

TRANSFORMING SOCIAL IDENTITIES AND THEIR ROLE IN THE PREVENTION OF
FUTURE CONFLICT: AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF POST-CONFLICT TAJIKISTAN

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ABSTRACT: Social Identity Theory suggests that negative intergroup relations are a possible side-effect of changing social identities. Today, religious identity and ethnonationalist identity gain importance in many countries. These two types of identity have been found to ambivalently affect society. With post-conflict Tajikistan as a case, this study explores how religious and ethnonationalist identity influence dynamics of peace and conflict. Telephone interviews with peacebuilding experts in Tajikistan showed both identities are indeed of increasing importance in Tajik society; at the same time, they do not seem to constitute main conflict-inducing elements. Realistic Conflict Theory is suggested as a more refined approach to the issue; mediator variables and their relation to identity and conflict dynamics are discussed beyond the example of Tajikistan.

DEĞİŞMEKTE OLAN TOPLUMSAL KİMLİKLERİN OLASI ÇATIŞMALARIN
ÖNLENMESİNDEKİ ROLÜ: İÇ SAVAŞ SONRASI TACİKİSTAN

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ANAHTAR KELİMELERİ: Toplumsal Kimlik, Tacikistan, Post-sovyet, Peacebuilding,
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ÖZET: Toplumsal Kimlik Teorisi [Social Identity Theory]; olumsuz gruplararası ilişkilerin, değişmekte olan toplumsal kimliklerin olası bir yan etkisi olabileceğini öne sürmektedir. Bugün birçok ülkede önem kazanan dinsel ve etnik-milliyetçi kimliklerin, bir toplum üzerinde hem olumlu hem olumsuz etkiler yarattığı görülmektedir. İç savaş sonrası Tacikistan'ı ele alan bu araştırma; dinsel ve etnik-milliyetçi kimliklerin, barış ile çatışma arasındaki dinamikleri nasıl etkilediğini incelemektedir. "Peacebuilding" uzmanlarıyla sürdürülen telefon röportajların ortaya koyduğu üzere, bu kimliklerin her ikisi de Tacik toplumunda gittikçe önem kazanmakla beraber, çatışmayı asıl teşvik eden unsurları temsil etmemektedir. Elinizdeki bu eser, Gerçekçi Çatışma Teorisi'nin [Realistic Conflict Theory] bu meseleye daha uygun ve ayrıntılı bir yaklaşım olduğunu öne sürerek, aracı değişkenleri ve bunların kimlikler ve çatışma dinamikleriyle ilişkisini de -Tacikistan örneği dışında da- incelemektedir.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent Nations
CNR	Commission on National Reconciliation
GNR	Government of National Reconciliation
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IRP	Islamic Renaissance Party
PDP	People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan
PFT	Popular Front of Tajikistan
SSR	Socialist Soviet Republic
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNTOP	United Nations Observer Mission to Tajikistan
UTO	United Tajik Opposition
YDC	Youth of Dushanbe City
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization

1. INTRODUCTION

The insistence, if only implicitly, on a choiceless singularity of human identity not only diminishes us all, it also makes the world much more flammable. (...) Our shared humanity gets savagely challenged when our differences are narrowed into one devised system of uniquely powerful categorization.

– Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence*¹

The most bloody and violent conflicts today and in the past were fought when the antagonists shared fierce hatred of one another. Certainly, while conflicting material interests and disagreements over a number of issues sometimes lead to conflict, any rational cost-benefit approach would fail to explain the sheer brutality of wars and the readiness of one group to fight another to death in the process.

This MA dissertation deals with the relationship between social identities and the potential for violent conflict. Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1982; Tajfel & Turner, 1986) suggests that classification of people's identity into dichotomous groups will lead to a negative relation between the groups. Even in cases when more advantageous paths of interaction for both groups are apparent, i.e. an opportunity to achieve a win-win outcome, we can expect discriminatory intergroup behavior to occur with higher likelihood, i.e. a win-lose or lose-lose outcome.

More specifically, I will be looking at two different types of social identity and how they are thought to impact peace and conflict dynamics. These are national identity and religious identity. Both forms of social identity have been seen as a possible source of a unifying kind of identity. Especially in processes of post-conflict peacebuilding, the

¹ Quote taken from Sen (2006, p. 16)

two identities play a positive role. Religion adds value to reconciliation and forgiveness; nationalism may aid unity and foster a future-oriented outlook.

At the same time, both social identities have a more ambivalent face. Ethnically rooted nationalism has caused many bloody civil wars with millions of refugees, ethnic cleansing and sometimes genocide as its consequence. Religion is also known for its destructive potential in having inspired people to wage wars throughout times and commit acts of terrorism. Social Identity Theory suggests that the negative consequences of this ambivalent nature would tend to prevail. Certainly, intergroup discriminatory behavior will not lead to violence directly, but problematic intergroup relations can be expected nonetheless. Disputes can be settled and conflicts can be solved by means of deliberation, negotiation and finding agreements. In this sense, conflict can be seen as a normal part of social and political life.

For the purpose of studying the relationship between social identity and conflict, Tajikistan is a particularly interesting case. As all post-Soviet societies, the Tajik society is still undergoing the process of social transformation towards different social identities. In the case of Tajikistan, this identity formation process has to be understood by also taking into consideration the experience of the civil war (1992-1997).

Today, Tajikistan sees a strong increase of Muslim religiosity amongst the average people and the promotion of a common ethnonationalist Tajik identity by the incumbent government. At the same time, following ten years of intensive peacebuilding and foreign aid, both the further consolidation of peace and improvement of the economy are necessary.

This dissertation deals with both social identities in Tajikistan, religious and national identity, and looks at their ambivalent potential in influencing processes of peace and conflict. My research is exploratory, and – as the nature of investigating future conflict and its prevention demands – highly speculative. Representatives of locally active NGOs and IGOs are interviewed and asked for their expert judgments. Given that future intergroup conflict is to be expected as a side-effect of the social identity reformation, the aim of this research is to investigate in which way religious and ethnonationalist identity could affect dynamics of future conflict in Tajikistan.

The value of this research will be manifold. For one, it will shed light on the nature of the relationship between social identities and future conflict in an applied case. Secondly, this study can inform further research about parameters of prevention of conflict and related early warning systems. Lastly, as an exploratory research study on a case often neglected in the literature on conflict resolution, I hope to provide some insights into the complex, yet informative, development process in a post-accord post-Soviet country.

The end of the Soviet Union has led to the fragmentation of a mighty empire and resulted in the independence of a total of 15 states. Some of these countries, for instance the Baltic States, have a history and an identity as a nation that predates the Soviet era. The Central Asian countries², on the other hand, have newly emerged from the Soviet Union with no prior experience of statehood and therefore no specific social identity linked to it. My dissertation is contribution to better understanding the consequences this has for prevention of conflict in the region overall.

I am going to conduct an extensive literature review on related concepts that will draw mostly from the fields of Conflict Resolution, Social Psychology and Nationalism Studies. Additionally, I will interview a number of experts who have been and are directly engaged with post-conflict peacebuilding in Tajikistan. This will serve to further explore the intricate role of Tajik social identities for the prevention of conflict escalation. I will then compare and contrast their viewpoints in a discussion on social identities in Tajikistan. Furthermore, I will talk about the actions deemed necessary in the realm of conflict prevention and then tie together the different views into a comprehensive picture.

In the following section, chapter 2, I will first review several Conflict Resolution concepts, most importantly the tightly interlinked concepts of peacebuilding and conflict prevention. This will provide the reader with the necessary background to understand the general analytical framework with which the topic is approached. I will then elaborate on the role of identity in conflict by explaining the basic psychological needs that underlie it. This subsection of the chapter will thus explain how social identity is to be seen as both a necessary aspect of human existence in communities, but

²These are Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

also one that has ambivalent impacts on the processes of peace and conflict³. The last two subsections will be concerned with how religious and ethnonationalist identity, as specific types of social identities, relate to the aforementioned conflict dynamics.

In chapter 3, I will introduce the case at hand. Since one can presume that most readers would be rather unfamiliar with Tajikistan, this account will start with a detailed country overview. After having talked about the country's socioeconomic and political state of development, I will then allude to its geopolitical significance. The last three chapters all deal with the complex history of Tajikistan and its historic predecessors. The reader will be introduced to the ancient Tajik empires and dynasties, the influence of the Soviet era and the consecutive independence, the recent civil war experience and lastly, the peace process and its implementation.

Tying the two previous chapters together, chapter 4 aims at discussing the nature of peacebuilding in Tajikistan. Mainly, however, it will explain and contrast the development of different social identities in the past two decades of the country's recent history. It will conclude with an analysis of the conflict potential that internal and external factors related to social identities posit for Tajik peace.

Finally, I will examine how increase in religiosity and ethnonationalism have fared in Tajikistan in recent years and how they have affected the overall state of peace. In Chapter 5, I will outline the methodological considerations explaining how I went about to conduct the interviews and their analysis with the goal of investigating the aforementioned interrelations.

In Chapter 6, I will summarize my research by presenting the results of a content analysis of the expert interviews conducted. In particular, it will be pointed out whether the relations between social identity and conflict can be understood as a general concept and how religiosity and nationalism differ in this respect. Furthermore, this section will also offer alternative projections with regard to future conflict and present suggestions as made by the respondents during their interviews.

³ Note that both peace and conflict here are not seen as static stages, both rather as dynamic processes. For discussion on the nature of conflict as a process, see Kelman (1997) or Sandole (1993)

Chapter 7 is set aside for a discussion of the concepts used throughout the thesis and a discussion of how the expert insights can be used within the framework of an early warning system. Several approaches to mitigating these threats to peace will be discussed. I will furthermore talk about the possible implications of my findings and considerations for further research. Also, I will try to show how lessons learned from Tajikistan could very well help in the resolution and prevention of conflict situations in locations similar either culturally or by their stage in the conflict cycle.

Finally, chapter 8 will be a comprehensive conclusion that will summarize the subjects explored throughout this thesis, and highlight the central findings resulting from my research.

As a final remark to this introduction, I want to say what this thesis is not going to do. Thus, in order to understand where the focus of this MA thesis fits in, the reader should be aware of the overall paradigm that this thesis adheres to. The Conflict Resolution paradigm utilized in this thesis can be summarized as follows. Rather than focusing merely on the macro-level aspects behind conflict, i.e. the economic and geostrategic aspects of power politics, the aim of this research is to explore aspects that play on the micro-level relations that fuel conflict, i.e. the psychosocial rationale behind human needs such as identity and belonging (Burton, 1990; Kelman, 1997). That is to say, while I am aware of the power politics in Central Asia and the alliances formed between small country and great power governments, this is not the main interest of this thesis. One obvious criticism of this kind of approach would be to argue that if the macro-level economics and politics are in balance, any disturbance on the micro-level will be kept in check and couldn't lead to large scale conflict anyways. I hope to show with the discussion in the following section that such a view is somewhat valid, but only in a limited understanding of what *peace* is.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Post-Conflict Peacebuilding

Following the end of the Cold War, conflicts have increasingly taken place within states rather than between states. At the same time, social science increasingly doubts the rational choice model of human behavior. Both of these developments have had tremendous impact on the way that international relations and conflict are studied. The old realist model not only fails to explain many of the developments, it also does not offer solutions that address the real problems that may underlie conflict (Rasmussen, 1997).

The concept of peacebuilding responds to these concerns. Basically, peacebuilding is a type of post-conflict reconstruction that pays close attention to the structural and psychosocial factors that might have caused conflict in the past. This is achieved through deconstructing aspects of violence, e.g. by demobilizing and disarming militia groups, or by restoring justice and achieving reconciliation with the help of fact-finding and truth-telling commissions. Simultaneously, it works through constructing peace, e.g. by institutionalizing human rights policies, by teaching citizens about peaceful ways to settle a dispute by means of conflict resolution workshops or workshops on democratization, etc. (Lederach, 1997).

However, whenever government or NGO-coordinated peacebuilding operations are launched, mostly Western countries intervene. The yardstick that they apply to the post-conflict countries is one biased on Western principles and is often driven by the unrealistic desire to turn these countries into picture-perfect liberal democracies with a market economy and a vibrant civil society. This mindset is often reflected in academia, where “many works on peacebuilding and post-conflict reconstruction suffer from

overly idealistic, simplistic and optimistic visions of post-conflict democratization” (Call, 2003, p. 1)

The concept of peacebuilding encompasses a broad radical transformation of society through addressing the underlying structural causes of conflict. It goes back to the works of Johann Galtung (1975) and find its political and global manifestation through being institutionalized within the UN following Boutros Boutros-Ghali's *Agenda for Peace* that was introduced in 1992 (Knight, 2003).

However, it may be helpful to first clarify the components of the term peacebuilding itself. If there is no clear understanding on what kind of peace peacebuilding is intended to build, it will be difficult to follow the rationale behind this thesis. With the understanding that as long as there is violence, there is no genuine peace, the work of Johann Galtung (1969) on the nature of peace and violence are concepts that hardly any Conflict Resolution scholar would ignore. He defines peace as the absence of violence, however makes clear that he has a broader understanding of what violence *is*: “Violence here is defined as the cause between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is.” (Galtung, 1969, p.168). Galtung then continues to lay down as many as six distinctions about the various manifestations of violence. To name the most important ones, violence can be both physical and psychological, it can be intended or unintended violence, and lastly violence is can be either direct and personal or indirect and structural. Often these dimensions are overlapping and merely classify different aspects of the same phenomena. Tying these arguments together, Galtung then arrives at the central distinction between negative and positive ‘peace’. Positive peace then, is the mere absence of personal violence and thus often what is commonly referred to as peace. The latter is the absence of both personal and structural violence: “the absence of personal violence does not lead to a positively defined condition, whereas the absence of structural violence is what we have referred to as social justice, which is a positively defined condition.” (Galtung, 1969, p. 183). The successful and sustainable transformation of conflict will thus take more than merely addressing the conflict in a manner that will ensure that termination of personal violence. Rather, the root causes of a conflict may lie with the sometimes unintended but detrimental aspects of structural violence.

The process of peacebuilding thus is composed of many concerted efforts that seek to prevent personal violence, but also seek to address the obstacles on the way to positive peace. In addressing who should ideally get involved in this important work, John Paul Lederach proposes an integrated model of peacebuilding, in which he classifies and evaluates significance of actor levels, response level and time frame (Lederach, 1997). Elaborating on this model, Lederach comes to the conclusion that middle-range actors and subsystem/relationship foci⁴ tend to have the “greatest potential to serve as sources of practical immediate action *and* to sustain long-term transformation in the setting” (p. 61).

Lederach furthermore argues that “peacebuilding must come from within a culture” (Evans-Kent & Bleiker, 2003, p. 111). If this does not happen, so the argument goes, local approaches and knowledge are not valued properly and consequently domestic and international organizations often experience a divide. In line with Lederach’s argument on this matter, locally relevant social identities should be important factors in peacebuilding on various levels.

Peacebuilding more often than not ignores many of the aforementioned considerations. One could say that in practice peacebuilding is mostly understood (or at least carried out) as a short term intervention immediately following any peace accord that has brought the fighting, i.e. the physical violence, to an end. Rather than having a long-term goal of sustainable peace, rather than involving the local community and considering culture as a factor, peacebuilding often takes on the nature of an internationally operated effort that is more like what Kenneth Bush (1996) calls *bungee cord humanitarianism*. Using the metaphor of a bungee cord, he criticizes that most peacebuilding operations are limited in scope, are only short-term ‘in-and-out’ type interventions, which lack creativity, a better understanding of local culture and most importantly, ignore principles of development (Bush, 1996).

Knowing that the nature of peace as a dynamic process requires continued efforts of peacebuilding beyond those confined to post-accord work (Lederach, 1997), we might come to ask ourselves what components and characteristics a type of peacebuilding should have in order to live up to the expectations of continuously

⁴ See Fig. 3, Appendix A, for a graph of Lederach’s integrated framework for peacebuilding

contributing to a more peaceful and just society. Merely treating root causes of past conflict can thus not be the only aspect of peacebuilding: More attention has to be paid to both the institutional structures and to the nature of a society's social fabric – and the patterns of how these relate to possible future conflict. Albrecht Schnabel (2002) argues that peacebuilding is only sustainable if in addition to its own principles, it also “embraces core principles of conflict prevention” (p. 7). The following section will look at those core principles, specify what kind of conflict prevention is meant and discuss specific aspects which make conflict prevention an applied concept, especially in its integration with the concept of peacebuilding.

2.2. Concepts of Conflict Prevention

The prevention of violent conflict can be seen as the primary aim of any peacebuilding process. In post-conflict settings, this is not limited to preventing recurrence of the conflict along the lines of the previous conflict issues, but at the same time focused on working against a culture of violence that might have been created through the conflict itself (Schnabel, 2002). The latter notion highlights that peacebuilding is concerned with addressing root causes. Disputes, in the basic sense of having disagreement on a certain issue between two groups, are both inevitable and normal. Whether these disputes can be settled in a non-violent way or whether they will lead to a violent conflict between the groups depends on a number of different factors. These factors include perception of potential gains and losses of conflict, knowledge of alternative ways of interest arbitration, but also on a number of sometimes emotional perceptions on the nature of the disagreement and the groups involved.

The Conflict Prevention literature distinguishes between *structural* and *direct* prevention of conflict. Direct conflict prevention refers to measures which are taken in the immediate pre-conflict phase in order to prevent the escalation into violence; it is thus rather limited in scope. Structural conflict prevention has a broader focus. In being concerned with the underlying causes of potential conflict, structural prevention requires a long-term commitment and a deeper understanding of the conflict's contextual dynamics. Primary goals are to prevent state failure and to engage in

economic development and reconstruction of political and social structures (Aggestam, 2003). Thus, we can say that any sustainable approach to post-conflict peacebuilding will have to have principles of structural prevention at its core.

All in all, it seems as though in narrow definitions, peacebuilding is confined to a short time intervention that follows the signing of a peace agreement. Similarly, conflict prevention is often narrowly defined as a type of intervention that merely contains a conflict's escalation and prevents any further spread of violence. However, scholars increasingly tend to shift to much broader definitions of both concepts, because a) a long-term focus is thought to yield more sustainable outcomes, b) it is more recognized that many Conflict Resolution concepts are not mutually exclusive sets of ideas and c) rather than static 'stages', both conflict and peace are seen as dynamic processes that call for more complex policy strategies. While the original distinction may be useful in some contexts, in other contexts this differentiation loses importance. When it is argued that sustainable peacebuilding embraces conflict prevention principles (Schnabel, 2002) and at the same time pointed out that effective conflict prevention includes structural peacebuilding (Aggestam, 2003), many are left in conceptual confusion. Once we recall, however, that a large percentage of the countries affected by war within a few years of termination of the conflict, relapse into some kind of violent struggle, the necessity to blend peacebuilding and conflict prevention becomes all the more apparent. To use a metaphor from soccer, *after the match is before the match*, meaning that as one match is over, the best strategy is to concentrate and prepare for the next.

One of the aspects of conflict prevention that is highlighted especially by Aggestam (2003) is that of early warning. She argues that since it is often the NGOs in the field who are closest to the pulse of the target society and therefore have the most knowledge about the potentially dangerous trends developing in it, there should be more cooperation between the NGOs to create effective mechanisms of early warning. Early warning consists of "gathering, interpreting and communicating information about specific and potential conflicts" (Aggestam, 2003, p. 16). These activities combined establish the basis for an early warning system with which conflict potential could be monitored. In line with the aforementioned human need theory (Burton, 1990), part of this monitoring process should involve paying a great deal of attention to how basic and psychological needs are satisfied. In case these are being satisfied in a way that they

disadvantage or marginalize other groups in society, we could speak of structural violence being present. Such structural inequality bears the potential for conflict, which might escalate with the slightest provocation and lead to severe consequences anywhere from social unrest to a full-blown war between the alienated groups. In this context, it is important and interesting to take a closer look at some aspects of Burton's need structure. Especially the psychological needs of developing a social identity will be under scrutiny in the following section.

2.3. Identity and Conflict Potential

In many troubled areas, for instance in former Yugoslavia or in present-day Israel-Palestine, conflicts were and are fought along the lines of social identities. That is to say, the issue of many conflicts does not merely lie in the interests that opposing groups may have, but rather in the differing identities and the threat that one group seems to pose to another (Ross, 2001). Social identities allow us to transcend our individual self and often go along with the impression that our social group is worth fighting for (Verkuyten, 2005). When our group's interests are at stake, we may come to the conclusion that another group, an out-group, is threatening the very existence of our own in-group (Black, 2003). While two individuals from different groups might get along perfectly fine, on a community level it might appear necessary for individuals to unite with members of the own social group in order to defend it or fight for its interests against a common enemy (Black, 2003). At times, the resulting inter-group tensions can be easily resolved, but in other cases, exclusive social identities can lead a conflict to escalate into a cycle of severe violence (Ross, 2001).

To understand this better, it might be useful to take a step back. Starting from a very broad point of analysis, one part of the answer to such questions lies with understanding the construction of identities. According to Taylor and Louis (2004), collective identity always precedes individual identity, because the attributes of the later are always relative, i.e. they are necessarily in relation to a reference group. Which group is chosen for that comparison should thus already be telling about the collective identity. As for collective identities or group identities that go beyond the family, the

main domains in which this is sought are usually nation, ethnic group and religion (Verkuyten, 2005).

The need for self-esteem is one of the core psychological needs of human beings. Besides a variety of individual factors, self-esteem is also influenced by the perceived group membership, or one's social identity. Identity in itself has the value that it gives direction and a sense of self-esteem to individuals. According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), people actively seek to single out distinctions between their group and other groups that make their group more favorable. Indirectly, this boosts their own self-esteem and is thereby functional. Comparison to out-groups, competition, prejudice and other negative intergroup behavior are therefore seen as normal consequences that occur as soon as an individual is categorized as belonging to one certain group (Diehl, 1990; Tajfel, 1982). In fact, it was shown that social categorization into different identities even creates a social norm of discriminatory intergroup behavior, which holds true even if paths of more cooperative behavior are shown (Tajfel et al., 1971).

The quest for collective social identity can be ambivalent in its outcomes, however. Besides expected intergroup tension, there is reason to believe the social identities can have positive effects in processes of peacebuilding, for instance. A stronger religious identity as well as ethnonationalism can be complementary to peacebuilding efforts by fostering societal cohesion and political stability.

In line with Social Identity Theory, people tend to define their in-group by means of reference to an *other*, or out-group, by building their sense of identity on the fact that there is an enemy that represents everything that they are not (or rather, that they have come to believe they are not). In this way, building national identity might be very detrimental to peace, as would be the case if inter-ethnic tensions turn out to be one result of such nationalist efforts. As far as religious social identity is concerned, radicalized religious identities might lead to security problems if they mount in movements that justify violence and acts of terrorism against anybody in the state that does not share their understanding of radical Islam.

As other authors have pointed out, individuals may also draw their self-esteem entirely from who they are and do thus not necessarily need to define themselves in

comparative relation to others. As every individual has some degree of freedom to choose between several social identities available to him (Sen, 2006; Turner, 1982), so does the society as whole. Social identities are necessarily multifaceted constructs, but in order to have a healthy self-esteem and positive perception of one's own in-group, one need not necessarily have negative views of out-groups and its individual members. As Herbert Kelman (1997) points out, "psychological and ontological needs (...) like identity, security, or recognition, are not inherently zero-sum. One party need not gain its identity at the expense of the other." (p.198)

With the goal of cultivating a non zero-sum perception of identity, NGOs and IGOs through their peacebuilding and conflict prevention work might ideally shift the focus that the quest for identity takes. Peacebuilding efforts might also have a significant impact on how much weight the aforementioned productive and destructive elements of ethnonationalism and religion will have on peace and security.

This is of utmost importance, because in identity conflicts it is not so much personal hatred of an individual that is the source of violence. In fact, the violence in such wars is often directed at complete strangers. The source of violence is to be found rather in the process that allows a person to perceive his identity as so distinct that they can see some individuals as non-human. When own identity is constructed as opposed to that of an *other*, it will allow for violence that can be directed entirely against this rather abstract notion of an enemy: "The individual victim (...) is punished not as a victim, but as a symbolic representation of the enemy" (Koestler, 1967, p. 252). The symbolic nature that each individual victim of violence takes on is what is characteristic of the dehumanizing aspect of others in examples of identity conflicts.

2.4. Religion and Identity

When religion is discussed in social psychology, the focus is entirely on the functional approach to religion. Social Psychology as a field is not interested in a

substantive approach to religion⁵. In the same way, it is not concerned with how religion came about historically; it is concerned with the concept as such. One theory that explains the psychological value of religion is Terror Management Theory. It explains religion as a coping mechanism to reduce mortality related anxiety. According to Terror Management Theory, religious identity simultaneously serves two important psychological functions. For one, religion – at least in the big monotheistic variants - promises some kind of afterlife, which implies not only that death is not the final end, but also that at least our soul is immortal. Secondly, through aiding the organization of large groups and being a central element of wider culture, religion establishes an imagined community that has its past and a future trajectory, a community that in essence makes it possible for its individual members to experience a sense of collective immortality (Pyszczinski et al., 1997). It is thus not surprising that universally, religion plays a significant role in the construction of collective identities.

Unlike national identity, religion can serve to construct identity at various levels of community size. That is to say, a religious identity can foster group identification at the community level as well as promote the sense of belonging to a wider religious community on a national or transnational level. A Sunni Muslim peasant for instance, could theoretically experience his own religiousness through being part of the Muslim community of his village and at the same time through knowing that he is part of a global Sunni Muslim community. A religion further provides clear laws of conduct, as well as a structure and an order that explain the big philosophical questions of human existence.

Since experience of religion is at the center of the concept of religion used here, it is important to point out that this necessarily implies a very broad definition of what religion means to individuals. While for one person, being religious would involve the correct practicing of religion duties and following all rules found in sacred texts or learned through common practice in their community, others might have a less orthodox understanding of religion. Those individuals could be believers in a god who nevertheless never or seldom engage in the practice of religious customs. Again others might perceive themselves religious on a mere cultural basis. For example, somebody

⁵ The substantive approach to religion deals with what religion *is*, whereas the functional approach to religion deals with what religion *does*. The former is found in philosophy and theology; the latter in sociology and social psychology.

who has been raised in a Muslim cultural context, might consider himself a Muslim, because he is aware of sharing a large set of Muslim values with the wider community. If such an awareness or perception is sufficient to subscribing to that specific social identity, then one need not even be convinced of the existence of a deity in order to be and be seen as part of the religious group.

As far as the relation between religion and conflict is concerned, one can point to what appears to be quite paradoxical in nature. While religion commonly preaches love, peace and understanding, at the same time a lot of blood has been shed in the name of religion. In order to understand how religion affects conflict and peace dynamics, we have to then look into the mechanisms of how religion can turn into a mobilizing factor in conflicts and also seek to understand why religion plays a key role in many post-conflict processes such as reconciliation or trauma healing. “A process to genuine reconciliation also demands leaders whose moral authority commands the respect of both sides.” (Little & Appleby, 2004, p. 15).

International actors do not have much to lose by incorporating means of social identities into their peacebuilding strategy: For religion, it has been pointed out that the “Western structural and materialist approach can be strengthened to address pressing inter-personal needs of society more effectively by engaging the moral and ethical resources that religion (...) has the potential to contribute.” (Goodwin, 2006, p. 5). The same author points out ambivalent meaning that religion can have for war and peace, i.e. that while it can be “used to promote nationalist ideologies and the cause of war, it also can be a positive force for peacebuilding” (ibid).

Religion is perceived to have become a primary factor for conflict especially in the era following the Cold War. This notion is best captured in the Clash of Civilizations theory (Huntington, 1993). As a reply to Fukuyama’s notion of history having come to an end with the end of the Cold War and the de-facto victory of the liberal democratic system (Fukuyama, 1992), Huntington developed a theory of the possible sources of conflict in the decades to come. He proposed that the world is divided into eight different civilizations, which are incompatible with one another on most outlooks on life and organization. For instance, with regard to the ‘Islamic’ and the ‘Western’ civilizations, he projected a major clash between the countries he associated with those two categories. Civil wars such as in Yugoslavia or conflicts such

as between India and Pakistan were seen as precursors of such a major clash and used as proof for this account (Huntington, 1993). The theory continues to have much of a popular appeal and arguably even serves to legitimize ongoing wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. This is so despite heavy criticism from many sides. The geographic division of the world into eight civilizations is seen as overly simplistic and arbitrary; the idea of conflict between these civilizations is criticized as reflecting primordial beliefs about certain ethnic groups and religions. Furthermore, Huntington is seen to have downplayed the important multifaceted nature of identity and overlooked the current and historical interdependencies between the regions he sees as so distinct and separate (Sen, 2006; Bermann, 2003; Said, 2001).

The role of Islam in politics has also received increasing amounts of attention in the post 9/11 world. The terrorist attacks of New York and Washington D.C. not only gave birth to an era in which the West perceived itself under constant terrorist threat, it also marked the beginning of increasing suspicion towards the religion in the name of which the attacks were carried out. Jihadist terrorism⁶ for many has become the irrefutable proof of Huntington's theory of a clash of civilizations (Khalid, 2007). Fundamentalist terrorism through attacks in Madrid, Istanbul, London or Moscow has deepened the negative image of Islam that had emerged.

At the same time, such acts of violence have been condemned by Muslim leaders worldwide (Waters, 2010; BBC News, 2003; RIA Novosti, 2010). Also, Muslim beliefs and practices in no way represent a homogenous global culture or civilization. In different cultures and in different countries Islam can represent very different lifestyles and interpretations of what is thought to be the right conduct of life according to the Quran. Muslim customs are practiced differently in Indonesia than they are in Nigeria, and the role of Islam in politics greatly varies from Turkey to Saudi Arabia or Iran.

What remains clear is that like any other religion, Islam can potentially become a source of political mobilization. Sometimes religious sources – despite violent aspects

⁶ For a discussion of the terminology and the distinction between the terms *Islamist* and *Jihadists*, see Khalid (2007, p. 16). The author argues that while many fundamentalist groups need to be distinguished from the mainstream moderate groups, and thus deserve the label *Islamist*, not all of those fundamentalist would also endorse killing. *Jihadists*, by contrast, would then be the appropriate label for those fundamentalist groups that endorse killing as a means to achieve their goals.

of Islam being marginal – can even aid the mobilization for the purpose of mass violence. Similarly, Islam can also be the foundation on which understandings of forgiveness, hope and reconciliation are taught and lived. In the analysis of a religion's impact on conflict dynamics, it is therefore of outmost importance to strive for the highest degree of differentiation possible. A more religious society does not necessarily entail a more politically fundamentalist society.

2.5. Ethnonationalism and Nation-building

Despite sometimes conceptualized as competing alternative identities, religious and national identities are by no means mutually exclusive. As we will see, there is enough room in defining the nation to allow for religion to be part of the cultural foundation that a nation claims to be its own. However, the term *nationalism* itself needs some clarification since it can be used for very different constructs; in some cultural contexts it can assume a positive, yet in others a negative valence⁷.

