

TAJIKISTAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS

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CERTIFICATE

Certified that the Dissertation entitled, "**Tajikistan-Russia Relations**", submitted by **Mr. Jajneswar Sethi**, is in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy (M.Phil)** of this University. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other University and is his own work.

We recommend that this dissertation may be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

PROF. SHASHKANT JHA
(Chairperson)

PROF. AJAY PATNAIK
(Supervisor)

DEDICATED
TO
MY PARENTS

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PREFACE

Tajikistan-Russia relations after the disintegration of the USSR certainly owe a lot to their historical attachments in various phases. Though the disintegration of the Soviet Union brought about drastic changes in the post-second World War balance of power affecting the interests of both the countries, there is still a continuity in Tajik-Russia relations even after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Notwithstanding Tajikistan's adoption of the language law and Russian exodus, inter-state relations between the two countries are on firm footing. Russia and Tajikistan share a common perspective on various issues, such as, threat of Islamic fundamentalism, ultra ethno-nationalism and trans-border terrorism. There are also cementing factors and mutual agreements in political, economic and military spheres that led to convergence of approaches of both Tajikistan and Russia in the changed international scenario. Their relationship is no longer based on ideological grounds, rather it is more practical and diplomatic in nature.

This dissertation is aimed at highlighting the various major problems both are facing while establishing good relations and the prospects for an improved bilateral ties. This dissertation consists of five chapters. The first chapter highlights - Tajikistan-Russia relations in various phases of history before the disintegration of the USSR. The second chapter deals with ethnic

conflict in Tajikistan, its language policy and the out-migration of Russians. The Third chapter deals with Tajikistan's economic relations with Russia. After the disintegration of the USSR, Tajikistan faced an acute economic problems and was inclined towards Russia to resolve the financial deadlock of the region. The fourth chapter highlights Tajikistan's military co-operation with Russia. After independence, Tajikistan was not in a position to protect itself from the outside powers and the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism, cross-border terrorism, drugs-smuggling and the continuing conflict along the Tajik-Afghan border compelled Tajikistan to depend upon Russia in military sphere. The fifth chapter contains main conclusion of the study emphasising on the clear delineation of mutual understanding and interest.

This study sometimes draws on primary sources, including, Current Digest of post-Soviet Press, 1991-2001, Summary of World Broadcast, Foreign Broadcast Information Service, relevant United Nations Industrial Development Organisation's (UNIDO's) official Records, Treaties, draft of the laws and speeches of the leaders. Besides, the secondary sources comprise books and articles from academic journals. Articles which are published in various journals will has been consulted.

In pursuit of my writing this dissertation, I owe a lot to my supervisor Prof. Ajay Patnaik. His deep insight on the subject, sustained guidance and flexible approach through out the course of research enabled me to accomplish this work successfully.

I wish to thank the Centre for Russian, Central Asian and East European Studies, J.N.U., which provided a very hospitable and stimulating intellectual environment for me throughout the entire length of my research.

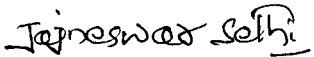
I am also thankful to the staff of J.N.U. Library for helping me with its fairly good collection of primary source materials, the staff of IDSA Library, New Delhi and the Nehru Memorial Library at Teen Murti House, New Delhi, for their courtesy and co-operation.

In writing this dissertation, I have been deeply encouraged by my parents, brothers, sister-in-laws, sister and relatives whose inherently tacit blessings has always made me be in right track of life. Hence, I am obliged to all of them.

I am also thankful to my elders, friends and youngers like Bijay Bhai, D.K. Bhai, Partha Bhai, Priya Bhai, Jatin Bhai, Rati Bhai, Sanjay, Ajay, Devendra, Mrutyunjay, Amar, Sujit, Arun, Raju, Ayush, Rabi, Pinto, Lipu and Jagannath.

Finally, I express my gratitude and love to them, whose names have not been mentioned in this limited space, but to whom I owe much for whatever little I have accomplished in the academic field.

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JAJNESWAR SETHI

CHAPTER I

**TAJIKISTAN-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN
HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE**

The sudden breakup of the Soviet Union led to the emergence of five independent states in Central Asia, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, covering a vast area of over 3,994,00 sq.; but possessing a collective population of only about 55 million people. After their independence, the five Central Asian States suddenly emerged into sovereign existence for the dismantling of the multinationality federation of the erstwhile Soviet Union. Emergence of Central Asia, as the latest region of sovereign states on the global map opened prospects of distinct shift in power politics. The present state of Tajikistan was created during the Soviet Rule in 1929 which brought economic and social benefits to Tajikistan.

The relationship between Tajikistan and Russia has always been a smooth one since the time of Tajikistan's creation as a republic within the Soviet Union. Tajikistan's geo-political importance has induced both the sides to chart-out their policies and relationship carefully. Tajikistan has considerable mineral deposits, including gold, antimony, silver, aluminum, iron, lead, mercury and tin. There are deposits of coal. So, Tajikistan has great strategic importance for Russia. Russia not only remains the most important neighbour of Tajikistan, but also the guarantor of regional stability in the region and wants to maintain political stability in order to check the interference of extra-regional powers. Tajikistan during the Tsarist

period remained largely peaceful and subservient to the central rule. The Tajik economy before the October Revolution was an economy dominated by feudal relations of production within a colonial mode of production in which the Russian bourgeoisie was the dominant exploiter. The October Revolution of 1917 changed the entire political morphology of the State. In this change, Tajikistan also participated by accepting the communist rule without much challenge. The establishment of communist rule brought a ray of hope for the people of Tajikistan who were suffering under the political and economic exploitation of the Tsarist regime.

The Republic of Tajikistan, formerly the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, is situated in the south-east of Central Asia. To the North and West, it borders Uzbekistan, to the North-East Kyrgyzstan, to the East the People's Republic of China and to the South Afghanistan. Covering an area of approximately 143000 sq. kms., Tajikistan has a population of 5.6 million (1992), eighty per cent being Muslims. Tajikistan is a mountainous region within the Pamir and Tien-Shan ranges and has very small areas of cultivable land. Nearly two-thirds of the population live in rural areas where they farm the irrigated valleys and mountain slopes. This small Persian-speaking nation in Central Asia, was incorporated into the Russian empire in the 1870's and to the Soviet Union after the 1917 Revolution.

Tajikistan was one of the most underdeveloped regions within the Russian empire. On the eve of the Socialist Revolution in 1917, only 0.5% of the population were literate. The overwhelming majority of the population were peasants who cultivated the land, received one-half or one-fifth of the produce.¹ The Tajiks were probably a distinct ethnic group by about the eighth century A.D., distinguished from their Turkic neighbours by their sedentary life-style and Iranian language. They formed several semi-independent territories under Uzbek suzerainty, but as the Russian empire expanded southwards in the 19th century, the northern Tajik principalities came under Russian Rule. The southern regions were annexed by the expanding Emirate of Bukhara.

In 1918, the Bolsheviks established control over northern Tajikistan, which was incorporated into the Turkestan Autonomous Socialist Republic (ASSR), but did not conquer Dushanbe and the other territories subject to Bukhara until 1921. Opposition to Soviet Rule was led by the Basmachis (local guerrilla fighters) and foreign interventionists. In order to reduce the influence of the Basmachis, the Soviet Government introduced the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1922. They returned the lands, formerly owned by religious

¹ Hafizullah Emadi, "State Ideology and Islamic Resurgence in Tajikistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 13 (4), 1994, p.565.

institutions and reduced the burden of taxes on the peasantry. The Soviet policy of the right to national self-determination, which led to the creation of Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic(TASSR) in 1924, further eroded the influence of the Basmachis leaders. In 1925, the south-east of Tajikistan was designated a special Pamir region within the Tajik ASSR. By 1926, the Basmachi resistance movement in Tajikistan dwindled from 57 groups of 1,370 men to 29 groups with 959 men. By 1927, the Basmachi chieftains in Tajikistan, *Ibrahim Beg* and others fled to Afghanistan.² On 16 October 1929, the Tajik ASSR was separated from Uzbek SSR and became a full union of Republic of the USSR. Soon after establishment, the Tajik Government at the time headed by *Nasaratullah Maqsum* used every means at its disposal to encourage peasants to lay down their arms and return to their land. It was estimated that 33,000 out of 200,000 returned to Tajikistan from refugee centres in Afghanistan.³

Although the Basmachis continued their armed struggle against the Soviet Government, their struggle ended when their leader *Ibrahim Beg* and his 2,000 fighters entered their home town, Lokai, in April 1931 to launch an armed insurrection. People were tired of hopeless war and were reluctant to support the Basmachi's call for an

² Michael Rywkin, *Russia in Central Asia*, Newyork: Collier Books, 1963, p.60.

³ *Ibid.*, p.60.

armed struggle. *Ibrahim Beg* was captured on 23 June 1931 and with his execution - the Basmachi movement finally came to an end.⁴

In order to expedite and increase its influence in Tajikistan, the Soviet Government also initiated the building of a modern state bureaucracy in Tajikistan. Local communists were delegated the task of political organisation and served as a means of communication between the Soviets and local Persian-speaking Tajiks. In Soviet modernisation policy, education had top priority. The first schools for children and adults were established in 1926-27 and the first Tajik newspaper began publishing in Dushanbe in 1926. Since Tajikistan lacked skilled and professional employees to run the state bureaucracy, the Soviet Government sent professional technicians and Russian communists to help the Tajik people to modernise their country.⁵ By 1930, all members of the Central Executive Committee and the Tajik Council of People's commissars were local Tajiks. However, except for the Chairman, *Nasratullah Maqsum* and *Nisar Mohammad*, the commissar for education who was a revolutionary intellectual from Afghanistan, none of them could communicate in the Russian language. Because of Soviet influence, the Tajik communist

⁴ Ibid., p. 61.

⁵ Hafizullah Emadi, "State Ideology and Islamic Resurgence in Tajikistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 13 (4), 1994, p.567.

party, which had an estimated 435 members in 1925, expanded its social base of support by recruiting new members to the extent that its membership reached 58,493 in 1962.⁶

Tajikistan also witnessed major economic development undertaken by the Soviet Government. The State distributed religious lands and lands belonging to the emir to landless peasants, supplied peasants with credit assistance and initiated a massive collectivization of agricultural land. The state also built industrial enterprises to boost the country's economy. Heavy industry was limited to coal, lead and zinc. By 1940, the country's economy was transformed from a primitive subsistence economy to a mechanised and industrial economy.⁷

Modernization was also introduced to the most backward regions of the Republic by the Soviet Union. In 1940, roads and rail roads were established that linked Khorog, the capital of Gorno-Badakhshan, with other cities in the Republic. By 1961, approximately 11% of the population of Gorno-Badakhshan lived in urban areas.⁸

Since 1960s Tajikistan entered a new-phase in its industrial development. The emphasis shifted to more complex industrial

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

structure. As a result, non-ferrous metallurgy industries became one of the most developed industries; oil and gas output increased remarkably and so also the output of engineering enterprises, like looms, fittings, pump machinery, cables, spare parts for tractor and transformers, cotton, ore-processing, and rare a non-ferrous metals industries made Tajikistan important in USSR's national economic structure. Thus, from an area without roads and industries before the revolution, Tajikistan under the Soviets was transformed into an agro-industrial republic. One-third of the population lived in urban areas and about a quarter of population consisted of workers and employees. However, despite all this impressive growth, Tajikistan remained the poorest republic in the former USSR and has been facing continuous economic decline since the onsets of perestroika and subsequent disintegration of the former union.

