Precarious Peace in Tajikistan

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# Abbreviations

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIS</td>
<td>Commonwealth of Independent States</td>
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<td>CNR</td>
<td>Commission on National Reconciliation</td>
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<tr>
<td>GBAO</td>
<td>Gorno-Badakhshan, Autonomous Oblast, in Tajikistan</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>General Agreement</td>
<td>The General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord, signed in June 1997, was the formal ending of the Tajik civil war</td>
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<td>IMU</td>
<td>Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<td>SCO</td>
<td>Shanghai Cooperation Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNMOT</td>
<td>United Nations Mission of Observers to Tajikistan</td>
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<tr>
<td>UTO</td>
<td>United Tajik Opposition</td>
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<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<tr>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Union of Soviet Socialist Republics</td>
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<tr>
<td>201st MRD</td>
<td>201st Motorised Rifle Division: a Russian military division of approximately 15,000 soldiers, stationed on Tajikistan’s southern border to Afghanistan</td>
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1 Introduction

Peace prevails in Tajikistan - at least on paper. The General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord, signed in June 1997, brought an end to one of the bloodiest armed conflicts in the post cold-war era. The subsequent Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR), established to oversee the implementation of the peace accord, started to work under the leadership of the main opposition figure, Said Abdullo Nuri.

After three years of unsteady co-operation between the government and the opposition, presidential and parliamentary elections took place. This historic event marked the end of the transition period envisioned in the General Agreement. Subsequently, the CNR finished its work in March 2000 and the United Nations Mission of Observers to Tajikistan (UNMOT) closed its office in April. In a formal sense, peace had been established.

Despite these positive trends and developments, we believe that Tajikistan is still far from sustainable peace. Tajikistan—along with most of the other former Soviet republics—is facing a broad variety of old and new challenges ahead: strong regionalism, appalling socio-economic living conditions, wide-spread corruption, recurring crop failure, highly repressive and authoritarian regime behaviour, unaddressed grievances from the civil war... to name just a few. Only if these major challenges are dealt with adequately can the possibility of renewed armed conflict be reduced significantly.

This report aims to outline the major challenges Tajikistan faces at present, with a special emphasis on the most recent trends and developments in the region. Policy options for external actors are formulated, because at least one thing is certain: only if Tajikistan receives major support from the international community can it avoid sliding back into violent turmoil - something that must be regarded as vital to Europe's self-interest.

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1The views expressed in this study are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

2The content of this report is based on previous FAST Country Risk Profiles on Tajikistan, written by Professor Muriel Atkin (1999) and by Professor Muzafarr Olimov (2000). This report therefore strongly emphasises the most recent trends and developments that occurred in and around Tajikistan.
2 Risk assessment

2.1 Supportive information for Tajikistan

2.1.1 Map of Tajikistan

(Source: Kamoludin and Barnes, 2001,15)

2.1.2 Basic data

Total area: 143,100 sq km

Population: 6.2m (end of 2000)

Population density per sq km of arable land: 488 (one of the highest per-head ratios in the world)

Main towns (in '000): Dushanbe (525); Khujand (165)
Climate: Continental high mountain

Main languages: Tajik (a variant of Persian) and Russian; Uzbek is the main language for about 25% of the population.

Currency: Somoni (average exchange rate in 2000 was S1.86: US$1)

2.1.3 Political structure

Official name: Republic of Tajikistan

Constitution: Republic (independent from the UDSSR since 9 September 1991)


Future elections: Presidential elections due by 2006

National government: The prime minister is appointed by the President, who is formally head of the executive branch. The peace agreement signed on 27 June 1997 provides for a coalition government, with the opposition taking 30% of the seats.

2.1.4 Main economic indicators in 2000

Real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth: 8.3%

Consumer price inflation: 32.9% (average)

Current-account balance: –61 US$ m

External debt: 915 US$ m

3 Source: International Monetary Fund, 2001.
2.1.5 Analytical framework for Tajikistan

**ROOT CAUSES**

- Historic
  - Soviet hegemony / legacy
- Political / institutional
  - Authoritarian political culture
  - Lack of democratic traditions
  - Centralised political power
- Societal / Socio-Demographic
  - Strong regional and ethnic identities
  - Impact of clan structure on nation-building
- Economic
  - Underdevelopment
  - Predominance of cotton mono-culture
- International
  - Non-correspondence between ethnic and national boundaries
  - Russia’s interests in Tajikistan as its main strategic partner in Central Asia

**PROXIMATE CAUSES**

- Political / Governance
  - Parallel structure of governance
  - Authoritarian regime behaviour
- Security
  - Increase of crime and vigilante justice
- Societal / Socio-Demographic
  - High unemployment rate (especially among the young)
- Economic
  - Economic protectionism
- Ecological
  - Land and water pollution

**INTERVENING FACTORS**

- Decreasing the likelihood of conflict
  - Authoritarian political culture (short-term)
  - Conservative nature of the “social fabric”
  - War – tiredness of population
  - Foreign assistance (NGO, IO)
  - Fragmented opposition parties
  - Strong Russian military presence
  - Willingness of Tajik opposition to co-operate with the government

- Increasing the likelihood of conflict
  - Authoritarian political culture (long-term)
  - Natural disasters
  - Increase in border traffic of arms
  - Mechanical hindering cross-border contact / activities
  - Frontier disputes with Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan

**ARMED CONFLICT**

- A R M E D  C O N F L I C T
2.2 Risk assessment

This chapter presents an in-depth risk assessment of the current situation in Tajikistan, addressing in detail the root and proximate causes plus the intervening factors that may lead to renewed armed conflict. The Analytical Framework, as outlined in chapter 2.1.5, is used as a tool to guide the analysis (for more detail see: Krummenacher and Schmeidl, 2001, 6ff). Although certain factors in particular increase the likelihood of renewed armed conflict, one should always remember that these specific Tajik factors pose a real threat only in combination (the "domino effect" unleashing a chain effect of instability).

2.2.1 Root causes

The following paragraphs present the root causes of possible major armed conflict\(^4\) in Tajikistan. These factors determine the basic risk potential for armed conflict. Remember, these components are necessary but not sufficient conditions for armed conflict. These factors, changing only slowly over time, can be outlined as follows:

**Historic**

Historically speaking, in the twentieth century Tajikistan experienced two abrupt and deep ruptures with its past, the effects of which are relevant up to the present. The first rupture was the imposition of the Soviet rule in the 1920s; the second, in the 1990s, was the collapse of the system the Soviets imposed (for more details on the second rupture see “Proximate Causes”, below).

The consequence of the first rupture for the whole region of present Central Asia was a firm domination for about 70 years by the Soviet powers. As their first political move, the Bolsheviks created the five new administrative-territorial units currently known as the independent Central

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\(^4\) For FAST’s purpose, armed conflict is understood as “a contested incompatibility which concerns government and/or territory where the use of armed force between two parties, of which at least one is the government of a state, results in at least 1,000 battle-related deaths per year” (Wallensteen and Sollenberg, 1998, 1f).
Asian states. Although the borders of these new units were based primarily on ethno-linguistic divisions, this was precisely not the case in the territorial division between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (for more information see: Akiner, 2001, 14ff): their present territorial borders do not correspond with the linguistic and ethnic borders of the people living in those two countries. This circumstance poses a problem as it was and is a constant source of conflict between the two countries (see: intervening factors below).

Not only were the foundations for Tajikistan’s national border laid by the Soviet rulers, but all spheres of public and private life were heavily influenced by the Soviet system, whether language, social welfare systems, planned market economy, strong centralised political power structures, cultural traditions or the mindset of the people. Consequently, this so-called “Soviet legacy” and its impact on the Tajik society must be considered in order to understand the challenges the country currently faces.

Despite years of Soviet domination, it must also be noted that some genuine, pre-Soviet structures of this Central Asian country have remained intact. The following paragraphs outline the most important of these characteristics.

Political / institutional
The fundamentals of the political and institutional setting in Tajikistan are all to be found in its Soviet and pre-Soviet past: in general, the Tajik society can be pictured as a “tightly knit pyramid, formed of hierarchically ranked levels of authority, bound together by chains of mutually acknowledged loyalty and responsibility” (Akiner, 2000, 4). The nucleus of this complex network is the patriarchal family that is linked to form larger pyramids. This setting is also referred to as the tribal state. Such a “pre-colonial state formation” (ibid) formed the background upon which the Russian advance into Central Asia took place in the beginning of the twentieth century. Although the influence of the Soviet regime was less intrusive than in northern Kazakhstan, changes in the Tajik systems of local administration and taxation were introduced, and salary was formally abolished. Muslim customs and institutions,
however, were scarcely affected in the early years of the past century (see also: ibid, 5f). In the aftermath of the 1917 revolution, however, the Soviet influence increased in Tajikistan. According to Soviet dogma, the evolution of tribes into nations was part of the historical process; the Soviet administration created five large administrative units (the present Central Asia states) in 1925 (see: above). Tajikistan was created as a nation, despite the absence of any real national identity for ordinary Tajik people. As a consequence, the tribal pattern, combined with the heavily centralised Soviet power structures, resulted in an authoritarian culture that is found not only in Tajikistan, but in all the other Central Asian countries as well.

This totalitarian political culture must not be seen as the sole reason for the mass terror and mass persuasion used in the early 90s in Tajikistan. Nevertheless, this factor was a necessary prerequisite that continues carrying the risk for armed conflict.

Another specific historical factor that is still influencing present-day Tajik politics is the antagonism between various provinces in Tajikistan. This issue is usually referred to as regionalism\(^5\), and it bears a huge potential for violent conflict, as witnessed from 1992-97 during the civil war. The challenge of integrating the various regional identities and geographically distant regions of Tajikistan has remained largely unaddressed up to present. However, regionalism breeds dissatisfaction, nepotism and corruption, i.e. potentials for widespread instability.

**Societal / socio-demographic**

Strong regional and ethnic identities have long existed among the Tajiks and have remained powerful, even as national or state-based identities gained importance during the Soviet times. The resulting local groupings and social networks – often referred to as clans – were suddenly, after the dissolution of the Soviet patronage, once again vying for control and power. The predominance of such clan structures, combined with other regional cleavages (e.g. religious cleavages between the southern parts and the

\(^5\) For more detail on the issue of regionalism see: International Crisis Group 2001f, 12f.
northern/eastern parts) made the process of the nation-state building a difficult enterprise: the power of the central government has always been limited in scope (even during Soviet times) and these regional differences have many times been (ab)used by internal and external actors.6

Economic

Tajikistan's economic capacity has always been weak and must be considered as under-developed up to the present day. On the one hand, this can be attributed to the fact that its economy has been dependent on the agricultural sector (mainly a cotton mono-culture during the Soviet era), despite the unfavourable climatic and geographic conditions.7 On the other hand, Tajikistan has very few natural resources compared to its neighbouring states, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The only natural resources are small quantities of minerals, including silver and gold deposits (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001, 52). Thus, the country has always been heavily dependent on the import of natural resources (e.g. oil and gas from Uzbekistan). Only a small fraction of its own resources have been exploited so far (for reasons of remoteness and disruption caused by the civil war).

With respect to economics, one should also consider that the differences between the various regions in Tajikistan are considerable (see: International Crisis Group. 2001f, 8ff). For example, the largest province in Tajikistan, Gorno-Badakhshan (GBAO), accounts for 45% of Tajikistan's total territory but receives only 1.8% of Tajikistan's annual capital investment. Consequently, this province has the highest poverty and unemployment rates. In contrast, the northern province of Soghd – the only province mildly affected by the civil war – is relatively well off. Thus, the economic

6 A good example is the civil war in Tajikistan: on the surface, this conflict (beginning in 1992) was between three main factions (old-style communists, aspiring democrats and Islamic activists). In reality, however, it was much more a complex power struggle between different regional clan groupings. The religious and ideological positions of the different conflict parties were of little significance. For more detail on the Tajik civil war see: Abdullaev and Barnes (2001); Atkin (1999); Akiner (1999).

