

## **Developments in the Situation of Tajiks in Uzbekistan and the Security Approach of the Karimov and Mirziyoyev Administrations towards Them**

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### **Abstract**

The Tajiks are one of the Aryan and Persian-speaking tribes that have been the subject of much debate in various sources since ancient times. The main roots of the Tajik people date back to the second millennium BC, when various Indo-European tribes settled and organized in the plains of Central Asia. The first information is from the 6th and 7th centuries BC, which refer to the settlement of Iranian ethnic groups in different parts of Central Asia. Hence, the issue of Tajik identity is a fundamental issue of the past and present. The present article attempts to analyze the situation of the Tajiks by focusing on historical and political analysis, and a theoretical study of the nation-state category. However, our assumption is that the situation for Tajiks is improving despite the pressures of the Soviet era and Karimov's rule. Our findings, given the manipulation of Tajik identity and geography by previous governments, show the same thing, namely the relative improvement of their situation in Uzbekistan. In fact, the purpose of this article is to answer the questions. What was the attitude of the Uzbek governments towards the Tajiks? Has the situation of Tajiks in Uzbekistan changed? In addition, what are the policies of the Tajik government towards Tajiks living in the neighbouring country?

**Keywords:** Culture, Karimov, Mirziyoyev, politics, Soviet, Tajik, Uzbek.

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## **Introduction**

Central Asia includes a variety of ethnicities, cultures, religions and tribes. Central Asian countries are comprised of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. These countries have a population of about 72 million. Most of Central Asia has been influenced by religions that have entered the region over the past 1,500 years; Such as Islam (Sunni, Shiite, and Ismaili) and Syriac Christianity (World Population prospects-Population division, 2019: 9). However, Buddhism entered Central Asia more than 2,200 years ago and Zoroastrianism more than 2,500 years ago (The World Factbook, 2018: 11). Common and official languages in Central Asia are Persian, Turkmen, Uzbek, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Pamiri languages. Russian can be considered the main language of Central Asia, as almost all people in the region, except the people of Afghanistan, are able to speak it. Only 6 million people in Central Asia speak Russian as their mother tongue. Persian-speakers live mostly in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Bosworth, 2009: 23).

The geopolitical region of Central Asia in the heart of Eurasia seems relatively calm, but the remaining border and ethnic divisions of the Soviet Union have turned the region into a dormant volcano that could erupt at any moment. The Russian Empire (1721-1917) controlled Turkestan and Russia as a single entity, but nation-building in Central Asia was not on the agenda of Russian policymakers. However, the revolutionary uprising of the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923) from the former Ottoman Empire invaded Russian territory. According to the ideology of Pan-Turkism, all Turkic-speaking ethnicities from Anatolia to China must become a single state (Stern, 2008: 1). The establishment of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Uzbekistan (known as Uzbekistan) in 1924 as part of the demarcation of national borders in the Soviet Union led to the Uzbekization of Tajik cultural centers in Samarkand and Bukhara, as well as to all Tajiks in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Dagiyeu, 2013: 17-23). Finally, the Soviet Socialist Republic of Tajikistan (also known as Tajikistan for short) was established in 1929. Both republics participated in the March 1991 referendum in an attempt to preserve the Soviet Union in a different way, but were halted in an attempt to stage a coup in August of that year. As a result, Uzbekistan and

Tajikistan both declared independence in 1991 and joined the Commonwealth. At the end of that year, the disintegration of the Soviet Union officially began.

In 1991, the Soviet Union collapsed and Russia emerged as the central and controlling power. These republics now face many problems, including border disputes. Due to border problems, these countries' relations have always changed. This has become an excuse for the biased intervention of regional and supra-regional powers in Central Asia. Uzbekistan is located in Central Asia between Kazakhstan in the west and north of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in the east and Afghanistan and Turkmenistan in the south. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are engaged in an "undeclared Cold War" and have the worst bilateral relations in Central Asia (Sadykov, 2013: 14).

In this regard, Uzbekistan, although it has no territorial claims on Tajikistan, has so far failed to accept Tajikistan's independence. Experts in the region also believe that Uzbekistan's history is so tied to Tajikistan that Uzbek leaders have always prevented the establishment of an independent republic of Tajikistan (Amir Ahmadian and Rezazadeh, 2012: 31). Therefore, the subject of this study is the study of the situation of Tajiks in Uzbekistan and their relationship with the Uzbek government, and in the next step, an overview of the impact of Tajiks on the relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. We are also examining whether it is possible for Tajiks to be part of Uzbek political power in the near future. Does the political establishment in Uzbekistan conclude that it recognizes Tajiks as first-class citizens of Uzbekistan? Is the Uzbek government reconsidering its current security view of Tajiks?

### **Main Research Questions**

In this study, we will try to answer the question that, given the analysis of the historical background of the Tajiks as well as the independence of the Central Asian region from the Soviet Union, what was the approach of the governments in Uzbekistan to the Tajiks? Has the situation of Tajiks in Uzbekistan changed? Besides, what are the policies of the Tajik government towards Tajiks living in the neighboring country?

### **Assumptions**

Based on political and historical analysis, our assumption in this study is that: 1- At the beginning of the years of separation of the Central Asian region from the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan considered the Tajiks living in its territory as a threat 2- The Tajiks of Uzbekistan, despite historical reasons, have not joined Tajikistan 3- In recent years, the Tajik government has prioritized political and security considerations with the Uzbek government due to the Tajik government's lack of support for Tajikistan.