Soviet Union, faced acute economic problems in the 1980's which created political turmoil in the USSR, leading to its disintegration. Republic. On 21 December, 1991 in a closed-door meeting in the old communist party headquarters in the city of Alma-Ata, eleven political leaders reached an agreement to end the existence of the USSR and on 25 December 1991, the Soviet Union formally ceased to exist. From all angles, it was an unprecedented event in history as it was liquidated not by war or rebellion or by force

or threat of use of force but by a cluster of reasons which were flooding in the 1980's, eventually creating a critical situation for *Mikhail Gorbachev* to deal with. Soon after the disintegration of the USSR, Tajikistan got independent status and had signed the declaration establishing the Commonwealth of Independent State(CIS), the successor body to the USSR.

Though the disintegration of the Soviet Union led the emergence of five independent Central Asian States, all these States have been facing innumerable problems and unlimited upheavals. Tajikistan has become the key factor of the re-emerging balance of power in Central Asia. In order to braden their sphere of influence, regional powers are trying hard to dominate the political corridors of Tajikistan. Tajikistan has become the worst victim of internal and external power rivalries.⁹

Rise of Nationalism in Tajikistan

Tajikistan was one of the poorest Soviet Republics, with a high natural population growth. The economic decline in Tajikistan was aggravated after *Gorbachev's* accession to power. During the first year of his secretaryship, capital investment fell in absolute terms for all

⁹ Mutahir Ahmed, "Turmoil in Tajikistan: The Role of Internal and External Powers", *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.2, No.3, 1995, p.66.

Central Asian States.¹⁰ Living standards were undermined during the tenure of *Kahar Mahkamov* as first secretary of the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) from 1985. *Mahkamov's* attempted marketisation of the Tajik economy aggravated the poor living conditions and unemployment. On the eve of the Soviet collapse, Tajikistan was suffering from a declining economy and dim prospects for recovery. The Soviet Government abandoned the policies of mass mobilization and popular participatory development programmes and stressed the role of technocrats and professionals in the management of the country's economy. They substituted the popular rhetoric of 'people first' with 'economic proficiency'. This new development led to a gradual decline in the living standards of the people and marginalized their role in the decision-making process of the state bureaucracy.¹¹ The soviet figures indicated that 60 percent of the population lived below the poverty threshold. In 1989, unemployment hit 25.7 percent of the working population, whereas, with a rate of 3.28 percent, Tajikistan recorded the highest population growth of the entire former Soviet Union. The Soviet leadership denied the existence of

¹⁰ Boris Rumer, *Soviet Central Asia: A Tragic Experience*, London, 1989, p.36.

¹¹ Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.48, No. 7, 1996, p.1108.

unemployment, but calculations suggest that in 1990, 22.8% of the labours force in Tajikistan were out of work.¹²

When the post-Stalin Soviet leadership and scholars began to attribute Asian and African backwardness and underdevelopment to colonial and imperialist exploitation and oppression, dissident Tajik scholars and writers began to view Tajikistan's underdevelopment as a result of Russian oppression and exploitation. Tajiks who remained loyal to the Soviet Government, supported its model of development and defended it against the Nazi Blitzkrieg assault during world war II, eventually became disenchanted with the system. They began to seek solace in religious teachings to assuage their doubts and to seek alternatives for their problems.

The intelligentsia launched cultural revivals movements or even movements for greater national autonomy. Most of these movements had nationalist wings who more or less openly advocated complete independence. *Gorbachev's* "Glasnost" offered disgruntled Tajiks a chance to voice their grievances. The intelligentsia took up this opportunity with determination, an experience mirrored in other Central Asian States. They charged the expanding republican bureaucracy with incompetence and lack of vision. Tajikistan's

¹² Ibid.

economic, social, cultural and ideological crises, however, were deemed secondary to the "spiritual poverty" of the nation. In this perspective, restoring the Tajik national dignity was pivotal to addressing the material ills of society. Economic prosperity and decent living standards hinged on the revival of national sovereignty, though this was not yet interpreted in political terms. And a key element of this national self-reliance and 'spiritual independence' was the Tajik language.¹³ Hence, improving the status of the Tajik language acquired top priority on the opposition agenda.

The Islamic Revival in Tajikistan

Together with the nationalist revival went a religious revival. Here the central figure was the head of the Official Soviet Islam in Tajikistan, supreme *Qazi Akbar Turajonzoda*. Spread of Islamic education and measures such as declaring Islamic festivals public holidays were taken. Agreements with several Islamic international groups to build new 'mosques' and 'madrasas' were signed. Other unofficial mosques were built for the first time. These activities brought foreign muslims into Tajikistan including Iranians, Pakistanis and Arabs who were involved with religious and cultural changes.

¹³ Ibid., p.1109.

The Islamic movement which started in unofficial mosques in the 1960s and 1970s was transformed into a political movement when Soviet leader *Michael Gorbachev* lifted restrictions on religious institutions in the late 1980's. New Soviet policies led to the dismissal of President *Rahman Nabiyeu* from the party and the state bureaucracy. His successor *Khanhar Makhkamov* was considered to be more loyal to Moscow, hence his unpopularity in Tajikistan. The policies of 'Glasnost' initiated by *Gorbachev* provided golden opportunity for the freedom of expression by the opposition members and clerics in Tajikistan. As a result, the clerics like *Abdullah Nuri Saidor*, from the provincial capital of Quighonteppe, vehemently assaulted clerics who had been on state pay rolls and called for reduction of taxes on Muslims and condemned the Soviet administration of Tajikistan. When state security forces arrested him in August 1986, his supporters staged a protest demonstration at the office of the Internal Ministry demanding his release.¹⁴

Thus, both the nationalist revival and religious revival created conditions for the political instability in Tajikistan. Two years before the beginning of the civil war, riots broke out in Dushanbe in February, 1990, when demonstrators expressed their anger towards

¹⁴ Muriel Atkin, "The Subtlest Battle: Islam in Soviet Tajikistan", *Foreign Policy Research Institute Journal*, Philadelphia, 1989, p.61.

the government whom they considered responsible for housing shortage, decreasing living standard and some other basic issues, faced by large segment of the population. The opposition had taken full advantage of the situation and exploited government's weaknesses. Despite the fact that the opposition professes to widen Tajikistan's political structure and curtail the monopoly of the communists, during their brief tenure in power in 1992, the opposite was the case. Their unwillingness to accept the results of the election followed by forcible capture of power, resulted in the Tajik civil war. The civil war has provided an opportunity for outside powers to involve in Tajikistan's political scene. Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan involved directly in the conflict, whereas Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and OSCE are indirectly involved in the conflict.

The Turmoil of Civil War in Tajikistan

Soon after the independence of Tajikistan in 1991, elections were held on 24 November 1991 in which *Rahman Nabiyeu*, a former communist head was elected president by obtaining 56.9 percent of the votes cast. The opposition whose candidate got 34 percent of the votes, did not accept the results and demanded fresh elections. In order to stabilize democratic process, President *Rahman Nabiyeu* agreed to accommodate the opposition's coalition of democratic

nationalist and Islamic groups by offering them one-third of Ministerial posts in his government.¹⁵ But *Nabiyev's* supporters in southern Tajikistan had rejected outright, the proposed compromise with the opposition. Civil War started between the two groups. Realising the sensitivity of the situation due to the pressure of the opposition, Russian government advised *Nabiyev's* government in Tajikistan to settle the conflict through peaceful negotiations process. On 7 May 1992, after a hectic round of talks, an agreement was reached to form a coalition government of national reconciliation. According to the agreement, it was stipulated that *Rahman Nabiyev* would be the President while opposition would be allotted eight of the twenty-four Ministries. But the communists refused to recognise the coalition government. On the other hand, the opposition wanted to share power immediately. This ensuring struggle for power between the two sides led to the collapse of all efforts for any peaceful settlement of the crisis. Negotiations between the Government and the oppositions failed and therefore the Parliament forced President *Nabiyev* to resign which he did on 7 September 1992.¹⁶

¹⁵ Mutahir Ahmed- "Turmoil in Tajikistan: The Role of Internal and External Powers", *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.2, No.3, 1995, p.69.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.70.

Following the resignation, the opposition captured power in Dushanbe. In such a anarchic situation, fighting started between the both sides. In that fighting, *Nabiyev* supporters succeeded to regain political power and brought to an end the Islamic coalition government. After consolidating its position, the new regime dealt a heavy blow to the Islamic forces. To prevent the opposition, the ruling elite appointed *Imamali Rakhmanov* of Kulyab region to succeed outgoing President *Nabiyev*.

Imamali Rakhmanov was elected President in November 1994, and under him the government position gradually stabilized. The government, nevertheless, has tried to engage in peace talks with the opposition under the auspices of the United Nations. On 17 September, 1994 a cease-fire agreement was signed in Tehran in 'inter-Tajik' talks, as the negotiations came to be known. The Tajik Government showed flexibility and agreed to free a number of political prisoners, postponement of presidential elections and a referendum for a new Constitution in an attempt to allow the opposition to participate in elections. These measures from the government side were seen as positive signals towards peace process and were described by *Romerio Pirez Balloon* as a "breakthrough for the peace efforts."

After ten days of the UN sponsored talks, the two sides failed to agree on cease-fire agreement. Though the differences between the government and the opposition were not sorted out, the UN special envoy, *Ramerio Pirez Balloon*, stated that he still hoped that the differences would be sorted out in future and cease-fire agreement would be signed soon.¹⁷

In November 1995, Russia tried to push the negotiation process forward. That month, *Dmitrii Ryurikov*, President *Yeltsin* aide on international issues, visited Ashghabad and Dushanbe to prepare for the fifth round of negotiations between the Tajik protagonists. This latest round of talks started on 1st December 1995 in Ashghabad, capital of Turkmenistan. After several negotiations, in response to the Government's refusal to accede to its demand for the formation of what they termed a national reconciliation council to govern the country alongside *Rakhmanov* during a two-year transition period.

Thus, the fifth round of intra-Tajik talks did not give any substantial result towards the solution of the problem, but again it provided an opportunity to have a communication link between the two sides.

¹⁷ Ibid., p.74.

Further in March 1996, talks resumed between the two sides in Ashgabat, in which the Government announced an indefinite extension of the cease-fire. However, no progress was made towards a political solution to the conflict; the opposition continued to demand the resignation of the government and its replacement by a national reconciliation council, to include opposition members.

Again, negotiations between representatives of the two sides took place in Tehran in October and in December a UN-Sponsored meeting was held between *Rahmonov* and *Nuri* in Khosdeh, northern Afghanistan. A further cease-fire agreement was reached. A significant breakthrough was achieved at discussions held in Moscow later in that month, when *Rahmonov* and *Nuri* agreed to form a National Reconciliation Council (NRC), to be headed by a representative of what had come to be known as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). In February 1997, agreement was reached on the composition of the NRC, which was to comprise 26 seats divided equally between the Government and the UTO. The General Agreement on peace and National Accord in Tajikistan was signed by *Rahmonov* and *Nuri* in Moscow on 27 June 1997, which formally ended the five-year civil conflict. Now peace is ensured in Tajikistan and a national government is ruling there.

