistan for a long time; reasons why there was not enough attention paid to the populations of mountain areas; not enough usage of national architecture, such as painting and carving; the right exploitation of water resources, the diminishment of cattle raising and others in agriculture. They also state that in the past historians, such as S. A. Radjabov, M. Vakhobov, A.V. Makashov in studies such as "Essay on the history of the communist party of Tajikistan", "History of the formation of the communist Central Asia" looked at the national-territorial division of Soviet Central Asia from too positive a perspective. Nabieva *et al* touch upon this question via Masov's point of view about Pan-Turkists oppressing Tajiks, causing the delay in the formation of the Tajik Soviet Republic in comparison to other Central Asian republics. They assert that it is well known that in ancient times there were various nations in Central Asia. Some of them, including Tajiks, had been scattered after the fall of Samanid Empire and only re-established their re-united state after ten centuries. They claim that it was not national-territorial delineation but only territorial delineation, i.e. the Tajik nation did not get its historical territory as there were 47.7% of Tajiks on the territory of Turkestan and 52.3% on the territory of the Bukhara Soviet Republic. In addition, they state that there are still Tajiks living on the territory of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and other Central Asian republics,<sup>921</sup> which is true, but they do not mention that there are Uzbeks, Kyrgyzs and other nationalities residing in Tajikistan as well. The authors do not offer any alternative theory for the reasons for the formation of Tajik nation, taking it as granted that the Tajik nation existed before national-territorial division in the 1920s.

Alternative historical publications of post-Soviet events not highlighting the President, Masov or Gafurov or not censured by the government are to be found in rare instances, such as the Tajik journalist, Umed Babakhtanov's book *Tajiks are Going*<sup>922</sup>. This journalist was living in the United States because of disputes with the Tajik government over publications of the media holding Asia Plus, of which he is the founder and general director. His writing is mainly pre- and post-civil war and does not concern the formation of the Tajik nation. Yet

it is still an alternative view on more recent history in comparison to the state rhetoric. The lack of unbiased information leaves many young people misinformed about their history or informed by the biased opinions of their families and friends. As for pre-independence history, Soviet concepts and the importance of Russian people are not mentioned in history textbooks, but otherwise information is almost the same as written during the Soviet period.

### 9.5 Tajik history from primordial point of view

This section goes into more detail about the historical explanations of the Tajik intellectuals and the government. To justify the existence of a new nation and its state as well as to replace the communist ideology, both the government and the intelligentsia accentuated nationalistic ideas and encouraged nationalistic research. Most of the detailed research was done during the Soviet period; since independence, it has been fine-tuned and instilled with presidential propaganda and non-communist nationalist ideology. The nationalist ideology dates the Tajik nation to the ninth century and dates the core of the Tajik ethnicity to the fifth century or earlier. This ideology makes the Tajiks the most ancient nation in Central Asia.<sup>923</sup> The main creator of the Tajik nation is claimed to be Ismoili Somoni of Samanid dynasty<sup>924</sup>, although the only links of the Tajik nation to the Samanid dynasty are the Tajik territory (Tajikistan is a minor part of the historical territory of the Samanid state<sup>925</sup>) and the Persian language. Gafurov and other Tajik historians use and shape archaeological and linguistic findings, which are sometimes quite vague, to mould their arguments towards the nationalist ideology.

Gafurov's book *Tajiks* relies on the archaeological research of various Soviet and pre-Soviet Russian archaeologists and linguists and includes a lot of musings and theories. Throughout the beginning of the book the author implies that the Tajik nation pre-dates Turkic nations in Central Asia using evidence of the existence of ancient Iranian groups on the territory. This territory covers a large part of Central Asia and Gafurov relates it to the ancestors of the Tajiks: 'Already the first reliable dated written sources, which include information about Central Asia, witness that in VII-VI BCE on all its territory lived tribes and peoples that belonged to the Iranian ethnic group – Sogds, Bactrians, Margian, Khorezmian, Parfian, various tribes of Saks and others.'<sup>926</sup> In one of Central Asian regions [the book does not define which one...] in the 1 BCE a dialect was widespread, which became a base of the language of Avesta – a collection of sacred books of Zoroastrian religion. Those written

sources are ‘texts written in a few Iranian languages [...such as] Bactrian, Sogdian, Khorezmian [...etc]. The Iranian group of languages includes Persian [...], Tajik [...] and other Western-Iranian languages; Afghan (Pashto), Osetian [...] and other Eastern Iranian languages.’<sup>927</sup> Gafurov relates Iranian languages to Indian or Indoarian groups and draws a parallel between Indian and Iranian mythologies and epics, at the same time connecting Tajik mythology to both. He states ‘The analysis of the Tajik mythology shows that there remain direct representations of Indo-Iranian togetherness. [...For example,] as M.S. Andreev writes, the myth about Father-Sky and Mother-Earth, “two great parents” from *Rigveda* [the oldest sacred book of Hindiusm] is still in representations of the Tajiks. In Yazgulem [Western Pamir mountains], for instance, the sky is still called *ded* – father, and earth – *nan* – mother.’<sup>928</sup> He concludes chapter 2 of volume I with: ‘All of this once again proves that Central Asia and the areas around it were the centre of Indoarian tribes’ spread and an ancient (although not the original) region that they inhabited. Those Iranian tribes which remained in Central Asia became the ancestors of the main population of Central Asia from the beginning of the historic epoch until the early Middle Ages. Thereafter, the Tajik nation formed from the Eastern Iranian people of Central Asia, mainly Bactrians, Sogdians and in lesser degree other ethnicities.’<sup>929</sup> In Gafurov’s opinion, since the Tajik nation is the only Persian-speaking nation on the territory of former Soviet Central Asia, it indicates that it is the oldest nation in this region.

The textbook *History of Tajik People* by Malikov generally reiterates Gafurov's view. Malikov claims that the first phase of the formation of the Tajik people developed in North Eastern traditional, insular and historic-cultural provinces of Khorasan, which during the Sasanid dynasty included the West and South of the river Amudarya and the cities Merv, Balkh and Herat.<sup>930</sup> Malikov states that while it is difficult to identify the ethnic composition of the Tajik people, the most authoritative researchers of Tajiks (without mentioning exact names but implying Gafurov) maintain that the ancestors of the Tajik nation were the most ancient and aboriginal Indo-European and Iranian people on the territory of Central Asia – Saks, Massagetae, Eftalits, Turanians, Kanguis, Sogdians, Bactrians, Ferganians, Tokharistanians, Khorezmians, Margians and Parthians.<sup>931</sup>

Such historical statements give a basis for claims that the Tajik nation is the most ancient nation in Central Asia. Relying on limited archaeological and linguistic evidence, Gafurov asserts that Indo-Aryan groups migrated from Central Asia to India, Afghanistan, Iran and

so on. He claims that Central Asia and its surrounding territory were the main and ancient homeland for these people, although not the first place that these Aryan people lived. Afterwards, labels those Aryan groups Iranians and claims them to be the ancestors of groups in Central Asia from the beginning of historical time to the early Middle Ages. He suggests the Bactrian, Sogdian and other smaller ethnic groups that formed the Tajik nation in the 9<sup>th</sup> century developed from these Eastern Iranian peoples of Central Asia. Thus, he suggests that the Tajik nation's ancestors are the most ancient people on the territory of Central Asia.<sup>932</sup> Such declarations of superiority over other nations can produce radical nationalism and are often perilous. 'The racial superiority of Tajiks' over other Central Asian nations<sup>933</sup> stated by Tajik academician Rahim Masov is as questionable as the superiority of other nations in Central Asia or anywhere in the world. The celebration of the Year of Aryan Civilization and declarations about Tajiks being pure Aryans, closer to Indo-European peoples than to the rest of the region, has prompted more arguments between Tajiks and Uzbeks. Racial superiority is indeed only a 'misguided "mythology"[...], which has been discredited not only by the tragic events of World War II, but also by findings of linguistics, archaeology and even genetics'.<sup>934</sup> Even Gafurov after developing the hypothesis, which relies on archaeological sources, that Central Asian people are Indo-Aryan or very closely related to them, nevertheless agrees that this theory has to be tested by collecting more new facts.<sup>935</sup> In the end, the trend of 'the homogenous, pure Tajik nation descending from Aryans' could create nationalistic conflicts between Central Asian nations.