### **Research Findings**

Following the study of the background and current situation of the Tajiks in Central Asia, the research findings revealed the following: 1- Historically, the Tajiks have high originality and antiquity among other ethnic groups in Central Asia 2- Many cultural changes and manipulations The length of the Russian and Soviet empires against the tribes of the region, especially the Tajiks, led to the disregard for their identity and dispersal. 3- In the post-Soviet period and Karimov's rule, the Tajik identity was integrated into the Uzbek government to prevent a civil war similar to what happened in Tajikistan in the 1990s 4- But the situation of the Tajiks in the next government, the Mirziyoyev government, improved relatively due to the cessation of Karimov's policies.

### **Theoretical Scope of Research; Nationalism and The State – Nation**

Most scholars believe that nationalism has no clear definition. Nationalism can be seen as consisting of people with common ethnic roots, language, religion, and similar historical memory, and an obvious desire to build a nation-based political unit. But (May) not all nations are necessarily defined in a specific territory. Nor can all countries be called a nation-state. Thus, "nation" can have a dual meaning: on the one hand, a nation can be people who, by appearing in history, imagine themselves as a political subject; On the other hand, the nation can be defined as a political-ideological structure. This structure is established by governments that have gained their legitimacy from the people and society. There are still multinational states or nations without a state in the world, but there is no real homogeneous and proportionate nation-state. Because such

communities have a mixed race through migration and interaction with neighbors. Almost all nation-states have ethnic minorities in their territory (Nation-State, 2019: 1).

Nationalism is considered the most fundamental social order in the modern period; A path to building a collective identity. Nationalism can also be defined in terms of "culture" and "ideology" (Panov, 2010: 4). Nationalism makes people proud of their culture, traditions and values and understands a sense of loyalty to the group to which they belong. Each of them (groups) is part of a community or nation to which they owe themselves. According to Fred Halliday, there are three possible domains to which one's loyalty is attached; to a nation-state, or to communities and groups that are larger and beyond a state, such as a particular religion or class, or smaller, such as families, tribes, and local communities. Before the rise of nationalism, the basis for choosing an individual or group to be loyal to a particular community was usually a combination of religion and local and family units. In the same debate, Ernst Gellner argues that nationalism is primarily a political principle that states that politics and nationality must be proportionate (Manzoor butt, 2010: 5).

The nation-state can be defined from different aspects. Politically, by the beginning of the sixteenth century, sustained wars between rival European governments created a way for government control and exploitation of resources to be more effective. Indirect rules by local elites and leading individuals were replaced by rules related to an integrated and hierarchical structure. At this time, two paths were created towards the nation-state building; one is independent states (such as France) where the ruling elites gradually homogenized the population in the nineteenth century in order to legitimize their roles and actions by developing a fascinating nationalism. But in the second direction, separatism took place. In the Habsburg and Ottoman multinational empires, the transition from direct rule to nationalist mobilization was made by foreign elites. This situation was caused by the dissatisfaction of an ethnic group with the ruling class, which aimed to form its own government. But in terms of cultural definition, nationalism (as a driver of nation-building) is associated with several variables; For example, one of these important variables was language and its replacement (by the printing industry) with the language of

foreign elites (for example, in some former colonies, this language was Latin). This created a sense of belonging to a community with a common origin and a political future (Wimmer and Feinstein, 2010: 6-7). The basic concept of the nation-state was formed in Europe between the 12th and 19th centuries. This process often occurred with changes in the cultural consciousness of citizens. Unlike primitive nation-states (which had a particular vision), secondary nation-states were briefly established by politicians to ensure that the territories under their rule could interact with other nations under international law. This rapid process (largely based on decisions made outside the realm of a nation) created a rift between politicians and the people that created problems (including in playing international or economic roles). This engineered gap created ethnic, linguistic, class, cultural, and identity-religious concerns (Benjamin, 2016: 2).

#### **History, Population and Ethnic Status of Tajiks**

An important period in the history of Central Asia and its tribes took place in the ancient Achaemenid state and beyond; Because important social and political changes took place in the whole geography and territory under his rule. These developments were the result of policies and decisions, including the expansion of international trade, the growth of trade, the monetary system, religious tolerance, and the expansion of culture, which deepened the center-periphery relationship. An important part of the Iranian army against Greece were the inhabitants of Central Asia, local rulers were appointed by the central government in Iran over this region, there were cultural commonalities in art, crafts and clothing of Iranians and Central Asians, and even some From the construction materials of Persepolis, it was offered from the land of Khorazm (Ghafurov, 2003: 158).

Tajik or Tajik Persian is a common name for the Iranian and Persian ethnic groups in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The ancestral homeland of the Tajiks is Iran and today they live in Tajikistan, Afghanistan and southern Uzbekistan. The Tajik people are very close to the Persian-speakers of Iran in terms of language, culture and history. Chinese Tajiks, although known as Tajiks, speak Eastern Iranian languages and are distinct from Persian-speaking Tajiks (Arlund, 2006: 191). Tajiks Major ethnic groups in Afghanistan live in

