



Tajikistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests

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Summary

Tajikistan is a significant country in Central Asia by virtue of its geographic location bordering China and Afghanistan and its ample water and other resources, but it faces ethnic and clan schisms, deep poverty, poor governance, and other severe challenges. Tajikistan was one of the poorest of the new states that gained independence at the end of 1991 after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. The new country was soon plunged into a devastating civil conflict between competing regional and other interests that lasted until a peace settlement in 1997. Former state farm chairman Imomaliy Rahmon rose to power during this period and was reelected president after the peace settlement as part of a power-sharing arrangement. He was reelected in 2006. His rule has been increasingly authoritarian and has been marked by ongoing human rights abuses, according to many observers.

The civil war had further set back economic development in the country. The economy recovered to its Soviet-era level by the early 2000s, and GDP had expanded several times by the late 2000s, despite setbacks associated with the global economic downturn. Poverty remains widespread, however, and the infrastructure for healthcare, education, transportation, and energy faces steep developmental needs, according to some observers. The country continues to face problems of political integration, perhaps evidenced in part by recent violence in eastern Tajikistan. The country also faces substantial threats from terrorism and narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan.

The United States has been Tajikistan's largest bilateral donor, budgeting \$778.6 million of aid for Tajikistan (FREEDOM Support Act and agency budgets) over the period from fiscal year 1992 through fiscal year 2008, mainly for food and other humanitarian needs. Budgeted assistance for FY2009 was \$35.8 million, and estimated assistance was \$48.3 million in FY2010. The Administration requested \$47.1 million in foreign assistance for Tajikistan in FY2011 (these FY2009-FY2011 figures exclude most Defense and Energy Department programs).

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, Tajikistan seemed to be willing to cooperate with the United States, but hesitated to do so without permission from Moscow. However, Tajikistan had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance's combat against the Taliban. Perhaps after gauging Russia's views, Tajikistan soon offered use of Tajik airspace to U.S. forces, and some coalition forces began to transit through Tajik airspace and airfields. U.S., French, and British personnel have used the Dushanbe airport for refueling, and there are some French troops and some aircraft based at Dushanbe. During a January 2009 visit, the then-Commander of the U.S. Central Command reached agreement with President Rahmon on the land transit of goods such as construction materials to support military operations of the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. While most land transport along this Northern Distribution Network traverses Uzbekistan to final destinations in Afghanistan, Tajikistan serves as an alternative route for a small percentage of supplies.

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Background

Tajikistan is a significant country in Central Asia by virtue of its geographic location bordering China and Afghanistan and its ample water resources, but it faces ethnic and clan schisms, deep poverty, poor governance, and other severe challenges. Tajikistan was one of the poorest of the new states that gained independence at the end of 1991 after the break-up of the former Soviet Union. The new country was soon plunged into a devastating civil conflict between competing regional and other interests that lasted until a peace settlement in 1997 (see below, “The Tajik Civil War”). Former state farm chairman Emomali Rahmon rose to power during this period and was reelected president after the peace settlement as part of a power-sharing arrangement.

The civil war had further set back economic development in the country. The economy recovered to its Soviet-era level by the early 2000s, and GDP had expanded several times by the late 2000s, despite setbacks associated with the global economic downturn. Poverty remains widespread, however, and the infrastructure for healthcare, education, transportation, and energy faces steep developmental needs, according to some observers (see also below, “Economic Issues”).¹ The country continues to face problems of political integration, perhaps evidenced in part by recent violence in eastern Tajikistan (see below, “The 2010 Attacks”). Tajikistan also faces substantial threats from terrorism and narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan.

Basic Facts

Area and Population: Land area is 55,800 sq. mi., slightly smaller than Wisconsin. Population is 7.5 million (The World Factbook, mid-2010 est.). The Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region has called for greater autonomy, which is opposed by the Tajik government.

Ethnicity: 79.9% of the population is Tajik, 15.3% Uzbek, 1.1% Russian, 1.1% Kyrgyz (2000 Census). Clan and regional identities include the Khojenti, Kulyabi, Garmi, and Pamiri groups.

Gross Domestic Product: \$13.8 billion; per capita GDP is about \$2,000 (The World Factbook, 2010 est., purchasing power parity).