The Effects of the Civil War

Tajik opposition was aided and abetted by the Islamic states of Iran and Afghanistan. Iranian support to the resistance movement in Tajikistan included distributing literature and providing arms and ammunition. Like Iran, Afghanistan has been supporting the Islamic movement in Tajikistan by smuggling of arms and ammunition.¹⁸ According to the U.S. Department of State and the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees, in the conduct of the civil war, each of the major factions has perpetrated serious violations of human rights, including political and extrajudicial killing, rape, disappearance, arbitrary arrest and detention, the use of excessive force and other human rights abuses as defined by the Helsinki Accords. The civil war is exacting a high cost among Tajikistan's ethnic minorities, and the last two years have seen a mass exodus of Russians, Germans, Jews, Uzbeks and even many Tajiks from the country. The human suffering caused by the civil war was immense: 50,000 persons were killed, 500,000 were displaced within Tajikistan, and more than 70,000 persons left the country to find refugees in Afghanistan.

¹⁸ Hafizullah Emadi - "State Ideology and Islamic Resurgence in Tajikistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 13 (4) 1994, p.572.

Position of Russian during the Civil War

The Russian population was not harmed during the civil war in Tajikistan. The opposition leadership, whatever their personal feelings, it seems, was conscious of the need to safeguard the lives and properties of the Russian minority. Failure to do so would have been devastating; it would have provided proof of their xenophobic nationalism as portrayed in Russian media coverage and would have unleashed the might of the Russian army upon them. Alienating the Russian population could have led to their mass out-migration and deprived the republic of much needed expertise. The Russian population, nonetheless, felt threatened by the civil war and left Tajikistan in droves. And this was the pretext for Russia's military involvement.¹⁹

Russia was directly involved in the Tajikistan's civil war and its support to *Rakhmanov* resulted in opposition forces mounting a massive insurgency operation against the government. Russia has unambiguously favoured the use of force in favour of *Rakhmanov*, and of keeping him in power. Russia has also been very sensitive towards the Islamic influence in the region that might spread to Russian Federation. The protection of Russian minorities in Tajikistan has

¹⁹ Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.48, No.7, 1996, p.1119.

been one of the excuses that Russia used as the legal basis for the presence of its troops in Tajik-Afghan border.

Consequently it can be said that Russia has been historically tied with Tajikistan and is one of the most important neighbour and guarantor of peace in Tajikistan. Even after the disintegration of the USSR, Tajikistan's relations with Russia in every sphere continued to be excellent. Their relations certainly owe a lot to their historical attachments in various phases. Geopolitics, inter-ethnic relations, economic and military ties have profound impact upon the present relations between the two sovereign countries.

CHAPTER II

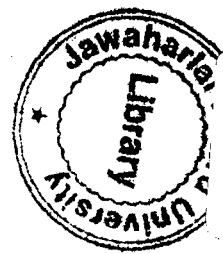
**ETHNIC CONFLICT IN TAJIKISTAN, ITS LANGUAGE
POLICY AND OUT-MIGRATION OF RUSSIANS**

Ethnicity is a sense of identity consisting of the "subjective or symbolic use" by a group of people in order to differentiate themselves from other groups. Ethnicity or ethnic identity also involves, in addition to subjective self-consciousness, a claim to status and recognition, either as a superior group or as a group at least equal to other groups. Multi-ethnicity is a socio-political phenomenon in most civic societies and in the present century, inter-ethnic cleavages, competition and conflict appear to have acquired a marked intensity. In the process, ethnic mobilization has posed varied challenges to many 'developed' and 'developing' states. The tension in inter-ethnic relations varies according to an infinite number of objective and subjective factors present all over the world, and the list of current conflicts on various levels between different groups human beings related to the recognition of their linguistic, economic, social, territorial and other rights. The Central Asian Republics, including Tajikistan are burning examples of this.

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Tajikistan in the aftermath of the disintegration of USSR faced wide-ranging problems due to a complete new situation of being an independent country. Being guided by Moscow for decades, it had hardly conceived of tackling its affairs on its own. Out of the varied problems associated with the post-Soviet situation, the worsening ethnic relations of Tajik people with the rest of non-Tajiks has posed a

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serious challenge to this country. At the same time, the fact that Tajikistan is a multi-ethnic society has wide-ranging implications for the development of a democratic political culture. Historically, known as a region having inhabitants of different ethnic origins, Tajikistan has increasingly become even more multi-ethnic over the last century, due to various phases of migration. These waves of migration began with the settlement of landless Russian peasants during the Tsarist period.¹

It was up to 1989 that the Republic witnessed immigration of Russians. In Tajikistan especially the migration rate was:

Table I
Immigration of Russian to Tajikistan

1956	1970	1979	1980
263000	344000	395000	386000

Source: Ahmed Rashid, *The Resurgence of Central Asia: Islam or Nationalism*, Oxford University Press, Karachi, 1994, p.56.

¹ Roger Kangas D., "State Building and Civil Society in India", *The New States of Eurasia*, Vol.10, New York, 1995.

Table II

**Growth Dynamics of Russian Population in Tajikistan
(in % of the total population of the Republic)**

1926	1939	1959	1970	1979
0.7	9.1	13.3	11.9	10.4

Source: V. Kozlov, *The Peoples of the Soviet Union*, London, 1988, p.33.

Tajikistan, is a country with a history of diverse ethnic groups out of which according to 1989 census report, Tajiks constitute 62.3%, Uzbeks 23.5%, Russians 7.6%, Tatars 1.4% and others 5.2%. The region witnessed socio-political tensions and ethno-religious resurgence, which led to the emergence of a qualitatively new and complex situation. Ethno-religious nationalism assumed unprecedented proportions, thereby disturbing the status quo in this entire region. Islam has remained the manifestations of the local identity, a unifying force that cuts across social barriers. Its great potential was felt in mobilizing masses on a supra-national basis. Political assertion by the native Muslims was a direct consequence of socio-economic developments in the Republic of Tajikistan. In the course of modernization, self-awareness manifested itself in the form of nationalist movements, anti-Soviet and anti-Communist demonstrations.

Moreover, it was *Gorbachev's* policies of '*perestroika*' and '*glasnost*' which provided an opportunity to the Islamic opposition groups in Tajikistan to give vent to their feelings and aspirations that remained suppressed for long. Freedom of the press enabled them to voice their grievances and demand publicity through the media. During the Gorbachev era, the entire Soviet Central Asia, including Tajikistan, witnessed ethnic turmoil and discontent. Subsequent developments led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the commonwealth, of Independent States (CIS).

The political implications of ethnic politics of Tajikistan have been largely influenced by the Soviet legacy. From the Geographic distribution and numerical locations of ethnic entities to the demarcation of territorial borders, the impact of Czarist rule and the nationality policies of successive Soviet governments have determined the nature of inter-ethnic relations in the region. Similarly, political developments and economic dynamics in the former Soviet Union have played a major role in influencing the direction of Tajikistan's ethnic politics. Hence, the ethnic issue has gained prominence during Tajikistan's transitional period of State formation and nation-building.

The Civil War and the Issue of Ethnic Minority

The out-break of the civil war in Tajikistan brought to the forefront the complexities of the situation and their fall-outs. The tall claims of the Soviets about cordial multi-ethnic settlements turned to be a big question mark. In Tajikistan, the open expression of the hostile attitude of the Tajiks against non-Tajiks is a manifestation of increasing competition among groups, vying with each other to ascertain national identities.

The civil war in Tajikistan which initially, for a while, targeted the Russians, later turned to be an inter-clan fight. The imminent result was the massive exodus of the ethnic Russians from Tajikistan to Russia and other regions. There, still is a Russian minority community left in the strife ridden republic. This community as expected is facing, today a myriad of problems of wide ranging nature. The political, socio-cultural and economic conditions in Tajikistan after the civil war has left many things to be desired by the Russian living there.

Intra-ethnic Discord in Tajikistan

An equally significant trend that could threaten the security of the region is the intensification of intra-ethnic discord along regional, sub-regional and tribal levels. It is noteworthy that there seems to be strong economic component to the growing intra-ethnic discord, as

more deprived regions, sub-regions or tribals hope to challenge their better-off counterparts. The northern region of Khojend in Tajikistan, where a high concentration of Uzbeks reside, has traditionally been in close contact with the Uzbek Communist Party and receptive to their policy preferences vis-a-vis Tajikistan. The Khojend power elite has managed to exercise control over much of the south through its alliance with Kulyabis and some loyal elements in Hissar.

Table III
Nationalities in Tajikistan (in thousands)

	1959	1970	1979	1989	1992
Tajiks	1051	1630	2237	3172	3251
Uzbeks	454	666	873	1198	1363
Russians	263	344	395	388	454
Tatars	57	71	78	72	NA
Kyrgyz	26	36	48	64	NA
Germans	33	38	39	33	NA
Ukrainians	27	32	36	41	NA
Turkmens	7	11	14	20	NA
Others	63	74	86.4	105.2	NA

Source : Figures of 1959 from Edward Allworth, ed., "Central Asia: 120 years of Russian Rule" (Durham, Duke University, 1989), p.96. Figures for 1970 and 1979 are from A. Bennigsen and S.E. Wimbush, "Muslim of the soviet Empire: A Guide" (Bloomington, Indiana University, 1986), p.46. Figures for 1989 are from L. Schwartz, "USSR Nationality Distribution by Republic", Soviet Geography; (Vol.XXXII, No.4, April 1991). Figures for 1992 are from several maps prepared by CIA, made available to the public in September 1992 under the title of "The States of the Former Soviet Union: An Updated Overview".

The south came together in the early 1990s to form the base of the opposition under the organisational banner of the Islamic Revival Party, the Democratic Party, Rastokhez and Lale Badakhshan.

Table IV

Opposition Parties in Tajikistan, 1990-1993

-
- The Democratic Party
Ideology: Political Pluralism
 - The Rastokhez (Resurgence)
Ideology: Islamic Liberalism
 - The Islamic Revival Party (IRP)
Ideology: Islamic Fundamentalism
 - Lale Badakhshan (The Rubies of Badakhshan)
Ideology: Irredentist Party demanding greater autonomy for Gorno-Badakhshan
-

Source: Compiled from various literatures on politics published in Tajikistan.

For a brief period in 1992, the south managed to enter into a power sharing agreement with the north, subsequent to the establishment of the Government of National Reconciliation.

Decades of Russian and Soviet rule in Tajikistan has produced one of the most ethnically diverse landscapes in the modern history. During the Soviet period, Russian language was the language of inter-ethnic communications and the people of Tajikistan regarded the Russian language as a superior tongue. At that time, the Russian

language was one the most important means of cross-national contacts, enrichment of culture, and further convergence of all the nations and nationalities.² Because of its position as the basic language of inter-ethnic interaction and scientific and technical literature, Russian language was also the working language for the majority of qualified occupations, by which the normal process of urban social and professional mobility was determined. Russian language was a means to upward social mobility and was also an indicator of the level of development of a nationality. It had historically become the main urban language.