The concept of ethnonationalism used here goes back to the work of Walker Connor (1994). He asserts that there are essentially two types of nationalism, namely rational civic nationalism and non-rational ethnic nationalism. The former pertains to a person's attachment to the state and really ought to be called patriotism. The latter pertains to a deeper feeling of attachment and belonging to a nation, which cannot be rationally explained, and as Smith (2004) indicates that it ought to be called ethnonationalism rather than just nationalism. Often, patriotism and nationalism greatly overlap, namely if the state is simultaneously thought to be home to a particular nation. The emergence of such nation-states, however, is a relatively new concept that has only emerged throughout the last centuries. This can be understood more clearly when we point out that a nation-state's emergence, commonly involves artificially constructing a nation that corresponds with the population living within the territory of a given state:

⁷ If nationalism has a historically stained connotation, it will most likely be reserved only for extremists. However, if a nationalist movement has brought about independence, for instance, the term may carry a commonly acceptable, sometimes positively valenced, connotation.

The nation-state's aim was to build a homogeneous nation out of a diverse population while constructing a distinct national identity destined to foster sentiments of belonging and solidarity among its members. In my view, this proves that the nation-state is not ethnoculturally free and that nation-building is ethnically charged. (Guibernau, 2007, p. 61)

As Guibernau suggests, the process of nation states emerging is a rather complex one that can be better understood as a number of processes combined, but can be summarized under the label 'nation-building'. Alluding to some of these processes, Smith (2004) includes, among other elements, the "codification of myths, symbols and tradition; the standardization of language and culture; the rediscovery of ethno-history and the crystallisation of collective memories; (...) the territorialisation of ethnic memories and of their political expressions" (p.61) as important components of this process.

The psychological utility of ethnic nation-building can be understood to serve the basic human need of belonging to a clearly defined group, which if it is satisfied would lead to more stability and cultural loyalty to the in-group and to the state connected with it. It should be taken into consideration that for an individual to feel belonging to an ethnic group is not a matter of biological or genetic relation. Rather, the quintessential state of belonging to an ethnic group is a result of shared behavior codes, such as use of a language or exercise of traditions, and a number of shared beliefs, which could be of a religious or even institutional nature, but most fundamentally consist of the beliefs in the shared historical experience of their group that makes up their cultural heritage (Spira, 2004).

Unlike religion, which allows for identification with communities at various levels, national identity, at a first glance, appears to work in the opposite way. National identity defines a nation in contrast to other nations. In this way, nationalism tends to be more exclusive than religion, yet in its variety of *ethnonationalism* lies the possibility to transcend the borders of nation-states and time: the central reference to identity is to be found with a wider ethnic group, which may be both modern and historic.

There is a debate in the literature that with the elementary nature of ethnicity. While on the one hand, ethnicity can be seen as an innate and primordial concept, on the other, it can be seen as a volatile and constructed one. Both have implications that

are somewhat normative and continue to influence public conceptions of ethnicity as well as academic normative descriptions of it⁸. Generally though, there is relative agreement that the constructivist explanation of ethnicity has more historical validity. It refutes the essentialist primordial image of ethnicity because it sees ethnicity as passing through several stages of development, from the formation of a community all the way to ethnonationalist domination (Jeong & Väyrynen, 1999).

The development or construction of a national identity through ethnonationalism threatens the peaceful relations between different groups. The relations become unstable because one ethnic group is placed at the center of what defines national identity. Naturally, other ethnic groups not fulfilling the criteria of these definitions are marginalized. In the development of a nation-state, this process of ethnonationalization possibly means that a population which previously used to have a non-ethnic social identity, e.g. tribal or a common ideological identity, suddenly finds itself divided along fault lines previously non-existent:

Ethnic nationalism underscores the differences between ‘us’ and ‘them’, and defines political power and community membership in ways that privilege the ‘in group’. It follows that the greater the degree of ethnic diversity within a state, the greater the danger that ethnic nationalism will create instability and conflict. (Menon & Spruyt, 1998, p. 112)

This process is the more conducive to instability as the ethnic groups involved in the nation-building as self and others can be found not only in the target state, but also in the immediate environment of surrounding states. In such situations the ‘us’ in one state would become the ‘them’ in another. The more the historic source of ethnic kinship is employed to create ethnonationalist support, the more a country might also be seen as responsible for groups in other countries that share the same ethnic identity. If these minorities are threatened, pressure for trans-national schemes of protection and security guarantees might increase.

Looking at peacebuilding efforts or the revival of Islam in Central Asian Tajikistan will not only provide more clarity to each of the concepts themselves, but will also help to understand the complexity of the interrelations between these dynamic processes in practice.

⁸ For a discussion of the arguments predominant in this debate, see Fishman (2004)

Tajikistan will first be introduced in general terms to provide some background information on the country, without which neither conflict resolution efforts nor identity dynamics could be properly understood, and then closer examined with the aforementioned specific topics that are at the center of this thesis' research focus.

3. COUNTRY BACKGROUND: TAJIKISTAN

3.1. Country overview

Tajikistan is one of the land-locked countries located in Central Asia. With 143,100 km², it is slightly bigger than Greece. Tajikistan is one of the most mountainous countries in the world, with a mere 6.5% of arable land. It borders Uzbekistan to the West and North, Kyrgyzstan in the North, China in the East and Afghanistan in the South (See Fig.5, Appendix A, for a map). The overall population is 7.3 million, which according to the 2000 census are composed of 79.9% ethnic Tajiks, 15.3% ethnic Uzbeks, and 4.8% others (Russian, Kyrgyz, etc.). According to the same census, a total of 99.5% of Tajikistanis are literate. The official language is Tajik, while the Russian remains a language widely used (CIA, 2010). The country's biggest cities all play an important role in distribution of power and the competition for it. The capital Dushanbe (previously Stalinabad), with a population of 679,000, is the biggest city. The second and third biggest cities are Khujand (previously Leninabad) and Kulob, with populations of 156,000 and 93,000, respectively.

In the 2009 Freedom House⁹ ranking, Tajikistan receives an overall democracy score of 6.14, which is the lowest score the country has received in the past ten years. Freedom House criticizes high levels of corruption, reluctance to reform the country's election laws, and the discriminatory nature of the government's nation-building efforts (Muhudinova, 2009). The 2010 Bertelsmann Transformation Index¹⁰ (BTI) in its overall status index ranks Tajikistan 118th of 128 countries, with a democracy score of 3.67.

⁹ Freedom House rates several aspects of freedom and democracy (electoral process, civil society, independent media, governance, judicial independence and corruption) on a scale from 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The democracy score is the cumulative overall score.

¹⁰ The BTI Status Index ranks 128 transition countries according to two measures, one of democracy and one of market economy. The indices operate on a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 representing the lowest level of transformation and 10 the highest.

The BTI report on Tajikistan further criticizes economic mismanagement, alienation of Muslim communities and the Uzbek minority alike, and inaction towards increasing drug trafficking (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010).

As the International Crisis Group (ICG) points out in a special February 2009 report on Tajikistan, due to its high dependency on remittances, the country is being hit especially hard by the global economic crisis (International Crisis Group, 2009). In 2008, remittances were estimated to account for 46% of Tajikistan's GDP; in following year the global economic crisis actually caused the cash flow to decrease by a third (The Economist, 2010). In each of the four years up to 2008, the country's "average gross domestic product grew by nearly 8 percent" (Muhudinova, 2009, p. 520). However, to praise this as remarkable progress would be naïve, as a quick glance at the country's historical trajectory of economic development shows. The GDP per capita reached in 2008 remains at roughly a quarter of the country's economic capacity in 1974 and today roughly equals the economic output Tajikistan used to have in 1926 (See Fig.6, Appendix A, for a graph).

Thus, politically and economically, Tajikistan is widely seen as either on the road to failure (International Crisis Group, 2009; Epkenhans, 2009) or already as a failed state (e.g. Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2010; Greif, 2007). Concerning the overall development and the well-being of people in Tajikistan, the Human Development Index¹¹ (HDI) might be a helpful indicator. In 2007, Tajikistan was ranked 127th of 181 countries. It receives an overall HDI score of 0.688, which is still slightly lower than its score immediately at the end of the Soviet Union: In 1990 it was 0.707 (UNDP Human Development Report Office, 2009).

Each period in its own right contributes to the way the political landscape of Tajikistan presents itself today. Furthermore, in order to understand the complexity of social identities in Tajikistan, one has to be aware of the historic accounts that relate to the country: Both the narratives on the role of the Tajik nation in the historic

¹¹ The United Nation Development Program's (UNDP) Human Development Index combines several measures in order to give a more broad global rating of well-being beyond GDP. It consists of three dimensions of human development: living a long and healthy life, being educated and having a decent standard of living (measured by life expectancy, literacy and education enrollment, and Purchasing Power Parity, respectively)

development of Central Asia and the direct experience of drastic changes throughout and especially towards the end of the 20th century constitute the core elements from which Tajik self-concepts are drawn.

The next sub-section will put Tajikistan into its geographic context and allude to its role in world politics. The three subsections after that will summarize important events in Tajik history. They will explain Tajikistan's Persian roots, which can be traced back to the Samanid dynasty and beyond, Tajikistan as a part of the Soviet Union, its Independence in 1991 and the civil war that was fought 1992-1997, and finally the peace process and implementation that have led to the political situation found in Tajikistan today.

3.2. Geostrategic and Political Significance

In the face of the proliferation of conflict issues in post-soviet countries it is somewhat surprising to see that Tajikistan remains one of the understudied and widely ignored cases of intra-state conflict. Whether for the purpose of more effectively dealing with the Caucasus conflicts or for the purpose of refining security concepts for Central Asia – there is a lot to learn from what happened during and after the civil war in Tajikistan.

After the fall of the Soviet empire, ethnic tensions and struggles for power took place in a number of countries that newly gained their independence. While only in one case this led to an inter-state conflict, namely between Armenia and Azerbaijan in their struggle over the Nagorno-Karabakh region, in other countries, civil wars marked the beginning of independence in the early nineties. As in Tajikistan, this was the case in Moldova/Transnistria and in various republics of both the Russian North-Caucasus and the Georgian South-Caucasus (Quiring, 2009). Most of the latter ended either in a military victory or an enforced ceasefire that effectively froze the conflict. Tajikistan stands out as the only case where the warring factions signed a mutually agreed upon peace treaty, which successfully prevented conflict from reoccurring. Nonetheless, Tajik peace appears far from being a model example of transition. Several reports

continuously label Tajikistan as one of the most unstable and impoverished Central Asian countries and predict that it is eventually doomed to fail (see International Crisis Group, 2009; Epkenhans, 2009).

From another perspective, Tajikistan deserves more international attention merely because of its geopolitical situation. Landlocked in the heart of Central Asia between China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, the country is at a particular geographical point of concern. The particularly interesting geopolitical situation becomes apparent when the relations to the neighboring countries and to the great powers are taken under scrutiny.

To start with, relations to the northern neighbor, Kyrgyzstan, are not very problematic – the country is, like Tajikistan, a loyal ally to Russia. However, recent events have shown how fragile the similarly impoverished and authoritarian states are. An opposition movement led to the violent overthrow of the authoritarian Bakiyev regime in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010. Furthermore, as a general note one could say that the Russian Federation still sees the Central Asian republics within its sphere of influence and – having its own large Muslim minority in mind¹² – certainly also as a buffer zone towards rising radical Islamism to the south of these former USSR republics (Johnson, 2007). Radical Islam is also the threat that Tajikistan faces from the bordering Chinese province of Xingjiang. According to Schoeberlein (2002), “[d]evelopments in Western China (...) also pose a threat to Central Asia as an aggrieved Uyghur population there conducts a militant insurgency supported by a network that extends into Central Asia and Afghanistan.” (p. 471)

The region of Central Asia as a whole, and Tajikistan with it, is increasingly becoming of interest to the greater powers – besides Russia, these are the US, the EU and to a lesser extent China. Tajikistan is a possible transit country for gas pipelines that run from the West towards China. Furthermore, the region has become a priority focus for the European Union. Its foreign policy efforts in the context of the so-called European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) have shown that Central Asia and the Caucasus

¹² Russia is home to large Muslim minorities that live mostly in the North Caucasus and in Russian Tartarstan. Throughout the past two decades, Islamist forces have been striving for independence and in this vain attempted to secede (as in the case of Chechnia) or shocked the country with a series of terrorist attacks, both in the predominantly Muslim republics and in Moscow (Quiring, 2009).

region are no longer to be neglected. Both regions play a dually important role for the EU: For one, they are key for providing the energy sources that Europe depends on. Secondly, the EU needs to secure stable future markets for its export-oriented economy.

For the US, regional security concerns begin with Afghanistan and are closely linked to energy security as well. Perhaps the biggest potential for wide-spread conflict in the region lies with the possible failure of the international community to build a stable and secure Afghanistan. In case of Islamists prevailing in the long run, vast implications for the security of Central Asia are to be expected. Such a course of events would have an even larger impact on Tajikistan than the current influx of refugees already has. “History shows that failure to bring peace to Afghanistan has had profound implications for regional stability” (Monshipouri, 2003, p. 151). Regional stability is easily affected for a variety of factors, ranging from religious fundamentalism to drug trafficking. If Tajikistan’s economic and political decline continues in the direction it has been going the past years, Tajikistan will be an easy target both ideologically as well as militarily.

The relation to Uzbekistan has to be analyzed with due respect to the large ethnic minorities of Tajiks and Uzbeks living in the respective other country. Since Stalin’s arbitrary drawing of borders between the two former Soviet republics, the Tajiks’ historical cultural centers are located outside Tajikistan, on Uzbek territory. These circumstances might – especially as ethnic identity is increasingly used as a vehicle of nationalism and nation-building – give rise to inter-state as well as intra-state tensions between or within Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Marat, 2008). With regard to national identity, Uzbekistan has a similar fate as Tajikistan: Despite large minority groups, the ongoing nation-building process also here focuses on historic accounts of Uzbek ethnicity that only sometimes link to the transnational Central Asian stream of identity, which results in highlighting the differences rather than the commonalities (Marat, 2008). Especially the following chapter is going to highlight this factor of shared history – ethnic and national groups today seen as distinct, often have the same historical roots.

3.3. Tajiks before and during the Soviet Union

Only when having a good knowledge and understanding of a country's and region's history, it will become apparent what is emphasized in the identity construction process and which aspects are being omitted. The history of Tajikistan that is presented in this and the following two sections provides the historical framework for analysis. At the same time, it represents the source of cultural renaissance and sometime the making of culture around newly constructed narratives. The collective memory of a people as to who they are find its most clear manifestation in the current discourse about the distant and the near past. The narratives that give this discourse direction and shape it, themselves are an outcome of the people's direct experience, the efforts of government propaganda and the influence of the international community.

The history of an allegedly distinct Tajik nation has become the primary source for recent Tajikistani nation-building. References to history are meant to paint a picture of Tajik glory and uniqueness. Over large parts of history, however, many of the Central Asian countries share a common history of empires and emirates, conquests and societal transformations (Jonson, 2006). It will become clear that Tajikistan's history has a lot in common especially with Uzbekistan's, so that any reading of history with the aim of deriving one nation's identity from it will have to downplay the role of the respective other. "Writing the national history today in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is most often an exclusionary activity: its purpose is to separate the specifics of the writer's own nation from those of other nations" (Jonson, 2006, p. 20). Furthermore, the variety of cultural influences on the region in the course of the past centuries opens up various potential points of references for national identity.

Tajik historians and politicians nowadays often refer to a number of specific empires in history in order to establish a firm memory of where the Tajik nation and Tajik statehood are thought to have their roots. The reference that goes back furthest in history is that to Aryan/Iranian tribes that in the 12-10th century BCE settled in the wider Central Asian region known as Transoxania¹³ (For a map, see Appendix A, fig.7), in which present day Tajikistan is located in the far southeast. More often though,

¹³ Transoxiana denotes the region between Amudarya and the Syrdarya rivers. *Transoxiana* is the Latin term used by the Greeks, the Arabic equivalent used by some authors is *Mawarannahr* (Jonson, 2006, p.19)

references are made specifically to the ancient states of Bactria and Sogdiana, which had their heyday in the 6th to 7th century BCE (Jonson, 2006). The history of these regions is common to both Uzbekistan and Tajikistan; the claim by Tajik historians who regard the history of these two states as part of “the chain of events which forged the history of the Tajik nation” (Rahmonov, no date, p.88) is generally not supported by other scholars (Jonson, 2006).

While the region of Transoxiana developed into a more and more disintegrated system of small fiefdoms that were suffering from the influx of power from the Turkic nomad tribes, in neighboring Iran the Persian dynasty fell to the Arab conquest in 630 CE. In the following decades, the Arabs also tried to conquer Transoxiana, but they had to face fierce resistance from both local principalities as well as from regional powers such as China. By the middle of the 8th century CE, however, the Arabs had not only broken all forces of resistance, they had also destroyed most of the prior sources of spirituality that were non-Islamic in nature (Jonson, 2006).

The second reference to historic roots of a Tajik nation is that to the Samanid Empire, which in Tajikistan is generally seen as the first example of a real Tajik state¹⁴. The empire, dated 879 – 999 CE, is seen as one of the most glorious ages in Persian high culture. During this time period for instance, ‘new Persian’ was firmly established as one of the pillars of Central Asian culture, meaning Persian as a completely Islamized language (Khalid, 2007). So while it was the Arabs who had brought Islam to Central Asia, the further Islamization of the region was then taken over by Persians of the Samanid Empire. Once the transition away from Buddhist and Zoroastrian spiritual teachings to Islam had reached Central Asia and was established by the Arabs, the spread of Muslim teachings took on its own local dynamics. Essentially, “the Samanid rule (...) played a catalytic role in creating a new Iranian identity which was Islamic at the same time” (Jonson, 2006, p. 29).

What follows the Samanid Empire is an era of Turkic domination of Central Asia, which ultimately led to its incorporation into the vast Timurid state in 1370 CE. In essence, this period in Central Asian history marked what could be called a “co-existence of two strains of high culture, the established Persian one and the new Turkic

¹⁴ Whether a Tajik nation, i.e. an understanding of the people as being a distinct Tajik group, actually exists at this point, is highly questionable though

one” (Soucek, 2000, p. 126). Linguistically, from this time onwards well into the 20th century, Central Asia remained remarkably bilingual (and bicultural), with Persian usually as the language of high culture and administrative concerns and Turki¹⁵ as the language of everyday business (Roy, 2000).

Russia was only able to secure its regional influence firmly towards the end of the 19th century, after it had invaded the Khiva and Bukhara Emirates and consolidated its dominance in a series of trade agreements. Following the 1917 October Revolution, the Bukhara Emirate was established as the People’s Soviet Republic of Bukhara in 1920 and formally integrated into the USSR four years later. By 1924, a kind of Jadid pan-Turkic nationalism¹⁶ had begun to worry the Bolshevik party leaders in Moscow. They decided on the creation of several nation republics in Central Asia, albeit along national groupings that at the time were rather meaningless (Jonson, 2006). For instance, Uzbekistan was created as a territory that has no historic geographic reference whatsoever – it was created simply as an answer to nationalism in Turkestan that could have potentially developed into secessionist tendencies in the region (Fragner, 2001). While at first, Tajikistan was established as a sub-region to this Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan, it became its own Tajikistan SSR five years later, in 1929. “The separation of Tajikistan from Uzbekistan (...) was perhaps even more artificial and arbitrary in terms of territory, titular nation and titular language [than the creation of Uzbekistan itself]” (Fragner, 2001, p. 25).

The structural changes to the local Tajik political scene, to its economy and society ran parallel to the changes which took place all across Central Asia. It was a vast restructuring for the region in many terms. The Soviet rule set out to break up the very regionally focused way of dealing with issues political and economic that was characteristic for Central Asia. The establishment of national soviets (councils) was the political aspect of this process, the collectivization of farm property the economic counterpart. The latter was especially devastating, as many local farmers did not see the

¹⁵ Turki is the term used for the Turkic language thought to predate the modern Central Asian Turkic languages, i.e. Kyrgyz, Uzbek, etc.

¹⁶ This trend of nationalism, however, still preserved the kind of blend of Turkic and Iranian cultural elements that had become the everyday livelihood of Central Asians at the time.

point in losing their property to a collective and hence refused to cooperate with the authorities¹⁷.

The most fundamental transformations, however, can be seen in terms of societal changes. In what could be called a large scale social-engineering project, the USSR sought to fundamentally redefine Central Asian cultural identity, both with regard to religion and in terms of perception of ethnic groups. This transition not only aimed at a more secular understanding in the realm of politics, but also intended for the Soviet citizens to arrive at a more atheist culture in general. Both aspects in essence serve the purpose of strengthening the importance and presence of Soviet ideology.

The Soviet campaign against Islam in Central Asia went through different phases with varying intensity. In the late 1920s, many mosques and religious schools were either closed or transferred to purposes deemed more socially useful by the Soviet government. Under strict laws that prevented religious communities from engaging in many of their previous core social activities and a local arbitrariness, Imams were imprisoned on charges of being an enemy of the people and Muslim property destroyed by uncontrolled groups of Komsomol, i.e. the Communist Party's youth organization (Khalid, 2007). While this was on the material and procedural side of things, public discourse was also shifted greatly to eradicate any kind of reference to Muslim teachings. The Soviets legitimized their policies with references to universal human progress, which was defined in rather antireligious terms. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to assert that all Central Asian Muslims were somehow convinced to become atheists over the decades of Soviet rule:

The disappearance of the social and moral authority of the carriers of Islam brought about tangible changes in actual practice: the daily routine, structured around the five-times-daily call to prayer from the mosques, was destroyed, as was the annual cycle of public celebrations of Muslim holidays; Islamic strictures against alcohol and even pork (...) could now be flouted much more easily; the requirements of the ritual purity (...) were impossible to fulfill. None of this is to say that Islam disappeared from Central Asia, or that a handful of people stopped thinking of themselves as Muslims. Rather, the meaning of being Muslim changed quite radically. (Khalid, 2007, p. 83)

¹⁷ There are reports of hundreds of cattle being sacrificed in a kind of last feast for family and neighbor. This was preferred to surrendering the animals to a collective kind of livestock pool.

The meaning of being Muslim for instance, became a significant element of national cultures and more specifically the different ethnic groups and traditions as defined and ‘created’ by the Soviet government (Khalid, 2007). As mentioned before, the Central Asian nations and associated ethnicities were rather arbitrarily created.

Despite this seeming entirely arbitrary at first glance, the rationale of the Soviet leadership behind the process of creating different nations and ethnic groups was entirely logically founded and builds on two different pillars of thought. One is an ideological one: Marx had posited that historical development will eventually see a fusion of all nations in its transition from capitalism to socialism (Roy, 2000). For this to happen, the Soviet Union first needed comparable levels of national identity in various parts of its territory. The second pillar is of purely geostrategic concern. As mentioned already, the creation of antagonizing ethnic identities among the Muslims in Soviet Central Asia was to prevent a strong pan-Islamic Turkestan-based nationalism. At the same time, the division of Soviet Republics was also focused on outside actors. Roy (2000) argues that the 1924 division, which made Tajikistan a subordinate yet separate republic within Uzbekistan, was done with relation to Iran, while the 1929 division that promoted Tajikistan to the status of its own Soviet republic, was probably done with relation to Afghanistan¹⁸. In consequence, Soviet theoreticians all of a sudden found themselves in need to “explain in ‘scientific’ terms how it was that between 1924 and 1929 the Tajiks had suddenly acquired characteristics which enabled them to make the transition from the status of a ‘feudal society’ to that of a ‘nation’” (Roy, 2000, p. 67). This problem was solved by falsely making claims about an emerging bourgeois intelligentsia having started a movement of national liberation. But since Tajikistan even lacked larger cities¹⁹ in which such a bourgeois intelligentsia could have emerged, any such claims are clearly blatant fabrications (Roy, 2000).

Since the real Tajik intelligentsia was now outside the territory of Tajikistan proper, even during the Soviet Union, all but one presidents of the republic came from

¹⁸ In the former case, breaking up the Tajik nation into a group of Tajiks living in Uzbekistan and another living in Tajikistan was seen as useful because it decreased chances of a strong trans-border Persian nationalism. The latter was a consequence of a Tajik assuming power in Afghanistan in 1928 and the Soviet secret service suggesting that the Tajik card be played.

¹⁹ The largest, most developed and culturally richest Tajik cities, Bukhara and Samarkand, had been given to Uzbekistan also to keep Tajikistan relatively weaker.

Russia. As far as other politicians were concerned, competition between regional centers in Tajikistan was the predominant way in which political culture manifested itself. Especially a rivalry between politicians coming from the Leninabad region and those from the Kulab region shaped the later years of the Soviet Union. It is important to mention that this localism went far beyond the political sphere and included the identification of the average citizen: Local identity was much stronger and much more prevalent in the minds of people than ethnic identity. In fact, many of the regions were very diverse with respect to ethnicity. The development of the different local groups struggling for power, led to a situation at the end of the 1980s that was much more prone to conflict: “[U]nlike the situation in the other republics, the dominant faction controlled neither the security apparatuses nor the apparatus in the countryside. It controlled only the central political apparatus and its own province.” (Roy, 2000, p. 114). The effect of this was that there was no guarantee for the Leninabad Communists in power that they could continue their rule without any major opposition. The groups that later fought in the civil war, are divided along complex lines according to region, ideology, as well as occasional along opportunism. The intricate circumstances and dynamics of the Tajik civil war are the topic of the following subsection.

3.4. Independence and Civil War

The series of state independences that took place in Central Asia after the end of the Soviet Union was somewhat curious. Rather than being marked by a fresh liberated spirit of a new beginning, the populations of the Central Asian republics were opposed to the declaration of independence. The collapse of the USSR system as a whole left the regional soviets, which were governing the peripheral republics, with little choice (Roy, 2000).

Western observers had expected nationalism to liberate the various nations of the Soviet Union from the Communist regime. Instead, nationalism became the vehicle for the Communist party elites to retain their power. Communist *apparatchiki*, all of whom had risen to power only recently, suddenly became founding fathers of new national states. (Khalid, 2007, p. 129)

When the Soviet Union collapsed, ethnic Uzbeks and Russians made up for 40% of the entire population. Soviet migration policies had led to large numbers of ethnic Russians assuming important positions in the republic's major cities (Roy, 2000).

In the first presidential elections in November 1991, Rahmon Nabiev was elected president of the newly independent state. However, many in Tajikistan suspected the election had been rigged and in a series of protests people voiced their discontent. In March 1992, demonstrations turned violent and were crushed by Nabiev's forces, which left many opponents dead. Nabiev decided to provide his supporters with weapons in May, thereby creating the Presidential Guard that later grew to become one of the main actors in the civil war (Schoeberlein, 2002). Soon after, guerilla groups formed on behalf of the separate opposition groups and the government's militias of the Presidential Guard were increasingly under pressure. Facing this strong resistance of government forces, the major opposition parties united their forces to what become known as the UTO – the United Tajik Opposition. Because of the overall violent situation, the fact that the political organizations had joined ranks of a united political anti-government movement, also meant a unified effort of their respective militias. With bases in Afghanistan, this coalition then fought the government's forces in a civil war that lasted five years, from 1992-97 (Karagiannis, 2006). The most violent part of the war, however, occurred between May and November of 1992 with the events that marked government breakdown and the struggle for power in Dushanbe (Heathershaw, 2009a). With heated tension in the city, the Russian troops intervened and helped establish a temporary government – the so called Government of National Reconciliation (GNR). However, this probably came at a point in time already too late – militias on both sides had formed and the population had gotten increasingly polarized. Furthermore, regional elites sought to increase their power and influence to a national level. In the months following the announcement of the GNR, the remaining support of pro-Nabiev militias dwindled. Fighting focused much on regional struggles between warlords and field commanders of the various militias. When Nabiev had lost all support, he was forced to sign resignation while he was trying to escape from Dushanbe. From September to December, the country was without government and in chaos. The forces of the PFT eventually gained control over most of the country (Heathershaw, 2009a). Russian and Uzbek troops intervened in order to back the government and restore order. Eventually, the old pro-government factions and the

Russian interveners placed Emomalii Rahmon in place of Nabiev, aiming to have a political leader less controversial yet loyal to Russia and the old elites (Johnson, 2007). While of course this effectively represented the victory of the same elites that had made Nabiev president, there was a significant shift in power within this group, namely in regional terms from Khujand to Kulob or representing a shift from those elites controlling economic sources to those controlling the most effective militia (Rubin, 1998). In their paper *Thank the Taliban for the Tajik Peace Agreement*²⁰ Abdullaev and Babakhanov (1997) summarize the complexities of the regionalism layer of the conflict as follows:

Representatives of the northern Leninabad region found supporters among the southerners in the poorest Kulyab region. Thus the north-south conflict transformed into a conflict between the southerners of Kulyab and their allies and the eastern region of Karategin-Badakhshan. The organizational structure of the former became the Popular Front. The political leader of the latter became the Islamic Renaissance Party. (Abdullaev & Babakhanov, 1997, p. 393)

One month after Emomalii Rahmon was elected head of state in November 1992; his new government banned all existing opposition parties. Being barred from political participation, they continued their violent struggle for a few years. This was possible because of the relative weakness of Rahmon's government and its supporters. The PFT militias had managed to take Dushanbe only with military backing from the Uzbek army. While the city was taken back and opposition forces were driven out, it became apparent that the civil war really operates on various levels at the same time. The ethnic groups of the Pamiris and Gharmis, thought to be loyal to the UTO, were subject of vast ethnic cleansing campaigns around the capital and other parts of southern Tajikistan (Heathershaw, 2009a). Rahmon managed to consolidate his power in Dushanbe, the war had been decided in favor of one side quite early, yet the fighting continued until the peace agreement was signed in 1997.

In terms of the regions that were behind the warring factions, the eastern Tajik Gorno-Badakhshan region were mostly backing the UTO, whereas the southern Kulob-centered and the northern Khujand-centered regions were supportive of first Nabijev and later Rahmon (Roy, 2000).

²⁰ The argument can be made that the UTO partly was ready to large concessions in the Peace Agreement because of a stronger Taliban in Afghanistan that increasingly would have made their insurgent operations from northern Afghanistan more difficult.

In 1993, a CIS peacekeeping force was created, mostly consisting of Russian and Uzbek troops²¹. Russia clearly had the interest to secure leadership in Tajikistan that was both stable and also loyal to the new Moscow government. With 16,500 troops, it especially sought to secure the territory of the country to the South (Johnson, 2007).

Although on the face of things, religion appears to play a central role in the Tajik civil war – indeed the struggle is sometimes depicted as one between Islamic and secular forces – such a classification is somewhat misleading. While the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) does play part in the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) movement, their *immediate* political goals were rather moderate and allowed them to form a coalition with democrats and nationalists against the government forces. One could argue however, that both clan-membership and religion merely served as means to mobilize the rural population in a violent struggle for power in the country. The intentions and ideological background of the elite thus are not necessarily identical with the tools of mass mobilization (Johnson, 2007).

In the end, the Tajik civil war had left an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 dead (Johnson, 2007; Roy, 2000). One of the biggest problems besides the question of how to come to an agreement between the conflict parties was the question of return of internally displaced persons and to organize also the repatriation of those that had fled into neighboring Afghanistan.

