

MAY 2015



#24

BISHKEK

ETHNIC MINORITIES'  
POLITICAL  
MOBILIZATION:  
CASES OF UZBEKS  
AND PAMIRIS. FROM  
THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR  
TO THE 2012/2014  
KHOROG EVENTS

**Azizzhon Berdykulov**

Azizzhon Berdykulov is an alumnus of the OSCE Academy MA Politics and Security, class of 2013. Azizzhon's research interests include ethnic minorities, democratization issues, elections, international development and regional integration. He is currently working as the Programme Assistant on the Good Governance and Anti-Corruption issues with the OSCE Office in Tajikistan. He can be reached via [azizberdickulov@gmail.com](mailto:azizberdickulov@gmail.com).



## KEY POINTS

- Due to the weak nation-building process in Tajikistan, the continuous civil war, the inadequate national and minority policies, the Tajik society is fragmented along ethno-regional lines. This fragmentation is a heritage of the civil war – a historical event, which mobilized different groups of Tajikistan along different identities, and ethnicity was one of them.
- Numerous and complex factors caused the Tajik Civil War (1992-97) , along which ethnicity played a crucial role between rivaling parties. Uzbeks and Pamiris acted differently. Uzbeks in Tajikistan are not so united as Pamiris, and political affiliation of them resulted in different undertakings. While some parts of Uzbek groups during the civil war fled abroad or internally, others allegedly received military equipment from Uzbekistan and joined the so-called “People’s Front”. Pamiris undertook more unified actions, very much because of the institutionalized Pamiri-led movement of “La’li Badakhshon”.
- The civil war has contributed to the unification and further consolidation of the Pamiri group. This group was the one attempting to challenge Tajikistan’s territorial unity by demanding the establishment of an autonomous republic. Further, the “special military operation” or so-called “Khorog Events” taking place during the summer of 2012 acted as external stimulus for the Pamiris’ political mobilization. 2014 marked civic meetings counting several hundred participants followed by skirmishes in town initiated to detain drug-smugglers, according to the state.



# INTRODUCTION

As far as territory, Tajikistan is the smallest country of Central Asia, which has stepped on its path of independence and gone through a long civil war (1992-1997). The Tajik civil war has jeopardized ethnic relations in the country and combined rivalries based on different ideologies and political motives too. The so-called “Khorog events” which took place in the administrative centre of the Badakhshan autonomous region weakened the relatively fragile peaceful relations established between Dushanbe and Pamir after the civil war. This brief attempts to research on ethnic components of the civil war and the 2012 Khorog events, which contributed to the political mobilization of ethnic minorities. Ethnic groups chosen for this study are Uzbeks and Pamiris residing in Tajikistan.

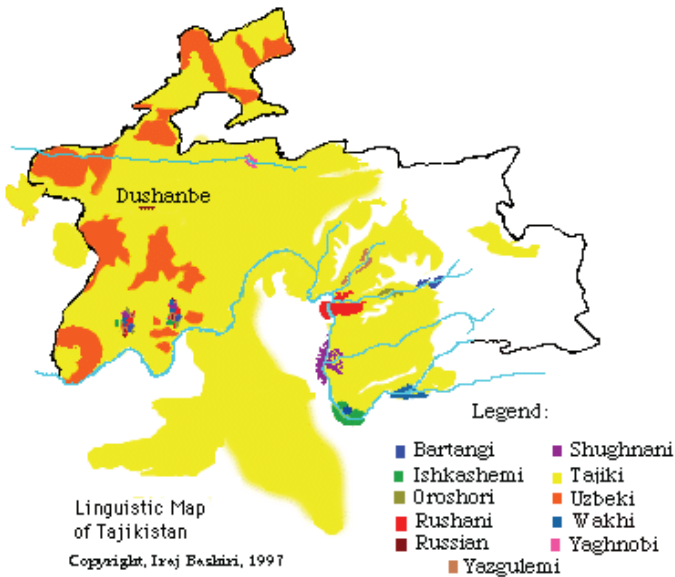
Mobilization can be defined in different terms. While Vermeersch describes mobilization as “the process whereby political actors encourage people to participate in some form of political action,”<sup>1</sup> it takes a group’s ability to act, its motivations and collective identity to further mobilize. Therefore, this brief will argue that during the Tajik civil war several factors contributed to the mobilization of ethnic Uzbeks and Pamiris. These factors are: post-conflict relations/tensions, discriminatory policies/formations/institutions, and support from a kin-state to a minority group. In case of Pamiris, there is no kin-state, but so-called spiritual and political leader, a kin-leader, Aga Khan exercises a vast influence over the Pamiri ethnic group. Later, almost after 20 years similar factors mobilized Pamiris during the Khorog events.

---

1 Peter Vermeersch, “Theories of ethnic mobilization: overview and recent trends,” Centre for Research on Peace and Development (CRPD) Working Paper, no. 3 (2011): 1.

