

TAJIKISTAN'S UPCOMING PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS



October 26, 2006

**Briefing of the
Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe**

Washington: 2008

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The OSCE Secretariat is in Vienna, Austria, where weekly meetings of the participating States' permanent representatives are held. In addition, specialized seminars and meetings are convened in various locations. Periodic consultations are held among Senior Officials, Ministers and Heads of State or Government.

Although the OSCE continues to engage in standard setting in the fields of military security, economic and environmental cooperation, and human rights and humanitarian concerns, the Organization is primarily focused on initiatives designed to prevent, manage and resolve conflict within and among the participating States. The Organization deploys numerous missions and field activities located in Southeastern and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia. The website of the OSCE is: <www.osce.org>.

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The Commission consists of nine members from the United States Senate, nine members from the House of Representatives, and one member each from the Departments of State, Defense and Commerce. The positions of Chair and Co-Chair rotate between the Senate and House every two years, when a new Congress convenes. A professional staff assists the Commissioners in their work.

In fulfilling its mandate, the Commission gathers and disseminates relevant information to the U.S. Congress and the public by convening hearings, issuing reports that reflect the views of Members of the Commission and/or its staff, and providing details about the activities of the Helsinki process and developments in OSCE participating States.

The Commission also contributes to the formulation and execution of U.S. policy regarding the OSCE, including through Member and staff participation on U.S. Delegations to OSCE meetings. Members of the Commission have regular contact with parliamentarians, government officials, representatives of non-governmental organizations, and private individuals from participating States. The website of the Commission is: <www.csce.gov>.

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Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe Washington, DC

The briefing was held at 2 p.m. in room 2200 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, DC, Ronald J. McNamara, International Policy Director, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, moderating.

Panelists present: Ronald J. McNamara, International Policy Director, Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe; H.E. Khamrokhon Zaripov, Ambassador from the Republic of Tajikistan to the United States; Eric M. McGlinchey, Assistant Professor, Government and Politics, George Mason University; Dennis de Tray, Vice President, Center for Global Development; and Anthony C. Bowyer, Program Manager for Central Asia, International Foundation for Electoral Systems.

Mr. MCNAMARA. Good afternoon. My name is Ron McNamara. I'm currently serving as the International Policy Director with the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. And we're pleased to have you here this afternoon for this Helsinki Commission briefing on upcoming elections in Tajikistan.

I note that this is the first event that our Commission has had specifically focused on developments in Tajikistan, although these concerns and others have been subjects of other hearings and briefings over the years.

Our information is accessible through the Commission's Web site, which is www.csce.gov.

There is a statement that our Chairman, Senator Sam Brownback, has issued in connection with today's briefing. Of course, as the Senate and the Congress are not in session, he cannot be with us today. But I would commend his comments to your attention.

As a long-term participant in the OSCE process, I remember very vividly the early days, in the early 1990s, when Tajikistan became a full member of the OSCE, accepting all of the commitments that had been undertaken from the 1975 Helsinki Final Act. I would also point out that Tajikistan has been a part of the consensus process of OSCE since it became an OSCE participating State.

One of the key and relevant provisions is contained in the Paris Charter of 1990, which says that democracy is the only form of government for our countries. Additionally, there are very specific commitments relating to the questions of the conduct of elections.

Before turning to our panellists, I would like to highlight a couple of the points contained in Chairman Brownback's statement.

For certain, Tajikistan has accomplished much since the peace agreement in 1997, but there is concern about Tajikistan's commitment to democratic reforms and human rights.

President Rakhmonov has served in that capacity since 1994—all of the time during which Tajikistan has been a member of the OSCE—and has solidified his power, effectively pushing any political opposition out of Tajikistan's political space.

The last Presidential election there fell short of OSCE commitments, as did the parliamentary elections last year.

Should President Rakhmonov win again on November 6th, constitutional amendments passed last year allow him to potentially remain in office until the year 2020.

While there are multiple candidates, the major opposition leaders have experienced significant harassment from authorities, and most have decided not to run.

Problematic actions against opposition leaders include: the sentencing of Muhammadruzi Iskandarov, the former head of the Democratic Party, to 23 years in prison and allegations of mistreatment during his imprisonment; slander charges brought before his death against the late Said Abdullo Nuri, Chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party; and the repeated threatening of criminal penalties against the chairman of the Socialist Democratic Party, Mr. Zoyirov.

Recent decrees by the Tajik Central Election Commission addressed some election system deficiencies, but questions remain about the follow-through necessary to ensure a free and fair election.

It would also be positive if non-partisan election monitors could observe precinct election commissions and if all political parties could participate on those commissions themselves, regardless of whether they have candidates running.

It is true that the government provided opposition parties free time on state television, but it has also limited the ability of independent media outlets to operate freely. Several newspapers have been closed, and the Ministry of Culture reportedly wants media organizations to re-register by the end of December.

There is also concern about the draft NGO law and draft religion law, as early texts were not in line with Tajikistan's OSCE commitments. And there may be some interest or questions relating to those matters.

As with all Commission briefings, there will be time at the end of the formal presentations for questions from the audience. What we do ask is that interested questioners approach the podium there; please indicate your name and any affiliation that you have; and try to be as succinct as possible regarding any questions that you want to pose to our panelists.

We are very fortunate this afternoon to have the Ambassador of Tajikistan, Ambassador Zaripov, who was appointed and has served here in the United States since 2003. The Ambassador is very familiar with the OSCE, as he served from 1996 until 2003 as the head of the delegation of the Republic of Tajikistan to the OSCE, as well as Tajikistan's permanent representative to the United Nations and other international organizations in Vienna. He has also served as Tajikistan's Ambassador to Austria, Switzerland, and Hungary.

In keeping with protocol, I will give Ambassador Zaripov the opportunity to speak first, and then we'll hear from Professor Eric McGlinchey, Associate Professor of Government and Politics at George Mason University. Professor McGlinchey received his Ph.D. from Princeton, and his areas of research include comparative politics, Central Asian regime change, and political Islam. He is currently revising a manuscript on patronage and authoritarian rule in Central Asia and has written articles on regime change and on political Islam.

Next we'll hear from Dennis de Tray, Vice President for the Center for Global Development. In this role, Mr. de Tray works to shape CGD's substantive and financial future to strengthen ties between CGD and communities of interest in the development arena and to work to develop new lines of business opportunities. Before joining CGD, he directed the World Bank's mission for the five Central Asian republics from Almaty, Kazakhstan. He earned his Ph.D. in economics from the University of Chicago.

Our final panelist will be Anthony Bowyer, IFES's Program Manager for the Central Asian republics, specializing in designing and managing elections assistance and civic education programs. Since 1995, Mr. Bowyer has managed all of IFES's Central Asia project activities, consisting of four cooperative agreements with a combined contract value of approximately \$15 million. In this position, he has been following closely amendments made to the Tajik election law. Mr. Bowyer earned a master's in international studies from the University of Miami and an honorary degree from the Engineering Academy of the Republic of Tajikistan.

So, again, Mr. Ambassador, I would be happy to turn the floor to you for your introductory remarks.

And certainly we also anticipate that there can be some discussion amongst the panelists regarding some of the points that may be raised in the presentations, as well.

Thank you, Ambassador.

Amb. ZARIPOV. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, dear guests, ladies and gentlemen.

Before starting to describe preparation for elections in Tajikistan, I would like briefly to take your attention to these people which live in mountain area, sometimes called [inaudible]. And regarding historical evidence, Tajiks from 2nd century before our era until 7th century [inaudible] distinct ethnic groups with its own region.

In 8th century, [inaudible] conquer Central Asia, including what is now Tajikistan, and introduce Islam. Ninth and 10th century, Persian Tajik Samanid dynasty gains control of Central Asia and, in alliance with caliph of Baghdad, develops Bukhara as center of Muslim culture.

On Monday, 23rd of October, 998, Bukhara was captured by Qarakhanids, and empire of Samanid is collapsed. From this day, more than 1,000 years, Tajiks was under Sama invaders.

Thirteenth century, Genghis Khan comes to Tajikistan—I mean, an area in which lived Tajiks—and all Central Asia, and Tajiks become part of Mongol empire. Fourteenth century, Tajiks become part of Turkik Rulit Tamerlane empire.

Eighteenth and 19th century, Tajiks divided with the north coming under [inaudible] Russian empire, while the south came under Bukhara and even Chinese rule.

In 1917, Soviet rule starts in area of Tajikistan, in Central Asia. In 1921, north Tajikistan became part of Turkistan after [inaudible] Soviet Socialist Republic. In 1929, Tajikistan upgraded to Soviet Socialist Republic.

In 1960s, Tajikistan became the third-largest cotton-producing republic in Soviet Union, and here an industry notable, aluminium. In 1980s, increased Islamic influence in our region.

Now, we come to the end of Soviet Union, with our length around 143,000 square kilometers, population more than 7 million, population growth of rate some of highest in the world, 2.19. Ethnic groups: Tajiks, 80 percent; Uzbeks, 15.3; Russian, 1.1; Kyrgyz, 1.1; others, 2.6. Religion: Sunni Muslims, 85 percent; Sunni Shia Muslims, 5 percent; and others, 10 percent. Education literacy, around 88 percent. Economy: GDP is expected gross 7.5 percent, and inflation around 7 percent. Life expectation, 62 for men and 68 for women. Capital city, Dushanbe; around 700,000 population.

We have a bicameral parliament, Majlis Oly, upper level with 63 seats and a lower level with 34 seats. The last election was on 27th of February, 2005, a parliamentary election, where People Democratic Party received 74.9 percent, and Communist Party less than 14 percent, and Islamic Party like 9 percent of voters.

Ninth of September, 1991, Supreme Court of Tajikistan declared Tajikistan's independence from Soviet Union. Rahmon Nabyev, Communist leader during the 1982 and '85, wins Tajikistan's first direct Presidential election with 57 percent of vote. Tajikistan joins Commonwealth of Independent States following the collapse of the Soviet Union in December.

In 1992, after long anti-government demonstration in Dushanbe, [inaudible] enters in civil war between supporters existing of secular ideology in Tajikistan with co-Islamic movements which actually climbs to civil war, and we have lost, like, 20,000 people and more than 600,000 were displaced.

In 1993, government established control in country. CIS is keeping force deployed on Tajik-Afghan border to prevent Islamic guerrilla groups inflowing from bases in Afghanistan. In 1994, cease-fire between government and rebels was signed, and start negotiations with our opposition.

November 6, 1994, constitution was adopted, referendum approves draft constitution. We're instituting Presidential system, and Emomali Rahmonov elected President of Tajikistan.

In 1997, government and rebel United Tajik Opposition signed peace accord agreement and established National Reconciliation Commission. In 1999, Rahmonov was re-elected for second time with vote 96 percent. United Nation Opposition candidate gained around 4 percent of voters.

In March 2000, last meeting of National Reconciliation Commission was held, and they created bicameral parliament which I've already mentioned. A new national currency, same time, was introduced: somoni.

In 2001, leaders of China, Russia, and four Central Asian countries signed Shanghai Cooperation Organization and agrees to fight ethnic and religious [inaudible] while promoting trade and investment. Around 19,000 prisoners are [inaudible] to mark 10th anniversary of independence of Tajikistan.

