Muslims and Communists Vie for Power in Tajikistan

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1. Introduction

During the euphoria that followed the fall of communist power and of the Soviet Union, the future direction of the independent republics of Central Asia was repeatedly debated. The prevalent views, summarized in ethnic and ideological terms, are Pan-Turkism and Pan-Iranianism on the one hand and Pan-Islamism on the other. The promoters of Pan-Turkism and Pan-Iranianism regard the ethnic and linguistic commonalties of the Turks and the Iranians to be sufficient rationale for uniting each ethno-linguistic group into a regional power, a Eurasian power consisting of Anatolia, the Caucuses, Tataristan, and Turkic Central Asia and a Westasian power consisting of Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. The promoters of Pan-Islamism envisioned a world power at the heart of which would rest Muslims of Eurasia, Westasia, and the greater Middle East combined. The cementing agent in this structure would be the Islamic faith, which dissolves all ethnic, linguistic, and national ties.

Although, in theory, these alternatives seem possible, in practice they have been defenseless against forces much less formidable than the issues facing Central Asia today. Pan-Turkism, for instance, plagued by tribal unrest and selfish leaders, lost its chance of bringing Turkistan propsperity during the early years of this century. Similarly, the empires of the Achaemenians and Sassanians of Iran crumbled because their monarchs, claiming divine right, abused the land grant system, robbing the middle class of its viability. And the Islamic Empire fell because it could not reconcile the Shi'ites with the Sunnites but, more significantly, it failed to recognize the necessity of allowing conquered nations to assert themselves. Those empires, like the Russian and Soviet Empires in recent times, denied their subjects ethnic and linguistic freedom, curtailed social and political mobility and, by necessity, centrally controlled the human and natural resources of their constituent nations.

Appearances are deceptive, especially if they are created by incomplete information and enhanced by inaccurate interpretation. The Central Asia that emerged after the fall of the Soviet Union was projected through the distorted lenses of the Directorate in

Tashkent. On the basis of the information available at that time, there was no reason to believe that the old Turkistan would not reemerge and grow as a whole. The present state of regional, political, economic, and cultural competition among the republics, as we shall see in the case of Tajikistan, bespeaks a different Central Asia. Tajikistan, of course, differs vastly from the Turkic republics in terms of ideology, ethnic problems, and economic health. Yet, one wonders if Tajikistan's problems are not symptomatic of the region as a whole-or if the fate of Tajikistan would not determine the long-range direction of Uzbekistan and, indeed, the rest of Central Asia.

The world of the empires, the hypothetical future Turkistan included, must be relegated to history (cf., Imart, 1990, 13). The uneducated subjects of the old empires had little knowledge or regard for democracy, market economy, and privatization. Neither were ethnic pride, socio-political mobility, and freedom of expression of great value to them. Today, however, for those same values, youth are readily giving their lives in the streets of Alma-Ata, Moscow, and Dushanbe (cf., Blazer, 1990, 6). Given the fact that the Central Asians have come to these values as a result of Stalin's terror, Brezhnev's neglect, and Andropov's and Gorbachev's glasnost', would it not follow that their ultimate response to the problem would be a concerted one? And, if that were the case, how would they reconcile their regional, political, and economic differences?

Ancient Central Asians were Zoroastrian. With the advent of Islam, most Central Asians became ardent Muslims. In the twentieth century communism changed their way of life one more time. The changes that communism dictated, however, appear irreversible. They are encoded not only in the language, literature, and culture but also in science and technology. Under the circumstances, therefore, what good would a Muslim/communist struggle of the type that is destroying Tajikistan bring to Central Asian?

2. Islam and Communism in Central Asia

The history of Tajikistan's painful transformation from a traditional community into a Soviet-style society shares many of the other Central Asian republics' experiences with communism. The Basmachi movement, for instance, was a confrontation in which the Muslims demanded the return of their waqf lands, freedom to practice their religion, and a firm control over the education of their children. Soviet interpretation of the ideals of the movement being different, the movement was crushed and its leaders were punished. Having used Dushanbe as a stronghold for Basmachi activities, the Tajiks carried the brunt of the Soviets' retaliation. Their nascent Autonomous Republic lay in ruin (Rywkin, 1982, 43) and all their hopes for retaining the cities of Samarqand and Bukhara for Tajikistan were shattered. Distant as the Basmachi movement is from today's realities, in places like Dushanbe and Alma-Ata, any discussion of the leaders of the movement still elicits opposing reactions, particularly in a cultural context: Whose statue, for instance, should be toppled? What street names should be changed? And whose name should grace the dedication plaque of a given building?