# UZBEKS AND PAMIRIS – BRIEF BACKGROUND

Uzbeks constitute the biggest ethnic minority group in Tajikistan. One can relate this to the proximity of a kin state, Uzbekistan, and to the territorial delimitation of the Soviet dawn. During the state census Uzbeks in Tajikistan were divided artificially into several ethnicities and each of them was labeled as a separate group, while the Tajik ethnicity remained solid and Pamiris were not singled out into a separate ethnic group. The Uzbek population in Tajikistan equaled to 22.9% of the total population in Tajikistan, in 1989 – 23.5%, and in 2000 it was 15.3%<sup>2</sup>. However, some Uzbeks change their ethnicity in passport seeking for better life and job or have moved to Uzbekistan and other countries. Uzbeks occupy different parts of Tajikistan but mostly reside in the Sughd region (which is closest to Uzbekistan), Khatlon



Picture 1. Linguistic Map of Tajikistan

2 Olivier Ferrando, "Manipulating the Census: Ethnic Minorities in the Nationalizing States of Central Asia," Nationalities Papers, no. 3: 36 (2008), 496-497.

(Kurgan-Tyube, Pyanj), and in the districts of the Republican subordination (Tursunzade).

Uzbeks speak Uzbek language with some dialects and profess Sunni Islam. Proximity of cultural and religious affiliations positively contributed to the relations between Uzbeks and Tajiks. Mixed marriages between these ethnic groups also seem to be a common practice. Under Soviet rule, Uzbeks and Tajiks co-existed in a relatively peaceful and cooperative environment with some clashes and tensions over resources, water or land distribution. Ethnic belonging and regional identity sharpened enough to mobilize ethno-regional groups during the civil war.

Pamiris are the smallest minority group in Tajikistan of 206,000 people living in its biggest administrative region.<sup>3</sup> Although, officially Pamiris do not constitute an ethnic minority group, Pamiris do not regard themselves as Tajiks. However, Pamiris speak different language, the Southeastern branch of the Iranian language family, Tajik is used in schools, media, and legislation, as Pamiri languages do not have script. Pamiris also differ by their religious affiliation – unlike a majority of Tajiks, Pamiris profess Nizari Ismailism, a flow in Shi’a Islam. Territorial remoteness of Badakhshan played an important role in preserving religious, linguistic, and cultural distinctiveness of Pamiris. Unlike Uzbeks, Pamiris played a considerable role during the civil war and territory of Badakhshan was a battle field as well during the conflict. The civil war affected the consolidation of Pamiri groups and their political mobilization. Another historical event influencing over “Centre-Pamir” relations were the 2012 Khorog events, which were followed by more recent unrests in 2014 resulting in 3 deaths and mass demonstrations of the local population.

---

3 “On the Preliminary Results of State Census,” Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan; <[http://stat.tj/ru/img/689970f6c49dc744ad4bb1001f96a5b0\\_1306734923.pdf](http://stat.tj/ru/img/689970f6c49dc744ad4bb1001f96a5b0_1306734923.pdf)> (Accessed March 22, 2015): 1.

## THE TAJIK CIVIL WAR – ETHNIC IN NATURE?

Numerous studies tried to investigate the causes of the Tajik civil war. First, the economic situation in Tajikistan and overall in the Soviet Union in the end of the 1980s suffered from a breakdown. Scarce resources, economic stagnation, and crop shortages could not maintain Tajikistan's growing population. People were in stress and this was only inflamed by rumors that Armenian refugees who fled from Azerbaijan would be given apartments in Dushanbe. Those waiting for housing for several decades rapidly mobilized and on 11 February 1990 people chanting "Armenians, go away!" gathered in front of the Central Committee of Communist Party.

Second, different ideologies that were suppressed by Soviet rule started to obtain their supporters and followers with perestroika. Underground movements did not want to hide and therefore rose. The religious movement of the Islamic Revival Party together with the "Rastohez" movement and the Democratic Party established a conglomerate of opposition anti-communist forces. Pamiri-led "La'li Badakhshon" also became prominent on the political arena lobbying for Badakhshan's interests and naturally, Pamiris re-aligned themselves with this movement. Promising regime change, stability and prosperous life, these movements targeted different population groups and each enjoyed support in particular regions.

Ethnicity has become a strong tool for the activation and mobilization of certain groups. As one interviewee mentioned, it was not religion but ethnicity which was used as a source for consolidation and further mobilization.<sup>4</sup> Several factors try to explain why ethnicity and ethnic groups had gained so much importance and served as driving force during the conflict. Some appeal to the fact that Tajikistan has not gone through the entire process of the feudal system's decomposition which

---

4 Interview with Ms Ulfat Mamadshoeva, Independent Journalist. Dushanbe, February 13, 2015.

has affected the ethnic mind-set of the population as well as of those who governed. Others were using “natural”, “cultural” factors, while one of the most popular approaches says that incomplete ethnic consolidation in Tajikistan is due to the state’s natural and geographic conditions, including mountainous landscape that has isolated population groups from each other and they thus evolved independently.<sup>5</sup> All these factors imply that there was no national self-consciousness in Tajikistan. Ethnic groups, located and isolated in different parts of the state, had not demonstrated strongly defined intentions for integration or consolidation for the sake of state unity.