the cities of Kabul, Herat and the provinces of Badakhshan, Parwan, Panjshir, Kapisa, Samangan, Sar-e Pol, and Takhar. Tajiks in Uzbekistan make up the largest population of the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, and live in large numbers in the Qashqadarya and Sarkhandarya provinces in the south, along Uzbekistan's eastern border with Tajikistan, as well as in the Fergana Valley (Fergana and Namangan provinces). In the past, the Tajiks lived in larger parts of Central Asia, but moved from the north and east due to the widespread Turkish invasion. Today, Tajiks make up about 79.9% to 84.4% of Tajikistan's population, and according to various sources, make up 27 to 32% or 23 to 35% or 37 to 39% of Afghanistan's population. According to official statistics, Tajiks in Uzbekistan make up 5% of the country's total population. But unofficial statistics put the number of Tajiks in the country at between 8 and 11 million (25 to 35 percent) (Richard, 1996: 213). The provinces of Samarkand, Bukhara, Sarkhandarya, Qashqadarya, Namangan, Fergana and Sirdarya are among the Tajik regions of Uzbekistan. Contrary to official Persian statistics, Uzbeks (Tajiks) are estimated at 30 to 40 percent. It is said that in 1924, Samarkand and Bukhara, the two major Tajik cities, seceded from Tajikistan under former Soviet policies and joined Uzbekistan (Svante E, 2000: 2). Official census indices in Uzbekistan put the number of Tajiks at around 5% of the total population, and are repeated by most Western academics, journalists, writers and travel guides. Tajiks across Uzbekistan, meanwhile, insist the figure is closer to 25 to 30 percent, with Tajiks making up 70 percent of Samarkand, the former capital and second-largest city of Uzbekistan, and more than 90 percent of Bukhara. Most people in the mountainous region northeast of Tashkent, beyond the Tajik Chorovk Dam are Tajiks. The people of parts of Fergana Valley, Jizakh province, Sarkandarya and Kashkudarya are also Tajiks. Professors at Samarkand State University estimate that the total Tajik population in Uzbekistan is 6 to 7 million (18 to 21 percent). That number is twice or more than twice the population of Tajiks in the Republic of Tajikistan.

In 1989, the Tajiks in Uzbekistan posed one of the major threats to Uzbekistan's territorial integrity. They were a large, concentrated group in the region, living in Samarkand and Bukhara, both historic cities of Tajikistan in eastern Uzbekistan. In addition, the Tajiks

formed a national movement that formulated its claims to territorial autonomy and border demarcation. By the late 1990s, however, the Uzbek Tajiks no longer seemed to be a serious rival to Uzbekistan or President Karimov's regime. For a variety of reasons, including the economic problems as well as the civil war that broke out in Tajikistan's neighborhood in the mid-1990s, Karimov took a completely authoritarian approach to the government and launched a war against all opposition groups. This approach also included the suppression of ethnic Tajiks. The arrest of leaders and members of the Tajik National Movement in 1992 thwarted its initial success and turned the movement into an affiliated network that became less political. Since 1994, the Tajiks have lacked significant political organization and have instead joined cultural associations. There has been no recent case of political violence by this group. Perhaps the only achievement that ethnic Tajiks can be proud of is the official recognition of their status as a separate national group, but this has undoubtedly been the legacy of Soviet policy. Tajikistan has shown no willingness to support Tajik policies in Uzbekistan. This undermines the Tajiks' ability to violently oppose the government (Liu, 2002: 7).

The current situation of ethnic Tajiks and the Tajik government's moderate policy towards its affiliated groups abroad suggest that ethnic Tajiks, as a relatively inactive society, are largely excluded from Uzbek political life. But what may change this situation is the growing activity of opposition groups organized around religious rather than national principles. These groups include the Islamic Uprising Movement of Uzbekistan (now sometimes referred to as the Islamic Movement of Central Asia or Turkestan) and Hizb Al-Tahrir, which operate illegally throughout Central Asia.

According to figures provided by the United Nations and the Uzbek Statistics Committee, after the establishment of the Republic of Uzbekistan during the Soviet era, Tashkent government officials changed the nationality of the Tajiks and changed the ethnic composition in these areas in favor of the Uzbeks. The population of Uzbekistan has increased by one and a half times, equivalent to 11 million and 500 thousand people during the last 26 years since the country gained independence. Of this amount, 4.8% of the population are Tajiks (Persian speakers). The rate for Tajiks in 1991 was 4.8

percent. According to statistics, the ethnic groups in Uzbekistan in 1991 were 72.8 percent Uzbeks, 2.1 percent Kyrgyz, 7.7 percent Russians, 4.8 Tajiks, 1.4 percent Cossacks, two-tenths Tatars, and seven-tenths percent Ukrainians. The rate on January 1, 2017 was 83.8 percent for Uzbeks, 2.2 percent for Kyrgyzstan, 3.2 percent for Russians, 4.8 percent for Tajiks, 2.5 percent for Cossacks, 0.6 percent for Tatars and two-tenths for Ukrainians.

**Table 1. Ethnic group population in Central Asia**

<b>Ethnic group</b>	<b>Population center in Central Asia</b>	<b>Total estimated population in Central Asia</b>
Uzbekistan	Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan	29.000.000
Tajikistan	Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. This includes the Pamiri people, who are formally classified as Tajiks in Tajikistan	25.000.000
Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan	16.500.000
Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyzstan	4.100.000
Russians	Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan	4.000.000
Ukraine	North Kazakhstan	250.000
Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Iran	6.500.000
Volga Germany	Kazakhstan	200.000
Uighur	Northwest China, East Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan	13.000.000
Dahgan Yahoei	Northwest China, Kyrgyzstan	10.500.000
Jewish Bukhari	Uzbekistan	1.000
Tatar	Uzbekistan	700.000
Caracalpa	Northwest Uzbekistan	500.000
Bashirg	Kazakhstan	30.000
Tough Turks	Kazakhstan	200.000
ARMATESTAN	Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan	100.000
Altay	Northern Kazakhstan	10.000
Pashtun	Afghanistan, northwest of Pakistan, Khorasan Razavi in Iran	12.500.000
Hazara	Central Afghanistan	3.500.000
Aikma	Central Afghanistan and northwest	1.500.000
Chechen	Kazakhstan	40.000

