

MILITARISM IN TAJIKISTAN: REALITIES OF POST-SOVIET NATION
BUILDING

by

DOUGLAS WAYLAND FOSTER

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Student: Douglas Wayland Foster

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This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Geography by:

Alexander B. Murphy	Chairperson
Shaul Cohen	Core Member
Daniel Buck	Core Member
Julie Hessler	Institutional Representative

and

Scott L. Pratt	Dean of the Graduate School
----------------	-----------------------------

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded September 2015

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Douglas Wayland Foster

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Shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the newly independent Central Asian republic of Tajikistan fell into a brutal civil war (1992-97) that exacerbated internal divisions based on ethno-regional groupings. In the following decade, the new government formed its own armed forces while maintaining the presence of the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division in the country. This made Tajikistan the only former Soviet republic that did not inherit the Soviet units located within its territory; thus, Tajikistan formed its own national military.

This dissertation examines the effect of military service on the development of national sentiments in the Tajikistan, focusing on three main points: 1) the practice of military recruitment, 2) the conditions within the national military, and 3) the available option for Tajikistan nationals to serve in active military units of the Russian Federation.

The autocratic Tajikistan government's state symbolism is associated with the importance and glory of the military. However, the population has shown a strong distaste for service in this military, and the state's approach to recruitment is both a

response to this aversion and a contributor to it. I show that military recruiters' use of an illegal but tacitly accepted practice of impressment called "oblava" (Russian: roundup) during bi-annual conscription drives has negative consequences for the development of national sentiments and state legitimacy. This conscription method is coupled with a lack of pay, training, adequate food, and health care during a member's service. The conditions within the Tajikistan military stand in contrast to those within the Russian military, which has units based in Tajikistan and into which Tajikistan nationals may enlist as contract soldiers. I conclude by conceptualizing the majority of military service in Tajikistan as the state use of biopower to control young males in a territory with a rapid population growth rate but few economic opportunities while relying on the Russian Federation for its existential defense.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Douglas Wayland Foster

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene
University of Delaware, Newark
West Virginia University, Morgantown

DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy, Geography, 2015, University of Oregon
Master of Arts, Geography, 2015, University of Delaware
Bachelor of Arts, International Studies, 1990, West
Virginia University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Russian language and culture

International affairs

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate teaching fellow, University of Oregon, Department
of Geography and Map Library

Instructor, Clackamas Community College, Oregon City, OR,
Department of Social Science

Instructor, Clark College, Vancouver, WA, Department of
Social Science

Instructor, Art Institute of Portland, Portland, OR,
General Studies

Instructor, Linfield College, McMinnville, OR, Adult Degree
Program

Instructor, University of Delaware, Department of Geography

Associate Planner, Delaware State Housing Authority, Dover,
DE

Research Assistant, U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC, Committee on Banking, Finance and Urban
Affairs, Subcommittee on Economic Stabilization

Field Coordinator, The Population Institute, Washington, DC

GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

IRES, Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Program (IARO). 2013-2014. Fellowship to fund dissertation research fieldwork in Tajikistan. \$15,500 plus travel expenses.

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Department of Geography, University of Oregon. Summer Research Funding. Grant to assist in fieldwork. June, 2011. \$500.00

U.S. Department of State, Foreign Service Written Exam Qualifier 1998

PUBLICATIONS:

Foster, D. W. "Hegemonic Turning Points: Vietnam, Iraq and the All-Volunteer Force." *Antipode*. Submitted September 2014

Foster, D. W. "Tajikistan in the Gap: The Geopolitics of Neoliberal Integration." *Geopolitics*. Submitted May 2014

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In Dushanbe, Tajikistan, two young men board a marshrutka (minibus taxi) as they commute around this Central Asian republic's capital city. Shortly after climbing in, they discover they are caught in a trap. Military recruitment officers have commissioned the taxi for *oblava* (Russian: roundup): the targeted impressment of Tajikistani males into the republic's armed forces -- a situation nearly every male citizen seeks to avoid. Quickly understanding their peril, one of the men calls his "tagha" (uncle on mother's side; in southern Tajikistan, vernacular for 'sponsor'), who is a man with connections who will tell the recruiters to let the caller go free. While the first male is able to calmly escape conscription, he could not directly help his friend, who is on his own to find a way out (Respondent 1 2013). The other verbally resists, citing the technical illegality of *oblava* and stating his rights as a student to be deferred from conscription. Immediately the military recruiter asks if he is an ethnic Pamiri from the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).

"I said yes. After that, they let us go. One of the reasons they let me go is my ethnic background. They know that normally Pamiris tend to be more educated people than the average citizens" (Respondent 15 2014).

The above episode is suggestive of two important components of this study. First, in Tajikistan, ethno-regional identity matters. The immediate inquiry into a specific group identity by the recruitment officer highlights this condition, though its importance is linked to many aspects of daily life (Nourzhanov & Bleuer 2013; Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009). Second, the government of the Republic of Tajikistan (RT)¹ believes it must rely on direct and illegal coercive methods to fulfill its manpower needs for its national military - while simultaneously positioning the military as a symbol of the Tajik nation. However, the RT has been selective regarding which units receive adequate training and material support, and most units appear deficient in some of the most basic requirements for military personnel (food, clothing, ammunition). Similarly, there seems to be little in the way of military training for most of these units. For these reasons (among others addressed in this dissertation) military service is widely disdained in Tajikistan, raising important questions about the stability of the state and the role of the military therein. Why has the RT opted to invest so little capital (both human and financial) in its military when it consistently draws public attention to the contemporary geopolitical threats emanating from Afghanistan? How does the presence of the Russian 201st Motorized Rifle Division (MRD) in Tajikistan embody the RT's reliance on the Russian Federation for its political stability? Lastly, what

¹ I use RT to specifically denote the state of Tajikistan, and I use 'Tajikistan' to represent the country more generally.

role do ethno-regional identities play in the decision of male citizens to serve in the RT security forces?

Investigating how these realities intersect and shape one another is valuable for understanding the development of national sentiments in Tajikistan. Tajikistan's ethno-regional identities represent a significant obstacle to the development of a strong national identity. Members of these different groups (which I describe in Chapter II) serve together in the RT armed forces, which are positioned by the government as the embodiment of the Tajik nation. In many countries, the armed forces play an important role in promoting and sustaining national identity (Shils 1962). Yet if Tajikistani males largely disdain service in the military and the state uses physical coercion to secure conscripts, the development of national sentiments through the military in the RT faces serious challenges. This thesis is fundamentally concerned with understanding the nature and significance of those challenges. To set the stage, it is useful to consider the broad outlines of the RT's post-independence history.

Shortly after the breakup of the Soviet Union, the newly independent republic fell into a brutal civil war (1992-97) that claimed the lives of over 23,000 people and created more than 100,000 refugees (Mukomel 2001). The war started when demonstrations in Dushanbe opposing a recent election escalated and groups seeking to alter the status quo (Pamiris, democrats,

nationalists and Islamists - see Chapter II) deposed the government. Simultaneous counterdemonstrations assembled that supported the previous regime, made up mostly of Tajiks from the south of the country. Violence erupted when groups on both sides mobilized supporters and armed them to form irregular militias. The ensuing war quickly transformed into a bloodbath targeting civilian victims for revenge and petty theft. Two aspects of the violence are notable: 1) the allegiance of combatants could be loosely defined by ethnicity and/or region of origin and 2) both sides' pursued ethno-regional identity-based mass murder as a tactic/strategy. While the causes of the war were not primarily based on ethnic and regional cleavages, as the violence progressed each side increasingly defined their enemies by specific ethno-regional identity (Uzbeks and Kulobis as the anti-opposition; Garmis and Pamiris as the opposition). This form of targeting was imprecise; there were people from all ethno-regional groups on both sides of the war and many preferred to remain neutral, if possible.

The contemporary influence of ethno-regional identity upon national sentiments is undoubtedly affected by the civil war. Further, how these identities interact with each other within the RT military serves as an important gauge of the institution's symbolic role in the development of national sentiment. Equally intriguing is the direct support given by foreign militaries (Russia & Uzbekistan) to the pro-government militias' cause. The support of Russia has been on-going since the collapse of the

USSR; it has taken the form of a semi-permanent basing of the 201st Motorized Rifle Division (MRD) in Tajikistan since the end of the war—an arrangement that will likely continue for the foreseeable future.

This brief but bloody history poses questions about subnational identity within the contemporary RT armed forces and the prospects for the development of a more cohesive national sentiment in a state with strong ethno-regional cleavages. Given that national militaries are often seen as powerful symbols of 'imagined communities' (B. Anderson 1991) constructed by the state, their ability to serve as a legitimate representative of the national population is relevant. Similarly, the presence of foreign militaries on national soil may pose challenges to the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its people.

Tajikistan (population: 8.27 million (PRB 2014)), like other post-Soviet Central Asian republics, represents a state where the titular nationality and border regime are the result of extensive social engineering efforts on the part of Soviet authorities (see Map 1.1). The results of those efforts are perhaps incomplete; in addition to its civil war, the RT has poorly delineated borders with China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, and people largely from one ethno-regional group head the top levels of government and the security services. Despite these issues, or perhaps because of them, foreign states with regional hegemonic intentions have based military units in Tajikistan

through agreements with the government. Foreign states' desires for military presence in Tajikistan is driven by concerns about radical Islam, narcotics trafficking and general political instability.

In the other four former Soviet Republics in Central Asia, in-country Soviet military units were converted into the national militaries after independence; Tajikistan was the only such Republic that did not inherit the units based there. The 201st MRD, based in the Tajik SSR and subsequently independent Tajikistan, was instead retained by the Russian Federation. As the civil war progressed, the RT commissioned its own formal military to fight alongside the militias supporting the government, Uzbekistani forces and the Russian 201st MRD. The final peace agreement, signed in 1997 in Moscow, led to the subsequent integration of some of the militias that had fought for the opposition into the RT's military units. Today, the Russian 201st MRD remains in Tajikistan, as the Russian Federation and the RT have recently signed an agreement for basing rights that extends until 2042 (RFE/RL's Tajik Service 2013).

How has Tajik national identity been transformed with independence? How can this transformation be measured? In many states, national identity is strongly associated with military service and symbolism. Since the RT had no national military at independence, it is reasonable to postulate that the state might



Map 1.1. Tajikistan

seek to grow national sentiments among its citizenry through everyday ties to, and popular representation of, its new armed services. This dissertation examines militarism's role in the production of national sentiments among the population through questions related to conscription, military experience, and foreign presence in the republic.

The research findings presented in this dissertation are based on a systematic examination of local and international

media coverage, ethnographic interviews, and participant observation. The news media has consistently covered oblava, often with the assistance of non-governmental legal organizations that seek to expose this process and defend illegally conscripted males. The media has also addressed issues related to the basing of foreign militaries in Tajikistan. The most prominent media outlets following these issues include (but are not limited to) Asia +, Ozodagon, and Radio Ozodi (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty); also insightful are the blog websites of foreign observers, such as Eurasianet.org. International news media, especially those based in Russia (RIA Novosti/The Voice of Russia) have also been valuable.

My semi-structured interviews were focused on males who have experienced the conscription process, including oblava, whether or not they actually enlisted in the military. Of those who have served, I limited my interviews to veterans as opposed to active duty soldiers in order to avoid putting the latter in a compromised position. I employed two research assistants both as translators and participant recruiters, who were able to identify many participants and arrange meetings with them. One was based in Dushanbe and covered most of the country, while the other lived in Khorog and worked solely in the GBAO. Participants were asked to complete a short questionnaire form that ascertained their military unit, ethno-regional identity and years of service. During the interviews I asked questions focused on the recruitment process and oblava (if applicable) experienced by

themselves and their friends and/or family, dedovshchina, and general life in the RT military. Specifically, I asked how ethno-regional identity shaped their experiences positively and/or negatively; that is, did soldiers from the same region of origin seek each other out for social bonding, protection from dedovshchina, or potential advancement.

The participant observation portion of my research took place during the course of visits to military bases throughout the RT. I also toured a few border outposts along the frontier with Afghanistan and a training facility in Dushanbe. During these visits I was able to experience first-hand the conditions under which RT military personnel operate. I toured the interior of different border zastavy (Russian: outposts) along the border with Afghanistan; one constructed with U.S. assistance funds and two more representative of typical RT installations. Most of my observations were visual, but I did have the opportunity to ask a few questions of a conscript in one location and a base officer in another.

The specific empirical focus of the study is centered on three basic questions. The construction of nationalism is often produced dialectically, with domestic social bonding occurring in conjunction with the identification and positioning of an outside Other. (J. Anderson 1986). The prominent role played by militaries in this dialectical relationship makes them central to

efforts to link the population to the state. Against this backdrop, I explore the following questions:

- How do the cadre and enlisted personnel of the security forces shape and reflect ethno-regional identity in Tajikistan?
- In what ways do recruitment and conscription practices hinder or improve the development of national sentiments among Tajikistani citizens?
- How has the presence of foreign military units stationed in Tajikistan affected the government's investment in its own security services? How are these units viewed differently from Tajikistani forces?

Focusing on the intersection of militarism and nationalism, these questions provide insights into the everyday lives of citizens in Tajikistan, as well as the geopolitics surrounding the region. In examining the everyday interactions with the military, the study seeks to unpack the manner in which it embodies other aspects of life in Tajikistan where average citizens come into contact with agents of the state. Tajikistan's social cleavages and recent political conflict provide the RT with powerful incentives to forge a cohesive national identity that surpasses - or at least limits - the influence of subnational sentiments. Given the role of military symbolism and ideals in nationalistic discourse, building a military inclusive of all ethno-regional identities in Tajikistan would seem

paramount to the state's own legitimacy. Further, the presence of outside military forces highlight the interest of foreign powers in the site and situation of Tajikistan's territory, not to mention its stability.

How the RT military recruits its soldiers and integrates its various ethno-regional groups into its ranks is important to understanding how power is exercised in this poor country. Public reactions to these practices also show how citizens perceive the state and the importance of public service; a critical point in a post-Soviet state where public service carried significant social meaning. Understanding the relationship between the RT and Russia through the basing of the latter's forces in Tajikistan provides an instructive case to examine how hegemons wield the combination of hard and soft power to establish and maintain dependencies among their spheres of influence. The largely positive perception of Russia and its military by RT citizens relative to their own armed forces is particularly significant, in many ways challenging the conception of Tajikistan as a sovereign state. If we are to understand how these dependent geopolitical relationships develop and are maintained, Tajikistan provides a valuable case study.

Background Considerations

The power of violence to construct geopolitical hegemony and shape the world map has been well documented by geographers.

However, geography's inquiry into societal militarization is more recent and has focused primarily on the Anglophone world, as noted by Woodward. But many of its premises are equally relevant to post-colonial societies. Cultural-spatial patterns may differ, but military institutions share similar goals and organizational structures. For Woodward, it is the state's infrastructure and capacity for military violence that must be investigated and conceptualized.

Military geographies, therefore, need to be understood not only as the study of the causes and consequences of armed conflict, but also as the study of those military activities which make armed conflict possible (Woodward 2005, 730).

The visible impact of military power networks upon the landscape and their influence on the social, political and economic spheres is notable in states such as the U.S. and U.K., where they are seen as embodying and advancing national sentiment. For example Bernazzoli & Flint, quoting Bacevich, note that "Ronald Reagan reconstructed a heroic, virtuous image of American troops, in which 'soldierly ideals and exploits' were glorified and their images used to inspire American citizens to live up to their potential to 'perform great deeds' (Bernazzoli & Flint 2009, 401; Bacevich 2005, 106-7). Woodward links the idea of rural England and its associated imagery to national identity, a landscape that is then transferred to far flung territories to legitimize military action. In places such as the Falkland Islands, for example, the media transformed the islands' landscape "into

something like Britain through idealized geographical representations" (2004, 122).

The premise that national militaries provide a cohesive institution, wherein differing subnational groups (e.g. races, ethnicities and/or regions of origin) may work together for a common civic purpose (national defense), is an attractive one to many statesmen. The general assumption that loyalty to the state, and thus stronger national sentiments, can be developed through military service carries significant weight in the post-colonial world. The influence of the constituting colonial power on these militaries is typically wide-ranging. It is particularly strong in post-Soviet Central Asia; all of the militaries of these republics follow the Soviet model of conscription, training and doctrine (Marten 2005).

Simonsen's analysis of the reconstruction of the Afghan military in the post 9/11 period has many parallels with that of Tajikistan. Geographically contiguous, constituted by outside powers, and comprised of a patchwork of group identities spatially patterned but also intermixed, both states see the value of militaries as integrative institutions. For Simonsen, such notions are mired in complexity.

In settings where little or no sense of 'nationhood' transcending ethnic or sectarian boundaries remains, establishing legitimacy by ensuring that the composition of new military forces mirrors the population as a whole will only work to the extent that such representation is seen as desirable by the population and its political and military leaders (2009, 1486).

Tajikistan and Afghanistan share much in the way of ethno-regional identities, including Tajik, Uzbek, and Pamiri groups. However, the Soviet experience, with its social engineering and modernization, represents a significant departure from many of the everyday similarities that bound these cross-border groups in the past. Still, the strength of ethno-regionalism in Tajikistan makes Simonsen's analysis relevant here, in immediately related but also different ways. The connection between regional groups of Tajiks or among Pamiris, Uzbeks, etc, remains, as do tribal and/or clan structures. However, the legacy of the Soviet system adds the existence of patron-client networks of loyalty that often cross ethno-regional lines. Additionally, the recognition and appreciation of a more centralized state, established through the Soviet system of republics (not to mention autonomous oblasts, i.e. GBAO), produces a political landscape in which controlling the state and its apparatus is perhaps seen as being more valuable in Tajikistan than in the much more provincially divided Afghanistan.

Shils' work on the development of militaries in post-colonial states draws attention to the juxtaposition between 'traditional' societies and the 'modern' nature of military organizations. To be successful, state militarization must account for traditional forms of social organization that may conflict with its institutional structure, including the region of origin of military members and the separation of the military from political party affiliations.

(The military) is ubiquitous, it recruits from all parts of the country, and, most important of all, it is national in its symbolism. The fact that it is organized and technical checks or moderates the passions which otherwise overflow onto national symbols. These features, which make the military into a nation-building institution, also affect the intensity of national sentiment of the officer class (Shils 1962, 32).

Shil's point that the organized and technical aspects of the military keep fervent nationalism in check within its members is based upon its functionality (its focus on acting as a military force and not merely a tool of political symbolism) and how representative it is of the populous. When that representation is disproportional (particularly in the officer corps), its value as a symbol of national sentiments is likely to be diminished. Presumably, this diminished value is due to an unbalanced degree of hard power in the hands of one or two groups, who then favor their own goals over those of the whole state.

Sociologists have long explored the social constructions surrounding group identity, nationalization and armed conflict. Malešević (2010) views the exhibition of intense nationalism during warfare as the result, but not a cause, of national sentiments actively constructed by the state and civil society. Emphasizing a hegemonic relationship that is reinforced from the ground-up, he notes that "this is not a one-way (top-down) process but works in both directions: the state apparatus utilizes its key institutions for ideological dissemination" (from the educational system, mass media, military conscription to welfare and citizenship obligations) (p.192-3). Such

constructions are imperative for the state to establish and maintain its sovereignty and create legitimacy. In cases where national sentiments and legitimacy are weakly developed, the state is likely to establish and promote institutions and practices that produce and reproduce its hegemony. To this end, military symbolism can be a powerful tool and a potential integrator, but only if it is seen positively by the various identity groups that comprise the population.

While Tajikistan is arguably still a post-conflict state, most average citizens' contact with the military is through the conscription process. Though scholars and policy makers alike have debated the issue of military conscription and volunteerism, these terms have different connotations outside of the West, and in the post-Soviet states specifically. As previously noted, geographers conceptualizing the intersection of citizenship and militarism (Cowen 2005; 2006; 2007; Flint 2008; Bernazzoli and Flint 2009; Woodward 2004; 2005) concentrate on experiences in North America and the U.K. The notion of military service in the Soviet Union was a powerful one that permeated many aspects of daily life. For example, reverence for veterans of the Great Patriotic War is exhibited on each May 9 through parades and the drinking of vodka to fallen soldiers. In Tajikistan, it was common during Soviet times for fathers to ask their daughters' potential suitors whether or not they had performed their military service yet; those who had not were typically prohibited from consideration (Respondent 2 2013). This practice was a test

of the suitor's integrity. As this dissertation addresses, this positive connotation has not been realized by the RT armed services. Indeed, in the eyes of many citizens, the military serves as a prison of sorts, offering little in the way of pay, training, health care or even sustenance. Nonetheless, the regime of President Emomali Rakhmon has continued to position it as an important contributor to state sovereignty and as a symbol of the Tajik nation--insisting that service within the military is obligatory and necessary to the nation's survival.

In Tajikistan, men aged 18-27 are notified of conscription via mail to their place of residence to report to their local voenkomat (Russian: recruitment office) for processing into the service. While this legal conscription process is in place, many more men are impressed into service illegally through the common practice called *oblava* mentioned in the opening of this chapter. Oblava consists of plain-clothes recruiters targeting and physically securing military-aged males and transporting them to the voenkomat against their will in a manner similar to a police arrest. It should be unsurprising that such practices do little to generate positive sentiments for the state among the population and stands in direct contrast to any imagery of the military as an attractive national symbol. The negative perception of the RT military is further exacerbated by the presence of the Russian military forces based in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan's territory has received growing attention from hegemony seeking influence and power projection, creating a space militarized in ways never before seen in its modern history. The Russian 201st MRD stands in sharp contrast to the RT units in terms of professionalism, capabilities and benefits. Enlistment in the 201st MRD is open to citizens of Tajikistan provided they meet the basic requirements of strong Russian language skills and being in good physical constitution, requirements that are difficult to meet for average Tajikistani males. By sanctioning the basing the 201st in Tajikistan, the Rakhmon administration is arguably making a statement about its trust in its own military as a functional institution of defense, not to mention integrator of its fractured ethno-regional identities. Coupled with the smaller-scale presence of NATO forces, including U.S. Special Operation Command (SOC) units, Tajikistan has become an increasingly militarized space. In contrast to the Soviet period, during which the 201st MRD and Soviet border guard troops were based in the Tajik SSR, now there are units from multiple foreign states in addition to the 201st and the RT armed forces developed after independence.

By examining the case of Tajikistan, I seek to open new avenues of research into the geographies of militarism beyond Anglophone regions, whilst empirically exposing and conceptualizing the structures of power of the Republic's government. Geographers have studied U.S. and U.K. military bases abroad (Yamazaki 2011; Higate and Henry 2011), but by looking at

the simultaneous development of a post-Soviet national army in a post-conflict state hosting the forces of competing hegemonic powers, I provide a new and instructive case study where militarism, critical geopolitics and ethnic geographies collide. Such a case poses many important questions related to how spatial patterns shape and are shaped by social structures and how they reflect the human agency of geopolitical decision makers. This case study is significant to understand how military power is produced and reproduced through coercion and consent outside of the West and in the post-Soviet world specifically.

Critical military geographies in the developing world are different from those found in the contexts of hegemonic powers. While military institutions and structures maintain many commonalities, the shaping of the landscape and population by military power in the developing world is influenced by the existence of different territorial arrangements and colonial legacies. Further, the presence of foreign military bases (usually hegemonic powers) or intermittent cooperative interventions complicates the expression of military power and societal militarization in these spaces. This dissertation pushes the relatively recent exploration into critical military geographies into the rest of the world, asking many of the same questions, but within a context that is more representative of global political-territorial norms: multinational states governed by weakly legitimate political regimes that are caught up in larger-scale geopolitical dynamics.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter II outlines the context imperative for placing the case study chapters. The first section situates Tajikistan within the framework of the world system and the geopolitical challenges confronting it. This section is comprised of three subsections that lay out both empirical facts and conceptual frameworks for the study—situating it within the context of the critical geopolitics and militarism literatures. The first subsection summarizes the Soviet construction (delineation) of the Central Asian republics generally, and Tajikistan specifically. The second analyzes the contextual literature on the immediate post-Soviet period and the Tajik Civil War (1992-97). The third subsection summarizes critical work on militarism. The importance of these contexts cannot be understated. The decades-long administration of Tajikistan by the Soviet Union defined not only its social and political structure; Moscow oversaw the initial (and only historical) delineation of its territorial outline and, in the modern sense, constructed the modern Tajik nation through its nationality policies. The brutal civil war that followed independence was not a continuation of old territorial rivalries or ethnic hatred, but rather was directly related to the legacy of Soviet administration, nationality policies, and the collapse of economic subsidies from the center. One legacy of this war is the raised significance of ethno-regional identity, which sadly became the basis for targeted killings perpetrated by both sides. To understand how identity matters within the contemporary RT

military, we must understand how it was utilized for these nefarious purposes during the war, and how the current regime and its senior military commanders largely hail from a specific region of Tajikistan to the exclusion of most others. Regarding the second subsection, geographers studying critical militarism have developed the framework of this new subfield of political geography. In order to critically examine the role of militarism in Tajikistan, we must first understand what forms of analysis have been performed in previous research. This study can then be placed appropriately within the context of these previous works and its value in opening new doors can be revealed. This subsection also analyzes the intersection of ethnic identity and military service, with special attention paid to the Soviet and Russian military experiences.

Chapter III develops the theoretical framework I use to interpret data gathered through mixed methods in Chapters V and VI. It lays out the design and goals of ethnographic interviews. I discuss the use of news media and regional Central Asian analytical blogs. While it is necessary to describe the methods employed in the data collection process, it is particularly important to explain the difficulties in performing ethnographic research on what can be perceived as a sensitive topic among citizens in an autocratic political environment that employs an intricate internal security apparatus that can be suspicious of academic researchers. Understanding these difficulties contextualizes the scarcity of data on certain topics that I

investigate. While this scarcity may not preclude me from providing information, it necessarily limits my efforts to understand some phenomena.

In order to contextualize the academic and foreign policy discourse that shapes and reflects Western views of, and policies addressing, Tajikistan, **Chapter IV** analyzes texts relating to geopolitics in Central Asia and the so-called "Great Game." Much of this discourse describes the region as one fraught with danger and in need of attention by foreign militaries. Examining the geopolitical landscape through both 'realist' and 'critical' frameworks situates not only the presence of foreign militaries such as Russia, U.S. and France, but also sheds light on the rationale for RT's internal policies regarding its armed forces. The chapter shows the challenges of contemporary Tajikistan's geopolitical situation and the Soviet border regime that delineated its boundaries to include numerous ethno-regional cleavages. These texts are then conceptualized through the discursive lens of the Global War on Terror, 'critical geopolitics of danger' (Megoran and Heathershaw 2011; Karagulova and Megoran 2011; Megoran 2004) and regional hegemony. The West's rhetoric on Tajikistan is often manifested in notions of nation-building and/or civil society development, but the investment in regional security is paramount. This study examines the intersection of all three of these foci, so the context of regional and global geopolitics of foreign influence in Tajikistan is relevant.

Chapter V analyzes the conscription practices (both legal and illegal) of the RT military. Data for this chapter was collected through local and international news media coverage and security services; ethnographic interviews with veterans discussing their experiences; ethnographic interviews with recruitment-aged males discussing conscription practices; the publications and interviews with local and international NGOs; and participant observation on military bases. The practices that feed the RT's military machine produce and reproduce biopolitical control of the male population without the benefit of a functioning defense force, thus posing serious questions about the state's strategy to incubate national sentiments among its population. This chapter provides fundamental understandings of the RT's military conscription process and provides evidence that its implementation is unpopular with its citizens, such as the performance of *oblava*. These negative qualities of the RT military present significant challenges to conceptions of it as an integrator of sub-national identities.

Chapter VI analyzes the material and living conditions within RT military bases, including soldier compensation. It also examines common practices and experiences of soldiers, particularly enlisted personnel; most importantly, I discuss the practice of ritualized hazing called *dedovshchina* (Russian: grandfathering) and how it directly contributes to military aged males choice to avoid enlistment or ignore conscription orders; this practice directly endangers soldiers mental wellbeing and

physical lives. This chapter also shows the importance of ethno-regional identity both through everyday practices involving enlisted recruits and personnel, as well as within the structure of the senior officer ranks, which have glass ceilings for many officers dependent upon their group affiliation. I then problematize influence of foreign military forces based in Tajikistan, in particular the Russian 201st base. Data collection was performed through structured interviews, examination of local and international news media, and participant observation. Attention is paid to the state's goals and negotiations for basing, the deployment of these forces, foreign cooperation with RT military units, and local populations' experiences with outside forces. If Tajikistan is a rentier state in which foreign militaries (e.g. Russia) base their forces in order to gain regional influence and/or hegemony, it is important to examine the ways in which this may affect local populations' views of their own national military. Moreover, coupling this foreign influence with the inadequate nature of the RT military and popular disdain of its practices poses questions about the Rakhmon regime's reliance on other states (particularly Russia) for its external security. This allows the regime to focus on perceived internal threats to the center in Dushanbe from those it fears. Any study of contemporary nationalism in Tajikistan must address this juxtaposition.

Chapter VII concludes the dissertation by addressing the contradictions inherent in conscripting a military that receives

little budgetary investment, has been shown to be operationally incapable, relies on an unpopular conscription system (including illegal impressment methods), and is viewed negatively by its citizens. The RT military stands in contrast to the Russian military, which not only acts as the security guarantor of the state's territorial integrity, but accepts RT citizens as soldiers into its ranks. These contradictions, in turn, challenge any notion of the RT military as a legitimate integrator of the country's various ethno-regional identities.

CHAPTER II

BROADER HISTORICAL AND CONCEPTUAL CONTEXT

The context of military formation and nationalism in Tajikistan must be understood through its construction and legacy as a former Soviet Republic. In the 1920s, the Soviets drew the state's boundary system (along with the rest of Soviet Central Asia), social systems changed, and ethno-national identities were destroyed, created and recreated. The emergence of the five Soviet Republics in Central Asia as independent states was sudden and unexpected, leaving them with a legacy of issues related to the Soviet system but lacking its resources to tackle them. In part, this contributed to the outbreak of the civil war that raged in 1992-93 and then simmered for four more years. The end result was a country in shambles and a regime staffed increasingly by one dominant ethno-regional group, presenting challenges to the growth of national sentiments. Under these circumstances, the RT created and developed its military forces, in many ways an embodiment of the Soviet legacy more than Tajik nationalism. The first two subsections of this chapter outline the historical and spatial framework that shapes these military forces and the RT's ongoing production of them through 1) the Soviet legacy and 2) the Tajik Civil War.

The third subsection diverts from the specific narrative of Tajikistan and explores the theories and concepts stimulated by critical military studies. Societal militarization and its

customary links to notions of a more uniform national identity can be conceptualized through these theories, which have been examined largely in Anglophone states such as the U.K., Canada, the U.S., and their installations abroad. Applying them to the case of Tajikistan provides both parallels and important variations, while pushing critical military studies into the non-Western world.

The Legacy of Soviet Delineation and Nation Building

Nationalism and Delineation

The modern political arrangement of states and boundaries in Central Asia reflects the titular ethnic nationalities encompassed in the names of the republics. This arrangement represents the culmination of a nation-building process by the Soviet authorities that lasted decades and, in many ways, remains active under the regimes of the current independent states. Deliberate state policies and actions were undertaken to unite subnational and tribal groups with the intent of forming homogenous, ethnic-based political territories within the U.S.S.R. This chapter subsection discusses the transformation of group identity in Soviet Central Asia from a locally-based phenomenon into five more unified and state-supported nations. As will become clear, this transformation shares some commonalities with the experience of other Central Asian republics, but there are also distinctive elements unique to Tajikistan.

James Anderson (1986) described the three formative roles that nationalism has played in the shaping of the modern state. First, it strengthens state/society institutional relationships; second, it helps to unify diverse regions into a more homogenous territory; and last it divides nations from each other. Each of these roles was important in the Soviet Union's decision to subdivide Central Asia. Moscow believed that delineation of new internal republics would simplify administration, eliminate resistance from local elites, limit the strength of sub-Soviet identity, and divide the Muslim population in order to hinder any pan-Islamic resistance to the center (Haugen 2003; Khalid 2007).

The delineation process has been researched primarily by historians (Haugen 2003; Laruelle 2012; Khalid 2007). Recent access to Soviet archives has debunked the long-held belief that authorities from Moscow solely managed the delineation process. In fact, the selection of final boundary lines was determined with intensive, active input from local national elites (Laruelle 2012). Noting the difficulty of categorizing the ethnic identity groups in Central Asia, particularly in urban zones, Haugen (Haugen 2003) outlines the Russian and subsequent Soviet understandings of identity to be based on a series of binaries: primarily Turkic/Persian, nomadic/settled and tribal/non-tribal. Based on these binaries, local groups were assigned to a particular nationality associated with the territory of a newly established republic. This process resulted primarily in the separation of Turkic-speaking groups (Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kazakhs &

Kyrgyz) from each other and from Persian-speaking Tajiks. In about ten years, Soviet delineation created a series of national republics that replaced the weak local emirates (Khiva and Bukhara) previously in place. However, the new boundaries were imperfectly drawn, leaving some of the new national populations outside their titular republics and within the territory of another. These new nations would be the basis for the contemporary nation-states in Central Asia.

Conceptually, the processes involved in Soviet delineation are often referred to as "nation-building." Benedict Anderson (1991) sees nations as artificial constructions: "imagined communities." However, the practice of forming new nations from loosely connected identity groups was, in fact, a destructive act. To establish communist rule in Central Asia, the Soviets needed to break local indigenous power structures such as those revolving around tribal rulers and key Islamic figures (Haugen 2003; Khalid 2007; Edgar 2004).

As Walker Connor noted, unthinking use of the term "nation-state" has prevented academics from asking "how many examples come to mind of a strong state-nationalism being manifested among a people who perceive their state and their nation as distinct entities?" (1994, 42). Geographer Mikesell (1983) similarly noted that few states have ethno-nationally homogenous populations. By forcibly moving populations' primary allegiance away from indigenous ethnic power structures to a newly created national

republic (subordinate to Moscow), the delineation process was actually one of smaller-scale "nation-destroying" (as per Connor: p. 42) to enable larger-scale "nation building."

Ethnogenesis

At the heart of Soviet nationality policy's rationale for delineation was the concept of ethnogenesis, which associated a population with a territory legitimized through 'academic' history. The reality was more akin to propaganda; this process was highly problematic and full of dubious claims and theories supported by the state.

Ethnogenesis was based in primordialism, which holds that "nations are organically grown entities" (Nietschmann 1994). Connor (1994) views primordialism as consisting of psychological and emotional ties stemming from common language, religion, ethnicity or tribe; inevitably, it is also associated with territory. To legitimize so-called "primordial" ethnonational claims to territory, the Soviets employed historians to make essentialist connections between the modern nations of Central Asia and their republics. Laruelle describes state-sponsored academics of each titular nationality performing "archaeological patriotism" to establish a conceptual "ethnogenesis," consisting of the "authentic connection among a people, its territory, and the state" that predates any other ethnic groups' claim to that territory (2008, 170). This practice included positive

discrimination and ethnogenetic research to establish racial connections to territory. These historiographies considered theories of migration that might place the ethnogenesis of a particular ethnonational group outside of its primordial territory to be reactionary. They also rejected concepts placing Tajik origins solely in Iran or predating the arrival of Uzbeks (who, like other Turkic peoples, had actually migrated from NE Asia). Groups often made competing primordial claims to territory during the establishment of formal republic boundaries. Further, Soviet linguists developed standard literary versions of Central Asian languages, using the Cyrillic alphabet, that were to be the national languages of instruction in addition to Russian (Laruelle 2008). William Rowe (2011) documented the construction of the new language of Tajiki (a Persian dialect). Rowe argues that the use of Cyrillic was a method of cutting ties between Tajiki speakers and the literature and culture of their Farsi and Dari Persian cousins. New words that were added to the vocabulary were mostly derived from Russian rather than Farsi. By cutting these ties and making Russian the primary language of administration, science and education, the Soviets consigned Tajiki to simple uses at home and/or in more rural settings.

Thus, what the Soviet histories presented as primordial (unconstructed and natural) was in reality largely imagined (constructed and unnatural). This is not to say that the individual titular groups did not exist prior to Soviet delineation. Persian speakers had long resided in Central Asia

and nomadic Turkic speaking groups had migrated to the region centuries ago. The names Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Kazakh and Turkomen were in use, though their meanings were somewhat different from those that the Soviets applied to them. It would be more accurate to recognize a number of connotations associated with these group names, including tribal (Turkic), and linguistic (Persian Tajik) associations, but "national" was not one of them. The contemporary titular *nations* of the republics were the result of substantial social engineering.

According to Diener (2002), the goal of the Central Asian regimes upon independence was to establish the external legitimacy of their sovereignty and internal legitimacy among their populations. Largely embracing their Soviet pasts, they defaulted to the historiography that had been constructed during the ethnogenesis movement. Academics have noted remarkably similar contemporary state practices of nation-building in Turkmenistan (Kuru 2002) and Kyrgyzstan (Murzakulova and Schoeberlein 2009) and geographers in particular have researched the development of this phenomenon in Kazakhstan (Diener 2002; N. Koch 2010).