In 2001, Tajikistan is quick to offer support to U.S.-led anti-terrorist coalition set after the September 11th attack on United States. In July 2002, Tajikistan doubles the

number of border guards along the 1,300-kilometer border with Afghanistan to prevent Al Qaida members which escaped from United Nations forces in Afghanistan.

In July 2003, parliament approved a draft law abolishing the death penalty for women and reduced the number of crimes for which men can face penalty. In July 2004, parliament approves moratorium on death penalty.

In June 2005, Russian border guards complete withdrawal from border with Afghanistan and hand the task over to Tajik forces.

That was last year, and nowadays we are prepared for new Presidential election, which will be 6th of November. It means after 9 days.

The Republic of Tajikistan is a sovereign, democratic, rule of law, secular state. The head of country, president. The president is elected in a democratic, fair, free election for a term of 7 years. According to the new constitution, one person just may be elected for two times. Any citizen of Tajikistan, living in Tajikistan more than last 10 years, and age of 35, can be elected if he received more than half of votes during the election.

In Tajikistan nowadays there are eight functioning political parties and more than 2,500 NGOs and political movements. Regarding political parties: Agrarian Party, Party of Economic Reforms, People Democratic Party, Social Democratic Party, Communist Party, Party of Islamic Renaissance, Socialist Party, and Democratic Party. Among eight, five of them passed all requirements and has nominated as candidates for Presidential election.

Who is he? The Party of Economic Reforms nominated candidate Olimjon Boboyev, who was born in 1952 in Hissar area in central Tajikistan. He's head of Tajik Transportation Institute. He's academician.

Second one, the Tajik Socialist Party nominated Abduhalim Gafforov, who was born in 1951 in Panjakent, north of Tajikistan's Sogd region. Director of the Professional Skills Upgrade Center of tutors.

Third one, Amir Karakulov was born in 1942 in territory of Surkhandarya, Uzbekistan. Director of a research center, nominated by Agrarian Party, he's an academician.

Fourth, Emomali Rahmonov, incumbent President, was born in 1952 in Khatlon region.

And last one, Ismail Talbakov was born in 1955 in Khatlon region. He is nominated by Communist Party.

All five candidates very respectful, respected person. Maybe some of them have more experience in political, but among population, all five have quite good authority.

Some political parties boycotted election. Just one, Social Democratic Party boycotted election for some reasons, which I hope it will be described today. And Islamic Renaissance Party not nominated its candidate, but this party will be participating in whole election process, in preparation and during process, and will be also members of observation groups.

There are organized central commission for election and referenda, and the 68 election districts across country, about 18 cities, 48 towns, 46 districts, and 280 communities. Among those, we have now 3,060 established polling stations, 26 of them abroad of country, two of them in United States. One of them will be in Washington, DC, and next one in New York.

Among the total population of Tajikistan, we have 3,155,321 registered voters which older than 18 years old and older.

The law in Tajikistan allows all political parties, movements to agitate against or favor any candidates in Tajikistan.

In order to be registered, nominated candidates—any candidates must collect 160,000 signatures. It's approximately 5 percent of voters—a passing requirement for getting the nomination.

Funding: The state budget allocated around 3,600 somoni for each candidate. It's around \$1,100 per candidate. And any candidate has right to gather money from his supporters, political movements, or any structures around 100,000 somoni, which also in comparison will be \$30,000. Of course funding, you are seeing, it's very limited. But in present condition, we accounted it's quite sufficient for this election.

Observers: It is expected around 700 foreign and 18,000 local observers in Tajikistan. OSCE will participate with 30 long-term and 100 short-term observers from 18 OSCE member-states.

In addition, will participate during the observation CIS secretariat and also some additional NGOs, including IFES from Washington. By the way, IFES will be observing election in our polling station in Washington.

We believe that authorities of Tajikistan have done whatever is possible to create equal conditions for all candidates during the campaign process. Despite some criticism for small mistakes and several mistakes, the Presidential election we expect to be a serious step forward in this year.

Media coverage: In Tajikistan, we have nowadays approximately 22 TV stations, including three state TV stations and 18 private TV stations. We have around 400 newspapers, which published across all country, and most of them independent and published. Nowadays, government also registered two additional TV stations and one radio station.

All in all, the Presidential election of 2006 is another positive step, and we will do all our best to make free, very transparent election in Tajikistan.

I will be delighted to take any question after my colleague will be finished with his presentation. Thank you very much.

Mr. McNAMARA. Thank you very much, Ambassador, for putting this in historical perspective.

And our next speaker will be Professor McGlinchey.

Mr. MCGLINCHEY. Thank you, Ambassador, for your comments.

I think what I'm going to present differs somewhat from the Ambassador's comments in a couple ways: One, I'm not particularly optimistic about these elections—everybody has a sense of where they're going, so there's no surprise here.

But I think what is surprising and what I'd like to get across, briefly, is I sincerely feel like these elections are actually a harbinger of problems to come, actually quite bad things to come. And so, what I'd like to do in about 7 minutes is lay out a causality for why I think Tajikistan may be headed in a rather problematic direction.

And I know for a political scientist, unlike an economist, is the death knell of a career [Laughter.]

But I'll try to do it regardless.

The past decade in Tajikistan has been a relatively good decade. It's been peaceful. It's been relatively prosperous, considering what's coming before. Tajikistan has been going in the right direction.

The central reason for why Tajikistan has been going in the right direction for the past, say, 7 years or so is that there was at least a modicum of pluralism, political opposition, institutionalized dissent, within the Tajik Government.

After the 1997 peace accords, Rahmonov very wisely agreed to allow a measure of opposition, not only within the parliament but within the administration itself. Thirty percent was the reach-for goal of allowing people from the IRP, the Islamic Renaissance Party, the UTO, United Tajik Opposition, this umbrella group. Thirty percent of the administrative posts at least in theory were supposed to be given to people of the opposition.

Now, in reality, of course, this didn't happen. But you could look within the Presidential administration and see at least a measure of dissenting voices. Same thing with the parliament. You could look within the parliament and you could see a little bit of political pluralism.

Bottom line, you could look at the government institutions in Tajikistan and there was a sense, I think a very real sense, among the opposition that they could use these institutions, if not really to get things done, at least to be heard. They could get their opinions out there in the public sphere. They could use the institutions of the government at least to get their opinions out there and to reach their constituents.

Now, this has changed. This has changed gradually over the past 10 years. And more and more, one can't find opposition voices, either in the administration or in the parliament. One still can find opposition at the local level, and I'll get to that in a second.

But there's a couple—you probably all know the examples: Iskandarov's 2005 forceful rendition from Moscow. Same with Salimov, also in 2005. One of the somewhat poetic examples of this repression, if one could call repression poetic, is the editor of *Neru-i Sukhan*, was imprisoned ostensibly for siphoning off electricity but really because he printed an article in his newspaper titled, "When Will Rahmonov Become Putin?"

So, I mean, across the board, if you look at political elites, if you look at journalistic elites, beginning really in the late 1990s and then taking off at the turn of the century, we see growing, growing repression throughout Tajikistan in anyone who voices any dissent whatsoever. And this intimidation, I think it's quite clear, has been continuing up until the election today.

One of the few remaining avenues of dissent in Tajikistan, where people can get their voices out, has been the Internet. And if you look at what's happened with the Internet in the past couple months, the last beacons of opposition or free speech, places like *ferghana.ru*, *centrasia.ru*, even, I'm sure, beacons like *neweurasia.net* based here in the United States, these things are all being blocked in Tajikistan.

So really, there's no way to get opposition voices out there. The only voices that you do hear, and somewhat sadly entertaining, are the voices of the candidates themselves. For example, Gafforov, the Socialist Party candidate, I think it was [inaudible] *Gazette* or one of the Russian papers, he was quoted as saying, quote, "It's difficult to run against Great Leader Rahmonov." This is one of the candidates, one of the four, quote/unquote, "opposition" candidates running in this election.

So these are the kind of voices that we hear in Tajikistan today, very different than the voices that we used to hear in 1997, 1998.

The central thesis that I want to get across, the central idea I want to get across today is, without representation in the government, as limited as it might have been in the late 1990s, without this avenue for institutionalized dissent, people are going to turn to what they know—what they know from the civil war, what they know from past history, what they know from looking across the globe—and that is anti-establishment, revolutionary, potentially violent forms of political expression.

Two forms which I can foresee where I would say we might want to pay attention to would be, one, Islam—and perhaps not Islam as radical Islam but Islam as a liberation from authoritarianism—and, two, warlord politics.

So let me just briefly talk about these, and then I'll turn it over.

I think the supporters of the IRP, the Islamic Renaissance Party, have learned their lesson from 1997 quite well. They were promised representation within the government. They've lost representation. They realize that Rahmonov looks at governance as a zero-sum game and that there's no such thing as compromise. They were fooled once, and I think most people who are believers in Tajikistan don't want to be fooled again. There's really no desire to truck with the current government and to participate in any of these games.

And I think what you could see with the Muslim population in Tajikistan is one of two outcomes. One, you could see this kind of liberation theology, which would be simply a desire to replace authoritarian government with something that perhaps is more democratic.

This kind of runs against the currents of what people like Bernard Lewis and Sam Huntington might be saying, that, you know, this is Islamist radicalism. I think if you talk to most people in Tajikistan, really what they want is just to have some kind of political representation, some kind of freedom, and they'd be quite happy with a democratic government. So I could imagine some kind of mobilization movement based on that.

You could also see Islamist extremism. And I think the persistence of groups like Hizb ut Tahrir is some evidence that this could happen. I would argue that the first, kind of, liberation theology movement would be more likely. But one can't discount this second, of radical Islam.

The other thing that I can foresee happening—and, in fact, I think we see it happening today—is a return to warlord politics, so basically a return to regional strongmen throughout Tajikistan.

Rahmonov not only incorporated members of the IRP into his administration following the 1997 peace accords, he also incorporated a lot of these regional warlords into his government. Bit by bit, just like he did with the IRP, he's gotten rid of these regional warlords.

Importantly, though, he's only gotten rid of these regional warlords from the central administration. He's tried to do this in the regions, he's tried to replace influential elites at the regional level, and he's been rebuffed many times.

So I think what's indicative and, I think, informative of what's happening here is that, although Rahmonov can control the central administration, when he tries to go out into the regions he's finding that his power is quite limited.

So this tendency is already happening, and I think it may only increase. People are going to look toward the regional strongmen, the local warlords, for getting things done, rather than to the national government. And this isn't so much a mobilization movement, as we might see with Islam; it's a state implosion movement and turning inwards. And, again, this is something that's already happening.

Just in conclusion, I'd just like to point your attention to, I think, a development that was reported if not yesterday the day before, and I think this starkly illustrates these two alternative ways of expressing dissent in Tajikistan.

The Tajik press reported that two underground bunkers were uncovered in Sogd province. And what's interesting here is they're attributing this to an Islamic extremist group, but I think what we're seeing, if this is indeed the case, is the coming together of Islam and regional warlordism.

One could imagine a possible scenario, in fact much like we saw in 1992, 1997, where charismatic Islamic elites, regional strongmen, come together, creating some kind of opposition movement, or it could be even a regionally based interest movement. I'm not quite sure, but bottom line, feeling that they are exempted or ostracized from the current government and administration, uniting together to oppose the government. And I think we're already seeing signs of this.

