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## **Socio-Political Change in Tajikistan**

**The Development Process, its Challenges  
Since the Civil War and the Silence  
Before the New Storm?**

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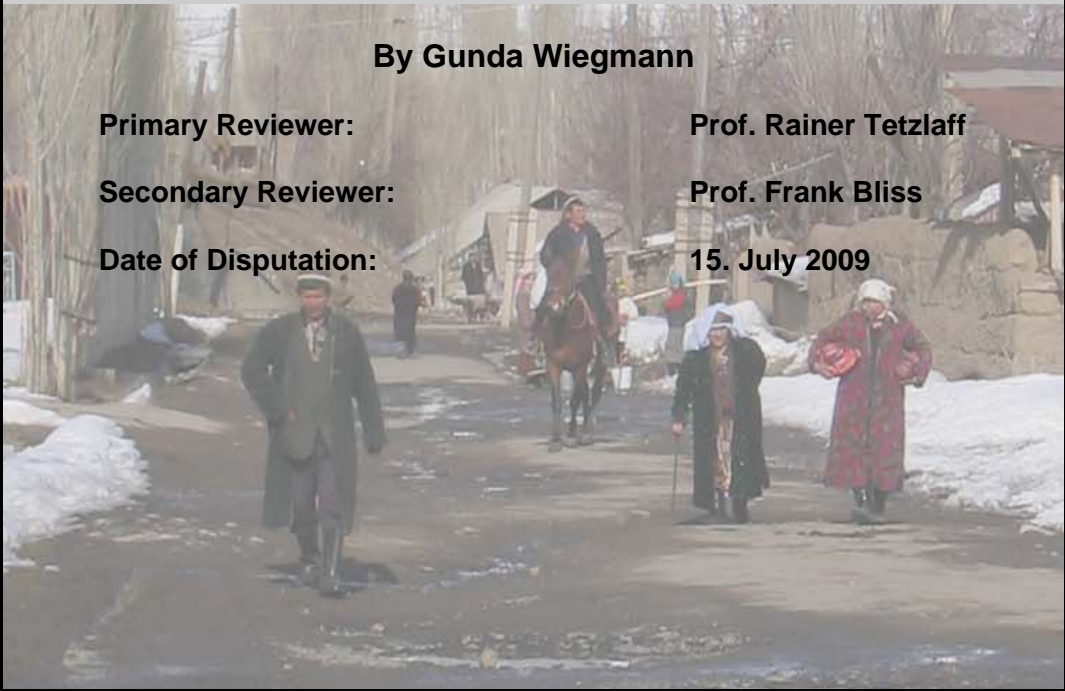
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## **Abstract**

The aim of my study was to look at governance and the extent of its functions at the local level in a post-conflict state such as Tajikistan, where the state does not have full control over the governance process, particularly regarding the provision of public goods and services. What is the impact on the development process at the local level?

My dependent variable was the slowed down and regionally very much varying development process at the local level. My independent variable were the modes of local governance that emerged as an answer to the deficiencies of the state in terms of providing public goods and services at the local level which led to a reduced role of the state (my intervening variable).

Central theoretic concepts in my study were governance – the processes, mechanisms and actors involved in decision-making –, local government – the representation of the state at the local level –, local governance – the processes, mechanisms and actors involved in decision-making at the local level and institutions – the formal and informal rules of the game.

In the course of my field research which I conducted in Tajikistan in the years 2003/2004 and in 2005 I found that the state does not provide public goods and services to the local population in a sufficient way. The research question which then emerged out of this insight concerned the players and mechanisms that filled the gaps left open by the state: who are the drivers and spoilers of the local development process and why do modes of governance at the local level more or less function, regardless of the fact that the state is only involved to a small extent?

Coming back to my dependent variable I wanted to find out why modes of local governance varied so much from region to region. I found that a diverse set of factors lead to this outcome: 1) the geographic, economic and social set-up varies significantly from region to region (e.g. land distribution); 2) the respective Soviet and post-conflict legacies (whether a region was shaped by the influence of the government or rather by the influence of the opposition); 3) the extent to which external players (such as international organisations and NGOs) are involved in modes of local governance; and 4) the role of other players such as local big men, e.g. former warlords, who are still respected and shape decision-making processes at the local level.

This leads to a constellation where in resource-rich regions the state expects the provincial elite to redistribute the wealth. This does not take place and the state also does not invest in these regions. Eventually, the situation of the population in the resource-rich regions (such as in the South-West) is the worst because on the provincial level rentier-state structures emerge and the local population is exploited. In resource-poor regions the modes of local governance are shaped by an alliance of local and international NGOs, international organisations and locally respected figures. In the short run, the local population in these areas is better off, but whether these structures will turn out to be sustainable remains to be seen.

Coming back to the question of why governance functions nonetheless: even during Soviet times, governance was significantly shaped by informal rules of the game (institutions). With the breakdown of this political system, Soviet socialism and the civil war, the local rules of the game did not change significantly and informal institutions provided some kind of continuity and still very much shape decision-making processes on the local level.

However, generally the local population is not satisfied with the quality and quantity of public goods that are provided. Resentment is growing and if the large extent of the male working population cannot continue to migrate to Russia for labour, the fronts might harden again and Tajikistan risks to fall back into the turmoil it experienced during the 1990s.

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## Acronyms

AKDN	Aga Khan Development Network
AKF	Aga Khan Foundation
CDC	Community Development Council
CVO	Cluster of Village Organisations
DRS	Districts of Republican Subordination
GTZ	German Organisation for Technical Cooperation
IO	International Organisation
IRP	Islamic Renaissance Party
JRC	<i>Jamoat</i> Resource Centres
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MSDSP	Mountain Societies Development Support Programme
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
NDS	National Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
VDF	Village Development Fund
VO	Village Organisation

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Everything must be studied from the point of view of itself, as near as we can get to this, and from the point of view of its relations, as near as we can get to them. If we try to see it absolutely in itself, unalloyed with relations, we shall find, by and by, as it were, whittled it away. If we try to see it in its relations to the bitter end, we shall find that there is no corner of the universe into which it does not enter.

*Samuel Butler as cited by Gillian Brown & George Yule, 1983*

# 1. Introduction

How does governance work on the local level in a country where the state is not in full control and what implications does this have for the development process? In this study, I am looking at the development process, modes of local governance, policies and their implementation mainly on the local level, i.e. the district level, sub-district, and village or community level. At times, I also take the national level into account as it has an impact on the local level and vice versa.

I would like to shed more light on to the reflexive relationships between three “sets of actors” regarding the development process on the ground: The state, informal leaders (heads of clans, religious leaders, former warlords, etc.) and external actors such as representatives of international organisations, and international and national NGOs<sup>1</sup>.

Unusually for political scientists, the chosen perspective is of looking at the development process from a bottom-up perspective rather than from top-down, i.e. not starting the analysis at the national level, but at the community level instead. My main level of analysis, therefore, is the local level. I am looking at the (pre-) conditions, structures, rules of the game (institutions) and processes at the local level in order to see what impact they have on the overall development of Tajikistan as a post-Soviet and post-conflict independent state.

## 1.1 The Development Process

Development, as are many other processes, is a relative process. It depends on the starting point and it is measured by comparing the level of development to that of neighbouring countries or those in a similar stage of development (in this case other post-Soviet or post-socialist states that also used to belong to the “second world”). A development process should be evaluated depending on how it is perceived by the people, on what they used to have, and what expectations they have presently and for the future. My analysis follows the logic of community development, first asking what the local people see as their needs and as development priorities for their local communities. Consequently, my thesis is based on qualitative interviews I conducted and observations I made in the field and not so much on the review of literature.<sup>2</sup> I make strong use of methods deriving from social anthropology, such as qualitative interviews and participant observation, data I gathered in the field.<sup>3</sup> If one tries to describe and analyze local governance in Tajikistan holistically, there is not much literature available that one can use.

For my analysis it is important to differentiate between ‘local governance’, ‘modes of local governance’ and ‘local government’. ‘Local governance’ is the sum of actors and processes involved in governing at the local level (district, sub-district level and village/ community level). Under ‘modes of local governance’ I understand the actor constellations and mechanisms that have emerged in response to the state deficiencies on the local level, e.g. former warlords and international organisations that have started fulfilling former state functions, such as the provision of public

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<sup>1</sup> As local NGOs are largely financed by international donors, they are very much influenced by international actors and therefore I count them as external actors.

<sup>2</sup> Qualitative research makes use of case studies, life stories, observations, etc. that “describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual’s lives.” This very much applies to my study as well; see: (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 5)

<sup>3</sup> Mixing approaches from different disciplines is very much in line with the recent blurring of disciplinary boundaries and the fact that “social sciences and humanities have drawn closer together in a mutual focus on an interpretive, qualitative approach to research and theory.” (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: ix)



goods. 'Local governance', as well as 'modes of local governance' includes state and non-state actors, as well as official and unofficial, legal and illegal actors. 'Local government' is the administrative structure of the state on the local level, including the district (*hukumat* in Tajik) and sub-district levels (*jamoat* in Tajik). It includes only state actors, the procedures in place and the resources provided by the state.

'Local governance' and 'modes of local governance' are new concepts that are just being explored, applied to new regions and accordingly not much has been written on these topics yet.

In the presentation of what I learned from my (field) research I would like to use as much as possible a local or inside view of what people see as the biggest challenges regarding the development and state-building process, how they deal with these and how they try to tackle the issues they face. As a foreigner, I believe that in a way I can provide a "better inside view" than the locals themselves, because I have the necessary distance to question and reflect on ways of behaviour, coping mechanisms, etc. I am not personally involved in local structures and processes. The people involved do not reflect as much on what they are doing and why, as I have done, as they lack the necessary distance and training. At the same time, I am aware of the fact that women write culture, political systems, and social structures differently than men and that "writing itself is not an innocent practice" (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 13). The nature of reality is socially constructed. The researcher develops an "intimate relationship" with what is studied, and through the course of the research numerous situational constraints arise that shape the inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln 2003: 13).

## 1.2 The Framework

In political science, research concepts are structured along the concept of independent and dependent variables. The dependent variable is whatever is being explained. The tool used to explain the dependent variable is the so-called independent variable. Optional is the intervening variable, which is influenced by the independent variable and has an impact on the dependent variable.

What helps me to explain my dependent variable (my intervening variable) is the reduced role of the state, particularly in 'local governance'. The state has even less than a coordinator role amongst the different actors involved in 'local governance'. The reduced role of the state leads to a slowed down development process (my dependent variable) at the local level in Tajikistan and in the long run leads to regression and a further widening of the gap between rich and poor.

I am using the reduced role of the state to explain the slowed down development process by examining the concepts, mechanisms and processes of implementation used by different kinds and sets of actors. I call this response to the deficiencies of the state 'modes of local governance', my independent variable.

I use the provision of public goods and the capacity to provide mechanisms for conflict mitigation as indicators for the new 'modes of governance'. The provision of material and non-material public goods and services has an impact on the general development process and prospects for development on the local level. The outcome of the provision of public goods at the same time indicates how successful the development process has been so far at the local level and what implications this might have for the future. The level or quality of material and non-material public goods and services being provided at the local level is linked to concepts developed at the national level and the way these are implemented by different actors at the local level.

Independent Variable	Intervening Variable	Dependent Variables
'Modes of Local Governance' as an answer to state deficiencies after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the Tajik Civil War	The reduced role of the State, particularly in 'Local Governance'	The slowed down and diverse development on the local level

Through the time of my research and analysis, my focus has moved more and more to the development process itself, to its drivers and spoilers.

My aim is to explain the development process in Tajikistan in the light of the breakdown of the Soviet Union and more specifically during the last five years (2003-2008). The aim is not only to analyze the deficiencies and to find explanations for these. Moreover, I aim to present coping mechanisms concerning the increased state failure and to explain the relative functionality of the social and political system. I would like to shed light on how the society pulled itself out of the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence that emerged during the civil war.

By state failure, I understand that the state loses its ability to fulfil its core functions: ensuring a monopoly on violence, the provision of material and non-material public goods and the establishment of institutions or 'rules of the game' to process conflict in a constructive way.

Even if many analysts classify Tajikistan as a failed state, this does not mean that all the rules of the game, all the institutions formerly in place, all of a sudden fell apart and are dysfunctional. The notion of a state having failed in my view mainly refers to the official and formal rules of the game, which might have broken down due to a regime change, but this does not mean that the informal rules of the game (i.e. social and political structures) cannot remain in place and continue functioning.

In the later "Weak-Strong State Debate" section I will return to this point and further elaborate on why I think that the weak or failed state situation is an interesting one, but does not exactly fit the Tajik state constellation of today due to the fact that it underestimates the functionality, force and "stickiness" (resistance) of informal and unofficial rules of the game.

While I was doing research on what the state and other actors offer to the people, e.g. in terms of public goods and services, on the local level in rural areas of Tajikistan, I learned a lot about how power is structured, who has access to what resources and is involved in what decision-making processes, and what networks there are that connect different players and different levels of the state. In the final section I develop scenarios of what the current development might lead to.

I take a normative state approach as my starting point. The measure is a functioning state, i.e. taking the Western nation-state as a role model.

In my definition, a functioning state has the following features:

- The state has the monopoly over the use of violence
- Public material and non-material goods are provided in a quantitatively and qualitatively sufficient way

- The state provides rules and procedures to deal with conflicts of interest in a constructive way
- The people have the chance to participate in decision-making on all administrative levels of the state
- The local population can dismiss leaders if they do not act in accordance with what the people want
- Rule-of-law reigns, accountability exists and processes are transparent to the citizens

Doing research on the role of the state in the development process in Tajikistan, as a Westerner (possibly a bit less than a *homo sovieticus* would have), one has many expectations of how the state is supposed to act and what services it needs to provide.

After living for one year with Tajik families in rural and urban parts of Tajikistan I realized that the state was only fulfilling a small part of what most of people expected it to do. Therefore, I will also focus on those players and mechanisms that fill in the gaps that the state leaves open. This will help to explain what other processes there are that one does not see at a first glance and that do not necessarily function prescribed by and according to existing state laws and policies. The current setup, consisting of unofficial and informal processes, has emerged as an answer to deficiencies and gaps left open by the state. This phenomenon is a side effect of the state's transition from an authoritarian system to something else, a new state form, which is still not yet clearly defined and graspable and which is not more democratic than the previous one.

The subtle assumption made by many people working in the development cooperation sector has been that all the states emerging from the breakdown of the Soviet Union will eventually develop into democratic nation-states. However, who actually has an interest in establishing democratic state systems in these newly independent states? Possibly the population has an interest, but certainly not the elites in power and the ones taking trail-breaking decisions, as they rather try to keep the social and political structures the way that they work to their own benefit (vested interests).

My field research has shown that many of the core functions, which have previously been provided exclusively by the state, are more and more being outsourced to alternative providers, e.g. local and international NGOs, or left to local power holders. Therefore, I see the development process and the state-building process as processes that can be steered by the state itself, but can also be initiated, conducted and steered by alternative players.

Under the state-building process, I understand the process of re-establishing the state as the main actor regarding the provision of public goods, re-establishing the monopoly of violence, building institutions for conflict mitigation and mechanisms for participation in decision-making processes on all levels of the state. When a state is built, it holds the monopoly of violence, is the dominating actor in the mosaic of actors involved in local governance. Processes are transparent, political leaders are accountable and the state is steered by the rule-of-law.

The question is then whether at some point the state will be able to take over again. This is also the approach most development initiatives work towards, to provide help for self-help. So that in the end development organisations will not be needed anymore.

### 1.3 Field Research and Gathering of Material

During my field research in Tajikistan (mainly in 2003 and 2004, but also in shorter visits in 2005, 2007 and 2008), the main methods used were participant observation and qualitative interviews<sup>4</sup> mostly in rural areas of Tajikistan. For one year, I lived with Tajiks in different parts of the country and shared their daily lives.

These qualitative interviews were partly “individual” and partly group interviews. In Tajikistan it turned out to be quite difficult to interview individuals, as people do not think of themselves as individuals, but rather as members of an extended family (in Tajik *aǎlūd*) and very much think of having a “family opinion” which is linked to the family’s ethnic or regional identity. When I would go to interview a woman in her house, some male family member would turn up during the interview and often end up answering my questions instead of the woman herself. Nevertheless, the woman would not show any sign of resistance against this and often would simply confirm what the male family member was saying. If one assembled a group of women, the eldest woman would mainly be the one answering the questions.

The local level was chosen as the main level of analysis because this is the level where state and society interact most intensively. Representatives of formal as well as informal structures were interviewed in order to analyse the interaction between the official and unofficial<sup>5</sup>, the formal and informal<sup>6</sup> spheres of state and society, the touching point between state and (civil) society. I conducted these interviews and spent extensive periods of time in the regions to see to what extent the Tajik state was able to deliver its core functions in my three target areas. These were the Rasht valley, Kulyab and Mountain-Badakhshan. I also wanted to find out more about what modes of local governance were in place and what this meant for the continued state building and development process. The time horizon of this study is from the end of the civil war (June 1997) to the present day with a focus on the last five years.

Carrying out field research in order to collect qualitative data in Tajikistan is a challenge. It certainly still had its limitations with regard to mobility in the country, partly due to security, especially when conducting field research as a single young woman. On the one hand, as a young woman I enjoyed a “jester’s license” as I was not taken as seriously as an older man would have been taken and therefore gained access to people and pieces of information that might otherwise have been sealed off from me. However, living conditions in rural areas of Tajikistan are harsh, transport from one village to the other was often difficult to arrange, and I was happy to tag along with the German Organisation for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) and its local partner Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP), an NGO built up by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN).<sup>7</sup> Tajikistan is a post-Soviet state that retains strong elements of authoritarianism. A fear of repression remains and has even intensified since 2003, and many people are simply too afraid to say what they actually think and do. I therefore spent extensive periods in the regions,

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<sup>4</sup> A total of 165 interviews were conducted in 2003/04 and several more since then. Out of the 144 respondents 54 were women and 90 were men (several respondents were interviewed several times throughout the year and therefore the overall number of interviews is larger than the overall number of respondents). 11 men were representatives of the local Tajik state administration, 36 people were representatives of local NGOs, 8 people were representatives of IOs and INGOs, and 8 were Tajik politicians at the national level.

<sup>5</sup> In my terminology official stands for the state and unofficial for non-state structures.

<sup>6</sup> In the formal sphere, rules are fixed in a written form; in the informal sphere rules are not in written, but they are known by the stakeholders.

<sup>7</sup> At this point, I would like to express my gratitude to the support I received from the GTZ/ ARC and its local partner MSDSP during my field research in Tajikistan. Thank you.

was living with local families, eventually built up trust, observed and conducted a total number of 165 interviews.

What was for me an excellent entry point was the fact that before actually starting my own field research, I was doing research on local conflicts in rural Tajikistan for the GTZ and its local implementing partner. Through this assignment, I got to know many people who later helped me to find respondents and, at the same time, I had an excellent introduction to social and political structures on the ground.

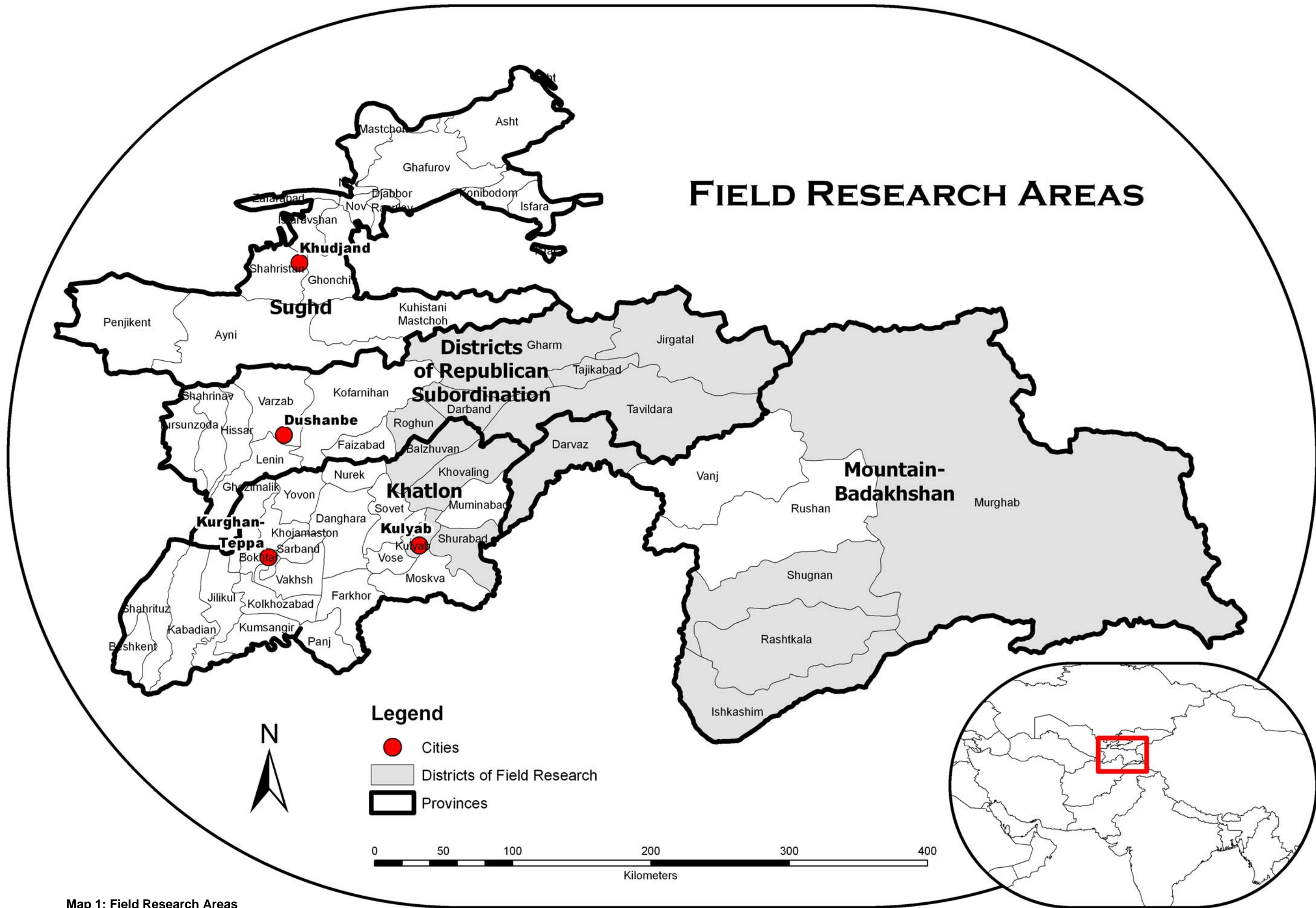
### **Statistics of Interviews**<sup>8</sup>

- A total number of 165 interviews were conducted
- Of the respondents, 54 were women and 90 were men<sup>9</sup>
- 11 men were representatives of the district level state administration
- 36 people were representatives of local non-governmental organisations
- 8 people were representatives of international organisations and international non-governmental organisations
- 8 were Tajik politicians on the national level

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<sup>8</sup> The aim was to interview a wide range of respondents in order to examine the local development process from different angles.

<sup>9</sup> If one adds the number of women and men interviewed, the sum is less than the total number of interviews taken. This is because some interviews were group interviews (where several men, women or mixed interview partners were present) and some people were interviewed several times and I counted them repeatedly for the total number of interviews.



Map 1: Field Research Areas

## 2. The Theoretical Background

### 2.1 The Concept of Governance

In the following, I would like to introduce the concept of governance and find a definition that I can work with throughout my study.

The concept of governance reaches further than the one of the state. Governance takes place on different levels (the local, the provincial, the national, as well as the supra-national – such as the European Union - and international). It includes a number of actors, who can build alliances regarding different issues, when they have the same interest. “Simply put, “governance” means: the process of decision-making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or decided not to be implemented).”<sup>10</sup>

Governance is a very broad concept. It is more inclusive than government because it also subsumes non-state actors, the decision-making processes they are involved in and the implementation processes for decisions that also affect non-state actors.<sup>11</sup>

One of the questions that arise at this stage is: Does (good) governance mean the same in Western Europe as it does, for example, in Central Asia? Are the same measures needed? How does governance make a difference in the way a particular country or region develops? (Hyden, Goran, Court, Julius & Mease, Kenneth 2008: 1).

I would like to offer different kinds of definitions to introduce the concept first, to then establish the definition of governance that I personally prefer and would like to use in my analysis of the Tajik state.

UNDP defines governance as the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society manages its economic, political and social affairs through interaction within and among the state, civil society and the private sector. In comparison to other institutions, UNDP emphasizes the role of the society in shaping governance.

The European Commission states that governance concerns the state’s ability to serve the citizens and therefore stresses the role of the state in governance.<sup>12</sup> As this perspective on governance emphasizes the central role of the state, it is rather a euro-centric concept, which does not fit well into contexts where the state is weak and cannot fulfil its core functions.

The World Bank defines governance as the traditions and institutions by which authority in a country is exercised for the common good.<sup>13</sup> This is a definition that places an emphasis on the role of authorities, which can be the state, but in fact in other contexts this could also include religious authorities, for example.

Other definitions say that governance is a way for a society to organize itself or governance is mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests. It is a concept relating to the functioning of any society, political and social system. Governance includes basic measures of stability and performance of a society or state. Governance therefore also includes collective self-help potentials that exist in the given society (Klemp and Poeschke 2005: 20). As I will elaborate later in the section on Soviet legacies in Tajikistan, the collective self-help potential is fairly limited and could only be activated by external efforts, e.g. international organisations introducing community development initiatives, such as the village organisation of MSDSP and the *Jamoat* Resource Centres of UNDP.

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<sup>10</sup> Paper on “What is Good Governance?” by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, on: [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org), sighted 15/02/08

<sup>11</sup> See “What is Good Governance”, on: [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org), sighted 21/02/08

<sup>12</sup> “Good Governance (Public Governance)”, on: [www.olev.de](http://www.olev.de), sighted 21/02/08

<sup>13</sup> Same as footnote no. 12

Predominantly, governance is described as a process, rather than an outcome or end in itself. Hyden, Court and Mease have come to the following definition: "Governance is the formation and stewardship of the rules that regulate the public realm - the space where state as well as economic and societal actors interact to make decisions." (Hyden, Goran, Court, Julius & Mease, Kenneth 2008: 5) This definition fits my analysis very well and is what I want to apply in the following text.

It has to be noted though that a state's governance performance is not directly tied to its economic system, the level of wealth or level of development in the respective country.<sup>14</sup>

To summarize, in my thinking it is important for the definition of governance that it includes official and unofficial actors as well as legal and illegal ones.

UNESCAP states the following: "In some countries in addition to the civil society, organized crime syndicates also influence decision-making, particularly in urban areas and at the national level."<sup>15</sup>

As I have mainly done research at the local level, I claim that in the case of Tajikistan crime syndicates, former warlords and other "respected figures" (who mainly became respected through actions during the war) are equally important in decision-making processes on the ground. In some cases they have even taken over the provision of public goods (it may be the provision of security or the renovation of the local school etc.).<sup>16</sup>

Governance is very much tied to the concept of statehood. In my thinking though, governance cannot directly be used as an indicator for the functioning of a state. As the example of Tajikistan shows, even if the state is weak, i.e. cannot provide public goods and services sufficiently, governance on the local level can function surprisingly well. In these circumstances, other mechanisms developed that fill the power vacuum that the Soviet power and the civil war left behind.

Therefore, I will use a similar definition to the one of UNESCAP for my analysis that subsumes formal and informal, official and unofficial actors as well as legal and illegal actors, the alliances they build and the rules of the game they establish. Governance is the sum of actors that influence decision-making on different levels of the state (village/ community, district, province and national). It is a process by which public resources are managed. The desired outcome of this process is good governance, when resources are managed responsibly for the benefit of all.<sup>17</sup>

## 2.2 Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood

Governance describes the central dichotomy between the state and private actors. Especially in the context of areas of limited statehood, the separation between public and private or state and society is often an artificial one (Draude 2007:9). In areas of limited statehood, it is even often difficult to distinguish the legal sphere from the illegal sphere. The borders are fluid. This is actually a development that already appeared during Soviet times, when illegal activity was woven into the (economic) state structures.

The phenomenon of 'limited statehood' is here understood as the limited capacity of the state in terms of governance. Limited statehood occurs when the state is not dominating all the governing process, but instead other non-state actors have taken over core functions of the state (e.g. such as the provision of public goods). When statehood is limited, the state does not have the full monopoly over violence,

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<sup>14</sup> "Good Governance (Public Governance)", on: [www.olev.de](http://www.olev.de), sighted 21/02/08

<sup>15</sup> Same as footnote no. 14

<sup>16</sup> These cases will be taken up again later in the section on the provision of public goods and in the case studies on the Shoh (section 8.9) and the Sheikh (section (8.1.1)).

<sup>17</sup> See the resolution 2000/64 by the Commission on Human Rights



processes are not transparent, accountability is not given and there is no established rule-of-law.

The main outcome of the process of governance should be a “healthy balance” between the two: Neither one dominating, both of them controlling each other, eventually leading to rule-of-law, transparency and accountability.

If one looks at governance performance (the German term is *Leistung*) it helps to distinguish between who are the actors that provide the outputs, such as security and welfare, and what are the modes of provision. Risse distinguishes in this context between three different modes: (i) hierarchy, (ii) negotiation/ bargaining and (iii) competition (Risse 2007: 6).

- (i) In the case of hierarchy, it is clear that the state is the main actor shaping the governance performance.
- (ii) If there is negotiation or bargaining going on, it means that there are actors that are as strong as the state. The state itself needs to bargain its position with the other actors in place.
- (iii) In the case of competition, the different actors do not combine in a productive way, but instead compete with each other in terms of governance performance and this can turn out to be counterproductive.

What I find in Tajikistan today is not hierarchy because the modes are not dominated by the state. It is not negotiation or bargaining because there is no conscious bargaining or negotiation process under way between the different stakeholders involved that is steered by the state. The current mode is uncoordinated competition between the different stakeholders. External actors seem to dominate the scene more than the state itself.

Governance concepts have to be adapted for the region where they are applied. In the western context within the area of governance, the state is usually seen as the main “string-puller”, the “interface manager”. This is not so much the case in areas of limited statehood such as Tajikistan, where the public and private sector (state and society) should rather be seen as equal partners. Therefore, my study looks at which actors are fulfilling governance functions and what the quality of these “governance products” is.

Anke Draude says in an article on governance: “States are making less and less use of their power to make decisions, which is based on sanctions. Instead, governing is done in networks, rules are negotiated with private actors, incentives are set and attempts are made to convince people of ideas...The state can no longer adequately control all social elements.” (Draude 2007: 4) This is very much true for the case of Tajikistan. However, putting it this way, it appears as if the state had the free choice to what extent it would make use of its power or not.

In my view, the state is simply incapable of fulfilling all its core functions and is therefore forced to delegate tasks to other actors. Many factors can weaken the role of the state, whether these are internal or external; often states are not capable of making use of their power, because they have been weakened by a civil war, an international intervention (as in the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq) or a natural disaster, etc. By this change in roles, not only the borderline between formal and informal is transgressed, but often also the borderline between legal and illegal. The “governing networks”, especially in the post-conflict context, tend to be a mix of legal and illegal actors, and different mechanisms are employed.

The lines between public and private become increasingly blurred. There is more and more cooperation between public and private actors and forms of private self-regulation are emerging that are often called new forms of governance, which replace functions that have previously been taken care of by the state.

The main difference between governance in the West and governance in areas of limited statehood is that in the latter there can be governance without government,

i.e. the participation of state actors in governance is not necessarily ruled out, but its dominance is ruled out (Draude 2007: 5).

Governance in areas of limited statehood is therefore shaped by the principle of subsidiarity. Wherever possible, social rules are shaped by the actors affected. Some scholars say that there is a transformation of the role of the state from being a steering body in the centre to being a coordination body (Draude 2007: 6). In the case of Tajikistan though, I argue that even the state's ability to coordinate the activities of different actors on the local level is limited.

In order to avoid a Eurocentric approach towards governance Draude suggests using a more functionalist approach, focusing on functional outputs of governance mechanisms. She puts it the following way: "This definition of equivalence functionalism also enables one to view the field without any certain actor typifications, and thus it opens up an area of comparison where there is space for other constellations and not just the well-known Western ones." (Draude 2007: 10)

I will base my analysis on the functional output that the described mechanisms produce. Therefore, the private and the public sector should be seen as functionally equal phenomena that are fundamentally different (Draude 2007: 12).

My approach is the following: The state should in the Western sense be the one in charge of governance. As the Tajik state is weak, there are areas of limited statehood. There are other structures and actors from the private sector that fill in the gaps. What do these structures and sets of actors look like? How functional and at the same time sustainable are they?

One can speak of an internationalization and privatization of statehood. As a result, non-state actors position themselves on the same level as or even above the state; this is the case on the local level. The central role of the state is no longer a monopoly on decision-making and organisational competency, but what is asked from the state now is to bring together the different outputs provided by international and private actors.<sup>18</sup> However, it is this new state role that the Tajik state is at the moment incapable to fulfil.

In the West, the state turns from the "monopolist of authority" into a "manager of authority". The state, in areas of limited statehood such as in Tajikistan, does not quite make this transition yet. Genschel and Zangl argue that the state can manage less and less by itself, but the final responsibility for the provision of collective goods according to them lies with the state. This applies to Tajikistan, even though the state cannot fulfil this final responsibility sufficiently. At the moment the international and private actors take some fiscal and "performance pressure" from the state. International actors provide funding for specific fields and if something goes wrong in the implementation it is not only the "state's fault", but even more "their fault". In addition to this, these international actors increasingly help the state to deal with threats such as natural disasters, terrorism or the bird flu, which the state by itself could not fully deal with (Genschel & Zangl 2007: 9).

Eventually, this is a situation that works for the time being, but the problem is that it is not sustainable. In the current situation, it is the international organisations that mainly sponsor the provision of public goods that promote transparency, accountability and the rule of law. However, many international organisations are increasingly losing their interest in Tajikistan, as the progress is so little and there are more urgent 'hot spots' in the region.<sup>19</sup>

The question is how can the degree to which statehood is limited be measured in 'areas of limited statehood' that undergo transition? What tells us that there is

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<sup>18</sup> Internationalization and privatization of statehood means that international and private institutions increasingly play a role in the execution of authority (Genschel & Zangl 2007: 3).

<sup>19</sup> Interview with an employee of the OSCE in Dushanbe in September 2008.

progress made towards 'unlimiting the statehood' in question? One indicator can be the quantity and quality of public goods provided to the local population by the state.

## 2.3 Good Governance

Good governance is a more specific category of general governance. According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) good governance includes the following eight characteristics: 1. participatory; 2. consensus-oriented; 3. accountable; 4. transparent; 5. responsive; 6. effective and efficient; 7. equitable and inclusive; and, 8. following the rule of law.<sup>20</sup>

Other definitions of good governance include, in addition, the following: Human rights, democratization and democracy, civil society, decentralized power-sharing and sound public administration.

Good governance is often viewed as if it is something that can be achieved through development cooperation in the course of a few years. The way I understand it though, is that it is an ideal concept that is worth striving for, but that cannot be achieved through the implementation of a development programme in a few years.<sup>21</sup>

However, while analysing to what extent a state is weak, one needs a concept that one can weigh one's findings against. This is how it currently looks, but how should it actually look? Good governance is about how it should look, it is a normative concept.

For my analysis, therefore, I am using the following combined concept of good governance:

A state that is ruled by good governance needs to have mechanisms for democratic participation in political decision-making processes. Governance policies need to be consensus-oriented, i.e. striving for the common good. The governance structures need to be accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient. Governance structures provided need to be accessible to all citizens and be governed by the rule of law. Human rights need to be respected and there needs to be space for a civil society, decentralized power-sharing structures and a well functioning public administration.

### Rule of Law

Rule of law is a fundamental "ingredient in the recipe" of good governance and is a very complex concept, which leads back to the development question of where to start. What conditions what? What is more important, the state building or the economy-building process? Which part follows automatically?

One of the main problems in Tajikistan is that people are unemployed, that they do not have a future. What is the solution? Employment opportunities have to be created by the state or some other entity.

Millions of dollars are sent back to Tajikistan every year as remittances from working migrants abroad. Due to the lack of the rule of law, these remittances are not properly invested into the local economy. The economic framework conditions are not reliable. Laws in place are often not properly enforced. Many laws are ambiguous and leave space for one's own interpretation. In addition, laws often change or are undermined by presidential decrees. Economic structures are largely ruled by the

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<sup>20</sup> "Good Governance (Public Governance)", on: [www.olev.de](http://www.olev.de), sighted 21/02/08

<sup>21</sup> This is also in line with what the definition of UNESCAP says: "...good governance is an ideal which is difficult to achieve in its totality."; "Good Governance (Public Governance)", on: [www.olev.de](http://www.olev.de), sighted 21/02/08

informal rules of the game and mafia structures play a considerable role. At the same time political and mafia structures overlap.

Not everyone can get involved in all branches of trade or open a shop where he or she wants. Many bribes and protection money (to the 'state' and to non-state actors) have to be paid along the way.

Therefore, these remittances are rather invested into everyday consumption products, into improving one's own house or buying a new car. These investments do not have a sustainable impact on Tajikistan's development. The problem comes back to the fact that there is no rule of law. There are no predictable laws in place, or if they are, they are not properly enforced and eventually are undermined.

In theory, rule of law is an important part of good governance. It implies that legal frameworks are fair and that they are enforced impartially. It also includes the protection of human (women, children, etc.) and, especially, minority rights. To achieve this, the judiciary has to be independent and the police force has to be impartial and incorruptible. In the end, the question is whether the rule of law is the precondition or output of a fully-fledged development process.

### **Transparency**

The second major precondition for good governance is transparency, meaning that decisions taken and their enforcement are done according to the rules and regulations in place and that information about how decisions are taken is freely available and directly accessible to all.

### **Responsiveness and the Level of Bureaucracy**

Good governance also implies that institutions and processes serve all stakeholders within a reasonable timeframe (responsiveness). Examples of this are that court cases need to be solved within a reasonable timeframe so that people make use of these structures. People need to be able to apply for a passport in an appropriate timeframe. If this is not the case, the state can use the lack of responsiveness as a mechanism to hobble people's actions. Responsiveness is also linked to the degree of bureaucracy that is reached by a political system. If a system does not manage to serve its citizens in a reasonable timeframe, this means that bureaucratic barriers are very high and that they increasingly slow down the system. An extreme example of the unresponsiveness of bureaucracy in the GDR was that people had to wait for more than ten years to get a personal car. In Tajikistan, bureaucratic barriers have, for example, been established in connection to the registration of mosques.

### **Consensus-Orientation and Reconciliation**

Good governance includes consensus-oriented behaviour, i.e. that a mediation between different interests takes place, and that the intention is to find the solution that is in the best interests of the whole community. This can be especially difficult in war-torn societies where people are not reconciled yet. In Tajikistan, political and economic elites are only focused on the well-being of their clientele and do not strive for the common good. The reason for this is that the reconciliation process was never completed.

### **Having a Stake**

According to the theory, when good governance is achieved, members of the respective societies feel that they have a stake and that the most vulnerable have the opportunity to improve or maintain their own well being. In Tajikistan, this is not the case. People have the feeling that most decisions are taken above their heads. The

interesting thing though is that the people are not very active in terms of claiming participation in political and social decision-making processes. A local gender specialist described the situation in the following terms: "So far I can write what I want, nobody hinders me. However, I describe the situation how it is. The way the opposition criticizes the system is not professional and is destructive. Slowly though the people are starting to demand more."<sup>22</sup> The fact that people are only now slowly starting to demand more, points to the fact that the majority of the people, especially in the rural areas, believe that they do not have a stake.

### **Effective and Efficient Institutions**

Good governance further requires that processes and institutions are effective and efficient, that they produce results, while making the best use of given resources. This also includes the sustainable use of natural resources and the protection of the environment. In this sense, community development can be a very good example of good governance at the local level, as it aims at using locally available resources in the most efficient way in order to create sustainable results.

### **Accountability**

Another important step towards good governance is that the government, private sector and civil society must be accountable to the public and to their institutional stakeholders. Accountability must be provided to those who will be affected by the decisions taken. Accountability requires transparency and the rule of law. At the same time, accountability is very much linked to legitimacy. A leader can only be legitimate if he is accountable to the people he or she leads.

### **Good Governance in Development Cooperation**

Good governance is a multi-faceted approach that includes work in many issue areas (as I have listed and elaborated on them above). That is why there is such a big discussion in development cooperation about where to intervene. It is difficult to define the priorities and gradual steps towards good governance, especially as it is difficult to develop indicators to report progress and to conclude that good governance has been achieved.

A problem with the concept of (good) governance is that it is very much donor-driven and not so much driven by the respective governments, as is the case in Tajikistan. In development cooperation it is important to mention the concept of good governance to get funding or, to put it in a different way, there is almost no donor who does not (intend to) contribute to good governance (Klemp & Poeschke 2005: 20). However, it is seldom realized that it is actually an ideal concept, which is not even always fully implemented or achieved by democratic Western nation-states.

What makes the concept of governance so much more interesting than just analysing government structures is the fact that it includes formal and informal actors, and is therefore in a way crosscutting, across formal and informal, official and unofficial, legal and illegal. Under the concept of governance, government is only one of the actors influencing decision-making and often the government is not the dominating agency.

On the local level (local governance) does not only include the local municipality, but also influential landlords, religious leaders, former warlords and others. It includes all actors that influence decision-making and the implementation of these decisions; actors from civil society, but also possibly crime syndicates who, for example,

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<sup>22</sup> Interview with a Tajik gender specialist in Dushanbe in September 2008

influence a local businessperson's decision to open a shop or not to do so because the amount of protection money that would have to be paid is too high.

Out of the different governance concepts, I have developed the following assumptions regarding governance structures in Tajikistan, which I would like to explore further during my analysis.

Regarding Tajikistan, my opinion is that governance performance varies enormously from region to region, due to the different geographic, economic and social contexts partly deriving from Soviet times and aggravated by the civil war. What additionally contributes to the diversity of governance situations' is to what extent external actors (IOs and NGOs) are involved at the local level. Accordingly, the level of development considerably varies from region to region.

The availability of resources in a region leads to the further enrichment of provincial elites and widens the gap between rich and poor. This fact shapes the 'modes of local governance'. It determines to which extent the state invests into this particular region in terms of the provision of public goods and services. The equation seems to be; the more natural resources there are, the less the state invests into the public sphere. It is a "paradox of plenty" (Basedau & Lacher 2006: 1), a kind of rentier state structure that prevails at the local level. As a result, the people in the regions with resources are actually the ones worst off.<sup>23</sup> Eventually, the governance performance and the level of development is the best in those regions where the state is largely left out of the sector of providing public goods and services, but where instead public goods and services are predominantly provided by NGOs, international organisations and local strongmen. Through this 'paradox of plenty', the overall development process is stalled, particularly in resource-rich regions.

The Tajik state seems to have an interest in keeping the appearance that Tajikistan is still a vulnerable state and in need of external support, and that it is moving towards democracy to keep up the inflow of international assistance.

Conflict lines that led to the civil war in Tajikistan are breaking up again, as the fronts between secularists (Rahmon and his former allies that have been reduced considerably) on the one hand, and Islamic-oriented forces and democrats on the other hand, are hardening and social discontent is rising.

## 2.4 Local Governance

Alternative modes of local governance and the role of informal, formal, official and unofficial institutions in post-Soviet Central Asia, particularly Tajikistan, make up a new topic that has not sufficiently been researched up until now. I aim to provide a bottom-up perspective that is rather unusual for political scientists and that has been almost entirely overlooked when analysing the political structures in Central Asia today. Previously, post-Soviet Central Asia had only been seen through the lenses of Sovietologists and orientalists. Other influences, such as the rising significance of (neo)-traditions, including religion and other local manifestations (in the form of localised customs; Tajik: *urfu odat*) and other unofficial practices and their influence on social, political and economic structures and practices, have not been emphasised sufficiently.

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<sup>23</sup> These people are forced to cultivate cotton and do not have the resources to also cultivate vegetables etc. for their own consumption. As a result, these people live in severe poverty, sometimes even suffering malnutrition.

Local governance is the sum of actors and processes involved in governing at the local level (district, sub-district and village/ community level). What defines local governance in Tajikistan is mainly the definition of 'governance in areas of limited statehood', including different sets of actors at the local level. Local governance is wider than local government as it includes non-state actors at the local level. These can be formal and informal, and even legal and illegal.

In Tajikistan, the way local governance is structured today is very much an outcome of the Tajik civil war. This opinion is shared by Freedom House, who stated in 2006 that regional affiliations, patronage, and clan networks that developed during the brutal civil war continued to play a critical role, "hindering steps toward genuine pluralism and democratic governance."<sup>24</sup>

There is a law on local self-governance in Tajikistan, according to which "local self governments are institutions of legislative and executive authority elected by the citizens of a given administrative territory." (Ilolov & Khudoiyev 2001: 607). During my field research in Tajikistan, I did not come across any elections for such officials.

Some authors (Freedom House, Ilolov and Khudoiyev) argue that grassroots organisations of community self-government are widespread and play an important role in Tajik society. "These institutions, which include *makhallia*<sup>25</sup> committees, micro-*rayon* councils, apartment block councils, *kishlak* organisations (*kishlak* is the Tajik term for village) in the Pamirs<sup>26</sup> and local citizens' associations such as *guzar* and *tabagy*, all facilitate law and order, assist in the process of democratization, protect citizens' rights and interest and exercise autonomy in solving local issues." (Ilolov & Khudoiyev 2001: 610).

Some local<sup>27</sup> self-governance institutions are worth mentioning. Most of them, however, are confined to a small geographical space. Local neighbourhood cohesion is very much limited to the immediate community. In urban areas, it includes one's own street, but it does not go beyond that.<sup>28</sup> I will get back to the role of the *mahalla* in section 7.13.

These local institutions are not democratic in the modern sense (one could call the phenomenon democracy Grecian style). In most decision-making processes, women are not involved. The importance of these structures is limited by the fact that they are not officially acknowledged by the government and therefore have not been incorporated into legislation, as has been the case with so-called community development councils (the equivalent to the Tajik "village organisations") in Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup> Credit has to be given to many local initiatives though in terms of solving local conflicts, as long as these conflicts only concern the community itself, such as agreeing on a schedule for the distribution of irrigation water etc. Most of these local initiatives are not constant institutions though. They act more on an *ad hoc* basis, assembling when there is a "burning issue". From my field experience, I have learned that generally it is very difficult to provoke self-initiative in Tajikistan. People still live in a kind of Soviet phlegmatism, waiting for the state to solve all problems, and many are still waiting for the Soviet Union to be resurrected.

These externally initiated local initiatives, such as village organisations, can also create new problems and conflicts because it can clash over the rules of the game. Is it the elders of the community or the newly elected village representatives who take the final decision? If this happens, in the end more harm is done than relief,

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<sup>24</sup> Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 28/02/08

<sup>25</sup> I spell the same phenomenon *mahalla*.

<sup>26</sup> This refers to MSDSP-initiated village organisations.

<sup>27</sup> By the term local I mean district, *jamoat* (sub-district) and community level.

<sup>28</sup> Interview with the driver of an international organisation in Dushanbe in November 2003

<sup>29</sup> For further information, see section 7.13 on the *mahalla*.

which is against the “Do-No-Harm” concept (Andersen 1999:1). This issue will later be discussed, when I come to the case study of Navdi in section 7.6.1.

## 2.5 Local Government

Tajikistan adopted a new Constitution in 1994, which was approved by a nationwide referendum, confirming the existing territorial and administrative division of the country established during Soviet times. Tajikistan is divided into three provinces (Tajik: *viloyat*. These are Khatlon, Sughd and Mountain-Badakhshan) that technically have their own regional governments; in addition, there are 62 districts (Tajik: *nohiya*, Russian: *rayon*), 356 sub-districts (Tajik: *jamoat*) and finally towns, settlements or villages, which do not have any administrative recognition.

Regarding its local government structure, Tajikistan is far from being democratic. Heads of provinces and districts are not elected from below, but appointed from above. The President appoints heads of provinces and districts in consultation with governors. *Jamoat* leaders are appointed through the head of their respective district (Tajik: *hukumat*).

According to the Constitution, a *jamoat* is an institution of self-government in towns and villages; a “system of organizing public activities to address issues of local importance autonomously and at their own discretion, directly or indirectly, in accordance with the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan. Local self-governments resolve issues within their competence directly or through their representatives.” (Ilolov & Khudoiyev 2001: 608) This already sounds vague in theory. In reality, *jamoats*, as I experienced it during my field research in Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan, never really had significant funds with which they could conduct serious activities, often not sufficient to maintain their premises and so, *de facto*, they were meaningless. On the local level, there were no elected councils, only appointed councils.

Not surprisingly, the ruling People’s Democratic Party usually dominates provincial, district and *jamoat* bodies. According to Freedom House, “patronage exercised by the national government in appointing province and district administrators discourages independent decision and policy making outside of the capital.”<sup>30</sup>

According to my observations in the field, regional and local politics are extremely limited. Accordingly, activities of opposition parties in the regions are restricted. Real political change will only occur once free and fair elections take place on the sub-national and national levels.

In terms of taxes, the regions made bad tradeoffs. 85 percent of the taxes generated at the regional level go to the state, i.e. the national level. Only about 15 percent remain at the district level.<sup>31</sup>

## 2.6 The State

In order to analyse the Tajik state system I am introducing four different state systems; the Tajik state can be described as a combination of all four. These four state systems are the command state, the network state, the cunning state and the NGO/ IO state.

The state in Tajikistan is fragile, and cannot entirely fulfil the core functions of a state. Ryszard Kapuscinski has said that the integrity of states is often threatened from

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<sup>30</sup> See: Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 28/02/08

<sup>31</sup> These figures are from Freedom House, Nations in Transit, on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08



below as well as from above (Kapuscinski 2000: 44). By internal threats regarding the integrity of a state he meant separatist movements, regionalism and the like, that threaten the cohesiveness of the state. Externally, he had the market-economic structures in mind. In the case of Tajikistan, I would like to argue that theoretically the integrity of the state is threatened internally as well as externally. In the 1990s during the time of the civil war, there were separatist movements, e.g. Lal'i Badakhshan.<sup>32</sup> *De facto*, there was never the chance of Mountain-Badakhshan actually becoming independent, as it was not strong enough economically. It depended even more than other parts of the country on subsidies. Externally, the integrity of the Tajik state is not so much threatened by market-economic structures, but rather by geopolitical and other interests of other states in the region, e.g. Russia and Uzbekistan. It is drawn into the dynamics of the fight against terrorism created by the US-regime.

### **Command State**

As I will later show, the Tajik state has strong traits of Elwert's definition of a command state. In a command state rules are explicitly not clearly set. There is confusion about which is the particular set of rules that should be applied in a given situation. The result is that people do not know what set of rules they should follow and, in theory, they could be fined for anything because there is no way to be fully compliant with the rules set, as they contradict each other or are formulated in such a vague way that there is a lot of "space for informal bargaining". Permission to be exempt from the state law is usually obtained through bribes. From the perspective of the elites, this kind of system gives leaders a flexible arena for manoeuvring and, especially, rent seeking. From the outside, this state system seems to be extremely bureaucratic, but this is simply a façade. Corruption is an integral part of this kind of system. Although laws exist, "...they are subordinate to the personal authority of state officials." (Zuercher 2006: 11). The line between state interest and personal interest is increasingly blurred. In such an environment the "risk of violence between competing patrons and networks is high". (Zuercher 2006: 11).

What looks like disorder at a first glance is not necessarily an indicator for a "failing" state or statehood. It can be a resource for those who are in power and who are managing and maintaining this kind of "lucrative insecurity" (Elwert 2001: 438).

Tajikistan has many traits of a command state. Laws are unclear, and new laws and decrees are frequently introduced, so that even judges often do not know what should be applied.

### **Network State**

The network state is common in the post-Soviet space. It is often marked by weak, but surprisingly stable, regimes and a sustained low-level of conflict - or at least an increased risk of conflict. (Zuercher 2006: 12). Furthermore, this combination is not necessarily a coincidence, but rather can be viewed as a rational strategy of the elites. With our western nation-state background we usually only think of rationality in legal terms. However, in state systems where the rule of law is not guaranteed anyway, different rationalities are pursued. The logic behind this kind of system is that elites in newly independent states often take the institutionalization of networks of patronage as the first step in "building stability" (e.g. Rahmon installing his Kulyabi network). A network state partly functions like a democratic system where voters have to be satisfied; the difference is that in a network system the patron only has to satisfy the needs of a select group of clientele. Patrons usually have power over this respective clientele because they control access to important (natural) resources,

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<sup>32</sup> Lal'i Badakhshan was a movement in Mountain-Badakhshan after the breakdown of the Soviet Union that fought for the independence of Mountain-Badakhshan from Tajikistan.

such as land, cotton, tax and customs.<sup>33</sup> Nevertheless, in such a system it is difficult as a patron to secure one's own position. Potential challengers of one's own power have to be annihilated and independent economic activities prevented; as in Tajikistan, the easiest constellation is when political string-pullers are identical with economic string-pullers. Patrons usually do not have an interest in public goods that are accessible for everybody. It is more in their interest to privatize the provision of these goods and services and restrict access to their clientele.<sup>34</sup> All these measures aim at limiting statehood and keeping the state weak, but stable. The same effect also is produced through the promotion of low-level conflict. Eventually, state weakness should be seen as a rational choice for leaders' who rule through networks of patronage. "Weak states may thus emerge by design and not just by default as the common wisdom assumes." (Zürcher 2005: 14)

### **Cunning State**

The term "cunning state" is an invention by Ivan Krastev and is mainly characterized by selective and outsourced statehood (Krastev 2002: 60)<sup>35</sup>. I will talk about the extent to which the provision of public goods and services is being outsourced, what quality is produced with this setup in Tajikistan today and who the new providers are (sections 3.3 and chapter 6).

The outsourcing of (former) state functions is usually associated with state weakness. In my understanding this does not have to be the case or this created weakness can be intended due to the fact that rule via patronage strongly depends on insecurity and informality. In reality, the lines of command keep functioning, even though they are often secured by informal mechanisms (Zürcher 2005b: 17).

### **NGO/ IO State**

Tajikistan is largely what I would call an NGO or international organisation (IO) state. In an NGO or IO state international non-governmental and governmental organisations dominate, or at least influence, the elaboration and implementation of policies considerably. If you ask, who is the 'boss' in the 'house', in case of Tajikistan one cannot answer that it is exclusively the state itself, as there are other agents that significantly influence political developments on different levels. As so often, 'money is what makes the world go round' and therefore it is the agent with most of the resources (often international organisations and international NGOs) that steer the development process.

A good example of the state in Tajikistan not actually being the 'boss' in the 'house' is the community development intervention by the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP).<sup>36</sup> MSDSP started implementing a major intervention, creating democratically elected village councils (in the framework of village organisations) that would undertake small-scale development projects and would eventually be integrated into the state and become part of the local government administration. This programme was first started in the former opposition regions during the civil war, in Mountain-Badakhshan (in 1993) and later in the Rasht valley

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<sup>33</sup> See the case studies on the Sheikh (8.1.1) and Shoh (8.9).

<sup>34</sup> C. Zuercher notes on this point: "...patrons will also attempt to minimize public goods such as safety, protection, economic opportunities or legal protection; instead they will try to privatise these goods and to make them available only through the network." (Zürcher 2005b: 14)

<sup>35</sup> Statehood, e.g. the provision of public goods, can be outsourced to non-state providers such as local and international NGOs, former warlords, religious leaders etc.

<sup>36</sup> MSDSP is a local NGO that was founded by the Aga Khan Development network. It deals with community development in Mountain-Badakhshan, the Racht valley and Kulyab.

(in 2000).<sup>37</sup> Only after the Tajik government asked MSDSP to also become involved in other regions, MSDSP started implementing the programme in Kulyab (Khatlon) in 2005.

Another indication that Tajikistan is an NGO/ IO state is that many analysts say that MSDSP is building up a parallel state that bypasses the actual state administration at the local level.

A mode of governance that an NGO/ IO state is significantly marked by is the outsourcing of the provision of cost-intensive public goods to non-state players (mainly international non-governmental and international organisations). I will come back to this point in section 3.3.

## 2.7 The Weak-Strong State Debate

The understanding of state and statehood in my study is based on a normative understanding of what a functioning state should look like. This normative state model derives from the “success story” of the western nation-state (Christophe 2005: 16). Lately, there has been an immense debate and discourse on categorizing states in terms of failing; having failed/ collapsed; state systems consolidating or having consolidated; and about states being weak or strong. Tajikistan does not fully fit into one of these categories because even though it is weak in some points, given the structural deficiencies, it is amazing to what extent the state and other actors manage to create statehood and produce governance (e.g. provide public goods and solve conflicts).

Tajikistan is in the process of consolidating its new modes of local governance. It is partly incorporating these into the state and in a very few cases (e.g. external border control by CIS border troops until 2005) the state has made an attempt to re-capture functions which had previously been outsourced to alternative providers.

A state can be termed weak if it lacks infrastructural power, the capability to set binding rules to steer the behaviour of its subordinates (Christophe 2005: 24).<sup>38</sup> It can be termed weak if social control is fragmented, local leaders start pursuing personal interests through nominal state institutions, and efficient monitoring and policing mechanisms are lacking, such as those required to deal with diffuse security threats (Douglas 2003: 37).

Tajikistan is certainly not on the way to becoming a consolidated democracy, but there is evidence to indicate that it is in the process of consolidating or formalizing its often unofficial, but functioning local modes of governance and re-establishing statehood. It has managed to establish central authority and control. In order to establish a functioning statehood the state needs to impose certain rules of the game on to society or has to incorporate the rules of the game from the society into its own system. It is a process of give and take. In theory (deriving from the analysis of western governance concepts), the state should be the main organisation regulating social relationships, and for this end it must extract resources to finance its services and use resources in determined and appropriate ways (Migdal 1988: 4).

In Tajikistan leaders on different levels of the state misuse their position to make private gains and where policing mechanisms often fail. Nevertheless, in Tajikistan statehood is being re-established and consolidated, even if this initiative has been driven by non-state actors, international and local NGOs as well as local power holders and not so much by the state itself.

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<sup>37</sup> Information was provided by an employee of AKDN in Dushanbe in February 2008; MSDSP worked with the GTZ since 1995/96 as PRDP and the name was later changed to MSDSP

<sup>38</sup> Infrastructural power is originally a concept by Michael Mann. His definition is that infrastructural power “is the capacity of the state actually to penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions throughout the realm.” (Mann 1984: 113)

A state can be weak in terms of legibility. Legibility can be defined as the state's capacity to arrange society in a way that enables it to fulfil its core functions (Scott 1998: 79). This includes, for example, keeping track of society, knowing how high the yields from cotton, wheat and potatoes are, knowing how many people profit from this or that sectors, and whether most income is generated in this sector or another, or whether remittances are the main source of income. The state in Tajikistan is insufficient in terms of legibility. The Soviet state was much more efficient, it collected immense amounts of data on its population, social processes and territory. Today different international organisations and local NGOs have taken over this task. The state currently does not seem to be capable of doing this and is even more incapable of making use of it as an effective device for monitoring and control.

Eventually, a state might be termed weak in terms of the provision of public goods and services. In some rural areas of Tajikistan, the state insufficiently provides public goods and services, but, nevertheless, in most regions the political and social life functions according to somehow agreed and accepted patterns of decision-making. This means that even if public goods are provided insufficiently, coping mechanisms can be found and local conflicts can often be solved by non-violent means.

Another indicator of how "healthy" the state is, how well statehood functions and how well the development process is embedded, is that conflicts are being processed in a non-violent and eventually constructive way. This leads back to the assumptions that if conflicts are solved in a non-violent and constructive way, they are healthy for state and society and they promote the development process. In the end, the state might have its deficiencies, but the level of statehood achieved might still be satisfactory for the current development phase.

What my discussion of the Tajik state being strong or weak shows is in fact that this concept does not actually fit or is misleading for Tajikistan as a transforming state moving away from a planned economy and a socialist authoritarian state system to something else. Whether a state is weak or strong does not actually determine whether the development process will succeed or fail. Therefore, a new methodology for classifying the Tajik state has to be found.

### **2.7.1 Separators in the Tajik Society**

An interesting concept in this context is the theory of 'weak states with strong societies' that partly fits the Tajik context and can explain why it is so difficult in Tajikistan to build a common nation.<sup>39</sup> What is actually meant by 'strong societies' is 'strongly fragmented societies'. Previously, during the Cold War, strong states, such as the Soviet Union, used to be a threat to the West. Nowadays it is the weak states with "strong(ly fragmented) societies", where conflicts break out.

A "strong(ly fragmented) society" is a society that has strong separators. These kinds of societies have strong social forces, but these are not necessarily unified and can actually tear the society apart. These separators can be ethnic, tribal, regional, religious or just confessional (the Sunni /Shia /Ismaili divide). In these kinds of societies, it is often more difficult to form a coalition or to create common ground amongst the existing micro-societies than is the case in other more homogenised societies.

The civil war in Tajikistan has shown that there are separators capable of tearing society apart. However, now these groups are using a strategy of avoidance and there is no violent conflict between the different groups.

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<sup>39</sup> I heard a lecture by Prof. Amin Saikal, political scientist from the Australian National University, on "State Building amidst Strong Society: The Case of Afghanistan", Kabul, November 2007

An additional difficulty for the state in Tajikistan is that the different ethnic or regional groups have extensive cross-border ties (Uzbeks to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz to Kyrgyzstan, some Pamiri groups with their counterparts in Afghanistan, Bukharian Tajiks in Tajikistan with Bukharian Tajiks in Bukhara itself, etc.). The question often is: what is it that keeps Tajikistan together as a state and nation? How can these micro-societies be patched up?

## 2.8 Statehood: What Makes a Functioning State

What actually counts in the end is not so much how capable the state is of fulfilling certain core functions, but whether there is statehood in place, an overarching system of regulating relationships between people from different layers of society. Statehood implies that there is reliability, a framework within which people can rely and plan their activities. Statehood should be understood as the output of a functioning state system.

Statehood involves (i) the provision of physical security; (ii) the provision of public goods (of which education and healthcare are the two most relevant examples); (iii) the legitimisation of the state, including at local level, in some way; (iv) the provision of conflict-processing institutions.

(i) The provision of physical security demands that the state ensures that people feel they can move around all parts of the country freely. It means that people are not restricted in their lives, that they do not fear physical harm, even though there are limits in the extent to which the state can control people's physical security, e.g. criminality that threaten people's physical security.

(ii) Regarding the provision of public goods (mainly education and healthcare) by the state, all citizens have to have equal access, and a reasonable quality of public goods have to be provided, so that people feel that there is social safety net they can rely on.

Education is important for a country (especially for a country with strong separators) to have a common base; it is part of creating an "imagined community", of giving people the feeling that there is something which makes them belong to each other, to create a common national identity.

Education is a major precondition for development and change. During Soviet times there was 100 percent literacy. The level of literacy today, though, is very much in flux; women's literacy especially, which is decreasing rapidly. Some specialists are even warning of a double illiteracy, the inhabitants of Tajikistan unable to properly speak either Tajik or Russian.<sup>40</sup>

The third most important indicator of a state's capacity is the provision of accessible and appropriate healthcare. This will also enhance their trust in the state, if people know that in an emergency situation they can rely on a "welfare" system. From the state's perspective, healthy people are important for a productive economy, they are the human resource producing profit and in theory giving the elites the opportunity to extract resources in order to finance state services in return.

Regarding education and healthcare, the state is functioning if citizens of the state have equal access to this welfare system. I will analyse the degree to which this is achieved with the help of quantitative figures, such as how many children go to school and the average number of doctors per thousand citizens. In addition to that, I will analyse the qualitative data that I collected concerning the quality of education and healthcare provided at the local level in Tajikistan.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in Dushanbe in February 2004

(iii) State leaders need to be legitimised by the local people, through elections or other mechanisms of participation. People need to believe that they can influence political decision-making at all levels of the state and that they can dismiss leaders if they do not comply with what the people demand.

People have to have the impression that their voice is heard in order to prevent them from denial and a desire to separate from the state. According to my normative definition of a state, a functioning state and legitimate statehood exist when the chain of command is not only top-down, but rather when local leaders have to base their decisions on popular support, which is not currently the case in Tajikistan.

Methods of legitimisation include:

(1) Legitimation by the state, e.g. leaders appointed by the President.

(2) Legitimation by the people: this can be traditional legitimisation where authoritative figures are accepted as leaders. An example of this is the *Hazor Imam* of the Ismailis – the Aga Khan - or other religious authorities who have some kind of 'divine right to rule'. Democratic legitimisation is when leaders are elected in participatory elections. Under this category also fall the two options of having earned one's position in the course of a civil war or through privatisation of large pieces of land, which often also took place in the course of a civil war.

Legitimacy is not necessarily tied to democratic procedures such as elections. A leader is legitimate if he or she receives his or her position in accordance with rules that are broadly accepted and practiced.

(4) Legitimation through the provision of public goods

(6) Legitimation through charisma<sup>41</sup>

Often it is not enough when the state appoints leaders. In this case, local state representatives often lack the necessary degree of social-embeddedness and therefore their legitimacy tends to be questioned by the people. The fact that they are representatives of the state (in the Tajik context) does not mean that they are legitimate leaders according to local standards. State representatives are often appointed to a particular post by the President and sometimes co-opted in order to prevent them from turning into potential rivals. Just from the fact that somebody has a state post it is difficult to determine whether that person is actually legitimized by the state or whether that person had been an authoritative leader before being appointed. Often it is the case that somebody is a respected leader in his or, in exceptions, her local community and because of that he or she is appointed to a state post, thereby upgrading the value of the state post and helping the state to gain influence.

(iv) The state needs to put in place conflict-processing institutions that turn conflicts into constructive mechanisms for the development of the state. The state needs to function as a neutral mediator between the different conflicting parties.

Last, but not least, especially in the context of a post-conflict environment, a state is only functioning and statehood only exists if there are conflict processing institutions in place that ensure that conflicts are solved in a non-violent way and can be integrated into the development process constructively. In order to enforce these institutions, sanction capacities are extremely important in order to make people stick to the rules. Instead, a state is seen as not fulfilling its functions sufficiently if it is unable to put state-set rules into force, when competencies are not clearly divided between political leaders on different state levels and when the state puts up with state representatives that turn state property into their personal property (Christophe 2005: 16). This is very much the case in Tajikistan, where the roles of different state

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<sup>41</sup> This follows Max Weber's distinction between legitimacy based on charismatic authority, legitimacy based on traditional authority and legitimacy based on rational or legal authority (Weber 1969: 217 & 226)

levels are not clearly defined and political leaders often act with 'vested interests' rather than for the sake of the common good.

Weak states do not have the power to provide mechanisms and institutions to resolve conflicts peacefully at different state levels (local, district, regional and national). Subsequently, these states become prone to conflict escalation. The purpose of many state institutions', such as partly of the the Parliament, is to mediate between different interest groups and to find compromises to solve conflicts of interest, which arise on a daily basis. If institutions like this one do not function, compromises cannot be found and some groups tend to become privileged while others are marginalized. In the course of this process, the marginalized groups gather resources to reclaim their power positions.

This was the situation in Tajikistan before the civil war. The same situation, this stalemate, seems to be re-emerging and the marginalized groups could start to reclaim their power share again, if they will manage to unite in the future. In addition to being unable to mediate between different interest groups, the state cannot keep up or enforce its legal monopoly on violence, which differentiates the state from non-state forces. When the state starts to take sides in a conflict, eventually the state itself turns into one of the warlord groups (as was the case in the Tajik civil war).<sup>42</sup>

### **2.8.1 Participation in Decision-Making Processes**

An important element of good governance and development at the local level is the participation of the people in decision-making processes. The development process at the local level can only thrive when policies are designed and implemented in accordance with the wishes of the local population, e.g. as it is done in community development.

The extent to which the Tajik state at the local level provides possibilities for participation is extremely limited. All state representatives down to the district level are appointed from the centre and not elected from below. Therefore, accountability towards a particular electorate does not exist. Accountability is being framed in patron-client relationships that are structured strictly hierarchically. In theory, in the *jamoat*, the sub-district level, there are possibilities for participating in political processes in terms of choosing the head of the *jamoat*, but *de facto* the *raisi hukumat*, the head of the district, proposes a candidate as *raisi jamoat*, the head of the sub-district, and eventually this particular person becomes the head of the sub-district.

People often do not have the right to organize themselves and to participate in political decision-making processes. In an interview with the deputy head of the Islamic Renaissance Party, Muhiddin Kabiri, he told me his party had been hindered by the municipality when conducting local level party meetings in Gharm.<sup>43</sup>

The sad part is that the level of participation has even been decreasing since 2000. The political system is increasingly marked by authoritarian traits (the role of opposition parties is decreasing and the personal cult around the President is growing). The implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, for example, did not even foresee any participation by the people (Bliss 2004: 13).

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<sup>42</sup> In this regard I also refer to an ongoing research project at the Free University Berlin "Governance in Spaces of Limited Statehood" which is based on a similar hypotheses.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with the Deputy Head of the Islamic Renaissance Party in Dushanbe in February 2004

### 3. Chapter 1: The Status Quo of Tajikistan

In the light of the theoretical statements made above, I would now like to analyse the *status quo* of Tajikistan in terms of its governance structures and its level of economic development. Further, I am examining the involvement of external actors in 'modes of local governance' and what influence they have on the local development process through the elaboration and implementation of their own policies.

I am also discussing how the local population perceives the situation. While looking at the living conditions of the people it is important to pay attention to how they perceive the situation and what expectations they have regarding the development of their personal lives in the future.

Finally, I am looking at the political culture in Tajikistan today and the extent to which it slows down the overall development process. What arenas for manoeuvring do the actors actually have?

The Soviet government started quite a radical modernization process. It improved social mobility, access to public goods and literacy considerably. Due to a high level of exploitation of natural resources and re-distribution of resources in terms of subsidies, it raised the general standard of living.

Certainly, many of these modes were not only introduced to improve living conditions, but rather to exercise control on all parts of society. The Tajik civil war created different scenarios of governance performance depending on the involvement of the state, NGOs and international organisations in the three regions that I am focusing on (Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan).<sup>44</sup>

#### 3.1 The Soviet Modernization Process

On the one hand, the Soviet regime and the transformation process it pushed forward, especially in its early years, modernized the society and brought several significant improvements with it, such as increasing access to education (thereby bridging the gap between the urban and rural population), healthcare, markets (through heavy investment in infrastructure), empowering women, etc. It pushed other dynamics forward, such as the secularisation of society, the Cultural Revolution,<sup>45</sup> forced settlement of formerly nomadic tribes (more in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan than in Tajikistan) as well as the overall collectivisation and industrialisation processes (Baldauf 2007: 99).

On the other hand, the Soviet regime through its effort to control people and make them accept the system, created extreme dependencies that diminished any kind of self-initiative to an extreme minimum. As an example, one of my respondents put it in the following metaphor: "They taught us how to eat fish, but not how to catch the fish." Other respondents had other formulations describing the same effect.<sup>46</sup>

In fact, this was not just a metaphor. The shops were "always full" with fish from the Kamchatka and one did not have to make an effort to go fishing oneself, even though there was fish available in the river Panj and other rivers and lakes of Tajikistan. The fish in the shops was affordable and ready to eat; no further effort had to be made.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> See the map on page 141.

<sup>45</sup> Professor Baldauf applies the concept of 'Cultural Revolution' to the early years of the Soviet Union. According to her, behind the Cultural Revolution stood a radical constructivist approach towards culture. Culture in this sense could be created, developed, re-shaped, could be fought against, overcome and eventually, if necessary, be left behind. See: (Baldauf 2007: 99)

<sup>46</sup> Interview with the administrator of a local NGO in Darvaz (Mountain-Badakhshan) in November 2003

<sup>47</sup> Interview with a local development worker in Darvaz in November 2003



The Soviet system and its comparably good provision of public goods and services in fact led the Tajik population into extreme dependency. This still has an impact on today's development process as people are still not used to taking the initiative and their destinies into their own hands. Many people in 2003 were still hoping for the Soviet Union to re-emerge and the good level of provision of public goods from Soviet times to return.<sup>48</sup>

This way of thinking is at the same time part of a general Islamic belief in a destiny-driven life (*inshallah* – if God allows), which almost cannot be influenced by oneself. This belief was actually re-enforced by the Soviet system.

### **3.2 The Provision of Public Goods during Soviet Times**

Secular education was free and highly valued during Soviet times and one did not have to bribe one's way into the faculty one wanted to study in. Especially in terms of education, the social mobility during Soviet times was of another kind. It was not uncommon for Tajiks, even women, from modern, secularized families, to study in Leningrad, Moscow and other metropolises of the Soviet Union. Young men serving in the military would usually be sent to the other end of the 'empire' or even to other countries of the Warsaw Pact. This was a strategy to make the state eventually grow together, as it is known that serving together in the army (particularly in conflict situations, fighting together in a battle, e.g. during the invasion of Afghanistan) often creates bonds that can hardly be compared to other kinds of bonds or friendships.<sup>49</sup>

The provision of physical security, welfare and other public goods and services are of particular significance for the successor states of the Soviet Union, as these are taken by people as indicators on how successful the state-building process is. People usually give credit to improved infrastructure, as this is the kind of development one can actually see and touch. For the general population an improvement in terms of democratization, rule-of-law and community development for example, is not that visible. It is "software" for which more time is required. The general population, as well as many external actors, rather want quick visible results.

The Soviet Union was a comprehensive system, known for providing security, education, healthcare and infrastructure to all its citizens. It is a "Soviet legacy" that people have high expectations in terms of output functions. Tajikistan is not an exception, but it was the republic that depended on subsidies from the Soviet centre the most (officially, before the breakdown of the Soviet Union, 40 percent of the budget came from Moscow, unofficially respondents said probably up to double of that).<sup>50</sup> The discrepancy between people's expectations on the one hand, and the actual provision by the state on the other hand, is very high in Tajikistan.

### **3.3 Outsourcing of the Provision of Public Goods**

The Soviet state was very strong in terms of the provision of public goods and services. The Tajik state, following the breakdown of the Soviet Union and more so after the civil war, could not keep up the level of investment that had been made in this sphere. To cope with this situation the Tajik state decided to outsource parts of the provision of public goods.

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<sup>48</sup> Interviews with different respondents in Mountain-Badakhshan in October 2003

<sup>49</sup> During my field research in Tajikistan, I met many men who had served their military service in the GDR, in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, the Baltic countries, Ukraine etc.

<sup>50</sup> Interview with an NGO worker in Khorugh in October 2003

Today, the state is outsourcing the provision of public goods and services to three sets of actors: international organisations, national and international NGOs and, to some extent, to local power holders.

Medicines Sans Frontières (MSF), for example, in 2001 worked in the Rasht valley and in Mountain-Badakhshan, regions that were after the war largely excluded from government support and the provision of state healthcare because they are historical strongholds of the so-called Islamic opposition. MSF has been distributing essential drugs, rehabilitating health facilities and training hospital personnel. In Khorugh they refurbished the hospital's infectious diseases ward and water system, and worked on improving the treatment of infectious diseases.<sup>51</sup>

In Tajikistan, especially in the health sector, external donors were crucial as they accounted for approximately a third of the government's health budget in 1997 when the Tajik civil war finally came to an end (Rahmin, Gedik & Healy 2002: 204).

The phenomenon of temporary or long-term outsourcing of former core functions of the state is not limited to the health sector, and can also be found in the sector of provision of physical security, which has until recently been provided by the Russian army (for external physical security) or by local power holders (for internal physical security).

In the case of Tajikistan, the domination of the provision of these public goods and services is localized. Neither the state nor any other social forces manage to achieve countrywide domination (Migdal, Kohli & Shue 1994: 9). There is a general tendency that in the region where most of the government functionaries are from, Kulyab, the state is dominant regarding the provision of public goods and services; but in the former opposition regions, Mountain-Badakhshan and the Rasht valley, provision is primarily undertaken by international non-governmental (e.g. AKDN) and governmental organisations (e.g. UNDP).

J. Migdal describes the impact of this phenomenon in the following way: "Accommodation at the local and regional level has stemmed indirectly from the fragmentation of society and the dilemma such fragmentation imposed on state leaders. Its impact has been to bring the political process full cycle, for the Triangle of Accommodation results in an allocation of state resources that reinforces societal fragmentation" (Migdal 1988: 256).

Looking at Tajikistan as an NGO/ IO state, it becomes clear that the Tajik government has an interest in keeping Tajikistan at this development level, just on the brink between the emergency and long-term mode of development cooperation in order to secure a continuous influx of aid money. This stage, just on the brink between the emergency and long-term development cooperation phase, can persist for a long time, which is also the case in neighbouring Afghanistan. Once the war is finished, this does not mean that peace and a functioning state are immediately established, there is an intermediate phase.

In two cases in Shurabad and in the Rasht valley, I even found that local power holders were taking over core tasks of the state. In Shurabad, there was a locally respected figure who had invested in the renovation of the local school.<sup>52</sup> In the Rasht valley, these services were more tied to physical security and access to land.<sup>53</sup> In the latter case, it was not entirely clear whether these services were actually provided to all of the inhabitants in the respective districts or only to certain clientele, entitling only network members to these network goods.

The Tajik state has the features of an NGO/ IO state not only because it is marked by the phenomenon of outsourcing, but also because the actual outsourcing is a conscious policy decision" taken by the Tajik state.

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<sup>51</sup> See: Tajikistan: Aid to health system in shambles, on: [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org), sighted 10/10/ 01

<sup>52</sup> Interview with a teacher in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>53</sup> Interview with two NGO workers in Tavildara in October 2003

### 3.4 The Economic Situation of Tajikistan Today

In this section, I am looking at the economic setup in Tajikistan today. To explain the slowed-down development process in Tajikistan, I need to describe the basis that from which the Tajik state is starting its development.

Tajikistan is geographically and economically made up of a number of distinct and relatively isolated regions separated by high mountain ranges, most of which are only connected with each other during summer months. In fact, some of these regions are geographically and economically more closely linked to neighbouring countries than to one another.

At present, the Tajik economy has not recovered from the total cut of subsidies in 1991, when the Soviet Union collapsed, and the enormous economic decline that was caused by the civil war in the early 1990s, which cost the country's economy more than seven billion USD. Along with this came a steep decline in production and macroeconomic instability (the main market to which goods were sold – which was mainly within the Soviet Union - broke down), and the rapid impoverishment of the population followed.<sup>54</sup> After years of continuous decline, the GDP from 1991 to 1997 fell by 65 percent and Tajikistan only recorded its first economic growth in 1997.<sup>55</sup> Regarding its industrial production, by 2004 Tajikistan had reached only 63.6 percent of the level it had in 1991 and 60 percent of all goods consumed in the country had to be imported (mainly from Russia, China, Iran, Turkey and partly from Uzbekistan).<sup>56</sup>

In the 1990s inflation rose to several thousand percent. There were periods when even essential goods were not available and poverty assumed threatening proportions. Only when a fair level of economic stabilization was achieved, economic reforms could be pursued. The gradual stabilization process also created an environment conducive to the second development phase, which was accompanied by an upward trajectory from 1997 to 1999. In 2000, strong economic indicators started: inflation fell to between 6 and 7 percent, and external debt, which had been equal to 108 percent of the GDP, dropped to 39 percent of the GDP in 2000.

The strong growth and macroeconomic stabilization from 2001-2006 additionally contributed to a drop in the country's poverty rate. In 1999, the poverty rate was 81 percent; by 2003 it was reduced to 64 percent. In addition, the degree to which the level of poverty varied between regions also declined.

In Mountain-Badakhshan, the poverty rate is still as high as 84 percent and in the regions of republican subordination (RRS), i.e. the Rasht valley, the rate is 45 percent.<sup>57</sup> According to my interviews and participant observation, it is these regions that suffered the most from the Tajik civil war and that have received the least state support since.

Up to 70 percent of Tajikistan's industrial output is based on the production of aluminium, cotton and hydropower. The vast majority of the population survives through subsistence farming and the bartering of home-produced goods.<sup>58</sup> Many adults engaged in farming actually regard themselves as unemployed, although they may undertake farming work.<sup>59</sup>

The external debt burden, which is now estimated at 87 percent of GDP, remains one of the most pressing economic problems the government will face over the next

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<sup>54</sup> National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 4

<sup>55</sup> According to the National Development Strategy though, between 1992 and 1996 Tajikistan's gross domestic product shrunk by a factor of more than three, performance indicators of sectors in the real economy fell by a factor of 2-10.

<sup>56</sup> Same as footnote no. 55

<sup>57</sup> National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 4 & 5

<sup>58</sup> Asian Development Bank, 2002: 2

<sup>59</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district, 2003: 12

decade. The total external debt is estimated at 970 million USD.<sup>60</sup> Cotton and aluminium actually account for over 80 percent of the export earnings. Two further pillars of (illegal) economic regeneration in Tajikistan are drug trafficking (of opium, heroin, and hashish from Afghanistan) and work migration, which will be more closely examined in section 6.4.

The harsh winter (2007/2008) and the following crisis regarding the provision of electricity, heating and food did not only have a severe impact on the living conditions of the people, but also on the general economic situation of the country. "Tajikistan's debt has been steadily climbing in recent years. But with the country being battered in recent months by the harshest winter in generations, President Imomali Rahmon's administration appears to have lost all semblance of financial independence."<sup>61</sup>

The frequent power cuts especially had a devastating impact on the Tajik economy. According to an Asia-Plus report on 1 February 2008: "All industrial enterprises in the northern Sogd Region have been brought to a complete stop due to the electricity shortage."<sup>62</sup>

The most profitable crop in Tajikistan is the monocultures of cotton in the south-west that were established during Soviet times. However, they consume a lot of water and have left the land with few minerals, as well as contaminated by artificial fertilizers and pesticides. The cotton suffered a lot from the winter crisis and the yields in 2008 in comparison to previous years are expected to be heavily reduced.