Source: The World Factbook-Central Intelligence Agency (2018)

### **The Cultural Situation of the Tajiks**

George Foster (1783) was the first foreign scholar to refer to the Tajiks as "Parsivan". When it comes to culture, a set of attributes and characteristics such as language, customs, religion, geographical location, symbols and myths are responsible for building the identity of a group. The cultural and civilizational identity of Tajiks before Islam was influenced by Aryan, Avestan, Greek, Western and Indian identities. In the post-Islamic period, they consider their geographical and historical identity as Aryan-Iranian-Khorasani and define their linguistic and religious identity with Persian-Islamic characteristics. Tajiks also base their identity and culture on the three principles of the Persian language, the land of Khorasan (Iran) and moderate Islam (Hanafi jurisprudence and Islamic mysticism) (Rebirth of Tajik identity and authority, 2018: 45). In the field of Persian literature, Tajik literature is rich and ancient, and great celebrities represent this antiquity, including Abolghasem Lahouti. Lahouti, known as the Golden Ring of Iranian-Tajik literature, was a prominent poet and politician who was forced to leave Iran after the defeat of the Lahouti Khan uprising in Tabriz in 1921. During his stay and teaching in Tajikistan, he flourished Persian literature and language and the principles of socialism; Until he became the Minister of Culture of Tajikistan and received the title of "Red Writer" from Sadr al-Din Aini (Bund Shahriari, 2007: 7). Sadr al-Din Aini is one of the pioneers of Persian-Tajik literature in the twentieth century. He was a Tajik poet, critic and linguist who played an important role in social and political change in the 20th century (Hamedani and Hosseinipour, 2011: 2). Among the policies of the 1930s (in Central Asia), which was the voice of the new Tajik and anti-Soviet identity, in the absence of a group of local, Aini and Lahouti, were The main promoters of this wish (Seay, 2020: 3).

But in recent years, during the presidency of former Uzbek President Islam Karimov, policies of cultural discrimination against Tajiks have been strongly enforced; To the extent that if these policies continued, they could lead to the complete elimination of the Tajik language and identity. These pressures in recent years have been justified by the logic that Tajiks sympathize with Islamic fundamentalists in Uzbekistan. In 1994, until the end of the Tajik civil

war and the signing of a ceasefire agreement in 1997, the Uzbek government closed the University of Samarkand and other Tajik-language schools due to the civil war and the justification that inter-ethnic relations were strained (There are also reports of burning Tajik-language historical and scientific books). The Uzbek government's main policy is the complete Uzbekization of the people and culture, and there is a fear that a vibrant Tajik community in Uzbekistan could lead to separatist tendencies and even lead to the return and unification of the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara with Tajikistan (Hunter, 2002: 15).

### **State and Policy in Uzbekistan**

Uzbekistan emerged politically with the dissolution of the Soviet Union in the late 1990s. This landlocked country is the largest in terms of population and the third largest in terms of area. In January 2002, former Uzbek President Islam Karimov (died 2016) formed the legislatures in a referendum to change the constitution. A Supreme legislature with 120 directly elected members and a 100-member Senate. Under the new constitution, the presidency was extended to seven years. In the Senate, 16 members are directly elected by the president and the rest by local legislators. In Uzbekistan, only government-controlled parties are active; The People's Democratic Party, formerly the Communist Party headed by Karimov, the Social Democratic Party, Liberal Democratic Party; Consisting of government-affiliated businessmen, the Tiklanish National Party; Led by state intellectuals and the Uzbek Ecological Movement (Nichol:2013,5).

Uzbeks are the dominant ethnic group in Uzbekistan (80%) and the official language is Uzbek. Russian is also used in the daily communication of Uzbeks. Muslims (Sunni majority) make up 88% of the country's population, while the Orthodox minority is part of the community. The Uzbek government closely monitors religious practices. Much of it has to do with security concerns about the situation in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan. Some argue that the Uzbek government is using anti-extremism laws against political opponents. After Karimov's death in 2016, he was replaced by former Prime Minister Shaukat Mirziyoyev. Mir Ziyayev headed ambitious

programs that challenged Karimov's legacy. He re-established and deepened Uzbekistan's diplomatic and economic ties with its neighbors. He also expanded ties with Russia, China and the United States by signing economic investment agreements. He further ordered the release of a number of political prisoners and the removal of thousands of citizens from the list of security services (Gracia: 2018, 1).

### **The Concept of Security and Uzbekistan**

After Uzbekistan's independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country, like other Central Asian republics, sought national security. In the early days of independence, Uzbekistan did not have a clear understanding of national and regional threats. The ongoing sectarian conflict in Afghanistan, the civil war in Tajikistan, the conflict of interests between different ethnic and regional groups, and the rise of extremism in Central Asia, which served as a detonator, are among Uzbekistan's security problems. Conflict in neighboring countries has had a negative impact on the demographic and social divide in Uzbekistan. The spread of slogans related to the return of the Islamic State in Central Asia paved the way for the emergence of radical ideas of people like J. Namangani et al. Yoldashev provided. These people organized the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The movement uses terror to achieve political goals. The movement's large-scale operations made it an international terrorist organization (Sayfulin, 2).

