

Policy Report for the United Nations Development  
Programme

# TAJIKISTAN: A CASE OF HOPE



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## Biographies

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## Executive Summary

The following policy brief adopts a development-oriented approach to investigate Tajikistan's experience with fragility, focusing on the questions of how and what weaknesses in the country's development are drivers for further fragility. This approach also aligns with the selected end user, the **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) in Tajikistan, with the purpose of providing evidence-based analysis on the primary catalysts of fragility and strategies for further mitigating fragility in the country. Tajikistan has maintained a medium level of fragility since the end of the civil war in 1997, with various factors affecting its fragility status. This brief delves into the primary drivers of fragility in the country, which include governance, economic development, and human development, as well as specific conditions where these factors may facilitate greater fragility. This report also goes over secondary drivers of fragility in the country, which include security, demography, and the environment. The authors propose four policy options for the UNDP to explore and recommend that focus be placed on: (1) capacity-building of local stakeholders to build resilience and (2) increased efforts in data collection to mitigate fragility in the country and improve the quality of life of all Tajiks.

## Methodology

This report relies on various academic and grey literature sources produced in the past five years. The search strategy used to find sources for this work consisted of using several different search terms that included “Tajikistan” or “in Tajikistan” in tandem with key terms such as “economic development,” “governance,” and “environmental conditions.” It is beyond the purview of the report to describe, in further detail, all the search terms that were used, though an exhaustive search was conducted to substantiate the data found in this document. Only those sources without blatant evidence of bias and of an academic nature were used for the report. As such, much of information found in this work came from academic papers, as well as reports from different organizations and institutes, such as the Brookings Institute, World Bank, United Nations Development Programme, and the CIA Factbook. Priority was placed on finding the most recent information.

This report utilizes the Authority-Legitimacy-Capacity three-dimensional view of statehood proposed by Carment, Prest, and Samy (2010) and presented by Charles Call (2010).<sup>1</sup> It additionally employs a development-oriented lens to fragility in its assessment.<sup>2</sup> Due to Tajikistan's moderate stability, numerical quantifiers for individual drivers were avoided, which some may view as a limitation for this report. The authors found that credible quantitative data was missing, while those available were biased and inconsistent. As such, the authors omitted quantifying the drivers. Instead, an assignment of *intensity* and *trend* were utilized to determine directionality and relevance. Intensity scores are assigned *low*, *medium*, or *high* while trend analysis utilizes *improving*, *stable* and *deteriorating*. An intensity score of *low* suggests that the driver or factor has limited impact on Tajikistan's fragility; *medium* refers to a moderate impact; and *high* means that the driver or factor has a salient impact on the country's fragility (see ANNEX 1).

To inform the ranking of drivers and scoring, the authors examined sources and events from 2000 to 2018, providing an events analyses to track the frequency and impact of phenomenon related to economic development, human development, governance, security, population and demography, and environment. Those that appeared the most often in these sources and had the greatest impact on Tajikistan, whether negative or positive, were ranked as *primary drivers*. The remaining drivers were qualified as *secondary drivers*. There are no hierarchies within these categories.

## **End User**

This policy brief will be presented to the **United Nations Development Programme** (UNDP) office in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The UNDP has been active in Tajikistan since 1994, particularly in supporting Tajikistan's national development strategy to alleviate poverty.<sup>3</sup> The UNDP builds upon the Sustainable Development Goals that are guided by the Country Programme Document. The organization provided significant contributions to develop the National Development Strategy, outlining the necessary policies and investments to reach the Sustainable Development Goals by the target year, 2030.<sup>4</sup> The research and policy recommendations in this report provide the UNDP with the opportunity to focus its priorities to identified areas of concern that go beyond poverty. The outcomes of implementing the policy recommendation found in this report include improved living standards for Tajik citizens, particularly the poorest and most vulnerable, as well as a sustainable future of equality, dignity, and opportunity for all.

## **Primary Stakeholders**

### *President Emomali Rahmon*

Ruling with an iron fist since December 1992, President Rahmon and his family continue to convince Tajiks that only they can maintain stability in Tajikistan.<sup>5</sup> After the civil war that took place from 1992 to 1997, President Rahmon's regime managed to improve Tajikistan's economy.<sup>6</sup> After 2000, Tajikistan's economy was in a period of strong growth, "averaging 10% annual growth between 2001 and 2004."<sup>7</sup> However, it began to slow down to 6% since 2005.<sup>8</sup> The growth seen in Tajikistan is due to structural reforms and capacity utilization recovery that was supported by "[favourable] world prices for aluminum and cotton" and the increasing remittances from labour migrants in Russia and elsewhere.<sup>9</sup> Such reform and recovery

paved the way for stability in the country and ended up trumping dissent and/or democratic reform at large. All parliamentary elections (2000, 2005, 2010 and 2015), presidential elections (1999, 2006 and 2013) and the constitutional referendum in 2003 that approved President Rahmon's proposal to hold office for seven years were met with complaints from the international community.<sup>10</sup> Despite the complaints, dissent and democratic reform continue to be silenced, especially since 2016 when President Rahmon's authorities sentenced the country's main opposition party – the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT) – to lengthy prison sentences.<sup>11</sup> President Rahmon opted for the strategy of patronage and personal loyalties (i.e. clientelism), with limited room for local governments and neighbourhood committees to participate in the decision-making process.<sup>12</sup> These groups do not have real autonomy from the central government and tend to also demonstrate patron-client relations.<sup>13</sup> Given the centrality of President Rahmon in Tajikistan's politics, he has been selected as one of the primary stakeholders.

### *Opposition Political Parties*

Under President Rahmon's consolidated authoritarian regime, opposition parties have always been closely monitored.<sup>14</sup> These parties were permitted to operate within limits so long as they did not challenge the existing regime.<sup>15</sup> However, since the removal of presidential term limits in the 2016 referendum and the ban of religious parties, there are no functioning opposition parties.<sup>16</sup> As a result of the referendum, the IRPT lost its last two seats in Parliament.<sup>17</sup> It is important to mention that while opposition parties did not have a strong influence in Tajikistan, their absence demonstrates the fragility of President Rahmon's regime, where it cannot stand dissenting opinions. As such, opposing political parties have been selected as one of the primary stakeholders.

### *Representation of Ethnic Minorities*

While Tajikistan's ethnic minority groups do not contribute to internal instability because they are small in number, they are not proportionally represented in Parliament.<sup>18</sup> According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Factbook, Tajiks represent 84.3% of the total population.<sup>19</sup> Ethnic minorities in Tajikistan include Uzbek (13.8%), Kyrgyz, Russian, Turkmen, Tatar and Arab (all form 2%), as per the 2010 estimate.<sup>20</sup> The Uzbeks are the largest ethnic minority in Tajikistan but are increasingly alienated from Parliament. As a result, they lack access to economic resources and government positions.<sup>21</sup> Given their continued alienation, the estimated number of Uzbeks is decreasing. In the 1989 census, Uzbeks made up 23.5% of the total population.<sup>22</sup> By 2000, however, Uzbeks were estimated to make up 15.3% of the total population.<sup>23</sup> It can be stipulated that the highly politicized nature of the census discourages individuals to claim their Uzbek identity out of fear of being denied social services or subjected to differential treatment. Due to the direct impact of development on minority groups, this marginalized group has been selected as a primary stakeholder.