I think it's no surprise what's going to happen on November 6th. It would be easy to dismiss this as a non-event. And I'm glad that the OSCE hasn't dismissed it as a non-event. But I would just point to the possibility that this is just the most recent and perhaps the most blatant example of how the current government is preventing opposition voices from expressing themselves. And I think if we look back to the civil war, there's some serious lessons that we should keep in mind.

Thanks.

Mr. McNAMARA. Thank you, Professor.

Mr. de Tray?

Mr. DE TRAY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

When I grew up as an economist, I was taught that economics is the dismal science, but I've decided that it's actually political science that's the dismal science. [Laughter.]

What I'd really like to do is discuss Eric's presentation, but I was asked to talk about economics, and I will talk about economics first and then hopefully we can come back to it, because I have a different view of where Tajikistan is today, as I think will be inherent in what I have to say. I don't really think I dispute many of the facts. It's the implications that Eric draws that I might not agree with. And I would stress, I'm not a political scientist, and he knows a lot more about underlying trends than I do, but it's an interesting set of issues.

As you've been told, until January of this year, I was the World Bank's country director in Central Asia, located in Almaty. And in that capacity, I spent a good deal of time in Tajikistan and Dushanbe. And while the statistics that I'm going to give you today are certifiable and up-to-date, this is a rapidly changing part of the world. And even in the 10 months since I've been gone, I have a sense that I have lost that special touch of knowing, sort of, the flavor and undercurrents of what's happening in the countries of Central Asia. So please keep that in mind, as I go through what I have to say today.

The Ambassador and Eric both have given you a little bit of a sense of Tajikistan's history, but I want to emphasize two points that I think are important about that history

that I think are fairly essential to understanding where Tajikistan is today and interpreting where it's going in the future.

One is that it is one of the few post-conflict success stories in the world. Less than a decade ago, it was at war—it was engaged in a civil war.

And when that civil war came to a close, the government inherited a country that had seen an 85-percent decline in per-capita income since the waning years of the Soviet Union. To put that in perspective, during the entire Great Depression, per-capita incomes fell only 30 percent. I'm unaware of a country that has suffered that level of consumption shock.

So there was a civil war that came to an end and a dramatic decline in consumption.

What is interesting is that, since that time, at least economically, Tajikistan has done remarkably well—admittedly from a low base. Its per-capita income in the early 2000s was around \$185, which is a misleading figure, because anyone who knows \$185 economies in Africa knows that Tajikistan is not a \$185 economy, period.

Nonetheless, the economy did very well. It grew an average of 10 percent a year from 2002 to 2005, and it is projected to grow a respectable 8 percent this year and 7 to 8 percent next year by the authorities in this area, the IMF.

One of the issues driving this growth scenario has been a massive inflow of remittances from Tajik workers working mainly in Russia, which are tough to estimate but are suggested to be on the order of a third, 30 percent to a third, of GDP. That's a really big number for remittances around the world.

But this isn't the only part of the basis for Tajikistan's success. They also have, I think, the government which maintained reasonable levels of macroeconomic stability, reasonable fiscal management, reasonable monetary management. Inflation has been in single digits. The deficit has been kept in perfectly manageable levels. And with the help of debt forgiveness on the part of the IMF and Russia, Tajikistan moved to a position of having a quite sustainable debt situation of around 40 percent of GDP.

But I want to come back to that in a minute, because I think that is something that may be eroding.

As I said, I think this is actually a pretty good story for a post-conflict country, a country that was at war with itself less than a decade ago. But, as we all know, the past in countries is not always a good predictor of the future.

And before I get to what I think are the key factors that we should all be looking at as we try to determine whether or not Tajikistan's economic future will continue on an upward trend, let me make two points that really encroach on Eric's territory but I think are nonetheless important.

On one point, Eric and I agree. There is no question about what's going to happen on November 6th, any more than there was any question last November when Kazakhstan had its elections.

But what one, sort of, thinks about the—and this is where I think Eric and I disagree—what one thinks about the, sort of, democratic aspects of this, it is my observation—and this is an observation and a personal observation—that Rahmonov has done actually a remarkable job of consolidating power. You can shade that in either direction one wants. In any case, there has been a removing of an enormous amount of insecurity in the country over the course of the last even 5 or 6 years.

When I arrived in Central Asia and in Tajikistan for the first time, Dushanbe was a non-family post for all expatriot organizations. It was difficult to travel outside of Dushanbe without some degree of concern. And it wasn't many years ago that that in Dushanbe itself one stayed on the main roads and didn't really stray too far from them.

By the time I left, none of these things were true. It was a country one could travel in widely and comfortably. Dushanbe was, in my judgment, aside from the usual—even less than the usual street crimes, perfectly reasonable place to be. It was a family post for international organizations, et cetera. A nice place, altogether. And that was only in the course of 5 years.

I think that stability was, is and will continue to be an extraordinarily important underpinning of the economic performance that we've seen in Tajikistan. I don't care how much the remittances are, I don't care how good the macroeconomic management is, if the country is unstable it's not going to grow, because people aren't going to invest, they're going to take their money elsewhere, they're going to leave.

It's presumptuous of us, as almost anything I can imagine, to suggest that I know what the Tajik people are thinking. But it was my sense from people who lived in Tajikistan that the memories of the civil war were all too real and that the one thing that the country wanted was continued stability and continued growth.

On economic growth, Tajikistan's future depends importantly on its citizens having continued access to the labor markets of Russia, but remittances cannot be the only factor driving Tajikistan's growth in the future.

I want to talk about five issues that I think deserve watching and will, in fact, have major impacts on the country's future.

First is how Tajikistan manages its national aluminium smelter, TADAZ. This is a company that utterly dominates the industrial structure of Tajikistan. It is 30 percent of the country's exports. It uses 40 percent the power and is 40 percent of the industrial production. It's a very large part of the economy.

It is also a company that's of great interest to many people outside of Tajikistan, particularly RUSAL in Russia, the Russian aluminium company. And there are plans afoot to renovate it, which it desperately needs and which my understanding is the World Bank continues to think is a good idea, but also to expand aluminium smelting in Tajikistan.

I think the economics of expansion is an issue that needs to be looked at very carefully by the government and by investors. Because it was my view, when I was looking at these things as country director, that the one thing that makes the aluminium industry successful in Tajikistan is very cheap hydropower. But there is no more hydropower without new construction, and new construction is going to produce power that's much more expensive than the current power at a price that would be over the price that these aluminium companies would need to make their activities economically viable in Tajikistan.

Second, and related, is Tajikistan's hydroelectric potential, of which it's now using less than 10 percent. It's a country designed to produce hydroelectric power. It's a great country. Not many environmental issues. Nice, big, gorgeous. And dams with no people that can be relatively easily dammed and create a run-of-the-river hydropower system. So, huge generation potential. Hungry neighbors to the east and the south and, to some extent, to the west and maybe even to the north. And a major element in President Rahmonov's vision for the country going forward.

But how these deals are done is going to make an enormous difference as to how much of the benefits of them go to Tajikistan and how much of them go elsewhere in the process.

A third issue that needs to be watched carefully is how Tajikistan manages its so-called farm debt issue. When the large state farms in Tajikistan were converted to private farms, the debts that these state farms had accumulated were divvied out among the new private-sector owners.

We've done—"we," I'm sorry, I still use the "we" term for the World Bank—they've done, with the Asian Development Bank in the lead, a lot of work to look at this debt. And it is estimated that on the order of half of it is fictitious, based on overpricing of invoices, overpricing of goods and services, and so forth.

This issue has to be resolved in farmers are going to get on their economic feet and do what they need to do to diversify Tajikistan's economy.

Fourth, Tajikistan is attracting new partners—well, some old, some new. Russia continues to be very interested in Tajikistan and is investing a lot in the country. Mr. Putin was a regular visitor, is a regular visitor to Tajikistan, one of Mr. Rahmonov's strongest supporters. RAO-UES is a prime mover in creating and finishing Sangtuda II, which is a major hydro project started under the Soviet system.

But the Chinese are coming in strong. They've just signed \$600 million worth of Export-Import Bank credit for two powerline projects and a road project. Anecdotal evidence that I've heard suggests that at least the electricity-transmission projects are actually pretty decent projects. There's some question about the road projects.

But there are two issues that this raises. One is how fast it's eating up the gap between Tajikistan's current debt-carrying capacity and its maximum debt-carrying capacity. This, more or less, brings Tajikistan back to where it was before all of the debt forgiveness. Six hundred million dollars is about 20 percent of Tajikistan's GDP. So they're rapidly losing the window to create more debt.

And the second is whether or not these projects are, in some sense, properly vetted from an economic rate-of-return standpoint. Are they good projects, or are they political projects?

But the final area, and it's one that I don't think has come up yet, which may be the issue that dominates all others, is the drug trade. I think the single most threatening aspect for all of Central Asia is the drug production in Afghanistan. Tajikistan has a 1,000-kilometer border with Afghanistan. I think it's the longest of any country in the world.

It is virtually inconceivable how much money is being generated by this trade relative to the gross domestic products of all the countries of Central Asia, with the possible exception of Kazakhstan. The corrosive effects of this money have already been strongly felt in the Kyrgyz Republic, with the removal of the last president and what's happening in the Osh region and so forth.

And it's not going to go away any time soon. All the efforts in Afghanistan to—alternative cropping is not going to do what it needs to do, and the drug trade will continue to occur. I think it's the single most important challenge facing the region and facing Tajikistan.

Let me close by saying that I think Tajikistan is a tough development challenge. It's 93 percent mountainous. There's a tough neighborhood. It has a population, 40 percent

of which are under the age of 15. But it has done a remarkable job, given its starting point, of finding its footing economically. I think, with patience and a bit of the long vision, it could continue to hold together.

Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Thank you.

Mr. Bowyer?

Mr. BOWYER. Thank you.

Members of the Commission, guests and fellow colleagues, I am honored to appear before you today to discuss the current state of electoral democracy in Tajikistan and the assistance efforts supported by the United States to help Tajikistan meet its international obligations as it prepared to hold national elections to the office of president on November 6th.

I'm speaking to you from the perspective as a representative of a non-governmental organization funded, in part, by the U.S. Government, which has been working in Central Asia, including Tajikistan, since 1994. And in that time, my organization, IFES, has worked with all stakeholders in the political process, including the Elections Commission, political parties, non-governmental actors and others.

This upcoming election represents the fourth such Presidential poll in Tajikistan's post-Soviet history and the second since the official conclusion of the civil war in 1997. Since that time, the country has also held two national and local legislative elections, the most recent coming in February of last year, and a national referendum which was held in 2003.

In assessing the current state of affairs in the country leading up to this election, I believe it is important to put our hands around some basic demographic information.

Of Tajikistan's population of 7.3 million, less than half are eligible to vote, but perhaps more importantly, nearly 50 percent of all citizens are 15 years of age or younger—a stark demographic reality that requires nurturing to create a functioning and sustainable participatory democracy through engagement of citizens in the electoral process and all facets of decisionmaking in order for Tajikistan to realize its national potential.

This young generation has little direct recollection of the civil war and virtually no recollection whatsoever of the Soviet period. The need to give them an opportunity to make their voices heard through democratic means is obvious. The alternatives to this are equally as obvious, though potentially ominous.

