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The Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), of which Tajikistan was a constituent republic for 70 years, was in hindsight built to be unbuilt. It was a multinational confederation, in which each republic was endowed with the constitutional right to secede. This right eventually led to the union's unraveling. Vladimir Putin, leader of the Russian Federation, which succeeded the USSR as its successor state, recently blamed Vladimir Lenin—who founded the Soviet Union and fathered the idea of national autonomy for constituent republics, investing them with the right to secede—for its collapse (Stanglin, 2016). As it turned out, state-society contradictions began to surface with the very founding of the Soviet Union. The core Russian nationality was deeply invested in the Soviet Union as a state, and the Soviet state was dominated by the Russians to the point that the Russian attempt to influence other states was referred to as the “Russification of the State.”

In response to Russian pressures, peripheral nations, especially the Central Asian Republics (CARs), including Tajikistan, found themselves contesting the state's overreach into their everyday life. As editors and contributors to *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood* argue, Soviet leaders suppressed the religious and cultural autonomy of the Tajiks in order to steer them into the fold of socialism. Divergent religious and cultural practices were deemed contrary to the development of a socialist state and society. The state-society contradiction that thus emerged further spurred the formation of a national consciousness among minority (i.e., non-Russian) nationalities that remained unintegrated into the Soviet state.

One of the paradoxes of the Soviet system, as Heathershaw and Herzig, editors of this volume, contend, lay within the project of the undoing of a traditional Tajik society and the building on its ruins a socialist society: The “societal engineering” that was deployed to realize this objective had unintended consequences. In fact, the socialist project in the Muslim republics led to a “re-composition of solidarity groups,” engendering a dual political culture: On the one hand, minority nationalities kept up an appearance of conformity with the socialist project. On the other, they subverted the project by practices of “factionalism and clientism.” (The factional divide and patronage were later inherited by the Tajik state.) This duality of culture imbued the Soviet Socialist project with an ever-present contradiction that kept the Soviet Union underdeveloped as a state and held it back from ever becoming a fully-integrated society. As a result, mutually colliding nations continued to exist within the “Soviet state,” a reality that continued to nurture not only the national consciousness of constituent states but also their aspirations for a national status of their own at the expense of the Soviet Socialist project.

The ripening of the national consciousness of constituent states came to full fruition at the 1991 collapse of the Soviet Union, which splintered into fifteen states, all of which were formed along racial-ethnic lines. Like other Central Asian nationals, Tajiks were ready to create a state of their own, which they founded in 1991. Many scholars of the young nation have since been dismissive of it as a decentralized federation of tribes that have drifted centrifugally outward and away from the state, preventing its coherence into a nation-state. Critics have called Tajikistan a ‘failed state,’ an epithet that Heathershaw and Herzig persuasively contest. This rebuttal seems to be the pivot of the entire volume and all of its contributions.

In the civil war—which broke out soon after Tajikistan's birth and has thus far claimed 50,000 lives—some heard a death-knell for the state. Not far behind was the rise of religious extremism and its virulent spin-off, a violent Jihadist movement that kept rearing its ugly head

and remains an existential threat to the state to this day (a topic that receives scant attention by the volume's contributors). If anything, the text presents "rebel" Islamic movements such as Hizb-ul-Tahrir and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (which has its offshoots in all of Central Asia and beyond, including Tajikistan) simply as an oppositional force to "official Islam." Despite the downplaying of the fear of Islamic rebel groups in the text, however, the Tajik government appears to be taking the threat of such groups seriously. Early this year, the government in Dushanbe ordered tens of thousands of Tajik men sporting unusually long beards to have their beards shaved and persuaded hundreds of Hijab-wearing Tajik women to have their headscarves doffed for fear of the symbolic associations of beards and headscarves with violent Jihadists (Hunter, 2016). This is the most recent sign of a deadly conflict between the state in Tajikistan and its rivals among religious extremists and violent Jihadists. Given these recent events, the scholarly exploration of the sources of statehood in Tajikistan could not be better timed. Heathershaw and Herzog did an excellent job of collecting and editing ten essays in the volume, which is aptly titled *The Transformation of Tajikistan: The Sources of Statehood*. Each essay explores the roots of Tajik statehood in multiple social formations. These essays have been placed into four thoughtfully organized thematic distributions that help the reader understand the evolution of statehood in Tajikistan and locate its multifarious sources in history and society that each span thousands of years of what Tajiks fondly remember as their glorious past.

The volume is divided into four sections. Section I: The Roots of Statehood explores and traces Tajik statehood back through its long history, which saw highs and lows, ups and downs on the way to the founding of the contemporary Tajik state. Section II: Islam and Statehood echoes the coalescing cries of a nation hewing to an Islamic state in the Soviet and post-Soviet era. Section III: Gender and Statehood examines the Soviet and post-Soviet state's attempts at penetrating the customary gender order in an effort to mold it to the needs of modern times. Section IV: Security, Economy and Statehood recounts post-Soviet challenges to the Tajik state in fragile national security and the flagging economy.