### **Secondary Stakeholders**

#### *Russia*

An important secondary stakeholder in Tajikistan, and in the context of fragility, is Russia. Given its geographic proximity to Tajikistan, Russia has a low-level investment in ensuring that Tajikistan does not become a conflict-ridden state and threaten Russia's stability. A particular source of concern for Russia is in the growth of terrorist groups in Tajikistan and the potential of this activity affecting or spreading to Russia. The impact of Russia as a secondary stakeholder has been mixed. The Russian troops provided Tajikistan with a source of political security,

in particular for its ruling elites. Additionally, Russia's debt forgiveness for Tajikistan allowed the latter some form of economic security. However, Russia's use of oil and oil product exports created instability in food prices in Tajikistan because food prices were pegged to oil. Russia also imposed export duties on top of increased tariffs on Tajikistan for oil in June 2011.<sup>24</sup> When oil prices increased, transportation costs also increased, resulting in increased food prices.<sup>25</sup> As such, Russian activity has helped and hindered the Tajik people.

#### *China*

Chinese-Tajik relations became stronger as China began investing in Tajikistan's development. For example, China has contributed funding to various developmental projects to improve transportation infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> China has also contributed to building a metallurgical plant that began operating in November 2017.<sup>27</sup> China is Tajikistan's largest creditor, with over \$1 billion owed to the Chinese Export-Import Bank as of 2016.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, China has provided almost \$6 billion since 2014 for projects that include building cement factories, roads, tunnels, and power infrastructure.<sup>29</sup> The rise of Chinese partnership in trade and investment in Tajikistan does not conflict with Russian interests or strategies in the region.<sup>30</sup> The reason is that both China and Russia have an overlapping interest in the stability of Central Asia "to protect their interests [...] and to keep militancy from reaching their borders."<sup>31</sup> Yet, that there may be some points of potential friction with Russia as China is increasing its security presence in Tajikistan to protect its investments in the region.<sup>32</sup> Despite the potential for friction, the China's impact on Tajikistan still remains positive.

#### *United States*

The United States (U.S.) - Tajikistan relations were established in 1993, following the dissolution of the USSR.<sup>33</sup> Due to the geopolitical location of Tajikistan, the U.S. government has been concerned about spillovers of transnational terrorism from Afghanistan.<sup>34</sup> The main areas of cooperation have been in anti-drug trafficking, counterterrorism, and regional economic connectivity and security-focused along the Afghan-Tajik border and the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO).<sup>35</sup> U.S. assistance has focused on providing security aid and training for defence and law enforcement agencies in Tajikistan. Training programs for security forces, however, have decreased in recent years following the defection of former U.S. trained Tajikistan Police Chief, Gulmurod Khalimov, to Daesh. In 2017, the U.S. trained 1,200 Special Forces troops from Tajikistan (600 from the National Guard and the other 600 from the Ministry of the Interior's special OMON police officers).<sup>36</sup> The U.S. contributed an additional \$10 million towards military aid under the designation “intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets.”<sup>37</sup> In addition to security aid, the U.S. has also provided \$15 million to the region to support the CASA-1,000 electricity grid.<sup>38</sup> This project would allow Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to transfer hydropower electricity to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Substantial investment has also been targeted at the development of the New Silk Road infrastructure initiative.<sup>39</sup>

### Key Issues

According to the 2016 Global Fragility Ranking in the CIFP, Tajikistan ranked 48 out of 60.<sup>40</sup> It has an overall fragility score of 5.90, which means it is in a state of medium fragility.<sup>41</sup> The scores of authority, legitimacy and capacity are: 6.35, 6.95 and 6.62, respectively.<sup>42</sup> Authority refers to a state’s monopoly over the use of force, where the state can guarantee the physical integrity

of its citizens and protect them from physical threats or violence.<sup>43</sup> Legitimacy is the ability of a government to gain public loyalty to the regime and gather domestic support for the government’s legislation and policies.<sup>44</sup> Finally, capacity refers to the government's ability to deliver services and distribute resources to its people.<sup>45</sup>

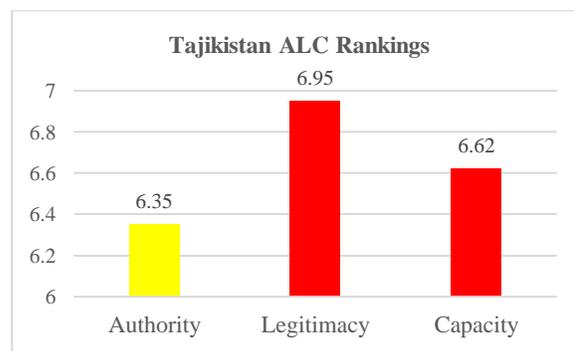


Figure 1: Tajikistan ALC Rankings extracted from 2017 CIFP Report, page 21, and plotted into bar-graph.

### Authority Assessment

**Intensity: Medium**  
**Trend: Stable** ↘

Since the 1992-1997 civil war, there has been a dramatic increase in the executive’s authority in Tajikistan. Tajikistan does not suffer from significant security threats (domestic or transnational) and the country has entered a state of relative stability characterized by the absence of any large-scale intrastate violence. However, this does not imply that Tajikistan is democratic. The 2018 BTI ranked the executives ‘monopoly on the use of force’ 9/10 (a three-point increase from 2014).<sup>46</sup> Since assuming the Presidency in 1994, President Rahmon has increasingly consolidated political and economic power in the office of the executive and actively instituted measures to silence

resistance in any form.<sup>1</sup> Despite the absence of insurgency, the government increasingly uses ‘domestic security’ as grounds to arrest or exile opposition.<sup>47</sup>

### *Legitimacy Assessment*

**Intensity: High**  
**Trend: Deteriorating** ↓

Tajikistan scored 6.95 on legitimacy as per the CIPF 2017 Report. According to the report, Tajikistan was the poorest performing country in the cluster of European and Central Asian countries in 2016, with high scores in governance and economics. This validates the concerns raised in the *Internal Stakeholders* section on silencing opposition parties and dissenting opinions; indefinite presidential terms; ruling through informal institutions, which weakens formal ones; and lack of democratic reform.