On the one hand, Gafurov admits that the ethnic diffusion was happening constantly and endlessly. Gafurov further indicates that ethnic processes going on in the Central Asian region since ancient times led to the formation of such peoples, as Khorezmians, Sogdians, Bactrians, Tokharistanians and, where each of them had their own culture. Gafurov asks not to exaggerate either the specificity of these local-ethnic cultures or their unity, as each of them consisted of a mosaic of subcultures. For example, the language of these peoples was Eastern Iranian, but Tokharistanians had three languages: Eastern Iranian, some Tokharistanian and later Turkic. The historian claims that in the last century BC most peoples in Central Asia, both settled and nomads, were of Eastern Iranian origin of Saks group. From the last century BC, along with the influx of Iranian groups came other groups, such as Turkic tribes. Many later peoples moved to Central Asia during the Turkic Khanate and during the seventh and eighth century Turks started to play an important role in the

ethnic history of Central Asia – by such statement Gafurov, however, reasserts the priority of the ancestors of the Tajik people.<sup>936</sup> Gafurov has to admit that ethnic borders were by no means solid – ethnic diffusion happened constantly, not only between different ethnic groups but also between settled people and nomads.

On the other hand, Gafurov implies that the Tajik nation's ancestors and the Tajik nation itself did not mix with newcomers and invaders. For example, he says that, in the fifth century BC, during the rule of Kserks, there were Greek people from the city Milleta living in Central Asia. These people were fluent both in Greek and local languages. During the rule of Darius I, the residents of the city Barks (Northern Africa) were relocated to Central Asia. Moreover, there were representatives of Ekhemnid government structures and Arameyan scribes living in Central Asia.<sup>937</sup> Nevertheless, he denies the influence of foreign groups in Central Asia. For example, he claims that Western literature exaggerates the role and meaning of Greek and Hellenistic culture in the development of Central Asia, particularly the statement that after the invasion of Alexander the Great, most of the social and economic development of Central Asia of that time was due to Greek influence. Gafurov states that Soviet authors and he himself had harshly criticised this 'bourgeois' theory, reasoning that inner deep processes were the main triggers of Central Asian peoples' development. As a confirmation, he states that archaeological research into the Bactrians, Sogdians, Khorezmians, and other peoples of Central Asia identified deeply self-reliant cultural characteristics. Nevertheless, he does agree that contacts between Central Asian people and foreign migrants were important and productive for social and economic development.<sup>938</sup> For Gafurov, the fluctuating presence of people from various regions does not end in assimilation. However, his own examples and research prove that groups of people on the territory of Tajikistan or even Central Asia were not united and did not have an ethnic core. They were separate communities constantly influenced and reshaped by foreign elements either voluntarily or by force. But since Gafurov was writing the national history to justify the ancient roots of the Tajik nation, many of his conclusions are nationalistic.

As the Tajik historians exclude outsiders' influence, they claim that the following points amounted to the most formative phase of the formation of Tajik people: the inclusion of Khorasan people into the Maeraunnahr region, where the Eastern Iranian groups resided; the spread of the Tajik language from Khorasan to Maverounnahr; the transition from polytheism to monotheism – Zoroastrianism.<sup>939</sup> Although Malikov indicates that the Eastern

Iranian tribes are the ancestors of Tajiks, in earlier chapters he refers to these tribes as Central Asian in general until the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Gafurov notes that due to strengthening of economic and cultural links between separate regions and government structures in Central Asia as well as the growth of urban life in feudal system, before the Arab invasion in the seventh and eighth centuries, there was a visible tendency for the merging of certain settled Central Asian people into one nation.<sup>940</sup> When it comes to the formation of the Samanid dynasty in the ninth century, Malikov states that the striving of Tajik political leaders [people of Fergana, Khodjent, Bukhara, Istaravshan, Khorezm, Chaganiyan, Khutalyan] to escape Arab influence was the main factor in the formation of the Tajik national state in Central Asia.<sup>941</sup> According to him, this was the third and final phase of the formation of Tajik people, where Tajik statehood and Tajik culture were shaped.<sup>942</sup>

Gafurov gives more details about this final period stating that already during Abdallah Tokharistani's rule (830-844), he was opposed to being a viceroy of Arab Caliphate and ruled Khorasan independently. However, Abdallah continued to impose Islam on local population to ensure the support of the Muslim clergy. Also, he continued to use Arab language and to be supportive of Arab culture, although Persian language was also used in the court. In the Merv library there were some books in the Middle Persian language, which Gafurov considered sufficient to prove pre-Tajik formation.<sup>943</sup> The Saffarid dynasty that conquered Tokharistanis was also only nominally subordinate to the Arab Caliphate. The Saffarid dynasty was mainly prominent because of its military achievements rather for progressing local culture, in comparison to Samanid dynasty that replaced it.<sup>944</sup> Since the Soviet period, the Samanid dynasty period has been recognised as the most celebrated period in Tajik history. The next section discusses how and why the Samanids could not be the founders of the Tajik nation.

## 9.6 The Samanids

Nationalists have been rediscovering and disseminating memories and myths of ancient heroes and the bygone battles of the Middle Ages and earlier times since the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Similarly, painters portrayed little known events and heroes from ancient times. Nationalists of Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America have been using these historical explorations to naturalise and validate newly formed nations.<sup>945</sup> Analogously, in Tajikistan the bygone heroes were resurrected to authenticate the nation and bring the people

together. Such heroes became an ‘embodiment of national spirit’ and ‘help[ed] to restore a sense of dignity to downtrodden peoples’<sup>946</sup> and according to Masov’s assertions, Tajiks have been ‘downtrodden’ by invaders throughout the centuries.<sup>947</sup>

The Tajik nation has acquired many national symbols, most of them designed to reinforce the idea of its ancient roots. After the civil war, the new Tajik leadership has used the Samanid dynasty as a symbol for the modern nation-state. The most celebrated national symbol is Ismoili Somoni, the ninth century king of the Samanid dynasty. President Rahmon’s uncanny resemblance with the new portrait of Ismoili Somoni and the frequent parallels drawn between the deeds of Rahmon and Somoni, makes Rahmon as much a national symbol as Somoni. Ismoili Somoni’s supposed importance in the formation of the Tajik nation has been emphasised by the Tajik government through various means.

Great historical personalities and dynasties, such as Ismoili Somoni and the Samanids, give people a sense of their roots and stability, and pride in originating from someone prominent. This is why Tajik politicians and historians very often mention Somoni. For example, in Rahmon’s speech, Somoni acts as a unifier: ‘Ismoili Somoni was a great and unique personality who united the Tajik nation and created a powerful country where culture and literature flourished. Despite multiple attacks from abroad, genocide and oppression, our nation has survived these tough conditions due to its culture and language and has happily gained its independence... Let our country stand firmly on its feet, like this peak, the symbol of power that represents the empire of the Samanids. Let this symbol give us power and inspiration to unite the people of Tajikistan.’<sup>948</sup> By identifying Somoni as a historical unifier, Rahmon at the same time, hints about his own role as a modern unifier, making his status even stronger (as discussed in the Chapter 8).

For most Tajik historians and politicians, the Tajik nation has had a continuous existence since the Samanid dynasty, but at the same time they suggest that it has undergone periods of revival. For example, Rahmon accepts that there are ‘multiple revivals of the Tajik people and their culture’ when he looks at the ‘dramatic history’ of the Tajik people.<sup>949</sup> The possible revivals they might be implying could be the Samanid Empire period, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic period and the modern Republic of Tajikistan period. The Samanid Empire remains the Golden Era of the Tajik people, as Rahmon states: ‘when considering the epoch of the Samanid Empire [...] must first talk about the onset of the revival of the



newly formed Tajik people, which was signified by an ethnic renewal of people from western Iran in connection with the formation of the Tajik people; this took place simultaneously with the beginning of the Middle Eastern Renaissance'.<sup>950</sup> Masov, in his turn, claims that after the Samanid Empire, Tajiks have experienced severe aggression from Turkic-Mongol invaders, and they have been displaced and assimilated, which made a sad and dramatic imprint on their psychology. He believes that the Tajik nation was a slave-nation under various despotic regimes until 1924.<sup>951</sup> Further, he accepts that 'there is a point that claims that an ethnos experience is a different and contradictory process, however, this cannot change its originality'; 'there are periods in time when internal relationships between people become weaker due to historical events and conditions and there are golden eras, when the people find strength and unite as a whole'.<sup>952</sup> Therefore, the Tajik intelligentsia maintains that no matter what happened to the Tajik people occupying the territory of modern Tajikistan in between the Samanid dynasty and the twenty-first century, the Tajiks have survived as a nation for many centuries.

Shared history and myths help people to feel proud about their community and more eagerly identify themselves with the nation. As religious identity becomes less important in secular states, national stories replace the divine stories of religion with history and myths.

The second epoch of Renaissance of Tajik people, for Rahmon, starts in the 90s and the beginning of the twenty first century; his basis for this being 'outstanding achievements in Tajikistan during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, now that the country has gained political sovereignty, despite all recent disasters.' The reasons of the achievements for him being that people are now free from the ideological dogmas of communism and Islam<sup>953</sup> (these achievements are not taking the country out of poverty or returning labour migrants to Tajikistan though).