But the Tajik intelligentsia, a major opposition group of Tajikistan challenged the Russian language as the language of inter-ethnic communication. The opposition's top priority was to improve the status of the Tajik language in the republic. Complaints that Tajik office holders, including the top leadership, in the republican state and party hierarchy were unable to communicate in their native language, prompted Mahkamov (May 1988) to endorse a resolution in improving the teaching of Tajik at all educational levels.³ On 10 December 1988, the first secretary supported the use of Tajik in

² Ia. R. Vinnikov, "National and Ethnographic Groups in Central Asia as Reflected in Ethnic Statistics", *Soviet Sociology*, Winter 1980-81, p.88.

³ Ann Sheehy, "Tajik Party First Secretary Addresses Concerns of Local Intelligentsia", *Report on the USSR*, 20 January 1989, p.22.

Government circles and encouraged Russians and other non-Tajik speakers to learn Tajik.⁴ Tajikistan was the first Central Asian state to take that bold step.

The Language Law and the Out-migration of Russians

During the Soviet era, wide-ranging Russification of Tajik culture had occurred mainly through education in schools and other institutions. Russian language had become the general medium of instruction. But shortly before the collapse of Soviet rule, Tajik public organisations called 'informals' - organisations separate from the Communist Party - began expressing specifically nationalistic concerns.⁵ The regime's most important concession to the nationalists was the enactment of a language law in 1989 which would make Tajik the sole state language by 1996, with Russian used only as a language of - inter-ethnic communication. As a result, Russian language lost its pre-eminent position.

The first draft of the Constitution of Tajikistan was published in the spring of 1992. Its preamble begins with the words "we Tajiks....."

⁴ Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan", *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol.48, no.7, 1996, p.1109.

⁵ Muriel, Atkin, "Tajikistan: Ancient Heritage, New Politics", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds), *Nations and Politics in Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.372.

and Article two states that "the official language of the Republic of Tajikistan will be the Tajik (Farsi) language."⁶

The entire draft, and especially the language provision, which reinforced the language law of 1989, drew immediate protests from members of Tajikistan's national-ethnic minority communities. These communities, including Armenians, Georgians, Jews, Germans, Koreans, Russians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Uzbeks and others represented by the Coordinating Council of National Association (Communities) of the Republic of Tajikistan pointed out that over 40 per cent of the population which is non-Tajik is not recognised by the authors of the draft of the new Constitution of Tajikistan.⁷ The Council also noted that "the higher state positions of President and Vice-President can be held only by Tajiks".⁸

The draft constitution of Tajikistan, published in the spring of 1992, affirmed Tajik's sole status as the language of state. An amended version of the language law drafted in the summer of 1992

⁶ *Foreign Broadcast Information Service (FBIS), Daily Report, Central Eurasia*, 1 September 1992, pp.64-73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, "Draft Constitution called Discriminatory", 26 July 1992, p.82.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 26 July 1992, p.82.

eliminated altogether the status of Russian as a language for conducting official business.⁹

Through its language law, Tajikistan made Tajik language mandatory in the schools and rejected the Russian language as the medium of instructions. Especially, after the proclamation of the new Constitution in 1992, Tajik has been imposed on Russians in almost all fields of life. The Russian children who would have gone otherwise to a Russian medium school now find it compulsory to go to Tajik medium schools.¹⁰ Further, the country started the policies of local majoritarianism. Both at the government and non-government level, favouritism was shown towards the native population, with total disregard to the Russian and other European minorities in the region. The new language laws are perceived by many Russians as the future basis for job discrimination.¹¹

Tajikistan, like many other multinational states is a home to a myriad of ethnic communities. When Tajik was declared the official language without much functional development, despite the

⁹ Muriel, Atkin, "Tajikistan: Ancient Heritage, New Politics", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds), *Nations and Politics in Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.375.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ajay Patnaik, "Russo-Central Asian Relations", *World Focus*, Vol.19, No.3, March 1998, p.9.

predominance of Russian, especially in science, technology and industry, it became a source of tension among its multi-ethnic and multilingual residents. The selection of one language, in a multilingual society, as the official language, affected the dynamics between the various ethnic groups of the country.

These proposed changes in the language law would have a serious negative impact on a large portion of the population, as Russian had been the dominant language used in official institutions in Tajikistan since the formation of the Soviet government in the 1920s. Not only ethnic Russians and others for whom Russian is the primary language would be disadvantaged: more than 25 per cent of the population are Uzbeks, and there are other sizable minorities in Tajikistan who speak little or no Tajik. However, the commission on security and cooperation in Europe maintains that as long as Russian-speakers are given the opportunity to learn the local language during the transition, "the language laws passed in all of the former soviet republics are not in and of themselves violations of anyone's human rights."¹²

But this form of language law has created a sense of frustration among the non-Tajik communities, especially among the Russian

¹² Ibid., p.375.

population. The Russians and other minorities are lamenting that ethnic favouritism towards Tajiks put them at a comparative disadvantage. Russians perceive the language and nationality policy of Tajikistan as forced and a means of replacing the Russians with the Tajiks. Russians have realised that they have no place in an independent and increasingly nationalistic and exclusionary Tajikistan. Now, they have invariably developed a feeling of "second rate citizenship" in a land where they have been living for years and towards the prosperity of which, they have also contributed.

The language law and the discriminatory provisions of the Tajik constitution have converted the once powerful ethnic groups into a bunch of second class citizens. The most powerful nationality in the former Soviet Union suddenly became minority in the republic of Tajikistan and was exposed to discriminations and intimidation.¹³ As a result, many started migrating from Tajikistan and others started to think in terms of getting out of the economically difficult situations in Tajikistan and move to Russia.¹⁴

¹³ Ajay, Patnaik, "Russo- Central Asian Relations", *World Focus*, vol. 19, no. 3, March 1998, p.8.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.8.

The Language Policy and Tajikistan-Russia Relations

Tajikistan's relations with Russia was disturbed in 1989, especially since the adoption of 1989 law; making Tajik the primary state language. The Russian concerns of possible educational and employment discrimination were further intensified during the Dushanbe riots of February 1990. Though the Russians were not singled out for attack, there were incidents of assault and intimidation aimed at them.¹⁵

Fearing the success of the Islamic party in Tajikistan, the Russian-speaking population have been leaving the republic in large number. After the events of February 1990 in Dushanbe, during which mass protests against republican authorities developed into attacks not only among the local population, but also of the minorities, at least 100,000 people left Tajikistan in the course of a year. In April and May 1992, there was an outburst of anti-Russian feeling, after which 20,000 people left Dushanbe.¹⁶ By 1993, Interfax reports that nearly 150,000 Russian speakers (which-includes ethnic Ukrainians, Germans and

¹⁵ Muriel, Atkin, "Tajikistan: Ancient Heritage, New Politics", in Ian Bremmer and Ray Taras (eds), *Nations and Politics in Soviet Successor States*, Cambridge University Press, 1993, p.369.

¹⁶ Ajay Patnaik, *Central Asia Between Modernity and Tradition*, New Delhi, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd. 1996, p.193.

Koreans) have left the war-devastated republic of Tajikistan.¹⁷ Though there is very little direct threat to the Russians, the psychological atmosphere of uncertainty prompted the Russian minority to leave the republic.

Many Russians blame the decision to make Tajik the state language and denial of the some status to Russians and Uzbeks who constituted 10 percent and 23 percent respectively of the republic's population at that time.¹⁸ Although there have been no serious outbreak of violence against the Russians in Tajikistan , the resurgence of ethno-nationalism has generated fear and panic among them. As a result, there have been large-scale Russian emigration out of Tajikistan.

The Russian-speaking population tends to be concentrated in the administrative and industrial occupational sectors. They are often depicted as industrial workers, health-care professionals, teachers in higher educational institutions and administrators. Many of these jobs are not sought after by indigenous Tajiks and so occupational competition does not bring the latter into conflict with the Russians. According to Gleason, there is a sense, at least among the indigenous

¹⁷ Ibid., p.193.

¹⁸ Ajay Patnaik, "The CIS: who needs it?" in Ajay Patnaik (ed), *Commonwealth of Independent State, Problems and Prospects*, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1995, p.97.

elite, that the technical specialists from the European nationalities are valuable to the Tajik economics.¹⁹

The exodus of Russians on a large scale has aroused concern among Tajikistan's elite, who are worried about the Republic losing brains and skills. Russians make up half the population of capital Dushanbe and a quarter of the country's.

Government's steps to protect the Rights of Russian Minority

Though most Russian emigration has been from Tajikistan, the present government there is eager to ensure the protection of the Russians both for economic and national security reasons. Tajikistan decided to delegate to Russia the authority to protect its external borders, during the visit of the then Russian vice-premier, *Alexander Solhin* in 1992. A bilateral agreement on guarantees in the area of human rights was initiated in Dushanbe.²⁰ The Tajik leadership assumed obligations to provide social and legal guarantees to the Russian population in its territory.²¹

The Tajik authorities have been making every efforts to persuade the Russians to stay in the republic. Davlat Khudanazarov, a

¹⁹ Ajay Patnaik, *Central Asia Between Modernity and Tradition*, New Delhi: Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., 1996, p.196.

²⁰ Ajay Patnaik, "Russo-Central Asian Relations", *World Focus*, vol.19, no.3, March 1998, p.9.

²¹ Ibid. p.9.

member of the special commission on normalising the situation in Kurgan-Tyube province in Tajikistan, met with representatives of the local Russian minority and briefed them on the work that the commission is doing and assured them that it will do everything it can to stabilize the situation in the southern part of Tajikistan.²²

The Tajik government officials like then Prime Minister *Abdulladzhonov*, emphasized the continued importance of Russia's role in ensuring stability in the region and Tajik government would proposed to the supreme Soviet that Russian be accorded equal status with Tajik as a state language and that Russian residents be permitted dual citizenship.²³

Though the government of Tajikistan promises to give all types of rights to its Russian minorities and claims to be following secular and democratic policies, but till today, the constitution of Tajikistan is silent on guaranteeing equal status for the Russian and other European minorities. Islam still acts as a cementing factor which the Tajiks think, is the very manifestation of their ethnic identity.

Despite the Islamic fundamentalism in Tajikistan and Russian emigration from Tajikistan, there are still near about 80 thousand

²² Ajay Patnaik, "The CIS: who needs it?" in Ajay Patnaik (ed), *Commonwealth of Independent State, Problems and Prospects*, Konark Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi 1995, p.98.

²³ Ibid.

Russians are staying in the republic, tolerating all the political, social and economic difficulties. It is mainly because of their economic concern that most of them have not preferred to migrate. Then, the controversial language law has not yet been rigidly applied for these people. It has been possible because of pressure from Russian side as well as Tajikistan's reluctance to lose the rest of the valuable skilled population whom it needs badly for the reconstruction of its economy and industry. On the other hand also, Tajikistan's leadership has adopted a soft stand towards Russian community which has resulted in various exclusive activities which others are not permitted.

Since ethnic competition by its very nature is flexible, ever existing inter and intra-ethnic tensions in Tajikistan could recede overtime if steps are taken to provide all ethnic communities a stake in the state. The Russian and other minorities of the republic of Tajikistan, should be given minority status in the constitution and the fear psychosis which has been created among the Russians has to be removed. The ability of the republic to evolve political systems which incorporate political pluralism and include power-sharing arrangements for its multi-ethnic populations will in particular, curb existing ethnic tensions and prevent confrontation along inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic lines.