3.5. Peace Process and Post-Accord Peacebuilding

The peace process came on its way in what could serve as an example for combined efforts of track I and track II efforts for the resolution of a conflict. For one, Uzbekistan's president Karimov wrote to the United Nations in September 1992 in order to request some action be taken on behalf of the international community. The UN sent a special envoy already one month later, and eventually took the role of mediating the peace talks that took place some two years later in Moscow. The fact that the UN

²¹ Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan only temporarily had battalions in the force (Johnson, 2007)

was able to organize and chair peace talks was possible in the first place, however, is due to determined track II efforts that began early on the in conflict and used secret talks and confidence building measures to work at getting the two conflict parties to negotiate with one another.

This process, which could also be labeled as one of multi-track diplomacy, found its manifestation in the so-called Inter-Tajik Dialogue. It came about on the initiative of the Dartmouth Conference Regional Conflicts Task Force²² and the first round of Inter-Tajik Dialogue was set-up in March 1993. The Kettering Foundation, which coordinated a lot of the work around the dialogue, was determined to establish a peace process that was based on an interchange of ideas between different groups coming from Tajikistan. It was participants of the Inter-Tajik Dialogue meetings who were able to convince the conflict parties to come to the negotiation table under UN auspices.

The UN had intervened at rather early stages of the conflict. A fact finding mission was sent in September 1992. It reported back to the Secretary-General and established first contact with the leaders of the conflicting sides. In November 1992, a second mission was sent to Tajikistan that had the primary goal of humanitarian aid and relief. It involved coordinated action of agencies such as UNHCR, WFP, UNICEF and the WHO (Goryayev, 2001). After the UN had been in the field for two years and Track II diplomacy in unofficial talks had been conducted for about a year, the official negotiations – the so-called inter-Tajik negotiations – started in April 1994 in Moscow. With venues alternating between the capitals of the observer nations²³, there were several general rounds of negotiations and several meetings of president Rahmon and the main opposition leader Nuri. Altogether, twenty meetings were convened, each of which was preceded by serious problems over the choice of venue, the selection of which often had to be mediated by the UN: Some of the hosting nations' governments had closer relations to the UTO, others closer ties to Rahmon, therefore the UN also tried to tactically chose the venue where most progress in the negotiation was to be expected (Hay, 2001).

²² The Dartmouth Conference was the bilateral informal dialogue that took place for three decades during the Cold War between Americans and Soviets.

²³ Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan.

The breakthrough for the peace agreement in June 1997, however, was heavily favored by the circumstances. For one, there was a situation of a mutually hurting stalemate – government and opposition forces' resources were depleted and the country was in ruins. Two, both Russia and Iran pushed for success in the negotiations for reasons of geostrategic concern and for the shared interest of keeping the influence of the US as low as possible. Lastly, the security of the UTO forces was in question after political and military changes in Northern Afghanistan, where the UTO was based (Hay, 2001).

The peace accord consisted of four main areas of agreement. One was concerned with the return of refugees, the remaining three were military, political and economic protocols (Slim & Hodizoda, 2002, p. 129). The multidimensional nature of this peace accord is significant for success in sustainably rebuilding a post-conflict country.

Furthermore, it was important that the peace process was not interrupted by Islamist groups. Both the Saudi and the Turkish government are noted for having had a moderating influence on their own Islamist groups operating in Tajikistan (Hay, 2001). Also, the role of religious identity in peacebuilding is a crucial one. The reasons for this complex and multi-faceted: They involve reconciliation as well as distancing Islam from Jihadist ideologies, they involve integration of political Islam as well as allowing for ethno-religious identity renaissance in the context of nation-building, and finally, they also involve the role of religion in creating a culture of peace and non-violence and possibly a Muslim identity that by means of transcending national borders serves the function of mitigating ethnic conflict potential.

Since the civil war, international and domestic NGOs have put a lot of effort into peacebuilding, essentially fostering structures that should consolidate peace and prevent further conflict. These activities included reintegration and disarmament of civil war factions, reconciliation and infrastructure reconstruction, conflict resolution workshops and training with regard to democratic processes. However, it might be helpful to look at different phases of post-accord peacebuilding in Tajikistan. Roughly speaking, we can discern three rather distinct phases of the peacebuilding process. The first phase, from 1997-2000, was all about the implementation of the peace agreement. The second phase, from 2000-2007, was concerned with consolidation of democracy and strengthening civil society. The third phase, starting about 2007, is marked by less

international involvement and a more aggressive type of nation-building process (Heathershaw, 2009a).

Tajikistan's president Emomalii Rahmon surprised international observers when he stood before the press in 2007 to proclaim that the peacebuilding process that had followed the peace agreement had come to an end after a process that lasted 10 years (Heathershaw, 2009a). While it may be judged as a valuable attempt to re-establish national self-confidence or a contribution to an actual development of such kind, this statement from an academic Conflict Resolution perspective should probably be regarded as unsound. While many of the goals of the peace agreement have certainly been implemented, Tajikistan might not necessarily fit the model for a successful construction of positive peace that underlies fundamental conceptions of peacebuilding.

As a concluding remark for the state of peace in Tajikistan, the following assumption still seems to be quite accurate today, namely that the "history of war and violence has led many to prefer a government capable of sustaining a 'negative peace' based on life without war at the price of not enjoying their full range of personal rights and freedom" (Barnes & Abdullaev, 2001, p. 10).

4. IDENTITY AND CONFLICT PREVENTION IN TAJIKISTAN

4.1. Religious Identity in Tajikistan

Tajikistan's population is Muslim by majority. The small Russian population that had mostly inhabited the capital Dushanbe in Soviet times has by and large left the country for Russia during the years of the civil war. According to the CIA factbook (CIA, 2010), today 85% of the population is Sunni and another 5% are of Shiite belief. It has been well-established that religion has a special role in post-Soviet identity formation (e.g., Khalid, 2007; Roy, 2000). A rise in religiosity has to do both with the lifting of state oppression, which already began in the final years of the Soviet Union, and the need to fill the ideological vacuum created by the collapse of the USSR itself. The first of these two aspects can be explained as follows: "Interest in religion soared throughout the Soviet Union in the Gorbachev years. Glasnost led to a quest for moral and spiritual values that were now seen to have been corroded by Communism" (Khalid, 2007, p.117). However, Christianity and Islam were not allowed to regain freedoms on equal terms or at an equal pace. This had to do with the elite's perception of the different religions: While Christianity was seen as a possible guarantor of morality and stability, Islam was seen as a possible instigator of political defection. To the Soviet elites, it had always remained something rather distant, obscure and uncontrollable (Johnson, 2007). Therefore, the revival of Islam in Central Asia took much longer than that of Christianity in other parts of the USSR. Until 1988, the Communists kept surveillance and persecution of Islam in place.

Thereafter, however, there was a rapid turn to Islam. Islam became visible in public again. (...) The number of mosques in the region swelled, and religious education began to be reestablished. (...). There was also a considerable interest in learning Arabic. (...) One could begin to speak of an Islamic revival in the region. (Khalid, 2007, p.117)

As said above, the second reason for a revival of Islam was that of a need to fill an ideological vacuum that had emerged across the formerly Soviet countries. When we speak of a revival of Islam and an increase in religiosity here, we thus mean a two-fold shift. The visible one is that people practice their religion more, which is visible in prayer ceremonies and opening of new mosques. The internal shift is that with regard to questions of morality and right conduct of life, people appear to be looking more into religious teachings and advice from Islamic authority than before.

Central Asia again, however, has to be analyzed in different terms than the rest of the CIS countries. The newly emerging Central Asian nations were politically and ideologically less developed for two main reasons: One, the arbitrary borders that date back to Stalinist policies and have little to do with the history of the region. Two, the fragility of secular nationalism that is emblematic for the region. These reasons have “brought as a consequence the strong possibility that Islam might play a large part in the revived nationalism” (Marty & Appleby, 1997, p. 79). The point is that religiosity and nationalism, more than just being social identities that develop in parallel, are closely connected in that Islam has become an important component of the national historic Tajik identity. While most authors concede that Islam has played and will continue to play a key role within Tajik ethnonationalism, Marat (2008) argues that the recent attempts by the government to link Tajiks to Aryan civilizations have marginalized the role of Islam for national identity and thus even “check-mated the Islamic opposition” (p.23). Why this is a fallacy becomes apparent when one examines the history of Tajikistan more closely (see section 2.3.). In the following section, I will turn to a discussion of this issue and further elaborate on why the link to the historic Aryan civilization does not necessarily lead to marginalization of Islam in Tajik politics or society.

The revival of Islam in Tajikistan as in the other Central Asian countries is not a single-stranded development. On the one hand, religion started to assume a much bigger role in people’s everyday life. On the other, political Islam also gained momentum with the independence of Tajikistan and led the IRP to play an influential role during and after the civil war. Despite the fact that by statutes of the peace accord the IRP was transformed into a legitimate political party, importance of political Islam in Tajikistan

has drastically decreased²⁴. However, the IRP remains the only Islamic party in Central Asia. Since the party provides a platform for a moderate stream of political Islam, it is even compared to Turkey's JDP²⁵. It has been argued that they reduce the peril of advocates for political Islam to become radicalized in illegal fundamentalist platforms (Karagiannis, 2006)

The situation is further complicated by contradictions in the literature. Some scholars tend to emphasize the threat the Islamic fundamentalists and Jihadists pose for Tajikistan as a whole (e.g. Karagiannis, 2006); other see no such threat currently emerging with religious revival being part of a normal development in the overall process of consolidating a Tajik nation state (e.g. Johnson, 2007).

In Tajikistan's post-conflict environment, Jihadist groups were generally present, but weak (Khalid, 2007). When contrasted with the number of terrorist attacks that have shaken Uzbekistan in past years, Tajikistan has been relatively peaceful with regard to its extremist groups. As far as the moderates are concerned, the IRP has since the end of the war and their emergence as a regular political party, seen a steady decline in support. This is not only felt in terms of bad election results, but also in terms of lacking financial sources to sustain political activity. "As one IRP senior official stated (...), 'it is easier to fund the *Kalashnikov* than to support political and social platforms'" (Slim, 2002, p.529).

4.2. Ethnonationalist Identity in Tajikistan

The element of post-Soviet identity is a very strong one. Bert Fragner (2001) suggests that in order to understand contemporary political culture in Central Asia, one must not ignore the factor of what he calls *post-Soviet Soviet nationalism*. That is to say,

²⁴ In the February 2010 parliamentary elections, the IRP received a mere 7.2% of the popular vote, which is down from 21% in 2006. (source Radio Free Liberty). It is however doubted that the elections took place under fair conditions applying to democratic standards.

²⁵ Justice and Development Party, also referred to as AKP, its Turkish acronym. The JDP has been in charge of government in Turkey since 2003 and is generally seen as Islamic-conservative, but not Islamist.

elements of Soviet ideology remain alive despite the formal end of the Soviet Union. This is true especially for such elements that relate to wider political culture. Indeed, the political values reflected in the discourses and civil society of Tajikistan may very much resemble a Soviet-style political culture. Much of the political process between government and opposition seems to have eroded to a mere simulation of democracy, in which only the symbolic acts of a democratic process are kept in place (Heathershaw, 2009b). For the case of Tajikistan, the legacy of the Soviet Union was also visible in the early years in its linguistic policies. Unlike other Central Asian countries, Tajikistan maintained Russian as a language of intercultural communication (Roy, 2000). In recent years, however, there is an increased effort to eliminate remnants of Russian linguistic dominance. For instance, Tajikistan's president symbolically had his last name changed from Rahmonov to Rahmon in March 2007, omitting the Russian suffix common to all male last names in Soviet years (Marat, 2008).

At the same time, Tajikistan is engaged in a continuous process of nation-building and a search for its collective social identity. Tajik politicians look for ways by which they can legitimize their actions, mobilize their supporters and muffle the opposition. Experiencing an ideology and identity vacuum following the collapse of the Soviet Union, people were turning to other possible sources. As throughout history, however, people's identity had never been based on being 'Tajik', there was no previous identity concept to revert to. Political leaders have been trying to answer the question of 'who is a Tajik' in line with what serves them best politically. At times, the answer is somewhat more religion-focused, but more often it draws on historic accounts of ethnic Tajikness.

Tajik identity is furthermore shaped by a double trauma that results from the collapse of the Soviet Union as well as from the civil war that followed it. Yet, these are not the only aspects that complicate national identity: Tajikistan's borders were arbitrarily drawn during the Soviet era, so that today, many Tajiks reside in bordering Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. At present, the biggest Tajik cultural centers – the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara – are on Uzbek territory (Khalid, 2007).

The Tajiks in the mirror of history has become the standard pseudo-scientific reference book for the government's ethnic nation-building project. (Jonson, 2006). "Writing the national history today in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is most often an

exclusionary activity: its purpose is to separate the specifics of the writer's own nation from those of other nations" (Jonson, 2006, p. 20)

Nation-building, as one of the guiding principles in Tajikistani politics today, is a political effort that Tajikistan shares with the other Central Asian CIS states. While a lot of these nation-building efforts are informed by historic accounts that pre-date the Soviet era, it is important to note that the seven decades of the common Soviet era cannot and are not being ignored in this process:

The logic of the new states is to invent a clear nationalist legitimacy, but one which does not break too abruptly with the Soviet period which gave birth to the new republics and is thus part (...) of their legitimization. (Roy, 2000, p. 163)

That is to say, without the existence of the Soviet Union, a state bearing the name 'Tajikistan' in its current territory would have never come into being. The link to the Soviet Union and Soviet identity is therefore two-fold. For one, there is an extended period of time during which there was a common Soviet identity and spirit: Among other things, children were educated in Russian, soldiers were fighting for the Soviet Union, ideology was shared with dozens of other nations²⁶ across a huge territory – with the result that Tajikness was of marginal importance for the identity of people and a common Soviet identity being at the forefront. Secondly, and in seeming contrast, the Soviet Union promoted its very own kind of regional ethnic nationalism. This can be understood as a centrally administered process of nation-building within the context of the USSR that in Soviet ideology was aimed at emphasizing the progressive self-defending type of nationalism, while the reactionary suppressing type that would have had the potential for secessionist aspirations was to be eradicated (Fragner, 2001). As Rubin (1998) points out, through this rather artificial top-down process of creating nations, "the Soviet ethno-federal institutions had laid the groundwork for the creation of a Tajik national identity" (p. 139)

Even though one can speak of a general post-Soviet rise in religiosity, it would be wrong to say that this religiousness is a cornerstone of a new collective Tajik identity. Partly out of fear of political and radical Islam, Tajik politicians rather try to

²⁶ Nations in the Soviet Union were not limited to those that have now emerged into sovereign nation-states, but roughly 90 different national groups within the territory. Many CIS countries today continue to be multi-national states.

resort to ethnonationalism in their own attempts at building the nation and shaping a conscience of a collective past. This often ignores a good four centuries of common Central Asian history²⁷ and is primarily concerned Tajiks' ties to Persian and Aryan culture (Roy, 2000). At the same time, president Rahmon as many other Central Asian leaders has realized that religion is nonetheless of value for constructing a sense of national togetherness, in which the secular understanding of Islam becomes a common trait throughout the country and helps to provide the spiritual components that mystic ethnical nationalism fails to offer. "For the secular authorities, Islam may be valued as a source of nation building or it may be feared as a potentially destabilising force." (Hann & Pelkmans, 2009, p. 1517).

While Soviet identity and religious identity thus do play an important role in Tajik national identity, they are not the central elements it. The main element of nation-building and shaping a Tajik identity rests on ethnic concepts of Tajikness. For the purpose of this, Tajik historians and leaders make an effort to create an identity that has little in common with the other Central Asian countries and emphasizes its regionally distinctive character (Marat, 2008). However, there are two obstacles that make it difficult to create an image of Tajik uniqueness: Tajikistan's history has many overlaps especially with Uzbek national history; the countries' history is intertwined. Furthermore, the ethnically diverse composition of Tajikistan's population also means that many people are neither clearly of Iranian or Turkic descent, but rather an ethnic mix that has sometimes been referred to as *Sarts* (Jonson, 2006, p.109).

To overcome these obstacles, Tajik nation-building to some degree takes a very antagonistic shape. This is a well-known paradigm: "An essential strategy in the generation of national identity consists in uniting people against a common enemy." (Guibernau, 2007, p.30) Uzbeks are implicitly constructed to be the enemy of the Tajik nation, while simultaneously links to the Iranian heritage of Tajiks are contrasted with the Turkic heritage of Uzbeks and the other Central Asian nations (Jonson, 2006). In fact, these concepts are not new and can be traced back to Soviet literature on Aryan civilization and its role in Tajik nationhood, which "also have anti-Turkic and anti-Uzbek connotations" (Marat, 2008, p. 21). The next section is concerned with an

²⁷ "from the start of the sixteenth century to the purges of 1937" (Roy, 2000, p.165). The excluded developments in Central Asian history are "[t]he Shaybandids, the nineteenth century emirates, the Jadid reformers, and the early Bolsheviks" (ibid.)

analysis of the conflict potential inherent in the current societal and political situation of Tajikistan.

The background of the civil war has both become part of Tajik identity and the mechanism by which Tajik elites remain in power. Among the Tajik population, there is a diffuse sense of pride in having established peace and prevented the recurrence of violent conflict. Rahmon understands to make use of this by presenting himself as the main figure in the peace process and paints a picture of himself as the guarantor of continued stability (Heathershaw, 2009b). Keeping the memory of the civil war in people's minds is of high importance for the Tajik government in times of economic crisis and hardship. Even if their government cannot provide for energy security and fails to effectively fight poverty, it will still be perceived in a very good light if contrasted with the gruesome years of the war. "[F]ear of a renewed civil war is a powerful political instrument for Rakhmon. He and his government repeatedly remind the public about the cost of war." (Marat, 2008, p.20)

4.3. Analysis of Conflict Potential

In order to not conflate the various aspects of potential for future conflict, I propose to examine the potential at three different levels: Intra-state, Inter-state and regional.

The potential for intra-state conflict would be concerned with the danger of renewed civil war in Tajikistan. That is not to say, however, that such a civil war would have to break out along the 1992-1997 division of power interests; a conflict could very well break out between ethnic factions in society or between the current Rahmon government and an opposition movement tired of corruption, poverty and political mismanagement. Considering the overall war fatigue and the above cited relative satisfaction with an authoritarian non-democratic, yet peaceful government (Abdullaev & Babakhanov, 1997), the danger of any serious internal tensions escalating in Tajikistan today seem to be rather low. The same goes for the opposition parties in Tajikistan: "The communists, like other political parties in Tajikistan, represent a 'loyal

opposition' to Rakhmon" (Marat, 2008, p.19). Similarly, the IRP has transformed into a party that more or less advocates the same political goals as the governing People's Democracy Party. Both parties promote a blending of Tajik ethnonationalism with elements of moderate Islam (Karagiannis, 2006).

The potential for intra-state conflict lies mostly within the already difficult relations between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and the situation of each country's national minorities the respective other country. The ethnic division within Tajikistan and Uzbekistan may not be very problematic as it is, but with parallel nation-building processes that focus on ethnic exclusivity, the problem of a potential for inter-state conflict increases. It appears logical that ethnic tensions within the countries would not necessarily lead to a civil war between ethnic groups – they as small minorities would not be powerful enough – but they might well trigger an outside intervention of the nation on behalf of a kin minority that is in trouble.

The recent developments in the relations between the Uzbekistan and Tajikistan can in part be seen as a consequence of this fierce process of nation-building and othering. While in 1988 there were large demonstrations in Samarkand and Bukhara that called for the unification of predominantly Tajik Eastern Uzbekistan with Tajikistan proper (Jonson, 2006), the experience of the civil war has at least for now silenced any irredentist claims for these cities (Roy, 2000).

While the constituencies therefore will not push their leaders to seek open confrontation with the respective other country, one yet has to note the deterioration of relations between the governments and the two authoritarian leaders Karimov and Rahmon. While during the early years of the civil war, Karimov ordered Uzbek troops to support Tajik government forces and thereby helped Rahmon to become leader and later president of Tajikistan, this support changed fundamentally only a year later. Unsatisfied with the decreasing importance of Uzbek minority members in the new Tajik government and also as a part of striving for more political independence from Russia, Uzbekistan sought close ties with the US, become a rival of Russia and eventually even withdrew from the CIS peacekeeping mission to Tajikistan in 1996 (Jonson, 2006).

Relations between the countries are thought to have majorly deteriorated in the phase from the end of the Cold War up to the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. In these years, almost a hundred Tajik civilians died in land mine incidents at the border, in some cases people were shot by border guards (Jonson, 2006). Throughout the last eight years, political efforts have been made to improve relations, albeit with little success. Despite the countries' essential interdependence with regard to supplies of water and natural gas, trade is still at a record low. Tough visa restrictions, slow progress in demining the border and an increase in terrorist attacks in Uzbek cities, and total lack of a strong opposition leave the countries at a vulnerable position (Jonson, 2006).

It is important to mention that Uzbekistan has a fairly large minority of Tajiks. While this number is kept quite low in official statistics at 4% of the population, unofficial estimates are as high as 25% of the population or 6 million people (Jonson, 2006, p. 108). This would mean that the population of Tajiks in Uzbekistan is roughly as big as the Tajik population in Tajikistan itself.

In summary, the ethnonationalism as it is promoted by Tajik elites today might only temporarily lead to political stability and in the long run prove to bear significant potential for conflict. Lena Jonson (2006) contends that this would have primarily internal implications. "As ethno-nationalism becomes more pronounced, it risks bringing tensions between the ethnic majority and national minorities in the country" (p. 167). I would argue, however, that tensions of this kind would hardly remain limited to a domestic conflict, meaning that an internal ethnically charged civil war in Tajikistan would probably take on a bigger dimension for both the reason of Uzbek intervention to protect the Uzbek minority in Tajikistan and in turn, possibly revived irredentist aspirations for Eastern Uzbekistan on the Tajik side.

At the same time, while one could argue that ethnonationalism always plays on creating and maintaining enemy images and thus is certainly conducive to negative peace, it is not feasible to deduct from this a kind of law-like inevitability of future conflict. This is so especially for possible inter-state conflict involving the protection of national minorities in other countries:

As for the danger of legitimating interference by hegemon on behalf of their ethnic kin, the likelihood of this happening will have much more to do with the variables of relative national power and

internal ethnic discord than with legal and administrative principles. (Menon & Spruyt, 1998, p. 119)

Another important factor in the analysis is the possibility of overestimating the prevalence of ethnic identity in the minds of minority members. As an outside observer, it is easy to make the mistake of misjudging the importance of such constructs and not recognizing the own bias. Notions of pan-Uzbekism and pan-Tajikism might be much weaker now than commonly assumed:

After 1992, the considerable weakening of the republic of Tajikistan removed any threat of Tajik irredentism over Samarkand and Bukhara, and distanced the Tajiks of Uzbekistan from notions of pan-Tajikism, which had been discredited by the traumatic experience of the civil war. (Roy, 2000, p.178)

The third level, what I called regional conflict potential, could also be framed in what nowadays is often referred to as international terrorism. Islamist groups that have the goal of creating a transnational Islamic state might not be so strong in Tajikistan itself, but with borders permeable and state structures weak, Tajikistan is nonetheless vulnerable as a target. However, much in the development of this as a serious threat to conflict depends on the ability of Islamic groups to actually take over political control in some places. Should the ISAF operations in Afghanistan not create a sustainable peace and withdraw nonetheless, it is quite feasible that the Taliban, the IMU, the Hizb ut-Tharir or other fundamentalist groups gain strength especially in the region of the Central Asian countries that are furthest away from the centers of power.

If it is then true that the two main causal elements to potential conflict in Tajikistan are to be found in ethnonationalist identity (inter-state conflict) and religious identity (Islamist fundamentalism), a number questions arise from this that are not easily answered. These questions will be laid out in the next section. To answer them as well as possible with my limited resources is the central aim of this thesis. The Research question, procedure and rationale of my research are all laid out in the next section.

5. METHODS

5.1. Aims and Nature of the Study

This part of my MA Thesis deals with the methodological considerations behind my research. First, I would like to further describe which specific question my research will address. Second, the nature of the study will be explained in order to clarify the approach to the subject taken, thereby setting the research design in the right contextual framework. The research design section will focus on the process of data collection and analysis. Lastly, before I go into the details of my research findings, I will discuss a number of shortcomings, both related to my function as the researcher and of the research method chosen.

As I have tried to show in the previous chapters, in the case of Tajikistan it seems that there are specific ways in which social identity may prepare or impact future conflict. With conflict dynamics possibly being most prevalently influenced by emerging religious and ethnonationalist identity, one arrives at the following issue, which will be expressed as my central research question:

In which ways are religious identity and ethnonationalist identity likely to influence dynamics of peace and conflict in Tajikistan?

In order to get an idea of how conflict-prone Tajikistan is, it is necessary to understand the nature of peace in present-day Tajikistan. How have both the civil war and the consequent process of peacebuilding shaped the sociopolitical sphere? If we can speak of a peace, how can it be characterized? Another aspect about social identities is to determine how conducive they are in terms of upholding the sociopolitical order at present. Would it be a viable claim, for example, to say that ethnonationalist identity has become more prevalent in Tajikistan, but that it is actually a beneficial element of Tajikistani sociopolitical order rather than a threat to it? But if, as projected, religious

and ethnonationalist identities bear conflict potential that can be dangerous especially once these identities become singular fundamental identities, how does the potential in conflict differ between the two types? And lastly, given that social identity could become the catalyst for conflict if the circumstances antagonize different groups, what measures are to be taken to prevent conflict escalation from taking place? The aim of the research presented in the following chapters is to shed light on these questions.

The nature of the study of the study is entirely exploratory. That is to say, I neither aim to test a hypothesis nor do I concern myself with a well-studied topic. The focus is rather to arrive at a good judgment about the relation between transforming social identities and the conflict dynamics. This is explored by examining the way in which these social identities relate to possible future conflict in a specific country. However, this kind of exploration necessarily involves future projections and thus is a characterized by a high degree of uncertainty.

Furthermore, the research is inductive in nature. The idea of the study is not to test any theory, quite to the contrary, it could be said that building theory is one of the aims of this type of research (Neuman, 2006). For instance, the results as presented in this paper could serve as a basis for further research that then takes a deductive approach to the issues studied here. The phenomenon of transforming social identities is not a new one and certainly has played important roles in many historical contexts. However, a multi-leveled transformation as experienced by the people in Tajikistan remains as a quite unique and extreme example. Theorizing in an inductive direction, Tajikistan makes for a concentrated case that could aid in building theory through reflection and analysis of processes observed and investigated in research. The qualitative research paradigm used here can thus said to be an example of grounded theory approach. The goal of this approach is build a theory that fits the empirical evidence found in research (Neuman, 2006). In order to do this, the research I carried out for this dissertation is based on seeing “micro-level events as the foundation for a more macro-level explanation” (p. 60). Inquires about expert judgments on prevailing believes and possible tensions in Tajikistan here thus pertain to just that micro-level, in the discussion following the analysis of the material, I will attempt a more macro-level explanation by presenting a model relation that can serve as a basis for further research on conflict dynamics in similar settings.

Being an example for case-based research, however, I have to highlight the fact that this MA thesis is best described as an enhanced-case research. As such, the case of Tajikistan is looked at through the lens of particular concepts (Druckman, 2005), which have been discussed at length in the literature review. For the purpose of conducting exploratory research, the most feasible approach to data collection is to rely on qualitative data (Neuman, 2006). Especially the component of future projections would make quantitative studies on the subject difficult. While much effort would be needed to acquire enough data to make predictions, the evaluation of quantitative data would not guarantee a higher probability of correct predictions that do comparative evaluations based on expert judgments.

5.2. Research Design

In order to conduct the kind of exploratory research yielding qualitative data, the need for which has been outlined above, I will employ the method of telephone interviewing. In the interviews, two groups of experts on Tajikistan will be asked to share their opinion and give judgments on issues related to the research question outlined above. An expert for the purposes of this study shall be considered somebody who has worked on matters of Tajikistan closely related to peace and conflict, for instance an academic researcher or a representative of an NGO working in the field. The interviews will be conducted with two groups of experts: One group is comprised of members of the local Tajik community; the second group is comprised of members of the so-called international community. This element of comparing two different groups of people enters the research design as a safeguard against concerns of validity. That is to say, even if a number of experts from one group reliably report the same judgments, this wouldn't necessarily mean that these judgments would also apply for experts surrounded by a different discursive environment, for instance. For this reason, the two respondent groups were targeted for the inquiry at hand. In each, the influence of their respective discourse environments will manifest itself in the answers given.

If consent is given by the interviewee, telephone interviews will be recorded electronically. A semi-structured interview format ensures enough flexibility to both ask

for clarification and incorporate follow-up question into the interview. At the same time, this format provides the necessary rigor for acquiring information on the same matters of interest from different respondents. The questions are put in a way that they contribute to the answering the research question, yet avoid carrying suggestive connotations: the exploratory nature of the study at hand demands that a format as open to alternative considerations as possible is retained (Neuman, 2006). In order for the experts not to feel the need to speak entirely on behalf of their organization, anonymity will be assured to all respondents. The interview guide used during the interview calls (see Appendix B), was put together with the following rationale.

At the outset, following the general introduction – including a personal introduction and explaining the purpose of the study – and the request for consent to recording, the first question regards the interviewees personal work responsibilities and experience. He or she is asked to briefly introduce themselves and to describe their work, which serves two functions. First of all, it is a way of verifying that the interviewee is actually a person with local expertise and thus of relevance for the study. Secondly, it is an easy question to begin with, which is nonetheless meaningful beyond its mere content: the interviewee will be more comfortable answering further questions following this introduction since it establishes a more understanding and trusting relationship based on having shown interest in the work of the other.

Understanding peace dynamics and conflict potential in Tajikistan requires knowing about the current state of peace. The first question probes an evaluation of the 1997 peace agreement's implementation. The question is open, the aim of the question item to find out about perceptions of the success of the agreement and the actual nature of peace. When interviewees are asked to talk about the most prevalent social identities in present-day Tajikistan, since no examples are given in the question as such, it is up to them to talk about the one that comes to their mind. While religious and ethnonational identities can be assumed to be predominant in the answers, this need not be the case in the interviews. The third question makes use of the circumstance that Tajik president Rahmon is said to have referred to an enemy in several of his speeches, allegedly implicitly having neighboring Uzbekistan in mind (Jonson, 2006). Without direct mention of Uzbekistan, the question on who the enemy might be should give us a better understanding of enemy image perceptions and possible in-group – out-group divides that may exist in the country. The last two questions pertain to possible future conflict.

Question four asks for a judgment of the likelihood of conflict in case the country experiences further crisis and which groups would be involved in such a crisis. Question five asks for preventive measures that should be taken in order to further consolidate peace and prevent future conflict.