However, Rahmon sometimes contradicts his statement about the continuity of the Tajik nation. In spite of announcing that Tajiks are in their second Renaissance and stating that the Samanid Empire formed the Tajik people, Rahmon, in his speech for the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the state's independence, and contrary to his earlier saying that the Samanid state is the Tajik state, admits that the modern Tajik nation had never had a state before the 1990s, although he reiterates that Tajik nation is the most ancient in Central Asia:

'Today is an unusual day for the glorious people of Tajikistan, the carriers of most ancient culture. The celebration of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the independence of Tajikistan is a holiday

for the most ancient nation in Central Asia – Tajiks, behind whom, as recognized by the international community, stands a competent state. It is a holiday for the restoration of historical validity in our destiny of our ancient nation, which has been in decline during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but which has again reached independence in spite of the fact that it never had a state or traditions to govern it.<sup>954</sup>

Indeed, Rahmon contradicts himself, at times stating that the Samanid Empire was the Tajik state in the past and at times admitting that Tajiks had never had their own state before the collapse of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, Rahmon affirms that even though the Tajik people have had only 10 years of independence by the time of his speech, they have ‘a background of a thousand-year history of statehood and the long stages of struggle by the Tajik people for independence is not such a long time’.<sup>955</sup> Perhaps, in order to justify his statement about the ancientness of Tajik nation, while the Tajik nation does not figure in world history until Soviet time, he adds that according to history during thousand years ‘the Tajik government’s’ regulations and customs underwent hard times in weakening and resurrecting.<sup>956</sup> But in spite of each downfall and break down, it managed to prosper again, and he adds ‘even greater’.<sup>957</sup> For him this is a historical mission and he even asserts it to be an unparalleled practice of ruling without any similar example in the world. In the end, this is ‘the statehood mission of the Tajiks’ that has started from the Samanid dynasty.<sup>958</sup> All in all, the Samanid dynasty has been deeply embedded into the myth of the Tajik statehood and nation building by politicians and historians.

The Samanid dynasty period (819-999)<sup>959</sup> originated from Persian land-owning magnates in Balkh in present-day north Afghanistan. Their empire extended far beyond the borders of modern Tajikistan, occupying Greater Khorasan, Transoxiana or Mawarannahr, Tehran province, Tabaristan, Kerman (capital city of Kerman province, Iran), Gorgan (capital of Golestan province, Iran), to the west up to Isfakhan (capital of Isfakhan province, Iran) and even to Quetta (largest city of Balochistan province, Pakistan) and Qazvin (largest city of the Qasvin province Iran). If we look at the old map and compare it with contemporary borders, Tajikistan’s territory is only a small part of the Samanid empire (see

Figure 9-1: ).

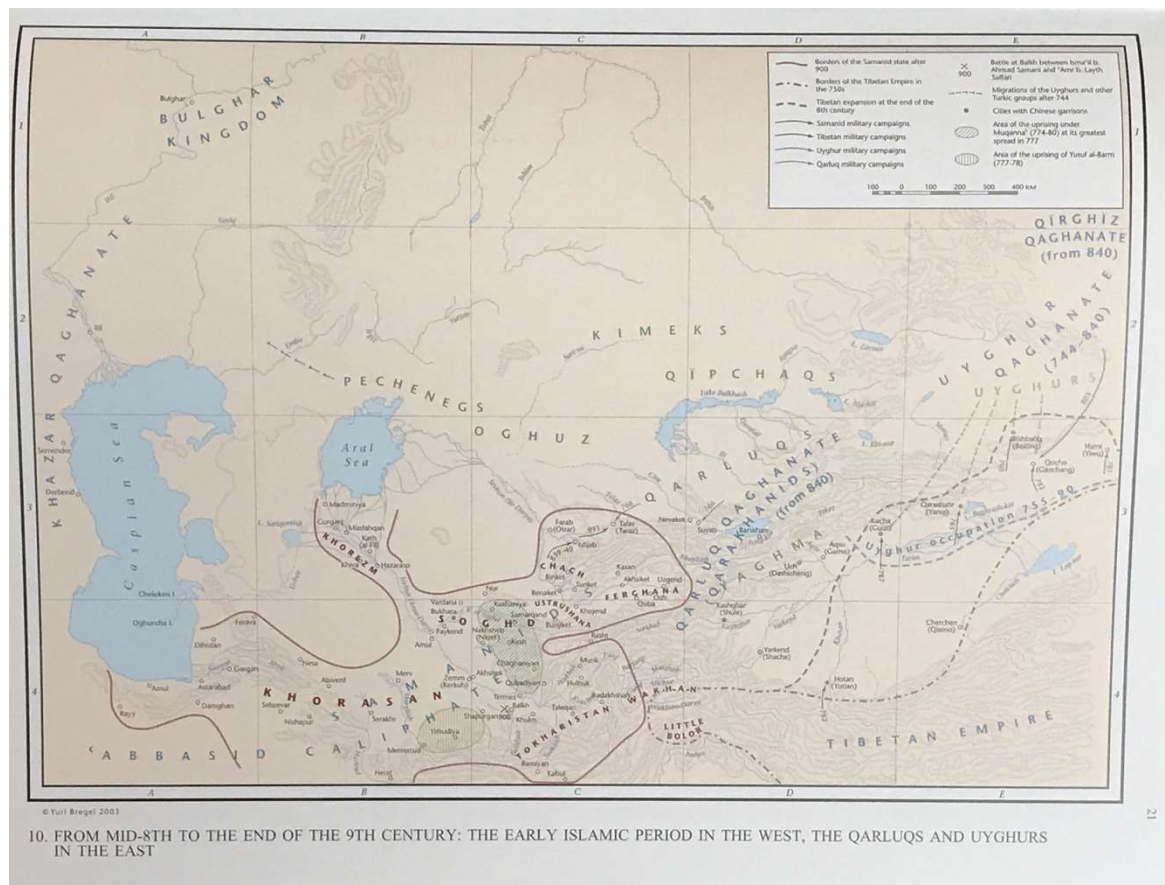


Figure 9-1: From mid-8<sup>th</sup> to the End of the 9<sup>th</sup> Century: the Early Islamic Period in the West, the Qarluqs and Yughurs in the East, Yuri Bregel, *An Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, Brill, Leiden Boston, 2003, p. 21.

One of the reasons that the Samanids are described as founders of the Tajik nation is their centralised state that united ethnic groups into one nation. However, Gafurov contradicts his own statement that Somoni created a strong centralized state by mentioning that regions such as Khuttalyan, Khorezm, Chaganian and others were only nominally a part of Samanid Empire – they sent the Samanids gifts but ruled independently. Moreover, the practice of giving the members of their dynasty and grandees provinces and cities undermined the empire even further, because each of these provinces strived to become independent itself and thus pulled the empire apart. Apart from creating a strong independent country, Gafurov sees the utmost importance of Ismoili Somoni in that the ruler reunited the region Mawerannahr (meaning Central Asia behind the Amudarya river, literally from Arabic ‘on the other side of river’) that was scattered due to the Arab invasion in the seventh and eighth centuries.<sup>960</sup> However, the region was politically scattered already before the Arab invasion. Somoni did not have an ethnic core to reunite. Both Malikov and Gafurov indicate that the ancestors of Tajiks were various Iranian groups, traces of which can be found from between seventh centuries BC and the seventh century AD. The groups of people on this territory

were indeed local Eastern Iranian groups. Iranians were swept into the region by Arabs as their warriors and viceroys but also various local tribes who used to be independent kingdoms and principalities, nomads, Turkic people and others.

Another primary importance of the Samanid rulers for the establishment of the Tajik nation is claimed to be their separation from the dependence on Arabs and the expansion of their territory into Khorasan and fighting against Turkic nomads in the north of Ferghana Valley, in Chaganiyan and Khutalyan.<sup>961</sup> However, Samoilovich on the contrary states that Ismoili Somoni remained the vassal of the Arab caliphate.<sup>962</sup> It was not a fight for the national statehood; it was a fight typical for many kingdoms at that time (and not only at that time), to gain more territory and power. The Samanids did not have a developed ethnic core or shared culture on which to create a nation. The Samanids did not create the Tajik nation but they could have created a core for Tajik ethnicity through developing local culture and language.