Noteworthy is the continuous issue on Samarqand and Bukhara. These ancient cities have been prominent sources for Tajik self-identity and then been given to Uzbekistan during the Soviet border delimitation. Consequently, the Tajik people who used to be mostly urban population became rural because the system uniting them under a single ethno-cultural community was no longer available. Blakkisrud and Nozimova even call the transfer of Samarqand and Bukhara to Uzbekistan “the national trauma”.<sup>6</sup>

There is an interesting version explaining the role and participation of Uzbeks in the Tajik civil war which assumes that the civil war was nothing else but the continuation of the confrontation happening between Turkic and Persian nations or, putting in the more modern term, among Uzbeks and Tajiks. Uzbekistan did not want Tajikistan to strengthen its statehood because it was afraid that if the nation-state of Tajikistan will get stronger, the Tajik population of Uzbekistan (which counts up to 40%) will get mobilized and act against forced assimilation or even demand for autonomy.<sup>7</sup> Contrary to this statement that Uzbeki-

---

5 Sergey Abashin, “Regionalism in Tajikistan: Establishment of the Ethnic Language” (Regionalism v Tadjikistane: Stanovlenie ‘Etnicheskogo Yazyka’), (Regionalism v Tadjikistane: Stanovlenie ‘Etnicheskogo Yazyka’), Tsentr Nezavisimykh Sotsiologicheskikh Issledovaniy; <[www.indep-socres.spb.ru/library/abashin.doc](http://www.indep-socres.spb.ru/library/abashin.doc)> (Accessed February 12, 2015).

6 Helge Blakkisrud and Shahnoza Nozimova, “History Writing and Nation Building in Post-Independence Tajikistan,” *Nationalities Papers* 38, no. 2 (2012): 180.

7 Abashin, *supra* n. 5.



stan was never willing to have a neighbor state experiencing unrests with the arrival of Islamic or radicalized forces. What Uzbekistan feared is that Dushanbe, due to the rise of national and patriotic attitudes, would claim for ownership of Bukhara and Samargand.<sup>8</sup> A spillover effect of the Islamic mobilization could have triggered residents of Uzbekistan and particularly those in the Fergana Valley. This falls in line with actions of the Uzbek government allegedly supplying the Supreme Council of Tajikistan by arms, thus, consequently confronting with Islamists and newly emerging “democrats”.<sup>9</sup>

Ethnicity became intertwined with territorial belonging (along with other identities such as religion, appearance, or language), and a new ethno-territorial identity pattern emerged. Ethno-territorial identities were instrumental in defining “self” and “other” during the conflict.<sup>10</sup>

Promotion of Uzbek interests would not be possible without external support and that was what Uzbekistan has been blamed of providing. A possibility of Uzbeks’ interests in Tajikistan that allegedly have been threatened by the Kulyabi clan could have served as a mobilizing factor.<sup>11</sup> Those interests supposedly have come from a big part of the Uzbek population residing in the Northern part of Tajikistan and were supported by Uzbekistan and, consequently, almost each opposition movement of that region has been considered as intriguers of Uzbekistan.<sup>12</sup> Not only has the North been the focal point of concerns. One of the Turkic groups – Laqais – were blamed for attempts of “de-tajikizing of the Southern parts of Tajikistan.”<sup>13</sup> Laqais even have conducted several demonstrations claiming for formation

---

8 Mehrali Toshmuhammadov, “Grazhdanskaya voyna v Tadjikistane i postkonfliktnoe vosstanovlenie,” *Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: Meso-Areas and Globalization*, 10; <[http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/pdf\\_seminar/040607tasmuhammadov.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/pdf_seminar/040607tasmuhammadov.pdf)> (Accessed February 17, 2015): 7.

9 Interview with Mr Parviz Mulloджanov, Political Scientist and Analyst, Dushanbe, February 10, 2015.

10 Blakkisrud and Nozimova, *supra* n. 6, 175.

11 Abashin, *supra* n. 5.

12 *Ibid.*

13 *Ibid.*

of autonomous Laqaistan within the Kurgan-Tyube district.<sup>14</sup>

The Northern part of Tajikistan, the Sughd region experiences geographical and cultural proximity with Uzbekistan, and a big amount of Uzbeks reside on these territories. Soviet Tashkent supported a promotion of the whole list of high-ranking politicians that had Uzbek origins – Abdullajanov, Turaev, Khudoyberdiyev, and Rakhmov Nabiev – Tajikistan’s first president.<sup>15</sup> All these factors were seen as catalysts during the Civil War sharpening ethnic identities and serving as sources for confrontation and violence between rival groups.