Political Leaders: President: Emomali Rahmon; Prime Minister: Oqil Oqilov; Speaker of the National Assembly (upper chamber): Mahmadsaid Ubaydulloyev; Speaker of the Assembly of Representatives (lower chamber): Saydullo Khayrulloev; Foreign Minister: Hamrokhon Zarifi; Defense Minister: Col. Gen. Sherali Khayrulloev.

Biography: Rahmon was born in 1952 and trained as an economist. In 1988, he became a state farm director in Kulyab region. His rise to power was boosted by his links to the paramilitary leader and ex-convict Sangak Safarov. He became chair of the Kulyab regional government in late 1992, and weeks later was elected chair of the Supreme Soviet and proclaimed head of state. He was popularly elected president in 1994 and reelected in 1999 and 2006.

U.S.-Tajik Relations

Overview of U.S. Support for Tajikistan

According to the Obama Administration, Tajikistan is “a critical partner to military stabilization efforts” in Afghanistan and the region. U.S. support for border security, counter-narcotics,

¹ “Central Asia: Decay and Decline,” International Crisis Group, February 2, 2011.

democratization, healthcare, education, and economic growth is “key to improving Tajikistan’s role as a bulwark against regional threats.”²

State Department officials served as observers at the U.N.-sponsored intra-Tajikistan peace talks and pledged rebuilding aid, an example of U.S. diplomatic efforts to head off or ease ethnic and civil tensions in the Eurasian states. The United States also supported the presence of U.N. military observers in Tajikistan during the 1992-1997 civil war. The United States has been the major humanitarian and developmental aid donor to facilitate implementation of the Tajik peace accord and for resettlement of displaced persons. Over the period FY1992-FY2008, the United States was the largest bilateral donor, budgeting \$778.6 million of aid for Tajikistan (FREEDOM Support Act and agency budgets), mainly for food and other humanitarian needs. The United States also facilitated the delivery of privately donated commodities. Budgeted assistance for FY2009 was \$35.8 million, and estimated assistance was \$48.3 million in FY2010. The Administration requested \$47.1 million in foreign assistance for Tajikistan in FY2011 (FY2009-FY2011 figures include Assistance for Europe, Eurasia and Central Asia, Food for Peace, Foreign Military Financing, Global Health and Child Survival, International Military Education and Training, and Nonproliferation, Antiterrorism, Demining and Related Programs funding). For FY2011, the Administration appeared to cut economic growth assistance slightly from that of the previous year.

To look at economic growth assistance provided in FY2010, a Business Environment Improvement project was carried out to strengthen business-related legal reforms. An Economic Reform to Enhance Competitiveness project was carried out to assist the Ministries of Economy and of Finance to develop sound fiscal management of revenues and expenditures. A Regional Trade Liberalization and Customs project was carried out to assist in developing and implementing WTO-compliant trade policies and in improving customs procedures. A Development Credit Authority project provided 50% credit guarantees for up to \$5 million in private lending to Agroinvest Bank of Tajikistan to help attract longer-term capital for agricultural loans to Tajik producers, agri-business intermediaries, private retailers, wholesalers, and processors. A Water User Association Support project, which ended in 2010, was carried out to set up Water User Associations so that farmers could maintain and improve their irrigation and drainage systems. A Productive Agriculture project was carried out to help farmers access fertilizers, seeds, equipment, livestock, and technologies to increase production, processing, and marketing in food-insecure areas in Western Khatlon, around Dushanbe, and the Sughd Region.

In the healthcare area in FY2010, a Health Outreach project was carried out to strengthen governmental and non-governmental organizations to provide prevention services and increase awareness to prevent the spread of HIV and tuberculosis among most-at-risk populations. A Tajikistan Safe Drinking Water Project was carried out to increase access to potable water in rural communities and provide information on household hygiene. A Tajikistan Maternity and Child Health project was carried out to hold health discussions with pregnant women, mothers of children under five, and others and to refer them to maternal and child services; to train staff at the Department of Health to deliver quality maternal and child health services; and to teach schoolchildren sanitation and hygiene skills. A STOP Avian Influenza project was carried out to help the Tajik government and private poultry producers to carry out prevention, bio-security, bio-safety, and preparedness measures. A Tuberculosis Control Assistance Project was carried out to help the Tajik government to prevent and control multidrug-resistant tuberculosis. An “I Know”

² The White House. *Congressional Budget Justification for Foreign Operations, FY2010*, May 12, 2009.

project was carried out to help businesses bring quality affordable contraceptives into Tajikistan, facilitate the distribution of contraceptives to rural pharmacies and health centers, train health providers in modern contraceptive technology, client counseling, and communication skills; and raise community awareness of the benefits of contraceptive use. A Cross-border Vocational Education in Badakshan project was carried out by the University of Central Asia to provide vocational training in Khorog, Tajikistan to citizens from Afghanistan's Badakshan Region to improve the quality of skilled labor in the region. A Quality Learning project was carried out to train teachers to apply modern methodologies in teaching and student assessments and help the Ministry of Education to develop training modules.