### *Capacity Assessment*

**Intensity: High**  
**Trend: Deteriorating** ↓

Tajikistan is afflicted with problems, such as poverty, food scarcity, limited freshwater resources, a high rate of debt, and limited employment opportunities among others. There have been some attempts to mitigate these problems. One example is that the government is working on reviewing and formulating new national policies on food security and agriculture.<sup>48</sup> President Rahmon has also been working towards increasing foreign investment into the country to reduce the debt burden and create more industrial growth.<sup>49</sup> Yet, these attempts are not enough to address the country’s numerous challenges. Data suggests that the state has limited capacity to address these problems due to the leadership, ministries, and government institutions lacking the ability to

analyze challenges and develop solutions.<sup>50</sup> The reason for this inability is because the country suffered a severe civil war that decimated the civil service and weakened institutional capacity.<sup>51</sup>

Since then, the country has been behind in creating effective and resilient institutions, which has fomented the Tajik government’s reliance on Russia in many areas. For example, Tajikistan depends on Russia for foreign investment and to provide employment to its citizens. The country also relies on Russia for security, further demonstrating the Tajik state’s lack of capacity. It is important to note, however, that this limited capacity is not solely because of the civil war and its side effects. Rather, the government has also proven to be unwilling to exercise its full capabilities, especially in the areas of governance and economic and human development. This reluctance is partly due to the government co-opting wealth, and partially due to the government limiting the provision of goods and services to its patrons and supporters.<sup>52</sup> In this regard, one reason why Tajikistan suffers from limited capacity is due to systemic weaknesses within the government and its administrative ministries and bodies.

Simultaneously, the government further facilitates this low capacity by engaging in corrupt practices. While the government lacks the capability and willingness to provide goods and services to the population, there are organizations and groups that are filling in this gap. Most notably, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) have been instrumental in working with the Tajik government, private sector organizations, and civil society groups to develop policies and programs to improve economic and human development outcomes in the country.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see ANNEX 2 for further information on opposition and dissent under the authority assessment in Tajikistan.

## Cluster Analyses: Primary Drivers

### Economic Development

**Intensity: Medium**  
**Trend: Stable**



The literature on fragility points to the role that institutions, such as the economy, have in either facilitating or mitigating fragility in a country. In Tajikistan, there is considerable evidence that economic development is not only a facilitator but a primary driver of fragility in the country. Tajikistan's economic vulnerability is due to various interrelated factors, some more salient than others. One source of the country's economic weakness is the legacy of the 1992 to 1997 civil war.<sup>53</sup> The war devastated Tajikistan's already weak economic infrastructure and led to a sharp decline in industrial and agricultural production, two critical areas of the country's economy. There are also long-standing tensions between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan on cross-border regional trade, which are playing out in Tajikistan's economic sphere by limiting the latter country's ability to move goods on land.<sup>54</sup> Two reasons for this conflict are incomplete border delimitation and historic competing claims over ownership of Samarkand and Bukhara.<sup>55</sup>

Chinese firms have also been investing in oil and gas exploration as well as in gold mining.<sup>56</sup> This investment, however, has not led to significant domestic economic growth nor made enough of an impact on the country's job market. Rather, the country's poor business climate has forced much of the population to work in Russia and send home remittances. Tajikistan's economy is consequently reliant on Russia and a limited number of foreign investors, yet this reliance exposes Tajikistan to monetary shocks.<sup>2</sup> Based on this vulnerability, there are some, albeit drastic, economic changes and events

<sup>2</sup> Please see ANNEX 3 on economic development.

that could exacerbate Tajikistan's fragility. The main trigger is a major exodus of Tajik migrant workers back to Tajikistan. Since Tajikistan has limited employment opportunities for its citizens and relies on Russia for remittances, the elimination of this vital source of income may lead locals to feel anger and frustration that results in violent protests. A significant reduction in China's investment may also elicit comparable negative sentiments.

It is important to note that unemployment and the threat of unemployment particularly affects youth and males in Tajikistan. A large population of unemployed and disenchanted young males may turn to the black market or illicit activities to acquire money, such as participation in the drug trade. As such, it is imperative for leaders and policymakers seeking to maintain Tajikistan's stability to ensure that economic conditions in the county improve, particularly through concerted attempts to attract additional sources of foreign investment and through job creation.

### Human Development

**Intensity: Medium**  
**Trend: Stable**



Tajikistan's Human Development Index (HDI) value is 0.651, making it a medium developed country.<sup>57</sup> Despite Tajikistan's human development being relatively moderate, it is the poorest country in Central Asia in addition to being fraught with inequality.<sup>58</sup> Since the end of the civil war, the government has significantly reduced poverty rates in the country, yet non-monetary sources of poverty are continuing to facilitate differences in citizens' quality of life.<sup>59</sup> The poverty rate in the country has notably improved, going from 83% in 2000 to 30% in 2016.<sup>60</sup> Yet, the remaining 30% of the population suffers from acute poverty and inequalities pertaining to their ability to

access various goods and services. While the wealthy (i.e., those who are elite or have ties to the government) benefit from nutritious food, enrollment in the best schools, and the ability to use optimal medical facilities, these goods and services are out of reach for the general population. Tajiks living in remote areas, such as the Khatlon Oblast, and those living in rural areas are among the poorest residents in the country and are particularly affected by low levels of development in the form of limited access to water, sanitation, and food.<sup>61</sup> Minority groups in Tajikistan, such as Uzbeks, are also neglected in terms of goods and service provision.

There are various salient sources of underdevelopment in Tajikistan, many of which exist due to poor economic management on the part of the government.<sup>3</sup> This poor management includes coopting funding for development projects and the tacit limited provision of goods and services to non-elites and non-government patrons. While poor government practices are affecting Tajikistan's human development level, the country also has limited capacity to independently address these problems without significant foreign help and cash infusions.

The damage to civil institutions following the civil war has undermined Tajikistan's ability to create and implement policies related to human development.<sup>62</sup> In the absence of adequate government capacity and willingness to address Tajikistan's human development challenges, the UNDP has been instrumental in implementing human development projects in the country.<sup>63</sup> Yet, the government has placed some bureaucratic barriers to prevent development groups and community service organizations from reaching the population. For example, certain groups are not allowed to found organizations

within the country while other groups are restricted from providing services outside a designated area.<sup>64</sup> Government authorities are also allowed to engage in highly intrusive means of supervision, including suspending activity without reasonable cause.<sup>65</sup> It follows that the level of development in Tajikistan is unlikely to change without the government allowing benevolent actors to operate more freely in the country, and without policymakers adopting more equitable policies to improve the quality of life for all Tajiks.

The development rate in the country is a primary driver of greater fragility, particularly if locals' quality of life deteriorates considerably. The logic of this assessment is that individuals experiencing either relative or absolute deprivation are susceptible to turning to dissenting behavior if they feel increasing disdain and frustration towards the government. It is unlikely that events as drastic as mass demonstrations would occur since the country has a strong policy of shutting down dissent. Further, there are no clear indications that the country's human development level will experience rapid deterioration since it has maintained a medium development level since the end of the civil war. Yet, engaging in illicit activities provides disenchanting and desperate locals with an option, which has relatively low risk compared to civil disobedience or violence, to improve their quality of life and escape taxing circumstances.