Hizb Al-Tahrir (with Middle Eastern roots), which focuses on peaceful methods but on a global scale, is an organization that deals with issues related to the caliphate, the state and Islamic jihad. Hizb Al-Tahrir is active in propaganda techniques in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and is working to establish an Islamic state in Central Asia. Another development that changed the security of Uzbekistan after independence was the start of the Tajik-Afghan civil war. Tajikistan's civil war was between Communist Party elites and Tajik opposition groups after secession from the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan was affected by the war in many ways, as large numbers of Tajiks live in Uzbekistan, and Uzbeks live in Tajikistan, and there are extensive economic ties between them. Karimov's government was concerned

that Tajiks in Uzbekistan and radical forces would be affected if Tajik forces seized power in Dushanbe. The leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan was stationed in Tajikistan during the civil war, and after the war with pressure from Tashkent on Dushanbe, he went to Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan; where there is a dense population of Uzbeks(Sönmez: 2012: 3-4).

But this situation has led to a bigger threat in recent years. In September 2014, the leader of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Osman Ghazi, announced that he had joined ISIS. They called for the overthrow of the Karimov government and the establishment of an Islamic caliphate. But Uzbekistan differs significantly from its other neighbors in its political and security structure; Strong structure of vertical power (top-down view), restrictions on extremism and religious sentiments of citizens, restriction of religion, strict control over mosques and restrictions on the activities of religious scholars, as well as opposition groups and organizations(Kukeyeva and etc: 2016: 6).

Uzbekistan's relations with Tajiks and Tajikistan are an important part of the country's definition of security. Relations between the two countries have been strained for years due to border disputes, resource rivalries, terrorist threats and transportation issues. In 2000, the Tashkent government established a visa regime to prevent terrorists from infiltrating Afghanistan through Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The Tashkent government also blocked the export and transfer of electricity, gas and other raw materials to Tajikistan. In 2012, Karimov warned that tensions over water resources could lead to war between the two countries. Trade between the two countries in 2008, which amounted to \$ 300 million, fell to several million dollars in 2014 due to the disruption of rail and road transport routes by Uzbekistan. During Mirziyoyev's presidency, Uzbekistan's tough stance on Tajikistan diminished. In contrast, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon attended Karimov's funeral in Samarkand and met with Mirziyoyev. Even the issue of water and dam construction in Tajikistan, which is considered a tense issue in relations between the two countries, has been dealt with gently by Uzbekistan in recent years. Uzbekistan urges Tajikistan to meet international water rights commitments (Weitz, 2018: 38).



**Fig. 1. Position of Central Asian countries**  
 Source: saylordotorg.github.io

### **Tajiks of Uzbekistan**

From 1910 onwards, the class struggle intensified in Central Asia, then known as "Turkestan" and under the banner of the Russian Empire, as in Russia. Strikes spread throughout the region, with the Bukhara Emirate (one of the pre-Soviet Turkestan regions) being rioted by the working class and peasants. On the other hand, under the influence of the relationship between the Ottoman Turks and Turkestan nationalists, the ideology of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism was emphasized and propagated in the absorption and unification of parts of Central Asia in the Ottoman Empire. But the Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Kyrgyz living in the region saw them as demagogues, and Turkish nationalists as pro-bourgeois, far removed from the working-class logic of Turkestan. With the outbreak of World War I in 1914, there was an economic crisis surrounding the war economy in Central Asia, with Tajik areas suffering the most (such as the cotton crisis). It was this economic misery that set the stage for Bolshevik activity. In Khojand province (one of the regions of Turkestan) the peasants were always rioting. It was in this context that the order to "mobilize the indigenous people under the Tsarist Empire" to work in the war zones

was issued in June 1916, further aggravating the situation of the people of the region and setting the stage for the great uprising of 1916; An uprising that was eventually suppressed by the army. Finally, with the February 1917 Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the overthrow of the Tsarist Empire, the Tajik people, mostly from the Bukhara Emirate of Turkestan and more affected by the war, found a revolutionary spirit and prepared to play a role in the new socialist and peasant revolution. (Ghafurov, 1382: 1089).

Coinciding with this time, another important incident took place in Turkestan; "Basmachians Uprising". Basmachi, which means rebellion in Russian, was a group of Turkestan Muslims, including Tajiks, who revolted for 12 years during the Russian Revolution. After the 1917 revolution and the overthrow of the Khojand Muslim government by the insurgents, and due to famine and problems around the revolution, a movement began from the Fergana Valley of Turkestan to the regions of Samarkand and Bukhara, and Jeyhun and Seyhun. The Soviet army also resisted to prevent the spread of the Basmachian uprising, but due to the high level of violence, the people turned to the Basmachians. They had the spirit of Ayaran and distributed the property they acquired from the Russians to the people of Miami. Eventually, the uprising, which lasted until 1930, was shattered by Soviet measures, including threats and a policy of division among the Basmachians (WalidiToghan, 1989:10).

Prior to the Russian and Soviet occupation, the modern Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan were divided into three kingdoms - the Emirate of Bukhara, Khiva, and khanat Khojand. As a result of the national and territorial designation of Central Asia by the Soviet Union, the cities of the capital and many of the territories of the three kingdoms were given to Uzbekistan. The new Central Asian republics were artificially created by the Soviets on the basis of the concept of language and ethnicity. Whereas before the Soviet rule, the traditional forms of identity in Central Asia were tribes, clans and Islam (Ubaidulloev, 2015: 83). The Tajiks, meanwhile, suffered the most from Soviet demarcation policy. The region of Tajikistan in 1924 included only territories from the eastern part of Bukhara. Following the brutal partition of Central Asia in 1924, the Tajiks lost historic, cultural, and

economically advanced centers. These areas were inhabited by large numbers of Tajiks. Turkish Central Asian leaders and followers of Pan-Turkism played a prominent role in this decision due to their influence in political affairs, especially during the period of delimitation of national and territorial borders. The Tajiks were persecuted by pan-Turkic officials and Soviet leaders, and even ignored the existence of such a nation (Dagiyev, 2013: 18). This was painful for the Tajik people. They suffered from the loss of their national, moral and spiritual prestige.