The process of sampling the interviewees for this study could be described simply as an acquisition of a convenient sample by means of using two relevant NGO directories²⁸. This sample could thereby be seen also as a purposive sample because all interviewees fit a set criteria (Neuman, 2006, p. 220), in this case that of being NGO-affiliated experts on Tajikistan. As Druckman (2005) points out, “it is essential to define what is meant by an expert” (p.197). I aimed to establish contact with key NGO experts involved in Tajikistan and with knowledge relevant to answering the research question. For this research, the experts are NGO representatives who not only have topical expertise on Tajikistan, they also have the direct experience and knowledge of everyday livelihoods relevant for this study. Since each organization was approached with the specific inquiry for an interview with a representative familiar with peacebuilding or conflict prevention aspects, the sampling process could also be called judgmental sampling (Druckman, 2005). The overall sample size with 10 interviewees is rather small; this is so for two reasons: For one, the scope of this MA research puts limits to the number of interviews that can be conducted, secondly, a research design involving experts judgments assumes a relatively small overall population of potential interview partners, especially for the case of a rather small country such as Tajikistan. Each informant was approached separately; acquiring contacts through snowball sampling could have seriously confounded the study, given the relatively small sample size.

My unit of analysis is thus the individual NGO representative or Tajikistan expert. The evaluation of their interviews requires careful analysis. Here, one has to highlight the need to make sense of the respondents’ subjective reasoning. My interpretation of their judgments is crucial to any successful synthesis of literature review and information acquired through research. I will use the technique of content analysis for the purposes of this study: I will employ latent coding, so I am going to be looking mainly at both the underlying meaning of the data collected in the audio recordings of

²⁸ One directory is provided by the Tajikistani Bureau of Human Rights (can be downloaded from <http://www.hrt.tj>, in Russian), the other one is taken from the Tajikistan directory chapter in (van Tongeren, van de Veen, & Verhoeven, 2002)

the interviews (Neuman, 2006). The open ended nature of the research design does not allow for any direct comparisons of the interviews that would involve manifest coding approaches.

5.3. Limitation of Method

In this last part of the methods section, I am going to address a number of shortcomings that can be identified as weaknesses of the research study at hand. The aspects discussed here are merely about *methodological* considerations, aspects that pertain to *general* limitations of the study will be discussed in the discussion chapter at the end of this thesis.

First and foremost, it is important to look at my role as the researcher. For the purpose of conducting personal qualitative interviews, not having been able to do field research in Tajikistan is certainly a major drawback. From the distance, as a researcher who has never been to the country he is writing about, it is always arguably difficult to get an authentic understanding of the current political situation and the fine nuances of societal developments. Having to rely solely on literature, the majority of which is also written by outside researchers, i.e. not by Tajikistanis, has the disadvantage that my knowledge of the case is an outcome of a two-step process or interpretation and therefore very prone to being shaped by biased perceptions.

In the case of Tajikistan, this is particularly unfortunate, since there is a lack of empirical data for the country. It would be helpful to have access to some sort of supplementary in-depth quantitative data (e.g. on values and identity construction). The lack of this data combined with the distance position of the researcher makes it rather difficult to analyze the overall situation and put other information into the right context.

Having staying in Turkey throughout the conduct of this study has thereby confined me to doing the personal interviews by phone; this circumstance in itself brings with it a number of further complications. For the type of exploratory qualitative interview, telephone interviews are certainly not the ideal type of data collection technique. This is true for a number of reasons. For one, the researcher and the

interviewee are not able to establish the kind of trusting relationship that would lead to an atmosphere more conducive to effectively producing results helpful in answering the central research question. Furthermore, personal one-on-one interviews are to be preferred because they allow for more communication channels being involved in the interview. For instance, a facial expression on the side of the interviewee might indicate confusion with a researcher's question, which would allow the researcher to react upon this. This of course is not a possibility for interviews conducted on the telephone.

There are also linguistic drawbacks in the conduct of the interviews. Although I consider my level of Russian to be good, I speak it with mistakes nonetheless. Also, my command of Russian might also not be sufficient to direct the interviewee's attention to the subject with the appropriate nuanced terms of expressions.

With regard the respondents, there are two main points that I would like to mention. First, there is the possibility of a response bias in the interviews. For example, if the interviewee has the impression that the interviewer expects clear judgment in undifferentiated terms, this might lead the person to exaggerate differences and distend small nuances to overall patterns. Also, the mere fact of being addressed as an expert might reduce the willingness of the interviewee to admit if he or she actually does not possess the sufficient expertise to make a good judgment on the specific question asked.

As far as the sampling is concerned, I had to rely on a purposive, yet convenient sample. More time and direct engagement in the field, i.e. in Tajikistan would have made it possible to follow a more systematic approach in sampling. This wouldn't have allowed for a wider range of respondents than used in the study at hand. Furthermore, the experts, in having a background in specific NGO or scholarly work, might be biased to judge certain aspects of conflict potential and identity as more prevalent merely because of their familiarity with the respective topic or aspect of Tajikistani politics/society. As Druckman (2005) points out, a further shortcoming of research relying on expert judgments lies with their tendency to focus on short-term rather than long-term developments.

6. FINDINGS

In the following, I will first present the main results of the content analysis pertaining to social identities and conflict likelihood. Furthermore, I will present findings about how the nature of peace in Tajikistan is viewed and suggestions on prioritizing of measures for conflict prevention.

Main findings

With regard to the main social identity, most respondents emphasized that how people construct their identity in Tajikistan is very mixed. It was pointed out that people generally have multiple social identities that may vary by context. Nonetheless, those respondents who indicated that Tajiks identify with several social identities also ranked them according to priority. To visualize which of these social identities are predominant, the respective answers were weighted accordingly. For instance, if regional identity was ranked 1st, but Muslim identity 4th, the former would be weighted with a factor of four.

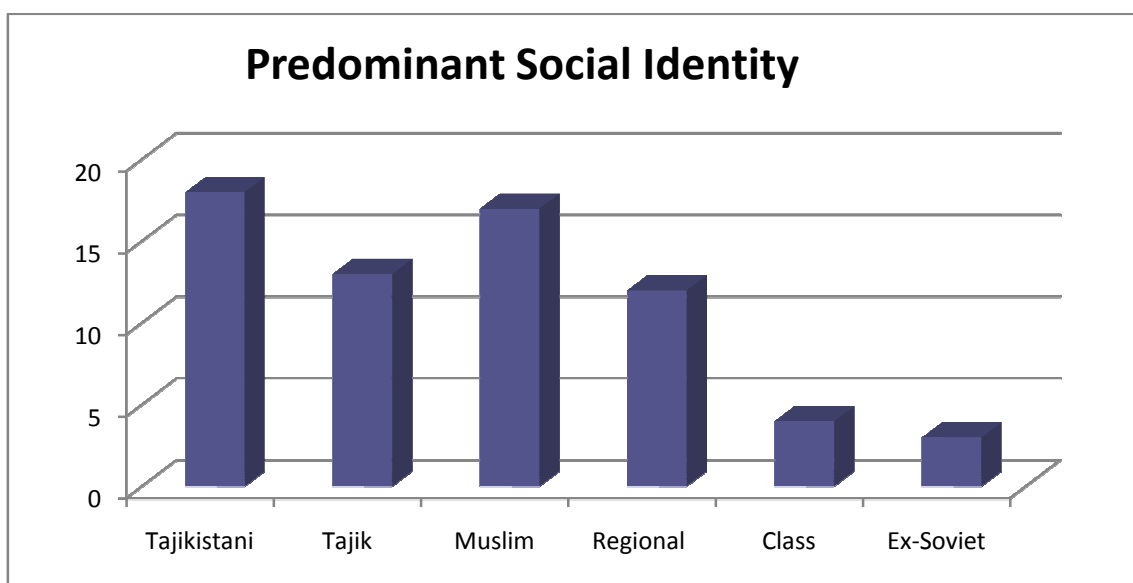


Fig. 1: Expert judgment about the main types of social identity/identities among people living in Tajikistan.

The two most predominant social identities were judged to be Tajikistani (citizen of Tajikistan) and Muslim. Also not insignificant, the identities of being ethnically Tajik and identification with a specific region in the country found frequent mention. Social identification along lines of class division or nostalgic cross-country ex-Soviet identity found little mention. It may well be the case that these are indeed important to peoples' identity, but not in a way that they would use these as answers to the question 'who are you' or 'which group do you belong to?'. Especially ex-Soviet identity may be a kind of identity that is not important in daily life, but becomes important when Tajiks travel or live abroad, even though it appears to become more and more difficult to connect to a common Soviet identity.

It is important to remember two things about the four predominant social identities. First of all, they do not constitute mutually exclusive categories. The Tajikistani and Tajik identities are sometimes distinguished, but often they are not. As one respondent said, "I think it is sort of conflated. (...) For many people it's the same, being Tajiks and living in Tajikistan. I don't think people quite distinguish it". Others pointed out ethnic minorities may be well aware of their own ethnicity, but at the same time, hold a strong Tajikistani identity.

When it comes to estimating the likelihood of future conflict in the country, without exception, all respondents estimated conflict potential to be low or very low. However, reasons for this unanimous agreement are manifold: They start with the conviction that peacebuilding workshops have transformed Tajikistan's approach to conflicts, and end with relying on the big powers' interest in regional stability.

When it comes to the central aim of the study, identifying the way in which social identity is expected to influence dynamics of conflict in Tajikistan, the results are not very conclusive. As far as potential causes future conflict were concerned, those were judged mostly to be likely linked to developments in neighboring countries, e.g. Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Besides this as factor, both nationalist and religious identities were named as having a possibly important role in future conflict. However, the link does not seem to be direct, but rather connected to mediating circumstances. All in all, it does not seem possible to predict a direct effect of either religious identity or ethnonationalist identity on future conflict, nor can anything be said about their respective prevalence the likelihood of such conflict in Tajikistan, we can say that they

both have a potentially important role. However, through this research a number of other factors have become apparent.

The central finding is that the Social Identity Theory model of a direct social identity – conflict link was rejected. It appears to be the case that the mere construction of new social identities in Tajikistan does not lead to conflict directly. We therefore need to discuss whether Social Identity Theory is flawed in itself or whether this weak social identity transformation – conflict proneness link is case-specific, whether it has to do with the circumstances found in Tajikistan.

While future conflict is seen as unlikely, it is not seen as impossible. There appear to be a number of mediating variables that would influence conflict potential. In order to arrive at an early warning system for Tajikistan, it may be useful to discuss and map how different factors, which were not previously considered, potentially interrelate. In this context, developments in all neighboring states may play a role: Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Afghanistan all influence the course of events in Tajikistan in significant ways. Internally, the state of democracy and the state of the economy are the two main factors influencing potential for conflict. As can be seen in the graph below, developments in neighboring countries is the factor which was mentioned most frequently.

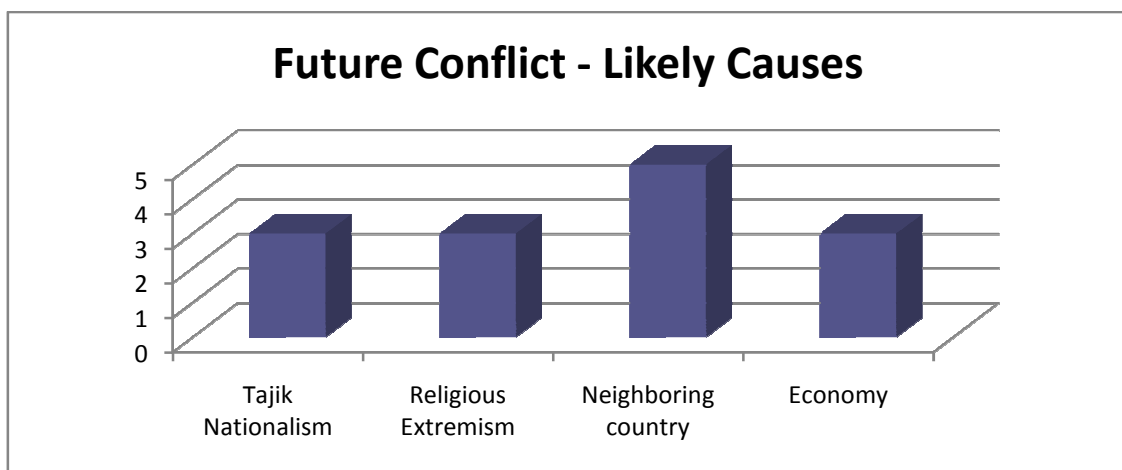


Fig.2: Expert judgments about factors that might contribute to future conflict in Tajikistan.

Further findings

As far as results of the war and the impact on the nature of peace are concerned, there appear to be two conflicting views on the outcomes. One view attests that people are suffering from a kind of war fatigue and an understanding of war being the least favorable way of dealing with problems. This view suggests that people assume a strategy that involves them to rather avoid and accommodate than to face and negotiate problems. The other view attests a more positive outcome of the post-accord peacebuilding: its proponents claim that people have benefited from the post-conflict peacebuilding work and the conflict resolution workshops that went along with it.

Overall, the implementation of the peace agreement is viewed as a success and even as a very important achievement for Tajikistan. Half the respondents voiced discontent with one or more aspects of the agreement's implementation. The most common mention here was that the opposition is not continuously being granted as much influence as the accord reserves for them.

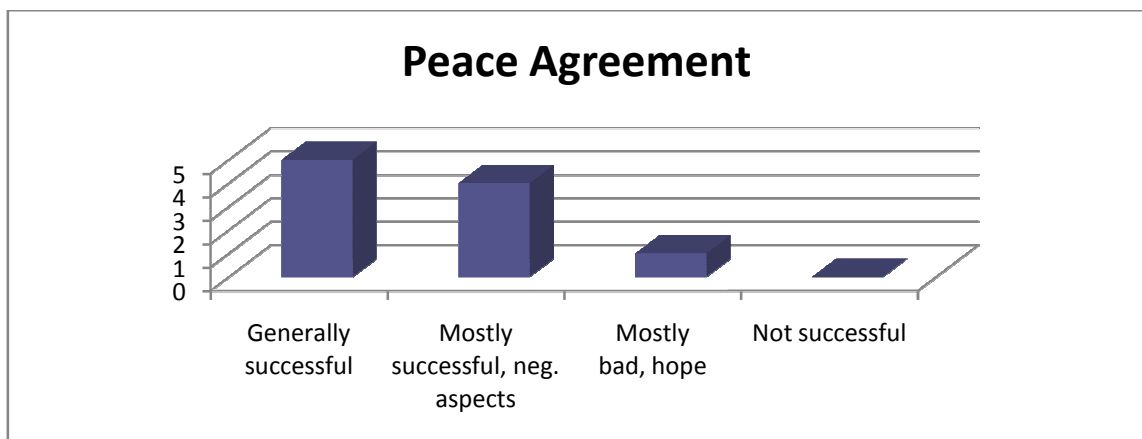


Fig. 3: Expert judgments on how successful the 1997 peace agreement was implemented in the years since.

In terms of conflict prevention, the most common response was that the most necessary thing is to improve people's life standards. There was a shared understanding that if people are poor and in need, they are more susceptible to radical groups or movements that could threaten peace in the long run. Other suggested means of conflict prevention also revolved around the idea of achieving a decreased susceptibility of the common people, especially of the younger generation. General education, religious education, strengthening of opposition parties' access to power, youth involvement,

better migration regulations, inter-community dialogue were all aspects deemed necessary for the consolidation of peace. Very interesting was also the relatively frequent mention of the need for a common national idea or project. The general idea here is that national unity is one of the key factors in preventing or mitigating conflict.



Fig.4: Expert judgment about factors that need to be addressed in order to prevent conflict escalation in the future and further consolidate peace.

As far as the international situation and conflict prevention is concerned it was pointed out that on the one hand, much depends on the development of Tajik-Uzbek relations and even more on the course that Afghanistan will take following the withdrawal of the US and its allies. On the other hand, the strong presence of the international community and the overall importance of interstate peace for the superpowers provide the highest possible level of security in the eyes of the NGO experts.

7. DISCUSSION

7.1. Nature of Peace

Without any doubt, Tajikistan counts as an example of a post-conflict country that has thus far managed not to relapse into conflict. A mutually agreed peace agreement, its relatively successful implementation, as well as UN-driven peacebuilding with the support of many international and local NGOs, appear to more or less have consolidated peace.

This type of peace is nonetheless a negative peace. In the words of a representative from an international NGO this even threatens the stability of peace in general:

Peace in Tajikistan is a negative peace, meaning the lack of war. But it doesn't mean the situation is becoming more and more stable and that the peace is becoming more and more sustainable. No, I think it is sort of like a negative peace, meaning that there is no war, but the country remains fragile.

There appear to be many structural problems that all revolve around the fact that people experience lack of opportunity, in economic and political terms. In economic terms, there is not enough work to employ the labor force, so young men have little choice but to emigrate in order to find work and support their families back home. Remittances are one of the main pillars on which Tajikistan's economy rests. As another worker of an international NGO put it, "half of the budget of Tajikistan, and it's not a secret, is made of migrant remittances. And those are sustaining even the political and social situation in the country. Otherwise there would happen civil unrest."

In political terms, the chance of opportunity is similarly limited. Even though initially the peace agreement guaranteed that opposition members would not only receive a fair share in the political, but also in the administrative realm, this mode of

power sharing seems to have been done away with in the past years. A local NGO representative points out that it did not take very long for the authoritarian Tajik government to turn the agreement upside down:

The power of president Rahmon got strengthened and he moved away from any commitments. For example, there was a guaranteed quote of 30% for representatives of the opposition for positions in the power structures. But within two or three years after [the agreement], these people were – either for subjective or objective reasons – removed from their posts.

Allegations not only go against Rahmon strengthening the position of the PDP by arresting opposition members, they furthermore go into the direction of what Heathershaw (2009b) had labeled *virtual politics of peace*. A representative of a local research center summarizes the situation that limits Tajikistan's political pluralism as follows:

All other parties that wanted to change something in the political life are exposed to various kinds of pressure. Besides, through founding new fractions of those [governing] parties through splitting those parties, or through the establishment of some quasi-parties, like the Party of Economic Development or the Agrarian Party, which in my view are no more than marionettes in the hands of the leading elites. Except for the Islamic Renaissance Party, there is no other political party that could through political means lead a fight for power.

Together, lack of opportunity in the job market and suppressive or virtual political elites in power constitute a kind of negative peace that until now has remained remarkably stable. In the light of this stability, it may be interesting to analyze what kind of peace conception most Tajikistanis have.

Throughout all the interviews, conflict was seen as rather unlikely not only because of the stability of government and its unchallenged way of clinging to power, but also because renewed conflict would not find any support among citizens of Tajikistan. Some of the respondents suggest that people are upset with the government, yet keep calm because they fear recurrence of violence, in the end preferring negative peace over fighting for an improvement of their livelihoods. Others point to possibility that the tremendous amount of conflict resolution workshops and trainings that had been carried out in the country in the years following the civil war actually were quite successful. In line with this argument, people would have learned how to deal with disagreements, solving them effectively and non-violently. The experience of a bloody

civil war may indeed have led to both fatigue of war and initiated a learning process that now makes alternative paths for problem solving appear more feasible. A local NGO director put it this way:

The people clearly do not want another war, everybody has realized that everything can be solved and decided upon by way of dialogue and a more democratic approach to any problems which arise. This approach includes principles of peace, also principles of peacebuilding, observing human rights, and so on.

Nonetheless, these two attitudes towards conflict represent two fundamentally opposed contentions. The former emphasizes the post-war apathy and conflict avoidance; the latter emphasizes the capacity for participatory problem-solving. If apathy and conflict-avoidance actually turned out to be the less predominant of the two attitudes, future conflict situations could be brought to solutions earlier and through addressing root causes. As the literature review and the interviews have shown, it seems as though there will be enough chances in the future to prove whether people actually got trained well in the many workshops conducted. If mere avoidance attitudes are the only thing that prevent people from voicing and showing discontent, then also potential conflicts will only be postponed and thereby possibly hardened.

Regardless of the negative peace and possible doubts about how effectively conflict resolution skills have been transferred to Tajikistanis, one aspect of present-day Tajikistan is remarkable. For a post-conflict society, there are few visible signs of what could be considered a culture of violence.

With regard to the implementation of the peace agreement and the phases of peacebuilding and peace consolidation, it remains open how successful this overall process actually was. By some hailed as a model transition from conflict to peace, other observers and respondents see the peace agreement statutes fulfilled unsatisfactory. The divergence in opinions maybe best summed up with the statements of one interviewee, who said the case of Tajikistan “may serve as a lesson for other countries struggling with conflict” but at the same time drew attention to the fact that developments in the past years have been anything but exemplary: “I think that after the establishment of peace and national accord, on the issues of strengthening state power country the country’s government has gone a little beyond or distanced itself from any commitment in the two-side agreement.”

Should one consider the implementation of the peace agreement as having been just or unjust? The circumstance that the IRP is losing votes in recent elections and the suppression of other parties can be seen as characteristic of a systemic power imbalance found in any authoritarian regime. If the benchmark for success of the agreement is ending the physical violence, while establishing a fully functional liberal democracy is not a criterion, we can definitely call the accord implementation successful. This furthermore defies the argument of Tajikistan possibly being a failed state: An authoritarian regime that is able to uphold power, even though through the use of structural violence, is nonetheless to be seen as a functioning state entity.

Overall conflict potential is judged to be low. The most optimistic explanations for this would be to assume that Tajikistanis are truly satisfied with the status quo and their current government. Furthermore, it would one could assume that the country has undergone a model conflict transformation, now being an example for having created a culture in which domestic conflicts are openly addressed and underlying issues resolved. Much more realistic is the underlying sentiment in most of the interviews: The people are frustrated with the economic situation and unhappy with the current political regime, yet remember the war and are content with the status quo as being the lesser 'evil'. Keeping the memory of the war alive and reminding citizens of his role in the peace process may actually be one of Rahmon's most important strategies for remaining in power despite all problems the country is facing. While memory of the war continues to play an important role, it is important to remember that Tajikistan is a relatively young country. A Tajik expert working at an international NGO drew attention to the aspect of demographic change in process:

The generations are changing. Those kids who (...) do not remember and not even know what the civil war was, they are just the new generation that does not even have the fear of repetition of those events that were in the past. It is us [the older generations] who do not want a civil war to come back. But looking at the current situation, Tajikistan is like on the brink of despair. The situation, I would say, could deteriorate or worsen in the nearest future. The state power is still powerful enough in terms of keeping the situation, but this may not continue endlessly.

Peace in Tajikistan today is stable in itself, but it does not represent a sustainable and lasting kind of peace. Furthermore, there is no conflict potential inherent in the

present-day situation, but a number of factors may influence the proneness for conflict in the coming years.

Furthermore, it has also been pointed out that religion plays a role in unifying people. One NGO representative mentioned that “in general, in a cultural perspective, religion also helps people to have a common identity”, adding that this common identity could tie together people from different Central Asian nations, that are nonetheless predominantly Muslim.

7.2. Conflict Potential

The changes in social identity in Tajikistan are evident, and both national identity and religious identity may have been promoted with more fervor than in other Central Asian republics. The distinct and unique Persian heritage and the post-conflict mesmerizing idea of a national unity gave legitimacy for the government to promote an ethnonationalist Tajik identity. Being the only republic having legally recognized an Islamic political party and promoting Islam as part of the national heritage, may make religious identity more prominent as well. Nonetheless, the basic assumption of these social identities inherently promoting negative intergroup behavior does not hold true. Neither religious identity nor ethnonationalist identity are seen as sources of possible conflict and in fact, not even tension. Why this is the case cannot be fully explained with the research data at hand. It may be possible that the formation of these identities takes place in a way that does not marginalize or stigmatize members of out-groups. For the two kinds of social identity under scrutiny, these groups could be non-believers and ethnic minorities, respectively. Alternatively, the identities could indeed be promoted in a marginalizing fashion, using for instance stigmatizing language. It may be quite possible that people living in Tajikistan today do not find the logic of a single level mono-cultural identity convincing. After all, even throughout the Soviet era, for instance, most of them experienced life as having both Tajik and Uzbek cultural components. Furthermore, even though ethnic and religious identity did not play a big role during those days, different identities at multiple levels were the norm already: people identified both as Soviets and with having a specific regional background. As a

third alternative, the tendency for negative intergroup behavior may well exist, but not find its manifestation in actual tensions. Either newly acquired conflict resolution skills or war apathy may suffice to channel problematic tendencies and therefore deflect conflict potential.

A number of factors were mentioned that might nonetheless have the power to increase likelihood for conflict. Here, one needs to distinguish between different types of conflict potential for Tajikistan's case. There are factors that promote the chance for an inter-state conflict and there are factors that increase the chance for intra-state conflict.

As for inter-state conflict, the only problematic relationship is between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. "Tajikistan traditionally has quite good relations with all other Central Asian states, except Uzbekistan", is how one international NGO representative put it. In part, Uzbekistan is simply trying to gain further independence from Russia and its allies; Tajikistan as an ally of Russia is thus naturally not a friend. The border is partially closed, in some parts of the northern border crossing between the two republics; mine fields have remained from the time of the war. Today, much of the political tension between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has its root in the distribution of natural resources. While Tajikistan is dependent on natural gas supplies from the west, Uzbekistan depends on water coming from the mountainous east, from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan blocks the building of the Rogun dam in Tajikistan by refusing transit deliveries needed for the construction. A staff member from a local NGO, even argues that Uzbekistan engages in "imperialist foreign policy". He also claims that Uzbekistan has extended trade limitations further: "At present, Uzbekistan is practically implementing a full economic blockade – something that the whole world is watching quietly and completely calm. If this kind of blockade is held up and continued, the consequences will be unpredictable." This problem seems to have increased most recently. End of May 2010, Uzbekistan claimed that 'technical difficulties' made it impossible to allow cross border transit of about 2,500 cargo trains. Uzbekistan says it lacks resources to repair the dysfunctional tracks, but has rejected Tajikistan's offer to take on the repair works itself (Najibullah, 2010). In an environment where independent news sources are scarce, media on both sides play a role in accompanying these developments with infiltrating people to be more nationalist. Treatment of the respective ethnic minorities is put into especially negative light. Uzbek media is said to

paint a picture of an overly impoverished Tajikistan, claiming that even bread was hard to get at. This does not seem to stir up tensions between Tajik and Uzbek groups, however.

The thing is that people understand, both Tajiks and Uzbeks, that it is a political issue and that these obstacles are created by the political leaders of Uzbekistan, but not by the people of Uzbekistan. This is considered here and people understand well. That's why they are not against Uzbek people, they are against Uzbek decision makers. (Local Tajik NGO representative)

Overall, conflict within the country are seen as more likely than a conflict between different republics. Asked whether a conflict between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan can be seen as the most likely type of conflict, one interviewee responded:

No, no. Within Tajikistan, there might be a conflict. I think there might be serious tensions within Tajikistan between different groups. Or just between the current elite and the population, because the population is growing more and more irritated with current policies. But of course the civil side is very weak and the opposition is weak, so I don't really see an individual really or a leader who could mobilize this discontent at the moment.

That above quote further answers the question whether anti-government riots or even ethnic violence as Kyrgyzstan is experiencing them (April and June 2010), are likely to take place in Tajikistan as well. Civic society in Tajikistan seems to be weak and apathetic, political opposition is muffled by the authoritative Rahmon regime. Historically, the relationship between the Uzbek and Tajik ethnic groups is a very different from the Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations. Also, during the early years of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan used to be one republic with influences from two cultures and linguistic groups more or less melted into a 'third culture'. Tajik-Uzbek ties are considered to be very positive; one interviewee described them as follows:

The relationships between the ethnic groups are very strong at the local level, at the community level. And even Tajiks and Uzbeks are relatives, are married to each other. I wouldn't say that any kind of crises happening in the world would influence to the relationships between ethnic groups in Tajikistan.

At the same time, respondents drew attention to the diversity *within* the Tajik ethnicity, suggesting there might be conflict between ethnically different Tajik clans:

So far, there haven't been any clashes or conflict situations between ethnic minorities, let's say between Tajiks and Uzbeks. But as you

might now, Tajiks separate themselves as well. Like between Pamiris, those who are from Badakhshan, Kulobis, those who are from the south of Tajikistan, although they are all Tajik. I would say there wouldn't be any conflict anymore that was before not the ethnic groups but the fight between the Tajiks themselves.

The possible tensions between Tajiks themselves mentioned in this quote point more to the possibility of a conflict between different regions than a purely ethnic struggle. At the same time, the likelihood of inner-country tensions is also not independent of the international context. Developments in Afghanistan are due to take a more essential turn. In the worst case scenario, this could result in extremists re-gaining power and potentially taking control over several regions following the withdrawal of ISAF forces. As many of these Islamist groups operate transnationally, this could have significant impacts on Tajikistan. In several interviews, it was pointed out that while radical Islam is weak in present-day Tajikistan, it could become stronger and more visible if the situation in Afghanistan changes. The border between the two states is already very permeable, as the unimpeded drug trade and some minor extremist activity show:

Some attempt from Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan are happening – not so often, of course – but there are some cases of crossing the border from Afghanistan or organizing some small fights in the bordering areas. (...) Not so frequent. One case was last year, it has been almost one and a half years and we had no more cases.

Social identities of the own population are something that is directly affected by many of the policy choices made by the Tajikistani leaders. The level of ethnonational affiliation or knowledge about Islam has to do with various policy choices made by the government. In the process of nation-building, the worst thing in terms of conflict potential would be if the focus was put on an exclusive kind of ethnonationalist identity that might work mostly with enemy images.

These enemy images sometimes involve the mentioning of different ethnic groups. As mentioned above, interethnic conflict within Tajikistan is unlikely due to good relations between the people, where Uzbek or Tajik ethnic belonging does not play much of a role. The political elites nonetheless attempt to instrumentalize the ethnic factor for their own purposes.

Ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan and ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan, they by themselves do not constitute conflict-creating factors. But the political

elites of both countries, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, sometimes make use of these moments to divert attention of their citizens away from their domestic political and socio-economic problems.

The main potential trigger of any internal struggle – regardless of the form that it would take – is the worsening economic situation. Danger of economic collapse, heavy reliance on remittances and foreign dependency due to lack of substantial natural resources in the country itself all paint a rather dark picture of Tajikistan's future. One respondent emphasizes that a lot of research goes into the question of future prospect of Tajikistan. This research, he says, is not worried about a political crisis, but very much concerned with the economic situation. He says that there are only two reasons for possible escalation, and these “reasons are poverty and inflation”. It is very hard to predict what such an escalation would mean in more definite terms. It would be possible that people blame the government for the bad situation, but it would also be thinkable that anger and aggression are channeled and directed at a scapegoat, e.g. a regional group, an ethnic group or against non-radical Muslims.

Nonetheless, people seem to remain cynically optimistic and confident that Tajikistanis are capable of bearing an even heavier burden.

The financial crisis had actually an impact. But people here are joking that we face a financial crisis since 1992 and it has continued so far. No financial crisis and nothing else in the world would cause more bad than what we are having since 1992.