The Khudzhum (onslaught on traditional ways) movement dealt with Soviet interference in the private lives of the Central Asian Muslims. In the 1920s, young women were incited to rebel against the traditional order, become conversant in the Soviet culture, and recruit other like-minded women for the cause. The Soviets' persistence to disrupt the family infuriated the aksakals, leading to Khudzhum. This bloody battle, too, ended in a loss for the Muslims. As a result, women were employed in the cotton fields and factories to work shoulder-to-shoulder with men (Massell, 1974, 226-246).

The most intellectually stimulating and yet tragic experience that the Central Asians share is the jadidist movement. Originating at the close of the nineteenth century by the Tatar educator Ismail Bey Gaspirali, the movement sought to modernize Islam and return the cultural integrity of Turkistan to its people. That movement was neutralized in the 1920s by the Soviet's thrust for modernization and later on, in the late 1930s, by the Stalin's purges. All the leaders of the jadid movement were liquidated (Zenkovsky, 1960, 82-91; Krader, 1963, 107). Sadriddin Aini, who painstakingly chronicled the rise of the jadid movement in Bukhara at the turn of the twentieth century (Aini, 1983, 342, ff.; Carr re d'Encausse, 1989, 172-74), understandably remained silent about its demise when he wrote his Yoddoshtho (Reminiscences) in the 1940s.

3. Muslims and Communists in Tajikistan

World War II changed the Soviet attitude towards Islam. Rather than a monolith, the Soviets came to regard the Muslims as a population with special needs and aspirations. To set the record straight, therefore, they differentiated between the Sunnis and the Shi'ites, giving the latter a voice of its own with a Mujtahid, rather than a Mufti. Considering the needs of the Muslims of a vast empire that spans eleven time zones, and the logistics needed to receive spiritual guidance, they also raised the number of Directorates to four. In 1944, therefore, four Directorates were established; the one for Central Asian Muslims being located in Tashkent (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1986, 14-16). This move was a watershed in the sense that, henceforth, the republics of Central Asia were guided by Muslims from Tashkent, or at least that was the official line. Having outlined some of the main points that bond the Central Asians togethr, we shall now turn to the case of Tajikistan.

Following Tashkent's advice, the Tajiks curtailed the amount of time they spent on prayers along with changing the order of some rituals and disguising the appearance of some others. In tight situations, they even practiced taqiyyah (defensive dissimulation). In fact, they adhered to the official line so well that by the 1950s, most vestiges of Islam seemed to have disappeared from Tajikistan. Still, to their chagrin, the Soviet researchers soon realized that Islam, in addition to the set of rituals that had been denied the worshipers, is also a set of abstract principles that flow from the Qur'an, the ahadith, and the schools of law. More importantly, they came to the conclusion that their

manipulation-far from bringing about the demise of Islam-had led to its resurgence. The aksakals had successfully passed on the faith to the new generation.

In the 1960s and 1970s, therefore, two major forces were at work in Tajikistan. One was an effort by the Soviets, Russian Soviets in particular, to put an end to the activities of the aksakals, mullahs, and imperialists who prevented the Tajik youth from grasping the full intent of Soviet education (cf., Safarov, 1965, 16). The other was a decidedly militant response by Tajik Muslims who intended to perpetuate the traditions of the Prophet. In order to understand better the dynamics of Muslim/communist interaction in Tajikistan, therefore, we shall review the Soviets' plan for the eradication of Islam and the Tajiks' response to the Soviet plan.

Government efforts to diminish the influence of Islam in the republic was included in the larger program of sliazhenie (merging), a program that ended in 1976-77 (Bennigsen and Broxup, 1983, 51, 54). To achieve the desired amount of mixing, large numbers of Russians were invited to Tajikistan by the republic's Russian settlers. Taking advantage of Tajik hospitality, the new immigrants gradually moved into the Tajiks' homes and confiscated them. In addition, they took control of the lucrative positions that opened up at the hydro-electric plants, factories, mechanized farms, and industries. Finally, they pushed the Tajiks out of their own public housing facilities. According to Bazarov, who wrote a report about the activities of the Soviet officials in the rural districts (Bazarov, 1968), and Safarov, who wrote a similar report on their treatment of the Sufi ishans (Safarov 1965), the new Russians intended to eradicate Islam systematically from Tajik culture.

