

Research Reports and Briefs

State Decline in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan

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This study investigates why Tajikistan's state collapsed in 1992 into civil war while state power in Uzbekistan declined into a mixture of coercion and material inducement consistent with predatory rule.¹ To explain the patterns in these two cases, my research has come to focus upon the conditions under which local economic elites ("strongmen"), patronage politics, and regionalism in national institutions contribute to and detract from the use of coercion in state building.

Based on preliminary data analysis, I find that specific combinations of local strongmen and regional patrons promoted very different forms of regionalism in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan during the Soviet period. The distinctive shapes of regionalism persisted into the 1990s, influencing the strategies and effectiveness of law enforcement agencies in each case. In 1992, dissension over one region's hegemony in Tajikistan split its national institutions from within, leading to the capture of the central coercive apparatus, the state's failure to police mass demonstrations, and eventually to state collapse. Uzbekistan's decentralized regionalism, however, left the center consolidated and its coercive apparatus intact. This prevented the type of rapid breakdown that occurred in Tajikistan, but the central leadership's growing reliance on coercion as a means of political control has encouraged predatory behavior in its law enforcement organs. State capture in Tajikistan and emerging predatory rule in Uzbekistan are diverging outcomes that can

be best explained by each country's configuration of strongmen, patronage, and regionalism.

By the end of the Soviet period, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan resembled many "weak" states in Africa, Latin America, and Asia, whose efforts to complement their juridical sovereignty with empirical sovereignty are complicated by diffused systems of authority at the interstices of state and society (Migdal 1988; Jackson and Rosberg 1982). Yet, state weakness in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan was characterized by two features of the Soviet system: (1) concentrations of wealth under local agricultural, industrial, or resource extraction operations, constituting the heads of these operations as "strongmen" within their localities; and (2) devolution of political authority to provincial governors (*Obkom* [*oblastnoi komitet*; provincial committee] First Secretaries), giving them opportunities to construct regional patronage relations. Local strongmen and regional patronage relations influenced the organization of state power in all Soviet republics (albeit in different ways), but these variables are of particular interest here because they distinguish Tajikistan and Uzbekistan from each other better than variables identified in general theories of state breakdown.²

In conducting my research, I used a comparative case study approach which placed Tajikistan and Uzbekistan within a "most similar"

¹ State breakdown or decline is a general term describing the diminishing effectiveness of a state's institutions to function. State collapse refers to the complete failure of state institutions and concurrent social disintegration (often internal conflict). Predatory rule denotes a personalistic regime ruling through coercion and rewards to collaborators. For more, see Beissinger and Young (2002) and Lewis (1996).

² Three common theories would emphasize that Tajikistan and Uzbekistan differ in: (a) how identities were formed and mobilized (Lewis 1994; Deng 1995); (b) the incentives among state rulers whose informal pacts of accommodation with local strongmen may or may not force them to purposely dismantle state institutions (Reno 1995; Ellis 1999; King 2001); and (c) levels of economic dependence on a foreign patron (Rubin 1995). While possible to apply to Tajikistan's collapse, none of these explanations adequately accounts for why Uzbekistan did not also collapse.

research design — one that seeks to explain different outcomes among cases that are otherwise similar. I organized my field research so that I could spend the first phase (September 2002 in Uzbekistan and October-December 2002 in Tajikistan) collecting data on strongmen, patronage relations, and regionalism. I designed my data collection on these variables around specific indicators³ and used national, regional, and district newspapers, various issues of the economic handbook *Narodnoe khoziaistvo*, and ministry publications. My research yielded biographies of central elites and regional governors, several databases of tenures of central elites, district governors and collective farm chairs, and local budget figures in each country from 1960-2001 (though gaps in the data remain to be filled). In addition, I collected several elite biographical works and conducted brief interviews with local elites, journalists, and on selected collective farms.

