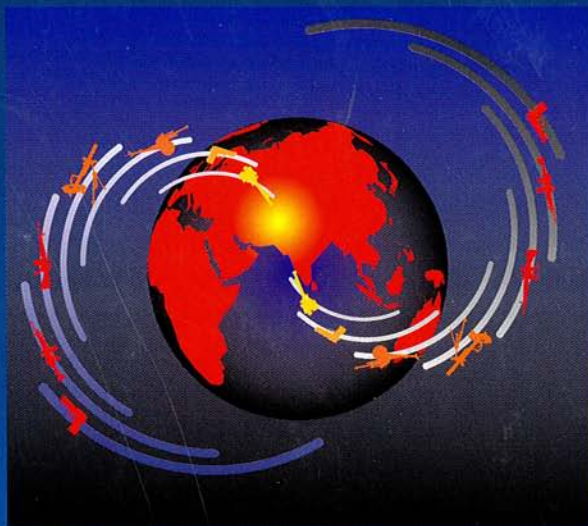


UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR DISARMAMENT RESEARCH
UNIDIR

The Small Arms Problem in Central Asia: Features and Implications

Bobi Pirseyedi



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United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research
Geneva, Switzerland

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ACRONYMS

BASIC	British American Security Information Council
BICC	Bonn International Center for Conversion (Germany, Bonn)
CASA	Coordinating Action on Small Arms
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (USA)
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNR	Commission of National Reconciliation
IDSA	Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses (India)
ISI	Pakistani Intelligence Service
MILF	Moro Islamic Liberation Front of Philippines
MRD	Motorized Rifle Division
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PRIO	International Peace Research Institute
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
UNMOT	United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UTO	United Tajik Opposition

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Introduction

“Might does not make right, it only makes history.”¹ This sign in the window of a gunsmith in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan tellingly captures a central feature of political life worldwide: although often regarded as unjust, the use of armed force remains the ultimate means towards the acquisition of power, wealth, or ideological domination. Since the end of the Cold War, a period overshadowed by the threat of inter-State war fought between two superpowers armed with weapons of mass destruction, the use of armed force has more readily characterized relations between political actors within rather than among States. According to a recent study, between 1989 and 1996, only 6 out of 101 armed conflicts involved the territory and the armed forces of more than one State.² Increasingly, thus, the use of armed force has become mostly a feature of internal conflicts—that is, of “violent or potentially violent political disputes whose origins can be traced primarily to domestic rather than systemic factors, and where armed violence takes place or threatens to take place primarily within the borders of a single State.”³

Although the causes behind recent internal conflicts in different parts of the world ranging from Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka to Bosnia, Afghanistan and Tajikistan have varied, these conflicts have concentrated almost without exception in Third World countries and so-called “post-Soviet States”.⁴ These countries, often referred to as the “weak States”, are commonly plagued by severe domestic ethnic, linguistic, religious or

¹ The quotation is from “Where guns are jewels, Peshawar is a gem row,” *New York Times*, 7 June 1998.

² Peter Wallensteen and Margareta Sollenberg, “Armed Conflicts, Conflict Termination and Peace Agreements, 1989-1996,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 34, No. 3, 1997, p. 339.

³ Michael E. Brown, “Introduction,” in Michael E. Brown (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996, p. 1.

⁴ The causes of internal conflicts can be divided into four broad clusters: structural factors, political factors, economic/social factors and cultural/perceptual factors. *Ibid.*, pp. 13-22.

economic divisions which make them susceptible to actual or potential internal conflicts.⁵

The weapons used in internal conflicts by different parties—government forces, insurgent groups, private armies, militias and other non-State actors—have been mainly small arms and light weapons.⁶ The dominance of small arms as a tool of violence in internal conflicts is due to several specific characteristics which typify these kinds of weapons. Firstly, the low price and the technical plainness of small arms make them attractive to non-State actors lacking the financial resources and training needed to procure and operate more sophisticated heavy weapons. Secondly, small arms are easy to deliver and conceal and they do not require extensive maintenance capabilities. Thirdly, the popularity of small arms can be explained by tactical considerations, for in internal conflicts the killing and intimidation of people with an ethnic, religious, cultural or other kind of affinity with enemy fighters can be considered at

⁵ K. J. Holsti, *Political Sources of Humanitarian Emergencies*, UNU/WIDER, Research for Action 36, Helsinki: Hakapaino Oy, 1997, pp. 2-8.

⁶ There is no single definition of "small arms" and "light weapons". However, those suggested by the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms are widely used. According to the Panel—a group which consisted of representatives from 16 countries and was given the task by the United Nations General Assembly to investigate what kinds of small arms are actually used in conflicts dealt with by the United Nations, what are the causes for the excessive and destabilizing accumulation of small arms, and what could be done about the small arms problem—small arms are weapons designed for personal use, whereas light weapons are those designed for use by several persons serving as a crew. Small arms includes revolvers and self-loading pistols, rifles and carbines, sub-machine-guns, assault rifles and light machine-guns. Heavy machine-guns, portable anti-aircraft and anti-tank guns and light mortars are examples of light weapons. See *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, United Nations document A/52/298/1, 27 August 1997, pp. 11-12. For the purpose of this report, "small arms" is used as a general term referring to both small arms and light weapons, and also to the ammunition used by these weapons. Although anti-personnel landmines are a category of small arms, the mine question is not addressed in this study, for in the diplomatic and scholarly debate anti-personnel landmines have been largely dealt with as a separate issue.

least as important as defeating the enemy on the battlefield.⁷ Fourthly, from a combat point of view, small arms are highly effective. According to some estimates, about 4 million people have been killed in the conflicts of the 1990s. A large proportion of these deaths can be attributed to small arms.⁸

The use of small arms in internal conflicts has caused tremendous human suffering, however.⁹ Some 50 per cent of wartime casualties caused by internal conflicts have been civilians, mostly women and children.¹⁰ These humanitarian implications of small arms have recently brought the issue to the international agenda. The human suffering and atrocities caused by small arms have alerted the international community to the importance of confronting the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of these kinds of weapons. However, it could also be argued that the growing international interest in small arms is due, to a large extent, to the lack of political will on the part of the international community to address the underlying causes of internal conflicts. By concentrating on the tools of violence instead of the causes of violence, by treating the small arms problem as an independent or a compartmentalized issue, the interested parties have hoped that within the prevailing political constraints at least some of the negative effects caused by internal conflicts could be avoided or controlled.

Yet small arms are not merely symptoms of violence; they are also factors that contribute to the intensity, duration and destructiveness of internal conflicts. The current debate on small arms has revived the old and contentious issue of whether the proliferation, accumulation and

⁷ Michael T. Klare, "The New Arms Race: Light Weapons and International Security," *Current History*, April 1997, pp. 174-175.

⁸ Lora Lumpe, "Small Arms Trade," *Foreign Policy In Focus*, Vol. 3, No. 10, May 1998, <http://www.prepcom.org/low/pc2/pc2b9.htm>.

⁹ There are an estimated 100-150 million military-style small arms located all over the world, plus hundreds of millions more destined for police or civilian use. See Jayantha Dhanapala, "Epilogue," in Jayantha Dhanapala, Mitsuro Donowaki, Lora Lumpe and Swadesh Rana (eds.), *Small Arms Control: Old Weapons, New Issues*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing and UNIDIR, 1999, p. 289.

¹⁰ Lora Lumpe, "Small Arms Trade."

easy availability of weapons should be viewed as a sufficient factor in triggering violent behaviour. It has been suggested that the role of small arms in instigating internal conflicts may sometimes be as important as the role of other “permissive factors” or root causes of conflicts.¹¹ However, it would probably be analytically more accurate to include small arms as part of those sources of conflict that have been called the “proximate causes” of internal conflicts. The difference between the two types of factors is that while the existence of permissive conditions makes violence more likely, it is the proximate causes that transform potentially violent situations into full-scale confrontations. In other words, proximate factors are decisive in determining whether the threshold between non-violence and violence will be crossed.¹²

In addition to playing a role in the initiation of internal conflicts, small arms have also had detrimental effects on ongoing conflicts and on post-conflict peace-building and reconstruction. The availability of small arms may prolong fighting, increase human and material costs, reduce the willingness of conflicting parties to find negotiated solutions to their disagreements, prevent international and non-governmental organizations from engaging in conflict prevention as well as management and resolution efforts, cause serious problems for the countries surrounding the conflict area, and even trigger bloody inter-State violence within regions.¹³

However, the small arms problem is not connected only with the wider problem of violent political disputes within States. Small arms are

¹¹ See Joanna Spear, “Arms Limitations, Confidence-Building Measures and Internal Conflict,” in Michael E. Brown (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, pp. 380-382.

¹² Michael E. Brown, “The Causes and Regional Dimensions of Internal Conflict,” *ibid.*, pp. 571, 576-578.

¹³ On the humanitarian and social effects of small arms availability, proliferation and accumulation see, for example, Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, “The Humanitarian Implications of Small Arms and Light Weapons,” Background Paper, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 25 January 1999, and Christopher Louise, *The Social Impacts of Light Weapons Availability and Proliferation*, UNRISD Discussion Paper No. 59, Geneva and New York: United Nations, 1995.

also the main tools of violence for criminals operating either on a national or transnational basis. The linkage between small arms and drug trafficking is a good example: drug traffickers use small arms to protect their business interests and often supply weapons to other criminal elements and non-State actors. In many cases, parties involved in internal conflicts take part in narcotics trafficking because it may be the only way for them to finance the purchases of small arms and other types of military hardware.¹⁴ Similar trafficking in other commodities and mineral resources, such as diamonds, is also used to sustain warfighting capabilities.¹⁵

As a result, the militarization of crime becomes a threat not only to countries torn by internal conflict but also to countries that are free from instability but function as transit routes or final destinations for illegal drugs. Countries already troubled by major societal and economic problems are especially vulnerable to additional challenges posed by the influx of drugs and arms. The increase in crime, violence and corruption can become a formidable obstacle to national development and well-being.

Overall, thus, the multifaceted problem of small arms includes three discernible aspects: the strong connection between small arms and internal conflict, the linkage between small arms and crime, and finally, the relationship between small arms and hindered economic, social and political development.¹⁶

¹⁴ On the different aspects relating to the linkage between small arms and drug trafficking, see the articles in Péricles Gasparini Alves and Daiana Belinda Cipollone (eds.), *Curbing Illicit Trafficking in Small Arms and Sensitive Technologies: An Action-Oriented Agenda*, Geneva and New York: United Nations, 1998, pp. 33-122.

¹⁵ "UN gets tough with Unita: Sanctions busters who trade arms for diamonds are to be shamed," *The Guardian*, July 9 1999, <http://www.newsunlimited.co.uk/>.

¹⁶ For a conceptualization of the notion of internal conflict that includes the element of crime, see Edward J. Laurance, *Light Weapons and Intrastate Conflict: Early Warning Factors and Preventive Action*, A Report to the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict, New York: Carnegie (continued...)

While the worldwide proliferation and accumulation of small arms results from the demand for these weapons, so-called supply-side factors also play a central role in the global circulation of small arms. The term "buyer's market" has often been used to describe the changes that have taken place in the international small arms market since the end of the Cold War. It refers, primarily, to the fact that weapons have been more easily available because cuts in national defence budgets have forced small arms manufacturers to find alternative markets abroad. The term also implies that the buyers of small arms, whether governments or non-State actors, have had increasing access to the stocks of excess weapons built up during the years of the Cold War and subsequently dumped on the world market.¹⁷ These changes in the patterns of small arms trade have coincided with growing quantities of supplies available through increasingly globalized black-market channels. Some argue that illegal or illicit transfers account for as much as 55 per cent of all small arms transfers.¹⁸

¹⁶ (...continued)
Corporation, 1998, pp. 14-15. Laurance, though, uses the term "intrastate conflict" instead of "internal conflict".

¹⁷ Joanna Spear, "Arms Limitations, Confidence-Building Measures and Internal Conflict," pp. 382-383. It is estimated that the current sales of small arms total US\$ 5-10 billion per year. See Michael T. Klare, "The Kalashnikov age," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, January/February 1999, p. 21.

¹⁸ For an estimate of the relative share of illicit small arms transfers, see Susannah Dyer and Geraldine O'Callaghan, *Combatting Illicit Light Weapons Trafficking: Developments and Opportunities*, BASIC, Project on Light Weapons, Report 98.1, London: BASIC, January 1998, p. 5. According to the United Nations Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms, illicit trade in arms refers to trade that is contrary to national and/or international law. See *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, p. 17. For a distinction between illegal and illicit arms transfers, see Ian Anthony, "Illicit arms transfers," in Ian Anthony (ed.), *Russia and the Arms Trade*, SIPRI, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 219. According to Anthony, illicit arms transfers cover not only cases that are unlawful but also cases that are regarded as undesirable by the government of the country from which the transfers originate or the government of the eventual end-user, but which cannot be sanctioned because of the lack of
(continued...)

Although arms transfers may be a highly lucrative business, such transfers are also being effected for political reasons. By supplying weapons, States hope to strengthen and maintain influence with allies or other arms recipient governments that are seen to serve their national interests. The political aspect of small arms transfers is particularly relevant in connection with internal conflicts. Often, foreign governments try to influence the outcome of specific internal conflicts and consider small arms supplies as the most convenient or efficient way of interfering.¹⁹ As a rule, these transfers originate from countries surrounding the conflict area, and the recipients of weapons and ammunition include not only governments but, increasingly, non-State belligerents.²⁰ Foreign parties may supply their arms in the form of government-to-government sales, grants or gifts. However, especially in the case of deliveries to non-State actors, arms may also be delivered covertly.²¹

The tight linkage between internal conflict, foreign involvement and small arms has two dimensions. The accumulation, proliferation and use of small arms in the context of internal conflict are spurred, on the one

¹⁸ (...continued)
legislation to prevent these transfers.

¹⁹ For an argument that students of internal conflicts may sometimes underestimate the extent to which foreign governments are involved in many of these conflicts, see Raimo Väyrynen, *The Age of Humanitarian Emergencies*, UNU/WIDER, Research for Action 25, Helsinki: Hakapaino Oy, 1996, p. 12.

²⁰ For an argument claiming that weapons imported into internal conflicts are more likely to come from sources geographically close to the conflict zone, see John Sislín, Frederic S. Pearson, Jocelyn Boryczka and Jeffrey Weigand, "Patterns in Arms Acquisitions by Ethnic Groups in Conflict," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 29, No. 4, 1998, pp. 398, 403.

²¹ Some diplomats and scholars argue that covert small arms transfers by foreign governments to non-State actors should be viewed as illicit arms transfers. See, for example, Edward J. Laurance, *Light Weapons and Interstate Conflict*, pp. 24-25. For a comprehensive picture of the different channels through which small arms are procured worldwide, see Michael T. Klare, "Light Weapons Diffusion and Global Violence in the Post-Cold War Era," in Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Light Weapons and International Security*, Delhi: Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, BASIC, Indian Pugwash Society and IDSA, 1995, pp. 1-16.

hand, by the involvement of foreign governments and, on the other hand, by the involvement of globally operating and highly networked arms suppliers. These suppliers include black-market dealers and non-State actors in other countries, operating out of the reach of national and international controls. Pushed by the forces of demand and supply, small arms—both the millions already in circulation from one conflict zone to another, and the new and more destructive ones still waiting to be transferred—are effectively finding their way to regions of instability worldwide, with dire consequences.²²

This study examines and maps the different dimensions of the small arms problem in Central Asia.²³ Although Central Asia has already been seriously afflicted by the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms, the region has been largely ignored by the international community. This report attempts to highlight the gravity of the situation in the region by describing the ways in which the small arms problem manifests itself within the Central Asian context. The study is organized into three substantive chapters followed by a conclusion. The first of these chapters examines the small arms problem in Afghanistan which dates to the Cold War years when the Soviet Union and the United States supported by their allies supplied huge amounts of arms and ammunition to the factions fighting for control of the country, and which continues to be felt to date. The second chapter looks at Tajikistan, a country that plunged into civil war soon after it had—together with the other Central Asian republics—acquired political independence at the end of 1991, and where the legacies of five years of armed conflict (1992-1997) continue to overshadow societal life. The third chapter examines the case

²² For a list of countries producing small arms and small arms ammunition, see Michael T. Klare, *ibid.*, pp. 26-36, Joanna Spear, "Arms Limitations, Confidence-Building Measures and Internal Conflict," p. 387, and Rachel J. Stohl, *Deadly Rounds: Ammunition and Armed Conflict*, BASIC, Project on Light Weapons, Research Report 98.4, May 1998, pp. 29-37.

²³ For the purpose of this study, Central Asia is understood to comprise Afghanistan and the five former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. These former Soviet republics are hereafter referred to as the Central Asian republics. In Chapter 4, the term Central Asian republics is used almost exclusively to mean Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan.

of the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan which unlike Afghanistan and Tajikistan have so far been able to avoid armed internal conflict, but where the combination of small arms and latent societal tensions is potentially explosive. Each of the case studies presented in these three chapters focuses on the following issues: the factors generating demand for small arms; the external and internal sources of small arms; the routes through which arms and ammunition are transferred; the various types of small arms in circulation; the humanitarian, political and societal implications of small arms; and finally, the factors hampering the efforts to combat the small arms problem. The study concludes with remarks on the impact of small arms in Central Asia and on possible approaches for their control.

This report is based on three types of sources: interviews and correspondence with people familiar with the small arms problem in Central Asia; general literature mostly concerning the political developments in the region; and articles and reports in various journals and newspapers. As has been the case with many studies dealing with the small arms problem in a specific geographical region, there were difficulties in finding relevant information about the situation in Central Asia, too. For example, for government officials, the topic seemed to be—for some reason or another—too sensitive to be discussed at length. The fact that, as of this writing, neither the Permanent Missions of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia to the United Nations in Geneva nor the Foreign Ministry of Turkmenistan have responded to the research questionnaires sent to them by the author is a clear indication of their disinterest in providing data. As far as the secondary sources of the report are concerned, the information contained therein was for the most part anecdotal. After a critical reading and proper contextualization, however, these anecdotal pieces of information turned out to be valuable and allowed many of the inferences drawn below.

CHAPTER 1

AFGHANISTAN: TWO DECADES OF ARMED CONFLICT

Afghanistan, a country situated at the geopolitical crossroads of Iran, the Central Asian republics and the Indian subcontinent, is a model example of a State that has been severely plagued by the problem of small arms. The internal conflict that has raged in Afghanistan for over twenty years has made the country a major destination for small arms transfers from different parts of the world. It is estimated that there are at least 10 million small arms presently circulating within Afghanistan, the total value of which is said to be between US\$ 6-8 billion.¹ These weapons, originally transferred both for political and economic reasons, have caused enormous suffering among the Afghan people. A major part of the estimated 1.5 to over 2 million Afghans who have been killed during the two decades of fighting have been victims of small arms. Hundreds of thousands have been disabled and maimed by these weapons.²

The case of Afghanistan pointedly illustrates how the distinction between the causes and the tools of violence may lose its relevance in the context of a protracted armed conflict. In Afghanistan, small arms are not merely a reflection of the ongoing crisis but a factor that contributes to the continuation of the bloody civil war. Furthermore, Afghanistan's huge arsenals of small arms have eroded the stability of the wider Central and South Asian regions. The country has become known as a guaranteed stock of small arms for non-State actors engaged in internal conflict or drug trafficking and other criminal activities in neighbouring countries and other regions. In addition, the combination of readily available arms and internal ferment has made Afghanistan an ideal base for international

¹ *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, p. 31, and *Time*, 5 October 1998, p. 49.

² *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and Larry P. Goodson, "Periodicity and intensity in the Afghan War," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1998, p. 471.

terrorists in need of weaponry, military training, and recruitment. The troubled state of Afghanistan has also been exploited by foreign governments which continue to view Afghanistan as a battleground for regional power politics.

THE COLD WAR LEGACY

The Arms Pipeline

Large-scale transfers of small arms to Afghanistan started at the beginning of the 1980s as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet military forces in December 1979. The invasion was based on Moscow's calculations that the communist regime in Kabul could not hold its grip on power without outside support. Justifying its interference by referring to the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed by the two Governments in late 1978, the Soviet Union sent forces and military supplies to Afghanistan and became a party to the civil war that had initially been sparked by widespread dissatisfaction among the Afghan people with the reform policies of the Kabul Government.³

Although the United States, the Cold War rival of the Soviet Union, and many regional powers immediately condemned the invasion and demanded the withdrawal of Soviet forces from Afghanistan, the anti-government guerrilla forces—generally known as the mujahedin—did not receive substantial military aid from abroad at the time. Thus, an important weapons source for the poorly armed mujahedin during the initial stages of the conflict were small arms that were seized from the Afghan army by soldiers who joined the ranks of the guerrilla forces. In addition, they used weapons looted from police posts and small arms that were produced by local gunsmiths in the towns of the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan. However, as the civil war continued and the mujahedin showed their ability to confront the Soviet forces—totalling over 100,000 by the spring of 1980, and constantly supplied with arms

³ On factors that contributed to the breakout of the civil war in Afghanistan, see, for example, Zalmay Khalilzad, "Anarchy in Afghanistan," *Journal of International Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 3, Summer 1997, pp. 37-41.

by Moscow—the situation changed. Encouraged by the mujahedin's successes, the United States set up, with the help of its allies, a massive arms pipeline to the Afghan guerrilla forces, which profoundly transformed the nature of the civil war.⁴

The establishment of this pipeline marked a dramatic change in the volume of United States arms transfers to Afghanistan. While the Carter administration had begun to send weapons—that is, Soviet-made small arms from Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) stockpiles—to the mujahedin starting in 1980, it was not until the Reagan administration that the United States embarked on an active phase of its involvement in the Afghan conflict.⁵ The covert pipeline operation, directed and managed by the CIA in coordination with the Pakistani Intelligence Service (ISI), made Pakistan a conduit through which huge amounts of small arms were delivered to the mujahedin fighters. Weapons destined for Pakistan were mostly flown to Islamabad or shipped to Karachi. From there the arms were transferred to staging posts around the towns of Quetta and Peshawar near the Afghan border, and eventually handed over to Afghan tribal leaders who passed them on to their military commanders.⁶

⁴ Larry P. Goodson, "Periodicity and intensity in the Afghan War," pp. 472-475, author's correspondence with Colonel Michel Lucy, United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan, May 1999, and Jasjit Singh, "Light Weapons and Conflict in Southern Asia," in Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Light Weapons and International Security*, p. 59.