Parviz MULLODJANOV, a well-known Tajik political scientist and researcher, stresses that there have been internal factors which exacerbated ethnic affiliations during the conflict of the 1990s.<sup>16</sup> Deep and old reasons – having conflict relations in the past – originated in the 1960s contributed to the evolution of the civil war – the policy of resettlement that led to numerous clashes and tensions between different ethnic groups in Tajikistan.<sup>17</sup> For example, in Kurgan-Tyube, one of the biggest cities of the Khatlon region, the consolidation of the Uzbek population has happened due to the clashes over water, resources, and high-ranking positions in mosques and state bodies with resettled population from Garm and Pamir. Simultaneously, intra-Uzbek groups started to distinguish themselves, as it usually happens to newly emerged or arrived communities, and pursued their own group-centered interests. There have been several armed clashes between Uzbeks and Garmis during the conflict for different reasons. MULLODJANOV explains that these clashes have been provoked by struggle over positions in mosques where Uzbeks have been driven out from.<sup>18</sup> Bushkov and Mikulskiy argue that Uzbek men raping local women served as initial rea-

---

14 MULLODJANOV, supra n. 9

15 ABASHIN, supra n. 5.

16 MULLODJANOV, supra n. 9.

17 Ibid.

18 Ibid.

son for clashes.<sup>19</sup> Unlike those in the North, Uzbeks from the southern part of Tajikistan experienced conflict in a more direct way, also participating in some clashes and fights.

Uzbeks, heavily populating northern Tajikistan, did not take part in the conflict, despite the assumptions that proximity of the kin-state of Uzbekistan would contribute to their mobilization and participation in the war. For Uzbeks, along with Tajik residents of the Sughd region, participation in the conflict would very much undermine their economic benefits, infrastructure, and industry they have been enjoying during the Soviet rule. A relatively isolated territorial disposition of the Sughd oblast only contributed to the exclusion of the North from the conflict. For Northern Uzbeks it appeared much easier to adapt to the post-conflict conditions as they used to not rely on the centre and its provisions before the conflict.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, mobilization of Uzbeks is not totally “classical”. The kin-state of Uzbekistan supported Uzbek military groups in Tajikistan for a favor of secular regime and not to overthrow the whole country’s rule. Those mobilized Uzbek groups confronted not with Tajiks, but with those whose policies and ideologies they found incompatible with theirs – basically, in the South where there was an open existential threat. Northern Uzbeks remained relatively indifferent to the conflict and supported incumbent President Emomali Rahmon for the sake of economic stability and preservation of economic status quo. In addition, Uzbeks in Tajikistan had no leaders who could have united and consolidated them and support to voice their sentiments and demands.

Pamiris, unlike Uzbeks, took more active part in the conflict. Saifari Kenjaev, the Supreme Council’s speaker, on the meeting of the Presidium of the Supreme Council of Tajikistan broadcast-

---

19 V. Bushkov and D. Mikulskiy, “Anatomy of the Civil War in Tajikistan” (Anatomiya Grazhdanskoy Voyny v Tadjikistane), CA&CC Press; <[http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/st\\_08\\_bush\\_9.shtml](http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/st_08_bush_9.shtml)> (Accessed February 11, 2015).

20 Christian Bleuer, *Uzbeks Versus the Center: Mobilization as an Ethnic Minority in the Tajikistan and Afghanistan Civil Wars*. (master thesis, University of Indiana, 2007), 9.

ing live accused Mamadayoz Navdzhuvonov, the Minister of Interior, for abuse of power.<sup>21</sup> Navdzhuvonov was of Pamiri origin, and that accusation has been estimated as discrimination of Pamiris, which has resulted in over 500 people and counting (mostly Pamiris) who gathered in front of the Parliament and demanded for the full parliament resignation.<sup>22</sup> Pamiris featured as “others” for other opposition movements easily because of their origins, Shi’a affiliation, region, language, and traditions.

Located distantly from the center, Pamiris were considerably more united and local leaders there enjoyed support of the population. Unlike Uzbeks, Pamiris did not have a kin state, but Aga Khan, the Ismaili religious leader, supported local Pamir population through its numerous development organizations and networks.