The Rakhmon regime constructs its ethnogenesis by tying the new state to the Persian Samanid Empire (875-999 CE). Although Tajikistan's territory (and not even the whole of it) represented only a small part of the Samanid Empire, and its capital (Bukhara) is located in modern Uzbekistan, the official view in

Tajikistan frames the Samanids as the origin of a politically and culturally organized Tajik nation (Atkin 1993; Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010; Horak and Shenfield 2010). Today, statues of Ismail Somoni, the founder and king of the Samanids, are common in Tajikistan's main cities such as Dushanbe, Khujand and Kurgan-Teppe. Behind the Somoni monument in Dushanbe (Figure 2.1) is a map of contemporary Tajikistan juxtaposed against the territory of the ancient Samanid Empire (tan shaded area) (see Figure 2.2). The map contains several inaccuracies, including its depiction of Badakhshan (GBAO), which is largely missing from the dark brown area symbolizing the contemporary republic's territory (labeled "Тоҷикистон"). The map designates the location of Badakhshan, but fails to include it within the RT boundaries. This absence provides an obviously different (and completely inaccurate) territorial outline. Why this territory is missing on what is, for all intents and purposes, an official representation of the Republic is unknown. It is quite possible that this omission is merely incompetence on the part of the design and construction teams. However the government's disputes with Pamiris are well documented and will be addressed later in this dissertation; suffice to say GBAO largely supported the opposition during the civil war and Dushanbe continues to have difficulty exercising full control over the region.



Figure 2.1. Ismail Somoni Monument, Dushanbe

While growth of popular national identity remains a state goal in all five republics, local identities remain strong. These identities can take the form of tribal affiliations within a greater Turkic ethnic group (Edgar 2004), smaller unique ethnic groups within the republic (e.g. Pamiris in GBAO), or national groups located within states other than their titular republic (e.g. Kyrgyz in eastern GBAO or parts of Sughd Oblast).

and Uzbekistan have implemented efforts to homogenize the 'other' (Tajiks in Uzbekistan and vice-versa) into the titular nation of the republic, often simply by pressuring them to change their formal listing of ethnicity on government documents but also by restricting the use of the other's language (Ferrando 2008). The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency lists the ethnic (but not ethno-regional) distribution in Tajikistan as follows: "Tajik 84.3%, Uzbek 13.8% (includes Lakai, Kongrat, Katagan, Barlos, Yuz), other 2% (includes Kyrgyz, Russian, Turkmen, Tatar, Arab)" (CIA 2010). Bleuer and Nourzhanov accept figures of Uzbeks as high as 23.5% and Tajiks as 62.2% (Nourzhanov and Bleuer 2013). Both estimates include 'Pamiris' as 'Tajiks'. Why nomenclature and percentages vary is worth examination.

In Tajikistan, policies designed to promote the homogenization of the population include not only banning any official use of Uzbek (or any language other than Tajik - though Russian is often tacitly accepted), but reintroducing old tribal identities (Lakai, Congrats, Catagans, etc.) that had been collectively grouped under the 'Uzbek' nationality by the Soviets. This action served to divide the sizable Uzbek population (over 15%: Minority Rights Group International, 2008) and sap some of its potential power. However, the same procedure was not implemented for Pamiri groups (Shugni, Wakhi, Rushani, Yazgulyami, Darwazi and Ishkashimi), which the government currently lists as Tajiks in all official documentation. Ferrando notes that the motivation for this discrepancy is obvious.

As all requested officials from the Tajik Academy of Sciences refused to comment on the changes they have introduced in the *Dictionary of Nationalities*, it seems clear that the decision to promote Turkic tribes out of the Uzbek nationality, while keeping all eastern Iranian groups under Tajiki nationality, was motivated by political interests rather than a response to sociological realities. The titular Tajik group remained the sole legitimate heir to the nation (2008, 496).

Pamiris are often referred to as "Mountain Tajiks" or simply "Tajiks," but the reality is more complex. "Pamiri" is a collective term for groups speaking a variety of Eastern Iranian tongues and predominantly adhering to Ismaili Shi'ism. These groups identify as Pamiri first, and Tajik second. Most importantly, since the civil war there has been resistance to the government in Dushanbe's efforts to maintain control in GBAO. The Rakhmon regime's choice not to list these groups separately is motivated by the drive to solidify a *Tajik* national state, with other groups only as small minorities. Dividing groups (Uzbeks) into smaller ones and placing others (Pamiris) under the Tajik label helps to build a statistical legitimation for this goal.

Appraising views of ethnic identity and nationalism in Central Asia, one constant is territory. Prior to the Russian conquest, group identity was locally based, whether familial, tribal or local in nature (Haugen 2003); Islam formed perhaps the most important individual component of identity (Khalid 2007). Subnational groups were connected to local territories and were largely unconcerned with the ruling sovereign if the daily lives of group members were not affected. Larger-scale ethnonationalism

was not well developed and the related identities (Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, etc.) held little importance in the practices of daily life. Over time, the effect of delineation did shape national identity; indeed Wixman (1980) argued that the creation of national republics and other administrative territories (e.g. oblasts) contributed to the development of a strong sense of ethnic identity, even if it did not supplant competing subnational connections.

The strong association between ethnic identity and territory suggests the importance of taking geographic considerations seriously in the effort to understand the cultural-political evolution of the region. The influence of Soviet policies and practices poses questions about nation-building, primordial v. imagined communities, and the role of common language and its inevitable link to territory. The emergence of the Soviet republics as independent states within the sovereign state system poses questions about how ethnicity is perceived and reinforced at multiple scales. Murphy has written extensively (1989; 2010) on the territorial relationship with ethnic identity, noting that "(f)ormal ethnic territories can have powerful effects on group identity," and that "ethnicity is inherently territorial" (1989, 411). However, the process of politically formalizing ethno-national relationships with territory does not guarantee successful cohesion, nor are such efforts predictably instantaneous (Agnew 1994; Mikesell 1984).

By analyzing the conditions and processes under which Tajikistan was formed, both territorially and socially, we can better understand two key components of this research. First, such an undertaking shows that the titular national identity promoted by the state is weakly developed and hampered by persistent subnational identities. Secondly, it helps explain why Tajikistan and other Central Asian regimes actively attempt to manipulate these categories of identity to ensure the dominance of the titular population and build national sentiments that serve to secure the position and legitimacy of the state.

The Tajik Civil War

The civil war influenced the structure of the RT's contemporary armed forces. The Soviets' attempt to create a Tajik national republic placed ethno-regional identity groups into competition for political authority and economic power within the Soviet system (Roy, 1997). The system distributed administrative posts to elites from particular regions to strike a balance between them. Thus, regional rivalries developed based on the linguistic/dialectic regions that pre-dated the institution of Tajik language policies by the Soviets (Rowe, 2011). These rivalries did not appear to exist in any significantly violent way prior to the formation of the Soviet republics; it was the divisive nature of the communist system of forced migration and kolkhoz (collective farm) formation that increased the level of

political and economic competition between groups. This competition spilled over into violence when the Soviet Union collapsed and Moscow's subsidies evaporated.

Groups competed for control of the state and militias that were allied to the government fought units of what came to be known as the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), including the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). During the early months of the war the Russian 201st Motor Rifle Brigade was the only formal military unit in the country (Poujol 1997; Orr 1997; Burnashev 2002). The pro-government militias collectively referred to as the Popular Front (PF) consisted mostly of Tajiks from the Kulob and Hissor regions, as well as ethnic Uzbeks. After the PF had removed the opposition forces from Dushanbe and a new government was installed in late 1992, the first formal RT military forces were formed. The war would continue until 1997. The military was initially required to combat insurgents characterized by hard line remnants of the IRP still present in the mountainous east and across the border in Afghanistan. When the government of Tajikistan began to solidify its territorial sovereignty after 1997, it was challenged by independent warlords of the PF that had neither demobilized nor formally joined the administration, as well as resistance from some former UTO commanders (Nourzhanov 2005). Moreover, the provision of border security and defense from existential threats outside of Tajikistan (Afghanistan) was also necessary.

However, the government's solidification of power was a complex process that involved a number of factors. First, the Popular Front was made up primarily of Kulobi and Hissori Tajik militias as well as ethnic Uzbek units. As the hostilities came to an official end, it was clear that the unified action of these militias, which was difficult during the war, would be impossible as part of a centrally negotiated peace (Nourzhanov 2005; Akiner 2001). Each regional group had its political priorities and the largest group, the Kulobis, began to fracture, as individual warlords were reluctant to give up the newfound power of their loyal militias. Second, the government of Uzbekista, which had supported the defeat of the UTO through direct military action (and installed Rakhmon in power) grew concerned with the regime in Dushanbe and increasingly took a hostile stance against its southern neighbor (Horsman 1999; Jonson 2006). This hostility was largely diplomatic but often contained threatening overtones and complicated Tajikistan's political development by providing a potential external threat during a time of internal instability. In the economically powerful northern province of Sughd, connected to the capital by a sole mountain pass, the apparatchiks who had held substantial power during the Soviet period attempted to remain neutral during the war and now considered secession and/or possible unification with Uzbekistan. However without a military force, they would remain vulnerable to other interests if and when attention eventually turned to them. Lastly, the conflict continued; though a peace agreement had been

signed and opposition figures began to accept government posts, more radical elements continued to fight in the mountains. Many of the remaining insurgents had received material and training assistance from the mujahedeen in Afghanistan (Brown 1997).

These factors created a situation in Tajikistan in which the government would need to establish its legitimacy and territorial integrity through both coercion and consent. This integration would be achieved by the negotiated absorption or forced elimination of some the same militants whose military action had enabled the new government to take power while continuing to combat more radical remnants of the UTO on the frontier, with an increasingly hostile Uzbekistan to the north and an Afghanistan embroiled in civil war of its own to the south. Additionally, the existence of Russian military units in Tajikistan, while helping to combat the remaining opposition units in the mountains and guard the border with Afghanistan, served as a reminder that the influence of the former master of this territory had, for better or worse, not quite disappeared (Baer 2002; Lynch 2000; Horsman 1999; Orr 1997; Poujol 1997).

Murderers, criminals...they took these people out of jail and made them soldiers. In Qurghanteppa, both sides did this. Narcotic users and alcoholics became soldiers.

There were some families. They could not say they did not support the militias. But they did not send their kids, did not give money. They killed them. People could not say 'we do not support' because of fear. They obeyed them and did whatever they said (Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009, 704).

In the summer and fall of 1992, the villages of SW Tajikistan erupted in ruthless violence that appeared senseless when viewed from afar. In a simple sense, armed militias fought each other over political control of the state: one side in support of the status quo and its Soviet-era power apparatus, one in opposition to it. The opposition militias were typically referred to as Islamists, though this is too general a description. Their "pro-government" enemies were often referred to as "pro-communists", among other terms; Brown perhaps more accurately describes the pro-government forces as "anti-opposition" (1995). Additionally, militias on both sides were associated with ethno-regional identities: Gharimi, Hissori, and Kulobi Tajiks; Pamiris; and Uzbeks. This association meant that the violent competition for power quickly turned into a murderous spree of identity-targeted killing performed by informal units led by radicalized leaders, who advocated and implemented increasingly violent actions towards their adversaries.

How and why did this murderous cleansing happen in Tajikistan? I use 'murderous' because 'ethnic' is too specific (Mann 2005); groups involved in this kind of violence may be divided based on other forms of identity, including patron-client networks. In Tajikistan, ethno-regional identity is a better term; groups may not only be based on ethnicity (Tajik, Uzbek, Pamiri, or Kyrgyz, e.g.), but also region of origin, as is the case among Tajik sub-national groupings (by region of origin) and

Pamiris (by regional origin and language). Bleuer correctly notes that

(t)he Soviet authorities attempted to shape ethnic identities throughout the USSR, and in Central Asia there were particular difficulties as most people here did not see their primary identities at the ethnic or national level. As part of the Soviet process, languages were standardized, traditions codified, pre-existing sub-ethnic identities (e.g., tribe or city) were suppressed (e.g., by being removed as an option in the official census), privileges were granted or denied based on ethnic identity, and many people found that they were outside the borders of their titular republic (e.g., ethnic Uzbeks inside Tajikistan) (Bleuer n.d.).

Though regionalism is strong and the relevance of ethno-national identity rose during the civil war, the organization of perpetrators and targets into such distinct groups does not adequately explain the motives for the violence; other factors had important roles in mobilizing combatants and identifying their targets. Bleuer further explains the importance of clientelism within the Soviet system in Tajikistan, leading to "the 'politicization' of regional identities" (Bleuer n.d.). As individual patrons rose through the hierarchy of highly coveted political/economic posts, they brought increasing numbers of clients to fill positions underneath them, with a majority of such individuals recruited from the patron's home region. This resulted in extensive patron-client networks that were somewhat homogenous in their ethno-regional background (though there were always exceptions). Tunçer-Kılavuz (2009) notes that these

patron-client networks were the main form of initial combatant mobilization during the early stages of the war, making regionalism as a macro-level cleavage appear illustrative while hiding much of the true complexity of the conflict.

Mann defines 'ethnic cleansing' as "the removal by members of one (ethnicity) by another (ethnicity) from a locale they define as their own" (Mann 2005, 11); he further posits that ethnic cleansing is primarily a modern phenomenon and linked to the concept of democracy. In this case, democracy does not necessarily refer to elections and methods of rule, but rather to the competition for power and rising expectations and fears faced by sections of the population potentially accessing political power for the first time in recent history. The breakup of the Soviet Union destabilized the geopolitical framework and initiated a period of somewhat chaotic political change (though not economic opportunity). In newly independent Tajikistan, the opportunity for a share of political power seemed possible for the first time in the region's recent history; indeed the newly independent RT held its first elections in 1991. The subsequent competition for power represents an important step toward Mann's cleansing thesis. However, it would be misleading to consider the identity-targeted killings in the Tajik Civil War as cleansing under his definition; among a variety of differences, the level of violence was significantly lower and mostly targeted military-aged males associated with opposing sides of the civil war rather than a whole identity group; for example Gharmi Tajiks targeted

Uzbeks, but Kulobi Tajiks did not. Nonetheless, it is important to note that rape and starvation - both practices commonly revealed in analyses of civil war and murderous cleansing - were also perpetrated in the Tajik Civil War (Akiner 2001).

Kalyvas (2006) demonstrates that deconstructing civil war violence more generally involves an in-depth look at the forms of social cleavages that exist in civil wars, how they shape such conflicts at varying scales (often counter-intuitively), and how violence often has little to do with the common assumptions of what generates and perpetuates civil wars. He terms the main division of sides in a civil war that commonly characterize it as the 'master cleavage,' with more local and/or less obvious ones as 'micro-cleavages.' This terminology is useful if we are to unpack the complex nature of civil war violence, which was demonstrated in Tajikistan in 1992. Additionally, Kalyvas sees the role of personal agency (along with micro-cleavages) as having more relevance than previously considered, as some individuals commit acts that have little relevance, or obvious connection, to the macro-cleavages that supposedly represent the rationale for the war. While this form of agency does not explain the reasons for the master cleavage, it does help to make sense of much of the small-scale violence that was perpetrated as the war reached its peak. Kalyvas' ideas are useful to better situate our understandings of the war in Tajikistan at the ground level and in turn provide context for the social relations that developed in the war's aftermath.

While it is illustrative to draw parallels to violent cleansing in Bosnia (which occurred almost simultaneously), there are important differences in performance and context that I will reference in the following pages. Western media attention focused on the Balkans during this period, but did not give the same attention to post-Soviet Central Asia and the Tajik civil war. This media coverage provided a wealth of information on the conflict in Bosnia. On the other hand, the relatively low level of journalist coverage of the civil war in Tajikistan makes researching this conflict challenging. Further, in some ways the current regime in Tajikistan seems reticent to contribute to comprehensive research on the war (Conversation with foreign academic 1 2013; Conversation with foreign academic 2 2013), making a comprehensive explanation difficult. That the violence in Tajikistan resembles ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in important ways allows us to deconstruct the patterns of this form of violence and better understand it within the Tajik context.

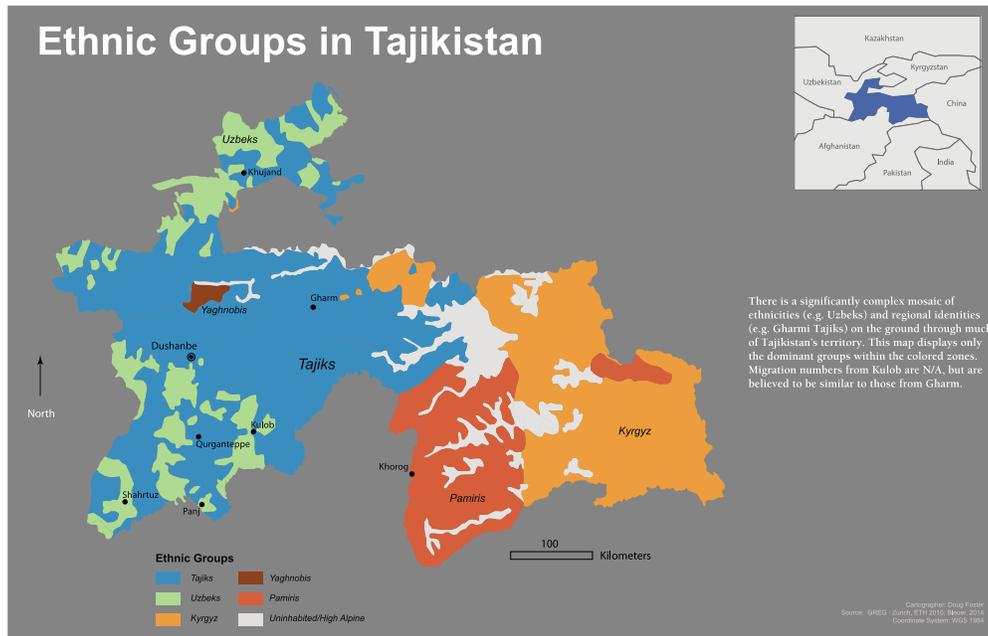
Ethno-Regionalism in Tajikistan

Kalyvas describes the master cleavages in a civil war as the division "that drives the civil war at the national level," while positing that local cleavages drive much if not most of the violence in such wars (Kalyvas 2006, 364). The master cleavage between the status quo of so-called neo-communists and the opposition led by the IRP was not the only grouping of

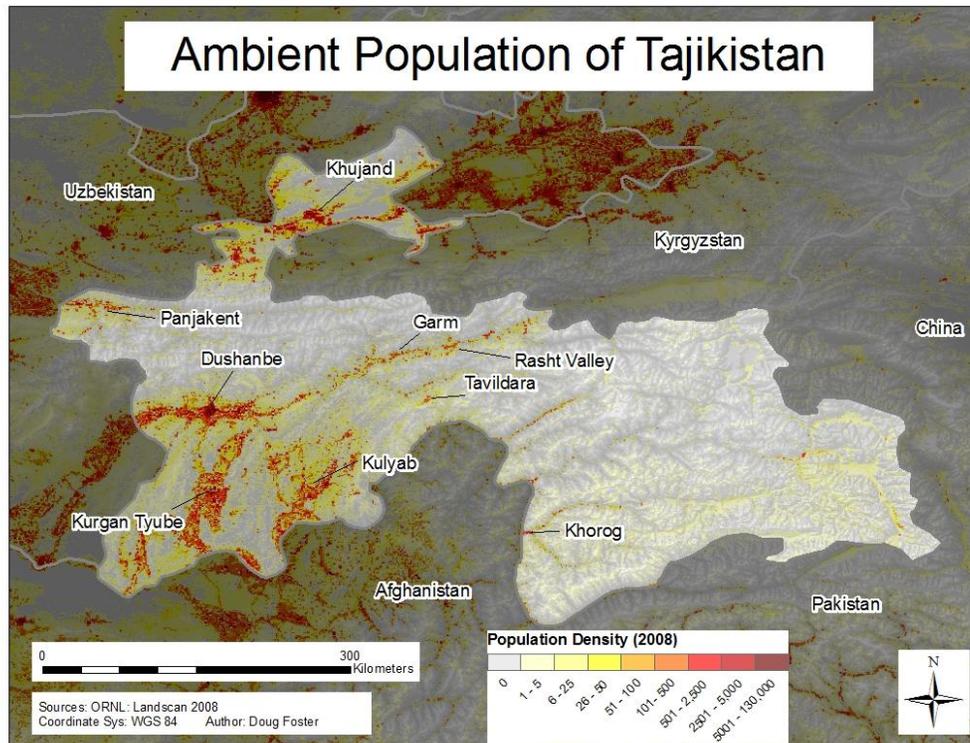
adversaries. Ethno-regional identity contributed considerably to the master cleavage; for some groups, such as Pamiris, it was the most important factor in the decision to join the opposition. The lingering basis of this phenomenon can be at least partially attributed to the physiography of Tajikistan, which is defined by high mountains that separate numerous remote valleys and plains where most of the population resides. This topography creates a significant challenge to national unity, dividing not only territories from the core, but also population clusters living in relatively close proximity to one another. Historically, this led to the development of separate regional identities that continue to permeate contemporary cultural and political life in Tajikistan.

Maps 2.1 and 2.2 portray the population of Tajikistan in terms of location and ethno-regional identity origins. Map 2.1 shows the general ethnic/regional spatial distribution, whereas Map 2.2 shows the actual population distribution that highlights the physical isolation of the various regions within the state. Tajik society maintains strong identities associated with these regions, and allegiance to one's home area is exhibited in many ways. Kulob, Karategin, and Khujand are the *home* regions to Tajik peoples who speak their own dialects of Tajiki (Persian) and share some similar culture traits. Additionally, these regions contain networks of economic and political power. Among Tajiks, the regional identity of intrastate migrants is commonly determined by the birthplace of one's grandfather (Tunçer-Kılavuz

2009, 325). The home regions in Map 2.1 include migrants who have settled within their rough boundaries. The SW plains contain the most migrant group populations, many of whom were forcibly moved there to work in cotton kolkhozes during the Soviet period.



Map 2.1. Ethno-regional Identity Groups in Tajikistan



Map 2.2. Population Clusters in Tajikistan and Surrounding Regions

The primacy of the Khujand (formerly Leninabad) region in Tajik economic and political affairs during the Soviet period was one of the issues that ignited the secular (non-IRP) groups of the opposition in the period just after independence. The Soviet government in Moscow made efforts to balance governmental posts between regions, but Khujand controlled the upper levels of the republic's government while its rivals received more cabinet-specific placements (Olcott 1994b; Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009). It is isolated physically from Tajikistan's other three regions by the Zeravshan Range and Fan Mountains, as clearly illustrated in Map 2.2. Its population is a mix of ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks as well

as some Russians. Located in the populous and fertile Ferghana Valley, it is also the most economically productive area in Tajikistan (Payne 1996, 371).

The Kulob region was second to Khujand in political influence, and many posts in the Soviet-era government's internal affairs/security ministry went to its officials (Horsman 1999; Olcott 1994a) (though reforms in the 1980s placed Pamiris in the prominent roles). As a result, most of its combatants were allied with the pro-government forces. Despite its role as a junior partner to the more economically oriented northern regions surrounding Khujand, it is a region of (mostly cotton) farms.

Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast is perhaps the most ethnically distinct region of Tajikistan. Containing the heart of the Pamir Range, it is the largest province territorially and smallest demographically. Its relatively (see Map 2.2) small population consists of ethnic Pamiri peoples in the western valleys and Kyrgyz on the eastern plateau. In addition to being linguistically distinct, Pamiris follow Ismaili Shi'ite Islam and are considered the most secular Muslims in all of Tajikistan in terms of practice (Lynch 2000; O. Roy 2000). The variety of East Iranian languages spoken is geographically dependent upon the mountain valley and ethnic group in question, and are not mutually intelligible with Tajiki (nor necessarily to each other). Pamiris consider themselves to be distinct from Tajik groups to their west, as can be seen in their bid for autonomy

(Barabanov 1997; Centlivres and Centlivres-Demont 1997; McChesney 1996).

Kurgan-Teppe in the southwestern area of the country is an ethnic mix of Uzbeks and Tajiks from Karategin and Kulob (among other regions), as well as Pamiris from Badakhshan, who were forced to migrate to work in Soviet kolkhozes. At the time of the war, the population in Kurgan-Teppe and the surrounding towns identified as Uzbek, Kulobi, Karategini, or Pamiri and was usually separated into kolkhozes, many of which were solely of one regional origin or ethnicity.

Uzbeks are considered ethnically distinct from Tajiks, speaking a Turkic language and having a somewhat different social organization (tribal). As noted above, they are most populous in the SW plains in Hissor and near Kurgan-Teppe, as well as the Ferghana Valley around Khujand. While their sense of identity can be strong, Tajiks and Uzbeks have frequently intermarried; distinguishing between the two requires simply inquiring into individual self-identification. Additionally, in many cases members of both groups speak Tajik and Uzbek as well as Russian (Atkin 1997, 280), though the use of the latter is fading in rural areas.

Unrest in Dushanbe

A detailed description of the personalities and intergovernmental instability immediately before the beginning of the violence is beyond the scope of this dissertation (see Brown 1997; Bleuer n.d.; Atkin 1997; Akiner 2001). Understanding the breakdown of civil order in the capital provides context to the motivations of the various opposition groups and the predominant ethno-regional groups associated with them. In short, a loosely connected opposition movement developed and began to protest in Dushanbe during the spring of 1992 after the first contested presidential elections that took place the previous November. The opposition encompassed a number of groups with different goals, including the implementation of reforms akin to those being instituted in the European republics of the former USSR and a return of Islam to daily life. These protests led to a loose coalition that included both these secular elements as well as the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) that ruled for a short period in late summer/early fall of 1992.

This 'coalition,' as it was commonly called, included nationalists, democrats, the Pamiri Lali Badakshan and the IRP. The largest militias were associated with the IRP. Though the Uzbek government (Horsman 1999), Russian, and anti-opposition (Bleuer n.d.) narratives characterized it as an extremist organization, such characterization is simplistic. It did have a goal of creating an Islamic republic in Tajikistan, but it was

aware that much of the population did not immediately share that goal (O. Roy 1997; Tuncer-Kilavuz 2011; Khalid 2007). Lali Badakhshan's goals were simple: more autonomy for ethnic Pamiris in the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) of SE Tajikistan that would help them maintain their unique (linguistic and religious) culture unimpeded by Dushanbe (Brown 1997; S. Dudoignon 1997).

The IRP was formed among Sunni Muslims from the eastern and southwestern part of the country, predominantly in Gharm (Karategin) and among migrants in the Kurgan-Teppe region. The IRP claimed to speak for all Sunni Muslims in Tajikistan, but not all clerics followed their lead. Many branded the IRP (mostly incorrectly) as Wahhabist and connected to similar groups in Afghanistan, and thus began to draw negative attention against them from abroad. The IRP began to develop a network of militias in Dushanbe, Gharm and Kurgan-Teppe that would perpetrate violence upon their opponents during the war; these units would constitute the backbone of the opposition's military. These murderous campaigns were justified by their perpetrators and would also be the primary rationalization invoked by Russia and Uzbekistan for their direct involvement in the war, in efforts to bring stability to the state and bring an end to the violence (Bleuer n.d.; Brown 1997; Horsman 1999; Kuzmin 2001; Lynch 2000). As the war progressed, the IRP dominated the ranks of the opposition's militias for the duration of the conflict.

On the pro-government side, the People's (Popular) Front (PF) started as a collection of irregular militias predominantly from the Kulob region that responded to the opposition's coup and particularly to the massacres perpetrated by IRP militias. Many of its leaders were convicted criminals, and would perform organized violent retribution that rivaled the violence of the IRP. PF units were primarily loyal to their individual commanders as opposed to the new government in Dushanbe and at times clashed with each other (Akiner 2001; Matveeva 2009; Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009; Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009).

The factors that led up to the Tajik Civil War were multiple and interconnected. "Although the war was neither Islamic, nor ethnic, nor regional, all of these factors played a role in the war as mobilizing tools" (Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009, 674). In short, the Soviet system had favored officials from two of these regions (Khujand and Kulob) for most of the government posts and this was the case at the time of independence. In response, economically and politically marginalized Pamiris and Karategini Tajiks demonstrated in the street of Dushanbe. Counter-demonstrations of Hissori and Kulobi Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks were organized by the government and the two sides clashed and began to arm themselves (Whitlock 2003). This division of combatants constitutes Kalyvas' 'macro-cleavage' for the war. Shortly thereafter these forces gathered in the agricultural SW to further mobilize their networks. This agricultural zone of kolkhozes (collective farms) in the SW became the main

battleground of the war. Since the more technocratic Khujandi elites from the north who had dominated the republic's politics during the Soviet period were distant from the fighting, they relied on their "junior Kulobi partners" to do their bidding in the maintenance of the status quo (Bleuer n.d.). As a result, when the PF won the war, the Khujandis assumed the junior position, inverting their previous roles in the partnership.

Kolkhozes in Flames

According to Kalyvas, civil wars often experience a "disjunction between the macrolevel causes of the war and the microlevel patterns of violence" (2006, p. 4). This was certainly the case in the Tajik Civil War in this crucial stage. In areas around Kurgan-Teppe, militias mobilized by leaders on both sides attacked kolkhozes populated by the regional or ethnic identity associated with their enemies as outlined in the macro-cleavage. Tajikistani collective farms were typically much larger than those in the other regions of the FSU (Davies 1980; S. Fitzpatrick 1994), and were centers of power and money during the Soviet period. In some ways, these attacks could be seen as payback for perceived wrongs experienced by those marginalized by this power. Civilians became targets as IRP militias murdered Kulobis, while Uzbek and Kulobi militias retaliated and massacred civilians from Gharm or the Pamirs. Thus, this form of murderous cleansing targeted Tajiks based on their region of origin, and

Uzbeks and Pamiris based on their ethnicity (Human Rights Watch 1994; Kuzmin 2001). The difference may seem semantic, but given the common use of the term 'ethnic' cleansing, it is important to note this distinction.

What makes this aspect of the war surprising is the general lack of any historical animosity or violent conflict between these groups within this part of Central Asia (there was localized competition for scarce resources, such as grazing areas of farmland, however). Roy (1997) explains that the Soviet system of forced collectivization and resulting forced migration broke up the regional stability of complementarity; "Tajiks in the bazaars and foothills, artisan Jews, Uzbeks in the irrigated plains, mountain-dwelling Ismailis (Pamiris) and Kyrgyz, and semi-nomadic groups who constituted a link in the marginal spaces, such as 'Arabs' etc." (p.138). Groups were now associated with kolkhozes that were (mostly) populated by members from one regional-ethnic group. Groups that in earlier times had little interaction with each other were thrust into competition for state resources and markets. Patronage-client networks that were often strongly regional in nature became an additional sub-national layer of identity within Tajikistan. These networks usually had a territorial association as well, typically with a kolkhoz or state industry.

Markowitz (2011, 2013) convincingly postulates that the main reason Tajikistan fell into civil war while Uzbekistan (with

similar regional and ethnic cleavages) did not was the lack of economic resources that could be distributed through elite patronage networks. With a more robust economy connected to regional markets, including agricultural commodities and petrochemicals, the Uzbek government apparatus could maintain the status quo by rewarding the loyalty of regional elites with access to markets for these resources. The nascent Tajik state, with support from Moscow now absent, could not. This prompted local elites to raise their own militias, often through the cooptation of state security forces in their respective regions, and thus led to direct, violent competition over what scarce resources and rents there were in the territory. Indeed, the various militias fought along the master cleavage (neo-communists v. Islamists) but also with each other over local territory and economic resources. Through this analogy, Markowitz explains the macro-cleavage at the ethno-regional level, with Khujandis, Hissoris, Kulobis and Uzbeks (western) opposing Gharmis and Pamiris (eastern)².

For many reformists, dismantling the republic's political-economic system was a means of ending the privileged access to state rents by elites from cotton-growing regions (S. A. Dudoignon 1994). When reform was abandoned in 1990, the return of many former elite and the continued exclusion of Tajikistan's eastern areas brought these competitive pressures to the surface (Markowitz 2011, 163).

² However, Darwazi Pamiris fought on the anti-opposition side, against the bulk of Pamiris associated with Lali Badakhshan.

For Markowitz, political power in Tajikistan is dependent on peripheral elites turning resources into cash ("loot"), through connection to the center. Without this connection, peripheral elites take matters - and local security apparatus - into their own hands. This is precisely what took place during the civil war. Thus, Tajikistan's "Unlootable Resources" noted by Markowitz are crucial to understanding the master cleavage of the war. If ties to the center through elite networks could not be maintained due to a lack of resources, the state was in danger from peripheral groups who would have little reason to be loyal to the central government.

When the war broke out in the spring 1992, neither side was prepared for military action, though the IRP had begun to stockpile light weapons and form irregular militia units. In September, the fighting moved to the countryside as the two sides clashed over kolkhozes throughout Kurgan-Teppe south of the capital. The Kulobi Popular Front had reorganized and obtained weapons from Russian troops and counterattacked. This initially light conflict quickly took a nasty turn that would rival the murderous actions that took place in the former Yugoslavia.

This was a savage war: massacres, rape, torture, looting and summary executions. The lower Vaksh valley was the scene of Serb-style ethnic cleansing. The houses of Gharmis and Pamiris were systematically destroyed and the civilian populations fled towards the border with Afghanistan. After a pause of a month, the Amu Darya was crossed at the end of December in very difficult conditions by tens of thousands of Gharmi refugees, taking them into Afghanistan where they were rapidly taken into the care of the UNHCR (O. Roy 2000, 140).

In a time of economic stress caused by the evaporation of the centralized Soviet economy, Tajiks elites mobilized their supporters (Tunçer-Kılavuz 2009) and turned on their rivals in competition for political power as well as scarce resources in the south of the country. While initial reports estimated 50-100,000 killed and 500,000 refugees in the six months of 1992-3 that encapsulated the vast majority of the conflict's action (Matveeva 2009), estimates of 23,000 killed and 100,000 are perhaps more accurate (Mukomel 2001). As a new president (Imomali Rahmonov) from the Kulob region took office, he consolidated his power through the posting of others from his home region at the expense of their former allies and long-time political rivals of Khujand, as well as ethnic Uzbeks (Horsman 1999; Kuzmin 2001). Gharmis and Pamiris retreated to their respective mountain valleys; the latter actually achieving both "de facto and de jure" autonomy for Gorno-Badakhshan (O. Roy 2000, 141). By the end of 1992 the fronts of the war had stabilized. Afterward, remnant antigovernment insurgents intermittently attacked army posts in the central highland valleys of Tajikistan. The immediate effect of the civil war was to exacerbate the regional identity differences among the population, turning peaceful economic and political rivalries into violence-based fear and hatred.

By the time peace and stability had become both formal (peace treaty signed) and functional (warlords coopted or eliminated, remaining insurgents defeated, etc.), the RT military

could focus on creating a national military that was universally inclusive of ethnic and regional identities. The civil war (especially the violence against civilians) served to fundamentally undermine national unity. The 1997 peace agreement horizontally integrated both opposition and anti-opposition units into the formal RT military. However, it did not consistently separate these units from their commanders, to whom most of their troops were fiercely loyal (Nourzhanov 2005; Akiner 2001).

The loyalty of PF units that became integrated into the nascent RT military varied, as did their size and military capabilities. The most organized and functional unit in a formal sense was that of Captain Khudoberdyev, an ethnic Uzbek and former officer in the Soviet/Russian 201st MRD, whose militia sought to protect their ethnic brethren in the Kurgan-Teppe area from attacks by the opposition (Akiner 2001; Bleuer n.d.; Nourzhanov 2005). The story of his militia, the 1st Special Operations Battalion (SOB) is particularly important because it demonstrates their effectiveness in combat against the opposition, but also how they were politically marginalized by the Rakhmon regime later in the conflict.

The SOB successfully fought campaigns not only near Kurgan-Teppe, but also during later stages of the war in the Rasht Valley (Garm and Tavildara) directly on behalf of the Rakhmon regime. However, Captain Khudoberdyev became dissatisfied with the 'Kulobization' of the regime, as Rakhmon continued to post

close Tajik associates from his home region to important positions in the government. His militia took up residence south of Kurgan-Teppe and ceased to take on offensive operations for the regime; he had 2000 active troops with a further 5000 reserves, including armored vehicles (Nourzhanov 2005). In 1997 he led an insurrection of sorts, blocking the key pass between Dushanbe and Kurgan-Teppe and making demands regarding an alteration of the peace agreement, believing Uzbeks had been marginalized despite their contribution to the war effort. In the subsequent meeting with President Rakhmon, he agreed to disband his unit and take another position. Shortly thereafter, one of the RT's loyal units closed on Kurgan-Teppe and took brutal revenge on his veterans and ethnic Uzbeks generally. A year later, Khudoberdyev led an invasion of Khujand from Uzbekistan that was defeated. He is believed to be dead (sources vary as to the cause), but there are many within the RT political establishment who maintain that he remains across the frontier, ready to invade again with the support of Uzbekistan (Nourzhanov 2005).

The various militias that operated in SW Tajikistan during the war were either coopted into the RT security services or brought into the fold through more direct, coercive methods. Sangak Safarov, the most popular such leader, met his end when he attempted to stop his former comrade, Faizali Saidov, from continuing his killing spree targeting Garmis and Pamiris. A shootout is said to have occurred, in which both warlords were

killed. Some believe the Rakhmon regime actually planned this outcome by encouraging this meeting and instigating the violence involved - or employed a sniper to shoot both men (Nourzhanov 2005, 118; Bleuer n.d.). In some cases, commanders and their militias were absorbed into the RT security services, only to use the opportunity to develop their own fiefdoms to maintain power independent from the government. Obviously, this situation challenged the stability of the regime, and Rakhmon moved strategically to eliminate these threats over time, only bringing about a reasonable degree of stability after 2006 - nine years after the peace agreement. The warlords/militia commanders for the most part met similar ends: violent death, exile or prison. The full stories of these commanders is covered elsewhere (Akiner 2001; Bleuer n.d.; *Asia-Plus* 2012; *Asia-Plus* 2006).

For the purposes of this dissertation, these commanders' stories are relevant in a number of ways. Firstly, they demonstrate the informal, decentralized power structures of both the opposition and the anti-opposition forces during the civil war; they show how molding units integrated (during the war and after the peace agreement was signed in 1997) into a formal, national military presented significant challenges. Secondly, the control they exhibited over specific territories during the war and in the aftermath threatened the sovereignty of the newly independent state, not to mention the Rakhmon regime. Thirdly, and as a consequence of the foregoing points, the regime became fearful of the armed forces within Tajikistan - whether they

existed outside the government's direct control, or within the supposedly loyal RT military structure. When examining the production of nationalism through the lens of military service and prowess, it seems clear that, rather than building on the personnel from wartime units, starting from scratch has distinct advantages if political stability is to be realized in a centralized "nation-state."