7 Ninety-three percent of Tajikistan's territory is mountainous and not suited for agricultural productions (see: International Crisis Group. 2001f, 8).
inequalities increase the level of regionalism and pose a constant source of violent conflict.

**International**

The republic of Tajikistan has been a small but nevertheless important player in the geopolitical make-up of Central Asia, where the interests of the various countries collide. Tajikistan borders with China (430 km), Afghanistan (1309 km), Uzbekistan (950 km) and Kyrgyzstan (590 km).

In the past, Tajikistan has been influenced most strongly by Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Russia (see also: 4.3 Actors List). In the case of Uzbekistan, the main disputes have been the recovery of old territorial and economic\(^8\) issues. In the case of Afghanistan, the relations between the two countries have been ambivalent and have always been a source of instability for Tajikistan (see also: 2.2.3 Intervening Factors). The relations to Russia have been highly significant for Tajikistan throughout its history; the economic\(^9\) and military ties have always been an especially important factor for the country’s overall stability and performance.

**Ecological**

Two ecological issues relevant to conflict escalation in Tajikistan must be considered as root causes of armed conflict.

First, natural resources are generally rather scarce and, more important, unevenly distributed among the different regions in Central Asia. Second, the problem of land and water pollution\(^10\) as a direct consequence of the cotton-monoculture must be considered as a root cause for

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\(^8\) Mainly related to the competition for natural resources (water and energy).

\(^9\) During the Soviet era, Tajikistan was – together with Uzbekistan – the main producer of cotton and, in return, was heavily subsidised by the USSR.

\(^10\) The predominance of cotton cultivation, along with the misuse and overuse of agricultural chemicals and pesticides during the Soviet time had drastic consequences for the water supply, the soil, the health status of the local population, and the perception that Tajikistan was a disadvantaged cotton colony of the Soviet central government. Cotton remains contemporary Tajikistan’s main crop for economic reasons, despite the environmental concerns (see also: Atkin, 1999, 178).
possible armed conflict, as it currently exposes the local population to lethal risks (see: intervening factors below).

2.2.2 Proximate causes

The following paragraphs present the so-called proximate causes through which root causes can have an indirect impact on the likelihood of armed conflict. These factors, occurring closer to the outbreak of armed conflict, are less static than the root causes, and are often linked to the (in)ability or (un)willingness of a government to cope with the difficult background factors. In the case of Tajikistan, they can be presented as follows:

Political / governance

After the break-up of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), the different regional clans sought (and still seek) to challenge the existing balance of power. The struggle was (and still is) for wealth and influence, mainly through control of the administrative apparatus, but also through extended legal or illegal business interests (see: paragraph on economy below). Tajikistan is a particularly good example of how quickly such clan rivalries can escalate into armed conflict when ambitions are raised and weapons are freely available. During the civil war (1992-1997) the northern political groups and clans (the Leninabadis), who provided most of the country’s Soviet era rulers, ceded power to allies from the poorer south (the Kuljabis). The eastern valleys supported the Islamic opposition and had allies in the GBAO. The result of this conflict was – as we know – one of the bloodiest armed conflicts in the post cold-war era: up to 50,000 people were killed, hundreds of thousands were displaced and, as a consequence, Tajikistan’s economy and infrastructure collapsed almost entirely.

The international community, hoping that Tajikistan would be a “quick fix”, introduced democratic standards on paper - without any significant success, however. In fact, “no matter what democratic structures may have been put in place in any country of Central Asia, these are regularly abused by those in power, and any significant opposition groups in those countries can be expected to do the same if
they gain power (...). The suggestion is that most of the viable political oppositions are simply using the rhetoric of democratisation to manipulate international support” (International Crisis Group, 2000, 24). Thus, due to the lack of democratic traditions in Tajikistan (or in Central Asia?), it is highly unlikely that any of the Western-European models of democracy and good governance will ever work in the same way they do on our continent. More importantly, special forms of government tailored to take the Tajik condition into account should rely on co-operation between Tajikistan and the international community (see also: Policy Options below).

Nevertheless, in a formal sense Tajikistan has a constitutional political system, with a bicameral legislature, a cabinet of ministers, and a president who has considerable powers. However, the democratic political system on paper does not explain how Tajik politics actually work. The absence of free and fair elections changes the meaning of elected office. When the president and the legislature were elected (in 1994 and 1995, respectively), the main opposition parties remained banned and therefore could not participate. Also, the latest national elections in spring 2000, through which a bicameral parliament was established (a Council of Representatives (lower house) and a National Council (upper house)) were, according to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) neither fair nor free. Thus, the autocratic regime behaviour of President Rakhmanov increasingly is threatening the historic peace accord of 1997. Although it might be true that a ruler with an “iron fist” guarantees stability in the short-term, this is certainly less true for the mid- and long-term. By strengthening executive powers, recruiting government officials mostly from his home area (at the expense of better-qualified people from other regions), controlling the parliament, keeping the media in custody, and neglecting vital aspects of the General Agreement, President Rakhmanov sows frustrations and discontent that could potentially contribute to unleashing a chain-effect of instability in the future (see also: International Crisis Group, 2001f, iff). Further attempts to consolidate power solely around the president are likely to provoke instability.
Political Islam is another issue related to the past civil war, and it remains controversial. On the one hand, there is a general consensus that Islam is an integral part of the national society, which is reflected in Tajikistan’s coalition government between secular and Islamic forces (for more details see: Atkin, 1999, 190-194; Kamoludin and Barnes, 2001). On the other, there remains a widespread fear of the rise of so-called Islamic fundamentalism, which is believed to stem from neighbouring Afghanistan. As a reaction to this perceived threat, the central government began persecuting alleged members of religious movements, particularly since the year 2000 (e.g. members of the Hezb-ut-Tahrir movement; see: chronology below). Now, after the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States of America (USA), the repression of non-government-controlled Islamic movements will most likely increase again; this, in turn, will further radicalise the extremist movements. By doing so, the Tajik population, living on the edge of the socio-economic abyss, is likely to become more receptive to Islamic extremist propaganda. The Islamic movements themselves do not as such pose a risk for violent conflict in the future; rather, the government’s very repressive ways of dealing with such movements do: the government of Tajikistan is on the way to further hardening its authoritarian domestic policies toward any dissent and opposition, thus driving people further toward Islamic-based protest. Even though a majority of Tajikistan’s Islamic opposition forces are integrated in the government, such tendencies are very likely to occur, should the current trend of state repression not be reduced.

The Islamic issue has often challenged the coalition government in the past two years. Whether because of the accusations voiced by Uzbekistan that Tajikistan was harbouring Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) fighters in its mountainous regions (see: chronology of the year 2000 below), or because of the harsh repression of Islamic activists (members of the Hezb-ut-Tahrir movement) mainly in the north of the country, the Tajik government (including the Islamic opposition) has had a hard time finding common ground in determining how to tackle the Islamic factor.
Corruption (along with the absence of a reliable taxation system) in Tajikistan is – as in many other former USSR republics – pervasive, especially in the police force, the courts, tax system, customs, banking, privatisation and government procurement (see: Freedom House, 2000, 628). Thus, for almost any government post, an applicant primarily needs not professional qualifications, but close links to powerful people, demonstrated loyalty to the authorities, and money (see: International Crisis Group, 2001f, 14). Such a high degree of corruption and bribery hampers economic prosperity, undermines political reform, provides a popular argument for extremist propaganda against the government, limits the effectiveness of foreign aid, and inhibits the just distribution of economic goods.

Last but not least, it should also be noted that Tajikistan’s political system is comprised of a parallel structure. Due to the remaining warlords (with their private fighters) and the strong clan structures in the region, the power of the central government has always been limited in scope. Some areas in Tajikistan are ruled de facto by local warlords (e.g. the Karategin valley) fighting to establish independent power bases and maintain their profitable economic monopolies in these regions (see also: Akiner, 2001, 83ff).

**Security**

On a domestic level, the security situation in Tajikistan decreased considerably after the break-up of the USSR. Even though Tajikistan has become a safer place to live after the signing of the Peace Agreement in 1997, it is still far from being a safe haven where law and order prevail. According to Akiner, “the economic pressures, coupled with the general loss of ethical orientation, have led to a market rise in personal corruption” (1999, 19). Thus, widespread corruption, combined with the existence of vast “mafia” business networks, has negatively impacted the security. In Tajikistan, many remnants of the civil war still exist (i.e. small
arms and an unknown number of former guerrilla fighters\(^\text{11}\)); this circumstance must be seen as a factor increasing the likelihood of renewed armed conflict in the future, as these remnants could potentially be used again.

In this context, a particular burden is the lack of funding to integrate former combatants into the official military structure (or into civilian life), which, in turn, decreases overall stability in the country (see also: International Crisis Group, 2001e, 7).

From an international point of view, Tajikistan has the smallest military of the Central Asian republics. It is said that the effectiveness of the troops is low and that – more important – there is a struggle within the armed forces. Although the peace process was meant to produce a unified army (integrating both government and opposition forces), this has never been achieved, as some units remain more loyal to civil war commanders than to the government. As a result, it is difficult to assess how much Dushanbe can count on its soldiers to follow orders. Only a few consider President Rakhmanov to have much of the country under his control. In addition, discipline has been a serious problem within the armed forces, leading the government to launch a campaign against errant soldiers in the year 2000 (see also: International Crisis Group, 2001e, 12).

**Societal / socio-demographic**

In general, the Tajik society has been thrown into an ideological vacuum resulting from the difficult breakaway from the USSR. People are disillusioned with both communist and democratic ideas and with the lack of powerful secular movements. They are angry with the government and believe that independence worsened their living conditions. Yet, attempts to replace the Soviet with a national ideology (with references to the national hero Ismail Samani) have not produced notable results. In contrast, Islamic ideology easily fills this ideological vacuum. The incredible poverty of the majority, combined with the wealthy lifestyle of a small

\(^{\text{11}}\) Atkin (1999, 187) estimates that of the approximately 5,500 former opposition fighters only a minority has been reintegrated and offered a position in the regular Tajik army. Thus, thousands of mostly unskilled and unmotivated soldiers are still believed to be based on Tajik territory.
minority of "New Tajiks" and the absence of a notable middle class, makes a more radicalised Islam quite possible in the future.

Furthermore, Tajikistan, along with all other Central Asian states, has very high demographic growth rates. According to Akiner (1999, 18), the growth rate varies between 35 (urban areas) and 39 (rural areas) per 1,000 inhabitants, which means that the population (given that present trend) could double in only 22 years. Such a fast population growth would certainly trigger a large-scale urban migration with a gradual decline in the general living condition in the mid- and long-run. Alongside that trend, rising urban unemployment, an acute shortage of accommodation, and increasing malfunction of essential public services is on the rise.

The unemployment rate is especially high in Tajikistan: whereas in 1991 the rate was roughly 12%, nowadays it is 49%; it is especially high amongst young people in places with huge conflict potential, e.g. Ferghana valley (see: Olimov, 2000, 13). Due to the high unemployment rate, combined with widespread poverty, many Tajiks have been forced to leave their homeland over the past decade to look for work abroad. As a result, a large proportion of the skilled and labour-active population is no longer in the country. This, in return, almost completely reduces the hopes for a better economic future for the country.

In addition to widespread poverty and high unemployment rates, the civil war has left key elements of the social infrastructure in tatters. The state-funded educational system and the social welfare system have suffered in particular from the severe decline in available resources and from years of social and economic dislocation. Although school attendance is, in theory,

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12 According to Davlatov (2001, 5), approximately 90% of people in Tajikistan are currently living below the poverty line.