⁵ For the claim by former CIA director Stanley Turner that the Carter administration supplied arms to the mujahedin, see *IWR Daily Update*, Vol. 5, No. 35, 23 February 1998, <http://intelweb.janes.com>. Larry Goodson dates the birth of the American-sponsored arms pipeline to the end of the period he calls the second stage in the Afghan war (1980-1983). See Larry P. Goodson, "Periodicity and intensity in the Afghan War," p. 475.

⁶ Chris Smith, "Light Weapons and Ethnic Conflict in South Asia," in Jeffrey Boutwell, Michael T. Klare & Laura W. Reed (eds.), *Lethal Commerce: The Global Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Committee on International Security Studies, American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1995, p. 62.

The small arms transferred through this pipeline were mostly of Soviet origin or design, as the United States Government tried to avoid being openly identified as an arms supplier to the Afghan guerrillas. As a result, the CIA procured massive amounts of small arms from China. These purchases included Type-56 assault rifles—the Chinese copies of the Soviet AK-47 assault rifle, the so-called Kalashnikov—and stick hand grenades. The CIA also bought thousands of light machine-guns, tens of thousands of rifles, mortars, and over 100 million rounds of ammunition from Turkey. Furthermore, it acquired Soviet-origin weapons from Israel, mortars from Egypt, about 100,000 rifles from India, Blowpipe surface-to-air missiles from Britain, and 30 million rounds of ammunition from Pakistan. In addition, tens of Swiss-designed Oerlikon anti-aircraft guns were funnelled through the pipeline.⁷ Although many aspects of the inner workings of the pipeline operations are still unknown, it is clear that the arms transactions involved private individuals who were used to cover the participation of governments in the weapons transfers. For example, a former British intelligence officer has recounted how he was hired by Britain's MI6 and the CIA to import East German small arms into Egypt for distribution in Afghanistan.⁸

A qualitative shift in the pipeline operations took place in 1986 when the United States Government decided to provide the mujahedin with American-made Stinger surface-to-air missiles. These missiles supplemented the British Blowpipe and Russian-made SA-7 missiles that had been delivered to the guerrillas since 1984. Hundreds of Soviet planes and helicopters may have been shot down by Stingers. These losses seriously weakened the willingness of the Soviet leadership and military to remain committed to the Afghan cause. It has been estimated that between the years 1986 and 1989, the United States Government channelled in all about 900-1,000 Stinger missiles to the mujahedin.⁹

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63, and Chris Smith, "The Impact of Light Weapons on Security: A Case Study of South Asia," in *SIPRI Yearbook 1995*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, pp. 585, 588.

⁸ *The Daily Telegraph*, 5 August 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁹ Singh in Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Light Weapons and International Security*, p. 59, and "Looking for Stinger," *Life*, September 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

There were also other actors contributing to the accumulation and spread of small arms in Afghanistan during the Cold War years. In addition to small arms transfers by the two superpowers, the Chinese Government regularly supplied small arms to the mujahedin guerrillas. These transfers were mainly motivated by the desire to weaken the Soviet position in Afghanistan, and included firearms and weapons such as SA-7 missiles and RPG anti-tank rockets. Egypt admitted in 1981 that it had agreed to provide the mujahedin with arms from stocks that had been left over from its alliance with the Soviet Union. However, the mujahedin's most active supporter among the Arab countries was Saudi Arabia whose role as a financier of arms transfers through Pakistan was highly significant. Although the role of Pakistan itself in the provision of military assistance to Afghanistan was confined first and foremost to the running of the arms pipeline, it too provided small arms to the mujahedin particularly in the initial stages of the conflict. Weapons delivered from Pakistan included small arms such as the FN FAL and Lee Enfield rifles.¹⁰

The flow of small arms to Afghanistan did not end after the Soviet forces withdrew from the country in February 1989. Just before the withdrawal, the United States increased its arms supplies to Afghanistan to ensure that the Soviet decision to leave would hold. The United States provided the mujahedin, for example, with Stingers and Milan anti-tank missiles, and continued to support the Afghan guerrillas in their fight against the pro-Soviet Kabul regime headed by President Muhammad Najibullah. Besides leaving behind large stockpiles of small arms after its forces had withdrawn, the Soviet Union, in turn, launched an intensive series of arms and ammunition supplies to Kabul almost as soon as its forces returned home. The massive airlift between Soviet Union and Kabul contributed greatly to the fact that the Najibullah regime survived longer than had been anticipated at the time of the Soviet withdrawal. At this stage of the Afghan conflict, Pakistan continued to act as a conduit for weapons transfers from various supporters of the mujahedin. However, due to severe tensions and disagreements between the main mujahedin groups based in the Pakistani town of Peshawar, by the end of the 1980s, the military and financial aid from mujahedin sympathizers was more and

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54, 59, Chris Smith, "Light Weapons and Ethnic Conflict in South Asia," p. 62, and Chris Smith, "The Impact of Light Weapons on Security: A Case Study of South Asia," p. 585.

more often directly channelled to tribal leaders and military commanders inside Afghanistan.¹¹

Millions of tons of military supplies were transferred to Afghanistan in the course of the Cold War, making Afghanistan the world's largest arms recipient in relation to the size of its population during the 1980s.¹² The major part of these supplies were small arms. It has been estimated that roughly one half of the small arms currently circulating within Afghanistan arrived there during the Cold War years, most of them from countries involved in the Afghan conflict.¹³ For example, the United States delivered at least 400,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles to the Afghan guerrillas in cooperation with the Pakistani ISI. In addition, at the beginning of the 1990s, the ISI was said to have still had access to around 3 million Kalashnikovs originating from the pipeline operations.¹⁴ Thus, in terms of small arms accumulation and proliferation in Afghanistan, the legacies of the Cold War are huge arsenals of small arms that came from three main sources: the stocks of foreign governments, small-scale arms manufacturers in the region, and black-market suppliers, whose role in the Cold War stage of Afghanistan's internal conflict, however, remained relatively limited.

¹¹ Ahmed Mukarram, "Afghanistan: History," in *The Far East and Australasia 1999*, Thirtieth Edition, London: Europa Publications, 1998, p. 62, Chris Smith, "Light Weapons and Ethnic Conflict in South Asia," p. 65, and Niaz A. Naik, "Light Weapons Flows to and from Afghanistan," in Jayantha Dhanapala, Mitsuro Donowaki, Lora Lumpe and Swadesh Rana, *Small Arms Control: Old Weapons, New Issues*, p. 238.

¹² *The State of the World's Refugees 1995: Conflict and Reconstruction in Afghanistan*, UNHCR, 1995, <http://www.unhcr.ch/refworld/pub/state/95>.

¹³ *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, p. 31.

¹⁴ Chris Smith, "Light Weapons and Ethnic Conflict in South Asia," p. 64.

SMALL ARMS AND THE TALIBAN ASCENDANCY

After the downfall of the Najibullah regime and the mujahedin's subsequent rise to power in April 1992, the interest of the international community in Afghanistan decreased considerably. In the post-Cold War atmosphere, the former superpower rivals no longer considered Afghanistan crucial for their strategic interests. The lessons of the unsuccessful military intervention by the Soviet Union led Russia to conclude that the solution to the Afghan crisis had to be found first and foremost among the Afghan parties themselves. The United States also distanced itself from the Afghan question, as it was no longer concerned with the spread of Soviet influence in the region. Yet, the rule of the mujahedin did not end the violence in Afghanistan. The inability of different factions of the mujahedin to settle on an acceptable power-sharing arrangement led to continuing factional fighting. The country increasingly disintegrated, and the conflict began to take a strong ethnic dimension.¹⁵

The configurations of the Afghan conflict were further complicated by a new force that within a short time managed to acquire the leading position in the country. This movement, known as the Taliban or the "students of religion", first drew attention in late 1994, when it managed to capture the city of Kandahar near the border of Pakistan. At the time, the Taliban—consisting of Afghan and Pakistani ethnic Pashtuns who had studied in religious schools in Pakistan and who were encouraged to fight for a strict interpretation of Sunni Islam, of former communist regime officers and the members of an irredentist Pashtun nationalist party—were still largely ignored by other Afghan groups and their foreign supporters.¹⁶ However, by September 1995, when the Taliban captured the city of Herat close to the border of Iran, and particularly by September 1996, when the Taliban forces captured Jalabad and eventually marched on the capital Kabul, the impact of the movement

¹⁵ On the events leading to the fall of the Najibullah regime, and on the strifes between different mujahedin factions, see, for example, Larry P. Goodson, "Periodicity and intensity in the Afgan War," pp. 480-483, and Ahmed Mukarram, "Afghanistan: History," pp. 62-65.

¹⁶ Amin Saikal, "Afghanistan's Ethnic Conflict," *Survival*, Vol. 40, No. 2, Summer 1998, p. 118.

was widely registered. The rise of the Taliban forced other Afghan groups to forge new alignments and brought the element of a strong foreign involvement back into the Afghan civil war. Ultimately, two camps were formed: the Taliban, presently controlling almost all Afghanistan, and the United Front or the Northern Alliance composed of groups opposing the conservative Islamic movement. Both camps have their own foreign supporters.

External Sources of Small Arms

The Taliban movement is widely considered to be a creation of the Government of Pakistan. The Pakistani intelligence service (ISI) has played an important part in the Taliban's successes: the ISI has financed, armed and given logistical support to the movement which largely grew out of the resentment of Pashtun tribes against the corruption of the former mujahedin leaders, and the fact that the Afghan Government was dominated by non-Pashtun groups. The emergence of a strong Pashtun actor in Afghan politics served Pakistan's interests because it eased the pressure coming from Pashtun nationalists who had tried to carry through their plan of an independent "Pashtunistan" composed of Pashtun areas on the territory of both Afghanistan and Pakistan. By drawing the attention of the nationalists to the Pashtun efforts inside Afghanistan, the Taliban made these irredentist claims a less urgent issue. The other main interest Pakistan has had in supporting the Taliban is related to the country's foreign policy aspirations. Pakistan has hoped that a friendly and stable government in Afghanistan would open up the commercial transit route between Pakistan and the Central Asian republics, and provide Pakistan with access to Central Asian oil and gas supplies. A friendly and stable Afghanistan would also strengthen Pakistan's geostrategic position in relation to its arch rival India.¹⁷

Arms supplies have played an important part in Pakistan's efforts to influence the outcome of the Afghan conflict. At first, the Taliban received

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 118, Barnett R. Rubin, "Women and Pipelines: Afghanistan's Proxy Wars," *International Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 2, 1997, p. 284, and Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1999, pp. 69-70.

small arms not only from its Afghan sympathizers and from Pakistan, but also through disarming the areas it had captured, and from the enemy fighters who abandoned their weapons while retreating. According to official Taliban history, the seizure of an arms dump in Pasha in late 1994 was crucial for the movement's first-phase arms acquisition. The Pasha dump is said to have been extremely large, providing enough supplies to last for years, and to have included both small arms—including 18,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles—and heavy weapons. Some observers, though, have interpreted the Taliban history as an attempt to cover the fact that the movement depended on foreign—mostly Pakistani—arms and ammunition supplies.¹⁸ In any case, there is ample evidence of Pakistan's provision of arms to the Taliban.¹⁹ Pakistani transfers are said to have taken place, for example, from the military depots in the towns of Peshawar and Rawalpindi.²⁰

As was the case during the Cold War period of the Afghan conflict, Pakistan has also acted as a distribution channel for arms that have been sent from other countries. One of the strongest backers of the Taliban has been Saudi Arabia which has provided both arms and financial resources for the Islamic militia's war effort.²¹ Saudi Arabia is reported to have arranged, for example, a massive series of arms transfers in cooperation with Pakistan from Ukraine to the Taliban at the end of 1997 and at the beginning of 1998. More than 50 flights of arms and ammunition are said to have taken off from Kiev and landed in the Pakistani town of Peshawar. From Peshawar, the arms were then transferred by trucks to

¹⁸ Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," in William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn? Afghanistan and the Taliban*, New York: New York University Press, 1998, p. 81, and Anthony Davis, "How the Taliban became a military force," *ibid.*, pp. 46, 48-50.

¹⁹ See, for example, the eyewitness accounts reported in *Afghanistan: Grave Abuses in the Name of Religion*, Amnesty International Report, November 1996, <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1996/ASA/31101296.htm>.

²⁰ *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 August 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

²¹ See, for example, Pyotr G. Litavrin, "Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons Procurement in Southwest Asia," in Jayantha Dhanapala, Mitsuro Donowaki, Lora Lumpe and Swadesh Rana, *Small Arms Control: Old Weapons, New Issues*, p. 232.

the Afghan capital of Kabul.²² Other Arab Gulf countries, such as the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Qatar, are believed to have aided the Taliban, although their role has largely been confined to the provision of financial support.²³ For the Arab Gulf countries, the Taliban are a valuable ally because the strongly anti-Iranian movement has put pressure on Iran and lessened fears of its aggressive policies in the Gulf region. Moreover, Saudi Arabia considers the Taliban an important partner which serves the country's objective of increasing its political, religious and commercial influence in Central Asia.²⁴

In fact, Iranian officials often cite Saudi Arabia's support for the Taliban in justifying their active involvement in the Afghan conflict. Iran perceives the Taliban as being a pawn in the strategic game run by the United States, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to strengthen its international isolation by containing it at its eastern border. Moreover, the Sunni Taliban, which bases its legitimacy on religious rhetoric and credentials, clearly poses an ideological challenge to the Shia Islamic Republic which likes to see itself as the standard-bearer of Islam. Consequently, Iran has been one of the main supporters of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. Arms transfers have been an integral part of Iran's overall assistance.²⁵ The city of Mashad in eastern Iran, close to the Afghan border, is said to have become a centre from which Iranian supplies to the anti-Taliban forces primarily arrive. In late 1995, for example, Iran reportedly sent vast amounts of arms and ammunition through an airlift from Mashad to the Afghan town of Bagram, located forty miles north of the capital Kabul.

²² "Torrent of arms foils Afghan peace hope," *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 March 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and "A Widening Divide," *Middle East*, October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

²³ See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, "Back With a Vengeance: Proxy War in Afghanistan," *World Today*, March 1996, pp. 60-61. Only three countries have so far recognized the Taliban as the legitimate Government of Afghanistan: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

²⁴ See, for example, Ahmed Rashid, *ibid.*, and Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," p. 73.

²⁵ On Iran's Afghan policies after the rise of the Taliban, see, for example, Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, "Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Conflict in Afghanistan," in William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, pp. 125-131.

These transfers were intended to strengthen the anti-Taliban forces after they had lost the control of the city of Herat in September 1995, and included weapons and ammunition provided by India.²⁶ Other information about Iran's involvement in arms transfers includes reports that, in June 1997, Iran together with Russia, provided about sixty aeroplane loads of arms and ammunition to the opponents of the Taliban.²⁷

In early 1998, Iran shipped large amounts of arms and ammunition to the Northern Alliance in preparation for an attack on Taliban-controlled Kabul.²⁸ Later, during the summer of the same year, Iran transported arms and ammunition by air from Mashad to central Afghanistan and the city of Mazar-i Sharif in northern Afghanistan.²⁹ These transfers, however, did not prevent the Taliban from taking control of the strategically important Mazar-i Sharif in August 1998. One of the latest and clearest indications of Iran's involvement in arms provision to Afghanistan was the case of an Iranian train halted by local customs officials in the city of Osh in Kyrgyzstan in October 1998. The train, supposed to be carrying humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, contained 700 tons of arms and ammunition—including small arms such as F-1 grenades and machine-gun ammunition—destined for one of the leaders of the Northern Alliance, Ahmad Shah Masud. Had they not been detected by Kyrgyz officials, the arms would have reportedly been unloaded in Osh, and transferred by trucks to the Gorno-Badakhshan region in eastern Tajikistan and handed over to Masud, an ethnic Tajik.³⁰ Traditionally, Iranian arms that have been transported to Afghanistan via Tajikistan have

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 130, and Ahmed Rashid, "Back With a Vengeance: Proxy War in Afghanistan," p. 61.

²⁷ Anwar-ul-Haq Ahady, "Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Conflict in Afghanistan," p. 134.

²⁸ *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 19 March 1998, and *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 March 1998.

²⁹ *Asiaweek*, 7 August 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

³⁰ *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 13 October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 21 October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

gone through the Tajik capital of Dushanbe and the city of Ishkashim near the Afghan border.³¹

In many instances, Iran has coordinated its arms transfers with other countries, mainly with Russia which is the other major supporter of Afghanistan's anti-Taliban forces. Russia's renewed interest in the Afghan conflict comes, above all, from the rise and military successes of the Taliban movement. The Taliban's religious outlook has raised fears of the spread of Islamic radicalism to the former Soviet republics of Central Asia, an area considered by many Russians as the "strategic backyard" of their country. In addition to the ideological challenge and the risk that the Taliban could even try to advance northwards beyond Afghanistan's borders, Russians fear that the rule of the Taliban intensifies arms and drugs smuggling from Afghanistan to the neighbouring Central Asian States and to Russia itself. Hence, Russia's position that any direct threat posed by the Taliban will be met with a strong response—including a military one if necessary—is not surprising.³²

So far, the military dimension of Russia's response has been confined to providing supplies of arms and ammunition to the Northern Alliance. Russia's arms transfers have frequently taken place in cooperation with and through the territory of the Central Asian republics. An airport in the Tajik city of Kulob is said to have become an important base for Russian weapons shipments to the Afghan fighters, particularly to the forces of Ahmad Masud.³³ Several land routes—for example, the ones from the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan to Afghanistan—are used for arms transports. The Afghan town of Taloqan is believed to be another major

³¹ "Kyrgyzstan Blocks Arms to Anti-Taliban Forces," *STRATFOR.COM Global Intelligence Update*, <http://www.stratfor.com/services/giu/101498.asp>.

³² On Russia's views vis-à-vis the Taliban, see, for example, Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," pp. 76-77, and Zalmay Khalilzad, "Anarchy in Afghanistan," pp. 50-51.

³³ See Anwar-ul-Ahady, "Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Conflict in Afghanistan," p. 131, Anthony Hyman, "Russia, Central Asia and the Taliban," in William Maley (ed.), *Fundamentalism Reborn?*, pp. 114-115, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, 2 October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 3 October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

destination for Russian arms deliveries.³⁴ Russia has also cooperated with Uzbekistan which has reportedly transferred arms to General Rashid Dostum, the ethnic Uzbek leader of the Northern Alliance. The Afghan town of Hairatan in the Uzbek-Afghan border region has frequently been the destination for Uzbek supplies—presumably arriving from Termez.³⁵ Despite occasional policy disagreements between Russia and its Central Asian partners, particularly between Russia and Uzbekistan, they have formed a unified front in trying to block the growth of the Taliban's influence in Afghanistan. Both Russia and the governments of the Central Asian republics view the Taliban as a major threat to their countries' internal stability. It is for this reason that suspicions have been raised that at least some elements in the Government of Kyrgyzstan had knowledge about Iranian plans to transport arms by rail to the anti-Taliban forces through the Kyrgyz city of Osh in October 1998—a claim the Kyrgyz officials have denied.³⁶

In addition to Pakistan, Iran, Russia and its Central Asian allies, a number of other countries have been involved in arms transfers to the Afghan belligerents, albeit to a distinctly smaller extent. India, for example, has sent weapons—in cooperation with Russia and Iran—to the anti-Taliban forces in order to check Pakistan's policies in Afghanistan.³⁷ China has provided small arms to the anti-Taliban forces mainly because it believes the Taliban are exporting their radical ideology and weapons to Muslim separatists in the Chinese Province of Xinjiang. The weapons

³⁴ Ahmed Rashid, "Back With a Vengeance: Proxy War in Afghanistan," p. 61.

³⁵ Zalmay Khalilzad, "Anarchy in Afghanistan," p. 51, *The Times*, 17 March 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, Anthony Hyman, "Russia, Central Asia and the Taliban," p. 115, and Roger D. Kangas, "Taking the Lead in Central Asian Security," *Transition*, Vol. 2, No. 9, May 1996, p. 54.

³⁶ See, for example, *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 12 October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

³⁷ See Zalmay Khalilzad, "Anarchy in Afghanistan," p. 52.

supplied by the Chinese have reportedly included the so-called CQs, Chinese versions of the American M-16 assault rifle.³⁸

The policies of the United States with regard to Afghanistan during the Taliban era have been rather ambiguous. What is clear is that the American involvement in the Afghan conflict has declined strikingly since the Cold War period. Yet the United States has closely followed the developments in the conflict, not least because Afghanistan has become a safe haven for international terrorists and a major producer and trafficker of illicit drugs. The United States Government has also been worried about Russia's strong presence in Central Asia, and has had an interest in supporting the plans of American oil companies to participate in the building of oil and gas pipelines from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan.³⁹ These commercial interests have often been mentioned as a factor that has allegedly led the United States Government to sympathize with the Taliban. Others have suggested outright support: a former prime minister of Pakistan, for example, has claimed that the United States and Britain have supplied arms to the Taliban. These transfers were allegedly financed by Saudi Arabia.⁴⁰ The CIA is said to have encouraged Pakistan and Arab Gulf countries to ship arms to the Taliban as a part of covert anti-Iranian efforts.⁴¹ Whatever the case, there are many signs suggesting that, in recent times, the relations between the United States Government and the Taliban have deteriorated. This is largely due to American suspicions that the Taliban are not countering the activities of international terrorists based in areas

³⁸ "Only the bangs are genuine," *The Economist*, 28 June 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>. On the latest shifts in the relations between China and the Taliban, see "Taliban Temptation," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 11 March, 1999, pp. 21-22.

³⁹ See Citha D. Maass, "The Afghanistan Conflict: External Involvement," pp. 74-76, and Zalmay Khalilzad, "Anarchy in Afghanistan," pp. 52-53.

⁴⁰ Anwar-ul-Ahady, "Saudi Arabia, Iran and the Conflict in Afghanistan," p. 132.

⁴¹ "A Widening Divide."

under its control, and to the movement's extremely poor human rights record.⁴²

In addition to the active involvement of governments in arms transfers to the Afghan belligerents, there are various illicit sources from which small arms continue to enter Afghanistan. In fact, it is believed that close to 60 per cent of all small arms currently entering Afghanistan are delivered by black-market suppliers.⁴³ Many of these weapons are surplus weapons coming from the stocks of Eastern European countries. For instance, small arms from Albania and Bulgaria have reportedly been transferred to Afghanistan by British and Russian arms dealers who are prepared to sell to any Afghan customer.⁴⁴ Small arms have been delivered from Russia which is often mentioned as a major weapons source for the world's black-market traffickers.⁴⁵ Arms from the traditional arms bazaars in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan have continued to end up in the hands of both the Northern Alliance and the Taliban fighters. The list of the different types of small arms that in recent years have been moving through illicit channels into Afghanistan is a long one, and includes the following weapons currently widely in use: AK-47, AKM, AK-74, Lee Enfield .303, CZ vz-61 rifles; PPSH41, AK-74U sub-machine-guns; RPK, RPD, RP-46, M-38/46, Brno, Grenov, PK, DSK, ZK-

⁴² See, for example, "U.S. raid could harm deal with Taliban," *Reuters*, 21 August 1998, and "The Taliban's strategy for recognition," *The Economist*, 6 February 1999, p. 59.