The point is that the Rakhmon regime saw the military as a potential threat to the government. This threat is twofold. First, many of the military's new commanding officers were warlords, who were unwilling to integrate their own loyal units into a military subject to Dushanbe's control. Second, as new conscripts were drafted from throughout the territory, many came from ethno-regional backgrounds marginalized by the so-called "Kulobization" of the RT government. Knowing the national integration process within the military would take time, it is reasonable to assume that the regime would be fearful of the potential threat presented by these new military personnel in the short run. Slowly but surely, Rakhmon eliminated the internal threat posed by the presence of warlords (both from those absorbed into the formal military structure and those operating independently) and looked to new beginnings for the military. Thus, the institution of conscription of young men from all parts of Tajikistan and all ethno-regional identities became a strategy that served a dual purpose: 1) to provide loyal manpower to the

armed services and 2) to integrate the various social cleavages dividing the state. I examine this process in Chapter V.

The Nationalism, Identity, and Militarism Nexus

Critical Geographies of Militarism

To situate this study of militarism, it is important to examine the literature in critical militarism studies (geography in particular) that until recently has largely concentrated on the Anglophone world. Critical military geographies investigate our understandings of the ways in which military activities shape the cultural landscape and social relations. There are interesting parallels between these Western-based studies and the case of Tajikistan, but also important differences. The similarities are primarily related to the many commonalities found in modern military institutions, including but not limited to rank structures, orders of battle, and training practices. Within the commonalities of modern militaries, there are specific differences between Western experiences and those of the post-Soviet states. In this section, I review literature on Western militaries, but also examine the Soviet and Russian experiences with militarism. In the latter section, I focus on two important legacies of the Soviet military that continue to shape militarism in Tajikistan: *dedovshchina* and conscription.

The study of military activities, particularly conflict, has long been a part of geography. In the modern period, most geographic scholarship regarding military conflict fell under two subdisciplines: 1) geopolitics and 2) military geography, with the latter comprising the "application of geographic tools and techniques to the solution of military problems" (Woodward, 2005: 720). The recent emergence of a new subfield engaging in the non-violent processes and practices of military spatial ordering has opened the door to studies of militarism and its interface with civil society. A number of the geographers who publish within critical geopolitics circles are also regular contributors to scholarship in militarism, suggesting an already existing synergy between the two. This section conceptualizes my critical analysis of the RT military's function in society. In doing so, I seek not to draw clear lines between what is (critical) militarism and what is critical geopolitics, but rather to outline the nascent framework of militarism geographies and to explore the inevitable, and to some degree already existing, crossovers between this subfield and critical geopolitics.

Gerard Toal (1996: 18) defined (critical) geo-politics as "the politics of writing global space." He was a seminal figure making the case for the critical questioning of "how global space is produced and organized by governmentalizing intellectuals of statecraft." Critical geopolitics seeks to question the manners in which space is dissected and defined through global power arrangements. From the imperial actions that drove the birth of

classical geopolitics through the Cold War era to the contemporary period during which the so-called "Global War on Terror" (GWOT) has dominated discourses in critical geopolitics, the role of the military in securing space has been ubiquitous and prominent, posing the question of how critical militarism differs from critical geopolitics. While I continue to discuss both here, I will concentrate on militarism in this section and critical geopolitics in Chapter IV.

Woodward (2004; 2005) stops short of defining the geographies of militarism and military activities as a subdiscipline. Rather, she has sought to expose geographers to the role the military plays in everyday practices and to the way it shapes societies at the local and national scales. In responding to Yves Lacoste's (1976) view that geography is primarily about armed conflict, Woodward contends "the escalation of armed conflict should not distract us from paying attention to the little things that make armed conflict possible" (2005: 731). The active exercise of state power predominant in critical geopolitics' discourses may now be complimented with geographies of militarism. However, cleanly separating these sub-disciplines is problematic; hence finding and developing synergies between them is easier than exposing the tensions. For my purposes, the synergies are more important; in Chapter V I address the geopolitics of Tajikistan and critically connect them with the geographies of militarism I introduce here.

At this relatively early stage in geography's engagement with militarism, there are two primary differences distinguishing these two critical geographies: 1) scale and 2) nonviolent processes. Critical geopolitics' focus on the state's actions in the *global* sphere is complimented by militarism's focus on the military land uses and consequences of military presence at the *local* and *national* scales. Power-centered relationships among states and non-state actors are located in the global sphere. Militarism's emphasis on the local/national scale is reflected in some of the key works of geographers inquiring into the common practices associated with military activities. Woodward's *Military Geographies* (2004) makes a compelling case for research into non-violent military spaces. Among other topics, she deconstructs the local-scale effects of active military training on land use and has increasingly engaged with personnel to investigate how soldiers perceive their participation in the military through spatial narratives (Woodward and Jenkins 2012; Woodward 2008).

Geographers are also investigating the development of environments (cultural, political and economic) that encourage and accept extensive militarism at a level that serves the needs of state and economic elites. Bernazzoli and Flint (2009; 2010) contend that through everyday practices, militarism ties the individual to the state and synthesizes the relationship in ways "not typically associated with the state, but which are vital to the success of state agendas" (2010; 159). Further, through the

lens of Gramsci's conceptualization of hegemony, these authors posit that "- the ability (of elites) to set agendas and define values and norms - has advanced militaristic goals as well as economic or class goals" (2009: 397). By normalizing the role of the military and militarization in the everyday affairs of the domestic population, elites further their capability to conduct military violence: soldiers recruited, weapons manufactured, and unit deployments abroad are legitimized by elites and accepted by the population.

However, this normalization of militarism does not take place within a vacuum contained by the sovereign boundaries of the nation-state; rather it is affected by assumptions and perceptions of the outside world. The geopolitical fears that define the threat of the 'other' in turn shape government decisions and subsequently civil society's relationship with its military. Geographers (Flint, 2008; Farish, 2007) have commented on the Cold War era construction of a psychologically and morally sound population that could serve the political needs of the state to defend against a conceptual threat (e.g. communism) instead of a specific territorialized enemy based in a nation-state. In comparing everyday practices in Cold War North America and those in the post-911 period, Farish (2007: 265) noted that "(i)nside the indefinite boundaries of the homeland, moreover, we have recently witnessed another set of school drills, urban simulations, propaganda-heavy press conferences, and, most importantly, calls for the mobilization of minds in the service

of American militarism." The militarized response to geopolitical frameworks drives domestic practices within civil society. Such practices can also mean the existence of militarized territory in the homeland; army bases, air force installations and naval docks all require visible imprints on the cultural landscape that shape and reflect both the local community in which they are placed and the nation as a whole. But some military spaces are designed to be invisible, both on the landscape and in the arena of public discourse. With origins in the Cold War and an expanded role after 9/11, the (global) network of "black" facilities operated by the U.S. security apparatus profoundly shape global geopolitics while remaining officially nonexistent on the U.S. landscape. Yet these "black" sites have a domestic geography too, its existence acknowledged through lived experience, conflict over indigenous territorial rights, and the fascination of the American population with its mysterious operational details (Paglen, 2009).

The existing framework of militarism's geographies has focused on domestic and primarily everyday notions of military activities in the Anglophone world. But it would be difficult to accept this agenda as circumscribing this subdiscipline's many avenues for research, either in terms of subject matter or scale. Synergies with critical geopolitics are evident and active among many scholars who publish along both lines of inquiry. A number of publications (see Flint, 2008; Woodward and Jenkins, 2012; Dijkink, 2005; Bacevich, 2005) straddle the line between

domestic/global scales and/or non-violent military activities/direct military action, providing evidence of the difficulty of attempting to epistemologically separate critical geopolitics from militarism.

To develop our understanding of the synergies between these two sub-disciplines, it is useful to unpack a similar relationship between international political economy and geopolitics. Publications rooted in the geopolitical/geo-economic nexus (see Agnew and Corbridge 1995; Agnew 2005; Smith, 2003; 2005; Sparke, 2007; Roberts, Secor and Spark, 2007) combine the calculated raw power of geopolitics and its representations with the softer power structures of globalized capitalism. In doing so, they expose the fundamental relationship between the tools of power and their economic engine. The geographies of militarism can be added to this nexus, forming a triangular, rather than bilateral, relationship. Militarism serves the needs of geopolitical decision makers while increasingly relying upon a military industrial complex (to use the words of U. S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1960) that is hierarchically well situated within the political economies of the U.S. and U.K. (see also Anderton and Isard, 1985; Bacevich, 2005). The synergy between geopolitics, militarism and political economy (aka 'geoeconomics') shape and reflect each other.

In Tajikistan this synergy exists, though its political economy exhibits important differences. As a small, landlocked,

post-Soviet state with no historical links to the world system, the communist legacy is a powerful one. Tajikistan has little to offer the world economy in terms of natural resources, production capacity, or consumptive markets. However, it does have excess labor, which is employed through a migrant economy in the Russian Federation. This migrant economy shapes the decisions of both its supplier (Tajikistan) and consumer (Russia) with regard to their political and military relationships, whether it involves negotiations over the basing of the RF 201st MRD, the RT's reliance on Russia for its existential defense, or young Tajikistani males' personal choices between potential conscription and labor migration to Russia. Connecting the triangular links between geopolitics, political economy and militarism is imperative to understanding the relationship between national identity and militarism in Tajikistan, and I make these relationships clear in the coming chapters.

The domestic focus of current militarism geographies has expanded to the international sphere, where the politics and culture of the local intersect with the globalizing presence of foreign militaries in non-violent, everyday practices. The spaces surrounding Western military bases in foreign states have become the subject of scholarly research. These local-scale relationships often carry profound meaning both for the host population and for the foreign military personnel based in semi-permanently in places such as Okinawa (Yamazaki 2011) and Cyprus (Higate and Henry 2011) they reflect and shape the geopolitical

relationship between the host and renting state. Similarly, investigation into military spaces of more peripheral states is an important next step for critical militarism/geopolitics research. This dissertation examines Russia's long-term military basing structure in Tajikistan (Najibullah 2011; RFE/RL's Tajik Service 2013).

National Identity and Military Service

Bernazzoli and Flint's (2009) examination of the U.S.'s tacit and active acceptance of militarism as a component of civil society is, in essence, a framework for understanding how the military shapes and reflects national sentiments. Ronald Krebs' work on citizenship and military service notes that during the late 1800s, Europe embraced the military as a "school for the nation" that would transform multiethnic chaos into cohesive national order, and that during the post WWII decolonization period new militaries would act as "modernizing" and "nationalizing" forces that could bind subnational groups into new nations (Krebs, 2006: 1-2). This observation is important; much like militarism's geographies, the study of militaries as nation-builders is anchored in Western, particularly Anglophone academia and policy circles. Studies of militaries in the developing world do exist; however, the modern national military that acts as a model for post-colonial states is essentially a Western invention. To understand how these institutions

(successfully or unsuccessfully) function as national integrators, it is helpful to understand the social composition of militaries of states such as the U.S., the U.K. and Israel. Naturally, the case of Tajikistan cannot be properly understood without analyzing the structure of the Soviet Union's Red Army and the military of the Russian Federation. This section examines the experience in these states to understand the context of civil-military relations in Tajikistan. Each case relates to Tajikistan in a different way, whether it deals with successful integration and a contract military (U.S.), subnational cleavages and incomplete integration (Israel), or as the architect of established military structure (both formal and informal) of the RT military (USSR/Russia).

The U.S. Experience

The U.S. stands as a model for popular integration in the military; the egalitarian inclusion of blacks and Latinos (as well as other minorities) has generally been considered a successful, if incomplete process (Moskos, 1966; Levy, 1998; Kirby, et.al. 2000; Cowen, 2006; Lundquist, 2008; Bailey, 2009). The official beginning of desegregation in the U.S. military began in 1948. When forces still used conscription as a recruitment method (particularly the army), the institution of the Armed Forces Qualifying Test (AFQT) produced a quantitative (Levy, 1998; Bailey, 2009) attempt at universalism. This exam

provided soldiers the opportunity to obtain training, be assigned to specific posts, and advance within the military ranks based on their performance rather than any subjective assessment of their abilities by their superiors. The AFQT is seen as an integrative step forward that would give blacks and other marginalized populations opportunity without the shadow of institutionalized racism.

However, the deferment structure implemented in the 1950s that caused such a (justified) backlash during the Vietnam War placed a disproportional burden of combat on the lower classes, including blacks (Levy, 1998; Bailey, 2009). As a result of this backlash President Nixon implemented the All-Volunteer Force (AVF), which removed conscription and relied primarily on market forces to recruit personnel. As feared by military brass, the recruits to the AVF came mainly from lower income populations. As Yarmolinsky and Foster (1983: 75) explained: "it can be inferred from periodic surveys conducted by the Defense Department that, in the aggregate, today's volunteers are more disadvantaged economically than their counterparts who elect not to join the military."

Geographer Debra Cowen (2006; 2007) argues that the AVF (in the U.S. and Canada) is a new form of neoliberal governance called 'workfare,' in which the social welfare benefits to lower income Americans are provided through the enticement of 'voluntary' military service. In her view, "'(m)ilitary workfare'

raises particular questions given that large numbers of racialized people must risk their lives in exchange for basic wages and spaces of social reproduction. Old and new racisms together fuel U.S. militarisms at multiple scales" (Cowen, 2007: 4). Cowen further notes the disproportionate number of poor rural whites who serve in the contemporary army, creating a stark rural/urban spatiality of small town and urban servicemen and women (ibid: 10). Hispanics make up a proportionally small percentage of enlistees, but their numbers are growing rapidly. To take Cowen's view one step further, recruitment strategies still reproduce racial and ethnic divides in terms of who serves, but such divides are not necessarily reproduced within the military structure regarding personnel advancement and professional interaction.

According to sociologist Jennifer Lundquist, military life seems to largely agree with minorities who serve relative to the civilian employment. Her quantitative research (2008) displays higher job satisfaction rates among blacks and Latinos of both genders as compared to whites. The explanation relies on the relative social status of each group in the civilian world v. the military.

An identical term of military service experienced by a black man and a white man may be interpreted in divergent ways based on their different civilian baselines. ...More equitable circumstances in the military than the civilian world explain a great deal of why groups that ordinarily express lower satisfaction than whites in the civilian world express higher satisfaction in the military context (2008: 492).

I believe that the residual higher satisfaction with military employment among minorities is rooted in the military's meritocratic organization (ibid: 494).

The results of this research suggest that the U.S. project of an egalitarian military has been largely successful. This is not to say that racism doesn't exist in the U.S. military or that social integration is complete, but rather that it has been essentially removed on an institutionalized basis. Coupled with other processes of militarization in American society, this degree of integration generates positive views of the military that position it as part of the glue that cements the American nation to the state.

The Israeli Experience

From its outset following the 1948 war, the new Israeli government designed the IDF (Israeli Defense Force) to be a universalizing nation-building project (Levy, 1997; Ben Eliezer, 1998; Kachtan, 2012). The IDF also differed in an important way from the Western (i.e. British) militaries after which it was modeled. Ascension to the officer corps was to be directly from the enlisted ranks based on a uniform objective system of performance review. This system deviates from the Western model, which typically requires a college education and extensive officer training; a so-called "People's Army" (Levy, 1997).

However, this system of rules was written by ethnically European Israelis, which meant that the "rational, objective criteria determining an individual soldier's position were, in fact, geared more toward the education, values and primary skills of Western draftees (Levy, 1997: 41). Since military service was seen as a key to social acceptance, the experience could affect an individual soldier's life long after his/her period in uniform.

A division of labor became evident that challenged the ethos of the egalitarian IDF. Westerners (Ashkenazim) came to dominate the officer corps and coveted units, while 'Orientals' from the N. Africa and the Middle East (Mizrahim) took on more peripheral roles (Levy, 1997; Kachtan, 2012). Sociologist Levy (1997) notes that, at the time, this arrangement was considered to be appropriate by all parties, as the Ashkenazim had the relevant skills, experience and education; these traits were to be conveyed to the Mizrahim over time as the Israeli state developed.

Kachtan (2012) demonstrates that this division of labor within the IDF has largely continued, at least in the perception of soldiers and citizens. Her focus lies solely on the ethnic divide between Ashkenazims and Mizrahims, thus avoiding other identities such as Russian, Ethiopian, Druze or Bedouin. By engaging with the production and reproduction of identity within two rival units, the (predominantly Ashkenazim) Paratroops and

the (predominantly Mizrahim) Golani, Kachtan contends (see also Levy, 1997) that the IDF "plays a key role in creating, maintaining, and perpetuating ethnic identities among its soldiers" (2012: 150). Further, she connects this ethnic divide to divisions in Israeli society as a whole:

Instead of causing ethnic identity to dissolve into a melting pot, as it was meant to do according to the State of Israel's goal, the army becomes an active participant in creating extreme ethnic identities. Focusing on the soldier's part in this process in fact reinforces and highlights the part that ethnicity still has in the Israeli military and society (ibid: 169).

An altogether different relationship exists between Jewish Israelis and Arab Palestinians who serve in the IDF. The prime consideration here is the issue of perceived loyalty to the ethnocratic state, which institutionalizes "low ceilings for promotions, extensive background checks and automatic rejection of applicants with relatives in the occupied territories" for Arab Palestinians resulting from distrust (Kanaaneh, 2003: 15-16). Through interviews of Palestinian personnel serving in the IDF, police or border patrol, Kanaaneh argues that their social inclusion was often conditional, based on Jewish Israelis' knowledge of that service. As one interviewee stated, "(y)ou feel one thing when you are in uniform. Then there is no such thing as Arab and Jew. But once you take the uniform off, it's all forgotten. You're a dirty Arab again (ibid: 15). Over the years, Palestinians have killed many Arabs suspected of collaboration as retribution, but apparently few of these have been actual members

of the security forces (ibid: 17). Despite its egalitarian design, the systematic reinforcement of ethnic identity within the IDF makes arguments framing it as a successful social integrator appear flawed. Nevertheless, comparing the U.S. and Israel, the relationship between identity groups within the IDF are probably more similar to those that exist within the Tajikistani armed services - although cohesion within the contemporary IDF is substantially stronger and has been throughout most of its history.

The case of Israel demonstrates the difficulty of integrating different ethnicities even when they share a strong common bond (Judaism and Zionism). Ethnicities serving together in the military of a post-colonial state that has experienced civil war (ie. Tajikistan) - or at the very least, struggles for political and economic power among various groups - present significant challenges. Taking the example of a stable state such as Israel and its military's reproduction of entrenched identities, Enloe sees military service as more of a nation destroyer rather than a nation builder due to its tendency to reinforce subnational cleavages (1980). This is crucial argument; while militaries have the potential to produce stronger national sentiments, they are quite capable, if not likely, to produce the opposite under all but the best conditions.

Post-colonial militaries typically have significant challenges emerging from multiethnic societies and weak national

institutions. When comparing them to the processes and successes of 'modern' militaries from Europe and North America, it is important to remember the differences that have marked the history of these more cohesive states, in which the growth of national sentiments has developed over relatively longer periods. The militaries in postcolonial states may be positioned as potential integrators of subnational cleavages, but the reality is more complicated. Examining the cases of Afghanistan and USSR/Russia provide important insights into the RT military, which contends with social cleavages similar to Afghanistan and institutional structure inherited from the Soviet Union.

Afghanistan and the Soviet Union/Russian Federation

The case of Afghanistan contains both strong parallels and dramatic differences with Tajikistan. Both have experienced civil war, though the former's war duration has been far longer, more devastating, and has yet to end. More importantly, both have integrated former insurgents into their current militaries. Remarkably, Tajiks represent a portion of those integrated troops in both cases. Simonsen describes the problems associated with this scenario.

In deeply divided societies the most worrisome scenarios of disintegration would seem to be associated with the model in which entire existing irregular units are inducted into new military structures. Such units may already have strong primary-group cohesion: they may share a loyalty to their commander (who may or may not have joined the military with

them); they may have a history of (irregular) combat together; and they are likely to share values and goals, besides - most probably - being homogeneous in ethnic or sectarian terms. The primary-group cohesion in this case, then, would be within the pre-existing, irregular unit, as well as tied to the soldier's kin outside of the force. On the other hand, vertical, secondary-group cohesion - between the soldiers and higher military units (and beyond) - may be very weak (2009: 1488).

Further, he notes that when formerly under-represented groups (Tajiks and Uzbeks of the Northern Alliance, e.g.) gain power and influence, expectations that they might use their new position in society to advance the common good are naïve (ibid: 1486). Such has been the case in Tajikistan, where Tajiks from the Kulob region have solidified their power and employed it to enrich themselves. While the RT remains stable, it regularly contends with resistance to its sovereignty from the periphery, most notably in GBAO.

The degree to which the RT military is modeled after its Soviet predecessor is notable. A number of key practices of Soviet military culture remain in the armed forces of the contemporary Russian Federation (RF) and that of the RT, most importantly conscription and *dedovshchina*. Holloway notes that "in the 1970s most Western observers regarded the Soviet armed forces (along with the KGB) as one of the two Soviet institutions that worked well. This image was fostered not only by Western defense ministries, which needed to support their claims for more resources, but also by the Soviet press which, although it carried articles on problems in the armed forces, was devoted to

inculcating respect for the military" (Holloway 1989, 13). Gresh (2011, 192-93) adds that "the Russian State is derived from a long history of militarism," which has served to maintain popular support for its policies and/or a lack of resistance to them, most specifically conscription. While militarism wields a powerful influence in both the U.S. and RF, there are important differences in the national cultures of these states that dictate how it is manifested. In Russia, "the principles of individual liberty and freedom that is often associated with an all-volunteer force, as in the United States, do not factor into the equation - people generally accept the realities of service" (Gresh 2011, 192).

Among many others, Tajikistan shares two key practices with Russia that directly influence citizens' connection to the military and thus, affect the development and maintenance of national sentiments: 1) conscription and 2) dedovshchina. Understanding the role of these practices in the Russian military contextualizes how Tajikistani citizens understand their own armed forces. In this section, I first analyze the similarities and differences between Russia and Tajikistan regarding conscription, and then examine the strong legacy embodied in the practice of dedovshchina. My research on the specific details of RT citizens' experiences with these practices is found in Chapter V, so what follows focuses primarily on the Russia.

Both Russia and the RT perform conscription of males 18-27 years of age on a semi-annual basis for two months each in the Spring and Fall. Exemptions exist for cases of bad health, enrollment in college, and family provision (e.g. only sons, etc.) (Gresh 2011; *Asia-Plus* 2014a). Resistance to conscription policies does exist in Russia, though as Gresh (2011, 192-93) notes, it has not manifested itself into a strong civil opposition due to cultural acceptance of the practice and a historical appreciation of the military. Nonetheless, he further comments that top military officers still control much of the discourse on conscription in civil society (ibid, 195); and many of these officers hold on to conscription "since they believe that it provides a good method of instilling patriotic values and socializing young men" (Herspring 2005b, 143). Gresh further notes three common methods employed by those families who choose to avoid service: 1) leaving their homes during recruitment periods, 2) bribing medical examiners to produce a failed exam, or 3) bribing local conscription commissioners. As I will show later, all of these methods are common in Tajikistan, perhaps to an even greater degree than in Russia.

The ritualized hazing found in post-Soviet militaries is connected to the conscription process, though it is not necessarily the direct result of it. The Russian term *dedovshchina* translates to "grandfathering" and is performed on new conscripts by those already in service. Since recruitment drives occur twice a year in six months intervals, the victims

are primarily those who have just entered the service, while the perpetrators represent soldiers conscripted at least six months prior. Holloway (1989) observes that "(d)edovshchina is not a new phenomenon (it dates back at least to the 1960s, and perhaps earlier), but it is only in the last few years that it has been widely exposed in the press" (p. 14). That its exposure grew as the Soviet Union collapsed should not be seen as a surprise given the state's attempt to hide the war in Afghanistan from its citizens (Whitlock 2003) and the resulting media backlash against the war and the policies that surrounded it. Daucé and Sieca-Kozlowski's (2006) examination of dedovshchina reveals that the number of hazing-related criminal cases rose by 25% between 2003-05, and by August 2006, there were 17 deaths and over 100 injuries stemming from about 3500 reported incidents (p. 23).

It also should not be much of a surprise that Soviet authorities would suppress any discussions of dedovshchina; the cult of personality in Russia is dependent upon a "family culture," in which a fatherly figure sees himself as the caring decision maker with little input from subordinates and is accepted as such by them (Trompenaars 1998). Russian military authorities saw no reason to have their expertise examined and questioned, so they simply ignored its existence publically. Regarding family culture in the RF military (which the RT military imitates), Gresh remarks that

(t)he corporate culture of the Russian Army very much takes on these characteristics. Russian authorities have

continually relied upon "the right person" or the power of personality to fix things. Power and decision-making is definitely not shared or decentralized, and all Russian authorities have repeatedly emphasized their expertise as one by definition; outside critique is certainly not looked favorably upon (2011, 199-200).

Authorities' resistance to criticism, whether from subordinates within the military structure or as part of discourse in civil society, in turn produces and reproduces practices that have negative outcomes. These practices have become so accepted in the culture of the military that, even in the face of obvious detrimental effects, the command apparatus faces little serious internal pressures to change them. Dedovshchina in post-Soviet militaries clearly fits this description; in Tajikistan however, we can add the conscription/impressment practice of *oblava* to this category (see Chapter V). For now, it is important to understand the strong influence of the Soviet Union and the subsequent Russian Federation upon political and military culture in Tajikistan, and the contemporary views and practices this influence produces there.

The entrenched challenges posed by questions concerning conscription and the persistent problem of dedovshchina within the RF military manifested themselves into a military that had difficulty functioning effectively in time of need. Faced with these issues, plus the additional problems of corruption (including the scamming of conscripts for bribe payments by recruitment personnel), and the growing obsolescence and

maintenance of the military's weapons technology, Putin began to institute reforms in 2008. The conflict in Georgia in 2008 displayed a military success to the outside world, but internal studies have shown that all of these problems (and more) were seriously hampering the RF military's operational effectiveness and that major changes were necessary (Braun 2012, 69). One part of these reforms has been the reduction of conscripted service from two years to one (Gresh 2011), which human rights groups have urged the RT to adopt as well (Ozodagon 2014a).

I bring the discussion of the Soviet and Russian legacy to Tajikistan's military by highlighting some important insights from the experiences of Central Asian personnel in the Soviet Red Army, particularly from those who served in the Afghan war (1979-89). Marat (2010) relates a number of these experiences; within them, I note three that have great relevance to understanding the contemporary RT military. First, perhaps unsurprisingly, ethnicity and degrees of Russian language fluency typically determined levels of respect and responsibility afforded to Central Asian conscripts by Slavic conscripts and officers, even driving those with better skills "to align themselves more with other Russian speakers than with their fellow countrymen" (p. 38). Second, the economic and social disparities of the Central Asian republics "led to hazing based on ethnic background" and "continuously lower performance by non-Russian soldiers" (ibid: 38). Further, she notes that "although the Soviet Union was still a superpower, its army was rived with ethnic resentments and

tensions. The Soviet Army with various ethnic groups serving alongside with each other exacerbated existing cleavages and indirectly encouraged confrontations among ethnic groups" (ibid: 39).

However, the Afghan war acted as a social integrator of sorts, and Central Asian veterans of the conflict, due to their knowledge of local cultures and language (especially Tajik/Farsi/Dari speakers), did not have "to prove his nerve in the army's informal hierarchy and therefore hazing was not as cruel at war as in peacetime" (ibid: 47). Third and finally, experience in the Afghan war, along with the universalism ('internationalism') of Soviet doctrine, built a Soviet identity among the veterans that remains in place today. The Afghan Veteran Union (AVU).

Most Central Asia veterans, however, say that they drew a clear line between their Soviet identity, calling themselves internationalists, and the local Afghan population, despite often similar physical appearances and languages...Their dual identity - the Soviet and the national - explains the veterans' support of both, the Soviet regime and the newly independent state (Ibid: 40)

These experiences tell us two things: despite the existence of 'internationalism' as Soviet doctrine, ethnic cleavages not only persisted but were reproduced within the Red Army and dedovshchina was the preferred hierarchical method by which it was enforced. However, the bond and trust developed among troops through combat played a strong role in overcoming these cleavages

(contextualized in time and space) and left Central Asian veterans with a lasting positive impression of the Soviet Union generally and of their military experiences during the war specifically. The positive connotations of the Soviet effort in Afghanistan are based on a strong sense of purpose (most such veterans see the war as a victory, in contrast to Western narratives) and demonstrate the value of military conflict in building national sentiments. The contemporary RT military contends with similar issues regarding ethnic cleavages and dedovshchina, but its war legacy plays a far more divisive role in its history than the Afghan war does for Soviet Central Asian veterans.

Conclusion

This section highlights important considerations regarding the role of social divisions - particularly ethno-regional ones - within military institutions. The United States stands as an example of successful integration of race and ethnicity, but represents a very different historical and social context. Democratic governance, an immigrant population, and a history of foreign wars (in which social bonds are strengthened among soldiers) all contributed to its development in this regard. Similarly, Israel sought to use the military as an integrative institution from its beginning. Despite this goal, it has not been as successful as the U.S.; however, its history is

significantly shorter. On the other hand, democratic governance, Jewish religion and numerous wars that have threatened Israel's existence have helped to produce and reproduce cohesion, even if integration has been elusive.

The Soviet legacy's effect on the formation of the RT military is twofold: 1) it serves as the model for the institutional structure, complete not only with nearly identical formal conscription processes, rank structures, and equipment, but also the negative cultural practice of *dedovshchina*; 2) its collapse led to the civil war, which exposed social cleavages and also prevented the RT from inheriting the Soviet military units based in the territory - the only Central Asian republic that experienced this loss. Questions of national cohesion presented by ethno-regional identity in Tajikistan in the aftermath of the civil war are challenging. Studies have shown that such cleavages are usually reproduced in the militaries of states that contain them. Moreover, this is not the only issue with which the RT military must contend; the unfair and often brutal illegal conscription practice of *oblava*, the physically and psychologically abusive hazing of *dedovschina*, and lack of a clear foreign existential threat all contribute to Tajikistani males' disinterest in, if not outright fear of, service in the military. The positive connotations of service associated with the Soviet Red Army have been sustained within the population of Tajikistan. However, the respect of Russian military - especially relative to that of the RT - persists. The project of the RT

military as a manufacturer of national sentiments faces serious challenges.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL MILITARY GEOGRAPHIES IN TAJIKISTAN: CONCEPTUAL AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES

In this chapter I conceptualize my research within the framework of the nascent sub-discipline of critical military geographies introduced in the previous chapter. I then discuss the challenges present in conducting sensitive research in a closed autocratic environment, which, in turn, limits the methodological options available for data collection. Lastly, I outline my methods, discuss my choices of research participants, and explain adjustments I made to my original methodology after arriving in country for fieldwork.

Critically Situating Tajikistan's Military Geographies

In many ways, Woodward (2004; 2005) has identified an important gap in the geographic literature on political power and social relations in her discussions of militarism. For her, "(m)ilitarism's geographies are about the control of space, about creating the necessary preconditions for military activities" (Woodward 2004, 3). Woodward's focus on the *preconditions* for armed conflict is crucial here. She specifically seeks to avoid discussions engaging in war and its justifications - she sees critical geopolitics valuable in this regard - in order to conceptualize the everyday aspects of military presence in space,

how they become normalized into the dominant culture, and how they “produce their own ordering of space” (ibid, 4). By focusing on the power of military activities to shape landscapes and spatially influence social relations during times of peace (particularly domestically), she argues that we can develop a more complete understanding of military power.

For Woodward, this is not merely a descriptive process, but also a normative one. “It involves questioning the moral authority of militarism, the rights and wrongs of the use of violence in pursuit of political and economic ends, and the morality of the consequences of military preparedness” (Woodward 2004, 9). In this way, critical geographies of militarism have much in common with the approach taken by critical geopolitics. But there is another important similarity that deals not in the conceptual method and morality but rather the practice of critical geographies of militarism: subject matter. Most (if not all) of the literature in this subfield focuses on Western militaries performing what are considered to be hegemonic geopolitical roles; Woodward’s own geographic focus is firmly located in the U.K. Others, such as Flint and Bernazzoli (Bernazzoli and Flint 2009a; Bernazzoli and Flint 2010; Flint 2008) have engaged primarily with the U.S. context, though Cowen (Cowen 2005; Cowen 2006; Cowen 2007) has conceptualized citizenship and militarism in both the U.S and Canada.

Using this framework to examine and conceptualize how militarism shapes and reflects national sentiments in Tajikistan differs from these previous studies in important ways. First, Tajikistan relies on (so-called) universal national conscription to recruit personnel; all three of the above-mentioned Anglophone states rely primarily on contract (aka 'volunteer') soldiers in their armed forces.

Second, both the U.S. and U.K. have active foreign policies that involve military action in many areas of the world. Studying militarism in these states necessarily has to engage with their global reach and commitment. This global reach presents appealing avenues for critical review of how it shapes and reflects geographies of power both domestically and around the world. On the other hand, Tajikistan's use of its military is focused on defense of the country from direct attack and internal threat suppression, a situation linked to its geopolitical situation, but also its governance, which also exhibits important differences.

Lastly, Tajikistan is a post-Soviet dictatorship (to pull the thin veil from its supposed representative democracy) with a highly centralized government evolving from the Soviet model (Matveeva 2009). The objects of most critical militarism research are liberal democratic governments. Much like my analysis of the differing goals of the U.S./U.K. militaries and that of Tajikistan, this governmental difference matters. The coercive

policies surrounding the RT armed forces (such as conscription) are made by a regime that appears to have little regard for the opinions of its citizens and the troublesome business of governing by consent. This is not to say that the Rakhmon regime does not pay homage to public opinion from time to time, but this is the exception rather than the norm. Civil society in Tajikistan is poorly developed (Lewis 2008; Heathershaw 2007).

Gramsci's famous discussion on the "war of maneuver" in the overthrow of capitalist hegemony from European states is useful here. One of the most powerful aspects of militarism in Western states is the way civil society is shaped by the normalizing the presence and legitimation of military forces in daily life. Gramsci's view that in "Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous" (Gramsci 1972, 238) is applicable to Tajikistan. Dissecting the role of militarism in Tajikistan is, in general, simpler. The sole actor is the state, which decides who serves and who does not, how soldiers are to be compensated and cared for, and what role the military plays in Tajikistani society. Public debate on the subject may not be muted, but reactions by the government to such debates are primarily characterized by a defense of the status quo instead of the embrace of changing realities or popular viewpoints that challenge this status.

Much of the critical geographic literature on militarism is centered on the unpacking of Gramsci's civil society, permeated

by militarism to its core, with the state serving only as an "outer ditch, behind which stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks" (Gramsci 1972, 238). In the West, geographies of militarism reach far beyond the state and are actively layered throughout civil society. The layers of militarism in civil society prompted Bernazzoli and Flint to ask, "what are some of the everyday activities that reinforce militaristic notions of citizenship, patriotism, and nationalism? How do civil society actors such as schools and churches perpetuate these views" (Bernazzoli and Flint 2009b, 399)? These two questions have relevance for both the U.S./U.K. and Tajikistan, but the answers are likely to be quite different. In Tajikistan, civil society hardly exists; its schools are directly controlled by the central government, its mosques must be approved by the state (which directly selects the controlling imams) (Pannier and Lemon 2015; RFE/RL 2014).

These differences are important not only to the subject matter of this dissertation; they also influence the type of field research that can be undertaken. The lack of a well-developed civil society lays bare the state and its coercive nature, but also creates a difficult environment for investigating the state and its intentions. The components of civil society - schools, business, news media, places of worship, etc. - that help reinforce the state also work to balance its coercive power and negotiate consent. Part of this negotiation involves academic inquiry, which (among other things) helps

identify public issues, investigate them, and offer potential solutions. Indeed, Woodward, Cowen and other academics investigating issues related to the military experience ebbs and flows in the level of cooperation they receive from authorities, but they are unlikely to be in personal danger as long as they operate within the well-documented letter of the law.

When the components of civil society are under the control of the state, as they largely are in Tajikistan, academic inquiry becomes problematic, or, in the worst case, may be seen as a threat to the state. Research under these conditions creates unique challenges, not the least of which is the threat to the researcher; indeed, the research participants themselves may be in danger. This is the backdrop for the research approaches discussed in the remainder of this chapter, which outlines my choice of methods and explains the challenges associated with fieldwork in the autocratic environment of contemporary Tajikistan.

Study Parameters

Fieldwork for this dissertation was conducted in Tajikistan from August 2013 to March 2014 and was funded through an Individual Advanced Research Opportunities Fellowship (IARO) from The International Research and Exchanges Board (IREX). During this period, I lived in Dushanbe and travelled to other parts of the country to conduct research. I stayed for extended periods in

Khorog and Khujand, and travelled to Kurgan-Teppe often. I made additional short trips to Kulob, Kholkhozabad and Moskovskii. I also took a multi-day trip into the Vaakhan Valley.

This dissertation is based on a combination of interviews, media analysis, participant observation and secondary sources. I used interviews and media analysis to answer all three of my research questions, which address 1) ethno-regional identity in the RT military, 2) conscription practices, and 3) the influence on foreign militaries based in Tajikistan on the state's investment in its own armed forces (see Chapter I for the complete questions). I performed participant observation to see with my own eyes the living and material conditions in the RT military. These conditions shape RT citizens' views of, and willingness to serve in, their national military forces. Given the limited amount of academic research performed in Tajikistan, I analyzed secondary sources to assist in addressing these questions and to align some of my findings with research on related issues from other post-Soviet states (e.g. military hazing/*dedovshchina*).