When I say most profitable crop, it has to be noted though that cotton is mainly profitable to the local elites rather than the local peasants and the women and children handpicking the cotton during harvest time. They are being exploited to the extreme. The environment has suffered a lot. Monocultures like cotton that need a lot of water have led to minerals being drawn out of the soil and a heavy salinisation of the land has been the consequence. If one would take all the destructive factors around the production of cotton into consideration and the costs that arise in the long term that are primarily irreparable, cotton would no longer be seen as the most profitable crop.

Economically, the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic was by almost all standards the least developed of the Soviet Union. Independent Tajikistan is in many ways even worse off than during Soviet times. Partly because it is isolated in a way that has become unusual in the twenty-first century: its topography, politically sensitive position and "weak infrastructure makes cheap communication with the world difficult" (Whitlock 2002: 4).

Tajikistan has an economic growth rate of 10.6 percent, which is not bad, but considering that it started from a very low basis, this does not mean a lot. What is increasingly turning into a problem is the growing inflation rate, which in March 2007 was 13.1 percent.<sup>63</sup> "While Tajikistan has experienced steady economic growth since 1997, nearly two-thirds of the population continues to live in abject poverty."<sup>64</sup>

The majority of the population of Tajikistan has been losing economically since 1991. Only very few functionaries and stakeholders affiliated with the marketing of cotton and import/ export businesses have managed to make some profit. In addition, the profit from drug trafficking only benefits a very small group of people close to this "business elite". The land reform is crucial in this regard. If it would be possible to

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<sup>60</sup> Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2000: 4

<sup>61</sup> Arman, Kambiz: Tajikistan: Mounting Debt opens up Country to Geopolitical Struggle for Control, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/02/08

<sup>62</sup> Same as footnote no. 61

<sup>63</sup> Canadian Development Agency: Tajikistan Factsheet, on [www.international.gc.ca](http://www.international.gc.ca), sighted 16/07/08

<sup>64</sup> CIA World Factbook, Tajikistan, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), sighted 08/03/08

split up the big former state plots into small pieces of private land, large parts of the population could profit at least at a low level (Bliss 2004: 8).

### **Economic Growth and the Debt Burden**

In 2004, economic growth reached 10.6 percent, but dropped to eight percent in 2005, seven percent in 2006, and 7.2 percent in 2007. Tajikistan's economic situation remains fragile due to uneven implementation of structural reforms, weak governance, widespread unemployment, and the external debt burden.

Continued privatization of medium and large state-owned enterprises could increase productivity. "A debt restructuring agreement was reached with Russia in December 2002 including a \$250 million write-off of Tajikistan's \$300 million debt."<sup>65</sup> In 2006, Freedom House stated that the cotton sector alone accumulated a debt of 300 million USD.<sup>66</sup>

According to preliminary data from the Central Bank, the winter crisis (2007/2008) has accumulated an additional 246 million USD on top of the initial debt.<sup>67</sup> The winter crisis has brought one billion USD in damages caused by snow and freezing temperatures.<sup>68</sup>

As a penalty for having provided the IMF with false data about the country's financial situation, Tajikistan was asked "to repay more than 47 million USD in IMF loans."<sup>69</sup> This supports my argument that the Tajik government is falsifying data to pretend that it is still at the same development stage, in order to have a continuous influx of aid money, from which the "political elite" profit's surpassingly.

"In late January [2008], the government disclosed that the national debt burden stood at a whopping \$1.2 billion<sup>70</sup>, a figure that is almost one-third of the country's GDP. *Per capita*, Tajikistan has a GDP of about 1,600 USD and almost two thirds of the population lives below the poverty line."<sup>71</sup>

The rate at which Tajik debt is accumulating is approaching warp speed. In 2007, the country's total debt figure climbed 29.3 percent over the previous year's figure, according to Timurali Avtonov, head of the Finance Ministry's main department for government debt and financial assets.<sup>72</sup>

Fifteen years after the demise of communism, IFES found that only 36 percent of the public prefers a market-based economic system with limited state control, while 50 percent prefer an economic system where the state had full control.<sup>73</sup> This shows how profitable it was, in the eyes of most Tajiks, to be a member of the Soviet Union. The country profited enormously from the subsidies coming from Moscow.

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<sup>65</sup> Same as footnote no. 64

<sup>66</sup> Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), on: [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 05/02/08

<sup>67</sup> Arman, Kambiz: Tajikistan: Mounting Debt opens up Country to Geopolitical Struggle for Control, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/02/08

<sup>68</sup> Radio Free Europe/ Radio Liberty: Tajikistan: IMF Demands Dushanbe Repay Nearly \$48 Million, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 20/03/08

<sup>69</sup> Same as footnote no. 68

<sup>70</sup> The CIA World Factbook in December 2007 even estimated the national debt burden to be \$1.308 billion.

<sup>71</sup> Arman, Kambiz: Tajikistan: Mounting Debt opens up Country to Geopolitical Struggle for Control, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/02/08

<sup>72</sup> Arman, Kambiz: Tajikistan: Mounting Debt opens up Country to Geopolitical Struggle for Control, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/02/08

<sup>73</sup> See: Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 03/02/08

### 3.5 The Human Rights Situation

My overall goal (my dependent variable) is to look at factors that slow down development. One important factor in this regard is the current human rights situation in Tajikistan.

Even though Tajikistan has fairly recently abolished the death penalty, in general terms in human rights it has not come very far. Extreme examples are the treatment of prisoners and the situation regarding child labour. Ill-treatment and torture is widespread in order to extract information from detained suspects. Child labour is particularly widespread in the cotton industry.<sup>74</sup>

Even the way soldiers doing their basic military service are treated can be called a violation of human rights. Soldiers based on the Tajik-Afghan border often do not get enough to eat. A respondent in one of border districts stated that soldiers often only would receive bread once a week and that they often suffered from coldness, as they would sell their uniform for something to eat. Soldiers were also said to be involved in community work (in Tajik *hashar*<sup>75</sup>) as they knew that this would be credited with a common meal in the end.<sup>76</sup>

Human rights are still only a side topic in which formally progress has been made following external pressure. *De facto*, the situation has not changed significantly. A lot of awareness still needs to be raised for these kinds of issues.

#### Less Girls Getting School Education

In Tajikistan, there is a trend in rural areas, especially in conservative areas such as Gharm and Shurabad, that fewer and fewer girls attend school. This is not the case in more urban areas, such as Dushanbe, Khudjand and central parts of Khatlon, but it contributes to the increased fragmentation of the country.

According to a UNDP report, the number of children not attending school is growing, and particularly secondary school attendance rates are declining.<sup>77</sup>

A fifth-grade teacher stated that every year there were fewer and fewer girls coming to school, and that as a result, the school had to adapt its curriculum to attract more girls. This teacher asked the parents of girls of school age whether they would allow their daughters to go to school if they were taught sewing. The parents said that, if this were the case, the girls would be allowed to go to school. The problematic tendency is that girls are not only prohibited from going to school, but they themselves do not see the advantage of going to school, tending to think that religious education is sufficient and eventually, especially in rural areas, the girls are more interested in who would become their future husband than getting a secular education.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006) on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 05/02/08

<sup>75</sup> A *hashar* is a common community event that one can call for, if one needs help with construction. It is based on reciprocity. To say thanks a meal is usually provided to the participants at the end.

The son of friends of mine in Dushanbe was drawn into the army at the beginning of 2007 and he was first based in Nishny Pyandzh (a town on the Afghan border). The parents were seriously worried about their son's physical survival. It was difficult for them to go and visit him because it was a long way and visiting hours were very much restricted. Nevertheless, the parents visited their son as often as possible, bringing him food and newspapers, as there was not enough to eat and he did not have access to any reading materials whatsoever. While they were visiting, he would read all through the night. Interview with a Pamiri family in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>76</sup> Interviews with two elderly women in the district of Yol, Shurabad, in October 2003

<sup>77</sup> UNDP in Tajikistan – Fighting poverty in post-Soviet Tajikistan, on: [www.undp.tj](http://www.undp.tj), sighted 24/05/08

<sup>78</sup> Newman, Dina: Tajik girls drop school to marry, on: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 03/25/08

In Khatlon in 2008 the 'decade of attracting girls to schools' was declared. In Khatlon last year, only 83 percent of the girls went to school. In the Vakhsh district only 59 percent of the girls attended school and in Kumsangir only 70 percent.<sup>79</sup>

In numerous cases, women had received their secondary education or had even completed university and were then married off and never 'made any use' of their high level of education professionally. It seemed that having received a secondary education or even a university degree increased one's 'marriage value'. Potential husbands prefer educated women, so that they are able to take good care of the children.<sup>80</sup>

### 3.6 Activities of the Main Donor Organisations

In the following section, I introduce the main external actors in the development process. I examine the policies they elaborate and implement, and to what extent they are in line with the state policies.

Since the end of the civil war, international donors have played an important role in local governance in Tajikistan as well as the overall development process. The engagement of international donors started first by rewarding Tajikistan for its peace agreement. Then the international interest in Tajikistan decreased again and only resumed its previous level in 2001.<sup>81</sup> Tajikistan since the civil war is highly dependent on development aid. Attention to Tajikistan was considerably increased following 11 September 2001, when the most important bilateral donors (with the exception of Japan) and a number of international development organisations developed strategies for crises and conflict prevention, and made them their main priority. USAID had already been focusing on crisis prevention in the region before the terror attacks.<sup>82</sup>

Unfortunately, this has not led to "much improvement in the capacity of government structures and the nascent civil society of Tajikistan." (Muhutdinova 2007: 684). At the same time, Tajikistan and the overall region of Central Asia was increasingly drawn into the stressful field of (regional) security interests.<sup>83</sup>

The World Bank, ADB, EBRD, the OSCE and UN agencies are the main multilateral providers of grants, loans, material and technical assistance to Tajikistan. Thirteen UN agencies are based full time in Tajikistan. The UN 2002 Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal sought a total of 76 million USD for the sectors of food security, health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, education, reintegration, coordination and security.<sup>84</sup>

As Tajikistan is moving from a post-war situation towards a long-term development goal, there are not only humanitarian relief organisations working in the country, but

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<sup>79</sup> Teletain „AP“: 1, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>80</sup> In autumn 2003, I visited a family in Mountain-Badakhshan. I had come to interview the head of the household as he was working for a local NGO that also had operations in Afghanistan. The man officially introduced himself. Later his wife whispered into my ear that she also had a degree in economics. I asked her whether she had ever worked in her field, but she said that she had not. In addition to this, there is a big pressure on young recently married couples for the woman to become pregnant immediately. Once the first child is born, she usually does not return to her work. As people in Tajikistan get married early, the potential period for women in which they could have a job is extremely short.

<sup>81</sup> Jörn Grävingholt cited in: German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2005: 18

<sup>82</sup> Same as footnote no. 81

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, p.11

<sup>84</sup> As of 25 October 2001, the international community had contributed some 35 million USD or 46 percent of the total requirements, of which 33.95 USD million were for food aid through WFP (Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal for Tajikistan).

also a host of development orientated international NGOs and international organisations (such as the UN and OSCE) that operate in Tajikistan.

Many states (the US, Switzerland, Germany, Japan, France, Sweden, Canada, Italy, Norway) have NGOs working in Tajikistan that are implementing projects, either financed by national budgets or by the European Union (ECHO, TACIS etc.).

After the increase of aid money following September 11, today the commitment of donors to Tajikistan in the context of the long-term vision of the NDS and medium-term with the second PRSP, remains to be seen.<sup>85</sup> Donors seemed to have lost interest in Tajikistan, overshadowed by its neighbour, Afghanistan. The interest in Tajikistan was slightly revived through the recent winter crisis (2007/ 2008).

In some regions (especially the opposition regions of Mountain-Badakhshan and the Rasht valley) people remain highly dependent on humanitarian aid, grants and credits provided by international NGOs and IOs. In general, there is a tendency to transition interventions away from relief towards longer-term engagement targeting issue areas such as community mobilization and capacity building on the local level.

<b>Total Aid to the Country in 2005</b>	<b>Amount Received</b>	<b>Source</b>
<b>Total Aid from All Countries</b>	241 million USD	Source 4 <sup>86</sup>
<b>Total Aid as Proportion of GDP</b>	10,44%	Source 5 <sup>87</sup>
<b>10 Biggest Donors in 2005</b>		
<b>United States of America</b>	58 million USD	Source 4
<b>International Development Agency</b>	37 million USD	Source 4
<b>European Commission</b>	36 million USD	Source 4
<b>Asian Development Fund</b>	26 million USD	Source 4
<b>IMF</b>	15 million USD	Source 4
<b>Switzerland</b>	10 million USD	Source 4
<b>Japan</b>	10 million USD	Source 4
<b>Germany</b>	8 million USD	Source 4
<b>Canada</b>	7 million USD	Source 4
<b>Turkey</b>	5 million USD	Source 4
<b>Sweden</b>	5 million USD	Source 4
<b>5 Biggest Bilateral Donors</b>		
United States of America		Source 4
Switzerland		Source 4
Japan		Source 4
Germany		Source 4
Canada		Source 4

### **Development Aid from USAID**

USAID has been operational in Tajikistan since 1993. USAID's support to the country exponentially increased since the US became militarily involved in the region in 2002. Since 1992, USAID has provided 240 million USD in assistance programmes to Tajikistan. In 2007, USAID had budgeted 21 million USD. To create economic growth (8.1 million USD allocated, 38 percent of the budget) USAID helps to reduce regulatory and administrative constraints for small and medium enterprises by facilitating informative and effective dialogue between the Government and the

<sup>85</sup> UNDP in Tajikistan – Fighting poverty in post-Soviet Tajikistan, on: www. undp.tj, sighted 24/05/08

<sup>86</sup> Source 4: Development Database on Aid from DAC Members, 06; DAC stands for the Development Co-Operation Directorate of the OECD

<sup>87</sup> Source 5: Total GDP, World Bank 2005



private sector. It supports business associations, and provides accountancy training, business education, and support in terms of microfinance and to the agricultural sector. In support of regional trade, in 2007 USAID began facilitating Tajikistan's accession to the World Trade Organisation, focusing on reduction of trade barriers and expanded access to market information. USAID's assistance to the Parliament and the Ministry of Finance focuses on budgetary and macroeconomic issues.

USAID provides support to the State Tax Committee in tax administration and to the National Bank in monetary policy and banking supervision. Other focus areas include the reform of commercial law, improving the land tenure legislation to allow for secure land use rights and strengthening farmers' rights to use land. It helps farmers to improve management of on-farm water and irrigation networks and to increase agricultural production. USAID also supports the creation of agricultural value chains and provides critical financing, support services and training to farmers. USAID further facilitates development of a regional electricity market and supports the Government of Tajikistan in reforming the country's electricity sector by helping to establish a transparent, competitive market to increase electricity trade and to introduce market-based solutions for trans-boundary water disputes, which have increasingly emerged after the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

Under the headline "Investing in People" (8.8 million USD allocated, 42 percent of the budget) USAID is assisting Tajikistan in implementing health system reforms to ensure utilization of quality, client-oriented, cost-effective primary healthcare services. The Ministry of Health receives assistance in developing its National Tuberculosis Control Programme and in improving human and systems capacity for tuberculosis treatment, prevention and control. USAID assists in implementing HIV grants from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. It supports the training of health professionals and officials in various aspects of HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, and policy-making. USAID also supports drug use prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programmes, and finally supports the Government of Tajikistan's efforts to combat avian influenza.

USAID seeks to improve basic education at the primary and secondary school levels. Activities include training in teaching methods that stress critical thinking and active learning, capacity building for administrators and education finance reform.

Regarding "Governing Justly and Democratically" (4.1 million USD allocated, 20 percent of the budget) USAID provides training, assistance and small grants to strengthen civil society, promote accountable local governance and increase access to information. Print and broadcast media receive training, legal assistance and production support, and NGOs receive legal advice. USAID also trains democratic political parties and supports public legal education. An anti-trafficking programme works on prevention activities and provides for the protection of victims (IOM).<sup>88</sup>

USAID is providing more than 830,000 USD to the people of Tajikistan after the extreme winter weather and an energy crisis (2007/2008) have caused a humanitarian crisis in the country. This funding helped to provide fuel, heaters, clothing, household supplies, and health services to those in need through USAID partners Save the Children, CARE and Mercy Corps.

In addition, the U.S. Department of State is shipping more than 259,000 humanitarian daily rations to Tajikistan. The total value of the rations, including transportation, is 1.6 million USD, bringing the total value of U.S. Government humanitarian assistance to nearly 2.5 million USD.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> USAID Programs in Tajikistan in 2007, on: <http://centralasia.usaid.gov>, sighted 11/05/08

<sup>89</sup> USAID: Europe and Eurasia: U.S. Disaster Assistance to Tajikistan Tops \$2 Million, on: [www.usaid.gov](http://www.usaid.gov), sighted 11/05/08

### **Swiss Development Cooperation**

The Swiss development cooperation has had a special focus on supporting mountainous societies in Central Asia. Swiss development cooperation sees its role as contributing to poverty alleviation and supporting a transition towards a pluralistic and economically viable state. The Swiss Government has mandated two federal offices to coordinate international development: the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO). Their joint three goals in Tajikistan and Central Asia are transparent, accountable and effective public institutions; equitable access to good quality public services; and, sustainable, private sector-led growth. The Swiss Cooperation Office in Tajikistan (SCO), which was established in 1998, monitors implementation. Its implementing partners are international organisations, national and international NGO's and governmental institutions. For 2007, the overall budget of Swiss Cooperation in Tajikistan, including regional components, was more than 12 million USD. The following five areas of interventions were chosen: healthcare reform; basic infrastructure; disaster and water management; private sector development; and public institutions and services, complemented by gender and good governance as cross cutting themes.<sup>90</sup>

In May 2008, the Government of Switzerland announced that it would allocate 1 million USD to Tajikistan after the recently experienced energy crisis. In addition to this, the Swiss government will grant six mobile hospitals to the Tajik Health Ministry for possible disasters. The Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs further plans to allocate 500,000 USD for the restoration of priority areas in the country's energy sector.<sup>91</sup>

### **Japanese Development Cooperation**

The overall amount of development aid provided to Tajikistan by Japan in 2006 was 10 million USD.<sup>92</sup> The Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in Tajikistan provides cooperation in the form of policy advice and human resource development. It supports the process of transitioning to a market economy and upgrading basic infrastructure, while taking into consideration the country's stage of development. In the fields of education and health, JICA engages in cooperation projects that incorporate the human security perspective. In addition to that, problems that were given little consideration during the Soviet era, such as environmental pollution, are now being duly addressed.

In August 2004 a new framework "Central Asia and Japan" was introduced that addressed the importance of intra-regional cooperation on common challenges, including terrorism, drugs, transportation, water and energy resources, trade, and environmental conservation. JICA is expected to take an active role as a participant in this framework.<sup>93</sup>

According to an overview by SIDA, Japan was the third largest bilateral donor in 2006. Unfortunately, irrational factors also play a role regarding how effective the development effort made by a donor will be. A respondent told me during my field research that the Japanese could do what they wanted, the Germans would always be in a much better position because the Germans are much more connected to the Tajiks historically.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> SDC: Swiss Cooperation in Tajikistan, on: [www.swisscoop.uz](http://www.swisscoop.uz), sighted 11/05/08

<sup>91</sup> Red Orbit: Swiss Government Allocates About 1m Dollars to Tajikistan, on: [www.redorbit.com](http://www.redorbit.com), 31/05/08

<sup>92</sup> Tajikistan, "Tadzjikistan\_en\_SIDA.pdf", on: [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se), sighted 03/07/07

<sup>93</sup> See: JICA: Central Asia and the Caucasus, on: [www.jica.go.jp](http://www.jica.go.jp), sighted 11/05/08

<sup>94</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Darvaz in November 2003; the respondent was referring to the Tajik thinking that they are close to Germans through an imagined "Aryan connection" that had also been propagated by the Nazis.

### **German Development Cooperation**

In 2006, Germany was Tajikistan's fourth largest bilateral donor and the overall contribution was eight million USD.<sup>95</sup> The German Organisation for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) has been operational in Tajikistan since 1995 and has maintained a coordination office in Dushanbe since 1996. In Tajikistan, the GTZ has been working on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). Cooperation has centred on rebuilding the economy and promoting the drawn-out, frequently interrupted transition process from a centrally planned economy to a competitive social market system.<sup>96</sup>

### **Canadian Development Cooperation**

Canada has had a presence in Tajikistan since 1994. Since then it has been working with its partners to reduce instability through poverty alleviation, particularly in the rural areas. Tajikistan's openness to cooperation with aid partners also allows Canada to contribute to regional security in Central Asia. In the years 2004 and 2005, Canadian Official Development Assistance to Tajikistan totalled 10.40 million USD.<sup>97</sup> In 2006, Canada provided an overall amount of seven million USD to Tajikistan.<sup>98</sup> In August 2006, Tajikistan released a draft of its National Development Strategy (NDS), which provides a clear set of needs and priorities for international assistance working towards the Millennium Development Goals. CIDA's assistance programme to Tajikistan focuses on this NDS and on agrarian reform in the rural areas (where the majority of the population lives). CIDA's approach is to foster local ownership and leadership. It is particularly focusing on democratization and capacity building of the public sector in rural agrarian reform as well as the promotion of rural entrepreneurship and access to markets for rural producers.<sup>99</sup>

### **Swedish Development Cooperation**

The Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) has been active in Tajikistan since 1997. Its overall objective is to create the necessary conditions for reducing poverty and for preventing conflict, primarily by promoting sustainable development and improved standards of living. It also has a strong focus on agriculture, as this sector is of crucial importance in preventing starvation and generating income for poor people. SIDA's activities in Central Asia cover rural development, veterinary services, seed development and support to the land reform process. In the social sector, SIDA works with authorities and NGOs in order to improve public health.

Given the vulnerable position of women and large number of female-headed households, all activities have a gender component. Together with its partners, SIDA examines the possibility of introducing certain targeted measures in the fields of education and local governance to contribute to the development of democratic structures and respect for human rights. Sweden's Strategy for Central Asia, that covered the period 2003-2005, focused on Tajikistan as the poorest country in the region. It was argued that a further stabilisation of the situation there would benefit security throughout the region. The aim of Swedish development co-operation with Tajikistan is to create means of support and faith in the future among the poor. Priority is given to programmes that lead to concrete, visible results, and that are in accordance with Tajikistan's own Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).<sup>100</sup> In 2006, Sweden allocated five million USD to Tajikistan.<sup>101</sup> Aid has been channelled via the UN and Red Cross movement and concerned food security, primary healthcare,

<sup>95</sup> Tajikistan, an aid overview for Tajikistan: "Tadzjikistan\_en\_SIDA.pdf", on: [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se), 05/06/07

<sup>96</sup> GTZ in Tajikistan, on: [www.gtz.de](http://www.gtz.de), sighted 11/05/08

<sup>97</sup> Tajikistan. Canada's Commitment, on: [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca), sighted 10/07/08

<sup>98</sup> Tajikistan, "Tadzjikistan\_en\_SIDA.pdf", on: [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se), 10/05/07

<sup>99</sup> Tajikistan. Canada's Commitment, on: [www.acdi-cida.gc.ca](http://www.acdi-cida.gc.ca), sighted 05/07/08

<sup>100</sup> SIDA: Why does Sweden provide Support to Tajikistan?, on: [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se), sighted 28/01/08

<sup>101</sup> Tajikistan, "Tadzjikistan\_en\_SIDA.pdf", on: [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se), 05/07/07

programme planning/ co-ordination and disaster preparedness. As Tajikistan is moving from humanitarian to long-term aid, the aim of the current Swedish development co-operation is to facilitate a gradual transition, whereby long-term assistance is linked to the humanitarian aid programme.

### **Development Aid from the European Union**

Since 11 September 2001, the EU doubled its aid to the region (Wiegmann 2003: 7). At the bilateral level, the EU's relations with Central Asian states are based on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCAs). The PCAs are built upon three pillars: political dialogue, trade and economic relations, and cooperation in a variety of sectors. They are based on common values of respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and include commitments to align their respective legal frameworks with that of the EU, and to undertake regulatory convergence in economic sectors.<sup>102</sup>

In 2006, The European Commission gave Tajikistan an overall amount of 36 million USD.<sup>103</sup> For 2007 to 2013, the EU regarding Central Asia is focusing on the diversification of energy supplies, promoting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), regional cooperation, and further ensuring stability and security.<sup>104</sup>

"TACIS Regional and Central Asia programmes have been effective in many cases in creating a system of regional networks or mechanisms enabling joint identification of priorities and mutual interest projects..."<sup>105</sup>

Following the 2007/ 2008 winter crisis the European Commission allocated an additional 750,000 Euros to Tajikistan. Funded actions included the supply of non-food items, water and sanitation actions, and food security. These funds were channelled through the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department (ECHO). A preliminary assessment of needs indicated that this crisis had affected around two million people. The Commission decided to give this humanitarian aid package to provide assistance to the most vulnerable people in rural and urban areas. The funds supplied the population with non-food items, water and sanitation, food security, including the provision of seeds and livestock.<sup>106</sup>

### **The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN)**

The *Aga Khan Development Network* (AKDN) implements the most extensive development programme in Tajikistan. AKDN began as early as 1993 by supporting the reconciliation and reconstruction processes, and providing legal advice to the National Commission of National Reconciliation. AKDN is made up of a host of sub-programmes, including the Agricultural Reform Programme under the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP), the Aga Khan Education Fund, the Aga Khan Foundation Tajikistan, and FOCUS, the Aga Khan's humanitarian aid programme.

The Aga Khan, the main religious authority of the Ismailis, brought his followers in Tajikistan a lot more than just a spiritual renaissance. "Many Badakhshanis credit him with saving them from starvation after the collapse of the Soviet economy and infrastructure, and in the ensuing civil war."<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> European Community, Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia, 2006: 4

<sup>103</sup> Tajikistan, "Tadjikistan\_en\_SIDA.pdf", on: [www.sida.se](http://www.sida.se), 05/07/07

<sup>104</sup> European Community, Regional Strategy Paper for Assistance to Central Asia 2006: 4-7

<sup>105</sup> See footnote no. 104, p. 21

<sup>106</sup> European Commission - Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO): Tajikistan: European Union allocates €750.000 in humanitarian aid to support victims of a severe cold spell, on: [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int), sighted 21/02/08

<sup>107</sup> Azizmamadova, Shirin: Tajikistan. Ismaili Resurgence, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net) (RCA No. 418), 05/11/05

### 3.7 The Perception of the People

Below, I aim to explain the development process at the local level in Tajikistan. Development and progress are difficult to measure in a neutral way. I therefore take the perception of the people as the main indicator. The primary question is if the local population is satisfied with the pace of the development process.

The general constellation in Tajikistan, however, is that people are unsatisfied with their living conditions and the pace of the overall development process. Judging from my interviews and observations in Kulyab, the people are even more dissatisfied with their living conditions and the pace of development than in Mountain-Badakhshan and the Rasht valley.

What adds to the often extreme dissatisfaction of people in Tajikistan with their current living situation is that their living standards are comparably worse than those of other Central Asian peoples. In fact, this has been the case for the last 70 years, but it is more the case that the people say that 'they used to have everything during Soviet times'. Nowadays, they do not even have the 'Soviet Central Asian Standard'. Eventually, it is more the loss or worsening of personal conditions that makes people dissatisfied, than what they see of how their neighbours live.

Tajiks (and even more Russian residents in Tajikistan) moved from a good standard of living to a much lower quality of life. Losing wealth and the reduction of the standard of living is a force that easily mobilizes people and creates frustration. It is much more forceful than a standstill in development and it can easily trigger conflict.

What Tajiks experienced after the breakdown of the Soviet Union was not a process of gradual degradation that occurred over decades, but in fact, this social change was the result of developments that took less than ten years of independence. The people were simply used to a different standard of living, to a different quantity and quality of public services being provided. During Soviet times the shops were always full, one could buy 'everything' at reasonable prices. A family used to receive one ton of coal every winter.<sup>108</sup> Therefore, the people did not have to fear the coldness of Tajik winters and they did not have to cut down the forests that are now endangered provoking erosion, as has happened rapidly in the years since independence. Forestation has significantly been reduced. Consequently, as the environment is increasingly being destroyed, natural hazards increase.

### 3.8 'A Poet is better than a Trader'

It is difficult to ascertain whether one culture or a people's mentality is more conducive to development in a region than another. However, what I see as a general tendency is that the Tajik people do not have a lot of drive for change or to pull themselves out of their misery. In regional comparison, Tajikistan's Uzbek, Kyrgyz and Afghan neighbours for example seem to have more entrepreneurial drive than the population of Tajikistan.

One of my observations has been that a general Tajik phenomenon seems to be the fact that in Tajik society a singer or poet is more respected than a trader. This is rooted historically in Tajik poetry and songs, and contradicts the notion that Tajiks used to be the traders, the settled urban population of Central Asia in pre-Soviet times. A lot of this formerly existing urban culture has been lost today.

A respondent commented on this issue in the following way: "The Afghans are different from us concerning trade. They never stop trading. There was this story that in Afghanistan during the war, the people would stop fighting when they would see a caravan. They would put down their weapons for some time and then they would let

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<sup>108</sup> Interview with a Pamiri development worker in the Rasht valley in November 2003

the caravan with goods pass and after it had passed, they would continue fighting again. In Tajikistan something like that would never happen.”<sup>109</sup>

In this regard, Tajiks are culturally very different from Afghans and Uzbeks. In Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, one has the impression that people are great money-makers, they manage to make a little business out of anything.

In Tajikistan, people do not seem to be focused on making money and building up little businesses. For instance, I observed in June 2007 that there are several restaurants in Dushanbe that are frequented by expatriates every night. Nevertheless, very few taxi drivers have the idea to simply sit and wait in front of these respective restaurants at around 10 p.m., when the people are likely to return home from their dinners. Often, when a taxi is needed, it is not available.

Tajiks still see themselves as the more cultured ones in Central Asia who used to be the settled, educated urban population. The population of Tajikistan seems to have switched roles with the Uzbek population. A respondent said: “If you compare what our people in Tajikistan are moving towards (she was hinting at people becoming more religious and the *hijab* being a fashion) and what you see on the streets of Tashkent today, it is a different world.”<sup>110</sup>

### 3.9 Political Culture and Political Will

Political culture is the context in which social and political decisions are taken; it is the “political climate”. The political culture in Tajikistan is very much dominated by informal networks and mafia-structures. Some of these structures date back to Soviet times. Others emerged during the civil war or were significantly strengthened during this time. The political culture is far from being ruled by the law and it is generally very limited.

Regional clans play an important role and people can easily be mobilized through these regional lines of belonging (the Russian term is *zemlyachestvo*, deriving from *zemlya*, which means ground or earth). *Zemlyachestvo* in Tajikistan today is one of the main means of identity, besides ethnicity. During the times of the civil war, the people were mainly mobilized along the lines of *zemlyachestvo*. I will come back to the phenomenon of *zemlyachestvo* in section 7.5 on networks.

Freedom House has been extremely worried by the decrease in the freedom of opposition voices. The parliamentary and presidential elections (2005 and 2006 respectively) could not be certified as free and fair (there was multiple voting, unmonitored tabulation of votes; candidates since then have to pay a 500 USD deposit to register etc.). These elections only consolidated the power of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT, President Imomali Rahmon's party).<sup>111</sup>

Tajikistan does not have the tradition of a strong civil society. Discontent until recently was rarely expressed openly in the form of protests, for example. Trade unions do not exist and workers' rights are extremely limited.

In 2006, the dynamics of civil society in Tajikistan remained unchanged. There were over 2,500 NGOs of which less than 10 percent were active in varying degrees. A new law on NGOs was drafted. Generally, no progress on developing a more vibrant civil society was made, as the government continued its distrustful and stagnant attitude towards activities in this sector (Muhutdinova 2007: 685).

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<sup>109</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Ishkashim in June 2004

<sup>110</sup> Interview with a local accountant in Dushanbe in September 2008

<sup>111</sup> Tully, Andrew: Democracy Survey Faults Russia, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/26/07

Some discontent is being expressed in the media, mainly print media, but the reach of the media is almost exclusively limited to urban areas. Until recently, people were caught in the “Soviet lethargy” and thinking that they as individuals, or more likely, as extended families, cannot really make a difference and change the existing structures. Political parties mainly mobilize people along regional lines and have programmes that are only elaborated to a very limited extent. In the public discourse, they do not play a major role. Public discourse is dominated by key political figures from the government or the opposition rather than the “voice of the masses”. For the current regime, this means that there is not much need for justification of policies and their implementation to the people. Accountability is extremely limited, but until recently the people have not been demanding more. People feel that the regime is becoming more and more repressive.<sup>112</sup> “Throughout much of the past decade, ordinary Tajiks have rarely voiced frustration with the government or head of state in the form of public protests. Demonstrations have been almost unheard of despite widespread poverty, rampant unemployment, and corruption.”<sup>113</sup>

In Tajikistan, corruption emerged under government’s control and managed to penetrate throughout all state structures. “It is a top-down construction that begins at the highest echelons of government and extends down to local governments. All governmental structures, including law enforcement, military, and border guards are under the centralized state’s oversight. Therefore, corruption at any level has a pyramid-like structure, and the president, at the top of the hierarchy, is typically the primary benefactor.” (Marat 2006: 23)

“Years after the end of the civil war, the Tajik economy resembles a pyramid-like structure, where the highest political authorities occupy the top of the corruption scheme. This scheme is functionally comparable to a semi-feudal system of government.”<sup>114</sup>

Tajikistan is today rated as one of the most corrupt states in the post-Soviet space.<sup>115</sup> However, people are only very slowly starting to speak up and to express their discontent. For example, in Mountain-Badakhshan there are growing levels of social discontent. People have started demonstrating. On 18 June 2008, 300 people gathered in Khorugh. The number of demonstrators even increased over the following two days. Analysts say that these local concerns need to be urgently addressed by the central government so that a political or even violent confrontation can be prevented. The demonstrations had actually been an immediate response to the arrival of a contingent of 1,200 troops that had been sent to the region by the government to allegedly “beef up the porous border with Afghanistan and curb the trafficking of drugs brought in from that country.”<sup>116</sup>

Speakers at the rally, however, raised concerns that the central government had sent those forces “to eliminate powerful local figures and crush public expressions of dissent in Badakhshan.”<sup>117</sup>

At the same time, the government’s political will to cooperate with international organisations is decreasing. Eurasianet reported that the International Committee of

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<sup>112</sup> I was surprised when I asked a respondent on the phone in Dushanbe in summer 2007 to tell me about the procedure to set up an NGO in Tajikistan; she asked me not to discuss issues like this one via the phone.

<sup>113</sup> Najibullah, Farangis: Press Break Decade of Silence, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/20/08

<sup>114</sup> This comment was made by Dr. Svante Cornell, Research Director at the Central Asia–Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program, July 2006; cited by (Marat 2006: 103)

<sup>115</sup> According to *Transparency International*, in 2005 Tajikistan was rated as corrupt as Somalia and Sudan. Among the post-Soviet states, only Turkmenistan stands as more corrupt, on: [www.transparency.org](http://www.transparency.org), sighted 11/05/05

<sup>116</sup> Olimova, Lola: Trouble in Tajik Mountain Province, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net) (RCA No. 547), 27/06/08

<sup>117</sup> Same as footnote no. 116

the Red Cross, which had worked on improving prison conditions, left Tajikistan in 2008 because it was unable to make progress.<sup>118</sup>

By choosing to align with criminals for their own political and economic ends, regime incumbents are susceptible to authoritarianism and cause the degradation of the society's well-being (Marat 2006: 10). In addition to the lack of political will by the Tajik government, the Tajik population is close to reaching a saturation point of what it will endure.

### 3.9.1 NGOs Try to Stay out of Politics

Another indicator for how limited the political culture in Tajikistan is, is the fact that local, often internationally financed, NGOs that exist and where people participate are almost only active in the social sphere, often targeting children, youth and women, but staying out of political affairs. This constellation very much limits the scope for group mobilisation and political participation. There are almost no movements dealing with issues such as the environment (as started in Russia during the time of *perestroika*), gender and civil rights. NGOs usually try to stay as apolitical as possible in order not to get 'too much into trouble' with the government. This is also connected to the fact that any kind of dissent since the end of the civil war is regarded as a threat to the fragile peace settlement (Akiner 2002: 34). Nevertheless, in 2001 the government lowered registration fees for NGOs, which led to an increase in the number of national NGOs. Currently, there are approximately 2,000 locally registered NGOs in Tajikistan.<sup>119</sup> During the last two years the work of NGOs has become more difficult again; in 2008 the Government asked NGOs to make their meetings with international partners open to the public to exercise more control over the activities of international actors.<sup>120</sup>

Finally, the problem is that NGOs often provide poor quality. "Many NGOs have become experts in successfully seeking funding from often naive donors, using proper buzzwords and appropriate Western-approved financial reports and narratives. Aside from glowing end-of-project reports, many NGOs deliver little of substance. This situation is exacerbated by improper or nonexistent auditing by donors, which inadvertently encourages unprofessional operations and financial mismanagement to some degree, even among the best of the local NGOs." (Muhutdinova 2007: 693)

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<sup>118</sup> ICRC left "with a lot of pain, a lot of regret," according to Sotirov. The international community was ready to assist. Several conferences on prison reform were organized. But the request by the government was only to 'give us money to repair the prisons.' But this is not the way the ICRC works; Kucera, Joshua: Evaluating Tajikistan's Reconstruction 10 Years after the Civil War's End, on [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), sighted 18/10/07

<sup>119</sup> Tajikistan report 2004 by the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), on: [www.humanrights.dk](http://www.humanrights.dk), sighted 16/03/05

<sup>120</sup> See: Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 06/02/08



## 4. Chapter 2: Geopolitical and Socio-Economic Structure in Rural Areas

In the previous chapter, I have looked at the development and *status quo* in Tajikistan in terms of the provision of public goods during Soviet times and how this is managed today. I will go into more detail in this regard in chapter 6. I examined at the economic situation in Tajikistan at present, particularly at the role external actors play. I again emphasized the importance of looking at how the people perceive the situation and the political culture in Tajikistan today. I looked at what chances people have to express discontent and to change political and social structures.

In this chapter, I am introducing the unique and often difficult geopolitical structure of Tajikistan. At the same time, I am drawing more attention to the socio-economic structure in the regions that lead to the development barriers and potentials explored in the following chapter. I am describing the structures in Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan (my research areas) in detail to further explain why the development process on the local level in Tajikistan has taken such a slow pace.

I am looking at the geographic, demographic, political, economic and social conditions that people live in and how these determine the future development of rural parts of Tajikistan.

### 4.1 The Geographic and Socio-Economic Factors

Tajikistan is landlocked, which has a negative impact on accessing markets - regional markets as well as the world market. Tajikistan borders Afghanistan (1,206km, south), Uzbekistan (1,161km west), Kyrgyzstan (870km, north) and China (414km, east). According to a report by the WFP, as long as relations with neighbouring Uzbekistan are tense and unstable, Tajikistan will remain a vulnerable country both economically and politically (Abassian, 2005: 10).

For the Tajik population, income is primarily generated from three sources. These are subsistence economy, remittances (from work migrants abroad) and finally from aid money. To date, the Tajik population is still very vulnerable to internal (e.g. the recent winter and energy crisis, and now the extreme increase in food prices) and external shocks (e.g. economic crises in Russia) (Abassian, 2005: 13).

Socially, Tajikistan is caught up between local traditions and modern external influences. The “Clash of Civilizations”, as Huntington called it, is partly taking place within the country (modern versus traditional, religious versus secular, different ethnic and regional groups against each other).

National identity is weak and people are looking for models that they can identify with and that can possibly bridge the gap between traditional and modern influences. To fill their ‘emotional vacuum’ people are increasingly turning towards religion (Islam, Jehovah Witnesses<sup>121</sup> and others), which is additionally being enforced by religious influences from abroad (extremist Islamic branches from Pakistan and elsewhere). Others try to turn towards the West to copy life models that are often in conflict with local and Islamic traditions (for example, young – even married - women and men studying abroad and leaving their families behind for years).

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<sup>121</sup> During my field research in Tajikistan in 2003/04, I had a friend who was working for an Italian NGO and her assistant was just in the process of converting to become a Jehovah Witness.

Domestic violence as a common post-conflict phenomenon is widespread, as is human trafficking.<sup>122</sup>

Tajikistan is rich in resources, but extracting them on a grand scale would be very costly, because mostly they lie very deep and it would be difficult to get them on to the world market. Tajikistan has deposits of petroleum, uranium, mercury, brown coal, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten, silver, gold and water for hydro power)<sup>123</sup> to offer. However, great investments had to be made to extract these resources and in comparison in the region Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are simply much more attractive, except regarding hydropower.

For centuries, Tajikistan has not been at the centre of interest, but has always been a country of the periphery and of transit. It has been pulled back and forth by external forces from Russia, the US, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran.

## 4.2 The Terrain and Conditions for Agriculture

In Tajikistan, the geographical and economic conditions largely define the prospects for the development process. Tajikistan is an extremely mountainous country with difficult terrain. Its lowest point is the Syr Darya, at 300 m and the highest point is the Qullai Ismoili Somoni at 7,495 m above sea level.<sup>124</sup>

Mountains form about ninety-three percent of the territory. Fifty percent of the territory lies above 3,000 meters (Abassian, 2005: 10). Although the whole population density is not that high for the given territory, people mostly make a living on 6.52 percent of the territory, which is the available arable land<sup>125</sup> and, therefore, the inhabited valleys are densely populated. The pressure on the land is growing as Tajikistan has a high population growth rate (1.89 percent, estimated in 2007<sup>126</sup>). This often leads to conflicts over land and other resources.<sup>127</sup> In the mountainous regions, land can be used as pastures, but not for farming. Due to extreme monocultures (such as cotton) formerly fertile land in the plains is now salinised and has significantly lost its minerals due to “over-fertilization”.

This puts pressure on arable land and makes it a scarce resource. According to Freedom House, inequality is on the rise. The situation is precarious. Hundreds of thousands of households depend on agriculture and animal husbandry for their survival in a country where less than seven percent of the land is arable.<sup>128</sup>

## 4.3 Tajikistan’s Demography and Health Risks

Tajikistan is a fast-growing society with an average fertility rate of 3.09 children born per woman (estimate from 2007).<sup>129</sup> The population is extremely young (35 percent of the population is younger than 14 years of age.<sup>130</sup> Tajikistan has one of the highest population density levels in the world, about 488 people per square kilometre of

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<sup>122</sup> See: Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2007), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 11/03/08; In the Balkans – in Kosovo – Tajik women were even reportedly trafficked to the Balkans as prostitutes.

<sup>123</sup> CIA World Factbook, Tajikistan, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), sighted 08/03/08

<sup>124</sup> Same as footnote no. 123

<sup>125</sup> Same as footnote no. 123

<sup>126</sup> CIA Tajikistan Factsheet, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), sighted 24/10/06

<sup>127</sup> I contributed to a study in which different conflict potentials at the local level are being analyzed: (Köhler 2004b: 18& 19)

<sup>128</sup> Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 04/02/08

<sup>129</sup> CIA World Factbook: Tajikistan, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), sighted 08/03/08

<sup>130</sup> Same as footnote no. 129

arable land (Abassian, 2005: 14). In 2005, Tajikistan was estimated to have a population of 6.7 million inhabitants, including 400,000 work migrants, 90 percent of whom were working in Russia. Almost five million out of the 6.7 million were living in rural areas (Abassian, 2005: 10). In Tajikistan, the trend of rural dwellers is not so much to move to urban centres. If people leave their home districts, they usually go abroad directly.

What has had a major impact on the social development of Tajikistan is that when it was founded as the Tajik Socialist Republic in 1929 it lost its urban centres, Samarqand and Bukhara, where they had developed a high culture, with, for example, internationally renowned poetry. Tajiks traditionally used to be the urban population in the region, whereas Uzbeks and Kyrgyz were mainly nomads. Today, Tajik urban culture is underdeveloped. Its main towns are Dushanbe (562,000), Khudjand (149,000), Kulyab (78,000), Kurghan-Teppa (60,000), Istaravshan (51,000) and Khorugh (28,000).<sup>131</sup>

Large parts of the population have grown up with war as a normal state, with strong memories from the Tajik civil war and with little prospects for the future. A local respondent put it the following way: "The youth is used to weapons and war."<sup>132</sup>

As with any civil war, the Tajik civil war created a new social structure for Tajik society. The civil war additionally intensified the process of the 'brain drain', particularly drawing educated people out of the country.<sup>133</sup> As the majority of the educated people had settled in urban areas and these people particularly were leaving the country, there was an increased influx of much less well educated rural population into the cities. During my research, many people were talking about this phenomenon and the 'intelligentsia' was complaining about these 'villagers' taking over Dushanbe. Often this process was subsumed by the term 'Kulyabization', of the 'Kulyabis', the people from the rural South, taking over and, for example, introducing their dialect as the new 'high Tajik' used on radio and television.

At the same time, the civil war claimed 50.000 to 80.000 victims, most of whom were young men, fathers of families. Consequently, many women-headed households remained. This often led to the fact that women now had to leave their houses in order to generate income. Women were increasingly becoming involved in trading activities, e.g. working at the bazaar or even opening their own little shop, as well as becoming more actively involved in farming and livestock breeding, which potentially could also be used as an opportunity to involve them more in local decision-making processes in the future.

To show how devastating the situation is, especially in the rural areas, one also has to mention the high risk of major infectious diseases, such as food or waterborne diseases like bacterial diarrhoea, hepatitis A, and typhoid fever as well as vector borne diseases such as malaria.<sup>134</sup> One of my respondents stated: "There is typhus in the village and there was malaria. Toilets and drinking water are a real problem."<sup>135</sup> Finally, yet importantly, to show how desperate the situation for some people is, the trafficking of human organs is flourishing.<sup>136</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> Same as footnote no. 130

<sup>132</sup> Interview with the head of a *jamoat* (sub-district) in Nulvand (Darvaz) in October 2003

<sup>133</sup> While I was working for a refugee centre run by the Red Cross/ UNHCR in St. Petersburg in 2000, there were still many Tajik refugees whose profiles I read, the large majority of them had a university degree. For those who had studied in other parts of the Soviet Union it was easier to return there as a refugee.

<sup>134</sup> Tajikistan Factsheet, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), sighted 08/03/2008

<sup>135</sup> Interview with the head of a *jamoat* (sub-district) in Nulvand (Darvaz) in October 2003

<sup>136</sup> When I did my field research in Tajikistan in 2003/ 2004, the son of my friend's neighbour disappeared for one week. When he returned he had a scar on his belly and could not remember where he had been in the meantime.

#### 4.4 The Ethnic Structure

An important issue is the fact that Tajikistan is not only diverse in ethnic terms, but that its ethnic minorities have large counterparts in the neighbouring countries.

Uzbeks, who account for 24 percent of the Tajikistani population, often largely orientate themselves according to neighbouring Uzbekistan. The same is the case with the Kyrgyz minority that lives mainly in the northern and north-eastern part of the country, adjacent to Kyrgyzstan.

This is, for example, the case regarding the population of Murghab, which is the largest district in Mountain-Badakhshan, situated on the borders with Kyrgyzstan, China and Afghanistan and whose population is mainly Kyrgyz. The situation of the inhabitants of Murghab has been desperate since the Soviet troops left, as they used to provide jobs, healthcare, electricity, fuel and other support. Seasonally or on a longer basis, more and more of those Murghabi Kyrgyz are migrating to Kyrgyzstan as they are offered land by the Kyrgyz government in the capital province (Tchuisky Oblast).<sup>137</sup>

Corresponding somewhat to the ethnic divide is the confessional divide, the fact that the majority of Tajiks are Sunni Muslims, but the majority of the Pamiris are Shia, i.e. Ismaili, Muslims.

The prevalent ethnic divisions are to some extent a legacy from Soviet times. In the course of the resettlement process as part of the overall collectivisation process, the state contributed to the re-composition of sub-ethnic divisions within the framework of the *kolkhoz* (collective farm) (Nekbakhtshoev 2006: 4).

The breakdown of the Soviet Union and the consequent civil war led to an exodus of the Slavic and ethnic German population. By 1992, 200,000 ethnic Russians had left the country (Bliss, 2006: 273).

It becomes obvious that the people from these ethnic groups who stayed behind simply had nowhere else to go anymore. Today they are the ones who often have the lower jobs in the Tajik society, e.g. cleaning the streets, selling newspapers, offering scales for people to weigh themselves in the streets, etc. Until three years ago in Dushanbe, one could still see a significant number of street children of Slavic origin, but they seem to have disappeared.<sup>138</sup>

Other ethnic minorities, especially in urban centres, include Tartars, Armenians, Koreans and Jews who had mostly been deported to Tajikistan during Stalinist times. The Tartars, Armenians and Koreans were always integrated into the Tajikistani society. Some of the Tartars have returned to their homelands in the Crimea. In 2004, there was still a small synagogue in the centre of Dushanbe. Allegedly, for reasons of city planning it was destroyed and supposed to be rebuilt in another location. Most of the members of the Jewish community were trying to emigrate to Israel or Germany.<sup>139</sup>

#### 4.5 Food Security in Rural Parts of Tajikistan

Access to nutrition can be a problem; particularly after the harsh winter (2007/2008) many Tajiks in rural areas were suffering from the initial stages of starvation. Another problem is poor methods of providing nourishment. Mothers (and even more so fathers) do not know what is healthy for their children. When their children suffer from diarrhoea, the children are given less fluids to stop the diarrhoea. It was also found

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<sup>137</sup> Interviews with local NGO workers in Murghab in October 2003

<sup>138</sup> A street boy, who has been slightly disabled, told me in Dushanbe in 2004 that his family had left for Russia and had left him behind.

<sup>139</sup> Interview with a representative of the Jewish community in Dushanbe in September 2003

that the nourishment of women was often much worse than the nourishment of men, as they would always first let the men eat and then the women take what the men had left.<sup>140</sup>

Due to growing inflation rates people are spending more than ever on food, but eating less. To demonstrate how severe the problem of inflation has become, in 2007 the price of wheat climbed by 70 percent. Consequently, 64 percent of Tajikistan's population subsists on less than two USD a day.<sup>141</sup> In mid-2007, food price increases did not only accelerate, but the country's cities also started experiencing significant difficulties regarding food supplies.

The government promised that price controls and government action would prevent food shortages, but nevertheless prices sharply increased and food supplies became scarce in some areas (in Khudjand meat disappeared from the market).<sup>142</sup>

According to the State Statistics Committee, the cost of basic food products rose by 20 percent in 2007. For some items, it rose by up to 500 percent. The overall inflation rate in 2007 was pegged at 19.7 percent.

The World Food Programme in 2008 stated that 550,000 Tajiks suffered from malnutrition and roughly 260,000 were in need of emergency assistance.<sup>143</sup> These figures almost describe a war-like situation.

#### 4.6 Poverty and the Rural-Urban Divide

Tajikistan is marked by extreme poverty. 83 percent of the population lives under the national poverty line. The Gross National Income per capita is 170 USD.<sup>144</sup> Especially in the large agricultural regions of Khatlon and Sughd the number of the extreme poor (earning below 1.08 USD per day) increased sharply between 1999 and 2003.<sup>145</sup>

According to the World Bank, until now "Tajikistan remains the poorest and among the most fragile of the CIS countries. Social indicators have continued to decline, reflecting deteriorating public service delivery, weak governance and sharp falls in per capita incomes".<sup>146</sup>

Today the minimum monthly salary in Tajikistan is 20 Somoni (which is equal to less than six USD). The average salary at the beginning of 2008 was 213 Somoni (equalling about 60 USD).<sup>147</sup>

The income of the lower and most common salary groups in the approximately 80 percent state-dominated agricultural sphere (people working for *sovkhoses* and *kolkhoses*), was in 2004 less than three USD. Only in those districts of Tajikistan where the land has been privatized and the peasants can decide themselves what they want to grow, mainly in Mountain-Badakhshan, have the people experienced an increase in income due to considerably increased yields.

In terms of poverty, there is a great rural-urban divide. Out of the poorest 20 percent of society in 2000, 18.5 percent lived in the urban areas and 81.5 percent in rural

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<sup>140</sup> Interview with co-workers of PSF in Dushanbe in April 2004

<sup>141</sup> See above

<sup>142</sup> Van Atta, Don: King Cotton freezes Tajikistan, [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 21/03/08

<sup>143</sup> See above

<sup>144</sup> Tajikistan, Consolidated Inter-Agency Appeal 2002, p.4, on: [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int), sighted 06/11/08

<sup>145</sup> World Bank: Republic of Tajikistan: Poverty Assessment Update. Report No: 30853-TJ, 06/01/05

<sup>146</sup> Tajikistan Country Brief 2007, updated April 2008, by the World Bank, <http://web.worldbank.org>, sighted 02/05/08

<sup>147</sup> Tajikistan: Government Shakes down Population amid Deepening Economic Dysfunction, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 05/07/08

areas. Mountain-Badakhshan had the highest proportion of poor families, followed by Khatlon. As Mountain-Badakhshan had only 220,000 inhabitants and Khatlon 2.3 million inhabitants in fact, most of the poor of Tajikistan were living in Khatlon – more than 45 percent (Bliss 2004: 4-5).

Poverty in old age is a phenomenon that is increasing. Old people are dependent on support from their families and *mahallas* (neighbourhood), as the state does not provide sufficient pensions anymore.

#### 4.7 Women's Poverty and Increased Discrimination

Gender and poverty also have to be considered together. The trend is that the situation of women and girls in society is worsening. Since 1991, jobs, especially those positions in the social and cultural sphere previously filled by women, have been cut. Regarding those positions that have remained for women, these jobs are the least well paid. A factor linked to the enormous amount of work migration taking place is that women have many fewer opportunities to seek employment outside of their homes or even abroad, as they need to take care of their children, animals and households. According to the World Bank, women-headed households have less access to land and other agricultural resources. The breaking apart of the state social system leads especially to an additional burden for the women. Poverty is often a reason for which children are not sent to school (Bliss 2004: 5-6).<sup>148</sup>

In 2005, the Tajik Parliament passed several laws on equal rights and opportunities. The problem, however, is the implementation and enforcement of these newly passed laws. The situation is changing and the roles men and women play in society are changing. However, the attitudes mainly stay the same and there is even a resurgence of patriarchal attitudes, especially in rural areas, such as in the Rasht valley and Kulyab.<sup>149</sup>

The official legislation gives women equal rights, but custom and practice often leave women with fewer property and inheritance rights.

“A UNIFEM study from 2006 on the land tenure rights of women in Tajikistan found that while the burden of agricultural work falls on women because the men are away working in Russia, they are not given equal access to resources including land.”<sup>150</sup>

Women do most of the work in the agricultural sphere, but they have only 15 percent of the positions in management and as technical experts. Female farm workers get half of what their male counterparts are paid and they have less of a chance to acquire land in the privatization process. Women are often unable to make use of the rights intended to support them because they do not have enough knowledge of the legislation. In village communities, the tradition that girls should not continue education after teenage years is still strong.<sup>151</sup>

Women's representation at the national level is not particularly bad. There are no female ministers, but women hold 17 percent of seats in Parliament. Women do hold secondary positions in government institutions, ministries and departments.<sup>152</sup>

Access to water and energy is even more a problem for women these days, as water and heating material is no longer provided by the state; women and children are forced to spend a lot of time collecting firewood and getting water from the nearest water source, which can be many kilometres away. In cotton growing areas, women

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<sup>148</sup> I learned this when I visited a very poor female-headed household in Darband in April 2004. According to my observation, the girls are then the first ones “to be sorted out” as people find it generally more important for boys to go to school than for girls.

<sup>149</sup> Mazarshoeva, Aslibegim & Majidova, Jamila: Gender Equality a Dead Letter in Tajikistan, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 31/03/08

<sup>150</sup> Same as footnote no. 149

<sup>151</sup> Same as footnote no. 149

<sup>152</sup> Ibid.

are forced to do unpaid work on the cotton fields to at least be able to collect the cotton stipes as heating material (Bliss: 2004: 6).

There is a regression regarding women's participation in the political process. However, this does not only concern women, there is also a general regression regarding participation in political decision-making processes (Bliss: 2004: 6).

Another indicator showing how desperate the situation of some women has become is the fact that child trafficking is on the rise. A judge from the Supreme Court stated: "One gets the impression that selling under-age children has become a kind of business for some mothers."<sup>153</sup> In 2007, the police recorded 13 cases of human trafficking involving minors, while during the first two months of 2008 six cases of human trafficking had already been reported. A new factor is that it is no longer only very young mothers selling their children, but now also older mothers are getting involved in this kind of "business". Women sell their babies due to poverty and because there is no longer a social safety net there to support them.<sup>154</sup>

The only mention the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) makes regarding women is "special programmes for employment of women", but nothing has been done by the state in Khatlon, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan in this regard.<sup>155</sup> The state would need to do a lot in order to re-establish the opportunities women still had in 1991 or to at least stabilize the current situation. It should be mentioned, however, that in comparison to other Islamic under developed countries the situation of women is still relatively good; the sad point is that the situation of women in Tajikistan was still much better seventeen years ago. To support women and the conditions for women, the provision of (micro-)credit and other means of financing needs to be improved (Bliss 2004: 13 & 18).

#### 4.8 Child Poverty

Child poverty is a significant factor in overall poverty in Tajikistan today. 66 percent of children under the age of 18 are defined as poor, compared with 61 percent of adults. Child poverty varies with age. Children aged under three are more likely to be poor than older children. In addition to this, there are strong regional disparities. The highest risk of child poverty is in Mountain-Badakhshan and Khatlon. There is a strong link between parental education and child poverty. Children of better-educated parents are less likely to be poor. From 2000 to 2005, some progress has been made. The UNICEF Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey highlights that the infant mortality rate (deaths to children aged under 12 months per 1,000 live births) fell from 89 to 65 and the under five mortality rate (deaths of children aged under five years per 1,000 live births) fell from 126 to 79. The nutritional status of children in Tajikistan is shocking: 1) 17 percent of children under the age of five are underweight; 2) seven percent of young children are wasted (i.e. are of a low weight for their height); 3) 27 percent of children under five are stunted (have low height for their age); and, 4) around 10,000 children in Tajikistan are stunted, wasted and underweight (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 3-4). An additional problem to malnutrition is the wrong nutrition. Women stop breast-feeding their children very early, in fact a Soviet legacy. As the water used for mixing baby nutrition is often not clean, the babies are in danger of catching all kinds of waterborne diseases.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Vahobzade, Salimakhon: Baby Trade worries Tajikistan, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 08/04/08

<sup>154</sup> Same as footnote no. 153

<sup>155</sup> The Government has theoretically focused on the reduction of poverty with its two Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers from 2001 and 2007, but in practice not much has happened in this regard.

<sup>156</sup> Interview with a French nurse in Dushanbe in May 2004

## 4.9 Linking Economy and Geopolitics with Development Prospects

The overall picture looks grim. Even though a robust growth in macroeconomic terms is expected, this will reduce poverty an insignificant amount, as the gap between rich and poor will most likely grow as well. If the Tajik government does not deal with this phenomenon sustainably, it will lead to repeated destabilization. The rural-urban divide is likely to widen, with cotton-growing areas especially enduring poverty, a continued gender bias, exploitation of labour (including child labour) and with an opaque and corrupt land reform that has dragged on for the last ten years.

Freedom House stated that economic and political development in 2006 depended on the government's ability to implement genuine reform and to continue peace-building and democratization efforts, which had been largely abandoned during the past few years.<sup>157</sup> The reform process has been very slow and often new laws were introduced, but no mechanisms were created to enforce these new laws. The Tajik government seems to have forgotten that there still is a need for peace-building and real democratization efforts, or actual successes towards more democratic structures, have not been visible or the mode has been one step forward in one area and one back in another area.

The legacies that have to be considered in terms of state-building and further development in Tajikistan are those from Soviet times as well as legacies from the Tajik civil war. These two factors and the degree of openness of the current regime for change will considerably determine what path Tajikistan will take in the near future.

The other factors are resources – natural resources as well as external resources, such as aid money<sup>158</sup> - that flow into the three target regions. Another determining factor is the question of what role the particular region played during the civil war in the 1990s. It is determining whether it was dominated by government forces or the *United Tajik Opposition* (UTO) and eventually its geographic and geopolitical location and the state of infrastructure in place<sup>159</sup>, the question of whether a region is situated on the border and what trade routes lead through this particular region – these factors significantly determine the regions' future development prospects.

Tajikistan is the country of the former Soviet Union where prices for consumer goods have risen the most. From the period between January and July last year to the same period this year, the prices have risen 29.8 percent. The official inflation rate is estimated to be at 9.9 percent.<sup>160</sup> A respondent from the OSCE said that the real inflation rate lies much higher.<sup>161</sup> The fact that consumer prices are rising, but salaries are not increasing to the same degree is becoming a problem in Tajikistan for the rural as well as urban population.

## 4.10 Tajikistan's Susceptibility to Natural Disasters

Tajikistan is extremely prone to natural disasters. Floods are followed by extremely dry periods; hot summers by extremely cold winters that tend to cut one fourth of the population off from access to food, fuel, heating materials, access to healthcare and other essential services.

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<sup>157</sup> See: Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 28/02/08

<sup>158</sup> "Only specific families have access to the humanitarian help and those families sell the stuff and do not give it to the poor." Group interview with two women in Yol, district Shurabad, province Khatlon, in October 2003

<sup>159</sup> During my field research in Mountain-Badakhshan during summer 2004 people in Khorugh were impatiently awaiting the opening of the new road to China, which they expected would ease the access to goods and consequently would make prices drop considerably.

<sup>160</sup> Kozhevnikova, Ekaterina: Holy Fast. Holy Prices, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>161</sup> Interview with an employee of the OSCE in Dushanbe in September 2008



Avalanches and earthquakes often destroy roads and buildings. For a large part of the year the northern part of Tajikistan is cut off from the rest of the country. The same is the case with the main road (via the Rasht valley, about 14 hours) to Mountain-Badakhshan, which has to be closed from November to February, and then there is only one alternative road via Shurabad during the winter. The conditions are especially bad in rural areas, where for instance only 15 percent of the population have access to clean drinking water.<sup>162</sup>

In February 2008, Tajikistan suffered from very heavy snowfall and a severe shortage of electricity and gas.<sup>163</sup> Following that, the UN issued a “flash appeal” calling for an immediate international injection of 25.1 million USD in assistance to Tajikistan. The appeal stated that 260,000 people were in need of immediate food assistance. In addition to this, the deep freeze destroyed cotton fields and was said to have had a significant impact on the yields in 2008.

Representatives of the World Food Programme and the World Health Organisation have cautioned that livestock and poultry have suffered severely during the winter, estimating that the production of milk and eggs could experience a 50 percent drop-off.<sup>164</sup>

In the spring of 2008, Tajikistan struggled with a plague of locusts that struck a surface of 76,000 hectares of arable land and was threatening to hit another 200,000 hectares of cotton and wheat fields.<sup>165</sup> The Institute for War and Peace Reporting similarly stated: “Plague of locusts, water shortages and rising food prices conspire against a region where life is tough at the best of times.”<sup>166</sup>

According to the Tajik Committee for Emergency Situations, water-related disasters over the past decade have caused more than 300 deaths and inflicted more than 65 million USD in damage. Considering that the Tajik government’s annual budget during this period was around 600 million USD, these costs are enormous. Again, in 2008 drought conditions have been ravaging many parts of Tajikistan. According to reports by Asia Plus, many farms have already lost plantlets of cotton and other crops. This means that the country will most likely face a serious food shortage this autumn. In the current growing season (2008), more than 60 thousand hectares of arable land are going uncultivated due to a combination of water shortages and a lack of electricity to run irrigation equipment.<sup>167</sup>

The Tajik state does not have any prepared strategy to deal with (natural) disasters. Preventative measures are not taken by the state itself, but are left to external donors and NGOs.

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<sup>162</sup> Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 05/02/08

<sup>163</sup> Najibullah, Farangis: Tajikistan: Energy Shortages, Extreme Cold Create Crisis Situation, on: [www.avesta.tj](http://www.avesta.tj), 02/14/08

<sup>164</sup> Parshin, Konstantin & Arman, Kambiz: Tajikistan: Severe Winter Weather means looming Pestilence and Hunger, on [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 20/02/08

<sup>165</sup> Eurasia Insight: Tajikistan: Government Shakes down Population amid Deepening Economic Dysfunction, 05/07/08

<sup>166</sup> IWPR staff in Central Asia: Central Asia Sees Lean Year Ahead, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 17/05/08

<sup>167</sup> Parshin, Konstantin: Tajikistan: President Renews Push to Create Central Asian Water Consortium, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/08/08

#### 4.11 The Bad Condition of Infrastructure and the Problem of Maintenance

In Tajikistan, infrastructure is in a state of complete decay. Roads and communication links, often heavily damaged during the civil war (especially in the former opposition regions), are still in need of repair. Throughout the country, communal services and infrastructure (water supply pipelines, etc.) have not been maintained, or were destroyed during the war and much of the infrastructure is now beyond rehabilitation. The majority of irrigation, drainage, and drinking water pipes are no longer functional. From November until March, electricity in rural areas of Tajikistan is only provided three hours per day (from six until seven thirty in the morning and the same at night).

Many organisations work on infrastructure projects. However, in a country where infrastructure had been provided and maintained by a strong state for seventy years, the gap is difficult to fill. It is extremely challenging to organize maintenance by local people because they are often not skilled enough or simply do not want to take any responsibility for their community. As a result, (infrastructure) projects are often completed in a rush and once something breaks down, they are never repaired again. Instead, people wait for the next donor to come and finance a new project, rather than making an effort and repairing the damage themselves.<sup>168</sup>

#### 4.12 Social Mobility

In Tajikistan, people mainly receive information from other parts of the country by either travelling there or going to the bazaar and meeting people who have recently travelled to another region. The movement people from rural areas in Tajikistan undergo is mostly limited to moving from the periphery to the centre (either district or provincial centre or the capital), rarely from “periphery to periphery” on a horizontal scale.

Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the civil war, people have become comparatively immobile. During Soviet times the infrastructure was much better, the prices for travelling were in comparison much cheaper, and more people could afford to move within their own republic and to other places within the Soviet Union. After the civil war, the social mobility decreased considerably and for security reasons people were not moving around anymore.

Even in 2002, it was still not advised to be even in the streets of Dushanbe after 8.00 p.m. Since the Tajik civil war, prejudice against people from different ethnic groups or other regions (concept of *semlyachestvo*) remains strong.

When MSDSP asked Pamiris in 2002 to go to Kulyab for a job and to establish an office there, many of them were still reluctant. Others agreed to do the job for a limited period. However, for all of them it was clear that they would not settle there, that this would only be temporary. What might have contributed to this was the fact that Shurabad was one of the very much-neglected parts of Kulyab, the Shurabadis themselves had not received a share of government posts, like other valleys of the region.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> I have this experience from working in the field in Tajikistan, for example in the Rasht valley, where infrastructure was part of the community development initiative of MSDSP. I also saw many projects completed by UNTOPS which was locally called “UNFLOP”. People said that most of their infrastructure projects did not last for a long time.

<sup>169</sup> The Russian term ‘*semlyachestvo*’ derives from the word *semlya* which means earth or ground. The noun developed from that describes a certain bond that develops from being from the same part of the country. Often times “*semlyachestvo*” and ethnicity correspond to each other.

## 4.13 The Three Target Regions of this Study

During late Soviet times, the relations between the different regions of Tajikistan could easily be described by the following proverb.

*“Leninabad rules, Kulyab protects, Pamir dances, and Karategin trades.”<sup>170</sup>*

As my description of the three target regions will show, the regional conditions differ considerably. According to MSDSP: “Overall inequality in Tajikistan, although obviously far greater than in Soviet times has not yet progressed to the scale seen in developing countries in South East Asia or Africa.”<sup>171</sup>

I chose these three regions of Tajikistan as my target regions, as they represent the government faction (Shurabad in Kulyab), as well as the former opposition factions in the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan. Economically, in terms of natural resources available, sources of income generation, the ethnic and confessional setup, traditions and ways of life, and perception of the current situation, they vary a lot, so that the question often remains whether there are not more factors separating the different regions from each other, rather than unifying them as one country.

### 4.13.1 Mountain-Badakhshan

The autonomous region of Mountain-Badakhshan (GBO)<sup>172</sup> is located in the east of Tajikistan. Mountain-Badakhshan covers 40 percent of the Tajik territory and during Soviet times it had the status of autonomous province (Russian: *avtonomnaya oblast*).

Due to its geographic location Mountain-Badakhshan was during Soviet times already marginalized. This was compensated by the fact that the state very much invested into education. Consequently, Badakhshanis represented a considerable part of the educated elite.

For autonomous provinces the rule during Soviet times “...was that decisions taken by the regional Soviets could be overturned by the next level of authority immediately above; that is, by the executive committee of the Communist Party of Tajikistan.” (Bliss, 2006: 243/ 244). The Party leadership in Moscow could always impose decisions on the nominally independent parties in the different republics that were part of the Soviet Union.

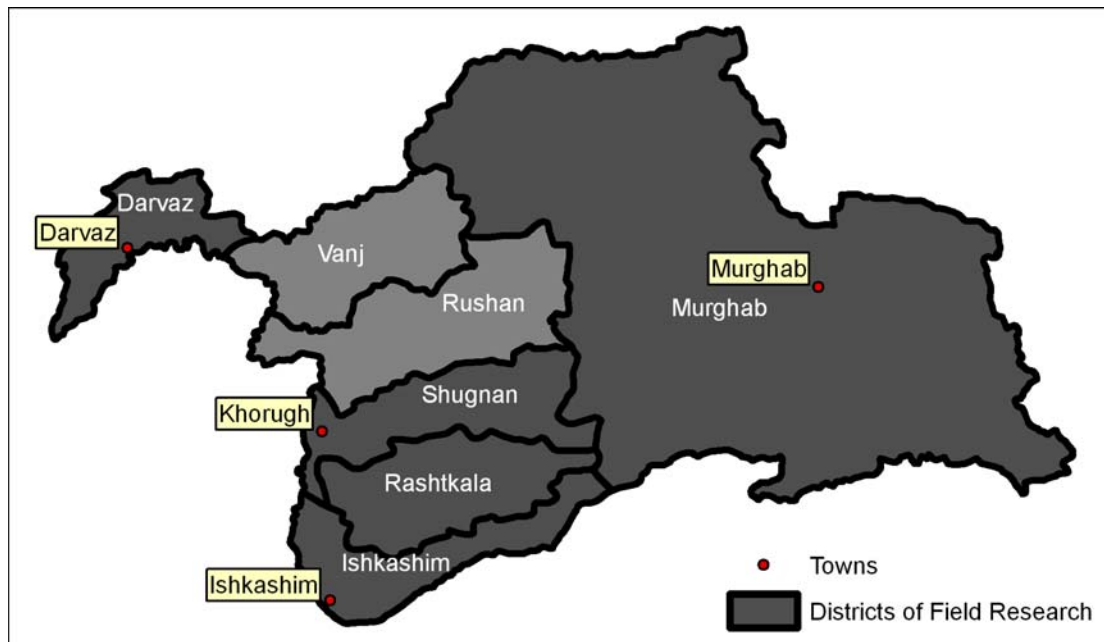
Today Mountain-Badakhshan is only nominally autonomous. Chapter seven of the Tajik constitution states the following regarding Mountain-Badakhshan:

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<sup>170</sup> This is a modern Tajik proverb, which I came across in Tajikistan. Leninabad is today Khujand and in the North, Kulyab is now part of southern Khatlon and Karegin is an old name for the Rasht valley. This was also cited by (Marat 2006, p.103)

<sup>171</sup> MSDSP, Baseline Survey of the Rasht Valley, 2003: 14

<sup>172</sup> The Autonomous Region of Mountain-Badakhshan is in Russian commonly called GBO – *Gorno-Badakhshanskaya Avtonomnaya Oblast*.



**Map 2: Districts of Field Research in Mountain-Badakhshan**

“Article 81: Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region is a component and indivisible part of the Republic of Tajikistan. Without the permission of the local parliament of people's deputies, it is not permissible to alter the borders of the territory of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region.”<sup>173</sup>

This shows that from the side of the Tajik government there were some fears that Mountain-Badakhshan might try to separate from the current state and become independent. A respondent said: “Before the war in 1991/92 there had been demonstrations because the people in Mountain-Badakhshan had wanted their independence from Tajikistan.”

At demonstrations in June 2008 in Khorugh, one issue was the people’s dissatisfaction regarding the effectiveness of the regional administration and the fact that the governor is an ethnic Tajik and not a Pamiri, as are the majority of the people. At the same time, claims for a greater degree of autonomy re-emerged.<sup>174</sup>

“The Badakhshanis did not support the civil war and respondents said that there had only been some uneducated people, who joined the armed forces. These had been simple people from the street. But the Badakhshani intellectuals, those people sitting in the *apparaty* in Dushanbe, they did not support the war.”<sup>175</sup>

In recent years, movements aimed at the secession of Mountain-Badakhshan from the Republic of Tajikistan have not found a lot of support and I was not aware of any reported activities to that end. With the current structure and the strong support of the Aga Khan, especially to the Ismaili believers, the people in Mountain-Badakhshan have experienced a quite comfortable situation, guaranteeing a minimum of public goods and a network they could rely on in emergencies.

To emphasize the integrity of Mountain-Badakhshan within Tajikistan, Article 83 states: The powers of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region in the social, economic, and cultural spheres of life, as well as other powers of the region, are determined by constitutional law.”<sup>176</sup>

<sup>173</sup> Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, article 81, see: <http://unpan1.un.org>, sighted 05/10/08

<sup>174</sup> Olimova, Lola: Trouble in Tajik Mountain Province, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 27/06/08

<sup>175</sup> Interview with the local employee of an NGO in Ishkashim in June 2004

<sup>176</sup> See the Tajik Constitution, Chapter Seven on Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast

Mountain-Badakhshan is the only province that had the status of autonomy within the Tajik Republic during Soviet times and remains the only autonomous province in the independent Tajik Republic. This status, however, is rather nominal.

Prior to that (even before the Tajik Socialist Republic was established) GBAO became a "Special Region of the Pamir" in 1925. In the same year, the title was changed to autonomous province. This, during Soviet times, had often been a measure to enhance the status of ethnic minorities, as this way they could be represented in the Soviet of Nationalities. Nevertheless, this title was rather meaningless, except that an autonomous *oblast* could decide for itself what its official language should be.<sup>177</sup>

Only in 1951, Mountain-Badakhshan (GBAO) was divided into seven districts. In the census of 1989, it was recorded that in Mountain-Badakhshan there were 47 different nationalities (Bliss, 2006: 245).

To what extent Gorno-Badakhshan is *de facto* autonomous today is difficult to say. My respondents did not seem to be clear regarding this issue themselves. One respondent stated that customs and local taxes were going exclusively into the provincial budget and were not passed on to the national level. On the other hand, he stated that Mountain-Badakhshan also did not receive any further subsidies from the national level.<sup>178</sup>

In Mountain-Badakhshan, five districts were examined: Darvaz, Shugnan, Rashtkala, Ishkashim and Murghab. They are structurally all very different from each other; Rashtkala is the only one of those districts that is not directly situated on the border with Afghanistan. In all, except for Darvaz, plots are very small and people primarily only undertake subsistence farming on rain-fed land.

In Mountain-Badakhshan food security is critical, wheat and fruit are almost exclusively grown for private consumption (this remains a subsistence and barter economy). In this part of Tajikistan the people are mostly Pamiris, i.e. an ethnic group to be distinguished from the majority of Tajiks due to their different language (various East-Iranian languages such as Shugni, Roshani, Ishkashimi, Vakhani etc. are spoken) and a different confession (Ismailism, a sub-branch of Shia Islam, except for Darvaz where the majority of people are Sunni).<sup>179</sup> Mountain-Badakhshan is by territory the biggest region in Tajikistan, but has the smallest population density.<sup>180</sup>

During Soviet times it was, due to its strategic military location, highly subsidized by Moscow ("Russian feeding", in Russian *moskovskoe obespechivanie*) and therefore by comparison regionally it suffered the most when the "overarching Soviet framework broke away" (Schmitz 2004: 13).

The autonomy of the region manifests in the fact that the Tajik border guards are under the command of the region. Whatever is collected on the Tajik-Afghan, Tajik-Chinese and Tajik-Kyrgyz borders in the region in terms of customs goes to the administration of the region (Tajik: *hukumati viloyat*), not to the republican centre in Dushanbe.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>177</sup> (Kolarz, 1956: 33) quoted by (Bliss, 2006: 245)

<sup>178</sup> Interview with a local civil servant in Khorugh in June 2004

<sup>179</sup> The lowest rate of poverty (therefore a "rich" region in Tajik inter-regional comparison) is observed in the RRS (Rasht valley) and in Dushanbe. According to the World Bank the highest poverty rates, which is predominantly tied to the given geographical conditions (small amounts of arable land, access to irrigation water is difficult.), are observed in Mountain-Badakhshan and Khatlon; <http://web.worldbank.org>, sighted 06/05/08

<sup>180</sup> During the Tajik civil war, most Pamiris (up to 100,000) who had been living in other parts of Tajikistan (some for generations) returned to Mountain-Badakhshan. After the war some of them left again, mostly to the capital, Dushanbe.

<sup>181</sup> All people visiting Mountain-Badakhshan, including Pamiris whose permanent place of residence is outside of Mountain-Badakhshan have to acquire a special permit, similar to a visa, in order to enter Mountain-Badakhshan.

Further, the natural resources (including uranium and semi-precious stones) in Badakhshani territory belong to the province itself.<sup>182</sup> In Mountain-Badakhshan, 97.5 percent of the population live on less than one USD per day - under the World Bank poverty line.<sup>183</sup> Consequently, the local population is highly dependent on remittances from work migrants working abroad and on external aid.<sup>184</sup> The overall average family size is 6.8 people, which is slightly lower than in the Rasht valley and Kulyab. Dependency ratios are lower, e.g. there are larger numbers of working adults per child or pensioner.<sup>185</sup> Mountain-Badakhshan is extremely mountainous and plots are tiny. However, most households received land in the course of the land distribution process in the early 1990s. The most commonly grown crop is potatoes.<sup>186</sup>

#### 4.13.2 Kulyab

My second target region is Kulyab, part of the administrative province of Khatlon, also located on the border with Afghanistan. Kulyab is the home of a large part of the government elite, especially around the town of Danghara where the President, Mr. Rahmon, originates from. About 65 percent of the total population of Tajikistan lives in Khatlon and Sughd, the two main cotton-growing provinces. These two provinces account for 72 percent of the poor and 75 percent of the extremely poor.<sup>187</sup>

Freedom House put it the following way in 2006: "Tajikistan's political woes are due partially to the ruling elite's use of "patronage and consanguine networks" like the Kulyab ethno-regional clan, which constitutes a large segment of the current regime."<sup>188</sup> Bliss calls this an "occupation of the state by certain regional clans [from Kulyab and Khudjand]" (Bliss: 2004: 7).

Khatlon is the most densely populated region: 34 percent of the overall Tajikistani population lives here and it is the "granary" of Tajikistan, even though the wheat (the principle food crop here) is mostly produced in western Khatlon, around Kurghan-Teppa, and not in the districts of Kulyab where I was conducting my research (Shurabad, Khovaling, Balzhuvan and Kulyab itself). As a second crop, cotton is produced in Khatlon. Cotton is always said to be the biggest export commodity of Tajikistan, but in fact only a very small regional layer of society profits from this business. Khatlon has several hydro-power stations, the produce of which covers most of the country's electricity consumption, and electricity is even exported to northern Afghanistan (Schmitz 2004: 13).

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<sup>182</sup> Interview with a local development worker in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>183</sup> 1USD is a standard used by the World Bank to measure poverty.

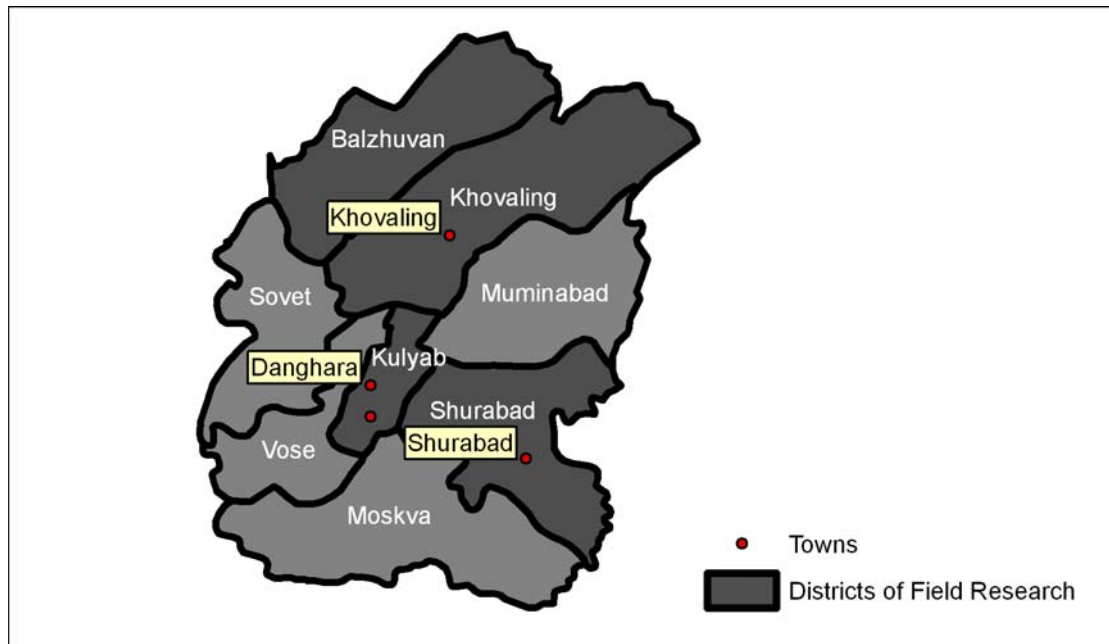
<sup>184</sup> Remittances were received by 21 percent of households and also made up 21 percent of non-agricultural income, compared to 62 percent in the Rasht valley; see: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast 2004: 5

<sup>185</sup> see: MSDSP, Baseline Survey of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast 2004: 5

<sup>186</sup> The only exceptions are Murghab and Darvaz. In Murghab the climatic conditions simply do not allow almost anything to grow and in Darvaz the land distribution process has not yet been completed; see: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, 2004: 6

<sup>187</sup> Poverty and Social Impact Analysis - Tajikistan Cotton Farmland Privatization, on: <http://web.worldbank.org>, sighted 03/09/08

<sup>188</sup> Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08



**Map 3: Districts of Field Research in Kulyab**

I carried out research in the districts of Balzhuvan, Khovaling, Kulyab and Shurabad, out of which only the latter is directly adjacent to the border with Afghanistan.