CHAPTER III

TAJIKISTAN'S ECONOMIC RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

From the very beginning, Tajikistan has historically had strong economic ties with Russia. The history of economic relations between the two countries is as old as Tajikistan's long association with the Tsarist empire and latter with the Soviet Union. They are inseparably associated with each other by numerous economic ties even after the disintegration of the USSR. Tajikistan has always been a priority in Russian economic policy. Tajikistan's geo-strategic importance has attracted Russia to establish economic relations with the region. Russia regards economic co-operation with Tajikistan as the best way to counter the influence of outside powers in the region.

Economically, Tajikistan was the poorest republic of the former Soviet Union. It was dependent on the inflow of subsidies from Moscow. The Soviet structure of inter-republic trade was such that between 80 and 90 percent of Tajikistan's exports and imports were accounted for by trade with the former Soviet Union.¹

Tajikistan Under the Tsarist Rule

The Tsarist annexation of Tajikistan in the 19th century, though in fragments, transformed the feudal economy of Tajikistan. Being basically a rural, backward and agriculture based society, Tajikistan

¹ Mutahir Ahmed, "Turmoil in Tajikistan: The Role of Internal and External Powers", *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.2, No.3, Fall 1995, p.70.

faced a lot of difficulties to come to terms with a new pattern of economic and social relationships. Tsarist rule as a matter of policy towards this area of Central Asia adopted largely a colonial relationship, wherein this region was treated as a colony only necessary to supply raw materials to the industries in Russia.² The rich soil of Tajikistan which could promote cotton cultivation, received the utmost attention of the Tsarist rulers. Under Tsarist government's encouragement, the cultivation of cotton began to expand rapidly in the region.³ The impetus was provided by better marketing facilities, finance and credit facilities, transportation facilities etc. Cotton shipment to Russia grew by leaps with the creation of the first rail connection, that is the Transcaspian railroad.⁴ However, colonial transport policy resulted in the development of only those railways which connected the metropolis with the colonies. Under these circumstances, the area under cotton increased dramatically.⁵

Due to the attention given towards cotton cultivation, industrialisation of the region failed to take off and the region remained a backward one, till the October Revolution of 1917.

² R.R. Sharma, *A Marxist Model of Social Change, Soviet Central Asia, 1917-1940*, Delhi, 1979, p.9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Tajikistan which was highly illiterate and had a rural society, accepted the Tsarist rule without any protest. The Tajik economy before the October Revolution was an economy dominated by colonial relations of production in which the Russian bourgeoisie and the local feudal lords exploited the peasants and the landless.

The October Revolution of 1917 changed the entire political situation of the state. In this change, Tajikistan followed the path of communism without much challenge. The establishment of communist rule brought a ray of hope for the people of Tajikistan who were suffering under the political and economic exploitation of the Tsarist regime. Tajikistan which till that time was only a raw material supplying colony saw a massive agenda for development in almost all sphere of life. Cotton, the main ingredient which this region supplied, was supplemented further with some other allied industries like coal, weaving, petroleum, food and others. The industries which were set up heralded a new era of urbanization and development. In order to perpetuate this development, Russians, largely skilled professionals, managers and other experts, started to pour into this region. The country's economy started gradually shifting from strictly rural and nomadic to primarily industrial, which mainly produced semi-processed raw-materials. A basic infrastructures of roads, railroads and aviation was developed with a near-universal literacy and a free

and relatively well-developed social security system. Because of the Soviet Government's economic assistance, northern Tajikistan has become a major industrial region of the republic. It produces electricity, oil, coal and minerals. It has machine-building and consumer goods industries, including food products.⁶

The rapid economic development of the region can be traced to the decades of general tranquillity experienced by its population under the Soviets. As a predominantly agricultural country, whose cultivable land is a mere 7 percent of the total land area, agriculture contributes nearly 40 percent of Net Material Product (NMP), while 70 percent of the population lives in rural areas. Hydro-electric power meets 95 percent of the country's energy requirements.⁷ Although richly endowed with natural resources, its foreign trade is focused on a few products, such as, aluminium, raw cotton and textiles, which form a large portion of its exports.⁸

Tajikistan blossomed in the 1930s and 1940s, and experienced a new type of development in the post-Stalin period. The New Soviet government abandoned the policies of mass mobilization and popular

⁶ Maqsuldul Hasan Nuri, "Tajikistan in 1990s", *Regional Studies*, Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, Autumn, 1996, Vol. XIV, No.4, p.26.

⁷ Ibid., p.25.

⁸ Ibid.

participatory development programmes and stressed the role of technocrats and professionals in the management of the country's economy.⁹ The Soviet government built industrial enterprises to boost the country's economy. Heavy industry was limited to coal, petroleum extraction and some lead and zinc. By 1940s the country's economy was transformed from a primitive subsistence economy to a mechanized and industrial economy.¹⁰

Agrarian Reforms under the Soviets

Though there was rapid growth of economic development in Tajikistan under the Soviet rule, the vast masses of the peasantry continued to live a miserable life, more so under the Russian colonial system which exposed the peasantry to the dual exploitation of a feudal land tenure system as well as the capitalist cash nexus. To end the miserable conditions of the peasantry, the Soviet Government introduced agrarian reforms. These reforms and changes that the Soviets brought about in agrarian relations freed the peasantry from various forms of bondage and indebtedness that forced the surplus rural population to provide cheap labour to the landlords or seek

⁹ Hafizullah Emadi, "State Ideology and Islamic Resurgence in Tajikistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 1994, 13 (4), p.568.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.567.

seasonal employment with manufacturers who benefited from this type of low paid employment.

Along with the reforms a massive cotton campaign was launched in Tajikistan, again to enable the country to produce large amounts of cotton. In Tajikistan, where agricultural implements before Soviet industrialisation consisted of hoes and wooden ploughs, and labour by hand continued to dominate, towards the end of 1940s changes in the quality of labour were discernible. The achievements in agricultural labour productivity were considerable, no doubt, compared to the earlier period.

Thus, with the coming of the Soviets and the coinciding industrial development, Tajikistan's society underwent a phenomenal change. Migrations from rural to urban areas increased and literacy rate shot up. Despite having highest birth rate among all the Central Asian republics, Tajikistan never had a major unemployed population during the Soviet period.

The Republic, however, experienced an economic decline, beginning in the mid-1980s which was aggravated by the country's rapid population growth rate (the highest in the whole of the USSR). Due to poor economy, Tajiks suffered low standard of living. The Soviet figures indicated that 60 percent of the population lived below

the poverty threshold. In 1989, unemployment hit 25.7 percent of the working population, with a rate of 3.28 percent.¹¹

Soviet Disintegration and Economic Decline in Tajikistan

The Soviet Union entered a process of disintegration in 1990 and finally ceased to exist in December 1991. Following the collapse of the USSR, the country was adversely affected by the widespread disruptions in the former Soviet trading system, resulting in shortfalls of urgently needed raw-materials and other supplies essential to the economy. As power of the central authorities declined, the structure of inter-republic trade began to collapse and shortage of food, consumer goods and fuel spread.¹²

The downward slide continued unabated after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Recession, unemployment and price rise resulted in a dramatic fall in people's living standards in Tajikistan.¹³

Declining industrial production characterised the Tajik economy since the onset of Perestroika. Industrial production stood at 53 percent of the GNP in 1992. Tajikistan's economy shrank by 13 percent

¹¹ Mutahir Ahmed, "Turmoil in Tajikistan: The Role of Internal and External Powers", *Eurasian Studies*, Vol.2, No.3, Fall 1995, p.70.

¹² Ajay Patnaik, *Central Asia Between Modernity and Tradition*, (Konark Publishers, New Delhi, 1996), p.174.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p.175.

in the first quarter of 1992 and by 20 percent in the second quarter of 1992. According to National Statistics Committee of Tajikistan, industry there faces a critical situation. The energy, chemical, food and construction industries were the hardest hit, showing 50 percent decline between 1991-92.

Table V

Economy of the Republic of Tajikistan (1992 compared to 1991)

National income 1992 as percent of 1991.	Industrial production 1992 as percent of 1991	Commercial turnover 1992 as percent of 1991	GNP 1991- 1992
69	76	28	-

Source: State Committee of Russian Federation, cited in Central Asia Newsfile, No. 4, February 1992, p.5 and CIS State Committee for Statistics, cited in Eric Whitlock, "The CIS economy, RFE/RL Research Report, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1993, p. 47.

One-fifth of the industrial enterprises could not fulfill their delivery commitments and the amount of unfinished construction projects grew almost 2.5 times.¹⁴

With supply of from other CIS states disrupted (their economies being in equally critical shape), civil war and political instability has exacerbated the economic crisis in Tajikistan, its economic growth decline drastically. During 1992-96 real GDP declined by 60%. Its debt

¹⁴ Ibid., p.179.

liability has also increased - the debt to GDP ratio has grown from 74.4% to 109% between 1992-97. Inflation is very high and as a result real wages have gone down by more than 95% between 1993-97. The fall in employment and real wage, combined with declining spending in social sector and removal of subsidies have brought down the general living standard of the masses.

Continued political instability, collapse of the rouble zone and trade between former Soviet republics and economic depression in all those states are delaying any prospect of economic recovery in Tajikistan. Industrial production overall in the republic in 1993 was half of its 1990 level, according to Tajikistan's state statistical committee.¹⁵ Tajikistan's one of the most key industrial sectors, uranium production, has also suffered from the disruption to supply lines.¹⁶ Economic relations between the Tajikistan and Russia were badly disturbed because of the breakdown of overall comm financial arrangements in Russia after the disintegration of which was unable to give financial assistance to Tajikistan a of the republic's financial crisis. Unlike other former Soviet the Tajik government has been slow to implement reforms to effect a transition to a market economy system.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

Frustrated by poor economy, Tajikistan faces a new situation of handling its economic affairs on its own without outside support. Like all other Central Asian Republics, Tajikistan faces a complex situation of transition from a centralised socialist system towards a more open society based on market driven economy. Its economic ties with the members of erstwhile Soviet union was such that economic dependence is unavoidable virtually with the rest of the CIS. However, with Tajikistan adopting a market economy and accelerating privatization, the new economic scenario has also necessitated more investments from the western countries. To attract foreign investments and bear the fruits of market economy in a changed liberalization perspective, it had to make various changes in its economic policies.

Privatisation Policy of Tajik Government

The Tajik Government announced in November 1993 that privatization was proceeding intolerably slowly. It decided to introduce new measures to speed up the pace of the sale of state assets. The state property committee has been instructed to draw up a list of small and medium sized ventures and firms ready for privatisation. In view of other pressing economic priorities, such measures will remain largely theoretical for sometime. A market has

to be created through the use of vouchers because of lack of domestic savings. Pronouncements by Tajikistan government from time to time, reiterating commitment to a market economy can hardly conceal the great reluctance with which Tajikistan is moving towards privatisation and the pressure of international monetary agencies in dictating many of the steps taken in that direction.