### *Governance*

<b>Intensity: Medium</b> <b>Trend: Stable</b>	
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Insofar as Tajikistan appears to be a fragile and weak state, President Rahmon's

<sup>3</sup> Please see ANNEX 4 for more information on literacy, undernourishment and other non-monetary poverty indicators.

governing style has provided some consistency and stability over the past 12 years.<sup>66</sup> The reason behind this stability is the government's strong grip over power and clamping down on the rise of religious revolts or rebellions. Additionally, the dismissal of representatives of opposition groups in Parliament allowed for consensus to form easily on legislation and policy. Furthermore, the mandatory requirement for civil servants to be loyal to the governing party demonstrates that the bureaucracy not only acts on partisan lines but is also controlled firmly by Rahmon's administration.<sup>67</sup>

On paper, Tajikistan is a democratic country as per its constitution. Yet, the President and his government continue to have a monopoly on governance.<sup>68</sup> Tajikistan's formal institutions are not strong nor independent enough to hold its officials accountable. On the contrary, informal institutions such as patron-client networks hold more power in Tajikistan and result in citizens receiving benefits if they are loyal to the government.<sup>69</sup> The courts in Tajikistan are also controlled by the executive branch, which exercises powers that are not within its jurisdiction.<sup>70</sup> If the government continues with this style of governance, there may be a chance for rebellion in Tajikistan, demanding freedoms and political reform.

### **Cluster Analyses: Secondary Drivers**

#### *Security*

**Intensity: Medium**  
**Trend: Stable** →

Tajikistan's security has been moderate and stable since the September 2015 gun battle in the town of Vahdat.<sup>71</sup> While the government has attempted to present recent security risks and problems as foreign in origin, they are domestic problems.<sup>72</sup> The gun battle fought in Vahdat is a symptom of the larger problem that Tajikistan is facing – repression of dissent. This was the case when “peripheral regions of Rasht Valley and Gorno-

Badakhshon” expressed their concerns openly on various domestic issues ranging from economics to social security.<sup>73</sup> Tajikistan's security services continue to suppress any form of opposition or dissent against the government or President Rahmon because of their fear of potential power loss.<sup>74</sup>

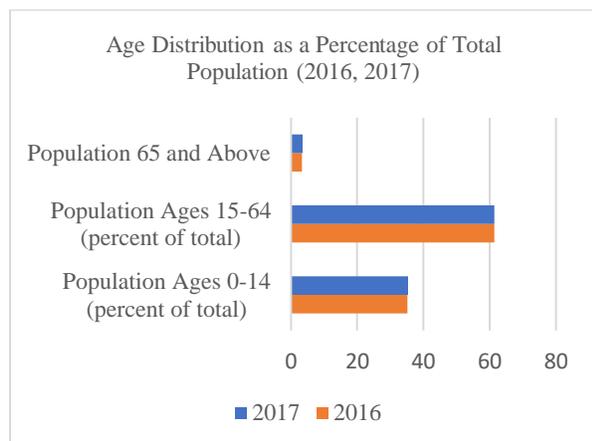
It is important to mention that while Afghanistan, Tajikistan's neighbour, is unstable – and despite the uncertain number of Tajiks who have joined Daesh – the security situation in Afghanistan did not contribute to Tajikistan's instability.<sup>75</sup> Even though it may appear fragile, Tajikistan still holds together as a state.<sup>76</sup> The state is considered a weak and unreliable security partner by Western states, Russia, and China. There is a belief in the international community that Tajikistan will be sucked into the alarming and imminent security threats currently plaguing Afghanistan and some countries in the Middle East. On the contrary, Tajikistan has been able to demonstrate that it can engage with and receive the necessary resources to the benefit of the government and the regime from “great powers.”<sup>77</sup>

#### *Population and Demography*

**Intensity: Medium**  
**Trend: Stable** →

Tajikistan's population is primarily rural and faces challenges because of its isolated mountainous geography. The population is concentrated in its lower-elevation valleys, with overall density increasing from east to west. It ranks 144<sup>th</sup> globally with a population density (person per km<sup>2</sup> of land area) of 64.3.<sup>78</sup> This has been consistent since 1999.<sup>79</sup> Only 27% of its citizens reside in urbanized areas, meaning its non-urban population accounts for 73% of the country's total population of 8.7 million.<sup>80</sup> This presents

additional challenges in both the access to and provision of goods and services.<sup>4</sup>



Data Source: World Bank Indicator Database.

Although Tajikistan has no official language, Tajik language fluency is required for all major political offices and dominates the linguistic landscape.<sup>81</sup> Ethnic Tajiks are estimated to account for roughly 80% of the total population and hold all major posts in the government.<sup>82</sup>

### Environment<sup>5</sup>

**Intensity: Medium**  
**Trend: Stable**

Environmental factors are not a major contributing factor to Tajikistan's fragility. However, Tajikistan is at a high-risk level for environmental disasters and lacks the resilience to cope with environmental shocks. The major factors influencing its risk are human and social vulnerabilities, matched with the low overall capacity to respond to or reduce the impact of natural hazards. Poverty is a major factor in the country's risk to disaster because it increases locals' vulnerability while reduces their coping capabilities.<sup>83</sup> A climate disaster would have the potential to produce severe socio-economic impacts on the country. Despite having only 7% of arable land, over 75% of its population relies on rural agricultural

<sup>4</sup> Please see ANNEX 5 for more information on population and demography.

production for their livelihood.<sup>84</sup> Its agricultural sector accounts for 21% of overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 64% of total employment.<sup>85</sup> Human and economic costs would likely be high in the case of a severe natural disaster.<sup>86</sup>

The country experiences a wide range of natural and technological hazards, including earthquakes, floods, landslides, mudslides, debris flows, avalanches, droughts, and extreme temperatures. Response capabilities are further impeded by the remoteness of population distribution and the lack of alternative transport routes or physical infrastructure to facilitate adequate response, as seen in the 2015 7.2 earthquake.<sup>87</sup>

Reducing risks will be intrinsically tied to reducing poverty-driven vulnerabilities and building local capacity to respond and prepare for environmental shocks. The *National Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction* was created in response to increasing instances of climate-induced disasters in 2012.<sup>88</sup> In 2015, Tajikistan adopted the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (2015-2030).<sup>89</sup> This strategy is in large part a continuation of the *National Disaster Risk Management Strategy and Action Plan*, a five-year government strategy that concluded in 2015.<sup>90</sup> It works in coordination with the UNDP *Disaster Risk Management Programme* and AKF's *Focus Humanitarian Assistance and Mountain Societies Development Support Programme* initiatives.<sup>91</sup>

### Scenarios

#### Most Likely

Tajikistan is characterized by a state of medium fragility that promises to remain stable for the foreseeable future. The volatile system of governance in the country will remain a high risk, though there is limited

<sup>5</sup> Please see ANNEX 6 for more information on environmental assessment in Tajikistan.

empirical evidence that the situation will deteriorate into increasing fragility. Principally, the absence of any dissent or opposition groups, due to the President and his government's stronghold on power, makes it likely that he and his small band of elites will continue to be the preponderant powers in the country. This power will also continue to extend to the political and economic realms with President Rahmon and his group of elites more than likely continuing to maintain control over policymaking.