13 According to estimates, between 300,000 and 700,000 Tajiks migrated to Russia or to other CIS countries in search of employment during the 1990s (International Crisis Group, 2001f, 22).
compulsory for nine years, in practice many children have to work to alleviate family hardship.\textsuperscript{14}

Also, the standard of the health system has declined drastically. Medical provision in Tajikistan is below average for a former Soviet republic; the infant mortality rate was estimated at 54 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1999 (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001, 52), one of the highest in the former USSR; and in the year 2000 the average life expectancy was just 68.4 years (ibid), owing to poor nutrition, deteriorating water supplies and the reappearance of diseases.\textsuperscript{15}

A more recent social phenomenon posing a threat to Tajikistan’s stability is the growing number of drug consumers. Until recently Tajikistan has been viewed as only a transit land for illegal drugs originating in Afghanistan (see: Economic paragraph below). Nowadays, Tajikistan also faces the societal effects of drug consumption, such as gang warfare, an increase in criminality and vigilante justice, prostitution, and HIV/AIDS. Although no reliable statistical data on drug addiction are available, there are reports suggesting that some 80\% of male adolescents in Kuljab city are drug addicts (Akiner, 2001, 91). Other sources estimate that there are currently more than 100,000 drug users in Tajikistan, despite the fact that only 4,600 are currently officially registered (International Crisis Group, 2001b, 10). Even though such estimates should not be taken as absolute truth, it is certainly true that the problem of drug consumption (and its related problems) has largely been neglected by both the Tajik government and the international community.

\textbf{Economic}

Economic performance is a crucial factor to be considered when looking at conflict (de)escalation, although “poverty and economic distress are not likely causes of conflict in themselves. Combined with other social

\textsuperscript{14} According to estimates from by the World Bank, 15\% of children in Tajikistan do not attend school because they have to work or because their parents cannot afford clothing and shoes for them.

\textsuperscript{15} According to Olimov (2000, 11), life expectancy in 1991 was – in contrast to present – 70.4 years.
and political factors, however, the kind of severe economic crisis facing certain localities in Central Asia creates the volatile conditions in which a desperate population could resort to violence when prompted by acts of organised aggression or perceptions of inequity or injustice” (International Crisis Group, 2001f, 1). The general hyper depression (i.e. the collapse of Tajikistan’s economy after independence) and the severe socio-economic stress (acute poverty and extremely high unemployment rates) combined with the government’s inability to face these economic challenges must be considered as major factors increasing the likelihood of armed conflict in Tajikistan today.

Tajikistan’s economy must be seen as one huge tragedy since the collapse of the USSR. Even though there are significant regional differences in economic performance within the country, and despite the fact that the downward spiral could have been stopped over the past couple of years, it is still true that the country’s economy is one of the weakest on the globe. It teetered constantly in the 90s and was supported almost solely by foreign credits. In general, the Tajik economy has remained heavily static, with the private sector contributing only 20-30% of the GDP (Freedom House, 2000, 629). However, the government has largely neglected the public sector and has rarely paid civil servants and pensioners since the break-up of the USSR. This gave rise to considerable black-market activities which, in turn, weaken the position and power of the government. This can be seen from the fact that the tax system – despite the reform efforts in late 1998 – has remained chaotic and poorly administered up to the present day.

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16 Tajikistan’s economy was divided by the civil war (1992-1997): while the northern Soghd region was nearly unaffected by the conflict and, thus, still has a relatively dynamic economy, the nation’s central and southern regions bear the scars of war. It is said that the majority of enterprises in these regions are currently operating at only 5-10% of their capacity (see: Isamova, 2001).

17 E.g. for the year 2001-2003, the international community agreed to grant Tajikistan US$430 million in credits in order to help alleviate poverty and unemployment (see also: Davlatov, 2001,5). Although such financial credits should be welcomed in the short-term, it must also be noted that such support will further increase Tajikistan’s dependence. It is said that the country’s external debts have already surpassed US$1 billion for summer 2001 (see: ibid).
Thus, Tajikistan's economic problems pose some of its major present challenges. Their causes lie in part with the legacy of the Soviet era, but also with the devastation caused by the civil war and the slow pace of legal and institutional reform since independence. As a consequence, the government has far too little money to spend on enormous social needs that have arisen both from a series of natural disasters in recent years (including landslides, floods and the dire impacts of the droughts in 2000 and 2001) and from the civil war (see: Atkin, 1999, 179).

Even though the latest trends indicate some economic growth in Tajikistan (8.3% in the year 2000), it must be noted that inflation reached 60% during the same period. As a result, approximately 90% of people in Tajikistan are currently living below the poverty line (Davlatov, 2001, 5).

One of the strongest cornerstones of the Tajik economy is the drug trade. It constitutes a major part of the national economy. Although unrecorded, the Economist Intelligence Unit (2001, 36) estimates that the drug trade accounts for between 30 and 50% of Tajikistan's GDP. This illegal business is a lucrative source of income for some of the impoverished population. However, it certainly does not contribute to stability. On the contrary: the government receives no taxes from this economic activity and, in addition, the side effects of this business are primarily destabilising (e.g. increased criminality, arms trade, corruption, gang warfare, etc.).

The agricultural sector - another major pillar of Tajikistan's economy - has declined progressively over the past five years in Tajikistan, although it remains an important part of the economy, providing 17% of the GDP in 2000 and accounting for 67% of the total employed labour force (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001, 59). This decline was caused primarily by the low world market prices of Tajikistan's two main export commodities, cotton and aluminium (see: Atkin, 1999, 179). Also, due to the lack of fertiliser for the cotton production, output has declined sharply since the break-up of the USSR.

Another aspect that hampers economic growth is Tajikistan's poorly developed transport and communication systems (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001, 52). Because of
difficult climatic conditions and a lack of funding, the prerequisites for economic prosperity are not met.

As a result, the population has suffered from appalling economic conditions and is faced with a social infrastructure in tatters. Even though these circumstances alone do not endanger stability, they provide all the ingredients for violent conflict. All efforts for rehabilitation, good governance, drug and crime prevention, etc., seem impossible and hopeless unless there is improvement in the economic situation (see: International Crisis Group, 2001f, 20f).

**Ecological**

Agricultural practices during the Soviet era resulted in almost unrecoverable ecological damage in Tajikistan: the cotton-monoculture, combined with careless, cost-cutting irrigation practices, led to an increase in salinisation of the soil (see: Akiner, 1999, 9). This, together with other agricultural malpractices, caused a severe decline in soil fertility, which in turn has prompted the overuse of chemical fertilisers. Severe pollution of the soil and water is a vicious cycle the local farmers can hardly escape. Thus, agricultural outputs are declining continuously, leading to a decrease in the rural population's living conditions.

Also, scarce energy resources in Tajikistan (see: 2.2.1 Root Causes), combined with the unsustainable use of natural resources (mainly due to the poor condition of the water management infrastructure), harbour a potential for international conflict (see: paragraph International below). Tajikistan is almost entirely dependent on outside sources for gas and oil, although it can still satisfy almost 50% of its energy needs through hydroelectric capacities (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001, 53).

The cycle of wet and dry years, coupled with recurring droughts puts an additional burden on Tajikistan's poor economic performance and the living conditions of the rural population. The declining socio-economic status of the population breeds dissatisfaction with the status quo and, thus, increases the likelihood of armed conflict.

**International**
The fight for water and energy resources is a constant stumbling block in the relations between the Central Asian states. Disputes regarding energy and water distribution (mainly between the upstream countries\(^{18}\) and the downstream countries\(^{19}\)) have continued to the present. The diversion of water from rivers that flow from Tajikistan into Uzbekistan to irrigate its cotton fields, and the control of the flow of water by dams in Tajikistan cause problems for Uzbekistan, where the decrease in the volume of water in its rivers and, therefore, also in the Aral Sea has caused serious environmental problems. Furthermore, Tashkent complained that what water did reach Uzbekistan was heavily polluted. Tajikistan, in turn, tried to use water to retaliate for Uzbekistan’s periodic halts in essential natural gas deliveries.\(^{20}\) These disputes over water are part of a larger picture of the troubled relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (see also: Atkin, 1999, 178f).

The disputes between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan have posed another major issue in Tajikistan’s international relations, especially in the last two years. Uzbekistan has repeatedly accused Tajikistan of harbouring Islamic militants (mainly IMU fighters) in its northern and eastern territories, something categorically denied by the Tajik government. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan has mined parts of its borders with Tajikistan as a consequence of these accusations, and has repeatedly introduced visa restrictions for Tajik citizens. Such measurements have devastating impacts for the population living in the border areas (e.g. in the Ferghana valley or in western Tajikistan); apart from the many people killed and injured in the land-mine incidents (see: chronology January-March, 2001), the visa restrictions are disabling local market activities in the border areas.

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\(^{18}\) I.e. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan with rich water but only few energy resources.

\(^{19}\) I.e. Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with little water but rich energy resources.

\(^{20}\) E.g. in 1998 and in the winter months of 2001, Tajikistan tried to charge Uzbekistan for water from rivers which rise in Tajikistan to balance the large bill Dushanbe has not paid for natural gas from Uzbekistan.
2.2.3 Intervening factors

Intervening factors can either positively or negatively influence the likelihood of (re)armed conflict. These factors are also linked to policy options as they provide entry points for external actors in supporting local initiatives. In the case of Tajikistan, these factors can be outlined as follows:

a) Decreasing the likelihood of renewed armed conflict

Despite the great conflict potential present in Tajikistan, the situation has remained remarkably stable in the country over the past few years (see also: 4.1 Tension Barometers). The main reasons for this include the highly “conservative nature of the social fabric” (Akiner, 1999, 22) that can be found in all the Central Asian countries, and the overall war-tiredness of the Tajik population has certainly prevented the eruption of renewed armed conflict (International Crisis Group, 2001f, 29).

Another crucial factor that guarantees stability is the fact that the opposition parties are fairly fragmented and, in addition, the opposition has been willing to co-operate with the government over the past few years (see also: chronology of the year 1999-2001).

It could also be argued that President Rakhmanov’s authoritarian political behaviour21 has had a stabilising effect in the short-run. Yet such trends are definitely counterproductive in the mid- and long-run. By fighting the so-called external threat of Islamic extremism22, the government risks creating the very threat they seek to prevent.

If the current trend of increased stability in Afghanistan prevails in the near future, Tajikistan will certainly benefit from this circumstance not only in the long run, but also in the immediate future. The tense situation on Tajikistan’s southern border, posing a constant threat of a possible refugee influx, would certainly ease. In addition, Afghanistan represents a possible trading partner and a market for goods either produced in or shipped through Tajikistan.

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21 E.g. the increased repression of alleged members of the Hezb-ut-Tahrir movement in the past two years (see: chronology).

22 Now, after the terrorist attacks in the USA, often referred to as the fight against terrorism.
The foreign assistance provided by the international community must also be seen as a factor that decreases the likelihood of armed conflict. Nevertheless, it should be noted that this is only true if the assistance delivered does not support corrupt governmental structures. Otherwise, "aid could simply widen the gulf between the small, wealthy ruling elite and the rest of the population and so contribute to the instability it was meant to prevent" (International Crisis Group, 2001f, ii). This aspect must be considered, especially in light of recent developments and the increasing assistance by the international community.