Tajikistan's economic development strategy is based on a deep and comprehensive economic transformation, which would eventually create a firm foundation for its independent existence. This strategy means not only reform in economic policy or the system of economic management and regulation, but also fundamental reorganisation of the overall economic system of the country.

Civil War and Economic Crisis in Tajikistan

Economic development in Tajikistan has been further hampered by the civil war which brokeout in 1992. Move towards a market economy, economic recession and drive for privatisation have resulted in a mass growth of unemployment in Tajikistan. There were in 1992, more than 22,800 unemployed in Tajikistan, while at the same time, the economy needed at least 6,000 qualified workers. This could be due to the emigration of skilled Russian workers and non-availability of workers with same skill level from among the Tajik population.

Faced with the unemployment situation, the indigenous people of Tajikistan started protest campaign against the non-Tajiks. Then followed the rise of nationalist sentiments and inter-ethnic conflicts which were the main causes of the civil war that coincided with deteriorating economic conditions in Tajikistan.

Apart from the devastating human cost (an estimated 50,000 people killed, 500,000 persons displaced within Tajikistan with a further 70,000 made refugees), the war was estimated to have cost more than 30,000 million roubles in economic losses.¹⁷ As a result of the civil war, the economic situation in Tajikistan, which had left much to be desired in the first place, has greatly deteriorated. Hence, any recovery in Tajikistan is expected to take many years and will depend on the Government's success in curbing an expected resurgence of the civil conflict.

The new leadership of the Republic of Tajikistan obviously appeared bewildered and overwhelmed by the sudden realisation of their responsibilities to avoid the economic crisis in the region without any central support. They are searching for avenues of expeditious and comprehensive economic growth. They need considerable economic support and co-operation from outside powers

¹⁷ Mutahir Ahmad, 'Turmoil in Tajikistan: The Role of Internal and External Powers', *Eurasian Studies*, vol.2, no.3, Fall 1995, p.69.

including Russia to resolve the acute financial crisis and rebuild the war-devastated Tajikistan. The civil war provided a golden opportunity for the outside powers to involve in Tajikistan's political and economic scenes. Instead of helping Tajikistan to solve its financial problems, they exploited the republic's natural resources for their own interests. Thus, the civil war adversely affected the country's economy. Hence any economic recovery in Tajikistan is expected to take many years, and will, depend on the Government's success in curbing an expected resurgence of the civil conflict. Further, the economic desperation of the republic also makes it highly inclined towards Russia. The only saviour it can see around is Russia and nobody else.

In the sphere of economy, the relationship between Tajikistan and Russia appears to have entered a new era with the establishment of a commercial alliance and the signing of the agreement on economic co-operation. In October 1991, Tajikistan signed, with seven other Republics of the former Soviet Union, a treaty to establish an economic community, and subsequently demonstrated its willingness to join the proposed union of sovereign states. When a Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was suggested in December, initially by the three Slav Republics (Russia, Ukraine and Belarus), Tajikistan expressed its desire to become a co-founder, along

with the other Central Asian Republics. Tajikistan always has tried to maintain economic relations with Russia by concluding numerous treaties, because Russia is the guarantor of economic stability in this region.

In 1992, Tajikistan joined the economic co-operation organisation (ECO) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); it became a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank in 1993. In May 1995, Tajikistan became the last country of the CIS to attain monetary independence from Russia by introducing its own currency - the Tajik Rouble (TR).

Tajikistan has sought to promote closer economic integration among the member states of the Commonwealth of Independent states (CIS), especially with Russia. Tajikistan is dependent on supplies of new Russian currency and is in greater need of Russian aid and assistance. From Russian point of view, Tajikistan, is of great strategic importance too which produces commodities and goods of vital interests to Russia. Tajikistan has considerable mineral deposits, including gold, antimony, silver, aluminium, iron, lead, mercury and tin. There are also deposits of coal as well as reserves of petroleum and natural gas. On the other hand, Russia has interest in gas, oil and

hydro-power resources of Tajikistan and supply of the country's cotton, grain, fruits and vegetables to Russia on a stable and long-term basis.

Russia is the major consumer market for Tajikistan's minerals and raw materials which need to be rescheduled by mutual agreement. In April 1998, Tajikistan was admitted to the CIS customs union, already comprising Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus. These states issued a joint statement after signing the treaty establishing the "Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC)". The document stresses that the Eurasian Economic Community will seek to launch the free trade regime, introduce uniform customs tariffs and non-tariff control system. On April 2, 1998, at Tajik capital Dushanbe, the prospects for the bilateral Tajik-Russian economic co-operation were discussed at the meeting between the President of Tajikistan, *Emamoli Rakhmanov* and Russian Ambassador in Tajikistan, *Yevgeny Belov*. During this meeting, the Russian Ambassador confirmed the readiness of the Russian leadership in improving economic situation in Tajikistan. Russia is always prepared for closer economic co-operation with the Republic of Tajikistan as an influential and authoritative member in the association of states of the Central Asian region.

Thus, the economic relations between Tajikistan and Russia has consistently grown. For Russia, Tajikistan constitutes a very important geo-strategic region with which Russia has age-old relations. Again, Tajik inclination towards Russia is also very strong. The economic ties sends a powerful signal regarding the existence of specific ties between Tajikistan and Russia.

CHAPTER IV

**TAJKISTAN'S MILITARY CO-OPERATION
WITH RUSSIA**

In matters of security, Tajikistan totally depends upon Russia and regards the latter as "the guarantor of regional stability and peace" in the region. Since the independence of Tajikistan in 1991, both countries have been inseparably associated with each other on numerous defence issues. Concerning Tajikistan's security ties with Russia in the light of the strategic geo-politics and security scenario of Central Asia, it can be said beyond doubt that Tajikistan almost depends entirely upon the Russia owing to the difficulty in forming a credible army after the disintegration of the USSR. Tajikistan has setup its own armed forces with the assistance of Russia and has signed a number of agreements with the latter for ensuring its national security both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The Russian Federation has been the single most important factor in the politics of Tajikistan. The emergence of nationalist tendencies in that republic and their Islamic flavour appeared to remind Moscow of its bitter defeat in Afghanistan. Russia was not prepared to lose another satellite state, like Tajikistan, which is one of the most important geo-strategic areas in Central Asia. The Soviet Union had collapsed, but Tajikistan was still considered an important piece in Russia's defence strategy. Russia would not let Tajikistan slip

away from its sphere of influence.¹ The danger of fundamentalism, therefore, helped Russia to encourage Tajikistan and other Central Asian states to close ranks with the former as well as to influence public opinion in Russia and Central Asia, atleast among its russified urban population.²

Further, the Russian Government's support for the communist party elite in Tajikistan baffled the opposition. The Tajik elite had sided with the putchists against President *Yeltsin* and *Sangak Safarov* had insulted the Russian President in the Khojand session of the Tajik Parliament (November 1992), while the opposition had supported *Yeltsin's* fight for democracy and tried to enforce his anti-CP decrees in Tajikistan; hence the Tajik opposition was deeply disillusioned about the real intentions of Russia. In an open letter to Russian government, *Shodmon Yusuf*, then leader of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan, criticised Russia's military backing of the Tajik elite, labelling it "aggressive, illegal and inhuman."³

¹ Shahram Akbarzadeh - " Why did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan", *Europe - Asia Studies*, Vol.8, No.7, 1996, p.1122.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

Considerations Behind Russian Involvement

Russian policy in Tajikistan has been determined not by ideological concerns for democracy, but by its security and strategic concerns. According to *Akberzadeh*, the strategic alliance of Russian democracy with the communist elite of Tajikistan is rooted in the one's desire to retain its sphere of influence at the expense of ideology and the other's willingness to sacrifice national sovereignty for its political ends.⁴ Russia has made it clear that Tajikistan is an inseparable link in its defence strategy. The Tajik-Afghan border is often referred to as 'our border' by the Russian Ministries of Defence and Foreign Affairs. In an interview in July 1993, the Russian Minister of Defence *Pavel Grachev*, took that line as far as implying that Tajikistan was a part of a larger Russian security sphere that goes beyond its natural borders.⁵

The most visible involvement of Russia in the Central Asian region is the presence of its troops on the Tajik-Afghan border. According to Russian policy in Tajikistan has been largely determined by the military and that former Minister for Defence, *Pavel Grachev*, was associated with it since the inception of this policy.⁶ However,

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Nirmala Joshi - "Russia and Central Asia: The Strategic Dimensions", *Strategic Analysis*, December 1995, p.1281.

the development of such institutions like Eurasian Economic Union and the Shanghai five, point to the fact that relations with Central Asian states like Tajikistan goes beyond purely military or defence issues.

Russian policy has been to support President *Emamoli Rakhmanov* of the People's Front whose political platform was based on rejection and confrontation with Islamic Fundamentalism. Russian support to *Rakhmanov* resulted in the failure of opposition forces which had mounted a massive insurgency against the government. A full scale civil war resulted in Tajikistan. This had led to thousands of Tajiks crossing the border and living in Afghanistan as refugees.⁷ Another dimension to the civil war was that the opposition was receiving help and support from Afghanistan and Iran who were supporting the resistance movement in Tajikistan by providing arms and ammunition. The Tajik opposition groups had also direct links with certain other extremist Islamic groups in the Muslim world.

It is estimated that the Afghan Government provided shelter to approximately 70,000 Tajik refugees who fled the civil war in Tajikistan and an estimated 7,000 Tajik militia. It has also provided military training to an estimated 35,000 Tajik nationals residing in

⁷ Ibid.

several northern provinces of Afghanistan.⁸ Afghanistan had been trying to create political instability in Tajikistan and had been supporting the Islamic movement in the region. *Ali Akbar Turadzhonzadah* and *Osman Davulatov*, members of the Islamic opposition party and their close associates, were in exile in Afghanistan, organising their supporters from bases in Afghanistan in order to continue their armed struggle for the restoration of an Islamic order in Tajikistan. In July 1993, *Turadzhonzadah* visited Pakistan to discuss with Pakistan's officials prospects for establishing an office in Peshwar. Although the Pakistanis did not allow him to use Pakistani territory as a military base, they along with Afghan fundamentalist groups, continued to support the Tajik resistance movement.⁹

When the civil war in Tajikistan was at its height, Russia had unambiguously favoured the use of force in favour of the President of Tajikistan, *Imamali Rakhmanov*, and of keeping him in power. It was Russia which took the lead to send a joint peace-keeping force to guard the 1,400 km. border with Afghanistan. Since then the Russian troops have been involved in intermittent skirmishes on the Tajik-Afghan border, with Islamic guerrilla forces based in northern

⁸ Hafizullah Emadi - "State Ideology and Islamic Resurgence in Tajikistan", *Central Asian Survey*, 1994, 13(4), p.573.

⁹ Ibid.

Afghanistan. The Russian leadership has stressed many times that it is committed to protect its 'near abroad' (former Soviet Republics) countries. Now, for the second time Russian troops are again facing Afghanistan from where they had to beat a humiliating retreat nearly ten years of heavy fighting.¹⁰

Russian Effort for Tajik Peace Negotiations

Despite Russia's involvement in the Tajik civil conflict and while upholding the policy of strength in Tajikistan, Russia has also favoured a peaceful negotiated settlement of the conflict and sought to mediate between the Government and the opposition leadership in exile.