Interest in these elections among young persons, who have traditionally been the least active group of voters, is growing. I've been told by our colleagues here at the Embassy, in fact, that they have received numerous requests from Tajiks studying in the United States to be able to cast ballots by mail, as they are unable to travel to the official out-of-country voting centers being set up here in the United States, in New York and Washington.

Of course, while voting by mail is not yet an option, the point is that young Tajik citizens, both outside and inside the country, are taking more notice of the elections. They're asking questions and demanding information.

This should be seen as a positive for Tajikistan and for democracy, as rising expectations among a well-informed, media-savvy, young electorate with unprecedented contact with the outside, who are more critical of the information they receive, can only help but advance the cause of democracy in that country.

I say this with a caveat, for it is imperative that the Government of Tajikistan continue to invest in the education of its citizens, young and old alike, so that people not only participate in the elections but that they participate in an informed manner, knowing not only who the candidates or parties are and what they represent, but also understanding the system of government and appreciating what they are voting for and why.

In this, I greatly encourage the United States and the international donor community to continue, and in fact increase, its support of mandatory, school-based civic education as part of the national curriculum for the growing youth population and voter education at all levels, in both times of elections and in between election cycles.

Confidence in the system of elections has been an issue among opposition parties during previous votes and certainly remains an issue in the upcoming poll. In addition, international observer contingents, most notably the OSCE, have outlined shortcomings in the process which are well-known.

As a representative of a non-partisan international assistance organization which has been working in Tajikistan with the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda since 1994, allow me to provide some perspective on the preparations presently under way.

It is my impression that the international perception of how these elections are run is exceptionally important to the Government of Tajikistan. We know about the continued shortcomings in the process, ranging from the continued practice, dating back to Soviet times, of "negative voting"; stringent signature requirements for all Presidential candidates; the overall media environment; insufficient appeals process; and some overall holes in the electoral legislation.

We have discussed the situation regarding the lack of domestic monitors and a tight timeline for the registration of international observers. And we are aware of the statements made by some opposition who are boycotting the elections and the splintering effect taking place within opposition parties.

I do, however, believe the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda is working to improve the administrative procedures in accordance with the recommendations made by both domestic sources and the international community, which may seem small on the one hand but, in fact, represent significant steps forward on the other, such as: providing opposition candidates with free time on state television; mandating that protocols of final results be posted immediately at the polling stations after they are compiled; greater adherence to ballot issuance procedures; publicly documenting voters who are out of the country for work-related reasons on election day; the right for political parties and non-governmental organizations to nominate members to district and precinct election commissions; as well as a new and energetic voter outreach and information campaign; and consideration of enhanced security measures, such as voter inking, which may be implemented in future elections.

At present, the Elections Commission is conducting a nationwide training for members of district and precinct election commissions, a project that our organization has been involved with through a grant by the U.S. State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, which involves as well publishing information bulletins, such as this one, titled, "100 Questions and Answers About the Presidential Elections," in Tajik and Russian.

As with any such improvement in procedures, of course, it will be important how, in fact, they are ultimately implemented and whether or not there exists the political will to do so.

Focusing attention on the technical aspects of the present process, I can say that during the 2005 elections, and certainly this year as well, the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda has been exceptionally open to cooperation, to discussion, and accepting recommendations that will increase transparency in the elections and build public confidence in the results.

The reality is that the CCER, as a state body, is a relatively small unit presiding over a vast constituency of district and precinct election commissions. Its resources are limited. It is still striving for recognition as a distinct and independent entity. It has presided over elections in an environment of peace and stability for less than 10 years and continues to face challenges in transition, as does the country itself.

And I believe we in the international community need to recognize from whence Tajikistan has emerged and what they have transcended to reach the point that they are currently at. We must indeed continue to hold them to the highest international standards of open and fair elections. We must, as well, consider the context of Tajikistan's development and brief history of independence when rendering judgment.

We must also continue to recognize the strategic importance of Tajikistan as a partner of the United States in so many areas.

Tajikistan needs our support to help it continue developing democratic institutions that will rise to the challenge of a growing population. And we must recognize the opportunity cost of failing to do so. Other regional hegemony with direct influence over the country, not to mention non-state actors operating in the region, do not necessarily share Tajikistan's stated commitment to democracy.

As soon as these elections come to pass, we should be working long-term to help Tajikistan for the next parliamentary elections in 5 years' time, with legal reform initiatives, capacity- and institution-building, regional networking, civic education activities, support for political pluralism, and technical upgrades.

There is an opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the process that will continue encouraging democratic reform, working at both the highest levels of decisionmaking and at the grassroots level with the decisionmakers of tomorrow.

I emphasize, in particular, the latter of these two, the young persons of Tajikistan. The future of democracy is in their hands, and we have the great possibility, if not responsibility, with our colleagues at all levels in the country, to help young persons develop the skills they will need to build democratic traditions.

I encourage everyone to support continued constructive engagement with Tajikistan for the long term, to show "tough love" when it is required, but to equally show praise.

We must embrace Tajikistan as a strategic partner, one, symbolized by its great poet, Rudaki, holding in high regard its truest friends and as its most cherished idols knowledge and experience.

Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Thank you very much.

Just to make a couple of observations—and then we'll have some time also for questions and answers and participation from the audience.

There will be a full transcription of today's proceedings available on the Commission's Web site, which again is www.csce.gov. That should be available tomorrow afternoon.

Certainly, from the discussion, we can see that there is a lot at stake in the upcoming elections. For our part, we generally try to avoid comparisons of one participating State with another but look at the trends within the individual country of interest or concern.

So, certainly we have a diversity of views that have been expressed today. And at the end of the day, we at the Commission have the long-established OSCE commitments that Tajikistan has agreed to as the gauge for the trends that will be observed in these elections.

It's also important because the OSCE, in following elections, issues very concrete recommendations. And one of the things that is of particular interest to us also is the extent to which a participating State will actually act on those recommendations.

The Ambassador has asked to make a couple of, I think, perhaps rebutting points, very brief, and then we will turn to questions from the audience. And, again, please come forward, state your name, any affiliation, and try to keep your question quite succinct.

A few moments, Ambassador.

Amb. ZARIPOV. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Really I would just like make brief remarks. First off, I would like to thank all my colleagues for their assessments, for their suggestions. I just would like to make two remarks regarding my distinguished friend, Professor McGlinchey, regarding prisoners of leader of oppositions.

Three persons which he mentioned—one of them just from opposition, two of them from government side—was, you know, each civil war has consequences, problems of warlords. This person, Mr. Iskandarov, was opposition warlord, and allegation against him not depends to his political ends. He, as warlord, made a lot of—even kill innocent people. The reason he prisoner was this reason.

And to another person [inaudible] was the warlord from government side, Mr. Salimov and Mr. Mirzoyev. They also are prisoners.

And regarding these blogs, Web blogs: Yes, really five Web blogs were closed on 9th of October, and 11 October they were opened. Just for 3 days they were closed.

And regarding a general openness of country, if our opposition is unable to do a thing or to express its vision, during this year we have received even in the United States all leader of opposition for several time. They have expressed their visions here in press. And we have lot of independent newspapers where they able to express their visions.

Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Sure. I guess, just adding a personal observation, it's one thing—and certainly it's welcome—that individuals, including opposition leaders, are able to exercise their right to leave the country and to speak outside of the country, but it's certainly a question in terms of their abilities inside the country to effectively get their views expressed and shared.

I guess one question that comes to mind, if any of the panelists can address this, is, very often, I know there are questions regarding so-called administrative resources. And the situation, I'm not sure exactly what that entails in Tajikistan, but perhaps somebody, one of the experts following the electoral processes might be able to address that.

But I don't want to go any further without opening up to questions from the audience. So, please, the microphone is here. Please come forward, identify yourself, any affiliation, and try to pose your question succinctly.

QUESTIONER. Thank you. Isabella Tomarovsky, Emerging Markets Communications. Thank you very much for your presentations.

One thing that surprised me a little bit is that nobody said anything about corruption in Tajikistan.

My company represents a company, a Tajik company, Ansol, in the U.K. high court. That company has been battling RUSAL for quite a while, and in the course of recent litigation some substantial evidence was entered about spectacular levels of corruption on the part of President Rahmonov, specifically with respect to TADAZ.

In that regard, I'm wondering, why is it that the World Bank continues to work with President Rahmonov and specifically helping renovate TADAZ when these levels of corruption are asserted?

How come our policy—and, of course, we all know that President Bush has recently made it a priority to fight kleptocracy internationally, and yet in this case nothing is being done. Is this all in the name of stability and fight against terrorism? And if so, how clear-eyed are we about this policy?

Thank you very much.

Mr. DE TRAY. I'm the last person who should answer this, because I no longer speak for the World Bank. In fact, my answer is going to be you're going to have to ask the World Bank why they continue to work there. I can tell you why we continued to work there when I was in charge.

First, I mean, I think as the Ambassador himself would admit, there's a serious corruption problem in Tajikistan.

I've had the dubious honor of working in many corrupt countries. I was country director in Indonesia for 5 years, I worked in Vietnam, so forth. And I think you either find ways of working in these counties that are good for their people, or you get out of the development business. This is not a 0–1, this is a continuum. And, I mean, that's a very philosophical answer to a very specific question.

I don't know what the details of the particular case you're talking about are, and I wouldn't want to comment on them anyways. But, as you can well imagine, there are two sides to every story. And I'm not suggesting I know either of those sides very clearly.

The management of—I will tell you one thing. We, under my directorship at the World Bank, pushed very hard to get Mr. Rahmonov to understand that more transparency in the management of TADAZ would not only be good for TADAZ, but good for him. And we eventually managed to get him to have TADAZ audited under international standards that were overseen by the Bank. We had to approve the auditors and the process and so forth, though the auditing was done for the government.

And I think Mr. Rahmonov himself was amazed at the information he got out of that and was quite upset, because it wasn't—I will not comment on what Mr. Rahmonov is doing, but other people were doing things that Mr. Rahmonov didn't like very much, strangely enough. [Laughter.]

So we hope—you know, development is not great leaps forward. It's small steps. By the way, so is democracy. It's small steps over a long period of time. And we hope that slowly, these little examples of how transparency and modern corporate governance in

places like TADAZ actually help improve efficiency, draw in investments. Making the pie bigger for everybody, whether they're taking parts of it or it's going to the right sources, is a good thing for a country. And then we can work slowly from that to buildup more effective corporate management. We pushed very hard for an independent board for TADAZ and so forth.

So, you know, TADAZ, as I said, is an immensely large fraction part of Tajikistan's economy. You either give up on Tajikistan or try to figure out how to fix TADAZ. And we were on the "fix TADAZ" side.

Mr. McNAMARA. Ambassador?

Amb. ZARIPOV. Thank you very much.

Unfortunately, corruption, it's not just privilege of my country. As you know, corruption very widespread in all of the world.

With this particular question, Ansol is an aluminium plant. These consequences of fight against corruption in particular plant by government, which former director of this aluminium plant left to Great Britain with whole sum of money around \$130 million, with Ansol also communicated. And this reason is consequences fighting against corruption [inaudible] equation, this problem.

Thank you.

Mr. BOWYER. If I could add something in the electoral context, certainly when you think of corruption in that sense, you think of something like about box-stuffing or what have you.

I think in the last couple of years there have been great efforts taken to improve the administration of elections at the local level through a number of means. But the main project presently taking place, as a continuation from 2005, is an ethical and procedural training for poll workers.