As far as pre-Soviet historians are concerned, Central Asia did not have any specific nations, and there was no Tajik nation. That is why all the Soviet and contemporary Tajik history authors don't just discuss Tajik history, but the Central Asian history in general, because it is quite difficult to separate one from another in the pre-Soviet times. The Russian historian, A. Samoilovich who published *Zapadnyi Turkestan* in 1905, states that as far as we can see the history of Central Asia through the ancient Chinese, Persian and Arab sources, the settled population belonged to Iranian groups, but it was not known whether they originated in this area or migrated from elsewhere. It was a part of the Persian empire, then conquered by Alexander the Great, becoming part of the Greek-Bactrian state, then conquered by Central Asian nomads or Turks, the Arabs and then the Mongols.<sup>963</sup> The author does not mention Tajiks even when he speaks of the Samanid dynasty. The Samanids are just another dynasty in the succession of monarchs in the region. The only emphasis he makes is that the dynasty lasted for about a hundred years due to a well-structured state and in this sense Ismoili Somoni was one of the most talented rulers among the dynasty.<sup>964</sup> However, Ismail's talent in state-building is not equivalent to the creation of the Tajik nation.

Another importance of the Samanids for Tajik historians is the patronage of the Tajik culture and language during that period. The Samanid dynasty used the Persian language, promoted arts and sciences and almost finalised replacing Zoroastrianism with Islam, which has lasted

on this territory to the present day. After the death of Ismoil Somoni the state was weakened by internecine wars and during the rule of Mansur Abd al-Malik II ibn Nuh was conquered by Turkic nomads called Karakhanids in 999.<sup>965</sup> Even Rahmon has to admit that the Samanid Empire did not last long, but he still argues that ‘the principles of the new civilization founded by the Samanids were very strong’ and ‘continued from the 11<sup>th</sup> century up to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, despite the hurricane of violence that fell on this part of the Old World’<sup>966</sup> [Mongol invasion (1216) and Mongol Empire (1206-1368)]. Rahmon calls this epoch the epoch of Renaissance and believes that it ‘was highly significant for the Tajik people and for a wide cultural and historical area’.<sup>967</sup>

Indeed, during the Samanid time most cultural traditions and classic poetry were created and inherited by the Tajiks afterwards.<sup>968</sup> It is true that the period of the Samanid dynasty was very prosperous with the region flourishing, as some of Samanid rulers patronised and thus advanced science, arts and literature. For example, the texts of Avesta (the sacred texts of Zoroastrianism) were translated into Persian and accepted as a literary canon. Many cities, such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Balkh and Merv thrived and became hubs of cultural activity. There were many great scientists and cultural activists during the Samanid period, such as: Ibn Kuteiba - historian and literary critic; Abu Mashar Djafar ibn Muhammad Balkhi – collector of religious stories, mathematician and astronomer; Abu Bakr Narshahi – historian who wrote the book History of Bukhara; Abu Nasr Farabi – Aristotelian philosopher; Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna) – writer, philosopher, doctor, poet and political activist; Abu Abdallah Djafar Rudaki – poet and musician; Abu-l-Khasan Shahid Balkhi – philosopher and poet; Abu Shukr Balkhi – poet; Rabia – the first known female poet writing in the Persian Dari dialect; Abu Mansur Muhammad ibn Ahmad Dakiki – poet, collector of heroic epic stories; Abu-l-Kosim Firdawsi – poet who wrote the famous epic Shahname.<sup>969</sup>

However, those whom the Tajik writers and politicians claim to be the Tajik poets, intellectuals and scientists, are actually Central Asian or Persian ones, because Tajik poetry per se came into existence only after the formation of the Soviet Union. Rahmon in his turn claims that the freedom from external threats that the Samanids provided during that short period in history gave an opportunity to people ‘to demonstrate their extraordinary creative potential’ achieving ‘high levels of development in culture, the economy, science and literature.’<sup>970</sup> In his other speech in 2000, he reiterates that ‘Tajik people have contributed much to the development of world science... many Tajik scientists have become world

famous in such areas of science as astronomy, seismology and seismic construction, mathematics, chemistry and others... today, the scientific potential of our Republic is great.<sup>971</sup> Any of those scientists, however, could be considered as much Central Asians as the Tajiks, since they lived on the territory of the pre- and post- Samanid Empire, and could have as strong a relationship to Uzbek, Iranian, Afghan, and other contemporary nations as to Tajikistan. The Persian language they used was only one of the languages or lingua franca for them. Thus, Rahmon uses them as symbols to create a sense of greatness for the contemporary Tajik nation.

The word non-existent comes to mind when referring to the Tajik nation's history, however, Rahmon refers to it as a kind of theory of national continual revival: 'From time to time the phenomenon of the statehood of the Tajiks represented miracles of revival or germination from the ashes of non-existence, or a new birth while under the impact of historical events. These processes repeated alternately. Such a culture of State governance is not inherent in any other nation of the world... In spite of the fact that the proud Tajik people have lost their independence so many times over the past thousand years it has once again won its independence owing to natural piety and immemorial intelligence and culture as well as struggle that was both open and secret'.<sup>972</sup> Rahmon uses many emotional words and strives to boost the pride of the Tajik people in their identity.

Rahmon then refers to some of those events when Tajiks 'lost' their independence: 'The desire and will to win independence, to win a state, to govern it, and also the eternal cultural mission of our ancestors could not be broken by the sword of Alexander the Great, or by slaps of the bloodthirsty Ibn Kutuyab, or by the massacres of Genghis Khan, or by the minarets that were erected from the decapitated heads of the Tajik people.'<sup>973</sup> He then refers to figures of Central Asian history as fighters of Tajik independence and to the Samanid dynasty as the most important factor in the survival of the Tajik nation: 'If the uncompromising struggle and fight for the protection of our independence and the statehood of our ancestors occurred under the leadership of Chirac and Spitamen, Devashchit and Gurak, Mukanna and Sumbad Mut, Temurmaliq and Makhmud Torobi, then our aspiration to spirituality, consciousness, the preservation of cultural independence, and the survival of the nation from generation to generation are all due to the famous dynasty of the Samanids – Rudaki, Firdausi, Avicenna, Abdurahman Beruni, Nosiru Khisrav, Kamoli Khujandi,

Narshakhi and Daqiqi, Nizamulmulka and Balami.’<sup>974</sup> Some of those figures could be contested by other Central Asian nations as their own, such as Uzbeks and Kyrgyzs.

Broadcasting the names of so-called Tajik ancestors encourages modern Tajiks to connect with their identity and country. Rahmon refers to the Tajik history; ‘only in this way can we understand the deepest sense of Firdausi’s *Shahname* [epic mythological stories written during Samanid and Ghaznevid dynasties between 999 and 1010 AD] which fixes its eye on ancient times and tries to comprehend the present through past epics’.<sup>975</sup> Using these figures as heroes of the Tajik nation, the government makes people believe that the nation is ancient and has a solid foundation represented by locally famous political leaders, scientists and writers. Presidential speeches are very influential for Tajik intellectuals and the local population. Many historians refer to him; moreover, new history textbooks do not get published without the approval of the government.

As for Tajik language, which was used in ‘ancient Tajik literature’, it is not suitable to prove the ancient roots of a nation in the Tajik case (see Chapter 2). The President claims that just as the nation itself, its language has gone through revivals as well: first used in the Samanid court and ‘for the formation of the Tajik National State’, it helped to unify the nation and has given it historical status.<sup>976</sup> Rahmon claims that ‘historians see the period of the Samanids as the golden period of the Tajik nation, science and culture’<sup>977</sup> because of the language. Calling the Samanid intelligentsia ‘our ancestors’, he maintains that they ‘not only wrote about history and civilization, but also left rich resources for the cultural formation of other nations’<sup>978</sup>, implying that other neighbouring nations, such as Afghan, Uzbek, Kazakh, etc., only used these resources in their formation, while the Tajik nation was already formed by those ancestors. Links forming ethnicity can have different forms and the simplest ethnic categories as defined by Smith do include language apart from customs or religion and recognition of the population by outsiders.<sup>979</sup> However, the Persian language that was dominant in the region and used as a lingua franca cannot be a proof of the ancestry of the modern Tajik nation.

The Tajik ethnic core had indeed existed in pre-Soviet times but there was no legally autonomous political community of the Tajik nation before the Soviet Union. By the fourth and fifth centuries there were Persian-speaking clans within various kingdoms and each of those little kingdoms was politically split, as Gafurov admits, and due to this lack of

homogeneity they could not drive back Arab attacks<sup>980</sup>. Therefore, when a Persian viceroy of Arabs, Somoni, created his own independent kingdom and drove Arabs back at the end of ninth century, he did not have a Tajik ethnic core to unite. The Samanid Empire lasted only until the Turkic Karakhanids defeated them at the end of the tenth century. The lack of an ethnic core and shared memory prevented people on the territory of Samanid Empire staying united. Therefore, I conclude that there was no Tajik nation before the Soviet Union.