In terms of human development, groups such as the UNDP have been working to improve development conditions in the country, while the government works on some poverty alleviation measures. The government does not, however, appear to be working on additional programs to address inequality or non-monetary sources of poverty. As such, it is highly likely that the current state of pervasive inequality and relatively high poverty will remain. This is in line with current assessments that Tajikistan lacks the capacity and willingness to improve living conditions for civilians. The state will continue to disproportionately support its clients and fail to make essential goods and services, such as food, energy, healthcare, and education, more affordable for a larger proportion of Tajiks. While there has been a notable cross-border regional trade dispute between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, there was some thawing in hostile relations in early 2018.<sup>92</sup> At this juncture, it is unclear whether these two countries will continue to pursue further cooperation and stability in the future. Thus, it is quite possible that trade barriers will continue, though tensions may relax further in the coming months.

The President has concentrated on improving economic conditions in Tajikistan by acquiring investment from China, Russia, and the European Union, which he will likely continue in the future. Yet, the lack of human

capital and exodus of human resources following the civil war will likely continue to undermine economic and human development reforms, such as market diversification and social assistance programs that have been delayed or are severely behind. Tajikistan reliance on a remittance-based economy will likely also remain in the future. In the last year, workers in Russia sent approximately the equivalent of \$2.5 billion back home, which accounts for over a third of the country's GDP.<sup>93</sup> This significant amount of remittances and subsequent dependency has made Tajikistan vulnerable to external shocks, a phenomenon that will continue because of the country's inability to diversify its economy or create sustainable domestic jobs.<sup>94</sup> In the absence of investment in private enterprises and education, which would create a larger skilled labour force and promote domestic job creation, it is improbable that Tajikistan would reduce or change its dependence on remittances from Tajik labourers in Russia. While the dependence is unlikely to change, it is highly likely that remittances will continue to decrease as Russia's economy is still suffering due to the global increase in oil prices as well as the economic sanctions following the seizure of Crimea.<sup>95</sup> While these projected occurrences are unlikely to elicit violent conflict or steer the country towards acute fragility, policymakers are advised to pay close attention to the total value of remittances being sent to Tajikistan as well as the number of migrant workers returning home because the country lacks the resilience to absorb this kind of shock.

A dramatic decrease in remittances and increase in workers returning home to Tajikistan, while unlikely, is a cause for concern as a large group of disenchanted workers are highly susceptible to self-radicalization, participation in terrorist groups, as well as displays of violent dissent. It is in the interest of parties seeking to maintain and increase Tajikistan's stability to

consider widespread economic stabilization measures and more concerted attempts at diversifying the economy and foreign funding. While the country has been developing a labour migration strategy and a new law on labour, it is important for the government to work on developing an action plan targeting the quality of life of locals and migrant returnees.<sup>96</sup> One strategy for ameliorating the above-mentioned threats to Tajikistan's stability is to develop more extensive monthly living allowances, which builds on the country's current social assistance program but extends beyond the poorest and most vulnerable Tajik citizens.<sup>97</sup> Other strategies include: creating a single consolidated social assistance program that provides a basket of essential goods and services, making affordable education more accessible, creating an action plan for domestic job creation, or securing work placements in other countries in need of additional labour.

#### *Best Case*

A best-case scenario would involve several key developments. These changes would occur *gradually* to avoid antagonising the elites who are loyal to the executive and consequently sparking conflict within the country. Developments would include the *gradual* decrease in the coercive authority of the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) and elite stakeholders; an opening up of the Tajik economy to allow more private industry and the reduction of reliance on remittances; and a stark improvement in the governance structures within the country to bridge its current gaps in capacity.

Effective checks and balances on powerholders and the executive would take place, increasing executive accountability towards citizens in the social contract. This would contribute to increases in the overall legitimacy of the government. Bans on opposition parties, such as the Islamic

Revival Party (IRPT), and persons exiled would be lifted. Opposition parties would be able to run in the 2020 election, provided they meet the 5% constitutional threshold to run. There will be a reinstatement of consociational agreements mandating a quota of non-PDT members in political positions of power. These accountability measures will be instituted gradually as to not provoke a backlash from those loyal to President Rahmon. Increased foreign and domestic investment in Tajikistan's private sector would increase opportunities for employment and relieve patronage networks embedded in the economy. It would also reduce the overwhelming influence and coercive power of state-owned monopolies, such as TALCO. Private sector actors would fill capacity gaps left by the state. It would also safeguard against crises stemming from external shocks to remittance flows. Outsourcing of state functions to external service providers, such as the AKF and the UNDP, would decrease in response to increased institutionalization of informal networks and capacity of local actors. Rural councils of elders will be brought into the institutional fold and jamoats, as a third-level administrative unit, and Uzbek mahalas (i.e., urban-division in for the Uzbek minorities) will be strengthened through capacity-building initiatives run by current CSOs administering goods and services. The capacity of these actors would increase to the point in which they can uphold the social contract and provide adequate services for citizens.

#### *Worst Case*

A worst-case scenario would entail, first and foremost, a dramatic reduction in the flow of remittances, a trend that began in 2014.<sup>98</sup> The remittance-based welfare system adopted to fill gaps in government service provision would be threatened. The significant percentage of the country's population already living under the poverty line would be hit most severely. Food insecurity and

malnutrition would increase and HDI indicators across all areas of well-being would decrease, especially among geographically isolated and marginalized populations. Drought or climate-induced impact of low crop yields would further exacerbate the economic crisis. Microfinance would not be sufficient to stem human costs, especially considering the National Bank of Tajikistan is already suffering from solvency issues. Informal governance structures that fill capacity gaps left by the state would be severely strained. The capacity deficit on behalf of the government to deal with exogenous shocks would be starkly exposed. Legitimacy would be further questioned as a result and small-scale civil unrest or protest. Challenges to PDPT authority would trigger reactionary arrests, deportations, and executions by the government.