In Kulyab the main source of income is farming (cotton, wheat, various vegetables and thistle for oil production) and livestock breeding. In Shurabad particularly there is very little difference in sources of income between quartiles, therefore although absolute incomes are different, the way in which those incomes are acquired is remarkably similar between quartiles, and there is no single livelihood strategy which seems to be explicitly linked to wealth.<sup>189</sup>

Together with the Rasht valley, Kulyab belongs to the more conservative regions of the country. In Shurabad there are eight times as many men in higher education as women, indicating the low status of women in the region.<sup>190</sup>

The districts of Balzhuvan and Khovaling are structurally different from the one of Shurabad. As they do not border Afghanistan, these two districts do not face security threats linked to drug trafficking as Shurabad does.

The *hukumat* (here the district level state administration) in Khovaling appears to be well linked to the state elite on the regional and national level.<sup>191</sup> Khovaling is a “rentier district”. The head of the district in Khovaling does not depend on rents from the people living in his district because he gets his income from a nearby goldmine.<sup>192</sup>

<sup>189</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district, 2003: 10

<sup>190</sup> Same as footnote no.189, p. 11

<sup>191</sup> What is surprising is that the building of the district state administration is in a very good condition and the head of the district seemed to be much more keen on following rules assigned from above than his colleagues. When I visited him for an interview in June 2005, he refused to be interviewed and for the first time during my research, I experienced somebody asking me for a permit to do research in Tajikistan and to enter this particular part of Tajikistan from the Tajik Ministry for Foreign Affairs. I told the head of the district in Khovaling that I had never had any problems before and he said that the situation was different now and that I was not allowed to travel freely in Tajikistan and just write my PhD about Tajikistan. The interview took place in Khovaling in June 2005. An employee of UNDP in Dushanbe commented on this incident that every year the president was introducing these laws that representatives from IOs and researchers needed permission, but in the course of the year these laws would be forgotten again. The interview was conducted in Dushanbe in June 2005.

<sup>192</sup> Interview with an employee of an international NGO in Khovaling in June 2005

In Balzhuvan the situation is structurally different. Heads of state farms still ruled on the ground in 2005, as most of them had not been privatised yet.<sup>193</sup> Nevertheless, in both districts subsistence farming prevails and therefore access to land is crucial to the people.

One respondent said that Kulyab actually consisted of four valleys that were competing against each other and that would only unify as Kulyab against a common enemy: the Balzhuvansky, the Dashtidzhumsky, the Khovalinsky and the Sarikhusursky. "All these valleys have networks that reach up to the top, the President is from the first valley, and from the second is half of the government; only the fourth does not have any positions in the Government. Therefore, the people from there were pro-Democrat."<sup>194</sup>

The district of Shurabad is situated in the very East of Kulyab and borders with Afghanistan. Most of the population is ethnic Tajik. Even though Shurabad belongs to the region of Khatlon, which during civil war times was a stronghold of the government forces and where most people supported the 'popular front', it is more the 'loser' and neglected part of this 'winner region' that did not get its 'share of the cake' in terms of government positions on provincial and national levels.

It is an agricultural district, based on rain-fed agriculture.<sup>195</sup> By 2002, only three percent of the households had privatised land shares and 91 percent were renting land either from collective farms or from new private landowners. In 2001 in the district of Shurabad, average income levels were about 60 percent of those in the districts of the Rasht valley. However, the 'wealth' was distributed more evenly.<sup>196</sup>

The most important sources of legal income in the Shurabad district are the opposite to the districts in the Rasht valley and in Mountain-Badakhshan - salaries and pensions, i.e. state-provided income. Remittances are almost negligible. The social mobility of the local population in Shurabad is extremely limited.<sup>197</sup> In 2001 in Shurabad, the average income levels were about 60 percent of those in the Rasht valley. Wheat production was essential for survival, but agriculture was not yet a real source of cash.<sup>198</sup>

The region is backward in terms of its geographical position<sup>199</sup> and development, and traditions are strong. Overall, 23 percent of adult men and three percent of adult women have some kind of job, whilst 20 percent of adult men and 71 percent of adult women described themselves as unemployed. This may be misleading as in many cases farming was not seen as employment and in fact 94 percent of families are engaged in farming.<sup>200</sup>

Shurabad is disadvantaged because it has poor agricultural potential, but instead it has large areas of pastures and good access to markets in order to sell the produce. MSDSP began working in Shurabad in 2002 and started implementing its programmes as in the other regions through newly established institutions, i.e. *Village Organisations*.<sup>201</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Interview with the secretary of the *jamoat* in Dekturi Bolo, Balzhuvan, in June 2005, at his office in the *jamoat* (sub-district)

<sup>194</sup> Interview with the head of the village organisation in Yol, Shurabad district, in October 2003

<sup>195</sup> Rain-fed agriculture is rare in Tajikistan; most plots are irrigated for cultivation.

<sup>196</sup> See: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district 2003: iv

<sup>197</sup> Same as footnote no. 196, p. 9

<sup>198</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district 2003: iv

<sup>199</sup> Only during the winter months when the main road to Mountain-Badakhshan through Tavildara in the Rasht valley is closed, there is some traffic coming from Dushanbe through Shurabad going to Mountain-Badakhshan.

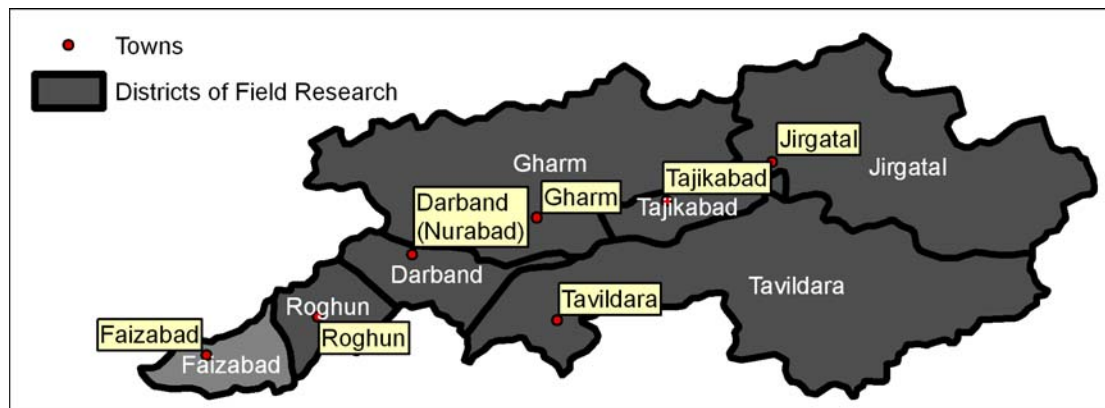
<sup>200</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district 2003: 22

<sup>201</sup> Same as footnote no. 200, p. 6



### 4.13.3 Rasht Valley

The Rasht valley (to the Northeast of the capital Dushanbe) includes seven districts designated as districts (Russian: *rayon*) of “republican subordination” (RRS): Roghun, Faizabad, Nurabad (Darband), Gharm, Tajikabad, Jirgatal, and Tavildara. The Rasht valley lies on the crossroad to Mountain-Badakhshan and has a border with Kyrgyzstan in the North, close to Jirgatal.<sup>202</sup> In terms of ethnicity in the Rasht valley most of the population are Tajiks, the only exception is the district of Jirgatal where 60 percent of the population are Kyrgyz.



Map 4: Districts of Field Research in the Rasht Valley

Not only was the Rasht valley a stronghold of the opposition during the civil war, but also later on it continued to be a major flashpoint. Until 2005 there were rival parties continuing to vie for power, despite the fact that opposition forces were coming to terms with government forces.<sup>203</sup> Administratively, the area has no provincial administrative structure of its own, but the districts report directly to the President (districts of republican subordination).

In terms of living conditions, low levels of food security and low incomes characterize the region.<sup>204</sup> The Rasht valley is an agricultural region. In terms of agricultural preconditions, it varies significantly from the other two regions. In the Rasht valley, parcels of land are large and soil is comparatively fertile. Therefore, mainly potatoes, vegetables and fruits for private consumption are grown.

During Soviet times, a lot of fruit and vegetables from the Rasht valley were brought to other parts of the Soviet Union for consumption. Today, only 11 percent of households have private land, 36 percent are renting and all other households have only a kitchen garden and some ‘president’s land,’ which is often not usable because it is not irrigated or simply infertile.<sup>205</sup>

<sup>202</sup> The total number of villages is 512, with a total population of 350,000 people. The main valley floor is wide and ranges from 1000 to 2000m in altitude, the mountains range from 4000m to 5000m in height. The length of the valley is over 250km and districts are arranged in a longitudinal fashion, with the exception of Tavildara, which is in a side-valley. Tavildara was, during the Tajik civil war, one of the key locations because it is located at a crossroad between the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan on the one hand and the Rasht valley and Kulyab (part of Khatlon) on the other hand. From Tavildara it is also not far to the Afghan border in the South.

<sup>203</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley 2003: 5

<sup>204</sup> As in other rural areas of Tajikistan, the people are lucky if they have three hours of electricity per day. The “grafica” (Engl. schedule) is as follows: one and a half hours in the morning from six until seven thirty and in the evening from six until seven thirty (Interview with a local peasant in Vozm, Badakhshan in October 2003). Otherwise, the cooking is done with gas and if there is none the stove is heated with (goat) dung; see: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley 2003: 5

<sup>205</sup> President’s land: usually small plots of land distributed by presidential decree to those members of the population who had smaller kitchen gardens than the national minimum, often presidential land is bad land or there are problems with the irrigation; see: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley 2003: 21

In the Rasht valley, in those cases where the collective land has already been privatised, the land has generally gone to those who have had the money, foresight, and influence to apply first and only in a few cases has land been divided equitably.<sup>206</sup>

Employment opportunities are scarce and 62 percent of the population in this region depend on remittances from work migrants who earn their income mostly in Russia. The extremely high rate of work migration is one of the legacies from the civil war, as people from the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan do not have access to the job market in other regions of the country, including the capital; this opportunity was blocked at least until 2004.<sup>207</sup>

According to a baseline survey conducted in 2002, 24 percent of the adult male population was working abroad.<sup>208</sup> Commonly, the Rasht valley is described as a very traditional region where religion plays an important role. Among other indicators, polygamy and underage marriage are widespread phenomena and the status of women in the region is lower in comparison to Mountain-Badakhshan. In that sense the Rasht valley is similar to the situation in Shurabad. According to a baseline survey conducted by MSDSP in 2002 there are five times as many men in higher education than women, indicating the low status of women in the region.<sup>209</sup>

Everyday life is significantly marked by the fact that the civil war has left heavily destroyed infrastructure and, in terms of the social structure, has left many widows behind, resulting in women heads of households (17 percent).<sup>210</sup> While 24 percent of the adult male population is working abroad, only 22 percent of adult males have jobs in the Rasht valley itself, whether regular or casual (as traders, labourers and salaried workers). Roughly, 50 percent of adult males have some kind of job, whilst the other 50 percent are either not working or are working on the land as peasants, which most people do not consider as being employed.<sup>211</sup>

MSDSP began working in the Rasht valley with an agricultural reform programme in 1997. This programme aimed at the provision of inputs on a credit basis to farmers, combined with a training programme in order to help increase yields of staple crops. Another important part of this programme was to rehabilitate the irrigation infrastructure, much of which had been destroyed or abandoned during the war. In 2000, MSDSP Rasht began an institutional development programme with the establishment of eleven Village Organisations<sup>212</sup>. In 2001 another 37 organisations were founded, which increased to 140 by the end of 2002.<sup>213</sup>

In the Rasht valley in 2002, 30 percent of the total income of all households came from remittances which were mostly sent from Russia. However, land and agriculture were also important, with those in the richest quartile more likely to have private land or land to rent than those in other quartiles. Due to this, on average only those in the top quartile are self-sufficient in flour. Accordingly, access to land and remittances are the major determiners of wealth. Yields of both potato and wheat increase strongly with wealth, indicating a need to target poorer households with inputs and training. 70 percent only have kitchen gardens. 91 percent of the households do not

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<sup>206</sup> See: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 21

<sup>207</sup> The only exception might be employment with an international organisation or international non-governmental organisation.

<sup>208</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 22

<sup>209</sup> Same as footnote no. 209

<sup>210</sup> Of the sample, 581 families are male headed and 119 (17 percent) are female headed. In 56 percent of cases the husband had died, in 36 percent he was abroad and in 8 percent the couples were divorced; see: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 20

<sup>211</sup> See: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 20

<sup>212</sup> These organisations generally comprise of over 80 percent of households in each village. Members hold monthly meetings and pay fees, which go into a revolving Village Development Fund, used for credit and grants for members and for village-wide projects.

<sup>213</sup> See MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 5/6

have any remittances. This helps to explain why malnutrition has been found to be high in the Rasht valley. "Humanitarian assistance and other types of grant programmes should be better targeted at such families, although in the longer term improved land privatisation policies might go some way to improving their livelihoods."<sup>214</sup>

**Table: Comparative Summary of Three Baselines Studies Conducted by MSDSP in 2002 (Rasht, Shurabad and Mountain-Badakhshan):**

Indicator	Unit	Rasht	Shurabad	GBAO
Sample size (hh)	hh	696	104	696
Average annual income per capita*	Tjks	266	165	361 (279)
% hh living on less than 20 Somoni per person per month*	%	56	83	34 (50)
Average annual cash incomes per capita	Tjks	166	35	125
% of income from agriculture*	%	29	49	33 (26)
% non-agricultural income earned by women	%	6	6	17
% non-agricultural income from private business	%	11	4	8
Number of households receiving remittances	hh	225	2	139
Average amount received per hh receiving (USD)	\$	576	195	233
Average family size	Individuals	7.6	7.0	6.8
Dependency ratio	Ratio	1.3	1.3	0.8
% male unemployment	%	24	21	19
% males working within the region	%	22	23	27
% females working within the region	%	3	3	17
% male family members in Russia	%	24	1	14
Ratio of males to females in higher education	Ratio	4:1	8:1	1:1.1
% of hh with private ownership of arable land	%	11	3	72
Average area of cultivable land (arable/orchard/kitchen garden) per capita	ha	0.07	0.27	0.05
Average area of private cultivable land per capita*	ha	0.04	0.09	0.04
% hh with access to piped drinking water	%	53	38	42

\*Figures in brackets calculated using Rasht commodity price tables. All income figures for Rasht and Shurabad include humanitarian aid, the GBAO figures do not. However, in the former two regions aid constitutes a very small percentage of total income (1.9 percent in Rasht almost 0.9 percent in Shurabad).

<sup>214</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 45

## 5. Chapter 3: The Development Process: Legacies, Barriers and Potentials

The development process of Tajikistan is predominantly predefined by the geopolitical setup that has been discussed in the previous chapter as well as two sets of legacies that I am aiming to discuss in this coming chapter. These two legacies are the 'leftovers' from the Soviet Union and its collapse as well as structural changes that occurred in the course of the Tajik civil war. However, it may not always be possible to clearly divide these two sets of legacies. Nevertheless, it is clear that they considerably predetermine what path Tajikistan will take in the near future. The Tajik people, because of the great loss economically that they experienced through the breakdown of the Soviet Union, look backwards and think about how they can return to the better standard of living they used to have during Soviet times. In this section, I would also like to touch upon the development potentials as well as obstacles and barriers that I see for Tajikistan in the coming years.

### 5.1 Brief Outline of the Tajik Civil War

The Tajik civil war is often reduced to a confrontation between the Communists (from Kulyab) and the Islamic and democratic opposition (mainly from the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan and partly from eastern Kulyab). However, it was more than that. It was a war about the rules of the game and power, such as over access to resources. It also had a strong regional component. Marginalized groups fought for their inclusion in the existing power structures.

One of the main political forces at the time was the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, which was established in August 1990. Its founders were a group of political reformers whose main objective was to contest the pro-Communist Khujand-Kulab faction's stranglehold on power. Many of the Democratic Party's leaders had originally been members of Rastokhez and they incorporated much of this organization's agenda into their own platform. At the same time, they called for the creation of a market economy and for progress on legal political institutions. The Democratic Party's leaders maintained contact with the heads of similar parties throughout the Soviet Union. A few of the party's most prominent personalities were members of Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet. One of its leaders, Davlat Khudonazarov (Chairman of the USSR Union of Cinematographers) had been elected to the Congress of People's Deputies in 1988. He also became one of the most active members of the Inter-Regional Group of Deputies.<sup>215</sup>

In 1991, Rahmon Nabyev, the former first secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan (1982-1985) became the new Tajik President. He was from the North, from Khudjand, where the political elite traditionally came from during Soviet times. The opposition increased its protest regarding the fact that they did not have a share of power and saw that its chance had come to finally demand 'a piece of the cake'. Regional groups from the southern Kulyab region who were partly armed supported Nabyev. The opposition instead was formed by forces from the region around Kurghan-Teppa<sup>216</sup>, eastern Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Pamiris<sup>217</sup> from Mountain-Badakhshan.<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> The Tajikistan Update. Roots of the Conflict, on: [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com), sighted 10/09/08

<sup>216</sup> Ethnically, these were the same people as in the Rasht valley, as extensive parts of the population had been deported to the Vakhsh valley in the Kurghan-Teppa region during the course of the early collectivization process.

The Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) played an important role in this, especially regarding Kurghan-Teppa and the Rasht valley. The Islamic Renaissance Party was founded as a political party representing Islamic interests. It had branches in all Central Asian republics, even though it was only recognised as a legal political party in Tajikistan. The IRP was a moderate Islamic party willing to cooperate with non-religious counterparts (Bliss, 2006: 273).

When Nabiyeu tried to build up an authoritarian presidential system, opposition pressure increased. For two months, there were daily demonstrations in Dushanbe of about 5,000 people. Most demonstrators were young; they were mostly residents of Dushanbe originating from the Pamirs. They were asking for some kind of representation in the political structures. The National Guard then started to join the demonstrators and provided them with arms. The political elite in power refused to give in to this claim and instead started building up its own armed forces. The Northerners threatened with claims for the independence of Khudjand and Kulyab if the IRP was not removed from the government. In May 1992, the two groups clashed for the first time in Kulyab and in Kurghan-Teppa (Bliss, 2006: 273).

Essentially, the confrontation was a struggle for regional and state power between (clan) members of the two factions. At some point, the conflict developed into a kind of ethnic cleansing. Pamiris reported that their supporters were shot because they could not pronounce a certain word in Tajik and so their origin was clear.<sup>219</sup>

In villages in the south, large parts of the population were murdered. Russian troops tried to control strategically important positions, but did not actually get involved in the conflict.

In September 1992, Nabiyeu lost power and the opposition formed its own government, which was dominated by the IRP. Akbarshah Iskandarov, a Pamiri and chairperson of the Supreme Court, became Acting President. This new government supported by forces from Kurghan-Teppa, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan came under increased attack from troops of the Nabiyeu clan and their supporters from Kulyab (Bliss, 2006: 274).

In October 1992, the Parliament, still in existence and Communist-dominated, elected former collective farm chairman Imomali Rahmon(ov) as the new President. In December, Iskandarov's interim government had been completely driven out of Dushanbe. Rahmon(ov) filled all ministerial positions with people from his own 'clan'. Some former opposition figures were bought into the system by appointing them to political posts or providing them with economic privileges, such as licenses for import and export. To date, however, these people have largely been replaced by close allies and family members of the President. This in contrary to what had been agreed in the peace agreement of 1997, which was never implemented and was a big obstacle for the reconciliation process.<sup>220</sup>

Fighting continued between Islamic (from the Rasht valley, Kurghan-Teppa and Afghanistan) and partly democratic forces (from Mountain-Badakhshan) against government troops and militia from Kulyab. In 1995, the largest opposition groups founded the *United Tajik Opposition* (UTO). At one stage the government controlled some regions and the opposition others, while the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan remained independent.

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<sup>217</sup> The Pamiris played only a minor role and large parts of the population were not actively involved in the war at all.

<sup>218</sup> One of the movements that joined the UTO was Rastokhez. Rastokhez began as a movement promoting the revival of Tajik culture and language during the Soviet period. Its leaders were Tajik intellectuals, and until 1990 it offered the only public forum for criticism of the Communist Party. Both the Tajik government and some scholars in the West have portrayed Rastokhez as a nationalist organization, whose primary raison d'être was to preserve and defend Tajik identity from the influences of Uzbek/ Turkic culture. The Tajikistan Update: Roots of the Conflict, on: [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com), 10/09/08

<sup>219</sup> Interview with a local employee of an NGO in Dushanbe in October 2003

<sup>220</sup> Interview with a local development worker in Dushanbe in October 2003

Most of the refugees fled to areas in Afghanistan that were controlled either by General Abdul Rashid Dostum (an ethnic Uzbek) or General Ahmed Shah Massud (an ethnic Tajik). Dostum provided shelter to the refugees, but refused to allow the Tajik opposition forces to launch any attacks on Tajik government forces from his territory. Massud, on the other hand, permitted the opposition forces to set up military bases near the Tajik border and reportedly supplied them with weapons and even helped train their troops. The UTO's headquarters were located in the town of Taluqan, in northern Afghanistan. Within a few months, the opposition fighters were engaging in frequent raids on Tajik and Russian border posts.<sup>221</sup>

Various external forces (Russian, Uzbek, Iranian, and Afghan leaders such as Rabbani and Massud) then intervened as they had an interest in a more stable Tajikistan.

In 1997, with the help of the United Nations, a peace agreement was negotiated which was ignored by some opposition groups until 2000, as they had been excluded from the process. Opposition forces that had been part of the agreement were integrated into the Tajik armed forces. Elections were organized that Rahmon(ov) and his People's Democratic Party won with 64.5 percent of the electorate (Bliss, 2006: 273/ 274).

Russia played an important role in the Tajik civil war. For its own security reasons it had an interest in maintaining Tajikistan's integrity and preventing it from turning into an Islamic state. Last, but not least, Russia saw it had a role in defending the Russian minority in the region (Shirazi 1997: 9).

The Tajik peace agreement is an example of a successful intervention by external forces (Russia, Iran and the UN). To make this intervention work, a certain condition had to be accepted, however. The conflicting party's had to agree that none of them would profit from a continuation of the violence, which enabled them to develop a willingness to sit around a table together and advance the peace dialogue; this was finally the case in Tajikistan in 1997 (Halbach 2007a: 91).

## 5.2 Legacies from the Tajik Civil War

A legacy from Soviet times was that during almost 70 years of Soviet rule the Tajik republic had never attained internal unity. These lines of fragmentation continued after Soviet times and the competition between the different regions became one of the major factors during the Tajik civil war. Many of those divisions are still prevailing today and are, to some degree, being reinforced by political forces.

The war had gradually taken an inter-regional character between the Popular Front – consisting of Kulyabis, backed by Khudjandis, Hissaris and Uzbeks from Khatlon on the one hand, and groups originating from the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan – who came together in the *United Tajik Opposition* (UTO) on the other hand.

Because of the war people from the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan – whether they actually took part in the civil war or not - have been seriously discriminated against and lost many positions of power in the course of the conflict (Harris 1998: 657).

As one Pamiri (from Mountain-Badakhshan) respondent put it, "Before the civil war we used to dominate the educational institutions and the Academy of Sciences and we used to control the streets." Now, after the civil war, the Pamiris have lost most of their posts and continue to be marginalized. The only sphere where they still have a relatively high influence is the NGO sphere, often due to their good level of education and their good knowledge of English.<sup>222</sup>

<sup>221</sup> The Tajikistan Update. Roots of the Conflict, on: [www.geocities.com](http://www.geocities.com), 10/09/08

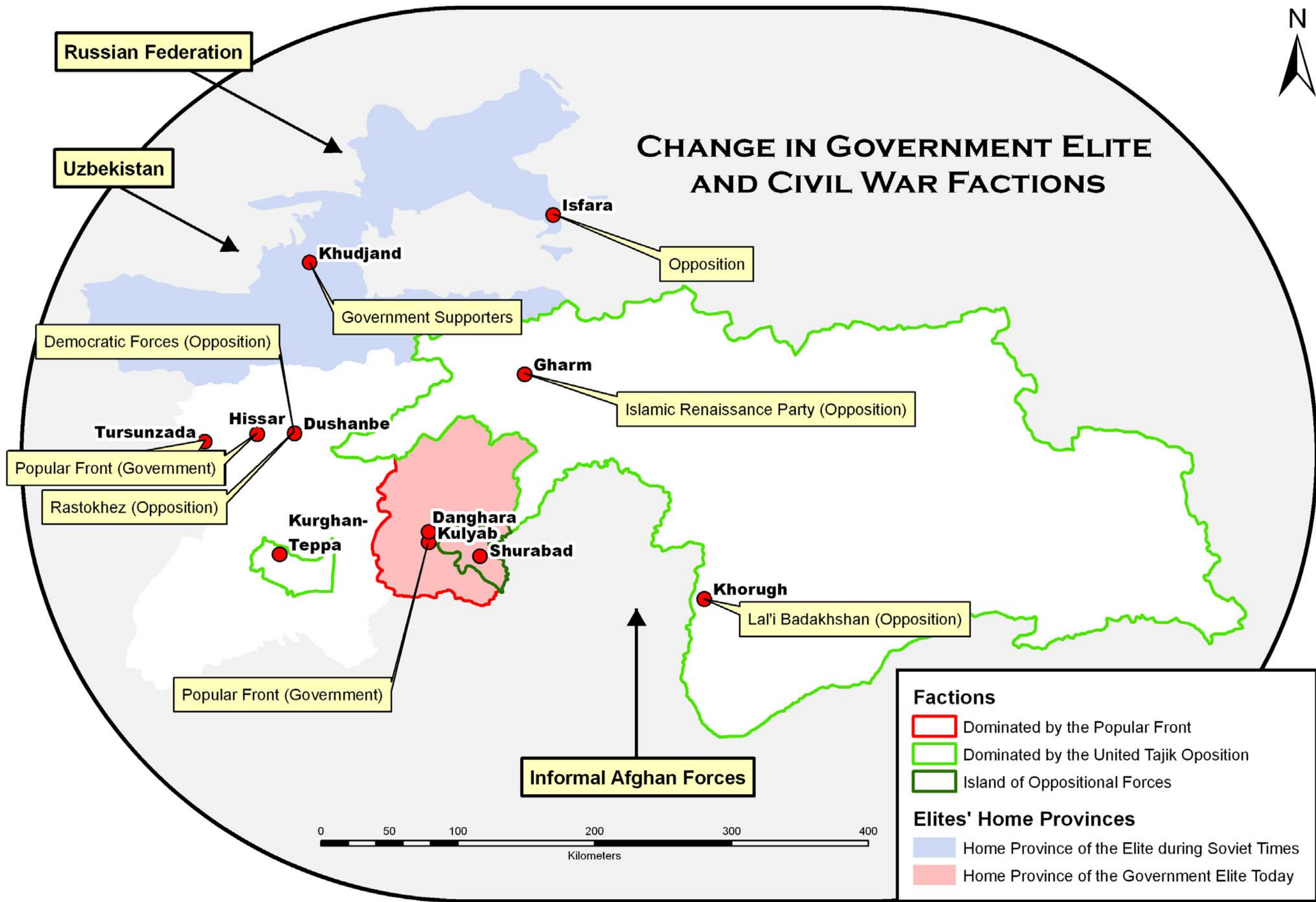
<sup>222</sup> Interview with an NGO-worker in Tavildara in October 2003

Nevertheless, eight years after the official end of the civil war on the surface there is almost no public expression of anger or hate amongst people of different regional or ethnic backgrounds. The Tajik society remains extremely fragmented however, and only survives with the help of its subsistence economy and donor aid. A process of 'societal healing' can be seen to be underway (Akiner 2002: 3).

Economically, the civil war in Tajikistan created an enormous breakdown. Not only is the GDP low, but in addition to that, in comparison to neighbouring countries such as Kyrgyzstan, this is even less fairly distributed.

Leading members of the former opposition have been co-opted into the state and privilege apparatus and are therefore not available any longer as serious alternatives to the current leaders. Benevolent commentators see this as a sign for the integration capacity of the current President.

The civil war provoked a power transfer from Khudjand (formerly Leninabad) to Kulyab. The clans from Khudjand were engaged in this structure as a kind of junior partner. The former elites from Khatlon (around Kurghan-Teppa), the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan were mainly excluded. The enormous concentration of power to this extent has led to government resources mainly targeting the areas the post-conflict elite are from, Kulyab (Bliss: 2004: 7-8).



Map 5: Change in Government Elite and Civil War Factions



### 5.3 Political and Social Legacies from Soviet Times

In the early 1990s, the conditions for development and the statehood-building process in Tajikistan were extremely hostile. In March 1991, the people of Tajikistan voted in a national referendum against Tajikistan's sovereignty and for the preservation of the Soviet Union.<sup>223</sup> In a recent newspaper article an author stated again that the independence had come as a surprise to the Tajik people.<sup>224</sup>

"In breaking away from the Soviet Union, they (the Tajiks) were only accepting the inevitable, as initially there had been no intention of making a complete break." Tajiks had no choice but to declare independence. "Nationalistic tendencies" in Tajikistan "always had been directed towards drawing maximum benefit from membership of the Soviet Union and never towards achieving national sovereignty or separation from the Soviet Union (Bliss, 2006: 271/ 272).

These results were no surprise considering what level of development the Soviet Union had achieved in these parts of the 'Empire' in comparison to the level of development in the adjacent regions of Afghanistan, Pakistan and China.

The most admirable achievement was a rate of 99 percent of children started school and that 50 percent of all schoolchildren were girls. Even in the most backward villages, there was 24-hour provision of utilities such as electricity and running water. There were daily domestic flights, for example to Gharm and Jirgatal, at very reasonable prices and every third household had its own car.

In 2003, the GDP of Tajikistan was at the same level as the one of Benin. Two-thirds of the population had to live on one USD per day.

During Soviet times, there had been an extremely high employment rate and almost everybody had been receiving a state salary. After the breakdown of the Soviet system, many people lost their jobs and those who kept their state jobs lost significantly in terms of purchasing power due to inflation.

Tajikistan received its independence without even wanting it and this was a major impediment to the further state building and development process. During the Soviet period, Tajiks had been known for being particularly conservative, doing their best to resist cultural transformation and to preserve their traditions as pure and untouched as possible.<sup>225</sup> Tajikistan was the republic furthest away from Moscow geographically and this had an impact on the extent to which Moscow managed to enforce control over this part of the country, providing the local population with its ideology.

In fact, the extent to which the Soviet state managed to penetrate society varied significantly throughout its territory. What the Soviet Union left was an immense divide between urban and rural areas. However, the Soviet Union increased the degree of social mobility very much, as young men would be sent to do their military service in far removed parts of the Soviet Union, to Czechoslovakia or even the GDR, for example. Urban areas profited to a much larger extent from the Soviet modernization process than rural areas did, which consolidated the existing rural urban divide.

People would visit other parts of the empire or would study in another place, but the large majority of people would then return to their homes (Halbach calls this "migration resistance"). Even though many incentives were created for ethnic Slavs

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<sup>223</sup> Chronology for Uzbeks in Tajikistan, on [www.cidcm.umd.edu](http://www.cidcm.umd.edu), sighted 09/09/08

<sup>224</sup> Tursun, Sattor: Holy Responsibility, ASIA-PLUS, No 36 (450), 03/09/08

<sup>225</sup> When the Soviet Union was established in Central Asia in the 1920s, the Bolsheviks found many local traditions and religious practices that appeared to be incompatible with the modern Soviet state, such as circumcision, religious marriage ceremonies, fasting during Ramadan, payment of a bride price and even family customs such as the parents deciding all their children's future in terms of education, choice of spouse etc., choices which the Soviet state now wanted to take care of. Nevertheless, throughout 70 years of Soviet influence in Central Asia rulers only managed to scratch the surface.

to move to Central Asia and many did move, but they intermingled little with the local population. Mixed marriages, for example, were very rare. In the public sphere, work was distributed along cultural lines. Experts arrived from other places to fill higher positions (engineers, doctors, etc.), the 'natives' took workers' positions. According to Halbach, the two groups even communicated little with each other (Halbach 2007a: 84). From what I heard from my respondents, the mingling of different ethnic groups (Slavs, ethnic Germans, Tartars, Uzbeks and Tajiks) was harmonious and peaceful and people from different ethnic groups were friends with each other.<sup>226</sup> Due to the civil war, many of these cross-ethnic links were later destroyed and people became hostile to each other, losing contact.

The impact of the Soviet system on the public sphere was immense; the impact on the private sphere was rather limited. Eventually, this led to a widening of the gap between the public and private spheres, which is inherent in most Islamic societies, but this division was additionally increased by the Soviet regime.

This meant that, for example, women, while not necessarily being aware of this fact or simply accepting these double standards as cornerstones of the existing social order in place, were enjoying formal equality in the public sphere, while at home they lived along patriarchal structures. According to my observations and interviews, the extent to which the Soviet Union managed to create social equality for women in Central Asian societies was less than usually reported. Women were playing very different roles at home, in the private sphere, than at work, in the public sphere. Even though women were formally equal in public life, at home they continued to occupy a subordinate position (Akiner 2002: 7).

Therefore, Tajikistan as a union republic of the periphery was one of the least affected by Soviet ideology and development policies. Patronage networks largely remained intact; in some cases modes of legitimisation altered, but many already embedded networks and relations remained in place (Beissinger 1997: 170). From the beginning the Soviet rulers used co-option of local leaders as a mean of indigenising the system and at the same time to facilitate the process of social transformation. The phenomenon of co-option continues to exist even now (Akiner 2002: 7).

Soviet development policies achieved remarkable results in some spheres, such as alphabetization of the entire population, but not in others and this led to peculiar imbalances (Akiner 2002: 5). The Tajik society was not penetrated deeply enough by the Soviet state. Formal Soviet structures in Tajikistan had, largely, been captured by informal rules and practices. Many pre-Soviet 'traditional' informal and formal institutions (for example 'religious' institutions such as *hashar*, *qars* and *taloq*<sup>227</sup>) preserved their role both during Soviet times and even today. Even in the *kolkhoz*, in theory a newly created communist collective farm structure, traditional institutions such as the *hashar* were incorporated in the form of *subbotnik*.<sup>228</sup>

A Soviet legacy was also the penetration of state structures by criminal or semi-criminal structures. The legacies of the Soviet regime did not only have a powerful

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<sup>226</sup> Interviews with families in Dushanbe in October 2003

<sup>227</sup> *Hashar* is a gathering of people in a community in order to undertake a common action, such as renovating a school or building a new house. *Qars* is the local system of taking 'credit' from the community. If there is a wedding in the village, for example, people usually collect money within the community for the celebration. This phenomenon creates certain bonds as practically 'every family' always owes something to their fellow villagers.

<sup>228</sup> *Subbotnik* is structurally similar to *hashar* and is the Soviet 'reincarnation' of this 'traditional' institution; for a discussion of this (Roy 2000: 89)

impact on the functioning of state structures, but also on the way non-state criminal actors emerged in the post-Soviet periphery, e.g. in Central Asia (Marat 2006: 6).<sup>229</sup>

Regarding the military, the Tajik setup after the breaking apart of the Soviet Union varied considerably from the other successor states. In all other post-Soviet states, most Soviet military assets were nationalized after independence. Only in Tajikistan, the Russian-controlled 201st Rifle Division took over the jurisdiction of almost all military facilities after the civil war. The Tajik state entered independence without an army or any military institution, except for its police (Marat 2006: 105).

This also had strong implications regarding the civil war that started soon after independence, where the state had difficulties maintaining its monopoly of force. In addition to that, until 2005 the control of the Tajik-Afghan border was mainly in Russian hands.

Soviet legacies still have an impact on how the government functions today. It came as a surprise that in April 2008 the Tajik government asked all residents of the capital Dushanbe to 'voluntarily' give up half of their salaries for May and June to finance the construction of a hydropower plant to improve the power supply for the capital after the recent winter and power supply crisis. In two ways this example shows the authoritarian political atmosphere in Tajikistan today and how Soviet legacies still shape the policy making of political leaders. It emphasises on the one hand to what extent Tajik government official still act in the belief that they can order their citizens around.

Makhmadsaid Ubaidulloev, the speaker of the upper chamber of Tajikistan's Parliament, showed himself convinced that this appeal would lead to a positive response. He went even further than this and immediately instructed government agencies and state enterprises to simply withhold half of the salaries for these two months.

Nevertheless, it was predicted that the fear of government reprisals would compel Tajiks to comply, and that very few people would likely be willing to risk non-compliance. Many believed that in the case of non-compliance, these people would have to pay a much higher price for such conduct in the near future, via audits from the tax inspectorate perhaps, or other legal difficulties would be created.<sup>230</sup>

#### **5.4 Economic Legacies from the Soviet Period**

Economically, Tajikistan was left highly dependent on supplies from Moscow and its neighbouring states. Even today, less than half of Tajikistan's essential food needs are domestically produced.<sup>231</sup> Strategically, during the Soviet period the economic system had been used to encourage the different republics to stick together and be dependent on each other, in an attempt to prevent secession. The main industries Tajikistan was left with after the breakdown of the Soviet Union were the aluminium and cotton industries.

Cotton is Tajikistan's most important export produce, but the cotton industry is in a devastating state. According to the Tajik Ministry of Agriculture the total annual production of unginned cottonseeds has since 1991 been at the level of 1963. Even

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<sup>229</sup>“Most 'thieves in law' of the Soviet breed were actively recruited in the civil war both by the government and the opposition. However, within roughly three years after the signing of the Peace Accord, most of those criminal leaders were eliminated from the political process. Some of them were killed in various circumstances, while others were imprisoned.” (Marat 2006: 111)

<sup>230</sup> Eurasia Insight: Tajikistan: Government Shakes down Population amid Deepening Economic Dysfunction, 05/07/08

<sup>231</sup> See: Don Van Atta: King Cotton freezes Tajikistan , [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 21/03/08

more surprising is that yields per hectare are today no higher than what they were in the late 1930s.

The way the cotton industry functions today is based on an extreme structure of exploitation that is profitable for the elite, but pushes the local population more and more into poverty. A 2004 survey by the World Food Programme found that households' food supplies were least secure in Tajikistan's cotton growing areas. Even though Tajikistan reported from 2000 to 2006 that it officially exported cotton worth of 931 million USD, little of this profit actually reached the people.<sup>232</sup>

The cotton industry has fatal consequences for the environment, as monocultures leach nutrients out of the soil and the women and children working in the cotton industry, the ones who are mainly picking the cotton by hand, suffer from the pesticides and insecticides that cause all kinds of skin diseases.<sup>233</sup> The winter of 2007/ 2008 brought a crisis that massively affected the cotton yield of 2008.

This crisis was predictable and preventative measures could have been taken, but the government did not take any action. "The weakness of the Tajik government, and its commitment to continuing Soviet-style cotton production at all costs, are largely responsible for this situation. Unless the government fundamentally changes its policies in rural areas – a change that will be very difficult because much of the Tajik elite benefits from those policies – such kinds of crises will recur and worsen, increasingly threatening the stability of the country."<sup>234</sup>

The Tajik government presented the winter crisis, the harm it has done and the resulting food shortages exclusively as a humanitarian crisis caused by a natural disaster, but different policymaking could have prevented the worst.

One of the major reasons for this crisis is the continuation of Soviet-era policies forcing the country's overwhelmingly rural population to produce cotton, rather than allowing them to farm for themselves to adequately supply themselves with food. Kazakhstan had even offered to sell 100,000 tons of wheat at a below-market price to Tajikistan to prevent a food crisis. Nevertheless, the Tajik government refused this offer.<sup>235</sup>

## 5.5 Forced Resettlement and Changed Social Structure

What had a significant impact on Tajikistan's post-Soviet experience were the numerous campaigns of enforced internal migration, which started in the early Soviet period and continued into the late 1990s. People were mainly relocated from the central mountains of Tajikistan to parts of the south-west, where, in the course of the collectivisation process, cotton monocultures were established and an immense amount of human power was needed (Akiner 2002: 8).

The most remarkable example is people who had been relocated to the Vakhsh valley during the collectivisation process in the 1950s, where by the end of the USSR 90 percent of the population had been newcomers. Even though extended family networks generally remained together as entire communities were being relocated, larger community groupings were eventually dispersed and most importantly, the rules of the game between local communities and the newcomers had to be newly defined. The relationship between "native" and "newcomer communities" eventually developed into conflicting relationships that resulted in the civil war. During the war these resettled families returned to their original homesteads.

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<sup>232</sup> Van Atta, Don: King Cotton freezes Tajikistan, 21/03/08

<sup>233</sup> Group interview with local development workers of an international NGO in Kulyab in June 2005

<sup>234</sup> Same as footnote no. 233

<sup>235</sup> Same as footnote no. 233

Another example is that of the Yaghnobi ethnic minority, that was relocated to the south several times, after repeatedly illegally returning to their 'homeland' in the Zarafshan valley (Loy 2005: 1).

The dispersal of larger community groupings as a result later became one of the aggravators for the Tajik civil war. The civil war actually started in this south-western region of Tajikistan where people had been relocated to and this part of Tajikistan in the course of the civil war became the one where the fiercest clashes took place.

Again, in 2006 new resettlements took place. The Tajik government started to resettle 1,000 volunteer families from western Khatlon to the very west on the Uzbek border, promising the people a start-up sum of 500 USD, which is more than an average annual salary. The ethnic component plays a role in this initiative. Those families predominantly being resettled were ethnic Tajiks and the target area is one mainly inhabited by ethnic Uzbeks. A respondent said that the families that were being resettled were from areas that were homogeneously ethnic Tajik, they were not used to the local "Uzbek culture" and the codes of conduct of the Uzbek population. This might have a destabilizing effect in the long run.<sup>236</sup>

## 5.6 The Regime and the Government Elite

Soviet legacies and the civil war very much define power relations at different levels of the Tajik state. The ruling regime in Tajikistan is dominated by people from the same region (Kulyab) as the President. Regional networks and networks based on other kinds of affiliation dominate political decision-making and the way posts are being distributed.<sup>237</sup>

Muhutdinova describes the current regime as follows: "President Rahmon has, in turn, taken his third-term victory at the polls as a mandate for a stronger presidency. He has continued to implement a *de facto* Tajikistan patronage and clan-based policy when staffing his cabinet and various positions of power throughout the republic. The Parliament remains largely a rubber-stamp entity, with many of its members either appointed or elected through an uncompetitive semi-democratic process." (Muhutdinova 2007: 684-685).

The political elite in Tajikistan further faces allegations regarding the fact that it has secured dominant rent-seeking positions in drug trafficking, from the cotton industry and, to a lesser extent, from international aid money.

The regime can legitimately be accused of being corrupt in many cases, violating human rights, censoring media (or creating the necessary conditions for self-censorship), undertaking nepotism, and being opportunistic regarding its choice of international partners (whether the US or Russia, Iran or China).

Nevertheless, the Tajik government enjoys a certain degree of legitimacy. The public appears genuinely supportive of President Rahmon's government due to the relative peace and stability that it has created since the end of the civil war in 1997.

However, despite impressive macroeconomic growth (starting from a very low level), income disparities are growing and Tajikistan remains the poorest of the post-Communist countries.

Since 2005, the Tajik government increased its efforts to monitor and sometimes restrict the activities of international organisations, domestic civil society entities and NGOs. It "ordered financial audits of various domestic groups and called for all international organisations and foreign embassies to inform the ministry in advance

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<sup>236</sup> Pannier, Bruce: Tajikistan. Officials entice Ethnic Tajiks to Western Border Region, 11/18/06

<sup>237</sup> "President Rahmonov has used an informal policy of assigning important government posts to individuals from the southern Kulob region of the country, where he is from.", Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), www.freedomhouse.org, sighted 03/02/08

of meetings and topics of discussion with domestic NGOs, political parties and local journalists."<sup>238</sup>

Analysts seem to be divided regarding the fact that Rahmon has recently started cracking down on key figures that during the war used to fight on his side. Some say it is a good sign that he is prosecuting even those who used to fight side by side with him. Sotirov, the head of the UN Tajikistan Peace-Building Support Office (UNTOP) indicated in this regard that firm action taken by President Imomali Rahmon's administration against hold-out rebel groups enabled peace to take root.<sup>239</sup>

Others say that he will soon not even be able to rely on his former comrades, which will increasingly destabilize the situation. Shokirdjon Rahimov, Assistant Chairman of the Social-Democratic Party, commented: "There is a conflict of interests 'upstairs' nowadays and it is worsening. That is why the powers-that-be regard their former allies as potential rivals and therefore invent excuses to remove them from the political process."<sup>240</sup> Previously, only members of the former opposition had been claiming their share of power; nowadays increasingly, members of the Popular Front demand a share.

In Tajikistan, the situation is partly similar to the one in Russia where people want a 'leader with an iron fist' who can stabilize the country. Democratization is often seen as a process that creates chaos and that is what people want to prevent most of all, i.e. falling back into civil war. For many people the memories of the civil war are still fresh and therefore they have developed an antipathy towards chaos and violence, which seems to lead to an affinity for benign dictatorship that is enforcing some kind of law and order and, more than anything else, preventing civil war.

In 1996, Nourzhanov made the following judgement: Institutions based on traditional and illegal exchange continue to play a prominent role in today's Tajikistan. "So long as the central government fails to transcend its policy of patrimonialism and acts with the sole goal of survival, these alternative structures will be in a position to prescribe their rules of behaviour on society. Rahmonov's regime has been moving, albeit slowly, towards greater legitimacy, stability and institutionalisation, but further setbacks to this process may well occur, and the prospect of the resumption of chaos and violence in Tajikistan still remains viable." (Nourzhanov 1996: 5) Even though this notion is from more than twelve years ago, it is still as valid today.

At the same time, people do not see an alternative to Rahmon, as "opposition parties lack solid platforms and agendas, are known for bickering, and appear unable to unite effectively" against Rahmon and the pro-Government People's Democratic Party.<sup>241</sup> In the current state of affairs, Rahmon can legally stay in office until 2020 and for now, a regime change is unlikely to happen.

## 5.7 Changing Alliances: With Russia or with the US?

The Tajik elite are engaging in different alliances, either with the Russians or with the Americans. The role of Russia has increasingly been reduced throughout the past few years and the US has won ground in the course of the anti-terrorism campaign, from which Tajikistan has profited a lot financially. According to a local respondent, President Rahmon has very good connections to the American Ambassador.<sup>242</sup> In 2003/4 when I conducted my field research, Russia still played a much more important role than it does today. As a local respondent put it in 2004: "If the

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<sup>238</sup> See: Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 05/02/08

<sup>239</sup> Kucera, Joshua: Evaluating Tajikistan's Reconstruction 10 Years after the Civil War's End, on [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 10/18/07

<sup>240</sup> Anonymous author: President of Tajikistan is not in control, on: [www.ferghana.ru](http://www.ferghana.ru), 05/29/08

<sup>241</sup> See also: Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2006), [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 05/02/08

<sup>242</sup> Interview with the founder of a local NGO in Dushanbe in June 2007

Russians want it: I will be President tomorrow or you will be President. It all depends on the Russians.”<sup>243</sup>

In 2007, a Tajik journalist described the relationship between Russia and Tajikistan in the following manner: “In fact, despite the recent meetings between the Tajik President Rahmon and Russian President Vladimir Putin, I think that not only meetings, but also the process of every transaction and reaching every agreement between Tajikistan and Russia has become difficult. That is to say, today we cannot say that there is an optimistic feeling about the outcome of relations between Tajikistan and Russia, including the issue of migrants.”<sup>244</sup>

The US has developed a new ‘Great Central Asia’ strategy linking Tajikistan more to Afghanistan and further to South Asia. The US is currently trying to gain the support of Japan and the EU for this idea. The EU foreign-policy chief, Javier Solana, visited Dushanbe in early 2008 to consider the strategy. The US has further brought in the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to explore possibilities for funding trans-regional projects that would strengthen the infrastructure and communication links among the Central Asian countries (including Afghanistan) and South Asia. Russia is aware of this strategy and has signalled resistance to the alleged US policy of detaching the Central Asian countries from Russia’s sphere of influence.<sup>245</sup>

A major visible sign of this newly intensified engagement of the US in the region has been the construction of a bridge over the Amur Darya River (between Tajikistan and Afghanistan), opened in August 2007. The US sees this as a showcase. Its delegate who came to inaugurate the bridge said that it would connect Afghanistan with the rest of the world.<sup>246</sup>

There have been several initiatives on the Tajik-Afghan border aiming at increasing trade between the two countries, but in the end the Tajiks and the Afghans do not have a lot to offer to each other and prejudices are deeply embedded. There used to be a bazaar on an island in the Amur Darya close to Ishkashim, in Mountain-Badakhshan; the main goods on sale were imported from other countries or were humanitarian aid, sold by Afghans to their Tajik neighbours.<sup>247</sup>

Russian troops remained present in the independent Republic of Tajikistan after 1991. Until 2005, the Russians had military representation in the centre of Dushanbe, since then they have been increasingly pushed to the periphery.

The Russian side is not just watching these actions taken by the US. In October 2004, they formally opened a new military base where several thousand troops were to be stationed. They also took back control over a space-monitoring centre at Lake Nurek.<sup>248</sup>

So far, the official version is that the Russian government supports military interventions in Afghanistan and the establishment of western military bases in post-Soviet Central Asia, seeing it as a security gain for the CIS region. However, there are two conditions to the concept: Russia only accepts these kinds of interventions when they aim at fighting terrorism and as long as they are only temporary (Halbach 2007b: 8).

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<sup>243</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Ishkashim in June 2004

<sup>244</sup> Roger McDermott: Dushanbe Expands International Partnerships beyond Russia, on: [www.avesta.tj](http://www.avesta.tj), 06/22/07

<sup>245</sup> Bhadrakumar, M. K.: Afghan Bridge Exposes Huge Divide, on [www.atimes.com](http://www.atimes.com), 09/07/07

<sup>246</sup> Same as footnote no. 246

<sup>247</sup> This respondent’s explanation for why the bazaar did not function anymore was also that the Russian did not want it to function. In his opinion, the main things that have to be changed were that the streets had to be renewed and the borders had to be opened: He said: “We are living here at the end and pay the highest prices within Tajikistan.” Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Ishkashim in June 2004

<sup>248</sup> See the Country Profile: Tajikistan, on: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 03/25/08

There are in fact two minor things that make Russia believe that Tajikistan is turning away from the Russian power. One is that Rahmon changed his name in 2007, Tajikisizing it by getting rid of the Russian ending.

Secondly, there is again talk of changing the script used for the Tajik language back to the Arabic one, as the people in Afghanistan and Iran are doing, and connecting again to Iranian culture by having access to modern Iranian literature and Iranian news. Nourmahamad Amirshohi, a researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies and Written Heritage within the Tajik Academy of Sciences, has in early 2008 written an open letter to the Tajik President pushing for a change of script.<sup>249</sup>

At the same time, the Tajik President passed a decree in 2007 mandating that all newborns be registered without the Russian suffixes, “ov” or “ova,” attached to their last names.<sup>250</sup>

Another sign of Tajikistan distancing itself from Russia may be that it cancelled a contract with a Russian conglomerate to develop a dam and an aluminium plant in 2007. For Russia the contract cancellation marked a diplomatic setback, “...which [Russia] has aggressively reasserted its economic and political influence across Central Asia over the past two years”<sup>251</sup>.

Most likely, the fact that RusAl was also involved in the modernization of the aluminium plant played an even bigger role in cancelling the contract. Apparently, RusAl sought a significant stake in Talco, which the Tajik government refused to grant. At the same time, Uzbekistan had expressed vocal opposition to Talco’s modernization, citing ecological concerns. The real reason was more likely to be that Uzbekistan was afraid of losing its position of being Central Asia’s political powerhouse. Analysts suggest that the cancellation of the contract is in line with Rahmon’s evident desire to reduce Russia’s cultural influence in Tajikistan. Since March 2007, the President has run a campaign to promote economic austerity and a distinctly Tajik national identity.<sup>252</sup>

Being so much at the mercy of external forces also gives people even more the impression that they are not the masters of their own destiny and it additionally discourages the Tajik people from acting on their own initiative.

## 5.8 The Role of Islam in Tajikistan Today

It is difficult to describe the role of Islam in Tajik society and, even more so, in Tajik politics today. Particularly in society, the different factions are increasingly growing apart. There is a faction that continues the Soviet secularism. Another faction is gradually turning towards Islam, partly radical Islam from places such as western Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, trying to fill the emotional and ideological space that opened up with the collapse of the Soviet Union.

During the Soviet era, official Islam was more or less suppressed during the different periods. Nevertheless, Islam shaped everyday life and as an answer to the repression, a parallel Islam (e.g. Sufism) developed. This was hidden, but very much influenced rural society. ‘Religious practice’, even though it contradicted the overall

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<sup>249</sup> Daler Ghufonov: Tajikistan drifting away from Russia, on [www.asiaplus.tj](http://www.asiaplus.tj), 03/24/08

<sup>250</sup> Nigel, Clive: Expect the Unexpected from the President, [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/14/07

<sup>251</sup> Tajik officials announced on 29<sup>th</sup> August 2007 that they were cancelling a deal from 2004 with the aluminium giant RusAl, under which the Russian company was to spend roughly \$2 billion on finishing the Roghun dam, along with modernizing the Tajik Aluminium Plant (formerly TadAZ and now known as Talco) and the construction of another aluminium smelter nearby. In a statement, President Imomali Rahmon attributed his government’s action to “the Russian company’s failure to honour its commitments.”, Anonymous author: Does Dushanbe Want to Distance Itself from Russia?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/07/07

<sup>252</sup> Anonymous author: Does Dushanbe Want to Distance Itself from Russia?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/07/07



concept (“Leitbild” in German), was often legitimised by being called ‘national’ such as the choice of a life partner, the upbringing of children, segregation of the sexes etc. In this regard, there were significant regional differences throughout the Soviet Union and there was a considerable divide between urban and rural areas.<sup>253</sup> The invasion of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union, in which many Tajiks were involved as interpreters for example, opened up channels for a more extreme version of Islam to enter Central Asia and this later played a role in the Tajik civil war (Halbach 2007b: 83).

### 5.8.1 Religious Practice and Political Islam

Islam is a factor in the development process in Tajikistan today that should not be neglected. The Tajik government generally respects religious freedom. As in countries in the West, religious communities have to register with the State Committee on Religious Affairs (SCRA). However, this process is sometimes used to control religious and political activities.

The attitude of the state towards religion is moving towards increased secularization. In 2004, the Council of Religious Scholars, a body close to the authorities, banned women from worshipping in mosques.<sup>254</sup> In 2007, girls and young women were banned from wearing the headscarf in public schools and universities.<sup>255</sup> This shows how inconsistent the policies are. Banning women from worshipping in mosques can be seen as an “orthodox” Islamic measure, whereas banning girls from wearing headscarves in schools is strictly secular.

The newly introduced policies and legislation<sup>256</sup> is dangerous in terms of how it is perceived by Islamic leaders<sup>257</sup>, who say “...the ban is a fresh assault on religious freedom in Tajikistan, where the fiercely secular government of President Imomali Rahmon has imposed restrictions on worship and has cracked down on Islamic

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<sup>253</sup> Annette Krämer divides Soviet policies towards Islam into six phases: 1) Fight against Islam and its clerics in the 1920s (against the Basmachi movement etc.) and “Stalinist cleansing” in the 1930s; 2) more moderate policies after WWII; 3) continued by Khrushchov (1953-1958); 4) 1958-1964 a new anti-religious campaign; 5) ended by Breshnev; and, 6) in the beginning of the 1980s a last large anti-Islam campaign (Krämer 2007: 59-60 & 64).

<sup>254</sup> See: Freedom House, Nations in Transit, Tajikistan (2007), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 11/03/08

<sup>255</sup> The Tajik headscarf case: A devout female Muslim faced pressure during her three years at university to remove her traditional head covering during classes. She resisted, until the Ministry of Education in Tajikistan ordered schools and universities to ban women from wearing headscarves on campus in 2007. The woman, Ms. Ismailova, then said that the Ministry’s May decree violated her constitutional right to practice her religion and that it was an affront to Islamic custom. She vowed to continue to fight the new law, all the way to the country’s Supreme Court, after lower courts had rejected her case. See: Rotar, Igor: Religion in Central Asia: Hijab Politics, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 10/01/07

<sup>256</sup> More than 300 makeshift mosques have been closed recently by authorities in Dushanbe, with some of those sites subsequently turned into beauty salons or police offices. These and other clampdowns follow a government ban on Islamic headscarves in schools, compulsory tests for clerics, and a ban on the fundamentalist Mavlavi religious group (a Sufi order). Government scrutiny of mosques and religious activities has intensified all over Tajikistan. Authorities in the northern Sughd region have set deadlines for the operators of 350 mosques to get proper licenses or face closure. One respondent said that one has to get documents from 12 different agencies to register a mosque. Najibullah, Farangis: Is President Rahmon’s Government Anti-Islamic?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/08/07

<sup>257</sup> Islamic leaders feel increasingly that they are treated in an unfair way, which might lead them to reclaim more power. Muhiddin Kabiri, leader of the IRP believes that it is obvious that the state suddenly made its policy very strict in regard to Muslims. According to him, the Tajik government in 2007 destroyed two mosques in Dushanbe because they were not registered with the government. The city administration also issued a decree prohibiting worship outside of mosques and the broadcasting of prayers from loud speakers. Rotar, Igor: Religion in Central Asia: Hijab Politics, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 10/01/07

political activism.”<sup>258</sup> Tajikistan’s constitution calls for religious freedom, but *de facto* there is little liberty and believers are coming under increasing state control.<sup>259</sup>

Tajikistan's Education Minister has extended official controls on personal and religious freedoms with an assault on deeply ingrained practices at one of the country's major institutions of Islamic learning. The government is not only restricting the display of religious signs in public secular schools, but even in the Islamic University of Tajikistan. The Tajik Education Minister has ordered male students to wear suits and ties and shave their beards. At the same time, he has vowed to introduce teacher uniforms and to ban headscarves.<sup>260</sup>

One of the dichotomies during the civil war was the battle between secularists and traditionalists/ Islamists. This battle is not over yet. Society is becoming more radicalised at both ends. An indicator for this phenomenon for example is that on the main roads of Dushanbe there are more girls and young women wearing extremely modern outfits (short mini-skirts, etc.) and at the same time one can see more girls and young women wearing the “traditional” *hijab* and long coats, ‘East-Anatolian style’. This has become more evident over the last couple of years.

Additionally, new laws restricting the number of guests and food offered at weddings, circumcision parties and funerals, and prohibiting ‘*mahalla* mosques’, i.e. unregistered mosques in the local neighbourhoods, are perceived by religious forces as an attack by the state on religion.<sup>261</sup> These measures further fragment Tajik society. Nevertheless, these new laws can also be seen as part of an “antipoverty campaign”. Rahmon has been criticizing lavish weddings, funerals etc. and has therefore taken measures to restrict the number of guests and cars that can be present at such events.<sup>262</sup> At the same time, the President is known to have a weakness for luxury and throwing big parties.

Politically, Islam plays a role in Tajikistan and this is emphasized by the fact that Tajikistan is the only one of the post-Soviet Central-Asian state that has a legal Islamic party, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP).<sup>263</sup> Its leader, Kabiri, is often celebrated in the West as a good example of an Islamist leader. He presents himself in European outfits, always well shaved, and embodies the modern, more liberal wing of the party.<sup>264</sup>

The IRP used to be much stronger under its previous leader, Said Abdullo Nuri, who died on 8 August 2006.<sup>265</sup> He was a prominent and influential figure in Tajikistan in the 1990s. Once a staunch enemy of the government, he became a major player in the peace deal that ended the civil war. He then helped to form a coalition government among civil war rivals.

Nuri had initially emerged as the leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), a coalition of groups opposed to rule by mainly Communist Party apparatchiks left over from the Soviet period. After the civil war broke out in 1992, Nuri fled the country for a

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<sup>258</sup> Rotar, Igor: Religion in Central Asia: Hijab Politics, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 10/01/07

<sup>259</sup> Same as footnote no. 258

<sup>260</sup> Najibullah, Farangis: New Curbs Target Islamic Students, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 01/18/08

<sup>261</sup> These new laws will be discussed in more detail later on. Rahmon introduced these new laws in May 2007.

<sup>262</sup> Najibullah, Farangis:: Tajikistan: Government Reacts to Economic Crisis by Banning Witchcraft, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 25/12/07

<sup>263</sup> At a presidium of the Islamic Renaissance Party about the Mission and Values of the IRPT from 2008-2015 the following goals were stated: aiming at economic development, an independent and stable society, rule of law, social equality and the development of democracy; Teletain „AP“, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>264</sup> I interviewed Mr. Kabiri in Dushanbe in February 2004 and he was extremely open to my questions.

<sup>265</sup> Nuri's ties to Islam go back many years. He was arrested by Soviet authorities in 1973 for distributing Islamic literature. In 1974, Nuri helped organize the banned youth group Islamic Revival ("Nahzati Islomi"). The spiritual leader of that group was a respected cleric, Muhammadjon Rustamov (also known as Mawlavi Hindustani), who also became Nuri's mentor. In 1992, just before the outbreak of the civil war, Nuri was editor-in-chief of the "Islamic Tribune" ("Minbari Islom") newspaper.

short time. However, he and his deputy, the former chief mufti (*qazi kalon*) of Tajikistan, Hoja Akbar Turajonzoda, continued to lead the UTO from Afghanistan and Iran. In 1997, Nuri signed the Tajik National Peace Accord on behalf of the UTO. Nuri had been a leader who pursued compromise in the national interest. Nuri led the National Reconciliation Council and worked with representatives of the government and UTO to form a new government.”<sup>266</sup>

The UTO consisted mainly of Islamists and Democrats who were from the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan. The Islamist forces especially were well connected with their counterparts in Afghanistan. They even partly operated from the Afghan side of the river Panj and received their supplies from there. These cross-border links still exist and can easily be re-mobilized.

Through this same link hundreds of students of Islam study every year in Afghanistan and Pakistan and, when they return, are indoctrinated with a version of Islam that is significantly more conservative than what has been the mainstream in Tajikistan during the last few decades.<sup>267</sup> Along the same lines, Rahmon has even described the *hijab* as ‘foreign culture for Tajiks’ and added that men at the Islamic University should not wear ‘Middle Eastern-style hats’.<sup>268</sup>

What is a problematic regarding Islam in Tajikistan today is that the average Tajik does not have a good level of pure Islamic education. Most Tajiks are religious illiterates due to the secularization campaigns during Soviet times, propagating that “religion is the opiate of the people”. Only very few people are able to read the Koran in the original and interpret the texts themselves. Therefore, customs and local laws are often presented as Islamic, even though they cannot be found in the Holy Koran or in the *hadiths*.

Halbach, a German expert on Central Asia, says that one of the main reasons for the expansion of religious extremism in the region is that even in one and a half decades the damage that the Soviet fight against religion caused to Islam could not be fixed. The Soviet religious policy did not manage to eliminate religion (in this case specifically Islam) in its sphere of influence totally, but it managed to diminish its public education institutions into minimal state-controlled organisations and to reduce Islam to simply ethnic customs. When with the ‘perestroika and glasnost’ and the liberalization process for religion in the latest phase of the Soviet Union young people from the Northern Caucasus, Tartastan and Central Asia became interested in getting an Islamic education, this demand was mainly satisfied abroad or by teachers coming from abroad, bringing more radical Islamic influences to Tajikistan (Halbach 2007b: 18). The difficulty of this development was that these new religious influences could barely be controlled by the respective states and it led to the influx of predominantly fundamentalist branches of Islam.

This leads to the notion that in Tajikistan one can find at least three different recognisable codes. There is the code of behaviour dictated by the state, in form of laws and decrees. Then there are localised code of behaviour (partly comparable to the Pashtunwali in Afghanistan) and Islamic code of behaviour which partly overlap, but that generally should be distinguished from each other, even though they are in reality often confused with each other.

A weakened role of the IRP and the growing general despair of the people might lead to more and more people turning towards more extreme forces (Krämer 2007: 73).

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<sup>266</sup> Anonymous author: Tajikistan: Islamic Party Chairman Leaves Behind Powerful Legacy, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 11/08/06

<sup>267</sup> Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in Dushanbe, a specialist of Islam in Dushanbe in May 2004

<sup>268</sup> Najibullah, Farangis: New Curbs Target Islamic Students, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 01/18/08

During the summer of 2008, the Tajik government has even shown a concern regarding an increased growth of Salafism<sup>269</sup>, an extremist branch of Islam in Tajikistan. Salafism is a form of Islam that is quite different from Hanafism, the traditional, more liberal Islam practiced by the majority of Tajiks. Some devout Hanafi Muslims, including Islamic scholars and Tajik officials, seem most worried by the growing influence and exclusionism of the Salafis in Tajik society. The danger, they say, is that Salafis see themselves as the purest Muslims and exclude others, renouncing other kinds of Islam. The head of this organisation claimed that 20,000 people had joined his organisation in Tajikistan in the recent years.

The Salafis are running a big propaganda campaign. Their ideology is widely disseminated in literature available on the streets and in bookstores at mosques. Salafis reportedly distribute nearly 6,000 audio and videotapes, books, and brochures every week. In addition to that, the Salafis' rejection of Sufism has caused resentment among many Tajiks, as Sufism has strong roots in Tajikistan.<sup>270</sup>

The general line in Tajikistan today is that the political leadership presents itself as the defender of a secular state order, which religious forces often perceive as a provocation.

### 5.8.2 The Role of Sufism

Another factor is Sufi brotherhoods in Tajikistan. It has to be noted though that orthodox Islam and Sufism are much intermingled in Tajikistan and the majority of believers are unable to identify the differences. The people practise some rituals of Sufism and do not know where they come from. In prayers, names of Bahauddin Naqshband and Abdul-Qadir Gilani are very frequently invoked and yet some mullahs are unaware of their Sufi origins. They just call them saints. Also Jalaluddin Rumi (d. 1273), for example is perceived as a Tajik poet, rather than a great Sufi *sheikh* and the founder of the *Mawlawiyya* order (Arabov 2004: 346).

Sufism is often neglected as a popular version of Islam, which is not the 'real thing' and which is often not acknowledged as part of Islam by orthodox believers. What characterises Sufism is the striving for a personal experience of God and for spiritual enlightenment, which finds its peak in the unification with the divine and the relinquishing of the self. Sufism is often described as Islamic mystic, but it is rather an organised form of religious orientation is lived in so-called orders (Krämer 2007: 56). As much as Christianity, Islam has also recycled many pre-Islamic practices. Many aspects of Sufism actually come from Zoroastrian times. Some of the holy places that are today perceived as Sufi holy places were venerated before the advent of Islam and Islam simply 'recycled' them into its own sanctuaries (Arabov: 2004: 346).

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<sup>269</sup> Muhammadi Rakhmatullo is the head of *Salafiyyah*, an unregistered religious organization in the Tajik capital, Dushanbe. Educated in a Pakistani *madrassa*, Rakhmatullo is known as Mullah Muhammadi in Tajikistan and is one of the country's Salafi leaders. Salafis advocate a pure form of Islam that is said to be similar to that practiced by the earliest generations of Muslims starting with the Prophet Muhammad (*salaf* means "ancestors" or "early generations" in Arabic). *Salafis* renounce innovations, alterations, and additions that were added in succeeding centuries to their "pure" form of Islam. Some believe Salafism is similar to Wahabbism, and many people use those terms interchangeably. Even the habit of rolled-up trousers is similar to the Wahhabi custom (in former Soviet republics and other regions adherents wear their trousers three centimetres shorter than normal).

<sup>270</sup> Saidazimova, Gulnoza: Tajik Government Concerned By Increasing Growth Of Salafism, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 11/07/08

The dominating Sufi order in Tajikistan today is the Naqshbandiyah<sup>271</sup>, whose importance and influence on the Tajik society and politics in Tajikistan are difficult to judge. Tajiks are not in the habit of practising spectacular Sufi chants and dances in public. “As for *Naqshbandiya*, one of their prominent *sheikhs*, Ishan Zubaydulla, says that there is no need for dancing and chanting. For him, the silent *zikr* is preferable as it can be performed anywhere and without a teacher at one’s side.” (Krämer 2007: 56) The *Qadiris*, another Sufi order, on the contrary prefer the loud *zikr*. According to Arabov, the strongest tie that links Tajiks to Sufism today is the pilgrimage to holy places where Sufi saints are buried. People visit these holy places on special occasions such as births, exams, or even business deals. Such a pilgrimage takes place before such an event to ask for the blessing, and afterwards to thank God. Pilgrims bring money or food offerings.<sup>272</sup>

Notions vary from “Sufi brotherhoods do not play a role anymore in Tajikistan today.” to “Sufi brotherhoods are extremely important for Tajik politics today and still play a vivid role.”<sup>273</sup> Regarding Sufism, one has to distinguish between the role it plays in everyday life, where it is still strong, and the role it plays as a political force, which is difficult to assess as it is very much hidden.

Until the end of the civil war, Sufis also played important roles in Tajik politics. The *Qadiri sheikh*, *eshon* Tourajan, for example, recalled in a long interview how he took part in talks with President Nabiev in 1992 over the disturbances<sup>274</sup> in Dushanbe.

Sufi leaders learned a lesson from the civil war, not to enter into the sphere of political power. However, the Sufis continue to play a significant role in the social life of the country. *Eshons* (Sufi title of honour) are highly respected by the population and often play the role of intermediaries in civil society. Having disciples from different layers of society, *eshons* find themselves at the centre of the social fabric. For example, two *murids* (term for disciples), one working for the administration and the other having problems with that administration may choose their common *eshon* as an arbitrator rather than the state system (Arabov 2004: 346-347).

Sufism is a network whose reach and importance in everyday life as well as in politics should not be underestimated. It remains to be seen whether the Sufi order will develop into a stronger force within civil society in the future. Sufi orders even have an international dimension. They do not only play an important role within Tajikistan, but they create important cross-border links. The *Naqshbandiya*, for example, are also an important Sufi order in Turkey today and play a significant role in Turkish politics.

### 5.8.3 The Role of Ismailism

Another wing often not fully recognized (by the majority Sunni Muslims in Tajikistan) as an ‘official version of Islam’, is Ismailism<sup>275</sup>, as it has strong Sufi elements.

<sup>271</sup> The *Naqshbandiya* dates back to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries and it was under *sheikh* Bahauddin that *Naqshbandiya* turned into a powerful organisation. The *Naqshbandiya* is a relatively conservative order. It emphasizes the need of sticking to the *sharia* and a law-respecting life, its followers practice soundless meditation (*zikr*), in opposition to other known whirling *derwishes* for example (Krämer 2007: 56)

<sup>272</sup> Same as footnote number 271, p. 345

<sup>273</sup> Interview with an Italian PhD candidate in June in Dushanbe; Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in February 2004 in Dushanbe; Interview with an employee of an international NGO in Dushanbe in May 2004

<sup>274</sup> In Russian people usually rather refer to *sobytiya* –events/ disturbances- rather than calling it the civil war.

<sup>275</sup> Ismailis believe that members of the Aga Khan lineage are the true *imams*, heirs of the Prophet Muhammed. They split with the main Shia community over a succession issue in the eighth century.

“The Ismailis of Tajikistan...have come a long way since Soviet times, when they were afraid even to have a picture of their spiritual leader the Aga Khan on display at home. The Soviet authorities were hostile to religion in general, but took a peculiarly strong dislike to Ismailism, originally a branch of Shia Islam, even though it preaches tolerance rather than *jihad*. As a result believers were forced to practice their faith in secret for decades.”<sup>276</sup>

One has to note that the Aga Khan has significantly managed to brush up the reputation of Ismailism and therefore the government is no longer suppressing it. The Aga Khan bought his way in, as he is a big donor for development cooperation in Tajikistan and this gives the Ismailis a good standing. The Ismailis in terms of their religious freedom gained enormously from the ending of the Soviet Union. “The sudden collapse of Communism meant that the Ismailis were able to practice their faith freely, and even meet their leader. In return, the Aga Khan Foundation, AKF, invested large sums of money to help their remote mountain communities survive and develop.”<sup>277</sup>

#### 5.8.4 Is the Latin Script an Alternative?

The Tajik language has been written in three different scripts: Perso-Arabic, Latin and Cyrillic. Currently, Tajiks are using an adapted version of the Cyrillic script. Initially, Tajik (a Persian dialect) was written in Arabic, then after the revolution a short period of Latin script followed, which was then replaced by the Cyrillic script to cut Tajik off from Afghan and Iranian influences.<sup>278</sup> After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Tajik civil war, discussions about replacing the Cyrillic script with the Arabic or even Latin script started again. The Arabic script would implicate the forging of closer cultural ties with other Persian-speaking nations, such as in Iran and neighbouring Afghanistan.<sup>279</sup> The debate about the script is not only a cultural, but also a political one. The Latin script is supported by pan-Turkists, who advocate closer ties with Uzbekistan and the other Turkic states in the area (even though Tajik is not a Turkic language, it has many influences from Uzbek). The Perso-Arabic script instead is supported by devoutly religious people and those who wish to bring the country closer to Iran and the Persian heritage. Finally, the current Cyrillic script is generally supported by those who wish to maintain the status quo and prevent the country from further distancing itself from Russia.<sup>280</sup>

Tajik was written in the Perso-Arabic script up until the 1920s. This had been the result of Islamic influence in the region. Until then Tajik was not thought of as a separate language, but was simply considered as the Persian language.<sup>281</sup> The division was later created artificially by the Soviet power. First, the Soviets started simplifying the Perso-Arabic script in 1923. Then in 1927, they introduced the Latin script for the Tajik language. This measure was an effort to increase literacy and distance the, at the time, largely illiterate population, from the rest of Islamic “Central Asia”. In addition to that, the script change also had practical reasons. The Perso-Arabic script is an abjad writing system and does not provide sufficient letters for representing the vowel system of Tajik. Besides that, the letters are more difficult to learn because each has three different forms depending on the position of the letter in the word.<sup>282</sup> In 1928, there was the Decree on Romanization. The Latin variant for

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<sup>276</sup> Azizmamadova, Shirin: Tajikistan. Ismaili Resurgence, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 05/11/05

<sup>277</sup> Same as footnote no. 276

<sup>278</sup> Tajik alphabet, From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, on: <http://en.wikipedia.org>, sighted 02/06/08

<sup>279</sup> Same as footnote no. 278

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Even today, one could call Tajik and also Dari simply Persian dialects, whereas Tajik was more influenced by Uzbek and Russian as Dari was by Pashto and English.

<sup>282</sup> Tajik alphabet, on: <http://en.wikipedia.org>, 02/06/08

Tajik was based on the work by Turcophone scholars who aimed to produce a unified Turkic alphabet. The literacy campaign was remarkably successful, with near universal literacy being achieved by the 1950s. In 1989, with the emergence of Tajik nationalism, a law was enacted declaring Tajik the state language. Only then again, the law officially equated Tajik with Persian, placing the word "Fârsi" (the local name for Persian) after Tajik. At the same time, the law called for a gradual reintroduction of the Arabic alphabet.

Again political reasons (the banning of the Islamic Renaissance Party in 1993 and then the Tajik civil war) slowed down the process of re-introducing the Perso-Arabic script. In 1999, the word "Fârsi" was removed from the state language law. Since 2004, the de-facto standard in use is the modified form of Cyrillic. Today, only a minority of the population can read the Arabic alphabet, as it is not taught in all schools throughout Tajikistan.<sup>283</sup>

### 5.8.5 The Threat of Terrorism

Islam, as part of a political agenda, is in Central Asia and all over the former Soviet Union by politicians in power often confused with terrorism and therefore I would like to mention this phenomenon here.<sup>284</sup> Equating Islam with terrorism leads to anti-Islamic measures being proclaimed to be anti-terrorist measures for which Central Asian regimes get credit, for example from the United States for "joining the war on terrorism".

If one looks at the statistics in terms of terrorist incidents, Central Asia does not stick out on the world map. There were no major terrorist attacks in Tajikistan or any terrorist attacks worldwide, which originated from Tajikistan (except for the Uzbek courthouse bombing in 2007) during the last few years.

According to a report by the U.S. Department of State, Tajikistan's State Committee on Religious Affairs has closed unregistered mosques and prayer rooms, but has not interfered in registered places of worship. The report says that this move reflected a concern about Islamic extremism; a concern shared by much of the general population, and stated that the government was monitoring the activities of religious institutions to keep them from becoming overtly political.<sup>285</sup> However, I have not come across any obvious concerns amongst the population regarding a threat of Islamic extremism.

Amnesty International reported on restrictive measures taken by the Tajik government. In 2006, nine women were sentenced to prison terms for their membership in the banned Hizb ut Tahrir party and for distributing literature calling for the establishment of an Islamic state. The Tajik government has at the same time sought to impose greater control over pilgrimages to Mecca.<sup>286</sup>

The proximity to Afghanistan plays a role and through established links Islamic influences from Afghanistan move across to Tajikistan. At the same time, it cannot be ignored that in Tajikistan's civil war, the Islamic Party was one of the violent players, and Islam is therefore often connected to violence (Halbach 2007b: 27). It has to be acknowledged that the Popular Front can be connected to violence in the same way. In 2004, the Tajik government was accused of torturing and ill-treating alleged Islamists, supposedly members of the Hizb-ut-Tahrir. However, eventually there was no thorough trial and investigation. It became clear that the government in the majority of cases is not impartial. These men had been accused by the government

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<sup>283</sup> Same as footnote no. 282

<sup>284</sup> Uwe Halbach says in one of his studies on the topic: "The imprecise definition of terror allows, to call all opposition forces that are connected to Islam, Islamic terrorism." (Halbach 2007: 8)

<sup>285</sup> Rotar, Igor: Religion in Central Asia: Hijab Politics, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 10/01/07

<sup>286</sup> Same as footnote no. 285

of planning the violent overthrow of the state and having links to the al-Qaeda network.<sup>287</sup>

In August 2006, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan conducted a common military exercise that showed that protection from terrorism is very much equated with military action against external threats (Halbach 2007b: 10). Terrorism is by political leaders all over the former Soviet Union predominantly perceived as something that comes from the outside and not a home-grown phenomenon.

What is clear is that Islam can be used in different ways. Islam can be used as a scapegoat by Westerners, claiming that all trouble is rooted in Islam. This is very dangerous. Islam has to be considered as a very multi-faceted phenomenon, which can be interpreted and used to mobilize and manipulate people, especially in economically difficult times when people need something to hold on to.

Resentment is further enforced by the Russian government. The Russian government in 2007 called for the need to take care of regional conflicts in which terrorists use religious, ethnic and social conflict potentials (Halbach 2007b: 14). The question is, how Russia really defines the phenomenon of terrorism; in the Russian sense it always seems to be linked to Islam and that is dangerous and puts Islam, as a religion, into a very difficult position.

Summarizing, one can say that the breakdown of the Soviet Union in terms of religion partly left a vacuum that was filled by new forces that have to be thoroughly observed and evaluated. When the Soviet Union collapsed and the civil war broke out, people started looking for something to hold on to and, in many cases, this was Islam, often supported by external forces from Saudi-Arabia, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan (Halbach 2007: 10).

Finally, Islam can easily be used to mobilize people and this can take different directions. For the development process, Islam could be taken as a positive force, bringing people together and taking care of their problems, by mobilizing their own resources. In order to eliminate Islamist extremism, the root causes (general crisis connected to the transformation process, weaknesses regarding legitimacy of power structures, the perception of an unfair division of power, socio-economic problems such as unemployment from which especially the youth suffer) have to be eliminated (Halbach 2007b: 32). This is obviously a very long process, which does not just take a few years.

## 5.9 Development Barriers and Potentials

Looking at the development process of a post-conflict state, one has to consider what development barriers (and potentials) there are that might slow down or even block the development process in the long run. One may have to differentiate between “natural” and “man-made” obstacles, and real development barriers that might threaten to block the entire development process.

In Tajikistan the general tendency, amongst the state elites is that they are not oriented towards development and the economic structure is not socially compliant (child labour, forced labour and the like). There are no equal chances in terms of access to property, the arena for manoeuvring in terms of trade unions is extremely limited, interests of civil society groups are insufficiently represented and corruption is endemic on all levels (Bliss 2004: 20).

At the same time, Tajikistan has a few good development potentials. A big potential is that the economy is growing and that poverty is declining. An important achievement is that the socio-political stability has improved. Tajikistan is slowly getting back on to the path of prosperity. Improvements started in the late 1990s: a

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<sup>287</sup> See: Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08



rise in export revenue from cotton and aluminium, the inflow of remittances and more successful structural reforms (since 2001 in the form of fiscal and monetary policies) helped to improve the situation (Abassian, 2005: 10-13).

However, after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the cut in subsidies previously provided by it and the impact of the civil war, it will take a long time before Tajikistan is fully back on its feet. In addition to that, it is disadvantaged regionally, with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan having better prospects in terms of the availability of natural resources.