## 9.7 Conclusions

Tajik historians and politicians promulgate the version of history made by Gafurov and popularised and further emphasised by Rahmon. Their version of history is embedded into the population via books and mass media. The ‘national past’ has been portrayed as a golden age and manipulatively used for political goals. At the same time, this version of the past helps people to identify themselves, to feel consolidated, as ‘the ethnic past or pasts that are rediscovered create the boundaries and frameworks in and through which we make sense of the community and its place in the world’.<sup>981</sup> This sense of false continuity that is found in culture, literature, language, architecture, traditions and rituals provides a basis around which the modern nation has formed. Intellectuals and politicians strive to mobilise members of their nation around those symbols of the past to strengthen their position in the present. In the process, some of these intellectuals and politicians become national mythical symbols themselves, such as Rahmon and Gafurov.

The Tajik nation was created *ex nihilo*, as modernists would argue. Tajik myths and culture were invented by elites to achieve social control. The Soviet Union formed the Tajik state, shaped the Tajik language, educated the Tajik people and wrote their history for them, thus helping them to identify themselves. This seems like a very short and radical emergence of the nation. There were indeed various sedentary people. But they were influenced and reshaped by invaders throughout history. Some of them lived within the modern territory of Tajikistan and some shared a common culture. However, they did not have anything else to unite them. After elites represented by the Soviet government shaped the Tajik nation, to sustain it they developed a cultural and ethnical basis to create united people. Therefore, we can conclude that the Tajik nation is a modern construct where cultural identity, myths and memories have been invented.





## 10 Conclusion

The objective of this study was to understand the origins of Tajik national identity and the Tajik nation. The period from the 1920s to 2015 was the focus, with information on the ninth and nineteenth centuries being provided to understand their impact on this core period. The primary conclusion of my research is that the Tajik nation is a modernist Soviet construct, with the post-Soviet Tajik government building on Soviet-style cultural nationalism by politicising it. While the period of formation of the Soviet Republic in the 1920s and the period from independence in 1992 to 2015 have been studied in detail, I do not claim to have covered the period from the 1940s to the 1980s to the same level of detail. What I have attempted, however, is to broaden the reach of my argument by systematic analysis of the Tajik national identity development and the Tajik elite's nationalistic politics within those major periods. I hope I have been able to contribute to the understanding of the origins of national identity in this relatively unknown, but geopolitically significant, nation-state.

The theory I chose for my analysis, and the results it produced, have been, to a large degree, determined by the case I examined, that of Tajikistan. Basing my framework on national identity theories, I identified the answer to my research question: *What national identity theory is the most applicable to the Tajik nation?* After looking through nationalism theories, I conclude that modernism is the most appropriate, although Central Asian historians have mainly used primordialist approaches. One might argue that ethno-symbolism is also applicable. While modernists state that nations are invented from scratch and applied to people to mobilise them under one government for its military or economic benefit, ethno-symbolists argue that every nation has some ancient ethnic group at its root. Primordialists claim that one group of people can survive migration, geographical cataclysms, wars and their consequences through centuries un-influenced by other groups and unchanged in terms of culture, traditions and language. For ethno-symbolists, the political continuity of the ethnic group can be broken at times, but culture, some traditions and historic myths survive through centuries and are revived by new elites and intelligentsia who use them to create a new nation. However, the research data shows that it is not the case for the Tajik nation. Therefore, modernism is the most appropriate approach to use to analyse the Tajik nation.

At the start of my study, the main research question was: *What are the different backgrounds and various influences that drive ideas of national identity in contemporary Tajikistan?* and

more specifically, looking at the Soviet period: *How did people on the territory of Tajikistan come to identify themselves as a Tajik nation?* After examining the early Soviet period, I conclude that the shape of the Central Asian countries originated from decisions of the Soviet Union government which created new nations based on Lenin's and Stalin's nationalist policies and strategies for international affairs with little understanding of the complex inter-relationships between people in Central Asia. The Tajik people were granted the privilege of becoming a Soviet Socialist Republic for several possible reasons. Firstly, the Soviet Union's foreign policy in relation to its Persian speaking neighbours drove the Moscow government to create the Persian-speaking Tajik republic to try to influence Afghanistan and Iran, although ultimately this policy failed to provide the influence desired because of the Soviet Union's antipathy to the Muslim religion, restrictions on freedom of movement and speech, and lack of understanding of the differences between the different Persian-speaking peoples. Secondly, anti-Turkic politics motivated the Soviet government to form a Persian-speaking country in Central Asia – internal conflicts about heritage and territory distracted local peoples' attention from creating an all-Turkic republic of Central Asia. Finally, a Tajik elite started to form as the initial discussions about forming a Tajik entity were taking place and started to clamour for more territory and better economic and political privileges for the emerging nation (and hence for the elite), since the Tajik autonomous region was poor and was considered 'backward'. Eventually, the newly-created Tajik nation embraced propaganda about its ancient roots and firmly believed in the primordial history of the Tajik nation and state. However, this newly-created Tajik nation still has clan divisions.

The analysis of clans helped me to answer a further question: *How does the clan system in Tajikistan co-exist with the Tajik national identity?* The Tajik nation's clan system can be classified as a unit of the national identity that has helped to form the ethnic core. The theory of modernism theory still fits the Tajik nation and clan system, but in the context of overlapping layers of identities with different scopes. Some identities, such as ethnicity and nationality are at the macro (national) level, while clan and tribal identities are at the micro level. Tajik clan identity plays an important role in Tajik politics and, for many Tajiks, comes before their national identity. Behind the scenes it is the clan relationship that governs Tajik politics. This is because clans were the pre-existing identity before the Soviets created ethnic identities and upgraded them into national identities during the formation of the Soviet Union. The Soviet government's actions in playing off different clan actors to further its

own politics not only preserved clan distinctiveness, but also deepened clan rivalries. Having considered the consequences of the Soviet government's activities on the Tajik clans, a new question could be raised: *What are the effects of the Soviet influence on clans of other former Soviet Central Asian states in comparison to the Tajik clans?* This question, however, has to be left for future comparative research, as this thesis concentrates only on Tajikistan.

Clan tensions and conflicts are said to have been one of the main reasons for the Tajik civil war. It was not the only reason though, as ideological battles and poor economic conditions (and hence competition for resources) also played an important role in the civil war, though ideological preferences were frequently changed by clans in favour of economic and political advantage. The distribution of clan power changed during the war and the Kulobi took the reins of control, while the previously dominant Khudjandi became marginalised in the government. None of the previous elite came forward to head the government, but Emomali Rahmon backed by the Kulobi warlords. Since then the government's political stance has been very nationalistic, to help to justify and strengthen the position of the economically poor war-torn country among its neighbours.

By analysing Tajik politics after the civil-war I have explored the answer to another research question: *What was the impact of the Tajik civil war on national identity?* The nationalist ideology of post-civil war Tajik government wants the Tajik people to be fully convinced that Tajikistan is an ancient nation with great leaders in the past and present. Some major factors which strengthen this feeling are Tajikistan's international interactions with countries such as Russia, China and Uzbekistan. The country has had to justify its existence in the face of threats of fragmentation or foreign invasion. Uzbekistan has become 'the Other' for the Tajiks and thus reinforced their feeling of unity. The Uzbek-Tajik relationship has had many difficulties, which are sometimes reflected in the nationalistic speeches of the Tajik president.

In the process of research, I have identified an additional research question that has been influential for my conclusion: *What is the role of elite in the Tajik nation building?* This question is not only relevant to the Soviet period, but also to the actions of elites in post-Soviet Tajikistan. President Rahmon's statements are of importance for the direction of national politics in Tajikistan. His decisions and statements are powerful not only because he has been the head of the country since 1992, but also because he has become a celebrity

and a hero of the country. The Tajik president uses his cult-leader status to encourage patriotism amongst Tajiks and to bolster the further development of Tajik history and literature. The new regime turned towards Soviet-style cultural nationalism but has become much more politicised. Tajik national celebrations have regained their Soviet character in terms of scale. However, nationalistic iconography, such as Tajik historical and mythical heroes and culture have been emphasised many times more than during the Soviet period. Intellectuals and politicians mobilise members of their nation around those symbols of the past to strengthen their position in the present. At the same time, some of the intellectuals and politicians have become national mythical symbols themselves, such as Rahmon and Gafurov. Gafurov's version of history, as well as Gafurov himself, has been widely popularized by Tajik historians and politicians. The 'national past' has been portrayed as an idyllic period and unscrupulously exploited for political ends. At the same time, this version of the past helps people to identify themselves as Tajik and to feel united. The sense of false continuity that is found in culture, literature, language, architecture, traditions and rituals provides a basis around which the modern nation has formed.

