

# Profiles

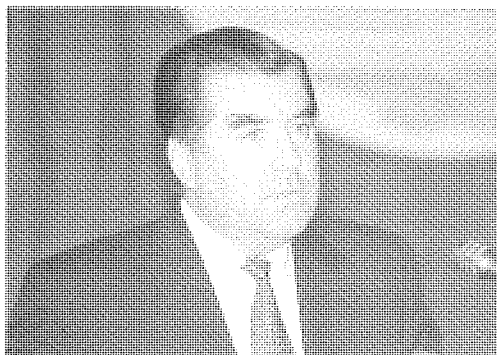
## Individuals

### Said Abdullo Nuri



Also known as Mullo Abdullo Nuri or Mullo Abdullo Saidov, Nuri is a politician and religious leader who was a key figure in the Tajik war and peace processes. He was a leader of the Islamicist forces as well as head of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) and later chair of the Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR). Nuri was born in the Qarateghin valley town of Tavildara, then called Sangvor, on 15 March 1947. Under the Soviet policy of forcibly resettling communities from Qarateghin to work in the new agricultural settlements in the south, Nuri and his family were removed to the Vakhsh valley in 1953. Like many other members of the new Islamicist movements, Nuri received religious training at home from both his father and an unofficial cleric. Nuri's religious stature grew with his activism. In 1974 he formed the illegal Islamic educational organization *Nahzat-i Islomi*. The Soviet authorities warned Nuri against his activities in 1983. Three years later he and forty others were arrested for producing and disseminating 'religious propaganda' and imprisoned for 18 months. After his release in 1988, he was invited to work with the official Tajik religious administration, the *Qaziyat*. In the late 1980s, Nuri became aligned with the young activists who formed the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). With the outbreak of war and under threat of arrest, he left the country for exile in Afghanistan. He became leader of the Movement of Islamic Revival of Tajikistan (MIRT) and, as head of the UTO, was active in the inter-Tajik negotiations. He was elected CNR chair and subsequently played a significant role in implementing the peace agreements. In 1999, he became head of the IRP.

### President Emomali Rakhmonov



Rakhmonov was born on 5 October 1952 in Danghara, Kulob. After graduating from a technical college as an electrician, he started work at a factory in Qurghonteppa in 1969. After a stint in the Soviet Navy from 1971 to 1974, serving in the Black Sea and the Pacific, he returned to the factory. From 1977 to 1982 he combined work with study to obtain a degree in economics. In 1976, he became secretary of administration to the chair of the trade union committee on the Lenin collective farm in Danghara and from 1988 to 1992 served as the farm's director. In 1990, Rakhmonov was elected to the Tajikistan Supreme Soviet and in early November 1992 was appointed chair of the Kulob Provincial Soviet of People's Deputies, immediately before the sixteenth session of the Supreme Soviet. That meeting, held in Khujand, was intended to settle the conflict over political control of the country. Rakhmonov was elected chair of the Supreme Soviet – a position that made him *de facto* head of state. It is likely that Rakhmonov's rapid rise to power was due, in part, to support from Sangak Safarov, founder of the Popular Front militia. After consolidating his position, Rakhmonov authorized the government to participate in the UN-sponsored peace negotiations. After the presidential system was reinstated in 1994, Rakhmonov became president, winning more than 58 per cent of the vote in elections that November. After the signing of the General Agreement in June 1997, Rakhmonov performed the hajj religious pilgrimage to Mecca. In July 1997, he founded and became leader of the Movement for National Unity and Revival of Tajikistan. In March 1998, he joined the People's Democratic Party, becoming its leader shortly afterwards. In the November 1999 presidential elections, he received 96.91 per cent of the vote and thus secured a further seven years as head of government.

### Khoji Akbar Turajonzoda



Also known as Akbar Qaharov, Turajonzoda was born in 1954 into an influential family in the Kofarnihon region near Dushanbe. He studied in established religious institutions first at the Bukharan *madrasa*, then at the Islamic Institute in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and Amman University in Jordan in the late 1970s and early 1980s. This gave him an excellent training in Islamic law, an opportunity to learn foreign languages and an international perspective. Between 1985 and 1987 Turajonzoda worked in Tashkent at the Department of International Relations in the Spiritual Administration of Muslims in Central Asia. He was appointed *Qazi-kaalon* – leader of Tajikistan's official Islamic institutions – in 1988. In 1990 he was elected to Tajikistan's Supreme Soviet. As *Qazi*, Turajonzoda was the main representative of 'establishment' Islam in the country, in contrast to the unofficial strand that Nuri embodied. Turajonzoda viewed the development of the IRP with scepticism, in part because it advocated a different path to Muslim revival. Also, by implicitly promoting a political party as the vehicle for revival, it challenged his authority as head of the *Qaziyat*. He nevertheless made an alliance with the IRP during the war and was forced to flee the country at the end of 1992. In 1993 Turajonzoda was appointed first deputy chair of the newly formed MIRT and became deputy chair of the IRP. In 1995 he travelled to Iran, Arab countries, the US, Europe, Russia, Uzbekistan and elsewhere seeking support for the UTO. He also participated in the UTO's delegation to the inter-Tajik negotiations. After a period of controversy, in March 1998 President Rakhmonov appointed Turajonzoda as first vice-premier responsible for relations with CIS countries. The following year Turajonzoda supported Rakhmonov's presidential candidacy after announcing that the IRP had lost its vision and become mired in partisan squabbles. This led to his dismissal from the post of deputy chair of the IRP.