7.3. Religious Identity

The answers with regard to religious identity generally reflected the effects of ambiguity that religious identity is said to have. Most respondents alluded to an increase of religiosity or process of Islamization, which has been and is taking place in Tajikistan. This process, however, seems to be evaluated differently. For some interviewees, this increase is directly connected also to the stronger position of extremist groups like the Hizb ut-Tahrir or the transnationally active IMU. For others, this is sign of a normal and healthy development, where in a Muslim society, there is both a party representing Muslim interests in parliament and a general increase of interest towards subjects related with Islam.

The threat of having Islamists striving for and eventually taking power in the country some day is seen as a realistic one, especially if the Islamization of society provides the appropriate background for such a development. One respondent even saw the main conflict threat in the country with extremist Islamism: “If there is something that threatens Tajikistan today, it is the further Islamization of society and that Islamists could rise to power.”

It has been pointed out that it is difficult to estimate the strength of radical groups and the prevalence of extremist activity in the country. This is so because there appears to be some kind of media censorship that goes so far as to not cover terrorist incidents in the news. One NGO representative offered an example from personal experience:

Something might happen and most of the public will not know about it because the news agencies are censored. I once witnessed a terrorist attack, it was in 1999, when a protestant church was bombed by three terrorists. They left the bombs and exploded them by remote control and a lot of people died and were injured. There was no a lot of noise about it. (...) It appeared in Russian news agencies, because there were some reporters from a Russian news agency, but in ours there was nothing.

The general shared view amongst the experts interviewed, however, is that extremist groups have been able to increase their influence on the people, but are kept well in check by the Tajikistani authorities. Furthermore, there is no extremist movement that is unique to Tajikistan, all movements are active in numerous countries. It appears to be the case that the suppression of Uyghurs in western Xinjiang drives many people there into the hands of radical Islamist groups. Afghanistan is known for its notorious Taliban and al-Qaeda groups. Most of the terrorist attacks carried out by the IMU and the Hizb ut-Tahrir target Uzbekistan, however:

There are different types of extremist groups (...) the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, (...) Hizb ut-Tahrir. (...) Those are the main threat, not just in Tajikistan, but in the region as a whole. Because these groups are in Uzbekistan as well, and in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There were some events in the past when these groups invaded Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz power could hardly manage to fight with them and to bring the situation to normal conditions. But I wouldn't say it a serious issue [in Tajikistan] because the current state structure keeps a constant eye on these. Everything is more or less under control in that regard.

In general, while an increase in religious identity is pointed out as a societal phenomenon, it doesn't appear to be the primary concern of people with regard to conflict potential in the country. On the contrary, it is even seen as a chance for promoting a culture of peace that could foster supranational understanding with neighboring populations, who share the same belief system. As an IGO representative told me that a stronger religious identity could help to prevent conflict: "In a cultural perspective, religion also helps people to have a common identity. Like Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, all of them are Muslim and that would unify people." He put this on the condition that people need to be learn to understand the Islam better, suggesting it would not only unify people, but also make people less susceptible to radical groups:

The religion, so bringing people the essence of Islam, is also important. I wouldn't say that people, even if they pray, are well-educated about what is the Islam and what it means. That's why when some people who are not educated, they can listen to everybody.

Especially young people with low education levels are perceived as susceptible to the propaganda of Islamist groups, as they feel the economic deprivation and lack of access to power most.

The element of having a functioning and recognized Islamic party in Tajikistani politics was considered a very important element throughout the interviews. While the IRP has not managed to gain enough votes to assume government responsibilities, they are nonetheless represented in the parliament. Many observers put a lot of hope into the IRP's future role:

The fact of the existence [of opposition parties] is telling about the possibility to go the next steps, to advance the process gradually year by year – well, I am sure that if there are no outside negative factors, the role of opposition parties and in particular that of the Islamic Renaissance Party will without doubt increase in importance.

Yet, currently the IRP is caught in a constant dilemma with regard to its own future development. If it shifts in order to become more religious-radical, the majority government would take steps to ban the party on grounds of extremism. On the other hand, the IRP knows that it can also not become too similar to the Rahmon's party because voters are likely to choose contiguity over change if the two alternatives are too similar.

7.4. Ethnonationalist Identity

Ethnonationalist identity seems to be a weaker form of social identity than Muslim identity. However, as pointed out before, neither the people in Tajikistan nor the interviewees necessarily distinguish Tajik and Tajikistani as clearly as I was expecting: Ethnic Tajikness and being a citizen of Tajikistan thus for many appears to be the same, despite the multiethnic composition of the country.

Nonetheless, an ethnic Tajik identity appears to be one of the central and certainly the most promoted aspects of government ideology. This promotion of Tajik ethnicity often takes the forms of symbolism:

The government now imposes the identity of the great Tajik nation, which many centuries ago reigned across the region, it covered the biggest part of Central Asia and present Afghanistan. These symbols (...), like Ismail Somoni, who is the founder of the first Tajik state with the capital in Bukhara (...). Somoni is a very important historical figure for the nation. The government really imposes this identity of Somoni nation. We have a lot of geographical annexes with Somoni: Like districts, mountains, streets, avenues, a lot of monuments and the national currency is called Somoni.

The circumstance that this Samanid – Tajik identity does not yet seem to be an important aspect of how the average people identify themselves shows that ethnonationalism at this point in time is both an elitist discourse and an important element for politicians in power to bridge discord resulting from regionalist identities.

Yet there is some doubt that even at the level of the elites, politicians are sincere about a purely ethnonational type of Tajik identity. For one, it is assumed that a unified ethnic identity is consciously used in order to promote unity and stability. Furthermore, the main focus is on the nation-state Tajikistan and only to a lesser degree on the ethnic heritage of the Tajik people. This can be seen when the delicate subjects of the Tajik cities of Bukhara and Samarqand are mentioned, both of which are located in present-day Uzbekistan.

I don't think that the official discourse really refers to different regions that much or to the regionally determined identity. The national identity is 'one united Tajikistan' and it doesn't matter where you originate from. And especially I don't think that any reference to being from Samarqand, for instance is encouraged. Because Samarqand is in Uzbekistan, with which Tajikistan has a rather strain

relationship. And now the official rhetoric is that one national identity is advocated for, promoted.

This account of nation-state promotion is interesting because it suggests that central elements of Tajik history are omitted in the process of nation-building if they are not congruent with the current borders of the state. In the memories of average Tajik people, however, such feelings do not spark irredentist hopes, but at the least they are nostalgic and full of sorrow about the current situation of the minority Tajik population that lives in Uzbekistan:

People here still believe than Bukhara and Samarqand belong to Tajikistan. In terms of the treatment of the Tajiks minorities in Bukhara and Samarqand, I would say the situation is really bad, in my opinion and according to what I am hearing here in Tajikistan.

Referring to the past as a basis for a national origin is not the only way in which the myth of nation is construed. Balibar (1991) argues that such stories about national origin gain their ideological efficacy by asserting to be manifestations of a peoples' common destiny. "It is on the basis of the definition of peoplehood that the nation-state is portrayed as the culmination of a directional, rational 'project' that unfolds linearly and cohesively" (Balibar, 1991, pp. 86-87). While the nation-state thus by itself functions as directional end-state in nation-building, it should not be surprising to find further projects, which are about building a better and self-determined future for the nation. The biggest potential boost for a unified national identity, that actually is more citizenship-focused than ethnically, is that of the building of the Rogun dam: "Necessary above all is some kind of a national idea, like in the example of the Rogun hydropower plant. What would be necessary is another such idea." By having citizens buy stakes and become shareholders in the project of building what would be the world's largest hydropower plant dam, several important and yet different goals are being reached. At the surface level, the dam would set out to solve the biggest of Tajikistan's economic problems in for the long run: It would not only do away with long-lasting black outs that have crippled the economy, it would also enable resource-scarce Tajikistan to export energy to other countries, even to Pakistan and China, for instance. Yet at the same time, it would also increase Tajikistan's power over the downstream flow of water, which is a major power factor in its relation to Uzbekistan. One NGO representative sees it as the main dilemma that inhibits the country's development: "nobody in the region wants us to develop because everybody knows

what potential Tajikistan has in terms of water resources". The expected boost for Tajikistan's economy is also not to be neglected:

In my view, the perspective of Tajikistan depends a lot on whether the Rogun dam is built. If this project works out, then development of Tajikistan will increase successfully. Why is Rogun so very important? When one roughly counts the economic benefits of this project, one will end up with more than a billion dollars. This is an investment not only fighting the poverty but one that is a means for the development of the state. This is very important for Tajikistan. Because of this the people should come up with the solution to realize this project. In any case, step by step, we will carry forward this idea.

The reason for why this dam project is so significant in terms of guaranteeing an increase in national unity in Tajikistan is because it is potentially independent of success or failure. The mere fact of this project being framed as a common national project with the involvement of virtually all Tajikistanis is one aspect. The more important one is that citizens literally do have their stake in the building of the Rogun dam, which makes the future of the project an essential mission for individuals as well. Should the project succeed in the long run, it is likely to be a main source of national pride, and indeed, a kind of national pride that could assure inter-ethnic unity rather than a divisive ethnonationalist focused pride. If in turn, the project fails to become realized, either for reasons of insufficient funds or for reasons of foreign opposition to the project, this could unite the stakeholders to the project, i.e. Tajikistani citizens, against the perceived foreign enemy that then certainly would be blamed for having prevented the success of the common Tajik project. Here, I would suggest that it also wouldn't matter whether a perceived enemy actually played a role in the prevention or not. Even in case of little outside involvement and mere financial impossibility to proceed with the completion of the dam, it would be likely that politicians and the media would make use of the opportunity of blaming an outsider for failure. Such a negative perception of Uzbekistan for example, regardless of whether then partially justified or not, could lead to a major deterioration of the already problematic political relations and depending on a number of economic and political factors also affect the otherwise positive relations between the two peoples of Uzbeks and Tajiks. For now, however, it is well understood that the negative relations between the countries stem more from the quarrels of the countries' leadership than from a rift between their peoples: "The factor of these personalities in both countries, here and in Uzbekistan, has a very high significance. Imagine: the

interrelations between the two peoples, this is roughly 30 million people, entirely depends on the mutual relations of these two figures.”

7.5. Conflict Prevention Parameters

With regard to conflict prevention, there were a vast number things mentioned possible as measures. The one which closest related to the social identities focused on in this dissertation is probably the aspect of education. While first of all, it is important in order raise people’s awareness towards the state and its functions, thereby empowering them to seize political action. Generally speaking, it is also important that people understand their social identities better. Especially becoming aware of the different faces of religion, understanding the real motivations of specific extremist groups, is important for people so that they are able to resist joining radical Islamist groups out of mere frustration. Only if the young generation, who often do not have a very bright prospect of their future, are able to resist the Islamists’ propaganda, the influence of such groups can be effectively limited.

Furthermore, religion can also serve as means of understanding transnational identity through highlighting that all Central Asians at least share religion as a common denominator. If Islam is preached in a peaceful and moderate way, it should be impossible for wars to develop between different ethnic groups or movements of different ideological conviction.

Apart from that, it is important for people to get a better and more reflected understanding of regional history that would allow them to appreciate their diverse national heritage. When people are educated in terms of the recent history of the country, a more differentiated view on the advantages and disadvantages of the Soviet System may develop. This is especially important with regard to understanding how arbitrary the division of nations was and that this in itself should unmask any potential exclusive ethnonational identity as a preposterous concept. In this context, knowledge of the Russian language has also been pointed out as a useful element that would aid inter-national communication and understanding, especially in the regional context of CIS countries.

The current government should promote the idea of the great history of Tajikistan, but it shouldn't ever reject positive impacts that Soviet civilization had on Tajikistan and maybe keep some of the best traits from these times. Like, for instance, good relationships with other post-Soviet republics and keep the Russian language as a very important tool for social development. Because now they say 'we are Tajiks, we should speak Tajik'. That is a positive promotion. But my opinion on this is that [while] you should consider yourself a Tajik, you can speak the Tajik language, but you should also position yourself as a part of the huge post-Soviet community, which enables you to go to Russia for work, which enables you to be friends with Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Uzbeks.

Strengthening the opposition, especially through access to power for the IRP, could serve as a very important element in prevention of future conflict. As an Islamic party, it is likely that the IRP would emphasize the need to reach out in a positive way to neighboring Muslim nations. More importantly, however, the stronger the IRP gets, the less likely would extremist organization such as the Hizb ut-Tahrir succeed in increasing their influence.

From the perspective of migration and remittances, it is important to either find stable agreements with Russia that would ensure that Tajiks can continue to work abroad and thereby support their home country with remittances. Also, a diversification of target countries for labor migration might be beneficial. It has been pointed out, for instance, that more and more labor migrants now work in countries such as Saudi Arabia, which previously did not play much of a role in this regard. If for one reason or the other, migrants were forced to return to Tajikistan in large numbers, this would have both negative consequences and carry the potential for social and political change. As a representative of an international NGO stated:

A fundamental part of the population is abroad, this the population that is both capable of working and also the socially and politically active – they live abroad. And if for example, just half of them – 500,000 people – were to be deported from Russia, Tajikistan could hope for the strongest social surge.

Not only in case this happened, but also in general terms, Tajikistan's economy needs aid programs from the international community in order to get people, especially those qualified, employed in Tajikistan so they don't have to emigrate. As the above quote indicates, the portion of the population that could initiate economic and political change has little choice but to work abroad. The economy of the country has therefore

never had the chance to become self-sustainable at least to some degree. What's worse, international aid in the past decade has increasingly moved away from money grants towards money loans, further increasing Tajikistan's dependency by indebting the country to the West (Heathershaw, 2009a).

7.6. Shortcomings and Limitations

The division of local and international community in the interviews was not as clear cut as I had hoped for. Since many of the international NGOs employ local staff and some of the local NGOs are heavily involved in projects founded by international organizations, they cannot be expected to represent opinions of separate discursive communities. On the other hand, this had the advantage that the vast majority of respondents had had a personal and direct connection to the subjects at hand and were thus both expert judges of developments from a social scientific point of view, but also part of the society that had experienced the civil war and the peacebuilding process.

There is no possibility of validating the expertise of the interview partners, as a consequence it is hardly possible for me to weigh the impact of what their saying in a statistical kind of an analysis. Also, with the scope of this research and considering the small target case, it was not possible to negotiate the most appropriate expert for me to talk to, with each organization anew. A convenient sample was hard enough to get to as it was.

While this research cannot validate the claims made as to the likelihood of a certain event taking place or even check for the factual correctness of the statements given in the interviews, I want to make clear that this is entirely in line with the aim of the research, as the focus is entirely on perceptual judgments of conflict potential, in this case the perceptions of NGO representatives. If these perceptions turn out to be factually wrong they nonetheless have their value in being informative about an opinion that possibly shapes peacebuilding work in Tajikistan or reflects general misconceptions in the population. Perceptions, expectations and judgments themselves guide decisions, policy and otherwise and therefore may in effect turn to become self-fulfilling prophecies.

7.7. Implications for further research

In the following I will present possible options for further research on the matter of potential future conflict in Tajikistan. I will start off with methodological considerations and then list some of the topics that I would consider worthwhile investigating further.

A lot of the questions of this research were actually aimed at investigating social psychological aspects of social identity, attitudes towards peace and prejudice toward out-groups. As pointed out in the previous section, qualitative interviews with experts can only give a limited account of how the actual average citizen actually does feel and think. The judgments provided are necessarily second-hand assessments of other people's psychological parameters. In order to really get a good understanding of the above-mentioned psychological concepts, quantitative research employing large samples would be needed. Such research could, for instance, investigate the values and attitudes of people with regard to Islam and ethnonationalism as well as probe for signs of prejudice against national minorities or citizens from neighboring countries.

As for a recent and to the best of my knowledge unstudied developments in the Tajik case, I would suggest that the Rogun dam would be a topic worthwhile being studied in its own right. Aspects around propaganda and extortion around the building of the dam, the rhetoric of leaders in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in promoting and speaking out against the project, respectively, all can be very enlightening topics with regard to the unfolding changes in relations between the two states and in the development of Central Asia as a whole.

As a very general consideration, more attention should be paid to local actors in research and assessment of specific countries, especially if their history is as diverse and difficult to understand as in the case of Tajikistan. This study has shown on a number of occasions that there are some inconsistencies between political assessments undertaken by international observers and local ones. For instance, there was disagreement about whether Tajikistan can or cannot be counted as a so-called 'failed state', furthermore the international community's assessment of role and locus of enemy image perception was seen as exaggerated and wrong by local political scientists. The convincing argument was that international observers often fail to differentiate between different levels of

actors, in this case between the political elites and the common citizens, thereby possibly even artificially creating non-existent problems.

8. CONCLUSION

This dissertation set out to bring more clarity to the relation between transforming social identities, peace and possible future conflict. Two types of social identity were examined in detail, religious social identity and nationalist social identity. In post-conflict transition countries, the promotion of a 'national idea' has often contributed to improving stability. Religion can be a key aspect of successful peacebuilding, especially because it tends to promote ideas of forgiveness and guides reconciliation. On the other hand, social identities bear the potential to increase inter-group tension and can even fuel conflict. Sometimes, especially in economically or politically difficult situations, social identities are deliberately constructed and promoted as singular and antagonizing types of identity. When a country's population is manipulated in such a way, one can speak of an increased latent conflict potential that manifests itself in higher levels of readiness for escalatory conflict between groups of different social identity.

Tajikistan is a country experiencing a multiple transition in terms of social identities. The transition from being a republic within the USSR to being a sovereign state is one fundamental changeover; the impact of the bloody civil war in the 1990ies significantly influences the legitimacy and importance of those social identities evolving in the different stages of the postaccord era. As we know from Conflict Resolution literature, post-conflict states already have a higher risk of relapsing into violent conflict. Furthermore, Social Identity theory suggests negative intergroup relations are the default development when dichotomous group identities are formed. A closer examination of potentially conflict-inducing aspects within two types of social identities lead us to understand that especially radical religious movements and strong ethnonationalist movements carry an inherent conflict potential in them. Since both types of social identities also have possibly beneficial effects on peace in a country, for example through promotion of national unity or by setting moral standards, the

influences of rather ambiguous effects of social identities on peace dynamics and future conflict are of particular interest.

Both above-mentioned aspects of social identity can be expected to be of importance in Tajikistan. There clearly is a revival of Islam and religious practice in general, which is something that also Islamist groups benefit from. Especially in an impoverished societal environment with insufficient education, such extremist groups could be expected to gain strength and become a serious threat to peace. The threat is twofold: The chance of terrorist attacks becomes more serious, and secondly Islamists might aim to seize power in the political realm. Already starting during the civil war, the political elite in Tajikistan has engaged in a nation-building process that goes far beyond mere institution building. Tajik identity plays a key role, historical accounts and cultural narratives are employed to foster an understanding of national unity. This bears the danger of creating a singular social identity, one which rejects notions of cultural and ethnic pluralism and thereby potentially marginalizes minorities. The promoting of both forms of social identity involves the use of *othering*; that is to say out-groups or enemies are blamed for the problems and misfortunes experienced by members of the in-group, in this case ethnic Tajik citizens. For religious groups, this ‘enemy’ could be the secular establishment, non-believers or the international community. For ethnonationalists, this scapegoat or out-group could be governments of neighboring countries or domestic ethnic minorities.

Along with the Caucasus, Central Asia is often considered to be the tinderbox of future conflict in Eurasia. The difficult distribution of essential natural resources among the Central Asian republics, the existence of weak authoritarian state structures and ongoing conflict as in Afghanistan, all add up to the perception of high levels of conflict potential throughout the entire region. What is more, Tajikistan itself counts as the most impoverished and fragile state in the region. The combination of macro-level factors of economic and political fragility and micro-level psychosocial factors such as transforming social identities suggest that Tajikistan might deserve a closer analysis. My research focused on the analysis of social identity – conflict dynamics relations with a special concern for how big conflict potential in relation to transforming social identities can be said to be. The judgments of experts takes as the unit of analysis in this thesis involve projections of possible future developments and thus judgments of likelihood of future events. The goal of such research can thus not be to accurately

predict future conflict, but rather to get a better understanding of the relation between the concepts under scrutiny. The rationale behind my exploratory research was guided by two considerations. One, general early warning systems for conflict may not be applicable to special case countries in a very straightforward way. Interviews with local experts can shed light on further aspects deserving attention in a local context. Two, most of the literature and ratings of Tajikistan are ‘Western’ in origin, i.e. written and published by US or European scholars. By interviewing local peacebuilding experts that work in the field, i.e. in Tajikistan, the approach is shifted away from the Western-centered perspective to a more integrative one by incorporating local expertise.

The interviews yielded a few important results. Descriptions of peace agreement implementation and the nature of peace in Tajikistan gave a mixed image. Nonetheless, it is clear the agreement itself is valued highly, yet there are different opinions about its implementation and the consequent fairness of the power distribution process in the first years of peace. The country can be seen as having stably cultivated a negative peace. New conflict is estimated to be unlikely for two main reasons. People in Tajikistan are tired of war and would thus do anything to avoid confrontation. It has also been mentioned that the conflict resolution trainings carried out in the post-conflict phase were effective in educating people about how to deal with and solve conflicts of interest. Taken together, the negative peace seems to go along with a mix of accommodation and avoidance styles in solving conflict. The authoritarian government is seen as either the guarantor of peace and stability or as a negative element that opposition parties may fight under the condition that merely political means are employed.

Also in terms of explaining how social identity is constructed for people living in Tajikistan, the results were rather mixed. Important identities seem to be that of Tajik citizen, being ethnically Tajik, being Muslim and lastly, regional identity. It has been pointed out that these are often not mutually exclusive. Tajikistani identity is the strongest identity, but also a rather new one, on the other hand, regional identity seems to be the most pervasive identity, that can be traced back furthest and also impacts other types of social identity the most. Furthermore, the identity of Tajikistani and Tajik, i.e. citizen of Tajikistan and the identity of being member of the ethnically Tajik people, respectively, are often conflated with one another. As many people do not make such a clear distinction, this allows even members of ethnic minorities to call themselves Tajik.

In the end, regional identity seems to be the one type of social identity that matters most – in the sense of being both predominant in terms of identification and possible future conflict.

Conflict potential for the region of Central Asia is generally regarded as weak with reference to big power interests in the region and strong military presence of the international community in Central Asian countries already today. Nonetheless, the chance of future conflict within Tajikistan was judged to be somewhere between ‘highly unlikely’ and ‘somewhat likely’. However, in this context, the direct impact of social identities on the potential for conflict appears to be weak. Neither religious identity nor ethnonationalist identity seem to directly create tensions between different groups in society. Explanations might be that either they do inherently lead to negative intergroup relations as Social Identity theory suggest, but that in Tajikistan, identity was not sufficiently defined in dichotomous terms, or that another theoretical model might be more applicable to understand the complexity of the case at hand. This led me to two conclusions. For one, any system of early warning for Tajikistan needs to pay due attention to regional identity. This is so, even though regional identity seems to run increasingly alongside other types of identity. Regional identity creates several mutually exclusive categories and is subjectively tied to real or perceived distribution of economic power and access to power. The second conclusion was that future conflict is possibly explained better through Realistic Conflict Theory than Social Identity Theory only. This in turn suggests that in the long run, the examined social identities emerging in the transition country might be of importance indeed, however not by themselves. Rather, a number of mediating factors need to be considered. Scarce natural resources or an increasing limitation of access to power may worsen intergroup relations and push latent conflict to an escalatory stage.

In the context of Tajikistan, mediating factors are plenty and each in their own right would be worth further investigation. For instance, the building of the hydroelectric power plant, i.e. the Rogun dam, is a good example for such a mediating variable. Raising money for the overly ambitious project requires that normal citizens buy shares at a price that few can afford. By concentrating resources of both state and private households on this one project, the country’s overall economic welfare is being jeopardized. Furthermore, political opposition from Uzbekistan that manifests itself in an economic blockade of goods needed for the dam construction lets the relations

between the two countries deteriorate even more. Despite the negative sides that the project has, the potential is just as great. Even if it is not realized to its full scale size, in the long run it promises not only to bring huge economic benefits to Tajikistan, it would also constitute the national idea and common project that would consolidate Tajik national unity and thereby unitary social identity.

This thesis has contributed to a better understanding of the relation between social identities and conflict dynamics. As the above example of the Tajik Rogun dam illustrates for the case of Tajikistan, social identity are often just one piece in the overall schema that would describe the development towards more conflict or towards more peace. Social identity here is hardly ever the triggering event, it does not appear to lead to conflict as easily as Social Identity Theory would have one believe. Rather, it seems to be feasible to construct social identity in place as a mediator variable that influences conflict dynamics in parallel to other events that are ongoing and bear the potential for clashing disputes. At the same time, it is important to realize that also such events can influence how social identities are interpreted and lived. As elaborated on in the literature review, social identities vary greatly with context. Understanding social identities' impact on conflict dynamics, regardless of whether we are speaking of religious or ethnonationalist identity, can best be done by employing this model relation and using it as a paradigm also for other cases. Applications of using this model are to be found not only in the construction of more detailed early warning systems and improvement of national policy making, but also in the retrospect analysis of other conflicts that were conflict of identity or appeared to be such conflicts.

For policy decision making, it seems to be more than necessary to differentiate more with regard to social identities. There needs to be a discussion and possibly constant re-evaluation of the policies a country applies to regulate and control religious activities in its territory. For instance, if religious education was denied on the grounds of wanting to prevent a further radicalization of the population, the state might actually prevent a more enlightened and open understanding of religion amongst its citizens.

The model might also be of use for looking into other regional conflicts. In the analysis of recent clashes between ethnic groups in Kyrgyzstan, for instance, one could assume that the model of social identity as a mediator would fit fairly well. What on the surface is often characterized as a violent clash between two ethnic groups that has its

roots in previous inter-ethnic turmoil, actually is more complex: Without specific events, namely political upheaval in the capital and disputes over usage of land in the region of the Verghana Valley, the differences between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks wouldn't necessarily lead to conflict by themselves. Rather, the escalation of conflict follows the model, in a way that conflict is instigated by a struggle for political power in the country. Social identity – here ethnic identity – is strongly affected by this struggle over political power and the divisions are highlighted and exaggerated in a way that it suffices to lead to hatred between the ethnic groups.

We can then say that in order to prevent conflict escalation and to consolidate peace, the implications of any policy or international NGO project that would influence the construction or strengthening of a specific social identity should be taken under close scrutiny for possible future implications. However, there is no master key to deciding which social identities need to be strengthened and which shouldn't. For each country and each region, historical events, demographics and a number of different factors are to be taken into consideration. For instance, while in a Kyrgyz context a strengthening of Muslim identity might be useful in order to bridge ethnic rifts, in a Tajik context a strengthening of nationally unifying identity could be conducive to stability, especially since the country has a history of inter-regional competition for power. Social identity therefore is likely not to be the cause but rather an important additional factor that could either propel or mitigate the escalation of conflict.

APPENDIX A
MAPS AND FIGURES



Fig.1: Map of Tajikistan in Central Asia

[<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/graphics/maps/large/ti-map.gif>]

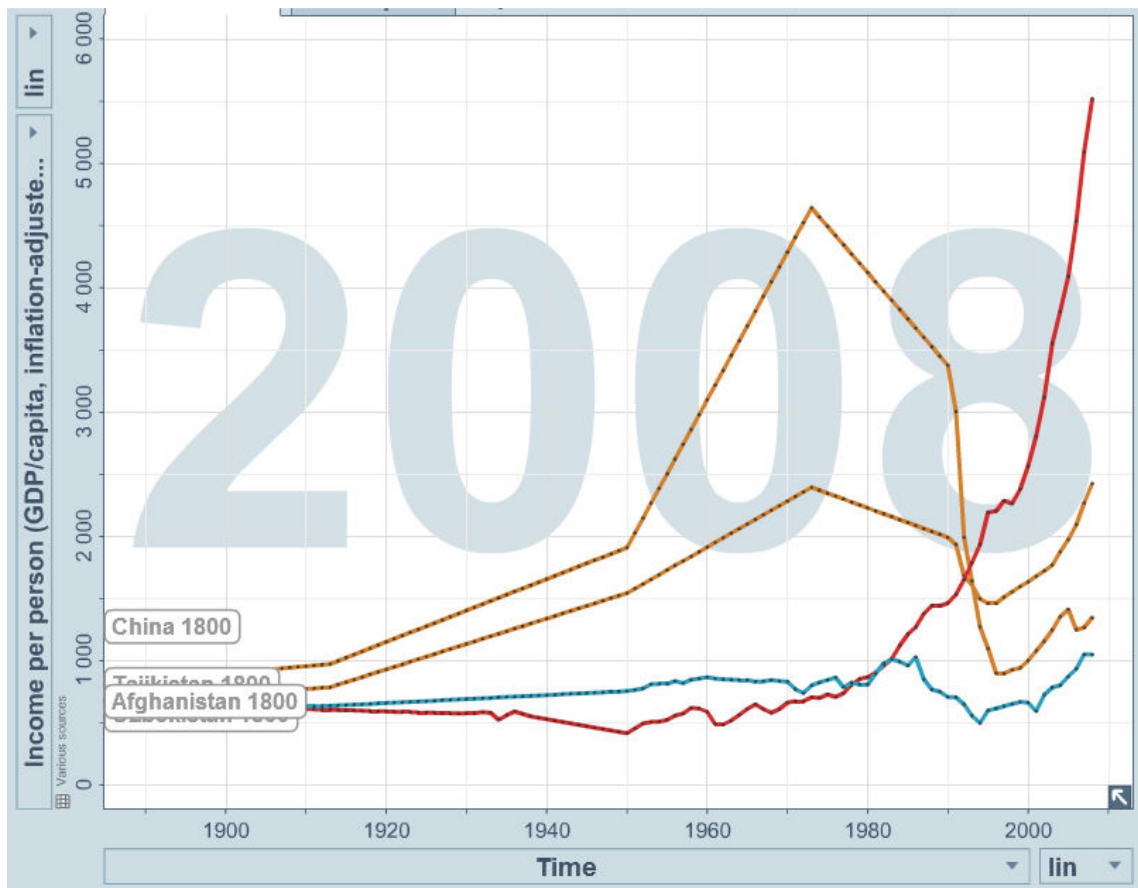


Fig. 2: Development of income per capita. The graph shows the development of China (red), Uzbekistan (lower orange from left), Tajikistan (upper orange from left) and Afghanistan (blue) in contrast. Tajikistan's development shows the biggest volatility. Created with gapminder.org, additional labels added with Adobe Photoshop.