In schools, in addition to attending seminars and conferences (Bazarov, 1968, 62-63), the teachers were forced to teach atheism and to emphasize the advantages of the new advances in astronomy, physics, chemistry, biology, and physiology. Similarly, Soviet doctors and interns were instructed to "enlighten" the masses with discussions about the marvels of new medicine, especially emphasizing the healing power of the new drugs as opposed to the efficacy of the remedies prescribed by the ishans (Safarov, 1965, 25, 31). Those who refused to participate in this process or who continued to visit the ziyarats (tombs of saints) and mazars (graveyards) were summarily dismissed. Journalists, radio and television broadcasters, publishers, and writers were asked to participate in the process by broadcasting, writing, and disseminating news that exposed the misdeeds of the ishans and the mullahs. The government itself published and widely distributed materials in Tajiki, refuting the claims of the ishans regarding barakah (special blessing) (Safarov, 1965, 32 - 33).

In carrying out these programs, the Soviets sought help from several segments of the Tajik population, including the elderly and the talented women (Bazarov, 1968, 67-68). Trusted clerical converts, and pensioners who had fought in the Basmachis wars, were persuaded to exert their influence on the Tajik youth. The women, too, were assigned the same task. After being trained in the urban centers, they were returned to the same

kishloks where the elderly had been working. The women were to influence those young men whom the elderly and the clergy had failed to reach.

Books have been written about the degradation of the clergy, most of whom respected aksakals, as well as about the suppression of Islamic rituals, and the enforcement of mandatory language laws. These repressive acts need not be detailed here. The Soviets' ban of the 'an'anahs (cultural festivals), however, (Bazarov, 1968, 47 ff.) distressed the aksakals the most. After all, the aksakals were the custodians of the republic's ancient heritage and were obliged to celebrate such rights of passage as circumcisions. The fear that they might lose the custody of their children to the State, however, prevented them from carrying out their duties (Pospielovsky, 1987, 87). All tois and ceremonies, therefore, were held in absolute secrecy.

In response to the type of oppressive measures outlined above, in the mid-1970s, a group that called itself Sozmon-i Javonon-i Ozod or Liberated Youth Organization (LYO) began operation in Kurgan-Tyube, some one hundred and fifty kilometers south of the capital of Dushanbe. The clandestine group, led by Mullah Abdullah Nuri, intended to perpetuate Tajik ethnicity, while it also strove to establish ideological ties with Islamic organizations outside the Soviet Union. Unfortunately, our present knowledge about the organization is superficial. We know, nevertheless, that it linked up with Hikmatyar's Hizb-i Islom-i Afqoniston (Islamic Party of Afghanistan) (Bennigsen and Broxup, 1984, 111-113) and provided teachers to promote ethnic pride and Islamic ideology in the countryside. Whether the group received assistance from the outside, especially from Pakistan and Iran, remains to be discovered.

The existence of clandestine orders in Central Asia has been known since the 1970s (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985, 4). The information gathered, however, is of little value for understanding the real motives of the participants in the secret activities. Soviet researchers, because they could not penetrate the veil of secrecy that masked the true nature of the inner sanctum of these "closed societies," interpreted the activities of the ishans variously as misguided educational efforts to poison the minds of the youth or attempts to perpetuate superstition. Some even attributed the ishans' activities to charlatanism by citing the distribution of illegal drugs, writing of prayer wheels, and praying for the dead (cf., Safarov, 1965, 7; cf., Paksoy, 1984) as examples of the ishans' misdeeds.

Bennigsen and Wimbush, who studied the Sufi orders in the Soviet Union in 1983, evaluated the situation differently. They singled out the activities of the Naqshbandiyyah order on both sides of the Tajik/Afghan border, emphasizing the importance of the clandestine alliance between the LYO and Hikmatyar's Mujahiddins. The doctrinal as well as the political ramifications of the alliance, they thought, were germane to a thorough understanding of the growth of Islamic movements in the region. It is due to their efforts, for instance, that we know that in spite of the drastic measures

taken by Soviet authorities to secure the southern borders, Afghan Mujahiddins traveled in the Soviet countryside unencumbered (Bennigsen and Wimbush, 1985, 111).

The activities of the LYO, of course, were not totally hidden from the authorities in Moscow. Dealing with the spread of the message, however, was a different issue, requiring a degree of caution. There were two options open to the policy makers. The group could be banned, which would give rise to a general feeling of anti-Islamism and also destroy what had been achieved since the inauguration of the Directorates and the initiation of renovation programs set in motion after WWII. Alternatively, the group could be discredited publicly and its membership purged officially. Mikhail Gorbachev chose the latter approach. Responding to the demonstrations in Kurgan Tyube (October 1986), not only Gorbachev, but Yegor Ligachev and Alexander Yakovlev as well, voiced their uncompromising stance in speech after speech against religious resurgence in the Union (Hetmanek, 1987, 84).