In 2006, Freedom House stated that even though Tajikistan still ranked one of the poorest among the post-Communist states, evidence showed that the overall poverty rate was declining.<sup>288</sup> Another important factor is that Tajikistan is rich in terms of some natural resources, mainly water to produce hydropower, which is a regional advantage towards the North, West and South. The National Development Strategy for Tajikistan that was developed in 2005 based on the Millennium Development Goals recognized agriculture, energy and aluminium production as the country's "growth engines".<sup>289</sup>

What has been an asset for Tajikistan in terms of its development has been the attention by the international community it received in the wake of the war in Afghanistan and this has brought increased economic development and security assistance, which has created jobs and will most likely increase stability in the long term.<sup>290</sup>

The cotton business itself is a development potential because it accounts for a large percentage of exports. However, its mismanagement prevents the development of the agricultural economy.<sup>291</sup>

Tajikistan is in the early stages of seeking World Trade Organisation membership and has joined NATO's Partnership for Peace.<sup>292</sup> This could potentially help Tajikistan in its development process.

### 5.9.1 Traditional Institutions are Difficult to Change

One of the factors that slow down development is the fact that traditional<sup>293</sup> institutions are "sticky", i.e. they are difficult to change. To a certain extent they have to be overcome or at least adapted in order to let development and progress embed. It is not actually the pure form of these traditions that needs to be changed in order to allow development and progress, but the current form into which they have developed. It is often the dysfunction or 'mutation' of these particular rules of the game that hinder the development process, for example, the enormous spending on wedding parties. If this money was invested into small and medium enterprises, this would be more sustainable than spending all the money for one festivity

#### **Arusi/ Tuy – Wedding or Circumcision Party**

One example for these "sticky" institutions is the 'tradition' of *tuy* (the Tajik term for festivities such as weddings – *arusi* - and circumcision parties). Weddings have to be big, if possible with around 300 guests. Weddings in Tajikistan can cost up to 3,000 USD. Often after the wedding the young couple has to live in poverty for some time, even years. It is a kind of competition - one wedding has to be bigger than the other.

<sup>288</sup> Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), sighted 13/02/08

<sup>289</sup> UNDP in Tajikistan- Fighting poverty in post-Soviet Tajikistan, on: [www.undp.tj](http://www.undp.tj), sighted 24/05/08

<sup>290</sup> See above

<sup>291</sup> World Disaster Report 2001: 130

<sup>292</sup> CIA World Factbook, Tajikistan, [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), 08/03/08

<sup>293</sup> 'Traditional' as it is used here refers to the rules of the game (institutions) that date back to pre-Soviet times or that have been revived as neo-traditions, but that have their origins in pre-Soviet times.

If one has a high position in society or a well-paid job (such as working for an NGO), the wedding is expected to be even bigger. In order to have a big wedding people often have to take *qars* (borrow money from the community).<sup>294</sup> As a reaction to the high level of spending by people on weddings and other ceremonies, the President in the spring of 2007 introduced some laws to limit the cost of weddings, funerals, circumcision parties and other big festivities.<sup>295</sup>

### **Qars – Islamic Tax**

*Qars* is a kind of credit (sometimes also called “Islamic tax”), which is collected among the members of the local community (collected within the big family, *mahalla* or *village organisation*). *Qars* can be collected for a wedding, funeral, *maraca* (memorial event), in the case of somebody falling sick and to send somebody to Russia for work migration.

In Shugnan (district in Mountain-Badakhshan) *qars* has become more institutionalized. When there is a wedding and a family does not have enough money, the family can take *qars*. Everybody gives as much as one is able to give; the *village organisation* helps to collect the money and eventually hands out the money as a ‘credit’. The credit has to be paid back with a two percent interest rate. If a family gives less than it could have (usually the community know about the income of each family), this family will be punished by shaming them.

Eventually, *qars* is a way of financial balancing within the community, because the way it was described to me during my research it seemed that not all the debts would be paid by everybody. Debts would be outstanding for years.<sup>296</sup>

### **Shirini - Sharing one's Profit**

Another phenomenon is called *shirini* (which comes from *shirin*, the Tajik word for sweet). If a person, for example, gets a new better-paid job, the ‘profit’ has to be shared within the extended family<sup>297</sup>. Consequently, for the individual itself it is not so profitable to get a better-paid job, because in the end it will be more work and stress for him or her as an individual, but the gain will only slightly improve his or her own life. In the end, it is in some cases the more rational choice for him or her to stay with his or her previous job.<sup>298</sup> This ‘rule of the game’ keeps people from striving for individual success.

Tajik society is a very hierarchic and patriarchal society based on collectivity, often giving the elders the last word. Age counts more than education and professional expertise. When somebody is recruiting staff there is pressure to serve one’s own family network.

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<sup>294</sup> Interview with two women in Shugnan in October 2003

<sup>295</sup> In spring 2007, the President introduced the following new laws: 1) in school miniskirts, jeans and headscarves are not allowed anymore; 2) School children are not allowed to drive to school in their own cars; 3) Mobile phones are also prohibited in school; 4) One is no longer allowed to celebrate one’s birthday in a restaurant; 5) at funerals, one is only allowed to serve bread and tea; 6) Weddings can only take three hours and the number of guests allowed is limited. These laws on the one hand aim to limit the extent to which people can display their wealth and to limit the expenses for weddings, birthdays and funerals; and on the other hand they aim at limiting the power of mullahs, interfering in their spheres. In the course of this initiative, many local “house mosques” were closed down.

<sup>296</sup> Interview with two women in the district of Shugnan in October 2003

<sup>297</sup> In some parts of the country the phenomenon is called and acknowledged *aūūd*.

<sup>298</sup> Interview with a local employee of an NGO in Dushanbe in November 2003

### 5.9.2 Post-Conflict Trauma

Another factor that puts the development process on a hold in Tajikistan is the fact that people are heavily traumatised and the main thing they have in mind is that something like the civil war should never happen again.

Goal number one is to prevent a resumption of the hostilities that developed during the Tajik civil war. Many people are still traumatized from the war and this experience prevents people from trying many things that they might dare to try without the wartime experience. Eventually, it is a development barrier and potential at the same time. It is a barrier in the sense that it prevents people from daring, i.e. taking a risk or experimenting. It is a development potential; it motivates people to do everything possible not to return to war.

### 5.9.3 Availability of Natural Resources

Tajikistan is rich in an array of natural resources that could potentially be exploited. One problem is the initial investment that is needed to be able to exploit these resources. As the economic framework conditions indicate, at the moment it appears that international investors are not going to arrive soon. Fundamental structural changes are needed to attract international investors to invest in this field.

#### **The Potential of Increasing the Hydropower Production**

Tajikistan has a good potential in terms of hydropower. "Harnessing the energy of water is a priority in Tajikistan, which has more water resources *per capita* than all but two other nations."<sup>299</sup> The estimate is that Tajikistan could potentially produce 300 billion kilowatt-hours per year, and therefore have the greatest hydroelectric capacity in the region. As it is today, however, during the winter it is dependent on its neighbours Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.<sup>300</sup> With an increase in the production of energy, Tajikistan could also possibly enhance its position in the region. According to Eurasianet about 60 percent of Central Asia's water supply originates in Tajikistan alone.<sup>301</sup>

Unfortunately, the current setup looks different. About 95 percent of Tajikistan's electricity generating capacity is hydroelectric, but now only an estimated five percent of Tajikistan's hydroelectric potential, most of it based on the Vakhsh River, is in use. "For several years now, the completion of new dams has suffered long delays, and the immense scale of the energy crisis means that the lives of impoverished people have become unbearable."<sup>302</sup>

While being the richest in terms of water in the region, every winter Tajikistan experiences deficits of electric power due to the low level of water in the big hydroelectric stations. Therefore, 85 percent of electricity consumed in the Sughd region around Khudjand is obtained through barter with Uzbekistan. Despite having the potential to become a leader in the production of hydropower, Tajikistan purchases electricity from Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan at international rates that often cause tensions between the countries.<sup>303</sup>

From 1 September 2008, onwards electricity is again only provided in a limited way. In comparison to past years, the water level of the rivers this year is 15 to 20 percent

<sup>299</sup> Tajikistan, on: [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com), sighted 08/08/08

<sup>300</sup> Farangis Najibullah: Tajikistan: Energy Shortages, Extreme Cold Create Crisis Situation, on: [www.avesta.tj](http://www.avesta.tj), 02/14/08

<sup>301</sup> Parshin, Konstantin: Tajikistan: President Renews Push to Create Central Asian Water Consortium, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/08/08

<sup>302</sup> Ganieva, Firuza: Can Somebody Turn the Lights on in Tajikistan?, [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 04/05/2007

<sup>303</sup> Same as footnote no. 302

lower. Negotiations have already been completed with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, who will provide additional electricity to Tajikistan during the winter months.<sup>304</sup>

The Tajik President at an international conference in Dushanbe recently revived an initiative to establish a regional water management framework and used the forum to advance a proposal to create a regional water and energy consortium. A communiqué stated that disasters related to water posed serious impediments to sustainable development and emphasized the need for greater regional and international cooperation.<sup>305</sup> This will be difficult to achieve, especially in times when the relationship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is worsening.<sup>306</sup>

At the same time, Rahmon acknowledged that Tajikistan was experiencing a drastic decline in water levels. He said: "There is a water shortage of about 35 percent in Tajikistan this year in comparison with last year." Although Tajikistan's main natural asset is water, the President admitted that many citizens, even in the capital Dushanbe, lacked clean drinking water.<sup>307</sup>

Rahmon further sees a potential in developing Lake Sarez<sup>308</sup> in Mountain-Badakhshan, which now possesses an estimated seventeen cubic kilometres of pure drinking water. However, some experts have expressed concern about the chance that the natural dam, created by the earthquake, could break away if nothing is done to bolster it. The President foresees that an international consortium would reinforce and monitor the dam. The consortium should also help to create the necessary infrastructure to supply up to 40 million of Central Asia's inhabitants with fresh drinking water. Only Kyrgyzstan showed enthusiasm for Rahmon's idea of a consortium. Unfortunately, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are not sufficiently capable of undertaking such big infrastructure projects. Other external support would be needed. While Kazakhstan offered to assist in developing hydropower development, it was wary of Tajikistan desiring to tie water to energy. Uzbekistan, however, has remained hostile to Tajikistan's development plans, due to its fears of losing political influence in Central Asia.

The Tajik President stressed again at the same time his desire to expand the Tajik hydropower capacity. According to him, at present the country is utilizing only about five percent of its generating capacity. Rahmon's solution for the recent energy shortages was the construction of additional power stations along the river Vakhsh.

Rahmon suggested that the construction of power stations would at the same time regulate the flow of water in many of Central Asia's most important rivers through which the danger of floods and droughts could be reduced.<sup>309</sup>

Accordingly, Tajikistan might be a good location for the production of energy-intensive products, as is already happening regarding the production of aluminium,

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<sup>304</sup> Yuldaev, Avaz: In Tajikistan a limit was set for the provision of electricity, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>305</sup> Parshin, Konstantin: Tajikistan: President Renews Push to Create Central Asian Water Consortium, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/08/08

<sup>306</sup> Eurasianet stated in this regard in July 2008: "An accusation of official involvement in cross-border terrorism has inflamed tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, two unevenly matched rivals for regional influence whose entrenched leaders have long jostled for the political high ground. Relations between Dushanbe and Tashkent have been fraught by border skirmishes, espionage scandals, and backbiting since independence in 1991. But the suggestion that Uzbek authorities are exporting violence in an effort to destabilize Tajikistan represents a departure from the low-intensity squabbling of years past. The head of Tajikistan's Supreme Court, Nusratullo Abdulloev, convened a press conference on July 16 (2008) to accuse Uzbek security forces of ordering an explosion that caused minor damage to the Supreme Court building in June 2007." Pannier, Bruce: Tajik Judge Alleges Official Uzbek Role in Courthouse Bombing, on: [eurasianet.org](http://eurasianet.org), 07/19/08

<sup>307</sup> Parshin, Konstantin: Tajikistan: President Renews Push to Create Central Asian Water Consortium, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/08/08

<sup>308</sup> Lake Sarez is a natural reservoir that was created by an earthquake in 1911.

<sup>309</sup> Parshin, Konstantin: Tajikistan: President Renews Push to Create Central Asian Water Consortium, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 07/08/08

for which the bauxite is being imported from Kazakhstan. Tajikistan gets 97.68 percent of its electricity from hydroelectric sources (estimate from 2003).<sup>310</sup>

There might soon be a big boost in terms of hydropower. Russian investment in the Sangtuda I hydropower dam was supposed to increase the production of electricity for domestic consumption. This year the contract with the Russian company was ended. The completion of the Sangtuda II and Roghun dams would have substantially increased the electricity production, which could have further been exported for profit. If ever finished (the planning and construction was already started during Soviet times), the Roghun will be the world's tallest dam.<sup>311</sup> Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have signalled that they are ready to import hydropower from Tajikistan.<sup>312</sup>

At the same time, the difficulty of accessing water resources due to new borders and climate change has led to conflict, especially in the Ferghana valley. The latest incident occurred on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border in March 2008. About 150 residents from the Tajik Isfara district, led by District Governor Mukhiba Yokubova and accompanied by Tajik police stormed across the border into the Kyrgyz Batken region and tried to destroy a dam built several years ago with financial support from the World Bank. The intention of the Tajiks had been to restore the direct water flow to their farms by destroying the dam on the Aksay River, which flows from Kyrgyzstan into Tajikistan and is a major source of irrigation water for Tajik farms in Isfara. Officially, border issues have been solved, but in fact, not all those borders have been clearly demarcated on the ground.<sup>313</sup>

In September 2008, a memorandum of understanding between Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Iran was signed for the construction of lines of electricity transfer from Sangtuda to Roghun, to Mazar-i Sharif, to Herat and to Mashad.<sup>314</sup> Tajikistan and Afghanistan also came to an agreement that Tajikistan would provide electricity to Afghanistan during the summer months. This is part of a project that is run by the Asian Development Bank. The line will provide electricity from the Vakhsh valley to Kunduz, Baghlan, Pul-i Khumri and Kabul. Once the project is realised, the estimated profit is 114 million USD annually. The overall volume of the project is 109.5 million USD.<sup>315</sup>

### **Other Natural Resources**

Besides hydropower, Tajikistan has petroleum, uranium, mercury, brown coal, gas, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten, silver and gold.<sup>316</sup> Its industry produces aluminium, zinc, lead, chemicals and fertilizers. The main agricultural outputs are cotton, grain, fruit, grapes, vegetables, cattle, sheep and goats. It exports aluminium, electricity, cotton, fruit, vegetable oil, and textiles.<sup>317</sup> These potentials need to be further developed.

Gas might also be a potential in Tajikistan in the future. The company Tethys Petroleum Limited will soon start seismological works in locations that promise oil and gas resources, said the president of the company David Robson.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>310</sup> Tajikistan Facts and Figures, on: <http://encarta.msn.com>, sighted 08/03/08

<sup>311</sup> CIA World factbook, Tajikistan, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), 08/03/08

<sup>312</sup> In fact, in Afghanistan, a long-distance transmission line for electricity has just been built from the northern border down to the capital of Dushanbe.

<sup>313</sup> Sharipzhan, Merhat: In Central Asia, Water Could Lead To Fire, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 11/07/08

<sup>314</sup> Naumova, Viktoria: Lines for Electricity Transfer are being built. But who is paying?, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>315</sup> Lets flood Afghanistan with electro-energy. ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>316</sup> Same as footnote no.315

<sup>317</sup> Tajikistan, on: [www.nationalgeographic.com](http://www.nationalgeographic.com), sighted 08/03/08

<sup>318</sup> Naumova, Viktoria: D. Robson promised to find gas, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

However, for more investors to come to Tajikistan there is a need for reliable framework conditions. This is also a precondition for remittances to be invested into local businesses, which could then further create employment and income.

#### **5.9.4 Connections to the Outside**

Internally and toward the neighbouring countries, Tajikistan's road network (28,000km) is mostly in a poor condition and large parts are not even paved, with the main North-South road connecting Khujand to the capital being closed in the winter because of snow. The difficult internal transport conditions also raise the prices for goods, leading to situations such as imported flour being cheaper (because of subsidies by the respective government) and of better quality (Abassian, 2005: 10). Tajikistan only has roughly 480 km of railway track, mainly connecting several of its main towns to the Uzbek and Turkmen railway networks. The air travel capacity used to be extremely well developed during the Soviet era. It had been highly subsidized by the state, so that it was affordable for the general population. People could even go to markets in Moscow and sell their produce directly. Today, the air travel capacity is highly inadequate and waterways are limited to 200km (along the Vakhsh River in the South).

The economic linking of Tajikistan with its neighbours, Afghanistan, Pakistan and China, should also be explored in more detail (Bliss 2004: 24). At this point with the new eastern connection to China and the link to the Karakorum highway only China profits in terms of exporting its goods to Tajikistan and not vice versa.

#### **New Road to China**

Especially, in Mountain-Badakhshan the local population had high expectations regarding the opening of a new road to China (in 2004) giving access to a higher variety of goods and lowering the prices.

The road to China has an impact on not only Tajikistan, but also other central Asian republics. It increased trade within Tajikistan, and between Tajikistan and Afghanistan and other central Asian countries – as Tajiks bring Chinese products and sell to others (both in domestic and outside markets). This road has also opened access to processing technology and alternative energy technology that is being imported to Tajikistan and indirectly contributing to the development process.<sup>319</sup>

According to Eurasianet: "Since the opening of a pass between Tajikistan and China in 2004, trade between the two countries has steadily increased."<sup>320</sup>

Ahmed Rashid says that Tajikistan's economy is growing at eight percent per year and that the capital is experiencing a building boom. According to him the new links – the Chinese are also investing into the road between Dushanbe and Khujand - help to attract resources from Central Asia and to open local markets to Chinese goods.<sup>321</sup>

#### **Bridges to Afghanistan**

Another factor is the new bridge between Tajikistan and Afghanistan that has been supported by the US and the Aga Khan Development Network. In August 2007, a new bridge between Tajikistan and Afghanistan (near Kunduz) was opened. The bridge can handle 1,000 trucks per day and has a financial volume of 37 million USD.<sup>322</sup>

<sup>319</sup> Interview with a Pamiri employee of AKDN in Glasgow in July 2008

<sup>320</sup> Trilling, David: Tajikistan: A Chinese Road to the Future?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 08/01/07

<sup>321</sup> Same as footnote no. 320

<sup>322</sup> Bhadrakumar, M. K.: Afghan Bridge Exposes Huge Divide, on:[www.atimes.com](http://www.atimes.com), 09/07/07

Altogether, AKDN has been planning six bridges over the Amur Darya to Afghanistan. To date AKDN has invested 1.7 million USD into the construction and rehabilitation of bridges over the river Panj.<sup>323</sup> Prior to the summer 2008, four bridges had been constructed (two in Ishkashim, one in Khorugh and one in Darvaz). Two more are planning to be constructed (one in Vanj and one in Shurabad).

According to a Pamiri respondent, the impact is that the perception Tajiks have of Afghans and vice versa has improved. It is expected to increase the trade in the border areas by 25 percent, increase the incomes in the boarder areas<sup>324</sup>, the diversity of products and to increase market choices for food and non-food items. The impact has been much more visible in Darvaz where AKDN has implemented a cross-border cooperation project funded by GTZ along with the construction of the bridge.

The bridges have a very high potential for development. There are some issues that still need to be addressed, such as custom regulations, permission for limited market days and lack of appropriate infrastructure in the markets. At the same time, Afghans have problems with obtaining passports needed for obtaining the Tajik visa and also getting the Tajik visa is a problem itself.<sup>325</sup>

According to AKDN, the newly constructed bridges have had a positive impact on the Tajik as well as the Afghan side. On the Afghan side the bridges have provided better food security, access to critical social services (such as Tajik hospitals) and more efficient delivery channels for humanitarian aid. On the Tajik side, however, they are facilitating access to a wider variety of better-priced goods that have been transited by Afghan traders. At the same time, these bridges are also facilitating the exchange of ideas and the strengthening of relations across the border, which is urgently needed and represents important steps towards fostering peace and stability in the region.<sup>326</sup>

### 5.9.5 Potential to Develop Tourism

There is a potential for alternative or individual tourism to be further developed in Tajikistan. It has a lot to offer in terms of mountain scenery and lakes for hiking, climbing and potentially skiing. Tajikistan will not develop into a destination for mass tourism, but there is a great potential for individual adventure tourism. Tajikistan has as much to offer as its neighbour Afghanistan, for example, but is more secure. Tourists looking for the real adventure tend to do a combined Tajikistan and Afghanistan tour.

The UN in Tajikistan has started an initiative “Principals Coordination in Tajikistan”,<sup>327</sup> bringing together different stakeholders regarding topics such as macroeconomic management, administration and governance, the private sector and more. Under the private sector topic, various organisations such as the Aga Khan Development Network, the Great Game Travel Company, and the World Bank have made presentations on how tourism in Tajikistan could further be developed.

According to a local respondent who recently opened his own tourist company, Highland Adventures, the tourism sector in Tajikistan is still in an infant stage, but in recent years tourism has produced quite a high flow of income in comparison to earlier years.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>323</sup> AKDN: Tajikistan Overview 2008, on: [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org) , sighted 11/07/08

<sup>324</sup> AKDN will conduct an income survey in autumn 2008.

<sup>325</sup> Interview with a Pamiri employee of AKDN in Glasgow in July 2008

<sup>326</sup> Same as footnote no. 325

<sup>327</sup> Principals Tajikistan, on: [www.untj.org](http://www.untj.org), 05/06/08

<sup>328</sup> Interview with a local Pamiri businessman in June 2008

## The Visa Regime

Developments regarding the visa regime seem to be going back and forth; until 2007, it was easier to get a Tajik visa. From 2003-07 citizens from the EU, the US, Japan and about 50 other countries did not need an invitation letter anymore.<sup>329</sup> It was then possible to get the visa upon arrival at the airport (since 2006). However, it had not become any cheaper. One also still needed to register if one stayed more than three days in the country and that cost another 30 Euros (in 2007) and was an administrative hassle if one did not do it through a travel agency. The same is the case with the permission to go to Mountain-Badakhshan, which always took a few days, and one could not be sure that the permission would be granted.<sup>330</sup> In 2008, a respondent told me that it was now possible to apply for a GBAO permit together with the visa at any Tajik embassy.

When I travelled to Tajikistan in September 2008 the visa policy had changed again (reminding the Tajik state to be a command state). When I had applied for a Tajik visa at the Tajik embassy in Kabul in June 2007 the civil servant had told me: "Why are you coming here to apply for the visa, if you can easily get it upon arrival at the airport?"<sup>331</sup>

In September 2008, I arrived at the airport in Dushanbe and the employee of the consular office at the airport told me: "Now it is 2008 and the laws are different than in 2007." After a friend arrived at the airport and signed a *zayavlenie* (a letter stating that I was her friend and that I would be staying with her), I managed to get a visa for 47 USD at the airport. When I went to the same travel agency to register, I paid an additional 125 Somoni (about 37 USD) for the registration.<sup>332</sup>

## Tourism Promotion Services by the Aga Khan Development Network

The Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) is focusing on the realization of tourism potentials in an environmentally and culturally sensitive manner. AKDN has a sub-section for the promotion of tourism in several developing countries. One branch is the Serena hotels and branches. There is a Serena Lodge in Khorugh, Mountain-Badakhshan, a Serena hotel is being built in Dushanbe and a lodge in Pastchid<sup>333</sup>. This way AKDN contributes to the local economy and trains local workers.

This programme further includes the reinvigoration of artisans and craft industries and sensitive conservation or development of the surrounding area. It also includes an income-generating component, as local residents are hired and trained at all levels of the organisation. AKDN incorporated these Tourism Promotion Services into its programme in 2003.

AKDN has identified the following challenges regarding its involvement in the promotion of tourism: lack of government support for the development of private initiatives; complicated legislative acts and norms on investment and taxation; limited access routes to and within Tajikistan; a need for a strategic marketing campaign; lack of an appropriate statistical information centre; underdeveloped infrastructure; and, finally the lack of specialized training for people engaged in the hospitality industry.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> See: the reference to the decree No. 460 from 25th October 2003 regarding the visa regulation under: [www.botschaft-tadschikistan.de](http://www.botschaft-tadschikistan.de), sighted 07/08/08

<sup>330</sup> In 2004, I met a German student who waited for several months to get permission to go to Mountain-Badakhshan to do her research there. The only chance to get it was to be connected to the Aga Khan Development Network.

<sup>331</sup> Interview with an employee of the Tajik Embassy in Kabul in June 2007

<sup>332</sup> Impressions from my latest field visit in Tajikistan in September 2008

<sup>333</sup> A market needs assessment was conducted and when the project is finished there will be 100 luxury rooms.

<sup>334</sup> Presentation on Tourism Promotion Services by AKDN, available on: [www.untj.org](http://www.untj.org), sighted 02/06/08



### **World Bank: Improved Access to a Landlocked Country**

The World Bank has been assessing the potential for developing Tajikistan into a tourist destination. So far, this sector has been functioning at a very low level. The national economy's income on travel is negligible. In 2005, it amounted to 3.5 million USD. An important factor in this context is that there are frequent policy changes, which concern travellers, such as the changes outlined above regarding the visa regime.<sup>335</sup>

Regarding reforms of the aviation sector, a major step will be the separation of policy making from technical regulation, and the separation of airlines from the airport and traffic control. Eventually, this will increase competition in the sector and will hopefully result in a decrease in prices and quality.<sup>336</sup>

### **ACTED: Promoting Eco-Tourism in Tajikistan**

ACTED is trying to promote eco-tourism in Tajikistan. Eco-tourism in this context is defined as the conservation of bio-diversity; consumption of non-renewable resources at the lowest possible level; protection of the cultural heritage; the promotion of an exchange between hosts and visitors; it stresses local participation and ownership and income generating opportunities; and, finally the promotion of handicrafts. The programme started in 1999 in Murghab, Mountain Badakhshan. In 2002, the Murghab Eco-Tourism Association (META) was founded. It works on community-based tourism and trains guides and home stay providers. Since then the number of services provided to tourists has increased enormously and the profit of META members has been increased tenfold.<sup>337</sup>

### **Private Tourist Agencies**

Since independence, several private local and international tourist companies have emerged in Tajikistan. These companies mainly specialize in adventure tourism such as trekking, jeep tours or even hunting. In the following, I would like to present a company working in this field.

### **The Great Game Travel Company**

There is a private company from the UK called the Great Game Travel Company specializing on adventure travel. The company was established in 2001, when it had only one client. Already in 2006, the company made its way up to more than 100 clients. Today the company has offices in Dushanbe and the UK, with one permanent staff member in Dushanbe, plus seven additional seasonal guides and drivers. The company offers trekking, mountaineering and jeep tours.

The company advertises Tajikistan as having "glorious, unique mountain environments, hospitable and generous people and historical and cultural heritage."<sup>338</sup> This is the case; hospitality in Tajikistan is a great plus and has to be promoted.

### **Hunting Tourism**

Finally, I would like to mention that there is also hunting tourism. Foreign hunters come to Tajikistan to hunt the endangered Marco Polo sheep and other species. As the animal is endangered, it is difficult to highlight this sector as a positive potential for development, but if the sector would be de facto state-regulated, it could be a

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<sup>335</sup> Presentation on "Tajikistan: how improved access can help landlocked country to grow" made by the economist Utkir Umarov from the World Bank, [www.untj.org/principals/index.php](http://www.untj.org/principals/index.php), sighted 02/06/08

<sup>336</sup> Same as footnote no. 335

<sup>337</sup> Presentation on "Eco-tourism in Tajikistan" by ACTED, July 2006, the presentation is available on: [www.untj.org](http://www.untj.org)

<sup>338</sup> Presentation by the Great Game Travel Company on its activities in Tajikistan, on: [www.untj.org](http://www.untj.org), sighted 02/06/08

good potential. According to a local respondent, the government hands out a limited number of licences per hunting season. There is always more demand for licenses than the government can provide. Therefore, this field already has reached the maximum of its potential development.<sup>339</sup>

It is said that hunters can only hunt the Marco Polo sheep if they get permission from the state, but given the high level of corruption in all fields and on all levels, I doubt that this is actually being enforced.<sup>340</sup>

On the internet one can easily find hunting companies that organize hunting trips to Tajikistan to hunt Marco Polo sheep. Prices are enormous. A 10-day Marco Polo sheep hunt costs 24,900 USD.<sup>341</sup> Another company offers nine days for 31,500 USD.<sup>342</sup> Companies advertise with 100 percent success rates regarding the hunting of a Marco Polo sheep.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>339</sup> Interview with a local Pamiri businessman in June 2008

<sup>340</sup> Interview with a young man from the Pamirs in Dushanbe who is involved in the hunting business and organizes trips for foreigners to Mountain-Badakhshan in November 2003

<sup>341</sup> Phil Whitmore's Blue Water Big Game: Marco Polo Sheep Hunt in Tajikistan, on: [www.bluewaterbiggame.com](http://www.bluewaterbiggame.com), sighted 02/06/08

<sup>342</sup> Info Hub Specialty Travel Guide: Tajikistan Hunting Packages: Hunting Argali Marco Polo in Pamirs, Tajikistan, on: [www.infohub.com](http://www.infohub.com), sighted 06/06/08

<sup>343</sup> 'ProfiHunt – Hunting Worldwide' advertises with the following: Marco Polo Argali hunting in Tajikistan. Tajikistan offers the excellent Marco Polo Argali hunt. Over the last 12 years, our hunters enjoyed 100 percent success. Average trophy size runs from 55 to 56 inches with several 60-62 inches rams taken every season. With the outstanding size of 68 inches, our client Sheik Mohamed took a Marco Polo ram in 2003. The season of 2006-2007 also proves lucky: Michael Stough (USA) harvests 59 inches ram (September 2006) and Jurgén Sartori (Germany) takes the trophy of 62 inches (Jan. 07), on: [www.profihunt.com](http://www.profihunt.com), sighted 13/06/08

## 6. Chapter 4: The Post-Conflict Development Process

In this chapter, I would like to introduce the reader to the current efforts being made in Tajikistan in terms of the state building process and what implications these have for the ongoing development process. When reviewing state-building, one has to differentiate between the policies and those efforts actually made. Further, one has to distinguish between the provision of statehood by the state itself and efforts made by other actors substituting former functions of the state, such as by NGOs, international organisations and other non-state actors, for example, local power holders.

I look at what policies have been applied and to what extent they led to a positive outcome, i.e. fostered development and improved the living conditions of the people. As two significant development factors, I also discuss the impact of work migration and drug trafficking on the state-building and development process in Tajikistan today.

### 6.1 National Development Policy

In order to understand the current state-building and overall development process one has to look at official state policy. Since the civil war the Tajik state has gradually been moving from an emergency phase to a more long-term development phase, and therefore the Tajik President, Imomali Rahmon launched the platform for the country's further development. First, two poverty reduction strategies were developed.

From 2003-2007 development workers and policy makers have seen Tajikistan going through a transitional phase, from a country in an emergency situation to a country that is going through a substantial development process and which is increasingly stabilizing, as it recovers from the breakdown of the Soviet Union and its civil war. Emergency NGOs are leaving the country and more long-term development organisations are taking over, as well as those NGOs already engaged in the country adapting their portfolio appropriately.<sup>344</sup> The organisation Merlin, for example, has ended its mission in spring 2007 and Care International was planning to leave the country in the next two years.<sup>345</sup> The government seems to be gradually taking over the coordination of development aid. To this end, a new agency was founded, the "State Committee for Investment and State Property Management". This initiative is being supported by the UN Coordination Unit, who still undertakes aid coordination to some extent, but also working on building up capacity within government agencies to take over this task.<sup>346</sup> It is under further discussion as to whether it is necessary to found a "Development Council" working in the same sphere.<sup>347</sup>

In 2005, the drafting of Tajikistan's National Development Strategy (NDS) was initiated to provide for an orderly long-term development process in accordance with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The NDS had two main purposes, it defines the country's development priorities and the general thrust of government policy, and it focuses on "achieving sustainable economic growth, expanding the public's access to basic social services and reducing poverty".<sup>348</sup> All of Tajikistan's

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<sup>344</sup> Interview with the head of the UN Coordination Unit in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>345</sup> Interview with an employee of Care International in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>346</sup> In June 2007 I visited this committee and tried to get hold of the report they do on donor money (how much there is and where the money goes), but the people there were very reluctant to give me the report.

<sup>347</sup> Interview with the head of the UN Coordination Unit in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>348</sup> National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 4

sectoral and regional conceptual frameworks, strategies, programmes and development plans that are currently formulated, as well as activities of all government agencies (ministries, etc.) are based on and in line with the NDS.

However, the NDS was not only seen as a government tool, it also aimed at being a tool for engaging in a dialogue with the business community and non-governmental organisations. In fact, international organisations (such as CIDA) have started to base their programmes on the NDS.

It remains unclear under whose mandate the aid coordination falls within the government. In terms of the NDS, this was mainly handled by the Ministry of Finance, which had to decide how much of the budget could be channelled where; and the Ministry of Economy, which was in charge of the overall planning. However, the process itself, of elaborating a development strategy for the whole country was not well coordinated with other agencies. It is still not ratified by the Tajik parliament.<sup>349</sup>

The NDS sets several main goals regarding the country's development for the next development phase, which I will look at in the following section and assess their validity.<sup>350</sup>

**The first goal is the creation of an institutional and functional environment for national development.** This in itself is a huge step. It would mean that governance was ruled by law, that public goods and services were provided on a sufficient level and that the people were not simply struggling with their day to day survival anymore.

**The second goal is to provide expanded access to basic social services.**

To some degree, this is already part of the first goal as it is a precondition. The access to basic public services will be further examined in Chapter 6. Generally, the quality of public goods being provided by the state is insufficient. The institutional set-up regarding the provision of public goods varies enormously from region to region, especially in the former opposition regions where public goods are mainly provided by non-state actors, local power holders, NGOs and international organisations. It is not only difficult to raise the standard of public goods being provided to the local population, but most difficult will be to balance the level of public goods being provided from region to region and to properly maintain the public facilities in the long run.

### **Achievement of the MDGs**

The Tajik government introduced its new National Development Strategy also to promote the Millennium Development Goals, to adjust them to the Tajik context and make them more workable for other agencies. At the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly in September 2005, the Tajik Foreign Minister, Mr. Talbak Nazarov, emphasized that the MDGs must remain the focus of efforts and they must be adjusted to specific conditions in the country. He mentioned that according to the World Bank, overall poverty was decreasing, but food security had to be further improved. In his view at that time, Tajikistan found itself at a turning point between conflict (resolution) and peace building. "Tajikistan has become one of the first countries in the world that, with the assistance of the United Nations, generated an estimation of the overall costs and resources required for the implementation of the MDGs." Mr. Nazarov said that Tajikistan needed 13 billion USD in the next 10 years to fulfil the requirements and he therefore asked the international community to double their efforts.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>349</sup> Interview with the head of the UN Coordination Unit in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>350</sup> National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 5

<sup>351</sup> Statement by Academic Talbak Nazarov, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Tajikistan, at the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN General Assembly, p. 3-4

The baseline scenario, which was conducted in the context of the MDGs, assumes a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of five percent, tax revenues as a share of GDP at 19 percent, and the government expenditure for MDG investment equal to 31 percent of the total budget. Under these circumstances, the total financing gap stands at 4.7 billion USD, or 36 percent of total needs. According to the high growth scenario that assumes a GDP growth of seven percent, tax revenues as a share of the GDP at 24 percent, and allocation of the government budget for MDG investment equalling 50 percent, the financing gap stands at 2.12 billion USD, or 16 percent of total needs. Tajikistan is the only country in the Central Asian and Eastern European region where a MDGs needs assessment is being carried out.<sup>352</sup> It is one of the eight pilot countries where a MDG Needs Assessment has been carried out with the support of UN experts to assess the policy priorities and financial resources needed to achieve the MDGs in key sectors, such as education, health, food security, water and sanitation, gender, environment and infrastructure.<sup>353</sup> According to reports by the World Bank in 2008, Tajikistan is the only country in Europe and Central Asia that is unlikely to achieve most of its Millennium Development Goals.<sup>354</sup>

### **Rule of Law and Civil Society**

The NDS suggests using a comprehensive block-based approach to tackle the issues, such as further developing the rule of law and the formation of a modern civil society. Little progress has been made in this regard during the last three years. The jurisdiction is not transparent and the system is very corrupt. If one is affluent enough or has the right *blat* (Russian for connections), one can always buy one's way into or out of something. A respondent said in this context: "For us in Tajikistan jurisdiction is a secret book. We do not trust courts."<sup>355</sup>

Regarding the emergence of a civil society, I have noticed that it has become more and more difficult to open an NGO. In 2007, a new NGO law was introduced that complicates the entire process. On the other hand, the problem is that the regime is becoming more authoritarian and local NGOs do not have the courage to complain and to demand a change in jurisdiction. No NGO really reacted to the new law. A general rule seems to be that a NGO works well if somebody from the organisation has good connections to the state apparatus. Consequently, most NGOs who lack these connections are very limited in their implementation of policies. According to a respondent, it seems that if three people meet twice a week in the same location, they already have to register this get-together as an NGO.<sup>356</sup>

Soon there will be a new law on religious entities, for example, associations. Slowly the non-state sphere, civil society, is becoming over-regulated. However, the government keeps emphasizing that an enabling environment has to be created for civil society. This in fact shows that there is a big gap between policy and what is implemented in reality.

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<sup>352</sup> UNDP: Tajikistan Leads on the MDGs, on: [www.tajik-gateway.org](http://www.tajik-gateway.org), sighted 15/06/07

<sup>353</sup> UNDP, MDG, Human Development, and Poverty Monitoring in Europe & CIS: Tajikistan holds local launch of the Millennium Development Goals, Kurgan Teppa, 10/02/05, on: <http://europeandcis.undp.org>, sighted 13/03/06

<sup>354</sup> Tajikistan Country Brief 2007, updated April 2008, by the World Bank, on: <http://web.worldbank.org>, sighted 16/05/08

<sup>355</sup> Interview with the founder of a local NGO in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>356</sup> Interview with an OSCE representative in Dushanbe in June 2007

## 6.2 NDS's Development Potentials for Tajikistan

In order to examine the development process in Tajikistan, one also has to look at what normatively the state's strategy is to then see how it is actually being implemented. The most remarkable point is that Tajikistan defines work migration as an element of its national development strategy and encourages the fact that young men go to Russia every year to make a living. According to the strategy, these work migrants are encouraged to make proper use of their rights.

If a government supports large-scale work migration, this implies that it has at least temporarily given up on local development options and sources of income. The question is: Does the government have an exit strategy for this constellation? Are these work migrants at some point encouraged to come back and invest their savings into the local economy?

The NDS development potentials for Tajikistan (except for hydropower and tourism), which will briefly be examined in the following section, seem to be random or inadequate and they differ considerably from what I have identified as development potentials in the previous section.

**Hydropower** might potentially be an opportunity and there is a demand in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan for importing electricity. However, this needs major investments. The big hydropower station at Lake Nurek would actually need to be closed down for about two years to clean it from silt. Nevertheless, this would mean a huge loss of energy in the mean time, which would be hard to substitute. However, there has been a lot going on in this sector recently. A new dam, Sangtuda I, has been completed and there is a debate on also completing the construction of a second dam, Sangtuda II.

As I have outlined before, there might be potentials for **tourism** at some stage. However, it will not be mass tourism. In spring 2007, big hotels were starting to be built in the outskirts of the city and on Rudaki, Dushanbe's main road. However, the appeal of the country to tourists is such that those who come are mainly individual tourists who do not demand fancy hotels.

The "**availability of agricultural raw materials for industrial processing**" I see more as a problem rather than a potential. It is true that Tajikistan produces vegetables and fruit of high quality. However, transportation within the country is difficult and expensive, and it is hard to reach regional (within Central Asia) and even more international markets. Trade structures are highly informalised and dominated by mafia structures, creating pseudo-monopolies. Local labour is cheap in comparison to the surrounding countries, but it is unlikely that anyone will invest in industry in Tajikistan if the state does not create the appropriate legal framework.

The notion is that Tajikistan can offer "**relatively large areas of undeveloped land suitable for agricultural use**". I cannot agree with this whatsoever, regarding the regions I have done research on (Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan). Respondents always named the scarcity of land and water as the main barriers for rural development. When I did research on local conflicts in Tajikistan in the autumn of 2003, disputes regarding land and irrigation water were the most frequent conflicts.

Tajikistan is often presented as being up to 93 percent mountainous. However, the higher regions function as valuable summer pastures. Nevertheless, the population density in the valleys is relatively high and it is increasing, as Tajikistan has a high population growth at 2.2 percent. The increase of the population in the valleys is

escalating pressure on resources, particularly regarding access to farming land and irrigation water.

In the NDS, Tajikistan is described as having “**favourable conditions for the cultivation of environmentally sound food products**”. Again, the climate is good, as is the quality of vegetables and fruit produced. However, land and irrigation water is scarce, and transport and access to markets difficult and expensive. Last, but not least, this is not actually a regional advantage. The neighbouring countries can offer the same products and therefore regionally there is no demand for import in this regard.

Tajikistan’s location is described as “**advantageous due to its strategic geographical position as a transit country for future transport and communication**”. Partly this is true, as sections of the Silk Road in ancient times also used to pass through Tajikistan. However, Tajikistan is double landlocked and the state of infrastructure today means that immense investment would be needed to make use of the strategically important position of Tajikistan. So far, only the French military is making use of that to secure their supplies for Afghanistan.

There are initiatives, for example by the AKDN, to connect Tajikistan more with Afghanistan through bridges over the Amur Darya River. However, until now the two nationalities are highly prejudiced and suspicious of each other, especially from the Tajik side. Tajiks perceive themselves as much more developed than Afghans are and often describe Afghans as dirty and uncivilized.<sup>357</sup> Uzbekistan makes exchange between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan more and more difficult. Even for local Uzbeks in Tajikistan it is difficult these days to acquire a visa for a longer period.<sup>358</sup>

**Labour force** is cheap in Tajikistan in comparison to its neighbouring countries<sup>359</sup>, but the educational advantage of Tajiks (in comparison to Afghans, for example) is also not that significant anymore. Since the breakdown of the Soviet Union, the level of education has decreased significantly. Workers in Soviet Tajikistan were literate and skilled, but they were also extremely specialized. This degree of specialization is no longer required. In order to provide employment to the people, major investment is necessary and incentives have to be created so that people realize that education is worth something (and that it does not only increase the bride price when a woman has an education, so that she can better educate her children). It is necessary to halt the practice of people simply buying their way into the career system.

### **6.3 Development Challenges or Barriers According to the NDS**

In the NDS the following issues have been identified as the main challenges and barriers to development in Tajikistan during the current transitional development phase.

#### **Ineffective Public Administration and a Weak Investment Climate**

In the NDS it is stated that the most important institutions – the government administration and the judicial and law enforcement systems are not working effectively enough. People do not trust the formal judicial system and, especially in

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<sup>357</sup> Interview with respondents in the border areas of Kulyab and Mountain-Badakhshan in October 2003

<sup>358</sup> Interview with the head of a local NGO in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>359</sup> In Tajikistan a university teacher earns 25 USD, in Afghanistan a normal teacher earns around 65 USD; interviews in this regard were conducted with teachers in Dushanbe and Kabul in June 2007

rural areas, rather rely on the informal system, mostly addressing these kinds of issues to the mullah or some other kind of village leader.<sup>360</sup>

In addition, government authorities tend to interfere at all levels. This includes law enforcement agencies interfering in operations of economic entities. Government decision-making mechanisms are complicated and not transparent. The extremely low wages of government employees in the public sector encourage corruption.

This is very much in line with my analysis of local governance structures. Making the right analysis though, does not mean that the correct steps will be taken to tackle these issues.

Mainly due to the lack of rule-of-law, the investment climate in Tajikistan is very weak. The state has been stabilized and the situation pacified, but the state is unreliable and continues to be unpredictable, as it does not act as a unified body.

It increasingly tends to introduce new laws touching the private sphere; the President passed a number of these kinds of laws in spring 2007.<sup>361</sup> These laws aim at limiting the extent to which people can display their wealth and to limit the expenses for weddings, birthdays and funerals. It is surprising, however, that issues like this are regulated at the national level. It shows how centralized the system is.<sup>362</sup>

This is to demonstrate that a potential investor cannot know today what the legal system will look like tomorrow, because the extent to which the state can interfere in one's affairs is not clearly defined.

Generally, trade structures are dominated by informal rules of the game. These are difficult to understand for outsiders and therefore investment costs can hardly be estimated by outsiders (by foreign investors, for example). In addition, Tajikistan's inability to attract investment can be explained by its geographical location and the extensive administrative barriers that exist.

Generally, Tajikistan is marked by unfavourable economic conditions, due in part to its geographical location. Other main reasons for this are insufficient development of the public and private infrastructure and weaknesses in addressing key economic problems, such as low labour productivity, insufficient competition and an underdeveloped private sector.<sup>363</sup>

The NDS itself states that the measure undertaken to draw investors into these sectors are insufficient, which can partly be tracked back to deficiencies in the institutional structures. Rather, what is needed is an environment that will ensure transparent decision-making regarding the targeting of investments. Monitoring mechanisms have to be put in place and special focus has to be given to public-private-partnerships.<sup>364</sup>

### **Little Competition between Companies**

The majority of sectors are characterized by a low level of competition and there is poor transparency in the way most enterprises operate. Most of them operate as monopolies and therefore there are no incentives to produce high quality. State-owned enterprises that operate on the market, often receive overt or hidden privileges. Restructured agricultural enterprises (former *kolkhozes*) are *de jure*

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<sup>360</sup> I learned this from my field research in the Rasht valley in spring 2004.

<sup>361</sup> I referred to this already in other sections: 1) in school miniskirts, jeans and headscarves are not allowed anymore; 2) Schoolchildren are not allowed to drive to school in their own cars; 3) Mobile phones are prohibited in schools; 4) One is no longer allowed to celebrate one's birthday in a restaurant; 5) at funerals, one is only allowed to serve bread and tea; 6) Weddings can only take three hours and the number of guests allowed is limited.

<sup>362</sup> I learnt this from interviews with a local woman working for an international NGO in Dushanbe in May 2007, and from an interview with a local NGO worker in Dushanbe in June 2007.

<sup>363</sup> National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 6

<sup>364</sup> Refer to the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 6



considered as independent market entities, but *de facto* are hindered from functioning independently by government authorities and local power holders. Often, they cannot make independent decisions regarding which crop to cultivate.<sup>365</sup>

### **Infrastructure Limits Growth and a Sharp Decline in Human Capital**

Both public and private infrastructure is in bad condition. By public infrastructure, the NDS understands transportation, power, telecommunication and other communication facilities, water supply and sanitation. Private infrastructure, according to the state, includes the sectors of banking and insurance, the security market, leasing and information technology.

There are enormous delays regarding the state legislation of basic social standards. The pace of reform in the social sector is extremely slow. Large parts of the population are denied access to education, medical and social services, and the quality of services is poor. "Coupled with a decline in personal income, this is contributing to a drop in the level of human development in Tajikistan."<sup>366</sup> This again negatively affects progress achieved in the areas of human rights, general legislation and social justice.

### **Problems in the Management of External Migration**

The NDS leads the problem of work migration back to the high population growth of 2.2 percent, which is in spite of continued family planning<sup>367</sup>, aggravating the problem of labour surplus. The NDS states the following: "The acute nature of external labour migration problems caused by high unemployment within the country means that the creation of new jobs and the upgrading of existing jobs, the preparation of migrants for work abroad and providing protection for the rights and interests of labour migrants in other countries have top priority."<sup>368</sup>

This part I find extremely interesting. New jobs have to be created and existing jobs have to be upgraded to make people stay and in order to reduce corruption in education, health, etc. However, how should that be done? This depends on so many other factors and it is a huge task to create long-term labour opportunities. On the other hand, I find it extremely interesting that the need for work migration is officially acknowledged by the NDS, i.e. the government, and that a need for the preparation of workers for work migration is acknowledged.

Work migration for the Tajik government is a tool to encourage potentially riotous parts of the population (young men) out of the country. It is a mechanism that is not sustainable in the end and that can easily fall apart due to external economic shocks.

### **Inadequate Implementation of Reforms at the Local Level**

The rights and responsibilities of the different entities at different levels are not sufficiently defined. Consequently, local governments and regional government authorities are not part of the ongoing reform process at the local level. During my

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<sup>365</sup> Interviews with former *kolkhoz* workers in Khovaling (Kulyab) and NGO workers (from an international NGO) in Kulyab in June 2005

<sup>366</sup> Here I am directly quoting from the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 6

<sup>367</sup> I wonder what measures are being undertaken; I have not come across any during my extensive field research in Tajikistan. A culture change is needed in this regard and that is a long process. It is still very prestigious, especially in rural Tajikistan, to have many children, especially boys, as they are seen by many as the main "age insurance". The sons traditionally stay with the parents and the daughters move out to their husbands homes. Therefore, the sons are the ones (or moreover their wives) who take care of the parents once they become old.

<sup>368</sup> Here I am directly quoting from the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 7

field research, when I asked heads of *jamoats* what their rights and responsibilities were, most of them said that there was not much going on because the *jamoat* did not have its own budget.<sup>369</sup> Delegating a separate budget to the *jamoats* would be a first step towards empowering them and creating some kind of accountability to the higher state levels.

The NDS further connects the lack of reform with the lack of competitiveness between regions and with the lack of improving their attractiveness in terms of external investment.

### **Limited Results from International Cooperation**

The NDS also recognises limited results from international cooperation as a development challenge. Regionally, there is not a lot of cooperation. The countries in the region compete for interest from Russia and the US and for development aid.

Tajikistan has a low level of diversified products and a poor use of “competitive advantages in the export market”<sup>370</sup>. Except for cheap labour, I do not see that Tajikistan has any competitive advantages on the regional (Central Asian) level. The limited extent of cross-border cooperation reduces opportunities for transit, and the complex bureaucracy holds up the extent to which goods are being exported across borders.

### **Inadequate Enforcement of Laws**

The NDS calls for the harmonization of existing local laws with international laws, e.g. in the field of human rights and personal freedoms. However, the difficult question from my point of view is not so much the legal harmonization, but the actual enforcement of these laws. Judges, advocates, and others in the legal process have to go through awareness raising and they need to be trained in this regard.

It remains to be seen to what extent the new National Development Strategy will actually be implemented during the years to come and whether, once it is ratified by the Parliament, NGOs, local and international, will more and more start adapting their programmes according to this strategy.

## **6.4 Work Migration**

Regarding the development process, at first glance work migration does not seem to play such a big role. Large parts of the population are involved in subsistence farming, but in fact labour migration is one of the most important sources of income for most Tajiks and therefore also substantially influences the development process on the local level in Tajikistan. One billion USD of remittances are sent back to families in Tajikistan every year, almost 50 percent of the national GDP.<sup>371</sup> This set-up eventually adds up to a “modernisation process against one’s own will” (Tetzlaff 2008: 15). Work migrants return from their stays abroad with new ideas and views that influence their society back home.

Therefore, I would like to emphasize the importance of work migration on the Tajik economy today and on the social structure as a whole. It changes gender roles and relations. Another indicator showing to what extent work migration is part of the

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<sup>369</sup> Interview with heads of *jamoats* in the Rasht valley in March and in Mountain-Badakhshan in June 2004

<sup>370</sup> See the National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan, 2006: 7

<sup>371</sup> Anonymous author: President of Tajikistan is not in Control, on: [www.turkishweekly.net](http://www.turkishweekly.net), 02/06/08

government strategy and planning is that in early 2008, Tajikistan requested a guest worker quota from the Russian Federation of 800,000 people for 2008.<sup>372</sup>

The work migration of Tajik men to Russia is enormous; in the age group of 18-35 almost every second young man is working abroad and this serves Rahmon in two ways. The income from work migration reduces local poverty significantly. Work migrants bring more money home than the state receives in development aid. The young men are the main group in society who might want to change things in the country and start a revolt, but as they are outside of the country for most of the year, society can more easily be controlled and social unrest prevented.<sup>373</sup>

In 2004, the number of work migrants ranged from between 300,000 and 800,000. Out of these, only very few managed to get well-paid jobs in Russia and could profit significantly. The larger part made only enough in order to send 100 to 200 USD home three to four times a year (Bliss 2004: 8-9).

Interestingly, extra money from work migration is only invested into better consumption, including nutrition, relatively fancy cars and the renovation of houses, but not into small businesses because the overall economic climate and legal basis is not good enough for that.

If one wants to open a new business, the regulations for registration are complicated. It takes a long time and the costs are high. Small enterprises are disadvantaged, as the regulations are such that it is difficult for small businesses to adhere to them. Furthermore, taxation is difficult because the company's running costs are not taken into account. Even the smallest amounts of income of companies are taxed (Bliss 2004: 17).

In 2006 AKDN/ MSDSP was conducting a programme that aimed at promoting investing remittances into development projects at the local level. Already today, remittances from work migrants finance development in the local communities. Families that have family members working as labourers abroad are visibly better off. Their houses are often nicely renovated and furnished, and the people are better dressed. The way work migration is organised in Tajikistan actually reveals a lot about social structures and the rules of the game (institutions) in place at the local level. So far, remittances mainly stay in the family that earned it and the money is only to a small extent shared with the village community.

According to unofficial estimates, at least 800,000 Tajik citizens earn their income, mostly illegally, in Russia every year, and to a lesser extent in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, sending as much as 400 million USD back home to relatives every year. To see the importance of the amount of money, one has to know that the remittances amount to roughly double of the estimate of the state's annual expenditures in 2000.<sup>374</sup> A respondent from the local NGO MSDSP phrased it the following way: "If Russia is closing down its border, we are dead".<sup>375</sup>

Russia has repeatedly discussed how to cut down work migration. Illegal migrant workers are regularly imprisoned and deported to their home countries. In April 2007, the Russian government passed a law forbidding foreigners to sell in Russian markets, where until recently most of the salespersons were Central Asians or Caucasians. In addition, Russian economic crises have a major effect on the Tajik economy. Sending remittances through messengers has become too risky, so more and more remittances are sent through the official banking system, resulting in a consolidation of the Tajik banking system, which is just being built up.

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<sup>372</sup> Van Atta, Don: King Cotton freezes Tajikistan, [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 21/03/08

<sup>373</sup> Interview with a representative of the OSCE in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>374</sup> Anonymous author: Russia, Tajikistan Spar over Illegal Labor Migration, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 1/09/03

<sup>375</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Dushanbe in November 2003

Families who decide to send a family member into work migration need to, considering local standards, make a substantial investment (starting from 150 USD). They take a considerable financial and personal risk as the family member may not find a job in Russia or might encounter other problems, such as being caught by the Russian police as an illegal migrant worker and imprisoned. He (or she) might have to be bought out or might be deported back to Tajikistan.<sup>376</sup> It also has to be considered that Central Asians are seen as *chernye* (Russian for 'blacks') in Russia and are often harassed by police as well as right wing extremist groups.

Due to the first investment necessary to send a migrant worker abroad, only wealthier families can afford to invest into sending a work migrant or the whole village community has to contribute to send a member from the community abroad. Eventually, this leads to an even greater fragmentation of society, making the rich richer and the poor poorer.

Repeatedly, development organisations found that money they had given to beneficiaries to start up a small-scale business (micro finance) was invested into sending a family member abroad. In Murghab<sup>377</sup> where AKDN was providing micro-credits, increasingly the credits were used to send family members into work migration. The organisation knew about this "alienation", but did not hinder the people from "misusing" the micro-credit as everybody knew how desperate the situation of these people was and that this was the only way out.

The family plays a key role taking decisions regarding labour migration, financing the trip and the start-up abroad, and in deciding who is sent and for how long. The migrant worker relies on the help of relatives or the village community in arranging an opportunity for him (with the help of money and existing contacts with people abroad) to go and during his stay overseas. The migrant worker is then, in return, expected to support his family back home with his (or her) remittances. The social control a family executes (mainly the father) determines the degree to which the work migrant will feel obliged to send remittances back home. The extent to which social control is executed varies highly from region to region.

Another dimension of work migration is the impact it has on Tajik-Russian relations. In August 2007, Russian Interior Minister, Rashid Nurgaliyev, and his Tajik counterpart, Mahmadvazar Salihov, held talks in St. Petersburg to work on ways to regulate conditions for migrant labourers that also included crime.<sup>378</sup>

In Tajikistan, about 60 percent of the Tajik population is estimated to live on remittances sent home by Tajik labour migrants in Russia and Kazakhstan, 15 percent survive on international aid and 25 percent are dependent on the drug trade.<sup>379</sup>

According to data from the Tajik Migration Service, work migration in 2008 rose by 10 percent in comparison to 2007. According to official figures, there are now 508,000 Tajik citizens in the Russian Federation. The number is expected to rise to 600,000 by the end of the year. This year, many work migrants do not plan to go home for the

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<sup>376</sup> To deal with this situation in bigger cities of Russia, such as Moscow and St. Petersburg, associations of Tajiks or smaller communities such as Pamiris have emerged that promote Tajik/ Pamiri culture and traditions abroad as well as help imprisoned migrant workers to be freed and go home to Tajikistan; Interview with the head of an association of Pamiris in St. Petersburg in March 2005

<sup>377</sup> The town of Murghab is situated on a plateau of 3,600m where electricity and access to heating materials is very limited.

<sup>378</sup> In 2006, Tajikistani migrants committed 8,200 crimes in Russia, and 1,200 crimes were recorded against them, Nurgaliyev said; Anonymous author: Does Dushanbe Want to Distance Itself from Russia?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/07/07

<sup>379</sup> Atovulloyev, "Pamir: Khronika bespredela" [Pamir: The Chronicles of Lawlessness], cited by: (Marat 2006: 116)

winter season when the construction sites in Russia close down. Many work migrants are now working to staying in Russia for good and taking their families along.<sup>380</sup>

### **Case Studies on Work Migration in the Three Regions**

Work migration is organised very differently from region to region. An important factor is whether the region was on the government or the opposition side during the war. This considerably defines access to jobs in the capital and other parts of the country. The rules of the game that dictate work migration in the different regions vary extensively, as well as the degree to which social control is being exercised.

#### **Case Study I: Work Migration in the Rasht Valley**

The Rasht valley has traditionally been a conservative region where social control and the last word of the elders have been of great importance; the pressure on migrants to send money back home is accordingly high. According to respondents from the Rasht valley work migrants from here mostly migrate to Russia only on a seasonal base, because “this is the Gharmi culture”. In the Rasht valley, people get married very early. Work migrants are either unmarried and therefore do not have so many obligations towards their families, or those that are married are obliged to at least come home once a year.

To illustrate the strength of social control in the Rasht valley, there is the following example. A respondent told me about a case in which a father told his married and grown-up son that he had to come back from work migration during the next month, otherwise the father would put an *oq* onto his son and that implies exclusion from the family, denouncing his son. This implies that if the *oq* would have been spoken, the work migrant would not have been able to return to his home village, he would have been disgraced for ignoring his father’s order.<sup>381</sup>

#### **Case Study II: Work Migration in Kulyab**

The way work migration is organized in Kulyab is significantly different from how it is organized in the Rasht valley. During the Soviet period, Kulyabis were part of the political elite and socialism embedded more deeply here than was the case in the Rasht valley. Still today, social structures in Kulyab are not as conservative and traditional as they are in the Rasht valley. Social control is not as strong and elders’ last words are often overruled by the younger generation by leaving the region, often without returning. The fact that social control is limited also led to work migrants often not sending money back home or relatives expect that, if one sends a young man to Russia, the first three or four years one could not expect the person to send any money home. Female respondents explained that the expected best scenario would be that the young work migrant would meet a Russian woman, get married and settle down over there, resulting in “one less mouth to fill”.<sup>382</sup>

Young men from Mountain-Badakhshan and Shurabad tend to stay on work migration for several years. They only come back to visit when somebody in the family back home falls seriously sick or dies. However, work migrants from the Rasht valley tend to stay only for a season until a relative replaces that person (in a rotation system) in order to hold their position abroad. Through this a kind of long distance family community is created that depends on each other’s inputs.

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<sup>380</sup> Khamidova, Parvina: Exodus. How to stop the brain drain from Tajikistan, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>381</sup> Interview with a Pamiri employee of a local NGO in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>382</sup> Interview with two elderly women in a border village in the district of Shurabad in October 2003

### **Mutual Lines of Reciprocity**

Work migration is marked and functions along mutual lines of reciprocity. Before work migrants are sent abroad, they depend on the support of their families or the local community to save up the amount of money needed to go abroad. Later their families or the local communities depend on them in terms of income through remittances. It is a circle of reciprocity, consisting of mutual obligations. The worst punishment (mechanism of sanction) that can face a work migrant when he does not follow the local code of conduct and does not fulfil his financial obligations prescribed by the extended family or local community, is that he is expelled from the family or even community and can never return to his home.

### **Implications for further Development**

The (temporary) migration of (mostly) young men has mixed consequences for the country's development. On the one hand, the young men's absence promotes the involvement of women in economic regeneration and other activities as active members of communities. In case remittances are not sent or are inadequate, women have to find their own opportunities for income generation and consequently these women are also increasingly involved in local decision-making processes.<sup>383</sup> On the other hand, work migration is also part of what is usually termed a 'brain drain', the outflow of the more dynamic and better-educated members of society that leads to an overall backlash regarding the local development process. Eventually, this can lead to a less efficient domestic agriculture, an increase in low-paid manual labour, the spread of subsistence farming and slower changes in the political and social sphere because the young (educated) male generation, that potentially might be able to change local traditional rules of the game (institutions), i.e. ways of decision-making, in the otherwise mainly patriarchal society, is absent.

Income from labour migration provides a very substantial part of household income, especially in Gharm in the Rasht valley. However, this income is unevenly distributed and contributes to the existing inequality. According to one respondent, Gharmis are richer than the Shurabadis and that is why they can afford to send their sons to Russia more often.<sup>384</sup> According to baseline studies conducted in the three target regions by MSDSP, in the Rasht valley the wealthier households profit most. 53 percent of the overall income is from non-agricultural income. 63 percent of all non-agricultural income is from remittances and 76 percent of all the remittances go to the richest quartile.<sup>385</sup>

The level of dependence on income from work migration varies from region to region. It is high in Mountain-Badakhshan and the Rasht valley and less in Kulyab. There are two reasons for this: The first wave of migrants consisted of those people (mainly of Gharmi and Pamiri origin) who had initially been resettled to the Vaksh Valley in Khatlon in the 1960s in order to have enough human resources for the cotton production in the process of collectivization. These people were then expelled from the Vakhsh Valley where heavy fighting took place at the beginning of the civil war in 1993. It was these migrants who were the first ones to go, but later paved the way for further work migration from these regions.

People from Kulyab instead also had the option of migrating for work reasons inside Tajikistan. This option was blocked for the population of the former opposition regions. Work migration in the opposition regions (in the Rasht valley and Mountain-

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<sup>383</sup> Another reason for women increasingly becoming involved in income generation and local decision-making processes outside of their houses is the fact that the Tajik civil war left many women as widows and eventually as heads of households.

<sup>384</sup> Interview with a Pamiri employee of a local NGO in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>385</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2002: 15

Badakhshan) is extensive. In some villages, there are no (middle-aged) men left and in others, every family has at least one relative supporting them from abroad.<sup>386</sup>

In 2002 alone, the total amount of roubles, U.S. dollars and Euros transferred to Tajikistan through the country's banks amounted to the equivalent of 78.3 million USD.<sup>387</sup> Other than that, vast sums of money (mostly from work migration) entered the country through informal channels. Informal foreign exchange flows into Tajikistan are estimated to be nearly equal to the volume of money being transferred through official channels.

The fact is that work migration is a considerable factor regarding poverty reduction. At the same time, it cripples the communities and prevents them from looking for local income generating opportunities. It puts pressure on society. If the one work migrant of the family fails, the whole family that depends upon him is drawn into misery.

## 6.5 Drug-Trafficking and Drug Consumption

At this point I would like to touch on the issue of drug trafficking. The link between drug trafficking on the one hand, and local governance and the local level development process on the other hand might not seem obvious. Nevertheless, I would like to touch upon this issue because drug trafficking can be a powerful source of income measured against local standards and, therefore, the people involved in this business can play an important role within the structures of governance on the local level. The phenomenon has a significant impact on the local economy and security in Tajikistan.

In 2005, UNDP estimated that up to 1,000 tonnes of heroin pass through Tajikistan every year, which roughly equals the demand for heroin in Western Europe and North America. According to a UNDP report, since the withdrawal of Russian border guards from the Tajik-Afghan border, drug trafficking in the region has increased significantly. The internal Tajik drug market is estimated to be at around 120-200 million USD. Whereas one kilogramme of heroin costs 400 to 500 USD in Afghanistan, at the Afghan-Tajik border it already costs 1,000 USD, and on the black market in Moscow, it is worth 10,000 USD.<sup>388</sup>

In Tajikistan, the annual income from the heroin trade amounts to between 500 million and one billion USD, whereas the Tajik GDP lies at 2.1 billion USD. "Anecdotal evidence indicates that senior members of the Tajik government provide protection to the drug trafficking business, which suggests that they, together with the respective drug barons, could have been influential in promoting the government's decision for Tajik border troops to take over border protection from the CIS troops."<sup>389</sup>

I observed different reactions towards drug trafficking in the different regions of Tajikistan. In Mountain-Badakhshan, those involved in the drug trafficking business were increasingly being rejected from communities and being marginalized. To deal with this process, they either had to break with their roots and leave the community, or they had to express their willingness to stop their involvement in drug trafficking

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<sup>386</sup> The author observed that in those families where the main breadwinner is in Russia on work migration, one could see a considerable difference in living conditions, and the houses of those families usually looked much better than the houses of those families who did not have a family member sending back remittances from work migration in Russia.

<sup>387</sup> This amount was calculated at the official exchange rate in January 2003.

<sup>388</sup> See the 2005 UNDP report on drugs (CISDB, December 8, 2005), on: europeandris.undp.org, sighted 11/05/08

<sup>389</sup> Same as footnote no. 388

and consumption and then the local communities had different techniques to treat these cases.<sup>390</sup>

In another case in Shurabad district, a local power holder being involved in drug trafficking was very much accepted because he invested part of his profit into the renovation of a local school.<sup>391</sup>

### **Drug-Related Conflict**

MSDSP staff and other respondents saw drug-related conflict in border regions as a potential risk to local security and stability, when I did research on local conflict potentials in rural areas of Tajikistan (Kulyab, Rasht and Mountain-Badakhshan) in autumn 2003.

The drug problem turned into a significant security threat for the local population in Mountain-Badakhshan from 1992 onwards, following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the strict border control on the Soviet-Afghan border. During that time drug trafficking and consumption became a massive problem in bordering areas, around Shurabad (Kulyab) and also Khorugh (Mountain-Badakhshan).<sup>392</sup>

### **The Bonanza of the 1990s**

The situation at that time has been described for both regions as a bonanza for everybody willing to take up the opportunity.<sup>393</sup> Everyone who wanted to could become engaged with drug trafficking. The drug trafficking business was unorganized, spontaneous and unregulated. It was driven by a large number of petty traffickers.<sup>394</sup> Afghan suppliers brought the drugs over the border to Tajik intermediaries who transported the drugs further, mainly to Dushanbe and further on from there. Profits were shared. Local consumer markets only emerged later.

A factor that triggered the emergence of local drug consumption was reportedly the tightening up of the Uzbek and Kyrgyz borders in 1994. As a consequence, local drug traffickers had more difficulties in exporting the drugs to consumer markets abroad and therefore started aiming at creating local consumer markets by distributing drugs for free or at very low prices, in order to make it accessible for local people and encourage addiction. This consequently forced them to also become involved in drug-trafficking.

Subsequently, the number of drug addicts rose significantly. In Porshnev, close to Khorugh in Mountain-Badakhshan, respondents reported, "In those times every village had its drug addicts and its drug dealers". Drugs were openly sold in central

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<sup>390</sup> In the early nineties the strategy from the Afghan side was that first drug addicts were to be 'created' and then, automatically because they would need money for further consumption, the very same people would get involved in the trafficking; Interviews with co-workers of a local NGO in Khorugh (Badakhshan) in October 2003

<sup>391</sup> During a field trip to Shurabad in October 2003, I visited a village in which one household was significantly better off than the others and I asked a child in the street what this man did for a living. The child's answer was: "He does 'business with the Afghans'." This very same man turned out to be the generous donor for the renovation of the local school, which was very much welcomed by the village community. In this case, where the money came from did not play a role, i.e. that it was from a 'dirty source', the main thing was that this man had shared his wealth and invested into the community.

<sup>392</sup> Interview with the son of the leader of a village organisation in Sari Maghzor, Yol (Shurabad) in October 2003; "One part of Shurabad district is depopulated, the people left for security reasons and that territory is fully under the control of Afghans," interview with the former head of MSDSP in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>393</sup> Interview with the former head of a local NGO in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>394</sup> This notion was also confirmed by respondents from Murghab who said: „Between 1993 and 1997 there used to be open drug trafficking and open drug consumption, today both are gone." The interview with two employees of a local NGO took place in Murghab in October 2003.



markets. Heroin, which was largely unknown before 1992, soon became the most important drug.<sup>395</sup>

### **The Emergence of a Closed Market**

In both regions, Mountain-Badakhshan and Kulyab, my respondents thought that there were now only a few, well-organised and well-connected organisations controlling the drug business, and that there was no longer place for small 'freelance' drug traffickers.<sup>396</sup> Respondents assumed that these organisations have a *krysha* (Russian, for "roof"), i.e. protection by powerful state agencies and/ or powerful criminal organisations from the centre.<sup>397</sup> In both regions, respondents assumed that local power holders, state officials as well as Russian and Tajik border troops, were involved in drug trafficking. The Russian border guards used to have the means to operate on their own on a large scale, independent from intermediaries. In 2004, they were by far the most powerful players in the border regions, operating unchecked from external control.

### **Drug Consumption and Social Control in Shurabad and Mountain-Badakhshan**

In Shurabad there is less social control (than in the Rasht valley and in Mountain-Badakhshan). In Mountain-Badakhshan, people involved in drug trafficking are being punished by shame and other sanctions. In Shurabad, the drug business is more accepted than in Mountain-Badakhshan and people say that a particular person 'simply knows how to make a living' and appreciate it if a part of the profit made by that person, is invested into the village by renovating the school.<sup>398</sup> The example of a local businessperson, who 'does business with the Afghans', is also an example of locally respected people filling in gaps left open by the state in terms of the provision of public goods. Theoretically, the state should be the one renovating the school, but as its resources are so limited, public goods are not provided sufficiently by the state and other actors win prestige by filling in the gaps.

A respondent from Shurabad described the situation in the following way: "Heroin and drug-trafficking in general only appeared in 1993, with the Afghans. Today the drug trafficking is in the hands of organized structures, not everybody can become involved; there is a big *krysha* (Russian for "mafia roof organisation").<sup>399</sup> Government institutions are also involved. Locally, drugs are not being consumed; the social control is very strong and is being exercised by the family."<sup>400</sup>

Today borders are controlled, but by no means 'sealed off' as is said to have been the case during Soviet times. In Shurabad in 2003, there were complaints about raids, hostage taking and cattle theft by the Afghans, who crossed the border to collect debts. "Afghans always used to come for the drug business, they used to pass the border in the past, they are doing it now and they will do that in the future."<sup>401</sup> Many respondents say that at night they do not go out because they are afraid.<sup>402</sup> The

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<sup>395</sup> Interview with an allegedly former *muğohid* from the civil war in Porshnev, in the district of Khorugh (GBAO) in October 2003; interview with two women in Yol (Shurabad, Khatlon) in October 2003; interview with the director of the middle school in Kisht, Yol, district Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>396</sup> Interviews with two employees of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003 and with the head of a village organisation in the district of Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>397</sup> Interview with the former head of a local NGO in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>398</sup> "According to Islam it is not allowed to drink alcohol, but if somebody builds a two-floor building and everybody knows that he earned this money by dealing with drugs, then this is o.k. and tolerated by society."; Interview with the former head of a local NGO in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>399</sup> *Krysha* is a Russian term, meaning roof in Russian, from organized crime. It is a protection mechanism. A shop owner who has a good *krysha* does not have to fear any extortion claims.

<sup>400</sup> Interview with a local teacher from a border village in the district of Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>401</sup> Interview the head of MSDSP, a local NGO, in the district of Shurabad in July 2005

<sup>402</sup> Interview with the director of the middle school in Kisht, Yol, district Shurabad in October 2003

threat is attributed to Afghan drug dealers coming over the border and to Russian border guards. There had been shootouts between Russian border guards and local drug dealers reported in Shugnan (Mountain-Badakhshan) and Shurabad (Kulyab) in 2003. Houses were burned down and Afghan debt collectors cut off the hand of the wife of one of the drug-traffickers.<sup>403</sup>

More than in the Rasht valley and in Shurabad, drug trafficking and addiction is a problem in the south-western districts of Mountain-Badakhshan (especially in Khorugh). The drug-trafficking business has over the years, following the breakdown of the Soviet Union, created multi-faceted dependency relationships.<sup>404</sup>

Certainly, drug consumption and trafficking is a highly sensitive issue, but according to the information that I managed to collect, drug addiction and the consequences of the local drug economy (and the dependency relationships it implies) have still a significant impact on the local population. Today, drug consumption plays a much bigger role in urban areas than in rural areas.

### **The Influence of Decrees by the Aga Khan**

As the Aga Khan, the Ismaili religious leader, is perceived as an important authority his decrees have a great impact on local developments in Mountain-Badakhshan, where most of the population is Ismaili, a sub-group of Shia Islam.<sup>405</sup> The Aga Khan sometimes comes to the region to declare decrees on certain topics, such as telling the people not to consume or traffic drugs, to learn English, etc.). Since the Aga Khan's *farmon* (Tajik for decree) in the mid-1990s on giving up drug consumption and trafficking, the drug trade in the area was, according to the perception of the local people, significantly cut and social control increased considerably.<sup>406</sup> Famous singers and sportsmen, in addition, started agitating against drug consumers and drug dealing.<sup>407</sup> This ended the bonanza years that had followed the break up of the Soviet Union.

### **Drug-Trafficking and Consumption in the Rasht Valley**

The Rasht valley serves as a transit route for bringing drugs to Kyrgyzstan and further on to Russia. It does not border Afghanistan and is thus less exposed to security threats that stem from Afghan drug traffickers (debt collectors) and Russian or Tajik border guards.

The route through the Rasht valley is run by a few small drug barons, most of them *muğohidon* (former opposition fighters) who have retained their connections with partners on the other side of the border in Afghanistan. They operate with protection from those opposition leaders who were co-opted into the political elite in Dushanbe,

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<sup>403</sup> Interview with an elderly woman in a border village in the district of Shurabad in October 2003; this is confirmed by Erica Marat: "An important aspect of the drug smuggling on the Afghan-Tajik border is that hard currency is rarely involved. The trade is based on informal agreements, deposits, and loans. If a buyer on the Tajik side fails or refuses to pay for drug products to the supplier in Afghanistan, the latter can resort to violent means of financial extortion. For instance, cases of kidnapping and stealing are common. Suppliers claim sometimes debts dating several years back." (Marat 2006: 46)

<sup>404</sup> According to interviews with locals (NGO-employees, peasants etc) in Khorugh, Mountain-Badakhshan in autumn 2003

<sup>405</sup> The Aga Khan is a famous businessperson who owns numerous companies. He combines business and development cooperation. A part of his profit from his businesses is invested into development cooperation, especially in areas where Ismaili Muslims live (e.g. India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Kenya and Syria etc.).

<sup>406</sup> Here, I am referring to three interviews: with a teacher from the district of Shurabad in October 2003, and with two agronomists working for a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>407</sup> There are reported cases from villages in Shugnan district, Mountain-Badakhshan, when village communities tried to cure addicts by locking them up and providing medical assistance, or when local communities tried to expel 'their' local drug dealers and addicts. Interview with an alleged former *muğohid* in Khorugh (GBO) in October 2003

and some of them exercise considerable influence at the district or even regional level.<sup>408</sup>

After the initial shock in 1993, communities slowly began to react to the negative consequences of drug consumption, dealing and trafficking. Drug use (and, to a lesser degree, drug trafficking) were publicly ostracised during community meetings or during prayers in the villages' mosques.<sup>409</sup>

Summarizing one can say that drug trafficking is a factor that influences structures of local governance, but its importance today should also not be overrated, as there are only individual cases of people profiting from the drug trafficking.

It is more a curse than a blessing, because it creates insecurity in the border areas and at times leads to conflict between Afghan providers and Tajik drug-traffickers that cannot pay back their debts.

### **The Impact of Drug-Consumption on Society**

UNODC, the UN agency for drug control, pointed at a 17-fold increase in opiate abuse from 1990 to 2002 across Central Asia.<sup>410</sup>

The Tajik authorities in 2005 estimated the number of drug addicts in the country to be 55,000 to 75,000 people (of whom 80 percent were estimated to be heroin addicts). Even though the social affect of drug trafficking remains largely unreported, the drug flow in Tajikistan tends to increase the level of crime, drug addiction and HIV/ AIDS. UNDP in 2005 came to the conclusion that unless Tajikistan makes a genuine effort to reduce drug-trafficking, its territory will function as a key conduit for drug flows from Afghanistan and this will continue to increase. The country's internal problems paired with the significantly increased number of drug addicts will most likely become increasingly pronounced.<sup>411</sup> People in the rural area are no longer so aware of the problem anymore, because drug-consumption has largely moved to urban areas, especially Dushanbe.

A recent incident, however, has shown how relevant the issue still is. In June 2008, police officers were sent to capture Suhrob Langariev and his group of alleged drug smugglers in southern Tajikistan. They had been 'armed to the teeth' and backed up by armoured vehicles. They holed up in Langariev's two-storey home in the city of Kulyab. The mission ended in a ferocious ten-hour fight, leaving one captain in the security service and two civilians dead.<sup>412</sup>

### **Where does the Profit Go?**

In neither Shurabad, Shugnan or Jirgatal districts (Rasht valley) is there evidence that much of the profit from drug trafficking stays in the region or that drug trafficking is a major source of income that is available to many 'beneficiaries'. The more visible signs of drug profits are extremely modest: new (Russian) cars, a refurbished house or a two-storey house (the only one in the village) instead of a one-storey building.

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<sup>408</sup> In this context, the case study of "Shoh" will be presented in section 8.9.

<sup>409</sup> Interview with a local NGO-worker in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>410</sup> See the 2005 UNDP report on drugs (CISDB, December 8, 2005) under: [europeandris.undp.org](http://europeandris.undp.org)

<sup>411</sup> Same as footnote no. 410

<sup>412</sup> The National Security Committee that led the operation appeared to be well pleased with the outcome. In a statement issued the following day, it said Langariev was believed to head one of the organised crime networks in Tajikistan that ferry heroin over the nearby border from Afghanistan and dispatch it onwards to markets in Russia and beyond. His group had consisted of both Tajik and Afghan nationals. Apparently, the incident had another dimension. Since the civil war, Rahmon's administration has sporadically targeted and neutralised any remnant units that refused to disarm – both those affiliated with the IRP and his own former Popular Front allies. Langriev allegedly had been one of the PF fighters who had refused to disarm. Olimova, Lola: Cops and Robbers in Tajikistan, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 06/06/08

However, in the context of rural Tajikistan such 'small drug barons' may exercise considerable influence within their own communities. There are numerous 'small drug barons' in the border communities. According to one respondent, there are two to three local drug barons in each *jamoat* (sub-district) in Mountain-Badakhshan.<sup>413</sup> During my field research in the Shurabad district, I visited a village where three households were significantly better off than the average, which was attributed by respondents to income from "doing business with the Afghans" or more frankly drug-trafficking. However, three new shiny houses, better than the average, seemed to be already a lot for one village. In general, the effect of the drug-trafficking business on villages appeared to be limited or was at least not very visible.

## 6.6 Impact of the Change in Border Troops on Drug-Trafficking

When the Russian troops left Tajikistan gradually, starting in 2005, there was a big debate on what impact this would have on the local drug trade.<sup>414</sup> A local respondent said in this regard: "I do not think that the drug problem will become much bigger when the borders are open, the drug business is big anyway already, and the Afghans bring the drugs over the border with helicopters. Some say that the Taliban will hit our heads when the borders will be open, but why should they do that? Sooner or later we have to learn to protect and defend our borders ourselves, it should have happened much earlier, we will either fall down to the absolute ground (even though I do not think that the international organisations will let this happen, will let us fall that deep) or we will make it."<sup>415</sup>

Another respondent also did not expect any significant changes, he said: "The Tajik-Afghan border was best protected during Soviet times, back then it was totally sealed off. The Russian commanders are highly involved in the drug trade. The only difference is that the Russians are much better equipped and their salaries are much higher. In terms of trade in the local communities, the change also will not make a difference; the (cross-border) trade was not worth mentioning anyway. In terms of drug trafficking, it does not matter whether the Russians or the Tajiks guard the border. A big difference is that the Taliban were afraid of the Russians, but they are not afraid of the Tajiks, even though they are Sunni and the local population is Ismaili (Shia), they will find many supporters because the drug-trade they are involved in is connected to big money. Sooner or later we (the citizens of Tajikistan) will have to learn to take care of ourselves because we are an independent state; maybe this is the beginning of a new era."<sup>416</sup>

Another source also shared this opinion and said that the Afghans were afraid of the Russians. The respondent said further: "They are not afraid of the Tajik guards, and it is very easy to cross the river, especially in the winter, so we're expecting an increase in the flow of drugs through here."<sup>417</sup>

Even if the big bonanza is over and mafia structures now dominate the business, still large quantities of drugs are being trafficked to Europe via Tajikistan. In March 2008, an attendant working on the train between Dushanbe and Moscow was caught trying to bring 45 kg of heroin into Russia. Authorities stated further that in January and

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<sup>413</sup> Interview with two employees of MSDSP in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>414</sup> To show that the Russians had some degree of effectiveness: "In the past four years, over 13 tonnes of drugs, with heroin accounting for half the total, have been confiscated by Russian troops guarding the Moskovsky stretch. Last year, 127 people were arrested crossing the border illegally and two Russian soldiers were killed in a clash in this one sector."; Dikaev, Turko: Is Drug Trade on Tajik-Afghan Border Set to Expand?, on: [www.turkishweekly.net](http://www.turkishweekly.net), 07/05/05

<sup>415</sup> Interview with the employee of a local NGO in Ishkashim in June 2004

<sup>416</sup> Interview with a local businessman from Khorugh in June 2004

<sup>417</sup> This lady from a local organisation working with drug addicts in Khorugh was quoted in the following article: MacWilliam, Ian: "Pamirs adapt to life without Russia", on: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 25/03/08

February 2008, 1,000 kg of heroin had already been seized, which was 11 percent more in comparison to those months in the previous year.