Preliminary analysis of these data confirms most assessments of Tajikistan: that a type of regionalism emerged which effectively split the center from within (Dudoignon and Jahangiri 1994; Roy 2000). Specifically, my analysis suggests that concentrations of strongmen of collective farms and regional patronage relations in the Leninabad province promoted its hegemony in key ministries of the republic's political economy, while local strongmen active in the Mountain-Badakhshan Autonomous Province's growing underground economy sustained its control within the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Data also show that these same variables were more evenly spread across regions in Uzbekistan, leaving Uzbekistan's central leadership undivided but ringed by powerful regional political machines. I believe that this difference accounts for the mobility of Uzbekistan's coercive apparatus in policing demonstrations in the early 1990s and for Tajikistan's immobility. Since much of this became clear to me while I was in the field, I was unable to interview elites who worked in the central offices of each country's law enforcement agencies at that

time. I plan to interview these former officials during a follow-up field trip.

During the second phase of my research in Uzbekistan (January-August 2003), I investigated the effects that local strongmen, patronage, and regionalism have on the country today. I decided to focus on the Prosecutor General and its regional and district offices. Since the mid-1990s the Prosecutor General's office has been given permission to use its wide-ranging formal powers to spearhead state-building in the country. Its mandate has included reducing the power of regional and district governors. I designed my ethnographic research so that it focused on the successes and failures of this effort among regional and district prosecutors. Over several months I conducted approximately 50 semi-structured interviews of high-level staff in district prosecutors' and district governors' offices and another 50 interviews of journalists, external observers, and lawyers in regional law offices. I conducted these interviews mainly in Uzbek (several were in Russian) in a random selection of districts in Tashkent City and in the provinces of Samarqand and Ferghana (lawyers were interviewed in other regional centers as well). Within each locality, informants were selected based on their professional position only, not according to ethnicity, sex, or social class.

Preliminary findings from these interviews suggest that the use of the Prosecutor General's office to undermine regional elites in Uzbekistan has had mixed results. There have been some successes, but prosecutors are underpaid, overworked, and often in debt from (formal and informal) law school expenditures. In addition, many view their primary role not as an anti-corruption mechanism but as a support for local resource extraction. As such, many of the local offices of the Prosecutor General have become incorporated within regional patronage relations and, paradoxically, *enhance* them. At the same time, where prosecutors remain relatively autonomous from regional governors and local strongmen, patterns of predatory behavior upon local economic actors have emerged, posing a new challenge to Uzbekistan's political and economic development. However, variation within Uzbekistan is significant and I hope to specify patterns in other localities through interviews in several regional centers upon my return to the field.

³ A "strongman" exists when his or her (and there were female strongmen) tenure outlasted that of his/her immediate superior (the *Raikom* [raionnyi komitet; regional committee] First Secretary). The shape of regional patronage relations is indicated by the lateral movements of *Raikom* First Secretaries within a province and by the origins of provincial governors. Types of regionalism are defined by the distribution of key positions in national institutions among regionally based elites.

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Towards a Connection between Religion and Nationality in Central Asia

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This report presents findings of a research project conducted for a Ph.D. on Christian movements and believers in Central Asia from 1945 through the present. It is a result of a two-year stay (1998-2000) in the five republics of Central Asia with the support of IFEAC, where I currently pursue research on politics and religion in Central Asia after independence. This research is based on library work (in Paris, Nanterre, Strasbourg, Oxford, Moscow, and throughout Central Asia, especially in Tashkent, Dushanbe, Ashgabat, Bishkek, Almaty and Öskemen [Ust'-Kamenogorsk]), plus surveys and interviews. I also extensively used Russian-language Soviet and post-Soviet newspapers, such as *Kazakhstanskaia pravda*, *Kommunist Tadjikistana*,

Pravda vostoka, *Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, and periodicals covering religious issues, such as *Bratskii vestnik*, *Zhurnal moskovskoi patriarkhii*, *Svet pravoslaviia v Kazakhstane*, *Vedi*, *Zhizn' very*, and *Slovo zhizni*. A number of important documents came from church libraries or were given to me by priests, pastors, and believers. I interviewed state officials in charge of religious affairs, representatives and believers of all Christian denominations present in the area, from the Orthodox Church to the Catholic Church, and the numerous Protestant denominations.

In Central Asia Christianity was not only persecuted by the atheist regime, but it was also a minority religion in a Muslim area. After