Significant place shall be given to “La’li Badakhshon” – the Pamiri political movement that was active before and during the war. It was established in 1990 with the main goals to promote and protect the interests of Pamiris, power change in Tajikistan, and gaining more independent status for autonomous Badakhshan.<sup>23</sup> As Said Akhmedov put it, it has got more radical and warlike when the informal leader of the movement Khudonazarov has lost the presidential election.<sup>24</sup> Navdzhuvonov, interior minister in 1989-1992 has managed to attract the ministry’s powers and authority to strengthen “La’li Badakhshon” and later has resulted in a relatively powerful armed group of Pamiris within the opposition alliance.<sup>25</sup> This group, for example, has taken part in clashes near Kurgan-Tyube in 1992 and managed to dislodge from Dushanbe the so-called “People’s front” formed and headed by Safarali Kenjaev, who has already lost his position of

---

21 V. Bushkov and D. Mikulskiy, *supra* n. 19.

22 V. Bushkov and D. Mikulskiy, *supra* n. 19.

23 Said Akhmedov, “Conflicts in Tajikistan: Causes and Effects” (Konflikty v Tadzshikistane: Prichiny i Posledstviya), Vrije Universiteit Brussel; <<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/etni-1/akhmedov.htm>> (Accessed January 30, 2015).

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

the Supreme Council's speaker.<sup>26</sup> The position of "La'li Badakhshon" has started weakening when the military troops sent by the XVIth session of the new government in Khujand have arrived to Dushanbe.<sup>27</sup>

Political mobilization of Pamiris did not take much time. One of its expressions was an attempt to adopt the Declaration on the transformation of the Gorno-Badakhshan oblast into an autonomous republic. Particularly, the Declaration on transformation of the GBAO into the Badakhshan Autonomous Republic (BAR) was initiated by the Pamiri Presidium but rejected by the Supreme Council of Tajikistan in Dushanbe in 1992.<sup>28</sup> The Declaration contained several articles that could have undermined the territorial integrity of Tajikistan. For example, article 4 stated that the status and territory of the BAR can be changed only by the population of the region by referendum. Article 2 underlined that the BAR solves its political, economic, and other problems only independently, and that the BAR is free to determine its social order; and, finally, article 6 stressed that if the legislation of the Republic of Tajikistan will contradict to the political, cultural and economic interests of Badakhshan, those will be suspended on the territory of the BAR.<sup>29</sup> The current constitution of Tajikistan states that appointing the chairman and judges of Gorno-Badakhshan are amongst the responsibilities of the president;<sup>30</sup> hence endeavors for greater independence have failed.

The Declaration on the transformation of the GBAO into the Badakhshan Autonomous Republic has been initiated not to secede from Tajikistan, but to strengthen the status of the region while the main intentions of "La'li Badakhshon" have been presented by demanding the opportunity to conduct economic reforms independently from Dushanbe. No established sepa-

---

26 Ibid.

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 "The Declaration on the Transformation of the GBAO into the Autonomous Republic of Badakhshan," Badakhshan, no. 32 (May 1992).

30 Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan, Article 69; <http://www.president.tj/en/taxonomy/term/5/28> (Accessed March 25, 2015).

ratism can be observed at present and that can be explained by the fact that the separate region of Pamir would become vulnerable and poorly protected from the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Signing the Peace Accord in 1997 marked the end of the civil war, which had left a legacy of warlords in Gorno-Badakhshan that enjoyed the support of locals.

## 2012 KHOROG EVENTS

On 22 July 2012, Tajik law enforcement authorities started the assault of Khorog, the administrative centre of Gorno-Badakhshan. This military action followed the assassination of Abdullo Nazarov, a general of the National Committee on National Security. According to the official version, the state was forced to bring troops into town because Tolib Ayombekov, a former civil war warlord and local leader, did not deliver people suspected in Nazarov's murder.<sup>31</sup> Sherali Khairulloev, the minister of defence in 2012, stated that one of the main triggering causes to start a special military operation in Khorog was the fact that several people from the General Prosecutor's Office, including the Deputy Prosecutor General who was also the Military Prosecutor, were kidnapped from the city military registration and enlistment office, where they were stationed for investigation of general Nazarov's assassination.<sup>32</sup> During the Khorog Events, on 22 of August one of the local informal leaders – Imumnazar Imumnazarov – was found killed in his house. As Khairulloev stated, people who killed Imumnazarov were from his own surrounding and this is the reason his relatives and approximates did not want investigation to happen after his

---

31 Ramziya Mirzobekova, "Khorog, 2012: A year after" (Khorog, 2012. God Spustya), News.Tj; <<http://www.asia-plus.tj/ru/node/162907>> (Accessed February 20, 2015).

32 "What Has General Nazarov Been Killed For?" (Za chto Ubili Generala Nazarova?) Avesta.Tj; <<http://www.avesta.tj/government/13360-za-chto-ubili-general-a-nazarova.html>> (Accessed March 23, 2015).

murder.<sup>33</sup> On the contrary, people close to Imumnazarov, believed his assassination was the result of an ordered murder by special security forces.<sup>34</sup>

The mobilization of the population in Khorog was evident and took shape of meetings. The first meeting in Khorog took place on 23 July and gathered around 200 people. Participants of the meeting demanded the withdrawal of troops from Khorog. A so-called "Group 20" was set up to mitigate the conflict and be a focal point between the local population and state authorities. Activists, religious leaders, representatives of NGOs and the Aga Khan networks comprised the group.<sup>35</sup> The second meeting took place on 25 August and followed firing of a car crossing check point. Up to 400 people took part in the meeting. The biggest meeting happened on 22 August and gathered over 5000 people. Protesters blamed state authorities for assassination of Imumnazarov and violation of previous agreements on troops withdrawal.<sup>36</sup> A meeting between the Defence Minister, representatives of the Interior Ministry, and the mayor of Khorog took place after people's protests. Parties signed an agreement and troops left the city.