Last but not least, the strong Russian military presence in the country accounts for some degree of stability. Despite the fact that Russian border guards have repeatedly been involved in the narco-traffics trade (see: chronology), the Russian military presence gives Tajikistan only minimal protection against possible external penetration.

b) Increasing the likelihood of renewed armed conflict

The desperate socio-economic condition of the majority of the population, combined with the breakdown in law and order has led to an explosion of both the drug market and drug-related crimes over the past couple of years (see: chronology). Two of the major six drug routes from Afghanistan identified by the United Nations (UN) run through Tajikistan (International Crisis Group, 2001f, 19). Although the drug business is essential for Tajikistan's national economy, it must be said that only a few mafia barons really benefit from this business. For the majority of the population the drug business remains a dangerous and not very profitable business. Thus, this business is unlikely to increase the living conditions of the great majority of the population in a sustainable way (for more detail on current drug-related issues in Tajikistan see: International Crisis Group, 2001b). In addition, the side effects of this illegal business significantly increase the likelihood of armed conflict: corruption of governmental officials, increasing numbers of addicts and other related negative consequences (e.g. social turmoil and health-related problems), and the provision of funds of arms for insurgent groups make the outbreak of armed conflict more likely.
The constant authoritarian regime behaviour of President Rakhmanov also increases the likelihood of armed conflict. The 1997 peace accord committed the Tajik president to giving 30% of government positions at all levels to the opposition and also to arranging free and democratic presidential elections. Neither requirement has – according to the International Crisis Group (2001a, 8) – been fulfilled. Since the two major political opposition parties – the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) and the Democratic Party – accepted the outcome of the February/March 2000 parliamentary elections, many people consider that part of the opposition leadership has sold out in return for government positions. Event though the established political parties have avoided confrontation so far (largely in the name of preserving peace), the relationship between government and opposition creates a constant conflict potential that could easily lead to renewed confrontations. The government’s increased persecution of any Islamic movements (since the terrorist attacks of 11 September in the USA) could become an especially crucial touchstone for the shaky coalition government in Tajikistan.

Ecological circumstances also have an impact on the likelihood of renewed armed conflict. In the past two years (2000 and 2001) Tajikistan endured two droughts during extremely hot and dry summers (according to local information, summer harvest returns were the poorest in 70 years). Consequently, the living conditions of the rural population declined sharply and the government was not able to manage the crisis on its own. It must be assumed that only through foreign assistance (in the form of humanitarian aid) was Tajikistan able to avoid social unrest. Another ecological circumstance has a significant impact on the timing of possible armed conflict: due to the harsh climatic circumstances in Tajikistan (mainly during the winter months), armed conflicts are confined primarily to the summer months when it is possible for combatants to move from one place to another.

2.2.4 Outlook and future scenarios

This section explores Tajikistan’s future, i.e. likely future developments, if things remain more or less unchanged.
Policy options are then formulated based upon these future scenarios. First, the short-term is considered more closely (6-12 months from now); then, the longer-term future of the country (2-5 years) is examined more closely.

g) Short-term scenario for Tajikistan (6-12 months from now)

Overall, the situation is calm for the present and – given the encouraging signs towards more stability in Afghanistan after the 11 September events – we expect this stability to prevail in Tajikistan’s near future. Thus, there is reason for slight optimism that Tajikistan faces a more stable and less chaotic short-term future, however distant this might be from sustainable peace. The following outlines two realistic scenarios (best- and worst-case) for Tajikistan’s near future:

I) Worst-case scenario in the near future

The situation in Afghanistan is worsening and the responses by major outside actors do not contribute to stability. The Taleban regains power and influence in many areas of the country and, in return, activates IMU fighters and large-scale incursions in the Ferghana Valley. The Tajik Soghd oblast becomes a major transit point for Islamic fighters from the opposition movements in neighbouring Uzbekistan.

In response to the instability, economic activities decrease in the whole of the region. The living conditions, combined with other natural disasters (drought, earthquakes, harsh winter conditions, etc.) further deteriorate the living conditions of the Tajik population. As a result, societal tensions in highly populated areas (e.g. Ferghana Valley) increase and lead to violent conflict.

The effects of the drug trade further aggravate the situation (widespread criminality, corruption, etc). The influence of the central government decreases further.

II) Best-case scenario for the near future

The response of the anti-terrorist alliance is targeted, effective and restrained in Afghanistan. The Central Asian governments, supported by Russia, seek to neutralise the destructive effects of extremist movements while, at the same time, being sensitive to distinguishing between so-
called ‘terrorist movements’ and other, non-violent opposition groups (see also: FEWER, 2001a, 10f).

Drug trafficking and its negative impacts from Afghanistan decrease substantially due to increased international support and stricter border control. Law enforcement bodies and governmental structures thus gain power, and the influence of warlords can be limited.

Having learnt from the bitter experience of its civil war, the different opposing groups in Tajikistan show a high degree of restraint when political collisions take place.

Nevertheless, the effects of overpopulation are continuously felt in rural areas, accompanied by unemployment and poverty. Thus, even in the best-case scenario, labour migration is likely to increase, encompassing Tajiks as well as Uzbeks.

In the best case, the great gap between the rich and poor does not widen. Tight customs and border regimes are unlikely to change significantly in the short run, thus, limiting free economic activities, in particular for farmers and for labour migrants who have to leave for Russia and Kazakhstan in spring to find work. In the best case, the poverty level remains the same and does not fuel the growing dissent among the low-income section of the population. Consequently, the influence of the politically extremist Islamic movements remains unchanged. Even though the level of social tensions remains high, no major violent incidents occur.

A positive role in this scenario is played by international organisations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), religious leaders, and by NGOs. Russia uses its presence in the region to strengthen peace, in co-operation with China and the USA. The authorities of all three countries try to avert violent conflict.

The relationship between different ethnic groups in Tajikistan remains – despite serious challenges – largely positive (see also: FEWER, 2001b, 15-18).

b) Long-term scenario for Tajikistan (2-5 years from now)

In general, it must be acknowledged that the long-term prospects for Tajikistan and for Central Asia as a whole simply remain unpredictable.
It can be said that the present calmness in Tajikistan is in danger of masking high levels of conflict potential that – if not adequately addressed – bear the risk for armed conflict in the long run. It must be remembered that relatively small incidents could suddenly trigger larger violent conflicts, possibly involving other regional players, in the mid- and long-term.

Despite the uncertainty of Tajikistan's long-term future, a possible best and worst-case scenario can be formulated as follows:

I) Worst-case scenario for the mid- and long run

The situation in Afghanistan spreads instability for the whole of the Central Asian region in the long run. Not only do incoherent responses by the major outside actors produce instability in Afghanistan itself, but the presence of both Russian and USA military forces on Tajik ground becomes a major political obstacle for Tajikistan’s domestic and international politics, leading the coalition government to fall apart. The Taleban movement regains power and influence and activates Islamic opposition fighters for large-scaled incursions in the Ferghana Valley. Tajikistan becomes a major transit point for Islamic fighters from the opposition movements in neighbouring Uzbekistan. The subsequent repressive and violent responses by the Central Asian governments lead the Hezb-ut-Tahrir movement to alter its non-violent stance and attempt a mobilisation of supporters for armed struggle.

The increased instability hampers economic activities and the remaining major economic actors transfer their plants into other, safer places. Consequently, the living conditions of the Tajik population decrease continuously. Societal tensions (not only in highly-populated areas) increase and lead to widespread violent conflict in many areas of Tajikistan.

In addition, ethnic minorities move in large numbers (the Uzbeks in Tajikistan, approximately one million people, and the Tajiks in Uzbekistan) due to governmental repression of minorities. There is a flow of refugees from each side to their ethnic homelands.
The negative effects of the drug trade further aggravate the situation. The influence of the central government is limited solely to the capital. In the countryside, the overall power is in the hands of warlords and criminal gang leaders who are violently fighting each other for spheres of influence.

The response by the central government to all of this is largely repressive, trying to eradicate every vestige of opposition. This, in return, tills the ground for extremist movements. Large parts of the population see the Islamic revival (achieved by violent means, because of the government’s repressive attitude) of the secular system as the only viable option for bringing about change and improved living conditions.

The civil sector is crushed completely and the remaining independent civil institutions (media, NGOs, etc.) are state-controlled.

II) Best-case scenario for the mid- and long run

The situation in Afghanistan has a calming impact on the whole of Central Asia. The Central Asian governments, supported by Russia and the USA, neutralise the destructive effects of extremist movements while, at the same time protecting and encouraging democratic opposition groups.

Drug trafficking and its negative impacts come to a halt, due to increased international support and stricter border controls. Law enforcement bodies and governmental structures thus gain in power and influence.

The negative effects of overpopulation (unemployment and poverty) are reduced significantly. Thus, labour migration decreases and economic activities in the whole of Tajikistan increases (even in the far remote rural areas). A more stable Afghanistan also offers a new market for Tajik goods and stimulates investment and economic activities. In particular, the economic reforms in northern Tajikistan continue, accompanied by economic growth and the development of small and medium enterprises. This economic boom is not restricted to the northern part of the country but, due to increased power of the central government and its wise economic policies, the rest of the country profits equally from this trend. Thus, the widening
gap between the rapidly developing northern Tajikistan and the rest of the country decreases and comes to a halt.

Along with the economic growth, the gap between the rich and poor can be reduced in a sustainable way. People with low or medium incomes profit especially from these economic improvements, due to fiscal policies implemented by the strong central government. Consequently, the overall poverty level is reduced significantly. Also, political Islamic extremist thought largely loses its influence on Tajik politics.

The role of the civil society sector becomes crucial in Tajikistan. There is a plurality of media coverage that can be called truly free and independent.
3 Policy options

This chapter presents policy options (both for Tajikistan and for outside actors) to help decrease the likelihood of armed conflict in Tajikistan. These policy options are divided into two sections: first, a general approach is outlined and, second, concrete tools and programmes linked to this strategy are formulated.

a) General strategy

In general, the Tajik government should pursue the following strategy to reduce the likelihood of renewed armed conflict:

a) Economic sphere

- Develop and implement strategies to combat poverty and unemployment.
- Resolve issues that hamper economic activity.
- Develop and implement a comprehensive regional framework to regulate international issues of water and energy resources between the Central Asian states.
- Provide profitable economic alternatives to those sectors perpetuating violence (black-market, drugs trade, mercenary military engagement, etc.).
- Create a favourable investment climate for local and international businesses.

b) Political sphere

- Demobilise former opposition fighters and help them return to civilian life.
- Seek a broader base of political support for the Tajik coalition government.
- Advocate religious freedom as both a human rights and a security issue.

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23 For more details on the policy options suggested see also: Krummenacher, Siegfried, Müller (2000); Olimov (2000, 4); FEWER (2001b, 20); International Crisis Group (2001b, ii; 2001c, iif & 11ff; 2001f, if & 30f; 2001g, vf & 30f).
Stop repressing non-violent opposition movements and respect them as legitimate political opposition forces.
Develop and implement a joint inter-state approach to control the effects of violent extremist movements.
Continue efforts to extend law and order throughout the country, but with better control of security forces and law enforcement bodies.
Reinforce, at the same time, the existing regional autonomy and local self-governance (which already exists).
Support the development of the civil society.
Empower law enforcement agencies to co-operate with their counterparts in neighbouring states.
Further develop transport- and communication infrastructures.
Take measures to raise opposition representation in the executive and judiciary.
Provide more transparent elections and greater legal protection for political parties.
Adhere to international conventions and protocols signed.

c) Social sphere
Encourage civil liberty issues.
Reactivate traditional mechanisms for conflict-regulation.
Strengthen public awareness of the difference between terrorist movements and legitimate opposition forces.
Improve education and access to information for the mass of the population.
Develop and implement effective, and regionally consistent drugs policies.

d) Institutional / legal sphere
Strengthen weak government structures and reintegrate disparate regions in the overall state.
Restore regime credibility.
Strengthen courts to restore credibility in the rule of law and to increase speed of judicial process.

Ensure lawful police behaviour and put in place procedures for investigating charges of police brutality and torture.

Carry out administration reform.

Develop well-reasoned laws and regulations on what constitutes so-called anti-state Islamic activity.

e) Humanitarian sphere

Treat the socio-economic misery of the people affected by natural disasters not only as an individual catastrophe, but also as a security threat for the whole of the country.