⁴³ *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, p. 31. However, it should be noted that, in some cases, the difference between governmental and black-market transfers may only be nominal. States may, for example, use black-market channels to cover their own involvement in the arms shipments, or they can give tacit approval for black-market dealers to use their territory or airspace for weapons deliveries. There are many reasons to believe that, with regard to arms deliveries to Afghanistan, cooperation between governments and black-market traders has continued to take place also during the Taliban era.

⁴⁴ *The Observer*, 14 March 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and Ahmed Rashid, "Back With a Vengeance: Proxy War in Afghanistan," p. 61.

⁴⁵ See Pyotr G. Litavrin, "Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons Procurement in Southwest Asia," pp. 233-234. The question of illicit arms transfers from Russia will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, in the context of the Tajik conflict.

1, Simonov SKS machine-guns; Makarov and Tokarev pistols; RPG-2, RPG-7, SPG-9, RCL B-10 and AT-1 Snapper ATGW anti-tank weapons; recoilless 75mm and 82mm artillery; 82 mm M37 mortars; AGS-17 and DShK close support weapons.⁴⁶

The Blowback Effect

Large quantities of small arms that have entered Afghanistan during and since the Cold War have also soon found their way out of the country. The Central Asian republics, Pakistan, and even Chechnya have been among the destinations for weapons that have been retransferred out of Afghanistan.⁴⁷ The irony inherent in these retransfers is that the governments supplying arms to the Afghan fighters may quickly find out that the same weapons they had initially supplied to Afghanistan will end up back into their own countries. The example of Pakistan is a case in point. Weapons provided by or with the assistance of the Pakistani Government to the mujahedin and later to the Taliban forces in Afghanistan have been diverted back to anti-government and criminal elements in Pakistan by smugglers taking advantage of the porous border between the two countries. The towns of Peshawar, Darra and Landi Kotal abound with different types of small arms that have recrossed the border: including pistols, rifles, sub-machine-guns and rocket-propelled grenade launchers. Even Stinger surface-to-air missiles are said to be

⁴⁶ Author's correspondence with Colonel Michael Lucy, United Nations Special Mission for Afghanistan, May 1999, Niaz A. Naik, "Light Weapons Flows to and from Afghanistan," p. 239, *Jane's Infantry Weapons 1997-1998*, Terry J. Gander (ed.), Twenty-third Edition, Surrey: Jane's Information Group, 1997, p. 731, "Weapons, Ammunition Seized West of Kabul," Kabul Radio, *FBIS-NES-96-204*, 20 October 1996, <http://www.nisat.org>, "Weapons Cache Seized by Security Forces," Kabul Radio, *FBIS-NES-96-210*, 27 October 1996, <http://www.nisat.org>, "Cache of Arms, Ammunition Confiscated in Laghman Province," Kabul Radio, *FBIS-NES-96-223*, 16 November 1996, <http://www.nisat.org>, and "Taleban Seizes Weapons, Ammunition in Khost," Kabul Radio, *FBIS-TAC-97-002*, <http://www.nisat.org>.

⁴⁷ For the claim that arms transferred from Afghanistan have been detected in Chechnya, see Ian Anthony (ed.), *Russia and the Arms Trade*, p. 230.

available.⁴⁸ Thus, indirectly, the Government of Pakistan has helped its opponents arm themselves. The same phenomenon, or paradox, has also been noticed by government officials in the Central Asian republics, most notably Tajikistan.

In addition to Pakistan, where the cross-border flow of small arms has intensified ethnic, religious and criminal violence—notably in the province of Sindh—the negative repercussions of small arms transfers to Afghanistan are felt, among others, in India, in the disputed region of Kashmir, and in Sri Lanka.⁴⁹ Furthermore, arms emanating from Cold War arsenals have attracted the interest of a wide array of non-State actors

⁴⁸ See, for example, “Where guns are jewels, Peshawar is a gem now,” and “Pakistanis arming the world’s guerrillas,” *The Washington Post*, 9 July 1998. The wide range of Afghan arms available on Pakistani markets suggests that the weapons transferred through the United States-initiated pipeline did not always end up in the hands of the Afghan mujahedin, but were diverted in other directions. The ISI, private individuals involved in the numerous loading and unloading operations, and mujahedin leaders and commanders seized arms for their own purposes. Sometimes, new weapons taken from the pipeline were replaced with old ones. It has been suggested that perhaps only 40 per cent of the pipeline weapons ever reached the mujahedin fighters at the battlefield. Moreover, it is said that between 550-700 of the estimated 900-1,000 Stinger missiles supplied to the mujahedin are still in unknown hands somewhere in the subregion or outside it. Some of these missiles have re-emerged in Iran, and some are suspected to have been rerouted to countries like North Korea and Qatar. Whether or not these missiles and their shoulder-held launchers are still operational is difficult to ascertain. Tara Kartha, “Southern Asia: The Narcotics and Weapon Linkage,” in Jasjit Singh (ed.), *Light Weapons and International Security*, Delhi: Pugwash Conferences on Science and World Affairs, BASIC, Indian Pugwash Society and IDSA, 1995, pp. 72-73; Jasjit Singh, “Light Weapons and Conflict in Southern Asia,” pp. 53, 59; *Report of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms*, p. 31; Chris Smith, “Light Weapons and Ethnic Conflict in South Asia,” p. 66; and Joanna Spear, “Arms Limitations, Confidence-Building Measures and Internal Conflict,” p. 389.

⁴⁹ See Rohan Gunaratna, “Illicit Transfer of Conventional Weapons,” in Jayantha Dhanapala, Mitsuro Donowaki, Lora Lumpe and Swadesh Rana (eds.), *Small Arms Control: Old Weapons, New Issues*, Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing and UNIDIR, 1999, pp. 255-261, and Chris Smith, “The Impact of Light Weapons on Security: A Case Study of South Asia,” pp. 589-592.

trying to find weaponry for their violent efforts worldwide, whether political or criminal. A recent news report testifies to Afghanistan's reputation as a guaranteed source for small arms. According to the report, guerrillas of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front of Philippines (MILF) have ordered a large shipment of small arms from Afghanistan for their fight for an independent Islamic State. The MILF's order consisted of around 3,000 assorted high-powered weapons, including Kalashnikovs and anti-tank weapons.⁵⁰

The regional and international implications of the "blowback effect" are magnified by the fact that Afghanistan's role as a drug-producing and -trafficking country has become all the more evident. In 1998, Afghanistan was the world's second largest producer of opium poppy.⁵¹ The large-scale cultivation of opium poppy is said to be on the increase and spreading to new areas within the country. The manufacture of morphine and heroin has also increased. It is estimated that up to 65 per cent of all Afghan opium, morphine and heroin is smuggled through the Central Asian republics. For example, many of the laboratories producing heroin operate near the borders of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in order to make smuggling operations easier. There are also large stockpiles of narcotics in northern parts of Afghanistan from which drugs are moved through the territory of Tajikistan. After being channelled through the Central Asian republics, Afghan drugs usually move further on to countries such as Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, which serve as points of entry into Western Europe. Iran and Pakistan are other important transit routes, as well as final destinations, for Afghan drugs.⁵²

⁵⁰ "Philippine Muslim Rebels Await Afghan Arms Shipment," *AFP*, 21 February 1999, <http://www.nisat.org>.

⁵¹ Charles H. Norchi, *Blowback from Afghanistan: The Historical Roots*, Columbia International Affairs Online Working Papers, February 1996, <http://www.cc.columbia.edu/sec/dlc/ciao/wps/>.

⁵² *Report of the International Narcotics Control Board 1998*, New York: United Nations, 1999, pp. 45-48, *World Drug Report*, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p. 20, and *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*, United States Department of State, February 1999, http://www.state.gov/www/global/narcotics_law/1998_narc_report/swasi98.html.

What links drug-trafficking operations with the problem of small arms is that, very often, the Afghan groups engaged with narcotics smuggling are equipped with various kinds of small arms. Again, many of these weapons originate from the same governments whose border guards and law-enforcement officials are the targets of the drug traffickers. Armed encounters between border guards and drug smugglers are frequent along many parts of Afghanistan's border with neighbouring countries. The militarization of crime caused by the connection between arms and drugs is further illustrated by the numerous cases within the transit countries in which armed clashes have taken place between local police forces and Afghan drug traffickers and their local accomplices.⁵³

Small arms and drug trafficking are intertwined also in other ways. First of all, drug trafficking is a highly important source of income for the Afghan belligerents. Both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance need drug money to finance their purchases of arms and ammunition. Although the parties are not always necessarily directly involved in the smuggling operations, they work in close cooperation with the drug traffickers. Neither the Taliban nor the Northern Alliance have taken serious action to discourage the illicit production of narcotics, to destroy drug-manufacturing laboratories or to hinder the activities of the smuggling networks. Instead, they have offered protection both to drug producers and traffickers, and regularly receive shares from the illicit sales of Afghan narcotics. Both parties have also collected taxes from drug producers who operate in areas under their control.⁵⁴ In particular, the Taliban, which currently control over 95 per cent of the area where

⁵³ See, for example, *IWR Daily Update*, Vol. 5, No. 143, 28 July 1998, <http://intelweb.janes.com/iwr/iv5n14301.html>, and "Uzbek protest at Afghan drugs," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 August 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁵⁴ *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*, "Opium blackmail is not acceptable," *Bangkok Post*, 9 October 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>. Also see R. T. Naylor, "The insurgent economy: Black market operations of guerrilla organizations," *Crime, Law and Social Change*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1993, p. 36. The belligerents in Afghanistan also finance their arms purchases by selling gems found in the country. See "Des mines d'émeraude pour financer la résistance du commandant Massoud," *Le Monde*, 19 July 1999.

opium poppy is cultivated, work closely with the drug traffickers. In fact, smuggling networks operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan have provided financial support for the Taliban because the movement has subdued fighting in many parts of Afghanistan and made the conditions for smuggling activities more conducive. Under the Taliban, whose high-ranking members are said to have strong business interests in—and even familial ties with—the criminal groups, smuggling has grown into a very extensive business.⁵⁵ What is worrisome with regard to the proliferation and accumulation of small arms is that, in many cases, the drug smuggling operations also include the illicit trafficking of weapons. Small arms and drugs are shipped together through the same routes, by the same smugglers, and sometimes to the same clients.⁵⁶

The regional and international repercussions of the trade in Afghan small arms are also being felt through the activities of the terrorist groups that are based in Afghanistan. As pointed out by the General Assembly of the United Nations, the territory of Afghanistan is continuously used for the sheltering and training of international terrorists.⁵⁷ The Taliban especially are believed to collaborate closely with terrorists including Islamic radicals from countries like Egypt, Sudan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. In addition to providing training and indoctrination, the Taliban have armed various terrorist groups and recruited fighters—including their own men—for their operative cells. Taliban militants have been directly involved, for example, in the fighting in the disputed region of Kashmir. Many recent terrorist attacks that have targeted people from Western,

⁵⁵ Ahmed Rashid, "Pakistan and the Taliban," pp. 76-78, and "Back With a Vengeance: Proxy War in Afghanistan," p. 62.

⁵⁶ Author's correspondence with Colonel Michel Lucy, United Nations Special Mission in Afghanistan, May 1999, and Tara Kartha, "Southern Asia: The Narcotics and Weapon Linkage," pp. 73, 75, 80.

⁵⁷ *The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security*, UN document A/RES/53/203 A–B, 12 February 1999, p. 2.

Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries have been conducted by individuals who have been armed and trained in Afghanistan.⁵⁸

THE HUMAN COSTS OF SMALL ARMS

The proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms has seriously affected the lives of the people of Afghanistan. Massive numbers of Afghans have been killed, disabled or maimed by small arms during the two decades of armed conflict, and the easy availability of these weapons has contributed to the breakdown of State structures and the destruction of Afghanistan's economy. The cycle of armed conflict has brought the country to a situation which has been characterized as a complex humanitarian emergency. At present, the Afghan people are not only targeted by the small-armed fighters, but also suffer from hunger and the spread of diseases that are caused by the lack of clean water and other war-related consequences of a degrading environment. The disastrous effects of diseases and undernutrition are most strongly felt by children and old people who, in many cases, cannot be helped due to the lack of medicine and other medical supplies. It is currently estimated that 257 of every 1,000 Afghan children die before the age of five.⁵⁹

Apart from hunger and a catastrophic health situation, Afghanistan's humanitarian emergency is characterized by large-scale external and internal displacement. There are over 2.6 million Afghans living outside their country as refugees, forming the largest single refugee group in the

⁵⁸ *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998*, Department of State Publication 10610, 30 April 1999, <http://www.state.gov/www/global/terrorism/1998Report/eurasia.htm>, Amin Saikal, "The enhanced dangers of a clash over Kashmir," *International Herald Tribune*, 29-30 May 1999, Charles H. Norchi, *Blowback from Afghanistan*, and Tara Kartha, "Light Weapons and States in Conflict," paper presented at the 48th Pugwash Conference, Quetaro, Mexico, September/October 1998, pp. 1-3.

⁵⁹ On the concept of a complex humanitarian emergency, see Raimo Väyrynen, *The Age of Humanitarian Emergencies*, pp. 16-34, *International Herald Tribune*, 2-3 January 1999.

world. Approximately 300,000 people are displaced inside Afghanistan.⁶⁰ The first major waves of refugees left Afghanistan soon after the Soviet military had invaded the country in December 1979. By the end of the same year, close to 400,000 people had fled to Pakistan and about 200,000 to Iran. By the end of 1980, the number of Afghan refugees had risen to 1.9 million. The peak in the number of Afghan refugees was reached in 1990, when there were 6.2 million Afghans living in Iran and Pakistan alone. Inside Afghanistan, the continuing civil war forced huge numbers of people to leave their homes in the countryside and move into the cities.⁶¹

Refugees began returning to Afghanistan from neighbouring States after the mujahedin took power in April 1992. By June 1998, about 4 million Afghan refugees had been repatriated. Most of those who have recently returned, mostly ethnic Pashtuns, have departed from refugee villages in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan for destinations in bordering provinces of Afghanistan. There have also been large numbers of returning Afghans from Pakistan's Baluchistan region and from Iran.⁶² Due to grim prospects for life and the volatile and changing military and political situation in Afghanistan, however, there are no guarantees that those going back will be able to maintain themselves. The wide proliferation of small arms in the Afghan society is an additional factor which constantly threatens the physical security of the returning refugees. Small arms also constitute a threat to the physical security of those Afghans who are still living as refugees in the neighbouring countries. For example, many refugee villages and camps in the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan have become highly militarized. They function as shelters for criminal activities, such as small arms and drug

⁶⁰ *UNHCR Country Profiles—Afghanistan*, March 1999 and May 1998, <http://www.unhcr.ch/world/mide/afghan.htm>.

⁶¹ *Refugees*, No. 108, 1997, <http://www.unhcr.ch/pubs/rm108/rm108toc.htm>.

⁶² *UNHCR Global Appeal 1999—Afghanistan*, <http://www.unhcr.ch/fdrs/ga99/afg>.

trading, and as bases for former Afghan combatants who have been forced into exile.⁶³

The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan is extremely serious. It is overshadowed by poverty, by severe and constant human rights abuses, and by the fighting parties' general disregard for the norms of international humanitarian law. As the ethnic and sectarian nature of the Afghan conflict has intensified in recent years, the distinction between combatants and civilians has practically lost its relevance, as illustrated by the numerous cases that have been documented by international organizations and observers. These observations have also shown that, in the Afghan context, humanitarian violence is more often than not conducted with small arms. Small arms are either directly used as tools of violence or as deterrents to intimidate and discourage potential victims.

Both the Taliban and the Northern Alliance have been guilty of serious breaches against civilians and the belligerents of the opposite camp. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed in deliberate or indiscriminate attacks on residential areas. Thousands of Afghan civilians have been killed or abducted by guards during home raids and house-to-house searches. Civilians are continuously being beaten and tortured because of suspicions that they support rival political groups, or because of their ethnic or religious background. The victims of these offences include children. They have been mutilated, kept as prisoners and arbitrarily killed. Moreover, many of the offences have been conducted by children themselves. Through recruitment or kidnappings, many Afghan children have become child soldiers, and the proliferation of small arms has made it easy for them to act violently.⁶⁴

⁶³ See, for example, "Afghan refugee camps safe haven for criminals," *FBIS-NES-98-341*, and *The Frontier Post*, Peshawar, 7 December 1998, <http://www.nisat.org>.

⁶⁴ *Afghanistan: Grave Abuses in the Name of Religion*, "Afghanistan: Human Rights Developments," *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*, <http://www.hrw.org/hrw/worldreport99>, *Afghanistan: Continuing Atrocities Against Civilians*, Amnesty International Report, September 1997, <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/ASA/31100997.htm>, and *Protection of Children Affected by Armed Conflict*, Note by the Secretary-General, United Nations (continued...)

Most of the serious human rights violations that have recently taken place in Afghanistan have been attributed to the Taliban.⁶⁵ There are numerous examples of the movement's offences. One peculiar aspect of the Taliban violations has been the harsh treatment of women. In addition to cases of harassment and rape, women have suffered from restrictions on their basic human rights including the rights of freedom of association, expression, employment and education. They have been forced to stay indoors and forbidden to appear in public without the company of a close male relative. Those who have defied the edicts of the Taliban—that is, the Taliban interpretations of Islam—have been punished. Women have been sentenced to lashing on the back and legs, or stoned to death. Taliban punishments are also said to have included bodily mutilations. Furthermore, there have reportedly been cases where women have been shot in the streets if seen in public without the attendance of a male relative.⁶⁶

One of the most horrendous acts of violence against civilians took place in August 1998, after the Taliban had captured the city of Mazar-i Sharif in north-west Afghanistan. Only a few hours after the Taliban troops had seized control of the city, they started to kill large numbers of civilians, indiscriminately shooting suspected Northern Alliance combatants and non-combatants in the streets and residential areas. In the following days, the Taliban systematically searched for male members of the ethnic Hazara, Tajik, and Uzbek communities in the city. Thousands of men from these ethnic communities were detained and transported to other Afghan cities. The Hazaras, a Persian-speaking Shia ethnic group, were particularly targeted by the Taliban fighters. Hundreds

⁶⁴(...continued)

Nations document A/53/482, 12 October 1998, pp. 8-10.

⁶⁵ This is illustrated, among others, by the fact that the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in his recent report, specifically appealed to the Taliban to respect the human rights of the people under their control. See, *The Situation in Afghanistan and its Implications for International Peace and Security*, p. 11.

⁶⁶ *Women in Afghanistan: The Violations Continue*, Amnesty International Report, June 1997, <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1997/ASA/31100597.htm>, and *Afghanistan: Grave Abuses in the Name of Religion*.

of Hazara men and boys were probably executed. It is estimated that, in all, at least 2,000 people were killed in the bloodshed of Mazar-i Sharif.⁶⁷

The Taliban's behaviour in Mazar-i Sharif has partly been seen as an act of reprisal for the mass killings of Taliban fighters which took place after the movement's failed attempt to capture Mazar-i Sharif from May to July 1997. Perhaps as many as 2,000 Taliban fighters were supposedly killed while in custody by the troops of General Abdul Malik, the local commander in control of Mazar-i Sharif at the time. The dead Taliban fighters were buried in 20 to 30 mass graves near Sheberghan not far from Mazar-i Sharif. As perceived by the Taliban, the Hazaras were mainly responsible for the killing of its troops. The fact that, a year later, Hazara civilians were punished for the deeds of combatants shows that no stratum in Afghan society is safe from unrestrained violence. The proliferation and easy availability of small arms make the circumstances more conducive to the culture of "blood revenge."⁶⁸

The proliferation and misuse of small arms also makes it difficult for the international organizations and aid agencies to alleviate the sufferings of the Afghan people. Acts of violence against international observers and the personnel of relief agencies, which include murders and kidnappings, have forced these communities to cut back their operations and even temporarily to leave Afghanistan. Unless the fighting between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance ends, the human costs of the Afghan civil war will only increase in the future. If the causes and tools of violence in Afghanistan are not addressed and controlled, the country is destined to remain, as put by one observer, "one of the world's most intractable human rights disasters."⁶⁹

⁶⁷ *Afghanistan: The Massacre in Mazar-i Sharif*, Human Rights Watch Report, November 1998, <http://www.hrw.org/hrw/report98/afghan/Afirepor0.htm>.

⁶⁸ *Afghanistan: Reports of Mass Graves of Taleban Militia*, Amnesty International Report, November 1997, <http://www.amnesty.org/ailib/aipub/1997/ASA/31101197.htm>.

⁶⁹ *Afghanistan: Human Rights Developments*.

CHAPTER 2

THE CONFLICT IN TAJIKISTAN

THE CIVIL WAR 1992-1997

Another Central Asian country that has recently experienced a disastrous internal conflict is Tajikistan. The Tajik civil war from 1992 to 1997 was the culmination of unsuccessful efforts by the Tajik Government and opposition to resolve their disagreements in the context of a new political environment that had been created by reform policies in the former Soviet Union in the late 1980s. By the time Tajikistan declared its independence in September 1991, political forces in the country had divided into two separate groups: the Communist elite in power and the opposition forces that mainly consisted of democratic, Islamic and nationalist movements. The opposition groups—which actively organized meetings, rallies and demonstrations to draw support for their demands—called for economic and other reforms such as the revival of Tajik cultural identity, democratization of Tajikistan and the Islamization of Tajik society and politics. However, the ruling Communist elite did not seriously respond to these demands and, most importantly, was not ready to give up power or share it with the opposition.¹

After the declaration of independence, the power struggle in Tajikistan intensified. Demands for a break with the practices of the Soviet era and for a representative government became louder. The opposition groups regarded the presidential election of November 1991 as an important opportunity for them to convey their message to the

¹ For more on the political developments in Tajikistan from 1988 to the declaration of independence in September 1991, see Muriel Atkin, "Thwarted democratization in Tajikistan," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997, pp. 282-287, and Barnett R. Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," *Survival*, Vol. 35, No. 4, 1993, pp. 76-77.

general public and to influence the political scene in Tajikistan. However, the candidate of the opposition, Davlat Khudonazarov, was defeated by the pro-establishment candidate Rahman Nabiev in an election that was overshadowed by extensive fraud and the Government's strong restrictions on the opposition's campaigning. As a result, the aftermath of the presidential election was coloured by increased tensions between the Government and the opposition. In 1992, the widespread discontent turned into mass demonstrations in the capital Dushanbe.²

With the demonstrations in the spring of 1992, violence became an intrinsic part of the power struggle in Tajikistan. Small-scale clashes between the Government and the opposition began to take place on a regular basis, and the conflicting parties began to arm themselves. Perhaps the clearest indication of the arming process was the decision by President Nabiev to distribute some 1,800 Kalashnikov automatic rifles to his supporters in early May 1992. Nabiev's decision aggravated the situation in Tajikistan and contributed to the outbreak of several days of sporadic fighting and hostage-taking in Dushanbe. These clashes during the first week of May 1992 eventually forced Nabiev to allow the opposition to join the Tajik Government, but the Government of National Reconciliation remained short-lived. As the influential political factions in the Tajik provinces of Khujand (Leninabad) and Kulob refused to recognize the new Government—and the old elite in the Government tried to crush the opposition both politically and physically—the new Government had no chance of survival. The cycle of violence in Tajikistan deepened, and the country plunged into a civil war.³

The regional character of the identities of the Tajik people soon intertwined with the political developments in Tajikistan. Reflecting the traditional structure of the Tajik society, in which the region of residence constitutes a fundamental component of people's identity, the parties in the civil war organized themselves largely along regional lines. The main regional division within the country was between Tajikistan's northern and southern provinces. Generally, the northern provinces represented

² Muriel Atkin, *ibid.*, pp. 287-288, and Barnett R. Rubin, *ibid.*, p. 77.

³ Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, Minority Rights Group Report, 1995, pp. 15, 22.

the political and economic power of the Soviet era, whereas the economically and politically inferior southern provinces advocated change and shared the goals of the opposition movements. Dozens of private armies, headed by various military commanders and warlords, were formed in different parts of the country according to political and regional affiliations. Yet the divisions among the Tajik people were not always clear-cut. For example, there were supporters of the opposition in the northern provinces and defenders of the old rule in the southern provinces. Also, there were substantial differences in the ethnic, religious and educational backgrounds of the Tajik people. As such, the existence of a wide variety of actors wanting to bring their individual grievances to the national agenda was a characteristic of Tajik politics.⁴

Most of the fighting in Tajikistan was over by the beginning of the year 1993. The country's former Communist elite emerged as the winner after six months of intense hostilities and took immediate steps to silence the Tajik opposition. Opposition groups were banned, and most of the opposition leaders fled either to Afghanistan, Iran or Russia. Yet the Government's control over the country remained limited. The clashes between Government and opposition militias continued in the form of guerrilla warfare, and the already substantial human costs of the crisis in Tajikistan increased. It is estimated that 20,000-100,000 Tajiks were killed during the short but brutal fighting in 1992.⁵ As a consequence of the widespread armed violence, around 500,000 people were internally displaced, and approximately 75,000 Tajik refugees crossed the border to the war-torn Afghanistan. Another 20,000 people fled to the neighbouring Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.⁶ Furthermore, at the height of the civil war, a wide range of serious human rights violations took place. Arbitrary executions, torture, kidnappings and the use of children as soldiers were among the offences that left bitter

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 15, and Muriel Atkin, "Thwarted democratization in Tajikistan," pp. 279, 291-295.

⁵ Bess A. Brown, "The Civil War in Tajikistan, 1992-1993," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, Surrey: Curzon Press, 1998, pp. 86, 93-95.

⁶ Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, p. 20.

memories for the protagonists on both sides of the political divide, and further polarized Tajik society. The civil war also contributed to the destruction of the economy of Tajikistan which already had the lowest standard of living among the Central Asian republics.⁷

After the end of the intensive phase of the civil war, the armed confrontations in Tajikistan started to follow a clear pattern. On the one hand, the fighting concentrated on the border region between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. The opposition militias, which had established bases in Afghanistan, constantly engaged in cross-border infiltration and attacked the troops of the Tajik Government. Simultaneously, sporadic violent clashes in different parts of Tajikistan took place on a daily basis. Thus, during 1993, the situation in Tajikistan remained highly tense and unstable. The most serious military incident that year occurred on 13 July, when an opposition militia attacked a group of Russian border guards responsible for the security of the Tajik-Afghan border. Twenty-four border guards were killed and eighteen others wounded in the attack. Clashes in the border region and in other parts of Tajikistan continued throughout 1994, although in the latter half of the year the fighting cooled down. Encouraged by the improved overall security situation in the country, more than 90 per cent of former refugees and internally displaced people had returned to their homes by mid-1995.⁸

Yet the humanitarian conditions in Tajikistan remained extremely serious. The Tajik people continued to suffer from a deteriorating economic situation, especially in the Khatlon region in the south-west, Gorno-Badakhshan in the east, and parts of the Garm Valley in central Tajikistan—in other words, in the areas most affected by the raging internal conflict. Crimes conducted by the arms-wielding militias added

⁷ Ian Gorvin, "The Human Rights Situation in Tajikistan (1992-1993)," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, pp. 229-236, and Laura A. Barnitz, *Child Soldiers: Youth who participate in armed conflict*, Youth Advocate Program International Report, 1997, p. 3.

⁸ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/26311, 16 August 1993, pp. 2-6, and *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, August 1995*, United Nations document A/50/1, 22 August 1995, p. 107.

to the difficulties of the civilians. Murders, rapes, beatings, hostage takings and robberies were among the atrocities of which the fighters from both political camps were accused. Due to the substantial proliferation and accumulation of small arms within the country, political violence, violent crime and violence arising from private disagreements became increasingly intertwined. Government and opposition leaders acknowledged the dangers of the proliferation of small arms, but were unable to control the activities of criminal groups or even of their own soldiers. The ubiquitousness of threats to personal security and the legal vacuum in Tajikistan led ordinary citizens to form self-defence units to protect themselves. The emergence of self-defence detachments in many parts of the country led to the further weaponization of Tajik society.⁹

By 1996, the overall situation in Tajikistan had reached such a low point that comparisons with the bloodshed in 1992 had become common.¹⁰ Fighting between the Government and opposition forces endured particularly along the Tajik-Afghan border, in and around Dushanbe, and in the Tavildara sector in the centre of the country. There was also unrest in several Tajik cities in the west and north of the country over day-to-day economic and political matters. The opposition continued to carry out terrorist attacks, which were mainly targeted at the Russian military stationed in Tajikistan. For example, on 19 November 1996, a Tajik Ministry of Defence officer of Russian origin was murdered, and three days later, a bus belonging to the Russian border forces was

⁹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, August 1995*, p. 107, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1995/1024, 8 December 1995, pp. 4-5, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1994/1363, 30 November 1994, p. 5, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1994/542, 5 May 1994, p. 2, and Irina Zviagelskaya, "The Tajik Conflict: Problems of Regulation," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p. 167.

¹⁰ For example, the Secretary-General of the United Nations characterized the situation in Tajikistan as "most volatile and serious since the end of 1992." See *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1996/412, 7 June 1996, p. 6.

attacked by opposition fighters equipped with anti-tank rockets and other types of small arms.¹¹

There was friction even among the Tajik Government. On 27 January 1996, the First Brigade of the Tajik Army took control of the city of Kurgan-Tyube in southern Tajikistan and addressed a number of requests to the Tajik leadership, including the replacement of senior government officials and the partition of the southern province of Khatlon. The incident, which was eventually defused without violence due to the Government's compliance with some of the First Brigade's demands, illustrated that the Tajik Government's control over its armed forces was far from total.¹² Another sign of the tensions among Tajikistan's ruling elite was the deterioration of relations between the country's two most powerful political factions: the Khujandis and the Kulobis. On 14 May 1996, mass protests took place in the cities of Khujand and Ura-Tyube in the Khujand region. Among the demands put forth by the demonstrators were calls for greater autonomy for the Khujand region and the removal of civil administrators and law-enforcement officials of Kulobi origin.¹³ Although the Government consented to some of the demonstrators' demands, the demonstrations did not alter the interregional balance of power within Tajikistan which had changed after the presidential election of November 1994. Since the Kulobi-supported Imomali Rakhmonov had won the election over Khujand's candidate, former prime minister Abdulmolik Abdullojonov, the Kulobis had

¹¹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1996/1010, 5 December 1996, pp. 1-3.

¹² *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1996/212, 22 March 1996, p. 3. Neither were clashes between different units of the Tajik army absent. For example, in September 1995, the First and Eleventh Brigades of the Tajik Army were engaged in serious confrontations. See *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1995/799, 16 September 1995, p. 4, and *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 8 December 1995, p. 3.

¹³ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 7 June 1996, p. 2.

consolidated their leading position and driven out the Khujandis from their posts in both central and local government.¹⁴

Amid the political upheaval and armed hostilities, the Tajik Government and opposition tried to find a solution to the prolonged conflict through negotiations. Initial discussions between the two parties, the so-called Inter-Tajik talks on national reconciliation, took place in April 1994 in Moscow under the aegis of the United Nations. During the Moscow talks the parties worked out an agenda for subsequent negotiations composed of three sets of topics: cessation of hostilities and disarmament, the fate of the refugees and internally displaced people, and the future structure of the Tajik Government. The first round of discussions between the parties did not bring any tangible results. The second round of the Inter-Tajik talks which took place in Tehran in June 1994, and which focused on reaching an agreement on a cease-fire and cessation of other hostile acts, was also inconclusive. An agreement on a cease-fire was eventually reached in a consultative meeting in Tehran later in September 1994, but it proved to be largely insignificant because the cease-fire was constantly broken by the belligerents. Thus, by 1996, the Tajik Government and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO)—an alliance of opposition parties and movements formed in 1995, consisting of an Islamic and a secular wing—had not managed to find a common position on the fundamental issues, the most difficult being, predictably, the structure of the future Tajik Government.¹⁵

Nevertheless, in December 1996, the Tajik peace talks began to gain momentum. The meetings in northern Afghanistan and in Moscow were followed by a successful round of talks in Iran, Russia and Kyrgyzstan

¹⁴ Irina Zviagelskaya, "The Tajik Conflict: Problems of Regulation," p. 162.

¹⁵ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 5 May 1994, pp. 1-2, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1994/1102, 27 September 1994, pp. 1-2, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 22 August 1995, pp. 106-107, and *Report of the Secretary-General on the Work of the Organization, August 1996*, United Nations document A/51/1, 20 August 1996, pp. 133-135.

during the spring of 1997.¹⁶ The spring negotiations finally paved the way for the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord which was signed by the representatives of the Tajik Government and the UTO in Moscow on 27 June 1997. The signing of the peace accord and the formation of a Commission of National Reconciliation (CNR), composed in equal numbers of government and UTO representatives, began the period of transition in Tajikistan, during which the fundamental questions mentioned in the General Agreement are expected to be addressed. These issues include the return of the remaining Tajik refugees, the demobilization of the UTO fighters or their reintegration into governmental structures, the enhancement of democratic processes in Tajikistan, and the formation of a new government. Although the peace agreement and its separate protocols laid out the guidelines for political change and gave a mandate for their implementation, detailed solutions to many of the practical issues were left to the responsibility of the CNR. Thus, the peace agreement only nominally ended the five-year period of violence in Tajikistan.¹⁷

THE SOURCES OF SMALL ARMS

The Russian Connection

The tools of violence in the Tajik civil war were first and foremost small arms. The wide variety of small arms used by Government and opposition forces—whether in actual fighting, or in connection with terrorist attacks and human rights abuses—were mainly of Russian origin, and, in the initial stages of the conflict, largely emanated from internal

¹⁶ See *Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1997/56, 21 January 1997, pp. 1-2, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1997/198, 5 March 1997, pp. 3-4, and *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1997/415, 30 May 1997, pp. 1-2.

¹⁷ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1997/686, 4 September 1997, pp. 1-2, 5-8.

sources. Significant numbers of weapons entered circulation from the Russian military stationed in Tajikistan. Some of the Russian garrisons were equipped only with small arms, large quantities of which had been left behind in Tajikistan by Soviet forces after their withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989.¹⁸

The Tajik belligerents acquired weapons from the Russian military in several ways. First, Tajik fighters stole small arms from Russian garrisons and border guards based along Tajikistan's borders with Afghanistan and China.¹⁹ Opposition militias which did not have access to arms and ammunition through government channels supposedly resorted to this method more frequently. Secondly, there were consensual transfers of arms from the Russian military to the Tajik belligerents. Russian soldiers sold large numbers of arms and ammunition both to pro-Government and opposition groups. They also bartered weapons for goods such as food and alcohol. Occasionally, Russian soldiers were simply disarmed by militias threatening to use force.²⁰ However, a major part of the weapons that entered into circulation from the Russian military were intentionally handed out. On the one hand, these handouts resulted from the sympathies of some individual soldiers toward specific actors in the Tajik power struggle. On the other hand—and more importantly—arms supplies were a way for Russia to influence the political developments in Tajikistan.²¹ Hence, the short history of independent Tajikistan has been coloured by foreign involvement right from the start.

¹⁸ Michael Orr, "The Russian Army and the War in Tajikistan," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p. 154, and *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 16 August 1993, 103, p. 2.

¹⁹ Matthew Evangelista, "Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union," in Michael E. Brown (ed.), *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, p. 124, and Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, p. 15.

²⁰ Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *ibid.*, p. 22, and Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 7, 1996, p. 1124.

²¹ See, for example, Shahram Akbarzadeh, *ibid.*, p. 1113.

When Tajikistan declared its independence in September 1991, there were three types of troops of the former Soviet army firmly based in various parts of the country: the 201st Motorized Rifle Division (MRD)—which had formed a part of the 40th Army in Afghanistan during the Soviet intervention—a regiment of the Air Defence Forces, and KGB Border Guards along the Afghan and Chinese borders. Due to scant financial resources, the lack of competent personnel, and the inability to independently ensure Tajikistan's national security, the Tajik Government was not capable of taking these troops under its jurisdiction. As a result, the responsibility over the Russian forces was given to Russia through an arrangement subsequently sealed in several bilateral accords between the Tajik and Russian Governments. In these agreements Russia also committed itself to helping Tajikistan to create a national army.²²

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia did not have a clear picture of the future role of its military in Tajikistan. The economic costs of relocation spoke against quick measures in this regard, especially at a time when the process of relocating Russian soldiers from Eastern Europe was still under way. As far as the strategic role of the troops was concerned, there was arm wrestling in Moscow about whether to utilize the military presence in Tajikistan for the advancement of hegemonic aspirations in Central Asia, or to keep a distance from the political upheaval that was steadily intensifying and risking to tie Russia to an Afghan-type protracted conflict.²³ Ultimately, the line of policy chosen was largely initiated by the Russian troops themselves: the initial hesitation on the side of the Russian leadership was replaced with an active support of Tajikistan's former Communist elite. Although the Russian military did not instigate the internal conflict in the country, it

²² Michael Orr, "The Russian Army and the War in Tajikistan," pp. 151-159, Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, Discussion Paper 74, The Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1998, pp. 12-13, and Susan Clark, "The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces," in Michael Mandelbaum (ed.), *Central Asia and the World*, New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1994, pp. 177, 189.

²³ Michael Orr, "The Russian Army and the War in Tajikistan," p. 152, Lena Jonson, *ibid.*, p. 8, and Pavel K. Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, PRIO, London: Sage Publications, 1996, p. 112.

played a central role in the civil war by making it possible for the former Communists to maintain their supremacy in Tajik politics.²⁴

Officially, the Russian military declared its neutrality in the Tajik conflict. Yet it was directly involved in the hostilities. Although the Russian troops concentrated their activities on protecting Tajikistan's borders, communications networks and other key sites in the country, the MRD is said to have actively fought against the opposition during 1992 and 1993.²⁵ Moreover, the Russian troops were accused of regularly attacking opposition bases, confiscating weapons from the bases and killing innocent civilians. As a result, the Russian military, considered to be an occupation force by many Tajiks, became a common target for attacks by the opposition fighters, particularly along the Tajik-Afghan border region.²⁶ These attacks and the general increase in the Russian involvement in the conflict forced Russia to send more arms and soldiers to Tajikistan.²⁷

In addition to the Russian military, the peacekeeping forces of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) also played a part in the Tajik conflict, and in the proliferation of small arms in Tajikistan. The decision to form a collective peacekeeping force within the CIS framework was taken by the Governments of Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan on 24 September 1993. The official purpose of the force was to control the fighting in Tajikistan, protect strategic installations in Tajikistan and its border with Afghanistan, and to deliver humanitarian aid

²⁴ Lena Jonson, *ibid.*, pp. 8-9, Pavel Baev, *ibid.*, and K. J. Holsti, *Political Sources of Humanitarian Emergencies*, p. 32.

²⁵ Sven Gunnar Simonsen, "Tajikistan," in Sven Gunnar Simonsen (ed.), *Conflicts in the OSCE Area*, PRIO, 1997, <http://www.prio.no/html/osce-tajikistan.htm>.

²⁶ Olivier Brenninkmeijer, "International Concern for Tajikistan: UN and OSCE Efforts to Promote Peace-Building and Democratisation," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p. 204, and Internally Displaced Persons, Note by the Secretary-General, Addendum, United Nations document A/51/483/Add.1, 24 October 1996, p. 24.

²⁷ Susan Clark, "The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces," p. 190.

to Tajik civilians. However, there were heavy suspicions from the beginning that the CIS forces were merely a façade constructed by Russia to conceal its aspirations for increased influence in Tajikistan.²⁸ Moreover, it has been suggested that the creation of the CIS forces was a result of a specific deal made between Russia and the Central Asian republics: Russia would carry the military burden in Tajikistan—and thereby address the fears of the Central Asian republics of a possible spillover of the Tajik conflict—whereas the latter, in exchange, would not oppose Russia's policies in the Caucasus within the CIS.²⁹

Whatever the case, the role of the CIS peacekeepers in Tajikistan clearly differed from the activities traditionally associated with peacekeeping—and from the official peacekeeping guidelines of the CIS itself, for that matter.³⁰ First, the almost exclusively Russian-manned peacekeeping formation took sides in the conflict by providing arms and ammunition to the supporters of the Tajik Government. CIS peacekeepers have been cited as a probable arms source, for example, for the pro-Government fighters in the Kulob region—although, interestingly enough, the opposition also reportedly managed to acquire weapons from the peacekeepers.³¹ Secondly, the CIS forces were involved in numerous armed clashes with opposition militias. One of the bloodiest of these incidents occurred in Gorno-Badakshan in April 1995. Twenty Kazakh peacekeepers were reportedly killed and 26 injured, when a convoy of the Kazakh contingent of the Russian border forces was ambushed by

²⁸ Catherine Poujol, "Some Reflections on Russian Involvement in the Tajik Conflict, 1992-1993," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p.102, and Matthew Evangelista, "Historical Legacies and the Politics of Intervention in the Former Soviet Union," p. 121.

²⁹ For this argument, see Pavel K. Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, p. 113.

³⁰ See Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, pp. 13-14.

³¹ Barnett Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," p. 81, and Susan Clark, "The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces," p. 190.

Tajik opposition fighters.³² The fact that the peacekeepers were closely assisting Russian border forces in monitoring the Tajik-Afghan border was, in itself, a clear indication of the element of combat that was present in the CIS peacekeeping mission in Tajikistan.³³

What were, then, the motives for Russia's strong military presence in Tajikistan? In addition to the financial constraints with regard to the reintegration of former Soviet forces within Russian territory, several other explanations have been put forward. First, policy makers in Moscow considered Tajikistan to be vital for Russia's defence. Russian leaders, including President Boris Yeltsin, emphasized that Tajikistan's southern border was in effect Russia's southern border. Russia's presence in Tajikistan was considered to be vital for countering the threat of the spillover of Tajik and Afghan conflicts into Central Asia. The Russian presence was also seen as vital for countering the spread of Islamic fundamentalism both to the Central Asian republics and to Russia itself, for if Tajikistan were to be taken over by Islamic radicals, the fall of governments in other Central Asian republics could easily have followed.³⁴

The coupling of the fate of Tajikistan with the security of Central Asia and Russia was not the only motive stated by Russians for their military presence in Tajikistan. In the initial stages of the Tajik conflict, the protection of the Russian minority was mentioned as an important task of the Russian troops. However, the plight of the Russian minority offered a good excuse for the Russian decision makers to legitimize their involvement in the conflict. In fact, it has been argued that Russia's strong military presence was, above all, an indication of Russia's intention to retain its political and military influence in Central Asia, and even an indication of its efforts to re-establish the great-power status of the former

³² *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1995/390, 12 May 1995, p. 4.

³³ Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, p. 15.

³⁴ See, for example, Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, p. 22, Shahrnam Akbarzadeh, "Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?," p. 1122, and Pavel K. Baev, *The Russian Army in a Time of Troubles*, p. 112.

Soviet Union. Russia not only wanted to present itself as the ultimate guarantor of stability in Central Asia but also signalled its readiness to block any efforts by other States to increase their influence in Central Asia—the probability of which had increased due to the turmoil in Tajikistan.³⁵

Uzbekistan and Afghanistan

Another external actor that played a central role in the Tajik civil war was Uzbekistan. Its active involvement in the conflict was spurred by several factors. One was the fear that the fighting in Tajikistan could spill over to the territory of Uzbekistan. Fears over the spread of the conflict were understandable for two basic reasons: Uzbekistan shares borders with Tajikistan and has a national Tajik minority of almost one million people. Uzbek authorities also worried that the upheaval in Tajikistan could increase the risk of an escalation of the conflict in Afghanistan. A stable “Tajik buffer” between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan was regarded as critical for the containment of the Afghan threat. Massive flows of illicit arms and drugs from Afghanistan through Tajikistan to the other Central Asian republics was the other major repercussion of the Tajik conflict feared by the Uzbek leadership.³⁶

The definition of the Uzbek leadership of the Tajik civil war was almost identical with its view of the crises in Afghanistan; the conflict in Tajikistan was explained as a battle between secularism and the forces of Islamic radicalism. However, by linking the developments in Tajikistan with Islamic activism in general, the Uzbek leadership was actually pursuing wider objectives. The spectre of radical Islam was used, first of all, to silence the political opposition inside Uzbekistan—whether Islamic or not. Legitimizing its tough policies by referring to developments in Tajikistan, the Uzbek Government suppressed the activities of its challengers at home. The situation in Tajikistan also provided the Uzbek

³⁵ Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, pp. 28-29, and Shahram Akbarzadeh, “Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?,” pp. 1122-1123.

³⁶ Brian Auten, “Tajikistan Today,” *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, Vol. 19, 1996, p. 202, and Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy*, The Royal Institute for International Affairs, London, 1998, pp. 54-55.

