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Aid and transition from a war economy to an oligarchy in post-war Tajikistan

Sumie Nakaya

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Abstract

Exclusion and violence persist in post-conflict states, despite international assistance aimed at the demilitarization of politics. Through a field-based study of Tajikistan, this paper argues that aid focuses on economic liberalization, not the implementation of peace agreements, in the initial stage of post-war transition. Such an organization of aid empowers a particular group of elites who have privileged access to state assets at the time of civil war settlement, allowing them to establish institutional frameworks that will consolidate their personal and monopolistic control of resources. This leads to the collapse of power-sharing arrangements, as the incumbent regime seeks to remove wartime commanders and opposition leaders from the administrative apparatus. In Tajikistan, the incumbent regime has also prosecuted many of these former allies and opponents on account of corruption through state agencies established with donor

assistance. Aid thus institutionalized exclusion and sustains patterns of violence along civil war divisions, rather than transforming wartime power structures.

Keywords:

Tajikistan peace-building aid post-war exclusion and violence

Notes

Interviewees were carefully selected, based on their seniority and prior and current institutional affiliations, including the state committee on property, the agency for financial control, the Ministry of Interior, the tax police, and the prosecutor-general's office, as well as local and international staff of UN and other international organizations, embassies, and regional and bilateral organizations.

These long-serving associates of the Rakhmon regime from Hissor include Murodali Alimardonov, the chair of the National Bank of Tajikistan since 1994, and Hakim Soliev, minister of Trade and property (1994–2001), minister of finance (2002–2006), and chair of the tax committee (2006 to date).

PFT commander Yakub Salimov was interior minister from 1992 to 1994, but Rakhmon dismissed Salimov in 1995, reportedly concerned with the extent of Salimov's influence within the police force. Salimov was reinstated him as the chair of the customs committee in 1996 but was arrested in February 2004 and sentenced to 15 years in jail after revolting against Rakhmon in 1997.

Based on the 30% quotas for the UTO, UTO would have gained more than 2,000 administrative posts, but only 54 UTO members were appointed to ministries, local governments, and judicial and law-enforcement bodies. See Kabiri (2002).

These contractors were Ministry of Trade, Ministry of Industry, Tajikmatlubot (consumers union for agricultural crops), Glavkhlopkoprom (state committee on cotton industry), the organization for trade and industry, and TADAZ.

Tajkmatlubot was headed by Habib Narzulloev from Kulyab and former PFT field commander (arrested in Moscow in 2006 on the Tajik government's request but yet to

be extradited due to the lack of evidence against him); TADAZ was controlled by PFT commander Ibod Boimatov; and Glavkhlopkoprom was headed by Ghulom Boyakov from Kulyab and former PFT field commander (his deputy Hikmat Odinayev also a PFT commander).

Data from www.worldbank.org. Tajikistan: projects and programs (accessed 16 November 2007)

Data from www.worldbank.org. Tajikistan: projects and programs (accessed 16 November 2007)

These included Davlat Usmon, dismissed from the post of minister of economy in 2000, a year after he ran against Rakhmon in the 1999 presidential election; Fayziddin Imomov, one of the UTO delegates to the Commission on National Reconciliation established by the 1997 peace agreement, dismissed as chair of the Qomsangir district, Khatlon, in 2001; and Shodi Kadirov, dismissed from the post of agriculture minister in 2001.

Interview in Dushanbe, January 2007.

Data from www.worldbank.org. Tajikistan: projects and programs (accessed 16 November 2007).

Interview with an expert consulting a donor organization in Dushanbe, February 2007.

Interview in Dushanbe, March 2007.

Due to debts accumulating in the cotton industry, AgroInvest was reorganized in 2003 between two separate entities, AgroInvest and the non-bank joint-stock company, Kredit-Invest. The restructured and recapitalized AgroInvest is still the largest bank in the country, with assets of US$70 million accounting for 38% of all assets.

Interview with a representative of international financial institutions in Dushanbe, March 2007.

Interview with a western embassy staff member in Dushanbe March 2007. Although there are almost no public and written accounts of the financial amnesty, according to a senior staff member of the tax committee, it was granted by a presidential decree with a view to legalizing money made illegally for the duration of one year (some say it was extended for another year). This tax committee official estimates that only 20% of

illegal capital was registered, due to the lack of confidence in the banking system (‘only those who had negotiated with banks and obtained the guarantee that their assets would not be seized upon registration came forward. Others kept money overseas’). Interview in Dushanbe, April 2007.

Interview with a local journalist, Kurgan-Tube, March 2007.

Meanwhile, the IMF announced in March 2008 that the Tajik government and the NBT had defaulted on their IMF loan agreements, as a result of which at least US$79 million went missing from a loan for poverty reduction. In addition, the ADB and other multilateral lenders to Tajikistan have reportedly opened separate investigations, looking for US$500 million in loans intended to revitalize the cotton sector.

Interview in Dushanbe, February 2007.

Interview in Dushanbe, January 2007.

For instance, in January 2003, he was apprehended in Dushanbe, released the same day, but detained the following day, only to be released shortly thereafter.

Interview in Dushanbe, January 2007.

These include PFT revolts in 1996 and 1997, former army commander Khudoiberdiev's attack on Khujand in 1998, the 1999 and 2000 incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan from its base in Tajikistan into Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and armed clashes between the government and rebellious UTO elements in 2000 and 2001.

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