Fully support and collaborate with the UN and NGOs.

In accordance with this general strategy, international actors and donors should pursue the following general strategy to reduce the likelihood of renewed armed conflict:

a) Economic sphere

Facilitate dialogue between all the Central Asian countries regarding water and energy resources.

Renegotiate Tajikistan’s foreign debts.

Increase the funds for humanitarian assistance and development projects in Tajikistan.

Attach and monitor stronger conditions to development projects.

Support the opening of possible export markets into Afghanistan (e.g. food-processing goods and low-level manufacturing goods).

Focus investment efforts on sectors that will provide significant employment and will be sustainable in the long term (such as agriculture).

Help to improve the socio-economic situation of the most needy people.
b) **Political sphere**
- Urge the government to include all political factions (e.g. groups from the northern Soghd region) in future political processes and negotiations.
- Urge the Tajik government to show constraint in fighting so-called terrorists.
- Monitor the adherence of the concessions stated in the General Agreement.
- Assist the Tajik government in demobilising and reintegrating former fighters.
- Help to reduce the appeal of radical Islamic groups.
- Support Tajikistan in fighting corruption.
- Encourage the government to distribute public funding more evenly between the regions.

c) **Social sphere**
- Assert that regional security can be assured only if religious freedom is guaranteed.
- Insist that legitimate activities of non-violent opposition groups and individuals not be suppressed.
- Set up training facilities for journalists and media professionals.

d) **Legal / institutional sphere**
- Further develop the capacity of Tajikistan’s ministries with special emphasis on public services.
- Develop and support the introduction of transparent recruitment criteria for all government posts.
- Provide technical and financial assistance to help Tajikistan reform its public sector.

e) **Humanitarian sphere**
- Expand assistance significantly beyond its present levels in Tajikistan (e.g. bolster the resources of relief agencies).
- Ensure that donor assistance does not contribute to strengthening the suppression of non-violent (religion-based) groups.
- Monitor developments in both visible and forgotten “hot spots”.
Support the local ownership of projects to ensure their continued, sustainable success.

To reduce poverty and the appeal of drug trafficking, make development projects to border communities a priority.

Insist that humanitarian aid should be more evenly distributed throughout Tajikistan.

b) Tools and programmes linked to the strategy

In particular, the **Tajik government should** support and implement the following tools and programmes in order to reduce the likelihood of armed conflict:

**a) Economic sphere**

- Immediately address the dire socio-economic situation of the most needy people, who are particularly susceptible to mobilisation by radical groups.
- Clear away obstacles that hinder cross-border economic activities where such trade is vital for the local population (e.g. Ferghana Valley).

**b) Political sphere**

- Set up retraining and education schemes for former opposition fighters to help them return into civilian life, where non-integrated fighters are most numerous.
- Release all prisoners detained for political or religious reasons (e.g. members of the Hezb-ut-Tahrir movement).
- End the selective prosecution of former opposition members for crimes covered by the Amnesty Law of 1997.
- Hand over significant political responsibilities (e.g. taxation) to the local administrative level and, at the same time, supervise the proper implementation and functioning of this increased local self-governance.
- Allow and encourage the formation of political opposition groups that reduce the constituency of radical movements.
Create permanent representation between regions in order to address remaining grievances from the civil war.

Relax border and customs regimes for the population of the Ferghana Valley oblasts, including the regulation of the movement of people.

Initiate and support the development of the civil society sector with special emphasis on multi-party systems, NGOs, the news media, and reform of the judicial system.

c) Social sphere

Initiate and support public forums for freedom of expression (e.g. allow the establishment of civil society institutions such as independent media channels).

Reduce censorship of the media and provide private companies with broadcasting licenses.

d) Institutional sphere

Articulate and demonstrate commitment to fighting corruption in order to restore regime credibility within the population (e.g. implementation of visible and effective anti-corruption instruments on all institutional levels).

Establish an anti-corruption task force with government, parliament, opposition, media, NGO and donor-community participation.

Train and further educate judicial staff to reduce governmental influence on the rule of law.

e) Humanitarian sphere

Give highest priority to the immediate relief of the suffering caused by humanitarian disasters (e.g. draught).

Clear away administrative barriers to international humanitarian agencies to enable them to relieve poverty and misery as effectively as possible (e.g. ease the process of organisational registration).
In accordance with the Tajik government, international actors and donors should support and implement the following tools and programmes in order to reduce the likelihood of renewed armed conflict:

**a) Economic sphere**
- Find ways to exempt (at least portions of) Tajikistan’s foreign debts (estimated at US$1.2 billion in 2000).
- Attach strict conditions to development projects, emphasizing the reduction of poverty and corruption, taking steps to improve the investment environment, and making significant efforts to strengthen government capabilities.
- Give highest priority to the support of development projects that reduce the level of unemployment in areas with high conflict potential.

**b) Political sphere**
- Closely monitor potential persecution of so-called Islamic terrorists.
- Insist on the full acceptance and inclusion of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) force in political processes (e.g. the 30% quota) on all levels in order to stabilise the situation and strengthen peace.
- Support the introduction of counterfeit-proof passports and IDs.
- Provide funding for training and reintegration programmes for former opposition fighters.

**c) Social sphere**
- Initiate and support the establishment of independent, non-violent opposition groups on a local level.
- Develop and implement a code of conduct for media professionals and make sure the standards are adhered to.

**d) Legal / institutional sphere**
- Provide training for governmental officials on all levels of administration.
- Provide short-term stipends for ministry staff.
e) **Humanitarian sphere**

- Concentrate on the areas of: poverty alleviation; legal reform; media and information; education; health and environmental projects.
- Regard the protection of civil liberties (especially individual religious and political rights) as crucial preconditions for providing humanitarian aid and international assistance (conditionality).
- Channel aid through traditional low-level community structures or nascent NGOs (as the basis for local activism), rather than through the government.
- Increase political early-warning mechanisms in the whole of the region to anticipate future violent conflict.
4 Appendix

4.1 Tension barometers

*System stability in Tajikistan: the Conflict Carrying Capacity curve*

**Conflict Carrying Capacity and Forceful Actions: Tajikistan**

(Monthly)

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**Conflict Carrying Capacity (CCC)** reflects the stability of a system or polity as a whole rather than a particular regime or administration. A CCC trend line approaching 1.0 suggests 100% stability.

**Forceful Action (FA)** refers to the proportion of any and all uses of physical force and any associated manifest violence by any actor.

When the CCC and FA trend lines intersect it implies severe regime instability coupled with violence. In such cases the regime might be in danger of collapsing or of being overthrown, or the country might face other severe internal conflicts such as civil war.

“n” signifies the number of events per month reported by the FAST Tajikistan Country-Coordinator. All events consist of a clearly identifiable actor, target and action.

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24 Please note that the raw data upon which all tension barometers are based were collected and generated by the Local Information Network for Tajikistan. For more information on the role of the Local Information Networks and the Tension Barometers in FAST’s methodology see: Krummenacher and Schmeidl (2001).
Conflictive and co-operative events in Tajikistan: Goldstein Curves

The Goldstein Conflict and Co-operation scale measures the relationship between individuals, groups, or states ranging from -8.4 for unmitigated conflict to +10.2 for complete co-operation. According to this scale, each event reported by the Country Co-ordinator is attributed a certain Goldstein score. These scores are summed up per reporting month and displayed in the graph.

“n” signifies the number of events per month reported by the FAST Tajikistan Country-Co-ordinator. All events consist of a clearly identifiable actor, target and action.
**Forceful Actions: divided into civil and governmental sectors**

**Government (or civil) forceful actions** signify the number of events initiated by the government (or civil) sector that include the use of physical force.

**Number of demonstration events in Tajikistan**

**Demonstrations** signify the number of events that are categorised as formal or informal complaint events (e.g. demonstrations, marches, hunger strikes, letter-writing campaigns, etc.).

“n” signifies the total number of events per month reported by the FAST Uzbekistan Country-Co-ordinator. All events consist of a clearly identifiable actor, target and action.
4.2 Chronology

The colonial period
In the 1860s, most of the present-day Tajikistan is seized and incorporated into the Russian Empire. Afghanistan becomes a buffer zone between the Russian and British empires. In 1875, Russia and Britain divide the Tajik-populated territories along Tajikistan’s border in the Pamir Mountains. In 1916, a popular uprising against Russian rule begins in Khujand and spreads throughout Central Asia.

The Soviet period
1917-26
The Russian Empire collapses. In 1917, Soviet power is established in northern Tajikistan. By 1918, Basmachi fighters have organised against Soviet control. In 1921, the Red Army conquers Dushanbe. Between 1921 and 1926, Soviet campaigns against the Basmachis result in more than 10,000 deaths and the mass flight of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Turkmenis to Afghanistan. By 1922, the bulk of Basmachi forces are crushed. In 1924, the Soviet government demarcates new administrative-territorial boundaries in Central Asia, following ethnolinguistic divisions. The new Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic is founded and Uzbekistan is given the ancient Tajik-speaking centres of Samarqand, Bukhara and Khujand – a significant deviation from the ethnolinguistic principle.

1927-79
In 1927, Stalin orders the first purges of political opponents in Tajikistan. The Tajik literary language is transliterated from the classical Arabic script into the Latin script. After years of dispute, present-day Soghd province is re-allocated to Tajikistan. A second wave of emigration of Tajiks to Afghanistan takes place to escape forced collectivisation and religious persecution. In 1940, Tajik is transliterated from the Latin script into the Cyrillic. The final wave of forced resettlement comes in the 1970s, with the removal of Yaghnobis from the mountains to the south-western cotton fields.

1980-1989
Inter-group tensions, often related to the struggle for limited resources, emerge and escalate into violent clashes between ethnic groups (Kyrgyz and Tajiks; Tajiks and Uzbeks). After mass protest, Tajik replaces Russian as the language of the republic. Many Russian-speakers begin to emigrate.

1990
In February, rumours that large numbers of Armenian refugees are to be re-housed in the capital spark violent protest in Dushanbe. The DPT is formed in August. The illegal conference of the IRP is held in October. In December, multi-party politics is formally legalised.

Independence and war
1991
Tajik President Makhkamov supports the coup against Mikhail Gorbachev. After opposition forces organise a public demonstration calling for his resignation and for free elections, Makhkamov steps down. On 9 September

25 The basic data for the chronology is based upon Abdullaev and Barnes (2001,82-87) and FAST’s Information Network for Tajikistan.
the Tajik Supreme Soviet declares Tajikistan's independence. A 14-day rally in Dushanbe later in the month brings an estimated 10,000 protesters to the streets; elections are called. Nine candidates contest the presidency. The opposition puts forward a joint candidate, Khudonazarov. In November, former Communist Party First Secretary Nabiev wins the election amid allegations of vote rigging.

1992
In February, US Secretary of State Baker visits Tajikistan, where he refuses to meet opposition groups. Nabiev subsequently acts more decisively against the opposition. In March, opposition sympathisers start a 52-day rally in Dushanbe, prompting counter-demonstrations from pro-government and anti-IRP factions. In April the GBAO within Tajikistan is declared.

On 1 May, in an attempt to end the opposition rally, Nabiev uses emergency powers to form and arm a 'presidential guard' consisting primarily of Kuljabis. Fighting breaks out, resulting in some deaths. Weakened by the conflict, Nabiev agrees to allocate a third of the ministerial posts to opposition parties. By mid-May the protesters have left Dushanbe and the armed conflict shifts south. Skirmishes break out between supporters of the previous government and supporters of opposition parties. Gharm aligns with the opposition block the roads to Kuljab, where demonstrators recruited into the 'presidential guard' have kept their weapons. By June there is open warfare.