Since mid-1994, the Russian leadership has been urging the Tajik rulers to opt for a political solution to end the crisis in Tajikistan.¹¹ There was wide agreement among the leaders of Central Asia and Russia that President *Rakhmanov* must strive for national reconciliation and start negotiations with the opposition.¹² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had taken an active interest in the peaceful solution of the Tajik tangle. During this time, the Tajik government did

¹⁰ Maqsuldul Hasan Nuri - "Tajikistan in 1990s", *Regional Studies*, Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, Autumn, 1996, Vol. XIV, No. 4, p.38.

¹¹ Ibid., p.39.

¹² Nirmala Joshi, "Russia and Central Asia: The Strategic Dimensions", *Strategic Analysis*, December 1995, p.1281.

not agree to hold talks with the opposition because of clashes between the opposition and the government forces. Some observers feared that these talks, instead of reducing tensions, could only push the country further into Afghan type conflict where the leaders from neither side would be able to control the regional warlords.

During 1994-95, relations between the Russian authorities and the *Rakhmanov* regime in Tajikistan, deteriorated, owing to disagreements regarding the approach of the Tajik government to the peace negotiations. Then, with the assistance of Russia, a number of rounds of talks between the Tajik government and the opposition leaders had been held, though without leading to any political reconciliation. However, again in 1996 and 1997, Russia hosted several rounds of the UN-sponsored negotiations for a political settlement in Tajikistan, which culminated in the signing of the peace agreement in Moscow, in June 1997.

Whether Russia will continue this peaceful diplomatic approach or escalate military tensions on the Tajik-Afghan border is difficult to say at this juncture. But what is certain is that Russia will not tolerate any interference in its sphere of special interests. In a strong assertion of regional prerogatives, former Foreign Minister *Kozyrev* had

declared that "no other groups of nations can replace our peace-making efforts along the border of the old Soviet Union."¹³

Despite exhorting the Tajik government to hold talks with its opposition and arrive at a political settlement, Russian continue to guard the Tajik-Afghan border for their larger security and geopolitical interests. According to the then Russian Defence Minister *Pavel Grachev*, "Russia does not intend to get involved in fighting between the Tajik guerrillas and the government forces, but nevertheless will guard important government installations." Further, military access to Tajikistan in order to defend that border is thus seen as vital for Russia, supposedly threatened by Islamic Radicalism, terrorism and the tread in drugs and arms. This view leads to an alliance with a Tajik state supported by Russian troops, seen as the least risky way to assure defence of the border. The continuation of Russian army in Tajikistan has been accepted as natural and the Russian troop's presence as an indication of Russia's strong ties with Central Asia.

The Tajik government troops along with the Russian forces, patrolling the border with Afghanistan to counter cross-border terrorism intensified in July and August of 1992 with many casualties

¹³ Ibid., p.1282.

reported on both sides. The continuing conflict along the Tajik-Afghan border has been interpreted by some observers of Central Asia as being partly a battle for control of drugs-smuggling routes: since gaining independence, Tajikistan had become a major conduit for illicit drugs (chiefly opium) from Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan to Russia and Western Europe.

The Tajik authorities asked the then Afghan government to prevent Mujahidin fighters and consignments of weapons from crossing the frontier into Tajikistan. The Afghan government denied that it was involved in arms-trafficking: it was widely believed that the main source of armaments was the renegade Mujahidin leader, Hekmatyar, over whom the Afghan government had no authority. Again in April 1993, the Tajik government protested to the Afghan authorities about alleged incursions across the border by Afghans, apparently to assist the remaining rebel troops. The opposition had taken refuge in Afghanistan, there were daily cease-fire violations across the border. By mid-July 1996, Tajikistan had closed all its border points with Afghanistan in a bid to thwart Islamist guerrillas operating out of bases located in the northern parts of that country. It was also reviewing relations with all countries which provided support to the armed opposition in Tajikistan.

Frustrated with the cross-border terrorism and armed rebellion in Tajikistan the Tajik authorities looked towards Russia helplessly to protect its borders from these anti-social elements and to restore peace in the region. Then with Tajikistan, Russia had signed a comprehensive military treaty in 1992 whereby the former delegated to Russia the right to defend its border with Afghanistan.¹⁴ Since then Russia has been maintaining a presence of nearly 24,000 troops on the Tajik-Afghan border, plus the 201st Motorised Rifle Division in the capital, Dushanbe.¹⁵ Again, it was May 1992 at Tashkent, that Russia and others CIS members (except Turkmenistan, which refused any involvement in the Tajik conflict) took a major step by signing the Collective Security treaty. This was further expanded in July 1992 when it was agreed to set up a 'blue helmet' force for rapid deployment in any area of conflict within the CIS.¹⁶ President *Karimov* of Uzbekistan justified the security pact on the ground that the militant Islamic Fundamentalistic forces were working overtime to turn Tajikistan into a 'spring board' for spreading militant fundamentalism in the Central Asian Republics and other CIS states

¹⁴ Ibid., p.1280.

¹⁵ Bennett R. Rubin, *Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery, Causes and Consequences of Civil War in Tajikistan*, Columbia University, September 1995, p.4.

¹⁶ Maqsudul Hasan Nuri, "Tajikistan in 1990s", *Regional Studies*, Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, Autumn, 1996, Vol.XIV, No.4, p.38.

and that, therefore, it was necessary to "prevent in their territories the activities of persons, groups and organisations" aimed 'at violating the security of those states'. It was emphasized that the borders of Tajikistan were "part of the common borders of the CIS".¹⁷

In January 1993, Russia along with Tajikistan, Krgyzstan and Kazakhstan signed an agreement whereby it was accepted that the external border of the CIS is also the border of Russia. In the same month of 1993, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan and Uzbekistan committed themselves to the defence of Tajikistan's southern frontiers, thus supporting the Government in the continuing conflict on the Tajik-Afghan border. In practice, mainly Russian troops were responsible for repelling rebel fighters entering Tajikistan, with Russia defending the southern CIS border as if it were its own. In August 1993, Russia and the Central Asian states, except Turkmenistan, signed an agreement establishing a CIS peace-keeping force to police Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan.

Russian Interest in Tajikistan and Military Presence

Moscow sees Tajikistan as the key point of the re-emerging balance of power in Central Asia. Controlling Tajikistan means

¹⁷ R.R. Sharma, "The CIS and the Central Asian Response", in Ajay Patnaik (ed), *Commonwealth of Independent States: Problems and Prospects*, Konark Publishers, Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1995, p.56.

preventing outside powers such as, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia from exerting their influence in the region. On the other hand, the plight of the Russian minority in Tajikistan often serves as a justifying factor for Russia's military presence in that republic. *Andrei Kozyrev*, former Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation, thought it necessary to write in *'Izvestiya'* about his government's objectives in Tajikistan. He rejected charges of defending a communist regime in Tajikistan and justified Russia's commitment there by evoking the image of a threatening spectre of Islamic extremism that endangered the Russian community in Tajikistan.¹⁸ Large-scale Russian emigration and the protection of remaining Russian minorities in Tajikistan has been one of the factors for Russia's engagements in Tajikistan.

In the words of Russian journalist *Olegpanfilov*, the Russian community in Tajikistan is Russia's 'trump card'.¹⁹ Uzbekistan, the other determining foreign factor in the Tajik crisis has shared, and at times fuelled, Moscow's anxiety about Islamic nationalism and its anti-Russian connotations in Tajikistan. Actually, Russia desire to see the neo-communist secular elite in power which could control the fundamentalist forces in the region.

¹⁸ Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan", *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol.48, No.7, 1996, p.1123.

¹⁹ Ibid.

For Russia, Tajikistan is an area of special responsibility and an area of special interests. Russia's historic interest and association with the region makes it obligatory that it should remain eminently engaged in the region, requiring no mandate to mount CIS peacekeeping operations if and when needed. Justifying the presence of Russian troops on the Tajik-Afghan border, *Anatoly Adamishin*, former first Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia, forthrightly put forward Russia's concern. According to *Adamishin*, "If we leave the Tajik-Afghan border, then we have no other border right up to the Arctic ocean, and everything which is now somehow being held back at this border will pour into Central Asia and through it into Russia. And this includes narcotics, terrorism and subversive activities."²⁰

Another dimension of the Russian concern is that it believes that China, Afghanistan and Iran may also increase their respective influence in the region and draw its people increasingly into their own orbits or press territorial claims against the Central Asian regions as different ethnic communities straddle across each other's borders. The then Russian President, *Boris Yeltsin* aptly stated the Russian thinking on this question when he said at the CIS summit meeting in September 1993, "we welcome closer co-operation in guarding

²⁰ Nirmala Joshi, "Russia and Central Asia: The Strategic Dimensions", *Strategic Analysis*, December 1995, p.1276.

borders with other countries, above all with the Central Asian States."²¹

The ethnically turbulent Central Asia needs Russia for its security. Already nearly 24,000 Russian troops are working together with the few Central Asian soldier to counter the militancy in neighbouring Tajikistan. There is a slow realisation among the Central Asian leaders that they cannot do without Russia. Further, Tajikistan is too small, too poor and too remote to maintain its own territorial integrity. Hence, Russia is integral to the security of Tajikistan, which has just come out of a debilitating civil war, but still faces cross-border terrorism, drug and arms trafficking and religious fundamentalism.

Numerous Agreements Between Tajikistan and Russia

On 26 March 1998, at Moscow, Russian Foreign Ministry's Chief spokesman *Gennady Tarasov* Said that "Russia as one of the guarantors of Tajik peace agreements firmly proceeds from the need for the unconditional and timely observance by the sides of their commitments, will continue to do everything possible in order to promote stabilization and the steady advance of the peace process in Tajikistan."

²¹ Ibid.

On March 19, 1998, at Moscow, Russia expressed concerned over an escalation of hostile terrorist activity in Tajikistan, which is complicating the peace process in the country and undermining joint efforts by Tajik society's sound forces to strengthen mutual understanding and confidence. This was stated by official Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman *Valery Nesterushkin*.²²

Russia and Tajikistan signed an agreement in April 1998 on the establishment of a Russian military base in Tajikistan. In the same month, nine major bilateral agreements were signed, including a Treaty of Alliance and Co-operation. On July 5, 2000, at Dushabe, present President of Russia *Vladmir Putin* stated that "if the Russian military is not present in Tajikistan, everything positive that has been achieved in the course of the peaceful settlement of the Inter-Tajik conflict will be lost - and the organisation of peaceful life of the Republic's people will be torpedoed."²³ *Putin* called for the establishment of a Russian military base on the territory of Tajikistan strengthening of Russian military presence in the Republic. On 9 September 2000, from Moscow, the Russia's President *Vladmir Putin's* message to his Tajikistan's counterpart *Mr. Imamali Rakhmanov* was that "I am confident that the allied Tajik-Russian co-operation would

²² *News From Russia*, March 20, 1998, Vol.VII, No.12, p.12.

²³ *News From Russia*, July 7, 2000, Vol.III, No.27, p.10.

be broadened and would more efficiently serve the interests of our peoples, regional and international security."