In the following sections, I will explain each of these methods, my reasoning for choosing them, and the challenges I experienced during data collection specifically and fieldwork generally. I start with the challenges associated with performing sensitive research in an autocratic political environment.

Qualitative Fieldwork in an Autocratic Environment

During my fieldwork, I had the opportunity to visit a few border guard zastavi (Russian: outposts) in the Vaakhan Valley in SE Tajikistan to perform participant observation and perhaps interview some border guard soldiers about the conditions in the service along this isolated frontier. My driver pulled our SUV up to the light blue driveway gate and my guide walked over to the smaller doorway entrance, where a young border guard met him. The border guard called another over, seemingly to get permission for our visit. A plain clothed man arrived shortly thereafter, and my guide spoke with him for a few minutes. He then returned to the SUV and said, "they will not let us in. The GKNB (State Committee for National Security) is there. They are afraid" (Respondent 10 2013). I instantly became intensely worried, as I did not want to put any of my companions in danger, nor lose my visa and be forced to leave the country. However, my guide assured me that they were more afraid of us than we should be of them. They were only there because of the upcoming election (November 2013).

Tajikistan's government for all intents and purposes is autocratic and inherits its structure from the Former Soviet Union. One respondent noted that most of its laws are either Soviet or Russian; in the latter case the RT government simply translates new Russian laws into Tajiki and puts them on the books without even reading them, assuming their worth solely by their origin (Respondent 23 2014). Included in this suite of

Soviet era bureaucratic structures is the secret police. Only the nomenclature has changed slightly, from the Soviet KGB (Committee for State Security) to the RT's GKNB.

The danger of performing field research in an autocratic environment has been noted by some geographers (Natalie Koch 2013; Gentile 2013). The incident above was typical of the fear I had for the local citizens whom I interviewed and who worked for me as guides and assistants. In most cases, my more educated associates were largely unconcerned as they were much more familiar with the dangers associated with their government and its secret service. I mostly only had to fear the premature end to my research in the country. My research participants, on the other hand, varied widely in their willingness to be interviewed, the types of questions they would entertain, and/or the type of answers they would provide.

Encounters with the Security Apparatus

Gentile (2013) provides an important guide of sorts to the types of encounters one might experience from the security apparatus in autocratic states, which he refers to as the 'organs'. He performed most of his research in the post-Soviet world, so his insights are particularly relevant to Tajikistan. Indeed, I experienced a number of the same experiences he describes during my fieldwork; or at least, I think I did. One

can never be sure of everything when dealing with organizations such as the GKNB.

As per the story as the border guard zastava above, merely coming upon the GKNB is alarming and generates a moment of shock and fear, much of it to the unknown. For Gentile, "(t)heir occasional 'emergence' is enough to generate sufficient fear and diffidence to substantially alter the atmosphere of the research setting" (2013, 427). Indeed, encounters with the secret police can make you want to hide in your apartment, watch your back continuously, and even avoid contact with potential research participants in some belief that they will go away. The reality is that they may very well be following - shadowing - you frequently during your entire time in country.

The zastava encounter was not my only one with the GKNB while in GBAO; I was also stopped in Khorog while walking through the city. A few minutes after taking a photo of a government building (GKNB office perhaps), a young GKNB plain-clothed officer stepped in front of me, showed his badge, and demanded my passport in Russian. I provided it and he reviewed the page with my RT visa. Then he pointed to a specific date on the visa and told me that there was a problem and that I would have to come with him back to the office. I had to think quickly on my feet - in Russian as well - to extricate myself from this situation. The visa is written in Tajiki, not Russian; since I could not read it, I was not sure what he thought was wrong with the date. I

quickly flipped the page to my permit to travel to GBAO, which was much easier to read in that it only had two dates: the beginning and end of the permitted time I was allowed to visit the oblast. I pointed to these dates, citing that there was no problem. He reviewed the document, asked what I did for a living, and sent me on my way. He appeared slightly embarrassed about his error and seemed to want to end the encounter as quickly as possible after that.

This incident strongly parallels an example provided by Gentile's description of the first encounter and its potential meaning.

This confrontation may occur when you make an unexpected movement in a place where no one else is likely to be, but it might also be pre-arranged or even provoked by something you are (or from a distance seem to be) doing. Taking a casual picture of a street scene sufficed to provoke one of my shadowers into revealing himself as 'representative of the law enforcement organs' (i.e. the organ). Casual confrontations are best ignored; the shadower himself might even experience fear, embarrassment or shame. On the other hand, confrontations can be arranged on purpose, too, in order to convey a 'we-are-watching-you' message (Gentile 2013, 431).

In the aftermath, I could not discern the precise reasoning behind this encounter and largely considered it chance. My thoughts focused on the officer's instinct to view a date on my visa as a problem. Either he knew everything was correct but thought I could not read Tajiki (he would be correct), or he could not read it himself. We were in GBAO, so if he was Pamiri his Tajiki may not be particularly good; Pamiris prefer their

local tongues (in Khorog: Shugni) or Russian over Tajiki, and many don't know the national language. As it turns out, about a year later another researcher and I were talking and noted an encounter with someone fitting this description in Khorog. This researcher spoke Tajiki, not Russian, which the officer had difficulty understanding. We speculated that he was the same person, and that he actually could not read the visa correctly after all. Nevertheless, the experience haunted me for some time and altered the way I conducted myself during my fieldwork. I increasingly placed an emphasis on safety and caution in my processes; I discuss these changes later in this chapter.

Electronic Communication Security

I had a lengthy conversation or two about electronic communication security in Tajikistan with a new American colleague, who had experience doing research in Tajikistan, a few weeks before I left. The overall message conveyed to me was to avoid using Skype (or similar programs), email or websites for any sensitive communication, a recommendation to which I adhered. Gentile notes that email messages he sent from an internet café "were saved and printed out by the organ, who even asked for my assistance in interpreting their contents" (Gentile 2013, 429). When speaking on Skype or over email, I developed a code that could be employed if sensitive material (such as my location, military installations I wanted to visit, or participants I

interviewed) needed to be discussed. I used these codes a few times, but I rarely had need for them as I generally avoided sensitive material in the online world; for the most part this did not directly affect my research.

Effects of Closure on My Research Methods

Protecting my participants, my assistants and my research was constantly on my mind as I navigated through the securitized political landscape of daily life in Tajikistan. It was more than a month and a half before I conducted my first interview, spending most of that time acquainting myself with my surroundings and interviewing potential assistants. I considered it extremely important to avoid any attention from the state security services, but was more willing to take risks as the end of my research period approached.

The care and attention I took to staying off the GNKB's radar led me to avoid virtually any attempt to contact and interview key members of the military or government until I was near the end of my research period. Any request for an interview would need to begin with an introduction from a mutual acquaintance of good standing. I would then need to be vetted through any channels my official thought fit to consult. I had no way of knowing whether a government or military official would include the GNKB as part of that vetting. So, as my fieldwork progressed, I made the decision to avoid speaking with any high

level official; it simply did not appear to be worth the risk, especially since they frequently made statements in the local media that addressed many of the questions I would ask. The arrest of University of Toronto researcher Alexander Sodiqov by GNKB agents while meeting a participant for an interview a few months after I left Tajikistan (Lemon 2014; BBC 2014) reaffirmed this decision as the right one. To be clear, Sodiqov is an RT national, so under greater personal danger than myself. In all likelihood, I would only have lost my visa and had my fieldwork brought to a premature end.

Methods

As noted in the previous section, the sensitivity of the subject, the autocratic structure of the Rakhmon regime and the pervasive reach of the RT internal security apparatus heavily shaped my research. This context limited my choice of methods and tools in a number of ways. First, I could not openly advertise my research in attempts to recruit interview respondents; under these conditions, alerting the GNKB would not only threaten my research, but more importantly could endanger any RT citizens who might participate. Potential respondents were also aware of this concern; a few of them who had committed to meeting with me changed their mind before doing so and cancelled.

Second, my opportunities to directly observe military performances were shaped by my ability to be present incognito.

Keeping my identity a secret was not always possible, so in some cases I needed to create another identity for myself to gain access to the practice in question. For example, when I visited border zastavii in GBAO, my guide introduced me to border guard commanders in a variety of ways, including as a fiction author.

Third, my access to government and military leaders was severely limited. Since I did not want to draw attention to my research or myself, I opted to avoid any attempts to contact government leaders until I had gathered sufficient information from other sources. While this decision was successful in avoiding attention, it may have prevented me from successfully scheduling an interview; however, it is also possible that the officials in question or their superiors would have denied my request anyway after investigating me. In addition, the process of arranging an introduction and being vetted by the interviewee is lengthy: government officials do not want to be caught discussing their views on what may be considered sensitive information with someone with whom they are not familiar. The length of this process would make it difficult to complete other aspects of the research before turning my attention toward interviews with military and government officials. Given the potential repercussions, I did not see the benefits outweighing the risks of pursuing interviews with officials.

Research Assistant

My research assistant was a local Tajik living in Dushanbe. He was fluent in both Russian and Tajiki and spoke English reasonably well. He was useful in recruiting respondents for interviews, making travel arrangements in small towns and villages, and making small talk with respondents to help make them feel more comfortable. He was also helpful in assessing whether or not a respondent was holding information back during an interview (I was usually able to pick this up as well) and proposing questions to me that I should ask in specific situations. I will refer to him repeatedly in the sections that follow.

While in Khorog, I had a female Pamiri assistant. It was important to work with a local while in GBAO; it is likely that Pamiris would not readily trust a Tajik in this context and thus not respond as well during interviews. She was fluent in Russian, Tajiki and Shugni, and could speak English well. In addition, I needed a local assistant to recruit local respondents. However, using a female assistant came with a potential downside. The misogynistic culture of Tajikistan frowns upon men interacting with women in powerful positions that are usually associated with men. Talking about military conscription, bad conditions and dedovshchina with a female interpreter could make a respondent uncomfortable to answer certain questions. It is certainly

possible that a few of my interviewees were affected by this choice of an assistant.

Semi-Structured Interviews

I chose interviews as a primary component of my data collection for a couple of reasons. First, without truly knowing what kind of data might be important, performing interviews allowed me to guide the conversation toward my interests while also allowing the interviewee to take me down new avenues that I may not have originally considered. For example, it quickly became clear upon the first conversations I had with locals that conscription and oblava were key sources of concern for citizens. However, the deep effects of dedovshchina, about which I had not placed much importance, were revealed to me by interviewees who brought the subject up themselves, without direct prompting from me.

My original target participant was the military veteran, who I believed would feel freer to discuss experiences and would be more accessible than actively serving soldiers. This strategy remained in place after I arrived in country. However, I added military-aged males to my targeted interview list after learning more about conscription and oblava and their potential effect on notions of national unity. I also added citizens who could comment on these practices from their important positions, including NGO staff, mahalla leaders, or simply village elders.

Identifying and Recruiting Participants

I wanted to get a representative sample of participants from each ethno-regional identity group in Tajikistan, which for my purposes includes Tajiks from Sughd Oblast in the North (primarily Khujandi), Khatlon Oblast in the south (primarily Kulobi), Garm/Rasht Valley in the Regions of Republican Subordination, Uzbeks, Pamiris and Kyrgyz. To this end, I spent extended periods in different locales to recruit interviewees from these different groups. In Fall 2013, I spent over 3 weeks in Khorog, GBAO, to recruit Pamiris and observe military installations in the region. This trip took place at this time and was limited in length due to the imminent arrival of winter weather, which severely reduces the area's accessibility. My trip to Garm was cancelled due to bad weather, as this location is also subject to varying accessibility in the winter months. I spent a few weeks in Khujand in January 2014 to conduct interviews with locals and meet with Amparo staff. I travelled to Kurgan-Teppe on a number of occasions to interview Uzbeks and Kulobi Tajiks.

My research assistant was aware of my interest in participants who were representative of the whole country, and made it a point to inform me of the group identity of each participant he recruited. This point was especially important in Dushanbe, where the population contains representatives of all ethno-regional groups. Some of the Pamiris or Khujandis I

interviewed lived in Tajikistan's capital city. I personally recruited some participants, while my research assistants recruited others. In some cases, interviewees introduced me to acquaintances and friends, creating a snowball effect. Snowballing was particularly true in Khorog and Dushanbe, with participants from the latter city even leading to participants in Kurgan-Teppe. I found this method was the most effective way to find military veterans. Since this group can be a bit more reserved (see next paragraph), receiving an introduction from another veteran helps to smooth the process and perhaps make a potential interviewee feel more comfortable sharing his experiences.

Finding interview participants who could talk about conscription and oblava was easier than finding actual military veterans who would comment on these matters. Most males had some experience with conscription as it is/was part of their daily lives for four months per year. Military veterans were more difficult to find and more reticent to meet. Many were from rural areas and were highly distrustful of outsiders, while others may have preferred not to talk about their experiences as they have the potential to be traumatic (as I demonstrate in Chapters V and VI). I sought veterans from all uniformed military services (Army, Air Force, National Guard Border Guards, Alpha, etc.), hoping to get representatives from each.

I was successful in finding Tajik participants from the north, south and Dushanbe, an Uzbek, and multiple Pamiris. I was unable to interview either a Kyrgyz or a Garmi Tajik participant; Kyrgyz constitute a very small portion of the population and most live on the high plateau of eastern GBAO. Unfortunately, I did not come across any Garmi Tajiks in Dushanbe or Kurgan-Teppe in our recruiting process and I had to cancel my trip to Garm and the Rasht Valley, but I do believe their representation is important. I was especially interested in the experiences of Garmis, who largely sided with the opposition during the civil war and have experienced RT military operations in their home area in recent years.

With greater time and resources, I would have scheduled a summer trip to Garm and the Rasht valley to interview Tajiks there. I would also have schedule a trip to Murgab in eastern GBAO with its Kyrgyz majority, and another to the north, not only to Khujand, but also Penjakent and other smaller cities. Lastly, I would have spent more time in Kurgan-Teppe to gain access to the substantial Uzbek population there and in Kulob, where I made important new contacts just prior to my departure from Tajikistan.

Table 3.1 displays the list of interviewees. In order to keep their identities protected, I have only listed the location of the interview and ethno-regional group with which the interviewee self-identifies.

#	Location	Identity
1	Dushanbe	Tajikistani
2	Dushanbe	Northern Tajik
3	Dushanbe	Tajikistani
4	Dushanbe	Tajikistani
5	Dushanbe	Northern Tajik
6	Dushanbe	Northern Tajik
7	Khorog	Pamiri
8	Khorog	Pamiri
9	Khorog	Pamiri
10	Khorog	Pamiri
11	Khorog	Pamiri
12	Khorog	Pamiri
13	Khorog	Pamiri
14	Khorog	Pamiri
15	Dushanbe	Pamiri

16	Dushanbe/Khujand	Northern Tajik
17	Isfara	Northern Tajik
18	Khujand	Pamiri
19	Kholkhozobad	Kulobi
20	Kholkhozobad	Kulobi
21	Dushanbe/Murgab	Pamiri
22	Kurgan-Teppe	Uzbek
23	Dushanbe	Northern Tajik
24	Kurgan-Teppe	American
25	Dushanbe/Khorog/US	American
26	Kurgan-Teppe	?
27	Khorog	Pamiri
28	Ishkashim	?
29	Ishkashim	?
30	Vaakhan	Kulobi

Table 3.1. Interviewees/Respondents

Interview Process

Each respondent was asked to fill out a simple questionnaire that asked the questions listed below. Each question had a list of potential responses, including the option

of "other," where the respondent could fill in an answer that was unlisted in the selections provided. My assistant or I provided the questionnaire in Russian and Tajiki, with the respondent selecting the form to be completed.

1. In which branch of the military did you serve?
2. What was the highest rank to which you were promoted?
3. Which of the following best describes a group with which you identify?

This questionnaire acted as a simple assessment of the ethno-regional and military background of the respondent. After answering the questions, I assigned a number to the respondent (the only way to identify him/her after this point) and wrote the number on the questionnaire.

The next step in the interview process was oral. I asked initial leading questions about how the respondent joined the military (if he actually served), the conscription process/oblava, and military service as a form of national pride. Related follow-up questions pertained to reactions to the conscription process or how the respondent's feelings might change if this process were different. After sustaining as much discussion as possible regarding conscription, I asked questions and probes about basic conditions and ethno-regional identity in the military. I also asked specifically about the respondent's experiences with dedovshchina. Some respondents went into detail

about this subject, whereas others preferred not to answer or to avoid the question.

In some cases it was difficult to get the respondent to expand on any particular experiences; while these interviews were not hostile, they left me with the feeling that the respondent did not fully trust me. As my assistant once told me after one such interview, "they will think you are either an academic or a spy. But they may not trust you either way." It was usually obvious when a respondent trusted me and when he did not, but occasionally it was difficult to tell.

My assistant acted as a translator when we conducted interviews in Russian or Tajiki (which was most of them). I do not speak Tajiki and my Russian is not proficient enough to conduct a full interview. However, during Russian language interviews, I often understood responses and asked follow-up questions in Russian. This often helped interviews run more smoothly, even if I could not do it consistently.

Secondary Sources

The use of secondary sources is important to my research. I did not possess extensive background knowledge of Tajikistan before starting this project, and there are not many academics who specialize in Tajikistan (only two other American geographers!) so it was apparent to me that I would need to

obtain and read nearly every book and journal article I could identify to learn about this place. As my research focus narrowed, it became apparent how little I still knew and how little anybody seemed to know for sure; research in Tajikistan largely suffers from two issues, 1) lack of interest by academics, an issue almost surely in part related to 2) a lack of official access to documents, officials or controversial subjects - "a space of closure" (Natalie Koch 2013, 390).

I had hoped to obtain basic information on the military in Tajikistan at the national library, but this huge building is practically empty of written materials and stands more as a monument to spending excess in a poverty stricken state than a functioning entity (Parshin 2012). I considered the few Soviet-era academics who might be able to get me access to the archives, but this process also would have involved vetting me through layers of contacts, some of whom may be connected to the security services. Perhaps this fear was unfounded, but I did not want to take the risk - and I lacked a contact to introduce me.

The most important documents I obtained and have used while in Tajikistan were the publications by the Association of Young Lawyers, 'Amparo.' This group, which I discuss more thoroughly in Chapter V, works against state abuses of the conscription process through legal channels and public outreach. They have authored two annual reports on conscription and associated abuses for Sughd in 2010 (Samadova and Gulov 2011) and for the whole country

in 2011 (Samadova, Sobirov, and Rahimova 2012). These documents were full of important basic information on the conscription process and their responses to it, as well as documentation of the illegal detention of conscripts through oblava. Due to the organization's official disbandment (though it continues to operated de facto), there have not been any further such reports produced.

Media Analysis

Media coverage of military issues and conscription in particular in Tajikistan is relatively strong, which allowed me to focus on collecting data through local online news sources. Western media coverage of Tajikistan is largely done from a distance. There are occasional articles written about human-interest stories or trends that are affecting the country and/or region, but little of the day-to-day events that define life in Tajikistan. There are, however, two main local sources and an American source with local reporters on the ground in Tajikistan. These three main sources are, *Asia-Plus*, *Ozodagon* and *Radio Ozodi* ("Radio Liberty:" a division of *Radio Free Europe*). Most other online news outlets doing daily stories pick up and repost articles already posted on one of these sites. Each has its own character but all use local reporters.

Asia-Plus carries stories written in Tajiki, Russian and English; stories in English have typically been translated from

Russian via an online translator website. Not all articles posted in Tajiki or Russian are translated into English and it is not entirely clear how articles are chosen for translation. *Asia-Plus* covers all topics, from the mundane to the highly controversial, and, according to a local military expert (Respondent 16 2014), relatively objective. For my purposes, this news outlet provides good coverage of conscription, oblava, dedovshchina and the military in general. It regularly interviews military and government officials and appears to have reasonable access to them.

Ozodagon writes stories predominately in Tajiki but also Russian. In addition, the outlet publishes blog posts from regular contributors. *Ozodagon* is less objective than *Asia-Plus*, often publishing articles or blog posts taking stands or expressing viewpoints more controversial than the other two outlets. For example, it regularly publishes blog posts by Rustam Gulov, a member of Amparo, who writes about his own and his clients' experiences with oblava and the conscription system.

Articles on *Radio Ozodi* are posted in Tajiki, Russian and English; similar to *Asia-Plus*, not all articles are translated into English; Russian appears to be its primary language of publication. *Radio Ozodi* may be the best-funded news media site that reports on Tajikistan and Central Asia, but it is also owned and operated by the U.S. government's Broadcasting Board of Governors (formerly a division of the U.S. Information Agency)

(BBG 2015). While it is difficult to detect subjectivity in its reporting, articles about U.S. activities in Tajikistan are noticeably lacking.

There are a number of blog websites on Central Asia. The most prominent and well funded is *EurasiaNet.com*. Most posts on this site are written by few regular bloggers who follow Central Asia and Russia their interactions with other states. Posts typically are referenced with links to news stories from *RFE/RL*, *Asia-Plus* or other reputable outlets. *EurasiaNet* postings are valuable for providing deeper context to news stories and connection to related past articles and events. They also publish posts by guest bloggers, many of whom are academics.

Table 3.2 below shows the number of articles I reviewed, the subject category in which I placed the article, and the media source. I did not cite every article and not all contained valuable information, though most had a least one item worth noting.

Subject	Asia-Plus	Ozodagon	Radio Ozodi	EurasiaNet	Total
Conscription/Oblava	53	33	9	2	97
Conditions	6	0	9	1	16
Russian 201st MRD	16	0	14	11	41
RT Military (other)	30	1	13	2	46
Foreign Assistance	29	0	8	14	51

Table 3.2. Media Outlet Stories and Subject Matter

While the above media outlets make up the bulk of my references, it is important to note one that does not: *Central Asia Online*. The U.S. Department of Defense's Central Command (CENTCOM) sponsors this news media site "to highlight movement toward greater regional stability both through bilateral and multilateral cooperative arrangements." The site focuses on hindering "terrorist activity and support for terrorism" in Central Asia ("Central Asia Online" 2015). Its stories on these subjects are often alarmist and do not reflect actual events on the ground; this became apparent during my fieldwork and was echoed by colleagues performing research in Tajikistan at that time. As such, it is an important benchmark for Western efforts to label Central Asia as "dangerous," a topic I address in Chapter IV. Headlines and news stories posted on its pages should be viewed from this perspective.

News media stories are useful in two important ways. First, they provide up-to-date and reliable information written about local issues and for the local population. Their reporters are fellow Central Asians who are better positioned to ask locals about controversial subjects such as *oblava* and *dedovshchina*. They are able to travel quickly to the scenes of events for on-site interviews. They can better understand the problems that people in Tajikistan experience in ways that an outsider, such as myself, cannot (at least without spending an extended period in a particular area getting to know the subjects involved in such events).

Second, the stories they choose to cover and the amount of coverage given to them are indirect indicators of popular trends and concerns. That a significant amount of news coverage is devoted to oblava and, to a lesser degree, dedovshchina, speaks to the importance average Tajikistanis place on these matters. However, this does not necessarily mean that the lack of coverage of a subject - for example ethno-regional group identity among government leaders or within the context of military service - does not matter to the population at large. This issue is more controversial in the eyes of the Rakhmon regime, which view of freedom of the press with suspicion. If *Asia-Plus* published an article about the concentration of Kulobis in high positions within the national government, this action would likely elicit a response from the regime.

Participant Observation

I performed participant observation on military bases on three occasions; each at a border guard facility. The first was along the Panj River in GBAO (of which the visit mentioned at the beginning of this chapter is a part), during which I visited two *zastavii* (Russian: outposts) and one *otriad* (main base). This experience was particularly valuable because I was able to walk around and photograph a small *zastava* and see its living conditions first hand. I also interviewed an enlisted border guard and two officers.

The second trip was to a border guard otriad and one of its zastavii along the Panj River in Khatlon Oblast near Moskovskii (south of Kulob). I went on this trip with an American military contractor friend of mine who was on a business trip to these facilities. The zastava we visited was built with U.S. assistance funds and the otriad (and its subordinate zastavii) were equipped with U.S. provided radio equipment and small all-terrain vehicles. Once again, I was able to see on-site living conditions, but in this case there were two important differences. First, the officers of the district gave me (in actuality, my friend) a full tour of a new U.S.-funded facility that stands in contrast to those I visited in GBAO, which appeared to be constructed in the Soviet era. It was incredibly interesting to watch and experience the interactions between this American (inactive) military officer and RT officers during discussions pertaining to the care and use of U.S. supplied equipment at the otriad. Similarly, the RT officers at the zastava we visited nearby appeared uncomfortable with our presence. However, I could not comment on precisely why they reacted this way, whether it was due to indifference, perception of American arrogance, unhappiness with the pomp and circumstance of an outside visitor, or fear that we would/could report them for poor behavior or facility upkeep.

My last on-base experience was shorter in length. Not long before I departed the country, I visited a border guard base in Dushanbe that serves as a headquarters of sorts. This base was

the central hub for training RT military and other government personnel on the communications equipment provided by the American contracting firm that took me on my previous trip to Moskovskii. In this case, I did not conduct any interviews, but I did get the opportunity to watch RT border guards going through basic marching training. While this simple daily practice may seem small, in reality the lack of discipline among RT soldiers and a comment by a contractor who is a veteran that the soldiering skills of the border guards was akin to "playacting" were revealing (see Chapter VI)

In many aspects of my research, my role as an American outsider acted as a barrier. Locals quickly recognized me as an outsider and as a result many may not have trusted me. Some might have been afraid to meet with me for fear of getting into trouble with the GKNB. My Tajik language skills are rudimentary at best. But in the case of access to these two military bases, being an American presented a relatively unique opportunity in this autocratic state. The performance of conscripts in action is not something I expected to experience.

Conclusion

Conducting critical militarism research in Tajikistan is, to my knowledge, unlike any previous work done in the name of this sub-discipline. The differences between Western, Anglophone professional militaries and the post-Soviet mode are striking. So

too, is the purpose for these militaries' existence; the U.S. and U.K. engage in actions worldwide, while Tajikistan is formulated for border defense and internal threat suppression. However, it is differences in governance and civil society that create the biggest divides. Tajikistan's autocratic government stands in stark contrast to the liberal democracies that have been the object of attention by critical geographers thus far. And as noted above, fieldwork on militarism in Tajikistan is rife with barriers, challenges and even threats to personal safety that are not common in more liberal-democratic settings.

The ever present belief (if not reality) that the GKNB was watching, listening, and following Westerners with the power to inhibit research, endanger participants, confiscate data, or revoke visas at any time was a constant concern. Though I had little evidence that I was being watched or that my participants were in danger, I had to acknowledge that I would always need to act as if this was the case. This understanding actively shaped my methodological approach and treatment of both my assistant(s) and research participants.

My research methods consisted primarily of semi-structured interviews and news media reports; I also used participant observation as a secondary method, mostly to confirm material learned from the former two methods regarding conditions within the military. While these methods were effective, they also represented the limited choices I believed to be open to me in

Tajikistan's autocratic political environment and the limited public and archival information available in the country.

My identity as an American primarily positioned me as an outsider and presented challenges to working with locals regarding the sensitive topic of military service in Tajikistan. However, it also presented the opportunity to connect with other Americans to gain access to RT military installations in ways even most local citizens could not. Similarly, access by foreign (or even domestic) researchers to military bases in many parts of the world - especially autocratic in states - is rare indeed.

In short, the difficulties of this research were considerable: an autocratic government largely closed to access, a sensitive political topic, the existence and threat of the GKNB to researchers and participants, and the lack of public data availability. Still, the methods employed allowed me to deepen my understanding of militarism and national sentiments in Tajikistan. This is especially true when these methods were complemented with published research on Russian/post-Soviet military issues, which have strong parallels and empirical frameworks. The data presented in the following chapters represent the success of these methods and offers useful insights.

CHAPTER IV

GEPOLITICAL IMAGINATIONS OF TAJIKISTAN

In order to understand the current geopolitics of Tajikistan both within Central Asia and more globally, it is imperative to appreciate its colonial legacy. Its suzerains include a number of past empires, most recently the Russian Tsarist Empire and the USSR that followed it. Chapter II examines the historical context of the Soviet legacy regarding its current boundary arrangement, its administration of the Tajik SSR, and the Soviet system's shaping of its cultural, political and economic systems. Russification policies by the Soviet government resulted in the spread of the Russian language and culture to the Tajik Republic (Maps 2.1 and 2.2) and would contribute to the subsequent migration of Russians to Tajikistan and Tajiks to Russia. Tajikistan was situated on the periphery of the Soviet Union. However, the appearance of regional non-state actors associated with the ongoing conflicts in Afghanistan, the reemergence of Russian power in Central Asia, and the increase of Chinese interest to its west has placed Tajikistan in a more central role of recent global geopolitical narratives.

Linking the RT's conscription practices to bigger geopolitical issues within the region provides a context for understanding not only the state's rationale for its policies, but also for the aid delivered to its security forces by the United States and Russia. In this chapter I focus on a pair of

contemporary geopolitical issues involving Tajikistan that help to define its relationships with these two states. First, I dissect the grand narrative views of Eurasian geopolitics and Tajikistan's role within them, with particular attention to those of the post-9/11 period. These narratives place Tajikistan within a 'dangerous' space in need of attention from Western security institutions that all too often go unchallenged in popular and policy-oriented media, and, in turn, influence the RT's policies on its national military service. Understanding the contemporary geopolitical framework contextualizes perceived threats to the RT regime, particularly those arising from Uzbekistan and Afghanistan.

The second geopolitical issue I examine is the structure and role of the migrant economy in which workers from Tajikistan travel to (predominantly) Russia to work in formal and informal economies; the remittances they send home have accounted for substantial portions of Tajikistan's GNP in the last decade. For its part, Russia not only consumes this labor but also uses the visa status of migrant workers as leverage over the RT government to ensure favorable interactions regarding its military presence there and political support on both the regional and world stages. This section provides a context for understanding the conscription process and RT citizens' response to it. I argue the migrant economy is part of a positive feedback loop that increases RT citizens desire to travel to Russia for profitable work while simultaneously (for military aged males) avoiding

military conscription. Migration generates income for families living in Tajikistan's stagnant economy, while the state continues to rely on Russia for its external (if not internal) security through the 201st base. The reliance on Russia for security allows the Rakhmon regime to invest lightly in its own defense and avoid improving the living conditions for its military personnel. This generates negative views of national military service and citizens' attempts to avoid that service, including the option of labor migration to Russia, thereby completing the loop.

Eurasian Grand Narratives

The "Great Game" of geopolitical competition between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire for hegemony over Central Asia (W. Rowe 2010; O'Hara, Heffernan, and Endfield 2005; Hooson 2005; Akiner 2011) gave the territory encompassing Tajikistan a strategic regional significance. Similarly, Mackinder's (1904) and Spykman's (1944) metageographic visions of territorial world hegemony place Tajikistan along a frontier of contention. As such, early geopolitical discourse frames it within a 'dangerous' expanse of territory - at least in the path of conflict between great powers striving for global hegemony. Mackinder's "Heartland" centered on Western Russia and Eastern Europe, and his adjacent "Inner Crescent," contained contemporary Tajikistan. Similarly, Spkyman situated Tajikistan's territory within a

strategic "Rimland" of territories that surrounded much of the USSR. In either case, Tajikistan, covered with high mountains and occupying a pivotal position between the Russian sphere of influence and maritime South Asia, stands more as a stepping-stone to be controlled rather than a territory strategically valuable for its internal resources. Hence, Tajikistan has much in common historically with Afghanistan in a geopolitical sense; in many respects it resembles a buffer state.

The Soviet structure, however, provided a layer of social cohesiveness that its southern neighbor lacked, centered as it was on Moscow's political control and economic interdependence with other Soviet republics. In the early days of the Soviet Union, this political control was not initially established. The violence of the Russian Civil War, which ended in 1922, continued in Central Asia through the Basmachi movement. Turkic and Persian guerillas continued an insurgency that lasted into the early 1930s before it was considered defeated in full. This was in no small part due to the skillful use of the mountainous terrain of what is today Tajikistan. While the mountains held marginal value in terms of natural resources in these early days of the Soviet Union, they were clearly of great value to any potential resistance to the Soviet center and were thus deemed to be worthy of direct administration. The lasting effect of this history was to contribute to the Western perception of this space as "wild" and prone to instability.

As the Soviet experiment came to a close, Tajikistan opened to the outside world. It became subject to narratives problematizing a post-Cold War arrangement, even if these narratives were a repackaging of the classic views of global hegemony. Huntington's (Huntington 1996) conceptualization of a world divided into "civilizations" of loose culture traits such as religion (Orthodox/Muslim/Hindu), language (Latin America) or race (Africa) located Tajikistan once again in a transition zone prone to contention between hegemonic powers. For Huntington, the edges of his Muslim civilization are rife with conflict ("Islam's bloody borders"); he refers to the Tajik civil war (1992-97) as a "fault line war" that is representative of such conflicts (ibid, 253-254). His identification of the civil war in this manner is flawed, however. As discussed in Chapter II, the origins of the civil war are complex, and while notions of ethnic nationalism and Islam played a role, the causes are better understood through the Soviet system, its favoritism of certain regional groups over others, and the collapse of the political economy when Moscow's subsidies disappeared upon independence (Akiner 2001; Matveeva 2009; Bleuer n.d.). The characterization of the civil war as a fight between the Muslim world and more secular (or, by his nomenclature, even Orthodox) civilizations is simplistic at best and outright false at worst.

Regional narratives focusing on Central Asia - especially from the policy perspective - also place Tajikistan in a locus of conflict and instability. Heathershaw and Megoran note "the idea

that Central Asia presented an enduring danger to Moscow was repeated in dominant western literatures on the region during the Cold War" (2011, 591). Civil wars in Afghanistan and Tajikistan contributed to Western views of the surrounding region as fundamentally unstable and violent. For Heathershaw and Megoran, the so-called 'war on terror' has dictated international understandings of "the Asianess of Central Asia," and "has not precluded orientalist representations of Central Asia in popular culture, policy formulation and practice, and even certain 'policy-relevant' academic circles" (Megoran and Heathershaw 2011, 598).

If orientalism (Said 1978) continues to influence Western policies in Central Asia, it not only frames the region within a discourse of danger, but also enables it to be "disregarded with indifference" (Megoran and Heathershaw 2011, 601). Such imaginative geographies shape actions in ways that limit long-term diplomatic investment and establish and reaffirm simplistic views of the region's needs, particularly those involving the security sector. The diplomacy associated with the interests of foreign actors plays easily into the hands of Central Asian autocrats seeking assistance for their security services, especially those geared toward internal rather than external threats. But whatever danger may be present, it is neither inherent nor solely internally sourced; foreign powers have played an important role in Central Asia's political and social

development, in many ways shaping much of the 'danger' that supposedly characterizes the region.

Gregory's analysis of political violence in Afghanistan is relevant here. He convincingly contends that this violence is connected not only to the agency of those directly involved but also to the manipulations of foreign powers: Russia, the U.K. and the U.S. in particular (Gregory 2004). He chronicles Afghanistan's entry into the nation-state system, emphasizing the role of Moscow and London in its border delimitation, and the subsidization of its government by these two powers. Further, the Soviet invasion in 1979 was countered by a proxy war perpetrated by the U.S and Pakistan, among others. The civil war that followed the Soviet withdrawal continued to involve outside stakeholders, with Russia and Iran supporting one side and Pakistan the other. 9/11 and "Operation Enduring Freedom" marked the return of U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan, and Gregory notes the parallels of the first three years of U.S military involvement running with the previous colonial periods of Russian and British suzerainty. Outsider influence in Tajikistan has been almost solely Russian and, as noted previously, has been a contributing factor in past political violence, which in turn has heightened perceptions of insecurity. Discourses of "danger" encompassing Tajikistan (and Central Asia generally) should be evaluated within the context of extensive historical foreign involvement that serves as both a cause of, and solution to, this narrative of instability.

The violence in Tajikistan led Russia to intervene in the civil war to contain it while simultaneously securing its former colonial frontier with a violent and fractured Afghanistan. This action was legitimized by Russian President Boris Yeltsin's statement "that the Tajik border was "effectively Russia's" (Erlanger 1993), a clear description of Russian intentions. Russian (and Uzbek) assistance to the pro-government forces in Tajikistan enabled the defeat of the opposition in the civil war and helped to foment an indefinite basing of Russian military units in the territory, particularly along the border with Afghanistan. In so doing, Russia did, in a military sense, reintegrate Tajikistan--this time, however, under different auspices: as a rentier of territory for foreign military forces (Ostrowski 2011). Russia's 201st MRD and other units are based in Tajikistan, and the two states have recently signed long-term agreement to keep them there until 2042 (Najibullah 2011).

New Grand Narratives

Under the narrative of the Global War on Terror (GWOT) that refocused military and diplomatic attention toward combating al Qaeda and related Islamic terrorist networks, another wave of grand geopolitical visions problematized territories believed to be prone to instability and violence. Journalist Robert Kaplan (Kaplan 2009; Kaplan 2012) embraces the work of Victorian geographer Halford Mackinder and a slew of other old-school

geopoliticians in his so-called "Revenge of Geography." Kaplan considers the whole of Eurasia a "shatter zone" rife with danger and threats to the Western world. Referencing Bracken's (1999) view of an "unbroken belt of countries," "from Israel to North Korea, which are developing ballistic missiles and destructive arsenals" (Kaplan 2009, 101), Kaplan suggests that an arms race engulfs the majority of Eurasia's states, including Central Asia. This statement is unwarranted; when one considers that Kazakhstan actually gave up its nuclear weapons shortly after independence, and other Central Asian republics neither had WMDs nor sought to acquire them, where is the arms race?. He further proclaims that demographic growth will create a "new map of Eurasia - tighter, more integrated, and more crowded," which "will even be less stable than Mackinder thought", with a "series of inner and outer cores that are fused together through mass politics and shared paranoia" (ibid, 102). What exactly drives this paranoia is unclear, though Kaplan seems to think that increased population growth will inevitably lead to increased civilizational proximity and thus conflict as described by Huntington. Kaplan has advised members of the Department of Defense as a member of its Defense Policy Board and served as an analyst for the subscription-based geopolitical think-tank Stratfor, which is read widely in American and international foreign policy and defense circles. As such, his discursive construction of Central Asia has the potential to influence governmental decision makers' views of the region. As such, unpacking his language is important.