Tajikistan is not on the main route from Afghanistan to Western Europe anymore, but according to the UN, 19 percent of the drugs that are sent from Afghanistan to the West are transported via Tajikistan and then Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.<sup>418</sup>

With the CIS-troops leaving, a major factor for the region has also been the loss of income that was provided by the Russian-led troops. At the same time, since 2005 the Tajik state did make a specific effort to crack down on the drug trafficking via the Afghan-Tajik border.

The taking over of the control of the border was a major step in terms of state building and the provision of external security. Nevertheless, the border control of the Tajik-Afghan border is difficult and skirmishes with drug smugglers who are crossing illegally from Afghanistan occur regularly, as Tajikistan is the first stop on (one of) the drug route(s) via Russia to Western Europe.<sup>419</sup>

Russian border guards were often accused of smuggling large quantities of drugs directly into Russia on military flights from Tajikistan.<sup>420</sup> This was stopped by the taking over by the Tajik troops, but as the strictness of the border control was expected to lessen and the likeliness of Tajik border troops being more prone to taking bribes (due to much smaller salaries) increased, it was not clear whether the trade-off would altogether be positive.

For the people on the ground, the removal of the Russian troops meant that they would soon be facing their first winter without Russian assistance.<sup>421</sup> The situation was especially grim for people on the Murghab plateau who had been highly dependent on fuel, heating and electricity from the Russian troops that had been stationed there.<sup>422</sup> In other parts, such as Darvaz and Shurabad, local shopkeepers were afraid that they would lose their main clients, as the Russian troops were the only ones who actually had cash to buy things. Otherwise, the local economy had only been functioning on a barter system.<sup>423</sup>

Both regions (the border districts in Mountain-Badakhshan and in Kulyab) reported significant changes since 2000 in connection with the strengthening of border control. The much tighter border control had, by some respondents, been attributed to Russian border troops serving on the Tajik-Afghan border at the time of my field research in 2003/4 in Badakhshan.<sup>424</sup>

In Kulyab the Tajik border troops (which until spring 2005 used to guard some sectors jointly with the Russian guards) were seen by all of my respondents as incapable of protecting the borders. They were seen as poorly equipped and trained, and extremely vulnerable to corruption as salaries were low. In addition to that, they were often pressured by relatives, friends and powerful local potentates to engage in illegal businesses (e.g. smuggling and drug trafficking). The Tajik border troops were in some parts even seen as a security threat, as conflicts would emerge between village youngsters and the soldiers.<sup>425</sup>

However, since the bonanza of the early 1990s was over in both regions, local residents perceived a reduction of local drug markets and a substantial reduction in the number of addicts (even though according to official Tajik figures drug addiction

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<sup>418</sup> Police seize 45 Kilos of Heroin from Train Attendant, on: [www.interfax.com](http://www.interfax.com), 03/19/08

<sup>419</sup> See the Country Profile: Tajikistan, on: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 03/25/2008

<sup>420</sup> McWilliam, Ian: Pamirs adapt to life without Russia, on: [www.bbc.co.uk](http://www.bbc.co.uk), 03/25/08

<sup>421</sup> Same as footnote no. 420

<sup>422</sup> Interview with employees of a local NGO in Murghab in October 2003

<sup>423</sup> Interview with employees of a local NGO in Darvaz and Shurabad in November 2003

<sup>424</sup> I repeatedly visited the two regions during my field research in 2003/ 2004 and conducted numerous interviews with local residents.

<sup>425</sup> Interview with two elderly local women in a border village in the district of Shurabad in October 2003

in 2008 is still rising).<sup>426</sup> This may either point to the fact that consumption has become clandestine, or, more probably, that consumption has been moved from the border villages to more urban areas, such as the capital Dushanbe, where the main Tajik drug market is now located.

## 6.7 Neglect of Rising HIV/ AIDS Rates in Tajikistan

The neglect of the rising HIV/ AIDS rates is starting to become a factor and will become even more of a threat if it is not properly dealt with in the near future.

In Tajikistan today there are just over 1,000 officially confirmed cases of HIV/ AIDS.<sup>427</sup> In 2007, there were 339 new cases, almost eight times the number recorded in 2001.<sup>428</sup>

Four main reasons have led to these developments: the extremely poor healthcare system; an increasingly mobile population (work migration to Russia); rising drug use; and, very poor knowledge and stigmatisation of the disease, and how it is transmitted. "While the commonest infection route is via shared needle use among drug users, experts note an increase in the number of women infected by husbands returning from time spent away working as labour migrants."<sup>429</sup> Experts say that 40 percent of HIV positive people in Tajikistan are labour migrants who picked up the disease while working abroad.

As HIV/ AIDS, sexual intercourse and contraception are such a taboo to talk about in Tajikistan, people are very poorly educated in this regard and even, if the women know how one can catch the disease, they do not dare to demand their husbands do the test when they return home from work migration. As a result, the number of pregnant women who are HIV/ AIDS positive is rising. The first case was only registered in 2005, today there are 28 HIV-positive women registered in Tajikistan.<sup>430</sup> In addition, HIV/ AIDS positive people are completely ostracized. A Tajik doctor said: "Even if they know their rights, HIV positive people often don't use them because they fear revealing their status."<sup>431</sup> Tajikistan's Centre for Strategic Studies, in cooperation with UNAIDS, conducted a survey which revealed that about half of all secondary school teachers believed that HIV positive children should not be allowed to share classes with others and 60 percent of doctors did not want their own children to have any contact with HIV positive children.<sup>432</sup>

## 6.8 The State Building Process: The Efforts Made

State building always has a connotation of sustainability. The state building process includes the establishment of the rule of law, accountability and on achieving the provision of a decent level of public goods and services. State building also includes building up institutions for constructive conflict mitigation. It implies that efforts made will lead to more efficient and sustainable structures in the future. Some measures that are mentioned in this chapter, e.g. work migration, do not actually fall under this category. Instead, they are simply coping mechanisms that save the Tajik state and society from total collapse, but they are not always investments into building an efficient state in the end.

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<sup>426</sup> However, what counts more in the end is how the people perceive the situation.

<sup>427</sup> The actual number is most probably much higher.

<sup>428</sup> Majidova, Jamila: Tajiks with HIV/ AIDS Suffer in Silence, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 03/21/08

<sup>429</sup> Same as footnote no. 428

<sup>430</sup> Majidova, Jamila: Tajiks with HIV/ AIDS Suffer in Silence, on: [www.iwpr.net](http://www.iwpr.net), 03/21/08

<sup>431</sup> Same as footnote no. 428

<sup>432</sup> See above

The Tajik state has been substantially stabilized since the end of the civil war in the sense that physical security is generally being provided to all Tajik citizens. However, has the state on the local level in the course of the civil war largely been captured by informal mechanisms?<sup>433</sup> Obviously, particular structural, e.g. institutional,<sup>434</sup> changes (such as the establishment of village organisations) have taken place that helped to stabilize the state and further define its relations with society, putting in place new modes of governance and opening new prospects for further development. The state has managed to re-establish control and central authority throughout the Tajik territory.

In other areas, such as healthcare, education and infrastructure, the state has not been sufficiently able to fulfil its role as a provider of public goods.<sup>435</sup> New players, such as local power holders, local and international NGOs and international organisations have come in to fill in the gaps left open by the state.<sup>436</sup>

State finances for the provision of public goods in the sectors of healthcare, education and infrastructure remain extremely low, partly because the tax base remains insufficient. Outputs are being provided, but many financial resources in this regard so far come from outside. As it is today, the system is not sustainable and cannot be continued as it is in the long run. Alternative ways have to be found.

In the short term, many forces have an interest in retaining this unstable constellation, so international organisations will keep financing and providing these functions and services that were formerly provided by the state. As a short-term solution, this is the easiest and most rational choice, for the long-term it is not a solution.

## 6.9 Intervention and External State-Building

Since the end of the cold war, there has been a debate on external intervention and state building. When does the international community need to interfere in the internal affairs of a state? This was the question in Rwanda in 1994, in Kosovo in 1999, in Afghanistan in 2001, in Iraq in 2003, and in Georgia in 2008 and many other places in the world. Do the military interventions and the follow-up work in these regions lead to the establishment of more democratic and more stable states?

Zuercher calls external state building “the well-intended but overambitious attempts of external actors to collate the centuries-long process of state-formation into a period of a few years, at the end of which the externally rebuilt states are expected to resemble modern nation states” (Zuercher 2006: 3).

Often the external state-building efforts are an attempt to speed up the state-building process and to impose foreign, mainly Western, value systems, such as human rights and democracy, on to these societies, which seldom works.

Another example of this kind of external intervention is also the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1980s. The Soviet ideology did not fit the Afghan context. The Soviets tried to impose a collectivization process on to the people. Amongst other factors, such as the difficulty of the territory, for Afghans property is “holy”, the collectivization process did not work at all.

The current intervention in Afghanistan is legitimized, and the stationing of French troops in Tajikistan, by being part of the international fight against terrorism. As the

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<sup>433</sup> I am referring to co-optation and informal networks that play important roles in political and social structures.

<sup>434</sup> Here I use the definition by Douglass North: Institutions emerge because of an interaction between actors. Institutions are constraints that shape human change and institutional change over time; they are the rules of the game in society (North 1990: 3).

<sup>435</sup> I will look at the provision of public goods in more detail in chapter 6.

<sup>436</sup> Here I am referring to AKDN and other organisations that are supporting health facilities mainly in the Rasht valley and in Mountain-Badakhshan and the example of local big men renovating schools etc.

German Defence Minister, Struck, once put it in a speech in 2007: “The Bundeswehr is defending the security of Germany at the Hindukush.” Is that why 3,500 Bundeswehr troops are stationed there, and is that actually what they are doing and what is intended?

External state building efforts usually resemble major interventions promoting democratic values, gender equality, breaking with strong hierarchic and patriarchal structures, and promoting participation in all kinds of decision-making processes on different levels of state and society.

These external state-building efforts are marked by the fact that external players play a significant role in steering the overall state-building process.<sup>437</sup> In most of these external interventions, there is insufficient local ownership.

The way most external interventions and many development programmes are designed, they aim at changing the political and social system of the target country, such as breaking up existing hierarchies, like that of the elders having the last word. The external player then usually introduces new institutions (rules of the game) and procedures (official laws as well as rules for the non-state sector, as is the case with *village organisations*, which will be analyzed in detail in section 7.9.3).

External state building uses positive as well as negative incentives. Positive incentives are aid, which is provided to the target country as long as the state-building process is running along predefined “benchmarks”, or envisaged lines. If this is not the case negative incentives, such as bans or embargos, are applied in order to bring the state-building process back on track (Zuercher 2006: 4).

Instead of rewarding places like Tajikistan for having overcome the culture of war and having restored peace and statehood to some extent, international development funding follows a different logic. The worse the situation, the more funding comes in. In addition, development interventions are not necessarily streamlined, and sometimes what is implemented in the ‘field’ contradicts the predefined benchmarks. In the field, the most troubled places get the most money. From my experience in working in development cooperation in Afghanistan, this meant that it was easy to get funding for places such as Kandahar, Hilmand and Uruzgan, which were the most insecure areas. It was difficult, however, to get funding for provinces in the North that were comparably calm, particularly those where the ‘insurgents’ had less power, such as Samangan, Bamyan etc.<sup>438</sup> Due to how the logic of funding worked, we could not reward people in the northern areas for being peaceful and stabilizing the situation.

### **The Logic of Post-Conflict Development Cooperation**

Wars are economic power games amongst internal and often also external forces (as in the case of Afghanistan). They often last for a very long time because too many influential people profit from the state of war. A good example of this is also the war in Chechnya (Politkovskaya 2004: 6).

Post-war reconstruction and state-building efforts follow a similar market-economy logic. On the ‘development cooperation market’, there is a lot of competition. Security is a big business for the state and private actors. Cooperation, information and best practice sharing amongst development organisations is difficult to organize, as many organisations compete for the same kind of funds. It is not so much about how an

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<sup>437</sup> It has to be noted that these external players do not necessarily have to be state players. External players are often international organisations (UN, World Bank, OSCE, etc.) and international NGOs. Last but not least, they can also be states.

<sup>438</sup> Experience from the field when I was working in one of the national development programmes of the Afghan Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Kabul in 2007



organisation performs, but more about how it manages to “sell its successes”, i.e. to advertise itself.

Due to the existing competition there is never enough cooperation amongst international (or national) development organisations, as is the case in places such as Afghanistan or Kosovo, where development organisations in the immediate post-conflict period literally were stepping on each others' feet.<sup>439</sup>

In addition to the above-mentioned phenomena, development programmes have to stay successful and success is predominantly defined by the rate of spending. Generally, there is a very high pressure to spend the money within a certain period (which are mostly short), otherwise the funding goes back to the donor and is possibly directed to another (“more successful”) initiative.

This raises the question of sustainability of these kinds of interventions from outside and state-building efforts. What will actually stay, once development organisations withdraw and how do they know when it is time for them to go?

In development cooperation, one can differentiate between two modes of operation: emergency relief and (long-term) development cooperation. When I first started working in Tajikistan in 2003, Tajikistan was said to be on the brink between the emergency mode and long-term development cooperation. However, has this transition actually been made? What has changed since then?

Following the logic described above, Tajikistan actually manages better by staying at this stage of development or by at least keeping the appearance of still being on the same level. To further acquire development funds it is better to stay at this point. It is also easier to keep financing the provision of public goods and services with the support of international aid money, rather than actually re-building the system locally. Political leaders in Tajikistan are aware of this fact and use this as a strategy.

These factors make it even more difficult to answer the question of what can interventions and external state-building efforts actually achieve and when is it time for the 'invaders' to go. Each organisation needs to define a concrete exit strategy for itself.

Every development organisation more or less undertakes monitoring. However, if funds are cut, the first section that is downsized is usually monitoring and evaluation. This is an indication of the fact that it is difficult to measure the success of international development interventions and how it is often neglected. There are few common goals. Donors are often only interested in ‘dumping’ funds, but they do not follow up to see what results have been produced and even less what the impact of a respective development project has been several years after its completion. Regarding infrastructure projects, donors often finance the implementation of a project, but they do not finance the maintenance and up-keep (running costs). It is often assumed that the state will again take care of that, but the state often does not feel responsible because generally projects have been planned and implemented in agreement with the state and in accordance with the state's regulations and policies. Many schools and hospitals are built, but then there are no finances for staff and equipment.

Another difficult area is maintenance. Development organisations that work in the construction of infrastructure usually try to develop some kind of maintenance mechanism. Generally, though, this does not work. Very few organisations can say, for example, three years after a project has built 100 wells, how many of those are still functioning and are still actually providing safe drinking water. However, should it not be in the interest of the local communities themselves to take care of a broken well? It should, but collective action is difficult to organize and for these local

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<sup>439</sup> I made this observation myself in Afghanistan in autumn 2005 and I heard the same from development workers who worked in Kosovo right after the war in 1999.

communities it is eventually easier to find a new donor to fund a new well than organizing themselves, forming a group and taking care of the broken well.

## 6.10 Statehood and Conflict

A conflict touches all spheres of life, public and private, official and unofficial, formal and informal rules of the game. It significantly predetermines the future development process of the state and society in question. The post-conflict set-up has numerous consequences for the further development process. The way I wish to proceed in this section is deductive, moving from the more general aspects of the post-conflict situation and constellations, such as the state itself, to the more concrete aspects, such as constellations in everyday life, as for example the role of women and their contribution to the state-building process.

Following a conflict what significantly is destroyed is the statehood, the reliability and “social net” that are connected to that. Statehood is an indicator for how well a state functions. It includes rule-of-law, accountability, the sufficient provision of public goods institutions and procedures to deal with continually existing conflict (this also includes elections and having a Parliament where different opinions can be expressed and compromises be found).

In a way, life becomes less fair because the state does not have the capacity anymore to balance between different forces and amongst individuals. When somebody falls sick, he or she has to deal with the situation him- or her- self or has to go back to his or her family and ask for their support. When somebody is facing a crime, the formal judicial system does not function, as it is highly corrupt, so that one also has to deal with the issue oneself, by possibly asking the local mullah or a local power holder to intervene. When the state cannot provide physical security, many girls will be the first ones not sent to school anymore for security reasons.<sup>440</sup> Young couples often do not register their marriage in front of the state. In the case of divorce, they cannot take the issue to court, as legally they are not married. They cannot sue each other to fight for their rights and duties connected to the marriage. When marriages are not registered with the state, laws are not enforced. Eventually, women are the ones who suffer the most from the missing or diffuse statehood.

### Diffused Statehood

The phenomenon outlined above can probably best be termed 'diffused statehood'. Post-conflict diffused statehood is not exclusively created by one player, previously the state, but by a number of 'providers' in the framework of an initially unintended responsibility sharing.

It is a constellation that developed out of the emergency of a lack of statehood and has now, through the involvement of various players, been turned into diffused statehood. The state elites on the local level have left gaps that were filled by a variety of other actors (local power holders – great landowners, former *muğohidon*<sup>441</sup> or religious authorities, NGOs, and IOs) which led to new modes of local governance. The state is not the only player in this context and the question is rather whether the state is still the player steering the process of re-building statehood. It is a question of ownership of the process.

Tajikistan's civil war ended officially in 1997, but it was only in 2006, almost ten years later, that the state managed to formulate a development strategy, the “Poverty

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<sup>440</sup> The same is the case in post-war Afghanistan. Women that I interviewed in Panjsher in May 2007 stated that children would only be sent to school if their route was no longer than a one hour walk.

<sup>441</sup> *Muğohidon* is the Tajik plural term for (opposition) fighters during the Tajik civil war.

Reduction Strategy of Tajikistan for 2007-2009". This is one of the very few indicators that the state is trying to take the process back into its own hands.

However, before taking a closer look at this strategic intent, I would like to analyse what the post-conflict situation actually brought, what kind of shambles the war and the breakdown of the Soviet Union left behind.

In the course of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the civil war in Tajikistan, a major redistribution of power and resources took place. Consequently, power structures and resource flows became more dispersed. Many former public goods that had been provided to the population were now been turned into network goods, no longer available to everybody, only to those belonging to or associated with a particular network in power.

Therefore, Tajikistan structurally is reminiscent of a rentier state. The state elite is not dependent on its citizens' votes and revenues, but mobilizes all its forces to invest into the stability of the regime in place and finances itself independently, mainly through rent-seeking from cotton and aluminium production. Consequently, local state representatives tend to lack the necessary degree of social-embeddedness and accordingly their legitimacy can be questioned.

Part of the state-building process is also the *Vergesellschaftung*, which could be translated as 'societisation', the process of 'becoming a society' in which people interact with each other. There should also be a certain feeling of trust and belonging to each other and agreeing, to a certain extent, on a common code of conduct. It includes the clarification of power relations, of who is superior to whom and work distribution of who does and is responsible for what. Only if these core issues have been decided, can the actual state-building process be embedded in the society.

## 6.11 Consequences of State Breakdown on the Economy and Markets

As the consequence of the civil war, the infrastructure in Tajikistan is largely destroyed. However, the extent to which the infrastructure has been pushed into decay varies from region to region. The parts mostly hit were the opposition regions, places like the Rasht valley, especially the route between Gharm and Tavildara where especially severe fighting had taken place and significantly stopped people from accessing market places, health facilities and other essential services.

However, not only the decay of infrastructure is the problem. For local people it is also difficult to transport local produce to the market because of security issues and partly re-invented traditions. These make it especially difficult, or even unacceptable, for women to go to the market in the next town to sell their local produce.

As the state does not have the capacity to regulate the market there are several reactions to this phenomenon. One is the increasing "mafiaization" or "informalization" of trading structures. In urban areas, mafia structures developed collecting protection money from local businesses and in rural areas, local power holders, often former warlords, tend to monopolize whole trade sectors.<sup>442</sup> According to a respondent in Dushanbe, to keep up a shop on Rudaki, the main street of Dushanbe, one has to pay enormous amounts of protection money for a little grocery store, for example.<sup>443</sup>

On the other hand, economic structures are reverting to their traditional form. As there is no reliable banking system and the currency is shaken by inflation, for some sectors people have returned to bartering, to exchanging produce, especially in rural parts of the country where 70 percent of the population lives. Many families have a

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<sup>442</sup> Regarding the monopolization of trade sectors, also see the case study on local powerholders.

<sup>443</sup> Interview with an NGO-worker in Dushanbe in November 2003

cow or chicken, but they do not sell their milk products and eggs at the local bazaar. The structures are being de-monetarised. Milk products are either only produced for one's own consumption, as much as the family needs, or they are being exchanged locally against other products.<sup>444</sup>

### **Transferring Remittances Back Home**

Even until recently, when work migrants wanted to send money back to their villages, they had to organize a chain of transferring the money to Tajikistan by handing it from one messenger to another. Certainly, this always involved quite a risk, due and usually a substantial part of the money would get lost on the way, either because the messengers themselves keeping their share or while having to cross the various borders between Russia and Tajikistan, through which they had to bribe their way.<sup>445</sup> Since 2004 more and more banks have been established and remittances are increasingly being transferred through official channels (banking system), enabling the state to keep track of these inflows, which was not previously the case. Banks are even starting to establish branches in rural areas, such as provincial capitals.

### **Access to Grants and Credits**

Another consequence of the breakdown of the state was that formal economic structures broke down. Access to credits, grants and other kinds of loans became very limited. In the case of Tajikistan, this is now being provided by international agencies, e.g. the AKDN offering micro-credit to heads of households, often widows who are the new heads of families trying to keep their households afloat.

The problem with credits, grants and other loans is not only that access is limited; this is a service that should be made available by the state or formal banks, but in fact has been largely taken over by NGOs and international organisations. The problem is also that people are not used to taking this kind of responsibility (of having to pay a certain amount back). Because of the war, they can barely handle their everyday life, and are not in a position to substantially think ahead and plan.

I observed this fear during the meeting of a *village organisation* that had been organised by MSDSP in Darband, Rasht valley, to distribute goats as a 'credit'.<sup>446</sup> The same number of goats received (five pieces) had to be paid back after five years. The members, especially the women, of the *village organisation* that had just recently been established in the village, were hesitant to accept the credit and actually in the end most of them refused. People were afraid that they would not be able to repay on time and again they were not used to thinking so far ahead.

### **The Need for a New Work Ethic**

Another fact that contributes to the reluctance to accept this kind of 'gift' (grant) is that the people do not have the necessary expertise for agriculture and animal husbandry. During Soviet times, political, social and economic life at the local level was mainly organized and structured through the overarching *kolkhoz*. The large majority of the villagers had their very specialized space and position in the *kolkhoz* system. Similarly, to the structures in the GDR, people were tractor drivers, they were specialized on seed production or responsible for fertilization of livestock, for example, but they knew very little about what the person next to them was doing and only very few had the full pictures of the cultivation cycle and so forth. People were not given any strong incentives to move up the hierarchy. Salary scales were similar

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<sup>444</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, 2004: 6

<sup>445</sup> Interview with an NGO worker in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>446</sup> The meeting took place in Darband in March 2004.

to each other and people stayed in the same position for decades. This situation had a considerable impact on the work morale. In addition to that, there was also a lot of underemployment at work. People would arrive at work and have nothing to do. One had to be at work from a certain time to a certain time, but that did not necessarily mean that one was actually busy all day, it was more a duty to be present. In the new economic era, people have to get used to a different style of working, a result-based work ethic. In the development sphere, people are more and more employed and paid according to their qualification and the achievements made. The whole system is much more competitive and one has to prove oneself.

### **The New Agricultural Setup**

Because of the breakdown of these official state farming structures and the destruction caused by the civil war, people were pushed into subsistence farming, even though they did not actually have the expertise for that. Their success was therefore rather limited.

All of a sudden people in rural areas had to know about the full agricultural cycle, when to plant what, when to scatter fertilizer (if they had access to it) and what to use as a fertilizer (organic or chemically produced). An indicator showing how low the knowledge was after the war is that when NGOs started offering training and extension services, the yields improved rapidly. One example was that earlier the people could not afford to buy any fertilizer or insecticides, but they also did not know how to make use of, for example, animal dung as a fertilizer or boiling particular blossoms of local flowers and spraying this onto the crop as insecticides.

## **6.12 'Privatization' and State Domination of the Cotton Business**

Cotton production is not prevalent in my research regions, but the sector plays an enormous role in Tajikistan's national economy and has major implications for Tajikistan's further development.

Officially, state farms do not exist anymore, but unofficially the same structures continue to exist, although in most cases the former head of the *kolkhoz* has now become the manager or owner of the business. The peasants are forced to grow cotton and to sell their harvest before actually harvesting. They tend to make miscalculations and often subsequently fall into debt and difficult dependency relationships with the proprietors. Under these conditions, for the majority of the people in the cotton-growing areas it is not profitable to work the land and for an increasing number of people the only way out is work migration.<sup>447</sup>

In 2007, the overall debt towards foreign investors was 400 million USD. The large majority of the profit does not go to the peasants, but to government officials and *kolkhoz* directors.<sup>448</sup>

Even though this is the most promising economic sector in Tajikistan, it is going through a heavy crisis and the local population is suffering a lot. The salaries for the women who pick the cotton during the harvest (it is harvested once with a combine harvester and once more by hand to collect the rest) are extremely low and they often suffer from skin diseases due to the large amount of fertilizers and insecticides used.

Students are forced every year to engage in the cotton picking. "Every fall, the classrooms empty and young people spend nine or more hours a day, seven days per week picking cotton under the autumn sun, which, in Tajikistan, can still burn."<sup>449</sup>

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<sup>447</sup> Khamidova, Parvina: Exodus. How to stop the brain drain from Tajikistan, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>448</sup> "Debt", newspaper article, ASIA-PLUS, 14/06/07

<sup>449</sup> Delly, James: Cotton Harvest Depends on Student Labor, on: www.eurasianet.org, 10/16/07

According to the Dean of the Kulyab Nursing College, if students refuse to go to the cotton fields for harvesting, their parents are called to give them a first warning; if they keep refusing they will be expelled from the college.<sup>450</sup>

On Sundays, students from close-by elementary schools even take part. The practice of students interrupting their education to help with the harvest dates back to the Soviet era. Although Tajikistan's agricultural sector has technically undergone privatization, the country's farmers still depend heavily on student labour to gather the cotton crop.

In addition, the only reimbursement for the labour provided, is a vegetarian meal and there is a lot of bribery going on (one can improve grades with a good picking rate).

Many workers live far below the poverty threshold and malnutrition in these areas is widespread, as local peasants do not have the land and time to grow vegetables and fruit for their own consumption.<sup>451</sup> This is a serious barrier to development in the cotton-growing areas in the South-West of the country. Many agricultural workers live under conditions described as bonded labour and financial servitude or one could call it modern slavery.<sup>452</sup>

According to a report by WFP in 2005, cotton contributed to nearly 90 percent of the total agricultural export earnings and already under the Soviet regime, it accounted for eleven percent of the total cotton harvested in the Soviet Union. After the lows in the late 1990s, cotton production has again increased progressively in recent years. Stronger world prices coupled with improved economic conditions have given rise to this recovery.

Nevertheless, the yields remain low (around 1.8 tonnes/ha) and the sector continues to struggle with debt accumulation, resulting mainly from the extension of credit to farmers at unfavourable terms in the mid-1990s. Cotton is closely managed by a handful of joint ventures with close ties to local and central authorities. "In fact, farmers have benefited the least from the growth in cotton export earnings in recent years as a result of official production policies; through land allocation as well as *de facto* targeting practices and implicit high taxes, stemming from the central government's price policies; by setting maximum rather than minimum prices." (Abassian, 2005: 16)

The result of the mismanagement of the cotton business is a humanitarian crisis. The actual problem is the continuation of Soviet-style policies and management that force the population to engage in the production of cotton rather than allowing them to "adequately supply themselves with food".<sup>453</sup>

For the first time in 2008, the state is not dictating the price for cotton, but the *dehqan* farms (semi-private farmers' associations) can sell at their own prices.<sup>454</sup> This shows that in the future there might be more space for manoeuvring in the cotton business.

### 6.13 Lack of Long-Term Investment

Tajikistan experienced a "boom of investment" after the civil war ended. That was when many emergency organisations came in, such as MSF, PsF, and others. The second wave came with 11 September 2001. In the cause of fighting terrorism, not only Afghanistan was seen as extremely vulnerable, but also the newly independent Central Asian republics were seen as on the brink between turning into democratic

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<sup>450</sup> Same as footnote no.449

<sup>451</sup> It is no surprise that a WFP large-scale survey in 2004 found that households' food supplies were least secure in Tajikistan's cotton-growing regions; Van Atta, Don: King Cotton Freezes Tajikistan, [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 03/19/08

<sup>452</sup> See: Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08

<sup>453</sup> Van Atta, Don: King Cotton Freezes Tajikistan, [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 03/19/08

<sup>454</sup> Gufronov, Daler: The political leaders are saying that they will stop dictating prices for cotton. Should we believe that?, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

republics, or falling back into governance set-ups similar to those of its neighbours, Afghanistan or Pakistan.

Today the Tajik set-up is one of the least spectacular in the region, as there are no revolutions as in Kyrgyzstan; the leader is not as repressive as Karimov or “creative” as Turkmenbashi used to be in Turkmenistan. The security situation is not comparable to the one in Afghanistan. Tajikistan has again disappeared from the world stage, as it has ‘nothing exciting’ to offer to the world audience.<sup>455</sup>

It faces the unpleasant reality that in the end foreign actors are not that interested in investing into the country and building up a prosperous Tajikistan for the future. Tajikistan does not seem to be a threat, as it seems to have found more of a balance between its formerly communist and Islamist forces since the civil war ended in 1997. In this sense, it does not have much to offer.

Strategically, Tajikistan is not very important; it is only the ‘little brother’ of its neighbour Afghanistan. Several organisations that came to Afghanistan to do relief work already left (e.g. MSF), as Tajikistan is more and more moving into the long-term development cooperation mode.

#### **6.14 Money Rules – “Money-pulation”**

The post-conflict set-up in Tajikistan is very much characterized by the rule of money: “Money makes the world go around”. Personal values, such as having a good education and coming from a good (in the sense of educated) family, do not count that much anymore. What counts is how to make money and how to survive. People have lost the ability to plan. They are simply struggling with surviving the week. Education is not valued that much anymore. People are rather looking for sources of income, whether legal or not.

As legal frameworks break apart, following the formal rules of the game is not honoured that much anymore as it was during the Soviet era.

In spring 2007, there were even more indicators pointing at the fact that money and its display was becoming more and more important. Fancy shops (Pierre Cardin, Benetton, and Adidas etc.) had appeared and a formerly popular bazaar “no. 82” was destroyed. According to my respondents, Pierre Cardin was a shop owned by the daughter of the President and this kind of shops main purpose was considered to be money laundering.<sup>456</sup>

#### **6.15 Fragile Peace**

Fragile peace is usually a term for the situation in a country where peace has recently been restored. It means that the peace situation is not fully secured yet, that the state is undergoing a ‘peace-building process’.

At the same time, it implies that there is always the possibility that the conflict might break out again. This *status quo* significantly shapes peoples’ perception, decision-making and overall behaviour. It prevents people from making investments in the economic sphere. It cripples society and prevents the spirit that is needed to actually rebuild the state. People are afraid of the lawlessness of the times of war returning.

This is why the initiative of community development is very much needed in the post-conflict context. People have to become aware of the fact that they can actually do something on their own, take initiative, to show them that there are resources

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<sup>455</sup> Most people in the West did not even hear about the Tajik civil war. Tajikistan for them was still lost in the ‘Soviet black hole on the world map.’

<sup>456</sup> Interview with the representative of a local NGO in Dushanbe in June 2007

available and that they should be used in the most effective and efficient way for the common good of the community.

Another force that can threaten the fragility of a state is when the elite introduce provocative laws<sup>457</sup>, as it was the case in Tajikistan in 2007.

Finally, war crimes have not been properly prosecuted. The warlords got away with what they did. The prosecution of war crimes is generally a big step in terms of reconciliation in post-conflict societies. Once war criminals have been punished for what they did, society can move on. The lack of prosecution of war crimes, therefore, remains to be one of the barriers to development in Tajikistan today.

## 6.16 De-Mobilization and the Culture of War

Peace and stability building have to be seen as long-term processes. Not only has the population to be prevented from falling again into the previous lines of separation, but it is also necessary to ensure that no new lines of separation emerge (either ethnicity, along *semlyachestvo* – common regional identity, class, confession or other possible “separators”).

The demobilization process plays an essential role in the peace-building process; it is a major precondition for civil statehood. In many regions of Tajikistan the demobilization process was never fully completed and many fighters from the civil war still have access to weapons, which they fortunately do not make use of anymore, but they could quickly take up again.<sup>458</sup> Even if Tajikistan had been successful in terms of demobilization, groups would always be able to re-arm themselves with weapons supplied from Afghanistan, where access to weapons is very easy.

In terms of demobilisation, Tajikistan is much further in the process than Afghanistan. In daily life, weapons are not being displayed anymore. They are not part of everyday life, as is the case in Afghanistan. If one sees somebody in a police uniform with a gun in Tajikistan, one can be sure that it is a police officer, which is not the case in Afghanistan. Police officers are not a threat to personal security in Tajikistan, as it seems to be the case in Afghanistan where their behaviour is unpredictable.<sup>459</sup>

Armament and access to cheap weapons are still problematic in Tajikistan, but only very rarely since the end of the civil war have conflicts in Tajikistan been ‘solved’ by the force of weapons.<sup>460</sup> In Tajikistan the ‘weapons culture’ has changed. It shows that the re-integration of former commanders and combatants into civil life has largely been successful. Alternative sources of livelihoods have been found.

It is a worrying development though, that Tajikistan is extensively investing into its military. The Russian newspaper “Komersant” did a rating of which country in the world spends the most on military expenses in relation to its GDP. Tajikistan turned out to be number nine on the world list.<sup>461</sup>

The state and the society have to get rid of its culture of war, of attempting to solve conflict with the help of weapons. The longer the war lasts in a country, the more difficult this is. In many places generations have grown up only knowing war as the normal way of life and mode in which the state has been operating.<sup>462</sup> In Tajikistan,

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<sup>457</sup> Laws that are perceived as being provocative by one part of the population, in this case informal religious leaders.

<sup>458</sup> Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>459</sup> I made these observations when I worked in Kabul from November 2005 until January 2008.

<sup>460</sup> Since 2003, I have closely monitored the international (Eurasianet) and local news (Avesta, Asia Plus etc.) regarding Tajikistan and I have heard of very few incidents in which weapons were used to solve a conflict.

<sup>461</sup> Grufronov, Daler: Against whom are we being friends?, ASIA-PLUS, No 36 (450), 03/09/08

<sup>462</sup> Interviews with local NGO-workers in Kabul in December 2005



fortunately, the war only lasted five years (with the most intensive period from 1992-94); nevertheless, it became a way of post-Soviet socialization.

Today, eleven years after the settlement of the official peace agreement, this culture of war has been overcome. What prevail are mafia-like structures that emerged during the civil war. Extortion, for example, is a normal thing for businesspersons in Tajikistan today. If one wants to run a small shop on Rudaki, the main road of Dushanbe, one will have to pay protection money to a *krysha* (Russian term for mafia protection organisation). A respondent said: "In Dushanbe businessmen only have to pay one *krysha* and the *kryshi* have divided the territory amongst themselves (400 USD is the rate for a 24-hour grocery store)."

The same respondent also claimed that development organisations had to pay bribes in order to be able to work in certain regions: "All projects in Khatlon implemented by international organisation have to pay 50 percent of the money to local big men."<sup>463</sup>

These figures seem to be exaggerated and I did not hear from any other sources that international organisations and NGOs were paying such large bribes or that they were paying those directly. It is more likely that the whole phenomenon is more hidden. NGOs and IOs pay bribes indirectly, e.g. when procuring materials for infrastructure projects, when selecting contractors and the like. This way they are not always aware of the bribery.

People to some extent have given up believing in a brighter future and this prevents them from becoming politically involved and actually fighting for their rights. In their heads is still the fear that the issues from the war are not actually resolved and that the war could break out again. This backfires on the democratic process that has been started and has been pushed forward by external forces. As a result, political activists cannot find any supporters and push through their ideas. It is extremely difficult to get out of this vicious circle that the war has created. As the state and its formal net of rules of the game breaks down, gaps are filled with informal rules and practices that newly fill the "power vacuum". Eventually, these are difficult to get rid of to pave the way to normalization. An imbalance between formal and informal rules comes into existence, informal rules eventually prevail. This problem can only be tackled if either unofficial rules are formalized through becoming part of the constitution or by intensifying sanctions, enforcing the law, in cases when official rules are being abused.

## 6.17 Reconciliation and 'Social Healing'

On the personal, as well as political, level a process of reconciliation and 'social healing' has to take place. People have to forgive each other to be able to move on. Reviewing social processes in a post-conflict country, one has to assess to what extent the level of reconciliation and 'social healing' has progressed. In Tajikistan, the most widespread consensus in 2003 was that the people wanted to do everything necessary in order to prevent Tajikistan from falling into another civil war.<sup>464</sup>

For these kinds of assessments, it is difficult to invent indicators in order to measure the situation. Nevertheless, from my experience in Tajikistan and other post-conflict countries, such as Afghanistan and Kosovo, I argue that people in Tajikistan are generally war-tired, which provided good prospects for post-conflict reconstruction and development processes.

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<sup>463</sup> Interview with the co-worker of a local NGO in Dushanbe in November 2003

<sup>464</sup> In most interviews (165) that I conducted and conversations I had with local people in 2003/04 people expressed their 'war-tiredness' and justified not doing many things to prevent the country from falling back into war.

## 6.18 Poverty Resulting from Conflict

Conflict increases the level of poverty. Infrastructure is destroyed, access to markets is affected, people forget how to work their fields and gardens, and due to the abeyance during the war, fields and kitchen gardens bring in considerably reduced yields. In Tajikistan, the overall conflict and the huge lack of knowledge and education even led to food security no longer being guaranteed and organisations like the AKDN, GTZ, etc. had to launch extensive programmes to tackle this issue. In extremely poor regions in the south young children were dying from malnutrition. PSF was trying to inform mothers about hygiene and nutrition. Simple knowledge, such as that a child has to get more to drink when it has diarrhoea did not exist.

Another side of this growing poverty is that children, especially in women-headed households, are forced into child labour and, therefore, often do not get a proper education.

The Soviet Union was famous for developing regions through literacy and the level of literacy it achieved was impressive. Astonishing has been the extent to which the level of literacy and general education has decreased since the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

As a result, people forget to think ahead as they are trying to ensure their survival. This again leads to the fact that programmes designed to bring long-term improvements, such as micro-credit, cannot actually embed as people are too afraid to take the risk, afraid not to be able to pay back the loan on time.

The extent to which the state offers income opportunities is extremely limited because of the war-caused weakness of the state. Teachers and doctors were only paid around four Euros per month in 2004, not to mention police and border guards who are also extremely under-paid.<sup>465</sup> This is not sufficient in order to survive. These people are forced to collect additional private payments in the form of bribes. Therefore, corruption spreads like a disease and is extremely embedded in the system. The only other alternative is to migrate to Russia.

Poverty varies regionally. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper has shown that almost half of Tajikistan's poor now live in the southern region of Khatlon and that in terms of poverty reduction special attention has to be given to them (Bliss 2004: 18).

## 6.19 Increased Stratification

An effect of the war and the economic transformation process from the socialist (planned economy) to the democratic (market-driven) system is that society is increasingly being stratified, widening the gap between rich and poor. Freedom House confirms this notion by saying that the increasing income inequality is a growing problem and it is threatening human and national security.<sup>466</sup>

A respondent from the district of Shurabad states: "The rich are becoming richer and the poor are becoming poorer, in some families the family solidarity is decreasing. There are rich local donors (Russian: *mestnye donory*), where they have money from is unknown."<sup>467</sup>

The war produced economic winners and losers. Some people managed to emerge from the war as big landowners; others were successful in illegal businesses, drug or the weapons trade, for example. The state does not provide many opportunities for a successful career anymore. The only way to make money is in the illegal sphere or if one becomes involved in international development cooperation. To demonstrate the

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<sup>465</sup> I interviewed a teacher in Shurabad in October 2003, a doctor and a nurse in Gharm in March 2004, a nurse in Shugnan in July 2004 and two teachers in Rashtkala in July 2004.

<sup>466</sup> Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08

<sup>467</sup> Interview with a teacher in Shurabad in October 2003

difference in salaries: an average teacher or medical worker in the rural areas officially got less than ten Euros in 2004. To survive he or she is forced to find some additional sources of income. Somebody who is engaged in international development cooperation and qualified for this work, in 2003/04 could earn from 200 Euros in rural areas to up to 600 Euros in the capital.<sup>468</sup>

The gaps between rich and poor have increased significantly. Another good source of income has been to find a job in Russia or even in the surrounding countries.

### **Income Inequality in the Rasht Valley**

The income inequality is the highest in the Rasht valley: The top quartile received 50 percent of all the income in 2001.<sup>469</sup> According to an MSDSP baseline study, the inequality of income is greater for non-agricultural income than for agricultural incomes and the richest group has a larger percentage of income coming from non-agricultural sources, of which remittances form the largest part. Therefore, the richest quartile is not so dependent on agricultural income.<sup>470</sup> At the same time, in the Rasht region, where *sovkhos* lands have been privatized, the land has generally gone to those who have had the money, foresight, and influence to apply first.<sup>471</sup> Interestingly, yields increase in line with wealth, which might imply that richer farmers have better access to knowledge and to agricultural inputs.<sup>472</sup>

In the Rasht valley for the richest quartiles, remittances are the major source of non-agricultural income. Business and salaries are roughly equal in the second place. A person in the top quartile is just as likely to receive humanitarian aid as a person in the bottom quartile, but a person in the top quartile is far more likely to receive remittances.<sup>473</sup> This increasingly adds to the inequality. Richer families are more likely to be selling agricultural produce than poor families.<sup>474</sup> Finally, only those in the top quartile are self-sufficient in flour.<sup>475</sup> As bread is the main food item, this shows how easily economic shocks can provoke food insecurity in rural areas of Tajikistan, especially at times when food prices are increasing massively.

### **Income Inequality in Mountain-Badakhshan and Shurabad**

In Mountain-Badakhshan, there is less inequality in terms of income. Remittances are relatively more important for the richest quartile; however, overall they make up a considerably smaller proportion of total incomes than they do in the Rasht valley.<sup>476</sup>

In Shurabad in 2001, average income levels were about 60 percent of those in the Rasht valley. However, it appears that wealth was distributed more evenly. Agriculture was not yet a real source of cash, but wheat production was essential for survival.<sup>477</sup> The most important sources of income were salaries, pensions and wages, which shows the degree to which Shurabad is supported by the state.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>468</sup> These were the figures I collected during my fieldwork in Tajikistan in 2004. The figures might have changed by now, but the gap in salaries between state and non-state workers has stayed at a similar level.

<sup>469</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district, 2003: 8

<sup>470</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 9-10

<sup>471</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 22

<sup>472</sup> Same as footnote no. 471, p.35-36

<sup>473</sup> Same as footnote no. 471, p.17

<sup>474</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 37

<sup>475</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 44

<sup>476</sup> Same as footnote no. 475, p.6

<sup>477</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district 2003: iv

<sup>478</sup> Same as footnote no. 477, p. 10

## 7. Chapter V: (De)-Consolidation of Power by the Centre

After taking a detailed look at the development potentials in Tajikistan, I am now turning to the consolidation and de-consolidation of power structures by the centre. To sustainably stabilise power structures the Tajik elite would need to increasingly balance between the forces in power and oppositional forces. The way the governing elite is playing the different forces against each other, there is always the danger that at one point the oppositional forces will unite and reclaim a share of the power.

Opposition work at the local level is very much restricted by the governing elite. Power structures are predominantly governed by hybrid institutional arrangements, a product of the political transformation process that subsumes formal as well as informal rules of the game.

In this chapter, I am also reviewing the role of former warlords in the reconciliation process and questioning to what extent war crimes have been investigated.

### 7.1 'Balancing' on the National Level

'Power games' at the local level often find their reflection on the national level and vice versa. Concerning the balancing act between the state and the two opposition forces (the democratic and the Islamist one), I therefore have to consider the local level as well as the national.

In 2003/ 2004 (during my field research), at both levels, the opposition was being held on a short leash and the question emerged as to why Rahmon was not using one level in order to compensate for his strict control on the other level, i.e. to balance power inequalities between different levels of the state. There was no strategic balancing between levels of the state going on.

At the national level, in 2003/04 President Rahmon did not only have to defend his power position against the warlords from the former *United Tajik Opposition* (UTO), but also against his former allies, the warlords from the former *Popular Front* (PFT) who were starting to demand more power and were actually beginning to move against Rahmon, their former ally.<sup>479</sup> The fact that President Rahmon was increasingly replacing warlords in his government with other people was promising in the sense of state building, but in terms of the stabilization process it was feared to be dangerous.<sup>480</sup>

In 2004, Rahmon was not creating a broader-based government. This did not seem to be his policy on the national or the local level. He could have involved people that were more socially embedded in the regions to stabilize the system, but he chose not to. Instead, he was replacing former warlords with people from his own personal network, many of them from Kulyab, his home region and his own *semlyachestvo* or clan, putting the state system increasingly into an imbalance.<sup>481</sup>

This way he created a two-fold conflict because neither the former warlords from the *Popular Front*, his former allies, nor the ones from the *United Tajik Opposition* were fond of these new developments. New grievances were created and new lines of conflict were threatening to open up due to these changes and the loss of power by opposition figures. The loss of power is one of the strongest triggers for (violent) conflict. It is a factor that mobilizes people considerably.

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<sup>479</sup> See the ICG Report, 19 May 2004: Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.2

<sup>480</sup> Compare the ICG Report, 19 May 2004: Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.5

<sup>481</sup> I actually have a hunch that the former warlords of the *United Tajik Opposition* are not strongly socially embedded in the Rasht valley and respondents during my fieldwork in February and March 2004 told me that they did not have a broad base of supporters during the war.

Furthermore, being part of the Rahmon network did not necessarily imply that these new politicians were good policy makers. These new 'strategic' moves by Rahmon created a new imbalance.

An ICG report from 2004 put it the following way: "Not only does narrowing the elite exclude competent officials from state service; it also raises discontent in other regional elites, thus exacerbating what was one of the major causes of the civil war."<sup>482</sup>

## 7.2 Opposition Work at the Local Level

An important female opposition figure (see the appendix in section 10), member of the *Social-Democratic Party* (SDPT) and the head of two NGOs in Gharm, described the political situation in the Rasht valley in March 2004 as tense and complained about how the *hukumati nohija* (the district administration) was blocking the work of opposition forces and NGOs in the Rasht valley.<sup>483</sup> This was followed by an article by the press centre of the district of Rasht. The opposition figure then answered with political poems in another newspaper.<sup>484</sup>

In addition, Muhiddin Kabiri, the deputy chairperson of the *Islamic Renaissance Party* (IRPT), complained about the district administration in Gharm where the IRPT had wanted to carry out a party meeting, but was not given a room for this purpose. Eventually, Mr. Kabiri said that several party meetings had to be carried out in private houses, as if the party was engaged in some illegal activity.<sup>485</sup> This measure was perceived by the party members as if the party, which is an officially registered party in Tajikistan, was pushed into the informal sphere.

The IRPT was also hindered from holding founding conferences for its local sections in several regions (in Gharm, Kulyab and Khovaling), which aimed at finding supporters and registering the party in the regions. In Shurabad and Muminabad, the IRPT finally managed to register in spring 2004.<sup>486</sup>

The situation in the regions is especially tense in the Rasht valley and in the home region of Rahmon, Kulyab. In these two regions, opposition parties face extremely tight restrictions. The situation is reportedly much freer in Khudjand (Sogd) and in Khorugh (Mountain-Badakhshan). In these two regions, Khudjand and Khorugh, the opposition parties do not have any problems carrying out party meetings. Nevertheless, in Khudjand there were cases when members of the *Social-Democratic Party* (SDPT) were given the choice of either staying the member of their party (SDPT) or losing their job.<sup>487</sup>

## 7.3 'Balancing' and Hybrid Institutional Arrangements

The difficult balancing act carried out by President Rahmon intermingles with the hybrid institutional arrangements I found on all the levels of state administration in Tajikistan. A hybrid institutional arrangement is a setup that contains informal and formal elements. These kinds of arrangements often look like formal institutions from

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<sup>482</sup> See the ICG Report, 19 May 2004: Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.5

<sup>483</sup> Same as footnote no. 482

<sup>484</sup> See a newspaper article in Asia Plus, "The population is united around us", 25/03/04

<sup>485</sup> Interview with the deputy head of the Islamic Renaissance Party, Muhiddin Kabiri in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>486</sup> Interview with the deputy chairperson of the *Islamic Renaissance Party* in Dushanbe in February 2004, also see the ICG Report, 19 May 2004: Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.6

<sup>487</sup> Interview with a young female (Pamiri) journalist in Dushanbe in April 2004

the outside, but if one takes a closer look, they are dominated by informal rules of the game on the inside.

Most state institutions in Tajikistan formally look like their Soviet predecessors and often still carry the same name as during Soviet times. Even during the Soviet era, most state institutions were hybrid institutions, having an informal kernel in a shell of formality, eventually melting formal and informal elements into one.

What has changed is the fact that the informal part has increased since the breakdown of the Soviet state, as have the functions that the particular institution fulfils. Especially since the Tajik civil war, co-optation has increased and state institutions on the national level and in the home region of President Rahmon in particular have been captured by his personal network.<sup>488</sup>

What I have found so far is that formal institutions of state administration on the local level have more of a destabilizing impact, than that they are stabilizing. By taking sides in conflicts on the local level, concerning for example the distribution of land, the state (by state, I mean those individuals who represent the state on the local level and who have personal interests) try to increase their personal power and material shares, instead of stabilizing the political, social and economic structures on the ground.<sup>489</sup>

Many destabilizing factors exist in Tajikistan today. Considering all these risk factors, it comes as a surprise that so far (for eleven years) stability has prevailed. One would have to compare different institutional arrangements in various post-Soviet republics in order to verify whether it is actually mainly the constellation and reciprocity of these formal and informal elements that form constructive hybrid institutional arrangements that eventually lead to the current stability of the system.

## 7.4 The Role of Former Warlords

There are some signs pointing to the fact that the opposition might soon claim its share again. Since the beginning of 2004, former warlords have been meeting more frequently for political purposes and have started to become more involved in political processes. So far they seem to be trying to solve the conflict within political and media structures and not (yet) by taking up arms again. The conflict finds its expression in the local media, especially in debates in the biggest newspaper *Asia Plus (AP)*.<sup>490</sup>

Former warlords often have developed into local power holders. They are at the centre of networks. Some of them were already respected figures, before the civil war, but often their power was further established during the civil war when they provided protection for their followers. Many of them rose through violent and criminal activities and later became 'legal' leaders, temporarily co-opted into the new political power structures, as the political regime realized that it was easier to work with them than against them.

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<sup>488</sup> Many respondents in Dushanbe talked of a 'Kulyabisation' of Dushanbe and meant the 'Kulyabisation' of the state structures. Some people even mentioned that the accent from Kulyab was now becoming the dominant accent. In the *marshrutka* (Russian collective taxi) when asking for the minibus to stop, people were not saying „injo istod boshed“, but instead „ma'n kuned“ in the Kulyabi accent. For example, the interview with the founder of a local NGO in Dushanbe in June 2004

<sup>489</sup> The state intervention in land distribution, especially in the Rasht valley and Kulyab, was an issue that was discussed at a conference that I attended in Kurghan-Teppa in June 2004. This was confirmed by interviews with several respondents in Tavildara, conducted with employees of a local NGO in Tavildara in October 2003; Interview with a local man, working in the district administration in Shurabad in April 2004.

<sup>490</sup> See a newspaper article in *Asia Plus*, "One does not have to heighten the passion around M. Iskandarov", 02/03/04

### **'Career Carousel'**

Makhmadrozi Iskandarov is one of the major former warlords of the *United Tajik Opposition*. At the same time, he is the head of the *Democratic Party of Tajikistan* (DPT). Regarding Makhmadrozi Iskandarov, President Rahmon seems to aim to demonstrate his power over the former warlords by granting him a post, dismissing him, granting another post to him and so on. I call this phenomenon, which is a strategic act, 'career carousel'.

It is a measure for preventing the emergence of powerful networks, which might, once they are fully established, become difficult to control. If a person only stays in a position for a short time, he or she does not manage to build up important links with other people in the 'power circle'.

At the same time these people in the 'Career Carousel' have the impression that they are involved in the power game, even if the 'Career Carousel' often tends to throw them gradually out of the power game, by granting the person less and less important positions.

In 1999, Mr. Iskandarov was granted the title of a Major General. Then he briefly served as the Chairperson of the *State Committee on Emergency Situations*. From 1999 to 2001, he was the head of a state-run *Utilities Firm*. From 2001 until 2003, he was the head of the *State Gas Company* until he was removed for "professional shortcomings".

The actual reason for his demission was more likely the fact that in the meantime (in 1999) Mr. Iskandarov had become the head of the *Democratic Party* (DPT) and that the DPT in 2003 called for the boycott of a referendum on constitutional amendments and Mr. Iskandarov himself had announced the referendum's outcome as fraudulent.<sup>491</sup>

Following his dismissal, Mr. Iskandarov left Dushanbe and went to his hometown Tajikabad (in the Rasht valley close to Gharm), as he perceived a personal security threat. From there he went to Jirgatal (in the Rasht valley on the border with Kyrgyzstan) where he stayed for some time and where I tried to meet him in March 2004. In his self-imposed exile Mr. Iskandarov was joined by Salamsho Mukhabatov, his former comrade-in-arms, also an important former warlord of the *United Tajik Opposition*.<sup>492</sup>

A respondent told me that in March 2004 Mr. Iskandarov and Mr. Mukhabatov had gone to Bishkek to meet another former warlord, named Hairiddin, who was said to control the entire drug network in Bishkek.<sup>493</sup> The actual aim of these meetings remained unclear, but there were rumours that these former warlords were planning to form a political block of former war commanders.

### **Warlord of the Former Popular Front: Mr. Mirzoyev**

Another significant step by Rahmon was when he dismissed Gh. Mirzoyev on 30 January 2004. Mr. Mirzoyev had been one of his former allies and had been a former field commander of the *Popular Front* (PFT), from Rahmon's home region Kulyab. He then became the head of the *Presidential Guard* – "an elite unit which was instrumental in suppressing anti-government uprisings in the late 1990s".<sup>494</sup>

After being dismissed from the Guards, Mr. Mirzoyev was offered a position as the head of *Tajikistan's Olympic Committee* – not a very influential position. Following this incident there were rumours that approximately 200 of Mirzoyev's officers

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<sup>491</sup> See the ICG Report, 19 May 2004: Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.4

<sup>492</sup> My meeting with them did not take place because people warned me that it would be too dangerous for me to meet with him, as afterwards the Ministry for Internal Affairs would be after me. Eventually, I was told that they had left for Bishkek.

<sup>493</sup> The respondent was local co-worker of MSDSP in Gharm, the interview was taken in Gharm in March 2004

<sup>494</sup> See the ICG Report, 19 May 2004: Tajikistan's Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.2 and the newspaper article in Asia Plus, "Ghaffor Mirzoyev switched to another armchair", 05/02/04

threatened to resign. Respondents reported that protest meetings were held in Kulyab, even attended by people from Gharm who went to the town of Kulyab to protest. The fact that Gharmis went to Kulyab for a demonstration is remarkable. During the war, Gharmis and Kulyabis were the key protagonists and therefore it takes a lot to mobilize Gharmis to go to Kulyab for to protest.<sup>495</sup>

Due to these protests, Rahmon realized that in order to prevent further mobilization and escalation of the incident he had to offer Mr. Mirzoyev a higher position in order to compensate for his dismissal. A few days later, Mr. Mirzoyev was appointed head of the *State Narcotics Control Agency*, which in fact meant, giving him a green light to control the entire drug business.

## 7.5 General Amnesty and the Investigation of War Crimes

Despite the general amnesty that was one of the main conditions of the 1997 peace accords, the Tajik government has in recent years ‘quietly’ been investigating war crimes. Crimes against civilians do not fall under the general amnesty. However, it is complicated to draw a line between those who were actively involved in the war and those who were only involved as civilians. The government has some space for manoeuvring here and can manipulate the investigation in whatever direction is profitable for them.

While I was in the Rasht valley in March 2004, I heard from a respondent that an investigation commando had been sent to Tajikabad in order to find out who had tried to shoot the head of the *hukumat* (district administration) in Tajikabad during the civil war.<sup>496</sup> This investigation commando was stopped by unidentified gunmen on its way to Tajikabad and went back to Dushanbe without fulfilling its mission.

Another move regarding the investigation of war crimes was made by Makhmadruzi Iskandarov in 2004. “Makhmadruzi Iskandarov declared his intention to take up amnesty violations with respect to former UTO combatants and reportedly compiled a list of more than 300 cases to be submitted to the President. “If the President doesn’t solve this problem”, he said, “I think that all trust in this government will be lost.”<sup>497</sup>

These examples show that the investigation of war crimes is more of a closed chapter for the government than for the opposition. In a state dominated by the rule of law, it would have been an important part of the reconciliation process to try war crimes cases in court.

## 7.6 Who is in Control?

Regarding local governance in rural areas of Tajikistan, it is not clear anymore who is in control. In February 2008, the following incident occurred in Gharm. Colonel Oleg Zakharchenko, commander of the Russian Interior Ministry unit, OMON (special police unit) went on a mission to Gharm to arrest Colonel Mirzokhoja Akhmadov, the chief of the local department for organized crime. Akhmadov had fought against Rahmon during the Tajik civil war. When Colonel Zakharchenko arrived at the site, Akhmadov and his cohorts opened fire on the OMON officers who had come to take them into custody. In the shootout, Zakharchenko was killed and four of his officers were wounded. Akhmadov was not arrested and the Tajik state acted as if nothing had happened.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> Interview with an international co-worker of MSDSP in Gharm in March 2004

<sup>496</sup> Same as footnot no. 495

<sup>497</sup> See the ICG Report, May 2004: Tajikistan’s Politics: Confrontation or Consolidation, p.8

<sup>498</sup> Anonymous author: President of Tajikistan is not in Control, on: [www.turkishweekly.net](http://www.turkishweekly.net), 02/06/08



This incident has three different dimensions. First, it shows the strong role that Russia still plays in Tajik politics today. How can a representative from the Russian Ministry of Interior investigate a country that has been independent for 17 years?

Secondly, this incident shows that the Tajik civil war is not forgotten yet and that there are still some cases not yet closed.

Thirdly, the fact that Akhmadov did not lose his position and that he was not arrested for this incident shows that Rahmon is not in full control of these parts of his country or deliberately chooses not to get involved.

There are other incidents indicating that Rahmon is losing control. In May 2008, there was a report on Rahmon's son, who had allegedly shot his uncle, Hassan Sadullayev, (the President's brother-in-law) in connection with a struggle for control of the Orienbank. Sadullayev was evacuated for medical reasons to Germany for treatment, where he allegedly died on 8 May 2008. The Tajik government has been denying the occurrence of this incident and is saying that Sadullaeyev is still alive, even though he had not appeared in public in the following weeks.

The motive for the shooting was said to be a "family feud" (usually the phenomenon of feuding is not common in Tajikistan) about control of the Orienbank, one of Tajikistan's largest financial institutions. Sadullayev had been heading up the bank, "but in recent months, one of the president's daughters, Takhmina, who owns one of Dushanbe's major construction firms, reportedly sought to wrest control of the bank from her uncle. When negotiations failed to yield an agreement, Rustam Rahmon apparently decided to help his sister resolve the dispute by other means."<sup>499</sup>

Rahmon was then said to have threatened to severely punish any source within Tajikistan who would divulge details of the incident. Orienbank's capital assets are remarkable for Tajikistan and are reported to be about 47 million USD. Sadullayev was considered one of the most powerful individuals in Tajikistan, to the extent, it was said, that he was a rival to Rahmon himself.

His power seemed to be fading, however, when the popular radio station "Imruz", which had mainly been controlled by Sadullayev had gone off the air in spring 2008. Until then, it had been one of the very few radio stations that covered political developments independently and provided an outlet for opposition politicians to express their views.<sup>500</sup>

Another branch of his power has been his involvement with a company called CDH, based in the British Virgin Islands that was responsible for trading much of Tajikistan's aluminium output. There had been a court case running against him involving fraud. This court case was important because the public had been informed of the fact that Rahmon's administration had paid 120 million USD in legal fees to British lawyers, an amount which is equivalent to about five percent of Tajikistan's GDP.<sup>501</sup>

These kinds of signs of instability do not bode well in a country that is marked by a deep social and economic crisis, resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Tajik civil war and lately the winter crisis in 2007/ 2008. During this last winter, the country suffered from severe shortages of heating material and electricity and is now suffering from spiralling inflation. Finally, "the government has faced criticism for corrupt practices in recent weeks from international creditors".<sup>502</sup> Recently, Rahmon is described by being preoccupied with a destabilizing power struggle.

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<sup>499</sup> Anonymous author: Tajikistan: A Ruling Family Feud Appears to Turn Bloody, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/05/08

<sup>500</sup> Same as footnote no. 499

<sup>501</sup> Same as footnote no. 499

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

Eurasianet describes the situation as follows: "The continuing uncertainty surrounding the President and his close relatives suggests that a bout of instability could be in the offing for Central Asia's poorest nation."<sup>503</sup>

The situation as it is now is as such that it does not actually matter whether Sadullayev is still alive or not. At this stage, the mere existence of the rumour could have the potential of inflicting a "mortal wound" on Rahmon's administration.<sup>504</sup>

In a way, the Sadulloev controversy gives the impression that the presidential clan is dysfunctional and this could be dangerous for the stability of the regime. In this post-Soviet context, and even more so, in the post-Civil war context, a leader who is unable to show that he is the master of developments, i.e. that he is in control, and who shows signs of weakness or simply hesitation can face strong challenges against his authority. The current setup in Tajikistan is similar to the recent political process Kyrgyzstan went through. How withdrawn Rahmon has been recently is highlighted by the fact that he did not even attend public ceremonies in connection with the Victory Day on 9 May 2008.

By now, these do not seem to be isolated incidents, but opposition to Rahmon's power seems to be building up. In November 2007, a bomb ripped apart the car of the head of Tajikistan's National Guard, Major General Rajabali Rakhmonaliyev, which also serves as Rahmon's personal self-defence force. Mr. Rakhmonaliyev was not in the car when it happened. A few days later, there was another bomb blast in Dushanbe in front of a conference centre where an EU-organized conference was supposed to take place. Regional analysts say that this might also be connected to the ongoing power struggle.<sup>505</sup>

In November 2007, the Ariana news website indicated that potential successors to Rahmon were trying to position themselves for a possible "forced change of the elite." Rakhmonaliyev was described as one of the main contenders to possibly succeed Rahmon. The second possible successor was Sadulloev. Other possible candidates were the mayor of Dushanbe, Makhmadsaid Ubaidulloev, who has long been known as one of Rahmon's main contenders, and Amirsho Miraliyev, a top presidential aide. Finally, Nuriddin Rahmonov, a presidential relative, was named. He wields influence over the personnel policy of the governmental bureaucracy.<sup>506</sup>

In November 2007, Rahmon's position had been weak as he had been suspected of being ill. At the beginning of 2008, his power seemed to be fading away due to the winter crisis in Tajikistan that left the population for extensive periods without heating and electricity. Reports say that this harsh winter could have been foreseen and preventive measures could have been taken. Instead, the government just watched. The winter crisis was then followed by extreme increase in food costs, especially for bread, which is the staple food of the Tajiks diet.<sup>507</sup>

"The recurring armed clashes between the central government and regional leaders, both official and informal, indicate to observers that Rakhmon does not control his own country."<sup>508</sup> It is widely speculated that, in case another conflict arises, Rahmon cannot count on his former supporters taking his side again and this constellation is very dangerous.

A specialist from the Moscow Carnegie Centre says that Rahmon "is no longer adequate as an unquestionable intermediary between various clans." The latest "intent" to crack down on drug barons in Kulyab in May 2008 does not have anything

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<sup>503</sup> Anonymous author: Tajikistan: Who is in Charge?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 16/05/08

<sup>504</sup> Anonymous author: Tajikistan: A Ruling Family Feud Appears to Turn Bloody, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/05/08

<sup>505</sup> Anonymous author: Tajikistan: Who is in Charge?, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 16/05/08

<sup>506</sup> Same as footnote no. 505

<sup>507</sup> Same as footnote no. 505

<sup>508</sup> Anonymous author: Central Asia News: Experts: President of Tajikistan is not in control, on: [www.ferghana.ru](http://www.ferghana.ru), 28/05/08

to do with the drug trade; it is part of a power struggle between clans from the southern region.<sup>509</sup>

The power struggle that emerged out of the civil war is not over yet and it has been renewed by recent incidents. It remains to be seen whether the opposition will take up its claim for power at this stage or remain silent for the sake of preserving the peace.

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<sup>509</sup> Anonymous author: Experts: President of Tajikistan is not in Control, on: [www.turkishweekly.net](http://www.turkishweekly.net), 02/06/08

## **8. Chapter 5: Local Governance and the Rules of the Game**

In the previous chapter, I looked at the post-conflict development process and emphasised the recent flare up of the power struggle at the national level. At this stage, I would like to return to the local level and examine the different rules of the game and actors that influence decision-making at the local level. I will look at networks and institutions that shape socio-political structures at the local level and define the relationship between the state and the society. Later, I will introduce community development as an approach applied at the local level by international organisations and NGOs that can potentially lead to more sustainable outcomes of rural development than other comparable approaches.

The way governance takes place at the local level, the way the rules of the game (institutions) determine the code of conduct at the local level, has again an influence on the overall development process that is ongoing in Tajikistan. In this chapter, I am looking at the different rules of the game (institutions). I am looking at institutions which have emerged out of a mix of traditions (from pre-Soviet times), that derive from Soviet times and the ones that emerged out of the civil war. I illustrate this with the help of numerous case studies, which I have mainly collected during my field research in Tajikistan during 2003, 2004 and 2005.

### **8.1 The Shifting Interface between State and Society**

In theory, I am referring to a model Western-type of state of the twentieth and twenty-first century here, where the 'contract' between the state and the people foresees that the former extracts money from the latter (through taxation, customs etc.). In return, the state provides public goods and services, and 'securities', such as, among others, physical security, welfare, healthcare, education, emergency relief, rule of law, conflict-mitigating institutions – what is altogether often termed human security. In the case of Tajikistan, the state is an arena rather than a dominating force, in which local (often informal) leaders who enjoy some kind of legitimacy, compete for domination – setting the rules of the game - in their spheres of domination. Therefore, the state cannot be seen as a coherent organisation, as it incorporates conflicting forms of social control (Migdal 2001: 52/53).

These modes of governance and forms of social control are based on institutional arrangements that have emerged since the breakdown of the Soviet Union and have had a significant impact on the regulation of inter-personal relationships, as well as relations between the political centre and the periphery. Migdal's characterisation of such arrangements very much suits the case of Tajikistan: "These game rules involve much more than broad constitutional principles; they include the written and unwritten laws, regulations, decrees and the like, which state officials indicate they are willing to enforce through the coercive means at their disposal. Rules encompass everything from living up to contractual commitments to driving on the right side of the road to paying alimony on time. They involve the entire array of property rights and countless definitions of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour for people." (Migdal 1988: 14)

Tajikistan is marked by legal insecurity because there are different sets of laws and rules in place (multiple legal systems) and there are conflicts about the rules of the game, e.g. religious against secular, modern against traditional, and local against universal.

There have been examples where, to a certain extent, the 'youth' (usually men up to the age of 35) have taken over the village, because democratic procedures have been introduced (through external community development initiatives). Through work migration, they now have access to economic resources. This has had a major

impact on the rules of the game and the implementation of development projects on the local level.<sup>510</sup> What happens in such a situation of having the opportunity to choose from different sets of rules is that people start to do 'institution shopping', choosing those rules that personally suit them best. The youth chooses the new democratic rules of the game and the elderly stick to what traditionally have been the rules of the game (see the case study on Navdi in section 7.6.1).

### **Where is the Border between State and Society?**

In the case of Tajikistan, the boundaries between the state and society are not only extremely blurred, but in addition, they are constantly shifting. More and more informal practices are being incorporated into the state; people are being co-opted into the regime. Migdal says in this regard: "As we find a 'mutual' process of powerful social forces, in particular arenas appropriating or capturing parts of the state, while at the same time components of the state co-opt influential social figures" (Migdal, Kohli & Shue 1994: 26).

Power holders play a particularly important role in local modes of governance in rural Tajikistan as they not only exercise social control over their subordinates, but, because of their positions of power, they also make demands upon the state and in some cases even capture parts of it (Migdal 2001: 90). Power holders are local political, economic and social leaders who have been legitimised through informal, often illegal, processes (such as actions during the civil war) and who are highly embedded into their local communities.

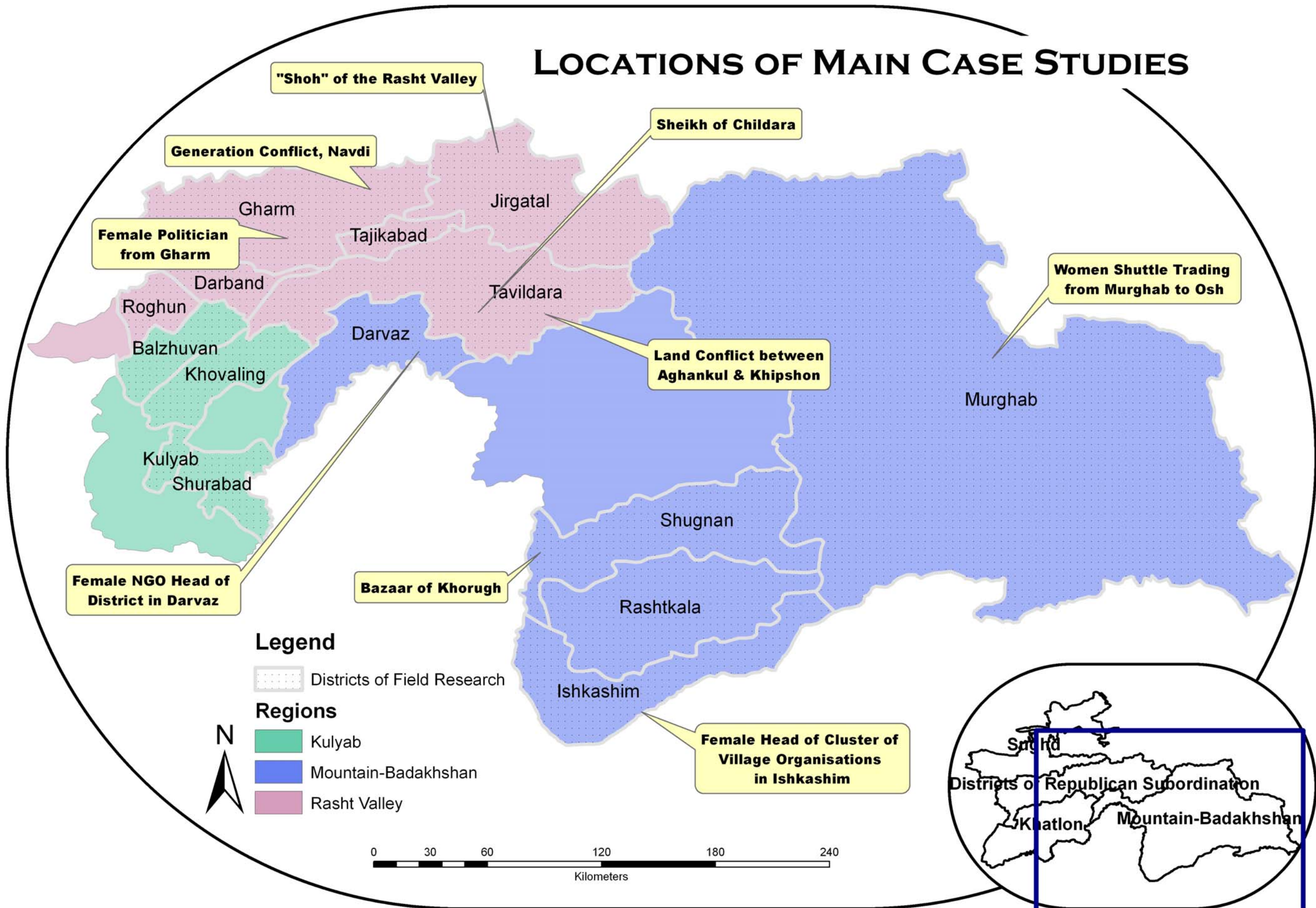
The relationship between these local power holders and the 'state' (its representatives at the local level) can often be described as a bargaining relationship that is constantly newly negotiated (Migdal 1988: 247/248). It is a question of weighing up the costs and benefits of the various state building and development strategies. On the one hand, through the social control exercised by local power holders a certain stability is created, which is in the interest of the state. On the other hand, the state does not have the capacity to invest state funds into those 'enclaves' ruled by local power holders.

Nasrin Dadmehr described the Tajik constellations on the ground the following way: "One of the results of the civil war in Tajikistan, as in many other post-conflict countries, was the emergence of powerful regional warlords. These warlords were active on both sides of the power struggle - the government as well as the opposition. In addition to politically oriented warlords, there were independent ones who did not support any political faction. The appearance of these new elements totally changed the political balance of power in Tajikistan, and no political or economic calculation is possible without taking them into consideration." (Dadmehr 2003: 254)

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<sup>510</sup> This mainly refers to the conflict in Navdi in the "institutions" section 7.6.1.

# LOCATIONS OF MAIN CASE STUDIES



Map 6: Main Case Studies

### 8.1.1 Localized Modes of Governance

In Tajikistan, it is very important to look at the relationship between the state and society to understand how governance works at the local level. The state as well as society are very much fragmented and constantly in flux. The relationship between the two has an impact on the way governance is performed in the different regions. According to “Nations in Transit” in 2006, democracy in Tajikistan did not progress, especially at the sub-national level, i.e. province, district, city, town, and *jamoat* levels (Muhutdinova 2007: 686).

The state in Tajikistan is a highly fragmented system in terms of social control and sanction capacities. Modes of governance are extremely localized. They are shaped by the local actors and by the fact whether they stood on the side of the government or of the opposition during the civil war (see the maps on page 144). The fragmented governance structures lead to development only in selected areas and overall development is hampered.

Often, if people move from one district to another or even from their home village to the district centre, they do not know how to behave anymore because they do not know what the code of conduct and the rules of the game in this particular location are.<sup>511</sup> Spheres of influence of local patrons are limited, rarely larger than that of a district. In terms of actors, the Rasht valley is controlled by local power holders, most of them former combatants from the civil war.<sup>512</sup>

State structures that have been established after the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the end of the civil war are often still in flux. They are not very well embedded in the local communities (as is the case with many heads of districts) or, in some cases they have only been changed nominally (institutional ‘recycling’) and keep functioning as they did during Soviet times (e.g. from *kolkhozes* to *assotsiatsii*). Many local power brokers have captured segments of the state and have succeeded in having themselves or their associates placed in state posts to ensure allocation of resources according to their own rules (first taking care of their relatives and other clients), rather than following the logic of the common good.

So far, the Tajik state does not have the capacity to undertake attempts to regain these parts of the state that it has ‘lost’ or temporarily handed over to other actors. This may lead to further fragmentation in the future, as the commitment shown by the Tajik state to (re)create a functioning statehood varies from region to region.

In my work, the state was initially defined as the main statehood producing<sup>513</sup> and rule-setting agency that coordinates the provision of public goods and other services. In the course of the development process, state-society interaction changes, as it is part of a dynamic process that changes the actors involved, their strategies and the rules of the game applied.

#### The Local Governance Setup in the Rasht Valley

In the following section, I would like to present a case study on a local power holder who very much shapes the local governance setup in his location (Childara is Tajik for 40 gorges) in the district of Tavildara in the Rasht valley.

The *jamoat* of Childara is a good example of how local power is structured in the Rasht Valley and what prospects the development process has under such conditions at the local level. The territory of the Rasht Valley is divided and ‘ruled’ by local leaders who are either religious leaders, former combatants (*boeviki/ muğohidon*), drug barons, *raishoi rayon* (chairpersons of districts) or a mixture of them all. Often these local power holders also act in alliance with local NGOs, INGOs and international organisations. They are men who already held important positions (such as the head of a *kolkhoz*) during the Soviet period, but most of them have emerged since Tajikistan’s independence and significantly draw their legitimacy and recognition from during the civil war, which was fought particularly bitterly in this valley.

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<sup>511</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>512</sup> Interview with a Pamiri employee of a local NGO in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>513</sup> Statehood stands for the provision of what is commonly defined as public goods, first and foremost the provision of physical security, welfare, (access to) institutions and procedures processing conflict in a non-violent way (Zürcher 2005: 14)

### Case Study – The Sheikh of Childara

In Childara, there is a so-called *Sheikh*<sup>514</sup> who controls most of the land (see the map on page 141). Land is important in the district (Tavildara), because potatoes are grown - a cash crop - and it is the main source of income for the local people. When asked how the *Sheikh* became a *Sheikh* (originally a Sufi title), local inhabitants claim that he “fell from heaven in a wooden cradle”.

During Soviet times, the *Sheikh* used to be the Director of the *sovkhos* (which specialized in silkworm breeding) and after the transition became the Director of a seed producing ‘association’.<sup>515</sup>

The people are highly dependent on him because he is a generally respected figure, feared by some and for some a personality of religious or mystic power and importance. People heavily rely on him in terms of access to land. He is the biggest proprietor in the area and mainly controls people’s access to rented land.

The *association*, which is led by the *Sheikh*, was founded in 2000 and it controls 129 hectares. Some people in the district perceive the *Sheikh*’s orders as a threat and try to free themselves from his influence.

During Soviet times, the *Sheikh* tried to misuse his official position and power to force people to breed silkworms. Some people, despite not being part of the *sovkhos* workforce, e.g. teachers, were also forced by the *Sheikh* to breed silkworms. Some refused to raise silkworms because it was difficult, but others respected the order by the *Sheikh* and followed it.<sup>516</sup> Those who refused fell into the *Sheikh*’s disgrace.

Within the district however, the *Sheikh* is part of an influential network; he is related to the head of the district of Tavildara, his nephew *Panjara* (Tajik for ‘five bullets’<sup>517</sup>) is a well-known *muğohid* and he is related to the Minister for Emergency Situations, Mirzo Ziyoyev (often called *Mirzo Jaga*). *Mirzo Jaga* is himself one of the biggest former *muğohidon* on the opposition side and one of the few opposition figures who received a post (if at least temporarily) as part of the reconciliation and peace process in Rahmon’s government.

The *Sheikh*’s zone of influence is very limited, however. He is not particularly well known beyond the borders of the district Tavildara. In the neighbouring district of Gharm most people have not even heard of him.

This is an example for how localized modes of governance are, how fragmented power is. In return, it becomes difficult to implement comprehensive development policies. One has to know the local setup to undertake effective development cooperation; approaches have to be locally adapted.

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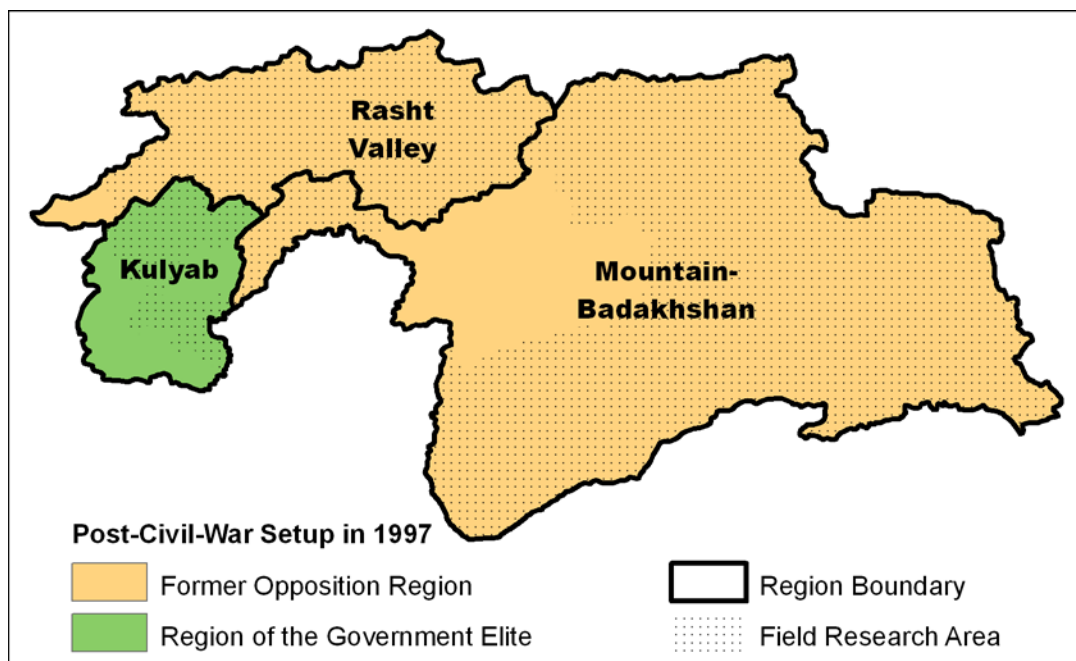
<sup>514</sup> A *Sheikh* is a religious leader who is supposed to live in abstinence. Sheikh is also a title in Sufism. It is unclear where the *Sheikh* got his title from, but he seems to be a respected leader among the local community; Interviews with inhabitants of Tavildara district in November 2003

<sup>515</sup> A seed-producing association is a state farm because seed-producing associations were not included in the official ‘privatisation’ process, but were retained as state institutions for the future.