There are no strong democratic traditions in the Central Asian republics. The regimes in some cases may be characterised as protodemocracies at the most. Tajikistan's case is a peculiar one. The hard authoritarianism of President *Imamali Rakhmanov* is tempered with power of the field commanders - the regional warlords. Islamic Fundamentalism is a serious threat in Tajikistan, where the Islamists have the process of democratisation has been seriously undermined by the emergence of the power of field commanders turned regional warlords.²⁴ So, the fear of the rise of Islamic Fundamentalism prompted Russia, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to enter into a series of agreements in 1994 dealing with co-operation and interaction on border questions, the status of the Russian borderguard-units on their territories, the service of local citizens in these Russian units and the training of officers.²⁵ The participation of Russian frontier guards in Tajikistan has helped countering the penetration of arms, drugs and criminal elements from across the border.

²⁴ Devendra Kaushik - "Central Asia: The Balance Sheet of 'OZODI'", *World Focus*, March 1998, Vol.19, No.3, p.6.

²⁵ Ajay Patnaik, "Russo-Central Asian Relations", *World Focus*, March 1998, Vol.19, No.3, p.7.

On 26 April, 1996, China, Russia and the three former Soviet Central Asian states of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan signed a security treaty, popularly known as "the Shanghai Treaty". The five countries signed the pact in the Soviet-designed Shanghai Exhibition centre. The treaty stipulates that military forces of the five neighbours would not attack each other. It also bans the countries from conducting military exercises aimed against each other and requires them to inform each other of the scope of exercises and set up friendly ties. There will be also annual exchanges of data on military activities in areas near the border, such as troop exercises or deployments.

The fifth summit was held in Dushanbe on 5 July 2000. It has not only offered better inter-state relations on a new basis, but it has given new security concept and a new model for regional cooperation. It began with confidence building measures in military field in the border areas that stretched more than 7,500 kms. A year later in the Moscow summit, the agreement on reduction of military force in border areas was signed and two related agreements stipulating non-aggression and not to hold military exercises aimed at each other and to invite observers in case of holding exercises as well as commitment to reduce border troops to the lowest minimum required for defensive purposes. These agreements forbid the use or threat of use of force,

pursuit of military supremacy. Exchange of information on troops on the border was also stipulated. At the 1998 Almaty summit, the 'Shanghai Five' for the first time discussed the issue of religious extremism and international terrorism and committed themselves to take measures to crack down on international terrorism, organised crime, weapon smuggling, narcotics trafficking and other cross-border crimes. At the Bishkek summit in August 1999, was issued a joint declaration stipulating cooperative measures for consultation and joint action. At the Dushanbe summit on 5 July 2000, a new stage in cooperation was reached. The five states reiterated their determination to jointly fight national separatism, international terrorism, and religious extremism, which constitute the main threat to regional security, stability and development. They also resolved to fight weapon and drug trafficking and illegal immigration. Members undertook not to allow activities on their respective territories that could undermine the sovereignty, security or social order of the five member states.²⁶

On 15 June 2001, Russia, China and four Central Asian Republics formally launched the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) in Shanghai. It includes the "Shanghai five" states and

²⁶ Ajay Patnaik, "Russia's Foreign Relations", *World Focus*, February 2001, Vol.22, No.2, p.8.

Uzbekistan. These states reiterated their support to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile (ABM) Treaty. Indicating the importance, the attached to fighting the "three forces", such as, terrorism, separatism and extremism. It stipulated the "specific way and procedure of co-operation" among the six countries to combat the three forces. "The signing of the Shanghai pact had laid the legal foundation for jointly cracking down on terrorism, separatism and extremism and reflects the firm determination of the six states on safeguarding regional stability", the Chinese president, *Mr. Jiang Zemin*, was quoted as saying at a press conference in Shanghai. The Shanghai co-operation organisation leaders expressed their willingness to make active efforts to strengthen global and regional strategic stability, maintain and further perfect the systems of arms control and disarmament treaties. The communique issued by the SCO Heads of States said they had discussed the current international situation and unanimously held that the formation of the SCO would help to promote the multi-polarisation of the world and democratisation of international relations.²⁷

Again in May 1998, the three countries of the Former Soviet Union - Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - agreed to jointly fight the growing Islamic terrorism, extremism and cross-border terrorism in

²⁷ *The Hindu*, 16 June 2001.

Central Asia, especially in Tajikistan which were major obstacles on the path of Tajik-Russian relations. The alliance, popularly known as 'Troika' was announced just four days after armed clashes in the capital of Tajikistan, between the Government and Islamic opposition forces. The Troika's main task was to counter the militancy in Tajikistan.

Russia along with other member countries of the Collective Security Treaty held further consultations in Moscow in March 2001. Nine former USSR republics, which were signatories to the treaty, spoke for the immediate implementation of the earlier taken decision on military and technical aid to Tajikistan. Spokespersons for the member states think that international terrorism is a threat to peace and stability in the Central Asian region, especially in Tajikistan. They note that the international terrorist units will start their activity in Afghanistan in spring.²⁸

Thus, various efforts have continued for strengthening Tajikistan's military alliance with Russia on a multilateral or bilateral basis and their relationships in the military sphere has been consistently grown.

²⁸ *News From Russia*, March 16, 2001, Vol.IV, No.10 & 11.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The relations between Tajikistan and Russia has remained strong even after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Both the countries share a common perspective on various issues, such as, threat of religious fundamentalism, ultra ethno-nationalism and trans-border terrorism. Tajikistan-Russia relations have undergone various phases of emotional attachments, understanding political reality, metamorphosis of economic ties in the light of respective economic compulsions, and subsequently an integrationist approach with a view to bringing about an enriching culture of reconciliation, economic prosperity and regional peace. Further, the relationship between the two countries can be considered from the geo-political point of view. Tajikistan occupies a distinct space of geo-political importance which produce commodities and goods of vital interest to Russia. Tajikistan's geo-political importance has induced both the sides to chart-out their policies and relationship carefully. However, in the recent past, the relationship has evolved with fresh considerations and new challenges.

The sustained endeavour to establish a healthy relation has, of course, sometimes confronted experiences of bitterness in their ethnic relations. However, cautious and courageous steps taken by the respective head of governments in the direction of reconciling their differences, have put their relations in right track.

Any analysis of the new geo-political significance of Tajikistan and its implication for Russia, must take into consideration not only the current developments, but also the historical linkages which this country had during the various phases of its evolution. Tajikistan-Russia relations can be analysed from the historical point of view. Tajikistan-Russia relations can be traced back to the later part of the 19th century during which the northern Tajik principalities came under the Russian rule. From that time, the relation has undergone metamorphosis in respect of the political structure and cultural integration. This relation survived the political and structural transformations made by the Soviet government in Tajikistan in various phases of its existence since 1917. On October 16, 1929, Tajikistan became a full union Republic of the USSR. Since that time, their relations have travelled a long path with the transformation of Tajikistan from a backward colony of Tsarist Russia to an agro-industrial economy. Geopolitics, ethnic conflicts, economic ties and military co-operations have profound impact upon the present relations between the two sovereign countries.

Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan, under the banner of the union, remained largely peaceful and subservient to the central rule. During that time, Russian language was the language of inter-ethnic relations which was accepted by the Tajik masses

without any challenge. Inter-ethnic relations remained broadly cordial. But during the *Gorbachev* era, the entire Soviet Central Asia, including Tajikistan, witnessed ethnic turmoil and discontent which led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the inevitable creation of Tajikistan as a sovereign country that brought about some changes in Tajik-Russian relations. The adoption of Tajik as the official language of the state, worsening ethnic relations, grim economic prospects in Tajikistan and a possible better prospects for living conditions in the Russian Federation encouraged large-scale Russian out-migration from Tajikistan. Tajikistan till the outbreak of the civil war in 1992, was considered a safe and secured place for the ethnic Russians. However, as the event progressed since, Tajikistan turned out to be a place of danger and uncertainty.

The country witnessed a civil war which is quite multifaceted - in the sense that it is not a straight contest between the Islamists and the communists alone. It is a fight between the well-to-do north and the impoverished south; a fight between the communists and the democrats, the nationalists and the Islamists. In February 1990, in case of Dushanbe riot, though the Russians were not singled out for attack, there were incidents of assault and intimidation aimed at them. This riot was demonstrative of the response to 'Perestroika' and 'Glasnost' unleashed by the Gorbachev era, the tragic failure of Soviet

nationalities policies of assimilation and integration and anti-theistic propaganda which proved that Marxism and Leninism could not provide an alternative to the newly emergent national ethno-religious sentiments. As a result, the highly skilled population, which had played a pivotal role in transforming an insipid, rural and backward economy to an industrialised and vibrant economy, preferred to migrate out of the country instead of risking their lives and property. Although there was very little direct threat to the Russians, the psychological atmosphere of uncertainty and the adoption of new language laws prompted the Russians to leave the region. Realizing the seriousness of the situation, the present government of Tajikistan undertook some confidence-building measures which included the protection of Russian-speaking people's interest in areas predominantly inhabited by them, simplification of the procedure for granting 'dual citizenship' and delaying the time-limit for full switching over to Tajik as the official language of the state.

In the sphere of economy, there are moves towards creation of common Central Asian market, and establishing trade pacts with Russia and other CIS countries of the former Soviet Union. Its economic ties with the members of erstwhile Soviet Union owe to the nature of its economic dependence created during Soviet times. However, with Tajikistan adopting a market economy and

accelerating privatization, the new economic scenario necessitated more investments from the western countries. To attract foreign investment and bear the fruits of market economy in a changed liberalisation perspective, it had to make numerous changes in its economic policies. As a rich raw-material producing area in Central Asia, Tajikistan is an important source for Russian market. Russia was the largest export and imports partner of Tajikistan though this decreased towards the later part of the 1990s. Further integration with Russia has taken place with the signing of the Customs Union Treaty and Tajikistan joining the recently formed Eurasian Economic Union.

So far as the security factor is concerned, Tajikistan totally depends upon Russia to protect its borders with Afghanistan. Russia enjoys a unique position in Tajikistan and wants to maintain the political stability in order to check the interference of outside powers. Besides, it signed many bilateral and multilateral treaties with Russia and other Central Asian countries on military co-operation and establishment of a peaceful border.

Russia which is apprehensive of spread of Islamic fundamentalism from Afghanistan supported by other external powers has realised the need for a strong 'buffer state' to check this sort of incursion. Coupled with this, consideration of other factors like

preventing the illegal drug-trafficking, terrorism and illegal arms trade has also compelled Russia to take special interest in Tajikistan. Further, the political unrest in Afghanistan has a direct bearing on Tajikistan and it is not possible on the part of Tajikistan to fight the menace of religious fundamentalism single handedly without the help and co-operation from Russia. In the recent past, the rise of 'Taliban' a fundamentalist Islamic force largely supported by Pakistan has put immense pressure on Tajikistan to strengthen its ties with Russia. Thus, the Russian military interference in this region has been accepted as natural and attempts have continued for strengthening military alliance with Russia on a multilateral or bilateral basis.

In conclusion, it can be said that, Tajik-Russia Relations starting from 1917 to the disintegration of the Soviet Union, and till the present time have remained close and cordial. On the basis of widespread goodwill, Tajikistan enjoys due to a variety of reasons, has helped it to take concrete and bold steps to strengthen its relations with Russia like joining the Collective Security and the Economic Union. Russia's basic thrust towards the region has been one of positive engagement.

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