In the democracy area in FY2010, a Community Connections project, which ended in 2010, was carried out by the American Councils for International Education to organize three-week specialized training programs in the U.S. for entrepreneurs, religious leaders, local government officials, non-governmental organizational leaders, and health specialists. A Combating Trafficking in Persons in Central Asia project, which ended in 2010, was carried out by the International Organization for Migration.

In the humanitarian area in FY2010, Food for Peace programs were carried out to provide micro loans in poor rural communities and to train women to process and preserve food. They also provided small livestock and poultry, training, and veterinary services to expand income-generation. Another focus of the program was on training health practitioners, repairing and equipping health centers, providing food rations to pregnant and lactating women as well as micronutrients and de-worming medication to mothers and children, and training mothers on breastfeeding, child care, hygiene, food handling, dietary diversification, and disease prevention. The program also constructed and repaired community water and sewage facilities and trained villagers in safe water management. The program provided lunches for girls and teachers; provided children with micronutrient supplements and parasitic medication, school health care, and screening for vision and hearing difficulties; rehabilitated water and sanitation facilities in schools; and introduced health education programs for all grades.³

Cooperation on Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Narcotics

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States, Tajikistan seemed to be willing to cooperate with the United States, but hesitated to do so without permission from Moscow. However, Tajikistan had long supported the Afghan Northern Alliance's combat against the Taliban, so it was predisposed to welcome U.S.-led backing for the Northern Alliance. Perhaps after gauging Russia's views, the Tajik Defense Ministry on September 25, 2001, offered use of Tajik airspace to U.S. forces, and some coalition forces began to transit through Tajik airspace and airfields. U.S., French, and British personnel have used the Dushanbe airport for refueling (in 2010, *The Military Balance* reported that there were 160 French troops based at Dushanbe and some aircraft), but the airport's limited capacity precludes wider coalition use.

During a January 2009 visit, the then-Commander of the U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM), General David Petraeus, reached agreement with President Rahmon on the land transit of goods such as construction materials to support military operations of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan.⁴ While most land transport along this Northern

³ USAID, *USAID Programs in Tajikistan in 2010*, at <http://centralasia.usaid.gov/page.php?page=article-90>.

⁴ U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan, *Press Release: U.S. Centcom Commander Visits Tajikistan*, January 17, 2009; *Press* (continued...)

Distribution Network (NDN) traverses Uzbekistan to final destinations in Afghanistan, Tajikistan serves as an alternative route for a small percentage of supplies.

The United States has provided \$104.2 million in “peace and security” assistance to Tajikistan in FY1992-FY2008. This assistance has been administered by the Defense, State, and Energy Departments, and has included Comprehensive Threat Reduction aid, Foreign Military Financing (FMF), International Military Education and Training (IMET), Non-proliferation, Anti-Terrorism, De-mining, and Related Programs (NADR), Partnership for Peace aid, counter-narcotics aid, and transnational crime aid.

The State Department’s Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism has warned that terrorists and others are able to exploit Tajikistan’s 870-mile border with Afghanistan to smuggle illicit goods into and across Tajikistan in part because Tajik border guards and police are stretched thin, because they lack “appropriate technical equipment, transportation, personnel, and training to interdict illegal border crossings, detect and analyze hazardous substances effectively and respond quickly to incursions,” and because “pervasive corruption and low wages [undermine] the motivation of security force members to interdict smugglers.” Among recent assistance, the United States has provided communication support to the Tajik Border Guards, built a customs facility at the Nizhny Pyanj Bridge, refurbished and supplied equipment and training for a Counter Narcotics-Counterterrorism Analytical Center for the Tajik National Security Committee, and refurbished three Border Guard Service outposts on the border with Afghanistan. Tajikistan also hosted the “Regional Cooperation 10” exercise, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Defense, to focus on strengthen cooperation among Central Asian countries.⁵ USCENTCOM announced in 2010 that \$10 million would be provided to the Tajik armed forces to set up a National Training Center near Dushanbe to train military personnel to combat terrorism and drug-trafficking.⁶