### *Wild Card*

Tajikistan is a country with medium fragility due to its relative long-term stability across its primary drivers. At the same time, it is possible for the situation to rapidly deteriorate under very specific and unfortunate circumstances. First, given Tajikistan's reliance on remittances from Russia, it is possible that a massive exodus of workers may lead to destabilizing effects in Tajikistan. This exodus may be the result of the struggling Russian economy, which has suffered since it was hit with punitive sanctions following the secession of Crimea and due to the declining price of oil worldwide.<sup>99</sup> Migrant returns may also be sparked by more random events, such as terror attacks in Russia. On October 31, 2018, a suicide bombing occurred in Russia near an intelligence office, killing at least one and injuring multiple people.<sup>100</sup> Though an extreme reaction, additional attacks of this nature may push the Russian government to mitigate future risks by expelling foreign groups, especially those accused of or associated with terrorism. Tajikistan is close

to Afghanistan and has had various, albeit isolated, instances of terrorist activities, such as suicide and planted bombings.<sup>101</sup> The Russian government has also expressed concern of Tajikistan being a hub for Daesh attacks and recruitments.<sup>102</sup> The return of Tajik workers from Russia may lead to a sense of restlessness and dissatisfaction at employment opportunities among this group. These feelings may make locals vulnerable to self-radicalization, participation in a terrorist group such as Daesh, or spark dissenting behaviours against the government of Tajikistan. The state has a strong policy of violently suppressing dissent and opposition, which will likely occur against anti-government activity. In a wild card scenario, this dissent would be extensive and result in large-scale government action that further enrages the local population. A vicious and violent cycle may manifest, wherein groups attempt to overthrow President Rahmon. Formerly deposed groups such as the Islamic Renaissance Party and United Tajik Opposition may lead the revolution, concretizing and formalizing the violence in Tajikistan.<sup>103</sup> Since Tajikistan emerged from a civil war in the late 1990s with Rahmon consolidating and monopolizing power through his rise to power, the breakdown of this control could plunge the country into civil war as a power vacuum emerges and Tajik citizens seek to remove President Rahmon and install a new leader of their preference.

### **Policy Options**

#### *Policy Option 1: Maintain the Status Quo*

Given the moderate fragility in Tajikistan, it is advisable to avoid interfering or attempting to implement any programming to improve the country's state of fragility. The logic of this policy option is to pursue a hands-off approach that does not interfere in current work by organizations such as the UNDP, and to avoid creation competition over

resources and clients (i.e., Tajik citizens). It will also be beneficial to leave the situation as is to avoid antagonizing the government and threatening its legitimacy among locals. While it is uncertain that any fragility reduction measures would lead to negative externalities, the situation is not so dire or threatening to justify the costs of potentially risky engagement.

#### *Policy Option 2: Data Collection and Monitoring*

Increased data collection and thorough monitoring of current UNDP programs will be a required and essential component in increasing the effectiveness of current aid and in driving future efforts towards reducing fragility. This plan will require coordination efforts on behalf of the UNDP and other international and multinational organizations for not only data collection of ongoing initiatives but data sharing between organizations as well. Publishing of data and evaluations of UNDP initiatives will be essential to ensure adequate information-sharing. Mahalas and jamoats will serve as the entry points for direct cooperation with the national government and for the implementation of initiatives aimed at addressing capacity gaps. There is a distinct lack of recent information on gender and social inequalities among vulnerable populations. There is a need for data spanning all geographic regions of Tajikistan, including the GBAO. A full evaluation of ongoing UNDP initiatives should be implemented, and feedback components should be incorporated into goods and service delivery. More thorough current data, in tandem with monitoring of existing programs, will help in driving evidence-based UNDP action and determining future courses of action.

#### *Policy Option 3: Building Resilience*

In this option, the authors propose building resilience by engaging the locals (i.e., the

average Tajik person) and civil society organizations. This can be done by holding consultation sessions hosted by the UNDP, given that it is a trusted organization, to ensure that existing social assistance and development policies are effective. These consultations will also provide opportunities to receive feedback from participants to improve the quality of services provided by the government. For example, social assistance programs available for the very poor. Consultation sessions are one way to measure and evaluate the performance of services through feedback loops. These consultation sessions can be facilitated by engaging the mahalas, jamoats and vulnerable populations during UNDP service provisions. Additionally, transferring some of the responsibility of providing social services to local actors such as non-governmental organizations, grassroots groups, etc. is a way to further engage the locals in deciding their fate. It also encourages gradual decentralization of government as the service provider and allows the government to focus spending on bigger investment projects. The UNDP is already investing \$1.7 million from 2017-2019 on promoting social and economic opportunities in Tajikistan, particularly for women.<sup>104</sup>

#### *Policy 4: Data Collection and Monitoring While Building Resilience*

Capacity-building of local stakeholders to build resilience should work in tandem with increased efforts in data collection. This strategy combines all aspects of policy options 2 and 3 discussed above. Combined efforts are expected to provide the adequate information needed to identify vulnerable populations and the current UNDP programs/initiatives best meeting civilians' needs. Building resilience through local capacity-building will help ensure these needs are met, not only by the UNDP but also local actors by adequately providing goods

and services. A formal review of progress should take place after five years.

### **Policy Recommendation**

The authors recommend the fourth policy option: ***Data Collection and Monitoring While Building Resilience***. It combines two important measures that can contribute to the general increase in economic and human development, as well as improved governance. The expected impact of this recommendation is the collection of the future research that can stem from data collection, as well as seeking feedback from locals. Such data that can stem from data collection, as well as seeking feedback from the locals. Such data can indicate how much HDI improved and how much local participation increased, where the latter acts as a gradual yet safe way of pushing the current governance system.

### ***Measurement of Expected Impact***

With respect to the measuring process, this option provides for employment opportunities at data centers, decreasing the dependency on the remittances market supplied by Tajik labourers in Russia; and decentralizes the government as the main service provider by engaging local communities, as well as empowering grass-roots efforts in providing services to people. The reason behind the decentralization is because the majority of Tajiks live in rural areas, where they lack government services. Therefore, the entry point for the UNDP would be the local leaders of the mahalas and the jamoats. These individuals are trusted by their communities as well as the government.

Annexes

ANNEX 1: Intensities and Trends Legend

Legend			
<b>Intensity</b>	Low	Medium	High
<b>Trend</b>	Improving	Stable	Deteriorating
<b>Direction</b>		 or  or 	

This legend serves as a visual presentation of the assessment of the intensities and the trends found under the authority, legitimacy and capacity section, as well as the primary and secondary drivers’ section.

In this report, the authors measure the intensities, trends and direction of authority, legitimacy and capacity, as well as the primary and secondary drivers against the baseline scenario. The authors identify the baseline scenario to be the most likely scenario. Briefly, the baseline scenario highlights the pervasive inequality and poverty in Tajikistan, which is a problem since its independence in the late 1990s. Tajikistan’s volatile governance system, which is unpredictable, will remain a high risk, despite the fact that there is limited empirical evidence that the situation will deteriorate. The reason for Tajikistan’s governance to remain at high risk comes from the authors’ thorough events analysis from the past 18 years.