In July, government and opposition politicians agree to a ceasefire and to release hostages and disarm militias. But fighting soon intensifies. In September, the UN sends a fact-finding mission to investigate the war. In late September, the Popular Front breaks through the blockade of Kuljab and kills many opposition supporters in Kurgan-Too. In November co-operation between UN and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) peace initiatives begins. Nabiev is forced to resigns and Rakhmanov is elected head of state. He forms a government without representatives from the democratic-Islamic opposition. The new government bans opposition parties and launches punitive reprisals against Pamiris and Karateginis, who are killed or forced to flee. Opposition militias retreat to Gharm, Badakhshan, or Afghanistan. Between May and November, approximately 50,000 people are killed and about 100,000 flee to Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan. 600,000 are displaced inside Tajikistan. Property and infrastructure damage is estimated at US$7 billion.

1993
In January, UNMOT establishes an office in Dushanbe and the UNHCR begins operating. Under the leadership of Nuri, the MIRT is formed in Afghanistan to co-ordinate the opposition's military and political activities. Military clashes continue in central Tajikistan. In April, opposition forces launch the first 'spring offensive' across the Pyanj River from Afghanistan into southern Tajikistan - a pattern that is to continue every spring until 1997. UNHCR efforts to repatriate 20,000 Tajik refugees from Afghanistan are undermined when 15 returnees are murdered in Kurgan-Too. In October, Russian and Central Asian troops stationed in Tajikistan are formally designated the Collective Peacekeeping Forces of the CIS. The UN is requested to designate it a UN peacekeeping operation - a request it never grants. In December, the CSCE Council of Ministers decides to co-operate with the UN to stabilise Tajikistan and a couple of months later establishes a permanent mission.
The search for accord

1994
In April the first round of inter-Tajik negotiations takes place in Moscow. The government stresses the end of fighting and the return of refugees, whereas the opposition wants an all-party council to govern Tajikistan and the legalisation of opposition parties. In June, the second round of inter-Tajik negotiations take place in Tehran without any substantial success. In September a temporary but open-ended ceasefire is agreed. In October, at the third round of negotiations in Islamabad, the negotiators agree to extend the ceasefire until February 1995, but ceasefire violations continue. In November, a referendum results in the adoption of a new constitution that bans parties based on religion. In elections on the same day, Rakhmanov wins the presidency. The elections mark the rapid political rise of Kuljabis. In December the UN Security Council formally establishes UNMOT.

1995
In 1995, the Pakistan-backed Taleban begins to consolidate control over large parts of Afghanistan. This changes the political and strategic context of the Tajikistan civil war dramatically, as Tajik parties and foreign countries aspire to contain the Taleban. In May, Rakhmanov flies to Kabul to meet Nuri for the first time. They agree to renew the ceasefire for a further three months but announce no substantive breakthrough. In May the fourth round of talks takes place in Almaty. The UTO proposes a transitional government and indicates that it will recognise Rakhmanov as president if the government accepts this proposal. In July Rakhmanov and Nuri meet in Tehran. They agree to intensify efforts to reach agreements on the outstanding political and institutional issues. In August the Protocol on the Fundamental Principles for Establishing Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan is signed. It is the first substantive agreement on political and institutional issues since the negotiations began. In November the fifth round of inter-Tajik negotiations begins. It continues until July 1996, with frequent interruptions.

1996
Assassinations and abductions of influential people mark the first part of the year. In May thousands demonstrate in Leninabad, frustrated with the north’s perceived disenfranchisement. The government cracks down; five people are killed and hundreds arrested. Fighting continues into July. Key CIS countries agree to protect the CIS border against the Taleban and to strengthen border controls. In December Rakhmanov travels to Afghanistan to meet Nuri, which marks a major turning point in the negotiations, and later sign an agreement laying the foundation for the General Agreement.

January-June 1997
The sixth round of inter-Tajik negotiations is held in Iran. In February, the seventh round of inter-Tajik negotiations in Russia results in the signing of the Protocol on Military Issues. In April and May, the Taleban briefly seizes the Afghan city of Mazar-e-Sharif near the Uzbek border, increasing pressure on the negotiators as many Tajik refugees are based in or near the battleground. In April, government troops kill hundreds of prisoners in Leninabad – many of whom participated in the May 1996 demonstrations – after a prison riot. In April Rakhmanov survives an assassination attempt in Khujand. In April/May the eighth and final round of negotiations takes place in Tehran. The delegations finally agree to the last protocol on guarantees for implementing the general
agreement, which in effect completes the treaty. They request that the UN extend UNMOT's mandate to monitor implementation of the General Agreement in the transition period. On 27 June in Moscow, Rakhmanov and Nuri sign the General Agreement, which is witnessed by Russian President Yeltsin and other officials.

**Making peace sustainable**

**July-December 1997**

In July, the CNR starts to work in Moscow under Nuri's leadership. The members agree on a general amnesty to enable UTO members to return legally to Tajikistan, and prisoners of war are finally exchanged. In October, Rakhmanov and Nuri draft a plan to repatriate and integrate UTO forces from Afghanistan.

**1998**

In January, Tajikistan's Prosecutor-General drops all outstanding charges against UTO leaders, in compliance with the amnesty law. In March, Tajikistan joins the common economic market between Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic and Uzbekistan. Fighting breaks out near Dushanbe between government and pro-UTO troops. In May, Parliament reluctantly agrees to legalise the IRP on condition that mosques and madrasas do not organise party cells. In July, four UNMOT personnel are murdered in Gharm and many international agencies and governments withdraw their personnel. In September opposition leader Otakhon Latifi is assassinated. In November, Khudoiberdyev leads some 1,000 troops across the Uzbek border to invade Leninabad. A Tajik army comprised of former UTO and pro-government soldiers defeats the attack.

**1999**

In June, relations between the UTO and the government appear close to breakdown but are restored after Parliament approves constitutional changes allowing opposition parties to contest elections later in the year. In August, the UTO makes a formal declaration ending its military-political opposition. Tajikistan's Supreme Court removes the official prohibition on IRP activity. Armed forces from the IMU invade the Batken region of southern Kyrgyz Republic from the Gharm region of Tajikistan, apparently intending to invade Uzbekistan. The Uzbek government responds by bombing Kyrgyz and Tajik territories. The incident results in as many as 40 fatalities. In September, more than a year later than planned, the General Agreement's constitutional amendments are adopted through a public referendum. A referendum also approves a series of constitutional changes to allow a seven-year presidential term, legalise political parties based on religion, and establish a bicameral parliament. In November, all remaining bans on opposition political parties are lifted. By December six parties are registered. In the November presidential elections, Rakhmanov wins 97% of votes; his IRP opponent receives 2%. The OSCE and Human Rights Watch accuse the government of vote rigging, manipulation of the media, intimidation of the opponents and illegal disqualification of several political parties. Nevertheless, the opposition accepts the results of the elections.

**2000**

In February and March, elections for the new bicameral Parliament are held. Rakhmanov's PDP wins most seats and the main opposition parties receive significantly fewer votes than expected. By February, most refugees and internally displaced persons are resettled. Mahmadsaid Ubaidullayev, the
mayor of Dushanbe and new speaker of the Upper House of Parliament, survives an assassination attempt. With the completion of both presidential and parliamentary elections, the transition period envisioned in the 1997 General Agreement is concluded. The CNR finishes its work in March and UNMOT closes its office in April. In June, Russia and Tajikistan agree to maintain Russian military forces in Tajikistan to replace the now disbanded CIS Peace Keeping Forces. During the summer, Taleban forces move near the Tajik border. Russia uses its bases in Tajikistan to reinforce military assistance to the Afghan Northern Alliance, loyal to the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani. Also in the summer, the IMU renews its attempts to invade Uzbekistan, apparently crossing from Tajikistan. The Tajik government decides to put more pressure on the Hezb-ut-Tahrir movement. During the year 2000, approximately 200 members of that movement are arrested. Also, Tajikistan is affected by a serious draught: the hottest and driest summer for 70 years puts an additional burden on the people, especially in the South. A new currency, the Somoni, is introduced in late autumn, which results in visible price rises and shortages of the foodstuffs in high demand. In early winter, the Northern Region known as Leninabad is renamed as Soghd. According to Tajik officials, more than seven tons of drugs are seized in 2000, three times more than in 1999.

2001

January – March 2001

Violent border incidents are increasing: dozens of Tajik civilians are injured and killed in border-mine incidents on the Tajik-Uzbek border (as a result of the Uzbek mining efforts in order to prevent Islamic extremist groups invading Uzbek soil from Tajikistan). In addition, violent clashes between alleged Afghan drug-smugglers and the Russian border guards stationed on the Afghan border are increasing. Repeatedly, Tajikistan is accused of hosting Islamic extremist groups and of allowing them to spend the rough winter months in its eastern mountainous territory (Karategin valley). These accusations are vigorously denied by the government. Also, in the early winter months of 2001, the number of refugees from the Taleban-occupied parts of the country is growing steadily in the Afghan districts bordering Tajikistan. By the early spring months, approximately 10,000 of them settle on the islands of the border river of Pyanj, within the so-called neutral zone. The Tajik government categorically denies any possibilities for the refugees to enter Tajikistan (as they are said to pose a serious security threat), despite the appalling living conditions and the deterioration of their health status.

April – June 2001

Despite the eradication of poppy growing in the Taleban-held territory (confirmed by the UN drug programme), the amount of confiscated drugs on the Tajik-Afghan border is increasing (more than 5MT in the year 2001). The number of political assassinations grows considerably over the spring and summer months killing, amongst others, the Deputy Interior Minister and the Minister of Culture. In response, Tajik governmental forces are launching large-scale military operations against Tajik criminal groups: former UTO field commander Rakhmon Sanginov, other leaders of the criminal groups, and approximately 40 bandits are killed in the events outside Dushanbe.

July – September 2001

The Rapid Deployment Forces under the Collective Security Treaty is formed in Central Asia. The forces comprise representatives of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan,
Tajikistan and Russia. The headquarters of the rapid deployment forces is based in Bishkek. Due to the ongoing drought in Tajikistan, the people in the South rely heavily upon food aid to survive the winter after a second successive crop failure. In Afghanistan, the leader of the Northern Alliance opposed to the Taleban regime, Ahmad Shah Massoud, is killed. At the same time, the USA is hit by the largest terrorist attack of its history. The World Trade Center and parts of the Pentagon are destroyed. Osama Bin Laden, hosted in Afghanistan by the Taleban, is the main suspect allegedly responsible for the acts. In the aftermath of the attacks, the situation remains stable on the Tajik-Afghan border.

October – December 2001
Early in October, the USA launches its first air strikes against Afghanistan. These heavy military attacks on Taleban strongholds, supported by the British army, last until late December. As a result, the Taleban are forced to retreat and surrender the capital, Kabul. However, Taleban leaders Mullah Ohmar and Osama Bin Laden are not captured. Tajikistan is willing to support the USA in its efforts to fight terrorism by offering airports for USA military troops. In return, Tajikistan receives tens of millions of US-dollars.

4.3 Actors list 26

4.3.1 Government list 27

President: Emomali Rakhmanov
Prime Minister: Akil Akilov
Deputy Prime Minister: Khoji Akbar Turajonzoda
Minister of Foreign Affairs: Talba
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Minister of Emergencies: Mirzo Ziyoev
Defence Minister: Sherali Khairullayev

4.3.2 Political individuals

President Emomali Rakhmanov
Rakhmanov was born in 1952 in Kuljab. After graduating from a technical college, he started work at a factory in Kurgan-Tube in 1969. Later, he obtained a degree in economics. From 1976 to 1992, he worked on a collective farm in Danghara. In 1990 Rakhmanov was elected to the Tajikistan Supreme Soviet. In 1992 Rakhmanov was elected chair of the Supreme Soviet – a position that made him de facto head of state. After the presidential system was reinstated in 1994 Rakhmanov became president, winning more than 58% of the vote in elections that November. After the signing of the General Agreement in June 1997, Rakhmanov performed the religious pilgrimage to Mecca. In March 1998 he joined the PDP, becoming its leader shortly afterwards. In the November 1999 presidential elections, he received 96.91% of the vote and thus secured a further seven years as head of government.