In addition, events in Khorog vivified social networks and Internet resources. Related forums and groups in social networks were created and used as platforms for discussions and consolidation of activities.<sup>37</sup> If initially concerns have been illustrated in regards to the Khorog Events and gener-

---

33 "Minister of Defense Told 'Asia-Plus' the Details about the Special Operation" (Ministr Oborony Rasskazal 'Azii-Plus' Podrobnosti Spetsoperatsii v Horoge), Fergana; <<http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=19404>> (Accessed March 23, 2015).

34 Ramziya Mirzobekova, "The Death of Imumnazar and a New Meeting" (Smert' Imumnazara i Noviy Miting), News.Tj; <<http://news.tj/ru/news/khorog-smert-imumnazara-i-novyi-miting>> (Accessed February 20, 2015).

35 The Civic Solidarity Platform, Monitoring of Observance of Human Rights in Connection with the Special Operation Conducted on 24 July 2012 in Khorog, Tajikistan (Dushanbe, 2013), 10.

36 Ramziya Mirzobekova, supra n. 34.

37 See <https://www.facebook.com/groups/473467116019162/>;  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/321227944638873/?fref=ts>

ally by the Internet users with Pamiri origins, later the number of users included not only Badakhshanis but people who considered themselves as opposition representatives.<sup>38</sup> The situation relatively calmed down in Khorog when Aga Khan asked the population not to exacerbate the status quo but support stabilization. The Aga Khan Foundation, through its numerous projects and established institutions in the regions enjoys major credit of trust and had influenced over a mitigation of the conflict.

While the official version explained that events in Khorog took place as a result of an operation to eliminate illegal armed troops that tried to threaten stability and territorial integrity, others [journalists, locals] were sure that the whole operation was set up to get rid of former warlords.<sup>39</sup> These warlords enjoyed great support of the local population and played the role of informal leaders.

The ethnic group of Pamiris who had never shown strong support for Dushanbe proved it can get easily mobilized once their territory and population are threatened. Assassination of one informal leader and arrest of others demonstrated that the people of Pamir can mobilize and express their political will, and the theme of the recent civil war and its horrors, well-exploited by the state authorities, cannot do much to demobilize.

Situation in Gorno-Badakhshan escalated recently in 2014, when a special operation took place to detain and prosecute local residents, who the state believed were involved in drug-trafficking. As a result of this, on 21 May a clash took place between residents of Khorog (mostly youth) and militia. A civilian has been shot, six people got injured and later two of them died in the hospital. The department of Interior, the regional court, and the prosecutor's office were burnt down.<sup>40</sup> Similar to events in Khorog in 2012, interpretations

---

38 Ibid.

39 Ramziya Mirzobekova, *supra* n. 31.

40 "Agreement on Non-Disclosure Adopted in Khorog" (V Khoroge Zaklyucheno Soglashenie o Molchanii), *Nezavisimoe Mnenie*; <<http://nm.tj/incident/21354-v-horoge-zaklyucheno-soglashenie-o-molchanii.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).



for those in 2014 are contradictory and opposing. According to the official version, local militiamen tried to stop the car with people they suspected for drug-trafficking but passengers of the car opened fire on them.<sup>41</sup> On the contrary, civic witnesses confessed that militia started shooting on the car when it got stopped.<sup>42</sup> Following this, on the night of 23 May one person was shot dead and two injured as the result of, according to official sources, armed attack on the State Committee of National Security local department building.<sup>43</sup>

After that, a meeting of the local population took place and participants demanded to release those detained for the events on 21 and 23 May. Free and fair investigation of the May cases and setting up a joint commission to support objective investigation were amongst the requirements meeting participants asked for. As a result, the commission was formed and consisted of state and civil society representatives, which still did not publish results.<sup>44</sup> The mobilization pattern of the 2014 events in Khorog is relatively comparable to the one of 2012: it took law enforcement agencies' intervention and civilian victims to get the population mobilized, united, and presenting specific demands. The most illustrative difference of Khorog events in 2014 is the involvement of high-level state officials. Thus, the Prosecutor General of that time Sherkhon Salimzoda along with the Head of the Council of Justice Zafar Azizov travelled to Khorog to hold a meeting with local population to assure

---

41 "Investigation Started in Khorog on 'Black Jeep' Case" (V Khoroge Nachalos Rassledovanie po Delu o Chyornom Dzhipe), Nezavisimoe Mnenie; <<http://nm.tj/incident/21280-horog-nachalos-rassledovanie-po-delu-ochernom-dzhipe.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).