Now, there have been some improvements, as suggested, that are sent out to increase the transparency in how ballots are issued, how they're counted certainly, how they're recorded.

One of these—and it may seem small, but it's actually a pretty big deal—is the use of transparent ballot boxes, as well as, I mentioned earlier, the posting of the protocols at the end of the vote count, which was always a big deal before because an observer didn't have the right to get a copy of the protocol, as they do now, and then be able to match what is posted there with what is officially reported then later by the Central Commission.

So there's a recognition that there need to be some improvements, yet there are also some somewhat more ingrained traditions that die hard, such as the proxy voting which is something that has been an issue for many, many years, not only in Tajikistan but all the former Soviet Republics.

I wanted to briefly—it's an interesting segue—to Ron's questions very quickly about administrative resources, particularly as regards elections.

The Central Commission is not particularly well-funded. Not too long ago, they were moved into their own building. They were given a new press center, which was a major upgrade. But at the same time, until 2005, they hadn't held a national meeting with all chairs of the district election commissions throughout the country.

As in many state budgets, election commissions are not terribly well-funded. Perhaps in time of elections, there's a spike in that, but typically they do exist on meager resources.

And I would argue the same is true even in Kazakhstan, which has, certainly, a lot of revenue to work with. They have a nicer building, nice chairs and offices. But if you look at the ability to project control over the expanse of the country, it's, as well, somewhat limited. And it's a function of resources.

Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Yes, when I mentioned administrative resources, I was not talking about the resources to conduct the elections, but the use or abuse by the incumbent of the apparatus of the state to support his or her candidacy.

So maybe you could address that later.

There's another question?

QUESTIONER. Grant Smith from the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute. My own impression, observing what's been going on in Tajikistan, has been that the election day administration has improved. We'll certainly know more after the current elections, and we will have the OSCE report on that. But that there have been, and perhaps more, problems with the less direct methods of influencing elections, over the years. And those would have to do with manipulation of candidacies, manipulation of access to the media, which is improving apparently this year.

But it seems to me, this year there's something that I'd appreciate the panel's comment on how important it is, because, for the first time, you have splits in parties in Tajikistan. Now, in other countries in which I've worked, sometimes splits in parties have been accommodated by saying, "OK, the parties split. Now there are two parties where there used to be one. One is, you know, the Democratic Party this-wing, and the other is the Democratic Party that-wing." But that isn't what's happening in Tajikistan right now.

And this has happened in, I believe, two of the opposition parties. However, these aren't the key opposition parties. They aren't the opposition parties with the seats in parliament. They're that second rung of opposition parties.

Is this important? Is it significant? What does it hold for the future?

After all, in a sense, you could look at this year's elections as practice for the next parliamentary elections, which could be significant. The outcome of this election, everybody agrees pretty much on what it's going to be. But the procedures, both on election day and, more importantly I think, the pre-election procedures, are important for the future and for future elections where they may matter.

Thank you.

Mr. McGLINCHEY. Thanks, Ambassador Smith, for your comments.

As far as the splits in parties, I think your observation that these aren't the major parties in parliament, I think, partly answers the question. And as far as opposition parties in parliament, I think we have, what, seven opposition members in parliament right now. It's less than 10 percent of the parliament; 90 percent is PDP.

So, I mean, it's interesting to watch. We've seen some fragmentation in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. And I think what's happened in those cases is, you have a process—whether or not these cases can inform Tajikistan is another question—but you have a

process of parties breaking apart and then coming together under these broad umbrella coalitions. And so, perhaps, if that were to happen, that could be potentially a good thing for Tajikistan if an umbrella coalition would form.

But getting back to this question of administrative resources, I think this is actually critical for the Tajik case. And really, this is where Tajikistan differs remarkably from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and to a certain extent in Kyrgyzstan as well. The Tajik Government really has less access to these administrative resources, certainly than Kazakhstan does and, I think we could even argue, in the case of Uzbekistan, although Uzbekistan's finding increasing challenges.

And this causality that I tried to lay out today about dismal gloom and doom—which, in part, by the way, is to spur people to act and think about these things, rather than just say this is necessarily going to happen. But because the Tajik Government does not have a really viable patronage system, to the extent that Kazakhstan does, to the extent that even Uzbekistan does, this is why the control at the local level is so weak.

You might be able to get the vote count deliver that you want, but as far as actual your administrator doing what you want to do, doing what Dushanbe says that you want to do, as far as the economy is concerned, as far as any social policy is concerned, you don't have that capacity in Tajikistan.

So when I was talking about warlord politics, I think this is really where the threat comes, because there is not central government capacity beyond Dushanbe.

Now, I think you're right, it's safer outside Dushanbe than it ever has been. But at the same time, these regional strongmen have immense access to drug profits, to drug resources, which far eclipse the administrative resources of the central government. And this is something that's going to continue, I fear, pulling apart the government.

Mr. DE TRAY. I just want to add an anecdote, because I think it actually underscores the point that Eric just made.

When Kazakhstan was going into its election phase, I happened to have an opportunity to meet with the president's, I think, most trusted advisor in Astana. And we knew each other reasonably well, so we were having a heart-to-heart talk. This would've been something like September of last year.

And I said to him, "You have yourself a real problem with these elections coming up." He said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, if your president wins too much of the vote, it's not going to look good for your president. You know, he wants to be a world figure. He wants to be a real figure on the international stage. He [inaudible] presidency in the future, et cetera." And this gentleman said, "You're absolutely right. And we have made it very clear that, by sending the word down to all of the (inaudible) people, that"—and I quote—"57 percent and 75 percent of the same number don't mess with this election." And I said to him, "It doesn't matter what you think. People that are hearing this are going to say, 'Fine for the guy next door, but I'm going to make sure that I'm at the front of the queue for the patronage system.' And he's going to get 91 percent of the vote."

The exit polls said that he got what people predicted he was going to get, roughly 70 percent. He was going to win, no question. He was—"popular" is not the right word. He was a—going to win. OK? This is a country that's got—he's got the money to buy anything he wants to.

So 70 percent was a reasonable number. It would've been actually a great number for him, in terms of his stature in the international community. But they could not control the patronage system down on the bottom, and 91 percent was the answer.

QUESTIONER. Hi. Oksana Macarov, with Emerging Markets Communications.

And my question is, so once Rahmonov gets re-elected, he's pretty much going to stay in power until 2020. And this is an awfully long time. So does the United States have any levers or any kind of way to ensure that Tajikistan is actually going to stay on a path to democracy and that corruption is eradicated once President Rahmonov is home-free?

Mr. DE TRAY. I can't resist. As soon as the United States eradicates corruption, Tajikistan will. [Laughter.]

Can I make one other comment? I actually think the most important issue is what happens to Putin in his next election. I think that is far more interesting and far more important in the political outcomes of Central Asia than any pressure the United States can bring on Central Asia.

But I'd very much be interested in Eric's views on that statement.

Mr. MCGLINCHEY. The 2020 comment, I think, by the way—and I don't mean to keep banging on the same drum, but I'll do it one more time. If you're in the opposition and you see 2020, you're just going to start pulling your hair out. So this is, kind of, the timeline that people in the opposition are looking at.

And this is part of the reason why, even though people are fed up with civil war, it doesn't take that many people to start a civil war, or at least conflict the way we saw it in Kyrgyzstan. I mean, this is, I think, what people are looking at, and this is where the frustration is coming from.

I mean, you say 2020, even for me, I just cringe when I hear that. And it's not that I don't think Tajikistan has taken steps forward toward democracy. I just fear that Tajikistan has taken steps backward more recently. So I agree, these are small steps forward.

As far as levers, you know, you don't want to overestimate the agency of the United States. One thing I would say, though, there's a lot of people who have been applauding Craig Murray, who you may know as the former British Ambassador to Uzbekistan. And basically Craig Murray said, "We had to wash our hands of Uzbekistan because this was a nasty regime."

Well, he was right, it was a nasty regime, but in washing your hands of Uzbekistan—and, you know, I saw this, this is first-hand, my colleagues in Uzbekistan, human rights workers—when countries like the United States or Great Britain walk away from these morally difficult regimes, they cutoff the one lifeline that human rights workers have.

And so, I guess what I'd say is, no matter how problematic we find these governments, you can't just walk away. Because when you do walk away, your moral conscience—Craig Murray's moral conscience might be eased and he might be happier, but the reality is that person who's working in Karsi or that person who's working in Kokhan or Garm or wherever, that human rights worker or that democracy activist has lost his avenue or her avenue of support.

So what I'd say is we can't overestimate our agency, "we" being the West. At the same time, walking away, we know what's going to happen if you do walk away. And unfortunately, it doesn't tell you that we can bring about some kind of positive change.

But at least we can help those actors within Tajikistan who are pressing for reform. So I'd say definitely stay but just temper your expectations.

Amb. ZARIPOV. You know, I think we are more speaking about 2020, but let's speak about 2006. It's closer and more important. Because who knows what will be happened in future? We should be concentrated in 2006 better.

Mr. BOWYER. I would agree, as well, with the comments that 2020 is a long ways off. But there needs to have continued strategic engagement on the U.S. side. Uzbekistan's a good example of what can happen when that is cutoff.

But, again, there is a rising majority of young persons who are going to have increased expectations that will have to be met long before 2020 comes. And it's imperative that the government realize this, recognize it, invest in education, create opportunities for young persons, building democracy as well.

I would say that there is, obviously, an opportunity cost for the United States in disengaging because there are actors there who don't care what happens in terms of the democratic process who are already in the country and willing to assume a role that the United States has been very constructively playing. So I think one needs to look at it from that angle, as well.

Mr. DE TRAY. If I could just add one other point that just follows on Anthony's point. While I will disagree in the short term with Eric on how tense the country is, if growth falters, the whole story changes.

I mean, there's this huge group of young people—half the population is under 18; 40 percent is under 15—that need jobs, that need a future, that need hope.

If the country continues to grow at 8 or 10 percent in a legitimate way, and it's diversified, the remittances continue to flow, maybe the lid can be kept on the pressure-cooker. But if growth falters, all bets are off; it's a different story going forward.

QUESTIONER. I'm Michael Ochs with the Helsinki Commission staff. I'd like to pose my question to Dennis de Tray and to Eric McGlinchey specifically, but if any of the panelists have anything to say I'd be interested in hearing it.

You said that economic development is a long-term process, and the same is true for democratization. And that's a perfectly reasonable position. I don't think anyone would argue with that, especially when you consider what kind of countries these are and what kind of environment they emerged from.

But if you put this Tajikistan in a larger context, in the political context of post-Soviet Central Asia, I'm very curious how you, either of you, or all of you, imagine, even assuming a benign economic forecast, even assuming that things work out reasonably well economically, how do you change, even over a long time, the kind of political system that has developed in places like Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan—forget about Turkmenistan?

In all of which there is a hyper-power executive branch, very highly personalized political systems, led by people who are surrounded by family members, friends, et cetera, all of whom have a very deep and profound stake in the continuation of the status quo, who, by virtue of being able to control so much of the economic wealth of all these countries, can buy off everybody else or suppress any sort of dissent or alternative political perspectives, parties, candidates, et cetera.

I was struck by some of your CVs, since you've come from Indonesia and Vietnam as well. What reason is there for us to hope that, say, in 20 years, that we're not going

to see the same thing that we're seeing today, except countries run by sons or daughters of the people who are in power today? Why should we believe that there's any real chance that things will develop in a more democratic direction?