Similarly Barnett (2004), who advises defense and foreign policy decision makers, suggests that the world is effectively divided between "Core" and "Gap" states—in the process directing attention away from power relations within the state system and instead "render(ing) the world in a cartography of safety and danger" (Dalby 2007b, 296). With the legacy of the civil war and substantial narcotics smuggling over the porous border with Afghanistan, Tajikistan is clearly located in the Gap of Barnett's cartography—an area understood to be a danger zone.

While the problems of Central Asia are not entirely unique, Barnett, like Huntington (1996) and Kaplan (2012; 2009), sees these and other regional zones of instability as examples of a greater spatial pattern. Dalby described this pattern as a "re-mapping of the geostrategic vision (that) involves both a reduction of regional concerns in favor of a global understanding of potential conflict and a re-mapping of the whole planet as a potential battlefield, taking the global war on terror to its logical geographical conclusion" (Dalby 2007a, 591). Thus, a delineation of the Core and Gap simultaneously represents a definition of zones of "safety and danger." A more profound understanding of the cultural framing contributing to the acceptance of this thesis within foreign policy circles and the public at large is crucial if we are to unveil the issues that surround its foundation. Barnett's further contribution to this narrative is the active pursuit of the integration of these Gap

zones into the Core, creating long-term peace through geo-economic connections backed by geopolitical force, if necessary.

Orientalism Revisited

Barnett's concept of forced integration represents a deeper narrative that poses questions about who integrates and who is to be integrated. Contending that threats emanating from the Gap need to be pacified by force ignores the histories of colonial empires and support of pro-Western autocrats, among other external influences, and eases the development of binary descriptions of the world's spaces. Gregory presents this viewpoint of spaces in need of civilizing as a form of patriarchal, benevolent ethnocentrism conceptually connected to the recent geopolitical past through his title.

These are constructions that fold distance into difference through a series of spatializations. They work, Said argued, by multiplying partitions and enclosures that serve to demarcate "the same" from "the other" at once constructing and calibrating a gap between the two by "designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'theirs.'" "Their" space is often seen as the inverse of "our" space: a sort of negative, in the photographic sense that "they" might "develop" into something like "us," but also the site of absence, because "they" are seen somehow to lack the positive tonalities that supposedly distinguish "us" (Gregory 2004, 17; Said 1978, 54).

Gregory's discussion of the "other," viewed as a state that is alterable through the application of direct political and/or military action, poignantly places the matter broadly within

Western culture. In his analysis, this culture remains coupled to its colonial past, leaving it to process world events and foreign spaces through the binary lens of the Other by its proponents. Development of the world into globalized spaces connected to the Core is seen as widely desired and even inevitable among developers and the developed alike. To become liberally democratic (connected and integrated) is to progress. To progress is inherently, in Barnett's view, to become peaceful. Therefore, further warfare prosecuted by Core states is to be supported in the cases where the integration of unstable Gap states is desirable by Western power brokers. Thus, any resistance emanating from within the Gap to the 'inevitable' expansion of Friedman's globalized 'flat world' (Friedman 2005) must be addressed through coercion should consent fail; the implication is that integration may take the form of legitimized military violence. Integration challenges the very notion of sovereignty by making connection to the capitalist global economy a requirement for its recognition by Core states.

The concept of 'integration' strongly parallels President Bush's declaration that "either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (United States et al. 2001). Indeed, after this most basic binary statement, U.S. government rhetoric and policy regarding Tajikistan quickly adapted to resemble it. In doing so, the U.S. redefined its relationship with the former Soviet republic. Bialasiewicz, et.al. see this *proactive* geopolitical

framework as a sea change from previous imaginary geographies of U.S. foreign policy.

(W)e detect in recent strategic performances a different articulation of America's relationship to the world. Signified by the notion of integration we identify elements in the formation of a new imaginative geography, which enables the U.S. to draw countries into its spheres of influence and control (Bialasiewicz et al. 2007, 409).

A complementary conceptualization of these spheres of influence and inclusion within, or exclusion from, their imaginary geographies can be found in the urban geography literature. Yiftachel's discussion of safe and dangerous urban spaces provides a useful framework for unpacking U.S. interventionist visions. Yiftachel "describes 'gray spaces' as 'those positioned between the "whiteness" of legality/approval/safety, and the "blackness" of eviction/destruction/death.'" (Yiftachel) notes that these spaces are tolerated and managed but only 'while being encaged within discourses of "contamination", "criminality", and "public danger" to the desired "order of things" (A. Roy 2011, 235; Yiftachel 2009, 88-89). There are, of course, differences with the spaces that define cities, but Yiftachel's concept is applicable to geopolitical discourses of danger in Central Asia and Tajikistan in particular. Barnett's "Core" and "Gap" could easily be described in this manner, with the 'gray space' of Tajikistan adjacent to the 'blackness' of Afghanistan, while both reside within the "Gap." While Barnett sees integration as an objective for both states, the respective methods to accomplish this end

would seem to differ: diplomacy and military assistance for Tajikistan and direct military action for Afghanistan. Indeed, American policy toward Tajikistan in the post-9/11 era has strongly resembled Barnett's vision and is reflected in the significant levels of security-sector assistance to the republic. I address this assistance in more detail in Chapter VI.

Geo-economic Contradictions

I have noted above the conceptual structure of militarized integration of Tajikistan -- located in Barnett's Gap -- into the core. But for Barnett, successful integration requires economic integration; indeed his main point is that connection to the core through the embrace of globalized capitalism will bring peace to the state in question and increasingly to the world as a whole. There are a number of problems with this viewpoint that can be exposed through an analysis of Tajikistan's economic structure and geopolitical environment. The analysis of discourse surrounding globalized integration, perhaps best referred to as 'critical geo-economics,' provides an appropriate conceptual framework to dissect the underlying spatial structures involved. Neoliberal journalist Thomas Friedman (1999; 1999; 2005) not only sees the spatial spread of globalization as inevitable, but also as something to be encouraged, even through the use of military force -- his "hidden fist of capitalism" (Friedman 1999b, 373). According to his framing, the "fist" responsible for keeping "the

world safe for Silicon Valley's technologies is called the United States Army, Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps" (Friedman 1999a, 11). By legitimizing the wedding of globalized capital and raw military power, Friedman embraces the conduct of war for economic gain as beneficial for all; the world economy needs transactions, and U.S. military power is a suitable enabler. While perhaps not berthing Barnett's vision of integration directly, Friedman undoubtedly provided some of the genetic material.

A number of geographers (Roberts, Secor, and Sparke 2003; Dalby 2007a; Sparke 2007) have commented critically on the integration concept in the development of world security. For these authors, the globalized order promised by integration is framed as a benefit to all those connected to it. Roberts et.al. note that these narratives place "globalization as the force that will lift the whole world out of poverty as more and more communities are integrated into the capitalist global economy" (Roberts, Secor, and Sparke 2003). Sparke draws attention to the neoliberal viewpoint that embraces the term 'flat' as a euphemism for the (supposed) equality that capital markets provide:

(T)his flat world vision is all about economic competition trumping military competition, a world where global free-market integration is promoted as the solution to all distress and disgruntlement, and thus a world where economic developments such as outsourcing are offered as antidotes to both terrorism and new social movements at the very same time (Sparke 2007, 344; with quotes from Friedman 2005; Spivak 2004, 91).

Barnett sees (coerced) market expansion as a vehicle for creating violence-free spaces, presumably as connection leads to rising incomes. Indeed, this future vision parallels capitalism's search for expansion; merely containing the negative 'exports' of the Gap from entering the Core is insufficient. For Barnett, "(i)t is not enough for the Core to survive. It must grow" (Barnett 2004, 56). When growth stagnates in the center, new markets (i.e. populations and territories) must be found and secured to enable the economic organism to swell.

However, Barnett posits that democratic governance and globalized capitalism change the accepted structure of the status quo, which he refers to as a "rule set" (Barnett 2004, 9-10). For Barnett, these rules must be introduced to the states within the Gap. Currently, he sees different rule sets in play; falling, not surprisingly, on either side of the Core/Gap boundary. Roberts, Secor and Sparke point out that, for Barnett, "the Core and the Gap are two 'distinct venues' in which the U.S. is bound to act according to entirely different rules" (Roberts, Secor, and Sparke 2003, 893; Barnett 2002a; Barnett 2002b).

Agamben's explanation of the sovereign state of exception describes the juridical process by which national law is suspended by the state (typically) in order to handle a national emergency (Agamben and Heller-Roazen 1998; Agamben 2005). The rendering of the earth into a binary cartography representing "safety" and "danger" or "civilized zones" and "wild zones"

enables the identification of explicit areas (the Gap) where the state of exception is in play. In these spaces, Barnett allows for a different rule set to be employed: one that subverts the juridical order of the constituting power (i.e. U.S.) in order to establish the same legal framework in spaces framed as a threat to the civilized world. In short, states must break the rules in faraway lands in order to recreate them there for their benefit.

By changing the rule set under which states and populations operate to one deemed acceptable in the Core, Barnett contends that the people of the Gap will benefit from the structure of neoliberalism and connection to global markets and thus the violence originating within its spaces will diminish. In fact, he suggests that "...if we do not all live under the same basic rule set, there will always be a global hierarchy by which some rule and others are ruled. *Until there are equal rules, we are not all equal*" (Barnett 2004, 54). This is a strange statement given the immense amount of research dissecting the various hierarchies of economic, political, and cultural power found in the states of the West. If such power is unevenly distributed over space within the Core, it is unclear how integration can suddenly create a level system based on equality within the Gap. Surely capitalism is not expected to fulfill this task. Its record of inequitable distribution of wealth and opportunity is well documented; yet connection to the market is a fundamental asset of Barnett's plan for integration. Indeed, the link to (in)equality is also one that can be connected to violence.

Flint and Radil link the expansion of capital markets into the Gap to violent conflict. They contend that connection to the global economy as a solution to political violence may also be flawed.

To the long-term processes of colonialism and state building can be added the permanent (world-systems theory would say "necessary") disparities of wealth of the capitalist world-economy, and the social tensions that result from the politics of trying to achieve economic success, or "development," within the world-economy's structural constraints (Flint 2009, 163).

This quote not only draws attention to the unequal nature of capitalism's spatial and hierarchical distribution of opportunity and wealth, but also suggests that the resulting disparities constitute the potential for violent conflict in the semi-periphery, especially sections of Barnett's Gap. Their research further proposes, "that increases in development might actually lead to an increase in terrorism" (Flint 2009, 162). Flint and Radil reference Bergesen and Lizardo, who see terrorism (and perhaps related forms of political violence) as a facet of the global capitalist economy; the semi-periphery of world systems theory offers the "most intense social struggles" that can be linked to this violence (Flint 2009, 157; Bergesen and Lizardo 2004). The semi-periphery is often a zone where resistance from traditional elements of society is present. Flint and Radil seem to suggest that Barnett's proposed solution to the violence in "untamed areas" may actually be part of the problem. Linkage to the global economy brings globalization and traditional cultures

into direct and often-opposing contact, leading to forms of resistance from the latter that culminate in political violence. Anecdotal evidence suggests that Central Asians fighting for the Islamic State in the Middle East were primarily recruited while living in Russia as labor migrants and not from their home regions (Bleuer 2014).

The above discussion of geo-economics is relevant to discussions of the RT military and the production of national sentiments. Tajikistan's role in the global economy is quite limited. It produces aluminum at the TALCO plant in Tursonzoda, a facility that changed hands a number of times during and since the civil war, but now is firmly in the hands of the state (and likely, Rakhmon's associates). The cotton production that was so important to the Soviet economy remains, though it offers little to the contemporary economy in real terms. Mineral resource potential is considerable, but requires foreign technical investment and appropriate transportation networks to be viable. For a landlocked state with little water transportation options and problematic border transits on nearly all its frontiers, the challenges are momentous and prevent much direct foreign investment. Its main export is migrant labor bound primarily for Russia—a labor flow that has significant geopolitical considerations, both domestically and in foreign affairs. By unpacking the role of the migrant economy in shaping Tajikistan's geo-economic situation and the challenges it presents to the republic's geopolitical framework, I show the integrated nature

of its relationship with the Russian Federation that serves to reproduce the lack of investment in, and popular disdain of, its national military.

The Migrant Economy

The structure of Tajikistan's migrant economy is imperative to understanding its geopolitical/geo-economic situation and its connection to militarization and nationalism. The migrant economy is profoundly important to both Tajikistan and Russia; the former needs the remittances that are sent home to family members from migrant workers, while the latter relies on foreign labor to perform work that the shrinking Russian population will not do (Nidoev 2015). In order to understand the depth of Tajikistan's client-like geopolitical relationship with Russia, it is important to examine its parameters and link two of its crucial aspects: 1) the use of migrant labor visa policies to coerce the Rakhmon regime to submit to Russia's foreign policy goals (in particular the basing rights of the 201st MRD in Tajikistan) and 2) the choice of migrant work to escape living conditions at home, including the avoidance of national military service. Further, the experiences of migrant workers in Russia may contribute to their vulnerability to recruitment by extremists in ways that do not exist at home. Bleuer (2014) aptly notes that Central Asians in Russia are "(d)etached from the control and moderation of family, village, local mosque, society and

government - and experiencing discrimination." Making them "more receptive to recruitment into radical extremist groups." Thus, the geopolitics of this migrant economy reach beyond Central Asia, drawing further discursive attention to Tajikistan and other republics as spaces of danger, even if inaccurately.

As of March 2014, 1,033,914 RT citizens were living in Russia (FIDH, fms.gov.ru), most as migrant workers. The most recent statistics (2012) of migrant remittances as a percentage of Tajikistan's GNP place the number between 43.3% (Kozhevnikov 2013) and 53.6% (Mahapatra 2014), with most estimates citing about 50%. Whatever the precise figure, it is clear that this sector plays an important role in Tajikistan's economy. The relationship is also unbalanced in Russia's favor; it has used this advantage to secure favorable financial conditions (nearly cost-free) for the basing of the 201st MRD in Tajikistan. The new lease was signed October 1, 2013, replacing the old lease that was due to expire January 1, 2014 (RFE/RL's Tajik Service 2013). The year-long negotiations involved two main concerns: duty-free imports of Russian oil products and better terms for migrant workers from Tajikistan in Russia (Kozhevnikov 2013).

Some speculated that the Rakhmon regime may have attempted to secure a cash deal up to \$300 million per year from Russia for the basing rights (Kucera 2013c), but this was unacceptable to Russia. In the period leading up to the ratification of the basing treaty the RT attempted to renegotiate the deal (which was

agreed to by both Putin and Rakhmon on the Russian president's visit to Tajikistan in October of 2012) to include these cash payments, among other items. At this time, Russian politicians and institutions began to threaten the status of migrants from Tajikistan working in Russia, a not-so-subtle signal that the demand for cash payments and the associated delays to ratification were not acceptable. These actions help to form what Eurasia.net blogger David Trilling refers to as "a familiar pattern" in this relationship: "Moscow doesn't get what it wants, so it starts threatening Tajik migrants" (Trilling 2013). Trilling further notes a 2011 case in which Russian pilots were arrested by the RT on dubious charges, to which Russia responded by deporting Tajik migrants--an action that resulted in the immediate release of the pilots. Russia's use of the status of migrant visas places a powerful hold on the Rakhmon regime; the RT government simply cannot afford to alienate Moscow on most matters relating to foreign affairs. I will further examine the direct influence of Russian military presence on national sentiments in terms of the 201st MRD base in Chapter VI; here it is important to understand the geo-economic relationship between Tajikistan and Russia and how it shapes the geopolitics of the two states.

The importance of the migrant economy to Tajikistan cannot be overstated. The concept of integration into the world economy is an important aspect of Barnett's vision and recent Western and Russian foreign policy discourse on Central Asia has mirrored

this concept. Yet for Tajikistan, it is hard to imagine a different outcome. With few natural resources, a relatively impoverished and rapidly growing population, and mountainous terrain that inhibits transportation, Tajikistan has little to offer the global economy. Further, political corruption in Tajikistan is a serious barrier to foreign investment. These conditions present narrow options for Tajikistan; thus, like many peripheral states, labor migration is a crucial component of its economy. Considering the unequal distribution of wealth and the networks of capital flows in the world system, for Tajikistan integration into the global economy currently translates into the provision of labor migrants and little else.

The migrant economy is also a factor in the conscription process, particularly when considering the practice of *oblava*. This practice, along with conditions within the RT military, creates an incentive for recruitment-aged males to choose to migrate to Russia for work. Chapter V addresses the individual motivations of males in Tajikistan regarding the choices surrounding military service; this section focuses on describing the realities of migrant work in order to contextualize those decisions. From an economic standpoint, the choice is an easy one; for most average men of military age, there is simply more money to be made in Russia than staying at home. Understanding this bigger picture allows us to compare it to other options found at home in Tajikistan.

Even with the economic benefits, the migrant experience is rarely pleasant. Central Asian migrants are subject to racism, extortion and physical attacks (Nidoev 2015; Ganjova 2013; C. A. Fitzpatrick 2009). Much of this persecution is actively perpetrated by ethnic Slavs on behalf of the state or is tacitly accepted by it. Statements by Moscow's mayor Sergei Sobyenin and President Putin broadly exhibited disdain for these migrants in response to the circulation of video footage showing migrant workers beaten by plain-clothed men while police prevented bystanders from interfering (Sadykov 2013). My research shows that the lives of many military-aged males from Tajikistan are subject to physical and mental abuse, whether at home during military recruitment as part of *oblava* or during the performance of *dedovshchina* during military service, or by xenophobes while working in Russia. However, comparing the hardships experienced in both labor migration and military service, the potential financial benefit of the latter is significant. Additionally, once conscripted, *dedovshchina* is difficult to avoid as part of the military experience. Attacks on labor migrants may happen at any time or place, but not all migrants experience them. Similarly, young males may or may not be conscripted or experience *oblava*; neither of the latter two experiences place males under the direct control of their abusers, nor is the abuse ritualized as is the case with *dedovshchina*.

Migrant work has a few advantages over military service, particularly financial and the absence of *dedovshchina*. However,

instead of the hazing of conscripts, Central Asian migrants face real fears in Russia: racist attacks, the threat of deportation, and other forms of persecution, the choice to migrate may be a difficult one, but at least 100,000 military-aged males from Tajikistan are currently in Russia. As I show in Chapter V, many do so to avoid military service--challenging notions of it as an institution for national integration.

The migrant economy poses questions about the relationship between geo-economics and geopolitics in Tajikistan. Specifically, integration, as described through Western grand narratives (see Barnett), U.S. Department of State's 'New Silk Road' initiative or through Russia's attempt at trade bloc through the Eurasian Economic Union (Parshin 2015; *The Economist* 2015), are likely to solidify the status quo, rather than offer new opportunities. Central Asian migrants may work in Russia or other locations, but other forms of integration into the world economy (and the peace supposedly associated with this connection) appear far-fetched, and there seems to be little obvious potential for future opportunities. Tajikistan's geo-economic realities in turn limit its geopolitical choices, leaving it largely vulnerable to, if not heavily dependent on, foreign powers for its economic and political survival.

Radical Islam

Much of the geopolitical discourse of 'danger' focuses on presence and growth of 'radical Islam.' Indeed, for U.S. funded outlets such as *Central Asia Online* it seems to be the primary subject of its media coverage. Authors on Central Asia include the term (or related ones) in their titles, even if the subject is not proportionally represented in the text (see Rashid 2002; Jonson 2006; Olimova 1999; Mcglinchey 2011; Zelkina 1999; Naumkin 2005). Further, as Heathershaw and Montgomery (2014) show, reputable sources commonly and repeatedly focus attention on the dangers of Islamic extremism, even though evidence for such discourse is strongly lacking. Much of this discourse is related to the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan (Rashid 2001), the role of the IRP in the Tajik Civil War, and the subsequent emergence of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in the late 1990s. However, it is imperative to understand that the appeal of these forms of Islam is quite limited in Tajikistan, even as the population's exposure to the rest of the Muslim world grows in the post-Soviet period.

The story of the Taliban is well documented and ongoing. Strongly linked to Pashtun ethnicity, southern Afghanistan, and Pakistan's concerns there, it has shown little interest or capability in moving north into Tajikistan. Its form of Islam (Wahhabism) has its origins in Pakistani madrassas funded by Saudi Arabia during the Soviet-Afghan War. Wahhabism conflicts

with many aspects of Islam in Central Asia (Khalid 2007), making penetration into Tajikistan difficult. The IRP has origins in the former Soviet Union, though it experienced only a short period of militancy. In the simplest terms, the IRP has marginal influence in Tajikistan and has shown little interest in violence since the end of the Civil War. There is no denying that it is strongly repressed by the Rakhmon regime, and those seeking to investigate its societal role place themselves in danger from the RT security services (*Asia-Plus* 2014d). But it remains difficult to envision it as an existential threat to the RT.

The Islam Movement of Uzbekistan is an offshoot of IRP hardliners who did not sign the peace agreement in 1997 and targeted the Karimov regime in Uzbekistan, often using the mountains of Tajikistan as a base for their attacks. After conducting a few bombings in Uzbekistan, the organization migrated to Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban against the Northern Alliance and its new Western allies (Rashid 2002; Lewis 2008). By most accounts it was largely destroyed as a fighting force in the early part of the U.S.' Operation Enduring Freedom, though the Karimov regime maintains its survival in its rhetoric; its (perceived) existence conveniently serves to legitimate Uzbekistan's repression of its population, particularly in the Ferghana Valley. Lewis aptly notes that its importance to Karimov is such that "(i)f the IMU had never existed, the Uzbek government would have had to invent it" (2008, 191). Recent evidence shows that it still exists, though it

operates outside of Central Asia (in Afghanistan and Pakistan) and is unpopular among Central Asians (Heathershaw and Montgomery 2014; Bleuer 2014). Thus, it is unconvincing to consider the contemporary IRP or IMU as representative of real and existential threats to Central Asian regimes generally, or Tajikistan specifically. Nevertheless, the Rakhmon regime, like Karimov in Uzbekistan, uses the threat of 'radical Islam' as a vehicle to justify popular repression, to eliminate political rivals, and to obtain material aid for the RT security apparatus, both internal and military.

The policies of these regimes were initially supported by the U.S. in the post-9/11 period. 'Insurgents' began to be considered 'terrorists' by the State Department, and the Tajik government took advantage of its connection-based approval to eliminate its political rivals under the auspices of fighting the Global War on Terror. Even so, U.S. policy analysts were aware of the regional autocrats' strategy. CRS' Nichol noted that the RT charges of terrorism against some individuals or groups "may mask repressive actions against religious or political opponents of the regime" (Nichol 1999, 7), and during a Congressional Hearing, Rep. Ackerman pointed out that Central Asian states were using the War on Terror to "crack down on political opponents and Islamic groups" (Ackerman 2006, 4). Indeed, such actions would continue as the selective use of the state's forces from the Ministry of the Interior (as opposed to those of the Defense Ministry) sought to eliminate so-called "terrorists" who often

represented opponents of the regime. While some were indeed active militant groups (IRP remnants/IMU), there has been much speculation regarding the government's motives and targets in these operations. The Rakhmon regime's use of 'radical Islam' as legitimation of popular repression and justification for military assistance requests does not mean that there are not groups that offer potential threats in the region. However, many of those groups the regime considers to be 'extremist' scarcely fit definitions of that term, and those that do may or may not be violent actors, and lastly those that are violent receive little support from the population.

It is important that foreign benefactors maintain perspective regarding such threats when considering how their assistance might be used. It is also important to consider how this affected relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Even though assistance from Uzbekistan helped to put Rakhmon in power during the Civil War, relations between the two governments soured over the 1997 peace agreement and have been tense ever since. Karimov blamed Tajikistan for failing to oust the IMU from its territory, even going so far as to plant land mines along the border to prevent militants from crossing in 2000 and conducting airstrikes on suspected IMU targets (without notifying Dushanbe) in 1999 (Stein 2012).

Radical Islam and political instability in Afghanistan are consistently featured prominently in the foreign policy discourse

not only of Tajikistan, but of all major actors in the region, including the U.S. and the Russian Federation. Given the basing of the RF 201st MRD in Tajikistan, such thinking is not surprising. Russian discourse is prone to overstatement, such as the Russian Ambassador to Tajikistan's recent (4/2015) comment that "Taliban fighters are massing in northern Afghanistan on the border with Tajikistan, in Gorno-Badakhshan and other provinces" (Kucera 2015b), but it is clear that threats from the south are taken seriously by Moscow. As RT soldiers are ordered to perform their patriotic duty to defend the motherland, the threat of Afghanistan is featured prominently in the calls to arms. I address these calls in more detail in Chapters V and VI particularly as they relate to justifications for conscription and service in the RT military.

Regional Threats

The diplomatic differences between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan do not end with concerns relating to radical Islam. Matters relating to water resources are also contentious. Tajikistan's interest in completing the Rogun hydroelectric dam, which was begun during the Soviet era, is considered to be an existential threat to the Karimov regime. Uzbekistan has been quite open with its view that its construction constitutes a *casus belli* with Tajikistan (Camm 2013b; Lillis 2012; Kucera 2013b), as the waters of the Vakhsh River where the dam is

planned feed into the Amu Darya, from which Uzbekistan diverts substantial volumes of water for irrigation. Efforts to mediate the issue through diplomacy have generally resulted in mundane statements and little actual interaction between the two states (Camm 2013b; Kucera 2013b). In reality, the point is moot unless foreign investors agree to finance the construction; planned for 335 meters, the world's tallest dam's price tag is estimated between \$2 and \$6 billion, far beyond the RT's means.

The tensions between Tashkent and Dushanbe put pressure on the defense apparatus of Tajikistan. Uzbekistan's military is substantially larger, better equipped and better trained than its southern neighbor. Estimates place over 60,000 personnel in Uzbek uniforms, likely over 3 times as large as Tajikistan's forces. Its air force has over 50 combat aircraft, while the RT service has but a small number of helicopters (Pike 2015). Comparing the capabilities and the threatening rhetoric over regional geopolitics between these two states helps to contextualize the close security relationship Tajikistan has with the Russian Federation. Should a military conflict erupt, Tajikistan would have an extremely difficult challenge in defending its territorial integrity, not to mention its transportation nodes/routes and population centers from swift conquest by Uzbekistan's armed forces. For the Rakhmon regime, maintaining strong ties with Moscow and its 201st MRD is a far safer bet in deterring Tashkent from military action. Male RT citizens mention the Uzbek threat from time-to-time, mostly with a laughing sense

of helplessness for their armed forces. My review and analysis of interviews in Chapter V highlights a few examples.

Conclusion

Tajikistan's geopolitical position has been influenced by historical world powers such as the U.K., Russia/USSR, and the U.S., regional states such as Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, and discursive framings of 'danger' from Western and Russian sources, mostly as it relates to so-called 'radical Islam.' Neoliberal narratives of 'integration' (either coercive or consent-based) ignore local realities of political power and economic potential by associating connection to the world economy with decreased violence and extremism even though evidence to the contrary is particularly relevant to Central Asia. These discourses have shaped and reflected the policies of states both large and small involved in Tajikistan's affairs. In turn, my research shows that this influence has altered the RT's policies regarding its military and, in turn, challenged the notion of the armed forces as an institution of national integration.

The role of the migrant economy links Tajikistan to Russia in multilayered ways. The reciprocal relationship that consumes Central Asian labor in Russian markets connects Dushanbe's regime to Moscow, simultaneously increasing its financial vulnerability in order to bolster its external security with foreign troops. The state of the RT military and its reliance on conscription and

even impressment are a byproduct of this relationship. Russia's use of migrants' visa status to bend the Rakhmon regime to its wishes in the foreign policy arena cements a co-dependent relationship that appears difficult to unglue. If anecdotal evidence suggesting that migrants in Russia are vulnerable to extremist (Islamic State) recruitment is confirmed through further study, another layer will be added to the geopolitics of Tajikistan. How these issues are embodied in the justifications and legitimations of the practices surrounding the RT military and the experiences of its personnel are the subject of the next chapters.

CHAPTER V

CONSCRIPTION AND OBLAVA IN THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN

Introduction: Conscription, Conditions and National Sentiments

The first lines of this dissertation describe common experiences shared by many (if not most) young adult male citizens in Tajikistan: the semi-annual military conscription drives, the illegal methods often used by representatives of the military commissariat (oblava), and the strong opposition to military service exhibited by male citizens' unwillingness to serve. This chapter addresses these issues. The Rakhmon regime's efforts to develop national sentiments include the construction of architecturally extravagant national buildings in Dushanbe, associating the ethnogenesis of Tajik national identity with the Samanid Empire (819-999) and King Ismail Somoni, embracing Tajiki as the official language, and universal military service. To better understand the realization of this effort through the military, it is important to unpack how citizens from Tajikistan regard service in the national armed forces. The performance of everyday practices of military recruitment and service present a challenge to the development of national sentiments; they are mostly associated negatively with the state by the population. This chapter describes these practices, based on semi-structured interviews, media reports, and personal observation.

The negative connotations associated with service in the RT armed forces do not necessarily represent negative attitudes

toward military service in general, nor is the need for national defense questioned. Rather, it is the RT military's methods and practices that many citizens reject. The social importance of military service that was so strong during the Soviet era may have been significantly reduced, but it has not totally evaporated. The existence of the Russian 201st MRD is generally viewed positively and regarded as both professional and necessary. How and why do citizens view the RT military, which is modeled after the Soviet/Russian structure, so negatively? The answer lies in the experiences of those in direct contact with it. These experiences may be related to either the recruiting process or actual service, but are not limited to males of military service age. Families and friends often play an active part in the conscription experience. For example, they may be present when their friend/family member is picked up by conscription authorities, attempt to prevent his conscription through bribing or legal action, and/or tell their stories to news media outlets that publish stories on oblava. This chapter unpacks the RT's recruitment processes, both legal and illegal (i.e. oblava), while the following chapter (VI) addresses material and living conditions in the military as well as how ethno-regional identity shapes and reflects social structures within the military. In the sections that follow, I demonstrate that popular resistance to the recruitment process (and the state's need for conscription) and life in the military are closely related, but detailed discussion of the latter follows in

the subsequent chapter. Before examining the conscription process and issues related to personnel, it is important to outline some basic information about the RT military structure and its technical capabilities. I analyze this structure in the next section.

The Structure of the Armed Forces of Tajikistan

The RT national army was formed during the Civil War on February 23, 1993, predominantly of Popular Front (PF) militias. This date is symbolic, as it is also celebrated as the day the Soviet Union's Red Army was formed (Salimpour 2015). Unlike the militaries of the other four former Soviet Central Asian Republics, Tajikistan did not inherit the Soviet units within its territory. This was in part due to the timing of the Civil War shortly after independence. The main Soviet units based there were the Ministry of Interior's border guard service and the Red Army's 201st MRD. The last border guards left in 2005, and the 201st remains in the republic as a unit of the Russian Federation (cite). Within this context, it should not be surprising that the RT military is the weakest of the five republics and has experienced the most growing pains from its initial formation to its current status.

The contemporary armed services of the RT include over 16,000 personnel and are composed of units organized under three main ministries, with one unit tied to the president's office.

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) oversees the Army (7,300 troops) and the combined Air Force/Air Defense units (1,500). The Ministry of the Interior (MoI) houses the Border Guards and the "Alpha" elite unit, accounting for a combined 3,800 personnel. The National Guard (NG) (1,200) answers directly to the president. In addition, the Committee on Emergency Situations includes a special forces unit referred to as the "White Wolves," which numbers about 2,500 personnel (IISS 2015, 198-199).

The London International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) performs an annual assessment of all of the state militaries of the world. The Institute's brief description of the RT structure and technical equipment outlines the meager capabilities of this small force. The army's vehicle pool is minimal: about 80 armored fighting vehicles (AFVs), including 37 main battle tanks (MBTs), and with 23 artillery pieces. The Air Force has 15 helicopters (4 attack), less than 10 fixed-wing aircraft (mostly trainers with one transport) and 20 mostly obsolete surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) for defense. In comparison, Russia's 201st MRD has more firepower in Tajikistan than the entire military and paramilitary apparatus of the RT, and nearly as many troops as its national army (IISS 2015, 198-199). Further, Uzbekistan's forces (68,000 + personnel) are over four times as large, with substantially superior equipment in terms of both quality and quantity (IISS 2015, 203-204).

Marat's (2010) analysis of the RT military and security apparatus provides a rudimentary, description of its development as an institution. She pays particular attention to the lack of planning and development of a military doctrine, citing a failure "to identify what type and size of army" the state needs for its national defense. Interestingly, she also notes that the government's official statements on the military place the MoD's troop numbers around 20-22,000, but does not cite a year. Her 2008 statistics place the MoI troop levels as significantly higher than those of the MoD: 40,000 v. 18,000 (Marat 2010, 74). This is a significant difference relative to the IISS figures, which seem to match those reported in media outlets during the period 2008-2015 in my research. Whatever the number, what is relevant here is the difficulty in acquiring accurate information on personnel levels of the RT military and paramilitary forces. Further, my own questions to a Western military diplomat in Dushanbe on the subject confirmed that the RT did not offer such information, and that his office developed its own estimates; despite my efforts, I was never able to obtain these figures from him.

The size of the RT military apparatus is presented here primarily for reference and comparative purposes, but it also demonstrates the practical considerations that lead the Rakhmon regime to rely on foreign assistance from Russia and the CSTO. Given the capabilities of the national army and air force, it is hard to imagine the successful defense of the country's sovereign

territory from any conceivable form of foreign invasion on its own. With such limited technical capability and manpower, the nature of Tajikistan's geopolitical relationship with Russia becomes profoundly evident. In terms of national defense, the RT must rely on Russia to maintain its security. Thus, RT authorities cannot afford to alienate the government in Moscow.

Universal Conscription and the Culture of Oblava

In accordance with Article 43 of the Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan: "The protection of the homeland; safeguarding the interests of the state; and strengthening independence, security and defense capabilities of the homeland are the sacred duties of citizens. The procedure for military service is specified by law" (Samadova, Sobirov, and Rahimova 2012, 7).

The most common way citizens of Tajikistan have contact with their national military is through the conscription process. Military recruitment in Tajikistan is universal for men aged 18-27. Whether a military-aged male or not, the process is familiar to nearly everyone, and experiences with it are common both directly (as a participant or relative of an eligible male), and indirectly (as a friend, colleague or employer of an eligible male). In any case, the practice carries negative connotations among citizens of Tajikistan, and media coverage on the subject during the semi-annual recruitment periods focuses on the experiences of regular citizens who are caught in its somewhat indiscriminate web.

Legal conscription is the term I use to refer to the official way the state performs this task. It involves the written notification of military-aged males of their selection for military service; this letter is referred to as a *povestka* (Russian: 'subpoena') (Respondent 5 2013). All males must notify the state of any address changes in order to ensure its ability to properly notify them; failure to do so is a criminal act. Upon receipt of a *povestka*, a conscript has five days to report to the local voenkomat for either processing or to present their proof of exemption or deferment (Samadova and Gulov 2011; Samadova, Sobirov, and Rahimova 2012).

There is significant resistance to conscription, however. Few males embrace the idea of service in the RT military for reasons related to poor conditions, pay, and lack of training. I will address the negative conditions in Chapter VI; for now it is important to understand that Tajikistani males' reluctance to enlist is based on a multitude of factors that encompass the most basic aspects of enlisted military life. Resistance to military service has led the state either to support, or at least tacitly accept, the use of an even more coercive method of securing military conscripts: *oblava*. In order to understand this widely despised and illegal method, it is important first to examine the parameters of legal conscription.

The Conscription Process

Conscription is performed twice per year in the spring (April-May) and fall (October-November). Local media sources report that each year some 15-16,000 men are brought into service in the various military and paramilitary forces, with a similar number released from service as their conscription comes to an end. Official figures tout the military-aged male population at 600,000, with about 150,000 eligible for deferment, exemption or are unsuitable for service. A further 100,000 are considered to be working abroad, mostly in Russia (Yuldashev 2013c). The total servicemen listed matches the total number of personnel in the RT security forces provided by IISS, which lists a figure of about 16,000 (IISS 2015, 198-199). Conscripts are required to serve for two years, unless they have a college degree, in which case the service requirement is one year.

In order to understand some of the realities of the conscription process - particularly regarding deferments and exemptions - it is crucial to situate higher education into daily life in Tajikistan. The quality, rigor and value that once existed in universities during the Soviet period have diminished to a very low level. Most participants interviewed stated that their university experience was neither challenging nor particularly useful, even while recognizing that their parents experiences during the Soviet period were different (Respondent 1 2013; Respondent 5 2013). The concept of having a degree is

valued, but the knowledge and practices gained through university are not. This, however, is a two-way street. Underpaid professors require little rigor from their students and accepting bribes for higher grades is common. In Tajikistan's colleges and universities, paying bribes for higher grades is quite common--so common that most people consider a college degree from these schools to be worthless outside of the country, if not within. Universities do vary in their quality; the Russian-Tajik Slavonic University (RTSU) is considered to be markedly better when compared to RT state universities, such as Tajik State National, Tajik Agrarian or Tajik Philological. Nonetheless, interviewees who attended RTSU, especially those who had also studied in the West, stated that it was not particularly challenging (Respondent 5 2013).