Government with an opportunity to engage in national identity-building. The example of Tajikistan was used to denigrate outlooks other than the official State ideology which continues to rest on the overriding values of authority and stability believed to secure Uzbekistan's pre-eminence in Central Asia. A corollary of this line of reasoning were the efforts by Uzbekistan to present itself internationally as an island of stability in the middle of a troubled region.³⁷

The fact that Uzbekistan strongly supported the Khujandi faction in the Tajik civil war suggests that Uzbekistan's policies in Tajikistan were linked to wider foreign policy aspirations. By trying to help the Khujandis—mainly ethnic Uzbeks and both culturally and economically tied to Uzbekistan—to maintain their powerful position in Tajik politics, the Uzbek Government wanted to make sure that its channels to influence developments in Tajikistan would remain intact.³⁸ The support Uzbekistan provided to its ethnic brethren and other pro-Government forces in Tajikistan included significant numbers of small arms and ammunition. For example, during 1992 Uzbekistan armed and trained various militias from the Tajik cities of Hissa and Kurgan-Tyube eager to remove the coalition Government from power. Supporters of the old rule were also allowed to use Uzbekistan's territory to launch attacks on Dushanbe.³⁹ The military base in the Uzbek border town of Termez is said to have been an important centre from which Uzbek weapons were channelled to the Tajik belligerents.⁴⁰

³⁷ Stuart Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-1997: Domestic Considerations," *Central Asian Survey*, Vol. 18, No. 1, 1999, pp. 37, 40-45.

³⁸ See, for example, Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 52. Ethnic Uzbeks constitute the largest national minority in Tajikistan. Approximately 25 per cent of Tajikistan's population of 5.6 million people are ethnic Uzbeks.

³⁹ See, for example, Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, pp. 15-16, and Shahram Akbarzadeh, "Why Did Nationalism Fail in Tajikistan?," p. 1123.

⁴⁰ Stuart Horsman, "Uzbekistan's Involvement in the Tajik Civil War 1992-1997: Domestic Considerations," p. 38.

During 1995 and 1996, militias headed by ethnic Uzbek commanders reportedly received military aid from Uzbekistan and conducted raids from camps located on Uzbek territory. Uzbekistan also took advantage of its connections in Afghanistan and encouraged the ethnic Uzbek General Rashid Dostum to assist pro-Government forces in Tajikistan. Given the existence of the huge weapons arsenals in Afghanistan, Dostum's assistance to the Tajik fighters must have included shipments of small arms. In addition to providing military aid to its Tajik protégés, Uzbekistan's own army directly took part in the civil war, and the Uzbek air force reportedly bombed Tajik opposition bases both in Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Often, Uzbekistan's military activities were conducted in close cooperation with Russia, but after the Russian-backed Kulobi faction monopolized State power in Tajikistan, the relations between Uzbekistan and Russia deteriorated.⁴¹

While Russia and Uzbekistan were the main providers of arms and ammunition to the pro-Government forces in Tajikistan, Afghanistan was a crucial weapons source for the opposition militias.⁴² Due to the fluidity of the Tajik-Afghan border, many opposition fighters went to Afghanistan to acquire arms and ammunition.⁴³ Moreover, massive quantities of small arms, ranging from assault rifles to hand grenades, were supplied from Afghanistan to the Tajik opposition.⁴⁴ Many of these weapons were bought with money provided to the opposition groups by sources in Pakistan and the Arab world—among others, in Saudi Arabia and Egypt. In May 1993, for example, Tajik opposition fighters shot down a fighter plane belonging to the Uzbek air force with a Stinger anti-aircraft missile bought from Afghanistan with money originating from Arab sources. Another important means for the Tajik opposition of financing their arms

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39, 44, and Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, pp. 35-36.

⁴² The pro-Government forces also acquired small arms from various sources in Afghanistan—particularly in the initial stages of the civil war. See Barnett R. Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," p. 78.

⁴³ See Bess A. Brown, "The Civil War in Tajikistan, 1992-1993," p. 92.

⁴⁴ See for example, Susan Clark, "The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces," p. 189, and Gunnar Simonsen, "Tajikistan."

purchases was drug trafficking. There were numerous cases reported in which opposition militants bought drugs from Afghanistan, sold them in Russia, and went back to Afghanistan to purchase arms.⁴⁵

Some of the weapons transferred from Afghanistan came from Afghan factional leaders such as Ahmad Masud and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who wished to influence the conflict setting in Afghanistan by supporting the opposition forces in Tajikistan. Hekmatyar, for example, armed and trained Tajik opposition fighters in order to weaken Uzbekistan's ability to stay involved in the Afghan conflict.⁴⁶ The crises in Afghanistan and Tajikistan were interwoven also through the fact that, during the Tajik civil war, there were around 12,000 Tajik opposition fighters based in northern Afghanistan. These forces were assisted by large numbers of Afghan fighters, and by volunteers from various radical Islamic groups in the Middle East.⁴⁷ Many of the opposition fighters were refugees that had initially fled the civil war to Afghanistan. Refugee camps in Afghanistan became highly militarized because they functioned as centres for arming and training Tajik fighters. Some of the refugees joined the opposition ranks voluntarily, but others were forced to take up arms against the forces of the Tajik Government. Those who avoided forced recruitments were often pressured to smuggle small arms over the border to the opposition fighters inside Tajikistan.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Barnett R. Rubin, "The Fragmentation of Tajikistan," pp. 84-87, and Nassim Jawad and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, *Tajikistan: A Forgotten Civil War*, p. 23.

⁴⁶ Pinar Ackali, "Islam as a 'Common Bond' in Central Asia: Islamic Renaissance Party and the Afghan mujahedin," *Central Asian Survey*, June 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and Mohammad-Reza Djalili and Frédéric Grare, "Regional Ambitions and Interests in Tajikistan: The Role of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran," in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p. 121.

⁴⁷ Irina Zviagelskaya, "The Tajik Conflict: Problems of Regulation," p. 168.

⁴⁸ Pinar Ackali, "Islam as a 'Common Bond' in Central Asia: Islamic Renaissance Party and the Afghan mujahedin," *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 16 August 1993, p. 3, and Irina Zviagelskaya, "The Tajik Conflict: Problems of Regulation," p. 171.

Other Sources

In addition to Russian, Uzbek and Afghan sources, small arms entered Tajikistan from a number of other locations. Pakistan, Iran, India, Belarus and Chechnya have been cited as places from which Tajik belligerents received arms and ammunition during the civil war.⁴⁹ Nevertheless, weapons transfers from these countries were secondary in the sense that their relative role in the accumulation and proliferation of small arms in Tajikistan was less significant. What is much more difficult to assess is the relative share of black-market supplies in the total flow of small arms to Tajikistan. Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to identify the various black-market actors that were engaged in arms trafficking to the Tajik fighters. However, it appears that, in addition to the wide-scale arms smuggling from Afghanistan, Russia was another major source for illicit small arms used in Tajikistan. Transfers of illicit weapons from Russia during the civil war included a broad range of small arms ranging from pistols and assault rifles to anti-tank and anti-aircraft missiles.

These transfers are a telling example of the fact that, in the 1990s, large quantities of small arms have leaked out into international black-market circulation from various sources in Russia. Many of these illicit weapons have originally been stolen from poorly guarded military and police stocks. For example, in 1993, alone around 300,000 hand grenades were stolen from Russian arms depots.⁵⁰ Arms thefts have been carried out by criminal groups and also by military and police personnel themselves. The Russian military, in particular, is said to have become a considerable source of illicit arms and ammunition. Illicit trafficking of small arms both by officers and rank and file has testified to the widespread crime and corruption present at all levels in the Russian armed forces, and reflected the severe financial hardships faced by many

⁴⁹ Pinar Ackali, *ibid.*, pp. 190, 204, Ralph H. Magnus and Eden Naby, "Afghanistan and Central Asia: Mirrors and Models," *Asian Survey*, Vol. 35, No. 7, 1995, p. 615, and Pyort G. Litavrin, "Sources of Light Arms and Small Weapons Procurement in Southwest Asia," p. 233.

⁵⁰ Ian Anthony, "Illicit Arms Transfers," p. 221. It is further estimated that every third illegally owned firearm in Russia has been stolen from the stocks of the Ministry of Defence. See *RFE/RL Newslines*, Vol. 3, No. 121, Part I, 22 June 1999.

Russian soldiers. In some cases, arms trafficking has been the only way for soldiers to make ends meet. There have even been cases in which Russian soldiers in combat have traded their assault rifles to their enemies simply for food.⁵¹ The low morale of the Russian military has been systematically exploited by organized criminal groups which have used corrupt military personnel to get their hands on small arms. High-ranking military officials have acted as links in major smuggling networks. It is very likely that these networks were in operation in the context of the Tajik civil war.⁵²

Another major source for illicit small arms has been the Russian small arms production plants.⁵³ Leakages from these sources have been spurred by Russia's economic difficulties which have put a heavy strain both on individual factory workers and the small arms industry in general. To secure their livelihood, employees in the factories have sold small arms to various black-market buyers. Many of these weapons have reportedly made their way into Tajikistan.⁵⁴ Leakages from Russian production plants have included illicit arms trading by factory managers who have ignored domestic or international rules on arms transfers. The indifference of the managers has echoed the severe problems Russian arms manufacturers have faced after the end of the Cold War. The sharp decrease in the demand for small arms by the Russian military, the allies of the former Soviet Union in Eastern Europe and the developing world has put the very existence of many small arms manufacturers in jeopardy. In order to avoid shutting down of their operations, some manufacturers have searched for new customers through black-market channels. The small

⁵¹ See Robert W. Duggleby, "The Disintegration of the Russian Armed Forces," *Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1998, pp. 1-4, 12-13, and Sarah Brown, "Modern Tales of the Russian Army," *World Policy Journal*, Spring 1997, p. 62.

⁵² Robert W. Duggleby, *ibid.*, p. 13, and Alexander A. Sergounin, "Military-technical Cooperation between the CIS Member States," in Ian Anthony (ed.), *Russia and the Arms Trade*, p. 174.

⁵³ Due to logistical reasons alone, it is not surprising that small arms have made up the largest part of the illicit arms trade in Russia. See Ian Anthony, "Illicit Arms Transfers," p. 227.

⁵⁴ Pyotr G. Litavrin, "Sources of Small Arms and Light Weapons in Southwest Asia," p. 234.

arms factories in the Russian cities of Tula and Izhevsk, in particular, are said to have been involved in illicit arms trading to various conflict regions. Although there is no evidence of direct trading of weapons from Russian small arms factories to customers in Tajikistan, the possibility that such transactions have taken place cannot be ruled out. The same applies for illegally produced small arms which have constituted another category of illicit weapons leaking out of Russia.⁵⁵

THE FRAGILE PEACE

The violent internal conflict in Tajikistan turned the country into a highly weaponized society within a few years. At present, small arms from the civil war period are widely circulating in the hands of former combatants, criminals as well as ordinary citizens. Large numbers of weapons have also crossed Tajikistan's borders and made their way into international circulation. The different types of small arms currently available in Tajikistan include AK-47 and AK-74 assault rifles; SVD sniper rifles; AKM, AKMS and AKSU sub-machine-guns; RPK and PK machine-guns; RPG-2, RPG-7, RPG-18, RPG-22, SPG-7 and SPG-9 anti-tank weapons.⁵⁶

At least some of the following types of small arms peculiar to the armed forces of the CIS countries—almost entirely equipped with Russian weaponry—are also available: PSM, Tokarev, PM and PMM pistols; SKS and V-94 rifles; DShk, NSV, KPV machine-guns, AGS-17 and GB-25 close support weapons; 2B-9, 2B-14 and M37M 82mm mortars; AT-1 Sagger, AT-2 Swatter, AT-3 Sagger, AT-4 Spigot, AT-5 Spandrel and AT-6 Spiral

⁵⁵ Ksenia Gonchar and Peter Lock, "Small Arms and Light Weapons: Russia and the Former Soviet Union," in Jeffrey Boutwell, Michel T. Klare and Laura W. Reed (eds.), *Lethal Commerce: The Global Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons*, pp. 117-118, and Ian Anthony, "Illicit Arms Transfers," pp. 226-227.

⁵⁶ Author's correspondence with a highly-placed military source in Tajikistan who wishes to remain unidentified, June 1999.

anti-tank weapons.⁵⁷ In addition, anti-aircraft missiles such as the SA-7 and Stinger have reportedly been located and used in Tajikistan.⁵⁸ What is unclear is whether any of the small arms in circulation have been manufactured in Tajikistan itself. On the one hand, there have been references to an unspecified factory in the Khujand region which is believed to have produced small arms—a possible candidate being the Khujand Torgmash Works, producing equipment both for civilian and for military purposes.⁵⁹ On the other hand, there are sources claiming that small arms have not been manufactured in Tajikistan.⁶⁰ In any case, it appears that even if there has been local production of small arms in Tajikistan, these weapons have not played a significant role in the overall weapons accumulation within the country. Although the vast majority of the small arms available in Tajikistan are Russian made or designed, weapons of British, Chinese, American and Israeli origin have also been detected.⁶¹ The different channels through which arms from these countries have entered Tajikistan are extremely difficult to ascertain, but it is evident that many of the weapons have come over the border from Afghanistan.

It can be reasonably maintained that the proliferation and accumulation of small arms in Tajikistan poses a formidable obstacle to the successful implementation of the peace agreement signed in June 1997. The fact that the peace process is in serious trouble is illustrated by a number of factors. In the first place, implementing the principles dealing with the changes in the Tajik political system has been hampered by the deep mistrust that continues to prevail between the former warring

⁵⁷ *Jane's Infantry Weapons 1997-1998*, p. 738, and Alexander A. Sergounin, "Military-technical Cooperation between the CIS Member States," p. 148.

⁵⁸ See Tara Kartha, "Southern Asia: The Narcotics and Weapon Linkage," p. 83, and *Itar-Tass*, 29 June 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁵⁹ Information provided by Julian Cooper, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, July 1999.

⁶⁰ See footnote 56 above.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, and Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, Minority Rights Group Report, 1997, p. 14.

parties.⁶² Tensions between the Government of President Rakhmonov and the UTO have been clearly evident also in the immensely troublesome implementation of the military clauses outlined in the peace accord.

The integration of former UTO fighters into governmental structures has been very slow, and a large number of those former combatants who have been assigned either to the Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Defence, Tajik border forces or the Committee on Emergency Situations—currently totalling about 2,500 men—have not been paid or properly placed in various command and control structures. This state of affairs, undoubtedly eroding the popularity of the peace process, has created major discontent not only among UTO soldiers but also among the political leaders and military commanders of the alliance.⁶³ Also, the process of disarming the former opposition combatants has proved unsuccessful. Only a small fraction of the weapons believed to be in their possession has been collected and registered; so far, around 2,200 weapons have been handed in.⁶⁴ Political uncertainties, the poor security situation, and the fact that the possession of small arms plays a role in the socio-economic lives of many ex-combatants are the main factors explaining the ex-combatants' unwillingness to give up their weapons. Beside the serious shortcomings in the implementation of the political and military clauses of the peace accord, the future of Tajikistan is overshadowed by the existence of powerful forces within the country who derive self-advantage from the continuation of instability.

⁶² See *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1999/514, 6 May 1999, pp. 1-3, and *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

⁶³ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 6 May 1996, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁴ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1999/124, 8 February 1999, and author's correspondence with a highly-placed military source in Tajikistan who wishes to remain unidentified, June 1999.

Political Violence

One of the consequences of the internal conflict in Tajikistan has been the country's fragmentation into zones of influence where power is exercised not by the central Government in Dushanbe but a miscellaneous band of armed formations led by individual military commanders and warlords. The control of the Tajik Government over the country is mainly restricted to Dushanbe, the area around the capital and parts of the Kulob region, whereas other regions in Tajikistan are largely controlled by the militias formed during the civil war.⁶⁵ Although not always under the control of the Government or UTO, most of the armed groups are loyal to one or the other, but there are also formations acting independently. What these groups have in common is their propensity to resort to violence in pursuit of their goals—whether political, economic or criminal. The division of Tajikistan into local power centres has in effect created a situation where the heads of the various militias function both as military leaders and providers of economic well-being for the people living in the areas under their control. Competition between the warlords over economic resources—such as aluminium, cotton and drugs—intensifies the instability in Tajikistan already sustained by widespread political and criminal violence.⁶⁶

The end of the civil war has not marked the end of armed confrontations between the forces of the Tajik Government and the UTO forces which are still heavily armed. In 1998, fighting between the two camps erupted on a number of occasions, particularly during the first half of the year.⁶⁷ At the same time, members of the Tajik Government and the UTO have been victims of widespread political terrorism taking place both at national and local levels. At the national level, the murder of Otakhon Latifi—a prominent member of the UTO and the senior

⁶⁵ Lena Jonson, *The Tajik War: A Challenge to Russian Policy*, p. 27, *Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan: Country Profile 1998-99*, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1998, pp. 34-35, and Muriel Atkin, "Thwarted democratization in Tajikistan," p. 301.

⁶⁶ Thomas Dorenwendt, "Tadschikistan: Die Transformation des Bürgerkrieges," *Orient*, Vol. 38, No. 2, 1997, pp. 354-355.

⁶⁷ See *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1998/374, 6 May 1998, pp. 1-2.

member of the CNR—on 22 September 1998 was one of the most serious incidents of political terrorism in the country after the signing of the peace agreement. The killings of local authorities in the cities of Shakhrinai and Tursunzade in August 1998 serve as an example of the political terrorism taking place at the local level.⁶⁸ Despite the heavy strain terrorist attacks have put on the relations between the Tajik Government and the UTO, however, the two parties have managed to cooperate militarily against the unconstructive elements in Tajikistan that are opposing the peace process.⁶⁹ Both parties have also been occupied with settling violent disputes between their own armed groups.⁷⁰

The victims of political violence in Tajikistan have included representatives of international and non-governmental organizations operating in the country. Recent terrorist attacks against international targets have included the kidnapping of two French relief workers from their home by the forces of a Tajik warlord. The incident—in which the kidnappers and one of the relief workers were killed—came to an end only after a shoot-out between Government security forces and the captors.⁷¹ Yet the most tragic case illustrating the susceptibility of international missions to terrorist attacks in Tajikistan was the murder of four members of the United Nations Observers Mission (UNMOT) on 20 July 1998. A UTO field commander is claimed to have instigated the killings.⁷²

Political terrorism in Tajikistan has been further fuelled by the fact that the main political factions in the country are still supported by foreign governments. Russian influence in Tajikistan is at least as strong as it was

⁶⁸ See *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

⁶⁹ See *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1998/1029, 3 November 1998, p. 2.

⁷⁰ See, for example, "Tajik opposition leader sacks commanders after Dushanbe clashes," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 31 December 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁷¹ See *Progress Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, United Nations document S/1998/113, 10 February 1998, p. 2.

⁷² *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 3 November 1998, p. 5.

during the civil war. One implication of this was the signing of a treaty between the Tajik and Russian Governments in April 1999 which formally lays out the terms of the Russian military presence in Tajikistan. According to the treaty, Russia will have a military base in Tajikistan for the next 10 years, the costs of which are to be covered by the Russian Government and the existence of which can be extended if both sides wish.⁷³ The agreement, for its part, implies that transfers of arms and ammunition from Russia to Tajikistan will take place in the future, although the Tajik Government has underlined that no new Russian weapons will be stationed in the country.⁷⁴ The risk that small arms will continue to leak into national and international circulation from Russian military sources in Tajikistan thus remains a problem. The number of Russian troops currently based in the country is said to be around 20,000 men.⁷⁵

Uzbekistan has also continued to be involved in Tajik politics. The country's support for the Khujandi faction—which was not included in the Tajik peace agreement and post-war institutional arrangements—has created serious tensions between the Uzbek and Tajik Governments. Relations between the two countries reached a low point in November 1998, when the forces of Mahmud Khudoiberdiev, a former Tajik army colonel, took control of the city of Khujand and demanded a share in the national Government. Khudoiberdiev's forces were eventually defeated by Government troops, but the uprising—which took the lives of more than 100 people, a large part of which were civilians—immediately sparked a wave of speculations about Uzbekistan's role in the incident.⁷⁶

⁷³ For more on the treaty between Russia and Tajikistan, see "Russian army base agreement signed with Tajikistan," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 19 April 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>. Also see "Latest agreements between Russia, Tajikistan hailed as extremely important," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 19 April 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁷⁴ See "Views on the deployment of Russian troops in Tajikistan," *Itar-Tass*, 9 April 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁷⁵ "Tajikistan, Russia worry as Taleban nears border," *Reuters*, 20 August 1998.

⁷⁶ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 8 February 1999, pp. 2-3.

In fact, it is widely believed that Uzbekistan supported Khudoiberdiev's forces by allowing them to use Uzbek territory to launch the operation and providing them with arms and ammunition.⁷⁷ Russia, in turn, is claimed to have provided weapons for the Government troops—reportedly including 300 UTO fighters—which subdued the Khujand uprising.⁷⁸ These suspicions are one indication of the way in which the developments in Tajikistan continue to be linked with the interests of foreign governments, Russia and Uzbekistan, in particular. Even though both parties have a shared interest in a stable Tajikistan, the country has become a battleground for Russia's and Uzbekistan's indirect contest for influence in Central Asia. In this competition between a successor to a former superpower and a newly independent State vying for regional leadership, arms supplies are regarded as a viable policy tool.

Arms and Drugs

The role of Afghanistan in Tajik politics after the June 1997 peace agreement has decreased in the sense that the country no longer functions as a base for Tajik opposition fighters. According to an official UTO declaration made on 25 December 1998, all UTO fighters have returned to Tajikistan and closed their bases outside the country.⁷⁹ Yet, massive shipments of illicit arms and drugs from Afghanistan keep on

⁷⁷ See, for example, "Tajik radio accuses unnamed neighbouring country of harbouring rebels," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 6 November 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and "Failed revolt," *Middle East International*, 25 December 1998, p. 19. After the November 1998 incident, large numbers of small arms—ranging from sub-machine-guns and grenade launchers to explosives and thousands of rounds of ammunition—belonging to Colonel Khudoiberdiev's fighters were found and confiscated in the Khujand region. See "Arms cache found in Tajikistan's Leninabad region," *Iftar-Tass*, 7 January 1999, <http://www.cnn.com>.