One area of potential further research would be to use a bottom-up methodology to analyse Tajik nation building to complement the top-down approach used in this thesis. The top-down approach views individuals as an outcome of society, whereas the bottom-up approach views society as an outcome of the interaction of many individuals and their ideas. In this case, instead of focusing on broad sectors and historical conditions and drawing specific conclusions from them, a researcher would move from specific observations obtained from interviews and questionnaires into generalisations and theories. The bottom-up approach does not depend on historical data and looks forward rather than backward as the top-down approach does. Using the bottom-up approach would complement my top-down research by giving an insight into the current views of actual Tajik citizens, for example to assess how successful the Tajik myths and symbols have been at embedding within current generation Tajiks. However, although identity constructs affect an individual it is a socially mediated process; thus, it does not help to analyse the causes and origins of nation building, and it can be difficult and costly to obtain information from a sufficiently large and representative sample that individual subjectivity does not affect results. As noted in the Introduction, there are some difficulties with undertaking such research in Tajikistan, so a judgement would need to be made as to whether the value of this work would outweigh the costs and risks. It

may be possible to interview Tajik's living outside Tajikistan, but these are unlikely to be representative.

The theoretical framework I used in my research could be examined in a new context, such as another post-Soviet country, as their similar experiences during the Soviet period would mean that differences in terms of post-Soviet nation building may be related to the historical circumstances. As mentioned in the Introduction, I was initially going to use the ethno-symbolist approach, but it proved to be unsuitable for Tajikistan. It would be interesting to explore whether other ex-Soviet countries, such as Georgia or Armenia, fit ethno-symbolism rather than modernism, possibly because of deeper historical roots in these countries.



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**Glossary**

Term	Meaning
ASSR	Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic
Basmachi	Anti-Soviet resistance groups in the 1920s
BPSR	Bukharan People's Soviet Republic
Farsi	Persian / Iranian language of which the Tajik language is a dialect
GosPlan	State Planning Commission
Kolkhoz	Collective farm
Kulyabi	Tajik clan
Leninobodi	Tajik clan
Narkomnats	People's Commissariat of Nationalities
Oblast	An autonomous region or province
Pamiri	Tajik clan
RCP CC	Central Committee of Russian Communist Party
RSFSR	Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic
Samanid	Dynasty that ruled much of Central Asia and surrounding countries, including Tajikistan, in the 9th century
Sovkhoz	Soviet farm
SSR	Soviet Socialist Republic
TsIK	Central Executive Committee (Tsentralnyi Iсполnitelnyi Komitet)
Turkestan, Bukhara, Khorasm (Khiva)	Central Asia during the Russian colonization until the formation of Soviet states
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics





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The type of school	Number of schools	Among them				Number of branches	
		Location		State/Private		In cities	In villages
		Cities	Villages	State	Private		
Primary schools	456	10	446	455	1	0	12
Foundation schools	577	19	558	577	0	0	17
Complete middle schools	2601	386	2215	2585	16	3	88
Lyceums	65	52	13	54	11	0	0
Orphanage-schools for orphans	22	13	9	21	1	0	0
Schools for deaf children	2	1	1	2	0	0	0
Schools of resort type	3	0	3	3	0	0	0
School for acquired deafness	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Schools for blind children	4	0	4	0	0	0	0
School of special aim (poliomyelitis)	1	0	1	1	0	0	0
School for children with difficult behaviour	1	1	0	1	0	0	0
Schools for low IQ children	4	3	1	4	0	0	0
School-kindergartens	5	5	0	3	2	0	0
Musical boarding schools	2	2	2	2	0	0	0
Sport boarding school	1	1	1	1	0	0	0
Boarding schools for gifted children	6	2	2	6	0	0	0

Total	3836	555	3281	3782	54	3	118
* Orphanages attached to schools	32	3	29	32	0		

\*The number of pre-school orphanages is included into the total list. Quantity and types of schools: 456 primary schools; 577 foundation schools, 2601 middle schools, 65 lyceums, 22 orphanage-schools for orphans, 2 schools for deaf children, 3 schools of resort type, 1 school for acquired deafness, 3 schools for blind children, 1 school of special aim (poliomyelitis), 1 school for children with difficult behaviour, 4 schools for low IQ children, 5 school-kindergartens, 2 musical boarding schools, 1 sport boarding school, 6 boarding schools for gifted children. Total 3836. \*32 orphanages attached to schools. Further sections in the table: Cities; Villages; State; Private; Branches: in cities; in villages. Accessed from the Ministry of Education of Tajikistan, (accessed July 2015).

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- <sup>398</sup> Sir Reader Bullard, 'Letter to H. M. Ambassador in Kuibyshev', no. 26 (159/29/43) of 3. 5. 1943 in *Persia: Anglo-Soviet Relations*, FO 181/972/14, The National Archives, Kew.
- <sup>399</sup> Charles A. Gault, H.M. Consul, 'Letter to His Majesty's Minister', British Legation, Tehran, no. 4 (439/5/2/1), Secret, British Consulate Isfahan, 30/5/1943 in *Persia: Anglo-Soviet Relations*, FO 181/972/14, The National Archives, Kew.
- <sup>400</sup> Sir Reader Bullard, 'Letter to H. M. Ambassador in Kuibyshev', no. 26 (159/29/43) of 3. 5. 1943 in *Persia: Anglo-Soviet Relations*, FO 181/972/14, The National Archives, Kew.
- <sup>401</sup> Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, pp. 175-177.
- <sup>402</sup> 'Tajikistan, Historical and Ethnic Background', Library of Congress Country Studies, available from: <http://www.country-data.com/cgi-bin/query/r-13606.html>, (accessed May 2016)
- <sup>403</sup> Geoffrey Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, London and Edinburgh, Morrison and Gibb Limited, 1964, p. 175.
- <sup>404</sup> M. Siddieq Noorzoy, 'Soviet economic interests in Afghanistan' in *Photocopy of Problems of communism*, Vol.36, no.3 (May-June 1987), S.I., 1988, p. 45.
- <sup>405</sup> Noorzoy, 'Soviet economic interests in Afghanistan', p. 45.
- <sup>406</sup> Ludwig W. Adamec, *Afghanistan's Foreign Affairs to the Mid-Twentieth Century*, pp. 69-71.
- <sup>407</sup> Adamec, pp. 109-112.
- <sup>408</sup> Adamec, pp. 109-112.
- <sup>409</sup> Adamec, pp. 45-48.
- <sup>410</sup> Kassymbekova, *Despite Cultures: Early Soviet Rule in Tajikistan (Central Eurasia in Context)*, Introduction.

- <sup>411</sup> N. M. Mamedova, 'Russia ii. Iranian-Soviet Relations (1917-1991)', <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/russia-ii-iranian-soviet-relations-1917-1991>
- <sup>412</sup> Adrian Holman (Counsellor), 'Memorandum', British Legation, Tehran, 1/4/43 in *Persia: Anglo-Soviet Relations*, FO 181/972/14, The National Archives, Kew.
- <sup>413</sup> Holman (Counsellor), 'Memorandum'.
- <sup>414</sup> Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, p. 176.
- <sup>415</sup> Anthony Arnold & Rosanne Klass, 'Afghanistan's Divided Communist Part' in Rosanne Klass (ed.), *Afghanistan, the great game revisited*, New York, Freedom House ; London : National Book Network [distributor], c1990, p. 141.
- <sup>416</sup> Mark Heller, *The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: motivations and implications*, Tel Aviv, Center for Strategic Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1980, p. 16.
- <sup>417</sup> Heller, *The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan: motivations and implications*, p. 16.
- <sup>418</sup> Wheeler, *The Modern History of Soviet Central Asia*, p. 175.
- <sup>419</sup> *Soviet Central Asia*, 1981 Jan 01 - 1981 Dec 31, FCO 28/4581, The National Archives, Kew.
- <sup>420</sup> Sart – the name for urban, settled people regardless of their religion or clan identity in communities of the Silk Road area of Central Asia, differentiating them from nomads or travellers. Confusingly, this term was applied by Tajiks to Tajiks and by Uzbeks to Uzbeks in the Uzbek SSR. (Slavomír Horák, 'In Search of the History of Tajikistan: What Are Tajik and Uzbek Historians Arguing About?', *Russian Politics and Law*, Volume 48, Number 5 / September-October 2010, p. 71.)
- <sup>421</sup> Ivan I. Zarubin, *Spisok Narodnostei Turkestanskogo Kraya*, Leningrad, 1925, pp. 14-15.
- <sup>422</sup> Iosif P. Magidovich, *Naselenie TSSR v 1920 g/Statisticheskii ejegodnik 1917-1923*, volume 1, Tashkent, 1924, p. 45.
- <sup>423</sup> Manuchehr Alimardoni, *Vozrojdenie Tadjikskoi Gosudarstvennosti. Iz Istorii Sobytii 20-h gg. XX v.*, Irfon, Dushanbe, 2014, p. 24.
- <sup>424</sup> Sharif Shukurov and Rustam Shukurov, *Centralnaya Aziya. Opit istorii dukkha*, Moscow, CSP Orengburskoi oblasti, 2001, p. 114 in Mirzohid Rahimov & Galina Urazaeva, 'Central Asian Nations & Border Issues', Conflict Studies Research Centre, ISBN 1-905058-08-X, March 2005.
- <sup>425</sup> R. M. Masov, *Tadjiki: Istoriya Nacional'noi Tragedii*, Dushanbe, 2009, p. 30.
- <sup>426</sup> Chekalin, <http://www.revolutionarydemocracy.org/archive/chekalin.htm>.
- <sup>427</sup> R. M. Masov, *Tadjiki: Istoriya Nacional'noi Tragedii*, Dushanbe, Irfon, 2009, p. 31.
- <sup>428</sup> Manuchehr Alimardoni, *Vozrojdenie Tadjikskoi Gosudarstvennosti. Iz Istorii Sobytii 20-h gg. XX v.*, pp. 17-18.
- <sup>429</sup> Masov, *Tadjiki: Istoriya Nacional'noi Tragedii*, p. 42.
- <sup>430</sup> Masov, *Tadjiki: Istoriya Nacional'noi Tragedii*, p. 30.
- <sup>431</sup> Masov, *Tadjiki: Istoriya Nacional'noi Tragedii*, p. 31.
- <sup>432</sup> Paul Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan: National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*, London, I.B.Tauris, New York, 2007, p. 22.
- <sup>433</sup> Manuchehr Alimardoni, pp. 102-103.
- <sup>434</sup> Jiri Becka, *Sadriddin Ayni. Father of Modern Tajik Culture*, Naples, Instituto Unversitario Orientale, Seminario Di Studi Asiatici, 1980. pp. 36, 40.
- <sup>435</sup> Teresa Rakowaska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins Press, 1970, p. 19.