The State Department’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has estimated that between 15% and 30% of heroin and opium from Afghanistan transits Tajikistan to Russia, China, and Europe. It warns that “geography and economics make Tajikistan an attractive transit route for illegal narcotics.” Although Tajik police and border guards confiscate more drug shipments than those in other Central Asian countries, they “apparently are unwilling or unable to target and prosecute major traffickers.” The United States funds a counter-narcotics office in the U.S. Embassy in Tajikistan that includes an INL officer. The Drug Enforcement Agency also has an office in Dushanbe. The Defense Department’s Office of Defense Cooperation manages USCENTCOM’s counter-narcotics program in Tajikistan. The embassy’s border and law enforcement working group coordinates the agency programs to train and equip police and other security-related personnel and to renovate border outposts. INL has funded a drug liaison office of the Tajik Drug Control Agency in the town of Taloqan, northern Afghanistan, to detect, investigate, interdict and report on the illegal movement of narcotics into the Gorno Badakhshan region of Tajikistan. The U.S. is renovating and providing teaching support to the Ministry of Internal Affairs Academy.⁷

(...continued)

Briefing by General David Petraeus, Commander, US Central Command, January 17, 2009.

⁵ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2009, Chapter 2: South and Central Asia*, August 5, 2010.

⁶ U.S. Central Command, *CENTCOM, Tajikistan Expand Security Partnership*, Press Release, June 29, 2010, at <http://www.centcom.mil/en/press-releases/centcom-tajikistan-expand-security-partnership>.

⁷ U.S. Department of State, *2010 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, March 1, 2010.

Political Developments

Since the end of the civil war in 1997, President Emomali Rahmon has steadily increased his authoritarian rule and marginalized the opposition. His ambit remains limited, however, by myriad local warlords. A legislative electoral law was approved in late 1999 calling for a lower chamber, the Assembly of Representatives (Majlisi Oli), to consist of 63 members (22 elected by party list and 41 in single-member districts), and an upper legislative chamber, the National Assembly (Majlisi Milli), to consist of 34 members representing regional interests (25 selected by indirect voting by local council assemblies, eight appointed by Rahmon, and one reserved for the former president). Another referendum on changes to the constitution was held in June 2003. Opposition critics correctly predicted that one of the changes—limiting a president to two seven-year terms—would permit Rahmon to claim two more terms in office under the “new” amendment.

There are eight registered parties. The People’s Democratic Party is the ruling party, led by President Rahmon. Pro-government parties include the Agrarian Party, Democratic Party, Economic Reform Party, and Socialist Party. The three registered opposition parties are the Islamic Renaissance Party, Social Democratic Party, and the Communist Party. The latter sometimes allies itself with the People’s Democratic Party.

Five candidates ran in the presidential election in Tajikistan held on November 6, 2006, including incumbent President Rahmon. All four “challengers” praised Rahmon and campaigned little. Rahmon officially received 79.3% of 2.88 million votes with a nearly 91% turnout. According to OSCE observers, the race was slightly improved over the 1999 presidential election but still lacked “genuine choice and meaningful pluralism,” including because of the dearth of meaningful debate by the candidates, improbable turnout figures in some precincts, use of administrative resources, and non-transparent vote-counting.⁸ A new presidential election is scheduled for 2013.

After the problematic 2005 legislative election, which the OSCE judged as not free and fair, the OSCE and opposition parties proposed changes to the law on legislative elections. A few were implemented through administrative means, such as a ban on a member of a family voting for other family members. Other proposed changes included placing opposition representatives on electoral commissions, banning officials from servicing on electoral commissions, permitting non-partisan monitors to observe elections, lowering the threshold of party list votes necessary for a party to gain legislative seats, eliminating a requirement that candidates possess higher education, and reducing or eliminating a sizeable election deposit, which some parties claimed deterred prospective candidates from running. Many of these reforms were introduced in the legislature but were blocked by the ruling People’s Democratic Party. Some opposition parties also have complained that it is difficult to campaign during the winter when legislative elections are held.