[[http://graphs.gapminder.org/world/#\\$majorMode=chart\\$;shi=t;ly=2003;lb=f;il=t;fs=11;al=30;stl=t;st=t;ns1=t;se=t\\$wst;tts=C\\$ts;sp=6;ti=2007\\$zpv;v=0\\$inc_x;mmid=XCOORDS;iid=phAwcNAVuyj1jiMAkmq1iMg;by=ind\\$inc_y;mmid=YCOORDS;iid=phAwcNAVuyj2tPLxKvvnNPA;by=ind\\$inc_s;uniValue=8.21;iid=phAwcNAVuyj0XOoBL_n5tAQ;by=ind\\$inc_c;uniValue=255;gid=CATID0;by=grp\\$map_x;scale=log;dataMin=194;dataMax=96846\\$map_y;scale=lin;dataMin=23;dataMax=86\\$map_s;sma=49;smi=2.65\\$cd;bd=0\\$inds=#\\$majorMode=chart\\$;shi=t;ly=2003;lb=f;il=t;fs=11;al=0;stl=t;st=t;ns1=t;se=t\\$wst;tts=C\\$ts;sp=6;ti=2008\\$zpv;v=0\\$inc_x;mmid=XCOORDS;iid=ti;by=ind\\$inc_y;mmid=YCOORDS;iid=phAwcNAVuyj1jiMAkmq1iMg;by=ind\\$inc_s;uniValue=1;iid=phAwcNAVuyj0XOoBL%5Fn5tAQ;by=universal\\$inc_c;uniValue=255;gid=CATID0;by=grp\\$map_x;scale=lin;dataMin=1887;dataMax=2010\\$map_y;scale=lin;dataMin=26.9845;dataMax=6021\\$cd;bd=0\\$inds=i221_t001800,,,,;i1_t001800,,,,;i44_t001800,,,,;i242_t001800,,,,,](http://graphs.gapminder.org/world/#$majorMode=chart$;shi=t;ly=2003;lb=f;il=t;fs=11;al=30;stl=t;st=t;ns1=t;se=t$wst;tts=C$ts;sp=6;ti=2007$zpv;v=0$inc_x;mmid=XCOORDS;iid=phAwcNAVuyj1jiMAkmq1iMg;by=ind$inc_y;mmid=YCOORDS;iid=phAwcNAVuyj2tPLxKvvnNPA;by=ind$inc_s;uniValue=8.21;iid=phAwcNAVuyj0XOoBL_n5tAQ;by=ind$inc_c;uniValue=255;gid=CATID0;by=grp$map_x;scale=log;dataMin=194;dataMax=96846$map_y;scale=lin;dataMin=23;dataMax=86$map_s;sma=49;smi=2.65$cd;bd=0$inds=#$majorMode=chart$;shi=t;ly=2003;lb=f;il=t;fs=11;al=0;stl=t;st=t;ns1=t;se=t$wst;tts=C$ts;sp=6;ti=2008$zpv;v=0$inc_x;mmid=XCOORDS;iid=ti;by=ind$inc_y;mmid=YCOORDS;iid=phAwcNAVuyj1jiMAkmq1iMg;by=ind$inc_s;uniValue=1;iid=phAwcNAVuyj0XOoBL%5Fn5tAQ;by=universal$inc_c;uniValue=255;gid=CATID0;by=grp$map_x;scale=lin;dataMin=1887;dataMax=2010$map_y;scale=lin;dataMin=26.9845;dataMax=6021$cd;bd=0$inds=i221_t001800,,,,;i1_t001800,,,,;i44_t001800,,,,;i242_t001800,,,,,)]

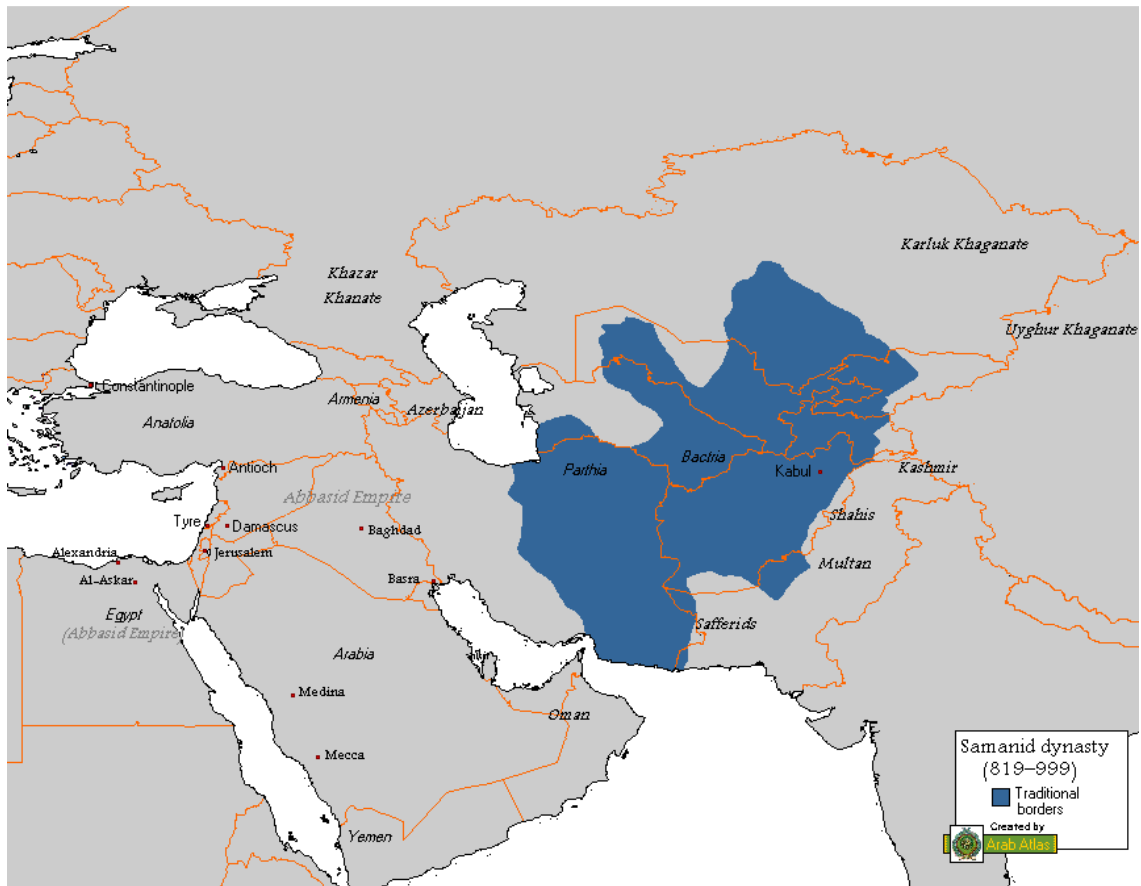


Fig. 3: Historic spread of the Samanid Empire, the first Tajik state.

[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/8d/Samanid_dynasty_%28819%E2%80%93999%29.GIF]

APPENDIX B
INTERVIEW SCHEME

Semi-standardized telephone interview scheme - MA Thesis

Research Question: In which ways are religious identity and ethnonationalist identity likely to influence dynamics of peace and conflict in Tajikistan?

Note: Additional words and sentences written in brackets and in italics were not necessarily read. They serve as guidelines to help the interviewer to keep track of interview progress. Possible follow up questions in case of short/unclear answers are written following the question item and are set in brackets, but not put into italics.

[Introduction, purpose of interview, consent to recording electronically]

We are doing this interview for social science research purposes. In my function as a graduate student at Sabanci University I may use the information given by you in this interview in writing my MA Thesis, which is focusing on aspects of social identity, as well as peace and conflict prevention in Tajikistan. All experts interviewed for this study will remain anonymous and will be mentioned only in general terms as IGO/NGO representatives. For the purpose of accuracy in incorporating your statements into my collection of data, I was going to record our conversation electronically. Would that be alright with you?

[Start recording the interview]

In the following, I am going to ask you five questions about the political situation and issues of identity in Tajikistan. Please answer as concise as possible and do let me know if a question has remained unclear to you so that I can rephrase it if necessary.

[Introduction]

Let us begin with a question about yourself. Can you please briefly introduce yourself and tell me a bit about your professional responsibilities and interests? How long have you worked on issues concerning Tajikistan?

[Possible follow-up questions: For how long have you been in the country yourself?; What other countries were you assigned to previously?; What is your academic background?]

1.[Peace in Tajikistan]

This is a two-part question about peace in Tajikistan, actually. In 1997, the civil war came to an end with a peace agreement. In your opinion, how successful was the implementation of this agreement when you take the current political and economic situation into consideration? How would you describe the nature of peace in present-day Tajikistan?

[Possible follow-up questions: If successful – what made success possible? If not successful – what prevented better implementation?]

2.[Social Identity construction]

How would you say identity is constructed by people in Tajikistan today, how would people primarily define themselves? [*Possible follow-up for clarifying the question: Is identity regional, national or transnational? Is it primarily religious, ethnic, primarily shaped by Soviet ideology?*] Furthermore, do you think there a difference in how the political elites and the average Tajikistani construct or talk about their identity?

3.[Enemy images; In-group / Out-group]

President Emomalii Rahmon is said to have referred to an ‘enemy’ in some of his speeches addressing the Tajik nation. Without explicitly referring to a specific enemy, he is said to have argued that there is an enemy that has prevented past development of the country and further is to blame for current problems. Is it generally understood which enemy he is talking about?

[Possible follow-up question: What is the biggest threat or enemy perceived to be?; Do religious fundamentalism or the Uzbek nation/Uzbekistan play a role in this?]

4.[State failure and conflict potential]

Some observers consider Tajikistan to be ‘on the road to failure’ or even as ‘a failed state’. How likely do you think a major political or economic crisis in the future would incite tensions between groups of a different ideology or different ethnicity?

[Possible follow-up question: Do you see potential for conflict coming from irredentist claims on Samarqand?; Is there a potential for ethnic conflict in Tajikistan?; Do extremist Islamist groups threaten peace in Tajikistan?]

5.[Conflict Prevention]

In your opinion, what is the most urgent thing necessary to further consolidate peace and prevent future conflict in Tajikistan? Would you agree that the different social identities may also help prevent conflict in Tajikistan?

[Possible follow-up for clarifying the question: All in all, do you perceive social identities, so national Tajik identity or Muslim identity, as advantageous or disadvantageous for peace in Tajikistan? ...or do you perceive them to carry potential for conflict?]

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

PEACE

“This agreement was signed on June 27, 1997. This year, soon, we are celebrating that it has been exactly thirteen years since the signing of this agreement. This period of post-conflict reconstruction is a significantly long time and actually, three years ago we had an event for the 10th year anniversary of agreement signing. The organizer of this conference was the UN mission to Tajikistan for peacebuilding. And before the accomplishment of this mission, we carried out this Public Forum in Dushanbe. And all the actors that played a role in the process of building peace, various organizations and representatives of countries. And there we had a few speeches on the lessons learned from ten year period of peacebuilding in Tajikistan.” (5:23 – 6:35)

“One of the most praised factors here was the existence of the factor of Islam in a secular state. And since, as you will know, one of the main factors in the conflict was related to political Islam in Tajikistan, one of the actors in the conflict was also the Islamic Renaissance Party. The political factor of Islam, in the course of the period following the signing of the peace agreement in 1997, became to be a real factor existing today in the character of a secular state. The Islamic factor was acknowledged as a political factor. In Tajikistan now exists an Islamic party as a political factor, recognizing the secular state and they really have their place. This is the first such

precedent case in the post-Soviet space, that there is mutual recognition and acceptance of an Islamic party, in other republics of our region, so in the post-Soviet area, this does not exist. The lessons learned from the years have shown that these parties can coexist.”

(6:40 – 8:29)

“A different question is how this coexistence will continue and how political Islam will be elected. [Brings up example of Turkey as possibility for Islamic parties to ‘make it’ in a secular state]. Other examples can be found in the Middle East region: Egypt and other countries, then Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan. But Tajikistan could also bid for being part in this stream of stable country of this space. Yet another question is – and this has to be further studied and observed – is how the current government can further coexist with Islam.” (8:32 – 9:52)

[Talks about how the IRP changed their structures and what they needed to do in order to become a secular Islamic party following the war] (~10:30)

IDENTITY

“In this state there is a lot of building of a national state ongoing. ‘Nation-building’ is a concept popular in all countries of Central Asia. In this respect, Tajikistan is not different from the other republics. The plan of the government to promote identifying as a Tajik or a Tajikistani is very much being put forth and is ongoing.” (15:37 -15:59)

“Survey results show that many identify themselves as Muslims, or as Tajiks or Tajikistani, but saying that all share some kind of clear ethnic identity is difficult. Because people introduce themselves differently when they are asked ‘who are you?’ Many consider themselves Tajikistani, many consider themselves Muslims, and a significant percentage of the population even identify with the region they come from.

This is also common, because in Tajikistan there has not yet been a formation of identity on the basis of a common nation.” (16:01 – 16:57)

“In addition, the national minorities, for instance those who are Uzbeks or of any Turkic group, for them it is more considerable to be Tajik than to be Uzbek or of another Turkic group.” [Talks about how he expects more people to consider themselves Tajik than Uzbek in the upcoming September census] (16:58 – 17:18)

“In our region particularly nation-building takes a priority. Because of this in economic terms we certainly have our problems, also in terms of bilateral relation with countries in the region is rather difficult, even though they are also (?). For a transit country this is a big problem. The instability of these states and countries just tells us that they are still at a certain stage in their development, in the sense of a stage in their transition path to stability. All these countries, which are in such a transit phase, would definitely say that they are stably going forward [developing].” (25:30 – 26:21)

RAHMON GOVERNMENT

“One cannot say that our political elite is formed quite yet. This process is still ongoing, that is why if in ideological terms they consider themselves Tajik and prioritize the idea of the nation, still this is not complete and still in the process of formation. The period of this has been relatively short, so at this point it is difficult to say whether this elite has even clearly been formed.” (18:52 – 19:23)

ENEMY IMAGE

“Blaming problem on some kind of enemies is a political crux in any country and of any political leadership that are at the top. This is a very easy path of solving problems.

In this case, I don't think [Rahmon] said directly 'this is our enemy #1, this is enemy #2'." (20:18 – 20:40)

"If you talk about enemies as regarding our neighbor Uzbekistan, then this is in my view not completely true. Of course there is a great deal of disagreement related to the economic situation. But judging on reasons of purely economic character, this is not to be equated with the relations of the two states, for this reason making the claim that our enemy number one is our neighboring country would not be completely true." (20:57 – 21:42)

"Officially, in all countries in Central Asia, when they determine the main threat, they of course point to terrorism, drug trafficking, of course they also point to our least peaceful neighbor Afghanistan." (21:40 – 21:56)

"Saying that [Rahmon] is trying to move the population against our neighbor, would again not be entirely true. This is not possible, with the global involvement that is going on in the larger region, to create such a debate, it is not entirely correct." (22:00 – 22:35)

"When all the countries in our region are practically in the course of (?) organization, it is unlikely a convenient path to lead a population against somebody else in such a way [through drawing enemy images]" in order to resolve own problems. That is why it is difficult to say that this is true. But I understand that this is shown in our mass media and on regional website it is written in such a way as well, but this is not entirely correct to say that this would be a way out of our problems. (22:44 – 23:14)

ISLAMIZATION

"One of the most praised factors here was the existence of the factor of Islam in a secular state. And since, as you will know, one of the main factors in the conflict was

related to political Islam in Tajikistan, one of the actors in the conflict was also the Islamic Renaissance Party. The political factor of Islam, in the course of the period following the signing of the peace agreement in 1997, became to be a real factor existing today in the character of a secular state. The Islamic factor was acknowledged as a political factor. In Tajikistan now exists an Islamic party as a political factor, recognizing the secular state and they really have their place. This is the first such precedent case in the post-Soviet space, that there is mutual recognition and acceptance of an Islamic party, in other republics of our region, so in the post-Soviet area, this does not exist. The lessons learned from the years have shown that these parties can coexist.” (6:40 – 8:29)

“A different question is how this coexistence will continue and how political Islam will be elected. [Brings up example of Turkey as possibility for Islamic parties to ‘make it’ in a secular state]. Other examples can be found in the Middle East region: Egypt and other countries, then Afghanistan, Iran or Pakistan. But Tajikistan could also bid for being part in this stream of stable country of this space. Yet another question is – and this has to be further studied and observed – is how the current government can further coexist with Islam.” (8:32 – 9:52)

[Talks about how the IRP changed their structures and what they needed to do in order to become a secular Islamic party following the war] (~10:30)

“Officially, in all countries in Central Asia, when they determine the main threat, they of course point to terrorism, drug trafficking, of course they also point to our least peaceful neighbor Afghanistan.” (21:40 – 21:56)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“In political terms, **peace with Islamist is more or less stable**, of course. **One cannot say that there is any kind of serious threat coming from them.** This is because they have dwindled in importance due to the political factor of the Islamic Renaissance Party. One cannot say that they have the potential to (?). But as we are all Muslims, and in Tajikistan they are being politicized completely because of the Islamic Renaissance Party. Their support in the last elections it was shown, it is within the limits of 10-15%. We continuously conduct surveys of public opinion and have shown that they [the IRP] has a stable electorate of about 10-15%.” (11:54 – 13:30)

“Theoretically speaking, of course there is the possibility that those people who are unsatisfied with the government and elites in power will turn to support Islamists. But in reality, there is no such potential visible yet. Generally speaking, the current power, the Rahmon regime, of course is dealing with various forms of Islam. In some aspects they are even taking such public steps in which they engage the potential of religious groups. As a result of this, Islamist groups torment about the fact that the regime itself is more active in guiding Islamic leaders. [Gives examples]. These steps taken by the government are not even expected by the Islamist or by the Islamic Renaissance Party. The government leadership goes further in this respect than anybody would have thought.” (13:37 – 15:05)

“Officially, in all countries in Central Asia, when they determine the main threat, they of course point to terrorism, drug trafficking, of course they also point to our least peaceful neighbor Afghanistan.” (21:40 – 21:56)

“One cannot say that Tajikistan is in such a condition of development [failed state], but agreed, **like the other countries in our region, we are in transition.**” (24:51 – 25:00)

“In our region particularly nation-building takes a priority. Because of this in economic terms we certainly have our problems, also in terms of bilateral relation with countries in the region is rather difficult, even though they are also (?). For a transit country this is a big problem. The instability of these states and countries just tells us that they are still at a certain stage in their development, in the sense of a stage in their transition path to stability. All these countries, which are in such a transit phase, would definitely say that they are stably going forward [developing].” (25:30 – 26:21)

“Except for some countries, for example Kazakhstan or (?) Turkmenistan, have – thanks to economic natural resources – a more advantageous situation... But countries such as for example Tajikistan are located in a more, let’s say, poor situation. Its economy is in a very difficult situation. (...) **But this is only in terms of the economy. In terms of politics, the ongoing process of establishing a national state, this of course does not fully turn out well in terms of the economy.** But if the process of reforms continues, and in case the economy is more successful, everything points to a further development. In the whole region, also between neighboring republics in different regions, there are real investments made for their economic development.” (26:36 – 27:59)

“If one wanted to compare the situation with that of Kyrgyzstan, one has to acknowledge that they are on a different level when it comes to the political procedures. We do not have the same possibilities as the political opposition which acted in Kyrgyzstan. The lines of active political parties which are located in opposition, here are not really prepared, you have to understand that their possibilities are rather limited. **That is why one cannot say that our opposition might act like the one in Kyrgyzstan.**” (28:39 – 29:20)

On Kyrgyzstan “Those involved were not only political parties, but also civil society, which was very active. Furthermore, many international organizations got involved.

[Explains why Kyrgyzstan's civil society was further developed and how this prevented Bakiyev from establishing authoritarian structures]. This kind of activity as in Kyrgyzstan is totally absent here." (29:20 – 30:58)

"And as far as political religious movements in Tajikistan are concerned, which are in opposition, they are also very weak. While they are actively engaged with the population, so far a politicization of any kind is not visible." (31:00 – 31:32) "Any threat for the regime from these religious movements is highly unlikely" (32:53 -32:58) [repeats again why he thinks that conflict between ethnic groups is unlikely in Central Asia in general terms] (41- 42)

"On the contrary, one can observe that members of ethnic minorities want to be Tajik, they study in Tajik at the universities, the process of Tajikization is ongoing – as in Uzbekistan is the process of Uzbekization." (43:40 – 43:51)

"But as a factor of conflict potential it of course will exist or will be used against one another. But I do not think this factor is so important yet. But between the states, the process of Uzbekization in Uzbekistan and the process of Tajikization in Tajikistan will go further probably." (43:58 – 44:22)

"Irredentist claims for Samarqand and Bukhara are a very unlikely idea, which (?). The memory of this idea, especially amongst the intelligentsia, of the educated class and people, it remains and is saved, the idea that for long, these cities are of Tajik heritage and history. Of course, the memory of people will remain for long and for eternity that these cities in history have been cities for Tajiks, of a Tajik state which were there in previous centuries. Nobody denies this and this will probably continue to be like this. However, after the collapse [of the Soviet Union] all the republics recognized the status quo of the existing states and territories. For this reason, returning to this question again

or even demanding [Uzbekistan] return [these cities], this is a scenario for a huge conflict, which would hardly be possible.” (46:29 – 47:44)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

Uzbekistan-Tajikistan relations “There are many outside factors. For one, there are many countries, which are interested in this situation: the US and Russia first of all, then China, Iran and even Turkey.” (34:36 – 35:00)

“Furthermore, in order to **solve the problems in Afghanistan** that the European Union, America and NATO are facing, they **need prosperity in all the neighboring countries in Central Asia**. I don’t think they will not have different opinions on this and will probably do everything for non-conflictual regulation of any problems that might exist between the neighboring republics. (...) Many expert commissions and consortia were established by countries involved. This is telling about the fact that many countries that have an interest in our region will actively take part in the solution of the conflict [between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan]. This is why I don’t think conflict will escalate, because solutions will be found beforehand. In addition, the problems of our region take on global character, especially with regard to energy resources. (36:00 – 37:58)

[explains how Rogun is an example for this, as it was planned and the building phase initiated during the Soviet Union, and the benefits would go far beyond just Tajikistan] (38)

[highlights again how the situation of Tajikistan and neighboring countries is highly depend on the actions of superpowers and developments in Afghanistan] (48 – 49)

PEACE

“One of the most important outcomes of the agreement, for example is the establishment of the institution of a public council, which was composed of representatives of all parties, movements and national minorities, and even representatives of social organizations. This public council played its role through consolidating political stability in the republic at that time.” (2:02 – 2:42)

“Furthermore, by itself the quota for representatives of the opposition parties in the parliament and in the state structures, which meant 30% of all the seats, this also played its role. This also substantially contributed to the fact that the situation in the republic grew calmer.” (3:09 – 3:34)

“The process of agreement implementation, already beginning at least in 1997, has led to calm conditions in the republic. This is also a good result when one compares with different states.” (3:57 – 4:14)

“The realization of the peace agreement, from the point of view of the current situation in the country, was successful enough. This is seen in that people in the country continue to live a peaceful life, at the same time overcoming arising difficulties.” (nr)

“In the country, **all public institutions of power function perfectly well**. Also, all of them are fully legitimate, they are recognized by the international community.” (nr)

IDENTITY

“[Points out that this is difficult to make statements about without having thorough scientific survey research] Judging from the people that I know, the people that I see and talk to all the time, people identify themselves as being citizens of this country. But for those that work in politics, this does not have much of a connection, because them

their daily problems which they try to solve as well as is possible to them.” (4:37 – 5:48)

“As far as I am personally far away from the political elites of this country, I am not sure I can comment on possible differences between the elites and the common people as far as identity is concerned. After all, I don’t know any of them closely or personally. So I cannot tell you, how they feel, what they think about or how they identify themselves.” (6:16 – 6:37)

“Nowadays the big majority of the **people identify themselves more or less as citizens of their country.**” (nr)

RAHMON GOVERNMENT

On media “At least here, the mass media is quite open. But at the same time, it appears certain that there is some kind of self-censorship. They do not allow themselves such harsh criticism about each other. That is to say, the polemics between mass media and institutions of power are said to become stronger.” (7:00 – 7:31)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“The opinions of the experts that count that Tajikistan is on the road to failure or should already be counted as a failed state is extremely misguided and even harmful. The main reason of problems between the countries is the hostile relationship from the side of our neighboring country, namely the Republic of Uzbekistan, and its imperialist foreign policy. At present, Uzbekistan is practically implementing a full economic blockade – something that the whole world is watching quietly and completely calm. If this kind of blockade is held up and continued, the consequences will be unpredictable.” (nr)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“It is most necessary to increase the life standards of the people living in Tajikistan today. Furthermore, already existing programs of social security have to be improved and strengthened.” (nr)

PEACE

“I believe that the signing of the agreement on the establishment of peace and national accord in Tajikistan as a result of the peace talks, so the fact of signing the agreement by itself, was a very positive moment and experience for the regulation of conflict overall in the Central Asian region.”(4:55 – 5:20)

“This case may serve as a lesson for other countries struggling with conflict.” (5:25 – 5:31)

“It has been thirteen years since the day of signing of this agreement. Overall, this agreement has a tremendous significance for the establishment of peace and for national accord. In the context of this agreement a commission on national reconciliation was established. They cultivated instruments for the regulation of discord. Peace in Tajikistan was established in consequence of the implementation of this document.” (5:34 – 6:16)

“Nonetheless I think that after the establishment of peace and national accord, on the issues of strengthening state power country the country’s government has gone a little beyond or distanced itself from any commitment in the two-side agreement.” (6:17 – 6:40)

[explains details on referenda on a number of referenda that strengthened government power, ~7:00]

“The power of president Rahmon got strengthened and he moved away from any commitments. For example, there was a guaranteed quote of 30% for representatives of the opposition for positions in the power structures. But within two or three years after [the agreement], these people were – either for subjective or objective reasons – removed from their posts.” (7:23 – 7:59)”

IDENTITY

“In Tajikistan the average person identifies himself with his region. For reasons of low education levels and because of the general social and political situation in current overall Tajikistan, they identify more with their regions, so the places where they are from.” (12:43 – 13:22)

“This is connected with the circumstance that in especially Tajikistan, regionalism is dominant. If representatives of one region take power, they strive to engage their fellows from their region in positions of higher office, for example committee members and positions in the administrative state structures. That is why, even though there is the opinion amongst the intelligentsia that a Tajik should identify himself with Tajikistan, as a representative of Tajikistan, identify with the people of Tajikistan (?), the illness of regionalism nevertheless very much is disturbing for the development of society. And this in the end might serve as a framework for the creation of conflicts in future Tajikistan.” (13:24 – 14:27)

About Tajik leaders: “By their words, they identify themselves with Tajikistan. But actually, they all have those clear personal goals and they try to sell these goals in the name of Tajikistan, in the name of the nation and in the interest of the state.” (14:53 – 15:15)

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“In the last few years, so after 2000, gradually the opposition politicians who could have aspired to higher public office were moved out in different ways. Let’s say Abdumalik Abdullajanov, who was a former prime minister of Tajikistan, he lives in exile and he counts as an enemy of the state, as he has done much against Tajikistan, and he does not have the possibility to return to Tajikistan. Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, who is the leader of the Democratic Party, is sentenced to 23 years of prison confinement. [talks about more examples...] They all sit in prison. This means in Tajikistan there are no strong politicians left, who might have challenged or taken over the current president. And the legislature has also established a limitation: If one has not lived in Tajikistan in the past ten years, he does not have the right to become a candidate, for example for the office of the Tajik president. In through exactly this the authoritarian power of president Rahmon is strengthened.” (10:24 – 12:11)

About Tajik leaders: “By their words, they identify themselves with Tajikistan. But actually, they all have those clear personal goals and they try to sell these goals in the name of Tajikistan, in the name of the nation and in the interest of the state.” (14:53 – 15:15)

“In Tajikistan, the pluralism of political parties is set up by the government. Except for the Islamic Renaissance Party, in there is no other constructive political powers in parliament. The whole parliament is controlled by the People’s Democratic Party. ” (19:00 – 19:30)

“All other parties that wanted to change something in the political life are exposed to various kinds of pressure. Besides, through founding new fractions of those [governing] parties through splitting those parties, or through the establishment of some quasi-parties, like the Party of Economic Development or the Agrarian Party, which in my view are no more than marionettes in the hands of the leading elites. Except for the Islamic Renaissance Party, there is no other political party that could through political means lead a fight for power. There is the Social Democratic Party in Tajikistan, which is lead and legally represented by Rahmatullo Zojirov, but he does not even get the opportunity to make it into parliament, despite the fact that they are getting stronger and that through election campaigns are trying to obtain deputy mandates. But since elections do not comply with international standards, they cannot ever become member of parliament in order to set up a fraction and work in a civilized manner of political struggle.” (19:33 – 21:07)

“All who are against the governing elite, for them the access to whole electoral process is limited to oust them from decision making.” (21:47 – 22:05)

“In Tajikistan, in Kazakhstan, in Kyrgyzstan, in my opinion, there are authoritarian regimes in power. But in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, we can see aspects of

totalitarian regimes. With this as a starting point, it might be possible to make still more conclusions in terms of conflict prevention in Central Asia.” (38:58 – 39:25)

“I mean that the roots of future conflict are not only to be found in the society, but also with the politicians of the governing elites.” (39:42 – 39:51)

ENEMY IMAGE

“The creation of internal and external enemy images is advantageous for the ruling elite. The ruling elite always strives to find a scapegoat or an external or internal enemy of the state independence and in this way deceived its people, i.e. they manipulate the public opinion, doing such false conclusions as ‘all others are to blame, only I am the good and do everything to make Tajikistan resist.’” (9:06 – 9:53)

“In the last few years, so after 2000, gradually the opposition politicians who could have aspired to higher public office were moved out in different ways. Let’s say Abdumalik Abdullajanov, who was a former prime minister of Tajikistan, he lives in exile and he counts as an enemy of the state, as he has done much against Tajikistan, and he does not have the possibility to return to Tajikistan. Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, who is the leader of the Democratic Party, is sentenced to 23 years of prison confinement. [talks about more examples...] They all sit in prison. This means in Tajikistan there are no strong politicians left, who might have challenged or taken over the current president. And the legislature has also established a limitation: If one has not lived in Tajikistan in the past ten years, he does not have the right to become a candidate, for example for the office of the Tajik president. In through exactly this the authoritarian power of president Rahmon is strengthened.” (10:24 – 12:11)

ISLAMIZATION

“Also for Tajikistan, also for Uzbekistan and for other countries in Central Asia, religious extremism has its place. In the recent emergence of different Islamic groups, which do not promote traditional Islam, for instance Hizb ut-Tahrir or different extremist streams of Islam, they actually constitute a threat for the stability of the region. The ones to blame for this are not only the groups themselves, but also the governments of the region, which are not able to engage in constructive dialogue with Muslim believers. And they have not yet clearly acknowledged the threat for the country from such extremist Islamist groups. It is there and one should not be concealed.” (31:38 – 32:57)

“The fact that Tajikistan is the only country [in Central Asia] where an Islamic party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, is officially registered and participates in the political struggle, is a positive experience. But there is other movements, like the Hizb ut-Tahrir or Hanafi [Tablighi Jamaat] or other radical streams of Islam, I believe that if these movements actually want to ... in Tajikistan or in Central Asian countries, then it is necessary to establish for them conditions of a legislative basis for their deeds, so that it would be possible to follow their actions. But here, we only forbid, for instance, political and religious literature (...) In my opinion, this is not only on the basis of writings in the religious sphere, but also in the political sphere. Everybody has the right to believe or not believe, or to be an atheist.” (36:37 – 38:02)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“Indeed, Tajikistan is in a very difficult political and economic situation. **Despite the small positive steps in economic realms, Tajikistan is experiencing a full crisis.** It only carries on owing to the loans and grants of international organizations and other

states. The clear-cut economic programs of Tajikistan's government were taken in the process and the declared reforms of economic programs and governmental administration. But actually, the results of such programs are not visible in the past years. This is related with life standards of citizens of Tajikistan are lot lower than the standards in other neighboring republics.” (16:03 – 17:14)