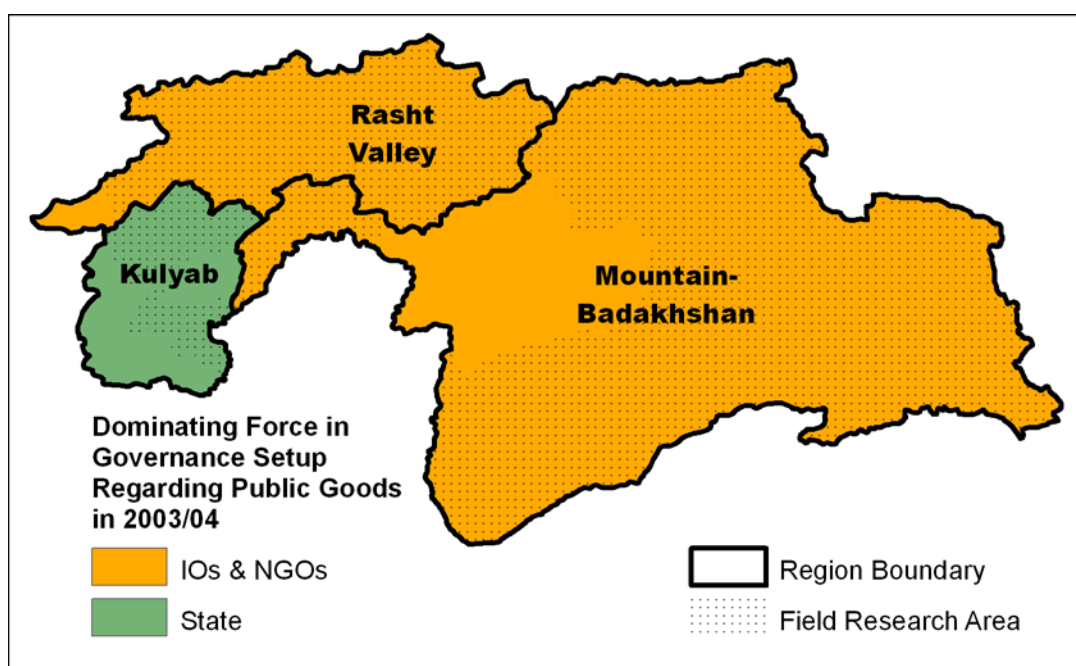
<sup>516</sup> One respondent said: “If you raise silkworms in your house, you have to move out yourself because they need a warm humid climate, a constant warm temperature and they only eat the leaves from mulberry trees.”; Interview with a local man in Tavildara in March 2004

<sup>517</sup> Panjara is said to have been hit by five bullets during a shoot-out in the civil war and nevertheless he survived.





Map 7: Post-Civil War Governance Structures in 1997



Map 8: Governance Structure in 2003/2004

## 8.2 'Cocktails of Actors' and Networks

### Co-Optation of Local Power holders

Another mode of implementation for development organisations is the co-optation of local power holders into their own structures. The local NGO – MSDSP - has chosen the option of co-opting local strongmen to rather have them on board than working against them.

### Co-Optation of a Power holder in Tajikabad

One such example is Sherali Mirzoev in Tajikabad. Mirzoev was, in 2004, head of the MSDSP district office in Tajikabad and during the civil war was a commander in the *United*

*Tajik Opposition* (UTO). Judging from his appearance, Mr. Mirzoev still displays the image of a *muğohid* (opposition fighter), but reportedly he is doing a good job for MSDSP and has successfully managed the transition back into civil life. His relationship with the *hukumat* (district administration), however, in 2004 was still marked by tensions.<sup>518</sup>

This is an example of how on the local level representatives of international organisations, local NGOs and local power holders form alliances that dominate local modes of governance and shape the local development process.

### **Co-Optation of a Power holder in Shurabad**

In the district of Shurabad (in southern Kulyab on the border with Afghanistan) the 'local cocktail' is made up of a coalition of former war commanders, many of whom in the course of the civil war turned into big landowners and became part of the presidential network or turned into *NPOshniki*<sup>519</sup> (Russian for NGO worker).

One specific example of a commander turned *NPOshnik* is the former head of the MSDSP regional office in Kulyab, Bahromsho Rahmatoloev, who had previously fought as a *kommandir* on the government side during the civil war. At one point after the civil war, he almost became minister in Rahmon's cabinet, but for some reason this attempt eventually failed.

Instead, he took an important and well-paid position with MSDSP in Kulyab.<sup>520</sup> Despite the fact that Mr. Rahmatoloev is still seen as a Darvazi (even though his family had already been living in Kulyab for several generations), he is highly integrated into the Kulyabi network.

The importance of NGO positions like this one is evident as the salary is many times a state one. Mr. Rahmatoloev was a clear winner. On one occasion, Mr. Rahmatoloev boasted that he is living in the "street of the winners" in Kulyab, together with other former fighters.<sup>521</sup>

### **Creating a Former Combatant if Needed**

This is an example to show what strange paths development cooperation can take. During my field research in Mountain-Badakhshan in autumn 2003, I came across a Japanese-funded reintegration programme for former combatants (in Russian *boeviki*). There was no real combatant who was willing to reintegrate into 'civil' society, but the community in Vozm, Shugnan, needed a school. Therefore, a young man called Umed (Tajik for 'hope') was set up to pose as a *boevik*; so that the Japanese would fund the reconstruction of a school.<sup>522</sup>

## **8.2.1 Networks**

In Tajikistan, social and political life on all levels is dominated by different kinds of networks that can overlap. These networks mainly run horizontally, but can also have vertical links. As Nourzhanov puts it: "In Tajikistan, informal political, parochial, kinship and criminal networks often overlapped and were inseparable from one another" (Nourzhanov 1996: 2).

According to Muhutdinova "the power base in Tajikistan comprises traditional, "patriarchal clan-based" figures relying on "patronage and consanguinal networks," which came to the fore immediately after the country gained independence from the Soviet Union" (Muhutdinova 2007: 688).

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<sup>518</sup> As a "special guest" Mr Mirzoev accompanied me to the district *hukumat* for an interview, but it became clear the relationship between the head of the *hukumat* and Mr. Mirzoev was like during a ceasefire.

<sup>519</sup> NPO is the Russian abbreviation for NGO and the shnik-suffix indicates that one is dealing with a profession or some other kind of affiliation. An NPO-shnik is simply somebody who works for an NGO.

<sup>520</sup> Later he was dismissed due to allegations of corruption; interview with a former employee of a local NGO in Gharm and from a local NGO in Kulyab in Dushanbe in September 2006

<sup>521</sup> Interview with the head of MSDSP Shurabad, the interview was taken in his house in Kulyab in October 2003

<sup>522</sup> Interview with two development workers in Khorugh in October 2003

Also during the Soviet era, however, many different kinds of networks existed. Many of them were re-enforced in Tajikistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union and new ones emerged as a response to structural insufficiencies of the socio-political system.

“During the heyday of Soviet rule, patterns of informal understanding, semi-legal and illegal exchange, and patronage networks were widespread in Tajikistan. In the 1970s-1980s, the system of social relations based on the combination of the feeling of impunity, mafia-type solidarity and security from the so-called 'common people' embraced a not so narrow circle of people” (Nourzhanov 1996: 1).

During Soviet times, networks or patron-client relationships were extremely important to make sure that a plan was fulfilled. “Potent patron-client dyads” were the natural product of the “peculiar character of the centre-periphery relationship in the Soviet polity.” The economic tasks assigned by Moscow had to be met at any cost. It did not matter if in the course of implementation the prescribed standard operation modes were violated. To ensure the “fulfilment of the plan” these informal networks were necessary (Nourzhanov 1996: 2).

### 8.2.2 Filling the Gap

Networks are extremely important in Tajikistan today. They shape social and political structures. They cut across the line between informality and formality. Informal networks can influence formal institutions and formal networks can play a role in informal relationships.

I do not aim to argue that networks have become more important and are therefore stronger in Tajikistan since the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the time of the Tajik civil war. Networks used to be very important during Soviet times as well. Many networks from Soviet times still continue to exist, have been ‘recycled’ and still tend to play an important role, determining decisions that are made and how actors behave.

The general manager of *Mountain Societies Development Support Programme* (MSDSP) in 2003, for example, was said to be only relying on his *KomSoMol* (former Soviet youth organisation) network, only trusting former *KomSoMol* people who were above forty years of age.<sup>523</sup> As the state system has largely collapsed, the gaps are filled by multi-layered solidarity networks.

### 8.2.3 Family Networks and *Aūlūd* –the Extended Family

In Tajikistan, the most important networks are the family networks. In times of political, social and economic insecurity and instability the only structures one can still rely on is the family (kinship ties). For example, for delicate issues such as borrowing money, the other family members are the first one asks to provide *qars* (Tajik for credit).

The general rule in Shurabad is that family solidarity is a must, but help between friends is usually a one-time thing and it is voluntarily. To a family member though, one is obliged to provide help when asked.

Concerning the importance of networks in everyday life in Tajikistan today, a respondent from Khorugh (Mountain-Badakhshan) stated: “It will take a long time to change the people’s mentality. Now generations are growing up who have been seeing their parents doing this [being corrupt, taking bribes etc.] and they will keep doing the same. It will probably take a hundred years to change the system. It is all about ‘knitting’ and building networks.”<sup>524</sup>

Another good example for how a family network can grow and dominate a certain space is as follows. The *aūlūd* (Tajik for extended family) of my former host-family was dominating the whole *mahalla* (living quarter) in Dushanbe that I used to live in. The whole family collected money and organized the construction of the building in which the office of an international development organisation was located. On the local level, the *aūlūd* was taking decisions and people were mobilized to conduct a collective action.

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<sup>523</sup> Interview with a local employee of MSDSP, the interview was taken in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>524</sup> Interview with a local woman from Khorugh in June 2004

In an interview with the weekly Tajik newspaper *Asia Plus* (AP) Mirzo Zijojev<sup>525</sup> described his family network and how he actually used his family network to finance the maintenance of historic monuments. He told AP: “I have a big family – eight brothers. All of us make good money (Russian: ...*ne plokho zarabatyvaem*). For example, in the Panj district we have 120 hectares of cotton. Last year this brought us yields worth 78,000 USD. In the Tavildara district, our family owns a lot of land where we grow potatoes. We also have a company. The company is not mine because as a Minister I am not supposed to conduct business; my brother is leading that company. That is how our family network works (Russian: *Vot takoy u nas semeynyi podrijad poluchaetsa.*)<sup>526</sup>

### **Clan Networks and *Zemlyachestvo* – Regional Identity**

Clan and *zemlyachestvo* (regional Identity) networks shape modes of local governance. Structurally, Tajikistan is different from formerly nomadic cultures such as the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. Clan structures and networks in the original sense play a less important role in Tajikistan than in the neighbouring countries. There are no big family names that dominate public life, as it is for example the case in the Caucasus today.<sup>527</sup> Nevertheless, kinship ties and rivalries exist. Also Nourzhanov compares Tajik patron-client networks with clans as they bear an imprint of kinship solidarity and are characterised by a less pronounced inequality and asymmetry in interaction amongst those involved. They additionally embody life-long endurance, more diffused spheres of penetration (far beyond strictly professional activities) and a relative closeness. At the same time, they fulfil the “traditional clan criteria”: common ancestry of the nucleus of the entity, territorial unity (the clan coincides with the local group), social integration inside the clan, in particular, the co-opting of new members through marriage (Nourzhanov 1996: 2).

Clans can be seen as the small version of *zemlyachestvo* (which derives from the Russian word for earth or ground – *zemlya* - and has a strongly territorial component). Originally, I was not seeing the Tajik society as a clan-based society, but it depends on the extent to which one widens the concept. Under the following definition though, I would define the Tajik society as a clan-based society: “Clans are based on bonds that are vertical as well as horizontal, linking elites and non-elites and that reflect both actual blood ties and fictive kinship, that is constructed or metaphorical kinship based on close friendship [*hamsinf* – ‘age-mates’- or people who did the army service together etc.] or marriage bonds that redefine the boundaries of the genealogical unit” (Shyrok 1997: 40-41).

Networks along regional lines are also very important. Tajikistan can generally be divided into four main regional groups or ‘clans’: Khudjandis, Kulyabis, Gharmis and Pamiris. Kulyabis can then be sub-divided according to the different valleys in Kulyab.<sup>528</sup> Nourzhanov adds another component and says that in the late 1990s the role of informal exchange, traditional patronage networks as well as pressure groups organised along regional or simply criminal interests in political activism in Tajikistan continued to increase (Nourzhanov 1996: 1).

The regional head of a local NGO in Shurabad put it the following way: “The imagination of the ‘other’ is strong and it is strongly negative, for the Kulyabi especially the Badakhshani is

<sup>525</sup> Mr. Zijojev used to be the leading commander of the *United Tajik Opposition* during the Tajik civil war.

<sup>526</sup> *Asia Plus*, “For Men 40 Jobs are Little”, 22/04/04

<sup>527</sup> I conducted my field research only in Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan and here I did not come across any big family names. Navruz Nekbakhtshoev though argues that in Khujand the names of the important families/ clans are the following: Arabov, Yakubov, Karimov, Asrotov, Chullibaev and Bobojonov.

<sup>528</sup> Interview with the head of a village organisation in Shurabad in October 2003 who was saying that in Kulyab there are four valleys: the Baldzhuvanskniy, the Dashtitutchunskiy, the Khavolinskiy and the Sarikhsorskiy. “Those valleys compete with each other, they have networks up to the top, the President is from the first valley, from the second is half of the government, the fourth does not have any positions, that is why the people from there were pro-Democrats.”

the 'big other'.<sup>529</sup> The geography of Tajikistan has contributed to the persistence of these sub-ethnic divisions.

In addition, because the Tajiks were originally the urban sedentary population of Central Asia they were very much focused on their local community. Nekbakhtshoev argues that the collectivization, cadre development during the Soviet era and the shortages in the economy were the main mechanisms for the persistence of ethnic subdivision in Tajikistan. He argues that what "Soviet authorities created in one policy area (with the intention of eradicating clans) produced unintended outcomes in another policy area thus encouraging the use of clan ties" (Nekbakhtshoev 2006: 8).

Another example of regional networks is the example from Nurek. Nurek is a strategically important town in the southeast of Dushanbe because there is a hydropower plant and because there used to be a space observation point during the Soviet period. In 2004, foreigners were officially not allowed to visit. It used to be a 'closed' town under the Soviets. I went there with Pamiri colleagues from MSDSP because they wanted to try out a picnic place close to the lake. A police officer told us that we were not allowed to go there. My colleagues asked whether it would be alright if they got permission from the local *shubai amnijat* (Tajik for security department, the local secret service).<sup>530</sup> The police officer said that it would be alright and so we went to get permission as my Pamiri colleagues knew a Pamiri who worked there; this man said it would not be a problem, he would organize the permission for us. This example shows how, in this case the Pamiri network, also functions in a non-Pamiri area.

### **Network-Based Actors: Local Power holders**

When I use the term "local power holders", I mean local informal leaders who in most cases are former *mujahedon/ boeviki* (combatants) from the time of the civil war. In comparison to most of the "traditional leaders" they do not base their prestige and power on (religious) knowledge, but mainly on money (accumulated by mostly illegal means, as for example weapons and the drugs trade) and the potential to mobilize people (in the positive sense of inspiring people to take up initiatives, as well as in the negative sense to engage in violent actions such as during the war). They tend to increase their prestige by engaging in charity activities, like building and repairing schools (as I was told in Vozm, Badakhshan<sup>531</sup> and Shurabad<sup>532</sup>), and giving humanitarian aid like clothes and presents to the local population.

"The influence of 'criminals turned warlord turned politicians' is still significant in Tajikistan [especially in Gharm]. These 'elites' have a vested interest in preventing the establishment of the basic principles of statehood, such as accountability, impartiality, and transparency" (Koehler & Zuercher 2003: 16).

These local power holders have often preserved their networks from civil war times. People who fought on their side still feel loyal to them and warlords who fought on the same side still retain links to each other.

### **The Role of Sufi Networks in Tajikistan Today**

The role of Sufi networks<sup>533</sup> within the political structures in Tajikistan is difficult to assess because they are still very much clandestine networks as during Soviet times, when religion,

<sup>529</sup> Interview with the regional head of a local NGO in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>530</sup> English: security department, *Committee of National Security* – KNB, former KGB

<sup>531</sup> Interview with a local peasant in Vozm (Badakhshan) in October 2003

<sup>532</sup> Interview with two elderly women in a border village in the district of Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>533</sup> One of the main aims of Sufism was to be as clean and pure as God, to have a soul like God, a body like the earth and energy like the sun. There are different levels one has to reach until one becomes like God. A Sufi is somebody who is on his way to becoming like God, but who has not yet reached this stage. Pictures of animals function as symbols for those different stages and the eagle is the symbol for the final stage. The names of the different stages are the following: *tariquat* (maintaining your life by eating, for example), *shariat* (prayer), *marifat* (study), and *haqiqat* (reaching the truth). Even within Islam, Sufism was first not recognized, but branded heresy. In Islam, there are five pillars, but in Sufism, there is only the prayer. Therefore, Sufis were also not supposed to

especially Sufism, was prohibited and pushed into the informal sphere. Therefore, it is still extremely difficult to find out more about the role of Sufi brotherhoods in Tajik politics and Tajik society today.<sup>534</sup> Former Sufi titles like *Sheikh* and *Shoh* have become nicknames and have changed their meanings in the Tajik society of today.

Sufi brotherhoods are at the same time highly organized networks, which can be used for purposes other than what they were developed for<sup>535</sup>, which was to become like God.<sup>536</sup>

Another respondent said that in Tajikistan today there were three Sufi brotherhoods: the Naqshbandiya, the Qadriya and the Shistiya. He said that the IRP was close to the Naqshbandiya, even though Kabiri and Nuri would probably deny that. He characterized the Naqshbandiya as conservative and having an international network (with sects in Turkey where it is very important, in India and in Cyprus). He said that Nuri had liked to see himself as a *pir* (Sufi authority) and that he had built an own *madrassa*.<sup>537</sup>

During Soviet times, Sufi brotherhoods were repressed. The Naqshbandiya were connected to the Basmachi movement in the 1920s. The Qadriya are connected to the brother of the former Big Kadi Akbar Turajonzoda, who managed the peace negotiations from the side of the UTO. The Shistiya mainly include the Luli (Tajik gypsies) in southern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan (around 100,000 people); they were also living in one of the suburbs of Dushanbe, together with Yaghnobis (another ethnic minority). The traditional clan structures of the Naqshbandiya and Qadriya were destroyed during Soviet times, and now these *murid-mushid* (Sufi titles) structures are being re-established.<sup>538</sup>

The respondent said that he had himself participated in a *sikr* (Sufi initiation ritual) in Dushanbe. The state officially says that there are no Sufi-brotherhoods in Tajikistan today.<sup>539</sup>

According to another respondent, the problem with Islam generally in Tajikistan today is actually not that it is too strong, but that it is too weak. Only in the Karategin, Vakhsh, and Zarashan Valleys (the former east Bukhara) Sufi-brotherhoods are still strong.<sup>540</sup>

In Balzhuvan in June 2006, I interviewed a local person whose husband was an *eshon*, which is a Sufi title. She explained to me that the lowest rank was *mullah*, then the next in the hierarchy was the *saidzoda* (*said* are those who claim to be directly related to the Prophet and *zoda* is an ending for a title of honour; it derives from *zadan*, Tajik for to hit) and then comes *eshon*. The *eshon* title is passed on from father to son. As an example of how special an *eshon* is, she explained that an *eshon* could not pour water into a simple person's hands in order for the person to wash his or her hands. He could only do that for another *eshon*. She said that it was clear that her daughters would also get married to *eshons*. Her own father and grandfather had been *eshons*. Her sons would become *eshons* themselves.<sup>541</sup>

## Other Networks

Networks are also made by people who went to school or university together, and by young men who served together in the army or fought in the same group during one of the wars (in Afghanistan or during the civil war). Army networks are very important. The experience of having served in the army or war together has a great impact on bonds between people.

An example of this is the friendship between the former head of a local NGO in Shurabad and the head of the *shubai amnijat* (English: security department, *Committee of National Security*) in Shurabad. One is a Darvazi (his ancestors came from Darvaz in Badakhshan, the Darvazis live in Mountain-Badakhshan, but they are predominantly Sunnis, which

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go to Mecca, but instead help the poor. Sufism is a kind of philosophy. The *Naqshbandiya* say in Tajik "dast ba kor va dil ba er" (the hands for the work and the heart for God).

<sup>534</sup> Often Sufi brotherhoods are organized as secret societies; Interview with an Italian PhD candidate in Dushanbe in June 2004

<sup>535</sup> Interview with an Italian PhD candidate in Dushanbe in June 2004

<sup>536</sup> The main assumption of Sufism is that people and God are the same. Its main aim is to find the path so that people can become like God. Interview with a local co-worker of an international NGO in Dushanbe in June 2004

<sup>537</sup> *Madrassas* are always very much shaped by the respective branch of Islam.

<sup>538</sup> Interview with a local researcher in Dushanbe in May 2004

<sup>539</sup> Same as footnot no. 538

<sup>540</sup> Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>541</sup> Interview with the wife of an *eshon* in Balzhuvan in June 2006

distinguishes them from the majority of the Badakhshanis who are Ismailis) and the other is a Kulyabi. The difference in age between them is probably more than fifteen years, but still they seemed to be very good friends, even using informal linguistic terms to approach each other, which is very uncommon in Tajik where usually even children approach their parents using *Shumo* (Russian for *vy*).

These two men served in the Tajik army together and fought together during the Tajik civil war. This example shows that army networks can even cut across *zemlyachestvo* – regional identity.

Also Makhmadrozi Iskandarov, the head of the *Democratic Party* (DPT) and one of the leaders of the former *United Tajik Opposition* (UTO) mentioned in an interview with the Tajik newspaper *Asia Plus* (AP) the importance of his “former colleagues in arms” (Russian: *byvshye sotovorishai po oruzhiju*) and stressed that he was still in contact and cooperating with them.

### **The *Hamsinf* Network**

Finally, a network can be based on a *hamsinf tie* (people of the same age). This is something that can also tie a foreigner to Tajiks. When somebody found out that I was the same age as him or her, the people would usually find this quite important due to having lived through similar periods at the same point in our lives (for example finished school or university during the same year).

### **‘Network Recycling’**

People who belonged to important networks during Soviet times often had the possibility to ‘recycle’ these particular networks in post-Soviet Central Asia.

For example, the head of the *Mountain Societies Development Support Programme* (MSDSP) in Osh in 2004, an ethnic Pamiri, used to have a good position among the police during Soviet times. Because he was dealing with many cross-border issues between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (while working for the NGO) and his former police colleagues often had become border guards in the two newly independent countries, he could still use his former connections in his new position.

Another example of ‘network recycling’ is the fact that quite a few people I got to know as regional managers of a local NGO used to work as heads of *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses* or for the *hukumat* (local government) during Soviet times and in their new positions most of the time they were dealing with people (subordinates) whom they have known for decades. The networks and patron-client relationships had stayed the same.

These examples show the range of networks that exist, how important they still are today and what a multi-layered society the Tajik one is in terms of networks.

## **8.3 Institutions**

The breakdown of the Soviet Union has had a significant impact on the institutional arrangements regulating the relations between individuals and groups. It is important to look at institutions because they are the rules of the game pre-determining patterns of behaviour and eventually shaping the social and political development process.

When the Soviet Union was established, institutionally the break was not that big. During the socio-economic and cultural transformation offensive in the early Soviet years, institutions were adapted rather than fundamentally transformed or eliminated. Collective farms (i.e. *kolkhozes* and *sovkhoses*) were partly based on existing communal and tribal structures (Halbach 2007a: 82). In the same way, the institutional disruption that followed the breakdown of the Soviet Union is often overestimated.

For the Tajik context, I differentiate between the following kinds of institutions: institutions that are legacies from Soviet times, traditional institutions (often religious institutions from pre-Soviet times), formal and informal, official and unofficial, and new institutions that have

emerged since Tajikistan's independence (particularly during the civil war). A very important phenomenon is the one of hybrid institutional arrangements. Repeatedly, I came across institutions, sets of rules, which were formal institutions by their external appearance, such as by name, but actually turned out to be dominated by informal, often hidden, sets of rules. Informal institutions are an answer to the question of why social and political life continued peacefully in most parts of the Soviet Union, even though the overarching state system broke apart. Informal institutions instead continued to exist and structure social and political life along somehow agreed and accepted patterns. Informal institutions are social conventions that are rooted in shared expectation and reinforced by social sanctions (Collins 2002: 108). Douglass North defines institutions as "the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, as the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction" (North 1990: 3). It is necessary to differentiate between formal or official rules on the one hand, and informal or unofficial rules on the other. Official rules are usually constituted in writing and are implemented by the state. Informal rules are constituted by routine and tradition, protected by social control and often exercised by informal authorities (Köhler & Zürcher 2004: 61). This categorization, however, is somehow artificial. Institutions are in flux all the time. Informal institutions can be formalized, if these rules are fixed in a written form and once certain procedures are established along with them. If the state then starts to incorporate these rules and ensure their enforcement with sanctions for violations, then these rules become official institutions. Further, institutions can be formal, but unofficial, as for example *village organisations*, which have been established in the target regions that I am looking at. They have certain procedures like elections and they have a written statute, but they are not registered by the state.

My institutional approach builds on the assumption that in a society there is never the situation that there are no rules of the game, no institutions in place. In times of conflict and in post-conflict societies it is especially interesting to look at the interaction between formal and informal, official and unofficial rules of the game.

The reason for conflict itself often is that the rules of the game are not clear or that different sets of rules clash. With the breakdown of the Soviet Union the overarching framework of official institutions collapsed and unofficial ways of handling things were all of a sudden the ones dominating decision-making processes.

The scope of institutions – seen as a legal space - is marked by sanctions. Institutions geographically reach as far as their sanction capacity goes. A sanction can be to spread rumours concerning that person and to destroy the person's reputation. The highest punishment in case of refusing to obey the existing rules of the game is usually exclusion from the local community, which means losing the support of one's extended family and other networks, which is highly significant in traditional societies such as that of Tajikistan.

There is especially a conflict potential in wanting to change the existing rules of the game, norms, values and accordingly identities too fast. This often happens when external forces intervene, as it is now the case in the overall campaign of fighting terrorism on the "axis of evil".

### **8.3.1 Case Study - Clash of Institutional Sets in Navdi, Rasht Valley**

A good example of a conflict about the rules of the game is the conflict in Navdi over the development priorities for the village. The two parties involved in the conflict in Navdi are the old and the young generation. The old generation is mainly represented by the mullah<sup>542</sup> and the young generation by the head of the youth organisation. The suggestion of the young people has been to build a youth centre in the village. The old generation emphasized the need for additional classrooms, water pipes and better provision of electricity for the village.

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<sup>542</sup> This is the local religious authority for Sunni Muslims.



As the village organisation was established by MSDSP, a village leader was elected democratically and the brother of the head of the youth organisation became the head of the village organisation. This implied that the village had been taken over by the young generation due to the fact that now the formal leadership was in their hands.

In the course of the village development process initiated from outside (by MSDSP) three priorities for the development of the village community had to be chosen. A vote on the priorities followed and the youth centre won the most votes. Following this defeat the *mullah* recognised that his authority was fading. He expressed his disagreement with the new procedure (i.e. the democratic election of the village leader). In the end the *mullah* did not accept the victory of the young generation's choice and protested by leaving a village meeting that had been held between the two groups.

Some time later at another village meeting the *mullah* now brought forward his opinion that a mosque or a *madrassa* (Islamic school) should be built for the village. The leader of the youth organisation vehemently answered him back and said in his opinion there was a need for a youth centre instead of a mosque.

A few days later, this argument escalated into an affray between the older and younger men of the village. The leader of the youth group blamed the *mullah* for destroying several families of the village and in his rage hit the *mullah* into his face.

This is considered to be taboo as respect for elders and religious authorities is one of the essential rules of Tajik society on the ground. Following this incident, the *mullah* left the village for good and went to Dushanbe.

Since then, representatives of the village community say that shame has hit their village and it has been isolated by other surrounding village communities.

The outcome of this conflict shows that there is not only monitoring and sanctioning within the village, but that the sanctions in this case goes beyond the borders of the village.

A respondent said that he had voted for the youth centre during the meeting and supported the younger generation, but the unexpected escalation of the conflict was now such a shame for the whole community that he regretted his decision.

What had contributed to the strong position of the young generation in the village was the fact that the young generation in Navdi was very well organized and officially registered as a youth organisation. The members were from 16 to 30 years old. The youth organisation had about 300 members (half of them working in Russia for at least one season a year, keeping in touch with the leaders of the organisation and supporting the organisation financially). The members of this youth organisation were paying a membership fee of 20 Diram (equal to a few Euro cents) per month into a fund.

The youth organisation developed its own dynamic. The former leader of the *village organisation* in Navdi withdrew from his position because the youth organisation was putting a lot of pressure on him and did not respect him anymore.

For the last two years, Navdi has not had an *aksakal*<sup>543</sup>. Those who had been chosen as *aksakals* refused to take up the position. Consequently, no all-village events (e.g. *hashars*) were organised anymore because this is one of the tasks of the *aksakal*.

This case study shows how a development intervention, as done by MSDSP, by establishing a village organisation can provoke a clash of different sets of rules of the game and lead to a major conflict. This in return has a significant impact on the further development of the village community, on how projects can be implemented, and on how accepted and sustainable these structures are in the end.

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<sup>543</sup> In Gharm, this is an elected 'wise' elder who takes important decisions; Interview with an employee of MSDSP Gharm in October 2003

### 8.3.2 Case Study: The *Grafika* in Mountain-Badakhshan

In many parts of Tajikistan, irrigation water is scarce and the vast majority of agricultural land has to be irrigated and cannot be cultivated with just rain water. Every year, villagers get into arguments about access to irrigation water because every peasant wants to get the biggest possible share of the irrigation water in order to have good yields.

This case study from Shugnan in Mountain-Badakhshan shows that those conflicts can be solved harmoniously without the involvement of the state. In such cases, there is the question of whether the issue could be solved any better with the involvement of the state.

For the time being, the state does not have any mechanism in place to manage the issue and, therefore, the local community has developed its own mechanism to resolve these conflicts.

#### The Governance Structure of a Communal Irrigation System

Elinor Ostrom describes the “governance structure of a communal irrigation system” the following way. The system has to fulfil four conditions. The access to the system has to be limited to a clearly defined group and has to exclude others. The system has to have clearly defined rules that set out who gets how much water and when.<sup>544</sup> The behaviour of the users has to be well monitored and the violation of rules has to be penalized. Each user has to be well informed about water availability and other users’ withdrawals. When these conditions apply a socially embedded conflict-resolution system is in place.<sup>545</sup>

Taking these criteria, one can say that in the case of Vozm (Mountain-Badakhshan) a socially embedded conflict-resolution system is in place. Only the inhabitants of Vozm have access to the system, inhabitants from adjacent villages are excluded. There are clearly defined rules of the game. The decision making process is transparent; the stakeholders are informed of any changes that occur. As these conflicts are usually small-scale in their intensity and space, access to full information is guaranteed.

There do not seem to be any major violations of the regulations because otherwise other stakeholders would have noticed. The social control is strong and disobedience would be punished by excluding the person in question from the system. The people involved know that if they do not follow the rules of the game, they will be punished risking the loss of prestige and by losing access to vital water necessary for livelihood.

What is interesting is that it does not seem possible to keep the same rules and mechanism for every year. The schedule is re-negotiated every year before the irrigation season starts.<sup>546</sup>

Why is there a need for such a mechanism? The answer to this is the geography of Tajikistan. Tajikistan consists of 97 percent mountains; 50 percent of the country is above 3,000m. Consequently, people settle and cultivate land in the narrow valleys. In the valleys, the population density is high, and therefore access to land and (irrigation) water is scarce.<sup>547</sup>

#### The Specific Case of Vozm

During my fieldwork in Mountain-Badakhshan in autumn 2003, the local people mentioned the conflict over access to irrigation water as one of the most urgent conflicts for the village Vozm and its surrounding villages in the district of Shugnan. One respondent dramatized the conflict and said that he wished to die each year before the irrigation season started.<sup>548</sup>

Respondents also reported a poem that dealt with the water issue, saying that “during irrigation season brothers turned into enemies”.<sup>549</sup>

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<sup>544</sup> In the Tajik context this is called *grafika*, a schedule clearly defining when farmers have access to the irrigation water and for how long.

<sup>545</sup> Elinor Ostrom cited in (Burger 1993: 189)

<sup>546</sup> During my field research in Khovaling in June 2005, I came across the same kind of setup; Interview with a female peasant (head of household) in Khovaling in June 2005

<sup>547</sup> As I mentioned earlier in section 4.2

<sup>548</sup> Interview with a local peasant in Vozm (Badakhshan) in October 2003

<sup>549</sup> Same as footnote no. 548

The water conflict – the clash of contradicting interests (every villager and every village wants as much water as possible) is a fact, but in fact the conflict is socially embedded into a functional arrangement of self-initiated local governance. The process of negotiation itself is quite predictable.

The conflict is solved according to accepted rules and every year the outcome is a solution that everybody can live with. There are existing procedures (a general assembly consisting mainly of representatives of the involved parties – associations and private households - and representatives of the local state administration on the *jamoat* level) on how to solve the conflict and there is no danger of the conflict moving across these borders – either by extending to other villages or issue areas. The procedure is a mechanism that comes from the local communities, but it is formalized by being fixed in a written document – the *grafica* - and it is approved by the local state administration (that sends a representative to the meetings) to stamp the document.

### Hybrid Local Institutions

This case study is an example of the many hybrid institutions on the local level. It is an informal institution, which has been given a formal backup. It has informal and formal elements. What distinguishes this from other examples of hybrid institutions is the fact that it is redundant – formal and informal elements contribute to each other and lead to a fruitful outcome – an intra-communal agreement that is binding for all stakeholders.

The implementation of the *grafica* is monitored by people from the local communities (functional social control) as well as by the local state administration, all the parties involved have an interest in the fact that the system works properly.

Socially embedded conflicts like this one in particular are not dangerous for states in terms of stability. On the contrary, they are healthy and show that society is functioning, has the capacity to deal with a conflict in a non-violent and constructive way. Societies need these kinds of embedded conflicts in order to constantly redefine themselves and adapt to new developments.

### 8.3.3 Marriage as an Institution

In Tajikistan, marriage is an institution with many agreed rules. Getting married in Tajikistan means that a deal between two families is made and not just a bond between two individuals. If a girl is older than 23 (especially in rural areas) it is too late for her to get married. Her only 'chance' is that she becomes the wife of an elderly man or somebody's second wife. If a couple wants to get married and this is not accepted by the two families involved, the only way to carry this through is by leaving the community and not ever returning.<sup>550</sup>

A respondent, an elderly lady, in one of the border villages of the district of Shurabad stated that one of the local girls had married one of the Afghans from across the border; she had never since returned to her home village.<sup>551</sup>

The institution of marriage is on the borderline between the public and the private sphere. Traditionally, marriages in Tajikistan were exclusively concluded by the blessing of the local *mullah* (who did not use to be registered<sup>552</sup>) and only in rare cases would marriages be registered by the state.

The reasons for which couples marry are, in most cases, still fundamentally different from the reasons for which couples marry in the West. In Tajikistan, it is fairly common to get married because one family wants to establish favourable professional, economic, business or

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<sup>550</sup> I learned this from living in different Tajik families in 2003 and 2004.

<sup>551</sup> Interview with an elderly lady in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>552</sup> In 2007, the Tajik government started closing down *mahalla* mosques to prevent the action of unregistered mosques and *mullahs*. This was widely seen as an attack on religion and not as an anti-terrorist measure, which it allegedly was.

political links with another family (Nekbakhtshoev 2006: 6). Marriage can also be 'used' as a means of reconciliation, if there has been a disagreement between families.

The marriage institution is now changing slightly. Some respondents said that (young people – men and women) were actually the ones determining when they would get married. They would tell their parents when they were ready, and then the parents would make the arrangements, including finding the partner.<sup>553</sup>

### Passing the Marriage Offer

The rules according to which a marriage is agreed upon in Tajikistan vary slightly from region to region and there is a difference between rural and urban environments.

In Tajikistan, it is usually the parents, specifically the mothers that decide for their children whom they marry. Wedding celebrations often resemble marriage bazaars where young girls especially are being 'checked out' regarding whether they could be potential daughters-in-law.

As a rule, it is then the father of a boy who approaches the parents of the potential bride who are usually (distant) relatives or good acquaintances (settling the agreement about the marriage is in Tajik called *maslihat kardan*) and asks for the daughter's hand in his son's name. In case that there is no father, another male relative goes instead of the father in order to pass on the offer.

Most of the time marriage partners (future spouses) belong to the same ethnicity (Tajik, Uzbek, Tatar, Pamiri) and therefore have the same religion – e.g. Sunni or Ismaili, or the same regional group (Gharmi, Kulyabi, Khudjandi, Pamiri etc.) and marriages are concluded between families with the same social background<sup>554</sup> defined by the level of education and wealth<sup>555</sup>).

Nowadays the rules of the game have been partly modernized, according to my observations. The parents of a young man decide that it is time for their son to get married when the following conditions are fulfilled: when he has reached a certain age (from 23-28 for young men and 18-25 for young women, even though the marriage age varies from region to region<sup>556</sup>), there is enough money to pay for a wedding ceremony and there is a place to live for the young couple.

The young woman always moves into the groom's house, which is either inside the parents' courtyard (called *khaūli* in Tajik) or close by. For a young women, this means that she leaves her village or *mahalla* (living quarter) once she gets married. In addition, often this is one of the few 'exchanges' that take place between villages or different *mahalla* communities. It depends on the openness of the groom's family how often the young bride will then be allowed to go home and visit her family.

In Dushanbe, the price of a wedding is around USD 3,000 for a young man.<sup>557</sup> Many families spend their savings from over a period of five years for a wedding. All that counts is to have a costly and enormous wedding ceremony, in order to keep up the family's good reputation, even if the married couple lives in poverty due to debts for a couple of years after.

I see this as a major development barrier. If this money would instead be invested into small businesses, for example, the investment would be much more sustainable.

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<sup>553</sup> Interviews with young Tajik women in Khudjand in 2002

<sup>554</sup> In Khorugh (Mountain-Badakhshan), which has approximately 30,000 inhabitants, I talked to a young 28-year old woman who perceived herself as a *gorodskaya* – a town girl. She said that there had been somebody who wanted to marry her, but he was from a village and for her it was inconceivable to move to a village and therefore they eventually did not get married; Interview in Porshnev in July 2004

<sup>555</sup> Usually for young women it is so important to have the same level of education as their future husband, because they more likely will stay at home with the children and take care of the household. For Pamiris (Ismailis from Mountain-Badakhshan) it is a little different because usually the young women are more educated, often also have a university degree, and therefore they usually also marry young men who have a university degree.

<sup>556</sup> In the Rasht valley, girls can even be married at the very young age of 14. I heard this information from a respondent in Gharm, when I was doing my field research there in March 2004.

<sup>557</sup> Interview with a young man in Dushanbe where the family had just enough money together to marry him off, in Dushanbe in November 2003

During my field research in Tajikistan, I met several young people who were working for international organisations. For Tajik standards, they were earning exceptional salaries and often their savings were then spent for that 'one special day', their wedding. Interestingly, the pressure to have a big wedding party with many guests led to the fact that some young men had to wait for years to have the money saved up to get married. This barrier was actually pushing up the average marriage age.

A respondent told me in 2003 that MSDSP was running a development programme that aimed at decreasing the expenses for weddings. However, the colleague who informed me about this initiative said that he himself had not "dared to have a modest wedding."<sup>558</sup>

### **The Bride's Side and the Number of Guests**

From the side of the bride less money can be spent. For a young woman who is too old (over 23 or 25 depending on the region) or has been married already, it is difficult to find a new spouse and if he is found, the wedding ceremony is usually less costly. For an average wedding in the urban areas of Tajikistan (Dushanbe, Khudjand, Kulyab etc.) 400-500 people are invited.

My proprietor in Khorugh (Mountain-Badakhshan) explained to me that one had to invite so many people because one would also be invited by so many people. She said that just the neighbours (she was living in a Soviet apartment block) would be around 80 people.<sup>559</sup>

When it is known that a young woman is infertile, which becomes obvious when she gets married for the first time and no children result from that marriage, it is not doubted that the problem lies with the woman.<sup>560</sup>

### **8.3.4 Case Study from Khorugh**

The person I stayed with during my field research in Khorugh in July 2004 was about to marry her 28-year-old son to a young girl. She named several reasons for marrying her son at that point of time: first she was pressured by her own mother because her son was already getting old (he was 28) and not married yet. Second, she said that her son needed somebody to take care of the cooking and the laundry, and that she could not keep doing that all the time<sup>561</sup>. Third, she thought herself that "the time for her son had come", he had finished his higher education, he had a job and was making good money.

The woman did not ask her son what he thought of getting married or what he thought of that young woman in particular. He was supposed to get married and he himself did not doubt the matter. It was the usual path that had to be taken in life. As the father had passed away during the civil war, the mother had already arranged everything (she had asked her brother to get in touch with the family and ask for the girl's hand in the name of his nephew). The young man himself did not have anything against the fact that his mother had decided that it was time for him to get married and that she had chosen the girl. The young woman the mother chose was a distant relative, 23 years old, who had a university degree and worked for PamirEnergy (the local energy company). For the moment, the bride was not going to move into the house of the mother-in-law, but the young couple would live separately in Dushanbe where the young man had a job.<sup>562</sup>

It was actually quite uncommon for the young couple to live that far from the groom's mother, but she quickly moved back to the Pamirs to join her mother-in-law. Her husband was still spending most of his time in Dushanbe, more than a days drive from Khorugh.

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<sup>558</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Dushanbe in November 2003

<sup>559</sup> Interview with my landlady in Khorugh in June 2004

<sup>560</sup> I observed this kind of constellation in the host family Gharm where I was staying in February and March 2004.

<sup>561</sup> Even though she usually lives in Khorugh and her son lives in Dushanbe, she spent almost half a year with him to take care of his household.

<sup>562</sup> Interview with a woman in Khorugh in June 2004

### 8.3.5 Case Study of an 'Unconventional' Family

At this point, I would like to present an example of an unconventional family that was nevertheless partly following traditional rules of the game.

The family is Uzbek, originally from the area around Samarqand. It is not a family in the traditional sense. The mother died seven years ago and the father used to live in Uzbekistan, until he also died. Until then he had been an alcoholic who needed financial support from his children. The only close relative in Dushanbe used to be the grandmother.

The family itself consists of three older sisters and two younger brothers. At the time of my research in 2003, the young men were 21 and 24, and the women 25, 30 and 32. The oldest sister in the family acts as the head of the family and she is addressed with a title of respect, *apa* (Tajik for big sister). She takes decisions that concern the whole family, but also decisions that concern the personal lives of her siblings, e.g. educational, job-related and marriage-related issues.

The brothers and sisters ended up in Dushanbe, as the two older sisters received their higher education in Dushanbe. When the civil war broke out, they started shuttle trading between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and that is how they survive in these difficult times.

The oldest received a university degree in Russian literature, the second in pharmacy, the third studied economics, the older brother studied law and the youngest again economics. The third sister at the time of the interview was 25 and had a three-year old son with a man she was divorced from. They all live together in one apartment. Even though all of them were at the age to get married<sup>563</sup>, none of them were married at that time. According to my observations, the problem was that there was nobody who could 'hook them up' and pass on the offer (Tajik *maslihat kardan*).

In a way, however, they were still trapped in the traditions. The youngest brother told the oldest sister – the head of the family - that he had a girlfriend and that he had been seeing the girl in public. Therefore, the sister decided that he now had to get married to this girl. He then started working very hard in order to save the money for the wedding ceremony.

The oldest sister has an additional problem. She has a skin illness (pigment disorder) on her face and hands, which local people believe is contagious and therefore people with this illness are marginalized. For her, it is clear that she would never find a local Uzbek or Tajik husband. Her only chance to get married is to a local Russian or to a foreigner.

#### Reasons to End a Marriage Contract

This case study shows to what extent Tajik society is marked by the rule of tradition, or informal institutions and that this also has implications for the current development process.

Feridun<sup>564</sup> is a 25-year old man who works as a driver for a development organisation and he is about to get divorced, even though he and his wife only just had a baby the previous autumn. He claims that they were getting divorced because his mother-in-law wants it this way. He still loves his wife. They did not want to get divorced. A major issue why his mother-in-law dislikes their marriage is the fact that they live separately in an apartment, which his father bought for him. According to the traditional rules Feridun would have to live with his parents, wife and child together.

Officially, Feridun and his wife are actually in the process of getting divorced; but in fact, his plan is to move to Penjikent (on the border with Uzbekistan) or Khudjand and live quietly with his wife and daughter. This shows that the only possibility of freeing oneself from the rules of the local community is to leave the community and simply move to another place where these rules do not apply anymore and social control cannot be exercised.

Feridun turned to his foreign boss for advice. His boss asked him what his priority was, to hold the family together or not to violate the tradition. Feridun said that his priority number one was to stick to the tradition.<sup>565</sup> This example demonstrates how well-functioning local

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<sup>563</sup> Actually, according to Tajikistani standards the three young women had already passed the marriagiable age.

<sup>564</sup> The name of the young man has been changed. The information was collected in Dushanbe in autumn 2003.

<sup>565</sup> Interview with the head of GTZ Tajikistan in Dushanbe in June 2004

traditional sets of rules still are and how difficult it is to change these rules of the game. It also shows the domination of the extended family over the will of the individual and has an impact on the overall development process.

### **Marriage or Divorce to Repay Debt**

During my field research, I came across another interesting case regarding marriage, or rather divorce. Similar to the case of Feridun this case is not an example of a conflict between informal and formal rules of the game, but it is an example of what rules of the game apply around the concept of marriage in Tajikistan and that they have to be taken into consideration when analysing the ongoing development process.

In Darband (Nurabad) in the Rasht valley, there was a young woman who had got divorced. The only reason why she had got divorced was that her husband had fallen into debt. He at that time was a migrant worker in Russia and had promised to someone to repay a debt before a certain deadline. He had promised that if he was unable to meet the deadline, he would divorce his wife. This is what happened. Eventually, he could not meet the deadline and his wife was informed about the divorce. Accordingly, she was forced to take her two children and return to her parents' house, who luckily accepted her back.<sup>566</sup>

## **8.4 The Impact of Institutional Change on Gender Roles**

Institutional change has had a great impact on gender roles and the overall development process in Tajikistan. One cannot say, however, that women have been only the losers or the winners of this process.

The 'Soviet emancipation model' foresaw that women would not give up their 'traditional' role in the house and society. They would simply study and take on paid positions in addition to the obligations (taking care of the household and children) they already had. Eventually, they would work under a double pressure.

The institutional change has additionally added up to a fragmentation of society in Tajikistan. In some parts of the country it has become more difficult to be active in public life, in other parts of the country women simply have shifted from one sector in the public sphere, such as the social sector, to the business sector, and new options have opened up. As modernization affects urban centres more than rural areas, the gap between urban and rural areas has also widened considerably.

In the Tajik development process, there is a contradiction concerning gender roles. On the one hand, there is the traditional patriarchal society where, especially elderly, men have a word in all major decision taking. On the other hand, there is the strong impact of large-scale work migration that regularly draws almost half of the male population between 20 and 40 years of age out of the country. Depending on the region the work migrants come from, they stay away from home for a season or for year(s) and therefore women, particularly those heading households, also have to take on roles that are usually filled by men and start becoming engaged in the family's external relations.

### **Dealing with Post-War Frustration**

For both genders, war always brings many frustrations. Men feel that they have to unload their frustration and this often leads to increased levels of domestic violence.<sup>567</sup> Instead of turning this frustration into violence against others, women often turn this kind of frustration into violence against themselves. In Tajikistan, there are cases of self-harm of young women.<sup>568</sup>

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<sup>566</sup> I worked with this lady, an employee of MSDSP in the Rasht valley; The interview was conducted in Darband in March 2004

<sup>567</sup> Interview with a female Tajik researcher who used to manage a Women's Refuge in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>568</sup> Interview with a French development worker in Dushanbe in March 2004

In the post-conflict context, tolerance concerning conflicts is low. The tendency to solve conflicts by employing physical power, arms and weapons continues and there are no agreed rules of the game in place or regulating mechanisms to deal with this kind of conflict. Women and men are partly being returned to their traditional working spheres. A respondent said: "Women in Tajikistan are the ones who suffered the most from the breaking apart of the Soviet Union."<sup>569</sup>

Allegedly for security reasons and because it is "just not something women do"<sup>570</sup>, women in some areas, such as the Rasht valley, following the war could not work outside of their houses anymore.

### **The Increased Regional Division Regarding Gender Roles**

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the role of women in politics on the sub-provincial level has been drastically reduced. In the 1980s women had been leading big organisations and companies, as well as leading engineers and managers of businesses. Many of these positions have been cut. Economic problems have disadvantaged women more than men. "Economic problems have apparently led women to retire voluntarily from politics in order to find time to look after their children. Obviously, men do not have the same problem, as no cases are known of men leaving office for family reasons (Bliss 2006: 327).

During the Soviet period, women were more active in the social sector (schools, hospitals etc.). Due to Mountain-Badakhshan's distance from the centre, even during the war women were never marginalized. However, with the start of the war, men were not able to travel to other parts of Tajikistan any longer for trade and consequently they were unable to provide for their families needs. Consequently, women got involved in trading, bringing food items from Dushanbe and Osh to Khorugh. This eventually overloaded the women.<sup>571</sup>

In the Rasht valley the setup was very different during Soviet times, when the women were marginalized. The war worsened the situation; however, with the implementation of micro-credit projects for women and establishment of women groups within the *village organisations*, some women in the Rasht valley became more active in the economic life.<sup>572</sup>

#### **8.4.1 Bazaar and Trade**

During my field research in 2003 and 2004 people perceived that there was a great change regarding the fact that women were starting to work in the business sector, such as in the bazaar in Mountain-Badakhshan. The rules of the game between women and men in everyday life are changing and the lines defining gender roles (women's roles and men's roles in society) are not so clear-cut anymore, even in fields that used to be male dominated, such as the business sphere. Increasing numbers of women are becoming involved in trading.

A female respondent in Dushanbe described the situation in the following manner: "During Soviet times there was equality between men and women regarding access to resources. The gender did not define whether somebody was allowed to engage in some kind of activity, e.g. a job, or not. After the civil war, men were scared to be involved in many activities due to the regional animosities (except for the Kulyabis, they could not engage in business). Because men were killed or left for work migration, women often became the real activists."<sup>573</sup>

Another case in which women have taken over roles that have until recently been filled by men, is the shuttle trading done by women between Osh (in Kyrgyzstan) and Murghab, in

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<sup>569</sup> Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>570</sup> By parts of society a women working outside of the household is even perceived as a sign of poverty. If the husband could afford it, he would never make his wife work outside the home.

<sup>571</sup> Interview with a Pamiri NGO worker in the UK in July 2008

<sup>572</sup> Same as footnote no. 571

<sup>573</sup> Interview with an NGO-worker from Dushanbe in July 2008



eastern Mountain-Badakhshan. A respondent from the district of Khorugh said: "More than 40 percent of the traders (with fruit) in Khorugh and Murghab are women."<sup>574</sup>

I attended a seminar conducted for women traders by MSDSP in Shurabad and I asked the women what their husbands thought about the fact that they had a store and undertook business. They said that their husbands did not have anything against them making an income outside of the house.<sup>575</sup>

One of the women had even gone to Russia as a work migrant and she worked as a cook for a few months in order to earn money for her son's wedding. Nevertheless, women migrating for work is still the big exception in Tajikistan today.

In order to stress what a big diversity there is regarding freedom of movement of women in Tajikistan, I need to mention that even in the households in Dushanbe, where I lived, the women would only leave the *khaūli* (Tajik for living compound) twice a week, once to do the shopping in the bazaar and once to visit relatives. Even for these traditional, but urban women, it would have been unthinkable to find a job outside of the house.<sup>576</sup>

In some areas, people are slowly getting used to these new circumstances and are forced to look for alternative sources of income. Women have taken over many responsibilities. They are doing the household work and, at the same time, they are tightly controlling the financial incomes. Women are in some cases becoming the main breadwinners, stepping in for their husbands who should, as perceived by many, be the ones working, but who cannot find a job. The need for an income has changed gender roles and opened up opportunities for women in the development process, especially in Shurabad and Mountain-Badakhshan.<sup>577</sup>

### **The District Bazaar in Khorugh**

In the bazaar in Khorugh traders are increasingly women. A respondent stated: "In the market in Khorugh 99 percent of the traders are women."<sup>578</sup> Another respondent confirmed that the majority of the people trading on the market in Khorugh were women. He said: "They (the women) got used to the laws of the market, they even bargain now. The goods come mainly from Osh, its cheaper there even though Dushanbe is closer. The goods in the market in Khorugh are cheaper than in Murghab, because there is more competition. Some women made money here at the market (in Khorugh) and now they trade in Dushanbe."<sup>579</sup> One respondent tried to find an explanation for these new developments. She said: "Money is breaking our traditions. I get home late but that's ok, because I am the one who makes the money."<sup>580</sup>

Another respondent explained: "During the civil war, 140,000 to 150,000 refugees came to Mountain-Badakhshan. Approximately 40,000 of them stayed. Nowadays most of these (refugee) women are trading in the bazaar. The market rules are also changing. The prices used to be fixed and lately the people started to bargain."<sup>581</sup>

### **Shuttle Trading in Eastern Badakhshan**

In Mountain-Badakhshan, a large part of the trade is shuttle trading between Osh, Kyrgyzstan, and Khorugh, Mountain-Badakhshan. Traders buy goods at a large bazaar in Osh and resell these goods in Murghab and Khorugh. On their way from Osh to Murghab

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<sup>574</sup> The respondent is said to be a former combatant that has 'successfully' been re-integrated into civil life and who is now the head of a local *village organisation*; The interview was taken in the district of Khorugh in October 2003.

<sup>575</sup> Interview with female shopkeepers in Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>576</sup> Throughout the entire year that I spent in Tajikistan in 2003/04, I lived with "host-families" and could therefore easily observe their habits and way of living. In one household only, one lady used to work as a cleaner for an international NGO, as she was without her husband and needed to earn an income for her two daughters.

<sup>577</sup> Interview with a female NGO worker in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>578</sup> Interview with a female employee of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>579</sup> Interview with a local employee of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>580</sup> Interview with a local co-worker (female) of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>581</sup> Interview with a local employee of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003

and Khorugh they have to pass many checkpoints<sup>582</sup> on the Kyrgyz-Tajik border. Male shuttle traders used to be harassed verbally and physically. As a result, men gradually withdrew from the shuttle trading business.

A respondent from Murghab said: "The main source of income is doing trade with Osh. Hundred and fifty people in the *jamoat* (sub-district) are traders. They are all women. Previously, the men used to be the traders. Due to the fact that the border personal used to treat them so badly), the women have taken over."<sup>583</sup>

## 8.5 Local Governance Initiatives by IOs and NGOs on the Ground

Local governance is the local version of governing. It is about how power and authority is organized and exercised at the local level. Therefore, in my understanding local modes of governance include modes initiated and enforced by the state as well as by non-state players, such as IOs, INGOs and local power holders who draw their legitimacy from various backgrounds, such as religion, the civil war, heritage and wealth (often through illicit income generation, e.g. drug-trafficking). Modes of local governance in Tajikistan have changed significantly since the breakdown of the Soviet Union and in the course of the civil war. New official and informal modes of local governance emerged and became established during the civil war, in the early 1990s.

The given constellation of players and the modes of governance in place, however, should not be seen as irrational or random, but instead be interpreted as a new rational way chosen by the local elites in power. The elites chose this particular version of state building because it was rational according to their personal interest in extracting as many resources as possible for their own good, and because for them this was the least cost-intensive structure. Given all the attempts that have been made to steer these modes of governance and the overall transformation process into a different direction, this version of state-building has proven to be quite resistant and capable of surviving. This may be an indicator for the fact that this system is actually quite adequate or socially embedded, in the sense that it fits the given local context (Christophe 2005: 16).

Modes of governance are crucial for the development process on the local level and they are a collective term for constantly changing alignment of players and alliances, which generates new identities and interdependencies.

The transition period creates a free space to be filled and new opportunities for players involved. A range of players have an interest in retaining this *status quo* so that international NGOs and organisations keep financing projects and the resource aid money is not cut. The local power brokers can therefore keep making money, as for example with the help of extortion and by keeping up relations based on dependency (patron-client networks), as in the sector of cotton production.

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<sup>582</sup> The shuttle traders have to pass the following checkpoints going from the Tajik to the Kyrgyz side: The 1<sup>st</sup> post is a Tajik post where one has to pay 50 Diram (less than 20 cents), the 2<sup>nd</sup> post is from the GAI (traffic police) and *Narkobisnes* (anti-drug police), the 3<sup>rd</sup> post is a veterinary post, the 4<sup>th</sup> is a license post, the 5<sup>th</sup> post is Tajik customs, the 6<sup>th</sup> post is the border guards, the 7<sup>th</sup> post is another a veterinary post, the 8<sup>th</sup> post is for ecology (people have to buy an *ecologichesky talon* for polluting the air), the 9<sup>th</sup> post is then Kyrgyz customs, the 10<sup>th</sup> post is again *Narkobisnes*, the 11<sup>th</sup> post is from an unspecified sort of militia and the 12<sup>th</sup> post finally is again GAI (traffic police). Due to all the checkpoints, the 450 km trip takes one and a half days. 90 percent of the security forces (in Russian *selovye structurey*) on the Tajik side are not Kyrgyz (as the majority of the population in the district) but Pamiris and Tajiks from other districts or regions. In Kyrgyzstan there are fixed prices for the informal fees, but in Tajikistan the prices are unknown and constantly changing, they are just rising continuously. The traders go to Osh twice a week during the summer and twice a month during the winter.

<sup>583</sup> Interview with a male and female NGO worker in Murghab in October 2003

### 8.5.1 Modes of Implementation in Development Cooperation

International development organisations are often under a lot of pressure and need to spend a certain amount of money within a given period. Based on this the mode of implementation is usually chosen. The equation is almost, the faster a project is implemented, the less time it will last. In addition, development cooperation is ruled by the market. Different organisations on the development market compete for the same kinds of funds and partly even for the same beneficiaries. When projects are implemented in the emergency phase, sustainability often is not the most important issue. Under all this pressure, monitoring and evaluation is not conducted properly by donors and other relevant players. Donors also barely ever come back a few years after projects have been implemented to check whether the outcome of the project is still functioning. Eventually, many projects are being implemented, but their sustainability is questionable.

After the civil war, international organisations and NGOs set regional *foci* initially aiming at targeting the most vulnerable according to baseline studies conducted when they first arrived. This was infrequently re-assessed in the following years. Organisations were building up trust relationships with the local people, to empower the communities, to make the process more participatory and to be able to channel development aid through these newly established institutions into the local communities to achieve a sustainable impact. Therefore, it seems that organisations are working in areas where over the years conditions have changed and where the people are not the ones most in need anymore.

The question is whether it is not more effective to invest into people who are a little bit better off than the most vulnerable. These will soon be able to stand on their own feet and invest in the local economy, than to invest into the most vulnerable for whom it will take many years, if not decades, to stand on their own feet.

Community development<sup>584</sup> instead is trying to make a difference in this regard. What differentiates community development from other modes of implementation is that it aims at creating a long-term impact rather than a short-term difference. As such, it is a mode of implementation that is often used in a more advanced development phase (development cooperation rather than emergency relief).

Another reason why community development is often chosen as a mode of implementation is that on the local level after a war or a general transformation process, there is often a lack of decision-makers and thus partners in the project (Bliss 2006: 318).

Community development<sup>585</sup> is a concept that aims at improving the living conditions of particular communities in a society. It is highly participatory and therefore includes the local population in decision-making processes.

### 8.5.2 The Advantages of Community Development

Community development is often preferred as a mode of implementation as it has a special focus on sustainability and ownership. It aims at providing help to those that help themselves. It is also in line with the principle of subsidiarity, which aims to solve problems and take decisions at the lowest possible level. Community development includes raising awareness of problems that concern the community, but also on how these can be solved and how the community members can pull themselves out of misery by themselves. Community development work mediates between different levels (national, district and local

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<sup>584</sup> Community development goes back to the settlement movement that originates from the UK. Originally, it was used in urban areas in the course of industrialization, to improve the living conditions of worker families. In development cooperation it is predominantly used as a mechanism within rural development (Akkaya 2006: 16).

<sup>585</sup> There is a similar concept called community building, which also emphasizes the participation of the local community in the development and state-building process.

level), it helps citizens to understand what they can claim from the local government, what their personal rights and duties are.

The community defines itself according to what the major problems and deficiencies in the community are. Locally available resources (financial and human) are pulled together in order to implement small development projects that concern the community.

The international development organisation in this case is normally seen as a mediator or facilitator of the whole process, supporting the community financially and with specific expertise. Community development takes a holistic view of social problems. Entry points in the case of community development are not problems (as problems depend on perception<sup>586</sup>) that have been defined externally, but areas of conflicts and problems which the community members themselves see as a priority. The aim of community development is to improve living conditions, especially of people who are socially disadvantaged, and to encourage the community to show self-initiative - to improve people's lives in cooperation with the community (Akkaya 2006: 15).

Community development is usually marked by the fact that it has an 'inbuilt exit strategy'. One of the goals is that at one point the organisation conducting the programme will not be necessary anymore (sustainability). The concept usually includes a description of how the organisation will get to the point when its intervention will not be necessary anymore. A problem is that often many organisations are involved with community development, while they do not have a common vision of what the community development will lead to. In Tajikistan in 2003, staff within one local NGO working on community development could not agree on whether the newly established administrative structures at the local level should become part of the local government or whether they should simply stay additional structures of self-governance.<sup>587</sup>

Self-initiative is in post-socialist and post-conflict regions especially difficult to initiate as it is contrary to the ongoing social dynamics, i.e. increased individualisation. Through the post-socialist heritage people have enormous expectations of the state and expect the state exclusively to improve their lives with minimal participation from their side. The post-conflict mentality leads people to be very concerned with their own (and that of their family) survival. Community development instead, which is based on self-initiatives, asks for long-term planning and the people need to have a vision of what their community should look like a few years ahead. The people need some analytical capacity for this. They need to be able to analyze their own problems and to find solutions on how to overcome them.

A special focus is often directed at women, youth and ethnic minority groups. Often these kinds of programmes also include other components, such as training/ capacity building or, for example, micro-credit systems or other measures to create income generation opportunities.

Depending on the definition, community development might also include conflict mitigation and resolution. The ranges of conflicts a community can take care of are mostly conflicts that are limited to the community or to the sub-municipal level. These can be conflicts for which the state does not offer any solutions (Akkaya 2006: 15). They can be conflicts between generations, conflicts about the rules of the game (which often have to be constantly redefined in the course of the development process), conflicts over resources (such as land, water etc.), and drug or border related conflicts.

### **8.5.3 Community Development in Multi-Ethnic Post-Conflict Regions**

In some cases, community development might also be used as a tool to mediate between different ethnic groups where conflict can arise in the post-conflict setup.<sup>588</sup> MSDSP has

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<sup>586</sup> In the thinking of the Community Development theory, an issue might seem to be a problem for an outsider, but as long as it is not perceived as a problem by the people inside the system the issue does not need to be taken care of. People set different priorities. It is the priorities of the local people that matter.

<sup>587</sup> Interview with two development workers in Dushanbe in November 2003

<sup>588</sup> Especially after a war that had both ethnic and regional components.

experience in conducting community development programmes and electing community development councils in order to prioritize needs and implement small-scale development projects in multi-ethnic areas of Tajikistan: in Murghab, Mountain-Badakhshan (where ethnic Pamiris and Kyrgyz live together in one community), in Jirgatal, the Rasht valley (where ethnic Tajiks and Kyrgyz live together in one district), and in Khovaling, Kulyab (where ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks live together in one community).

The village organisations were established by MSDSP to take over general village administrative as well as project tasks (Bliss 2006: 319). By electing a common community development council MSDSP contributed to creating some kind of unity or cohesion between these different ethnic groups. In order for such a programme to be successful, five preconditions have to exist.

The organisation leading the “intervention” needs to: 1) Know the power structure of the village; 2) Conduct a detailed analysis of the *aūlūd* (tribal in English) leaders; 3) Know exactly how many households are representing which ethnic group; 4) Know what kind of local conflicts exist and what the main reasons for the conflicts are; and finally, 5) Know what factors can contribute to unity within the community.

According to a respondent, the aim was to establish a balanced leadership in the course of the community development process, to facilitate meetings in a balanced manner, so not giving privileges to one ethnic group and to implementing projects in a balanced way, fully including all minority groups in the decision-making process.<sup>589</sup>

Often in new community development institutions, such as councils (village organisations or community development councils) the rules of the game are being formulated. The question is then whether these newly created structures should eventually be incorporated into the local government structures and therefore become legalized or whether the newly created structures should be part of civil society and possibly turned into NGOs that can acquire further funding themselves and continue the implementation of development projects.

The problem is often that community development programmes are started, but fundamental questions like what this will lead to are not clarified in advance to the implementation of the project. Once the external funding is finished, these structures fall apart because the community members were eager to conduct a development project and to be involved in the implementation process, but they did not think about what this might lead to in the future. Therefore, it is very important to ask the community to contribute financially, to have maintenance plans ready and to secure running costs before the implementation of the project starts.

#### **8.5.4 Village Organisations**

Through the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) of the Aga Khan Foundation, AKDN currently implements rural development projects in 17 districts of three regions of Tajikistan, in Mountain-Badakhshan, the Rasht valley and Khatlon – with a target population of more than 730,000 people.<sup>590</sup>

The number of local non-governmental organisations is still limited in comparison to the influx of international players in neighbouring Afghanistan, for example. Even though Tajikistan also very much profited from the big increase in aid money following September 11, 2001, after which, for example, the European Union doubled its aid to the region as a measure against global terrorism. However, the local NGO culture is little developed. Most so-called local NGOs are ‘marionettes’ of foreign investment. A good example is the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP), a sub-branch of and financed by the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN). MSDSP is carrying out a large-scale development programme essentially aiming at reforming structures of local governance. The programme was started in Mountain-Badakhshan and the Rasht valley in the mid-1990s, following a request by the Tajik President it was extended to the region of Kulyab.

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<sup>589</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Khorugh in March 2008

<sup>590</sup> AKDN Tajikistan Overview 2008, on: [www.akdn.org](http://www.akdn.org), sighted 17/04/08

Through *village organisations* (Tajik: *sosmoni mardumi* or *tashkiloti dehoti*) MSDSP tries to introduce new possibilities for income generation, mobilize communities and eventually to initiate sustainable economic development in Tajikistan's regions. The aim of *village organisations* is to create autonomous and transparent village level institutions in order to contribute to democratic norms of behaviour and to the growth of civil society. In this way villagers are encouraged to take responsibility for their communities.

MSDSP only establishes a *village organisation* if 80 percent of the village community agrees to participate. The chairperson and the manager are then elected by open and competitive public elections by secret ballot, and the vice-chairman, the accountant and the chairperson of the women's committee are approved by the *village organisation*. The heads or representatives of these village organisations are elected by the men and women of the village.

Village organisations formulate a development plan for the village. In the course of this process, the needs of the villagers are identified and out of these, the priorities in terms of village development are defined. Each village organisation gets a fund<sup>591</sup> to implement small-scale development projects. In most cases, the villagers contribute either financially or with their own labour to the implementation of the development projects. These projects can be, for example, the renovation of the local school, road or bridge construction or, in some cases, the instalment of a local hydropower plant. Further, village organisations also distribute micro-credit, giving preference to women-headed households, to build up small-scale businesses.

It depends on the village community (members of the village organisation) whether a salary is paid to its management or not. The salary can then, if agreed, be taken from the village organisation's budget, the village fund, which comes mainly from MSDSP and to a small extent from membership fees. The membership fees are also supposed to add up to a revolving *village development fund* (VDF), used for credits and grants for members and for village-wide projects. During my field research, membership fees were still very low; each household only contributed a few dozen cents per month.

MSDSP started establishing *village organisations* in the Rasht valley in 1999 and by September 2007 more than 1,100 village organisations and 55 cluster federations on sub-district level (SUDVO, formerly CVOs) had been established.<sup>592</sup> Since 2002, all MSDSP projects have been conducted in partnership with *village organisations* (VO). These initiatives included agricultural diversification (horticulture and livestock), cash credit provision and social infrastructure activities as well as an agricultural reform programme. Some agricultural diversification activities, such as revolving livestock projects and vegetable processing projects, are aimed at vulnerable households and particularly at women-headed households.

VOs are further meant to deal with problems like arguments between neighbours, disagreements over land distribution and inter-generational conflicts within the community. *Village organisations* are meant to be a more inclusive replacement for the traditional decision-making bodies previously in place, the council of elders, head of the *mahalla*, the local religious authority etc.

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<sup>591</sup> According to an employee of MSDSP, in April 2008 MSDSP initially spent 200 USD to set up the village development fund. MSDSP spends an average of 10,000 USD per village organisation every year. The entire strengthening cycle is over nine years. The first three years, MSDSP establishes the *village organisation* and facilitates the process of developing annual plans and a three-year plan. In the second three-year period, MSDSP reviews the process and helps with making the new three-year plan and implementing it. In the third three-year period, MSDSP facilitates village organisation's becoming partners of the government, INGOs, local NGOs etc. The third period foresees that MSDSP gradually withdraws from the process.

<sup>592</sup> Information provided by the manager of the Community Development unit of a local NGO in Dushanbe in September 2007.

### 8.5.5 Analysis of the Effectiveness of *Village Organisations*

By design, this extensive programme resembles a major external intervention that introduces considerable change and has a large impact on the communities. To a certain extent it imposes new rules of the game on to a very traditional society and, therefore can, in certain cases, create conflict, as different sets of rules might clash (see, for example, the case of Navdi in the Rasht valley outlined above above in section 8.3.1).

The whole concept is often difficult to understand by a village community and even after the concept has been introduced for a long period, the ideas behind it, the vision to empower communities and make them shape their own state, are often not entirely understood or supported by the local communities.<sup>593</sup> In addition to that, policy makers disagree on where the journey should go.

“For the present, the VOs as community planning councils continue to be entirely informal in character: that is, they are bodies convened *ad hoc* to discuss specific projects and so far do not have any foundation in the Tajik community constitutional framework.” (Bliss 2006: 319)

Another challenge is to make the local communities actually independent. In the case of *village organisations* in Tajikistan, the concept does not seem to be sustainable because the *village organisations* are financially highly dependent on MSDSP, according to the policy. If MSDSP stopped grants and credits at this point, these structures would soon fall apart.<sup>594</sup> Another problem is that heads of *village organisations* often want to be paid; they keep money or other resources to themselves instead of investing the money into the wellbeing of the whole community.

The concept of *village organisations* also does not seem to be the best approach to mobilize people, as they often simply choose from a ‘menu’ that is offered to them. They choose something because it is free, they do not have to make a big effort themselves and it is not because they actually need it. Therefore, even through this procedure, ownership is not guaranteed and the villagers usually do not fully take ownership. I especially observed this phenomenon in the Rasht valley where I had the chance to be part of meetings of *village organisations*. The *village organisations* did not become self-sustaining. It seemed that meetings did not take place regularly, that meetings had often just been organized because MSDSP staff had announced their participation.<sup>595</sup>

In the Rasht valley, when a *village organisation* is about to be established and the development priorities of the community for the first three years have to be set, people usually want a mosque as their first priority. However, the construction of a mosque is not considered to be a development project by MSDSP and subsequently will not finance mosques for the community. As a second priority, communities usually ask for a small hydropower plant, but that is often refused as being too expensive and too difficult to maintain. Eventually, the community is given three choices to choose from: the renovation of a school, the construction of a health centre (Russian: *medpunkt*) or a water canal. Certainly, the people will not say that they do not urgently need any of these choices. They will take as much as they can, but eventually they will not take good care of the canal, for example, because in the end, they did not prioritise the project. The community did not consider the project its own initiative, but something ‘offered from outside’.

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<sup>593</sup> Here I am referring to a meeting of a village organisation in Nurabad (former Darband, Rasht valley) in March 2004 that I referred to earlier in section 6.11.

<sup>594</sup> A respondent in Rasht told me that usually the people pay 20 Dirams (6 cents) as a monthly fee, but often they do not even have these 20 Dirams and then they do not pay at all. Respondents said that village meetings do not take place regularly. Often it is only initiated if somebody from MSDSP announced his visit to the *village organisation*. It also happens that the meetings are not all-village meetings, but rather simply five or six people (usually the elders of the village who also used to take the important decisions for the village community in the past) meet and set the priorities for the whole village.

<sup>595</sup> I made these observations during VO meetings in the Rasht valley in spring 2004.

## Varying Impact

At this point, it also has to be mentioned that the impact of *village organisations* and MSDSP's work in general in the different regions varies a lot. For two reasons, MSDSP's work in Mountain-Badakhshan has been much more effective than in the Rasht valley and in Kulyab. MSDSP is much more embedded and accepted by local communities in Mountain-Badakhshan due to its Ismaili background. In addition, AKDN/ MSDSP developed a very good standing due to the role it played in the early 1990s in organizing an equal distribution of land in Mountain-Badakhshan and supporting the local population with humanitarian aid during the difficult civil war years. In Mountain-Badakhshan, the first *village organisation* was established in 1998. By October 2005, 445 village organisations had been established. They had 37,000 members and represented 80 to 90 percent of local households (Akiner, Shirin 2002: 30).<sup>596</sup> In Mountain-Badakhshan AKDN/ MSDSP's concepts are taken as almost as something divine, sent to the people from God and is therefore not questioned, but very much supported.

## Building a Parallel State?

Regarding the establishment of *village organisations* in Mountain-Badakhshan, the Rasht Valley and Kulyab by MSDSP, there is often criticism that it is eventually establishing parallel structures to those of the state and thereby improving governance on the local level, but undermining the role of the state instead.<sup>597</sup> This criticism is partly justified. MSDSP with its *village organisations* is filling gaps that are left open by the state administration. Nevertheless, the *village organisations* are part of a legitimate statehood-building initiative from below.

MSDSP was particularly criticised for trying to build up a parallel state in the former opposition regions. It is true that MSDSP first started its work in the former opposition regions. However, this can be justified by the fact that these regions were very vulnerable and in need of external help in those years. Right after the civil war, MSDSP stepped in and took over some of the functions of the state, simply to guarantee the survival of the local population, who in some parts of Mountain-Badakhshan were facing food insecurity and hunger.

*De facto*, for the time being MSDSP in many areas and sectors has taken over the role of the state, such as supporting the provision of public goods. For example, by managing land distribution in Mountain-Badakhshan mainly through *village organisations*, which are in a way independent from MSDSP, but are perceived as part of the organisation, and by building and renewing schools, medical centres and other key functions.

"Since 1992 the policy-making and advisory functions of the GBAO government have almost been totally lost. Although the PRDP/MSDSP stressed the aim of encouraging the government to resume taking responsibility for the various policy sectors right from the start, this had proved difficult to put into practice. After all, until 2000 and in some sectors even now, development organisations and not the government have provided practically all the funds and resources arriving in GBAO." (Bliss 2006: 320)

In the long run, this might provoke a weakening of the state, as the state might miss the opportunity to take on these responsibilities and instead of expecting the state to provide public goods, as it used to be during Soviet times, the people might start to increase their expectations of MSDSP and similar actors. On the other hand, this might be necessary in order to take some burden from the state while the state is regaining strength following the civil war.

At the same time *village organisations* can also have a side effect of additionally fragmenting society. Empowering the villages through the establishment of *village organisations* has led to the consequence that now, for example, each village wants its own *medpunkt* (medical

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<sup>596</sup> Information from the head of the policy and evaluation unit of MSDSP in Dushanbe in April 2004

<sup>597</sup> In May 2004, two more offices were opened in the Khatlon region in Khovaling and Muminabad. In 2005 the regional office for Kulyab was opened in Kulyab town.



station), which is expensive to implement, instead of investing into a common clinic at the district level. Villages are becoming more and more detached from each other.

### **8.5.6 Cluster Federations at Sub-District Level (SUDVOs)**

In order to prevent the criticism of encouraging a parallel state and to show that *village organisations* are part of a more comprehensive bottom-up state-building process, MSDSP has been trying to link the *village organisations* to the state. As a first step in this direction, MSDSP has started creating cluster federations of *village organisations* (CVO) on the *jamoat* (sub-district) level and connecting these CVOs to the *jamoats* (organs of state administration on the sub-district level).

The eventual direction is as yet unclear. Some people want to strengthen the *village organisations* and then on that basis build clusters on the *jamoat* level; others want to wait to see what changes the new Tajik law on local government might bring and then possibly the *village organisations'* incorporation into local government structures might not be necessary. The supporters of the CVOs argue that *village organisations* and their clusters should not be given up because they are the constituting elements for civil society in Tajikistan. Together with the few local NGOs, they are the only anti-pole towards the state in order to keep some kind of balance between state and society.

There is debate as to whether the state structures or the structures of local self-governance (in the case of Tajikistan, mainly the *village organisations*) should be strengthened in order to strengthen the statehood and (good) governance in the long term. The best solution would be to strengthen both, so that there would be a 'healthy' balance between the state and non-state sector, neither society nor state dominating the relationship. It would be dangerous only to strengthen the state and then let the state take over those structures or the other way around.

The problem today in Tajikistan is that there are almost no financial resources at the *jamoat* level provided by the state and that the villages only have responsibilities towards this institution, but they do not actually get anything from it in return. To link the state with the CVOs, they would eventually have to be connected to the administration on the district level.

#### **Case Study: Clusters of Village Organisations in Ishkashim District**

I visited a pilot project for a CVO in Langar, a district of Ishkashim (Mountain-Badakhshan), initiated by MSDSP. It consists of eight *village organisations*; it was founded in February 2003. The CVO is situated on the level as the *jamoat* (sub-district).

The CVO has its own executive committee, a general assembly and the head of the *jamoat* is a member of both organisations. The CVO and the *jamoat* together do the monitoring for the projects of the *village organisations*. According to the head of the CVO, before it had been difficult for MSDSP and the *jamoat* to cooperate with each of the *village organisations*, for project monitoring, for example, now with the establishment of the CVO the monitoring became easier to coordinate and much more effective.

The CVO did not have any projects on its own and did not have any additional projects together with the *jamoat*. In the following year, another uniting structure on the district level was supposed to be developed. It helped additionally that the CVO and the *jamoat* were located in the same building. This way cooperation was made very easy.

In summer 2004, MSDSP was running seven CVOs as pilot projects (all in Ishkashim district). Before the establishment of the CVOs, there used to be a lot of work concerning the credits that the *village organisations* were giving to the people (mostly to the women, often war widow-headed households). With the CVOs it turned out to be much easier to keep track and prevent people from becoming corrupt. The contact with the *jamoat* had improved and the distribution of tasks had become much clearer between the state institution and the civil society institution at the *jamoat* level.

The examples of community development by MSDSP, especially in Mountain-Badakhshan, have shown what a great degree of independence international organisations and NGOs have developed from the Tajik state. They are often implementing their own policies that do not necessarily coincide with the policies of the state. Bliss commented on the current setup that: "It is time to let state administration, and above all political organisations (oblast assembly and rayon assemblies), participate more in decision-making, in the way that the local population participates in the VOs." (Bliss 2006: 320)

## 8.6 *Jamoat* Resource Centres

The *jamoat* (sub-district) level is usually defined as the lowest level of the state administration. The problems of *jamoats* are that they financially depend on the district level and that *jamoat* representatives are not elected, but appointed from above (the district level). Generally, finances are very limited and accordingly *jamoats* are not very active. Freedom House also criticizes the *jamoat* structure for not being democratically elected and for lacking sufficient revenue. According to the Tajik Constitution, *jamoats* are defined as "system of organizing public activities and to address issues of local importance autonomously". The role defined in the Constitution, however, is far from the role fulfilled in reality.<sup>598</sup>

The *United Nations Development Programme* (UNDP) has as part of its local governance initiative built up so-called *Jamoat* Resource Centres (JRC)<sup>599</sup>. On the district level, it has established so-called District Development Committees. In addition to that, UNDP is also working on building up the capacity of local governments and supporting the strengthening of civil society. The coordination unit of the UN founded working groups for civil society in 2007. All these initiatives are aimed at supporting the bottom-up state-building process.<sup>600</sup>

For the last 15 years and following the civil war, rural communities in Tajikistan experienced abject poverty and lacked the ability to fulfil various basic needs, such as education and healthcare. In such an atmosphere, local communities were, undoubtedly, in need of external support. However, this external support could not be provided directly from donors, as sustainability concerns proscribed such a situation from occurring. Instead, UNDP created grass roots community-based organisations called JRCs, which would have a permanent presence in the *jamoat* and build the capacity of its members and authorities to design, plan, and implement local development projects, even after donor funds are no longer available.

JRCs are civil society elements that link local authorities and community members to one another by, on the one hand, monitoring and keeping the public informed of local government decisions and actions, and, on the other hand, by articulating public interests and concerns regarding the authorities. In this way, JRCs work both sides of the problem. JRCs also (i) mobilize communities to prioritize and resolve their problems; (ii) support the capacity building of local authorities at the *jamoat* level; (iii) support infrastructure rehabilitation; (iv) provide advisory services to the population; (v) support the creation of employment and income-generating opportunities through microfinance activities and (vi) promote gender equity.<sup>601</sup>

Involving communities through JRCs can improve efforts to target the poorest and most marginalized individuals and groups. When these groups are actively involved in community-based organisations, they can help make development processes more comprehensive and inclusive.