Elections to the Assembly of Representatives were held on February 28, 2010. Only the People’s Democratic Party could afford to register 22 candidates for the 22 party list seats, so the total number of party list candidates was 73. For the constituency races, 153 candidates registered, including 83 sponsored by parties and 70 who nominated themselves. Turnout on election day

⁸ OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, *Final Report on the 6 November 2006 Presidential Election in Tajikistan*, April 18, 2007.

was reportedly 3.2 million (87.1%), and the People's Democratic Party won 54 seats (up from 52 in 2005), the Agrarian Party won 2 seats, the Economic Reform Party won 2 seats, the Communist Party won 2 seats, the Islamic Renaissance Party won 2 seats, and an independent candidate won one seat.

An OSCE monitoring mission viewed the campaign and voting as “fail[ing] to meet many key OSCE commitments.” The monitors raised concerns about the prevalence of officials and members of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan on electoral commissions, the high electoral deposit (relative to average incomes), electoral commissions organizing and presiding over “meetings with the voters,” and the requirement that candidates possess a higher education. The monitors praised the sizeable field of parties and candidates providing voters with different political programs, but stated that this positive feature of the election was vitiated by credible and verified reports of local authorities and police violating campaign regulations to the disadvantage of opposition parties and by the lack of diverse viewpoints in broadcast media. There were “serious irregularities” in many polling stations observed “which undermined the integrity of the elections,” including a high incidence of proxy voting (voting for someone else) in about one-half of the polling stations. Other irregularities involved voting without identification documents, multiple voting, casting pre-marked ballots, and some cases of ballot-box stuffing. Vote-counting also was assessed negatively in many of the polling stations visited.⁹ Observers from the U.S. Embassy were in agreement with the OSCE monitors, stating that “the vote was beset by procedural irregularities and fraud.”¹⁰

President Rahmon increasingly has used rhetoric associated with Hanafi Sunni Islam and Tajik nationalism to define his rule. This rhetoric has alienated ethnic and religious minorities, including ethnic Uzbeks and ethnic Pamiris in Mountainous Badakhshan who practice Ismaili Shiism. In July 2009, President Rahmon proposed banning the use of Russian as “the language of interethnic communication” to strengthen the use of Tajik. Some observers suggested that the proposal would most impact ethnic Uzbeks, who are much more numerous than ethnic Russians.

The terrorist incidents in mid-2010 appeared to heighten views of the Tajik government that the Islamic Renaissance Party harbored extremists. The party was ordered in August 2010 to cease holding Friday prayers at its large headquarters compound (a 2009 religion law banned prayers in unregistered sites), the headquarters was raided by the police in mid-October 2010, a mysterious fire destroyed part of the compound in late October 2010 that had been used by women for Friday prayers, and an official of the party was badly beaten by unknown assailants in February 2011. The government also recently has requested that parents recall children studying at Islamic religious institutions abroad, detained or harassed many bearded men, banned the wearing of the hijab by shopkeepers, ordered imams to only use approved sermons, and reportedly closed several mosques that it claimed had not been legally registered.

⁹ OSCE, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, Election Observation Mission, Republic of Tajikistan, Parliamentary Elections, 28 February 2010, *Needs Assessment Mission Report*, December 4, 2009, *Interim Report No. 1*, February 8, 2010; *Interim Report No. 2*, February 22, 2010; *OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report*, July 6, 2010.

¹⁰ U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, *U.S. Embassy Election Observers Note Widespread Fraud and Irregularities in Parliamentary and Local Races*, March 2, 2010.

Human Rights

According to the State Department's latest *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices*, the Tajik government's human rights record remained poor in 2009. Human rights problems included the torture and abuse of detainees by security forces; the harassment of refugees by security forces; denial of the right to a fair trial; restrictions on freedoms of speech, press, association, and religion; government harassment of nongovernmental organizations; and violence and discrimination against women.¹¹ Tajikistan is a major source country for persons trafficked as forced prostitutes and forced laborers, and the government does not fully comply with the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking. Although it has made some efforts to combat trafficking, it continues to compel adults and children to pick cotton during the annual harvest. For these reasons, the State Department downgraded Tajikistan from "Tier 2" to the "Tier 2 Watch List" in 2008 and the country remained on the watch list in 2009 and 2010.¹² In July 2010, cotton from Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was added to a list that requires U.S. government contractors purchasing products to certify that they have made a good faith effort to determine whether forced or indentured child labor was used to produce the cotton.¹³