Mr. DE TRAY. If I had the answer to that, I would've won last year's Nobel Prize. [Laughter.]

I think it's a beautifully put ultimate question for countries like this. I mean, one of the—I've had the privilege of working in an extraordinarily interesting set of countries. But they've all had this transition problem.

I was in Indonesia when Suharto came down. I was at its peak and at its trough, in some sense. I watched Communist Vietnam struggle with all of its successes, in some sense. And it was a remarkable experience to move from Communist Vietnam to non-Communist Central Asia. One of my stump-speech statements was that 50 years of war is much less debilitating on mentality than 70 years of communism.

But I think really the only answer I have—and it's an extremely unsatisfactory answer—is that we always get the timeframe wrong on these issues. It will happen. It will happen in China. It will happen in Vietnam. You know, it took 200 years; that's a small part of history for most nations. And we're asking it to happen in five. That's a dangerous thing to do.

Elections don't democracies make. They're a starting point; you begin to build. But it is a long-term, stumbling process, with ups and downs and troughs and hills and pot-holes and everything else.

And at least my message to my development colleagues—and it would be to anybody who also is interested in the democratization of these countries—is be patient and stay the course. It is going to be a long-term process. It will take many failures and continuing re-engagements.

But it's not that the model is wrong, either the development model or the democracy model. It's that, you know, democracy is not like a book of laws. It's a culture. It's a thought process. It's a whole mental state. And it takes a long time to develop it. The accountabilities of a mature democracy are not something that come about because people have elections, as the Philippines and Thailand and other places have shown for many, many years.

So, there is no better model. But it needs patience too, and humility. Because just because it's good for us doesn't mean necessarily people will see it as good for them.

It's a very complicated process, which is a very unsatisfactory answer but the best I can do.

Mr. MCGLINCHEY. I think, in this crowd, you're on firm ground, Michael. But I think if we were to have a crowd of Latin Americans with us and we took this crowd back 60, 70 years, you might have also been on firm ground and then suddenly something changed. Now, there's a lot of complex causality that went into that change in Latin America, but there's also a lot of surprise.

Similarly, if we had a crowd like this just 25 years ago and a bunch of academics or policy people talking about the USSR, who could have thought the USSR would change? But it did. I mean, one could argue that it hasn't really changed all that much, with Putin coming back to power, but still, there are substantial changes.

And there have been multiple books written about why it changed, and there's multiple theories about why it changed. But I think what it does instruct us is, despite the

pessimism of people like me and you and the kind of patronage models that we look at and see, which are so firmly ingrained, things can change.

And one thing I would say, it probably isn't communism, it's institutionalized patronage, which has been extant in this area for ages. So it's not 70 years of communism, it's this patronage system which is so hard to get around. But other societies have done it, and the causality behind that is incredibly difficult to unravel.

The one thing that I would say is Tajikistan, as with other countries in Central Asia, has a very strong human capital potential. I mean, it's a very educated population, which gives Tajikistan, if one buys into the development model—I'm not quite sure I do buy into the development model—but at least you have this precondition that's necessary for reform. You have an educated population that can understand and that really desires this reform.

We've done public opinion polls in Tajikistan, and it comes out again and again there's a sophisticated knowledge of what democracy is. Perhaps not our knowledge, but there is that knowledge. And maybe, over time, there will be a change in that direction.

The causality of how we're going to get there, though, is anybody's guess.

Amb. ZARIPOV. You see, when we discussed about development in Tajikistan and the future of Tajikistan, we should consider several things very carefully.

For example, if we're comparing this election and election in 1994, you will be held very significant development which might be no country in past suffered [inaudible] very short terms.

And second, I really agree with my colleague regarding of knowledge of population. We have 88 percent of literacy. Most population—you should look how steps of government is going. You go and buy something in education sector or in visa issues or [inaudible] currently political parties or movements.

Everything in Tajikistan open. We have now a lot, lot of our students in United States, Western countries, outside of country. All of them will be have his own experience and knowledge. It will be helpful.

In this realm, if I'm very optimistic, situation will be continued not in worse direction. It will always will be continued in positive direction.

Thank you.

Mr. McNAMARA. Any further questions?

If not, then we certainly appreciate the panelists being with us this afternoon, and for the audience and your helpful questions. And certainly I think we all come away with greater insights.

Could I ask one—because I thought there was one discrepancy, and this was with respect to the question of observation of the elections. The Ambassador, I think you had mentioned a figure of 100,000 domestic observers?

Amb. ZARIPOV. Oh, I will tell you again. It will be 30 long-term OSCE observers. It will be 100 short-term. And it will be 18,000 local observers.

Mr. McNAMARA. 18,000?

Amb. ZARIPOV. 18,000, yes.

Mr. McNAMARA. OK. Because I thought there was some discrepancy as to whether there would be domestic observation. Perhaps I misheard.

Mr. BOWYER. No, indeed there is a question over registration of domestic observers, and that not just any interested individual can become accredited. One needs to be part of a domestic association that gains formal accreditation for the purpose of observing.

In the past, there haven't been non-affiliated domestic monitors. There have been trusted faces. There have been political party observers and so forth.

It's something that represents an improvement. And if they do, indeed, achieve those numbers, it would be quite extraordinary.

Of course, the issue then becomes that these observers need to be trained and need to know their rights and need to be able to, if something untoward is witnessed, be able to have available a process of grievance adjudication that is fully in accordance with international law. And at this point, that's something that is somewhat untested. So we'll see in these elections.

But certainly greater observation, of domestic observers particularly, who are the most important observers because they can cover vastly greater amounts of polling stations than international observers, is a step forward.

Mr. McNAMARA. OK. Thank you very much.

[Whereupon the briefing ended at 3:42 p.m.]

APPENDICES

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. SAM BROWNBACK, CHAIRMAN, COMMISSION ON SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE

Located between China, Afghanistan and the rest of Central Asia, Tajikistan is on the southern edge of the OSCE, an organization comprised of 56 nations stretching from Vancouver to Vladivostok bound together by mutually shared commitments on political freedoms, respect for human rights, security and economic development. Since achieving independence, Tajikistan has been on a difficult journey into this community of values, and its progress towards democratization is important to the United States.

Soon after the collapse of USSR, Tajikistan was rocked by a civil war. Fighting raged from 1992–1997 and resulted in the deaths of between 50,000 to 100,000 people, not to mention over one million refugees. In addition, Tajikistan's fragile infrastructure was seriously damaged, wreaking havoc on an economy struggling to find its feet. The war ended in 1997 under a UN armistice that created a power-sharing agreement among the warring parties, including the only legal Islamic party in Central Asia.

Despite the gains achieved since the peace agreement signed almost 10 years ago, as Chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I am concerned about Tajikistan's commitment to democratic reforms and human rights. Imomali Rakhmonov has served as president since 1994 and has solidified his power, effectively pushing any effective political opposition out of Tajikistan's political space. The last presidential election fell short of OSCE commitments, as did the parliamentary elections last year. Should President Rakhmonov win again on November 6, constitutional amendments passed last year allow him to potentially remain in office until 2020. While there are multiple candidates, the major opposition leaders have experienced significant harassment from authorities and most have decided not to run.

Problematic actions against opposition leaders include:

- the sentencing of Muhammadruzi Iskandarov, the former head of the Democratic Party, to 23 years in prison and allegations of prison mistreatment
- slander charges brought before his death against the late Said Abdullo Nuri, Chairman of the Islamic Renaissance Party
- the repeated threatening of criminal penalties against the Chairman of the Socialist Democratic Party, Rahmatullo Zoyirov

Recent decrees by the Tajik Central Commission on Elections and Referenda addressed some election system deficiencies, but questions remain about the follow through necessary to ensure a free and fair election. Full implementation of CCER decrees is critical, as ensuring a free and fair election involves not only a sound election law, but vigilant enforcement of its regulations. It would also be positive if non-partisan election monitors could observe Precinct Election Commissions, and if all political parties could participate on Precinct Election Commissions, regardless of whether they have candidates running.

It is true the government provided opposition parties free time on state television, but it has also limited the ability of independent media outlets to operate freely. Several newspapers have been closed, and the Ministry of Culture reportedly wants all media

organizations to re-register by the end of December. The Helsinki Commission will be monitoring whether this re-registration effort is used to punish outlets that are critical of the president on the conduct of the election.

To be sure, Tajikistan has made progress. However, only through free and fair elections that allow Tajik citizens to freely express their political views can the country truly consolidate these gains.

Other issues are also of concern. There was talk earlier this year of a new law on NGOs that would limit their ability to operate freely. We are troubled by the problems the National Democratic Institute has experienced with registration and hope that when it does reapply to register, it will not encounter any difficulties. Also, if the draft NGO law is resurrected, the government should work closely with the OSCE Mission and U.S. Embassy to ensure it meets international standards.

Maintaining respect for religious freedoms in Tajikistan is likewise very important. Many were therefore troubled by the first draft of a new religion law released earlier this year, which fell well short of OSCE commitments. Particularly troublesome were the excessive powers given to government agencies allowing them to interfere in the internal affairs of religious organizations, such as limits on mosque construction and bans on proselytism. If a draft is considered again, I urge Tajik authorities to continue working with the OSCE Mission and OSCE Panel of Experts on Freedom of Religion to ensure that any draft is fully inline with OSCE commitments. Another area of concern is the increase in arrests of members of independent Muslim groups and the banning of the hijab in some schools.

There are conflicting reports on whether Dushanbe's synagogue will be spared demolition. Considering Tajikistan's unique relationship with its Jewish community, I hope Tajik authorities will work with the small community to find a just solution to this situation.

In closing, Tajikistan has accomplished much in this decade of peace. However, only through political openness, religious freedoms and respect for human rights can Tajikistan's future success be assured.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF H.E. KHAMROKHON ZARIPOV, AM- BASSADOR FROM THE REPUBLIC OF TAJIKISTAN TO THE UNITED STATES

The Republic of Tajikistan is a sovereign, democratic, rule of law, secular state. A head of the country is a president. The president is elected in a democratic, free, fair, direct and general election for the term of 7 years. According to the Constitutional Law “On the Election of the President of Tajikistan” from 1999, any citizen of Tajikistan, who is 35 years old, speaks the official language, and has the residency of the country for the past 10 years, can be nominated for Presidency. When more than half of voters vote for a candidate, the president is considered to be elected.

There are 8 legal political parties;

- Agrarian Party
- Party of Economic Reforms
- People Democratic Party
- Social Democratic Party
- Communist Party
- Party of Islamic Renaissance
- Socialist Party
- Democratic Party

Five candidates are racing for the upcoming presidential election on November 6th.

- The Party of Economic Reforms nominated candidate Olimjon Boboyev (was born on January 5, 1952 in Hissar citi), Head of the Tajik Transportation Institute, academician.

- The Tajik Socialist Party nominated Abduhalim Gafforov (was born on December 24, 1951 in Panjakent district of the Sogd region), Director of the Professional Skills Upgrade Center for tutors, candidate of pedagogical science.

- Amir Karakulov (was born on July 15, 1942 in Surkhandarya region of the Republic of Uzbekistan), Director of a Research Center nominated by the Agrarian Party, academician.