26 The Actors List is based upon Abdullaev and Barnes (2001) and Krummenacher et al. (2000).
27 As per 31 December 2001.
Said Abdullo Nuri
Also known as Mullo Abdullo Nuri or Mullo Abdullo Saidov, Nuri is a politician and religious leader who was a key figure in the Tajik war and peace processes. He was a leader of the Islamic forces as well as head of the UTO and later chair of the CNR. Nuri was born in the Karategin valley. Under the Soviet policy of forcibly resettling communities from Karategin to work in the new agricultural settlements in the south, Nuri and his family were removed to the Vakhsh valley in 1953. In the late 1980s, Nuri became aligned with the young activists who formed the IRP. With the outbreak of war and under threat of arrest, he left the country for exile in Afghanistan. He became leader of the MIRT and, as head of the UTO, was active in the inter-Tajik negotiations. He was elected CNR chair and subsequently played a significant role in implementing the Peace Agreement. In 1999 he became head of the IRP.

Khoji Akbar Turajonzoda
Also known as Akbar Qaharov, Turajonzoda was born in 1954. Turajonzoda viewed the development of the IRP with scepticism, in part because it advocated a different path to Muslim revival. Also, by implicitly promoting a political party as the vehicle for revival, it challenged his authority as head of the Qaziyat. He nevertheless made an alliance with the IRP during the war and was forced to flee the country at the end of 1992. In 1993, Turajonzoda was appointed first deputy chair of the newly formed MIRT and became deputy chair of the IRP. In 1995 he travelled to Iran, Arab countries, the USA, Europe, Russia, Uzbekistan and elsewhere seeking support for the UTO. He also participated in the UTO’s delegation to the inter-Tajik negotiations. After a period of controversy, President Rakhmanov appointed Turajonzoda as first vice-premier responsible for relations with CIS countries in March 1998. The following year Turajonzoda supported Rakhmanov’s presidential candidacy after announcing that the IRP had lost its vision and become mired in partisan squabbles. This led to his dismissal from the post of deputy chair of the IRP.

Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloyev
Rakhmanov’s main contender is Ubaidulloyev, who is also from Kuljab and has enjoyed a career almost parallel to that of Rakhmanov. He served in the government from 1992-1996, until he was appointed head of the city administration in Dushanbe. He became chairman of parliament in 2000. In addition, his post as mayor of the capital is powerful. Beyond that, Ubaidulloyev’s business interests have reputedly made him one of the richest men in Tajikistan. His real influence and his relations with the president are hard to ascertain, although there are rumours saying that “Mayor Ubaidulloev rules Tajikistan” (International Crisis Group, 2001f, 5). Rakhmanov may see him as a possible successor, but the two men may have different ideas of timing. Ubaidulloyev is particularly hostile to northern elites, and Rakhmanov’s attempts to promote more officials from Soghd Province has caused some tension.

4.3.3 Political parties and movements in Tajikistan
The following domestic actors are considered especially relevant for conflict (de)escalation in the future. They can be outlined as follows:

The Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT)
Drawing its support largely from the national intelligentsia fraction in Dushanbe and some industrial towns, the strongly anti-Communist DPT was launched in 1990 as the most influential secular opposition. This platform called for Tajik sovereignty within a framework of confederate states. Between March and May 1992, the DPT and its allies held a 52-day anti-government rally in Dushanbe that led to confrontations with government supporters. The DPT became embroiled in the ensuing Tajik civil war and was formally banned in June 1993. A split formed in the DPT over the issue of co-operation with the IRP in the UTO, and whether to negotiate with the government. The DPT demonstrated a willingness to work with the government and was legally registered in Tajikistan in July 1995, and joined the CNR to oversee the implementation of the General Agreement. In the last parliamentary elections (February 2000), DPT won only 3.5% of the vote and therefore holds no seats in parliament.

The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP)

This party grew from an underground youth organisation that emerged in 1978 in Kurgan-Tube. The core of the organisation consisted of people resettled from the mountainous Karategin region. Soon after the collapse of the USSR in September 1991, the IRP formed a coalition with other opposition parties. Under public pressure, the Supreme Soviet was forced to rescind its ban on the IRP and other opposition parties. Islam was declared the guiding principle of the party, while its immediate task – according to party leaders – was to establish a ‘legal and democratic state’. At this point party membership stood at 20,000.

The IRP was the only Central Asian Islamic party to participate in general elections. After proclaiming the November 1991 presidential elections to be fraudulent, the opposition bloc took its protest to the streets of Dushanbe. As the conflict became increasingly violent, the IRP and other opposition forces later formed the Fatherland Liberation Front to co-ordinate armed struggle against the pro-government Popular Front. After the opposition forces were defeated in November 1992, IRP leaders escaped abroad or retreated into eastern Tajikistan. In 1993 the exiled IRP joined the MIRT.

The IRP was the backbone of the UTO and participated in negotiations that led to the General Agreement. The Supreme Court reversed the 1993 ban on the IRP in August 1999, more than two years after the signing of the General Agreement and too late for the party to participate effectively in the November presidential elections. After repeated protests from the IRP and international pressure, their candidate was registered at the last minute but received only 2.1% of the vote. The IRP remains the most powerful opposition political party, but faces turbulent years ahead as it competes for political dominance with the secular-oriented government.

At present, the IRP holds two seats in the parliament. It received 7.5% of the votes in February 2000 Parliamentary Elections.

La’li Badakhshan

This political movement, representing opposition figures from the GBOA region, was formed in Dushanbe in 1991. It was banned between 1993 and 1999 but continued to operate illegally. In 1999 it had nearly 3,000 members. La’li Badakhshan is a regional organisation whose stated objective is educational,
social, economic and political development in GBOA. In the 1991 presidential elections, Lati Badakhshan, supported the candidate of the opposition bloc. In the ensuing civil war, it co-ordinated the activities of Pamiri forces who joined the UTO. In June 1997 it entered the CNR. The party left the UTO again in 1999.

Movement for Islamic Revival in Tajikistan (MIRT)
This movement was formed by exiled Tajik opposition leaders at the end of 1993 in Afghanistan to co-ordinate all exiled Tajik opposition activists and their military forces. Its leaders were Nuri (chair), Turajonzoda (first deputy chair), and IRP leader Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda (deputy chair). The IRP dominated the MIRT and commanded 8,000-15,000 fighters. The MIRT acted as a government in exile from 1993 to 1996. In 1995 its leaders visited the USA and Western Europe, and established contacts with the UN, the OSCE, and international NGOs. At the same time they established close contacts with the authorities in Moscow and Tashkent. In 1994, MIRT joined the UTO and entered the inter-Tajik negotiations. In 1998 its armed forces began to be integrated in Tajikistan's regular army, a process that took more than a year to complete.

Movement for National Unity and Revival in Tajikistan
The largest political movement in Tajikistan is sponsored by the government and chaired by President Rakhmanov. The MNURT was formed in 1997 and declared as its aim the unification of different social layers and forces of Tajikistan and the establishment of a stable civil accord. The movement incorporates representatives of all regions and a majority of political parties and associations loyal to the president, including the PDP.

The Party of People's Unity (PPU)
This party was formed in the northern city of Khujand in 1994. Its chair and founder is former Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajanov. At the time of registration, it had 895 members. The PPU remained legal through most of the war but was banned in December 1998, following an attempt to assassinate Rakhmanov in Leninabad in April 1997.

The People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDP)
This government-affiliated party was formed in 1994. The party membership in November 1998 stood at 20,000 and included all regional and provincial administrators and some members of the intelligentsia. In March 1998, President Rakhmanov joined and was elected chair. The PDP’s organisational structure resembles that of the former Communist Party of Tajikistan. It is a founding member of the MNURT. Five members of the PDP were elected to Parliament in 1995 and the party chair, Rakhmanov, was elected President in the November 1999 elections. The PDP considers itself a centrist, parliamentary political party aiming to unite all citizens of Tajikistan, regardless of language, ethnic affinity, social status or political beliefs, for the establishment of rule of law and a sovereign, democratic and secular state. It asserts that diversity in cultures, languages and religions is an invaluable treasure of the people of Tajikistan. At present, the PDPT holds about 75% of all the seats in the parliament.

The Popular Front
This predominantly Kuljabj paramilitary force provided much of the military muscle that brought the Rakhmanov government to power. It emerged in
1992 during the pro-Communist rally in Dushanbe, when then President Nabiev created a ‘presidential guard’ by distributing weapons – including an estimated 1,700 guns – to the demonstrators. Nabiev officially disbanded the guard several days later. Many Kuljabis, however, took the Kalashnikovs they received back to Kuljab, where they started to organise paramilitary groups. The self-proclaimed Popular Front first appeared in Khatlon province in the summer of 1992 and later surfaced in Hissar province near Dushanbe. It is thought that they received substantial support – including money, weapons and ammunition – from various sources supportive of the Tajik government, including those in Uzbekistan and Russia. In November 1992 at the 16th Session of the Supreme Soviet, all the important positions were given to Kuljabis who, at the time, held the military balance of power. Rakhmanov was elected leader. After the current government came to power in early 1993, the Popular Front was disbanded by presidential decree and its units became the core of the national army.

The United Tajik Opposition (UTO)
In response to the conflict that had forced most of their leaders into exile, the IRP, the MIRT, the DPT, the Coordination Centre of Democratic Forces of Tajikistan in the CIS, the Umed Association of Tajik refugees and other movements joined together to take part in the inter-Tajik negotiations in early 1994. During the talks their coalition crystallised and was named the United Tajik Opposition. In 1997 the La’li Badakhshan movement joined. The UTO, led by Nuri, was dominated by the MIRT and strongly influenced by the IRP. The UTO co-ordinated the opposition’s military strategy and its participation in the negotiations from April 1994 until June 1997. The General Agreement provided for a CNR with equal representation of government and UTO members. Nuri became head of the CNR and was thus responsible for overseeing implementation of the Agreement. In 1998-99, the UTO suspended its activity in the CNR several times, claiming that the Rakhmanov government had failed to honour its responsibilities under the General Agreement.

In 1999, the UTO demanded the Defence Ministry post several times. Rakhmanov, rejected this claim, however, and appointed UTO member Mirzo Ziyoyev as minister for Emergency Situations and Civil Defence in July 1999. In October 1999, the UTO banned its First Deputy leader Khoji Akbar Turadjonzoda, because of his open criticism of the party. Before the October 1999 presidential elections, the UTO suffered serious setbacks. The DPT Almaty platform left the UTO soon afterwards and La’li Badakhshan left in December. The UTO then effectively ceased to exist, as the IRP was its only remaining member.

Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT)
Created in 1992 as the successor to the Soviet Communist Party, it advocates a return to the socialist economy and restoration of the USSR. The party calls for more links with enterprises in the rest of the CIS, and for lower taxes. It is estimated to have 70,000 supporters nation-wide. It is based in the northern industrial Soghd region and in other areas with high numbers of ethnic Uzbeks or Russians. The party was banned in October 1991 but was registered and began functioning again in March 1992. At present, the CPT holds 7 seats in parliament.

Hezb-ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation)
Matthias Siegfried: Tajikistan Country Risk Profile 2001

The Party of Liberation is an Islamic underground group, as popular as the IMU, with growing support in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. It operates a highly secretive cell system that makes it difficult for authorities to contain its spread. Its members have a vision of uniting Central Asia in what group leaders call an “Islamic caliphate”. Hezb-ul-Tahrir was formed in Saudi Arabia as a pan-Islamic movement in the 1950s. Nowadays, the Hezb-ul-Tahrir supports the idea of a “peaceful jihad”. The group is said to have had some good relations to the Taleban movement and the IMU. The Tajik government has started to strictly persecute and imprison the members of the party, especially since the year 2000.