Service Exemption

Military-aged males who legally do not have to serve are considered exempt. Unlike deferment, which is conditional and temporary, exemption is typically a permanent status once assigned. There are conditional exemptions for service, including being married with two children or physically unfit for duty (Kiromova 2013). Exemption from service is officially secured through the possession of a *voenniy билет* (Russian: military ticket): a card issued by the *voenkomat* (military recruitment office) that registers their status/condition and prevents future

conscription of the citizen in possession. They are issued to those males who have performed their service, for medical conditions that prevent service, or to only sons. Tajikistani males covet such cards; once in possession of a voennyi bilet, they are free from any form of conscription or recruitment effort. Unsurprisingly, the demand for voennyi bilets leads many recruitment officers to accept bribes in exchange for them. Only sons are exempt from service to ensure that they are available to work as the breadwinner for their families. There are also medical exemptions for various ailments and conditions that are deemed incompatible with military service. In such cases males may apply for a medical voennyi bilet.

The reality is that legally/officially obtaining an exemption is not straightforward. The bureaucracy of the RT government presents a formidable obstacle, not only in the various layers inherited from the Soviet system, but also within the context of the government's disincentive to distribute them. While the Soviet Union was dutiful in documenting its citizens, requiring paperwork for many aspects of daily life, such bureaucratic detailing in many ways has crumbled in the 20+ years following independence for Tajikistan. Verifying whether a male is indeed an only son may not be as easy as it once was; official records can be quite spotty, particularly in rural areas. Even in cases where documentation is current and available, government officials may doubt its authenticity (and its existence may deny

an opportunity for a bribe), causing processing delays that last months to over a year.

In order to secure a medical voenniy билет, examination by a doctor is required. Once revered in society and decently paid during the Soviet period, doctors in Tajikistan are now underpaid and poorly trained (one might argue untrained!). During my field research, anyone with whom I came in contact flatly refused to visit a doctor trained in Tajikistan after independence, preferring Soviet-trained or Iranian doctors. In fact, under emergency conditions, many considered a visit to locally trained medical staff to be synonymous with death or grave injury. The ineptitude of medical staff can be traced to the collapse of the education system. Just as in undergraduate studies, the practice of paying for grades is common in the country's medical schools (Respondent 5 2013). Under these conditions, it is prudent to question the competence of any doctors trained in Tajikistan. Even so, doctors do graduate from medical school and are in need of employment, even if they are incompetent. One potential employer is the military.

Doctors in the service of the voenkomat typically push conscripts through their exams, denying all but the most obvious medical claims and stamping approval for eligibility or, if conscripted, direct entrance into the military (Respondent 1 2013). However, as with many government officials, doctors in such positions are typically open to the offer of bribes in

return for signed paperwork for a voenniy bilet, or at least temporary rejection from service. Meanwhile, during the time it takes to receive a voenniy bilet, the applicant remains eligible for conscription. It stands to reason that, since neither the conscription process nor military service is popular in Tajikistan, the government (and thus any examining physician) has an incentive to maintain the service eligibility of as many males as possible.

Simply because a potential conscript possesses a voenniy bilet does not necessarily mean he is safe. One respondent waited more than two years for a voenniy bilet, and still received a povestka six months after obtaining it. Upon reporting to the voenkomat, the recruitment officers refused to look at it, denying its existence or validity; only after calling his mother, who went through the same conversations by phone, did they release him. "From this point I realized that the paper I have in hand does not put me on the safe side" (Respondent 5 2013).

Service Deferment

The official status that delays eligibility for conscription is called *deferment*. When a young male is assigned this status, he is not subject to conscription as long this status remains in effect. It is, however, a temporary situation; when the deferment period/status comes to an end, the male is once again eligible for service provided he meets all other

criteria (age, marital status, etc.). Much like exemptions, deferments can be treated as fleeting; recruitment personnel often ignore their validity or deny their existence in order to conscript eligible males.

The most common form of deferment is for educational purposes. While enrolled in a state or state-approved institution of higher education, a male student's identification card serves as his proof of deferment. He must be enrolled in good standing and regularly attend classes, where professors must document the individual's presence. Student ID cards are coveted, even though they are relatively easier to obtain than a voenniy bilet. Additionally, the law that states that university graduates who are conscripted are only required to serve one year; this provision acts as an additional incentive for eligible males to pursue higher education. For many male students, avoiding the draft is a primary reason to enroll in a university. One respondent noted that he travelled from the south of Tajikistan to Dushanbe to attend class in place of his brother (pretending to be him), in order to keep him in good standing with the university while he worked (Respondent 19 2014).

Bribes

If they have the means, avoiding military service by bribing officials at the voenkomat is a common practice of families in Tajikistan (EurasiaNet 2012a; Respondent 4 2013;

Respondent 8 2013; Respondent 15 2014; Respondent 18 2014; Respondent 22 2014). The aggregate amount of bribes paid to military officials are estimated to "add up to millions of dollars per year" (EurasiaNet 2012a). Indeed, for those who do not have connection to key positions in the state but do have financial means, bribing is a typical choice to avoid service. One respondent, a respected Uzbek *mahalla* (village) leader in Khatlon, when asked about Uzbeks in the military, remarked, "(t)here is not reason for this service. We pay their way out of service. We can make more money during the two year service period than a bribe costs" (about \$1000 in his region) (Respondent 22 2014). An expatriate friend of mine in Tajikistan noted the local Uzbeks' work ethic and focus on commerce in the marketplace, so this view is perhaps unsurprising (Respondent 24 2014).

The cost of a typical bribe varies in time and space, but bribe amounts do appear to be growing. The demanded price is dependent upon a number of factors, including whether the bribe is for one-time or for a longer-term (or even exemption-based) *voenniy bilet*; where the conscription takes place; whether or not the conscript has been shipped to a military base; and who the officer(s) in charge is. The fluid nature of these transactions makes it difficult to ascertain a going rate with any consistency, but it seems clear that the rates in questions represent substantial amounts for average families in Tajikistan.

When appropriate and relevant, I asked interviewees about the going rate for a bribe to avoid service and received a variety of responses. A respondent in Khorog paid \$300 to avoid service some years ago, but noted that the price had risen to around \$800 at the time of the interview (Respondent 8 2013). Another Pamiri living in Khujand told me the current rate for a 3-year voenniy билет is \$1200 (Respondent 18 2014).

The speed at which a conscript is processed and sent to a military base influences the asking price of a bribe. Much like oblava, the military commissariat indiscriminately and coercively moves newly arrived conscripts through the voenkomat and off their first base posting. The time period varies, but it can be as fast as 24 hours or a couple of days (Respondent 5 2013). This is the most important time for the conscript and/or his family to act to escape military service. In terms of bribes, the cost can rise to more than double that once the conscript has left for his duty assignment (Respondent 4 2013), which is more than likely very far from his family and home region.

A Peasant Army

Those citizens who do not have the financial means to pay the substantial cost of a bribe at the voenkomat to avoid military service, or who cannot afford to lose their sons to attend college, are left with little alternative. That poorer, less connected citizens have a difficult time avoiding

conscription and military service contributes to popular views that the RT military is composed of personnel from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Media articles have explored this phenomenon, based on interviews on the streets of Tajikistan's cities. A respondent in one article noted that: "I have served in the military for two years and 24 days in Tajikistan and did not see even one son of an authority figure. The ones who served with us were the sons of peasants and teachers." Another respondent noted that "(f)or 4,000 recruits for the quota, they visit all the villages across the country, when this many could be collected from only one town" (Ozodagon 2012). In other words, for the actual number of overall conscripts drafted for each two-month drive, the number could easily be filled by a city, yet the government practices conscription in every small village because it is easier to find recruits among poor villagers than among its wealthier and better connected urban citizens.

During my research in the field, I had the opportunity on a number of occasions to see regular RT soldiers and border guards in uniform during marches in Dushanbe, serving on a military base, or at a border guard *zastava* (Russian: outpost). It seemed clear that most were of smaller stature - some appeared underage - and their uniforms were often too large for their small bodies. All things considered, they fit the descriptions relayed to me by my interview respondents and media--descriptions that portrayed the military as comprised mostly of physically weak soldiers from marginalized backgrounds. My interviews with young males in

Dushanbe were largely with those from the other side of the socio-economic scale: middle class and college educated men, with some even connected to an authority figure or two. All of these respondents had at least one way out of service, though the conscription process could pose a burden on them or their family financially (or did in the past). One Pamiri interviewee living in Dushanbe noted that "(i)n our country and in the entire world rich people make laws for middle and low class people. It is when 10% controls 90% of the population. Therefore, these are low class people serving in the military" (Respondent 15 2014). For poor citizens, the options to avoid service are few and far between.

The RT military appears to be disproportionately comprised of poor conscripts, but without a detailed study of the socio-economic backgrounds of its personnel, an accurate assessment of this phenomenon is speculative. Given the state's distaste for academic research on matters relating to subnational identity, security, and the privileges of its political figures, such a study is unlikely to be conducted anytime soon. Yet for the purposes of understanding the military's influence on national sentiments, public perception carries significant, if not dominant, weight. If the population believes the military to be devoid of privileged citizens - and full of lowly conscripts serving in poor conditions - then it is difficult to envision it as a strong symbol of the nation. This situation is exacerbated by a lingering Soviet legacy that honors military service and

views it as a valuable social contribution. Many sources (both through interviews and in media articles) refer to this legacy and concept of universal military service when discussing the negative aspects of their national military, noting the specific problems they see with the conscription system and living conditions within the military. Specifically, citizens negatively view the use of impressment to secure conscripts (*oblava*), hazing within the ranks (*dedovshchina*), and generally poor quality and quality of food, medical care and basic equipment. I discuss these negative aspects in the following sections.

Illegal Methods: Oblava

To combat popular resistance to service, the military has resorted to the outright impressment of males, a tactic that is technically illegal but tacitly accepted, if not directly conceived, by the civilian government of the Rakhmon regime. The Tajik news source Asia-Plus goes so far as to state that “despite the cloudless statistics of the defense ministry, to recruit the necessary number of young people by legal means is not possible, and so they use the method of military conscription raids” (Mannon 2013). The use of the term ‘raid’ here is important. To locals, the term *oblava* has come to mean the illegal impressment practices by military recruitment agents biannually performed upon male citizens of Tajikistan. *Oblava* can be either overt or clandestine, performed by uniformed official military recruiters

or plain clothed hired thugs. It can be executed painlessly or brutally through the aggressive capture of unsuspecting males in public places or even dragging away them forcefully from their homes. The populace strongly opposes oblava regardless of the performers or the methods, even if they agree with the concept of universal service.

The Association of Young Lawyers, Amparo, published a monitoring report that outlined statistics from a survey of 2525 people (soldiers, conscripts, eligible males, parents, and citizens) affected by the conscription process in Sughd Oblast in 2010. I will discuss Amparo's work in more detail later in this chapter; for the moment it is important to acknowledge the work to document the Sughd population's experiences with oblava.

Figure 5.1 displays five categories representing the period during which a conscript received his *povestka* requiring him to report to the voenkomat for military service, if one was received at all. Those received outside or during the conscription period might be considered formally conscripted, even if the former is technically illegal. Some of those surveyed did not receive a notice. The remaining two categories indicate an illegal act on the part of the state, with the conscript either having received a *povestka* at the commissariat or after an oblava by commissariat officers; this means that about 20% of conscripts surveyed in Sughd in 2010 were the victims of oblava (Samadova and Gulov 2011; Amparo 2011).

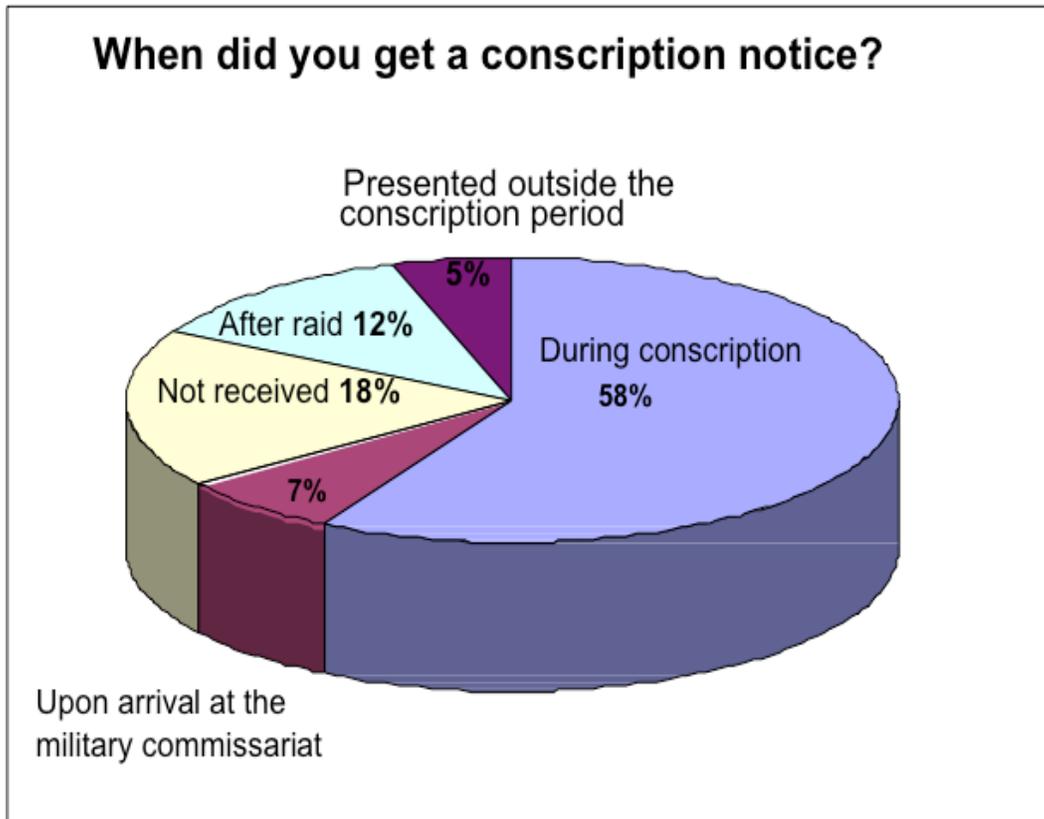


Figure 5.1. Where did you receive your conscription notice?
(Samadova and Gulov 2011)

In order to understand this illegal recruitment method, it is useful to examine the recent experiences of Tajikistanis with oblava. These experiences demonstrate the relatively ad hoc nature of the practice, its illegality and lack of popular legitimacy, and some of the spatial aspects of the population it targets. As with all coercive actions perpetrated on a group of people, conscription-aged males and their families respond to these methods with tactics of their own to avoid being caught in the dragnet. While examining conscription methods, I show how

citizens seek to avoid military service through situational responses specific to the recruitment officers' tactics. The tactics of oblava and civilian responses are spatial in nature, both at the micro-scale and at the larger regional level. To demonstrate this series of actions/reactions, it is useful to explain state tactics and civilian responses together—the focus of the next set of subsections. However, popular and formal resistance to oblava more generally focuses on the illegal nature of the practice and suggested policy changes/alternatives; I examine and explain this aspect of resistance and the state's response to it in a separate section.

The Marshrutka Trap

A common tactic used by recruiters is to commission the use of *marshrutki* (Russian: minibus taxis; singular: *marshrutka*). Marshrutki drive on regular routes through even the smallest cities in Tajikistan. Their drivers display the route number on a card placed on the front windshield so potential riders might wave them down anywhere along the route. They charge each rider a fee of 1-2 Somonis (about \$0.2-0.4 during the research period) dependent upon the distance to be travelled and some run longer routes between cities. I used them to travel around Dushanbe, Kurgan-Teppe, Khujand and Khorog. Marshrutki are perhaps the most common form of transportation for most citizens in Tajikistan and throughout Central Asia generally. As such, they are an ideal

locus for officers from the voenkomat to find young males to apprehend and impress into the military.

During recruitment periods, recruitment officers or hired goons commandeer some marshrutki; the vehicle makes its usual stops, but the officers lie-in-wait on-board for potential oblava targets. Young males eligible for conscription are prevented from exiting and, when the vehicle is full, the driver is directed to the local voenkomat to process its captured riders. Female riders are allowed out of the bus at their stops (or simply denied entry in the first place) and will not be taken to the voenkomat. One marshrutka driver explained that "drivers working capital lines are obliged to devote one working day to the needs of the military office during the call" (Asia-Plus 2013a). Riders may enter voluntarily (unaware) or be forced to board a commissioned marshrutka by recruiters. One respondent to a news reporter noted that plain-clothed recruiters emerged from a marshrutka when he was waiting at a stop. They asked him, ""Are you a student?" I answered yes, he asked me for a student ID, which I could not show, then they surrounded me and pushed me into the marshrutka" (Respondent 15 2014).

Interviews with young males in Dushanbe confirm this tactic; I have already highlighted one at the beginning of this dissertation (Respondent 1 2013; Respondent 15 2014). Many are aware of this tactic through friends who have experience with it (Respondent 6 2013) and/or media reports (Majid 2013). Young

males react to this tactic mostly through spatial behavior modification; they simply avoid taking marshrutki during recruitment season whenever possible. Since this is difficult given the strong public reliance on this form of transport, another tactic is to avoid boarding a marshrutka that has no women on board--a somewhat reliable sign that it has been commandeered by officers from the voenkomat (Respondent 6 2013).

Public Spaces: Bazaar, Parks and Side Streets

Public spaces are frequented by recruiters, especially "crowded places such as bazaars, markets, and parks," but they concentrate on side streets rather than main avenues (Respondent 15 2014) to secure military aged males for conscription. Another typical place is the *dvor* (Russian: courtyard) of an apartment complex, where recruiters lie in wait for unsuspecting targets. The easy tactic to avoid *oblava* would seem to be simply avoiding leaving the house, but of course this is not always possible. One interviewee in Dushanbe explained how his schedule and those of his friends are altered during conscription drives: "we try to avoid meeting with our friends in day time, avoid going out. And this became part of our culture. Many things you shall do tonight were postponed to early morning; basically it dictates you to make your schedule according to *oblava's* schedule" (Respondent 5 2013).

Referring to the danger of public space posed to males during conscription, he further explained how this affects his family. "Because of all this, whenever my mother has a task for me, she does it herself, because she knows I can be conscripted if I go out. And every single day I am warned by my mother, "be careful," whenever I go outside (Respondent 5 2013). Similarly, a Pamiri living in Dushanbe remarked that his mother "calls me every morning once a day. She tells me to avoid walking the streets in vain" (Respondent 15 2014). Every family in Tajikistan is aware of the disruption that oblava causes to the flow of daily life for four months each year. It generates a substantial amount of public anger at the voenkomat and Rakhmon regime, which leads to increased media coverage.

Public spaces have been the scene of many dramatic episodes reported in media sources (Ahmadi 2013; Ашуров 2013) during conscription season. Many men have been caught at the bazaar (Mamurzoda 2012). In one case, a man pursued by recruiters through a bazaar in the southern town of Vose (Khatlon Oblast) attempted to jump over a cauldron of oil used for preparing food, tipping its contents upon an older female cook, who was badly burned. The military commissar of Vose, responding to citizens who blamed his officers for the incident, refused to admit it had even happened, stating it "is only a rumor" (Ahmadi 2013). The cook is a mother of four and would require months of treatment, putting the burden of caring for her children on her sister for this period as there was no direct assistance from the state.

These types of experiences, where potential conscripts are essentially arrested - sometimes after a chase - are common in media stories during recruitment season. Oblava related stories appear in media sources that cover Tajikistan, in particular Asia-Plus, Ozodagon, and the Radio Ozodi, a division of the U.S. Information Agency's Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The stories posted on these sites reflect the popular dissatisfaction with the systematic coercion of the male population, while simultaneously presenting a forum for discussion of alternatives by local experts and government officials. Local activists, who seek to expose these recruitment methods and offer reforms to the military system, source many of the stories reported by these media sites.

A few other telling examples include a conscript who broke his leg attempting to escape (*Ozodagon* 2014d), a 42-year old journalist (Vose 2013) picked up off the street, and madrassa students raided during evening prayer in their dormitory (*Asia-Plus* 2013c; *Asia-Plus* 2013b). Videos shared online have also documented oblava in action. In one short clip posted on YouTube, a couple at their own wedding is shown facing their supporters and guests when the scene is interrupted by what is reported to be the arrival of recruitment officers (off screen); the groom immediately flees for his freedom, running away from the camera and the crowd into the night (Gulov 2013). Another shows a young Tajik in traditional Muslim garb who has been caught by

recruitment officers and is being taken to the voenkomat while he (very) emotionally pleads for them to release him (Нуриев 2015).

These articles and videos demonstrate that oblava is part of the everyday experience for RT citizens during recruitment drives, highlighting the coercive role of the state and the extensive power the security apparatus has over the population. But they also demonstrate that the local press actively reports this abuse of state power and provide a space for critique of government actors. In a state where access to electronic news and social media outlets has been shut down for days or even weeks at a time, often for seemingly trivial reasons (including the unwanted YouTube posting of Rakhmon singing and dancing at a party), this is notable (Camm 2013a; RT 2012; Taylor 2013). In its 2015 annual report, Freedom House currently ranks Tajikistan 179th in the world and labeled the situation as “Not Free” (though Russia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are farther down the list). The report made special note of the Rakhmon regime’s barring of independent media from reporting on the situation in GBAO as a “prime example” of repressive governance (Freedom House 2015; RFE/RL 2015b).

This tactic has been addressed by human rights groups, one of which noted that “it has become common practice for the government’s Communications Service to put pressure on the media in response to criticism by blocking internet resources” (NGO Coalition 2013, 45). The Rakhmon regime has closed institutions

that have challenged it, including Amparo, a young lawyers group in Khujand that has assisted conscripts and worked against oblava through legal channels (the group remains active even if it no longer officially carries the name). I discuss Amparo in more detail later in this chapter. For now, it is important to acknowledge the link between Amparo and media outlets; the legal association provides many of the leads and stories regarding military conscription directly to media outlets, and its members are quoted regularly in those stories.

In the pages that follow, stories of this sort not only provide a foundation for understanding the role oblava plays in citizens' daily lives; they link the experiences of these citizens with their compatriots across the country and around the world. Most Tajikistanis exhibit limited mobility, spending most of their lives in or near their hometowns and villages. Reading news stories about oblava creates a shared experience among them, even if it is a negative one. Nonetheless, disdain for conscription practices seems to be one thing that nearly all citizens agree on, and that is notable. Unpacking how individuals and groups have resisted conscription and its ugly son, oblava, is important to understanding how the military system more generally inhibits the growth of national sentiments.

Resistance

Potential recruits develop counter-tactics to avoid being picked up through oblava. These practices are performed during recruitment season and are typically dependent upon the vulnerability of the person in question, as some males feel safer due to connections, status as a student, or possession of a voenniy bilet. "Safe" males may adjust their behavior when in the company of vulnerable friends, however. Obviously, these practices are situated in time and space. Temporally, recruiting drives are bound to the biannual two-month periods and only then do targeted males need to adjust their behavior. During these periods, the importance of space is demonstrated through young males' avoidance of, and heightened awareness in, public areas and along mass transit lines. However, as oblava can happen virtually anywhere, heightened awareness at all times to one's environment is imperative four months per year for those considered most vulnerable to conscription: poor, unconnected, and uneducated young men.

Connections and Verbal Tactics

People who have connections in the government do not hesitate to use them to escape oblava. Calling their connections by mobile phone at the moment they are caught, can typically result in release by the recruiters on the spot. One respondent called his "tagha" (uncle on mother's side; in southern

Tajikistan, it is vernacular for a 'sponsor') when recruiters caught him and his friends. He was able to get out, but could not directly help his friends, who had to extricate themselves from the situation on their own (Respondent 1 2013). Such connections provide comfort to those who have them. Furthermore, those who are confident and knowledgeable of the power of connections to the elite may attempt to talk their way out of being taken to the voenkomat by stating that they have powerful friends - even when they do not. Speaking confidently and demonstrably of connections - even threatening the status of the recruitment officer - may persuade a captor to release his captive.

Similarly, knowledge of *oblava*'s illegality, coupled with enough confidence to stand up to recruiters practicing these tactics, may result in the release of a potential recruit. In the story highlighted at the beginning of this dissertation, the respondent resisted, stating his rights as a student. He was immediately asked if he was Pamiri. "I said yes. After that, they let us go. One of the reasons they let me go it is my ethnic background. They know that normally Pamiris tend to be more educated people than the average citizens" (Respondent 15 2014). In this case, the officers' perception (not without some basis) of Pamiris influenced them to release their quarry. It is likely they viewed him as a hassle not worth pursuing--one that potentially could get them into trouble with lawyers and/or angry family members who were likely to be educated in the unlawful methods of the recruiters.

Some respondents noted that simply "behaving confidently" to indicate that you have someone "behind you" and should be respected (an important personal connection) works, even if no connections in fact exist (Respondent 5 2013; Respondent 4 2013). On the other hand, another said that speaking up about your rights may bring a harsh response from the recruiters; still, he noted that conscripts may be asked about their parents in case they are important people that might get the recruiters in trouble (Respondent 6 2013).

However, it is important to note that these tactics may be more likely to be effective in large cities such as Dushanbe or Khujand, where the bureaucracy is extensive and such connections common. In villages and smaller towns, connections to state elite for average conscription aged males are less plausible. In addition, the government footprint is smaller in these regions and local officials tend to know the other apparatchiks in the surrounding area, making bluffs easier to call. Perhaps most importantly, this tactic is far more likely to be used by educated males. Those in small villages and/or from modest families often know little about the systematic workings of the state and their rights within it. They are unlikely to have connections or know anyone who does and therefore do not understand some of the verbal tactics that could be used if they are caught (Respondent 5 2013). Similarly, as relatively powerless citizens, the concept of citing the illegality of *oblava* as a tactic is also an unlikely choice. Far away from the

eyes of the media and more educated citizens, villagers are less likely to challenge the state's coercive methods.

Amparo

The Association of Young Lawyers, Amparo, is an organization that has operated in Sughd oblast out of the city of Khujand since 2005. Its primary goal is "defending the rights of conscripts and military service members and the strengthening of civilian control over the armed forces" (NGO Coalition 2013, 54). Hence, Amparo places the performance of oblava and dedovshchina directly in its crosshairs. Amparo has published annual monitoring reports for Sughd Oblast for 2010 (Samadova and Gulov 2011) and nationally for 2011 (Samadova, Sobirov, and Rahimova 2012) that provide useful statistical information on conscription and oblava as well as a description of the association's activities that assist conscription-eligible males and conscripts to understand their legal rights within the military context. Most of Amparo's efforts have been centered on Khujand and Sughd Oblast, but its goal of changing the conscription system is national.

The monitoring reports mention five primary activities for disseminating information on the legal rights of conscripts and servicemen in the 2007-2010 period (Samadova and Gulov 2011). It is useful to examine how Amparo works to understand its contribution at individual, local and national scales. From

assisting families of wrongfully conscripted males to proposing both a contract-based military and alternative forms of national service, AMPARO is at the forefront of formal resistance to the RT military's personnel policies and practices. These five activities outline the organization's efforts to promote and defend legal rights at these scales within the framework of RT law "On General Military Duty and Military Service."

The first is the "Organization of public reception," which outlines the association's direct legal consultations with clients regarding their rights as conscripts or servicemen. During this period, over 600 people have approached Amparo for assistance. "Legal literacy," the second activity, works to educate the population at large regarding their rights before conscription. It encompasses the most wide-ranging forms of assistance, including training for lawyers and activists; a variety of publications (soldier and conscript pocketbooks, monitoring reports, brochures, and articles in Russian, Tajiki and Uzbek); television talk shows, informational meetings for rural governments, students and families; and informational stands at the entrance to voenkomats. Third, Amparo disseminates information on alternative civil service and has developed a draft law to that effect, which it has forwarded to government agencies and made publically available. Fourth, Amparo worked to raise the legal literacy of servicemen and held training seminars at 18 military units in Sughd, attended by over 600 conscripts. Lastly, Amparo has participated in conferences organized by the

International Project "Society and the Army." This project is active in a number of FSU republics and promotes the protection of servicemen and the institution of alternative civil service models by governments (Samadova and Gulov 2011, 45-50).

Amparo's work drew the ire of the Rakhmon regime. On October 24, 2012, a court accepted the RT Justice Ministry's motion to shut down the association. EurasiaNet covered this story and linked it to Amparo's work on conscription and torture conventions.

...an Amparo representative, speaking at a European Union-funded seminar in Dushanbe, accused the government of failing to address torture cases. Not long after that seminar, Amparo was charged with a number of technical violations. The charges also closely followed a briefing that Amparo activists gave the UN special rapporteur on torture, Juan Mendez, during his visit to Tajikistan in May (*EurasiaNet* 2012b).

However, it is hard to imagine that the Rakhmon regime was solely concerned with torture, and at least one observer agreed.

EurasiaNet again:

"My hunch is that they pissed off somebody in Khujand, possibly related to their military recruits activism," said a Western diplomatic source. "To be fair they appear to do a pretty good job in this area, and have taken the lead on it" (*EurasiaNet* 2012b).

Amparo's closing resulted in protests from a variety of NGOs and IGOs. Human Rights Watch's Europe and Central Asia director Hugh Williamson stated that the granting of this legal motion "is a transparent attempt to silence voices working on

critically important issues such as torture and the rights of military recruits and a major step backward for human rights in Tajikistan" (Human Rights Watch 2012). But in fact, Amparo was not silenced even while it officially closed its doors. Many of its members continue the work on military personnel issues and maintain contact with the others (Respondent 16 2013). The regime's move may have made these lawyers' efforts more difficult, but the association has taken a new, less centralized form. One casualty of the move has been the loss of the annual monitoring report, which requires an institutional capability that has largely evaporated with Amparo's closing; there are only two annual editions: 2010 and 2011. Nonetheless, so little has changed in the military commissariat's methods and the conditions within the RT military itself that it is difficult to imagine significant statistical or qualitative variations from these two years in ways that affect citizens' views of the national armed forces.

Masculinity and Resistance in Khorog

GBAO is a difficult oblast for the RT government to administer. The legacy of the civil war left a number of opposition commanders in positions of power, either formally as part of the government or informally through their control over Pamiri militias (Respondent 25 2014). The self-governing nature of Pamiris, formalized within the territorial structure of an

autonomous oblast both in the USSR and independent Tajikistan, has presented a challenge to some of Dushanbe's policies. Pamiris predominantly practice Ismaili Islam and their imam is the Aga Khan. The Aga Khan development network provides substantial educational, cultural and financial resources to its members in GBAO, weakening the power of the state to leverage its interests there.

In discussing recruitment with Pamiri men in Khorog, there were some conflicting stories regarding oblava, though it appears that recruitment is a bit different in the administrative capital of GBAO. First, a number of respondents remarked that oblava is no longer practiced (as of 2010) - at least regularly - in Khorog due to officers getting physically assaulted by locals (Respondent 7 2013; Respondent 8 2013). Others noted that it is still there, even if it is practiced less violently (Respondent 10 2013; Respondent 13 2013). Another described that it as being much more common in villages and along the highway in GBAO on the way to Dushanbe (Respondent 12 2013). This is an especially difficult situation for parents whose sons are taken this way, as it forces them to travel long distances to help (negotiating with and/or bribing) free them from the voenkomat; conscripts taken locally are sent to the nearest voenkomat which families of conscripts can more easily visit and attempt to free their sons. This same respondent explained that recruitment officers often pick up Pamiris in Dushanbe, even if they are students, because

the officers believe the conscripts' parents will travel to pay a bribe; it is simply for financial gain.

Nearly all Pamiri respondents were explicit that military service was something that they were not afraid of; like many Tajiks, they actually desired to perform military service - though few wanted to enlist in the RT military. One respondent stated that *dedovshchina* and general bad conditions is the main reason most young men do not want to serve, even if they do not admit it, noting "being a coward is not appreciated in the region" (Respondent 13 2015). Some served in the Russian border guards before their withdrawal in 2005 (Respondent 12 2013; Respondent 7 2013), while others joined just to avoid *oblava* and finish their service early (Respondent 9 2013). During these interviews it was apparent that the Pamiris I interviewed had a fairly masculine view of the military, that it was a 'school of life' and to some degree, a stepping-stone to manhood. However, there was some reluctance to serve in the RT military due to its perceived unprofessionalism. Also, many noted that they or their relatives/friends served in the border guards in order to serve near home and that until recently, this service branch was full of Pamiris. One stated that his nephew volunteered so that his uncle could choose where he served, undoubtedly as close to home as possible (Respondent 10 2013). It is possible that this situation is unique to GBAO, but through my research I was unable to confirm it. I later asked a pair of respondents in Isfara (Sughd Oblast), if volunteering for service instead of being

conscripted would help a soldier to be based near his hometown. Their answer was "no" (Respondent 17 2014). It is perhaps unsurprising that there are inconsistencies in the practices of military recruitment, particularly in time and space. Aspects of the conscription system remain dynamic, but its basic structure remains coercive, unpopular and largely unchanged in its methods and goals.

Emigration

I describe the geopolitical importance of emigration and the remittance economy to Tajikistan in terms of its relationship with Russia in Chapter IV. Emigration also acts as a valuable option for males seeking to avoid military service in Tajikistan. This option is condoned by the state, which considers those living and working outside of its borders to be free from conscription while they are abroad. Media outlets have noted this situation, considering it virtually the equivalent of unofficial deferment (Yuldashev 2013c; *Asia-Plus* 2014a). Emigration is a form of avoidance rather than resistance; military aged labor migrants can come and go from Tajikistan at will and avoid conscription simply by not coming home during the recruitment period. Respondents noted friends or family who had emigrated abroad not only to Russia, but even to the U.S. (to study) with the intention of returning only after they turn twenty-eight and

are no longer eligible for conscription (Respondent 5 2013; Respondent 4 2013).

Understanding the choice to emigrate, pay a bribe or resist conscription must be understood within the context of the conditions within the armed forces of Tajikistan. That life in the RT military is difficult if not dangerous is well known to nearly everyone in Tajikistan. In the next section I examine the conditions that dominate perceptions of the military among RT citizens and contribute to its failure to legally fulfill its manpower needs and inhibit its ability to develop national sentiments.

Conclusion

Most RT citizens' interaction with, and understanding of, the country's national military is constructed around the conscription process. Conscription is publicized as requiring young males to fulfill their national duty; yet the official deferment and exemption methods create an unequal playing field. Males with important political connections and financial means are able to avoid service through those connections by bribing someone within the voenkomat structure (a doctor, recruiter, commissariat official). Only those who either want to enlist (which seems to be very few) or have little choice when their number is called actually serve in the RT military. The public's disdain for its armed forces has helped to raise a military

filled with conscripts who, in the words of RT citizens, are from marginalized backgrounds: a "peasant army".

Popular disinterest in serving in the RT military has caused a counter reaction by the state, which either actively or tacitly accepts the practice of impressment of males into the military through the exercise of oblava. This indiscriminate practice captures unsuspecting and suspecting males in the public areas - and even homes - of Tajikistan, often creating a game of cat and mouse in some of the country's urban areas. Conscription-age single males develop tactics to avoid being caught in oblava's web, though it appears many of these tactics are more suited to those with higher education levels, connections and confidence. The options for less connected, poor, and/or less educated males are substantially lower. While it is possible for them to employ some of these tactics (arguing the illegality of oblava, calling a political connection, or acting calm, cool and collected during recruitment process), most males from marginalized backgrounds don't understand their rights, have no important political connections and thus lack confidence in this context.

Of course, all this begs the question, why avoid service at all? The conditions in the RT military structure are quite poor, when it comes to the availability of food, health care, uniforms, and housing. Additionally, military training is minimal, giving potential recruits the impression that they are gaining little in

compensation for the bad conditions they must endure. If one is not to become a trained soldier, why join the army? Most importantly, the ritualized hazing practice of *dedovshchina* performed among the RT conscripts strikes fear into the hearts of military-aged males and their families. The stories on *dedovshchina* appearing in news media and those told by veterans act to make military service more like a prison sentence and help to foster the idea that becoming a soldier is rather pointless.

In the next chapter, I unpack the role of the issues described in the preceding paragraph and consider how they shape Tajik nationalism. If military service holds little value to RT citizens - despite a Soviet tradition that looks favorably on such service -there are clearly significant challenges to the notion of the military as a national integrator. This challenge is intensified by the presence of the Russian 201st MRD, which has long accepted Tajikistanis among its personnel. Most recently, the Russian Federation and the RT have legalized the enlistment of the latter's citizens into Russian units based outside of Tajikistan, including in combat operations abroad. With better pay, overall conditions and materials, the perception of less *dedovshchina* and professional training, the option of service in the RF armed forces could be an appealing one to many RT males and complicates the situation of the RT military in the minds of its citizens. By examining the conditions within the RT armed forces and service options with Russia (and other states), we can better understand the resistance to conscription into

Tajikistan's national military and its failure to create positive national sentiments.

CHAPTER VI

MILITARY CONDITIONS AND FOREIGN PRESENCE

Introduction: The Disdain for National Military Service

The disdain for conscription described in the preceding chapter does not, by itself, explain the widespread resistance to military service - a resistance that stands in marked contrast to the high value placed on military service that is part of the Soviet legacy (Respondent 2 2013; Respondent 4 2013; Respondent 7 2013; Respondent 8 2013; Respondent 12 2013; Respondent 22 2014; Respondent 23 2014). The everyday practices relating to military personnel are shaped not only by the social realities of life in Tajikistan, such as ethno-regional identity, poverty and the aftermath of the Civil War, but also by the legacies of the Soviet period such as the hazing practices of *dedovshchina*. Indeed, my interviews revealed that many RT citizens lament the decline in the social status of military service since the Soviet period that is prevalent in independent Tajikistan. Nonetheless, it is also understood why this situation exists: conditions in the RT military are substandard, training is minimal, and hazing is rampant. This military may be modeled after the Red Army, but it largely fails to match the latter's professionalism and thus, national appeal.