- <sup>436</sup> GARF, f. 3316, op. 16a, d. 127, 11.207-7 in Francine Hirsch, 'Toward an Empire of Nations: Border-Making and the Formation of Soviet National Identities', p. 219.
- <sup>437</sup> Hirsch, p. 217.
- <sup>438</sup> *Centralnyu Gosudarstvennyi Arhiv Respubliki Tadjikistan*, reserves 2, inventory 1, case 59, p. 152.
- <sup>439</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, reserves 62, inventory 2, case 1744, 80, pp. 414, 80.
- <sup>440</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 414, 80.
- <sup>441</sup> *U Istokov Istorii. K 130-letiyu so Dnya Rojdeniya Nusratullo Mahsuma*, Dushanbe, 2011, p. 35-36.
- <sup>442</sup> A Agzamkhodjaev, *Obrazovaniye i razvitiye Uzbekskoy SSR*, Tashkent, 1971, pp. 155-156 in Rahimov & Urazaeva, 'Central Asian Nations & Border Issues', Conflict Studies Research Centre, ISBN 1-905058-08-X, March 2005, p. 16. Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia: A Political and Cultural History of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Iran*, Google eBook.
- <sup>443</sup> Hirsch, p. 220.
- <sup>444</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 71-72.
- <sup>445</sup> 'Short Information Note of the Government of Tajik ASSR in Uzbek SSR', *Centralnyu Gosudarstvennyi Arhiv Respubliki Tadjikistan*, reserves 35, inventory 1, case 1, pp. 2-3.
- <sup>446</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 71-72.
- <sup>447</sup> Teresa Rokowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia. The Case of Tajikistan*, Baltimore and London, The John Hopkins Press, 1970, pp. 31-34.
- <sup>448</sup> Guissou Jahangiri, "The Premises for the Construction of a Tajik Identity, 1920-1930" in *Tajikistan: the Trials of Independence*, ed. Mohammad Reza-Djalili, Frederic Grare and Shirin Akiner, Richmond, Curzon press, 1998, p. 14.
- <sup>449</sup> Rokowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia. The Case of Tajikistan*, pp. 31-34.
- <sup>450</sup> K. Abashin et al, "Soviet Rule and the Delineation of Borders" in *Ferghana Valley. The Heart of Central Asia*, p. 104.
- <sup>451</sup> K. Abdullaev & Nazarov, "The Ferghana Valley under Stalin" in *Ferghana Valley. The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. F. Starr et al, pp. 121-122.
- <sup>452</sup> Hirsch, p. 220.
- <sup>453</sup> A Agzamkhodjaev, *Obrazovaniye i razvitiye Uzbekskoy SSR*, pp. 155-156 in Rahimov & Urazaeva, p. 16. Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia*, Google eBook.
- <sup>454</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, reserves 1, inventory 1, case 801, pp. 6-14.
- <sup>455</sup> GARF, f. 3316, op. 22, d. 129, 1.9 and d.127, 1.132 in Hirsch, p. 220.
- <sup>456</sup> Keith Hitchins, "Khudjand", Online project Encyclopaedia Iranica, Columbia University, New York, 2009, accessed October 2015, <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/khujand-city-in-northwestern-tajikistan>.
- <sup>457</sup> Rokowska-Harmstone, *Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia. The Case of Tajikistan*, p. 37.
- <sup>458</sup> Agzamkhodjaev A, *Obrazovaniye i razvitiye Uzbekskoy SSR*, pp. 155-156 in Rahimov & Urazaeva, p. 16. Dilip Hiro, *Inside Central Asia*, Google eBook.
- <sup>459</sup> GARF, f. 3316, op. 22, d. 129, 1.9 and d.127, 1.132 in Francine Hirsch, p. 220.
- <sup>460</sup> P Bergne, *The Birth of Tajikistan. National Identity and the Origins of the Republic*, p. 110.
- <sup>461</sup> *Istoriya Tadjikskogo Naroda*, ed. B. A. Antonenko, volume 3, book 1, Dushanbe, 1964, p. 471.
- <sup>462</sup> 'Komissii po tadjikskij voprosam 26 Iyulya 1929 g.' and 'Komissii po razmezhevaniyu Tadjikistana s Uzbekistanom ot 7-go avgusta 1929 g.', in R Masov, *Istoriya topornogo razdeleniya*, Dushanbe, Irfon, 1991, pp. 115-135.

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- <sup>464</sup> *RGASPI*, f 52, op 1, d 25, l, 30 in Mirzohid Rahimov & Galina Urazaeva, p. 11.
- <sup>465</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 10-11.
- <sup>466</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 11-13.
- <sup>467</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 11-13.
- <sup>468</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 14.
- <sup>469</sup> *Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arhiv socialno-politicheskoi istorii*, pp. 15.
- <sup>470</sup> Bergne, p. 154.
- <sup>471</sup> K. Abdullaev & Nazarov, "The Ferghana Valley under Stalin" in *Ferghana Valley. The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. S. F. Starr et al, p. 121.
- <sup>472</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2006, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, p. 1.
- <sup>473</sup> Kathleen Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', *Journal of Democracy* 13.3, 2002, p. 143.
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- <sup>479</sup> Kathleen Collins, 'The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories', Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, *World Politics*, Vol. 56, No. 2, Jan., 2004, p. 234.
- <sup>480</sup> Olivier Roy, *The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, p. 13.
- <sup>481</sup> Reihard Eisener, 'Who was Ibrahim Bik' in *Central Asia on Display: Proceedings of the VIIth Conference of the European Society for Central Asian Studies*, eds. Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek, Julia Katschnig, LIT Verlag Münster, Vienna, 2005, p. 113.
- <sup>482</sup> Irina Irofeeva 'The Evolution of Tradiitonal Governing Elites in Kazakhstan within the Russian Empire between the Middle of the 18th and the Beginning of the 20th centuries' in *Central Asia on Display: Proceedings of the VIIth Conference of the European Society for Central Asian Studies*, eds. Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek, Julia Katschnig, LIT Verlag Münster, Vienna, 2005, p. 78.
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- <sup>490</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', pp. 144-147.
- <sup>491</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, Institute for Security and Development Policy, p. 9.
- <sup>492</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', pp. 144-147.
- <sup>493</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', pp. 144-147.
- <sup>494</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', p. 142.
- <sup>495</sup> T Barfield, *The dictionary of anthropology*, Cambridge, MA, Blackwell, 2000, p. 62.
- <sup>496</sup> Kathleen Collins, 'Clan politics and regime transition in Central Asia', Cambridge University Press, 2006, p. 17.
- <sup>497</sup> Jan Tullberg and Birgitta S. Tullberg, 'Separation or Unity? A Model for Solving Ethnic Conflicts', *Politics and the Life Sciences*, Volume 16, Number 2, p. 7.
- <sup>498</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', p. 142.
- <sup>499</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', p. 142.
- <sup>500</sup> The Tullbergs identify four natural categories of human behaviour within groups: egoism, kin selection, group egoism, and reciprocity. They 'distinguish reciprocity from kin selection, since a reciprocal consideration can function independently and also overrun the priority of kin', Jan Tullberg and Birgitta S. Tullberg, p. 8.
- <sup>501</sup> Alessandra Ceccarelli, 'Clans, politics and organized crime in Central Asia', Springer Science, Business Media, LLC 2007, p. 24.
- <sup>502</sup> Collins, 'Clans, Pacts, and Politics in Central Asia', p. 142.
- <sup>503</sup> Andrei Grozin, 'Elity Turkmenistana I Centralnoaziatskie klany: Obshee, Osobennoe I Trudnosti Modernizatsii', 'Aziya I Afrika Segondya'; no9, 2010, available from: [http://www.perspektivy.info/table/elity\\_turkmenistana\\_i\\_centralnoaziatskije\\_klany\\_obsheje\\_osobennoje\\_i\\_trudnosti\\_modernizatsii\\_2010-12-21.htm](http://www.perspektivy.info/table/elity_turkmenistana_i_centralnoaziatskije_klany_obsheje_osobennoje_i_trudnosti_modernizatsii_2010-12-21.htm), (accessed January 2016).
- <sup>504</sup> Roy, pp. 16-17.
- <sup>505</sup> İdil Tunçer-Kılavuz, 'Political and social networks in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan: "clan", region and beyond', p. 324.
- <sup>506</sup> Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek, 'Frontiers, Hinterlands, Centers, Peripheries: Adapting to Changing Fortunes – the Uzbeks of Afghanistan' in Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek, Julia Katschnig (eds.), *Central Asia on Display: Proceedings of the VIIth Conference of the European Society for Central Asian Studies*,
- <sup>507</sup> Ceccarelli, 'Clans, politics and organized crime in Central Asia', p. 24.
- <sup>508</sup> Grozin, 'Elity Turkmenistana I Centralnoaziatskie klany'.
- <sup>509</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 325.
- <sup>510</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 324.
- <sup>511</sup> 'Tradicionnoe Socialnoe Ustroistvo Tadjikskogo Obshestva', Sweden, CA & CC Press AB, Publishing House, available from: [http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/st\\_08\\_bush\\_3.shtml](http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/st_08_bush_3.shtml), (accessed January, 2016).
- <sup>512</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 328.