The context of these lectures, however, was of more significance for understanding the events in Tajikistan than the activities that had precipitated them. This was the time when the nomenklatura-the Soviet Politburo, Secretariat, and Central Committee-were being overhauled (cf., Bashiri, 1992, 2300; Rywkin, 1990, 149) and when purges were under way to strengthen the Communist Party as a whole so that it could withstand the impending shocks of the full realization of glasnost'. The demonstrations in Tajikistan and the reaction to them, therefore, must be considered in the larger context of glasnost' and its use and abuse by different groups. After all, Islamic resurgence in Tajikistan cannot be viewed as an isolated case. Tajikistan's Islamic movement is connected to a network of Islamic societies throughout the former Soviet Union. The movements of the communists in the other republics are as closely watched today as were the movements of the Muslims during the Soviet era. Whatever the significance of these tactics might be, one thing is quite clear. The 1986 purges in the region are yielding results today. Wave after wave of assaults on the bastion of communism in Tajikistan, for instance, has proved ineffective in bringing about its collapse. The resistance in the other republics would be doubly strong.

As mentioned in the introductory remarks, there is a fundamental difference between the view of Central Asia/Islam that emerged immediately after the breakup of the Soviet Union and the view that is prevalent in the republics today. Visiting the republics, one comes away with the understanding that Islam in the region follows a north-south geographic orientation. In Kazakhstan, Islam is just beginning to bud. The Kazakhs openly announce their adherence to the faith and though their knowledge of the religion is fairly limited, their conviction is not. Every Friday afternoon, their only mosque in Alma-Ata is filled with worshipers from all around the Dzhambul region. A minaret, as well as a prayer and sermons hall, is being added to the old structure. In Kyrgyzstan, especially in Osh, the existence of Islam is palpable. Osh is where northern Kyrgyzstan and its growing Muslim population-Bishkek, for example, has four mosques and a newly established school-meets southern Kyrgyzstan's devoted Muslims. It is also in

this general area, at Namangan, in the Ferghana valley, that the Kyrgyz Muslims meet Central Asia's militant Muslims, the Tajiks.

In Tajikistan, the republic with the longest history of Islamic worship, Islam is already a way of life. The Tajiks began the renovation of their mosques and madrasahs at the end of the 1980s. Having passed the renovation stage, they are now educating their citizens in the tenets of Islam. They have replaced the Cyrillic alphabet with the Arabic-based alphabet used for Farsi and Dari (Iran Times, 1992, 14) and have opened the way for reading and, eventually, understanding the Qur'an. They also have resurrected the aksakal system, a feature of old Turkistan now absent in the other republics but which is, perhaps to a great degree, responsible for the slow growth of communist ideology in the rural areas of Tajikistan. But most importantly, the Tajiks have given their ethnic groups an opportunity to assert themselves and have allowed divergent ideologies to have a voice in the leadership of their society. In fact, part of the troubles that present-day Tajikistan is undergoing is due to this very unbridled openness.

Logic dictates that the spread of communism into Central Asia must have followed the reverse pattern of that of Islam. We expect, in other words, the Tajiks to be the least affected of all the republics. And to a great extent that is the case. Yet the Tajik adherents of communist ideology are the most ardent. They have supported the Communist Party consistently and with a very high rate of native participation (Krader, 1956, 808), and they continue to be so disposed. In fact, Tajikistan is the only one among the republics of the former Soviet Union to retain the hammer and sickle against the red field of its flag. In fact, a green band, representing Islam and a white band are added to the old flag.

After perestroika, the LYO surfaced under the title of Hizb-i Nihzat-i Islomi-i Tojikiston or the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT). Having explained the reasons for the formation of the clandestine organization and detailed the organization's contributions to Tajik ethnicity and ideology, the Party leaders announced their readiness to participate in all decision-making processes regarding the future of Tajikistan. Presently the IRPT is headed by Mukhammad Sharif Khidmatzoda. In time, he intends to create an Islamic government that would operate on a parliamentary basis.