- E. Rahmonov (was born on October 5, 1952 in Khatlon region) is a candidate from the Peoples Democratic Party.

- And Ismail Talbakov (was born on March 24, 1955 in Khatlon Region) was nominated by the Communist Party.

Some political parties, like Social Democratic Party is boycotting the election and the Party of Islamic Renaissance is not nominating its candidate and doesn't support any nominee. But, they will observe the election and their members would participate in voting process at the election.

There are 68 electoral districts in Autonomous Region of Kuhistoni Badakhshon, Sogd Region, Khatlon Region, the Districts under the Republican Authority, and capital city Dushanbe. All together, they are in 18 cities, 48 town, 46 districts, and 280 communities across the country. Among those, there are 3,060 established polling stations across Tajikistan. Also, there will be 26 polling stations abroad, including two in Washington and New York.

Of the total, Tajikistan population of 7,320,815, there are 3,155,321 registered voters age 18 or older.

The law also guarantees to all political parties, unions, and other public organizations, movements, and to the citizens of Tajikistan the right to agitate in favor or against any candidate in Tajikistan.

Candidates can be nominated by registered political parties, federations of independent unions, the youth union of Tajikistan, and by Majlises—the local legislation bodies in the regions.

In order to be registered, a nominated candidate must collect 160,000 signatures, equivalent of 5 % of voters. Every candidate may have around 15 registered representatives, who are in charge of his or her election campaign.

The Constitutional Law “On the Election of the President of Tajikistan” and the law “On television and radio translation” guarantee the free and equal access to TV and Radio stations.

According to the Article 5 and 12 of The Constitutional Law “On the Election of the President of Tajikistan” every candidate has certain amount of time for debates and advertisements.

The state budget allocates around 3,600 somoni for every candidate. Moreover, political parties, unions and other public organizations, movements and the citizens of Tajikistan have the right to found candidates around 100,000 somonies for election campaign.

OBSERVERS; It is expected that around 700 foreign and 18,000 local observers would observe the election. In this election, the OSCE is registered as an observer, and they would have around 30 Long term and 100 short term observers from 18 OSCE m.s.

In addition, CIS Secretariat will have an observing team, which would include Secretary of Executive Committee of CIS. And, also various international, nongovernmental election organizations, including IFES, would have their observers present on the election day. Actually, IFES is observing the election process at the Embassy of Tajikistan here in DC, too.

We believe that authorities in Tajikistan have done whatever is possible to create equal conditions for all candidates during the campaign process. Despite some criticism for small mistakes, the Presidential Election is a big step forward at the democratization process of Tajikistan. If you compare this election with the past elections, you can see many positive differences, which means we are on the right path and direction.

More than 78% of Tajikistan’s citizens said that the Government of Tajikistan can improve the lives of citizens, while in 1996, only 48% thought the same way. It shows again that the last decade’s political development is positive. From election to election, from mistakes to lessons, not only political parties gained more experience of elections campaigns, but also the Government structures at all levels have learned how to conduct free and fair elections.

As one of the pillars of democratic society, there are many government and privately controlled media, like print media outlets, state and private television and radio stations in Tajikistan. In addition to state TV, approximately 18 private television stations operate in the country, which broadcast independent and uncensored programs. Recently, the Ministry of justice registered two new radio and three TV stations. International media is

legal and allowed to Tajikistan, and foreign newspapers are freely distributed, including rebroadcasts of foreign television and radio programs.

Around 400 newspapers published in Tajikistan. According “Worldwide Press Freedom Index 2006” by “Reporters without borders” from October 23, 2006, Tajikistan take a visible place about press freedom and stay before some CIS countries like Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Russia, Belarus and Turkmenistan.

All in all, the Presidential Election of 2006 is another positive step toward the victory of democracy in Tajikistan, and we would have fair and free election.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ERIC M. McGLINCHEY, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS, GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today.

The Tajik government, in contrast to the unsteady regimes in neighboring Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, appears on the surface to be moving toward greater rather than less stability. The upcoming November 6 presidential ballot in which Emomali Rahmonov will win reelection, is testimony to Tajikistan's transition from civil war to increasingly consolidated authoritarianism. Critically though, simmering discontent persists and, should President Rahmonov continue to repress meaningful political discourse, influential actors within Tajik society may seek alternative and revolutionary avenues of dissent such as Islam-centered mobilization or warlord politics.

STATE REPRESSION OF POLITICAL OPPOSITION

Tajik political oppositionists confront regular state-led intimidation and repression. Executive-controlled agencies, notably the courts and the police, pursue oppositionists who pose a threat to the Rahmonov government. The result of this systematic intimidation is that recent Tajik elections, although they may appear competitive on the surface, are in reality one-sided affairs in which relative unknowns are added to the ballot so as to give President Rahmonov a patina of democratic legitimacy.

Executive imbalance has not always marked Tajik politics. The 1997 United Nations-brokered peace accords which ended five years of Tajik civil war assured the opposition thirty percent of all executive branch offices. Over the past decade, however, the Rahmonov government steadily evicted opposition elites from the administration while concomitantly undercutting the opposition's presence in the national parliament. Today Rahmonov loyalists occupy all important posts within the executive branch and over 90 percent of seats in the national parliament.

Opposition elites are not only barred from politics, they are imprisoned, fined, and in some cases, tortured. In 2005 Democratic Party leader, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, was forcibly returned to Dushanbe from Moscow, convicted on corruption charges and sentenced to 23 years in prison. Iskandarov reports he has been repeatedly tortured while in custody. Yakub Salimov, another former Rahmonov supporter turned oppositionist, was similarly rendered from Russia in 2005 and sentenced to 15 years in prison.

Prominent oppositionists are not the presidential administration's only targets. The executive sees journalists as equally suspect and, as such, here too Tajik courts are enlisted to muzzle the media. In July 2005 Mukhtor Boqizoda, the editor of the newspaper, *Neru-i Sukhan*, was found guilty of libel for printing the article, "When Will Rahmonov Become Putin?" In August 2005 Boqizoda was convicted of illegally siphoning electricity and sentenced to two years detention.

The Iskandarov, Salimov and Boqizoda imprisonments are only three cases of what is a widespread and sustained government campaign against political dissent. The print media remains hobbled and now, in the run-up to the November presidential elections, the Tajik government is blocking independent internet sites such as the www.ferghana.ru, www.centrasia.ru, and www.tajikistantimes.ru. From the Rahmonov government's perspective, this campaign is a success. All four of Rahmonov's challengers in the

November presidential elections are allies of the administration and the only expressions of discontent voters hear are statements similar to Socialist Party presidential candidate Abduhalim Gafforov's lament, "it is difficult to run against Great Leader Emomali Rahmonov."

ALTERNATIVE AVENUES OF DISSENT: ISLAM-CENTERED MOBILIZATION AND WARLORD POLITICS

Barred from contesting politics through existing institutions, the Tajik opposition will likely pursue increasingly antiestablishment strategies. Despite President Rahmonov's consolidation of executive rule, Tajikistan remains a fractured country. Many of the same factors which sparked the 1992–1997 Tajik civil war persist today and, in the case of Islamist and warlord politics, the preconditions of instability are greater now than in any period since the early 1990s.

ISLAM

Islam, as witnessed in neighboring Uzbekistan, throughout the Middle East and North Africa, and during Tajikistan's own five years of armed conflict, provides a powerful ideology of resistance to authoritarian rule. In Tajikistan, Islamist opposition disappeared in the years immediately following the civil war once the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP), Tajikistan's leading opposition movement, was guaranteed representation in the post-1997 reconciliation government. Today, though, with the IRP effectively expelled from the government, new Islam-centered opposition movements are again on the rise.

A large majority of moderate and small minority of radical Muslims understandably perceive the 1997 peace accord's power-sharing agreement as a chimera. Determined not to be fooled again, a growing proportion of Muslims would prefer to see the revolutionary overthrow of the autocratic Rahmonov government rather than to wait for the unlikely possibility of peaceful incremental change. Western analysts are quick to equate such sentiments as evidence of increasing radical Islam. While the presence of Islamist groups such as Hizb ut-Tahrir suggests that an element of extremism may exist, the more likely reality is that Tajik Muslims gravitate toward a form of liberation theology, motivated more by the overthrow of immoral autocracy than the establishment of conservative theocracy.

WARLORD POLITICS

Perhaps even more threatening to the Rahmonov government than Islam-centered mobilization is the real potential of warlord politics. As he did with the leaders of the IRP, so too did Rahmonov integrate local warlords such as Kulob-based Gaffor Mirzoyev into the presidential administration in the initial years following the 1997 peace. Gradually though, Rahmonov has ousted these regional strongmen from positions within the national government, preferring instead to surround himself with an ever-narrowing circle of loyal elites. The result of this purge has been the reinvigoration of localized warlord politics and the de facto collapse of central authority in regions like Gharm and Khujand. And, as was the case during the 1992–1997 civil war, it is conceivable that these regional strongmen, militarily armed and financially enriched by Tajikistan's booming narcotics

trade, might find common cause with charismatic religious elites in seeking to overthrow the Rahmonov government.

RAHMONOV'S HOLLOW VICTORY

It is tempting to dismiss the November 6 Tajik presidential elections as a nonevent. This would be a mistake. Although Emomali Rahmonov is guaranteed victory, his choreographed ballot does not guarantee continued stability. Indeed, the opposite may be true. The paradox of Tajik politics is that the comparative calm of the past nine years has been the product of institutionalized dissent, of political pluralism however limited. The Tajik opposition, accorded a voice in government, abandoned their weapons and sought influence through the existing institutional framework. Now though, just as it appears Rahmonov has at last consolidated power by pushing the opposition out of government, the president's authority may be at its most precarious. Denied voice within the executive administration and the national parliament, the Tajik opposition may once again seek alternative, revolutionary and potentially violent forms of political protest.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF DENNIS de TRAY, VICE PRESIDENT, CENTER FOR GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT

Good afternoon and thank you for the invitation to speak on Tajikistan's economic prospects and challenges. As you have been told, I was the World Bank's country director for the five Central Asia republics, including Tajikistan, from October 2001 until January of this year when I retired from the Bank. During that time I was stationed in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and came to know Tajikistan and Dushanbe well.

The statistical information I will share with you today is up to date, but I should warn you that I don't have the same hands-on feel for Tajikistan I had when I was living in the region. Central Asia is a fluid and rapidly-changing part of the world, so it is possible that I am missing important nuances that have developed since I left the region in January. With that caveat, let me offer the following remarks. I want to start by giving you a brief sense of where today's Tajikistan came from, then turn to its current economic circumstances, and end with a discussion of both the challenges and the changing investment landscape that will determine its future.

You have already heard a bit about Tajikistan's recent history, but I want to underscore a couple of points because they influence (or should influence) how we see Tajikistan today. Tajikistan is one of the rare post-conflict success stories. Less than a decade ago, the country ended a bloody civil war. As the war came to a close, the government faced a country in which per capita income had fallen by some 85% since the final days of the Soviet Union (in contrast, consumption during the entire Great Depression fell by 30%). Since shortly after the peace agreement in 1997, the country not only has consolidated politically, but also has shown remarkable economic performance, albeit from a low base. Growth from 2002 to 2005 averaged 10% and is still projected to be a highly respectable 8% in 2006, and in the range of 7–8% in 2007. This robust growth has lowered poverty to a still high 60% in 2005 from a very high 80% in the late 1990s.