<sup>513</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 328.

<sup>514</sup> ‘For instance, Abduljalil Hamidov was the chairman of the Khujand oblast executive committee. He was a member of the so-called ‘Khojendi clan’. But he opposed Rahmon Nabiev, the president of Tajikistan between November 1991–1992, a Khojendi, and sided with Abdumalik Abdullojonov who was another member of the ‘Khojendi clan’ and also opposed Nabiev. Later, Hamidov and Abdullojonov cooperated against the new president Emomali Rahmonov (a Kulyabi) and made plans to oust him from power. However, after Rahmonov won in the elections and dismissed Hamidov from his position, Hamidov changed sides and became Rahmonov’s client. Thus he was able to gain reappointment to the post of governor of Leninabad [...]Although the civil war in Tajikistan came to be defined as a war between different regional ‘clans’ – with Garmis and Badakhshanis on one side, and Kulyabis and Khojandis on the other – both sides included people from different regions. Many Badakhshanis supported Nabiev (the Khojendi president of Tajikistan), among them Nazrullo Dustov (his vice-president between November 1991–May 1992) and Shodi Shabdollov (secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party in 1988–1999, afterwards chairman). Nabiev’s Garmi supporters included Saidulla Hayrullaev (who served as vice-prime minister in 1991–1992) and Munavvar Nazriev (a Communist Party leader). In many cases, people from the same region took different sides. Among the Kulyabis, Mulla Abdulla Abdurrahim was an opposition leader, but Haidar Sharifzoda was a leading government supporter. Although Communist Party chairman Shodi Shabdollov was a government supporter and Davlot Khudonazarov was the opposition presidential candidate, they were both from Badakhshan. For that matter, not all Khojandis supported Nabiev’, İdil Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 329.

<sup>515</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 332.

<sup>516</sup> Collins, ‘The Logic of Clan Politics: Evidence from the Central Asian Trajectories’, p. 232.

<sup>517</sup> ‘This study is based partly on library research and partly on interviews. Between June 2003 and February 2004, I conducted 192 interviews with elites and non-elites in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In Uzbekistan I worked in Tashkent, Samarkand, the Fergana region (Andijan, Kokand, Fergana, Namangan), and Syrdarya. In Tajikistan, I conducted fieldwork in Dushanbe and Qurghonteppa. I interviewed both elites and non-elites. My interviews lasted between one and four hours. The questions were open-ended. I also gathered data from the national libraries of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.’ This shows that the researcher spent much more time and covered more territory in Uzbekistan rather than in Tajikistan. The local terms that he uses across the article are also primarily Uzbek. İdil Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 332.

<sup>518</sup> Akerman, p. 1.

<sup>519</sup> Akerman, p. 1.

<sup>520</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 326.

<sup>521</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 325.

<sup>522</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, p. 8.

<sup>523</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, p. 8.

<sup>524</sup> Albrecht Rothacher, “Olivier Roy. The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations”, *Asia Europe Journal*, 2006, vol. 4, issue 4, p. 611.

<sup>525</sup> The governor of a district or province.

<sup>526</sup> Rotatcher, ‘Olivier Roy. The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations’, p. 2.

<sup>527</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, p. 14.

<sup>528</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, p. 14.

<sup>529</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>530</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, pp. 12-13.

<sup>531</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, p. 7.

<sup>532</sup> Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia, The Creation of Nations*, p. 113.

- <sup>533</sup> Aleksey Chelnokov, Konstantin Poltoranin, *Etnicheskaya Katastrofa. Rossiya bez Russkih?*, Litres, Political Science, 2014, in chapter 'Na Shtykah I Pod Kryshei' (e-book, no page numbers, but I mentioned the chapter name where found information).
- <sup>534</sup> Akbarzadeh, p. 88.
- <sup>535</sup> Akbarzadeh, p. 217.
- <sup>536</sup> Sébastien Peyrouse, *Battle on Top of the World: Rising Tensions in Tajikistan's Pamir Region*, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Foreign Policy and Civil Society Program, August 2012, p.3.
- <sup>537</sup> On 23 July, 2012 Tajik military forces clashed with Pamiri guards in an effort to arrest Tolib Ayombekov, the former warlord who opposed the government during the civil war but was given a government post of head of the Ishkoshim guard section, as a part of a deal with the government after the civil war. Ayombekov was accused of murdering Major-General Abdullo Nazarov, who was visiting Ishkoshim district on 21 July 2012. The former warlord denied responsibility for Nazarov's death and fought the military forces sent after him. The conflict lasted during several days, during which all mobile networks in the region were blocked, so that people were unaware of the scale of the conflict, which caused tensions in the country. About 70 people were killed including Ayombekov himself. Vladimir Fedorenko, 'Conflict in Pamir and Identity Politics', *The Washington Review of Turkish and Eurasian Affairs*, September 2012, <http://www.thewashingtonreview.org/articles/conflict-in-pamir-and-identity-politics.html>, (accessed February 2015)
- <sup>538</sup> Alter, p. 141.
- <sup>539</sup> Suhrobsho Davlatshoev, 'The Formation And Consolidation Of Pamiri Ethnic Identity In Tajikistan', PhD Thesis, The Graduate School Of Social Sciences Of Middle East Technical University, 2006, pp. 8-10.
- <sup>540</sup> Olivier Roy, *The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, p. 113.
- <sup>541</sup> Roy, *The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, p. 113.
- <sup>542</sup> Roy, *The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, p. 113.
- <sup>543</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 327.
- <sup>544</sup> Roy, *The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, p. 113.
- <sup>545</sup> Starr, *Clans, Authoritarian Rulers, and Parliaments in Central Asia*, p. 9.
- <sup>546</sup> Tunçer-Kılavuz, p. 327.
- <sup>547</sup> Heathershaw, *Post-Conflict Tajikistan. The politics of peacebuilding and the emergence of legitimate order*, p. 22.
- <sup>548</sup> Roy, *The new Central Asia. The Creation of Nations*, p. 114.
- <sup>549</sup> Chelnokov, Poltoranin, *Etnicheskaya Katastrofa. Rossiya bez Russkih?*.
- <sup>550</sup> Chelnokov, Poltoranin, *Etnicheskaya Katastrofa. Rossiya bez Russkih?*.
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- <sup>959</sup> Samanid dynasty/Samanid Empire/Samanids (819-999), Persian dynasty in Central Asia and Greater Iran. Alternative spelling – Samani, Somoni. Founder – Somon Khuda, a landowner from Balkh. Ismoili Somoni (892-907) – the most influential amir (ruler) of the Samanid dynasty.
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<sup>980</sup> Bobojon Gafurov, *Tadjiki II*, Dushanbe, Irfon, 1989, p. 9.

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