Even though the role of Islam in Central Asia cannot be determined until the number of the truly faithful is certain, the establishment of an Islamic republic in Tajikistan does not seem as remote today as it did a year, even six months, ago. The leaders of the Islamic movement have visibly showcased the concrete dedication of their supporters. Only the IRPT, with its tentacles deep in Tajikistan's kishloks, could mobilize large numbers of devotees, house them in Freedom Square, where not long ago the statue of Lenin had stood and, more importantly, keep up their level of enthusiasm for fifty days and nights. These are the Central Asian Muslims that, according to Safarov, communism never touched (Safarov, 1965, 17).

The institution of an Islamic republic in Tajikistan, however, might not follow the model created by the Islamic Republic of Iran for a number of reasons. To begin with, the Tajiks are Sunni with a tightly knit Isma'ili Shi'ite community in the far off Pamirs. Secondly, the Tajiks, having witnessed the impact of fundamentalist Islam on Westernized Iran, are not likely to allow the same type of alienation and displacement to be visited on their Sovietized intellectuals, professionals, and educators. On the contrary, through the Paivand Organization, they are seeking to reestablish ties with Tajiks who might have left Tajikistan some thirty or forty years ago. Thirdly, if the Soviet regime has left any lasting legacy in Tajikistan, it is in the education of the masses (Rywkin, 1982, 103; Bazarov, 1968, 20 ff.). Educated Sunnis are likely to ask those questions about Shi'ite ideology that the twelver Shi'ites are forbidden to probe. Finally, Tajik visitors to Tehran returned with much less enthusiasm than expected. They were especially disappointed in Iran's lack of democratic institutions of the type desired in Central Asia. They found the Iranians more restrained in expressing themselves than the Tajiks had been under Soviet rule. For the present, therefore, fundamentalist Iran does not seem to be an attractive ideological model for the Tajiks (cf., Olcott, 1992, 127).

Perestroika opened up Tajik society to the world and gave it a taste of freedom: ethnic, linguistic, political, and ideological freedom. Many Tajiks seized the opportunity and formed political parties. These include the culturally oriented Hizb-i Rastokhiz-i Milli-i Tojikiston or the National Rebirth Party of Tajikistan (NRPT); the Sazman-i Nosir-i Khesrav or the Nasir-i Khesrav Organization (NKO), representing the Isma'ili shi'ites of the Pamirs; and the Sozmon-i La'l-i Badakhshon or the Ruby of Badakhshan Organization (RBO), representing the Gorno-Badakhshan region (See, Wixman, 1984, for the ethnic and linguistic background of the people of Gorno-Badakhshan). A most curious revival, however, is that of Wahhabism. Originally founded by Muhammad b. 'Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1787) in Arabia, Wahhabism was brought to Central Asia in the late 1800s (Schuyler, 1867, ii, 245). There it grew around Khojand until, like Sunnism and Isma'ilism, it was suppressed by the Soviets in the 1920s. The Wahhabis oppose the cult of the saints and condemn visitation of tombs. They acknowledge the authority of the four schools and the six books of hadith. Inclusion of any name but Allah's in prayers would constitute shirk for them. To the Hanafi and Isma'ili Tajiks, as to some other Muslim groups, Wahhabi thought borders on fundamentalism.

Capitalizing on a vague association between the beliefs of the Wahhabis, the Tajiks' cultural ties to fundamentalist Iran, and the claims of the IRPT, the officials of the old order are attributing the activities of IRPT to Wahhabism. In addition, there are also rumors that according to Wahhabi belief if the fifth child in a family is a girl, the father has the right to sleep with her. These kinds of allegations and fabrications, especially the tension that they have created in the South and the number of Tajik lives that have been lost because of them, worry the more educated Tajiks.

The IRPT and the organizations mentioned above did not emerge out of a vacuum but were created by Tajiks who had become disenchanted with the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT). The Party's conservative stance on full and rapid democratization (Gleason, 1990), its treatment of the elderly, its lack of regard for family values, and its unjust hold on the political and economic levers of power had alienated them. The IRPT operated clandestinely for fifteen years before it surfaced as a legitimate party.

Nevertheless, the Communist Party remains the major player in Tajik affairs and, although its ideology is discredited, still commands the economic resources of the republic. The long-term future of the CPT, however, is in doubt due to internal fragmentation. As the IRPT and the other organizations gain strength, the sphere of influence of the CPT would become increasingly limited. This process has so far, according to Shodi Shabdalov, the Party chief, compelled the CPT to declare that it no longer plays a vanguard role and that its ideology is no longer viable. While still advocating socialism, the Party now accepts all forms of ownership and is ready to relinquish to the public sector everything but health care, transportation, communication, and defense.