Section I: The Roots of Statehood consists of three historically and socially literate essays, although the first two are of uneven length, which does not sit well with the rest of the essays, each of which is around ten pages long. Botakoz Kassymbekoya, in his essay, "Hapless Imperialists: European Developers in Soviet Central Asia in the 1920s and 1930s," traces Tajik statehood to the Soviet imperialism in the early twentieth century, when Tajikistan was forcibly incorporated into the Soviet state. He illuminates the efforts mounted by European state-builders in the service of the Soviet socialist project. Olivier Ferrando, in his essay, "Soviet Population Transfers and Interethnic Relations in Tajikistan: Assessing the Concept of Ethnicity," speaks to the society-wide resistance to forced resettlement triggered by the Soviet socialist project and locates the anchor of this resistance in ethnic affinity, trans-local identity, and political community. He brings to the fore the power of what Benedict Anderson (2006) aptly called "imagined communities" in shaping and de-shaping state structures. Alexander Sodiqov, in his essay, "From Resettlement to Conflict: Development-induced Involuntary Displacement and Violence in Tajikistan," examines connections between forced resettlement and socialist modernity by illustrating these connections in such development projects as the Roghun Dam. He finds Soviet-era policies being replicated in post-Soviet Tajikistan, which partially explains the nation's civil unrest and the lethal consequences thereof.

Section II: Islam and Statehood comprises two major essays, one each by Stephane A. Dudoignon and Tim Epkenhans. Dudoignon, in his work on "From Revival to Mutation: The Religious Personnel of Islam in Tajikistan from De-Stalinisation to Independence (1953-1991)"

focuses on Islam's presence in social and political spheres—which was kept up by religious revivalist movements and which not only resulted in the building of networks of relationship but also ignited competition between religious scholars in post-Stalinist Tajikistan. Epkenhans, in his article on “Defining Normative Islam: Some Remarks on Contemporary Islamic Thought in Tajikistan-Haji Akbar Turajonzoda's Sharia and Society” reflects on a particular national Islamic discourse by exploring the religious and political writing of Haji Akbar Turajonzoda, an influential Tajik scholar of Islam. Section III: Gender and Society consists of two essays, one by Colette Harris and one by Sophie Roche and Sophie Hohmann. These essays review the relationship between gender, the family, and the state. Harris, in her essay on “Affairs of the State: Gender, Sex and Marriage in Tajikistan” argues how the state is struggling to penetrate the intimate spaces in which individuals demonstrate resistance to state-imposed governance. Roche and Hohmann, in their essay on “Wedding Rituals and the Struggle over National Identities” attempt to show how matrimonial ceremonies inform and are informed by national identities. Both essays are built on anecdotal accounts that are found wanting in empirical validity (i.e., generalizability), which the authors, to be fair, themselves recognize.

Section IV: Security, Economy and Statehood makes for a more contemporaneous reading of Tajik affairs, as it is embedded in the post-Soviet Tajik state. Consisting of two essays, the section reviews the fragility of the state's domestic national security and the sagging of its national economy, both of which are challenged by narco-lords and the narco-trade. Filippo de Danieli, in his essay on “Counter Narcotics Policies in Tajikistan and Their Impact on State-building” paints a picture that depicts Tajikistan as a state that is locked in a losing battle against the cross-border movement of contraband and its traffickers. Mohira Suyarkulova, in an essay on “Statehood as Dialogue: Conflict Historical Narratives of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan,” traces the embittered interethnic relations between Tajiks and Uzbeks within Tajikistan as two neighboring states sharing thousands of years of history. This history is competitively deployed to claim superior national status. As a result, the rewriting of history in both nations to present one's past as having been diminished by the other has grown into a national obsession. Tajiks and Uzbeks, however, have long been engaged in appropriating history to establish their respective cultural and social ascendancy, which partially has to do with their Soviet-era coexistence and coevolution. Under the Soviet system, Tajikistan was initially absorbed into the Republic of Uzbekistan before it became an autonomous region and later a republic in its own right. Interethnic relations in post-Soviet Tajikistan, especially between Tajiks and Uzbeks and Tajiks and Russians, remained fraught.

John Heathershaw, one of the editors, closes the volume with an epilogue in his essay entitled, “Tajikistan amidst Globalization: Failed State or State Transformation?” The weight of his argument, of course, is in support of a nation in transformation. So is every essay included in the volume. Has the text, then, succeeded in achieving the goal it set for itself? The volume does a stellar job of refuting the widespread perception of Tajikistan as “a failing or a failed state.” Yet it does not sufficiently engage the concept of failed or failing states and, to some readers, its “orientalist” deployment seems to tar certain nations more than others. This deficiency is largely due to the varying disciplinary backgrounds of the contributors, whose works did not cohere to present an overarching model of statehood. For instance, the source of statehood in Tajikistan (whether it is attributed to culture, ethnicity, economy (i.e., elites), faith, gender, or history) varies by chapter, according to whichever source suits the contributing authors' disciplinary backgrounds. Editors, in their effort to build a cross-cutting theme for the volume, contest Max Weber's theory of “state as one,” in which states necessarily possess a monopoly over violence

and have the legitimacy to wage it (by which measure, Tajikistan would be considered a “failure”). Yet the editors do not offer an alternative to Weber’s theory, which would have been important, as the proponents of the failed state thesis hinge their argument on a state’s ability or inability to extend and protect its writ. Wittingly or unwittingly, editors and some contributors do lament the Tajik state’s inability to tame warlords, runaway economic elites, drug traffickers, and even violent Jihadists. Despite this blind spot, however, the volume stands out as a highly informed, historically literate and socially profound analysis of Tajikistan’s past and present that will help future researchers to theorize and problematize statehood in Tajikistan even more productively.

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