42 "Is Khorog Quiet?" (V Khoroge Vsyo Spokoyno?), Nezavisimoe Mnenie; <<http://nm.tj/society/21506-v-horoge-vse-spokoyno.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).

43 "Burnt Buildings of the Court and Prosecutor's Office in May in Khorog are Already Reconstructed" (Sgorevshie v Maye v Khoroge Zdaniya Suda i Prokuratury uzhe Vosstanovleny), News.Tj; <<http://news.tj/ru/news/sgorevshie-v-mae-v-khoroge-zdaniya-suda-i-prokuratury-uzhe-vosstanovleny>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).

44 "Is Khorog Quiet?" *Supra* n. 42.

them an objective investigation. After that, in December the Prosecutor General of Gorno-Badakhshan was replaced and a new Prosecutor was appointed.<sup>45</sup>

The rationale behind that can be explained by the notion that the state does not want to have the situation in Pamir to escalate, especially when it smoothed down a little after the events in 2012, neither it wants separatist attitudes to form in faraway Badakhshan. Whenever unrests happen, the state tries to recover and gain trust by showing greater involvement in the processes of investigation and prosecution.

---

45 “Former Prosecutor of Kulyab Headed the Office in Khorog” (Eks Prokuror Kulyaba Vozglavil Prokuraturu Khoroga), News.Tj; <<http://news.tj/ru/news/eks-prokuror-kulyaba-vozglavil-prokuraturu-khoroga>> (Accessed March 25, 2015).

## CONCLUSIONS /RECOMMENDATIONS

- The role of the informal leaders of ethnic minorities can be used in more effective way. These leaders can act as focal points between the local population and the state and support the implementation of social policies. If provided proper training, informal leaders could act as sources of legal norms and regulations, help in settling conflicts, and support the development of concrete neighborhoods.
- The political representation of minorities is crucial for a fully functioning democratic society. Minority representatives find it hard to run for elections; high-ranking positions and vacancies are unreachable for minorities as well. Therefore, legal reforms regulating certain quotas and providing guarantees for ethnic minorities for political representation (with adequate requirements) can considerably improve conditions and build trust between the state and the minorities.
- It is necessary to elaborate a national strategy and/or policy for the development of minorities. Such strategies will cover education in native languages, support of culture and traditions, religious freedom, and state policy on peaceful and non-discriminatory integration of minorities. Moreover, fair treatment of ethnic minorities can play a positive role in the facilitation of bilateral relations between Tajikistan and the kin-state of Uzbekistan, for example.
- Fair, free and open investigation of causes and proceedings during the Khorog events in 2012 can help the population to restore the trust in state institutions. The results of these investigations should be made public and those who suffered should be granted appropriate compensation.

- In case of Gorno-Badakhshan, greater autonomy in terms of economic, social, and political self-identification can ventilate concerns left after the Khorog events. It does not mean giving up on the region but letting it decide on its future ways of development.
- Cultural diversity of ethnic minorities can play efficient role in promoting multi-ethnic society and trust-building. For example, any day of the year can be officially called ethnic minorities day, where all minorities residing in the country can demonstrate their culture, cuisine, fashion, and history on fairs and contests.
- Hardly any international organization working in Tajikistan makes ethnic minorities and their issues a focus of its work. Such organizations usually possess institutional memories of best practices and international lessons learned in settling ethnic tensions and on effective integration along with the elaboration of policy directions on ethnic matters. Thus, international organizations can become a source for fruitful development of ethnicity-oriented policies, given the trust and continuous working experience obtained from the host government.

## REFERENCES

1. Abashin, Sergey. "Regionalism in Tajikistan: Establishment of the Ethnic Language" (Regionalism v Tadzhiqistane: Stanovlenie 'Etnicheskogo Yazyka'). Tsentr Nezavisimykh Sotsiologicheskikh Issledovaniy. <[www.indepsocres.spb.ru/library/abashin.doc](http://www.indepsocres.spb.ru/library/abashin.doc)> (Accessed February 12, 2015).
2. "Agreement on Non-Disclosure Adopted in Khorog" (V Khoroge Zaklyucheno Soglashenie o Molchanii). Nezavisimoe Mnenie. <<http://nm.tj/incident/21354-v-horoge-zaklyucheno-soglashenie-o-molchanii.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).
3. Akhmedov, Said. "Konflikty v Tadzhiqistane: Prichiny i Posledstviya." Vrije Universiteit Brussel. <<http://poli.vub.ac.be/publi/etni-1/akhmedov.htm>> (Accessed January 30, 2015).
4. Blakkisrud, Helge and Nozimova, Shahnoza. "History Writing and Nation Building in Post-independence Tajikistan." Nationalities Papers 38, no. 2 (2012): 172-189.
5. Bleuer, Christian. Uzbeks Versus the Center: Mobilization as an ethnic minority in the Tajikistan and Afghanistan Civil Wars. (Master Thesis, University of Indiana, 2007).
6. "Burnt Buildings of the Court and Prosecutor's Office in May in Khorog are Already Reconstructed" (Sgorevshie v Maye v Khoroge Zdaniya Suda i Prokuratury uzhe Vosstanovleny). News.Tj. <<http://news.tj/ru/news/sgorevshie-v-mae-v-khoroge-zdaniya-suda-i-prokuratury-uzhe-vosstanovleny>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).