The Tajiks' perception of the membership of the CPT points to a membership that is no longer focused. It also shows that the Tajiks tolerate, rather than support, the CPT members in office. What follows is a summary of the Tajiks' view of the fragmented CPT, but both the categories and the percentages are yet to be verified.

The members of the main communist body, 30% of the membership, are usually referred to as Mankurt or ignorant communists. Like Chingiz Aitmatov's shepherd boy who had no memory of his mother, these are party members who, have lost their link with their past (Aitmatov, 1980, 124 ff.). Poorly educated, they slavishly carry out the dictates of their superiors. Unlike the Mankurt, the Matin or steadfast communists (20%) are true communists. The members of this group, fully familiar with the history, dogma, and the ideals of the movement, continue to believe that the Party has a positive role to play in the future of Tajikistan. The Haromkhor or profiteer communists, comprising 20% of the membership, are communists who owe their livelihood to the system. They would do anything to safeguard their jobs and financial well-being. The Eslomi or Islamic communists, about 10% of the CPT membership, consist of hard-line communists who still believe Islam and communism have much in common and, therefore, can coexist. Originally these individuals used communism to safeguard their traditional Tajik values. The members of the last group are the Ozodikhoh or democratic communists. With 20% of the membership, this group is Tajikistan's hope for a stable and prosperous future. Like the steadfast communists, the members of this group are fully familiar with communist principles and ideals; however, they believe that democracy must be earned and that it cannot be dictated from above. Ironically, due to a lack of space for development and xenophobia, the majority of the democratic communists, being Russian, are leaving Tajikistan (Pigolkin and Studinikina, 1991, 39, 55; Bennigsen and Broxup, 1983, 132; Guboglo, 1990, 30-31).

Tajikistan is enmeshed in a war of ideologies. The core of its culture, although disputed and threatened from the outside (Watters, 1990, 108-9; Gleason, 1990, 91), remains fairly safe and protected. The future of the republic, however, hinges on the growth of its fledgling parties and availability of economic aid. If the IRPT grows in strength, as it seems it would, the specter of the Amir of Bukhara might be revisited on the Tajiks. On the other hand, if the democratic wing of the CPT grows, there is a good chance for the establishment of democratic institutions, leading to cultural, political, and economic growth. Until that time, therefore, although it may remain theoretically independent, Tajikistan will remain at the mercy of outside forces.

4. Conclusions

Returning to the larger picture of Central Asia, Bennigsen and Broxup pointed out in 1983 that Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism must be viewed as aspects of the same phenomenon and that attention must be drawn to the sentiments that bind the Muslim Turks (Bennigsen and Broxup, 138). This sobering assessment, I believe, must be explained further by specifying that Pan-Turkism and Pan-Islamism have their roots in two fundamentally different aspects of the culture, ethnicity and ideology. Turkism, like the Turkish language, is an unchangeable aspect of the Turkic Central Asian culture, while the Islamic and communist ideologies are additions to the ethnic core. A Pan-Turkic alliance and a Pan-Islamic alliance encompass very different peoples. In fact, that is why I believe the Central Asian scene today is vastly different from the seemingly unified Turkistan about which the Bennigsen and Broxup statement was made. As the discussion of the shared experiences of the Tajiks and the other Central Asians shows, ethnic identity and the mix of ideologies are both determining factors in an assessment of the future direction of the republics. The North emphasizes ethnicity in order to gain a firmer grip on independence and democratization. Emphasis on ethnicity also camouflages the North's retention of the ideology of the past for economic survival. For this area ethnicity is a given. Conversely Tajikistan emphasizes ideology-Muslim and communist-in order to safeguard its ethnic and, thereby, territorial integrity against incursions by its northern neighbor, Uzbekistan (Laitin, 1991, 20).

Since the ethnicity factor of the Bennigsen/Broxup analysis is a constant, ideology remains as its only determining factor, dividing the region between a latent communist ideology and an assertive Islamic faith. In other words, Tajikistan's present-day troubles might become a regional communist/Islamic struggle. There is, however, a third factor of great significance ignored in the Bennigsen/Broxup equation: economy. The prevailing socio-economic interdependence that the Soviet system has woven into the fabric of the republics, I believe, outshines both the ethnicity and the ideological factors. Because of this interdependence, the republics are likely to form selective, theme-and-issue oriented alliances among themselves and with the rest of the world, avoiding structures that might give the control of their resources, human and natural, to outsiders. Furthermore, ideology will guide their international affairs as far as acquiring viable technological and economical means for civil and defense industries are concerned.

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