⁷⁸ "Failed revolt," and "Russia denies helping Tajik Government with arms and transport," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 6 November 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁷⁹ *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 8 February 1999, p. 1.

fuelling instability in post-war Tajikistan.⁸⁰ Arms and drug trafficking—both of which are said to be on the increase—are a major source of tension in the Tajik-Afghan border region where clashes between border forces and smugglers take place on a regular basis.⁸¹ The smuggling groups operating from Afghanistan are well equipped with small arms and also heavy weapons such as heavy mortars.⁸² In addition, they are in control of a chain of hidden arms caches located in the Tajik-Afghan border region which are used in trafficking operations. Pistols, carbines, assault rifles, grenade launchers and various types of small arms ammunition, among others, have been found in these caches.⁸³

Tajikistan is currently the main outlet and transit route for illicit drugs coming from Afghanistan. Frequently, shipments of drugs are supplemented with illicit small arms and, sometimes, even with high-tech weapons systems and heavy weaponry.⁸⁴ Consequently, arms and drug trafficking are inextricably linked, and the routes used for the smuggling of this contraband are often identical. There are numerous routes through which Afghan arms and drugs cross the border into Tajikistan. One sector where smuggling is rampant is the border area between Afghanistan and the Gorno-Badakhshan region of Tajikistan. Kalai-Khum, Ishkashim and Khorog are the main entry points for drugs and arms in Gorno-Badakhshan. The Afghan town of Feyzabad functions as a hub for

⁸⁰ Of course, the ongoing civil war in Afghanistan also affects the security situation in Tajikistan.

⁸¹ *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*, and "Russian guards thwart traffickers on Tajik-Afghan border," *Itar-Tass*, 2 October 1998, <http://www.nisat.org>.

⁸² *Programme for the Government of Tajikistan (1999-2002) in Support of an Integrated Border Control Programme*, Report by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, April 1999, p. 8.

⁸³ See "Russian border guards uncover arms cache in Tajikistan," *Itar-Tass*, 2 February 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and "An arms cache discovered on Tajik-Afghan border," *Itar-Tass*, 18 May 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁸⁴ *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan, 25 November-6 December 1998*, United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, 8 March 1999, p. 28.

contraband transferred to these, and many other, destinations in Tajikistan.⁸⁵

Entry points in the Tajik districts of Muminabad and Shurabad are also widely used by Afghan and Tajik smugglers often working in close cooperation. Noulvand is a popular destination for smugglers in Muminabad, whereas Khavan is a well-known entry point in the Shurabad district.⁸⁶ In fact, the area between Shurabad and the district of Moskovsky is said to have become the most vulnerable spot on the Tajik-Afghan border. Smugglers from nearby Afghan villages easily reach this area by crossing the more or less open border points lacking efficient controls. Arms and drugs reaching Shurabad and Moskovski are often further transferred to the cities of Dushanbe and Khujand from where they usually find their way out of the country.⁸⁷ Other major leaking points on the Tajik-Afghan border are situated in the Tajik districts of Shaartuz and Panj in the Khatlon region.⁸⁸ Thus, there are porous points along the entire Tajik-Afghan border, although the real “smuggling corridor” in the region is said to consist of the area between the entry points of Panj, Shurabad and Kalai-Khum.⁸⁹ Small arms that are being trafficked into Tajikistan are intended both for local and international usage. Those weapons—whether coming from Afghan or Tajik

⁸⁵ *Drug Trafficking in Tadjikistan Badakhshan*, map drawn by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, 1997.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan*, pp. 6-7, and *Programme Framework for International Cooperation on Drug Control to the Member States of the Economic Cooperation Organization*, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, 5 October 1998, p. 13.

⁸⁸ *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan*, pp. 31-32.

⁸⁹ Author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999.

arsenals—that have found their way out of Tajikistan have ended up in places like the Central Asian republics, Russia and China.⁹⁰

The border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan is likely to remain porous for the foreseeable future. Prospects for tighter border controls in the region are poor for a number of reasons. One is that border forces in many parts of Tajikistan are short of the very basic equipment needed for monitoring and countering the activities of smugglers with extensive networks.⁹¹ Furthermore, the border forces' work is impeded by the mountainous terrain on the border areas and by the risks related to the smugglers' readiness to use weapons to ensure the success of their operations.⁹² Yet the fundamental problem in this connection is the widespread corruption among Tajik authorities. Arms and drug trafficking constitutes one of the main forms of organized crime in Tajikistan, and it is often conducted by the same people whose job it is to tackle the trafficking problem in the first place.

The source of the problem is twofold. First, corruption is rampant among customs officials, Tajik border guards and low-rank local authorities, including Russian soldiers and CIS peacekeepers.⁹³ Secondly, organized crime has powerful allies inside Tajikistan's main political

⁹⁰ See, for example, "Defence need, costliness behind Russia's reluctance to get rid of land mines," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 10 March 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, "Nationalist riot blamed on executions," *Independent*, 12 February 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and Tara Kartha, "Southern Asia: The Narcotics and Weapons Linkage," p. 81. For the smuggling routes leading from Tajikistan to the Central Asian republics, Russia and China, see Chapter 4.

⁹¹ See, for example, *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan*, pp. 9-12.

⁹² For other factors impeding the work of the border forces in Tajikistan, see *Institution Building, Strategy Development and Improvement of Drug and Crime Control Measures in Tajikistan*, project document, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, 1998, pp. 7-8.

⁹³ See, for example, *Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan: Country Profile 1998-99*, p. 37, and Thomas Dorenwendt, "Tadschikistan: Die Transformation des Bürgerkrieges," p. 357. At present, the CIS forces in Tajikistan are composed of Russian peacekeepers and a small battalion from Kazakhstan. See *Report of the Secretary-General on the Situation in Tajikistan*, 6 May 1999, p. 6.

institutions, and it has taken control of a large part of the country's economy.⁹⁴ The other side of the coin in the criminalization of Tajik politics has been the politicization of crime. This refers to efforts by organized crime to acquire political posts in both central and local government. For example, the Tajik Ministry of Interior—the State authority dealing with internal security—has been infiltrated by criminal elements.⁹⁵ Violent clashes between various interest groups involved in organized crime occur regularly, and they contribute to the endemic insecurity which remains a central feature of social life in Tajikistan.

The increasing number of crimes committed by ordinary Tajik citizens is also fuelling instability in the country. Unemployment and poor employment opportunities have led many people to take part in criminal activities. Crimes involving the use of small arms are very common, reflecting the law-enforcement agencies' inability to tackle the problem of internal weapons proliferation.⁹⁶ Although the Tajik Government has forbidden its citizens to carry arms in public places and issued a decree ordering them to hand over their weapons to the Ministry of Interior, small arms such as pistols, Kalashnikovs and hand grenades are routinely confiscated by the police.⁹⁷ The use of small arms by individual criminals, organized crime and armed militias thus constitutes a constant threat to the personal security of the Tajik people. Murders, rapes, hostage-takings and looting of civilian homes will continue to take place as long as the armed actors in Tajikistan adhere to the maxim put into words by the

⁹⁴ See *Tajikistan: Human Development Report 1997*, United Nations Development Programme, 1997, pp. 78, 82-83, and author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999.

⁹⁵ *Tajikistan: Human Development Report 1997*, p. 80, and Irina Zviagelskaya, "The Tajik Conflict: Problems of Regulation," p. 67.

⁹⁶ *Tajikistan: Human Development Report 1997*, pp. 78-81.

⁹⁷ See "Tajik president orders citizens to turn in weapons," *Interfax*, 13 August 1997, <http://www.nisat.org>, "Rakhmonov orders crackdown after security meeting," *FBIS-SOV-1999-0217*, Dushanbe Radio, 16 February 1999, <http://www.nisat.org>, and "Criminal digest," *Itar-Tass*, 28 May 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

country's former prime minister. According to Abdulmolik Abdullojonov, "in Tajikistan, power is weapons."⁹⁸

⁹⁸ See *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*. The quotation is from "Tajikistan peace agreement leaves unanswered questions," *Financial Times*, 1 July 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

CHAPTER 3

UZBEKISTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, KAZAKHSTAN AND TURKMENISTAN: SMALL ARMS AND LATENT THREATS TO STABILITY

WEAPONIZED SOCIETIES

Internal Sources of Small Arms

In the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, the transition from the membership of the former Soviet Union to independent statehood has taken place peacefully. Despite the tremendous changes these States have experienced since the end of 1991, they have been able to avoid violent internal conflict such as in the case of Tajikistan. However, many of the fundamental processes related to State-building in the Central Asian republics are still far from complete. The creation of political institutions and structures of power reflecting local needs and post-Soviet realities is still under way. The construction of identities promoting the notion of a single nation, aimed at uniting the multi-ethnic and multicultural Central Asian societies, is only in its initial phase. Regional, tribal and ethnic affiliations continue to cause serious disagreements about the best way to pursue national interests. Finally, severe economic difficulties remain to be solved in every Central Asian republic.¹ Unless these questions are successfully resolved, they may become a source of violent internal conflict.

Another factor contributing to the possibility of armed internal conflicts in the region is the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms. In fact, there is a clear risk that the easy availability of small arms reduces the willingness of the political actors to settle their differences in a peaceful manner. The large numbers of small arms currently circulating within the Central Asian republics originate, first of

¹ Anna Matveeva, "Democratization, Legitimacy, and Political Change in Central Asia," *International Affairs*, Vol. 75, No. 1, 1999, pp. 24-26.

all, from military stockpiles that belonged to the former Soviet military. The military hardware the Central Asian republics inherited from the Soviet Union included significant quantities of conventional weapons, including small arms. The fact that the change in the ownership of this hardware was unexpected and tinged with numerous practical problems created a vacuum in the control and management of weapons stocks. As first steps were taken towards the establishment of national armies in the Central Asian republics—still heavily relying on Russian expertise and *matériel*—this vacuum was exploited by the military personnel who provided weapons to the black market.²

Even today, low salaries, lack of guarantees about the future and the poor control of the movements of arms entice soldiers into illegal weapons sales. The Kazakh army, in particular, is regarded as a considerable source of illicit arms and ammunition.³ The widespread corruption among the country's military is illustrated by the numerous cases in which Kazakh soldiers have been caught trading arms, both small arms and other military hardware.⁴ Yet the problem of corruption is not

² Keith D. Wolfe, "A Work in Progress: The Development of Export Controls in Kazakhstan," in Gary K. Bertsch and Suzette R. Grillo (eds.), *Arms on the Market: Reducing the Risk of Proliferation in the Former Soviet Union*, New York: Routledge, 1998, pp. 115-116, author's correspondence with a highly-placed military source in Tajikistan who wishes to remain unidentified, June 1999, and S. Frederick Starr, "Making Eurasia Stable," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 1996, p. 80.

³ See "Weapons possession among citizens on rise," *FBIS-SOV-97-100*, Almaty Karavan, 25 April 1997, <http://www.nisat.org>, and "Käsiaseiden jättikuormaa on vaikea keventää," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 7 November 1998.

⁴ See "Attempted ammunition sale foiled," *FBIS-USR-94-137*, *Kazakhstanskaya Pravda*, 13 December 1994, <http://www.nisat.org>, and "Three Russians sentenced by Kazakh court for military equipment theft," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 8 December 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

confined only to the Kazakh army. Soldiers in the Uzbek, Turkmen and Kyrgyz armies are also corrupt and involved in criminal activities.⁵

Small arms production units presumably constitute another major source from which weapons have leaked into internal circulation in the Central Asian republics. However, it is difficult to present concrete evidence to support this argument because information about the production of small arms itself is hard to obtain: local authorities are disinclined to discuss matters belonging to the military sphere, and the information provided by “open sources” is anecdotal at best.⁶ The pieces of information available nevertheless suggest that, during the Soviet period, there were many weapons production facilities in Kazakhstan which had the potential to manufacture or actually manufactured small arms.⁷ One facility identified as a possible arms and ammunition producer is the Ural'sk Metallist Factory.⁸ Whether this or other Kazakh facilities still manufacture small arms is not clear. In the mid-1990s, there were altogether almost 200 industrial enterprises involved in military production on Kazakh territory—constituting the most significant defence industry in Central Asia.⁹

⁵ *Uzbekistan: Country Profile 1998-99*, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1998, p. 8, *Turkmenistan: Country Report, 1st Quarter 1999*, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1999, p. 6, and author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999.

⁶ See Introduction, p. 11.

⁷ See Susan Clark, “The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces,” pp. 181, 201.

⁸ Information provided by Julian Cooper, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, July 1999.

⁹ Andrei Kortunov, Yuri Kulchik and Andrei Shoumikhin, “Military Structures in Kazakhstan: Aims, Parameters, and Some Implications for Russia,” *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1995, p. 302.

Uzbekistan also had a defence industry, including factories producing weapons, during the Soviet era.¹⁰ Despite the potential for small arms manufacturing, it is not clear whether small arms were actually produced in the country, however. As far as the current situation is concerned, local officials strictly point out that no weapons are manufactured in Uzbekistan.¹¹ This of course does not rule out the possibility that there is small arms production in the country, although the recent interest Uzbeks have shown in Ukrainian small arms would suggest that even if local production does exist in Uzbekistan, it is not significant.¹² Kyrgyzstan, in turn, had a major factory in the city of Bishkek during the Soviet period which produced small arms ammunition. The Bishkek Machine Tool Factory, one of the largest factories in the country, may also have produced various types of small arms.¹³ It is not clear whether small arms production is currently taking place in this or other Kyrgyz facilities. Turkmenistan is said not to have contributed much to the defence industry of the former Soviet Union.¹⁴ The lack of a significant defence industry also appears to be a characteristic of independent Turkmenistan, too. Again, however, the possibility that small arms are manufactured in the country cannot be ruled out.

The fact that there has been small arms production at least in some of the Central Asian republics makes it reasonable to assume that after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, small arms have leaked into illicit circulation from Central Asian defence industry facilities. These leakages

¹⁰ Julian Cooper, *The Soviet Defence Industry: Conversion and Reform*, Chatham House Papers, London: Pinter, 1991, p. 23, and "American-Uzbek Chamber of Commerce holds session in US," *Itar-Tass*, 13 May 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

¹¹ Author's interview with a high Uzbek official who wishes to remain unidentified, April 1999, and Liam Anderson, "Central Asia: The Absence of Incentives," in Gary K. Bertsch and Suzette R. Grillo (eds.), *Arms on the Market: Reducing the Risk of Proliferation in the Former Soviet Union*, p. 169.

¹² See "Ukraine starts small arms production," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 28 February 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

¹³ Information provided by Julian Cooper, University of Birmingham, United Kingdom, July 1999.

¹⁴ Julian Cooper, *The Soviet Defence Industry: Conversion and Reform*, p. 23.

have presumably been spurred by the same economic motives that have also been at play in connection with weapons thefts from military stockpiles—dramatic falls in orders from Central Asian defence industry plants have caused severe socio-economic distress among industry employees and prepared the ground for criminal activities. The defence industry in Kazakhstan especially has been hit hard by the changed circumstances. By the mid-1990s, military orders from Kazakh plants had decreased by over 80 per cent, some plants losing all their contracts. Thus, within a few years, the future of the Kazakh defence industry and the well-being of entire communities built around its production centres had become endangered.¹⁵ Still, the Government of Kazakhstan has hoped that the country would be able to continue the production of weapons for sale on the international market.¹⁶ Kazakhstan is also said to have planned to sell the excess weaponry it inherited from the Soviet Union.¹⁷ The Arys export station near the border of Uzbekistan, from which large quantities of heavy weapons and small arms ammunition were exported during the Soviet period, may continue to function as a station of departure for arms destined for international customers.¹⁸

In general, it is impossible to know the exact number of small arms that have leaked out of military stockpiles and arms factories in the Central Asian republics. Shortcomings in compiling statistics, filing and controlling the movements of arms imply that any estimates about the number of leaked weapons would be highly unreliable. The lack of

¹⁵ See Andrei Kortunov, Yuri Kulchik and Andrei Shoumikhin, "Military Structures in Kazakhstan: Aims, Parameters, and Some Implications for Russia," pp. 302-303.

¹⁶ Shirin Akiner, "Soviet Military Legacy in Kazakhstan," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, December 1994, p. 555. For recent international arms sales from Kazakhstan, see, for example, "US considers sanctioning Kazakhstan over fighter sale to North Korea," *International Herald Tribune*, 28-29 August 1999.

¹⁷ Susan Clark, "The Central Asian States: Defining Security Priorities and Developing Military Forces," p. 181.

¹⁸ For information regarding the Arys export station, see Moysey Rabinovich, *Soviet Conventional Arms Transfers to the Third World: Main Missile and Artillery Directorate (1966-1990)*, unpublished report, 1990/1991, pp. 23-29.

information about the size of the weapons stocks is partly accounted for by the fact that the centralized style of governance during the Soviet period put local administrators into a situation where they did not always know what Moscow was doing in the Central Asian republics. For example in Kazakhstan, the local leadership had no detailed information about the military deployments in the republic and was not allowed to approach some of the military installations.¹⁹ What is clear, however, is that the vast majority of the small arms presently circulating within the Central Asian republics are of Soviet/Russian origin, and include the types of weapons that are peculiar to the armed forces of the CIS countries.²⁰

Porous Borders

Weapons leakages from internal sources are not the only factor contributing to the problem of small arms proliferation and accumulation in the Central Asian republics. In fact, at present, the main cause of anxiety among the local authorities are the weapons illicitly entering their countries from external sources—Afghanistan and Tajikistan, in particular. The flows of small arms from the two conflict-torn Central Asian States has alarmed Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan about the way they function as transit routes and final destinations for illicit weapons. Accordingly, the issue of arms trafficking has been continuously discussed both at the bilateral level between the Central Asian republics and in various multilateral forums—for example, within the CIS.²¹ As has been underlined in these discussions, the proliferation of small arms is tightly connected with the problem of drug trafficking. Very often, illicit weapons and drugs travel in the same shipments and through the same smuggling routes.

While being well aware of the severity of the problem of arms and drug trafficking, the Central Asian republics have so far been incapable of

¹⁹ Shirin Akiner, "Soviet Military Legacy in Kazakhstan," p. 552.

²⁰ For the various types of small arms available in the Central Asian republics, see "The Fragile Peace" section in Chapter 2.

²¹ See, for example, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 November 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and *Itar-Tass*, 4 April 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

seriously tackling the issue. There are many reasons for this. First, border forces in all of the Central Asian republics—which, with the exception of Uzbek forces, are composed of both local and Russian troops—are suffering from a lack of resources in terms of manpower, technical equipment and training.²² Secondly, the unclear division of labour and overlap between the functions of the border forces, customs authorities and other law-enforcement agencies have led to serious bureaucratic inefficiencies which erode the efforts to combat the smuggling problem, and crime in general.²³ Thirdly, the border forces are said to be highly unreliable, corrupt and themselves participating in the smuggling activities.²⁴ The fact that, in the Central Asian republics, corruption and crime reach up to the high echelons of power makes the efforts to combat illicit contraband trafficking all the more difficult. In Uzbekistan, for example, each of the three main criminal organizations in the country is believed to have a protector in the cabinet of ministers.²⁵ Corruption and crime have also penetrated the political systems of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan—although, in Turkmenistan, the problem of corruption is said to be less acute than in other Central Asian republics.²⁶

There are multiple routes through which arms and drugs travel into and out of the Central Asian republics. Since the vast majority of the smuggled arms and drugs entering these States come either from

²² Marc Pasotti, "Problems to Enhance Combatting Organized Crime in the Central Asian Region," paper presented at a conference on organized crime in Central Asia, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, 26 September 1998, p. 3.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ See, for example, "Security agency in South Kazakhstan arrests law officials for corruption," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 22 July 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*, and Liam Anderson, "Central Asia: The Absence of Incentives," p. 161.

²⁵ Phil Williams, "Organized Crime in the Former USSR: The Russian Federation," in *Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States 1999*, Fourth Edition, London: Europa Publications, 1998, p. 52.

²⁶ Author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999, and *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*.

Afghanistan or Tajikistan, the starting points for the main smuggling routes are located in the Afghan and Tajik territories. From Afghanistan, contraband primarily travels to Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, for the 110 kilometres-long border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan is tightly guarded.²⁷ The Turkmen villages of Takhta Bazar and Kushka, in particular, are the main entry points for contraband coming from Afghanistan to Turkmenistan. Recent improvements in the political and commercial relations between the Turkmen Government and the Taliban movement have increased the number of Afghan trucks crossing the border to Turkmenistan, and thus intensified smuggling activities in the border region. Afghan contraband is smuggled to Turkmenistan also by rail and by well-armed commandos crossing the border usually during the night time. Overall, the “Turkmen route” is said to have become increasingly popular among regional smuggling networks. One indication of this is the fact that more and more drugs are cultivated in the Afghan regions near the border of Turkmenistan.²⁸

After entering the territory of Turkmenistan, Afghan drugs and arms usually travel further to places such as Mary, the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat, Turkmenbashi on the coast of the Caspian Sea—a major centre for smuggling activities eastwards over seas—and eventually out of the country.²⁹ Russia and countries in the Caucasus and Europe are among the final destinations for Afghan contraband transiting Turkmenistan.³⁰ In

²⁷ *Ibid.*, and author’s interview with a high Uzbek official who wishes to remain unidentified, April 1999. For the smuggling routes from Afghanistan to Tajikistan, see Chapter 3.

²⁸ Author’s interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999, *The Drug Problem in Central Asia*, background paper, European Union, September 1998, p. 13, and *Turkmenistan: Country Report, 1st Quarter 1999*, p. 12.

²⁹ Author’s interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999.

³⁰ *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, 1 June 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*.

addition, smugglers regularly take advantage of Turkmenistan's porous borders with its Central Asian neighbours of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.³¹

Kyrgyzstan, in turn, is primarily concerned about the shipments of arms and drugs—whether emanating from Afghan or Tajik stocks—entering the country from the territory of Tajikistan. The main smuggling route from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan is the so-called “Silk Road”. The Tajik starting point for the Silk Road is Ishkashim from where the route continues through Gorno-Badakhshan via Khorog and Murghab to the Kyrgyz city of Osh in the south of the country.³² Before reaching Osh, smugglers commonly enter Kyrgyzstan through the Sary-Tash and Daraut-Kurgan border points.³³ The other major smuggling route from Tajikistan to Kyrgyzstan, the so-called middle route, leads across central Tajikistan to the Kyrgyz districts of Leilek and Batken and then to Osh and the Kyrgyz capital of Bishkek—the two centres for illicit drugs and arms in Kyrgyzstan.³⁴

A major part of the contraband entering Kyrgyzstan eventually makes its way out of the country. Russia, European countries, Ukraine, China and the neighbouring Central Asian republics are among the destinations

³¹ See Liam Anderson, “Central Asia: The Absence of Incentives,” p. 163.

³² Author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999, and “Drug Trade,” map in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p. 248.

³³ *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*. It should be noted that although the frontier between Tajikistan and China is generally considered well guarded, smuggling over the border does occur. Taxkorgan is one of the Chinese entry points for contraband coming from Tajikistan. Rangkul and Kulma in Gorno-Badakhshan near the Chinese border are examples of Tajik locations through which smuggling into China has taken place. See *Drug Trafficking in Tadjikistan Badakhshan*.