Driving this growth has been a massive inflow of remittances, thought to be in the neighborhood of 30% of GDP, from Tajik migrant workers mainly living in Russia. But the country also has done a good job of managing its macroeconomic climate, including maintaining a reasonable fiscal balance and keeping inflation to single digits. Debt forgiveness by the IMF and by the Russians lowered Tajikistan's debt to GDP ratio to a manageable 40% . . . but more on this issue later.

As I say, a pretty good story for a country that was at war with itself a decade ago. But a country's past performance is not necessarily a good predictor of its future. Let me turn now to what we need to watch in the coming years. Although I am not tasked with commenting on Tajikistan's political landscape, a word on President Rahmonov who is coming up for certain re-election on November 6. Whether one likes it or not from a democratic perspective, the President has done an amazing job consolidating his power base over the past five years or so. This consolidation has led to a vast improvement on the security front, and to the internal stability that has underpinned the economy's success. For example, when I first went to Tajikistan in early 2002, Dushanbe was still a non-family post for most expatriate organizations, travel outside of Dushanbe had to be managed with great care, and significant parts of the country were not under Dushanbe's control. All that has changed. Rahmonov is now firmly in power, has no obvious challengers, and the country is—for the most part—safe. At least for now, Rahmonov remains central to Tajikistan's stability. And as long as growth continues at reasonable levels, he is

unlikely to be challenged, or challenged successfully. The all-too-recent memory of civil war keeps stability foremost in the minds of most Tajiks.

On the economic front, Tajikistan's future will depend importantly on its citizens having continued access to the Russian labor market. But remittances cannot be Tajikistan's only engine of growth. I would look to the handling of five issues, all but one related to diversification, as bellwethers of Tajikistan's future:

- First, how Tajikistan manages its aluminum smelter business. TADAZ, the state aluminum smelter company, accounts for 30% of the country's exports and 40% of both industrial production and electric power use (billed at very low rates). There is much external interest in TADAZ, and, more generally, in expanding Tajikistan's smelter industry especially by RUSAL, the Russian aluminum company. However, the economics of all this remain murky. Tajikistan imports all its alumina at considerable cost, and processing it is—or has been—economic only with very cheap power, considerably less than 1 cent per kilowatt-hour. New hydro-generation projects will need to sell power at prices higher than this to make them economically sound.

- Second and related, how Tajikistan's hydroelectric market develops. Tajikistan uses less than 10% of its hydroelectric generation potential. With power hungry neighbors to the east and south, and maybe to the west and north, hydro-generation capacity is a major item on President Rahmonov's development agenda. Just how these deals are done will determine how much good they do Tajikistan, as opposed to special interests.

- Third, how the government manages the farm debt issue. With the break-up and privatization of the large Soviet collective farms, the new owners inherited large amounts of debt owed to suppliers and others from the old system. Estimates suggest that on the order of half the face value of this debt is fictitious, arising from over pricing inputs bought on credit. A work-out scheme that gives small scale farmers a chance to get out from under their debt burdens is essential to agriculture and rural development.

- Fourth, how new investment partners affect resource allocation. While Tajikistan is not resource rich in the sense that Kazakhstan is, it is of strategic interest to its neighbors, especially Russia and China. Both countries have shown serious investment interest in Tajik projects. Russia's RAO-UES is the prime mover in an effort to complete Sangtuda II, an economically viable hydroelectric project begun in Soviet times. China's Export-Import Bank has recently signed three agreements with the Tajik government totaling over USD \$600 million, around 25% of Tajikistan's GDP, to support two transmission lines and one road project. These investments raise two broad sets of concerns. The first is whether and how fast they will move Tajikistan back to debt non-sustainability. The second is the how the projects were selected and designed.

- Fifth, how Tajikistan handles its drug problem. Perhaps the most intractable and dangerous element of Tajikistan's geography is its 1000 kilometer border with Afghanistan. The movement of heroin from Afghanistan to markets in Russia and Europe will continue to challenge the fabric of society and governance in the Central Asian states. Given the sums involved, limiting the damage the drug trade has on Tajikistan will take courage and leadership on the part of President Rahmonov, and patience and perseverance on the part of his international supporters.

Tajikistan is a tough development challenge. It is 93% mountainous, in a tough neighborhood, and it has to contend with a young population, of which 40% is under the age of 15. But it is also a country that seems, for now, to have found its footing after

a very difficult start. With judicious and practical support it can and should continue to progress.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANTHONY C. BOWYER, PROGRAM MANAGER FOR CENTRAL ASIA, INTERNATIONAL FOUNDA- TION FOR ELECTORAL SYSTEMS.

Members of the Committee, guests and fellow colleagues, I am honored to appear before you today to discuss the current state of electoral democracy in Tajikistan and the assistance efforts supported by the United States to help Tajikistan meet its international obligations as it prepares to hold national elections to the office of President on November 6. The upcoming poll represents the third presidential election in Tajikistan's post-Soviet history, and the second since the official conclusion of the Civil War in 1997. Since that time the country has also held two national and local legislative elections, the most recent coming in February of last year, and a national referendum held in 2003.

In assessing the current state of affairs in the country leading up to this election, I believe it is important to put our hands around some basic demographic information. Of Tajikistan's population of 7.3 million, less than half (3.2 million) are eligible to vote. But more important, nearly 50% of all citizens are 15 years of age or younger, a stark demographic reality that requires nurturing to create a functioning, sustainable participatory democracy through engagement of citizens in the election process and all facets of decision-making, in order to realize its national potential. This generation has little direct recollection of the Civil War and virtually no recollection whatsoever of the Soviet period. The need to give them an opportunity to make their voices heard through democratic means is obvious; the alternatives to this are equally as obvious, though potentially ominous. Interest in these elections among young persons, which have traditionally been the least active group of voters, is growing. I have been told that our colleagues here at the Embassy have received numerous requests from Tajiks studying in the U.S. to be able to cast ballots by mail, as they are unable to travel to the official out-of-country voting centers being set up in New York and Washington. While voting-by-mail is not an option, the point is that young people both here and in Tajikistan are taking more notice of the elections and are asking questions and demanding information. This should be seen as a positive for Tajikistan and for democracy, as rising expectations among a well-informed, media-savvy electorate with unprecedented contact with the outside and who are more critical of the information they receive, can only help advance the cause of democracy in their country. I say this with a caveat, for it is imperative that the Government of Tajikistan continue to invest in the education of its citizens, young and old alike, so that people not only participate in the elections but that they participate in an informed manner, knowing not only who the candidates or parties are and what they represent, but also understanding the system of government and appreciating what they are voting for and why. In this I greatly encourage the U.S. and international donor community to continue, and in fact increase, its support of mandatory, school-based civic education as part of the national curriculum for the growing youth population and voter education at all levels both in times of elections and in-between election cycles.

A nationally-representative public opinion survey conducted last year by IFES, part of a long-term study, showed that while just over one-third of respondents indicated they held at least a moderate interest in politics, nearly two-thirds felt uninformed about the political and economic situation in the country. The survey showed an interesting relationship between information and engagement; those who are the most engaged in civic participation are those who also report they have the most information. But a lack of information does not necessarily mean a lack of interest in politics, as three in four per-

sons reported having discussed politics with friends and neighbors, and three in five with members of their families. A majority (58%) firmly believed in the power of voting and that voting gives them influence on how decisions in the country are made. Yet a lack of information about the process itself, while not necessarily affecting whether or not people will come to the polls, has the effect of discouraging their maximal participation in the process of democratic governance once the election is over.

Confidence in the system of elections has been an issue among opposition parties during previous votes, and remains an issue in the upcoming poll. In addition, international observer contingents, most notably from the OSCE, have outlined shortcomings in the process which are well-known. As a representative of a non-partisan international assistance organization which has been working in Tajikistan with the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda since 1994, allow me to provide some perspective on the preparations presently underway. It is my impression that international perception of how these elections are run is exceptionally important to the Government of Tajikistan.

We know about the continued shortcomings in the process, ranging from the continued practice from Soviet times of “negative voting” (marking of ballots), stringent signature requirements for presidential candidates, the overall media environment, an insufficient appeals process and some holes in the electoral legislation. We have discussed the situation regarding the lack of independent domestic monitors and a tight timeline for the registration of international observers. We are aware of the statements made by some opposition who are boycotting the elections and the splintering taking place within opposition parties.

I do, however, believe the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda is working to improve administrative procedures in accordance with recommendations made by the domestic and international community, which may seem small on one hand but represent significant steps forward on the other: providing opposition candidates with free time on state television, mandating that protocols of final results be posted immediately at the polling stations after they are compiled, greater adherence to ballot issuance procedures, publicly documenting voters who are out of the country for work-related reasons, the right for political parties and NGOs to nominate members to District and Precinct Election Commissions, a new and energetic voter outreach and information campaign, and consideration of enhanced security measures such as voter inking—which could be implemented for future elections. At present the Elections Commission is conducting a nationwide training for members of District and Precinct Election Commissions, a project IFES has been involved with through a grant by the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, as well as publishing informational bulletins such as 100 Questions and Answers about the Presidential Elections.

As with any such improvement in procedures, of course, will be how they are ultimately implemented, and whether there exists sufficient political will to do so. Focusing attention on the technical aspects of the present process, I can say that during the 2005 elections and certainly this year as well, the Central Commission on Elections and Referenda has been exceptionally open to cooperation, to discussion, to accepting recommendations that will increase transparency in the elections and build public confidence in the results. The reality is that the CCER, as a state body, is a relatively small unit presiding over a vast constituency of District and Precinct Election Commissions. Its resources are limited. It is still striving for recognition as a distinct and independent entity. It has presided over elections in an environment of peace and stability for less than

ten years, and continues to face challenges in transition, as does the country itself. I believe we in the international community need to recognize from whence Tajikistan has emerged, and what they have transcended, to reach the point they are at today. Though we must indeed continue to hold them to the highest international standards of open and fair elections; we as well must consider the context of Tajikistan's development and brief history of independence when rendering judgment. We must also continue to recognize the strategic importance of Tajikistan as a partner of the United States in so many areas. Tajikistan needs our support to help it continue developing democratic institutions that will rise to the challenge of a growing population. We must recognize the opportunity cost of failing to do so. Other, regional hegemonies with direct influence over the country, not to mention non-state actors operating in the region, do not necessarily share Tajikistan's stated commitment to democracy. As soon as these elections come to pass we should be working long-term to help Tajikistan prepare for the next parliamentary elections in five years with legal reform initiatives, capacity- and institution-building, regional networking, civic education, support for political pluralism, and technical upgrades. There is an opportunity to make a lasting contribution to the process that will continue encouraging democratic reform, working at both the highest levels of decision-making and at the grassroots level with the decision-makers of tomorrow.

I emphasize in particular the latter of these two, the young persons of Tajikistan. The future of democracy is in their hands, and we have the great possibility, if not responsibility, with our colleagues at all levels in the country, to help young persons develop the skills they will need to build democratic traditions.

I encourage everyone to support continued constructive engagement with Tajikistan for the long-term; to show tough love when it is required, but to equally show praise. We must embrace Tajikistan as a strategic partner, one, symbolized by its great poet Rudaki, holding in high regard its truest friends and as its most cherished idols knowledge and experience.



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