7. Bushkov, V., and D. Mikulskiy, "Anatomiya Grazhdanskoy Voyny v Tadjikistane." ("The Anatomy of the Civil War in Tajikistan") CA&CC Press. <[http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/st\\_08\\_bush\\_9.shtml](http://www.ca-c.org/datarus/st_08_bush_9.shtml)> (Accessed February 11, 2015).
8. Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan. President of the Republic of Tajikistan. <<http://www.president.tj/en/taxonomy/term/5/28>> (Accessed March 25, 2015).
9. Ferrando, Olivier. "Manipulating the Census: Ethnic Minorities in the Nationalizing States of Central Asia." Nationalities Papers, no. 3: 36 (2008): 489-520.
10. "Former Prosecutor of Kulyab Headed the Office in Khorog" (Eks Prokuror Kulyaba Vozglavil Prokuraturu Khoroga). News.Tj. <<http://news.tj/ru/news/eks-prokuror-kulyaba-vozglavil-prokuraturu-khoroga>> (Accessed March 25, 2015).
11. "Is Khorog Quiet?" (V Khoroge Vsyo Spokoino?), Nezavisimoe Mnenie; <<http://nm.tj/society/21506-v-horoge-vse-spokoino.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).
12. "Investigation Started in Khorog on 'Black Jeep' Case" (V Khoroge Nachalos Rassledovanie po Delu o Chyornom Dzhipe). Nezavisimoe Mnenie. <<http://nm.tj/incident/21280-horog-nachalos-rassledovanie-po-delu-o-chernom-dzhipe.html>> (Accessed March 21, 2015).
13. "Minister of Defence told 'Asia-Plus' the Details about the Special Operation" (Ministr Oborony Rasskazal 'Azii-Plus' Podrobnosti Spetsoperatsii v Horoge). Fergana. <<http://www.fergananews.com/news.php?id=19404>> (Accessed March 23, 2015).

14. Mirzobekova, Ramziya. "Khorog, 2012: A year after" (Khorog, 2012. God Spustya). News.Tj. <<http://www.asia-plus.tj/ru/node/162907>> (Accessed February 20, 2015).
15. Mirzobekova, Ramziya. "The Death of Imumnazar and a New Meeting" (Smert' Imumnazara i Noviy Miting). News.Tj. <<http://news.tj/ru/news/khorog-smertimumnazara-i-novyi-miting>> (Accessed February 20, 2015).
16. "On the Preliminary Results of State Census," Statistical Agency under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan. <[http://stat.tj/ru/img/689970f6c49dc744ad4bb1001f96a5b0\\_1306734923.pdf](http://stat.tj/ru/img/689970f6c49dc744ad4bb1001f96a5b0_1306734923.pdf)> (Accessed March 22, 2015).
17. The Civic Solidarity Platform, Monitoring of Observance of Human Rights in Connection with the Special Operation Conducted on 24 July 2012 in Khorog, Tajikistan (Dushanbe, 2013).
18. "The Declaration on Transformation of the GBAO into the Autonomous Republic of Badakhshan." Badakhshan, May no. 32, 1992.
19. Toshmuhammadov, Mehrali. "Grazhdanskaya Voyna v Tadzhikestane i Postkonfliktnoe Vosstanovlenie." Making a Discipline of Slavic Eurasian Studies: Meso-Areas and Globalization. <[http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/pdf\\_seminar/040607tasmuhammadov.pdf](http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/pdf_seminar/040607tasmuhammadov.pdf)> (Accessed on February 17, 2015).
20. Vermeersch, Peter. "Theories of Ethnic Mobilization: Overview and Recent Trends." Centre for Research on Peace and Development (CRPD) Working Paper, no. 3 (2011).

21. "What Has General Nazarov Been Killed For?" (Za chto Ubili Generala Nazarova?) Avesta.Tj. <<http://www.avesta.tj/government/13360-za-chto-ubili-general-a-nazarova.html>> (Accessed March 23, 2015).

#### List of interviews

1. Interview with Ms Ulfat Mamadshoeva, Independent Journalist. Dushanbe, February 13, 2015.
2. Interview with Mr Parviz Mullodjanov, Political Scientist and Analyst. Dushanbe, February 10, 2015.

#### List of Figures

1. Linguistic Map of Tajikistan