³⁴ “Drug Trade,” map in Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare and Shirin Akiner (eds.), *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence*, p. 248, “Police seize drugs, weapons,” *FBIS-TDD-97-110*, Kyrgyz Television, 20 April 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and “Kyrgyz heroin trade on the increase,” *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 27 July 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

for contraband transiting—or originating from—Kyrgyzstan.³⁵ Illicit arms and drugs regularly cross the porous Kyrgyz-Uzbek border by travelling, for example, from Osh to the city of Andijan in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley, a popular entry point for smugglers coming into that country.³⁶ Smuggling networks between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan are also well established, and contraband trafficking along the Kyrgyz-Chinese border has steadily intensified. The threat posed by the movements of illicit weapons and drugs between Kyrgyzstan and China's Xinjiang province has become a key issue in the bilateral relations between the two countries.³⁷

Uzbekistan is also primarily concerned about the weapons and drugs that enter the country from Tajikistan through a variety of routes. The border region between the Tajik cities of Tursunzade and Shaartuz is said to be a major starting point for smuggling operations to Uzbekistan. This is largely due to the difficult geographical conditions which make border controlling in the region extremely difficult.³⁸ The city of Tursunzade, in particular, is a popular destination for smugglers wanting to cross the Tajik-Uzbek border.³⁹ Contraband enters Uzbekistan also from border areas near the Tajik city of Khujand—for example, through the border point of Kalam—from where it travels to the Syr Darya region of Uzbekistan.⁴⁰

³⁵ See, for example, "Kyrgyz heroin trade on the increase," *ibid.*

³⁶ Marc Pasotti, "Problems to Enhance Combatting Organized Crime in the Central Asia Region," p. 9.

³⁷ Alexander Zelitchenko, "Golden Subregion," paper presented at the 12th International Congress on Criminology, South Korea, August 1998, pp. 6-9, and author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999.

³⁸ *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan*, p. 7.

³⁹ See, for example, "News digest," *Itar-Tass*, 7 February 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁴⁰ *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*, and "Two drug couriers arrested on border with Uzbekistan," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 15 March 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

Moreover, railway and flight connections between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are widely used for smuggling operations. The Dushanbe-Moscow train, which travels through Karakamar in Uzbekistan, crosses the Turkmen border at Kelif before going back to the Uzbek city of Bukhara and continuing in the direction of Moscow through Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, is an example of a rail route widely used by smugglers.⁴¹ The Pakhtaabad railway station in the Tursunzade district of Tajikistan is another point from where smugglers cross the Uzbek border by rail. Saryassiya on the Uzbek side of the border is an entry point for contraband coming through this route.⁴² Flight connections from the Tajik cities of Dushanbe and Khujand to Uzbekistan are also regularly used for smuggling operations.⁴³ After reaching Uzbekistan, smuggled goods usually travel further to other locations inside and outside the country. Uzbekistan is used as a transit route for contraband intended for black-market sales in Russia and European countries.⁴⁴ Due to poor border controls, smuggled goods from Uzbekistan also easily reach Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.⁴⁵

Kazakhstan's geographical location makes it the last outlet for Central Asian contraband before it enters the territory of Russia and other parts

⁴¹ Author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999, and *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*.

⁴² *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan*, p. 14, and author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999.

⁴³ Author's interview with Marc Pasotti, United Nations Centre for International Crime Prevention, August 1999. For the problems relating to controlling the smuggling activities in Tajik railway stations and airports, see *Report of the Mission to Tajikistan*, pp. 13-18.

⁴⁴ See, for example, "Over 700 kg of drugs bound for Russia seized in Uzbekistan," *BBC Monitoring Former Soviet Union*, 2 February 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and "Russian mafia cash washes into London," *The Times*, 10 January 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁴⁵ Liam Anderson, "Central Asia: The Absence of Incentives," p. 163.

of the former Soviet Union.⁴⁶ Shipments of illicit arms and drugs coming from the neighbouring Central Asian States reach Kazakhstan through multiple routes.⁴⁷ The cities of Chimkent and Almaty are major entry points to Kazakhstan whose borders with its Central Asian neighbours are largely uncontrolled. Biney on the border with Turkmenistan and Arys on the border with Uzbekistan are examples of popular railway entry points for contraband destined for Kazakhstan.⁴⁸ Arms and drug trafficking has also become a serious problem in the border region between Kazakhstan and China. Smuggling operations are reportedly being carried out at every checkpoint along the 1,700 kilometres-long border between the two countries.⁴⁹ Whereas the Chinese authorities have been specifically worried about the transfers of illicit arms over the border, Kazakh officials have pointed out that illicit drugs enter their country from the Chinese province of Xinjiang. In fact, it appears that in addition to direct sales of small arms to customers in Xinjiang, smugglers operating from Kazakhstan barter weapons for Chinese drugs. On the other hand, ethnic Uighur

⁴⁶ For news reports on small arms trafficking from Kazakhstan to Russia and the Caucasus region, see, for example, "News digest," *Itar-Tass*, 12 November 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and "Weapons possession among citizens on rise."

⁴⁷ The same routes are naturally used for contraband transfers from Kazakhstan to the other Central Asian republics.

⁴⁸ *Institution Building and Improvement of Control Measures in Kazakhstan*, project document, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, 1995, pp. 2-3, and *Republic of Kazakhstan: Master Plan for the Control of Illicit Drugs and Organized Crime*, draft, United Nations International Drug Control Programme, July 1998, p. 11.

⁴⁹ *Republic of Kazakhstan: Master Plan for the Control of Illicit Drugs and Organized Crime*, p. 23, and "Kazakh security delegation in Xinjiang to discuss separatist crackdown," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 22 August 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>. The Chinese city of Horgas appears to be a major venue of black-market activities in the Kazakh-Chinese border region. See, for example, "Drugs, violence and fear: China clings to Central Asian outpost," *AP*, 30 January 1999, <http://www.cnn.com>, and "Chinese customs seize 880,000 tablets of psychoactive drug in Xinjiang," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, 11 January 1999, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

separatists in Xinjiang are said to traffic drugs in order to finance their purchases of small arms.⁵⁰

The Problem of Crime

The inability of the Governments of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan to block the contraband flows into their countries is illustrated by the estimates they have given regarding drug seizures along Central Asian borders. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, law-enforcement officials catch only about 5 per cent of the illicit drugs smuggled into the country.⁵¹ In Kazakhstan, local authorities estimate that their seizures make up about 5-8 per cent of the total amount of illicit drugs entering the country.⁵² Given these figures, it is clear that the situation is more or less the same with regard to small arms: only a fraction of the weapons destined for the Central Asian republics are confiscated by local authorities. Weapons seized at border points in the region have included a wide variety of small arms: pistols, assault rifles, hand grenades, machine-guns, anti-tank and even anti-aircraft weapons.⁵³

The largely unhindered transfers of illicit small arms into the Central Asian republics have led to a situation where well-armed organized crime groups pose a severe challenge to the internal stability and societal development of these countries. The possession of a wide range of weaponry enables criminal groups to challenge State authorities by conducting violent attacks whenever their interests are threatened. The organized crime groups' propensity to resort to terrorism—together with their extensive connections with the centres of political power—have made them strong political actors. Violent clashes between various

⁵⁰ See "Drugs, violence and fear: China clings to Central Asian outpost."

⁵¹ "Kyrgyz parliament passes bill on narcotic drugs," *Itar-Tass*, 24 April 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and "Kyrgyz heroin trade on the increase," *BBC Monitoring Central Asia*, 27 July 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁵² "Tajik swallows heroine in order to smuggle it to Moscow," *Itar-Tass*, 3 November 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

⁵³ See, for example, "Illegal border crossings becoming more organized," *FBIS-TDD-96-024-L*, Ashgabat Esger, 27 June 1996, <http://www.nisat.org>, "Police seize drugs, weapons," and Alexander Zelitchenko, "Golden Subregion," p. 6.

criminal groups themselves, commonplace in the region, are another implication of the militarization of crime contributing to the deterioration of internal stability in the Central Asian republics. For example in Kazakhstan, officials in charge of internal security have been worried about the possibility of a war breaking out between the numerous organized crime groups—both local and international—operating in the country.⁵⁴

Yet the problem of small arms proliferation is linked not only with organized forms of crime but also with criminal acts conducted by ordinary people. Crime rates among ordinary citizens are on the increase, and small arms are increasingly easily available. It is estimated, for example, that as much as 80 per cent of all crimes in Kazakhstan are committed with the use of firearms.⁵⁵ Every fifth Kazakh man is said to be an owner of a small arm, and the number of weapons circulating within the country has increased year after year.⁵⁶ In Turkmenistan—generally regarded as the most stable of the Central Asian republics—law-enforcement officials regularly seize small arms from criminals. Firearms, grenades and different kinds of ammunition have been among the small arms confiscated by the Turkmen authorities.⁵⁷

Although illicit small arms transfers to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have mostly originated from neighbouring Afghanistan and Tajikistan, the Central Asian republics have also been vulnerable to contraband shipments from Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union. Consequently, smuggling routes out of the Central Asian republics have been two-way in the sense that they have been used for reverse contraband shipments back into these countries. Precursor chemicals intended for drug producers in Afghanistan and the Central

⁵⁴ *IWR Daily Update*, Vol. 5, No. 143, 28 July 1998, <http://intelweb.janes.com/iwr/iv5n14301.html>.

⁵⁵ See "Weapons possession among citizens on rise."

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ See "Security forces anti-crime operations viewed," *FBIS-SOV-97-283*, 10 October 1997, <http://www.nisat.org>.

Asian republics have been among the items found in these shipments.⁵⁸ Small arms that have travelled to the Central Asian republics have reportedly arrived from conflict zones such as Chechnya.⁵⁹ This, and other politically unstable parts of the former Soviet Union such as for instance the Caucasian republic of Dagestan will remain a potential source of illicit arms for buyers in the Central Asian republics.⁶⁰

It should be noted, however, that the Central Asian republics have not only been recipients of small arms. First, as long as the Afghan and Tajik conflicts remain unsolved, Afghanistan and Tajikistan provide a market for illicit arms and ammunition for criminal groups operating in the Central Asian republics.⁶¹ Secondly—and as already noted in previous chapters—at least some of the Central Asian governments have been directly involved in weapons transfers to Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Needless to say, then, that some of these small arms have ended up back into the Central Asian republics themselves.

POTENTIAL SOURCES OF ARMED INTERNAL CONFLICT

The existence of a considerable infrastructure for illicit small arms trafficking in Central Asia suggests that a breakout of armed internal conflict in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan or Kyrgyzstan would lead to immediate and massive shipments of small arms to the conflict

⁵⁸ Cultivation and processing of drugs, although not significant, does take place in the Central Asian republics. For the situation pertaining to drug cultivation and processing in these countries, see *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report 1998*.

⁵⁹ See, for example, "Weapons possession among citizens on rise."

⁶⁰ The armed clashes between the Russian army and Muslim fighters which took place in Dagestan in August 1999 led to the proliferation of small arms in the republic. See "Sota jätti Dagestaniin tuhansia pakolaisia ja kasoittain aseita," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 25 August 1998.

⁶¹ See Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 14. An interesting detail pertaining to illicit arms and drug trafficking in Central Asia is that small arms purchases have been used as a way to launder money received from narcotics sales. See Alexander Zelitchenko, "Golden Subregion," p. 2.

region.⁶² However, given the proportions the proliferation of small arms has already assumed within these countries, it can be argued that the easy availability of small arms itself may become the decisive factor transforming political disagreements into full-scale armed confrontations.⁶³ In the following, three sets of issues that can—in the context of a highly weaponized environment—trigger armed conflicts within the Central Asian republics are discussed: (1) disagreements over the division of political power and economic resources, (2) animosities between different ethnic groups, and (3) tensions between ruling elites and political forces viewing Islam as the framework for both individual and societal life.

Conflicts over Political Power and Economic Resources

One source of tension between political forces within Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan is the authoritarian nature of the national governments. In each Central Asian republic, political power is for the most part in the hands of the same forces that held leading positions during the Soviet period. This also applies to the presidents of the Central Asian republics who, with the exception of Askar Akayev of Kyrgyzstan, rose to their current positions from the ranks of the former Communist party. The institution of a strong presidency—the central element in the political systems of the Central Asian republics—has left no room for actors advocating an open political system and other social reforms. Opposition forces are systematically suppressed in all of these countries.

In Turkmenistan, the opposition groups that emerged in the late 1980s to demand democracy and social reforms are today marginalized or exiled. This is due to the harsh suppression of the Turkmen people's

⁶² Taking into account the interest foreign governments have in the political future of the Central Asian republics, it is evident that an armed internal conflict in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan or Kyrgyzstan would be coloured by foreign involvement. Arms and ammunition supplies to the conflict parties would most likely constitute one dimension of this involvement.

⁶³ See Introduction, p. 6, where the role of small arms as a source of internal conflict is discussed.

attempts to organize independent political activity. The Government led by President Saparmurat Niyazov does not allow its citizens the right to assemble or to publicly express their views. A central organ in the implementation of the Government's authoritarian policies is the secret police which threatens, assaults and imprisons opponents of the regime, whether real or perceived, and keeps a close eye on the State-run media which operates under strict censorship.⁶⁴ The role of the secret police in cracking down on political activism is also central in Kazakhstan. Organized dissent is not allowed in the country, and opponents of the Kazakh Government led by President Nursultan Nazarbayev are regularly harassed, arrested and convicted for anti-Government activities. Chances for independent political activism were further curtailed in June 1998, when new legislation concerning the national security of Kazakhstan was introduced. The law on national security makes it easier for the law-enforcement authorities to deter and punish the members of the opposition. Brute force and legal means have also been used to monitor the operations of the tightly controlled Kazakh media.⁶⁵

In Uzbekistan, the suppression of anti-Government forces has intensified in recent months. The main reason for this have been the tensions between the Uzbek Government and the Islamic opposition, which have led President Islam Karimov to embark on repressive measures aimed at eradicating all traces of Islamic activism in the country. The heavy-handed policies of the Uzbek Government—making no distinction between moderate and radical elements in the Muslim community—have included religious discrimination, mass arrests as well as harassment and torture of suspected activists. However, there are signs implying that the ruthless policies of the Uzbek authorities have not discouraged the Islamic opposition but, rather, may have just added to their discontent with the current rule. The fact that the Karimov regime has effectively silenced Uzbekistan's secular opposition may increase the popularity of the Islamic radicals who appear to form the only opposition

⁶⁴ Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: The Quest for Stability and Control," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, pp. 312-313, and *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

⁶⁵ *Kazakhstan: Country Profile 1998-99*, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1998, pp. 6, 9, and *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

force in the country capable of challenging the Government.⁶⁶ Also, the Kyrgyz authorities have recently stepped up their activities against the real and perceived opponents of the Government of President Akayev. Restrictions on the activities of opposition parties and movements, arrests of journalists, police abuse and religious persecution have been among the measures taken by the Kyrgyz authorities to silence anti-Government critique in the country. The increasingly harsh actions of the Government have raised international concern and cast a shadow over Kyrgyzstan's reputation as the most open and democratic society in Central Asia.⁶⁷

In addition to the possibility that tensions between government and opposition forces within Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan lead to violent internal conflicts, power struggles among the Central Asian ruling elites themselves constitute a potential source of armed conflict. As the developments in Tajikistan have shown, regional identities and loyalties especially play an important role in shaping factional politics in the Central Asian republics. In Kazakhstan, regional alliances, together with tribal and ethnic networks, form the most important channel of elite policy making.⁶⁸ The same is true in Kyrgyzstan, where regional identities are particularly strong due to Kyrgyzstan's mountainous geography that has traditionally restricted contacts between people living in different parts of the country.⁶⁹ Political tensions between the two principal regional groupings in the country, the north and the south, have been so strong that some have feared that they could eventually render Kyrgyzstan ungovernable.⁷⁰

The impact of the political tensions based on regional and tribal affiliations has also been felt in Turkmenistan. The possibility of an open conflict sparked by regional and tribal disagreements is a threat which has

⁶⁶ *Uzbekistan: Country Report, 1st Quarter 1998*, The Economist Intelligence Unit, 1998, p. 6, and *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

⁶⁷ *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

⁶⁸ *Kazakhstan: Country Profile 1998-99*, p. 9.

⁶⁹ Eugene Huskey, "Kyrgyzstan: The Fate of Political Liberalization," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 243.

⁷⁰ Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 11.

been taken seriously by President Niyazov who has tried to keep these tensions in check by equitably nominating representatives from different regions and tribes to the cabinet of ministers and other government institutions.⁷¹ In Uzbekistan, competition between the power bases of Ferghana, Samarkand and Tashkent has been a basic feature of the interregional rivalry.⁷² Although the Samarkand-Jizzakh region of Uzbekistan is the support base of the country's current leadership, President Karimov has allocated government posts and other favours to representatives from other major regions in order to limit the negative effects of interregional rivalries on general stability and his own rule.⁷³

Intra-elite power struggles over the control of government structures may intensify in the future, when the issue of presidential succession becomes topical in the Central Asian republics. The issue of succession is linked to the threat of armed internal conflict also through the fact that any processes related to transfer of political power may encourage opposition forces to push harder for societal reforms. The possibility that, in this connection, the use of violent means may become an intrinsic part of opposition endeavours cannot be ruled out. At the moment, however, there are no immediate prospects of leadership changes and, consequently, any discussion about the issue of succession is regarded as a threat by the ruling presidents.⁷⁴

Perhaps the most urgent social problem in the Central Asian republics is the poor condition of the national economies. The drastic decline in trade between the former republics of the Soviet Union and the end of subsidies from Moscow have led to steadily falling standards of living among the great majority of the Central Asian people. Moreover,

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, and Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: The Quest for Stability and Control," pp. 317-318.

⁷² Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 11, and Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy*, p. 22.

⁷³ William Fierman, "Political Development in Uzbekistan: Democratization?," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott (eds.), *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 393.

⁷⁴ Anna Matveeva, "Democratization, Legitimacy, and Political Change in Central Asia," p. 42.

as the efforts to attract foreign investments and to promote local entrepreneurship have turned out to be more laborious than expected, the ability of the Central Asian governments to maintain public services and social security services has dramatically weakened.⁷⁵ It is estimated, for example, that 73 per cent of the Kazakh people live below the Government-defined poverty line of US\$ 50 per person per month. In Kyrgyzstan, the real income of local people decreased by almost 84 per cent between the years 1992 and 1996.⁷⁶ Even though Uzbekistan is said to have experienced one of the mildest recessions in the entire former Communist bloc after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the real gross domestic product per person in the country fell by about 27 per cent between 1991 and 1995.⁷⁷ The fact that the economy of Turkmenistan is believed to be on the brink of collapse further illustrates the gravity of the economic difficulties faced by the Central Asian governments today.⁷⁸

At the same time, however, for some strata of Central Asian societies, the post-Soviet years have proved to be an economic boon. The emergence of the new social class of the extremely rich—very often including people who are at the helm of political power—exacerbates the existing division of the Central Asian people into the rich and the poor.⁷⁹ The ever wider gap between those belonging to the opposite ends of the welfare spectrum is a major source of popular discontent which can easily turn into violent unrest, as has already been the case in certain isolated instances in recent years.

In Turkmenistan, economic grievances led to anti-Government demonstrations in 1994 and in the summer of 1995, when about 1,000 people marched in the streets of Ashgabat to demand economic and

⁷⁵ Jude Howell, "Coping with Transition: Insights from Kyrgyzstan," *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 1996, p. 55.

⁷⁶ Anna Matveeva, "Democratization, Legitimacy, and Political Change in Central Asia," p. 39.

⁷⁷ *Uzbekistan: Country Profile 1998-99*, p. 14.

⁷⁸ For an evaluation of the state of Turkmenistan's economy, see *Turkmenistan: Country Report, 1st Quarter 1999*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 14.

political reforms.⁸⁰ Kazakhstan experienced serious disturbances in the Autumn of 1997, when workers from the southern parts of the country—supported by workers in the north—protested against unemployment, wage arrears and poor living conditions.⁸¹ The recent violent events in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan have also been largely motivated by the widespread dissatisfaction with the declining economic conditions. These disturbances have shown, for their part, that economic grievances may manifest themselves in the form of ethnic clashes and religious radicalism.

Ethnic Tensions

The birth of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan as ethno-national entities dates back to the 1920s, when the Soviet Union established its power in Central Asia and divided the region into five territorial-administrative units. The main criterion guiding the delimitation of 1924-1925 was linguistic, which meant that the ethnic ties and identities of the local people were ignored when the borders of the new entities were drawn. Consequently, the overlap of ethnic groups between the territorial borders became a characteristic of the ethnological map of Central Asia.⁸²

Since the independence of the Central Asian republics in 1991, ethnic divisions within these States have become a matter of great political importance. This is largely due to the ongoing processes of State- and identity-building which consciously underscore the differences between the majority peoples and those in the minority.⁸³ In the context of increasing societal problems, there is a risk that popular discontent in the Central Asian republics may turn into violent internal confrontations

⁸⁰ Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: The Quest for Stability and Control," p. 343, and *Turkmenistan: Country Profile 1998-99*, p. 5.

⁸¹ Anna Matveeva, "Democratization, Legitimacy, and Political Change in Central Asia," p. 40.

⁸² For the Sovietization of Central Asia, see Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 5.

⁸³ See Olivier Roy, "Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?," in *ibid.*, pp. 133, 143.

between the different ethnic groups. These confrontations, in turn, could spill over into inter-State conflicts if foreign governments decide to intervene in the ethnic hostilities to protect their ethnic brethren or to support the irredentist claims of their protégés.⁸⁴

The bloody clashes between ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz which took place in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan in June 1990 serve as a tragic reminder of the way in which economic grievances and other sources of popular discontent may trigger ethnic violence within the Central Asian republics. The clashes, which broke out in the city of Osh and soon spread to adjacent towns and areas, started as a dispute over the allocation of building land. Fundamentally, however, the conflict reflected the tensions that have long coloured the relations between the Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the region. One major source of inter-ethnic friction has been the uneven division of economic well-being and political influence. Whereas the Uzbeks have controlled the economic resources and held central positions in the regional government, the Kyrgyz community has been mostly rural. The catastrophic economic situation and political chaos in Kyrgyzstan at the end of the 1980s aggravated these differences and turned mutual resentment into open ethnic conflict.⁸⁵ The clashes in the summer of 1990 also pointedly illustrated how the use of small arms can quickly become an integral part of ethnic violence. Small arms were the main tool of violence in the Osh confrontations which took the lives of at least 170 people. Small arms such as pistols, shotguns and rifles were also used by armed bands in connection with rapes, assaults and other crimes. Although the ethnic violence in Osh ended after Kyrgyz authorities imposed a state of emergency and sent army troops to the

⁸⁴ For the ethnic composition of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, see Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr and Edward Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 153.