This chapter examines the conditions within the RT military that create such negative views among the population. It is organized into four main sections, each addressing important -

but closely linked - aspects of these conditions. First, I show how the experiences of conscripts are closely related to the military's failure to provide adequate material needs (food, pay, uniforms, equipment) and organization (training and leadership). Second, I unpack the widespread problem of ritualized hazing, referred to as *dedovshchina*, which plays a greater role in discouraging military service than any other single factor. The stories on *dedovshchina* appearing in news media and those told by veterans act to make military service resemble a prison sentence and the idea of becoming a soldier seem senseless to potential conscripts.

While I note its pervasive influence, the third section focuses the role of ethno-regional identity in the officer corps, particularly as it relates to advancement and the composition of the senior officer corps. With the president and his closest apparatchiks predominantly from the Kulob area, more specifically the town of Dangara, a pattern has emerged that often favors certain ethnicities and/or regions of origin over others within the state governmental and security apparatus. How this affects the experience of regular citizens and conscripts is crucial to how military service acts (or fails to act) as a national integrator. If certain identities are favored over others and/or conscripts collectively associate with those from similar ethno-regional identities within their units, the military may reinforce societal cleavages rather than fostering national sentiments. The reinforcement of societal divisions has been

performed in many other militaries, such as Afghanistan (Simonsen 2009) and Israel (Levy and Sasson-Levy 2008), and is considered more the norm for multiethnic armies (Enloe 1980). Understanding how ethno-regional identity is manifested in the national military of Tajikistan is critical to understanding the production of national sentiments there.

If military service holds little value to RT citizens - despite a Soviet tradition that looks favorably on such service - it appears clear that there are significant challenges to the notion of the military as a national integrator. In the fourth section, I demonstrate how this challenge is intensified by the presence of the Russian 201st MRD, which has long accepted Tajikistanis among its personnel. Most recently, the Russian Federation and the RT have legalized the enlistment of the latter's citizens into Russian units based outside of Tajikistan, including those involved in combat operations abroad. With better pay, overall conditions and materials, the perception of less *dedovshchina* and professional training, the option of service in the RF armed forces is an appealing one to many RT males and complicates the meaning the RT military holds for many of its citizens.

Why Avoid Service? Conditions in the RT Military

In the Tajik army soldiers are beaten, hungry, humiliated, used like slaves for generals, etc. Even if such information is not in the mass media, every poor and rich

person possesses this information. This sort of information can't be locked, because people tell their pains, they complain (Respondent 4 2013).

Bribing to avoid service, resistance to oblava, and calls for a contract military and alternative forms of national service all lead to an important question: Why do young males, who grow up in a post-Soviet culture that places value on military service, want to avoid their so-called civic duty? Further, why do males who live in a country with a high birth rate (CITE) and little economic opportunity largely shun military service? In many states, the military offer of a paycheck, room and board is an attractive option for those in need of employment. The answer to these questions lies in the conditions within the RT military. Some of these conditions relate to the Soviet legacy, such as *dedovshchina*, while others relate to such fundamental matters as health, pay, food and professionalism. Each of these aspects of daily life in the RT military is viewed negatively, leading most of the population to avoid peacetime service and challenging the military's capability to positively influence national sentiment.

Additionally, ethno-regional identity shapes and reflects many of the daily practices within the RT military. The geographic placement of new conscripts, the performance of *dedovshchina*, and promotion through the officer ranks all take place within a framework of ethno-regional identity. The following sections explain each of these practices, highlighting the role identity plays within them. In some cases, identity is

incredibly important (officer promotion and placement), while in others its influence is expressed unpredictably in time and space. For example, some respondents noted how certain identities are targeted in dedovshchina, while in others' experiences, ethno-regional identity did not play a strong role. First, I examine the popular perception of the military, including prospects after service. I then turn to the popularly disdained practice of dedovshchina and its effect on conscription, unit cohesion and soldier welfare. Then I discuss issues of pay, health, food and advancement. Lastly, I scrutinize how ethno-regional identity affects advancement within the officer corps and favors certain groups over others-- making the merits of individual officers a secondary or even tertiary consideration.

Basic Conditions

Media stories that address life in the military mention the bad-to-horrible conditions under which RT soldiers serve and the problems this causes conscription efforts. This is no better displayed than in a Radio Ozodi article with the English title "Where does the military service's negative image in recruits minds come from?" (Юсуфӣ 2014). The government often downplays the problems in the military, making statements about national duty. One area chairman addressed some new conscripts; according to Asia-Plus news, he "noted that parents and teenagers should not complain about the conditions of military service in parts of

the country's armed forces, as they are consistent with current standards" (Nazriyev 2014). Recently, the ruling People's Democratic Party Tajikistan (PDPT) office in Sughd oblast organized a trip that included local parents to visit their sons serving in the southern parts of the country. The delegation was to visit all the basic aspects of daily life on the base, including barracks and mess halls, in an effort to familiarize participants with the terms and quality of their service conditions (Rafieva 2014).

Dedovshchina: The Bane of the Mladshii Conscript

It is important to note that my sample group was relatively small and that dedovshchina can be a sensitive topic in Tajikistan, as it is a traumatic experience for many soldiers. With this in mind, I offer some insights into the practice and other aspects of military life, but I am not in a position to present robust conclusions from the limited data derived from my research. Nonetheless, there seems little disagreement about dedovshchina's negative effect on soldier morale throughout the post-Soviet world (Daucé and Sieca-Kozlowski 2006; Herspring 2005a); the details of the practice help to shed light on the conditions in the RT military, but there seems little evidence that it serves to further the development of national sentiments.

The Tajik interviewee who spoke the quote at the beginning of this section wanted to enlist in the RT military. He explained

that his brother, a veteran, convinced him not to join almost solely due his experience of being tortured through dedovshchina. He still had interest in military service, so he considered other options.

(T)he fact is that after the Soviet period dedovshchina was expanding. It was the understanding of lower case officers that dedovshchina is a good method of teaching new recruits. Here when I dropped the idea of joining the Tajik military, but there was an option of joining the 201st Russian military base, with better pay, no dedovshchina, and better training (Respondent 4 2013).

Whether dedovshchina is absent from the 201st MRD is perhaps an open question, as there is sufficient literature to suggest that it remains a problem within the contemporary Russian military (Daucé and Sieca-Kozlowski 2006; Herspring 2005a). Regardless, citizens of Tajikistan consider their military bases to be dangerous spaces due to this practice.

A Pamiri interviewee who served in the Russian border guards prior to their withdrawal in 2005 described dedovshchina as part of his experience. At this time, his border guard unit (like most others) was comprised mostly of enlisted personnel from Tajikistan (Pamiris, Tajiks and Uzbeks) with Russian officers. He explained that he was well trained and fed, and had all his necessary material needs met.

In the border guards there was hazing as well, but not as severe. When we left the border guards in 2004, the Russian border guards left Khorog and people started to enter the RT border guards, hazing grew and intensified. When veterans left the RT border guards, they started to tell

others about the hazing and men should avoid joining the RT military (Respondent 12 2013).

During his time in the service, the RT military was preparing to transition to a border protection role, so there was a national military base attached to his Russian unit; they were separated by a wall, but otherwise in close proximity to each other. The RT personnel were lacking in even basic material needs. "(T)he RT soldiers would come and ask for food and clothes. In the RT army they did not have good uniforms. We had everything in the border guards: toothpaste, good food, uniforms, boots, combs, and our haircuts were always clean" (Respondent 12 2013). Another Pamiri interviewee, who was not accepted into the Russian border guards, also mentioned the advantages of this service over the RT units. "The main thing was money, they had good pay, they had good conditions. Lots of people went for money. Now, there is no money, no conditions" (Respondent 8 2013). His brother, however, served in the Russian 201st MRD in Dushanbe for similar reasons, signing a second service contract to stay in the unit.

Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of his experience concerns the how ethno-regional identity shaped the *dedovshchina* experience. The interviewee served in two different border guard *zastavi* (outposts): Kalaikhum and Vanj, both in GBAO along the Panj River and the Afghan border. In the former location, most of the soldiers were Pamiri. He remarked that they did not haze each other, though fights sometimes took place. However, at *zastavi*, where a few Pamiris were outnumbered by Tajiks, the "Tajiks would

band together and target the Pamiris." In Vanj, his arrival brought the number of Pamiris to three, so "the others could not pick on us. Not because of my strength, but because I communicated well and was able to negotiate with the others." For the most part, the Pamiris didn't haze each other here either, but the Tajiks were all from Kulob and hazed each other regularly. "I asked them why they did this. They said this (regional identity) didn't matter to them" (Respondent 12 2013).

Of all the ethno-regional identities in Tajikistan, I detected the most solidarity among Pamiris in my research. Perhaps this should not be surprising; they comprise a relatively small population within Tajikistan and their home region is a collection of somewhat isolated mountain valleys in the high Pamirs. Their educational level is considered to be exceptionally high on a relative scale, as is their pride in being Pamiri. My interviewee explained one of the factors that reinforce this solidarity.

Pamiris do not haze each other. Khorog is a small town; if I come from the military and tell people who hazed me while I was in, people I know may choose to haze them when they see them. There would be one situation when Pamiris would haze each other, but this is related to 'slave' actions, where younger soldiers perform duties for older ones (Respondent 12 2013).

The slave actions he mentions refers to simple tasks that *mladshii* (younger) soldiers perform for *starshie* (older) soldiers; he considered these duties to be a normal part of daily

routine in the military. Some respondents noted that *dedovshchina* was not really an issue in their experience and/or that everyone was treated equally (Respondent 22 2014; Respondent 21 2014), while others noted that it doesn't exist on bases where many officers are present (Respondent 16 2013; Respondent 12 2013). These experiences may refer to this more routine form of hazing that is largely normalized within the daily structure of military life. On the other hand, *dedovshchina* involves physical and mental abuse, generates fear in conscripts and breaks unit cohesion, contributes to desertion and has been linked to suicides (*RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty* 2006; *Asia-Plus* 2008; Haidar 2014; *Ozodagon* 2014c; *Asia-Plus* 2014b; *Asia-Plus* 2014c; Djuraev 2014). In some cases interviews, I felt that the respondent wanted to hide his experience with *dedovshchina* (Respondent 21 2014) or was openly unwilling to discuss it (Respondent 9 2013).

A Pamiri respondent who served in the RT Presidential (National) Guard in Dushanbe also noted the Pamiri solidarity within the military. During *dedovshchina*, he explained that *starshie* Pamiris would take care of *mladshii* Pamiris, mostly by replacing material goods that had been taken from them. He noted that other ethno-regional groups didn't exhibit this kind of solidarity in the military. Further, while he was friendly with the other three Pamiris in his unit, he interacted with the Tajiks he served with only professionally. "We communicated officially, but not so much as comrades" (Respondent 14 2013).

Another Pamiri who served in the security services corroborated his group solidarity. "Pamiris band together, especially away from their home region. Other regional identities, not so much" and "Pamiri officers protect Pamiris" (Respondent 10 2013). When asked about other (specific) identities, he stated that Uzbeks and Kyrgyz would be targeted in dedovshchina, especially if they were serving far from their home regions. One Pamiri who served in the RT army refused to answer questions regarding dedovshchina and remarked that there were no problems in his unit among the different ethno-regional groups (Respondent 9 2013). It is impossible to know if this was truly his experience, but it stands in contrast to that of all other veterans from GBAO.

A Khujandi member of Amparo and expert on military personnel affairs in Tajikistan commented on the ethno-regional issue. When asked about Pamiri solidarity relative to other groups, he responded "(t)his is the nature of the Pamiri people. However, it cannot be applied to other ethnics/regions in Tajikistan. For instance, a Kulobi may torture a Kulobi, or a Khujandi may do the same with a Khujandi mladshii" (Respondent 16 2013). He further described the practice of base assignment and how it helps establish a spatial pattern to the practice of dedovshchina at the national scale. Since conscripts are typically deployed to bases far from their home region, soldiers in any given region are typically not from the surrounding area. Thus, bases in southern Tajikistan are likely to be full of

conscripts from the north and vice-versa. He then associates the practice of dedovshchina more prominently with southern (Kulobi) Tajiks.

(T)he people of the north tend to be more educated compared to the south, and dedovshchina apparently appears less in the units in which they serve. This is typically in the southern bases; in contrast, the northern bases have more dedovshchina due to more southerners serving there. In addition, the units that are based in Dushanbe and the Regions of Republican Subordination have more visits and control from the center just due to their proximity, which makes the existence of dedovshchina to be in doubt there (Respondent 16 2013).

Soldier and Officer Compensation

Multiple respondents reference the very low compensation in the RT military as an important disincentive to serve (Respondent 1 2013; Respondent 4 2013; Respondent 8 2013; Respondent 14 2013). Some compare it directly with pay and benefits found in Soviet or Russian armed forces, which are substantially higher (Respondent 12 2013; Respondent 21 2014). If it is true that the RT conscripts are predominantly from economically and educationally marginalized backgrounds, extremely low to nonexistent pay would seem to add a disproportionately negative component to the experience relative to wealthier and better educated ones. Put differently, if pay were reasonable, poor males would at least be compensated, even if they were unable to avoid service. Since the pay is nearly nonexistent, the negative experience of military service is exacerbated further.

One Pamiri who served in the Presidential (National) Guard, noted that he was never paid. "Instead of money, we received basic goods like toothpaste. They said, "this is your salary"" (Respondent 14 2013). He noted that soldiers did not receive enough basic goods and that sometimes *starshie* conscripts stole cases of materials and sold them on the black market. To make his service time even worse, officers demanded bribe payments from conscripts in order to be granted the contractually allotted 10 days of official leave.

One way to gauge the pay of career soldiers (despite these conditions, Tajikistan does have some) is to look at the compensation of officers. Like many statistics for the RT military, the full pay range of the cadre is not readily available. However, in 2014 Radio Ozodi published a comparison of pay for lieutenants (junior officers) in each of the 15 post-Soviet republics. The article listed pay in Russian rubles, but also presented an equivalent in U.S. dollars for the five Central Asian republics. "In dollar terms, according to this study, a lieutenant in Tajikistan receives \$56, while the salary of his colleagues in Uzbekistan is \$120, in Kyrgyzstan - \$200, in Turkmenistan - \$250, and in Kazakhstan - \$470" (*Radio Ozodi* 2014).

What is striking about this comparison is not that Tajikistan is the lowest, but rather just how low; Tajikistan is the poorest of the former Soviet republics at \$990 per capita GNI

(The World Bank 2013b), but Kyrgyzstan is not far behind at \$1210 (The World Bank 2013a), yet it pays its lieutenants nearly four times as much as Tajikistan (\$200 compared to \$56). Coupled with the negligible pay and limited material goods provided to conscripts, it is difficult to imagine many soldiers entering the RT armed services with the intention of long-term employment, unless they have some promise of rapid advancement through the ranks. One respondent noted that his brother wanted to stay in the military to potentially pursue a career, but the pay was too low to make it worthwhile (Respondent 18 2014).

Tajikistan has the full range of officers (generals, colonels, majors, etc.), so who stays and climbs through the rank structure? This is an important question if the military is to represent the breadth of society and help to mold positive national sentiments among the population. The next section examines how ethno-regional identity shapes the officer corps and in turn reflects the social divisions that exist in Tajikistan.

Ethno-regional Groups in the Officer Corps

The importance of ethno-regional identity and patron-client networks in the advancement of officers through the ranks represents perhaps the greatest challenge to the military as a contributor to national sentiments. If certain groups are favored for advancement over others, the very concept of a national military is thrown into question. The majority of the cabinet

ministers and other key figures of the Rakhmon regime are from the Kulob area, more specifically from the president's hometown of Dangara. It is logical to expect that this region of origin be disproportionately represented among not only the general officers, but also increasingly among senior officers (colonels and majors) of the RT military. The heads of the key ministries and services in the RT security sector fit this pattern. Below is a list of these officials/generals with their hometown/place of birth in *italics*. All of these towns are in relatively close proximity to each other in the SE section of Khatlon Oblast as is shown on Map 6.1.

Ministry of Defense: General Sherali Mirzo, *Hamadoni (near Kulob), Khatlon Oblast*

Ministry of Interior: Ramazon Rahimov: *Dangara, Khatlon Oblast*

GKNB (former KGB): Saimumin Yatimov: *Farkhor, Khatlon Oblast*

Committee on State Secrets: Saidamir Zuhurov, *Farkhor, Khatlon Oblast*

Border Guards: Lt. General Rajabali Rahmonali, *Dangara, Khatlon Oblast* (president's nephew)

National Guard: Bobojon Jamolzoda: *Dangara, Khatlon Oblast*
("Who is who? (Кто есть кто)" 2015; *Asia-Plus* 2013d; *Asia-Plus* 2013e)

The main leaders of the security apparatus of the RT government are all from the same ethno-regional group of Kulobi Tajiks to the exclusion of Khujandi Tajiks, Garmi Tajiks, Dushanbe/Hissori Tajiks, Uzbeks, Pamiris and Kyrgyz. At what point does it begin to matter and how are officers from less-desired groups weeded out?



Map 6.1. Tajikistan Administrative Divisions and Urban Areas

Unlike *oblava* and *dedovshchina*, discussion of ethno-regional identity in the RT military is not well documented in the media (with the exception of the biographical sketches of its highest leaders). It may be inferred in some articles on

conscription and hazing, but is rarely, if ever, considered directly. In my field research, insight into this important phenomenon could only be gained through interviews with locals and to some degree, a few Western expatriate military experts. Given that the number of these interviews is relatively small, it is important to acknowledge that the information I present in this section is limited in depth. However, the fact that there is disproportionate representation by southern Tajiks over all other groups in the military officer corps does not seem to be controversial. Rather, there are differing views of the logic and legitimacy of this condition in the context of Tajikistan's geopolitics.

The general acceptance that southern Tajiks filled the key positions in the Rakhmon regime was apparent in conversations with nearly everyone I met in Dushanbe and other parts of the country. As a result, I asked a local military expert about whether this mattered in the RT armed forces.

Researcher: Do the people from Kulob have more prospects in military compared to, for example, from Khujand?

Respondent: They have better prospects in both civil service and the military. But the system does not prevent the appearance of people of other ethnic/regional groups. It admits them, but without those who are really talented, the system fails. They are admitted out of need. The guys from north can be working and holding high positions in both military or ministry administration, but for this they have to be really adept in their work, whereas those from the south do not necessarily have to be so accomplished. They differ in terms of quantity as well. The guys from the

south are prioritized compared to other parts due to their network connections (Respondent 16 2013).

His response includes two important points. First, as in the conscription system, entrance into the officer corps is not predicated on ethno-regional identity; the system does not appear to exclude certain groups from entry into either the ranks of enlisted personnel or commissioned officers. Second, he discusses the relationship between ethno-regional groups (and their related patron-client connections) and the proficiency and expertise of military officers. Officers who are politically connected and/or from the south can advance through the ranks with little effort (and foreseeably no ceilings) while those from other regions need to be hard workers and/or talented if they hope to advance. When political connections carry significant weight, they often trump talent and hard work; thus, even being a skilled and capable officer is no guarantee of rapid or consistent advancement, while political connections (often ethno-regional in nature) carries substantial weight in promotion.

A conversation with a Pamiri military expert (Respondent 18 2014) revealed his view of the parameters of potential advancement. I have previously noted that in my experience, Pamiris not only exhibit the most resilient solidarity as a group, but also see military service as an attractive career option (or at least project the least fear of service). However, according to this source (among others), Pamiris are talented, but rarely make it past major (senior officer). Reaching this

plateau prevents them from obtaining the rank of colonel or general, unless they can prove their loyalty in some way or perhaps advance through corruption. For him, the hierarchy of ethno-regional groups within the military is as follows:

1. Kulobis (Dangara especially)
2. Regions of Republican Subordination (RRS)/Dushanbe
3. Khatlon
4. Sughd/Khujandis (including Uzbeks)
5. GBAO/Pamiris (including Kyrgyz)

The position of Pamiris at the bottom is indicative of endemic differences between Dushanbe and power brokers in GBAO. The Rakhmon regime has not been able to exercise its desired level of sovereignty over the oblast since independence. Pamiri solidarity couple with geographic isolation in their mountain valleys has made the short arm of Dushanbe's law even shorter. This relationship has led to violence in Khorog on occasion, the most pronounced in the summer of 2012 when the RT military descended upon the capital of GBAO in force (Радио Озоди 2012; Kucera 2013a). I discuss this event in detail later in this chapter. For now, it is important to recognize this antipathetic situation and its effect on ethno-regional relations within the RT military structure.

Uzbeks make up the second largest ethno-regional group behind Tajiks in Tajikistan. During the civil war, their militias fought on the side of the government in the current oblast of

Khatlon. After the war, the Rakhmon regime marginalized their influence (see Chapter II) and official use of the Uzbek language. Unlike Pamiris, Uzbeks live in sections of Tajikistan that are also heavily populated by Tajiks. Uzbeks do not share the degree of autonomy enjoyed by Pamiris (aided by the isolation of their homeland). Additionally, the existence of the titular republic of Uzbekistan, with which Tajikistan has a tenuous diplomatic relationship (see Chapter IV), can add tension to Uzbeks' interactions with Tajiks and the Rakhmon regime.

My only interview with an Uzbek (a local village leader), however, provided some interesting insights. Within the context of this section, I asked what this interviewee thought of the domination of Kulobis within the military hierarchy (and government), he offered a sobering response. "The President is a strong ruler. He needs his loyal assistants; this is not an issue. We are not a democracy. It will be many decades before anything like this is possible" (Respondent 22 2014). The Central Asian concept of "peace" is one that acknowledges power and stability as primary, with individual rights and equality often a distant second (Respondent 24 2014). "If you have bread and water to dip it in, everything is okay" (Respondent 22 2014). In some ways, his view represents an aspect of the Soviet legacy; when I asked about the Russian 201st base in Kurgan-Teppe, he told me, "(t)he Russians made us what we are today. Our country, our nation. We owe them. There are no problems whatsoever. Without them we are nothing!" (Respondent 22 2014). This view may or may

not be shared by younger Uzbeks who did not grow up in the Soviet period. Nonetheless, such a positive view of the former colonizer is an important illustration of the enduring influence of Soviet social engineering.

Ethno-regionalism and Conflict: Khorog, Summer 2012

I have demonstrated the strong sentiments of solidarity and desire for (continued) autonomy displayed by Pamiris. This autonomy is practiced in a number of ways, from the lasting power in GBAO afforded former commanders from the civil war to the development and maintenance of their own schools and universities and development projects through the financial support of the Aga Khan. Further, the control of cross-border (especially illicit) trade with Afghanistan is also important. In a territory with limited resources, Dushanbe has been wary of this autonomy and attempted to chip away at it whenever possible.

The events of the summer of 2012 generated little media coverage outside of Central Asia. Within Tajikistan, they were big news. In short, General Abdullo Nazarov, head of the border guard district at Ishkashim, was murdered on July 21, 2012, in what has been characterized as a personal dispute over the cross-border tobacco trade with a former Pamiri civil war commander, Tolib Ayombekov, who controlled much of this trade. Negotiations began between the RT law enforcement agencies and Ayombekov, who agreed to hand over those purportedly involved in the murder for

trial. The negotiations broke down when MoI Alpha unit special forces, MoD army, and National Guard units arrived by helicopter into Khorog on July 22. Ayombekov believed the government was coming for him and the other commanders who wield informal power in GBAO. More units arrived on July 23. Locals claimed the total number reached 3000 - including a contingent that was already in Khorog for military exercises ("Khifz-2012") (Kerymov, Bakhrieva, and Akdodova 2013, 12-13).

Fighting broke out in the early hours of July 24, with locals claiming that the RT units opened fire, which generated a response from the Khorog residents and supporters of the commanders. All electronic communications were cut off from the city, with the head of the Communications Service claiming that this was because "a bullet hit a fibre-optic cable;" the cable was not restored until August 28 (Kerymov, Bakhrieva, and Akdodova 2013, 14). Negotiations mediated by the "Group of 20," local mahalla civic leaders, began on July 25. The fighting came to an end on July 28 after the Aga Khan called on all Ismailis to allow the situation to be settled through relevant state structures, a call that was largely answered by the Khorog population (Kerymov, Bakhrieva, and Akdodova 2013, 15). A voluntary handover of small arms by locals followed. In August, two men accused of killing General Nazarov voluntarily surrendered and were tried and convicted in January 2013, and received lengthy prison sentences.

For Khorog residents, the violence has had a powerful lasting effect. The human rights reports notes that "due to the exchange of fire it was impossible to move about the city" and "in particular around the microdistricts in which military activities were conducted, there were snipers who also shot at peaceful inhabitants" (Kerymov, Bakhrieva, and Akdodova 2013, 30). The death toll included 22 civilians and 23 members of the RT security forces; one of the civilians was only 16 years old, killed by a sniper. In addition, unknown assailants raided the house of Imomnazar Imomnazarov, another former civil war commander on August 22, and killed him (Kerymov, Bakhrieva, and Akdodova 2013, 34). Many locals believe these were RT security forces.

The "invasion" of Khorog provides important insights into the competencies of the RT military and the Rakhmon regime's intentions regarding its use. According to one source who witnessed the fighting directly, the many RT soldiers had no interest in fighting and either jumped in the Gunt River to escape or simply surrendered at the earliest opportunity to the resistance in Khorog (Respondent 13 2013). Examining the casualty lists, more security forces were killed than Khorog residents (many of whom were clearly noncombatants). Further information is difficult to come by. The government has released very little and Khorog residents are careful to discuss the matter (though some claim a victory of sorts). Nevertheless, the military action in Khorog poses important questions about the RT units' limited

tactical capabilities in actual combat - not to mention their motivation. If the view of the action as a victory for the Pamiri resisters has any merit, the morale of the RT units appears to be quite low, as exhibited by their willingness to break or be taken prisoner in order to escape fighting. It should not be surprising that a force conscripted and impressed into service, underfed, and undertrained would also be unmotivated to fight an internal enemy that offers no existential threat to the state (or perhaps more importantly, to their families).

But the question of ethno-regional identity within the military is a poignant one in this case. What does it mean for Pamiri soldiers to arrive for a training exercise and be informed they would essentially be attacking their hometown (or at least the capital of their home region)? Pamiris are somewhat divided on their views of the former civil war commanders/warlords who control much of the illicit cross-border trade (especially narcotics) with Afghanistan. Many are uncomfortable with the illegal and immoral nature of the trade's influence on the region and the sometimes-forceful manner the commanders' deputies exhibit among the population (Respondent 25 2014). Still, negative views of these figures are weighed against a general distrust of the government in Dushanbe. The choice between a problematic brother at home and a distant cousin with untrustworthy intentions in Dushanbe is a complicated one.

This choice is further influenced by a Soviet legacy that emphasizes a strong central government with a powerful leader. But it took decades of social engineering to shape views that favor the centrality of Moscow and the legitimacy of Soviet state power. In the early decades of the USSR, some Pamiris supported Stalin's policies in the region that challenged local power structures. The families of those who chose this path are still remembered for this action and locals comment on their association with Stalin (Respondent 25 2014). Will those who sided with Dushanbe on the military action in 2012 be socially banished? How will they be remembered? If the cultural past is any indicator of the present, it seems logical to assume that Khorog's residents are experiencing a reckoning of sorts. How the Pamiri population socially interprets individual actions by locals during the fighting is difficult to assess at this time.

Nonetheless, the situation highlights the importance of ethno-regional identity in the RT military, especially if the actions of Pamiri soldiers are judged differently from those with other ethno-regional affiliations, such as Tajiks or Uzbeks. It also poses another related question: did Pamiris soldiers who took part in the fighting advance within the RT military rank structure as a result of their actions? Could active participation in this event be considered a form of loyalty test for the Rakhmon regime's security apparatus? This last question is even harder to answer in the contemporary environment in Khorog, but its pertinence is hard to overstate. If officers from

certain ethno-regional groups have glass ceilings in the rank structure, it stands to reason that they may grasp at opportunities to prove their loyalty to the regime.

If this is indeed the case, it poses yet another challenge to the military's ability to produce and reproduce stronger national sentiments. On the one hand, choosing the national military over one's home region would seem to elevate the nation over subnational allegiances. Of course, the opportunity for individual career advancement (especially in the context of a poor country) must be considered too, perhaps lessening the role played by nationalist sentiments. On the other, being placed in a position where advancement is predicated on performing in a manner not required of the dominant ethno-regional group (risking one's social reputation) challenges the idea that the nation is an inclusive, rather than exclusive, body. While other groups fit into lower positions in the state/military hierarchy discussed in previous interviews (Respondent 18 2014), none seem to carry the same price for allegiance with the state when tough choices are presented, as they were in 2012 and have continued to be since.

Indeed, the events during the summer of 2012 were catastrophic for Pamiris in their relations with Dushanbe. How the Rakhmon regime handles Pamiri autonomy and develops inclusive policies will help shape this relationship more than military action, which acted more to pull GBAO away from Dushanbe than increase positive views of the government.

Foreign Militaries and Tajikistani Recruits

In the Soviet Union, the Tajik SSR was one of the smallest and least militarized republics. In addition to its own national armed forces, in recent years it has accommodated military units from foreign powers such as Russia and France (the latter's units exited in 2014) (Kucera 2014; Kutnaeva 2010). Soldiers from the U.S. Special Forces have been temporarily based there who are on leave from Afghanistan and/or who are training RT military units (Kucera 2013a; Kucera 2012a). American military contractors have been training locals in non-lethal technical equipment as well. I personally met a few of these current and former soldiers during my fieldwork. Further, India has provided direct aid to Tajikistan's military (Yuldashev 2013a) and refurbished a military airfield west of Dushanbe at Ayni, though the base remains vacant at this time (Kucera 2010; Kucera 2011). Of these foreign forces, only Russia consistently maintains a substantial contingent.

This relatively recent influx of attention and investment from foreign militaries (Russia excluded) is notable for a number of reasons. First, it represents a substantial increase over the number of units based there during the Soviet period, of which the Russian 201st MRD is a direct descendant. Second, on one side, some of these foreign militaries represent an effort to develop influence in this newly independent state that sits within the Russian sphere of influence, while on the other,

Russia seeks to maintain and/or expand its influence in its former territory. Third, this attention positions the RT government to take advantage of this competition and benefit from foreign training missions, direct equipment transfers, and financing of its security programs. Lastly, this assistance helps to improve aspects of the RT security forces, though it pales in comparison to the presence of the Russian 201st MRD, which acts as the security guarantor of the Rakhmon regime.

I argue that the existence of the Russian base allows the regime to avoid substantial investment in its own military, particularly regarding the basic rights of its personnel in terms of food, medical care, supplies and pay. If Russia is willing to perform the function of national defense for the state, why should the RT invest in its own military? If Tajikistan does not invest adequately in its national armed forces, how are they to be perceived by the population as a representative institution of the larger nation?

This section addresses the ways in which the presence of foreign militaries in Tajikistan shape popular views of the RT military. These militaries are professional, highly technical, and serve as national symbols in their countries. In Chapter V, I problematized the issues surrounding the consideration of the RT military as a national integrator and/or symbol, focusing on its unpopularity in the practice of conscription. In previous sections of this chapter, I examined material and behavioral

conditions within the military. Comparing Tajikistan's national armed forces to these foreign militaries, particularly Russia's (with which locals are most familiar), presents yet another challenge to the potential integrating role of military service in Tajikistan. This challenge is further complicated by the option RT nationals have of serving in the Russian 201st MRD in Tajikistan, and more recently, to serve as a contract soldier in any units of the Russian military. The latter option may potentially include deployment into combat abroad. Given that this option is available to locals and their own military is characterized by such poor conditions, there are very few reasons left for any male to choose to serve the state rather than Russia. This surely poses serious challenges to the development of national sentiments, especially in a post-Soviet state where the concept of military service is held in high regard.

The Russian 201st MRD in Tajikistan

I briefly discuss the evolution of the Soviet 201st MRD into its Russian equivalent in Chapter I, but it is important here to emphasize the Russian rationale for keeping this unit. Shortly after independence, Moscow viewed Tajikistan's political situation as unstable and their fears were legitimized by the eruption of the civil war within a year. With no universally recognized government to which Moscow could transfer the 201st or the border guards serving on the Afghan frontier, the units would

have to remain Russian for the time being. At the same time, civil war raged in Afghanistan and the Russian government feared this instability would spread into its former territories; indeed, connections between these conflicts exacerbated this fear. The 201st was soon drawn into the Tajik Civil War on the pro-government side while it remained a Russian institution and Moscow saw the value of a military base in what appeared to be a region rife with political instability. The Rakhmon regime, established in 1992, asked Moscow to remove the Russian border guards along the Afghan frontier, a process that began in 2004 and was completed in 2005 (Respondent 12 2013).

Semi-permanent basing agreements for the 201st were signed between the RT and RF, initially a ten-year deal in 2004, which was recently replaced in 2013 by a 30-year extension set to end in 2042 (Roudik 2013; Kozhevnikov 2013; Service 2013; Kucera 2013c). This was an important deal for both states, and there was considerable local media coverage of its negotiation. A Voice of Russia article on the deal noted "the threat of terrorism and drug trafficking remains strong" and quoted a member of the RT parliament, who stated "'Russia's progress and stability means stability for the entire region" (*Voice of Russia* 2013). Tajikistan's own Asia Plus interviewed another lawmaker, Ismoil Talbakov, who noted "it is not secret that the Russian military base in Tajikistan today not only protects the interests of Russia or Tajikistan, but it also may provide peace and stability in the whole Central Asian region" (Yuldashev 2013b). On the

Russian side, a foreign policy aide of Vladimir Putin, Yuri Ushakov, commented "(t)his base is needed by us, and is needed by Tajikistan" (Kucera 2012b). As may be apparent from these quotes, much of the rhetoric about the need for the 201st base revolves around instability emerging from Afghanistan.

However, little of this coverage challenged the need for the agreement, or for Russian presence in Tajikistan. This may very well represent the broad support for Russian presence in Tajikistan, but to some there was not enough debate. Eurasianet's Josh Kucera noted that one opposition politician "said that the presence of the base weakened Tajikistan's sovereignty." The politician, Aminyat Abdulnazarov stated, "(a)fter the pressure applied by Russia, the parliament had no choice but to ratify the agreement."" Paraphrasing another, he noted that the "debate in Tajikistan as been pretty muted for a deal that's going to mean 29 more years of Russian military presence there" (Kucera 2013c).

Another Eurasianet blogger, David Trilling, aptly noted that Rakhmon was up for reelection the following year, raising the question of Russia's ability to influence elections in some Central Asian states. "(Rakhmon) has not said he will definitely run, but few expect any change of power. If he betrays Vladimir Putin, however - as ousted President Kurmanbek Bakiyev from neighboring Kyrgyzstan can tell you - he could face a formidable opponent" (Trilling 2013).

This view speaks to the deep, symbiotic yet uneven relationship I unpack in Chapter IV between the Rakhmon regime and the RF that involves security guarantees, migrant labor, and maintenance of the political status quo for both sides. While instability in Afghanistan is certainly one threat to be countered, it is often overstated. In fact, one Tajik commenter rightly questioned the utility of the 201st in Tajikistan to counter the threat of "Taliban-style militants." "If they decide to 'attack,' this will be done the way its done elsewhere in the Muslim world: they will first change the Tajiks psychology, making them kill infidels. This enemy won't be visible in the air or on the border" (Kozhevnikov 2013). Another potential threat that goes largely unnamed is Uzbekistan, with which the RT regime is often at odds. Russia has often been unhappy with Uzbek President Islam Karimov, so having the 201st base active is a deterrent to the north as well.

For locals, knowing the 201st will be based in Tajikistan for the foreseeable future may be reassuring, given the state of the RT military. One respondent commented that at one point his mother was concerned that the agreement had not been signed yet, and "was planning to move to Moscow, because as NATO and U.S. troops leave Afghanistan, the increase in drug trafficking, stability threats and an increase in Islamic fundamentalism will start appearing" (Respondent 5 2013). Another, who spent some of his younger years in Kurgan-Teppe near the Russian base there, also had positive views of their presence. "Russians being in our

territory does not affect me to be less patriotic. Besides, their existence is accepted positively. They guard our border better. Therefore, in current situation Russian presence makes us feel safer" (Respondent 6 2013).

The discursive legitimation for the 201st's presence and the long-term basing agreement highlights the degree to which Russia can exert pressure on Tajikistan's politicians and the Rakhmon's regime's reliance on Russian assistance to remain in power. This is important if we are to understand how the regime seeks to shape popular views of Russia and its military, in many ways at the expense of supporting its own armed forces. In the next sections I examine how locals view potential service in the Russian military.

Honorable Service with the Old Hegemon

But I don't think it will help me to go to the Tajik army. I can go to the Russian base. I have heard they are recruiting Tajik people (Respondent 1 2013).

In Chapter V, I note some of the experiences of RT nationals serving the Russian border guards as well as the desire, or at least interest, of some respondents in serving in the Russian 201st MRD. I also discuss the strong social value citizens placed on military service in the Soviet Union, including the Tajik SSR. This aspect of the Soviet legacy appeared in a number of interviews and media coverage.

Specifically, the concept of military service is still considered important by many in Tajikistan, even if the comments by my interview respondents suggest that they have difficulty associating the RT armed forces with this service (i.e. service in the RT forces may not meet the standards set by the Soviet Union). Put another way, for RT citizens, military service is valued, but service in the RT military doesn't measure up because of its poor conditions, lack of training and discipline, extensive problems with *dedovshchina*, and nearly nonexistent pay. My fieldwork shows that many RT citizens would like their military to be more professional--to serve the country and be an institution to be proud of, but it simply does not meet this standard.