The councils abolished the "Sirt and Turk" identities and decided that many of the Turko-Mongol tribes of Central Asia, who had the identities of Chaghatai, Karluk, Kipchak, Lakae, etc., be known as Uzbek. This caused many ethnicities and tribes to lose their culture and language. The cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, which were the main centers of Islamic education in the eastern part of the Islamic world and also for Tajiks the main centers of civilization and the source of their intellectual elites in the middle Ages until the beginning of the twentieth century, were significant centers of cultural and national identity. It was given to Uzbekistan. This weakened the Tajiks. Samarkand, a 2,750 year-old city with a tumultuous history, has always been one of the most important cultural centers in this region. Samarkand is a city with a unique destiny that is part of the history and cultural heritage of all human beings. Samarkand was famous all over the world and poets and historians praised the city with various names such as "Garden of Angels", "Paradise on Earth", "Face of the Earth" and "Protected by God" (Malikov, 2018: 129). In line with the Uzbek government's policy of Uzbekization, the capital was temporarily moved from Tashkent to Samarkand in 1924, and Tajiks were encouraged to call themselves Uzbeks. Tajiks were also told they could immigrate to the Republic of Tajikistan to make up for their backwardness if they were dissatisfied with the policy. The main purpose of moving the capital from Tashkent to Samarkand was that Samarkand was located near Bukhara, which was of symbolic as well as strategic importance to the Tajiks. Thus, Tajiks have long been the "subject of a cautious and persistent Uzbekization policy," and thousands of Tajik citizens in Bukhara, Samarkand, and other cities have been forced to identify themselves as Uzbeks under threat of

deportation to Tajikistan (Ubaidulloev, 2015: 84). Thus, as a result of the Soviet-era administrative and political divisions, Tajik areas such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Sarkhan Darya, Qashq-e Darya (Kashk-e Darya), Namangan, Fergana and Sirdarya became part of Uzbekistan.

### **Economic Situation and Migration of Tajiks after Independence From the Soviet Union**

During the 1990s, displacement was considered a form of Tajik immigration due to the civil war; But after 1997, this form of migration gave way to labor migration. A 2003 survey found that 18% of Tajik adults work abroad. Nearly half a million people left Tajikistan by 2005, and in 2006 that number dropped slightly to 337,000. Overall, the economic downturn has been one of the main reasons for Tajik emigration (Jones et al., 2007: 8). Tajikistan is not a rich country. The country's per capita income in 2014 was \$ 2,700, which is a low figure, and due to the continuing multi-year economic crisis in Central Asia, this figure is unlikely to change much. Government statistics show an unemployment rate of 2.5 percent in 2015, but non-government statistics show a figure of 10 percent. About 1 million Tajik citizens - more than ten percent of the total population - migrated to neighboring countries as migrant workers (Stronski, 2016: 2). The destination of migrant workers in recent years has been Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, respectively (Unicef, 2013: 2).

Immigration is one of the most important economic issues in Tajikistan. In July 2019 alone, 57,000 Tajiks left the country in search of work, up from 26,000 in the same period last year. Following this, the migration of workers to neighboring countries, the migration economy in Tajikistan has developed. For example, between 2013 and 2018, Tajik migrant workers transferred \$ 15 billion through official channels, ie only from banks, to the country, which is several times the amount of government direct investment attracted in the same period (Raissova, 2020: 9). According to the following table and statistics, despite economic growth and GDP, labor migration has increased:

Table 2

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Remittance inflows, \$bn	2.021	2.722	3.222	3.698	3.384	2.259	1.867	2.237	2.183
Average total income per capita, somoni per month	190.8	225.62	258.81	293.58	323.64	297.61	351.14	374.12	409.78
Poverty rate, %	39.6	42.0	37.4	34.3	32.0	31.3	30.3	29.5	27.4
Inflation rate, %	6.4	12.42	5.79	5.03	6.07	5.78	5.97	7.31	3.84
Average earned income, somoni per month	77.5	154.27	174.9	202.79	231.7	244.48	252.40	272.55	290.20
Number of emigrant workers, persons	313,900	333,200	410,000	415,000	626,000	251,600	450,000	459,971	463,552
GDP, million somoni	24,707.1	30,071.1	36,163.1	40,525.5	45,606.6	48,408.7	54,491.0	61,093.6	68,844.0
GDP growth, %	6.5	7.4	7.5	7.4	6.7	6.0	6.9	7.1	7.3
<i>Sources:</i> Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, available at [ <a href="https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TJKPCPIPCHPT">https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/TJKPCPIPCHPT</a> ]; World Bank, available at [ <a href="https://databank.worldbank.org">https://databank.worldbank.org</a> ]; National Human Development Report: Tajikistan, available at [ <a href="http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/tajikistan_rus2013.pdf">http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/tajikistan_rus2013.pdf</a> ]; Agency on Statistics under the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, available at [ <a href="https://www.stat.tj/rj">https://www.stat.tj/rj</a> ]; Interstate Statistical Committee of the CIS, available at [ <a href="http://cisstat.com/">http://cisstat.com/</a> ].									