⁸⁵ For the causes of the Osh conflict, see Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 25, Valery Tishkov, "Don't kill me, I'm a Kyrgyz!: An Anthropological Analysis of Violence in the Osh Ethnic Conflict," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 1995, p. 134, and Abidin Bozdog, "Crisis and Democracy in Kirgizia," *Aussenpolitik*, No. 3, 1992, pp. 279-280.

region, the tensions between the two communities that sparked the bloody events initially still exist. The desire of many Uzbeks in Kyrgyzstan to unite with Uzbekistan is an example of the factors contributing to the mutual distrust and the threat of renewed violence.⁸⁶

In Uzbekistan, the competition over economic resources and political influence led to ethnic violence between local Uzbeks and Meshketian Turks in June 1989. The brutal clashes in the Ferghana Valley between armed bands lasted for two weeks and resulted in at least 100 deaths. In addition, the conflict forced about 100,000 people—the vast majority of whom were Meshketian Turks—to abandon their homes. Due to the poor security situation in Uzbekistan, about 74,000 Meshketian Turks were flown out of the country in the course of the fighting. About 44,000 of them were granted asylum in Azerbaijan, and a large number of Meshketian Turks also fled to Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. It can be presumed that the situation of those Meshketian Turks who never left Uzbekistan or have returned to the country remains difficult.⁸⁷

There are also tensions between other ethnic groups in Uzbekistan. The disagreements between Uzbeks and ethnic Tajiks are centred on two main issues: competition over the various symbols of the common Central Asian cultural heritage, and dissatisfaction of the Tajik minority with the amount and quality of Tajik-language educational and cultural facilities in Uzbekistan. Issues related to the status of the Russian minority in the country have been the main cause of tension between Uzbeks and ethnic Russians. Nevertheless, it is questionable whether the Uzbek-Tajik or Uzbek-Russian disagreements are severe enough to generate inter-ethnic violence.⁸⁸

In Kazakhstan, the possibility that tensions between Kazakhs and ethnic Russians—the two largest ethnic groups in the country—may result in armed violence in the future cannot be ruled out. Generally, the disagreements between the two communities have largely reflected the

⁸⁶ Valery Tishkov, *ibid.*, pp. 134-136, 138, 140, Shirin Akiner, *ibid.*, and Abidin Bozdog, *ibid.*, p. 277.

⁸⁷ Shirin Akiner, *ibid.*, pp. 18, 34-35.

⁸⁸ Annette Bohr, *Uzbekistan: Politics and Foreign Policy*, pp. 31-39.

post-Soviet societal realities in the republic. As a result of independent statehood, political and economic power has passed into the hands of the titular people of Kazakhstan, and the ethnic Russians have lost their former dominant position in the country. On the one hand, this has meant that issues related to the future status of ethnic Russians have become a subject of fierce political debate. The fear of becoming second-class citizens has been widespread and evident among the Russian population when matters pertaining to the nature of the Kazakh State, language policy and the ownership of property within the country have been discussed.⁸⁹ On the other hand, the changed circumstances have strengthened Kazakh nationalism and encouraged some elements in the country to demand an ethnically homogeneous society.⁹⁰ The shift in the demographic balance in favour of the Kazakhs has added to the animosity between the two communities. At present, Russians—who constituted the largest single ethnic group in Kazakhstan for much of the Soviet period—represent about 32 per cent of Kazakhstan's total population, whereas almost 51 per cent of the country's inhabitants are ethnic Kazakhs.⁹¹

The most dangerous expression of the Kazakh-Russian tensions are the activities of the extreme nationalist groups on both sides. The sporadic clashes that have taken place in the Petropavlovsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk regions of Kazakhstan between Kazakh and Russian nationalists over the past few years illustrate that both sides are prepared to resort to violence.⁹² Information suggesting that these groups are well equipped with arms and ammunition further supports this conclusion. Kazakh nationalists seem to have access to small arms through various smuggling networks, and the Cossacks—the most nationalist of the ethnic

⁸⁹ Martha Brill Olcott, "Democratization and the Growth of Political Participation in Kazakhstan," in Karen Dawisha and Bruce Parrott, *Conflict, Cleavage, and Change in Central Asia and the Caucasus*, p. 215.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

⁹¹ Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr and Edward Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, p. 153.

⁹² Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 21.

Russian groups—have also armed themselves.⁹³ For many armed Cossacks, the ultimate goal is to unite northern Kazakhstan with Russia.⁹⁴

Ethnically, the most homogeneous of the Central Asian republics is Turkmenistan, where titular people represent 77 per cent of the country's total population. Uzbeks are the largest and Russians the second largest ethnic minority in Turkmenistan. The former constitute a little more than 9 per cent, and the latter about 7 per cent of the total population.⁹⁵ Although the demographic dominance of the titular people alone would imply that the risk of ethnic violence in Turkmenistan is limited, there are latent inter-ethnic tensions which could develop into armed confrontations. The status of the Russian minority in Turkmenistan, in particular, is a potential source of inter-ethnic violence.⁹⁶

Ideological Confrontations

The revitalization of Islamic culture and traditions has played a central role in the efforts by the Central Asian governments to construct national identities based on cultural and historical elements predating the Soviet period. The mosques, religious schools and colleges that have resurfaced in the Central Asian republics during the 1990's testify to Islam's importance as a unifying force in these newly independent States. Paradoxically, however, Islam has also become a political force which poses a direct challenge to the ruling Central Asian elites by providing an

⁹³ Reuel R. Hanks, "Directions in the Ethnic Politics of Kazakhstan: Concession, Compromise, or Catastrophe?," *Journal of Third World Studies*, Spring 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, Martha Brill Olcott, "Democratization and the Growth of Political Participation in Kazakhstan," p. 214.

⁹⁴ Reuel R. Hanks, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Graham Smith, Vivien Law, Andrew Wilson, Annette Bohr and Edward Allworth, *Nation-building in the Post-Soviet Borderlands: The Politics of National Identities*, p. 153.

⁹⁶ Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: The Quest for Stability and Control," pp. 333-338.

ideological framework for those who question the legitimacy and policies of the regimes in power.

It is not surprising, then, that all kinds of political activism taking place under the banner of Islam are viewed by the ruling elites as a danger to the stability and well-being of the Central Asian societies. Muslim activists—for whom Islam is a comprehensive belief-system belonging both to the realm of spiritual and societal life—are labelled, among others, as fundamentalists, criminals and terrorists, regardless of their actual goals and intentions.⁹⁷ The demonization of Islamic activism and its outright identification with fanaticism, turmoil and violence have in fact strengthened the ranks of the Muslim activists and their sense of being a distinct political force. Moreover, the tough measures that have been taken against devout believers have radicalized some of the moderate Muslims and provoked those who have always been ready to use violence in their battle against the Central Asian leaderships. Whereas in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan the attractive power of political Islam has been rather insignificant, the political scenes in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan are increasingly coloured by the appearance of Islamic forces.⁹⁸

At present, the confrontational setting between the Government and Islamic opposition is most evident in Uzbekistan. The ideological

⁹⁷ See, for example, the author's interview with a high Uzbek official who wishes to remain unidentified, April 1999. The term "Wahhabis"—referring to the Wahhabi school of Islam prevalent in Saudi Arabia—is a common designation by which Muslim activists are known in the Central Asian republics. The underlying assumption in the designation—already used during the Soviet period—is that these Muslims are supported by foreign actors in general. Today, however, the term is increasingly used specifically to designate Muslims who are influenced by the Saudis. For the double meanings of the term "Wahhabi" in the Central Asian context, see Oliver Roy, "Is the Conflict in Tajikistan a Model for Conflicts Throughout Central Asia?" p. 142.

⁹⁸ For the role of Islam as a political force in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, see Martha Brill Olcott, "Democratization and the Growth of Political Participation in Kazakhstan," p. 234, and Michael Ochs, "Turkmenistan: The Quest for Stability and Control," pp. 338-340.

polarization within the country has intensified since late 1997, when the murder of an official of the Uzbek Ministry of Internal Affairs and three policemen in the city of Namangan—believed by the local authorities to have been conducted by Muslim radicals—triggered a major crackdown on Islamic activism in the Ferghana Valley. The arbitrary arrests of hundreds of people that followed the killings were a clear indication of the Uzbek Government's effort to eliminate religion as a mobilizing force for the political opposition.⁹⁹

The explosion of six car bombs in the Uzbek capital of Tashkent on 16 February 1999 marked the beginning of the most intense phase of the ideological conflict so far. Although it is not clear who was behind the bomb attacks which took the lives of 15 and injured more than 150 people, the Uzbek Government immediately pinned the blame on Islamic radicals.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, the Government's ideological reading of the bombings has led to further suppression of Islamic activism in the Ferghana Valley. On the other hand, there are signs suggesting that the harder measures taken by the Government have strengthened the position of militant elements within the Muslim community. Perhaps one indication of this are the large amounts of small arms that have been found in the militants' possession during house searches and arrests conducted by Uzbek law-enforcement authorities.¹⁰¹

The events in Kyrgyzstan in the Autumn of 1999 serve as another example of the radicalization of Uzbekistan's Islamic forces. According to news reports, an Uzbek armed formation composed of up to 750 fighters entered Kyrgyzstan from Tajikistan in August 1999 and captured several villages in the southern Batken region of Kyrgyzstan. The group—believed to form a part of Uzbekistan's radical Islamic opposition—took hostages,

⁹⁹ See "Crackdown in the Farghona Valley: Arbitrary Arrests and Religious Discrimination," *Human Rights Watch Report*, May 1998, <http://www.hrw.org/hrw/reports98/uzbekistan/>, and *Uzbekistan: Country Report, 1st Quarter 1998*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁰⁰ "Central Asian shockwaves," *The Economist*, 20 February 1999. For the various actors who may have set off the bombs in Tashkent, see "Bomb blasts in Tashkent," *Middle East International*, 12 March 1999, pp. 16-17.

¹⁰¹ Author's interview with a high Uzbek official who wishes to remain unidentified, April 1999.

including members of the Kyrgyz army and four Japanese geologists, and made it known that it wants to exchange them for its own members held in prison in Uzbekistan.¹⁰² At the time of writing, armed fighting between the Uzbek militants and the Kyrgyz army anxious to resolve the situation has continued to take place in southern Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan's air force has reportedly supported the Kyrgyz army in its effort to crush the resistance of the armed guerrillas.¹⁰³

As for the Kyrgyz Government's problems with local Islamic forces, Kyrgyz authorities have stepped up their operations against Islamic radicals operating in the country. In December 1997, the Government set up special units under the Ministry of National Security to monitor and control the activities of suspected Muslim activists—particularly in areas bordering the Ferghana Valley of Uzbekistan.¹⁰⁴ According to Kyrgyz authorities, the two bombings which took place in the Kyrgyz city of Osh in May 1998 were conducted by Islamic radicals. The explosions in a public minibus and an apartment killed four people and wounded ten others.¹⁰⁵

Kyrgyz government officials have also been worried about the links the members of the ethnic Uighur minority in the country—numbering in all some 30,000—have with Uighur separatists in the Chinese province of Xinjiang.¹⁰⁶ Both the Kyrgyz and Chinese authorities—viewing Uighur separatism as a manifestation of Islamic radicalism—believe that Uighurs in Kyrgyzstan provide covert assistance, including arms and ammunition, to their ethnic brethren in Xinjiang. As a result, Kyrgyz law-enforcement officials have intensified the monitoring of the country's Uighur minority

¹⁰² "Kyrgyz forces attack raiders," *International Herald Tribune*, 27 August 1999, and "Gunmen free Kyrgyz captive," *International Herald Tribune*, 3 September 1999.

¹⁰³ "Kyrgyz villagers bombed in error," *International Herald Tribune*, 31 August 1999.

¹⁰⁴ *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

¹⁰⁵ *Patterns of Global Terrorism 1998*.

¹⁰⁶ For the Uighur minority in Kyrgyzstan, see Shirin Akiner, *Central Asia: Conflict or Stability and Development?*, p. 25.

by arresting suspected activists on charges of illegal weapons possession and possession of "Wahhabi" books and videotapes.¹⁰⁷

The Uighur question has also engaged the law-enforcement officials in Kazakhstan. Many of the ethnic Uighurs living in Kazakhstan support the goals and activities of the Uighur separatists in Xinjiang.¹⁰⁸ This support has included illicit weapons transfers to the province. For example, Uighur separatists in the Chinese city of Yining are said to be in possession of a considerable arsenal of small arms originating from Kazakhstan.¹⁰⁹ Overall, the issue of Uighur separatism is another indication of how the problems of internal conflict and small arms are inextricably linked, and often, international in character.

¹⁰⁷ "Chinese pressure hurts Uighurs," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 1 July 1998, <http://proquest.umi.com/>, and *Human Rights Watch World Report 1999*.

¹⁰⁸ See, for example, "Exiled groups back separatist attacks," *South China Morning Post*, 11 February 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

¹⁰⁹ "Chinese may execute 40 Uygurs," *Daily Yomiuri*, 24 February 1997, <http://proquest.umi.com/>.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report has been to describe the various aspects of the small arms problem in Central Asia, that is, the region composed of Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Although each of the Central Asian States suffers from the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms, the nature and the implications of the problem vary within the region. Whereas in Afghanistan small arms sustain a disastrous civil war, in Tajikistan small arms constitute an obstacle to the reconstruction of a society that only recently broke away from a five-year period of armed internal conflict. In Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, the problem of small arms endangers political, social and economic development. In sum, the Central Asian small arms problem has three distinct faces.

The case of Afghanistan tellingly illustrates the symbiotic relationship between the problems of small arms and internal conflict. As the two decades of fighting in Afghanistan have demonstrated, the easy availability of arms and ammunition reduces the warring parties' interest in a peaceful settlement, prolongs and fuels ruthless violence, and blurs the distinction between the causes and symptoms of internal conflict. Consequently, the humanitarian, political and societal costs of the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms in Afghanistan have been enormous, and the negative implications of the Afghan conflict have also been felt internationally—for example, in the form of political violence and terrorist attacks conducted with weapons that have come from Afghanistan. Notwithstanding these repercussions, however, foreign governments have not—primarily for political reasons—stopped their small arms transfers to the Afghan fighters. And as long as the crisis in Afghanistan persists, it is certain that black-market traffickers worldwide will try to meet the Afghan fighters' demand for additional weapons. Massive flows of arms and ammunition into and out of Afghanistan testify to the fact that the country is the heart of the small arms problem in Central Asia.

Small arms were the main tools of violence also in the Tajik civil war from 1992–1997. After the armed clashes in the country had broken out, substantial arsenals of weapons from various sources—mostly Afghanistan, Russia and Uzbekistan—were supplied to the Tajik belligerents, both by governments and arms smugglers. In addition, as

weapons from the stocks of the former Soviet military forces based in Tajikistan leaked to internal circulation, significant quantities of arms and ammunition became available for the factions locked in domestic conflict. Regardless of the peace agreement signed in June 1997, Tajikistan continues to be in a state of turmoil. Political and criminal violence is rampant, and the country's central government is unable to control the activities of the numerous armed bands that have practically divided the country into various spheres of influence. Given this fact and the Tajik Government's military and political dependence on Russia, it can be justifiably asked whether Tajikistan's status as a sovereign nation State is just a matter of formality. Even the possibility that the country will break up at some point in the near future cannot be ruled out. The proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms contribute to the fragmentary tendencies and constitute a serious obstacle to the reconstruction of the post-civil war society in Tajikistan.

By comparison, the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan have been spared from the kind of organized violence that has afflicted Afghanistan and Tajikistan. However, the absence of armed internal conflict does not mean that the four Central Asian republics are free from societal tensions capable of triggering armed confrontations. On the contrary, the sporadic outbursts of violence that have taken place in these States in recent years are indicative of the ever present danger that latent societal grievances come to the fore and escalate into armed conflicts. Conflicts over political power and economic resources, ethnic clashes, and ideological confrontations are the most potent examples of the forms these grievances could take. Any internal conflict would also raise the risk of inter-State violence in Central Asia.

The decisive factor that may turn the latent tensions in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan into open conflicts is the easy availability of small arms. To put it differently, small arms may become the proximate cause of internal conflict. There are a number of signs which indicate that the four Central Asian republics are suffering from a small arms problem. For example, large quantities of weapons originating from internal sources are circulating within the Central Asian republics. Arms and ammunition leakages from military stocks and—presumably—defence industry facilities have contributed to the

weaponization of these societies. Furthermore, considerable numbers of small arms continue to enter the Central Asian republics through the extensive contraband trafficking networks in the region. The conflict-ridden States of Afghanistan and Tajikistan are the main sources of illicit arms, but surplus weapons from various parts of the former Soviet Union have also arrived through illicit channels. The ease with which smuggled arms enter the Central Asian republics is due to the law-enforcement agencies' lack of resources and the corruption which is rampant among the government agencies responsible for internal security. By ending up in the hands of political radicals and organized crime groups, these weapons not only fuel political instability but also contribute to the militarization of crime. To summarize, the proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms put political, economic and social development in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in jeopardy.

The complexity of the small arms issue in Central Asia poses formidable challenges to any effort to tackle the problem. Therefore, practical measures aimed at the amelioration of the problem have to be based on a broad conception of "small arms control", that is, on measures that address both the tools of violence—i.e. the production, transfer, deployment and/or the use of arms—and the root causes of violence that prompt the use of small arms in the first place.¹ Given the political stakes at play, the existing accumulations of small arms within the country and the extensive arms smuggling networks in Central Asia, it is clear that in Afghanistan, measures that would only concentrate on the tools of violence would produce minor tangible results. Yet again, any effort to bring about and maintain peace in the country would have to be supported by measures dealing with the flows and destabilizing accumulations of small arms.

¹It has been suggested that, in the post-Cold War world, the concept of arms control should be defined broadly "to encompass any type of cooperative measure meant to reduce the costs and risks associated with the acquisition, threat, and use of military force." See Nancy W. Gallagher, "Bridging the Gaps on Arms Control," *Contemporary Security Policy*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 1997, p. 3.

In Tajikistan, too, the root causes and tools of violence ought to be addressed simultaneously, although the fact that Tajikistan, unlike Afghanistan, has managed to bring its civil war to an end offers more scope for micro-level measures focusing on the tools of violence—for example, weapons collection programmes or support of the law-enforcement agencies in their effort to control the transfers of small arms into the country.² In the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, these kinds of micro-level measures would certainly contribute to increased stability and, at least partially, reduce the potential risk of full-scale armed internal conflict. The strengthening of border controls at critical Central Asian border junctions is one example of the micro-level measures that could bring about tangible results, and would, at the same time, bear upon the general problem of contraband trafficking in the region.

There are a number of institutional frameworks within which the international community could effectively deal with the Central Asian small arms problem.³ For example, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) could give concrete substance to its efforts to build an organizational identity regarding the question of small arms by directing its attention towards Central Asia. Any measure by OSCE focusing on the region would also have wider implications, for the movements of small arms from the Central Asian countries fuel instability in other parts of the OSCE region. Assistance to the Central Asian countries could also be an option for the European Union which has

²For a list of the various options available for tackling the problem of small arms in general, see Joseph Di Chiaro, *Reasonable Measures: Addressing the Excessive Accumulation and Unlawful Use of Small Arms*, BICC Brief 11, August 1998, pp. 17-23.

³A detailed analysis of the practical steps the international community could take within international organizations and other arrangements to ameliorate the Central Asian small arms problem is beyond the scope of this report. For a general presentation of the measures the international community has already taken to restrain and control small arms availability in different parts of the world, see, for example, *Arms Availability and the Situation of Civilians in Armed Conflict*, International Committee of the Red Cross, June 1999, pp. 49-61.

started to implement its Joint Action of December 1998 setting out the Union's objectives vis-à-vis the question of small arms.⁴ Furthermore, the United Nations could take advantage of its presence in Central Asia by integrating a small arms dimension into the functions of its many offices and missions based in the Central Asian countries.⁵ For example, steps could be taken to broaden the Organization's landmine activities in Afghanistan to include the provision of relevant information about the types, quantities and movements of other small arms within the country. The establishment of a regional "Small Arms Action Centre" concentrating on the coordination of concrete projects, information-gathering and reporting—possibly including an early-warning dimension—would further enhance the United Nations' capacity to combat the small arms problem in Central Asia.

Again, however, it should be underlined that only measures that are based on a broad conception of arms control can effectively contribute to the amelioration of the Central Asian small arms problem. Measures focusing on the tools of violence alone may decrease societal violence, but they do not address other fundamental aspirations of local political actors, that is, welfare and just government.⁶ Thus, unless, for example, the sources of economic difficulties in Kazakhstan, ethnic tensions in Kyrgyzstan or ideological confrontations in Uzbekistan are addressed, the

⁴See "Joint Action of 17 December 1998 adopted by the Council on the basis of Article J.3 of the Treaty on European Union on the European Union's contribution to combating the destabilizing accumulation and spread of small arms and light weapons," *Official Journal of the European Communities*, 15 January 1999.

⁵On the broad organizational level, the United Nations has started to coordinate the activities of its organs pertaining to the small arms question within the so-called Coordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA) framework.

⁶For the division of political actors' demands worldwide into order, welfare and legitimacy, see Edward A. Kolodziej and I. William Zartman, "Coping with Conflict: A Global Approach," in Edward A. Kolodziej and Roger E. Kanet (eds.), *Coping with Conflict after the Cold War*, Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996, pp. 16-21.

demand for small arms in these countries will continue unabated. Moreover, the probability that the objective of decreased societal violence may collide with the political actors' aspiration for just government has to be taken into account when small arms control measures are planned and implemented. The reason for this is the possibility that measures which concentrate on the tools of violence alone may turn out to be counter-productive in the sense that they strengthen the position of the authoritarian governments vis-à-vis the opposition forces challenging the legitimacy of these governments, and thus, intensify domestic tensions.⁷

In the end, discussion about small arms control in Central Asia is irrelevant if there is no political will on the part of the international community to seriously tackle the region-wide proliferation, accumulation and misuse of small arms. In fact, it can be argued that—by and large—up to now, this has precisely been the case. The continuation of armed fighting in Afghanistan, the post-civil war turmoil in Tajikistan and the instability of the Central Asian republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan alone support this conclusion.

⁷See Timo Kivimäki, Terhi Lehtinen and Liisa Laakso, *Arms Management and Conflict Transformation in Mali: A Reinterpretation*, Research on Politics and Administration, Vol. 5, Department of Political Science, University of Helsinki, 1998, pp. 11-16.