Assessing Tajikistan's human rights record in 2010, Human Rights Watch, a non-governmental organization, has stated that "despite a few small positive steps, Tajik authorities continue to violate rights affecting areas ranging from elections and media freedoms to religious liberty and women's rights." The organization has asserted that Tajik authorities continued suppression of the press, began enforcing a repressive religious law, and used the judicial system to prosecute human rights activists and political opponents. The government made a few small steps to protect combat widespread domestic violence against women.¹⁴

Foreign Policy and Defense

In April 2008, President Rahmon stated that Tajikistan was ready to "further expand relations of cooperation with countries of the West and the East, as well as those of the Islamic world, from the point of view of our open-door foreign policy." He pledged that Tajikistan would "expand constructive collaboration with the United States, the European Union and other countries of the [anti-terrorist] coalition not only in this important field, but will also pay more attention to expanding beneficial economic cooperation." In November 2007, Rahmon explained that Tajikistan's "open door" foreign policy—"cooperation with any entity of international relations which has good intentions and aims towards our country"—might not please certain unnamed "powerful countries," but that the policy prevented Tajikistan from becoming a "puppet." He has warned that Tajikistan faces a global environment where "the rivalry between different countries for international markets, resources of raw materials, fuel and energy reserves, and other natural wealth" is growing, and where arms races are intensifying. He has called instead for "beneficial

¹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2009*, March 11, 2010.

¹² U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2010*, June 14, 2010.

¹³ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of International Labor Affairs, Office of Child Labor, Forced Labor, and Human Trafficking, *The Department of Labor's List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor*, September 3, 2009; Executive Order 13126, *Prohibition of Acquisition of Products Produced by Forced or Indentured Child Labor*, at <http://www.dol.gov/ILAB/regs/eo13126/main.htm>.

¹⁴ *World Report 2011*, Human Rights Watch, January 24, 2011.

international cooperation to reduce and prevent new global threats and dangers, [such as] terrorism, extremism, drugs production and trafficking, [and] organized transnational crime.”¹⁵

Tajikistan is interested in the political and human rights of approximately seven million ethnic Tajiks residing in Afghanistan (25% of the population) and over one million in Uzbekistan (4%). Tajikistan has hosted about 5,000 refugees from Afghanistan, mainly ethnic Tajiks, but reportedly is somewhat concerned that a greater influx could exacerbate Islamic fundamentalism in the country. Tajikistan’s relations with Uzbekistan have been problematic, including disagreements about water-sharing, Uzbek gas supplies, and environmental pollution (see below).

The Tajik armed forces consist of about 8,800 ground, air force-air defense, and mobile (rapid reaction) troops.¹⁶ There also are about 3,800 troops in the Interior Ministry, 1,200 in the National Guard, and 2,500 in the Emergencies Ministry. The armed forces are underfunded and fractured by regional clan loyalties that compromise their effectiveness. According to Defense Minister Sherali Khayrulloev, a mobile (rapid reaction) force recently was created as a third branch of the armed forces from subunits of the other branches as “a quality enhancement of combat readiness and [to ensure] a swift reaction to a change in the situation in the country and region.”¹⁷

Tajikistan is a signatory of the Collective Security Treaty (CST) of the CIS (led by Russia). In 2001, CST members approved the creation of regional rapid-deployment military forces that include a Tajik battalion. Tajikistan also belongs to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO; an economic and security organization led by China and Russia that also includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan). Tajikistan joined NATO’s Partnership for Peace in February 2002.

A 10-year (with options for renewal) Tajik-Russian basing agreement was signed in October 2004 that provides for Russia’s former 201st Motorized Rifle Division to be based at three garrisons and to have access to three training grounds. Tajikistan also transferred ownership of the Okno space tracking base (near the town of Nurek) to Russia. In exchange, Russia cancelled a \$242 million debt. Russia’s approximately 5,500 contract troops in Tajikistan (many or most of whom are ethnic Tajik noncommissioned officers and soldiers) constitute its second-largest military presence abroad, after the Black Sea Fleet in Ukraine. Tajikistan assumed control from Russia over guarding its borders in June 2005, although about 50 Russian border guard advisors and 20 instructors remain. In November 2006, Tajikistan and Russia signed an agreement to hold joint military training operations. Many Tajik officers receive training at Russian military schools. In October 2009, visiting President Rahmon reportedly urged President Medvedev to pay rent on Russia’s base facilities in Tajikistan, but Moscow only agreed to consider the issue when the current basing agreement comes up for renewal in 2014. Russia reportedly is interested in obtaining access to Tajikistan’s Ayni airfield, near Dushanbe (modernized with Indian assistance), but President Rahmon allegedly has requested that Russia pay \$125 million in annual rent or equivalent military assistance.