“And all citizens of Tajikistan, who are capable of working, are looking for work outside of the borders of Tajikistan. And the main source of income of Tajik citizens is due to the migrant workers in Russia, Kazakhstan and other countries of the world. As long as there are no clear-cut economic policies implemented and as long there are no normal conditions for the economic development, this will show through consequences social severance.” (17:15 – 18:18)

“In fact, **ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan and ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan, they by themselves do not constitute conflict-creating factors.** But the political elites of both countries, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, sometimes make use of these moments to divert attention of their citizens away from their domestic political and socio-economic problems. They use this in with the goal of populism to divert attention of domestic problems of their country.” (28:33 – 29:24)

“This has been and will continue to be the way that the politically leading elites have deflected attention and this is not for the purpose to actually escalate a conflict between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for reasons of the ethnic Tajiks in Uzbekistan or ethnic Uzbeks in Tajikistan. This cannot happen in any case.” (29:35 – 30:05)

“**The normal citizen of Tajikistan and the normal citizen of Uzbekistan are a lot more responsible in their personal views than the political leaders and public personalities.** The citizens know very well that even the establishment of different barriers for visa between the countries or obstacles to a rapprochement of Tajiks in

Uzbekistan and Uzbeks in Tajikistan, that all these circumstances have a political significance and they do not have a direct impact on the immediate relations between Uzbeks and Tajiks.” (30:13 – 30:59)

“Also for Tajikistan, also for Uzbekistan and for other countries in Central Asia, **religious extremism has its place.** In the recent emergence of different Islamic groups, which do not promote traditional Islam, for instance Hizb ut-Tahrir or different extremist streams of Islam, **they actually constitute a threat for the stability of the region.** The ones to blame for this are not only the groups themselves, but also the governments of the region, which are not able to engage in constructive dialogue with Muslim believers. And they have not yet clearly acknowledged the threat for the country from such extremist Islamist groups. It is there and one should not be concealed.” (31:38 – 32:57)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“For the consolidation of peace and the prevention of conflict, I think **it is absolutely necessary that the government is accountable for what the people are saying and guarantee the efficacy of its decisions.** I can give you a recent example: Since April 1, 2010, there is now a road toll for usage of the highway that connects Dushanbe with the North of Tajikistan, so with the Varzob Oblast. The road is called the Dushanbe-Chanak highway. [talks about the odd circumstances of the company that is involved in the process of building this, etc.]” (23:35 – 24:11)

“As long as the government does not listen to the opinion of its citizens, as long as there is not implementation of any programs securing genuine social protection of those that are not capable of much, then this will have far-reaching consequences for the government itself.” (24:53 – 25:17)

“I think that these identities, different social identities, enable initiation of tensions between these groups – since there is not a unified identity, like the Tajik people.”(26:35 – 27:05)

But: **“In case of a constructive approach to this different groups and the consolidation of this groups in a united identity, they can serve as stabilizing factors.** But if each groups only follows their own aims, they can serve as deconstructive factors in a conflict.” (27:19 – 27:57)

“In order to prevent extremism— extremism takes its beginning and has its roots in social surroundings, i.e. in those surroundings where people live destitute in a hopeless situation. That’s why it is necessary to improve the social environment in Tajikistan, as in general in post-Soviet societies. So that the people, so that every person can realize their right to work, so they had a workplace, so that they could earn themselves a living with dignity. This is one of the factors. The one who is hungry is always ready for anything, ready for the extreme. People, who are in a hopeless situation, want to believe in something like a bright future. And such a bright future is usually what these religious groups promise. (...) In different ways they try to get these people, who are in a hopeless situation, onto their side.” (33:30 – 35:01)

“So in order to prevent the emergence of conflict, it is necessary to establish such conditions as to make sure that exactly these reasons are eliminated by the government. (...) I think that it is less important to make promises, but more important to take practical steps, so that the simple citizen understood that the government takes care of them. If there will be nothing happening like this, then the likelihood of these people joining extremists groups is higher. Therefore, these factors might count as the most important ones in the context of conflict prevention in Tajikistan.” (35:10 – 36:12)

“The fact that Tajikistan is the only country [in Central Asia] where an Islamic party, the Islamic Renaissance Party, is officially registered and participates in the political struggle, is a positive experience. But there is other movements, like the Hizb ut-Tahrir or Hanafi [Tablighi Jamaat] or other radical streams of Islam, I believe that if these movements actually want to (...) in Tajikistan or in Central Asian countries, then it is necessary to establish for them conditions of a legislative basis for their deeds, so that it would be possible to follow their actions. But here, we only forbid, for instance, political and religious literature (...) In my opinion, this is not only on the basis of writings in the religious sphere, but also in the political sphere. Everybody has the right to believe or not believe, or to be an atheist.” (36:37 – 38:02)

CIVIL WAR

“We, as many other Tajik nationals had to leave the capital. I myself am originating from Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Province and at those times it was quite dangerous staying in the capital, especially for people from Badakhshan region. And that’s why in 1992 we left with my family and many other families to Badakhshan.” (3:58 – 4:26)

PEACE

“The reconciliation that happened 1997, it (?) just some people. And 30% of the seat in the central apparatus, in the state structure, that was promised to the former Islamic opposition. It was not observed. I would say that at the beginning just the leaders of the opposition, they were given certain posts in the state structure. However, the other people, the supporters, they were just left without anything and received nothing. And those leaders, after a certain time, they also lost the opposition. They were promised in

the beginning, that they would be given high-ranking posts, but finally they were just also asked to leave their posts. Many different reasons exist for that.” (5:17 – 6:38)

“Actually, neither the opposition leaders nor the then government authorities, in my opinion, had good competence to work in the state structures. However, the (...) authorities in my opinion did not keep their word. I would say that it has led to nothing. Yes, the war stopped. But in any event, the promises that were given to the opposition in general, not meaning just the leaders at those times. There was a need to reintegrate the ex-combatants, but instead the government did not do anything. But they started chasing those who participated in the battle. Although at the beginning it was promised that nobody will be pursued or sentenced when the agreement will be signed. But these were just promises.” (6:39 – 8:16)

“It has become evident at the end of the 90ies and at the beginning of the 2000s, when many opposition leaders and many people were just sent to prison. At the moment nobody knows their whereabouts, what happened to them and in what condition they are.” (8:18 -8:42)

“[The nature of peace] is okay, actually. Tajik people are just looking at the past all the time, and just do not want this to be repeated. This is the only thing, perhaps, that keeps them from opposing the current state power. Although, looking at the current situation, the economic and social situation: It is really like not dangerous, but representing some threats, I would say. The generations are changing. Those kids who at the beginning of the 90ies and who do not remember and not even know what the civil war was, they are just the new generation that does not even have the fear of repetition of those events that were in the past. It is us [the older generations] who do not want a civil war to come back. But looking at the current situation, Tajikistan is like on the brink of despair. The situation, I would say, could deteriorate or worsen in the nearest future. The state power

is still powerful enough in terms of keeping the situation, but this may not continue endlessly.” (9:16 – 11:17)

“If you look at the news (...) in the recent one or two years, Tajikistan has had many different and very heavy events, in terms of disasters and many other things that have a great impact on the psychology of the people, on the social life of the people. People do not know, whom they can go to and ask for help. This brings us to what we had before.” (11:18 – 12:13)

“In fact, the frustration is not only because of the present pressures, it has continued from those times. It is not something new. The only thing is, the degree, the level of frustration is increasing.” (37:33 – 38:58)

IDENTITY

“I would divide the people in Tajikistan, the Tajik nationals, into two categories only. There are upper level and lower level people only in society. There is no middle level. The beginning of the 90ies showed that people, faces whom you see currently in the present state structures are actually those active participants of those events.” (14:55 – 15:45)

“Those whom I called ‘upper class’, they directly those who fought and participated in the civil war, those who opposed to the Islamic opposition at that time. They are quite influential and rich people. What is happening now, they – at least it seems to me – they went into a kind of a shadow. It seems that there is a fear that they have in terms of they fear that they can lose what they earned after 1997 at national and regional level.” (16:05 – 17:15)

“The society in Tajikistan is really split into several identities. In the north of Tajikistan and in the middle part of Tajikistan, people are more prone to religious issues. Religion

in those parts, now plays the major role. While in the south of Tajikistan, people do not even know how to identify themselves. The south of Tajikistan is suffering the most at the moment.” (20:30 – 21:30)

“So far, there haven’t been any clashes or conflict situations between ethnic minorities, let’s say between Tajiks and Uzbeks. But as you might now, Tajiks separate themselves as well. Like between Pamiris, those who are from Badakhshan, Kulobis, those who are from the south of Tajikistan, although they are all Tajik. I would say there wouldn’t be any conflict anymore that was before between not the ethnic groups but the fight between the Tajiks themselves.” (38:28 – 39:23)

RAHMON GOVERNMENT

“It has become evident at the end of the 90ies and at the beginning of the 2000s, when many opposition leaders and many people were just sent to prison. At the moment nobody knows there whereabouts, what happened to them and in what condition they are.” (8:18 -8:42)

“The state power is doing something now, it is trying to mend the situation. It has realized that it cannot continue like this endlessly and some measures that would improve the situation need to be taken. That’s why the building of Rogun was initiated. This idea has been supported by the population, by the way. Because it has consolidated the Tajiks around this issue. But the way how it was done was really terrible. Although the president says that they need to build this power station when addressing the population asking to help, to invest in the Rogun. He is mentioning to do on volunteer basis. But just immediately afterwards, upper level and middle level officials started doing it in another way. They are just grabbing the money from the population, forcing the people to buy the shares of the Rogun. The amount is sometimes sizable, like 5,000

Somonis, it is approximately 800/900 US Dollars. And not everybody can afford to buy these shares. This also has a negative impact. And the people here, when you listen to them, they are saying it would be better not to conduct such propaganda to collect money for Rogun. If such a thing hadn't been done, the population would have agreed to invest the money itself. Not forcibly, but voluntary. This was a wrong step made by the state power in terms of mobilizing resources for building the Rogun." (34:29 – 37:20)

"Average people, they just support the state power." (52:03 – 52:09)

ENEMY IMAGE

"Even the civil war, it happened because indeed, there were enemies at that time who didn't want this country to develop. People who come to Tajikistan, they may hear, when they ask 'who started this war?', like everybody the Russians and Uzbekistan. These two countries is what is meant when our president has mentioned as enemies preventing our development. But I would say our closest neighbor, which is Uzbekistan, does not actually want Tajikistan to develop." (24:36 – 25:45)

"Tajikistan is trying to build a hydroelectric station, which is Rogun. They are running many barriers and obstacles to not allow Tajikistan to complete the [construction]. Even the trains were stopped several times. Tajik cargo for this electric station, but not only resources for the electric power station, but also for the population in general, this also prevents development. **Yes, nobody in the region wants us to develop because everybody knows what potential Tajikistan has in terms of water resources.**" (25:54 – 26:57)

ISLAMIZATION

“Although more people in Tajikistan are now visiting the mosques and although more people are praying now, **I wouldn’t say now it is the main issue at the present time.** Although in the north of Tajikistan, which is the Sughd province, there are some demonstration of hidden resistance. (...) There are different types of extremist groups (...), IDU – the **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, another one is Hizb ut-Tahrir.** (...) **Those are the main threat, not just in Tajikistan, but in the region as a whole.** Because these groups are in Uzbekistan as well, and in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There were some events in the past when these groups invaded Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz power could hardly manage to fight with them and to bring the situation to normal conditions. **But I wouldn’t say it a serious issue because the current state structure keeps a constant eye on these.** Everything is more or less under control in that regard.”
(41:57 – 44:33)

“The main things happening not just in Tajikistan but everywhere in the world, it has more relation to political frustration than to any other things. Even (...) the religious factor. It doesn’t have the face of Islam. It is more related to the political frustration that is happening in different Islamic countries.” (46:00 – 46:30)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“**Tajikistan traditionally has quite good relations with all other Central Asian states, except Uzbekistan.** I don’t know what the exact reason is. Although Tajikistan in the beginning of the 20ies was part of Uzbekistan and then it has just separated from it. But still, there is Uzbekistan has some ambitions on Tajikistan in terms of... I don’t know” (27:44 – 28:38)

“People here, as well as the leadership, are saying that this part [Samarqand and Bukhara] traditionally belongs to Tajikistan. Although we cannot actually, how to say, get them back (laughs), but still there are these kind of statements during meetings of the top leaders of Central Asia. In case a need arises, at the top level something happens, like any conflict let’s say between Tajik and Uzbek leadership. This is exactly the argument. This issue is also on the agenda.” (29:41 – 30:45)

“People here still believe than Bukhara and Samarqand belong to Tajikistan. In terms of the treatment of the Tajiks minorities in Bukhara and Samarqand, I would say the situation is really bad, in my opinion and according to what I am hearing here in Tajikistan. (30:53 – 31:20)

“The financial crisis had actually an impact. But people here are joking that we face a financial crisis since 1992 and it has continued so far. No financial crisis and nothing else in the world would cause more bad than what we are having since 1992. This structure has resumed its activities.” (32:45 – 33:23)

“People got used to such kind of life. If you look at the local newspaper and watch the local TV station, whatever you see is totally different from what you hear. The population is really angry and disappointed, upset with the current state of affairs and with the present state power. Although, on the TV and in the newspapers, it is something different and everything is alright. (33:33 – 34:28)

“In fact, the frustration is not only because of the present pressures, it has continued from those times. It is not something new. The only thing is, the degree, the level of frustration is increasing.” (37:33 – 37:58)

“So far, there haven’t been any clashes or conflict situations between ethnic minorities, let’s say between Tajiks and Uzbeks. But as you might now, Tajiks separate themselves as well. Like between Pamiris, those who are from Badakhshan, Kulobis, those who are

from the south of Tajikistan, although they are all Tajik. **I would say there wouldn't be any conflict anymore that was before between not the ethnic groups but the fight between the Tajiks themselves.**" (38:28 – 39:23)

"There **might be some tensions in the future between Tajiks and Uzbeks.** Around several issues, such as border control passages, the citizens of Tajikistan traveling to Samarqand and Bukhara, Uzbek border forces are causing many many problems. The issue of Rogun is another issue that may cause even a greater conflict. The building of the Rogun power station might be another cause. By the way, it is paid much more attention to. Uzbekistan is now trying to involve as many international experts as possible to conduct the assessments saying that the Rogun power station that Tajikistan is going to build may cause ecological problems and (?). Although they are not mentioning that the power station that was started during the Soviet times, the Uzbek engineers actually projected and initiated the building of this power station." (39:26 – 41:19)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

"The only way for Tajikistan at the present moment is to **support the migrants, who are actually bringing most of the benefits to the national budget.** Like half of the budget of Tajikistan, and it's not a secret, is made of migrant remittances. And those are sustaining even the political and social situation in the country. Otherwise there would happen civil unrest. Let's say if the Russian Federation would introduce a visa system or any other measures, that would afterwards worsen the situation in Tajikistan. Labor migration, in my opinion, in the nearest ten/twenty years would be at the top of the Tajik agenda." (18:19 – 19:35)

“Tajikistan is trying to build a hydroelectric station, which is Rogun. They are running many barriers and obstacles to not allow Tajikistan to complete the [construction]. Even the trains were stopped several times. Tajik cargo for this electric station, but not only resources for the electric power station, but also for the population in general, this also prevents development. Yes, nobody in the region wants us to develop because everybody knows what potential Tajikistan has in terms of water resources.” (25:54 – 26:57)

On Rogun “Then we would have a small bit of power and influence and play a major role in the region and at least have some influence politically.” (27:05 - 27:22)

“One of the best options for Tajikistan would be if **people’s representation of all regions in the state power**. Because right now, there is only one family or clan that is in charge of the country. Even parliament is formed out of the people from that clan. Even that small number of people representing various regions, they don’t have the voice and they can not have a decision making status. That’s why it is quite important for all regions to be represented.” (46:37 – 47:40)

“And I would say that as it is done in many other developing countries, **to give more opportunity to young people, who obtained education in the Western countries, overseas**. There are plenty of Tajik nationals, who are returning to their country, who usually end up working at the international organizations. There is a real need in involving more younger people, if not on the high positions in the government and state structures, at least the local part, the middle level where the major work is being done by the way. The state structure in its present form includes those people that have more Soviet type of education. This prevents keeping up with modern trends and modern tendencies that are happening in the world.” (47:41 – 49:18)

CIVIL WAR

“For Russian speakers, it is a little bit difficult. But unfortunately, most of those Russian speaking people left Tajikistan because of the civil war in 90ies.” (6:49 – 7:05)

PEACE

[rated the implementation of the agreement as successful and peace as rather good, while recently there is a deterioration in the political progress that the country was making, the government now clinging to power to strong and making opposition work problematic] (nr)

IDENTITY

“If you compare with the Soviet times, it is a little bit different now. Because under the Soviet Union, there were almost no ethnic groups, nations. There was a big nation of Soviet and Communist. People usually did not pay much attention to who and which ethnic group they represent. It was free for movement in this huge territory of the Soviet Union. And usually, **for instance when people travelled to Russia (...), they never had problems and nobody would ask them who are they and which republic they represent. That’s why the ethnicity was not priority for the people. They were considered as a *big* nation. And of course changed after the collapse of the Soviet Union, preceding this independence the nations tried to look more and deeper to their histories, to different cultures they had.** And even in Tajikistan for instance, the Tajik language because the state language of the country and of course it created some difficulties for Uzbeks or other ethnic groups living in this country. But still, many of the Uzbeks living here speak well and understandable Tajik because they communicate

with the people and they participate in the life of the country very actively.” (4:23 – 6:44)

“For Russian speakers, it is a little bit difficult. But unfortunately, most of those Russian speaking people left Tajikistan because of the civil war in 90ies.” (6:49 – 7:05)

“Regarding the Russian language I would say that it did not lose its position in the country. More and more people are trying to learn Russian because people understand that they are dependent from Russia. (...) Because of labor migration.. (?). and in terms of GDP, the remittances transferred to Tajikistan. About 80% of migrant live and work in Russia and even if they work in other countries like Kazakhstan, they have to know Russian as well to communicate. The language is becoming more important, even some courses for the labor migrants are conducted by the different organization on learning Russian language. [Talks about the condition of lacking Russian teachers in rural areas] (7:34 -8:35)

“Also, in general, in a cultural perspective, religion also helps people to have a common identity. Like Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, all of them are Muslim and that would unify people.” (25:10 – 25:33)

ENEMY IMAGE

“[Inter-community dialogue between Uzbek and Tajik communities] is necessary and the people who live in the bordering areas wish to communicate with the Uzbeks from that side of the border. And in many cases, also they have their relatives living in that side of the border because during the Soviet times there was very good cultural interrelationships between the people there. And Uzbeks living in Tajikistan in the bordering area cannot go to their relatives homes and they cannot create any contact. Even if they try it is really difficult to cross the border, sometimes they face problems in

Uzbekistan territory with police. People wish to communicate, but this strict regime of the border creates obstacles for that.” (2:21 – 3:40)

“At the current moment, for these days, **people in Tajikistan consider Uzbekistan being one of the main – I wouldn’t say enemy – but still, one of the main obstacles for the country’s development.** Because Uzbekistan is against the construction of the hydropower station of Rogun, which has started now and the people are building it in Tajikistan. They [Uzbekistan] just create obstacles for the raw materials coming from Russia through Uzbekistan by railway. There are Uzbeks organizing different meetings [demonstrations] and manifestations in the bordering districts, demonstrating that they are against the construction of the power station and against the Aluminum plants of Tajikistan.” (10:14 -11:28)

“**The thing is that people understand, both Tajiks and Uzbeks, that it is a political issue and that these obstacles are created by the political leaders of Uzbekistan, but not by the people of Uzbekistan.** This is considered here and people understand well. That’s why they are not against Uzbek people, they are against Uzbek decision makers.” (11:44 – 12:18)

ISLAMIZATION

“Religious identity became very strong after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Because during the Soviet times, people had no access to the religious literature, to the mosques – they were closed. And when [Tajikistan] became independent, people became free in choice and they all tried to get more of this, all the religion. And very many people pray now in Tajikistan, when you to the mosques, there are very many people coming to the mosques. So this religious identity became very strong. Of course, Tajikistan is the only

country in Central Asia having the Islamic political party, officially: (...) The Islamic Renaissance Party.” (16:10 – 17:24)

“There are of course such [Islamist] groups and movements in Central Asia. And the countries’ authorities fight against these movements, which are illegal. They exist, but for now I wouldn’t say they are so active, no. They were active some years ago, in 2000, in 1999, in 2001/2002, and then the authorities organized a very big fight against such movements and there were members of these movements jailed. So they have less and less influence on the situation in Tajikistan.” (18:20 – 19:18)

Which of these Islamist movements are the most active or dangerous? “Hizb ut-Tahrir. (...) No, they are not active, but they were one of the more dangerous ones for the country some years ago. So the government was fighting against them.” (19:27 – 19:33)

“Some attempt from Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan happening – not so often, of course – but there are some cases of crossing the border from Afghanistan or organizing some small fights in the bordering areas. (...) Not so frequent. One case was last year, it has been almost one and a half years and we had no more cases.” (19:46 – 20:42)

“These groups try to recruit people from the rural areas, especially from those remote areas where the religious influence is higher than in the cities. (...) They try to involve young people, who are jobless.” (20:56 – 21:38)

“At the same time, the religion, so bringing people the essence of Islam, is also important. I wouldn’t say that people, even if they pray, are well-educated about what is the Islam and what it means. That’s why when some people who are not educated, they can listen to everybody. ” (23:47 – 24:20)

“Also, in general, in a cultural perspective, religion also helps people to have a common identity. Like Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kyrgyz, all of them are Muslim and that would unify people.” (25:10 – 25:33)

EDUCATION

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POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

[Talks about general influences of the economic crisis: Cotton and Aluminum exports dropped, some labor migrants first returned from Russia in 2009, but they are already going back in 2010] (13:30 -14:30)

“The relationships between the ethnic groups are very strong at the local level, at the community level. And even Tajiks and Uzbeks are relatives, are married to each other. **I wouldn’t say that any kind of crises happening in the world would influence to the relationships between ethnic groups in Tajikistan.**” (15:01 – 15:34)

“These territories are considered by the people. When they talk they say ‘Bukhara and Samarqand are Tajik’. They were Tajik state, this was the Tajik cultural center in the past. These cities were even capitals of Tajik civilization in the past. And all people here, and especially Tajiks, think that this is this way. But they know that now these cities belong to another country, they do not want any movement towards creating any problem in the relationship between two nations, between two countries, let’s say to take back these cities. No, people do not think of this, people think more of stability in the region.” (26:36 – 27:39)

“In Tajikistan, people consider that the Tajik minority there [in Uzbekistan] have less rights than Uzbeks in Tajikistan. Because even during Soviet times, most of Tajiks’ ethnicity in their passports was changed to ‘Uzbeks’, even in the Soviet passports in

order to show that these locations, especially Samarqand and Bukhara are populated with Uzbeks but not Tajiks. So this was happening in the past. And for now, also, the problem is that people from both sides of the border do not enough information about what is happening on the other side of the border. The only channel of information is the state TV and of course some non-state mass media, but in the rural areas people do not have enough access to the Internet and different websites. They mostly watch TV in the evenings at home and their opinions can be formed by what the state TV brings. (...) **People do not know each other.** (...) [People are] saying that in Tajikistan there is hunger, people cannot find a piece of bread. (...) All of the mass media in Uzbekistan is creating the opinion that Tajiks who live in Tajikistan are very poor, they do not have any means for living, etc., which is forming the attitudes of people unfortunately.” (27:51 – 30:39)

“Recently, the UN Secretary-General was in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. He was in Central Asia and visited both these countries. They discussed the issue of regional cooperation between the presidents and the Secretary-General. The president of Tajikistan expressed in the meeting that he is ready to cooperate, but the other side, Uzbekistan, is not willing to do so. So the problems are because there is no regional cooperation, the sides do not want to listen to each other on energy issues, water management issues. That’s why he addressed the UN to facilitate the cooperation in the countries, I mean the dialogue and discussion. But for the UNDP there is no plan to do activities in this direction” (30:57 – 32:28)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“We have some projects for conflict prevention and strengthening the inter-community dialogue. (...) This is mostly in the bordering areas between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

and some initiatives are planned between the communities of Tajikistan and Afghanistan for this year.” (1:15 – 1:51)

“[Inter-community dialogue between Uzbek and Tajik communities] is necessary and the people who live in the bordering areas wish to communicate with the Uzbeks from that side of the border. And in many cases, also they have their relatives living in that side of the border because during the Soviet times there was very good cultural interrelationships between the people there. And Uzbeks living in Tajikistan in the bordering area cannot go to their relatives homes and they cannot create any contact. Even if they try it is really difficult to cross the border, sometimes they face problems in Uzbekistan territory with police. People wish to communicate, but this strict regime of the border creates obstacles for that.” (2:21 – 3:40)

“Of course there should be a complex of activities, not only one type of activity to implement. Because for the stability there should be improvement of the social and economic condition of the people. When they have job, when they have income, they will not think of the fighting or to be involved in some different groups, etc.” (22:31 – 23:07)

“For the purposes of security it is of course necessary to make stricter the controls in the border, especially for Afghanistan to create obstacles for those movements and people from different groups coming to the country, communicating with the people.” (23:14 – 23:40)

“At the same time, the religion, so bringing people the essence of Islam, is also important. I wouldn’t say that people, even if they pray, are well-educated about what is the Islam and what it means. **That’s why when some people who are not educated, they can listen to everybody.** ” (23:47 – 24:20)

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PEACE

“If you compare the current situation to the time until the year 1997, indeed a very serious progress has taken place in terms of consolidation and in terms of conditions for the existence of a few Tajik parties. I.e. the peace process itself did not only set the main politics. But this process of signing the peace agreement also included the establishment of the conditions under which cooperation and the mutual recognition of political parties was possible.” (1/4:37 – 1/5:30)

“However, in the currently one can not say that all political parties have the equal opportunities or equal access to power and the process of decision making. But still, already the fact of recognition and free existence of the Islamic Renaissance Party fills out a massive role and underlines the significance of this process ” (1/5:30 – 1/6:05)

“Actually – and this is something that nobody talks about – the civil war one the one hand of course had negative consequences, which were serious and substantial (?) on the other hand it also contributed positively to the process of unification, to the process of national consolidation of Tajikistan. For example in the countries where there was no such inter-ethnic (?) unification of such a civil war – for example Kyrgyzstan – they are bent on this even though they probably know the consequences [talks about the possibilities of the situation in Kyrgyzstan escalating to a civil war and how people there are ready for it]” (1/10:01 – 1/11:07)

“In our country, this time period [of a civil war] has already passed – unfortunately or luckily – and the people [Tajikistanis] already understand that this is the case at least at this moment. Although there is open disagreements about which is openly debated between the government and the opposition parties. The Islamic Renaissance Party can openly express their disagreement with the policies of the party in power, if you open any newspaper or website, you will see that in general they express they dissatisfaction openly. ” (1/11:10 – 1/11:45)

“Not long ago, there was an interview with a representative of the Islamic Renaissance Party, Vinikabeli, criticized the government for manipulating and making use of facts of the civil war for the purpose of not allowing for a inter-political cooperation, for not giving way to open expression of discord or dissatisfaction by other parties to the party in power.” (1/11:55 – 1/12:28)

IDENTITY

“I’ve read somewhere that Tajikistan is on second place in Central Asia when it comes to showing identity at the national level. For instance, a very large quantity of the population of Uzbekistan call themselves Uzbeks, a very large percentage. And right

after Uzbekistan, on the second place, Tajikistan is located. About 65% of the population consider themselves to be Tajiks. That is to say, a national structure exists.”
(1/15:20 – 1/15:54)

“What is necessary in order to ensure consolidation of commonness and identity of the population is the need for a national idea. This could be the building of the Rogun hydroelectric power station. But unfortunately, this idea is in digression because Uzbekistan is working against the building of this hydropower plant. For this reason this idea has already become weaker. However, this was an excellent opportunity to unite the whole population independently of national characteristics. Against the background of such a unification process, remaining questions, for example any political questions, become secondary. **The government, the party in power, could have created itself the image of an avant-garde of this process, namely the process of national consolidation and national unity.**” (1/15:57 – 1/17:16)

“When one performs a regional analysis of all political parties, there is only a single party which represents all regions, this is the People’s Democratic Party, the party in power. The other parties unfortunately receive more of a regional appraisal. These parties all have the component of regionalism and thus have no chance. This is why it would be important to move all other political issues to the back and national unity to the front—**regionalism prevents parties from improving their image.** (1/17:40 – 1/18:34)

“This works well in the People’s Democracy Party, this party represents all regions. The Islamic Renaissance party by contrast one identifies more with eastern Tajikistan”
(1/18:53 – 1/19:08)

[talks about different parties and why they are not in parliament...]

RAHMON GOVERNMENT

“Unfortunately there were those two newspapers which were writing openly and were strongly criticizing those in power in government. They were closed down. The news papers were [names them]. If I am not wrong, they were closed either in 2005 or 2006. [names a few newspapers that write more carefully, but still criticize the government]” (1/12:45 – 1/13:03).

“Even though there is no censorship, there is internal [self-]censorship of these newspapers. They are very careful writing about certain questions. But currently there is no censorship from the side of the government, but in case they do not like what it being written they can find other ways. For example they can accuse them of not having paid taxes bring up other questions and could then in this basis close these newspapers down. But a kind of direct and open censorship does not exist.” (1/14:12 – 1/14:48)

ENEMY IMAGE

“When he [Rahmon] speaks of an outside enemy, he of course is referring to the influence of superpowers and all other states that have their interests in Tajikistan. Even when they don’t have their concrete interests in Tajikistan, they all have an impact on the development of Tajikistan.” (1/22:20 – 1/ 22:43)

“Maybe this is related with the fact that the leaders of the two countries cannot agree between each other.” *Which two leaders?* “The two leaders, Rahmon and Karimov. **The factor of these personalities in both countries, here and in Uzbekistan, has a very high significance. Imagine: the interrelations between the two peoples, this is roughly 30 million people, entirely depends on the mutual relations of these two figures.** (1/22:45 – 1/23:26)

“When Rahmon in his speeches relates to an outside enemy or outside factors, this is in fact in our understanding Uzbekistan, and also Russia, above all. These two countries

are very interested in the processes ongoing in Tajikistan. On the one hand, Russia demonstrates its closeness and calls Tajikistan its strategic partner. On the other hand the mutual relations between Russian and Tajikistan depend on the nature of relations between Uzbekistan and Russia. That is to say, the relations that Karimov has towards Russia shape the relations of Russia towards Tajikistan.” (1/23:26 – 1/24:26)

“For Russia the priority is not Tajikistan, it is Uzbekistan. There even arose this situation about the building of the Rughon hydropower plant. In the beginning it was agreed upon that Russia with the company Rusal was supposed to build [the dam]. But when Uzbekistan started to oppose (?), Russia sided with Uzbekistan and decided not to participate in the construction of this hydropower plant.” (1/24:50 – 1/25:28)

“When Rahmon talks about an outside enemy, Rahmon in fact has in mind Uzbekistan, this is commonly known, and of course Russia.” (1/25:36 – 1/25:47)

ISLAMIZATION

“The fact of the existence [of opposition parties] is telling about the possibility to go the next steps, to advance the process gradually year by year – well, I am sure that if there are no outside negative factors, the role of opposition parties and in particular that of the Islamic Renaissance Party will without doubt increase in importance” (1/9:06 -1/9:34)

“Yes, they have gotten very active. Until the civil war there weren’t any parts of Tajikistan that were this Islamized. [Talks about how the Islamization of the country provides a background for extremists, conflict possible because of this. Bad recording quality ??]” (2/6:00)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“This is also one of the primary question for many political scientists in Tajikistan today, who are earnestly occupied with study of this question: The general prospect of contemporary existence of Tajikistan against the background of the crisis. (...) This is only related with the economic crisis, however. A political crisis we do yet not have.