Source: Central Asia And The Caucasus

### **Uzbekistan and the Persian-speaking Regions of The Country (During Karimov Era)**

Until the late 1930s, there were very few Tajik-Persian language high schools in Uzbekistan. During this period, the number of Tajik schools in Uzbekistan increased due to the efforts of some Tajik government officials, such as Abdul Qadir Mohiuddinov, Abdul Rahim Hajbayev, Shirin Shah Shahtimur and ChenarImamov. By the end of the 1940s, approximately 85% of Tajiks in Uzbekistan were educated in their mother tongue in high schools, but since the early 1950s the number of Tajik schools in Uzbekistan has gradually declined until the collapse of the Soviet Union (Shafaqna News Agency, 2013: 21). During this period, the policy of "Uzbekization" and the undermining of the cultural and historical identity of the Tajiks was seriously pursued by Uzbeks. During the reign of Sharaf Rashidov, a member of the political bureau of the Communist Party and the then first secretary of the Communist Party in Uzbekistan, if anyone spoke Persian in the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in government offices, five Soviet rubles should be fined to the state treasury. In Rashidov's time, speaking all languages except Persian was free. Therefore, the Persians of Samarkand and Bukhara preferred the Russian language to Uzbek.

The collapse of the Soviet Union did not mean the end of the policy of "Uzbekization" and the weakening of Tajik cultural and historical identity in Uzbekistan. Islam Karimov's nationalist policies, based on "negative nationalism" against Tajiks and ethnic and identity "alienation", intensified the atmosphere. The result of those policies was the continuation of past cultural and social policies on a broader and more systematic level. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the situation in Uzbekistan and the policy of Uzbekization (imposition of Uzbek culture, language, and literature on the Tajik minority) became a political and security issue in Dushanbe and Tashkent relations. Murad Sadykov conducted a field study in Samarkand in 2013 and concluded that "the Tajik language is under pressure in the ancient city of Samarkand" (Sadykov, 2013: 5). Another researcher refers to the situation of Tajiks as the "Tajik tragedy of Uzbekistan" (Peylamarari, 2016: 6).

The idea of internationalism, which was widely promoted during the Soviet era, had a particular influence on Karimov and his environment (Adams, 2010:194). Following the ideas of internationalism and the pursuit of a policy of ethnic and religious unity, Uzbek officials established the Bukhara Jewish Museum in Samarkand in 2008. The period of independence was also a turning point in the positive assessment of Timur's role in the history of Central Asia. The big celebration of the 660th anniversary of Amir Timur's death in 1996 became an important event in Samarkand. In 1996, two minarets were rebuilt from Amir Muslim Cemetery, where Timur and his sons are buried. On October 18, 1996, Karimov proposed that Timur Day be celebrated as an official city day.

This holiday is traditionally celebrated in Samarkand. During the 25 years of Islam Karimov (1991-2016) leadership, the "memory policy" (reminder of the past) in Uzbekistan was tasked with legitimizing the new government, promoting the achievements of the independence period and Karimov's contribution to Uzbekistan's development and promoting Uzbekistan's international relations. The Russian Empire and the Soviet period were interpreted negatively, while the Uzbek independence period was praised. The search for a balance between the multicultural and multipolar nature of the

population and the promotion of Uzbekistan's development was on the agenda (Malikov, 2018: 133).

Because Uzbekistan is stronger than all its neighbors, government disputes could potentially lead the region to a domino effect of violence and instability. Thus, with a nationalist program, Karimov spent a great deal of resources creating the symbols, myths, legends and history of the "United Uzbek Nation". Karimov's nationalist-democratic plan, and the need for its strong acceptance, led to widespread popular legitimacy. In his speeches and writings, Karimov always referred to serious threats of regionalism, separatism, and sectarian strife. It was clear that Karimov feared a conflict like the one in Tajikistan between rival tribes for power and tried to inform the Uzbek people about it (Collins, 2017: 465).

Karimov's policy seemed to maintain a relative balance between ethnic and tribal networks. From 1995 to 1997, the period when Uzbekistan invested the most, Karimov directed foreign investment to different parts of the country. Although a large portion of this capital typically went to Tashkent and to the Samarkand / Navi gas and gold sector, by establishing industrial centers such as automobile production in major cities in these areas (Namangan, Organge and Andijan), Karimov also encouraged tribal factions in the Fergana and Kharazm valleys (Collins, 2017:476). The process of Uzbekization during the 25-year leadership of Islam Karimov was pursued with particular seriousness in Tajikistan. For example, while the language of educational institutions, including the University of Samarkand, the oldest university in Central Asia and founded by Lenin, the first leader of the Soviet government, was Persian. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the rise to power of Islam, Karimov changed to the Uzbek language. There are many such examples in the cultural and social fields. The widespread reaction of public opinion and the elites of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to Google's inclusion of the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in the map of Tajikistan in January 2013 clearly shows the extreme sensitivity of this issue in relations between the two countries.

**The Socio-Cultural Situation of the Tajiks in Uzbekistan during the Rule of Shukat Mirziyoyev**

Since the death of Islam Karimov in 2016, there have been signs of progress in bilateral relations. In October 2016, the Uzbek ambassador to Dushanbe announced bilateral talks with the Tajik side to improve visa requirements for Tajiks. In late December 2016, an Uzbek delegation traveled to Tajikistan to review economic and trade co-operation and to establish direct flights and railways between the two countries. In January 2017, the two countries began negotiations to establish a new road connecting Tajikistan to Russia via Uzbekistan (Baratov, 2017:193). De-escalation of relations between the two countries, especially Mirziyoyev's visit to Tajikistan in 2018 and Rehman's visit to Tashkent in the same year, which was the Tajik president's first visit to Uzbekistan in 17 years, took Tajik-Uzbek relations into a new phase.