¹⁵ *CEDR*, November 16, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950361; April 25, 2008, Doc. No. CEP-950185; September 8, 2007, Doc. No. CEP-950171.

¹⁶ *The Military Balance*, February 1, 2010.

¹⁷ *CEDR*, June 14, 2009, Doc. No. CEP-549001.

The Tajik Civil War

Tajikistan was among the Central Asian republics least prepared and inclined toward independence when the Soviet Union broke up. In September 1992, a loose coalition of nationalist, Islamic, and democratic parties and groups tried to take over. Kulyabi and Khojenti regional elites, assisted by Uzbekistan and Russia, launched a successful counteroffensive that by the end of 1992 had resulted in 20,000-40,000 casualties and up to 800,000 refugees or displaced persons. In 1993, the CIS authorized “peacekeeping” in Tajikistan, consisting of Russian and token Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek troops. After the two sides agreed to a cease-fire, the U.N. Security Council established a small U.N. Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) in December 1994. In June 1997, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and then-rebel leader Sayed Abduullo Nuri signed a *comprehensive peace agreement*. Benchmarks of the peace process were largely met, and UNMOT pulled out in May 2000, but Russian troops have remained. Stability in Tajikistan is fragile. Observers remain concerned about possible secessionism in the northern Soghd (formerly Leninabad) region and in the eastern Mountainous Badakhshan region, and tensions between ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks within Tajikistan.

The 2010 Attacks

In late August 2010, over two dozen individuals sentenced as terrorists escaped from prison in Dushanbe and launched attacks as they travelled to various regions of the country. Many of these individuals had been opposition fighters during the Tajik civil war and had been arrested in eastern Tajikistan during government sweeps in 2009. In early September 2010, a suicide car bombing resulted in over two dozen deaths or injuries among police in the northern city of Khujand. An obscure terrorist group, Jamaat Ansarullah, supposedly related to the IMU, claimed responsibility. Some escapees and their allies, allegedly including IMU terrorists, attacked a military convoy in the Rasht Valley (formerly known as Karotegin) east of Dushanbe on September 19, 2010, reportedly resulting in dozens of deaths and injuries to government forces, leading to concerns among some observers that Tajikistan was becoming more unstable. However, the government has claimed in early 2011 that it has stabilized the situation in eastern Tajikistan. In early January 2011, the Tajik Interior (police) Ministry reported that its forces had killed former Tajik opposition fighter Alovuddin Davlatov, alias Ali Bedak, the alleged leader of one major insurgent group. Rumors are that Abduullo Rakhimov, aka Mullo Abduullo—a former Tajik opposition paramilitary leader who spurned the peace settlement and travelled to Afghanistan and Pakistan, where he maintained links with al Qaeda and the Taliban—reentered Tajikistan in 2009 and remains there in 2011. According to some observers, underlying causes of the violence may be related to the failure of the Rahmon government to share power and economic benefits with minority groups and clans, and more immediate causes may be related to the increasing repressiveness and exclusiveness of the government and the ability of disaffected populations to obtain countervailing armed support from affines and others abroad.¹⁸

¹⁸ Lola Olimova and Nargis Hamrabaeva, “Tajik Authorities Struggle to Quell Militants,” *Report News: Central Asia*, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, October 4, 2010; Umida Hashimova, “The Islamist Insurgency in Tajikistan,” *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, October 12, 2010; Tilav Rasulzoda and Parvina Khamidova, “New Militant Force in Tajikistan?” *Report News: Central Asia*, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, October 21, 2010; *CEDR*, January 12, 2011, Doc. No. CEP-950136.

Economic Issues

Tajikistan's economic decline reversed in 1997 as the peace accords that ended the civil war took hold. The Tajik government's National Development Strategy for 2006-2015 focuses on ending the country's transport and communications isolation and enhancing energy and food security.¹⁹ The global economic downturn in 2008-2009 depressed prices for Tajik commodity exports (mainly aluminum and cotton) and reduced worker remittances from Russia and Kazakhstan, which host most of Tajikistan's migrant workers. The Tajik currency, the somoni, lost much of its value relative to stronger currencies, which increased the costs of imported food and other goods. The NGO International Crisis Group (ICG) warned that the economic downturn subjected the "desperately poor population [of Tajikistan] to yet more deprivation.... To address the situation, the international community ... should ensure any assistance reaches those who truly need it, place issues of governance and corruption at the centre of all contacts with the Tajik government, and initiate an energetic dialogue with President Rahmon on democratization."²⁰ The Tajik government reported that its worker remittances plunged by almost 30% in 2009. The Tajik economy began to improve in 2010 as world commodity prices increased and improving economies in Russia and Kazakhstan resulted in an uptick in worker remittances by Tajik migrant workers.