JRCs are formed through an inclusive and participatory process involving every village of a target *jamoat*. JRC members (one representative per village) are elected by the *jamoat*'s

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<sup>598</sup> Freedom House, *Nations in Transit, Tajikistan* (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08

<sup>599</sup> "*Jamoat* Resource Centres" used to be called "*Jamoat* Development Committees"

<sup>600</sup> Interview with the head of the UN coordination unit in Dushanbe in July 2007

<sup>601</sup> Interview with UNDP staff in Dushanbe in June 2007

target population, a process monitored by UNDP to ensure its transparency and adherence to democratic procedures.<sup>602</sup>

The establishment of JRCs was supported by representatives of authorities at the district and *jamoat* levels. Their support came despite the fact that, while *jamoat* representatives could be elected as JRC members, they were ineligible from holding high-ranking positions within the JRC.

Prior to JRC establishment, partnerships were non-existent between local authorities, the private sector and civil society, as the latter two were both underdeveloped and weak. Moreover, most *jamoats* only had a meagre budget, from which community demands and development needs could not be met.

During JRC establishment, meetings and discussions were held with representatives from the respective district and *jamoat* authorities. Input from local residents regarding JRC establishment was not only welcomed, it was encouraged; as such structures are formed for the community's benefit.

The aforementioned meetings and discussions ensured that the process of JRC establishment was transparent and that there was a mutual understanding regarding the purpose and function of JRCs.

The election of JRC members was conducted by secret ballot with the participation of all village residents over the age of 18, regardless of their sex, marital status, occupation, etc. The elected JRC members came from various segments of society. Before becoming JRC members, they were, *inter alia*, teachers, farmers, agronomists and civil service workers. In general, these people are well respected in their local communities.

Each JRC has its own office where members get together to conduct meetings and round-table discussions on a variety of topics concerning their communities. Of particular concern are employment generation, capacity building of local authorities, the development of civil society, poverty reduction, and economic development.

Upon request from the local communities, the JRC organizes committees in order to mobilize the community on specific issue areas, such as business services, agricultural advice, help to vulnerable women, and employment for young people. The members of the JRC meet for regular meetings and once a year the entire population of the *jamoat* gets together for a meeting.<sup>603</sup>

The primary tasks of the JRC are the following: 1) The JRC mobilizes the villages in a *jamoat* to vote on the priorities for public investment and the provision of communal services; 2) the JRC intends to raise awareness in terms of access to information; and, 3) the JRCs are also intended to help identify the most vulnerable households in order to give them easier access to credits and to assist them with the establishment of small enterprises.

JRCs are financed out of a public investment fund, which can amount to up to 45,000 USD. This fund is provided by UNDP and *ad hoc* investments from the community.

The JRCs are usually established in buildings that are provided by the *jamoat* administration and that are then renovated by UNDP in a joint effort with the community.

The process of building up a JRC also includes making the people capable of mobilizing communities, conducting consultations with the communities, analyzing social and economic trends, making representative recommendations, and raising funds and enforcing reform processes. Until 2005, UNDP had established 34 *Jamoat* Resource Centres in the Rasht valley.<sup>604</sup>

### **Criticism on Community Development in Tajikistan Today**

The different initiatives and programmes were initially not very well coordinated and adjusted to take account of each other. Consequently, they began the bottom-up state-building process at different administrative levels (community, *jamoat* and district levels) and they did not agree on the output aimed for.

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<sup>602</sup> Same as footnote no. 601

<sup>603</sup> Interview with UNDP staff in Dushanbe in June 2007

<sup>604</sup> Interview with an employee of UNDP, specialist on local government in Tajikistan in Dushanbe in October 2005

The different posts – chairperson, accountant and women’s representative - are elected through a secret ballot. The experience has, however, shown that the way the elections are conducted is often not democratic and forces that have governed the village previously (the village elder or a great landowner) often succeed in the election or, if they do not, conflicts regarding ‘who is the man in the house’ arise.<sup>605</sup> Membership fees, which are still very minor (often only a few dozens cent), contribute to the village fund. The more important contribution of the village population is mostly the labour force.

The philosophy behind these village organisations is that the villagers are capable of making their own decisions in terms of local development with a minimum of external advice or guidance, particularly technical help. In addition to the external help, locals who have been trained accordingly support the process, to guarantee the sustainability of these projects.<sup>606</sup> So far, the local population accepts the *village organisations* as its own structure, which it can shape itself and utilize in the future in only a very few cases. In most cases, the people do understand the procedure of how *village organisations* are being elected and function, and they understand that if they participate they will profit from this in the short term. Most people do not believe in the long-term process of building a new state and statehood from below, in which they as citizens can actively participate and make their voices heard.

Following the criticism that MSDSP was only supporting the former opposition regions, in 2005 MSDSP also started setting up *village organisations* in Kulyab, the region where most of the government elite come from. This shows that MSDSP is genuinely interested in a comprehensive state-building process from below. In Kulyab, local governance takes place under a much more formalized framework. Local power holders from the time of the civil war are either not important anymore or have got posts in the new public administration, i.e. they have been legalized or co-opted.<sup>607</sup> It is, however, becoming clear that in the long term the state has to take over the steering of the process and it has to be the state who is the main provider of public goods.

So far, one cannot talk about a network of villages or *village organisations* growing into a civil society, which can act as a balance to the state. At the time of my research in 2003/2004, it was not clear whether village organisations were there to help build the state or to act as a counterbalance to it.

There is still a need for a more comprehensive approach that covers the whole country and starts working at the same administrative level everywhere. Efforts in this regard have to be much more coordinated. Nevertheless, especially between international organisations and different NGOs, cooperation and coordination is difficult. In the end, they are competitors.<sup>608</sup>

At this point all connections from one village to elsewhere go through the district centre, there are few horizontal linkages. A disadvantage of this kind of empowerment is that each village demands its own facilities, such as its own *medpunkt* and villages cannot agree to come together to invest into a common district clinic, which possibly provides better quality healthcare.<sup>609</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Compare with the case study on Navdi in section 7.6.1.

<sup>606</sup> Please see in the context the article “Gorno-Badakhshan – One of the Most Successful Development Programmes Ever Implemented”, on: [www.pamirs.org](http://www.pamirs.org), sighted 07/05/08

<sup>607</sup> One of these local co-workers switched from the side of the state into the NGO sector. During the civil war, he had been commander of an armed unit in the state forces. After the end of the civil war, he had hoped to get a Minister’s post in the new cabinet. Nevertheless, when it became clear that he would not get that, he became the head of the newly established MSDSP office in Kulyab, one of the regional offices, which is occupied with establishing *village organisations* and implementing development projects in this region. In this new position, he could further rely on his old connections, as he had now again access to important resources and could give something in return. One of his comrades from war times had become the head of the local department of intelligence (Tajik: *shubai amniyat*) in that region. Also, he was closely linked with the head commander of the border troops on the Tajik-Afghan border. Then in 2006, he was convicted of corruption and lost his post. (This information is based on interviews in 2003 and 2004 with the head of the local intelligence department in Shurabad.

<sup>608</sup> Interview with a lawyer from the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>609</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO in Gharm in March 2004

However, as one respondent put it: In order to say that there is a society-building process from below one would need several organisations going in the same direction, but international organisations and local NGOs lack coordination amongst themselves.<sup>610</sup>

Most respondents I talked to did not actually see a development or state-building process from below behind these different initiatives. The intended development or state-building process from below, from the village communities in 2004 only in very few pilot projects (in central Tajikistan in the East of Dushanbe in Roghun and Faizabad and in south-western Mountain-Badakhshan in Ishkashim) reached the district level<sup>611</sup> as in general it stayed at the village level and in linking up with the state remained difficult.

Another deficiency of the whole process was that MSDSP and UNDP did not follow a comprehensive and agreed pattern. MSDSP was trying to link its institutions of self-governance with the state on the district level and UNDP was trying to do this on the *jamoat* (sub-district) level.

In terms of overall stability for Tajikistan, it probably would be most effective to link up with the state on the *rayon* (district) level where the state actually has some power and not on the *jamoat* level, where the state is not very visible.

Some people in MSDSP are waiting for the people to link up their *village organisations* with the state by themselves, but given 70 years of Soviet development, it seems unlikely that the people on the ground will be able to show self-initiative to such an extent.

It might be helpful to take examples from countries that are at a similar stage of the development process. GTZ, who works with MSDSP as an implementing partner, is trying to learn from experiences in Armenia. In Armenia, GTZ has facilitated such village level organisations, and has united structures like the *village organisations* into a *union of village organisations*. These new institutions on a higher level are now increasingly becoming independent of GTZ and starting to search for new sources of funding on their own, to further implement development projects.<sup>612</sup>

## 8.7 Mahalla – A Community Institution

The *mahalla* is an important traditional institution from pre-Soviet times that still shapes local governance structures at the community level in Tajikistan today.

Structurally, in pre-Soviet times Central Asian societies were shaped by whether they were nomadic or sedentary. The *zhuz* (hordes or extended clan networks) used to be the focal structure for nomadic Central Asians. While the *mahalla* (community neighbourhood) has been the venue for communication, exchange of information, group volunteer work (*hashar*), and decision making for sedentary Tajiks and Uzbeks.

In current day Uzbekistan, the *mahalla* has become a standardized control tool of the government, which tends to exploit the voluntarism of the community in support of state-directed objectives.

In Tajikistan, the “*mahalla* has remained less politicized and more in tune with the genuine affairs of the local community” (Muhutdinova 2007: 692). During Soviet times, the *mahalla* could be preserved as a private space outside official control. Since independence, the *mahalla* continues to foster communal identity and solidarity in organized activities (Muhutdinova 2007: 696).

The *mahalla* is an institution on the local level whose importance is difficult to judge and varies between regions as well as urban and rural areas. A *mahalla* is the main traditional institution at the local level. Freedom House says: “Despite the fact that the *mahalla*, or

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<sup>610</sup> Interview with a local lawyer, at his office at the Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>611</sup> In addition, UNDP is initiating *Jamoat Development Committees* (JDC) in the Rasht valley, for example, but only one respondent other than the UNDP head in Gharm mentioned this institution. Therefore, by 2004 it did not seem to be very influential yet.

<sup>612</sup> From September to December 2003, I was affiliated with GTZ/ MSDSP and had a chance to get to know their community development programme.

neighbourhood, has for centuries acted as a *de facto* community council and as the smallest body of governance (aside from the nuclear family) in Central Asian societies, the Tajik Constitution has failed to recognize this traditional social institution.<sup>613</sup>

Muhutdinova states the following: “In addition to the modern, Western definition of NGOs and civil society, an informal ‘communal’ civil society has existed for centuries in Tajikistan and the rest of Central Asia. This form of civil society is based largely on ‘trust and solidarity networks’ associated with kinship ties and on the imposition of the majority will over the community. Above all it is highly traditional, and may contain elements of repression, especially toward a nonconforming minority.” (Muhutdinova 2007: 692). It might be too much to call the *mahalla* a “communal civil society”, but the *mahalla* is very much about solidarity networks.

People in the *mahalla* get together for different kinds of events. One of the most visible institutions under the roof of the *mahalla* is the *hashar*, a kind of community work where people get together to build or reconstruct a house or to build local facilities. Other events are wedding celebrations, circumcision parties, funerals and *maraka* (repeated gatherings to remember a particular person who has passed away).<sup>614</sup>

According to Freedom House “the informal social institution of *mahalla*, which during the Soviet era helped preserve a private space outside official control, continues to foster identity and solidarity in the post Communist era.”<sup>615</sup>

The role of the *mahalla* should also not be overemphasized. It is mainly a ‘men’s club’ meeting in the mosque or the teahouse (male spaces) taking decisions that concern the entire community. Within these male dominated structures, elderly men play the most important role. Even young men have little to say and therefore the decision-making structures are far from being democratic.

Some argue that the modern NGO model should be fitted on to the traditional *mahalla*, and this way the structure would have more impact and sustainability. Citizens should shape their own institutions by combining traditional values with the best elements of the Soviet legacy and relevant Western and international experience. MSDSP with its *village organisations* and Oxfam, which has funded the creation of community-based organizations, have successfully based their work on *mahalla* structures (Muhutdinova 2007: 693).

The *mahalla* is defined by a particular set of rules and is limited by space. In urban areas the *mahalla* is a living quarter or a single street (such as the Uzbek *mahallas* in the north-west of Dushanbe); in rural areas usually the whole village is a *mahalla*. It is a space produced by social practice. Opinions vary whether it is an institution that exists because it always existed (primordial approach), or whether it was established by the state in order to implement state and social control on the ground (constructivist approach), or whether it exists because it fulfils certain functions (social control, enforces mutual help, etc.) without which life on the local level would be less structured and more difficult (functional approach). I take the reason for its existence to be a combination of these three sets of factors (Lefebvre 1991: 223).

One also has to be careful because the term *mahalla* has a different connotation in Uzbekistan, where it is more a tool used by the elite to govern local communities, than in Tajikistan where the state mostly stays out of the *mahalla* space.

The visible external structure of the *mahalla* indicates a lot about what kind of rules of the game function inside of it. In *mahallas* in Tajikistan, houses show little of themselves to the streets. This fact reflects the typical traditional (Islamic) separation between public and private space. In reality, however, the separation between different spheres is not all that clear; it is not simply juxtaposed, there are also semi-private spaces in the *mahallas* such as, for example, dead-end alleys only used by two or three families living adjacent to these side alleys.

In a *mahalla* the public space (the street) seems to be ‘privatized’, as a lot of activity takes place in the street. Children play, women and men (separately in small groups) chat and

<sup>613</sup> Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08

<sup>614</sup> Regarding this aspect also see: Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08

<sup>615</sup> See: Freedom House, Tajikistan (2006), on [www.freedomhouse.org](http://www.freedomhouse.org), 28/02/08

discuss issues, young men play board games etc.<sup>616</sup> In addition to that, if a stranger enters the *mahalla*, people will to some extent look at him as if he was intruding on the community's private or semi-private space.

*Mahallas* can also be places for home businesses, not usually marked by any signs, e.g. little bakeries, tailor shops or beauty parlours. People know about these home businesses from 'mouth-to-mouth advertisement'.

Research on the *mahalla* is complicated, as it is not an official institution and people who are themselves part of the *mahalla* are not aware of what it implies.

To reflect on the *mahalla*'s rules of the game (institution) one needs a certain distance, an observer status. The people living in the *mahalla* do not have the necessary distance to describe the phenomenon. An exception to the rule might be women, for instance, who married recently and moved from their home *mahalla* to their husband's *mahalla*. In this case, they might be able to describe to what extent the new *mahalla* functions differently in comparison to the one they grew up in.

People that have grown up and lived in the same *mahalla* all their lives simply know which houses can be entered when and by whom.<sup>617</sup> The *mahalla* is marked by sometimes overlapping hierarchies of privacy. The street is the most public, the *khaūli* (courtyard) a private space and the house, especially the rooms furthest away from the entrance, are the most intimate spheres of life. As a guest one usually only enters the rooms adjacent to the courtyard, further into the house one might find a room where elders or women and children are resting.

Another rule to the *khaūli* is that many sons of the family (at least the youngest son), as long as there is space in the courtyard, continue living in their parents' *khaūli* after they have married. After marriage, the bride moves into her husband's *khaūli*.<sup>618</sup>

The marriage for the bride often resembles quite a clear cut break with her home *mahalla*; it will then depend on her husband and mother-in-law how often, if at all, she will be allowed to go to her home *mahalla* and visit her family.

The division of public and private spheres in the *mahalla* are further marked by the fact that the houses either have (almost) no windows to the street or if they do, these are closed so that nobody can look inside. In addition, one does not find any public buildings (except for the mosque), such as schools or hospitals directly in a *mahalla*, they are usually situated just outside.

### Private Space in the *Mahalla*

The private space consists of an "...integrated ensemble of separate structures arranged around an outside central courtyard..." called the *khaūli* (Lui 2002: 15). The centre of the *khaūli* (courtyard) is the *tapchan*, a bed-like platform where the family meets for the meals, relaxes and receives guests during the warm seasons of the year. These *khaūlis* are usually inhabited by at least three generations of the same *aūlūd* (extended family). Usually, the houses in a *mahalla* are single-storey buildings. Lately, (especially in urban Uzbek *mahallas* in Tajikistan) the number of two and three-storey buildings has been increasing due to sudden wealth from trade, people working and enriching themselves through government positions, from drug trafficking and work migration.<sup>619</sup> An Uzbek respondent from Dushanbe told me that the difference between Tajik and Uzbek *mahallas* was that the Uzbek ones were cleaner. As far as I have observed in Dushanbe, the Uzbek-dominated *mahallas* were the

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<sup>616</sup> Also see the description of an Uzbek *mahalla* in Osh by (Liu 2002: 107)

<sup>617</sup> One time a German male friend of mine wanted to come with me and my 'host-sister' to a tailor nearby in the *mahalla*. It turned out that first going to the tailor was a women's activity and usually not an event attended by men and that the house was the house of a *mullah* who did not want any foreign men to enter his *khaūli* (courtyard) and see his women. In an impolite way, my friend was asked to leave the *khaūli* immediately. Afterwards my 'host-sister' was punished for her mistake by the family whose *khaūli* we had entered and later on, when my host-family found out about the incident, also by her grandfather, the head of my host-family.

<sup>618</sup> This is why there are usually several separate little houses together in one *khaūli*.

<sup>619</sup> Also compare with the description of an Uzbek *mahalla* in Osh, Kyrgyzstan (Lui 2002: 15-17)

ones where the people were better off because the Uzbeks were said to be good traders. Therefore, the Uzbeks in Dushanbe live in the 'better' *mahallas*.<sup>620</sup> In general, *mahallas* are characterised by narrow winding often unpaved roads or paths. *Mahallas* are marked by organic house-by-house growth rather than spaces filled by urban planning. "*Mahalla* spaces appeared illegible to the state and outsider individuals because their configurations were produced according to local epistemologies of space via local practices of domestic space-making rather than state logic of national spaces" (Liu 2002: 112). Concerning their spatial configuration and the impact this has on everyday activities, *mahallas* resemble *medinas* (the old cities) in northern Africa and the Middle East. Consequently, *mahallas* were difficult to control for the state and the state aimed at restructuring the spaces by building large apartment blocks during Soviet times and resettling people in these new living quarters.

### **Rules and Codes of Behaviour Created From *Mahalla* Spaces**

The name *mahalla* first describes a space, a locality, but from the way it is arranged certain rules and a codes of behaviour are derived. There is a lot of face-to-face activity (people meet each other frequently) and this creates face-to-face accountability, or at least the perception of it according to which people behave. This also implies a certain level of social control. People meet each other on a regular basis. They know for example, if a person has lately had problems, what kind of problems and how they were solved.

Bringing a friend to the *mahalla*, for example, always makes one think "what will the neighbours think about my friend, what will they say afterwards and what will they think about me because I have such a friend". The information flow (also concerning rumours) is quick in a *mahalla*.

If there is a funeral, for example, people are usually not invited formally, but are instead obliged to come without invitation.

There is a lot of exchange between households in a *mahalla*. For example, if the phone does not work (which happens quite frequently because of non-payment of bills, something that can last for several weeks) one goes to the neighbours' and uses their phone to make a call.

### **The *Mahalla*: Part of Local Government or a Community Structure?**

The *mahalla* in Tajikistan *de jure* is not part of the local government, but an informal local institution. The *mahalla* is not legally recognised and there is no legal basis for the running of its affairs. Accordingly, there are no functions explicitly determined for the *mahalla* by the government and there are no legally defined territorial boundaries for the *mahalla*. The *mahalla* in Tajikistan does not undertake any large-scale service provision and does not have any paid officials.

There are no funds issued by the *hukumat* (district government) that are explicitly for the *mahalla* and that are administered by it. The *mahalla* does not have any duties towards the state. It does not collect or retain taxes or any other charges.

The *mahalla* is an informal institution that 'members' identify with. Territorial boundaries of the *mahalla* depend on tradition rather than administrative determination. The *mahalla* has diversity in its range of activities (festivities, *hashar*, giving *qars* –a local form of credit, mutual help, etc.). For any collective activities, the *mahalla* relies in fiscal terms on unpaid volunteers.<sup>621</sup>

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<sup>620</sup> When I first came to Tajikistan to do fieldwork in September 2003, it was difficult for me to find a Tajik host-family. I first lived with two Uzbek families in two different *mahallas*, before finding a Tajik host-family. One aspect of this experience was certainly that I had asked an Uzbek friend of mine to find me a host-family and later on I asked a Tajik acquaintance of mine to find a host-family for me. Another aspect was that the Uzbek friend did not want me to live in a very shabby *mahalla* and, therefore, searched for Tajik-speaking Uzbek families.

<sup>621</sup> Tacis Discussion paper No. 5: The Future Role of Makhallas. Issues for a Conception; Strengthening of Government Administration and Assistance to the Civil Service Reform in the Republic of Uzbekistan; Tacis, January 2001



All the times I stayed or lived in a *mahalla* (in two *mahallas* in Dushanbe and one in Gharm) the people did not actually perceive it as a *mahalla*. People living with the rules, created by the *mahalla*, were not aware of the rules of the game they were following. I found that in Tajikistan *mahallas* are not ethnically homogenous. In a way, a *mahalla* is simply formed by people living together in one neighbourhood.

The *mahallas* where I lived in Dushanbe and Gharm were institutionalized to a small extent and did not give the impression that the *mahalla* was an effective example of Tajik local self-governance, nor that it was increasingly being instrumentalized by Tajik state authorities. The Tajik state administration only goes down to the *jamoat* (sub-district) level and stops before the *mahalla* level. Links between the *jamoat* (sub-district) and *hukumat* (district government) are extremely limited, as are the links between the *jamoat* and the *mahalla* level. Mutual obligations are not defined.

I lived in two *mahallas* in Dushanbe, which were mixed Tajik, Uzbek and Russian, and this did not appear to be a problem.

Further, I did not observe that the people attended structured *mahalla* meetings or talked about the head of the *mahalla* as a fixed position. One of the very few times when the men of the *mahalla* met in an organized inclusive way was for prayer, especially during the fastening month of Ramadan (Tajik: Ramazon).

Another example was the attic where my proprietor kept his fighting chicken. During the evenings, men from the *mahalla* would come to visit and stay for a few hours, exchanging ideas and the latest in the community.

If a family from the *mahalla* was having a feast (wedding, *maraka* – a feast to remember those who have passed away, circumcision party, etc.), it was supposed to invite the whole *mahalla*. There were also collective *mahalla* celebrations, for example for *Navruz* – the Zoroastrian New Year. Each *mahalla* had its own local mosque. Meeting points of the *mahalla* were in general the mosque or teahouse for men and private homes for women.

## 8.8 Actors

In Tajikistan, I see three different groups of actors involved in the development process on the local level. Firstly, there are private players, usually men, who have influence because they run some kind of profitable business (often illegal) and dominate a certain trade route or sector; people who have earned respect as *muğohidon* (opposition fighters and commanders) during the civil war for defending their local community from aggressors often by running private militias or by managing to 'privatise' large parcels of land and therefore have turned into large landowners that other people depend on. The latest phenomenon is a sort of revival of feudal structures. Often, peasants have to give large amounts of their yields, often one third, to their landlords.

Secondly, there are state players, legitimized and appointed to their respective positions by the state.

Thirdly, there are players 'put into power' by international organisations and local non-governmental organisations.<sup>622</sup>

When we look at these three groups of players, there are the following possible scenarios:

1. On the local level both the state and local NGOs or international organisations co-opt local power holders in order to prevent them from turning into potential rivals and because it is easier to have them on one's own side than on the enemy's.
2. The state at the local level (and also NGOs or IOs) tends to install people in leading positions that are already well embedded in their local communities and are established leaders (so called local strong or big men). This way the state, that usually does not have a lot of legitimacy and power on the local level due to lack of finances and other resources, can increase its power position and legitimacy.

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<sup>622</sup> I met the head of a local NGO in Tajikabad who had previously been a 'warlord', but who was according to respondents doing a good job (visit to Tajikabad in autumn 2003).

3. Local power holders and local NGOs or international organisations can try to build up structures parallel to those of the state structures and therefore undermine the state or capture state structures and instrumentalize them for their own purposes.
4. Big landowners, drug barons and former warlords can act as local authoritative figures because they have a lot of influence on their dependents and they have extensive resources to manipulate representatives of local government.

The question is now, what do these constellations of actors mean for the development process at the local level. To what extent do these constellations of actors vary from region to region? Has the provision of public goods and services deteriorated since the breakdown of the Soviet Union (when certain standards existed) and actor constellations were different? To what degree is the access to these goods and services actually the same for everyone and are the local people satisfied with the level of public goods and services being provided?

### **Constellations of Players**

When I am talking about constellations of players in the governance sphere, the questions that arise are where do these players come from, how do they legitimise themselves, what alliances do they form, who creates their own spheres of influence in which others are not bound to interfere? Another role of these players and stakeholder is that they act as gatekeepers, determining who can participate in certain decision-making processes and who cannot.

In Tajikistan, formal institutions (e.g. the *jamoat* - the sub-district administration) tend to be captured by informal institutions. Network rule tends to prevail over rules by formal official institutions. The central authority in the local communities is mainly perceived as either non-existent or extremely weak due to a lack of financial resources (paying appropriate salaries and lacking project budgets) and the lack of power to implement policies. Especially in the two regions of Tajikistan previously controlled by the opposition, the districts of the Rasht valley and the autonomous region of Mountain-Badakhshan, the centre is 'perceived as far away'.

Evidently, in Tajikistan the development process at the local level is highly influenced and steered by these local sets of actors, alliances of local power holders and, in some cases, representatives of INGOs and/ or local NGOs.

In the Rasht valley the local ruling set of actors mainly consists of an alliance of former *muğohidon* (former combatants and commanders from the time of the civil war) and local (informal) religious authorities (such as the *Sheikh* of Childara and *Shoh* from Jirgatal). Only on an *ad hoc* basis do these players act in cooperation with the state.

#### **8.8.1 Case Study – Governance Structures in Cotton Areas**

Farmers are forced to sell their cotton yields in advance and when the actual harvest sets in they often find that the yields turn out to be less than what they have already been sold for. The result is extensive debts and dependency relationships that can be maintained for decades and are used by the current regime as an instrument of control. Especially in the south-western region around Kurghan-Teppa, where cotton is mono-cultivated by an alliance usually consisting of the Director of the respective collective farm, the Chairperson of the district administration (in Tajik *raisi hukumat*) and the Director of the cotton-processing plant exercising total control over the peasants. In effect, the workforce's dependence is similar to work relationships during feudal times.

The Chairperson of the district administration installs the farm director. Dependency relations are maintained through methods such as small farmers only getting access to the production devices (technical equipment, fertilizer) of the collective farm if they plant at least 60 to 70 percent cotton on the land they are renting. The cotton factory holds a monopoly and is run by a joint stock company in which the state owns over 50 percent.

This business is reportedly of strategic importance to at least three networks of patronage that entered into an informal power sharing agreement: the President, the Prime Minister and a group of former field-commanders. The desperate situation of dependent farmers has already led to a series of protests in the Kurghan-Teppa region, with the result that in the cotton-growing area where the state is extracting most of its income, the local population is actually the poorest in Tajikistan in cross-regional comparison.<sup>623</sup>

The given constellation of players and the modes of governance in place, however, should not be seen as irrational or random, but instead have to be interpreted as a new way of rational choice made by local alliances in power. The local elites chose this particular version of state-building or state consolidation because it was rational according to their personal interest of extracting as many resources as possible for their own good and because it was the least cost-intensive for them. Given all the attempts that have been made to steer these modes of governance and the overall development process into a different direction, this version of 'statehood' has proven to be quite resistant and capable of surviving, which can be considered an indicator for the fact that this system is actually quite adequate because it fits the given local context (Christophe 2005: 16).

Modes of governance are a collective term for constantly changing constellations of players and alliances, which between them generate identities that are constantly shifting. Modes of local governance have a sustainable impact on state structures, which affect the development process and limit the emergence of new structures. Consequently, external forces, e.g. international organisations, INGOs, and other states, eventually only have an extremely limited impact on the inner dynamics of the development process.

## 8.9 Unofficial Institutions and Leaders

In Tajikistan during Soviet times, life was very much regulated. The rules of the game, even though there were some clashes between different sets of rules in the early days, were clear and well settled. When the overarching institutional framework of the Soviet Union fell apart, the struggle for which would be the dominating set of rules started all over again. The different sets of rules present at that time were three-fold. First, there were the rules of the game left over from the legal system of the Soviet state; second, there were local culturally-defined rules of the game; and finally, those sets of rules defined by religion and by the Koran itself.

In fact, the clash between different sets of rules and the lack of clarity regarding which set of rules ought to be applied, was then one of the main causes or structural preconditions for the outbreak of the Tajik civil war. During the civil war the rules of the game were very much in flux, communist against Islamist, secular against religious, traditionalists against modernists, formal against informal, etc. Informality was taking over and steering processes on the local level.

Following the Tajik civil war, former warlords and (pseudo-)religious leaders<sup>624</sup> turned out to be very much in charge of setting the rules of the game on the local level. Local men became leaders in the course of the civil war because they took good care of their constituents during these difficult times. Men became legitimized leaders through protection measures, but also war activities.<sup>625</sup> Leaders, for example, gained respect for physically protecting the people of their village during the war and for investing their wealth into the wellbeing of the villagers.

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<sup>623</sup> ASIA-PLUS: "Debt", Dushanbe, June 2007; information was also taken from a group interview with NGO-workers in Kulyab in June 2005

<sup>624</sup> Respondents, local employees of an NGO, in Tavildara told me during an interview in October 2003 about the *Sheikh*. See the case study in section 8.1.1.

<sup>625</sup> These discoveries are based on interviews with respondent in Tavildara in March 2004. Interestingly; Tajiks would never use the term war to describe the Tajik civil war, but would circumscribe it as "those events" or "those difficult years".

Even if this was financed with illegal money from drug or arms trade, the effort made by the local leader was very much appreciated by the village population.<sup>626</sup>

Tajikistan was one of the Soviet Union's satellite republics that was the least penetrated by Soviet formal rules of the game. In fact, life at the local level in rural areas remained very much structured by what the *rish-i safed* (Tajik term: whitebeard) and the council of elders were deciding for the village community. Therefore, even today the power and sanction capacity of these traditional institutions should not be underestimated. Largely these traditional institutions were formalized during Soviet times, but became again part of the informal sphere after the Soviet Union fell apart and Tajikistan fell into the civil unrest that cost up to 80,000 people their lives in only two years.

### **Criminal Networks, Organized Crime and Former Warlords**

Criminal networks and individuals significantly shape economic and political structures on the ground in Tajikistan today. Until today, none of the Central Asian states has developed a coherent strategy that could prevent the activities of criminal networks and individuals. Organized crime in Central Asia embodies groups and individuals engaged in illicit businesses and racketeering. "Whether these entities manifest themselves as a radical religious group, a gang involved in drug trafficking or a political figure controlling illicit businesses – all are interested in material profits" (Marat 2006: 14).

Chaotic economic activity gradually developed into regulatory systems. Shuttle traders acted as micro-providers of social cohesion in the local communities by importing and retailing goods and services. While in the centre the state was still being built, non-state groups were strengthening and consolidating economic and social networks. Informal networks subsequently triumphed in domains where the state's law enforcement was not able to penetrate, i.e. in areas such as smuggling, trafficking in drugs, persons, and arms (Marat 2006: 35).

Finally, groups of sportsmen, especially from martial arts and wrestling, developed into criminal networks.<sup>627</sup> The Soviet Union had invested a lot into sports in general and it had been particularly prestigious to be a good sportsman. Younger sportsmen and young people in general saw older sportsmen as authorities. In Khorugh, respondents reported a conflict between different parts of the town in which people had partly been mobilized along the lines of sport communities.<sup>628</sup>

In the post-civil war period in Tajikistan, former warlords and criminals increasingly had a chance to legalize their businesses and wealth and integrate into mainstream society. During my field research in the Rasht valley, I came across many (local informal) leaders who, in some cases, became formal leaders and moved to the national level, e.g. Mirzo Jaga and Makhmadrozi Iskandarov (see the table on the next page).

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<sup>626</sup> In autumn 2003, when I was doing field research

<sup>627</sup> Interview with two development workers in Khorugh in October 2003. The importance of communities of sportsmen is also confirmed by (Marat 2006: 37)

<sup>628</sup> Interviews with two NGO workers in Khorugh in July 2004

Name	Origin	Time of Emergence	Famous for
<b>In the Rasht Valley</b>			
<b>Namangani</b>	Namangan	During the civil war	Kidnappings, from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
<b>Mullah</b>	Tajikabad		One of the most respected <i>mullahs</i> of Tajikistan, has his own <i>madrassa</i> , solves conflicts between <i>mullahs</i> , has authority in the entire Rasht valley, has a <i>krysha</i> in Dushanbe, respected by the President
<b>Sheikh</b>	Tajikabad	During civil war, former combatant	Has his own <i>madrassa</i>
<b>Sheikh</b>	Childara in Tavildara	During Soviet era	Respected as a religious authority & a big land owner, used to be the <i>sovkhos</i> director during Soviet times and was forcing non- <i>sovkhos</i> staff members to breed silk worms; the Minister of Emergencies (Mirzo Jaga) at the time is his relative
<b>Mirzo Jaga</b>	Tavildara	During the war	Former member of the opposition who was co-opted into the new Government as the Minister for Emergencies
<b>Panjara</b>	Childara in Tavildara	During civil war, former combatant	Nephew of the <i>Sheikh</i> , is called 'Panjara' because 5 bullets hit him during a battle during the war and he survived anyway
<b>Mahmadrozi</b>	Tajikabad		Influences the district government, big land owner
<b>Ramon Gitler (Hitler)</b>		During the civil war	Connected to Mullah Abdullah, is called Gitler (= Hitler) due to his Hitler-like behaviour
<b>Mullah Abdullah</b>	Nurabad/Darband	Cruel commander during the civil war	Connected to Ramon Gitler, was thrown out of Tajikistan in 2000
<b>Sijorasho</b>	Nurabad/Darband		Head of district, very influential person, he "fixed the system" in Nurabad (militia and KGB are functioning very well), has good relations with the president, controls a lot of land and is running a private school in Nurabad
<b>Shoh</b>	Hait (Gharm)	During the civil war	Big patron and drug dealer, former commander of border troops in Jirgatal, affiliated with the head of the district in Jirgatal, big land owner, controls the potato trade to Dushanbe and the vodka and tobacco trade through the Rasht valley, he is the 'owner' of a coal mine in Hait
<b>Makhmadrozi Iskandarov</b>	Gharm		Brother of <i>Shoh</i> (their brother used to be Ambassador to Afghanistan), head of the Democratic Party in 2004, one of the main opposition figures
<b>Salamsho Mukhabatov</b>		During the civil war	Former commander of the opposition, comrade of Iskandarov who he still works politically
<b>Mirzoev</b>	Tajikabad	During the civil war	Commander in the <i>United Tajik Opposition</i> (UTO), after the war became district-head of an NGO
<b>Hurinisso Ghafforzoda</b> or Mutabari Rashti	Gharm	During Soviet times	Political activist from the side of the opposition, in 2004 she was the head of two NGOs (I will get back to her in the appendix, section 10).
<b>Talib</b> (means student)		Was an advisor to the President	The name suggests connections to Afghanistan
<b>In Mountain-Badakhshan</b>			
<b>Commander</b>	Khorugh	During the war	Commander who had a direct connection to the Taliban, he talked to them by radio every day and had a lot of money from Arabs
<b>Yodgorsho</b>	Khorugh	During the war	Well-known warlord, who was in 2003 mainly acting as investor (building a hotel), he was still an idol for the young people, was perfectly cooperating with the <i>hukumat</i> and was about to become a positive authority figure

In Shurabad			
<b>Bahromsho</b>	A Darvazi from Shurabad	During the war	Former Government commander, after the war turned district-head of an NGO in Shurabad and then regional head of the NGO in Kulyab, according to himself lives in the “street of winners” in Kulyab

There are certainly many more that could be named as informal local leaders, but at the time of my field research in 2003/04 this was still a very sensitive issue and it was not easy to collect this kind of information.

### **Shoh – The ‘King’ of Jirgatal**

As an example of an important local power holder with a big consolidated network, I would like to mention a big drug-baron, called *Shoh* (Tajik for King) in Jirgatal.<sup>629</sup> *Shoh* is originally from Hait (Gharm district). In Hait there is coalmine that provides very good quality coal. *Shoh* is controlling the coalmine, it is considered his property and it is he who sets the prices. *Shoh* has a big residence in Jirgatal. The people used to say about *Shoh*: “People did not have bread and *Shoh* had a jeep.”<sup>630</sup>

In 2004 *Shoh* further controlled the whole flow of drugs through the Rasht valley to Kyrgyzstan and the whole potato trade from Jirgatal to the capital Dushanbe as well as the tobacco, vodka and coal trade in the region.

Only *Shoh* himself had access to the markets in Dushanbe because he had a well-established network there. At the same time during my field research, it was still easy for him to get drugs over the border to Kyrgyzstan because he had been the commander of the Tajik border troops.

His last major connection or network link was that he was engaged to the *raisai jamoat* (female chairperson of the sub-district) of Jirgatal. Therefore, *Shoh’s* network had quite a broad geographical (concerning space) and vertical dimension; it went from the local level in Jirgatal to the national level in Dushanbe.<sup>631</sup>

When there was a clash in the 1990s in Khudjand with Uzbek forces, *Shoh* was fighting on the Tajik side and he was considered a commander of the Tajiks.<sup>632</sup>

In 2004, *Shoh* was removed from his position as the main commander of the border troops on the border with Kyrgyzstan. He then became the commander of troops in the Sughd region (in Ura-Teppa). Judging from the strength of his network, he probably managed to keep dominating the different trade sectors, even in the new posting.

Many of *Shoh’s* relatives are also prominent figures in Tajikistan. His brother is Makhmadrozi Iskandarov, who used to be the head of the national gas company and then became the Minister for Emergencies and the head of the main opposition party - *Democratic Party* (DPT).

Their nephew, O. Nijozov, used to work for a local NGO in the Rasht valley until March 2004. His father used to be the head of the department for the countries of Asia and Africa in the Foreign Ministry, until he became the Tajik Ambassador to Afghanistan in the early 1990s. He held this position for six years. Finally, his mother is a journalist and used to be the head of the opposition newspaper, called *Charogi Ruz* (Tajik for the Light of the Day).<sup>633</sup>

The inter-linkage between these three power holders (*Shoh*, Makhmadrozi Iskandarov and the former Ambassador to Afghanistan) shows that to a large extent political power structures in Tajikistan are infiltrated by informal networks like that of

<sup>629</sup> Shoh Iskandarov is also the brother of one of the biggest warlords, Makhmadrozi Iskandarov (used to be the head of the national gas company) and I met their nephew in Gharm, who then worked for MSDSP.

<sup>630</sup> Interview with an NGO worker in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>631</sup> Interview with a young employee of a local NGO in Gharm in February 2004

<sup>632</sup> Interview with an NGO worker in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>633</sup> I held an interview with his nephew, an employee of a local NGO in Gharm in March 2004

the Iskandarov family and that these kinds of structures significantly determine the development process on the local level.

### 8.9.1 Female Political and Social Leaders

In Tajik society today, the power and influence of some female local leaders in decision-making at the local level and in local governance structures should not be neglected. These women draw their legitimacy from being from respected families or their high level of education, which they mostly received during Soviet times. The most 'profitable' combination is when a woman comes from a respected family and is particularly well educated at the same time.<sup>634</sup>

#### A Women's Leader in Shugnan, Mountain-Badakhshan

One of these women is the leader of a women's group in Porshinev. She is an influential woman. She does not only lead the women, but also has influence on men and the decisions they take. She is the sister-in-law of a local person of authority, who in 2003 was the head of a local NGO. She does not have children herself, but raised eight children of her relatives'. People do not bring her presents to influence her decision taking, i.e. bribe her.<sup>635</sup>

Women leaders are not a new phenomenon; they existed in the pre-Soviet era and were reinforced under the Soviet. Nevertheless, I wanted to emphasise that even in a highly patriarchal society, there is always space for alternative power patterns that tend to coexist.

One respondent said that his great-grandmother had even been a *hakim* (head of an administrative unit) under the Emir of Bukhara.<sup>636</sup> The following case studies show the arena for manoeuvring some women have in their local communities.

#### Female Leaders in Langar, Ishkashim and Darvaz (Mountain-Badakhshan)

In June 2004, I visited the town of Langar in the district of Ishkashim, in Mountain-Badakhshan. Here I got to know a lady who was a locally respected figure, a female local leader. By education, she was a teacher.<sup>637</sup> At the point when I met her, she acted as the head of a cluster of *village organisations*, an institution that had been initiated by MSDSP to link *village organisations* with the district level.<sup>638</sup>

In the district of Ishkashim, there was an impressive woman who was the head of a local NGO in the district of Ishkashim and had previously been the deputy head of the district.<sup>639</sup> Her main concern was the education of girls. She had just recently arranged for three female students to go to university in Dushanbe. This *raisa* (how she was addressed as Chairwoman) said that she was especially interested in projects for women and she stressed the benefit of the micro-credit the organisation she was working for gave to women.

In 2004, this *raisa* was involved in creating five training centres (for sewing, computer skills, telephone operation, medicine and pedagogy) especially for young women to get a professional education. She further contributed to the medical college of

<sup>634</sup> In this regard also see the appendix on page 210

<sup>635</sup> Interview with a female employee of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003

<sup>636</sup> Interview with a local development worker in Gharm in March 2004

<sup>637</sup> Becoming a teacher is often the first opportunity for a woman to work outside the house. Being a teacher is also, for women, widely accepted.

<sup>638</sup> The interview with her was conducted at her house and office in Langar (Ishkashim district) in June 2004

<sup>639</sup> Interview with the female head of the Ishkashim district office of a local NGO in June 2004

Khorugh opening a branch in Ishkashim. She mentioned that there was a presidential quota for women, so that 13 percent of them would study and get a professional education, and she said that this was especially meant for women from poor and remote districts, such as Ishkashim.

In addition, the district head of MSDSP, a local NGO in Darvaz, Mountain-Badakhshan, was a woman. During my stay in Tajikistan, I visited the MSDSP office in Darvaz several times and saw how dominating this woman was when managing the office. When she would start speaking, everybody was silent, listening to her.<sup>640</sup>

### 8.9.2 The New Law

In the context of local governance structures, I would also like to mention this example of a new law, where the state is allegedly making an effort to regulate things that have formerly been in the informal sphere. It is not a measure that is taken by local government, but surprisingly, it is an issue at the local level that has been taken up by the national level, and is now regulated by a decree from the President.

In May 2007, the Tajik President Rahmon introduced a new law regulating the way family events, such as weddings, circumcision parties, funerals and other social events should be conducted.<sup>641</sup>

The new rule was that the number of guests should not exceed 150 people. This clearly contradicts what respondents stated as being “a proper number of guests” (that a minimum of 400 people had to be invited). With this new regulation, the President is provoking a conflict between traditional informal and new official rules.

Another part of the new legislation is that at these kinds of occasions the food on the tables should not be “luxurious”. This kind of regulation indicates that Tajikistan is a ‘command state’ as it leaves a lot of space for interpretation, which again can create conflict about what is actually meant and intended by the respective law.

In each *mahalla* (Tajik term for living quarter) there is a person responsible for family affairs. It is his role to report to the *hukumat* (district administration), in cases where this regulation is violated.

A respondent told me that often disagreements arose in regard to violations of this new law. In addition, there were complaints that the person responsible for family affairs in the *mahalla* would come to the family event and behave as if he was invited, even though he had not officially been invited by the host.<sup>642</sup>

The new law introduced in May 2007 is a measure of control that is not welcomed by many parts of society, and people even have the impression that the President is too interfering into their personal lives and the private sphere.<sup>643</sup> However, the question really is whether such minor details should be regulated at the national level and whether the President does not have more urgent issues to work on.

The introduction of this new law also shows how conflicts between informal and formal rules of the game can arise and how difficult it is for the state to navigate between taking control, the state-building effort and crossing the line to interfering in personal affairs, violating traditional rules of the game.

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<sup>640</sup> I interviewed her colleague at the MSDSP office in Darvaz in November 2003

<sup>641</sup> This might be a measure to limit expenses. The President himself, however, likes to drive the newest model of Mercedes with tinted windows through Dushanbe.

<sup>642</sup> Interview with a local OSCE employee in Dushanbe in February 2008

<sup>643</sup> Rahmon, despite his insistence that others cut back on opulent displays, is building a massive official residence for himself. Nigel, Clive: Expect the Unexpected from the President, [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 09/14/07



### 8.9.3 New Modes of Implementation

I claimed earlier that the state is investing into the southern region, Khatlon (where the government elite is from), but to a much lesser extent into the former opposition regions, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan (which are more supported through international organisations and NGOs). See the two maps on the following page showing the change in 'governance cocktails'.

Immediately following the civil war, the main division between the regions defining governance was whether they were pro-government or pro-opposition. Today, governance mostly depends on the actors dominating the provision of public goods, whether this is the state or international organisations and NGOs. The provision of public goods in Kulyab today is mainly managed by the state. In the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan, the provision of public goods is primarily managed by international organisations and NGOs.

This may be explained by the following. After the civil war in 1997 when most international organisations and NGOs started moving in, they assessed the situation and conducted baseline studies in order to capture the current situation and in order to measure their progress against this baseline data later on. These organisations increasingly started building up trust-relationships with the local population. As in the case of the Mountain Societies Development Support Programme (MSDSP) and UNDP, new institutions (*village organisations* and *Jamoat Resource Centres*) were founded to empower the local communities, to make the development process more participatory and to have a local partner through which development aid could be channelled. Nevertheless, as the years went on these organisations did not necessarily re-assess the need for external support and did not check whether the communities they were involved with were still the most vulnerable.

This kind of situation is actually not surprising. For external actors it is always difficult to find local partners and to shape and strengthen structures through which development aid can be channelled and projects be successfully implemented. The investment regarding community mobilization is enormous and therefore once communities are mobilized and the system is functioning, organisations rarely want to pull out and start from scratch in other parts of the country.

## 9. Chapter 6: The Provision of Public Goods and Services in Rural Areas

In the previous chapter, I closely examined the local governance structures and the rules of the game or institutions in place at the local level. Further, I looked at what structures there have been traditionally, such as the *mahalla*, and at what community development structures are now newly being introduced by international organisations. I also started to review what the most profitable governance or actors' setup is in terms of the provision of public goods and services on the ground. At the same time, I explored how state functions are increasingly being outsourced to alternative providers.

In the following chapter, I will focus even more on the provision of public goods and services provided on the ground. I have chosen internal and external security, healthcare, education, access to information, land and water, and finally the provision of mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution as the main public goods and services that I want to analyse in more detail.

The definition of governance – particularly local governance - that informs my analysis at this point is the following: Governance is about institutions, i.e. the rules of the game. It is a term that refers to functions that are fulfilled in order to create statehood. The most important function of statehood is probably the provision of public goods and services.<sup>644</sup>

### 9.1 Statehood and the Provision of Public Goods

When discussing statehood, one has to think about what differentiates the concept of state from statehood. I define statehood as the outcome of a functioning state and good governance. Statehood means that there are systems in place that people can rely on, a social net that catches them when they fall. If a state is weak, i.e. cannot fulfil its core functions, statehood is not or insufficiently existent. In return, statehood is an indicator for how well a state functions. It includes rule-of-law, accountability, the sufficient provision of public goods and services, and institutions for conflict resolution.

Regarding the provision of public goods, Tajikistan is marked by insufficient statehood. The state is providing minimal schooling, healthcare, infrastructure and security. Just enough is done – buffered by the effort of international organisations and NGOs - to prevent a rebellion by the people. Therefore, social forces (from within and outside the state) have developed new alternative modes of governance in order to deal with the deficiencies of the state and the poor statehood. In the course of my research, I discovered gaps left open that in a properly functioning state would be filled by statehood.

Particularly in rural (opposition) areas, these 'gaps' were filled by new modes of local governance created by a variety of actors (local power holders – great landowners, former *muğohidon*<sup>645</sup>, religious authorities, NGOs, IOs and others). Migdal confirms this observation and says that in the Tajik context in many sectors "...local leaders have become the brokers for the contracts, jobs, goods, services, force, and authority that filter through the bureaucratic tentacles of the state." (Migdal 2001: 93).

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<sup>644</sup> Public goods are non-rivalries, meaning that its benefits do not exhibit scarcity from an individual point of view (it is not zero-sum game, whatever one loses the other wins), once it has been produced (such as clean air or water) each person can benefit from it without diminishing anyone else's enjoyment. Public goods are in addition to that non-excludable, meaning that once it has been created, it is impossible to prevent people from gaining access to the service.

<sup>645</sup> *Muğohidon* is the Tajik plural term for (opposition) fighter during the Tajik civil war.

The assumption here is that a state-building process is the precondition for the emergence of statehood. Once a proper functioning *Rechtsstaat* (German for rule of law state) exists, statehood will emerge 'naturally'. To create rule of law, however, is a big step by itself.

Many respondents mentioned that during the Soviet period, they thought that they were living in socialism and were always waiting for communism to arrive. Only after the Soviet Union fell apart did they realize that they had already been living in a communist system, because under the Soviet system everybody was physically safe, had the chance to go to school, did have free access to healthcare, could more or less rely on the courts if a criminal act occurred, and so forth. For the people, the lack of all of these services was the biggest loss that heavily affected their lives after the breakdown of the Soviet Union.

Functioning conflict processing institutions and procedures are a constituent element of functioning statehood. This implies the capacity of local formal and informal, official and unofficial institutions to deal with conflict (clashing interests) in a constructive and non-violent way, which allows state and society to adapt to changing circumstances. In 'healthy' societies there are informal mechanisms for conflict resolution, but they are often backed up by mechanisms put in place by the state. If these informal mechanisms fail, the state steps in to regulate the conflict. In countries where these state mechanisms are missing, conflict can easily escalate.

Only after the state has been strengthened sustainably can the state-building process lead to the outcome of a functioning statehood. Western researchers usually take western states as the measure or as the norm. In fact, the majority of states in the world are not constitutional states and people often cannot rely on functioning statehoods, especially in post-war countries, and they have to find mechanisms that allow for state deficiencies.

The provision of public goods belongs to the core functions of the state. In cases where the state is not even able to fulfil these functions properly, the level of development is very low. In Tajikistan, there is a great divide between urban and rural areas in terms of the access to public goods and services. It is much more difficult to access public goods and services in rural areas than in urban areas.

The provision of public goods is the most important thing for the people. Especially in post-Soviet societies; people measure the state by the extent to which security, healthcare, education, electricity, heating, transport infrastructure etc. is provided. If one starts development projects, infrastructure, connected to the provision of public goods, is the first thing people ask for. The local people need visible outputs and basic needs have to be secured for people to be satisfied and eventually have trust in their government.

In areas of limited statehood, e.g. post-conflict societies, it is the state that leaves open gaps in terms of the provision of public goods, particularly regarding the provision of physical security. Klemp and Poeschke describe the outsourcing process as follows: "In many countries these systems produce functional equivalents to governance outputs....Where the state fails or is not present, traditional systems fulfil basic (state) functions on the local level" (Klemp & Poeschke 2005: 22)

It is not only Tajikistan that is unable to provide public goods and services to its citizens in the region. Each of the Central Asian states, by being unable or lacking the incentive to develop the education system, healthcare, police, provide jobs and other social services, feeds into the mobilization of organized criminal groups and the

rise of their leaders. None of the Central Asian states can achieve these goals alone, international assistance is needed for the time being to provide these social services (Marat 2006: 10).

## 9.2 Outsourcing of State Functions

According to the Country Report 2008 by the Bertelsmann Foundation, “the current level of social welfare is well below that of the Soviet era. Social welfare policies do not correspond to the changed social context and to the development perspectives for this sector.”<sup>646</sup> A coping mechanism is therefore the outsourcing of state functions to alternative providers. Outsourcing is a term borrowed from the field of economics and refers to instances when an ‘enterprise’ starts to pass on a particular branch of production to another company. Outsourcing is of major importance in Tajikistan. The outsourcing of state functions to alternative agents by definition has to be initiated by the state. If this process is not initiated by the state or goes against the pursued policy of the state, one would rather call this mechanism (state) capture.

Outsourcing occurs if there is a lack of resources and the state has little capacity to fulfil its functions by itself.

In case of capture, an actor other than the state completely takes over a territory or a functional sector of the state, such as external security. The reverse process is re-capture, in which the state takes over a function that has previously been outsourced to a particular agent.<sup>647</sup> A state that is not capable of re-capturing its core functions can be defined as weak. There are several ‘agencies’ that state functions can be outsourced to. Alternative providers of statehood can be foreign troops (in the case of security), foreign and local companies, NGOs, criminal groups, and finally INGOs<sup>648</sup>.

In many rural areas of Tajikistan, local NGOs, such as MSDSP, and international organisations, such as UNDP, are important service providers. In Mountain-Badakhshan in particular, the population only survived periods of extreme scarcity during the civil war because in 1993 the *Aga Khan Foundation* had become heavily involved in the land distribution process so that food security could be increased and people be saved from starvation.<sup>649</sup>

In rural communities in Tajikistan, local power brokers or ‘strongmen’ very often set the rules of the game and define the connections between various levels of society. These strongmen, bosses<sup>650</sup>, patrons or however one might want to call them oppose horizontal social control by local people and have the means to make people stick to

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<sup>646</sup> “Every year the government increases the budget to support the social welfare system. State expenditure for social welfare amounts to around 2% of GDP per annum (2005). Health care expenditure as a proportion of GDP in Tajikistan dropped from 6.4% in 1994 to 1.3% in 2005.”; 2008 Country Report by the the Bertelsmann Foundation, on: [www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de](http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de), sighted 25 February 2009, p.15-16

<sup>647</sup> By re-capture, I mean the fact that the Tajik state re-claimed the border control from the Russians on the Chinese-Tajik border.

<sup>648</sup> As it is the case with for AKF. Examples of *outsourcing* include the guarding of the Tajik-Afghan border on Tajik side is *outsourced* to CIS troops that are *de facto* Russian troops (e.g. at the level of the commanders the guards are Russians and below that they are Tajik natives). In addition, emergency relief (for the public good) is outsourced to IOs in Tajikistan.

<sup>649</sup> An agricultural specialist from MSDSP in Khorugh, Imatbek (June 2004) said that the process of distribution of land had already started in 1995 and that it would only be totally completed by the end of this year (2004). Only four state farms were still left: one in Sagredasht, one in Rushan, and two livestock farms in Murghab.

<sup>650</sup> “...a boss may often function as a patron... he is the most powerful man in the arena...his power rests more on inducements and sanctions at his disposal than on affection or status.”; The term boss refers to the phenomenon of men using their control over the state in order to exploit resources. (Sidel 1999: 19).

their rules of the game (sanction capacities). The patron-client relationships they create not only divides society by defining who is in and who is out, but at the same time tend to crosscut and undermine potential cleavages based on class, ethnicity (including religion), region, and gender. Particularistic alliances or *networks* based on bonds of personal reciprocity emerge and function instead (Sidel 1999: 7). Local strongmen are the heads of these influential networks. They have an interest in keeping the state weak in order to rule their own territories without the state interfering.

Under Soviet legacies, I mentioned that state weakness could be linked to the emergence of criminal structures and that therefore one of the Soviet legacies was the increased importance of criminal structures in Central Asia. Due to the weakness of state institutions that were unable to supply basic public services, “intermediaries between the state and the rural communities emerged as the gap between the two widened in the 1990s” (Marat 2006: 6). Another problem in this periphery was that there was a lack of entrepreneurship and that this vacuum was increasingly filled by new actors, such as directors of industrial and production sites, sportsmen, former inmates, shuttle traders and other actors with some experience in economic activities or with political connections, who had benefited from the collapse of the Soviet regime and had taken chances as new opportunities emerged. These new actors on the scene mobilized into networks on the local and transnational level much faster than the newly independent states could develop state institutions and re-configure old economic ties. The communities at the local level welcomed the emergence of these new structures as they brought at least some kind of order. In the course of further developments, a mutual relationship developed between these criminal structures and the state. These criminal structures increasingly started to develop political ambitions and ‘the state’ (and the personalities behind it) wanted to get a share of the profits made by these ‘entrepreneurs’. In comparison with other Central Asian states, in Tajikistan there was limited mobilization of criminal actors outside of the state (Marat 2006: 6-7).

In Tajikistan, these power holders were often involved in the process of land reform by controlling the distribution of large parcels of land during the civil war, especially in the Rasht valley. Many only appeared during the civil war and emerged from it as powerful proprietors (e.g. the *Sheikh* of Childara, see section 8.1.1).

### 9.3 Security

In terms of the provision of public goods and services, the first I will examine is the provision of physical security. One of the major achievements of the post-war period in Tajikistan is that people are physically safe. There is no open violence in the streets that cannot be controlled by the state.

In my view, security is a very important public good and particularly in post-war societies the provision of security is a precondition for many other steps in the development process. What is the use of a newly constructed road if it cannot be used due to lack of security, as is for example the case in neighbouring Afghanistan? In the field of security one needs to differentiate between internal order and external protection, Draude calls external protection “protecting independence from external threat” (Draude 2007: 3-5).

### 9.3.1 External Security

Tajikistan has, in terms of external security, a total of 3,651 km of border to defend. The border with Afghanistan is 1,206 km, with China 414 km, with Kyrgyzstan 870 km and with Uzbekistan 1,161 km.<sup>651</sup> Externally, for Tajikistan the biggest 'threat' is the influx of drugs from Afghanistan. Other than that, Tajikistan is not in danger of being annexed by one of its neighbouring states.

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the Tajik civil war it was decided that the Tajik-Afghan border would, for the time being, be guarded by CIS-troops. The task was mainly fulfilled by Tajik troops under Russian command. The Russian side still for many years considered the Tajik-Afghan border as 'their' border. The Tajiks were from the beginning not very happy with this arrangement and knew that as part of the state-building process the Tajik state would have to regain control over the Tajik-Afghan border. This transfer finally gradually took place in 2005. Even if the border is now more porous, i.e. drug trafficking has increased, the transition has been made and most respondents see this as a major step towards independence and building their own statehood.<sup>652</sup> Even in 2003 (before the official handover of the guarding of the border to Tajik troops), a respondent on the Tajik-Afghan border stated that he was afraid to leave his house after darkness because he feared getting in between Afghan drug-traffickers and Tajik border police.<sup>653</sup>

#### Border Management

As the state is too weak to fully take care of border management. International partners are getting involved. UNDP, funded by the EU, has developed a programme called Border Management programme in Central Asia (BOMCA) that aims at facilitating the licit flow of persons and goods across Central Asian borders and at increasing security in Central Asia.

As its second component, CADAP aims at fostering a developmental oriented drug control strategy in Central Asia that ensures sustained reduction of drug consumption and trafficking in line with European Commission Drug Strategies. 4 million USD were spent in this regard in 2005 and 2006. The current BOMCA Programme in Tajikistan is soon to be partially replicated on the Afghan side under the BOMAF programme.<sup>654</sup> BOMCA has conducted numerous training sessions for border staffs and rehabilitated infrastructure for border control. BOMCA has identified three pilot locations in Tajikistan to reinforce border management capabilities; those are Darvaz, Khorugh and Ishkashim (all located in Mountain-Badakhshan).<sup>655</sup>

BOMCA is also trying to increase transnational cooperation in terms of border protection. The Tajik and Kyrgyz Drug Control Agencies (DCA) admit that little collaboration takes place as the coordination of activities, especially with Uzbekistan, is complicated (Marat 2006: 47).

Furthermore, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs of the US Department of State provides security assistance to Tajikistan. "Attention by the international community in the wake of the war in Afghanistan has brought increased economic development and security assistance, which could create jobs and increase stability in the long

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<sup>651</sup> CIA. The World Factbook: Tajikistan, on: [www.cia.gov](http://www.cia.gov), sighted 05/08/08

<sup>652</sup> In 2004, before the transition, there was a lot of talk in Tajikistan about how it would be after the transfer. Most of my respondents agreed that it was a good step if the Tajik border troops would take over control, e.g. interview with a local businessman in Khorugh in June 2004

<sup>653</sup> Interview with a teacher in the district of Shurabad in October 2003

<sup>654</sup> BOMCA Progress Report, June 2006, on: <http://bomca.eu-bomca.kg>, sighted 05/08/08

<sup>655</sup> Border Management in Central Asia, Phase 5, The European Union's Central Asia Drug Action Programme, Progress Report May 2008, on: <http://bomca.eu-bomca.kg>, p.5, sighted 05/08/08

term. Tajikistan is in the early stages of seeking World Trade Organization membership and has joined NATO's Partnership for Peace.<sup>656</sup>

Regarding external security and border control, the link between weak statehood and the emergence of organized crime becomes particularly evident. "This linkage, involving a variety of relations between the narcotics industry and state officials and bodies, threatens all states of the region, though its effect is disproportionate on small and weak states near Afghanistan, the world's main producer of heroin." (Marat 2006: 50).

Border management in Tajikistan nevertheless remains a very difficult case. How bad the situation of border control is was highlighted in a recent case when two border guards were caught leaving their post and passing over to the Uzbek side to earn money.<sup>657</sup> Border guards do not even earn enough money to survive.

### 9.3.2 Internal Security

The Tajik government has been successful in restoring internal security. In 2002, the situation was still entirely different from what it is today. I was advised not to leave the house after 8.00 p.m.

One night I was forced to leave the house again after eight because I did not have the right key to the apartment where I was supposed to stay. When I went through the streets of central Dushanbe, there was almost nobody in the about. Today, young people are returning home from a night out in the early morning and there are no security restrictions whatsoever.

In Tajikistan today, security issues are still sometimes used to justify a certain code of conduct. Some parents in Kulyab and the Rasht valley in 2004/2005 still claimed that it was not safe enough to send their daughters to school. I suspect that this was an excuse to cover up their conservatism.<sup>658</sup>

Another factor is that even though the Tajik state has largely managed to restore physical security and protect its citizens against non-state threats, state organs at the same time threaten human security (due to their weakness towards or even direct connection with organized crime), particularly the lives of journalists who report to critically of the regime (Gravingholt 2005: 11).

### 9.4 Healthcare

The healthcare sector is in a devastating state. Access to healthcare is difficult and the quality is extremely limited; but 'clients' also do not seem to ask for improvements.

At the end of the 1980s, Tajikistan had, as in the sphere of education, a level of healthcare that was low in absolute terms and by Soviet standards.<sup>659</sup> The decay of the healthcare system was exacerbated by the civil war. This trend has been continuing since independence and has only slightly been cushioned by outsourcing healthcare, or at least the maintenance of healthcare institutions, to local NGOs and international organisations.

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<sup>656</sup> US Department of State: Tajikistan: Security Assistance, on: [www.state.gov](http://www.state.gov), sighted 16/07/08

<sup>657</sup> Anonymous author: Soldiers who went to earn money in Uzbekistan were sentenced, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>658</sup> I got this information from families in Kulyab, as well as in the Rasht valley. Interviews with peasants in Khovaling (Kulyab) and Darband (Rasht valley) in March 2004 and June 2005

<sup>659</sup> see Library of Congress Country Studies on Health, <http://lcweb2.gov>, sighted 03/02/05

The Tajik state spends 1.1 percent of the GDP on healthcare. The per capita health expenditure is 16 USD.<sup>660</sup> The health sector has particularly been affected by the 'brain drain'. A large proportion of healthcare professionals emigrated after the Soviet Union fell apart and in the course of the civil war, as they had often been experts from outside of the republic.

An indicator for the low quality of healthcare in Tajikistan is that utilisation rates for healthcare are low. The main reason for non-use is 'affordability'. Theoretically, healthcare is still free, as it was during Soviet times, but in fact, at every level there are 'out-of-pocket payments' to be made. "Prescription medication constitutes the most expensive outlay associated with an episode of ill health, averaging nearly 22 Somoni (around seven USD), equivalent to approximately half of the monthly poverty line. The average value of official payments was nine Somoni, informal gifts 5.5 Somoni and travel to the consultation - seven Somoni. Taken together the cost of one episode of child ill health involving a primary care consultation and prescription can easily amount to the parent's total monthly salary. There are no differences in the percentages paying for services during hospitalisation according to whether the patient is a child" (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 6).

One of the consequences has been that people turn away from state institutions towards traditional healers. Instead of investing more into the state health sectors, the Tajik government in December 2007 began cracking down on 'occult' and similar phenomena. Radio Free Europe reported that according to the Parliamentarian Mahmad Rahimov, some 5,000 people in Tajikistan practice witchcraft and fortune telling. Tajik authorities are concerned about the fact that "many people who have health problems or other troubles turn to sorcerers instead of seeking professional help".<sup>661</sup>

The Ministry of Health reported a remarkably high degree of birth trauma, affecting as many as 72 percent of all newborns, and attributed this both to deteriorating medical facilities and a high and steadily increasing number of home births often attended by untrained and poorly equipped midwives. The Ministry of Health reported that 25 percent of those women who died in pregnancy or because of childbirth had never consulted a physician during their pregnancy and usual prenatal care did not even include a general health examination.<sup>662</sup>

In rural areas, medical healthcare is based on and carried out by 'medpoints' (Russian: *medpunkt*). These points are usually staffed by *feldshers* equivalent to nurse practitioners or physician assistants.<sup>663</sup> 'Medpoints' are usually poorly equipped by the state, but often maintained and equipped with the help of local NGOs and international organisations. Today, they provide first aid, work on controlling infectious diseases, report cases of diseases to the *hukumat* (district government) and train local people on sanitation, hygiene and basic health issues. However, not every bigger village has a 'medpoint' and therefore even access to this minimal level of healthcare is often difficult.<sup>664</sup>

The next level of the state healthcare system is hospitals on the district level where people have access to medical personnel such as general practitioners,

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<sup>660</sup> Tajik Health Sector Overview, Principals' Group Meeting, presentation by Dr. Santino Severoni (WHO Country Office), Dushanbe, sighted 13/12/07

<sup>661</sup> Najibullah, Farangis: Tajikistan: Government Reacts to Economic Crisis by Banning Witchcraft, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 25/12/07

<sup>662</sup> Tajikistan Human Development Report 1996, see: [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org), sighted 11/07/07

<sup>663</sup> Same as footnot no. 660

<sup>664</sup> I visited many 'medpoints' in the Rasht valley, GBAO and Khatlon and observed the extent to which they function and they are equipped; many respondents the author talked to claimed that they did not even have access to 'medpoints'.



paediatricians, dentists etc. Sanitary and hygienic conditions of health institutions are insufficient. Patients, for example, have to bring their own bed sheets and often their own food.<sup>665</sup> In low-income groups, more than half of the patients (66 percent) reported that family members administered medicine and 43 percent reported that family members had administered injections (McKee, Healy & Falkingham 2002: 50). Another indicator highlighting the decay of the health system is that the average length of stay in acute hospitals<sup>666</sup> and the admission to acute care beds<sup>667</sup> decreased significantly, because people are simply not able to afford long stays in the hospital anymore. Even after giving birth, women mostly would leave the hospital the day following.<sup>668</sup> Often district hospitals are too far for villagers to access because districts can cover enormous distances and public transport to medical facilities, like ambulances, is not available or the unpaved roads are not passable during large parts of the year.

Already by the mid-1990s, there was a great backlog in the construction of new medical facilities and 80 percent of Tajikistan's healthcare facilities were evaluated as substandard.

Even though drug consumption and related diseases are a significant problem, there was only one drug treatment centre in Dushanbe.<sup>669</sup>

Theoretically, medical treatment is still provided to the people for free, but as salaries of doctors and nurses are extremely low paid, healthcare professionals are forced to take additional fees for services like operations, abortions and births. This leads to a further stratification; low income groups do not have access to healthcare to the same extent as do higher income groups. Practically, healthcare is not a public good anymore, which by definition gives everyone access to the same extent.

A survey carried out by Falkingham in 1999 showed that those living in the poorest fifth were nearly twice as likely to report affordability as the main reason for not seeking healthcare. Nearly a third of the families surveyed went into (further) debt in order to meet hospital costs and just over a quarter had to sell household assets (McKee, Healy & Falkingham 2002: 51).

Since independence, the state health budget and salaries of health professionals accordingly have sank significantly<sup>670</sup>, between 1991 and 1997 it fell by nearly two-thirds from 50 to 17 percent (McKee, Healy & Falkingham 2002: 49) and in 1992 the Ministry of Health was the state ministry with the lowest budget.<sup>671</sup> In Tajikistan, health workers are amongst the lowest paid workers: in 1998 the average monthly salary among health employees was 4.8 USD compared to a workforce average of 11 USD and 33 USD for workers in key enterprises (Rahimov 2002: 49).

The general steep decline in real government expenditures led to a sharp decline of real spending on health to between only a quarter to a third of what it was before Tajikistan's independence (McKee, Healy & Falkingham 2002: 49).

In such a decayed healthcare system, what suffers the most is the sector of disease prevention, because the state does not train staff appropriately anymore.

In 1996, the level of medical personnel in the country remained relatively high: there was one nurse or medical technician for every 150 persons and a doctor for every 442 persons. Already back then, the concentration of medical personnel in urban

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<sup>665</sup> I made this observation while visiting the district hospital in Gharm, Rasht valley and talking to patients there in winter 2003/04.

<sup>666</sup> From almost 13 days in 1991 to 11 days in 1997; see: (McKee, Healy & Falkingham 2002: 156)

<sup>667</sup> From 21 per 100 population annually in 1991, to 9 per 100 population in 1999, (McKee, Healy & Falkingham 2002: 157).

<sup>668</sup> The author made this observation while visiting the district hospital in Gharm, Rasht valley and talking to patients there in winter 2003/04.

<sup>669</sup> see Library of Congress Country Studies on Health, <http://lcweb2.gov>, sighted 05/02/05

<sup>670</sup> Average per person public expenditure on health has fallen from 69 USD in 1990 to 2.50 USD in 1998 (Rahimov, Gedik & Healy 2002: 204).

<sup>671</sup> see Library of Congress Country Studies on Health, <http://lcweb2.gov>, sighted 05/02/05

areas was much higher than in rural areas. The level of education, and with that quality, is decreasing significantly. University exams and degrees can easily be bought, and therefore classes do not have to be attended and exams can be missed, in order to become a doctor.<sup>672</sup> In 2004 doctors received monthly wages of 2.85 USD and nurses 2.30 USD (Bliss 2005: 72).

**WHO Figures from a Presentation in 2007<sup>673</sup>**

Number of hospitals	360.00
Hospital beds per 1,000 people	5.80
Physicians per 10,000	18.80
Nurses per 10,000	41.20
Acute care hospital admission per 100,000	105.80
Number of annual average contacts with PHC	4.00

In Yol, Shurabad district, respondents reported that if a person became ill, there was simply no possibility of bringing the person to the district hospital because there was no public transport and nobody in the village had a car. Children were born at home and the leader of the women's group of the local *village organisation*, who by chance was a nurse, was assisting during childbirths.<sup>674</sup>

While visiting a 'medpoint' in Dekturi Poyon, district Balzhuvan, Khatlon, in front of which a horse was grazing, I found that emergency cases could only be reached by horse. It was an 'ambulance horse'. In fact, the 'ambulance horse' turned out to be much more appropriate for the local conditions than any other alternative. Roads in the district were bad and a car would have needed frequent repairs, and there would have been additional costs for fuel. Taking care and feeding the horse was much less cost-intensive.<sup>675</sup>

A mother of five in the district of Khovaling, Khatlon, when asked about what she did in the case of one of her children falling sick reported that they would try to "do something with herbs", but that they did not go to any hospital because they could not afford to pay for any treatment there.<sup>676</sup>

A survey by Action Against Hunger (ACF) in November 2004 found that in rural areas 35 percent of households did not seek medical attention for a sick child.

After the civil war, 16 percent of households were critically food-insecure in Tajikistan. The World Food Programme later found that chronic malnutrition rates were even greater than 40 percent and the British NGO Action Against Hunger found that in the south of the country, 12 percent of children suffered from acute malnutrition.<sup>677</sup>

Even healthcare facilities lacking running water, central heating and often electricity are not uncommon. When I visited the women's department of the district hospital in Gharm in February 2004, I found that on the second floor there had not been running water for the previous five years. Electricity was only provided according to the common *grafica* (schedule) which meant only three hours per day (one and a half hours from six to seven thirty in the morning and the same in the evening). Hygiene

<sup>672</sup> See also: Tajikistan Human Development Report 1996, see: [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

<sup>673</sup> Tajik Health Sector Overview, Principals' Group Meeting, presentation by Dr. Santino Severoni (WHO Country Office), Dushanbe, 13/12/07

<sup>674</sup> Group interview with two women in Yol (Shurabad, Khatlon) in October 2003

<sup>675</sup> I visited Dekturi Poyon (Balzhuvan) in June 2005

<sup>676</sup> This family was in debt anyway, because they had intended to send the father to Russia for work migration and they had taken credit in order to pay for the international passport, but then eventually it had not worked out because he did not know anybody there; Interview with a female peasant from Sari Osyob (Khovaling) in June 2005

<sup>677</sup> Food crisis in Tajikistan: an unnatural disaster?, World Disaster Report 2001, ch. 6, p.125-128

in the district hospital was sub-standard and patients had to bring their own bed sheets.<sup>678</sup>

I was invited to have lunch with the hospital personnel and witnessed how all the personnel were eating, most likely without even washing their hands in advance, out of one wooden bowl, while one nurse had a cold.

The head gynaecologist, Dr. Shoeva, of the district hospital in Gharm and Rita, a nurse from Khorugh, Mountain-Badakhshan, said that doctors, nurses and *sanitarki* (untrained personnel who helped the nurses) equally earned 10 Somoni (an equivalent to three Euros at the time) per month. This meant that with half a year's salary they could afford to buy one bag of flour.<sup>679</sup>

Salaries like these provoke the necessity of informally subsidizing official salaries by 'under-counter payments'. Eventually, low and sporadically paid salaries for healthcare professionals lead to unofficial patient charges that are not fed back into the healthcare system, but remain in the personal pockets of the health personnel. They have to be paid in order to get a certain service, but they are not long-term investments.

The World Health Organisation found that in all districts and for all services patients had to pay, starting from ambulance care (on average 13 Somoni), for being hospitalized and up to cleaning services.<sup>680</sup>

As mentioned earlier, malnourishment is a problem in Tajikistan today. According to a national survey carried out by the British NGO Action Against Hunger, it was estimated that one child in three was malnourished. The government does not seem to acknowledge this fact and has not taken any measures, such as by trying to battle the problem with school feeding programmes. In the Ishkashim district in south-western Mountain-Badakhshan, the UN was running a school feeding programme, giving warm meals to schoolchildren and in fact, the meal provided to the children was often the only meal they would get that day. Reportedly, in Ishkashim district the people did not have enough food and they mainly lived on potatoes and bread. My respondent said that the only "state-help" these people would get, was that the *hukumat* (district government) would sometimes provide food to needy families and reduce prices on electricity for these respective families.<sup>681</sup>

The extent to which the healthcare system is below standard was also shown by the following example. While I visited a family in the district of Khorugh I found that the mother, who was actually meant to be in hospital, had come home for two days in order to wash herself because the district hospital in Khorugh did not provide appropriate sanitary facilities.<sup>682</sup>

The table below presents figures from 1994, but it shows the big discrepancies amongst regions already evident then.

**Provision of Medical Services 1994<sup>683</sup>**

	Tajikistan	GBAO	Khatlon	Rasht
Hospital Beds per 10,000 people	87.9	144.9	77.0	74.1
Physicians per 10,000 people	22.7	28.1	13.1	12.7

<sup>678</sup> Interview with a female head gynaecologist of the district hospital in Gharm in February 2004

<sup>679</sup> Same as footnote no. 676

<sup>680</sup> Tajik Health Sector Overview, Principals' Group Meeting, presentation by Dr. Santino Severoni (WHO Country Office), Dushanbe, 13/12/07

<sup>681</sup> Interview with the female head of the Ishkashim district office of a local NGO and former deputy head of the district Ishkashim in June 2004

<sup>682</sup> Interview with a young female economist from Porshnev, district Khorugh (GBAO) in July 2004

<sup>683</sup> Tajikistan Human Development Report 1996, see: www.undp.org, sighted 11/07/07

Even though quantity does not necessarily indicate the quality, the table above shows that medical healthcare was the best in Mountain-Badakhshan, which can be explained by the great impact of the local NGOs and international organisations (mainly AKF) in the area, maintaining medical facilities and training staff.

The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank conducted research on Gender-Sensitive Participation regarding the PRSP. The study found that the health status in Tajikistan had worsened after independence, with a particular rise in infectious diseases. Women said that they have been particularly hard hit with the decline of the reproductive healthcare system. Most women give birth at home, often without medical care and accompanied by a lack of sanitation, even water and basic hygiene. Women do not have the money to pay for healthcare services. In addition, men expressed concern in their focus groups about the deterioration of women's health, especially gynaecological diseases and widespread anaemia (De Soto 2008: 3).

The quality of healthcare was also described as extremely bad in a recent newspaper article in the ASIA PLUS. A respondent said: "I first thought I would somehow try to circumvent migration. But when last year my not to old acquaintances who became seriously ill, started to die one after another, the doctors simply could not save them, even though the illnesses were in principal not deadly." This shows not only the weak condition of Tajik hospitals, but also how little qualified doctors are in Tajikistan today.<sup>684</sup> Consequently, weak provision of healthcare, electricity and heating materials, and migration are increasingly linked. Healthcare in Tajikistan is not equally accessible for everybody. Many people cannot afford the necessary payments.<sup>685</sup>

#### 9.4.1 Outsourcing in the Health Sector

Especially in the area of the provision of public goods, e.g. resource-intensive state functions, the state is outsourcing functions it used to fulfil to other players. International relief agencies are trying to change the system through the existing structures. Especially UNICEF and the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, who have cooperated with the Ministry of Health in providing information on common health problems to the local population (Harris 1998: 667).

Most of the medical supplies currently available in Tajikistan have been maintained with the help of international agencies such as the World Health Organisation, UNICEF, the International Federation of the Red Cross, Pharmaciens sans Frontières, Medecins sans Frontières, Relief International, Vision International, Merlin etc. (Harris 1998: 667).

MSDSP through its *village organisations* is also financing and implementing measures aiming at improving the healthcare system. In some cases, *village organisations* would set the construction of a 'medpoint' as one of their priorities and other international organisations would join the project and, for example, support the construction of toilets or anything else connected to this 'medpoint'.<sup>686</sup>

"Doctors without Borders" (MSF), for example, in 2001 worked in the Rasht valley, a region which is basically excluded from government support and state healthcare services, mainly because it is historically a stronghold of the *United Tajik Opposition*. MSF has been distributing essential drugs, rehabilitating health facilities and training

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<sup>684</sup> Khamidova, Parvina: Exodus. How to stop the brain drain from Tajikistan, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>685</sup> Same as footnote no. 662

<sup>686</sup> Interview with a former fighter in Khorugh in October 2003

hospital personnel. In Khorugh, they refurbished the hospital's infectious diseases ward and water system, and worked on improving treatment of infectious diseases.<sup>687</sup> In Tajikistan, especially in the health sector, external donors are crucial as they already in 1997 accounted for approximately one third of the government health budget. The result of this phenomenon of outsourcing is that expectations that were previously aimed at the Soviet state have now simply been transferred to international aid organisations, but in substance, the dependency has stayed the same, only the provider has changed. Therefore, it is extremely important that the approach is now changed from only running relief operations towards more self-sustaining approaches of long-term development cooperation (Rahminov, Gedik & Healy 2002: 204).

Since 2002, 97 projects in the health sector have been implemented by 33 different donors and 39 agencies, with an overall volume of 136,002,353 USD.<sup>688</sup> One of the main problems of the work of these development organisations was that their activities were not well coordinated amongst themselves.

My three research regions actually turned out to depend on external aid to the same extent. In eastern Khatlon, the Rasht valley and western Mountain-Badakhshan the extent to which people are dependent on and need aid from local NGOs and international organisations in terms of food, financial aid, agricultural inputs, trainings and clothes was the same, but the extent to which it was actually provided highly varied between government supported and former opposition regions.<sup>689</sup> NGOs and international organisations were more active in the former opposition regions (the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan), which had been neglected by the state.

## 9.5 Education

The state education system in Tajikistan is in a state of decay. In many schools lessons have to be taught in several shifts, as there are not enough classrooms to teach the children all at the same time.

There are high dropout rates for girls in secondary education (except for Mountain-Badakhshan where girls also undertake secondary education) (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 7). In most rural parts of Tajikistan, except Mountain-Badakhshan, people believe that it is not as important for girls as for boys to go to school.<sup>690</sup>

Overall, the level of education in the Soviet Union has always been praised and, in fact, since the Russian revolution major achievements had been made, but by the time Tajikistan became independent the quality and availability of education had not reached the average of the Soviet Union.<sup>691</sup>

Today, the level of education in Tajikistan and quality of the institutions offered is decreasing rapidly, so that many parents think that it is not worth sending their children to school as they do not learn a lot anyway. In some parts of the country, there is such a big lack of teachers that people who have finished secondary

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<sup>687</sup> See: Tajikistan: Aid to health system in shambles. See: [www.msf.org](http://www.msf.org), sighted 11/11/01

<sup>688</sup> Tajik Health Sector Overview, Principals' Group Meeting, presentation by Dr. Santino Severoni (WHO Country Office), Dushanbe, 13/12/07

<sup>689</sup> I draw this information from a survey that I conducted in cooperation with the local research institute *Sharq* in Dushanbe. In this survey 12 districts of Khatlon, the Rasht valley and GBAO were examined; 1,000 respondents were interviewed in this survey.