The only thing is that there maybe are reasons for escalations –may god not give us a collapse – these reasons are poverty and inflation.” (1/26:55 – 1/27:40)

“However, if one was to judge by the very process that is ongoing with the work emigration, in this manner more than one million people are outside the country, mainly in Russia. Just recently they have sent a big group of work migrants to Saudi Arabia. A fundamental part of the population is aboard, this the population that is both capable of working and also the socially and politically active – they live abroad. And if for example, just half of them – 500,000 people – were to be deported from Russia, Tajikistan could hope for the strongest social surge.” (1/27:43 – 1/28:48)

“Like I said, if the quantity of these workers returned to Tajikistan through deportation from Russia, so the migrants. For instance, if 300,000 or 400,000 people returned to Tajikistan, then it would be an easy thing to use this part of the population for other political parties. The Islamic Renaissance party could also make use of this force for its own interests. There could be a social conflict that turns into a political conflict, just maybe. Maybe such a version is possible.” (2/1:36 – 2/2:20)

Could there be an interethnic conflict? **“This issue can be excluded because such a strict discrepancy between Tajiks and other ethnic groups, like Uzbeks, does simply not exist.** Even Uzbeks who live here in Tajikistan cannot be understood to be the same as those in Uzbekistan. They know this very well and consider themselves

Tajiks. I don't think that ethnic issues or an ethnic conflict could end (?) in some kind of escalation." (2/2:39 – 2/3:18)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

"If there is no help from the international community and international organizations, then Tajikistan by itself is not able to improve its situation by these means." (2/1:00 – 2/1:09)

"It all depends on the government and how they react to various influences of political kind and ethnic kind. However, (?) reasons for a conflict between different ethnic groups doesn't seem to exist at this time. Surveys of society's opinion show that the biggest share of the population consider themselves alike in terms of national identity." (2/6:42 – 2/7:23)

"One should create conditions under which the Islamic Renaissance Party would have a little wider access and possibilities as a political subject in the political process in Tajikistan. This could fundamentally positively influence the prevention of conflicts: The interrelations between the government, the party in power and the Islamic Renaissance Party. Because other parties do not make up for serious partners for the party in power." (2/7:50 – 2/8:32)

"Necessary above all is some kind of a national idea, like in the example of the Rogun hydropower plant. What would be necessary is another such idea." (2/8:49 – 2/9:00)

"National consolidation is also to be seen as an important fact for the prevention of conflicts" (2/9:21 – 2/9:27)

PEACE

“It [the Tajik peace agreement] has been kind of successful in that the war has not resumed and it has been in a negative peace situation. But in terms of the agreement, I don’t think it has been respected all that much. Ever since ’97, especially in the 21st century, the ruling elite or the current government has been getting rid of members of the opposition. And I think they have been sort of abolishing all the arrangements, which both parties signed in 1997. As a result, we don’t really have an opposition anymore, an effective opposition. Okay, there is the Islamic Renaissance Party, they got two seats in the parliament. But I think their role in the political scene is really diminished considerably. And that is largely due the policies of the current government – deliberate policies to diminish their role and push them out of the political domain and to restrain their influence on their policies. So in this regard, I think the agreement hasn’t really worked out, and not the way it was envisioned by the opposition.” (4:36 – 6:21)

“Peace in Tajikistan is a negative peace, meaning the lack of war. But it doesn’t mean the situation is becoming more and more stable and that the peace is becoming more and more sustainable. No, I think it is sort of like a negative peace, meaning that there is no war, but the country remains fragile as far as I am concerned.” (6:36 -6:58)

IDENTITY

How do people define themselves? “First, I think it would be Tajik, secondly it would be Muslim and then it would be belonging to a certain region.” (7:16 – 7:28)

By ‘Tajik’, do you mean they consider themselves ethnic Tajiks or citizens of Tajikistan?

“I think it is sort of conflated. (...) For many people it’s the same, being Tajiks and living in Tajikistan. I don’t think people quite distinguish it. And then, ethnically

most of them are really Tajiks after all. So this ethnic identity is sort of conflated with national identity, for most people. (7:40 – 8:07)

“The third one would be belonging to a certain area, so originating from Kulob, Samarqand, Pamir. So three major areas and then being also from Dushanbe, urban Dushanbe residents.” (8:55 – 9:29)

“And I suppose it might be different in Pamir, but I didn’t go there. So maybe people define themselves differently there as Ismailis. So they might have a different identity, overall. They might have a different dominant identity. They might first identify themselves as Pamirians or Ismailis rather than Tajik.” (8:08 – 8:46)

“I don’t think that the official discourse really refers to different regions that much or to the regionally determined identity. The national identity is ‘one united Tajikistan’ and it doesn’t matter where you originate from. And especially I don’t think that any reference to being from Samarqand, for instance is encouraged. Because Samarqand is in Uzbekistan, with which Tajikistan has a rather strain relationship. And now the official rhetoric is that one national identity is advocated for, promoted.” (9:42 – 10:49)

“And of course, religious identity is also promoted. We are all Muslims, but we are Hanafi Muslims. So we are Muslims belonging to a certain branch of Sunni Islam, a certain school” *So you are saying this is the government promoting this kind of Hanafi Islam?* “Yes, yes.” (10:50 – 11:20)

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ENEMY IMAGE

What enemy is Rahmon referring to when he names an ‘enemy’ of Tajikistan in his speeches. Is this understood by people? “Yes, I think it. It is understood. I think he kind of referred to Uzbekistan. ” (11:49 – 11:57)

What is he accusing Uzbekistan of? “Well, obstructing building Rogun, that is the most important thing. And it’s basically also trying to reduce the influence of Tajikistan. It is trying to remain the only and the only regional power through actually marginalizing Tajikistan.” (12:08 – 12:37)

“Doing this by working with Russia, China, the international community and so on and so forth. Basically blocking gas coming from Turkmenistan to Tajikistan, also the freight coming for building Rogun, basically against anything constructive.” (12:47 – 13:18)

“I think people agree with that [government’s enemy image] and the general understand is that Uzbekistan really trying to do anything to prevent development of Tajikistan and the building of Rogun. But I don’t think it has had any situations for the relationship between Tajiks and Uzbeks, with the sort of ethnic relationship in Tajikistan, if you ask about that. There is this sizable Uzbek population in Tajikistan. I haven’t read or heard of any ethnic tensions between them. ” (13:33 – 14:27)

ISLAMIZATION

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Islamist extremists and issue? “I think that it is an issue. And again, it’s all related to economic policies and marginalization of youth. Not only the marginalization of youth, but also marginalization of the opposition. So the Islamic Renaissance Party being a moderate party, it has been basically, been pushed out of the political process. I think, their national following, the people who supported them, they might get disappointed in

the them and then turn to and look for other religious powers, which could represent them. And then, that is how they could turn to really radical, religious radical movement. I think there is a risk of that. Maybe it is not an immediate risk, I don't think they are influential now in the country. But depending again, on what is going on in the country, it could become more – Actually depending on the situation in Afghanistan sometime, it could become more and more visible here and influential. ” (21:50 – 23:02)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

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“There is a debate between scholars and international community about whether Tajikistan is a resilient state or a failed state. Nobody says it is actually a failed state, but it is on the way to become a failed state, if it doesn't really change its political and economic policies. I think that it is becoming more and more fragile, but this is my superficial and maybe original observation. And it is not on the brink of becoming a failed state, but if they really maintain the same policies, especially economic policies, which are not really accepted by the population. **Then at the end of the day some kind of conflict might elapse.** But between whom, which groups, it is a question mark. Between regional clans, or between secular and religious groups or parts of the

population, and ethnic conflict – I don't know about that, actually. Again, that is something to look into more thoroughly.” (15:06 – 16:37)

If you say that the relations between the different ethnic groups within Tajikistan are good and not much of an issue... “Yes, that is my impression now.” (16:53)

Conflict potential between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan? “No, no. **Within Tajikistan, there might be a conflict. I think there might be serious tensions within Tajikistan between different groups.** Or just between the current elite and the population, because the population is growing more and more irritated with current policies. But of course the civil side is very weak and the opposition is weak, so I don't really see an individual really or a leader who could mobilize this discontent at the moment.” (17:13 – 17:48)

Risk for inter-state conflict? “No, no. There is Russia, there is China, there are other powers, there are Americans sort of present here, I don't think it would result in that [inter-state conflict]. Some things might happen, like Uzbekistan by default dropping a bomb on Tajik territory to demonstrate their power, to warn Tajikistan about something. But it is not going to be an in-and-out war or conflict.” (18:11 – 18:47)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“It is important, first of all, that all actors here do everything to strengthen institutions. I think one of the major weaknesses of the country is the weakness of institutions and hence implementation of any policies. Tajikistan is not ready, institutions are not really ready to react to any threats, be it internal threats or external threats.” (19:08 – 19:48)

“Or even three years ago, there was this compound crisis. People say that Tajikistan is a resilient state because it survived the crisis. But on the other hand, that crisis was mainly

man-made. They didn't do anything to prevent that crisis. So basically I think to start with institution-building.” (19:50 – 20:11)

“Then I do think that **one of the most important issues is marginalization and radicalization of youth. Basically, more things should be done to enhance social participation, political participation of youth.** And of course, economic policies for fostering the youth employment. It is a very young state, I don't know what is exactly the percentage of the young population, but it is huge. And these people, they are growing up and soon, they will take over power positions. So the Soviet population is really leaving and even the generation, which remembers and participated in the war is also slowly but surely leaving the political space, if you will. So this new generation, they could be – nobody knows what they want, nobody knows what to expect from them. Given the low education standards, very bad economic standards and generally very unclear bad policies, this could have serious consequences, really.” (20:12 – 21:31)

“If national identity is promoted, but in a wise way and if it is also substantiated somehow, then of course it is a good way of unifying the nation and hence for preventing conflict in Tajikistan.” *What do you mean by promoted in a wise way?* “(...) **I mean the national identity should be dominant and should prevail over clan identity and over religious-driven identity.** And this something also to emphasize that this is a secular state with national interests and with strong institutions. That is how it should be. But the way that politics is done, the level of corruption here and the way it is an absolute clan-alistic society, doesn't conclude you to promoting and building this national identity. I think that slowly and surely –that's what I mean by substantiating – that is enhancing the national identity. Basically, all these issues should be addressed and then of course people would feel themselves rather belong and be citizens of Tajikistan, it would make them proud and it make them trust the – It also would mean

the relations, the connection between the state and the population. The major problem here is the rift between the elites, between the government and the population. So there is no connection, no link between them, they all function separately.” (24:06 – 26:22)

PEACE

“Generally speaking one can say that the signing the peace agreement in 1997 was the right decision. Although, of course following this we had a national establishment of a new parliament into which went the Islamic Renaissance Party, the Democratic Party and the government of the country... In very general terms, one can say that the implementation of the agreement was successful. Of course, there were a few moments when the 30% quota for opposition members in state organs was not fully reached. But Even though members of the opposition didn’t receive many positions in the structures of power, step by step they reached more influence. But in any case, the implementation was successful” (1:42 – 2:35)

“Two of the parties of the conflict, the Islamic Renaissance Party and the Democratic Party, became fully re-integrated. They are in the parliament and in the last election were well confirmed. That is to say, the process of reintegration in political terms also was concluded successfully. Currently, even though in our society there is a situation of overall stability, there are high levels of poverty and corruption. These may cause several kinds of societal disorder.” (3:24 – 4:15)

“The process of national consolidation is not yet completed. We have not yet reached national unity as we envision it to be.” (5:13 – 5:25)

IDENTITY

“The process of national consolidation is not yet completed. We have not yet reached national unity as we envision it to be.” (5:13 – 5:25)

“There are three **levels of self-identification in Tajikistan**: There is the supranational level, many identify with the huge community of the Ummah of Islam, we can say Islamists. Then there are the communists, which also promote a supranational identity. On the second place, there is there is the social identification with regions. Tajik citizens don't see themselves in a way that they say of themselves ‘I am a Tajik’ or ‘I am a Tajikistani’, first of all he identifies himself as a representative of a specific region. For example, ‘I am a Sughdian’, ‘I am a Khujandian’, ‘I am a Kulobian’, ‘I am a Badakhshanian’ and so on. The most necessary national self-identification is to be found in the opposite. Like I have mentioned, we are building the hydropower plant, in this way this construction project might consolidate it [national unity]. So, **at the first place there is local/regional self-identification, then, on the second place there is supranational self-identification, of a communist or Islamist kind, and on the third place there is a general national identification.**” (5:24 – 6:56)

“**Primarily, Tajikistanis identify with their regional heritage.** This you might also say about the political elite in the country, but the national development of the state demands from them to maneuver between these regions, so that they can create a consensus between regional interests and from there fuse this into overall national interests. In Tajikistan there is exactly this balancing act between regional interests and national interests.” (7:27 – 8:19)

ENEMY IMAGE

“Well, objective difficulties exist between the republic of Tajikistan and the republic of Uzbekistan. Because the bilateral relations have deteriorated for some time, now many start to speak about a general deterioration of relations between the countries and also about the emergence of mutual enemy perceptions between Tajikistanis and Uzbekistanis, but actually in the wide society this cannot be observed and doesn't develop.” (9:07 – 9:55)

“There are few specific groups of people, in your surroundings for example [international community], who know about the difficulties of the Tajik society, but generate notions of enemy images and turn all their attention into that direction. This is not a correct tactic, but sometimes this tactics works. Sometimes international organizations or even international analytics use this or even exaggerate this further.” (10:12 – 10:53)

ISLAMIZATION

“In general, (?). By itself, the state would not collapse. **If there is something that threatens Tajikistan today, it is the further Islamization of society and that Islamists could rise to power.** (...) But the state – despite a big number of problems – survives and attempts under great efforts to solve its problems. Even though there are not many natural resources that we can make use of, there are ambitious plans for a power plant. While at current times, there are very many problems, there are strong aspirations to focus on the future in order to improve the situation.” (11:49 – 13:17)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“In general, (?). By itself, the state would not collapse. If there is something that threatens Tajikistan today, it is the further Islamization of society and that Islamists could rise to power. (...) But the state – despite a big number of problems – survives and attempts under great efforts to solve its problems. Even though there are not many natural resources that we can make use of, there are ambitious plans for a power plant. While at current times, there are very many problems, there are strong aspirations to focus on the future in order to improve the situation.” (11:49 – 13:17)

“This [relations between Uzbeks and Tajiks] is a very difficult question for us. Until December 22nd of the last year, the problems between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan was the problem of the two leaders. On December 22nd of last year, when the Uzbek parliament was joined by an environmentalist movement of Uzbekistan. They not only work in the parliament, they also organize demonstrations and work against Tajik Aluminum factories. So if earlier such problems were between the leaders, now unfortunately the problem takes on a systematic character that influences the state system. These problems, one has to solve. If they cannot be solved, the peoples of the two countries (?) as result of poverty portrayed by the mass media as (?)(14:30 – 15:32)

“But in general, the outlook of the two peoples towards each other are very positive and one can even say complementary in nature.” (15:33 - 15:43)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“If you know the political history of Tajikistan and the history of Central Asia in general, you will know that every 50-70 years or so the state will change. For us this means we can wait, we rented out the cities of Samarqand and Bukhara to Uzbekistan. Maybe in 10-15 years there will be a confederation or unified state. Anyways, in such a

unified state with the capital of Bukhara or Samarqand, this state would speak in two languages, in Uzbek and Tajik. This is completely possible.” (16:15 – 17:00)

“I am not sure that Tajikistan could repeat something like the government overthrow as it took place in Kyrgyzstan. I don’t believe in this happening, it is very unlikely. In my view, the perspective of Tajikistan depends a lot on whether the Rogun dam is built. If this project works out, then development of Tajikistan will increase successfully. Why is Rogun so very important? When one roughly counts the economic benefits of this projects, one will end up with more than a billion dollars. This is an investment not only fighting the poverty but one that is a means for the development of the state. This is very important for Tajikistan. Because of this the people should come up with the solution to realize this project. In any case, step by step, we will carry forward this idea.” (17:26 – 18:43)

“If you know the ideology of Sufism – and Tajiks are educated according to the principles of Sufism. Even if there is nothing else, the people can live on little food and just cold water.” (19:42 – 20:12)

CIVIL WAR

“Because the war was terrible. It was a nightmare for people. They are really afraid, they really don’t want to have this experience again. It is still very deep in the memories of people.” (1/7:14 – 1/7:29)

PEACE

“Before the [peace] agreement was ratified and signed, people were already ready to stop fighting. **The general population was ready to stop the war and start the**

peacebuilding process. Although some of the armed groups still tried to destabilize the society and communities.” (1/4:46 – 1/5:15)

“**Maybe five years after the agreement** was signed the situation was still pretty bad because a lot of people had arms on their hands and some of them took very important positions in the country: in the government, in businesses, in legislative branches, in courts. And at the same time they still had their military groups and arms. **This situation I wouldn’t ever call peace** – because they could do whatever they wanted, on both sides, the oppositional and the governmental groups” (1/5:18 – 1/6:01)

“**Today, it’s [the peace] more or less okay.** The evidence for this is that the government takes up some missteps, let’s say. A couple of month ago, we had our parliamentary elections and the results were not so clear and transparent, but the public has no heart to protest. That means that **the only thing people are afraid of is the repetition of war, coming back to this conflict. That’s why people are quite calm.**” (1/6:08 – 1/7:04)

Why? “**Because the war was terrible. It was a nightmare for people. They are really afraid, they really don’t want to have this experience again. It is still very deep in the memories of people.**” (1/7:14 – 1/7:29)

IDENTITY

“For Tajikistan as well as for many other Central Asian countries (...) the issue of identity is a burning issue, is a very hard issue to talk about because right now we live at the crossroads of civilizations and cultures. There used to be a very strong (...) Muslim culture. Before that there was a very significantly rooted pre-Islamic cultures and cults (...), Zoroastrian culture. At the same time, **it is all mixed with the Soviet and post-Soviet identities and now new democratic identities.**” (1/7:46 – 8:47)

“Some groups of people really identify themselves as strong Muslim community. The other part of the nation, intelligentsia let’s say, it’s about 10-15% of the population, who took the best what they could from the Soviet culture, from the Soviet civilization, like education, Russian language, (...) the moral and ethical principles.” (1/8:55 – 1/9:26)

“The government now imposes the identity of the great Tajik nation, which many centuries ago reigned across the region, it covered the biggest part of Central Asia and present Afghanistan. These symbols (...), like Ismail Somoni, who is the founder of the first Tajik state with the capital in Bukhara, which is in Uzbekistan now. So Somoni is a very important historical figure for the nation. The government really imposes this identity of Somoni nation. We have a have a lot of geographical annexes with Somoni: Like districts, mountains, streets, avenues, a lot of monuments and the national currency is called Somoni. (1/10:25 – 1/11:29)

“**The regular people (...) are sort of lost in this [Somoni] identity.** The only alternative identity which people have now is this post-Soviet intelligentsia, who think that Tajikistan should still remember this Soviet traditions and be closer to the Russian federation.” (1/11:32 – 1/12:04)

RAHMON GOVERNMENT

“On the other side, the strong presidency is something we need in order to keep the country together and prevent the conflict. But still, the policies it fosters now with the neglect to the educational and cultural sphere is potentially dangerous for all of us.” (1/25:19 – 1/25:48)

ENEMY IMAGE

“I actually don’t remember him [Rahmon] calling anyone an enemy like it used to be in Soviet times (...). But he is criticizing some politicians inside the country and outside the country, both Tajik and from other nations, like Uzbek for instance. **[He] claims that most of the problems for Tajikistan were caused by Uzbekistan**, for instance. He just criticizes people – sometimes he is right, sometimes he is wrong about it, but I really wouldn’t say he calls anyone an enemy of the nation, of Tajik people or of Tajikistan.” (1/13:01 – 1/14:12)

ISLAMIZATION

“This problem [Islamism] is a burning issue for us today because the process of Islamization of the country is very fast and is very intensive. People really move towards Islam and **the problem is that there is no good knowledge about Islam in Tajikistan**. You won’t find a proper Islam school or religious school or school of theology. You won’t find an institute of Islam like in other developed countries where people study Islam in order to practice it. But here, it’s only interpretations of interpretation of religious books, of Quran. It gives a lot of space for speculations. For instance, it is very convenient to justify violence against women or in families because you can say it is written there that women should be obedient and man can do whatever they wants (...). You will see a lot of women with hijabs walking in the city. In rural areas young girls don’t go to schools, because their parents get them married when they are fourteen years old. They cannot finish their education (...). And it is all justified by Islam. When a girl isn’t married for a long time, people start talking about her (...). It is all connected with the overall of literacy in the nation. After these educational reforms we’ve had really big problems with the high school education. The number of teachers

was decreased, so that they get higher salaries so that they work more” (1/14:33 – 1/16:55)

“I would even call it a law: the less people know, the more religion is determining their lives. And this is what is happening in Tajikistan.” (1/18:04 – 1/18:16)

Are extremist/fundamentalist Islamist groups important in Tajikistan? “One really can’t say for sure because most of the information in Tajikistan are censored. There are some topics which they are authorized to cover in their media and I suspect that Islamist fundamentalism is one of this topics. There are some cases reported from northern Tajikistan, for example last year there were a couple of Hizb ut-Tahrir cells closed down and their members were jailed. Hizb ut-Tahrir is a fundamentalist organization operating mostly in northern Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, they are very close to terrorist organizations. They don’t do anything really serious, they don’t do terrorist attacks. I suspect they they are organizing (?), their alliences and do the networking, talk to young people. And they get new members – I think they are now just getting stronger.” (1/18:32 – 1/20:12)

“You will never know if something like this happens in Tajikistan. So something might happen and most of the public will not know about it because the news agencies are censored. I once witnessed a terrorist attack, it was in 1999, when a protestant church was bombed by three terrorists. They left the bombs and exploded them by remote control and a lot of people died and were injured. There was no a lot of noise about it. (...) It appeared in Russian news agencies, because there were some reporters from a Russian news agency, but in ours there was nothing.” (1/20:23 – 1/21:36)

EDUCATION

“It was during Soviet times that we were one of the most literate Soviet countries. But now we are almost the least literate country because of the [reform]. [Talks about detailed examples of this]” (1/17:14 – 1/17:19)

“I would even call it a law: the less people know, the more religion is determining their lives. And this is what is happening in Tajikistan.” (1/18:04 – 1/18:16)

“First of all, I really believe we are going downwards. (...) To identify the future of the country you have to look at the education first. The field of education is totally destroyed now. A lot of literate and educated people left the country already, so there is almost no one who could foster the development of the country. And when you don't foster the development, you are going downwards.” (1/22:18 – 1/23:08)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“Tajikistan is mostly a one-nation country. The majority of the population is Tajik. **But the differences between the regional groups of Tajiks is affecting this significantly.** There are some **potential conflicts between the southern and the northern Tajikistan and the southern and the eastern Tajikistan.**” (1/23:14 – 1/23:42)

“Now, the southern region reign the country because the president in from the south and he brought most his staff from the south. His alliances from the south brought their people from the south and it turns out that the southern region wins the country. (?) is really improper way, which creates tensions in other regions like in the north or in the east. And all this is accumulated. Nothing is forgotten, people remember what happens and so it all gives reasons for potential conflict in the future.” (1/24:20 – 1/25:50)

“**If the whole nation believed that they are the one single solid nation and if there were no discrepancies in social development and economical development in**

different regions, then it could work. What I mean is that when there is an unstable region in the country where people live poor, where they are uneducated and when the religion is strong – this is what happened in the civil war – they all raise up, they come to the city, they destroy everything. This is what happened in Kyrgyzstan, for instance.”
(2/2:35 – 2/3:17)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“On the other side, the strong presidency is something we need in order to keep the country together and prevent the conflict. But still, the policies it fosters now with the neglect to the educational and cultural sphere is potentially dangerous for all of us.”
(1/25:19 – 1/25:48)

“I really believe that in order to prevent conflict our current government should improve the education and literacy amongst the nation because **when people are illiterate and can't read by themselves there is a lot of space and freedoms for interpretations on various aspects:** on history, on religion and politics. If people are told something is wrong, people will believe that something is wrong. If people are told that the people from the other regions are bad they will believe in that. That why I think that the education should be the priority for the country.” (2/1:21 – 2/2:15)

“What I think should be done is that the level of the country and the level of social stability is equally disseminated in the country, that it is the same throughout the nation. At the same time, people should be educated. As for identity, people should position themselves as a Tajik of course. (...) **I think that the current government should promote the idea of the great history of Tajikistan, but it shouldn't ever reject positive impacts that Soviet civilization had on Tajikistan and maybe keep some of the best traits from these times. Like, for instance, good relationships with other**

post-Soviet republics and keep the Russian language as a very important tool for social development. Because now they say ‘we are Tajiks, we should speak Tajik’. That is a positive promotion. But my opinion on this is that [while] you should consider yourself a Tajik, you can speak the Tajik language, but you should also position yourself as a part of the huge post-Soviet community, which enables you to go to Russia for work, which enables you to be friends with Kyrgyz, Kazakhs and Uzbeks.” (2/3:18 – 2/5:09)

“Right now, we have two identities to choose. One is promoted: Purely Tajik. And there is one identity people should realize and promote and believe in it and position themselves like this if they really want it: it is a **post-Soviet identity. Because we are Tajiks, we are a separate nation, but we still want to be friends with other republics.** We will want to speak Tajik and Russian and we will have an access to the rest of the post-Soviet communities, which can be very important for us. ” (2/5:11 – 2/5:51)

Russian minority “The Russian community is now the center of the intellectual capacity and they are the link between Russia and Tajikistan. Some of them are teachers, some of them are social leaders, they are leaders of NGO sectors. Russians play a very important role in the development. I wouldn’t use the national term, actually: The Russian-speaking community [is more appropriate]. Most of the are half-Russian, half-Tajik (...), so they are a very important part.” (2/6:37 – 2/7:17)

Uzbek minority “The Uzbek and Kyrgyz communities, they live in Tajikistan and they don’t want to live anywhere else. Because for instance for Uzbek people who come from Tajikistan to Uzbekistan – the Uzbek community doesn’t accept them. They are saying ‘You are not Uzbek, you are Tajik’” (2/7:26 – 2/7:45) “As for Tajikistan, they [Tajiks and Uzbeks] have lived together for many years. In Dushanbe, there are a lot of

Uzbek districts and Uzbeks own a lot of businesses. Nobody has anything against this. Most of people have nothing against this. They have really big businesses and lots of money, but it's okay. Nobody deprived them of this. The small nations, they all left or mixed with the Tajik population, so you cannot find a track.” (2/8:41 – 2/9:15)

“At the same time [in Uzbekistan] it is the Uzbek community saying ‘You’re not Tajik, you are Uzbek. So in all their passports, they put *Uzbek* for all Tajiks living in Bukhara, Samarqand. In their [Tajik’s] passports, they are all Uzbeks. And they all have to speak Uzbek, they cannot speak Tajik in public in different cities. Of course they can speak Tajik in their native cities, in Bukhara, for instance. But in Tashkent, for instance, they cannot speak Tajik because it would raise suspicions.” (2/7:56 – 2/8:30)

“Of course they don’t like it [the bad treatment of Tajiks in Uzbekistan], but the good thing is that for instance in Bukhara there is only Tajiks and Jews living, there are almost no Uzbeks. And nobody speaks Uzbek in the streets or in families. So it is very easy for them to live this way. These are very important cities for Uzbekistan because they are mostly touristic cities. The government doesn’t want to spoil the relationship with these communities because they are very important for them. At the same time, they [people in Bukhara and Samarqand] don’t have these nostalgic feelings about Tajikistan. They position themselves as totally independent cities, even from Tajikistan.” (2/9:51 – 2/10:50)

“Of course, they [people in Tajikistan] really want it back. Every Tajik believes that it is totally unfair for these two cities to be in Uzbekistan, we are absolutely clear. But of course now it is impossible to do anything about it. All we can do is just to remind Uzbeks of this. Like ‘Ah, you stole our cities. Ah, you stole our people’. That’s the way it happens. But all we have is a very bad sorrow about all of this. We really would like to have these cities back. But at the same time people realize that it is impossible. [talks

about how close these cities are and despite border difficulties, that livelihoods depend on travelling back and forth]” (2/11:14 – 2/12:00)

PEACE

“Following the signing of the agreement on peace, our society of course began to work very intensely. So not only the governmental structures, but also the local NGOs contributed to this process significantly, they had a big share in the success in that the state was on the track of engaging in a peacebuilding process.” (7:11 – 7:29)

“And for this newly attained peace to be strong and persistent for many years, for human rights to be observed, not to leave all this to the government power, this is what we worked for and paid much attention to. And this lead to very positive results in the end.” (7:30 – 7:49)

“By itself already the understanding that there is not need for war is important, that all this can be solved and determined through a more democratic path and so a non-violent path. We worked a lot to make people understand and have them embrace this kind of peace where one knows that problems can be solves in a peaceful and democratic way through discussions and deliberation and not through war and conflict.” (7:50 – 8:19)

“Well, of course the result of the peace agreement was positive. The whole society took part in the process. It was the people, so the whole population, who along with many people in the non-governmental organizations played a very big role in this.” (8:54 – 9:07)

POTENTIAL FOR CONFLICT

“Tajikistan of course has its political as well as economic difficulties, which we face today. However, the people clearly do not want another war, everybody has realized

that everything can be solved and decided upon by way of dialogue and a more democratic approach to any problems which arise. This approach includes principles of peace, also principles of peacebuilding, observing human rights, and so on.” (nr)

CONFLICT PREVENTION

“The most important thing in my view is that the level of knowledge about law amongst the general population has to be increased.” (nr)

“Furthermore, the self-consciousness of different layers in society has to be raised. People from different social classes need to become more aware of the differences so that change for a more just and equal society can be effectively demanded, but in the course of doing so, the tensions between them should be reduced. ” (nr)

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