During the meeting, Rehman visited the Tajik regions of Uzbekistan and made decisions such as opening the first international bus line on the Tashkent-Khudzhand-Tashkent route, licensing and disembarking Tajik Railway passenger trains in the cities of Tirmuz, Samarkand and Qarshi in Uzbekistan. And the resumption of direct flights between the two countries' capitals, a threefold reduction in ticket prices, and the offer of new flights between Dushanbe and the cities of Samarkand and Bukhara could help reduce pressure on Tajik and Uzbek minorities within the two countries. And increase the cultural and popular relations between the two countries.

The presidents of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have met several times since September 2016, and in March 2018, Mirziyoyev paid a historic visit to Dushanbe, where he signed 27 bilateral agreements in the fields of trade, economy, investment, finance, transport and transit. Agriculture and water and energy, taxation, customs, tourism, education and science, health, culture, interregional cooperation, security and counter-crime. Thus, with the election of Mirziyoyev as President of Uzbekistan, relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as well as relations between Uzbekistan and its neighbors in Central Asia, have reached a new level of potential. The practical implementation of this potential has not yet been seen, and by 2020

the Central Asian region is one of the least integrated regions in the world (Vakulchuk and Indra, 2019: 116).

However, there are still ethnic problems between the two countries, including the Tajiks in Uzbekistan. As a result of the political and administrative divisions of the Soviet era. In domestic politics, Mirziyoyev, while maintaining Karimov's policies and tactics, is implementing some slow reforms with a gentle slope. Although Mirziyoyev is known for his closeness to Karimov's ideas, he knows the situation in Uzbekistan well after about 13 years as Uzbekistan's prime minister. To better understand Mirziyoyev and compare him to Karimov and predict Uzbekistan's future, the two are from two different generations of Eurasian leaders. Karimov lived in a period influenced by Stalin's policies, but Mir Ziyayev's political growth was the product of the heyday of Glasnost and Pros troika Gorbachev's policies, and for this reason he spent most of his life in independent Uzbekistan. Therefore, political and economic freedoms will probably increase during Mir Zayef's time (Emad Center for Strategic Studies, 2016: 54).

Overall, the developments in the three years since Shaukat Mirziyoyev's rule have eased some of Karimov's Islamic policies and pressures for Uzbekization in Tajik-speaking areas. Of course, this situation is twofold, and in Tajikistan measures have been taken to tolerate Uzbek culture and language in the Uzbek regions of Tajikistan. A trip by a delegation of Uzbek educators and artists to participate in the "Festival of Uzbek Cultural Days" in May 2017 is a prime example (Easterniran.com). However, even if progress is made in the future, such as direct flights and improved visa issuance for nationals of the two countries, there can be little hope of improving relations until an acceptable agreement addressing the two countries' disputed national issues.

### **Conclusion**

Central Asia has been home to many cultures and civilizations. Russian and Soviet writers generally claimed that the colonial conquest of Central Asia by Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union was the free choice of the peoples of the region who wanted to ally with Greater Russia. But the conquest of Central Asia was an important

plan and strategy of the Russian Empire. The Russian Empire had political and economic reasons for invading Central Asia and sought to colonize and "civilize" the region. The Soviet goal of delimiting the national and territorial boundaries of Central Asia was to place ethnic groups on artificial borders. Another goal of this policy was to destroy the traditional institutions of the region. The Russian Empire and the Soviet Union in Central Asia ignored the history, culture, and traditions of the local people. The territories of Central Asia were occupied by Tsarist Russia and without reflecting the historical and national characteristics of the region, were organized according to the traditional Russian administrative system. In addition, the delimitation of the national and territorial boundaries of Central Asia, designed and implemented by the Soviets in the 1920s, had important consequences, including the creation of artificial identities and political structures with new names, the disappearance of many identities, and the creation of divisions, divisions, and it led to divisions between different ethnic groups in Central Asia. The Tajiks suffered the most.

As a result of the Soviets' policy of delimiting the national and territorial boundaries of Central Asia, large numbers of Tajiks settled outside their borders. Tajiks live mainly in Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Surkhan Darya, and Fergana and far from their compatriots in the Republic of Tajikistan. This is the result of the Soviet division of 1924. Since then, Tajik speakers have been so absorbed into the structures created by the Uzbek government that they are forced to deny their identity and become Uzbeks. This has not been ineffective in escalating tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. During the Karimov era, policies were implemented to Uzbekize the Tajik population living in Uzbekistan. The policies were aimed at maintaining national security, combating separatism and preventing conditions similar to those that occurred during Tajikistan's civil war. With Karimov's death in 2016, there is hope that the situation of Tajik-speaking Tajiks in Uzbekistan will improve as a result of domestic and regional policies, as well as post-Karimov reforms by Shaukat Mirziyoyev, which have shown improvement in recent years. Tajik speakers insist on the Republic of Tajikistan. Although it has not been long since the will to change political relations between the two

countries and these changes have been slow, but with the past and the negative mentality that Tajiks have from their history in Uzbekistan, especially during the Soviet era and after its partition, these changes are expected. Unprecedented at the highest political level, the change in the situation of Tajiks in Uzbekistan and, consequently, the Tajik-Uzbek relations entered a new phase in its history.

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