<sup>690</sup> I got this information from families in Kulyab, as well as in the Rasht valley; Interviews with peasants in Khovaling (Kulyab) and Darband (Rasht valley) in March 2004 and June 2005; Women were concerned about fast rising gender segregation in primary education and vocational training. Most women said that many young girls are no longer attending schools. De Soto, Hermine G. (ECSSD): Gender-Sensitive Participation Characterizes Tajikistan's PRSP, on: [povertynewsblog.blogspot.com](http://povertynewsblog.blogspot.com), p. 3, sighted 11/11/07

<sup>691</sup> see: Country Studies: Education; on: [www.country-studies.com](http://www.country-studies.com), sighted 11/11/07

education and do not have a university degree are allowed to teach. Many Russians used to be teachers (especially teachers of Russian language). When the Soviet Union collapsed, many of them went 'home' to Russia.<sup>692</sup> Government expenditure on education has fallen to as low as 2.1 per cent of GDP.<sup>693</sup> An indicator for the rapidly decreasing quality of teaching is also that the incentives for working as a teacher are extremely poor. If one is good, one will prefer to work for an international organisation or even go abroad to teach, especially to Russia. In 2004, the state was paying elementary school teachers approximately eight USD and high school teachers a little bit more than 10 USD per month (Bliss 2005: 72). From 1 September 2008 onwards, the government promised to increase the salary of people working in the education sector by 40 percent.<sup>694</sup>

The effect of this kind of development is that teachers become 'bribable'. They start taking extra money for admitting new students, for extra classes or simply are paid for letting students pass exams. As a result, the whole system becomes highly unfair. It is no longer performance that counts, but increasingly 'the father's wallet' and the connections he has. In the end, education is no longer a public good because it is not accessible to all students to the same degree.

This certainly is a major change from Soviet times, when education was actually a public good and it offered enormous chances to children from an underprivileged background.

The gross school enrolment rate between 1991 and 1998 fell from 94 percent to 89.1 percent. This absence from school is mainly due to poverty. The ratio of girls to boys has fallen from 96 to 92 in 100 at the primary level and from 97 to 89 at the secondary level. According to an ADB report in 2000, the school enrolment rate of girls in comparison to boys has fallen twice as fast. Even worse is the situation in terms of higher education. The ratio of girls to boys has fallen from 58 to 34 girls per 100 boys between 1990 and 1998 (Bliss 2004: 6).

Data from 2003 shows that in urban and peri-urban areas six percent of the boys and 18 percent of the girls leave school after only four years of schooling (WB 2004: 23). Specialists say that soon there will be a 'double illiteracy'; Tajikistanis will know neither Tajik nor Russian properly anymore.<sup>695</sup>

Given the circumstances of a territory that is extremely difficult to access and a population that is multi-ethnic, the problem is that enormous resources would be necessary in order to finance an appropriate curriculum and schooling system.

Finally, yet importantly, not only are teachers offered few incentives to teach well, but also for the students there are weak incentives to complete higher education. Education is not much of an asset when, for example, finding a job.

If a young university graduate is looking for a job, his luck will not so much depend on his qualification, but rather on other factors. His or her contacts and connections will play a big role, the person's regional and ethnic background and whether he or she is wealthy enough in order to buy himself or herself a certain position.

### **Schooling in Kulyab**

Also in the sphere of education regional differences have increased. In the eastern part of Khatlon in Kulyab girls usually only go to school for four years. Increasingly, girls are instructed by the local *mullah*, instead of being sent to a public school.<sup>696</sup> In general, in this part of the country, schools are in extremely bad condition and the

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<sup>692</sup> Interview with a teacher in Gharm in October 2003

<sup>693</sup> Food crisis in Tajikistan: an unnatural disaster?, World Disaster Report 2001: 127

<sup>694</sup> Anonymous author: Workers in the education sphere will get 40 percent higher salaries from 1 September onwards, ASIA-PLUS, 03/09/08

<sup>695</sup> Interview with an employee of the German Embassy in Dushanbe in February 2004

<sup>696</sup> Interview with local women in Shurabad in October 2003

state is mostly not even able to maintain the building, not to mention paying a decent salary to the teachers. International organisations and local power holders step in to renovate school buildings. Often, when a *village organisation* is being established and three priorities have to be chosen for the village for the next few years, the renovation of the local school is amongst those first three chosen priorities.<sup>697</sup>

### **Schooling in Mountain-Badakhshan**

In Mountain-Badakhshan the schooling situation differs significantly from the situation in the other two regions. Culturally, education has always been much more important in Mountain-Badakhshan, both for boys and girls. Even girls were always expected to be well-educated so that they would be capable of raising their children, the future generation, in a prosperous way. Moreover, it was seen as a kind of 'backup' in case their husband fell sick or died and then the woman would be able to sustain herself and their children.<sup>698</sup>

There is a big difference in pupils' enrolment in secondary education. In Mountain-Badakhshan, a significant proportion of pupils stay on for upper secondary education. In other parts of the country, however, enrolment rates drop to around 65 percent (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 7).

During Soviet times, Pamiris had been dominating the Academy of Sciences and other educational and intellectual institutions in Tajikistan. Land had always been scarce and there had never been any industry, and therefore education was very much supported in this part of the region. Today in Mountain-Badakhshan, educational institutions are predominantly maintained by the Aga Khan Foundation and since 1993 there has been a local university, the State University of Khorugh, which offers above average higher education in business administration and foreign languages. Many foreign teachers come to teach here and locals go to study abroad, at the Aga Khan University in Karachi (Pakistan), for example. All over Tajikistan, one finds many Pamiris working in NGOs due to their good level of education and the fact that the percentage of Pamiris speaking English is comparably high, which leads back to a decree (Tajik: *farmon*) by the Imam – the Aga Khan – to the Ismailis in the 1990s to learn English.

The Aga Khan foundation has been establishing internet centres in schools in Mountain-Badakhshan, so that school children have access to more information. The American NGO Relief International has also been running a project that is called 'Connectivity' and has established internet centres in schools. Recently, the Aga Khan Foundation has begun establishing the 'University of Central Asia', located in Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan (Khorugh), and at the same time AKF is running a private high school in Khorugh.

### **Schooling in the Rasht Valley**

Regarding the level of education, the Rasht valley is structurally similar to Khatlon. The level of education decreased since the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the civil war, because the government lacked finances and children (mainly girls) were often not sent to school for security reasons. In Tajikistan, education is compulsory until the age of 16, but the law is not actually enforced. One respondent stated: "There is not much education in the *jamoat* Shur in Gharm anymore, there are not

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<sup>697</sup> In Yol a local powerholder was giving money for the renovation of the local school and in another village in Shurabad district the German Technical Cooperation was financing the renovation of the school, which was then carried out by the village community organized by the head of the local *village organisation*; Group interview with two women in Yol (Shurabad, Khatlon) in October 2003 and interview with the head of the village organisation in Yol in October 2003

<sup>698</sup> Interview with a Pamiri woman in Khorugh in July 2004

enough teachers and since the breakdown of the Soviet Union girls do not go to school at all anymore.”<sup>699</sup>

Sometimes a reason not to send a child to school is that the family does not have a pair of shoes or other decent clothes for each child. The first ones who had to stay at home were the girls, to take care of younger siblings, to help in the household and with the subsistence farming (Roche 2005: 27). Poverty is limiting the access to education, the lowest income groups become increasingly marginalized and the ones who are suffering especially are the girls. At same time does the lack of education cause poverty? Children from uneducated families are more likely to be hit by poverty than children from educated families (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 3-4).

Also, in the Rasht valley, the provision of education has partly been outsourced to private players. In Darband there is a former warlord (called Siyorasho) who was, in 2004, the head of the district. He managed the district very well and built a private school.<sup>700</sup>

Particularly the teaching of foreign languages (Russian and English), has decreased significantly since the breakdown of the Soviet Union and the civil war. The reason is that there is a huge ‘brain drain’; many teachers who were ethnic Russians left the country in search for better job opportunities abroad, as did ethnic Tajiks, teachers with a good education.

The extent to which families make use of the education system varies regionally and depends on households’ socio-economic characteristics. Other deterrents are employment opportunities in the area and perceived quality of education.

The state needs to play a more active role in actively enforcing the Labour Code prohibiting work before the age of 14 to provoke a significant beneficial effect on schooling. Particular attention needs to be given to encouraging girls to complete secondary education (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 7).

## **9.6 Access to Information and Social Mobility**

Access to information on events in other parts of the country is a big problem in rural areas of Tajikistan and tends to deepen the existing regional divide. An indicator for the lack of information is little social mobilisation. Increasing access to information and social mobility are an important part of the statehood-building process.

People do not try to take their lives into their own hands, partly because they are not informed about what options they have and what is done in other parts of the country, region (Central Asia) or world. People at the local level only to an extremely limited extent are informed about what is happening at the national level and in other parts of Tajikistan, even in the next village or district. Most information they receive comes by word of mouth, from somebody who has recently been in Dushanbe or at least the district centre. Information travels only from centres to peripheries, but not from periphery to periphery. People cannot afford to buy newspapers and in most regions, they are only available in the district centres, and here only with a delay of several days.

In 2006, the independent media was largely characterized by stagnation. In the weeks leading up to the presidential elections in 2006, “the state media were used heavily as a source of campaign propaganda for the incumbent government candidate, while opposition candidates were nonetheless each given nearly an hour of airtime on radio and television. Fearing repercussions from the authorities, journalists continued to generally practice their well-polished skills of self-censorship and avoidance of controversy” (Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 7).

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<sup>699</sup> Interview with the gender specialist and social organizer for a local NGO in Tavildara in October 2003

<sup>700</sup> Interview with two Pamiri development workers in Gharm in October 2003



The print media in Tajikistan remains free, for example in comparison to the media in the surrounding states and Russia these days. The reporting in Tajikistan is still open; as an example, there have been articles in Tajik newspapers dealing with the Tajik civil war and the enormous mismanagement and debt problem in the cotton economy.<sup>701</sup>

The problem of print media in Tajikistan is the very limited outreach to the regions. Reporters Without Borders' *Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2006* labelled Tajikistan's media as the least restrictive and most free among the five post-Communist Central Asian states.<sup>702</sup>

Mr. Sotirov, the head of the UN Tajikistan Peace-Building Support Office (UNTOP)<sup>703</sup> commented on press freedom in the same light - he said that progress had been halting. "You might find very interesting, critical and objective materials in newspapers. However, the newspapers do not reach people; they are just for the elite in the cities. They don't have influence," he noted. "The major influence is TV, which is very restricted, very controlled."<sup>704</sup>

However, it is not clear which way the trend is going, more restriction or more openness. Eurasianet in July 2008 published an article entitled "Tajik Public Press Break Decade of Silence", even though I do not perceive the situation quite as such. According to Eurasianet "When an influential brother-in-law of President Imomali Rahmon mysteriously disappeared in April, the ensuing media coverage surprised many Tajiks"<sup>705</sup>. Eurasianet further reported that even if President Rahmon is not the biggest enemy of free press in the region, nevertheless, "the president and his image have left little room for genuine public scrutiny of Rahmon, his policies, or his family".<sup>706</sup>

According to Eurasianet "journalists who choose to challenge the country's leaders have faced serious retaliation in the form of beatings, firings, or closures of their publications".<sup>707</sup>

Newspapers do not reach very far (except for the government newspaper that can also be found in the regions) and until today, there is no daily newspaper, just several weekly newspapers that cover all of Tajikistan.

The only national newspapers are published just once a week. One of the better local newspapers (in mixed Russian and Tajik) is ASIA PLUS which comes out every Thursday. However, the number of newspapers printed is also very low in regional comparison; it is 10,000 newspapers per week, "Vechernyi Bishkek" (Russian for "Evening Bishkek") in comparison prints this number of newspapers daily.

I am taking Kulyab as an example, a city that comprises 160,000 people including its close surrounding areas. Only 300 newspapers reach Kulyab weekly. However, the local salespersons are satisfied anyway because this number was just recently increased from 250 to 300, so the growth rate is good.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>701</sup> During my stays in Tajikistan I always read the local newspapers and was surprised how open the reporting and criticism on the regime was. A major town like Kulyab in the South gets only a couple of hundred newspapers per week. People simply cannot afford to buy newspapers regularly. In some towns there are newspaper stands where one can read the newspaper in the street and these are very much frequented.

<sup>702</sup> Reporters Without Borders for Press Freedom, *Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2006*, press release, 23/10/06

<sup>703</sup> UNTOP formally shut its doors on 31 July 2007. It is the first such mission to do so. UN peace-building support offices are a relatively new invention and the three others that have been established, in Liberia, Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic, remain in operation.

<sup>704</sup> Kucera, Joshua: Evaluating Tajikistan's Reconstruction 10 Years after the Civil War's End, on [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 10/18/07

<sup>705</sup> Najibullah, Farangis: Tajik Public, Press Break Decade of Silence, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 7/20/08

<sup>706</sup> Same as footnote no. 703

<sup>707</sup> Same as footnote no. 703

<sup>708</sup> Interview with a representative from OSCE in Dushanbe in June 2007

Internet access was partly restricted by the government. In preparation for the Presidential elections in 2006, access to several websites was blocked.<sup>709</sup> In addition to this, only a very limited number of mostly (male) young people have access to the internet. News on television and radio is also not very accessible because the provision of electricity is limited, e.g. there was only a maximum of three hours of electricity provided in the winter in rural areas in 2003/2004; during the winter of 2007/2008 the situation was even worse.

Most information is transmitted to the regions from person to person, through TV and radio. Nevertheless, only 4.5 percent of the population have TVs and an even fewer number have radios. Cross-regional contacts are limited since the breakdown of the Soviet Union. During Soviet times, public transport (planes, busses and others) was good and many more people had private cars. Today, only 2.7 percent of the population have telephones and only 2.3 percent have motorized vehicles (Akiner 2002: 20). In Mountain-Badakhshan, the people that have a television get their information predominantly through the local Badakhshani television channel, which is broadcast in the Tajik language.

In the Rasht valley, people mostly rely on information from the state television channel. During my field research in the Rasht valley during winter 2003/04, it was difficult to find up-to-date newspapers and the only ones available were state newspapers. Moreover, even these state newspapers were only available in the district centre of Gharm, but not in the other district centres such as Tavildara, Tajikabad and Jirgatal.

## 9.7 Access to Arable Land

The way the Tajik state processes conflicts over land is interesting in terms of its statehood mechanisms. In Tajikistan, 75 percent of the population lives in rural areas and only four percent of the country is arable land. It is an agrarian country and its population is highly dependent on subsistence farming. Therefore, the pressure on land is high. Food security is poor in many regions. The pressure on land is growing as the population of Tajikistan is continuously increasing at a high speed.<sup>710</sup>

At the very beginning of the Tajik civil war, it was, among other factors, competition regarding access to land that led to violence between groups of different regional origin.<sup>711</sup> Until 1991, all land was controlled by kolkhozes and sovkhoses (collective farms). The collapse of the Soviet system triggered the dissolution of the kolkhozes and sovkhoses and, in 1996, after the distribution of land had informally already started; the Tajik state finally adopted a law on the distribution of land.

In Tajikistan, land is the property of the state and cannot be sold or used as collateral. Instead, people may receive heritable land shares for permanent use. All state farms, except the seed producing and stockbreeding farms, were to be broken up and converted to private farms by 2005.<sup>712</sup>

At the local level in Tajikistan, the main source of conflict is the scarcity of resources, particularly land and water. Land (especially irrigated) is scarce and therefore the pressure on land is high. In theory, most people 'privatised' a piece of land. De facto, the state and the individuals representing it at the local level created additional barriers and acted as parties involved in the conflict over land. A good example of this phenomenon is the case study of Aghankul and Khipshon (in the district Tavildara, Rasht valley) which I will describe in section 9.9.

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<sup>709</sup> Interview with an Uzbek NGO worker from Dushanbe in October 2006

<sup>710</sup> At present, children are seen as insurance for old age and having many children is prestigious, not only in rural areas of Tajikistan.

<sup>711</sup> This was mainly the case in the Vakhsh valley in the southern region of Khatlon.

<sup>712</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 20

Until today, the land distribution process is neither fully state-controlled nor fully complete. Instead, one can observe a re-arrangement of property rights over land which is partly carried out according to informal rules and partly state-controlled: the state retains the ownership of land whereas the right to use and transfer land, although not to sell, is passed on to private 'owners', such as collectives of farmers or an association of individual farmers.

People may inherit land plots for permanent use. If a person does not use his or her piece of land or in case a major reconstruction project is planned, the state can confiscate the land. All citizens of Tajikistan are entitled to land, except those working in the administration of the government. Those with farming experience and the ability to farm the land have first priority.<sup>713</sup>

In addition, property rights on land are often unclear, local people are not informed about the changes in legislation and therefore do not know what rights they actually have.<sup>714</sup> Nevertheless, the laws are weakly institutionalised and enforced.

Access to land is *de facto* controlled by the respective rural elites and not by the central state. The unfair distribution of land is actually one of the most significant development barriers. Especially in the cotton growing areas, the old structures of *kolkhozes* (collective farms) were *de facto* preserved. Under the land distribution process in Tajikistan, the land of the collective farms has not been automatically distributed, as was the case in neighbouring Kyrgyzstan. People had to apply for land individually, which meant that there were many bureaucratic barriers in place and a lot of bribery was needed at different stages of the process.

### **Land Privatization in Mountain-Badakhshan**

In Mountain-Badakhshan, the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN) played a vital role in speeding up the land privatization process. Since the Tajik civil war, AKDN has been working to make agricultural improvements, at the beginning simply trying to ensure that the local population would not starve. A remarkable success has been achieved: Mountain-Badakhshan now produces 80 percent of its own food requirements.<sup>715</sup>

According to many of my respondents, the land privatization in Mountain-Badakhshan was conducted to most people's satisfaction and it was a fair process. Even people who had not worked in the *kolkhoz* (collective farm), such as for example teachers, doctors, civil servants, etc. were able to be part of the privatization process and to get a piece of land, necessary in a subsistence economy.<sup>716</sup>

The situation in Mountain-Badakhshan is the least conflict prone, because land was distributed more evenly than it was the case in Kulyab and in the Rasht valley. The main reason for this is that the land in Mountain-Badakhshan is not very fertile and scarce and, therefore, in comparison not a real 'resource' for cash. Local leaders did not try to become stakeholders as they did in the Rasht valley, because it was simply not worth the hassle.

Plots are small and the soil is not as valuable as in other parts of the country, where cash crops such as potatoes (mainly in the Rasht valley), wheat and cotton are produced (mainly in the western part of Khatlon).<sup>717</sup> After the war, the situation in

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<sup>713</sup> See Article 66 of the 1997 land code, see: MSDSP Baseline Survey of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast, 2004: 8

<sup>714</sup> This is a typical feature of a command state.

<sup>715</sup> Interview with an employees of AKDN Khorugh;

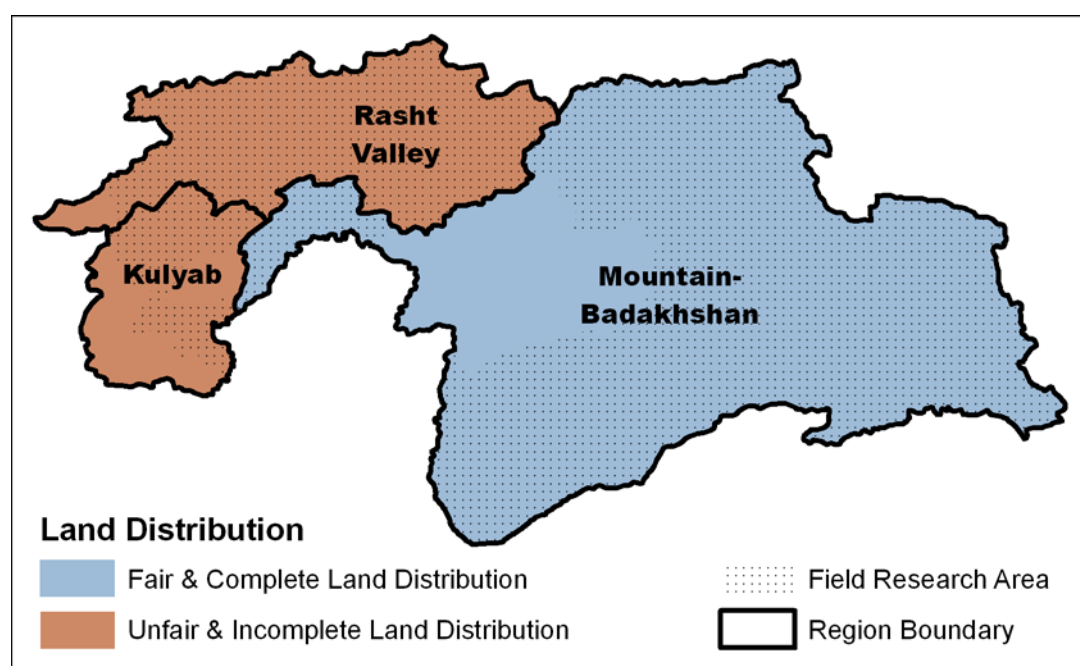
<sup>716</sup> Interviews with a local development workers and peasants in Shugnan district in Mountain-Badakhshan in October 2003

<sup>717</sup> Interviews with two employees of a local NGO in Khorugh in October 2003; Interview with a village leader in Porshnev (GBAO) in October 03; Interview with the owner of a small enterprise in Khorugh in June 2004

Mountain-Badakhshan was desperate and people simple needed their plots in order to survive in the subsistence economy.

The World Bank arranged for an external assessment of the agricultural programme of MSDSP in Mountain-Badakhshan. It said: “In contrast to the process throughout most of the country, nearly all land in GBAO was distributed to individual families during the period 1995 to 1999. With support for input provision, this agriculturally disadvantaged region has moved from being 15 percent self-sufficient in wheat in 1995 to a projected 80 percent self-sufficiency in 1999” (Bliss 2000: 61).

Access to rented land is (in contrast to the situation in the Rasht valley where more than half the families do not even have access to rented land) much easier. The differences in relative wealth are thus smaller. The average income levels were about 60 percent of those in the Rasht valley; however, it appears that the wealth was distributed more evenly. Wheat production was essential for survival, but agriculture is not a source of cash income.<sup>718</sup>



**Map 9: Land Distribution**

### **Land Privatization in Khatlon and the Rasht Valley**

In Kulyab and the Rasht valley, the situation was different. Here land was a more important resource, plots were bigger, and the soil of better quality, and therefore it was more of a power game than in Mountain-Badakhshan. In Kulyab, most state farms were turned into associations, *de facto* leading to *kolkhoz* directors simply being turned into the private owners of the farm they had previously been managing.

In the West of Khatlon, in the cotton producing areas the “privatization” process has been very unfair. In 1997, the Tajik state officially ended state support of agriculture. Nevertheless, the National Bank of Tajikistan continued to finance agriculture through numerous ‘private companies’. These ‘private companies’ supplied production inputs in return for the farms’ cotton. The country’s elite, including several people close to

<sup>718</sup> see MSDSP Baseline Survey of Shurabod district, 2003: iv

the Tajik President, control these 'investor' firms. At the same time, these investor firms also control much of the food import business.<sup>719</sup>

Therefore, the simple peasants in Kulyab and the Rasht valley were not satisfied with the land distribution process in those areas and this is unlikely to change. A revision of the land privatization process would most likely cause more conflict than keeping it the way it is.<sup>720</sup>

In the southern region of Kulyab, in the districts of Khovaling, Balzhuvan and Shurabad, the structures of collective farms were either preserved or the Director turned the collective farm into his 'individual farm'.<sup>721</sup> In the district of Shurabad, the main issue is that the former managers of the *sovkhos* are still in charge and in control, often in coalition with local government, de facto controlling people's access to land. In Shurabad, only three percent of households had privatised land, whereas 91 percent were renting land. Overall, five percent of families did not get any land either for rent or for permanent tenure from the land distribution process. Of those renting, 76 percent were renting from the *sovkhos* and the rest were renting from private farms. However, it should be noted that these large private farms that rent out land to farmers, are usually the old *sovkhos* under a new name, usually now called an association. The management of these associations control the access to land and very much control what crops the farmers have to grow; they receive a share of the farmer's harvest and/ or a fee. De facto, they have the power to prevent individual farmers from leaving these associations in order to start an individual private farm, by putting many bureaucratic barriers and very high (informal and thus illegal) fees in their way.

### **Land Privatization in the Rasht Valley**

In general, the access to land is very uneven, the process of stratification is continuing and the gap between rural rich and poor is widening. Small conflicts between villages and within villages about disputed plots of land or about perceived unfair distribution occur frequently, but do not have mass character and do not (yet) tend to escalate into large-scale conflicts. The uneven distribution of land will most likely lead to the emergence of a large stratum of rural poor, locked in a structural poverty trap. The problem is further aggravated by the fact that the Tajik economy will not be able to absorb the workforce in the foreseeable future, for people from the opposition regions (the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan) mobility is very much blocked within Tajikistan and it is difficult to get access to jobs in the economy or in the administration in Dushanbe. The only safety valve is therefore work migration to Russia – a valve that is vulnerable to economic shocks and this can politically be manipulated by Russia. Russian authorities are deporting more and more work migrants to their homelands and Tajik exile organisations are involved in buying illegal Tajik work migrants out of custody in Russia.<sup>722</sup>

State capacity concerning land distribution is very weak and the state does not act as the arbitrator in the disputed process of distribution, but more often as an involved party. It does not have any conflict solving mechanism in place. There were very few

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<sup>719</sup> Van Atta, Don: King Cotton freezes Tajikistan, [www.cacianalyst.org](http://www.cacianalyst.org), 21/03/08

<sup>720</sup> Interview with an employee of a local NGO from Gharm in Dushanbe in October 2003; Interview with a landless local widow in Tavildara in March 2004; Group interview with employees of an international NGO in Kulyab in June 2004

<sup>721</sup> The author conducted qualitative interviews with respondents in all three regions (GBAO and Rasht, 09/2003-07/2004 and in Khatlon 05/07/2005)

<sup>722</sup> The author interviewed the head of the association "Pamir" in St. Petersburg in March 2005

cases where the state was actually solving disputes. In terms of land distribution, rule of law proved to be scarce.

In the Rasht valley, the state played an important role in the privatization process, which did not increase the transparency and fairness of the process. The state was often a biased stakeholder.

In the Rasht valley, one could observe by far the highest degree of inequality concerning the access to land. Overall, 53 percent of families did not get any land either for rent or for permanent tenure from the land distribution process. Out of the group of people that wanted to privatize, 75 percent did not privatise due to a lack of money, whilst 25 percent were offered land, but did not take it, as there was no water available for irrigation. Nine percent felt that the distribution had been unfair and that they had not even had the opportunity to apply for land.<sup>723</sup> The situation in the Rasht valley is therefore seen as the most conflict-prone and inequality amongst the population is likely to increase in the future.

Relatively speaking, land scarcity is not a problem in this region and produce can be turned into cash on the national level, and is not only bartered in local markets. It therefore pays for the new rural elite to control access to land. In marked difference to Kulyab and Mountain-Badakhshan, the rural elite in the Rasht valley emerged during, and were shaped by, the civil war. Local power holders, such as influential religious figures and/or *muğohidon* (former combatants), many of whom have protection from those members of the former opposition who were co-opted into high positions in Dushanbe (as, for example, from the Minister for Emergencies Mirzo Jaga who is originally from Tavildara), have been heavily influencing the land distribution process for their own purposes.<sup>724</sup>

In the Rasht valley, regarding the land distribution process the state often took sides and used to become involved in the conflicts on the local level as one of the conflicting parties. Therefore, distribution of land turned 'wild' and the 'new rural elite' benefited from this.

The World Bank has been running a programme to privatize *sovkhoses* all over the country, but the progress has been slow. In 2003, except for Mountain-Badakhshan and the Rasht valley, one could not speak of privately managed agriculture in Tajikistan (Bliss 2006: 321). According to the World Bank, people rank their household plot and livestock at the top of their lists regarding survival strategies, ahead of migration, trade, humanitarian assistance, wages and pensions.<sup>725</sup> This shows that for many people in Tajikistan access to land is key to survival.

## 9.8 Access to Water

Besides the fact that Tajikistan is the richest country in the Central Asian region in terms of water resources and it actually exports hydropower, in most regions the distribution of irrigation water and access to clean drinking water is a problem. The main issue is the management of water, which should be regulated by the state. The provision of these kinds of public goods is an important part of statehood mechanisms. The state needs to provide mechanisms that allow for processing conflicts over water and other resources. Now the state is only formalizing informal institutions that mitigate water conflict.

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<sup>723</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 25

<sup>724</sup> See the table of influential people in the different regions in section 8.9.

<sup>725</sup> World Disaster Report 2001: 131

### 9.8.1 Access to Irrigation Water

Irrigation and drainage systems in rural parts of Tajikistan are often on a very primitive level. The distribution of irrigation water is done by dividing little streams with the help of rocks and thereby blocking side-channels. Those channels were mostly open, only on occasion was the water flow piped.<sup>726</sup>

“The irrigation and drainage systems have seriously deteriorated since the break-up of the Soviet Union. As a result, irrigation volumes have been reduced by as much as 50 per cent.” According to the World Bank this means about 200,000-300,000 ha of arable land, or 20-30 percent of the total production area, may not be in use.<sup>727</sup>

Another issue regarding access to irrigation water is that the cotton production is priority. At the same time, there is no convincing strategy to restore irrigation to grain-producing land. Even in times of drought, as it was the case in 2000, cotton yields could be increased because in terms of irrigation absolute priority was given to cotton. Subsequently, there is a great concern that the prioritization of water resources for the production of cotton over food “may be in the interests of new profit-making elites into whose hands cotton ginning mills and farms have been privatized.”<sup>728</sup> The simple peasants suffer very much and food security is still a problem in those areas.

In many parts of the country, distribution of irrigation water is therefore regulated by an agreed schedule, called *grafica*, described under the section on institutions (section 8.3.2). People concerned with the matter get together once a year and decide on the *grafica*.

The irrigation water distribution process is one of the few possibilities for women on the local level to participate in decision-making processes. In the case of Vozm, Khorugh, Mountain-Badakhshan, the head of the *hukumat* (district government) was even a woman. Here the water *grafika* only applies for two summer months of the year, other than that there is enough water and, therefore, no need for a water-sharing schedule.

The same system was observed in the district of Khovaling (Khatlon), where a new *grafica* is agreed upon every year. The author talked to a peasant there who said: “I get water to water my kitchen garden once a week (in the evening) for four hours. Every year we sit together and decide on the new *grafica*. The *mirob* has the control; he checks that the *grafica* is adhered to.”<sup>729</sup>

The *grafica* with the position of the *mirob* (Tajik term for caretaker of the water system) is an informal institution, which has developed out of the need to solve conflicts due to the scarcity of irrigation water. It has filled a gap that the state is unable to fill on water provision as a material public good and on the provision of an effective conflict solving mechanism (there is a conflict of interest, everybody wants to get as much irrigation water as possible to increase the personal yields). The state is integrating this institution into its own structures by putting a stamp on the document.

Tajikistan, often perceived as a land in ‘drought’, is extremely water rich. Consequently, the bad management of water has as much impact on food insecurity as poor rainfall. Melting snow from Tajikistan’s mountains supplies the irrigation network with up to 52 million cubic metres of water per year, enough to supply all five central Asian republics. The major problem is that delivery systems are falling apart and leaking massively.<sup>730</sup>

<sup>726</sup> I looked at these rather primitive irrigation systems in Shugnan (Mountain-Badakhshan) in October 2003.

<sup>727</sup> World Disaster Report 2001: 129

<sup>728</sup> World Disaster Report 2001: 130

<sup>729</sup> Interview with a peasant and female head of the family in Khovaling district (Khatlon) in June 2005

<sup>730</sup> World Disaster Report 2001: 128

## 9.8.2 Access to Drinking Water

Not all people have access to clean drinking water. Often, the women and children (as water fetching is traditionally their role in Tajik society) have to walk several kilometres to get to a well that is often not kept clean, as the people are not aware of the need for hygiene around a water point and simply do not know any better. During a field trip in southern Tajikistan, eastern Kulyab (Balzhuvan) I once saw a dead animal lying next to a well.<sup>731</sup>

The quality of drinking water in Tajikistan is poor and responsible for intestinal infections and waterborne diseases. Even in the capital, Dushanbe, tap water would often, especially after rainfall, be the colour of cacao. If one lets the water sit for a few hours, the dirt settles on the bottom of the bottle. Even in Dushanbe, there were periods (of a few days) in the summer of 2005 when tap water was not available. Water tanks would go around and distribute water to the people, who would have to stand in long lines to receive their share.

A big problem is that the water system is often not piped and that the system is vulnerable to (natural) disasters. During summer 2005, there was a water crisis in Dushanbe, due to a landslide that had caused parts of a cemetery to fall into the river that provided water to the Dushanbe and at the same time, a truck with poisonous material had fallen into that same river.<sup>732</sup>

According to the UN, 40 percent of the Tajik population lacks access to safe drinking water, 60 percent of rural populations use unprotected water sources.<sup>733</sup> Most public facilities in rural areas, such as schools and health posts, do not have running water, and the children, for example, do not have the chance to wash their hands after using the washrooms.<sup>734</sup>

Water is mainly distributed through open irrigation channels and not through closed pipes. It is often contaminated by fertilizers and pesticides when it runs through fields. At times, people's incoming 'fresh water' is actually the sewage water of people who have already used the same water up-stream, have thrown their garbage and ashes in there and washed their dishes in it, before it arrives in the next household or village.

In many places, there are old distribution systems in place, which do not function properly anymore and that are in great need for essential renovation. Many of these old irrigation channels are totally broken and unusable, and need to be replaced.

Local NGOs and international organisations are engaged in infrastructure projects and when a community-based organisation is set up and priorities are fixed for the village, one of the first priorities is always a new channel or another project connected to water distribution.<sup>735</sup>

Especially in rural areas, the author was often told that access to clean drinking water was a problem, and the cause of many diseases and infant mortality. In Yol, Shurabad district (Khatlon), an old lady claimed that 100 households did not have access to clean drinking water. Consequently, there were many conflicts ongoing in the village about water and also about the distribution of humanitarian aid. The main problem was that there was no water point in the village and that the women had to carry the water long distances from the river Panj (Amu Darya).<sup>736</sup>

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<sup>731</sup> This field research period on Balzhuvan took place in June 2005.

<sup>732</sup> I experienced this myself during my field research in Dushanbe in June and July 2005.

<sup>733</sup> See: Tajikistan: IRIN Focus on decline in health of Tajiks, on: [www.irinnews.org](http://www.irinnews.org), 07/02/05

<sup>734</sup> The author visited many schools in the Rasht valley and Khatlon and talked to teachers working there during a field research stay in 2003/04.

<sup>735</sup> While travelling through Tajikistan for a year approximately only five families the author visited had a decent indoor bathroom.

<sup>736</sup> Group interview with two women in Yol (district of Shurabad, Khatlon) in October 2003



With increased stratification, the access to clean water also becomes more unfair. In the Rasht valley, poorer households were more likely to be drinking from irrigation canals, whilst the richer households had better access to piped water.<sup>737</sup> The situation is particularly difficult for children. In Tajikistan 32 percent of children are both materially poor and have poor access to clean water, which concerns around 550,000 children.<sup>738</sup>

## 9.9 Mechanisms for Peaceful Conflict Resolution in Rural Areas

In the western understanding of the role of the state, the state should provide conflict mitigation mechanisms that lead to a de-escalation and can resolve conflicts in a constructive way.

This is what Parliaments are about. Parliaments deal with constant conflicts of interest. Through agreed rules of the game, this conflict of interest can be turned into reform processes that constantly adjust the political system to needs that newly emerge.

In the case of Tajikistan, the state is unable to provide mechanisms for peaceful conflict resolution on the local level in rural areas. In addition, the state often gets involved in conflicts and takes sides. This often worsens the situation and makes the resolution of the conflict even more unlikely. The role of the state in conflicts should be the role of a mediator providing mechanisms that lead to a peaceful resolution of the given conflict. Instead, state representatives often get involved, acting in line with their personal interests and not according to previously defined state policies.

The limited capacity of the Tajik state in terms of peaceful conflict resolutions is highlighted in the case study on Aghankul and Khipshon (see below). In the previously presented case study on water distribution in Mountain-Badakhshan, it becomes clear that there are cases where local conflicts can be solved without the involvement of the state. In these cases, there is no actual need for the state to intervene. Following the principle of subsidiarity the best solution is to solve the conflict at the lowest possible level.

### Is There a Need for the State to Intervene?

Informal conflict resolution mechanisms are in place. Often the village elder (in Tajik: *rish-i safed*, which means 'white beard' or *aksakal*, the Turkic term), head of the *mahalla* (neighbourhood) or religious authority (such as a *pir* or *eshon* – sufi titles, *said* – somebody who directly derives from the Prophet, *mullah* or *khalifa* – Ismaili authority) solves conflicts at the village or community level. Social control can only be exercised in the community or village itself and not beyond, because sanction mechanisms are limited to disgracing the person and damaging the person's reputation, which can only be done if there is a vis-à-vis contact between the parties involved. Subsequently, a mechanism to avoid conflict can be to leave the community or village.

The case study on 'Navdi' (section 8.3.1) which is presented under 'institutions' shows that many kinds of conflicts can occur at the local level (conflicts about resources, conflicts related to the border and drug-trafficking, conflicts between generations and conflicts about the rules of the game.)

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<sup>737</sup> MSDSP Baseline Survey of Rasht Valley, 2003: 31

<sup>738</sup> Baschieri & Falkingham 2007: 9

The local NGO that established the *village organisation* in Navdi had good intentions, but in the end, more harm than relief was done.<sup>739</sup> The existing conflict was exacerbated by the development intervention. The conflict escalated, emphasising two lines of conflict, the conflict between generations, and the conflict about the rules of the game and who has the final authority. As the state does not have any legal entities on the sub-*jamoat* level, it is difficult for the state in this case to take preventive action. Nevertheless, of course, once violence occurred, the state could have intervened.

However, the capacity that the state currently has in terms of conflict resolution is so low that in the end it was most likely better that the state did not get directly involved. The case study of Aghankul and Khipshon is a good example of how the state's involvement has only worsened conflict, as the 'state' has not taken the role of a mediator, but has personally become involved in the conflict and pursued vested interests.

Today, local communities are facing new pressures. Globalization is hitting them and every year a substantive number of young men return to their village having experienced how it is to live out of sight of "the eye of the village" and with the freedom to take decisions on your own.

### **Case Study: Aghankul and Khipshon**

Shortly after the civil war, local combatants took over land in Aghankul. Even though this piece of land was situated in Aghankul, according to cadastre documents it belonged to Khipshon. This piece of land comprised 24 hectares, out of which only eight hectares were arable land. The situation turned out to be that the people from Khipshon were paying the taxes for that piece of land and the people from Aghankul were using it. In 2000, a conflict erupted between the two villages. A group of former combatants from Aghankul went to a field in which people from Khipshon were working and berated them. Reportedly, the people working on the field did not answer back, as they knew that these people from Aghankul were *muğohidon* (former fighters) and they were afraid of them. The former combatants from Aghankul had brought with them a car and a tractor and they loaded the farmers from Khipshon on to the tractor and into the car, and took them to Aghankul.

Originally, the people from Khipshon used to have certificates for this particular piece of land, but after a court decision, the people from Aghankul made new certificates. Eventually, the people from Khipshon were punished for their falsified certificates and the land was temporarily given to the people from Aghankul.

The people from Khipshon informed the *jamoat* about this incident. The district authorities (Tajik: *nohija*) became involved and the people from Aghankul were asked to give an explanation for the incident. Eventually, in November 2002, the case was taken to court and it was decided that in the future the land should be used by the *jamoat* – as a neutral resolution - for public purposes (in order to build a boarding school and a hospital).

*De facto*, employees of the *jamoat* are now using the land privately, but the people from Khipshon are still paying the taxes. Eight hectares are still not distributed and are used by the employees of the *jamoat*. For now, the conflict has been 'frozen'.

This case is an interesting example of state agents at the local level acting according to vested, rather than common interests.<sup>740</sup> There was a conflict and in order to solve

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<sup>739</sup> The Do No Harm Project seeks to identify the ways in which international humanitarian and/or development assistance given in conflict settings may be provided so that, rather than exacerbating and worsening the conflict, it helps local people disengage from fighting and develop systems for settling the problems that prompt conflict within their societies.

<sup>740</sup> Vested interests is a term for deep personal (and possibly financial) interest in some political or economic issue.

the conflict, the land was given to a 'neutral institution', the *jamoat* (the local representation of the state). Obviously, state control and the rule of law at the local level are not strong enough to enforce the neutrality of the local state authorities. The state is not capable of acting as a mediator, but instead is one of the parties involved.<sup>741</sup>

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<sup>741</sup> This case study is based on an interview that I conducted with two employees of a local NGO in Tavildara in October 2003

## 10. Appendix

The career of the female political leader who will be introduced in this section reflects the recent developments Tajikistan has been going through. Some accuse her of being an opportunist because she has changed political sides several times during her career. Others acknowledge that she had to change her political affiliations in order to stay involved in decision-making processes at different levels of the state. This example, like the examples of other female (local) leaders that I have provided before, shows that there are gaps in traditional Tajik society that women can fill in order to participate in decision-making processes on different levels of the state.

### 10.1 An Important Female Leader

Hurinisso Ghafforzoda (also called Mutabari Rashti) is probably the most important female political figure in Tajikistan today. She has a very interesting background. Her political career started during Soviet times and continues today.

Hurinisso Ghafforzoda is a well-known member of the opposition and political activist.<sup>742</sup> She is a Gharmi, but has lived in Dushanbe all her life. Mrs. Ghafforzoda is a very educated woman; she has degrees in medicine, philology and engineering, but also in religious terms, she is very well educated.<sup>743</sup>

She used to work for the *hukumat* (district administration) in Roghun, which was a strategic town (because of the hydro power plant, which began to be built there under the Soviets).

In Roghun, there were 35,000 foreign specialists for the construction of the hydro power plant, almost all of which were from other parts of the Soviet Union. However, Mrs. Ghafforzoda's husband was invited to work there.

In 2004, Mrs. Ghafforzoda had two non-governmental organisations: the "Centre for the Support of Civil Society" in Gharm and another one called "National Reconciliation" (*natsionalnoe primerenie* in Russian). These two organisations touch fundamental issues in terms of development in Tajikistan. To be really able to move on the society still needs to work on reconciliation and to balance the government and to ensure participation, a civil society needs to be built in Tajikistan.

She comes from a very politicised family. The whole family was very happy when the *perestroika* (Russian for reconstruction) started in the 1980s. Her mother came from an aristocratic family and her father was a farmer (Russian: *semlyadelez*). All the women in her family were scholars, they were all educated in Tajik literature and some of them wrote poetry (including Mrs. Ghafforzoda herself).

Her great-grandmother was a *hokim* (governor) under the rule of the Emir of Bukhoro. According to her, "everybody" was killed when the Soviet Union was established, her grandfather had been an astronomer and he had had a laboratory, but it was also destroyed and all his books were burned.<sup>744</sup> After this, they changed their family name. Throughout the decades her family was part of the opposition, not so much out of free political will, but because they were pushed into this corner.

In 1939, there was an earthquake in Hait (their village in Gharm) and they lost everything.

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<sup>742</sup> I interviewed Mrs. Ghafforzoda in Dushanbe in March 2004.

<sup>743</sup> She always read the Koran and the Bible, she was always taught to be open towards other religions, because there was only one God and it was the same for all people.

<sup>744</sup> Her family was most likely connected to the *Basmachi*.

In her family, they were two sons and four daughters. Everybody got a spiritual Islamic education and a secular higher education.<sup>745</sup> For some years, Mrs. Ghafforzoda also lived in Kurghan-Teppa; her husband was a Kulyabi. Her husband came from a family of spies (KGB), there were always disagreements between the two families; “they had other opinions and we had other opinions”.

### **The Development of her Activism and Political Career**

Her political career actually started as an activist when she was still studying at university and she and her friends organized a protest in order to achieve a higher status for the Tajik language.

During Soviet times, Mrs. Ghafforzoda became a member of the communist party (even though the whole family was against it), because this was the only way to get an important position and, in general, this was necessary in order to find a job. Before entering the party, she had been an important activist of the *KOMSOMOL* in Darband (today Nurabad).

She was never an Islamic fundamentalist and she never agreed with those who wanted to deny access to education for women and those who did not ask women what needs they had. She fought for the opposite, establishing several opportunities for women to get a professional education in Gharm (a medical and a pedagogical college).

The Soviet Union gave everybody a good education, but there was no freedom of speech. Russians were living in decent houses in Dushanbe and the Tajiks were living in a kind of low-level “residential accommodation” (Russian: *obshezhite*) or very shabby small houses. The Tajiks were discriminated against by the Russians, if they did not speak Russian. Mrs. Ghafforzoda very much disliked this policy and this is how she became more and more politically active.

At that time, tourists were coming from the GDR and the local people were very interested in being in touch with them and getting information from them about the outside world. The people realized that they were dressed in a much better way, that they were not afraid to criticize and that they were not satisfied. Mrs. Ghafforzoda said: “We realized that in our society there were many inequalities and we understood that there was something wrong with the world we were living in (Russian: *My poneli, shto my ne to zhivem*) and that there was no freedom of speech.” She was then involved in the foundation of a student group and started to organize *mitingi* (Russian for protests).

Later on, she became the head of the communist party in Roghun. She organized many protests. Then she became the deputy head of the state council and the head of the women’s council of Roghun. She never liked the ‘national question’, she was an internationalist.<sup>746</sup>

At one point, she was stripped of all political positions because she had demanded democratic development. She also left the Communist Party for that. Then, for some time there was no party she could really fit into. She was also on the black list (Russian: *cherniy spisok*) for her activism.

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<sup>745</sup> Possibly, all the incidents made the family stick even more closely together. Mrs. Ghafforzoda also values very much the support of her brother. Her brother lives in Moscow, he is a Russian citizen and he supports her a lot, financially and morally. The other brother is a farmer in Gharm; he also has an NGO there.

The whole family supports her political activity very much (comment: Mrs. Ghafforzoda mentioned this several times during the interview, she seems to rely on this backup a lot).

<sup>746</sup> Her husband was always a *chekist* (CHK - cherezvuchainy komitet – Russian for emergency committee), a communist and he always had a different point of view.

### **Female Leader in the Times of the Civil War**

When the civil war started, Mrs. Ghafforzoda was in *Maidoni Shahidoi* (Martyr Square) with the democrats and later on the Islamists joined as well as the extremists. Her husband was in *Maidoni Ozodi* (Freedom Square) with the supporters of the government. According to Mrs. Ghafforzoda, many families broke apart in that way for political considerations.

Then she fled to Gharm with her children and her husband stayed in Roghun. She came home and found that her uncle and grandfather had been killed and that they had burned all her grandfather's books. The elders of the village came to her and said that she had to leave.

They told her: "You can do it, you can lead the people to another place and make our voice heard (Russian: *otnesti nash golos*)." She was given 12 people to support her and she was told to fight the government troops in the mountains. She fled by foot with her injured daughter and her son. Then, finally, the UN intervened.

She begged the head of the Parliament and the head of the *hukumat* (district administration) to help her. The head of the *hukumat* said that if he had the opportunity, he would kill them all. She told him that she would become his competitor and later on, they actually both turned out to be candidates in the same municipal elections.

When they were fleeing, they spent a night in a teahouse in a village close to Darband. In the night the government troops (fighters: *boeviki*) came. She was sleeping or pretending that she was doing so, but they came up to her, lifted her blanket and said that she was from the opposition, that she was a spy, they pulled her out and took her to the balcony. The other women were screaming. She told those Kulyabi fighters that she was working for the *hukumat* (district administration). They claimed that she was from the Pamirs.

All of a sudden, she realized that one of them was an acquaintance of her husband from Kulyab. This man also recognized her and asked her what she was doing there. She said that if somebody would kill her, it should be an ethnic Tajik.

They wanted her to take off her sweatshirt, but she refused and said that they should rather kill her right away. Finally, she was forced to hand in her jewellery and her sweatshirt; then there was a shoot-out amongst the fighters. In the end, many people perceived her as their saviour.

She made a plan to flee again during the night. There was another woman with them whose son died from the cold and starvation on the way. Mrs. Ghafforzoda quickly dug a grave for him. During that time there was a lot of rape. She and the people who were with her were knocking on peoples' doors and asking for something to eat; they eventually ate cow fodder, so that the children at least would not starve to death.

### **Female Leader in the Post-War Period**

After this experience her plan had been to live a quiet life and not to get involved with politics anymore; but then she saw the "regional cleansing" against Pamiris and Gharmis and she could not watch that and not do anything.

Her husband asked her whether she wanted to support him (the government side) or stay with the opposition; she replied that she would stay with the opposition and that she was ready to die for her beliefs.

Her former girlfriends and those colleagues with whom she used to work for the *hukumat* (district administration) refused to acknowledge her, and nobody talked to her anymore because she was obviously part of the opposition. Neighbours were betraying each other and saying that those were Gharmis and those Badakhshanis.

In 1995, Mrs. Ghafforzoda was already working for Relief International doing research in all regions of Tajikistan, even in Kulyab. She attended the peace

negotiations in Gharm and later on in Afghanistan. She said: "There was a risk in this, but the peace was the most important thing."

She was also part of the Commission of National Reconciliation and she had a great deal of respect for the commanders of the opposition, they were good people, the government spoke about the horrible things they did, but in reality, it was not like that. In 2000, she was a candidate for the Islamic Renaissance Party, as she put it: "At that point there were no serious parties yet." Back then, the party did not have any women and so she fitted right in. She supported a progressive Islam. She said that she did not want to become a member, only if she could have made substantial reforms and establish a democratic Islamic party, she would join.

Later on, she was occupied with women's rights in Islam and civil society. She participated in many conferences and seminars, also abroad. She was offered the post of Minister of Education, but she refused and said that if they wanted her in the government, they had to offer her a more important position (like the vice-president or so).

Mrs. Ghafforzoda is an interesting character. She was shaped by the Soviet Union, but also developed into a leading figure in post-war times. She likes the progress of Europe and the culture of the East. She also mentioned that she does not like this eastern mentality that everybody does what the *rais* (Tajik for leader) says.

The political models of Iran, Afghanistan or Pakistan do not attract her. In 2004, when I met her, she was cooperating with Zoirov, the head of the social-democratic party.

She sees traditions as barriers to development and said that traditions would keep people from working freely (Russian: *Traditsii meshajut nas rabotat' svobodno*). By this notion, she was actually one of very few people in Tajikistan distinguishing religion from tradition.

Possibly, this could be an overall development approach for Tajikistan, linking East and West, but developing its own model not copying from Iran, Afghanistan or Pakistan.

She was further critical of the fact that NGOs were not very political, but only working in the social sphere and that they were highly dependent on international organisations (Russian: *Zhivut nashet mezhdunarodnykh organisatsii*). She even said that she thought that the Afghans were more advanced. She said: "Every simple Afghan man speaks English."<sup>747</sup>

She mentioned a political network of women that she was involved in. To further demonstrate her power she said that the *raisi hukumati Gharm* (the head of the district administration) was afraid of her and that he saw her as a political leader.

Even in 2004, seven years after the official peace agreement, she said: "Gharm was and is a conflictive zone." According to her, there were very few NGOs in Gharm in 2004. She also said that there was no peace in Tajikistan (Russian: *Nikakogo mira neto*).

In 2004, the head of the district administration in Gharm did not allow civil society to develop; he wanted money from her and she said: "And what will I tell the donors about where this money went?" He also wanted her to sign a paper saying that she would not run as a candidate for the elections, which took place later that year, but she refused to do so.

She has written her PhD in political science; she wanted to hand it in somewhere abroad because she was saying that in Tajikistan a degree did not mean anything

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<sup>747</sup> This is interesting because most Tajiks perceive themselves as better developed than the Afghans and they have prejudices such as Afghans are dirty and stink.

anymore. She said: “Every stupid man can study and get a degree because one only needs to bribe the right people.”

### **Continuing the Political Fight, as there is nothing to Lose**

She said that after the war, she did not want to mess with politics anymore, but eventually she saw the need for somebody to get involved and she started again to become active.

She said that she wondered where all the big villas of government officials came from as they officially only earned 20 Somoni a month, that everything was built with drug money and that there was no rule of law.<sup>748</sup> According to Mrs. Ghafforzoda there was absolutely no support for the civil society from the *hukumat* (district administration in Gharm) in 2004, instead they were even trying to restrict her work as much as possible. During the war Mrs. Ghafforzoda was close to the opposition; even in 2004 she was friends with the major warlords, Mirzo Jaga and Makhmadrozi Iskandarov.

To some degree, women like Mrs. Ghafforzoda are still profiting from education that they received during Soviet times. Nevertheless, these examples show that women on the local level in Tajikistan have been and are increasingly again starting to play important roles in local and national decision-making processes.

There is also a regional difference. Except for one, all my examples of female leaders are from Mountain-Badakhshan where women are generally better educated than in the rest of Tajikistan and have traditionally been more included in decision-making processes than in other parts of the country.

Finally, this example shows that for really grassroots democratic elements there is no space yet in Tajikistan, neither on the local nor on the national level.

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<sup>748</sup> During my one year of field research, she was probably the only one who dared to speak openly about the deficiencies of the current regime. She behaved as if she had nothing to fear.



## **11. Chapter 7: Conclusion and Outlook**

Chapter 6 has shown that an analysis of the provision of public goods and services can function as a good indicator for the quantity and quality of the governance performance of the state. The level of public goods and services the state provides is extremely low and alternative providers have filled the gaps the state has left open.

The previous exert has shown how exemplary the biography of a single person can be for the history and the current development phase Tajikistan is going through.

At this stage, I would like to review my hypothesis from the beginning and to summarize my findings in the light of the ongoing development process, and examine what implications this will have for Tajikistan's future.

### **11.1 Varying Governance Performance and the Paradox of Plenty**

As I have shown above, the governance performance significantly varies from region to region. The state does not have any fixed performance criteria, according to which it functions in each particular region. The 'code of conduct' of the state is random and varies according to the particular context in each region.

This difference is determined by several dividing factors. One divider is whether the region in question belonged to the opposition or the government during the civil war; another is whether a large number of Government functionaries come from this particular region. Economically, the structure in the different regions varies a lot and in this regard, the existence of natural resources plays a big role.

Through my different case studies I have shown that in the main cotton-growing areas (in the south-west of Khatlon) the people are extremely poor and forced to work on the cotton fields. Provincial elites increasingly enrich themselves. The national level seems to assume that the provincial elites take care of their clientele in terms of the provision of public goods and services. In fact, this is not the case and accordingly, the people in this part of the country have the worst possible governance situation.

Much better off are actually the former opposition regions where many international organisations and NGOs became active after the civil war. Initially, the people in the opposition regions were the most vulnerable groups and the international actors made a good choice by supporting these parts of the country at the time. With the passing years (it has been eleven years since the official end of the civil war) these regions have caught up and the international organisations and NGOs managed to establish fruitful trust-relationships with the local population.

Economically, these two opposition regions (the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan) have gotten back on their feet. Mountain-Badakhshan particularly has profited from the fast and fair land privatization process. Another factor that has particularly helped the opposition regions back on to their feet has been the extensive work migration to Russia. As work migrants were blocked for these two regions within the country, they soon made their way abroad.

In addition, in terms of the provision of public goods, the former opposition regions have profited more than Kulyab, especially as the Aga Khan Development Network and other major donors significantly invested into the provision of public goods and services, particularly in terms of education and health care.

A lesser role, but significant, was played by local power holders in the provision of public goods. There were cases in the Rasht valley and in Kulyab where local power holders (who were mainly involved in drug trafficking) invested into the renovation of the local school or even financed a new private school (as it was the case in Darband in the Rasht valley).

The geography and the distance to the centre also played a role in defining the governance performance of the state and the general relationship of the national with the provincial and local levels. Kulyab is the region (out of my three research regions) that is geographically the closest to the centre, Dushanbe. Accordingly, it is the region that is the most under the control of the national level. It is followed by the Rasht valley, where the main opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, which has its home base in the Rasht valley, faced heavy restrictions regarding its political activities.

Mountain-Badakhshan, however, in the political sense is the freest. It is geographically the furthest away from the centre, it was one of the main losers of the civil war, but politically it is the least active; although recent demonstrations, during summer 2008, might indicate change in the near future.

## **11.2 The Most Profitable Setup – Mountain-Badakhshan**

With my analysis, I have shown that in regional terms, the most profitable structure is the one in Mountain-Badakhshan. The investment of the different Aga Khan agencies has been enormous. Bliss writes in his book on Mountain-Badakhshan: “On the basis of the level of support from western donors per head of population, GBAO is today the most favoured oblast in Tajikistan” (Bliss, 2006: 297). The reason for this is that initially it was the most in need.

Three factors led to this vulnerability: 1) Mountain-Badakhshan was the region that indirectly suffered the most from the Tajik civil war. Even though it did not suffer any direct war damage, it had to deal with a large influx of internally displaced persons who had fled Dushanbe and other parts of Tajikistan to return to their Pamiri homeland; 2) It was, outside Dushanbe, the least capable of providing for its own food security, as it had been the most dependent on Soviet subsidies. Due to the lack of land and good soil, yields had always been comparably little. This was then an advantage in the land distribution process, as the land was not such a big stake the process could be completed much faster and more fairly. People have therefore been able to significantly increase their yields; 3) After the Tajik civil war Mountain-Badakhshan was completely cut off from the rest of Tajikistan, as the road to Gharm had been destroyed. Without external aid, large parts of the population would not have survived this humanitarian disaster (Bliss, 2006: 297).

When the international development organisations had established their structures and were operational, they simply continued to implement their programmes in the same parts of the country.

Today, Mountain-Badakhshan is the region furthest away from the centre where the state is the weakest. Nevertheless, the Aga Khan Foundation and its branches have been very active and in comparison to other regions. AKDN is much more embedded into local society due to the Ismaili connection. It can therefore achieve much more in Mountain-Badakhshan than in other regions, such as Kulyab and the Rasht valley. The poor provision of public goods and services by the state in Mountain-Badakhshan is buffered by the fact that people have access to public goods and services provided by international organisations, even if only on a low level.

Last, but not least, the perception of the local people in Mountain-Badakhshan showed in 2004 that they were much more satisfied with their living conditions and felt less neglected than the people in the Rasht valley and in Kulyab, particularly Shurabad.

### **11.3 'Fossilization' of Aid Structures**

As my interviews and my personal observations have shown, the people in the former opposition regions who are mainly targeted by international organisations, and even more so by international and national NGOs, are not the most vulnerable anymore. It is clear that international actors do not want to invest into parts of the country where people are poor due to structural deficiencies of the political system that predominantly benefit the 'string-pullers' on the national level (as it is the case in cotton-growing areas in the south-west). In the end, this would only fossilize the current structure.

At the same time, development organizations always face different kinds of criticism from the local population, from the government in the respective country and from the taxpayers back home. However, development cooperation is never easy; it is difficult to plan ahead and to take potential changes and development barriers into account.

Most organisations have to work with short contracts, insecure funding and highly fluctuating (expatriate) staff. It takes a long time for a trust relationship with the local population to be established and for a development intervention to show an impact.

The Aga Khan Development Network as a development organization is rather an exception. AKDN has traditionally been close and especially supportive towards the Ismaili population in Tajikistan. In the recent years, it has opened up its portfolio and established offices in the Rasht valley and Kulyab.

Nevertheless, it remains clear that the focus remains on Mountain-Badakshan, but the Aga Khan seems to have made a good deal with President Rahmon. There is no open conflict arising in this regard, instead Rahmon has become more open towards Ismailism. President Rahmon is happy to profit from the investments by the Aga Khan and the Aga Khan enjoys the freedom of being able to support his Ismaili community by building a big Ismaili religious centre and a Serena (luxury hotel) in the capital, Dushanbe.

Development organisations are under pressure from many sides. Nevertheless, there is a need for more impact assessments, for looking at whether the intended impact of a project was achieved and what negative or positive side effects occurred. The context in transition countries is in flux and therefore this has to be continuously re-assessed. Donors need to create more conditionality; they need to speak out, if the regime does not take structural reforms seriously enough.

Projects are often completed and neither the organisation that implemented them nor the donors that financed the project or the government follow up. Consequently, the projects are already dysfunctional after a few years. To some extent, projects are even fake. Particularly, in terms of infrastructure projects there is a lot of room for manoeuvre. The documentation is often wrong, worse quality products are being purchased than specified in the contracts and finally the quality of the projects is insufficient.

### **11.4 Keeping up the Appearance of Being in Need and Democratization**

One of the main policies of the Tajik state is to keep the development level of the country on a certain low level and to keep up an appearance of democracy and general change, so that external actors keep investing and the state elites can enrich themselves with the resources at hand. Long-term observers of political developments in Tajikistan agree that the Tajik state has much more potential than it currently reveals.

This 'policy' was, for example, revealed partly when in 2008 Tajikistan was accused of having provided wrong data to the International Monetary Fund. It was then asked to partly pay back a loan it had earlier received.<sup>749</sup>

Another indicator for this phenomenon is that specialists say that large parts of the 2007/2008 winter crisis in Tajikistan could have been prevented if the state had taken reasonable measures. According to specialists, the winter crisis was foreseeable and with the help of preventive measures, the impact could have been much smaller.

Eventually, this is the logic of the game. In addition, development cooperation follows 'market rules'. In terms of development aid, the winter crisis was actually good; it brought Tajikistan back into the world's spotlight and led to a new major influx of aid money.

This shows that the inflexibility of 'development interventions' can in the end lead to a fossilization of the existing structures and eventually prevent the development towards genuine democracy.

## 11.5 The Influence of External Forces

Tajikistan's development path will also further be influenced by external forces, such as Russia, the US, Uzbekistan, Iran, China and even India. The way the "war on terror" will continue in Afghanistan will also have an impact on the development process in Tajikistan. A major step has been achieved, basic physical security has been re-established and many other important development processes (decentralization, increasing rule of law, improving human rights etc.) have been started, but they have been advanced from outside and the local population has not yet taken ownership. Only if this is the case can these processes contribute to the further consolidation of the peace process and the transformation towards a more democratic and open political system.

The question of what it is that actually keeps Tajikistan as a territory and Tajiks together as a nation, remains. Different development processes have been started in the different regions (Kulyab, the Rasht valley and Mountain-Badakhshan) which are dominated by different actors (the state, international organisations or locally respected figures). Now these processes need to be brought together and one has to see to what extent informal rules of the game can be formalized and incorporated into the official system, and be 'universalised' for the entire country.

### Relations with Uzbekistan

Over the last few years, the relationship between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has been deteriorating. A recent accusation by a Tajik judge of official involvement in cross-border terrorism (the bombing of a Tajik courthouse in 2007), has again inflamed tensions between the two neighbours, who are both competing for regional influence. "Relations between Dushanbe and Tashkent have been fraught by border skirmishes, espionage scandals, and back-biting since independence in 1991. But the suggestion that Uzbek authorities are exporting violence in an effort to destabilize Tajikistan represents a departure from the low-intensity squabbling of years past."<sup>750</sup> The head of Tajikistan's Supreme Court, Nusratullo Abdulloev, convened a press conference on 16 July 2008, where he accused Uzbek security forces of ordering an explosion that had caused minor damage to the Supreme Court building in June

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<sup>749</sup> Arman, Kambiz: Tajikistan: IMF catches Dushanbe in creative Accounting Scandal, on: [www.eurasianet.org](http://www.eurasianet.org), 03/10/08

<sup>750</sup> Pannier, Bruce: Tajik Judge Alleges Official Uzbek Role In Courthouse Bombing, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 19/07/08

2007. The two main suspects are Mirzoev Bobosubhon and Mahmud Khudoberdiev, two former field commanders from Tajikistan's Popular Front, a paramilitary group that sided with the government during the civil war, who at the same time are wanted criminals in Tajikistan. Tajik officials suspect Khudoberdiev and other ex-commanders to be continuing plots against Dushanbe from Uzbekistan. Khudoberdiev is a veteran of the Soviet conflict in Afghanistan. He led what was regarded as the best-trained and best-equipped unit in the Tajik armed forces at the outbreak of the civil war. After the peace deal was signed in 1997 to end the fighting, the colonel disappeared, along with much of his unit, only to return in November 1998 to attack Tajikistan's second-largest city, Khudjand. Defeated, he vanished again, most likely to Uzbekistan. The Tajik side has demanded that Uzbek authorities hand over Khudoberdiev and his fighters, but the Uzbek side has denied that the colonel is on Uzbek territory. As tensions have risen between Tajikistan and Dushanbe, Uzbek officials have in return accused Tajikistan of harbouring members of the Al-Qaeda linked Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Uzbek requests for those people to be handed over have similarly drawn denials or silence from the Tajik side.<sup>751</sup>

In early December 2008, Uzbekistan for two days restricted movement on all roads connecting it with Tajikistan without stating a reason. In early 2009 Uzbekistan blocked an energy deal that Tajikistan had made with Turkmenistan to bridge its lack of electricity during winter times. This had a significant impact on supplies reaching Tajikistan and on the Tajik side it was perceived as an Uzbek move to demonstrate its power and superiority towards Tajikistan.<sup>752</sup>

### **The Role of External Actors in Development Cooperation**

Development organisations have to re-think their approaches continuously and adapt them to the relevant stage of development in the country. Many good concepts exist in theory, but their actual implementation in practice is often difficult. In this regard, 'Do No Harm', sustainability, ownership, vulnerability and participation play an important role. Is it really the aim to target the most vulnerable or might it be even more effective to start with the layer above in order to sustainably empower the people and hope for a spill-over effect towards other layers of society. Vulnerability and the general need for a development intervention also has to be continuously re-assessed. In case one targets the most vulnerable, the people who used to be the most vulnerable groups in 1997, might be much better off today, as it is the case in Mountain-Badakhshan.<sup>753</sup>

The biggest barrier to development in Tajikistan today is that the Tajik government has an interest in keeping the development level the same, in order to keep an inflow of external aid and so that its members can enrich themselves with the profit made by their privatised former state companies. At the current development trajectory, Tajikistan is moving towards a much bigger gap between rich and poor. Poor layers of society are increasingly being marginalized and those involved in the major industries continue to profit from the economic growth. The Tajik regime is increasingly blocking or refusing to implement badly needed structural reforms. After the second winter crisis in 2008/2009, people are increasingly becoming fed up with the lacking preventive action taken by the Tajik government. At the same time, the financial crisis adds tension to the constellation because it makes work migration, the

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<sup>751</sup> Pannier, Bruce: Tajik Judge Alleges Official Uzbek Role In Courthouse Bombing, on: [www.rferl.org](http://www.rferl.org), 19/07/08

<sup>752</sup> Anonymous author: Tajik paper calls for closer integration with Iran and Afghanistan, published in the Tajik newspaper "Nigoh", 4 Dec. 2008

<sup>753</sup> Right after the war they were the most vulnerable, through the efforts of the Aga Khan, they are much better off today.

main safety valve, more and more difficult.<sup>754</sup> The local population is increasingly pushed into precarious working conditions.

If one looks at the development process in Tajikistan since the end of the civil war, one can see that the development process has been slow. Many questions and conflicts from the times of the civil war have still not been resolved and the regime increasingly dares to take up measures that tend to provoke oppositional forces, such as the newly introduced laws restricting the religious sphere.<sup>755</sup>

Last year's winter crisis has pushed Tajikistan's development back significantly, especially in economic terms. The way the government is dealing with these kinds of issues shows how low its capacity still is or how little the government is concerned about acting in the interest of the people. Natural disasters like this one are partially preventable, but for the political system to deal with these kinds of issues, an enormous economic (connected to agricultural) reform process would have to be pushed forward which many important stakeholders are opposed to.

In terms of development cooperation in a post-conflict society such as Tajikistan, a continuous monitoring of the impact of the development intervention on post-conflict developments has to be conducted. For this, local conflict potentials have to be monitored continuously.<sup>756</sup>

Room for manoeuvre was there for external actors, but it was not fully used. International actors did not link their aid sufficiently to certain condition and simply continued funding. Only now, this is changing slightly. Donors are becoming wary of the fact that structural reforms intending to change the political system are not happening.

Another factor that shapes the relationship between external actors and the Tajiks government is the fact that external actors are accountable to tax payers and policy makers back home. They have their own interests and often run a strategy that could be called "Politics of Announcement". The most important part of the intervention is the pledge. To what extent the money actually reaches those in need, is in reality often secondary.

In the future, more coordination between the actors is needed.<sup>757</sup> This is difficult to achieve, as in a way these actors are competitors' for the same resources. There is currently no sufficient coordinating body between state agencies and non-state actors (NGOs, IOs, local power holders, for example) which could potentially develop a comprehensive development policy and a development strategy for the coming years on different levels of the state.

Agencies are pulled back and forth between visible quick impact projects so that the local population sees and has the proof that something is being done and long-term development projects where impact will only become visible in the years to come, but that will be more sustainable.

The Aga Khan Foundation and its sub-agencies in Tajikistan have a very good reputation, as it creates the impression through its development projects (such as the establishment of *village organisations*, the establishment of the University of Central

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<sup>754</sup> (ICG 2009: i)

<sup>755</sup> As the Country Report 2008 by the Bertelsmann Foundation put it: "Key leaders of the former United Tajik Opposition (UTO) and potential opponents of the Popular Front are marginalized, imprisoned or dead.", on: [www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de](http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de), sighted 25 February 2009, p. 23

<sup>756</sup> The German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development is emphasizing the need for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessments; (German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development 2005: 58)

<sup>757</sup> Also Bliss says that some donor institutions criticise a lack of coordination that is above average (Bliss 2004: 13)

Asia and numerous other projects) that it is there for many years to come and to support the local population from within. This approach functions especially well in the Ismaili areas where the Aga Khan Foundation is socially embedded and the Aga Khan is recognized as the highest religious authority.

The backlash of this major intervention is that AKF and AKDN initially only started in mainly Ismaili populated areas in Mountain-Badakhshan, it then moved on to the second former opposition region (Rasht valley) and only later, following a request by the Tajik President, started working in the south (Khatlon) where today most government officials are from. Through such a way of proceeding agencies might create new fragmentation by supporting particular groups and not others.

For the people at the local level, who expect (from the state) to be provided with the core public goods (such as security, healthcare, education and mechanisms for conflict resolution) the best constellation of actors at the local level is the one where the state is almost entirely left out and where local power holders cooperate with local NGOs and international organisations.

## **11.6 Can Tajikistan Exist as an Independent State?**

Will Tajikistan in the end be able to exist as an independent state, if it does not want to become a full-fledged 'NGO/IO state' (as is for example the case in Afghanistan) or an 'Aga Khan State'? The influx of aid money has transferred dependency relationships from the state to international actors. However, the ongoing development intervention has not sustainably empowered the state. This is not the fault of development organisations, but rather the lack of openness (Russian: *glasnost*) of the Tajik state. It has to be acknowledged at the same time that it is difficult to develop a comprehensive development approach for a transforming state that is regionally as diverse as Tajikistan and that is transforming from the Soviet system to a new authoritarian (commando state style) system and from a conflict state to a post-conflict state.<sup>758</sup>

Rule of law has to be one of the main pillars of the further development process. As soon as the reconciliation is more consolidated, international organisations and NGOs should increasingly be working on giving ownership back to the local people. It is an ongoing measuring process to judge to what extent former informal leaders should become part of the state system and get a 'share of the cake'. It is a process of balancing between consolidation on the one hand side and creating a context for genuine development on the other hand side.

## **11.7 Future Scenarios for the Development of Tajikistan**

In my thesis, I have discussed a lot about perceptions and how developments are seen through the eyes of the local people. I have compared a description of the real situation (supported by hard facts from various sources) with the perceptions of the people, which I have filtered out of my qualitative interviews and my participant observation. The two perspectives often differ considerably from each other. In the end, I believe that it is the perception that counts and not so much the reality, as people take decisions and generally behave based on how they perceive things.

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<sup>758</sup> The Bertelsmann Foundation ranked Tajikistan in its last country report in 2008 as an autocracy with a badly functioning market economy. To achieve sustainable poverty eradication, structural reforms are needed that are so far not taking place; (ICG 2009: 1)

Resulting from my analysis, I see three likely development scenarios for Tajikistan in the near future.

**Scenario 1:** The first scenario would be that the conflict lines harden up considerably and that Tajikistan falls back into civil war.

**Scenario 2:** The second scenario is that Tajikistan develops after the “Uzbek model”, where authoritarian measures keep the population from revolting.

**Scenario 3:** The third scenario is that Tajikistan might follow the different revolutions that recently occurred on the territory of the former Soviet Union (such as the revolutions in the Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan). Tajikistan might follow the Kyrgyz model and develop a stronger civil society. The question is though whether this may lead back to the first scenario, the re-emergence of a civil war.

**Scenario 4:** The last scenario is that work migration continues to be the main safety valve, that everything stays how it is and no major structural changes occur.

These four scenarios should not be seen as isolated from each other, but rather interlinked.

#### **Scenario 1: Returning to Civil War**

The conflict lines of the civil war were not resolved. The gaps between the different regional groups have opened up again and recently grown. The opposition was not sufficiently, and only temporarily included in political decision-making processes (career carousel). Tajik politicians act very much according to vested interests and not in the interest of the common good. The Kulyabis managed to ‘occupy’ the government structures and to ‘privatize’ or rather monopolize the Tajik economy (the cotton and aluminium production, as well as the drug trade) and share the profit amongst themselves. Political positions are for sale at a price that takes into account how much income the position will bring, very lucrative, for example, are positions connected to border control, such as customs and drug control.

Gharmis and Badakhshanis received little attention in these processes and as Tajikistan is still only slowly recovering from the civil war and still far from the industrial level and standard of living, it had achieved by the time the Soviet Union broke apart, they might soon start mobilizing again and demand more. Rahmon has even lost many of his former war allies. They might, in case it comes to a new confrontation, turn against him.

#### **Scenario 2: Tajikistan Follows the ‘Uzbek Model’**

Many facts point at the Tajik regime moving more and more towards the ‘Uzbek model’. By the introduction of new laws and decrees, the Tajik President is increasingly interfering in the private sphere (limiting the number of guests for weddings, prohibiting mobile phones, mini-skirts and headscarves in schools, closing down unregistered mosques and introducing difficult processes for mosque registration in return). Especially the religious forces feel increasingly intimidated and pushed out of the sphere they used to occupy. Commando state like, laws are becoming more and more confusing, making citizens prone to breaking the law.

Prior to the elections in 2006, the media were highly restricted and dominated by state propaganda. Journalists who reported in favour of the opposition or critical issues were mistreated and consequently the media were shown its limits, mainly resulting in self-censorship. On all levels, including the local level, possibilities for participation in decision-making processes are extremely limited.



Similar to the regime in Uzbekistan the human rights situation in Tajikistan is still complicated. Conditions in prisons are sub-standard. Rape and torture is the usual practice to extract information from suspects. Even relatives of political opponents and journalists have recently been imprisoned.

### **Scenario 3: Tajikistan Moving Towards a Kyrgyz-Style Participatory Process**

The stalemate, that the older generations are tired of war and that they tolerate the endemic corruption, the generally bad and neo-feudal modes of governance, is slowly unfolding and young generations are moving to the fore. Their memories of the war are not that strong and they might dare to ask for more. Only if these young forces become stronger, Tajikistan might be able to partly follow the Kyrgyz way and open up to create a stronger civil society that can demand more participation in decision-making processes on different levels.

### **Scenario 4: Everything Stays the Same**

The last scenario is that structurally the Tajik state stays as it is now. For the time being, this is the most likely development scenario for the coming years. This can only be the case, if the relationship with Russia remains satisfactory and large parts of Tajikistan's male population can continue to migrate to work. What points in this direction is the fact that there is no good alternative to Rahmon. The opposition lacks professionalism and a coherent programme. Especially, the Islamic Renaissance Party suffered from the death of its former leader Nuri, a very charismatic leader who symbolized also religious authority. The well-shaved, European-dressed Muhiddin Kabiri has not managed to unite political opposition leaders and to offer an alternative to the same extent.

Tajikistan currently lacks strong drivers of change. The political and economic scene instead is full of development spoilers, who have an interest in blocking the land privatization process and keeping their share of the cotton business. Those drivers of change that exist are individual figures, often with an academic background that do not unite large numbers of followers in their own name. It is common that before they start becoming dangerous to the regime, they are being co-opted by the regime and therefore neutralised.

I have described the current structure and how the 'cooperation' between the different actors functions. In fact, there is little cooperation and the different actors seem to have divided the Tajik territory up amongst themselves.

Even though the current system is not very sustainable, it could continue for a long time, if no major natural disasters destroy the livelihoods of the local people; work migrants can continue to go to Russia and make an income there and provided that international organizations and NGOs retain an interest in Tajikistan and it does not totally disappear from the spotlight on the world scene, the system can endure.

The question as to if large-scale work migration can be continued in the future, very much depends on the economic situation in Russia and how the global financial crisis develops, the relationship between Tajikistan and Russia, and policies of the Russian state towards work migration in the future.

The future development of Tajikistan also very much depends on external powers and their relationship to each other (especially between Russia and the US). It is important to see how Tajikistan will position itself on the international development scene and whether it will continue to get a share of the 'aid money cake' that is given in the context of the US-led anti-terror campaign in the region.

On the sub-national level, development organisations have promoted the establishment of community-based organisations, which in many cases have blunted

conflicts and eased the life of many people in rural areas. By exclusively investing into these newly created structures, there is a danger of bypassing the state structures and not increasing the capacity of the state and eventually not adding up to the state-building process.

Tajikistan is currently facing the same scenario as e.g. Kosovo and Afghanistan, faced or are facing. Many efforts are made by international actors in the area of state building. The state has partly been rebuilt and stabilized. However, the main concern of the people is that they do not have sources of income. It turns out there is an increased need for economy building<sup>759</sup>. As the situation is now in Tajikistan, political power brokers are identical to the economic power brokers.

In the Tajik context, there has been a lot of talk about democracy, or at least processes of participation, but these have predominantly been referring to the political process, but not the economy. Much more freedom and reliability is needed in the economic sphere.

Particularly, international actors often talk of the need for better governance, as I mentioned in the beginning of my study. Experience has shown that, especially in this field, intervention is difficult (Bliss 2004: 17). Good governance includes many different steps that condition each other. If step one is not completed, it is difficult to move on to step two.

### **11.7.1 Fronts Hardening Up and Growing Social Discontent**

My analysis has shown that the conflict from the Tajik civil war was not resolved and the peace agreement was not fully implemented. At the same time, the Tajik President is now playing the provocative secularist card, which is increasingly leading to a re-hardening of fronts. In parallel, social discontent, aggravated through the recent winter crises and other factors, is growing. A Pamiri respondent told me in September 2008 that he thought that the current political setup was similar to the situation shortly before the civil war broke and he said that he thought that Tajikistan was again at the brink of a civil war.<sup>760</sup>

President Imomali Rahmon has informal control over different economic sectors, which “in combination with his systematic suppression of political opposition ensured him victory in the November 2006 presidential elections” (Marat 2006: 8-9). With this victory, Rahmon confirmed his power until 2020.

The question is though, for how much longer will he be able to run the country with such an increased level of political and social suppression? The setup is not sustainable. Social unrest is rising and people increasingly feel that they have not much to lose.

At the same time, a new generation is growing up that does not remember the war, that is highly frustrated with the chances, e.g. in terms of employment, the current

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<sup>759</sup> “Both the government and many in the international community agree that greater emphasis must now be put on economic progress in Tajikistan- namely, investment in a variety of projects and opportunities for credit, business start-ups, and joint ventures.” (Muhutdinova 2007: 687)

<sup>760</sup> Interview with a local entrepreneur in Dushanbe in September 2008; The Economist Intelligence Unit published a report in June 2008 in which it expects Tajikistan to face a growing threat of instability in the 2008-09 forecast period. Given the economic hardship caused by soaring inflation and the winter fuel and food crisis, the long-term goal of structural reform will have to be balanced against preventing a rise in social instability. Regional tensions appear to have been rising and the population is growing increasingly disillusioned with the authorities’ inability to address economic hardship. Central government forces have been involved in a number of violent incidents in recent months in 2008, in an attempt to crack down on potential threats to the authorities from local power bases and to reassert control in the regions. Country Report Tajikistan, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008: 5-7

system can offer to them, and that might dare to protest and demand fundamental changes in the near future.

Rahmon still lives on the pride of having consolidated the peace, but this will not last forever. He will have to prove himself in the future by satisfying the people's demands, which will include eliminating the discrepancies in the country, guaranteeing food security, decreasing the overall level of poverty and providing equal access to a decent standard of public goods and services. Rahmon in the long run will also have to find a way to build up a constructive relationship with the opposition and to include them in the political system.

Should Tajikistan follow the Kyrgyz model and allow a stronger civil society that might then turn against the government? This seems to be a very unlikely scenario after Tajikistan's experience of the civil war. Does this mean that it necessarily has to turn to the Uzbek model? Tajikistan should focus on opening up the economy (which would include a major agricultural reform) and developing its potentials, such as hydropower and tourism.

Since the end of the civil war, Rahmon has managed to keep up "a façade of democracy" which helped him to continue to acquire international assistance.<sup>761</sup> The question is whether he will manage to do so in the future. His façade is falling apart, increasingly unveiling to what extent the political system is penetrated by corruption and general mismanagement. People in their local communities have to realise that they increasingly need to take their lives into their own hands.

My thesis is a contribution to transition theory (transition from the Soviet to a new political setup and from a conflict to a post-conflict set-up). The main lesson I have learned from this study regarding the transition process, is that as a state breaks apart and leadership fails, informal actors and networks need to be taken more into account, as they can play an important role in conflict mitigation and other governance areas. Even if the state fails on the national level, due to informal leadership, community life can still work surprisingly well on the local level. The danger with this is though that such a setup can eventually add up to an increased fragmentation of society.

My contribution to development theory is that we need to look more at what impact development cooperation has. In this regard intended impact as well as unintended impact or side-effects (positive or negative) need to be taken into account. Vulnerability has to be continuously re-assessed, donor conditions towards the respective state need to be revised and updated. These points then need to be fed back into the further policy-making and planning processes.

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<sup>761</sup> Country Report Tajikistan, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2008: 124

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