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)
The IMU is a militant group formed in the mid 1990s, said to be stationed mainly in eastern Tajikistan and Afghanistan. It has the declared goal of overthrowing Islam Karimov’s government in Uzbekistan and establishing an Islamic regime in its place.

In August 1999, members of the IMU coming from neighbouring Tajikistan penetrated Kyrgyzstan. They took several persons hostage, including four Japanese geologists. Since they were trying to penetrate Uzbekistan from Kyrgyzstan, the Uzbek air force bombed them, in conjunction with Kyrgyz military forces. A similar but more powerful event occurred in August 2000, when members of Namangani’s group simultaneously invaded both Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. The movement, said to be backed by the UTO, returned to Tajikistan in October 1999. It is estimated that the movement includes some 7,000-8,000 fighters. In May 2000, the US State Department added the IMU to its list of what it calls “terrorist organisations”. In late November 2001, the outlawed leader Namangani was killed while fighting on the Taleban side against the USA in Afghanistan.

While there has been little direct threat to Tajikistan from the Taleban or IMU militants, there have been serious tensions with Uzbekistan over its policies for dealing with militants. Uzbekistan, with its much larger military, demanded that drastic action be taken against the IMU and sent bombers to attack villages where the IMU was believed to be hiding. These raids damaged homes in both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and also caused a number of fatalities and other casualties among the civilian population. Both Dushanbe and Bishkek demanded an explanation from Tashkent, indicating that the raids might not have been cleared by authorities in those two countries, as Uzbekistan claimed. Although Tajikistan did not break off relations with Uzbekistan over the incident, it further damaged their already-strained ties (see also: International Crisis Group, 2001e, 8).

4.3.4 International actors

On the international level, the following actors are especially relevant with regards to (renewed) armed conflict in Tajikistan:

Afghanistan
Tajikistan and Afghanistan share strong cultural ties, and the inhabitants of southern Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan have close ethnic ties. The two countries share a 1,200-km border, and their affairs have been closely
Matthias Siegfried: Tajikistan Country Risk Profile 2001

intertwined during the twentieth century. Many Tajiks fled to Afghanistan to escape Soviet persecution and forced collectivisation during the USSR-period. At the beginning of the 1990s, central government functions collapsed almost simultaneously in both countries. The Tajik-Afghan border region again became a hotbed of political and military instability.

Beginning in 1992, an estimated 80,000 or more Tajiks (mostly opposition supporters) fled to northern Afghanistan and established military bases. Tajik Islamists received considerable support from their Afghan counterparts. However, the UTO’s closest Afghan allies were the factions supported by Russia – those led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Massoud, both ethnic Tajiks.

The rise of the Taleban encouraged the Tajik opposition and government to enter negotiations. Rabbani also encouraged mediation and supported the Tajik peace process. The first meeting between Rakhmanov and Nuri took place in Kabul in May 1995. The Taleban’s capture of Kabul in September 1996 provided further incentive for Tajik reconciliation. This marked an important turning point in the peace process. The Taleban’s advance northward in 1997 forced almost all Tajik exiles to leave Afghanistan for Tajikistan. The Taleban’s rise indirectly helped Russia to strengthen its position in Central Asia, where governments have strengthened their military links with Russia to protect themselves from the perceived threat of militant Islamic movements.

A more peaceful and friendly Afghanistan after the 11 September incidents is helping to transform Tajikistan from a buffer-zone state trapped in the geopolitical conflict between, to a potentially important crossroad between Southern and Central Asia.

Iran

The majority of people in Iran and Tajikistan share a lingual heritage. Most Iranians, however, are Shi’a Muslims, whereas most Tajiks are Sunni. Iran’s leaders maintained amicable relations with Tajiks from opposing sides of the conflict throughout the 1990s. Tehran did support the emergence of the Tajik opposition in 1991-92, and it hosted Tajik opposition leaders from 1993 to 1998. Yet its general policy was to maintain good relations with Russia. Iran was a key sponsor of the peace negotiations and had the status of an official observer of the process.

Pakistan

Tajiks have traditionally had close links to the peoples of Pakistan. Both are predominantly Sunni Muslims and the Tajik Farsi language was once widely spoken in Pakistan. A thin strip of Afghan territory ranging from 15 to 50-km wide along the Eastern Pamirs, at an elevation of 3,000m and higher, now separates the two countries. Pakistan’s involvement in the Tajik civil war is unclear but it is rarely viewed as a major player. However, it is quite possible that groups based in Pakistan supplied weapons and other forms of military support to the opposition.

The Russian Federation

Russia’s motives for its involvement in Tajikistani affairs are many, but five main factors prevail. First, the fear of an Islamic revolution in Tajikistan was a major reason for Russia’s intervention in the civil war on the side of the anti-reformists,
and for its subsequent support for the Rakhmanov regime. Second, Russia used Tajik territory to secure its security interests by keeping a strong military presence in the country up to the present day (201st Motorised Rifle Division (201st MRD)). The growth of drug trafficking was a third factor. Fourth, the protection of the Russian minority in Tajikistan was an issue during the height of the civil war. And fifth, the desire to recapture the power and dominion of old territory has also shaped Moscow’s policy.

Russia’s involvement in Tajikistan has been extensive, and Tajikistan’s ruling elite is well aware of its dependence on Russia. The Dushanbe regime calls its relationship with Russia its most important by far, in both a political and a military sense. President Rakhmanov announced in 1998 that, in the event of a crisis on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, Russia would take command of Tajikistan’s border troops. That year Russia announced that it would provide Rakhmanov with a military adviser. The two countries also made an agreement for co-operation between their ministries of defence. Tajikistan is also economically beholden to Russia. This can be explained in part by the disastrous state of Tajikistan’s economy.

As the Peace Agreement began to be implemented in 1998, Russia continued to side with the Dushanbe regime in disagreements with the UTO, assuming that difficulties in working out the specifics of the settlement were entirely the UTO’s fault.

Russia continues to play a dominant political, military and economic role in Tajikistan. The presence of around 20,000 Russian army forces has been formalised by a ten-year treaty concluded in 1999 and ratified in February 2001, that permits Russian military bases in Tajikistan. The Russian forces guard the border with Afghanistan against drug-trafficking and potential infiltration by Islamic extremists – an issue that assumed increasing importance following the terrorist attacks on the USA in September 2001. The Russian government holds considerable assets in Tajikistan, controls most of Tajikistan’s trade routes and is itself the country’s major trading partner. Tajikistan’s economic ties with Russia have been further strengthened by its accession to the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic (see also: Atkin, 1999, 194ff; Economist Intelligence Unit, 2001, 49).

Uzbekistan

The Uzbek and Tajik peoples have been close neighbours for centuries. Although Uzbeks speak a Turk language that differs from Farsi, most Tajiks and Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims and have traditionally lived in sedentary communities. This differentiates them from the traditionally nomadic Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. Minority populations of ethnic Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks, numbering more than one million each, live on either side of the border. The

28 The Russian military have proved to be incapable of reducing the amount of drugs shipped through Tajikistan from Afghanistan. On the contrary, Tajik authorities acknowledged for the first time in spring 2001 that the rapidly increasing illegal drug trade poses a serious risk to the national security of Tajikistan and, also, that a number of Russian and Tajik military officials (on the Afghan-Tajik frontier) were found to have been involved in the illegal business (Jamestown, 2001).
ancient Tajik urban cultural centres of Bukhara and Samarqand were incorporated into Uzbekistan early in the Soviet era.

Uzbekistan played a significant yet ambivalent role in the Tajikistan war and peace process. It is widely thought that Uzbekistan provided military assistance to pro-government forces in 1992-93 to support their fight against Islamic opposition. From 1995 Uzbekistan’s attitude to Rakhmanov shifted. Karimov began to criticise his government’s intransigence in the peace process and became concerned about Russian military engagement in Tajikistan.

Cross-border invasions by armed insurgents are a sensitive issue in relations between the two countries. In November 1998, anti-Rakhmanov forces (led by Mahmud KhudoiBerdyev) launched an attack from Uzbek territory. The Uzbek government denied involvement. The Tajik government, for its part, refuses supporting militant groups of the IMU, which launched attacks in 1999 and 2000 (and on a much smaller scale in 2001) into Kyrgyz and Uzbek territory from Tajikistan. Uzbekistan retaliated by bombing villages in eastern Tajikistan in October 1999.

Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic denounced the Tajik government for insufficient effort to destroy IMU forces on Tajik territory and began to engage directly with the Taleban. Uzbek authorities also questioned the Uzbek-Tajik border and attempted unsuccessfully to demarcate it unilaterally. Since late 2000, a joint Uzbek-Tajik commission has been working on border demarcation, also with little success. Many people on Tajik soil were killed in mine explosions on the Uzbek-Tajik border, especially in the years 2000 and 2001.

United States of America (USA)
Before the 11 September events in the USA, ties between Tajikistan and the USA were extremely thin. This changed drastically when Tajikistan suddenly was in the limelight of international world politics. In reaction to the USA Intervention into Afghanistan late in 2001, Tajikistan provided strong support and became a major USA ally. However, Tajik reactions have been cautious and at times contradictory. While allowing humanitarian aid to transit, officials consistently denied US-statements and rumours that they had agreed to let the USA use bases for military purposes. Nevertheless, rumours surfaced that troops and aircraft had arrived in Tajikistan in late-September 2001. The reason for this close co-operation with the USA is obvious: Tajikistan is keen to receive economic and humanitarian aid. The main concern is the impact on popular opinion. The authorities fear that their help to the military campaign could provoke unrest. The attitude of the Islamic opposition has been mixed and the IRP also rejected Taleban calls for a jihad against the West. However, the party does not represent the entire Muslim community, many parts of which view it as too moderate, including Hezb-ul-Tahrir.

Nevertheless, Tajikistan has only very limited room for manoeuvre and has to consider the attitude of its main godfather, Moscow, carefully. Russia was initially cautious about accepting US military forces on Tajik territory. Eventual Russian support for the campaign was clearly a factor in Dushanbe’s final position (see also: International Crisis Group, 2001f, 24-26).

China
There are three factors driving China’s policy towards Central Asia., Generally speaking, there is economic interest; Chinese trade with the Central Asian
states increased several-fold since independence and there is clearly a potential to develop those markets further. Second, Beijing is interested in developing friendly relations which would allow it to decrease forces deployed along its borders with Central Asian states. The primary vehicle for co-operation in building military confidence between these countries is the SCO. Third, China is concerned about the activities of Muslim Uyghur separatists seeking independence for China’s Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region. Overall, those interests complement the Central Asian countries’ interests in China. China also participates in meetings on regional security, using those to ensure its interests in fighting Uyghur separatists are respected (see also: International Crisis Group, 2001e, 18).

The United Nations (UN)
The UN is the most engaged international body in Tajikistan. The peace negotiations and the implementation of the Peace Agreement were under its auspices. The UTO has shown occasional mistrust of the UN’s approach to the peace process as being biased in favour of the Dushanbe regime, but that has not proven to be an insuperable obstacle to the continuation of the process. When the CNR finished its work in March 2000, UNMOT closed its offices.

International Organisations (IGOs and NGOs)
Various NGOs and IGOs have provided funding to help Tajikistan recover from the destruction caused by the civil war and to develop its economy. The UN’s contribution took the form of humanitarian aid. The World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Asian Development Bank have all granted Tajikistan loans for the use in reconstruction and development. In addition, various NGOs provided substantial assistance to the country to help it cope with the effects of the drought in 2000 and 2001.
5 References