Predominantly, the absence of opposition political groups and any dissent, due to President Rahmon and his government’s strong grip over power, provides for the likelihood for the former and the latter to continue to be the main powers in the country. Such control will resume to extend to the political and economic realms with President Rahmon and his group of elites more than likely continuing to maintain control over policymaking.

*Intensity* is classified into three streams: *low*, *medium*, and *high*. *Low* intensity means the fragility risk is minimal. *Medium* intensity means that the fragility risk is moderate. *High* intensity means that the fragility risk is significant.

With respect to *trend*, there are also three streams: *improving*; *stable*, and *deteriorating*. *Improving* means that the factor that is being assessed is getting better. *Stable* means that the current state of the factor is stagnant, though there is the potential for it to either get better or worse. *Deteriorating* means that the variable’s condition is worsening over time.

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The *direction* matches with the trend. If the *trend is improving*, it is matched with an upward, green arrow. If the *trend is stable*, it is matched with a horizontal, right-pointing, yellow arrow. Alternatively, *stable* is matched with either a slightly upward sloping yellow arrow, indicating some improvement, or a slightly downward sloping yellow arrow, indicating some deterioration. Finally, if the *trend is deteriorating*, it is matched with a downward red arrow.

Tajikistan has an overall fragility score of 5.90, making it a medium fragile state.<sup>105</sup> According to the 2017 CIFP Report, the countries with an overall fragility score of 6.5 and above are considered in serious fragility situations.<sup>106</sup> Alternatively, countries with an overall fragility score of 3.5 to 6.5 are considered to have medium fragility situations.<sup>107</sup> Finally, using this logic, countries that have scored below 3.5 have low fragility situations.

While the overall fragility score for Tajikistan, 5.90, suggests that the country is relatively stable, the score was obtained using different time periods and coding procedures. The overall score was obtained through the more complex coding procedures, whereas, the ALC scores use the minimalist dataset.

### ANNEX 2: Authority Assessment

Marginalized independent or opposition parties have increasingly become excluded from the political process. In 2014, the opposition party *Group 24* was exiled and its leader, Umarali Quvvatov, was assassinated in Istanbul.<sup>108</sup> Less than a year later, Zayd Saidov, leader of *New Tajikistan* was sentenced to 25 years in prison and the party was dissolved. All semblance of legitimate opposition disappeared in 2015 with crackdowns against the IRPT.<sup>109</sup> The Ministry of Justice, under the orders of the executive, revoked the IRPT's legal registration after the Supreme Court declared it a terrorist organization. Membership or 'express support' for IRPT remains criminalized and there is an absence of veto players in the houses and the bicameral legislature.

In 2016, President Rahmon amended the constitution eliminating term limits on the presidency (Freedom House Report 2018).<sup>110</sup> He has since instituted a ban on religious parties and replaced long-time mayor of Dushanbe, Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev, with his eldest son. All political and economic positions of power remain reserved for PDPT members.<sup>111</sup> Patronage networks and personal loyalties are a necessity for economic or social positions of power.

The president controls the judiciary through his constitutional prerogative to nominate and dismiss judges and the prosecutor general. Human Rights Watch has also reported that “torture remains widespread in the criminal justice system.”<sup>112</sup> Despite authorities often using the threat of radical Islamic groups and insurgency to justify their actions, there are no significant and sustained insurgent or violent movements contesting the state. A lower level of authority does exist at the subnational level in the GBAO, but this does not threaten Tajikistan’s overall stability or result in any substantial violence.<sup>113</sup> Its shared border with Afghanistan has not resulted in transnational Islamic insurgency or threatened the safety of Tajiks through spillover from the border.<sup>114</sup>

### ANNEX 3: Economic Development

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In the past three years, the number of migrant workers has declined, while the amount of money transferred from Russia to Tajikistan has fallen considerably, particularly since 2016.<sup>115</sup> This decline, coupled with slowdowns in China's economy, has stunted the country's economic growth. The concentration of key national economic assets and regulation of the economy in the hands of a limited elite is further hampering Tajikistan's economic development. Mainly, the concentration of power based on loyalty and family ties (i.e. nepotism) rather than on competence and merit has slowed Tajikistan's progress in establishing an effectively functioning market economy and sustainable economic policies.

Tajikistan has a largely young population, including a significant population of young males.<sup>6</sup> A large population of unemployed and disenfranchised young males may turn to the black market or illicit activities to acquire money, such as participation in the drug trade. As drug trade increases, so do the chances of drug-related violence and turf wars. This is not an impossible scenario since Tajikistan has a highly porous border with Afghanistan and has a history of moving a considerable volume of drugs from Afghanistan to Russia.<sup>116</sup>

### **ANNEX 4: Human Development**

Although the Tajik government reports nearly 100% literacy rates and high rates of school enrollment, the quality of education varies considerably.<sup>117</sup> Many Tajiks are unable to access quality education or higher education due to exorbitant costs. Another major development challenge in Tajikistan is the high rate of undernourishment. Based on Asian Development Bank data from 2018, 30% of citizens are undernourished.<sup>118</sup> There is also a severe shortage of clean water, resulting in a situation where more than 50% of the population does not have access to safe drinking water.<sup>119</sup> A significant proportion of the population also has limited access to heating and sanitation, which are two notable indicators of non-monetary poverty.<sup>120</sup>

While it is unlikely that a civil war would break out, it is possible for locals, particularly those who are experiencing poverty and inequality, to attempt to improve their living circumstances by engaging in demonstrations or rebellions. They may also turn to illicit activities, such as delving into the drug market to supplement income, to access goods and services that are currently outside their reach.

### **ANNEX 5: Population and Demography**

The most populous provinces are the Sugh and Khalton, and GBAO the least. Only 852,000 people reside in the capital Dushanbe.<sup>121</sup> The overall population is incredibly young and growing at a stable rate of 2.1% (less than 0.5% fluctuation in growth from 2009).<sup>122</sup> Additionally, gender distribution is almost identical (within a percentage point for the last decade) at 49.8% female and 50.2% male.<sup>123</sup> Both face substantial marginalization within Tajikistan. There is no official state religion, but according to the U.S. State Department, the government recognizes the 'special status' of Hanafi Sunni Islam. This is reflected in the governments' exiling and execution of members of religious opposition political parties. The Hanafi Sunni Muslim makes up 85% of Tajikistan's population. Whereas Shia Muslims make up 5% and concentrated in the GBAO, and approximately 3% of the population is Christian (mainly Russian Orthodox).<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See "Gendered Population Distribution: Tajikistan 2016" under "Extra Figures"

## ANNEX 6: Environment

Avalanches, floods, and earthquakes are the most frequent types of disasters in Tajikistan, occurring nearly every year.<sup>125</sup> In Tajikistan, 63% of the population live in highly seismic areas.<sup>126</sup> Tajikistan is considered the main glacial centre of Central Asia and glaciers occupy about 6% of the total country area.<sup>127</sup> Tajikistan is 93% mountainous. Increases in temperatures due to climate change are expected to impact the Alay Range and the Pamir Mountains significantly, worsening instances of flooding and avalanches in the country. By 2030, an average annual temperature is expected to increase by 0.2-0.4 degrees in most areas.