GDP grew about 5.5% in 2010 and consumer price inflation was 5.8% (*The World Factbook* est.). Tajikistan has depended heavily on foreign loans and aid to cover its budget and trade deficits. Tajikistan's foreign debt was \$1.94 billion in early 2011, with the largest share owed to China's Exim Bank, according to the Tajik Finance Ministry. Most small enterprises had been privatized by 2000, but land and major enterprises remain state-owned. Tajikistan's aluminum smelter in Tursunzade, one of the world's largest, accounts for three-fourths of Tajikistan's exports. Cotton and hydro-electricity have been other exports. The agricultural sector employs two-thirds of the labor force. One million or more Tajiks—up to 50% of the labor force—are labor migrants, and up to two-thirds of the remaining population lives in poverty. Almost one-fourth of households in Tajikistan receive some remittances from these workers.²¹

Uzbekistan began to restrict railway and road transport to and from Tajikistan in February 2010, reportedly to pressure Tajikistan not to build the Roghun dam on the Vakhsh River and the Sangtuda-2 hydro-electric power plant on the Vakhsh River that might limit water flows to Uzbekistan. Reportedly, thousands of railcars and trucks have faced delays, including those carrying construction materials bound for Afghanistan to support ISAF, materials for building the Roghun dam, materials from Iran for completing the Sangtuda-2 power plant, fuel and seeds for Tajik farmers, flour, and materials for road construction in Tajikistan. Uzbekistan also has boosted tariffs on trucks crossing into Tajikistan. Uzbekistan has rejected Tajik assertions that shipping delays are political and has claimed that they are caused by increased ISAF rail traffic to

¹⁹ State Committee on Investment and State Property Management of the Republic of Tajikistan, *National Development Strategy of the Republic of Tajikistan for the Period to 2015*, August 2006, at <http://www.gki.tj/en/documents/33/>; U.N. General Assembly, *Statement by Mr. Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, at the General Debate of the 65th session of the U.N. General Assembly*, September 23, 2010, at http://www.un.org/en/ga/65/meetings/generaldebate/Portals/1/statements/634208415241718750TJ_en.pdf.

²⁰ ICG, *Tajikistan: On the Road to Failure*, February 12, 2009.

²¹ CIA, *The World Factbook*, at <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/>; Zarina Ergasheva, "Tajikistan's External Debt Up US\$265.1 mln in 2010," *Asia-Plus*, January 24, 2011; *CEDR*, August 6, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950158.

Afghanistan, a backup of railcars headed to Turkmenistan, and track repairs. Tajikistan has repeatedly appealed to the OSCE that Uzbekistan continues to delay rail transit to and from Tajikistan.²² Uzbekistan also has claimed that Tajikistan's aluminum plant has caused pollution in Uzbekistan.

During the winters of 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, severe weather and electricity, gas, and food shortages led the Tajik government to declare a humanitarian crisis and ask international donors for assistance. During the winter of 2010-2011, the U.N. World Food Program has warned that poor harvests and increased food prices in several districts have created urgent food needs that it continues to monitor.

After Uzbekistan withdrew from the Unified Energy System for Central Asia at the end of 2009, it refused to permit Tajikistan to transfer electricity to Kazakhstan during the summer of 2010, resulting in a reported loss of revenues by Tajikistan (and Russian investors). Tajikistan hopes to complete power lines to Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan to boost energy exports.

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²² Konstantin Parshin, "Tajikistan: Repercussions of Tajik-Uzbek Feud May Be Felt All the Way to Afghanistan," *Eurasianet*, April 1, 2010; Konrad Mathesius, "Boxcar Diplomacy Puts Tajik Businesses at Tashkent's Mercy," *Eurasianet*, August 6, 2010; *CEDR*, November 18, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950138; November 19, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950234 and Doc. No. CEP950214; and December 30, 2010, Doc. No. CEP-950116.