If service in the RT military is considered to be pointless, service in the Russian armed forces substitutes as a worthy alternative. In my research, three respondents expressed a direct willingness to enlist in the 201st MRD (Respondent 1 2013; Respondent 4 2013; Respondent 6 2013), even if they had not attempted to do so. All thought military service to be important and interesting, but none seriously considered joining the RT armed forces, at least not after they heard what it was like. One respondent noted that others, like his brother, did not understand that the RT military was not the Soviet Red Army anymore. He joined and had bad experiences with *dedovshchina* and convinced the respondent not to enlist, telling him stories of his hazing. Conversations with his brother convinced him not to

enlist, even though he was interested in military service. He ended up studying in the U.S. instead (Respondent 4 2013).

Two others served in the Russian border guards before they withdrew from Tajikistan in 2005 (Respondent 12 2013; Respondent 21 2014) and both indicated that their experience was largely positive in terms of pay, training and general treatment by their comrades, even if some *dedovshchina* took place there. Their experiences match the general views and expectations of serving in the 201st MRD held by other respondents. My first respondent had a friend who was serving in intelligence in the 201st. He noted that Tajiks were useful to the Russians in this kind of work, especially when dealing with Afghanistan, patrolling the border, and other related activities.

Respondent: He told me why Tajiks are recruited. They know Afghanistan, they look similar. Russians cannot go there because they are bald.

Researcher: They would be found out.

Respondent: We know the scripture, Farsi. Not all, but the majority know...If (I had) my choice, I (had to choose between) the 201st or our military, I would choose the 201st (Respondent 1 2013).

Given the modest number of interviews I was able to conduct during my fieldwork, it would be premature to assume these responses are indicative of the viewpoints of most males in Tajikistan. However, when coupled with the overwhelming perception of the bad conditions found within the RT military and the legacy of social importance assigned to military service during the Soviet period, it seems likely that others hold

similar, if not precisely the same, opinions about the Russian 201st. Of course, there are realities and experiences that can run counter to this view; for example, some labor migrants who have lived in Russia and experienced xenophobic attacks may not feel inclined to associate themselves with the Russian state, though it is also possible that they crave the social and legal acceptance associated with such an opportunity discussed below. Political elites with military backgrounds or connected Kulobi Tajiks who serve in more advantageous positions or units (such as the Alphas Special Forces) may prefer the opportunities available to them in the RT security apparatus. These would seem to be logical exceptions to what might be safely assumed to be a general preference for the Russian 201st over the RT military.

Serving Mother Russia Abroad

In January 2015, Russia issued a decree that enables foreign nationals to serve in its military (RFE/RL 2015a). This development altered the status quo on the matter in two important ways. First, most foreign soldiers serving in the RF military forces do so in Russian units based in their own country; for example, Armenians, Georgians and Tajikistanis serving in Russian units based in Armenia, Georgia (South Ossetia and Abkhazia) and Tajikistan respectively. Second, and most importantly, foreign nationals serving in the RF military may now be sent abroad into combat (RFE/RL 2015a). One month after this law was enacted, the

RT amended its own law making it illegal for citizens to fight with groups in armed conflicts in foreign lands (Kucera 2015a). A member of the RT parliament, Makhmadali Vatanov, noted that this law was only meant to apply to citizens fighting in "illegal armed formations" (Yuldashev 2015), a legal application clearly aimed at groups such as the Islamic State (IS).

The new law would presumably draw support from males in Tajikistan who were originally conscripted to service in the 201st, though the concept of serving anywhere Russia's enemies may be found is distinctly different from defending Tajikistan in an RF uniform. Nonetheless, given the pay (an average monthly salary of \$500), training and other benefits of service coupled with the legacy of post-Soviet military tradition, it is likely that RT citizens will line up to apply for contract enlistment in the Russian military. In an interview with Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, one young Tajik "said paid service in the Russian army was a preferable alternative to working in Russia as a labor migrant" (RFE/RL 2015a).

The RFE/RL article noted another important stakeholder in Russia's offer: labor migrants already in living Russia. In 2014, Mohammed Amin Majumder, leader of Russia's Federation of Migrants stated, "100,000 migrants were ready "to defend Russia's interests anywhere in the world."" This support is seen as a play for citizenship for labor migrants who lack social and legal status and protection in Russia (RFE/RL 2015a). The entrenched

relationship between the migrant economy and military recruitment in Tajikistan has been further cemented through the addition of Russia's decree on foreign contract soldiers. The Rakhmon regime's quick compliance with RF military's personnel needs provides yet another indication of its dependence both on the 201st for its existential defense and on migrant remittances for its economy. The legal nature of this new source of remittances - the Russian armed forces - provides some stability to the process, which, for labor migrants, is subject to the ups and downs of the Russian economy and the whims of its immigration policies. Contract soldiers carry legal protections and their salaries from the state would not be vulnerable to the same hazards as those of migrant workers, who regularly experience extortion and threats to their visa status; even this year Russia has introduced expensive new tests and work permits as part of the work visa process (*EurasiaNet* 2015).

The timing of this decree coincides with Russia's active military campaign in eastern Ukraine, where some commenters believe Putin has overstretched the reach of his armed forces. Reports surfaced quickly that RT enlistees in the Russian military had been sent to Ukraine. Military spokespeople for the RF deny such reports (*EurasiaNet* 2015; *KyivPost* 2015; Morse 2015). However, *EurasiaNet* reports that an interview with a Dushanbe resident revealed that his cousin had been transferred from the 201st base to Crimea, where he has been promised an apartment and can move his family (*EurasiaNet* 2015). In any

event, it would seem that plans to raise the size of the 201st MRD to 9000 troops by 2020 (*Radio Ozodi* 2015) are contingent on recruiting Central Asian males to serve there. Overall, the Russian military has announced plans to grow its armed forces from the 2014 figure of around 295,000 personnel to over 500,000 by 2021 (Yuldashev 2015). Given the demographic decline in the Russian national population, the logic and timing behind Putin's recent decree becomes clear.

Just how this new opportunity shapes national sentiments in Tajikistan is hard to gauge at this point. Statements from representatives of both Russia and Tajikistan are instructive. EurasiaNet interviewed Yaroslav Roshchupkin, the spokesman for Russia's Central Military District, which includes Tajikistan.

"First, it is not the Russian army that needs recruits from Tajikistan. But we provide them this opportunity because many wish to get Russian citizenship. Contract soldiers get Russian citizenship through a simplified procedure and they can get a [low-interest] mortgage through the military," Roshchupkin told EurasiaNet.org. He added that the number of Tajiks who have joined the Russian military is a secret (*EurasiaNet* 2015).

Roshchupkin also stated that the 201st base in Tajikistan is not able to process recruits at this time, so RT citizens must currently apply at a recruitment office in Russia. Military training and Russian language skills are prioritized among applicants.

Comments by RT officials provide an interesting look at the juxtaposition between contract service in the Russian military

and the issues surrounding conscription and basic conditions in the RT military. An RT member of parliament, Nasrullo Makhmudov, stated that, "I think that Tajik citizens must serve in the official Tajik army. However, there are times when a person has left the country and cannot serve. [...] It is up to them. If they want, they can serve in the Russian army" (*EurasiaNet* 2015). Makhmudov seems to imply that those RT citizens who migrate to Russia will constitute the majority of contract recruits and that locals will continue to be forced to serve in the national military. If so, this is a dubious analysis; I have shown that other male citizens see the value of service in the 201st. It is unclear why Makhmudov thinks they would not opt to enlist.

However, this is not the most far-fetched statement made by a government official on the subject. The RT MoD spokesperson, Faidun Makhmadaliev, when asked by *EurasiaNet* whether the new Russian policy would hamper the RT military's conscription and recruitment efforts, responded that this was not a problem because Tajiks are patriots. "They will never refuse their poor mother in favor of a rich one." He further claimed that "(p)eople stand in line to serve in the army. We can even choose the best candidates for the Tajik army" (*EurasiaNet* 2015). These statements contradict the RT military's struggles with conscription, living conditions and *dedovshchina* (which *EurasiaNet* notes in the article). The statements are consistent with the approach used in other responses to criticism of military issues from government officials: denial.

When asked about avoiding oblava by Ozodagon in 2013, Makhmadaliev replied,

First, it shall be mentioned that the term "Oblava" does not exist in law for military service. In addition to the above mentioned, every citizen have rights and responsibilities, to serve in military. In case if those citizens, whose ages became proper for military service, would visit recruitment centers themselves, there would not be any need for searching them (Ozodagon 2013).

When asked about illegal conscription practices in Sughd, "recruiters express no knowledge about 'oblava' in districts and cities across the Sughd, and also refuse even a single case of 'oblava' in youth recruitment" (Yodgor 2011). In the oblava case in the bazaar of Vose, which burned a local female cook with hot oil mentioned in the previous chapter, the local military commissar said that the recruiting office was not guilty because "there was no oblava of conscripts that day" (Radio Ozodi 2013). Major-General Azam Kasymov, Sughd military garrison chief, responding to comments about problems with living conditions in the RT military, stated that the military has "created the perfect conditions for service" and "parents who visited military units across the country were convinced that today we have very good conditions" in the military." Regarding the morale of soldiers in the RT military, he responded that "many who are drafted by force in the army, having served, thank us" (Mirsaid 2014).

These quotes are typical of government responses to journalistic inquiries into conscription practices and conditions

in the military. My research strongly contradicts statements of this nature, as do stories in the news media and opinions of the general public. It seems the state simply denies the existence of problems until it can determine whether or not it wishes, or has the capacity, to tackle them. Perhaps this should not be surprising in such a poor country. But it is difficult to hide the reality of Tajikistan's military and its ever-closer relationship with Russia.

Service in Other Foreign Militaries: The Military High School

During my fieldwork, I interviewed three Tajiks who attended a national military high school located near the Dushanbe airport. Obtaining information on this school was difficult, though its existence was corroborated by a Western deputy military attaché. The school offered the recruits a path to join the RT military with preferential treatment, but the more attractive option for some was the potential to enter the military (any service) of Russia, India or France as an enlisted man (Respondent 3 2013). Acceptance into these foreign militaries would be predicated on successful completion of the program and the passage of examinations, including tests of language skills. Unfortunately, like other aspects of the RT military apparatus, it was rife with corruption and advancement often involved the payment to certain officers, or political/regional connections similar to the advancement of officers through the ranks.

Respondent 3 (Darwazi Tajik) dropped out of the program for this reason; he was unconnected and did not have the money to continue.

Another attendee (Kulobi Tajik) also mentioned the problems of advancement and the necessity of bribes in order to take and pass the required examinations (Respondent 19 2014). Both respondents noted that the largest ethno-regional group in the school was Kulobi Tajiks, mostly privileged sons from Dushanbe, but that there were student from all over the country. Officers were mostly Tajiks (no Uzbeks or Kyrgyz), though they could not tell where they were from or if any were Pamiri. There were also instructors from many places, including the U.S., France and India.

The international aspect of this military school demonstrates that Russia is not the only state offering military service options to RT citizens, even if this service option is on a much smaller scale and operates with (likely) a much higher barrier to entry (language skills, connections, aptitude). It remains to be seen whether the continued growth in the Russian military presence and political influence on the Rakhmon regime from Moscow allows these other militaries to stay involved in the school.

Conclusion

The basic conditions and daily practices within the military help to create and perpetuate strongly negative popular views of the RT national military. Food, health conditions, pay, training, uniforms, and equipment are all reasons Tajikistani males cite when responding to the question, "why not serve?" That males by and large do not want to serve is especially pertinent in the poorest former Soviet republic, which has a rapid population growth rate and few economic prospects; if conditions in the military were tolerable, the food decent, and pay reasonable, it is logical to conclude that a sufficient number of males would volunteer. But the normalized hazing of *dedovshchina* stokes fear in the heart of most military aged males.

Ethno-regional identity is laced into the fabric of everyday life in Tajikistan and the military fits this pattern. The everyday practices and structures in the RT armed forces shape and reflect these divisions. My research suggests that this serves to inhibit national sentiments and any views of the military as a national integrator. While group identity often plays an important role in the performance of *dedovshchina*, there is also a universalizing aspect to this practice that lessens the significance of ethno-regional identity. The importance of the *starshii - mladshii* relationship (older - younger) among conscripts is fundamental to the perpetuation of *dedovshchina*, even as it varies somewhat in time and space. In this context, some ethno-regional groups (Pamiris) exhibit strong solidarity

relative to other groups (Kulobi Tajiks).

Most importantly, the ethno-regional composition of the general officers - all originating from SE Khatlon Oblast - poses potentially serious challenges to the RT military as a national integrator. Further, the existence of an ethno-regional hierarchy with separate glass ceilings for officers from different groups (Kulobis at the top, Pamiris at the bottom) prevents the development of any impartial system based on merit. Coupled with low pay, it is difficult to envision many talented (non-Kulobi) men choosing military service as a career.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION: NATIONALISM, MILITARISM AND RENTIERISM

This study began with the assertion that examining universal conscription practices and ethno-regional identity within the RT military could provide important insights into the development of national sentiments in Tajikistan. Military imagery, war remembrance and notions of national integration place military service squarely in the center of typical state efforts to produce national sentiments. This chapter returns to this assertion. The first part of the chapter examines how the study of conscription, living conditions and ethno-regional identity in the RT military can contribute to discussions about the development of national sentiments in post-Soviet states. The second part conceptualizes the Rakhmon regime's military policies and practices in the context of an ever-strengthening Russian geopolitical relationship with Tajikistan.

Overview: What Have We Learned?

The Soviet social structure considered military service as crucial form of civic duty and its legacy continues to shape RT citizens' views. However, the contrasts between the Soviet, and later Russian, militaries and the armed forces of the RT reveal significant differences that diminish citizens' opinions of their national armed forces. Nationalism in Tajikistan was a component of Soviet socialization of Central Asian populations, with the

international view of Soviet citizenship having priority. Upon independence (but after the civil war), the newly independent state needed to develop its own sense of national identity, or at least the appearance of such; this research showed that the notion of active interest on the part of the RT government to be somewhat lacking, as I explain later in this chapter.

The larger picture of Tajik nationalism generated by the Rakhmon regime focuses on aspects of a shared Tajik history and past glory embodied in the Samanid Empire and King Ismail Somoni over 1000 years ago. However, it is more likely that the reality of developing national sentiments is different, with mundane, everyday social practices outweighing historical events and concepts of ethnogenesis in the minds of RT citizens. Though the practice of universal conscription does not take place every day, it is a reality four months out of the year and embodies the pervasive notion of national service that was so important during the Soviet period. Further, the civil war shattered any illusions of a strong cohesive national bond among Tajiks (not to mention Uzbeks, Kyrgyz and Pamiris).

In this dissertation I have drawn attention to the wide popular disdain for military service through my analysis of conscription policies and practices in Tajikistan. It is evident from discussions with interviewees and analysis of media reports that locals view the practices associated with universal conscription negatively, even if they agree with its premise

and/or perceived necessity. There are a number of practices that shape this view.

First, the state does not follow its own policies. Men who are exempt, have a deferment, do not fit the age parameters, or have a medical voenniy bilet (or would qualify for one) are often conscripted, processed, and sent off to duty in quick order. Corruption is rampant throughout the system (not to mention the government generally) and officers from the voenkomat use a variety of tactics and situations to solicit bribes from potential and actual conscripts. Those who can afford to pay often do so unless they have some other way to avoid service.

By selectively enforcing its own policies and tacitly allowing wealthy, politically connected individuals to escape national military service, the state creates a de facto divide in the polity. On the surface, this divide may appear to be class-based. However, deeper examination reveals that subnational groupings play an important role. If the highest levels of the RT government are disproportionately filled with cabinet ministers and military cadres from southern Tajikistan, specifically Tajiks from the area around Kulob and Dangara, it problematizes this issue as solely class-based.

A deep analysis of ethno-regional identity in the governmental apparatus of Tajikistan is beyond the scope of this dissertation (see Nourzhanov and Bleuer 2013), but the reality of Kulobi dominance in the political sphere is not lost on the

citizens of Tajikistan. Much like the Soviet Union before it, the political and economic spheres in Tajikistan are tightly intertwined; those who control the government largely control the economy, even at relatively small scales. Therefore, issues of privilege and exceptionalism among the connected classes in Tajikistan are closely linked to ethno-regional identity, specifically southern Tajik identity.

However, it is important to note that simply being a Tajik from Kulob or Dangara will not place a young male in a privileged position. The clan and patron-client networks that control the government in Dushanbe may be based in Kulob and Dangara (and predominantly filled with individuals from these clans), but they are not the only ones from this region. Nor are southern Tajiks the only members of these patron-client networks; people from other ethno-regional groups may join a network and prove their loyalty. Even Uzbeks and Pamiris may be found in positions of power in RT government's networks. Nevertheless, southern Tajiks still dominate key positions and since the civil war have established their hegemony over the other groups.

Thus, at the scale of the average RT male citizen, privilege and its associated power are centered among the ruling patron-client networks in Dushanbe and Dangara/Kulob. The ability to avoid military service through connections, then, is also centered in these locales.

Conscription, Oblava and the Soviet Legacy in Tajikistan

Though the popular disapproval of conscription is strong, it is unquestionably surpassed by the anger, frustration and level of active resistance to the illegal practice of oblava. Characterized by tactics based on deception and brute force, citizens' experiences with oblava range from the mundane collection of males on commissioned marshrutki running their regular routes, to raids in individual homes, to chases through bazaars and other public spaces. Given the conditions in the military, male citizens running from recruitment officers are seeking to avoid what could be equated to a prison sentence.

Russian Presence

The deficiencies within the RT military structures and practices are not the only challenge to its ability to generate national sentiments. The semi-permanent basing of the Russian 201st MRD in Tajikistan presents another test of sorts. When viewed in comparative terms, it is clear that this relatively well-funded, professional military contrasts with the underfunded, undertrained, conscripted RT armed forces; the former is representative of the highly-regarded Soviet military, while the latter is indicative of how much has changed for the worse in Tajikistan after independence. Further, the newly available option for citizens of Tajikistan to join the Russian

military without legal repercussions poses a direct challenge to the RT military as a symbol of national unity and strength.

This new policy represents yet another way in which these two states seem to be embracing a deeper hegemonic relationship, with Russia dictating the terms and the Republic of Tajikistan willing to oblige by offering its territory and population for the hegemon's geopolitical requirements. Naturally, this presents a significant challenge to the sovereignty of Tajikistan, and the development of national sentiments. Unpacking the role of these dynamics is important when considering how the military shapes Tajik nationalism.

Military Service as Biopower

This dissertation has described the conscription system and its practices (both legal and illegal), material and living conditions, and ethno-regional identity in the RT military. These conditions and practices are highly unpopular among RT citizens and construct a widening divide between the state and its polity. This is an especially poignant development given the traditional association of military service with civic duty that was established under Soviet rule and largely embraced by its citizens, even in contemporary Tajikistan. Further, the need for the Rakhmon regime to generate national sentiments in this newly independent state - with numerous subnational cleavages that

played a significant role in the civil war - is important for its political stability. Employing the military as a national integrator, not to mention security guarantor of the state and its territorial integrity, is a common tactic for post-colonial regimes. So why has the Rakhmon regime invested so little in the RT military while simultaneously citing the duty of every able-bodied citizen to serve in it? The regime's contradictory rhetoric and practices are further revealed by its consistent references to the dangers posed by existential threats emanating from Afghanistan and the Islamic State.

The answer to this question lies in two different, but interconnected, relationships. First, the aftermath of the civil war and the consolidation of power by Rakhmon involved the elimination of warlord territorial fiefdoms among both his allies and former enemies. During the civil war, the nascent RT military was comprised of pro-government militias that wielded significant military and territorial power. After the peace treaty was signed in 1997, these militias and their leaders were reluctant to directly give up their arms and personnel. As I described in Chapter II, over time Rakhmon coopted rival commanders and militarily eliminated others. Some who had joined his government and pledged loyalty later became existential threats through growing local power or even open rebellion.

That this power consolidation was tenuous and at the time bloody surely contributed to the decision to institute universal

conscription nationwide. This move would simultaneously lead to the expansion in the size of the army while diminishing the power of remaining militia commanders in the RT military structure. That Rakhmon needed to eliminate internal threats to his power - even within his own army - would not easily be forgotten. Creating a strong military force might be useful, but could its commanders be trusted? Further, training large numbers of the male population from all over the country could backfire; if an internal threat to his power were to arise, the potential for masses of local citizens trained as soldiers to join any organized opposition would exist. These potential scenarios had to be considered by the fledgling regime as it assessed the goals and policies of its armed forces.

Unsurprisingly, then, the RT government's main investment has been in its units under the MoI umbrella: the "Alphas" special forces (Russian: spetsnaz) unit (IISS 2015) composed primarily of southern Tajiks (Respondent 31 2014). As the ministry's title would suggest, these units are formulated and trained to suppress internal dissent (or those characterized as a threat to the state). Arguably they may be one of the few units actually capable of organized military action; in fact they have received training from U.S. Special Forces (Kucera 2012a) and they acted as the tip of the spear during the operation in Khorog in 2012 (RFE/RFL Tajik Service 2012).

It is notable that the southern Tajik-dominated Alpha elite unit is housed in the MoI instead of the MoD, symbolizing where the regime perceives the true threat to the state. It is reasonable to speculate that this unit (and other related ones) receive a disproportionate amount of material funding and training, which adds context to the state's lack of funding or training for the MoD and larger scale units in the MoI (i.e. border guards). It is also reasonable to speculate that soldiers serving in the Alphas have a very different military experience and that they harbor different notions of national sentiments than average conscripts serving in regular units.

Unfortunately, access to information on this unit is relatively hard to obtain. The experience of the average conscript is the primary focus of this dissertation and their experiences are arduous, unfair, and even life threatening.

Discipline and Punish?

I have noted previously that service in (most units of) the RT military has much in common with serving time in prison. Little to no pay, mental and physical hazing that is often life threatening, poor quality and low quantity of food rations, conscription practices that include random search and capture tactics, little actual military training, basing of conscripts far from their home regions, limited (if available) annual leave, and little to no personal access to friends or family from the

outside are all common negative features of service in the RT military. While the desire to serve in the world's militaries is by no means universal, many offer a number of positive incentives (pay, health care, room and board, training, social bonding) to draw in recruits for short-term service and even stay for a military career. That this aspect seems to be largely missing from the RT experience is noteworthy, especially given the rhetoric of existential threats that are regularly put forth by the Rakhmon regime (and other Central Asian governments).

Foucault's (1995) analysis of the prison system offers a useful conceptualization of the processes involved here. Referring to the development of national armies in the 18th century and the development of discipline in their organization, he compares how militaries internally socialized discipline and formed obedient bodies for the polity as a whole.

Politics, as a technique of internal peace and order, sought to implement the mechanism of the perfect army, of the disciplined mass, of the docile, useful troop, of the regiment in camp and in the field, on manoeuvres and on exercises. In the great eighteenth-century states, the army guaranteed civil peace no doubt because it was a real force, an ever-threatening sword, but also because it was a technique and a body of knowledge that could project their schema over the social body (Foucault 1995, 168).

Surely the regimented society of the Soviet Union (a state born of war) and the importance it placed on military service left a deep mark on the concept of governance in Tajikistan. Many citizens still remark on the social value of military service

during the Soviet period; a few even state that this should be the case in contemporary Tajikistan even while admitting that major changes would be necessary to the RT military to correct problems with the recruitment system and improve conditions and internal service practices. Only one interviewee (Respondent 15 2014) rejected the idea of military service outright; all others saw it as potentially useful personally, and socially important, or indicated that they would enlist immediately if the country were faced with a true existential threat.

The civil war undoubtedly created a number of crises for Tajikistan. One of the main loci of political instability was the military. The juxtaposition of the need for a stabilizing military force against the potential and realized threat that emerged from within the RT military itself almost certainly influenced not only conscription practices, but the general lack of military training and financial investment in the armed forces that continues today. The result, then, is the cycling of young males through the discipline of a military system without the ability to function as an institution capable of basic operations, let alone defending the territorial integrity of the country. In short, the RT armed forces contain the form (albeit a poor one) of a military without the function necessary to execute its duty of defending the country and the nation.

Foucault unpacked how the mode of discipline implies an uninterrupted, constant coercion, *supervising the processes of the activity rather than its result* and it is exercised according to a codification that partitions as closely as

possible time, space, movement (1995, 137) (the *italics* are mine).

As Foucault's quote noted, Tajikistan's military system focuses on the *processes* of discipline rather than its *result*. The cycling of (mostly uneducated and unconnected) young males through the armed forces appears to be performed for the sake of the process, since investment and training seem largely absent from RT military doctrine.

From the beginning of the conscription process to the end of a soldier's military service, coercion and discipline are prevalent in their lives. Snatched off the street through *oblava*, detained and cycled through the *voenkomat* as if arrested and convicted, and serving in substandard facilities far from home with little access to the outside world, the lives of conscripts resemble incarceration in many ways.

It is virtually impossible to know the Rakhmon's regime's true intentions regarding its military forces other than the maintenance of state power over the territory and the economic returns it brings. But there are plausible explanations for the country's contradictory approach to the organization and administration of its national armed forces, even if those explanations are necessarily speculative in nature. These explanations fit some of the actions and realities that the regime has already taken, situations in which it has found itself

from its inception through the aftermath of the civil war, and its desire to maintain the political status quo.

By using conscription, the RT government avoids any need to provide enlistment incentives such as pay, good quality room and board, and serviceable uniforms and kit. Naturally, this saves limited 'public' funds for projects that distribute rents to important regional and local power brokers as outlined by Markowitz (2011; 2013), or projects that enrich the president and the inner circle of his patronage network.

However, the perhaps less obvious but arguably more important aspect of this scheme is the political control of bodies that ensues, Foucault's *biopower*. Unlike more extreme autocratic states (such as Turkmenistan), for the most part Tajikistan has not attempted to limit the movement of, or create or enforce many policies designed to control, its population; the exception is the regime's cooptation of mosques and the limits it has placed on religious expression that it considers to be extremist (for which there is a very low bar). When considering policies and practices regarding military service, the link is apparent: limiting internal threats to the state. Military service indirectly serves this purpose.

By cycling young males through military service - but offering very little training - the regime exercises a form of control over the section of its population that poses its biggest potential threat. This potential threat begins with an idle young

male population. An examination of key demographic statistics is useful to help unpack the potential threat posed by idle males.

The natural rate of growth in Tajikistan is quite high; in 2013 the country had a Total Fertility Rate (TFR) of 3.8 and 36% of its population below the age of 15 (PRB 2014). It is also interesting to note that the conscription policy contributes to these statistics; as Chapter V addresses, married men with two children are exempt from service, thus creating a strong incentive among young couples to marry early and reproduce quickly.

These statistics must be viewed within the context of Tajikistan's difficult economic circumstances and the lack of job opportunities that I discussed in Chapter IV. The migrant economy is one side of the solution to the demographic challenge; it sends young males to Russia for work, removing them from the state's immediate concern while simultaneously acting as a source of income to locals and the state alike. That many villages in Tajikistan are missing significant numbers of their male population is testament to this condition.

Males remaining in Tajikistan represent two other categories: those connected to the state directly through employment or indirectly through patronage, and those who are eligible for service in the military. In both cases, the state maintains its hegemony over them. While there are, inevitably, some who do not fit either of these categories, the state's

efforts to maintain the status quo is perhaps made simpler through these mechanisms and practices of control. The fear of idleness among a young male population that has multiple ethno-regional cleavages in a post-civil war environment is palpable. Foucault recognized the state's approach to biopower through military organization in the context of idleness.

The principle that underlay the time-table in its traditional form was essentially negative; it was the principle of non-idleness: it was forbidden to waste time, which was counted by God and paid for by men; the time-table was to eliminate the danger of wasting it - a moral offence and economic dishonesty (Foucault 1995, 154).

Foucault is referring here to individual idleness within the military, but it is useful to equate his view with the development of discipline within the polity. Indeed, his discussions and conceptualizations of the military and prison system are a method of describing the formation of self-discipline among the population, which serves the purposes of the dominant group.

In considering the context of the Kulobi Tajik-dominated RT government, I must acknowledge that I find it doubtful that the government plotted to create an intricate system of biopolitical control that encompasses such a broad plan for its population. However, I do find it quite plausible that, as the realities of the political and economic situation confronted by the Rakhmon regime and the policy choices it made during its first decade or so after independence became apparent, the resulting social

landscape contained much to their liking. That landscape also includes a powerful outside actor: Russia, which I discuss in the next section. Before doing so, it is useful to speculate further on how the Rakhmon regime envisions its military.

All signs seem to point toward the connection between an underfunded and publically disdained national military and the presence of Russian forces in Tajikistan. In order to understand why the regime invests so little in its military in light of geopolitical challenges, we must first accept Russia as the security guarantor of Tajikistan. The limited resources available in the country make financial investment in any activity without economic return challenging and militaries tend to fall on the expensive side of public spending. If Russia is willing to provide Tajikistan with national defense services for the cost of a semi-permanent base, then there is little incentive to invest in their own armed forces.

The fear of internal enemies - whether from Islamic insurgency, regional-based dissenters, or even political rivals - provides incentives to limit the training and capabilities of the national military for two reasons. First, a renegade officer may foment a rebellion/coup against the regime. Given the size of the country and the armed forces, this could be difficult for the regime to stop; therefore, emphasis on prevention is prudent. I discussed the problem of the civil war commanders/warlords in previous chapters, noting that some of the anti-opposition

leaders rebelled against the government in the aftermath. These events are surely remembered by the regime.

Second, the fear of internal enemies can translate into a fear of the general population. Indeed, the existence and actions of the GNKB is evidence that this fear. In this context, having large numbers of the male population cycle through the armed forces and receive training in the military arts presents a very real threat. Large numbers of small arms and other weapons are available across the border in Afghanistan - not to mention leftovers of the civil war in Tajikistan - so the fear of a popular uprising also fits with the regime's logic of low military investment. These two fears also explain the higher levels of investment in the MoI units, particularly the Alphas. Their loyalty is imperative to the regime and they are focused on internal suppression as opposed to territorial defense.

Recently, there have been a few developments regarding the RT military that are worthy of note. It is difficult to gauge whether or not they will result in any real changes, however. First, Rakhmon shifted his cabinet after the last election in 2013, replacing his Minister of Defense for the first time since he gained power (*Asia-Plus* 2013d). The old minister, Sherali Khairulloev, had done little in the way of reform during his command and the new one, Sherali Mirzo, formally commanded the MoI border guard forces. This change was coupled with Rakhmon proclaiming end of oblava in March 2014 (Yuldashev 2014).

Unfortunately, stories immediately emerged of oblava taking place during the following spring recruitment period (*Ozodagon* 2014b). In the context of the Rakhmon regime's goals (stay in power) and fears (internal more than external), it seems unlikely that the government harbors any real notion of reform. If this view is incorrect, and reform is on the agenda, progress will be very slow; the structures of corruption, limited resources and limited experience and competence in the officer corps will present substantial challenges.

Russia and the Contradiction of National Military Service

As discussed earlier, the guarantor of RT state security must be filled from the outside. Russia has largely filled this role since independence, through its intervention in the civil war on the pro-government side and the long term basing agreement for the 201st MRD. As discussed in Chapters IV and VI, the relationship between the RT and RF governments is increasingly bound through both military cooperation and the migrant economy.

The challenges to Tajikistan's stability are notable. Building and maintaining strong ties with Russia are an understandable reaction to these challenges, and each state has much to gain from cooperation. In the simplest sense, the Rakhmon regime gains a low-cost security guarantor and Russia gains a foothold in a territory of its former empire that it sees as key to its ability to contain threats of Islamic extremism.

What is most interesting in this relationship is how the long-term presence of a foreign military is seen not only as positive, but even preferable to the national military of the home country. The recent action to legalize (by both states) the enlistment of RT citizens to serve in the Russian military anywhere in the world, including in combat situations, is a fascinating development. As my interviews show, young males in Tajikistan generally see the idea of service in the Russian military in positive terms, and others in the population note feeling safer with the 201st MRD agreement signed. How the population views the RT military contrasts strongly with the positive views it has of the Russian military.

Some analysts may see these geopolitical moves as part of a strategy for Russia to gain lost territory - a so-called reformation of the Soviet Union (or at least its border regime). Russia has performed similar aggressive (but non-violent) actions in the recent past. Artman's (2013) discussion of Russia's issuance of RF passports to Georgian citizens in South Ossetia and Abkhazia as a form of territorial control (if not acquisition) offers an example of the ways in which Russia seeks to gain hegemony over areas of its former empire. In these cases, 'passportisation' acted to separate the people from the Georgian state, thereby denying sovereign control over territory by the government in Tbilisi. The difference here is that passportisation in South Ossetia and Abkhazia was a hostile act aimed at the Georgian state, through which Russia essentially

secured territory contiguous to its own. The RT government, by contrast, has openly welcomed the enlistment in the Russian military of RT citizens, even though that act facilitates the acquisition of Russian citizenship.

The Rakhmon regime has shown itself to value the maintenance of power over the development of a sovereign nation-state. It may see the development of nationalism as a useful goal in the long run, but it seems to prefer policies that guarantee its stability in the short run. These choices may appear counterintuitive from the outside. However, given the geopolitical realities of a small, mountainous, landlocked state with numerous ethno-national cleavages, recent domestic political violence, very little economic resources, and a rapidly growing population, the choices are not ideal. The border regime and construction of separate nations in Central Asia was performed by the Soviet Union and it seems the project was successful in fulfilling at least one of its goals.

Conversations with locals during my fieldwork revealed that most believed maintaining strong ties to Russia was important for Tajikistan's stability and economy. Clearly, this is unlikely to contribute to the development of national sentiments in Tajikistan, and may act to hinder them. In this way, the Soviet project of citizenship and state building has exhibited a stronger legacy than the social construction of the Tajik nation initiated by Moscow and continued after independence.

Conclusion

This dissertation contributes to critical military geographies in four ways. First, it unpacks how the formation of a national military shapes and reflects the daily lives of a small post-Soviet country. Second, it problematizes the rhetorical effort to produce national sentiments and integration through military service by analyzing the conditions of that service. Third, it juxtaposes service in the national military against service within a foreign unit based in the country and explores how the latter can affect desire to serve in the former— in the process inhibiting the deepening of national sentiments. Lastly, it conceptualizes military service as a form of biopower that works to control male idleness rather than produce an operational military force.

The interconnection of these four aspects of my research in Tajikistan also extends into geo-economic considerations. The role of the migrant economy in producing and reproducing the hegemonic relationship between the Rakhmon regime and the population of Tajikistan is remarkable. On another, larger scale, the Russia's hegemony over Tajikistan is exhibited through the latter's reliance on remittances from the migrant economy and the former's willingness to politically exploit this dependence to secure military basing rights in Tajikistan. These relationships may be profoundly different from the prominence of the military-industrial complex and neoliberal geopolitics addressed by

critical militarism research on Western subjects, but it demonstrates that geo-economics is relevant to the study of militarism in other geopolitical situations and environments. These kinds of connections are important if studies in critical military geographies are to expand into different spaces.

Through this research, I have sought to open new avenues for work in critical military geographies that include autocratic states. In more than a few ways, the repressive environment of Tajikistan limited my access to statistical data, potential interviewees, and ability to perform participant observation. Nevertheless, by addressing a little-understood state with a different military structure, geopolitical goals, and popular conceptions of service, this research diverts from the beaten path of previous work in this geographic sub-discipline.

Even in such a different environment, this subject matter can be linked back to current critical research in militarism. The discourse of 'danger' so prevalent in the West's characterization of Central Asia contributes to Tajikistan's militarization. Surely influenced by the conflicts in Afghanistan and Pakistan, these discourses help build legitimacy in military aid programs to this autocratic state. I saw the emphasis the U.S. Embassy in Dushanbe places on military aid and cooperation; the mission has both a Defense Attaché and an Office of Military Cooperation (OMC), each headed by a Lt. Colonel. These offices have facilitated training operations performed by U.S. troops,

including units associated with internal popular suppression during the Khorog operation. It is important to continue to critique geopolitical hegemonic actions by both Russia and Western powers alike. Doing so requires getting into the field and seeing the landscape from the ground level. It can be challenging, but the perspective is dramatically different and that matters.

Варақаи пурсиш

Милитаризм дар Тоҷикистон ва воқеиятҳои миллатсозии дар замони Мустақилият

Рисолаи Докторӣ дар солҳои 2013-2014 – Ҷ-6. Дағ Фостр, факултаи география, Донишгоҳи Орегон.

dfoster@uoregon.edu Тел: 987217068

Саволгузорӣ чунон ба роҳ монда шудааст, ки фаҳмиши таъсири пойгоҳҳои хориҷиро ба ҳаёти рӯзмарраи наздашонро раванқ диҳад. Хоҳиш, ба саволҳо то имкон рост ҷавоб гӯед.

Ҷавобҳои ки ба беҳтарин шакл ҳиссиёту таҷрибаи Шуморо инъикос мекунанд, ба давра гиред.

1. Дар кадом намуди қушунҳои ҳарбӣ хизмат кардаед?

Қушунҳои пиёда

Қувваҳои ҳавоӣ

Қушунҳои сарҳадӣ

Гвардияи президентӣ

Қушунҳои десантӣ

Таъиноти махсус

2. Рутбаи баландтарине ки соҳибаш шудед?

3. Кадоме аз гурӯҳҳои этникии зерин, Шуморо хубтар муаррифӣ мекунад?

Тоҷикистонӣ

Шимолӣ

Самарқандӣ

Кӯлобӣ

Ғармӣ

Бухороӣ

Ванҷӣ

Дарвозӣ

Помирӣ

Рус

Қирғиз

Яғнобӣ

Ўзбек

Туркман

Дигар (варианти Шумо) _____

Ҷой барои тадқиқотчи

Ҳамсӯҳбат № _____

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