### Extra Figures

#### Tajikistan's Exiles by Affiliation

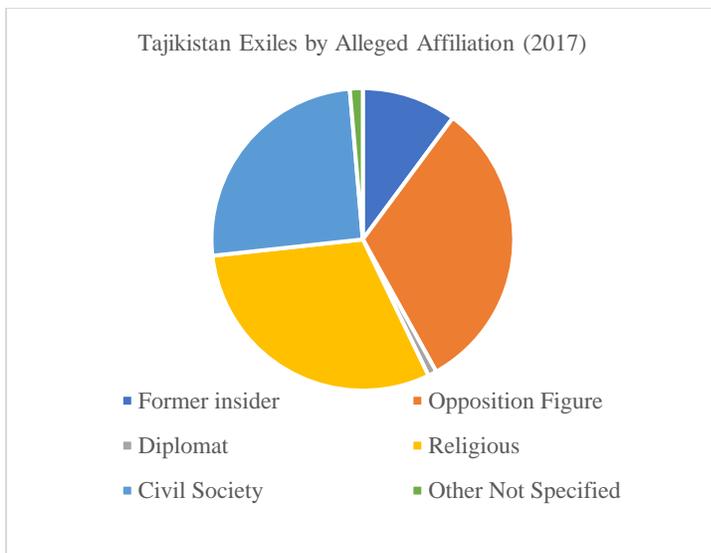


Chart 1: Data sourced from Central Asian Political Exiles Database at the University of Exeter (2017)

Political Exiled Activities

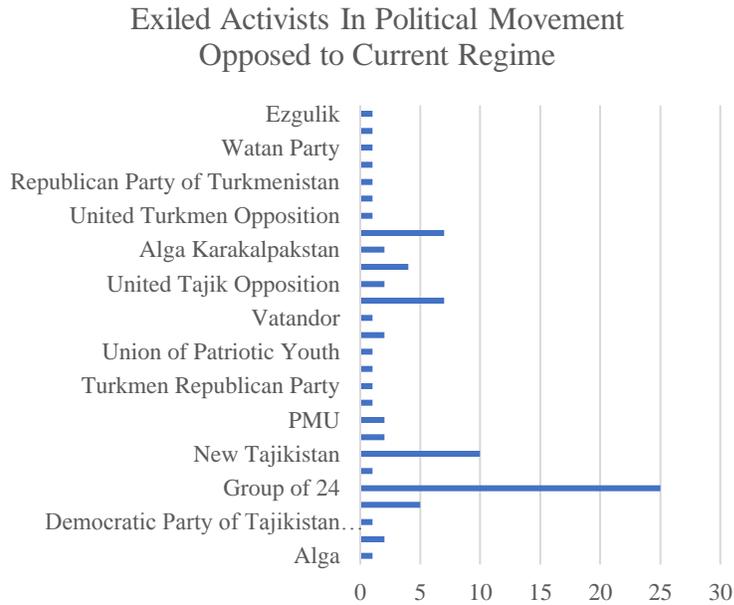


Figure 2: Based on data from Central Asian Political Exiles Database at the University of Exeter (2017).  
Gendered Population Distribution: Tajikistan 2016

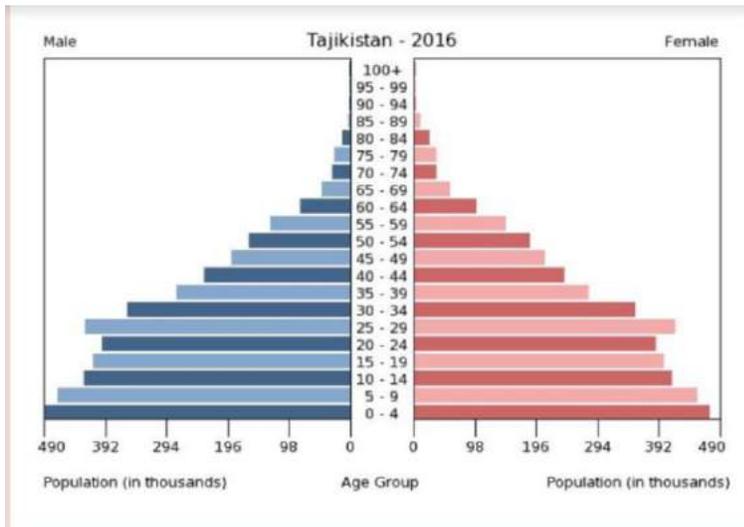
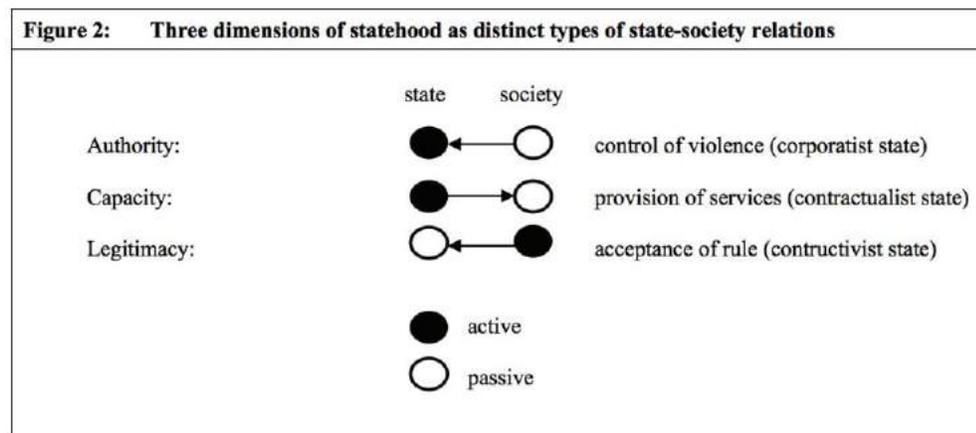


Figure 3: CIA Factbook (2017)

Tajikistan has considerably even gender distribution. In 2016, the CIA Factbook reported its female population as a percentage of the total to be 49.8% and male 50.2%.

## Authority, Capacity, Legitimacy (ACL)



Gravingholt, Ziaja, and Kreibaum, “State Fragility: Towards a Multidimensional Empirical Typology”, *German Development Institute* (2012)

## Endnotes

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<sup>5</sup> “2018 Country Report: Tajikistan,” *Bertelsmann Stiftung’s Transformation Index*, Gütersloh, Germany (2018): 3.

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

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