## Political parties and armed factions

### The Democratic Party of Tajikistan (DPT)

The most influential secular opposition party in Tajikistan, the DPT was formed on 10 August 1990 in Dushanbe with Shodmon Yusuf as chair. In its first year, it had about 3,500 members from all regions. In 1992 the DPT published several newspapers, all of which were banned in 1993. For the 1991 presidential elections, the DPT joined other opposition groups to support a joint candidate, Davlat Khudonazarov, who lost. Between March and May 1992 the DPT and its allies held a 52-day anti-government rally in Dushanbe's Shahidon Square that led to confrontations with government supporters. The DPT became embroiled in the ensuing Tajik civil war and was formally banned in June 1993. A split formed in the DPT over the issue of cooperation with the IRP in the UTO and whether to negotiate with the government. Yusuf expressed reluctance over both these issues and after attempts to reach compromise, a party congress in December 1994 in Almaty, Kazakhstan removed Yusuf as DPT chair. Soon after, Yusuf and his supporters formed the DPT Tehran platform (DPTT). The DPTT demonstrated a willingness to work with the government and was legally registered in Tajikistan in July 1995. The faction that had rejected Yusuf's leadership called itself the DPT Almaty platform (DPTA). Two DPTA leaders, Jumaboi Niyozov and Abdunabi Sattorzoda, later joined the Commission on National Reconciliation to oversee implementation of the 1997 General Agreement. In August 1999, Tajikistan's Supreme Court rescinded the ban on the DPTA, which registered in December 1999 as a legal political party that could contest elections. In October 1999, the DPTA left the UTO.

### The Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRP)

Known in Tajik as the *Hizbi Nahzati Islomi Tojikiston*, this party grew from an underground youth organization that emerged in 1978 in Qurghonteppa. The core of the organization consisted of people resettled from the mountainous Qarateghin region to the Vakhsh valley and Qarateghinis who remained in their native region. In June 1990, Davlat Usmon and Said Ibrahim Gadoev participated in the founding congress of the All-Union Islamic Renaissance Party for the Muslims of the Soviet Union. Appeals to the Tajikistan Supreme Soviet for an inaugural conference of a Tajikistan IRP were rejected. The official clergy in Tajikistan, headed by *Qazi-kalon* Turajonzoda, confirmed the principle of the separation of religion and state and advised against political participation by the clergy. Nevertheless, the IRP held an illegal inaugural conference on 6 October 1990. Soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union in September 1991, the Tajikistan IRP formed a coalition with other opposition parties. Under public pressure, the Supreme Soviet was forced to rescind its ban on the IRP and other opposition parties the next month. The IRP was subsequently registered in December and later

proclaimed its independence from the All Union IRP. Islam was declared the guiding principle of the party, while its immediate task – according to party leaders – was to establish a 'legal and democratic state'. At this point party membership stood at 20,000.

The IRP was the only Central Asian Islamic party to participate in general elections. After proclaiming the November 1991 presidential elections to be fraudulent, the opposition bloc took its protest to the streets of Dushanbe. During this period, Turajonzoda joined the opposition. As the conflict became increasingly violent, the IRP and other opposition forces later formed the *Sitodi Najoti Vatan* (Fatherland Liberation Front) to coordinate armed struggle against the pro-government Popular Front. After the opposition forces were defeated in November 1992, IRP leaders escaped abroad or retreated into eastern Tajikistan. In 1993 the exiled IRP joined the MIRT.

The IRP was the backbone of the UTO and participated in negotiations that led to the General Agreement. The Supreme Court reversed the 1993 ban on the IRP in August 1999, more than two years after the signing of the Agreement and too late for the party to participate effectively in the November presidential elections. After repeated protests from the IRP and international pressure, their candidate was registered at the last minute but received only 2.1 per cent of the vote. The IRP remains the most powerful opposition political party but faces turbulent years ahead as it competes for political dominance with the secular-oriented government.

### La'li Badakhshan

This political movement, representing opposition figures from the Badakhshan region in eastern Tajikistan, was formed in Dushanbe on 4 March 1991 and registered on 30 May. It was banned between June 1993 and August 1999 but continued to operate illegally. In 1999 it had nearly 3,000 members. La'li Badakhshan is a regional organization whose stated objective is educational, social, economic and political development in Badakhshan. In the 1991 presidential elections, La'li Badakhshan, supported the candidate of the opposition bloc. In the ensuing civil war, it coordinated the activities of Pamiri forces who joined the UTO and as a result the pro-government Popular Front persecuted Badakhshanis. Atobek Amirbekov, the party's leader from its inception, took part in several rounds of the inter-Tajik negotiations between 1994 and 1997. In June 1997 La'li Badakhshan entered the Commission on National Reconciliation. The party left the UTO in December 1999.

### Movement for Islamic Revival in Tajikistan (MIRT)

Known in Tajik as *Harakati Nahzati Islomii Tojikiston*, this movement was formed by exiled Tajik opposition leaders at the end of 1993 in Taloqan, Afghanistan, to coordinate all exiled Tajik opposition activists and their military

forces. Its leaders were Nuri (chair), Turajonzoda (first deputy chair), and IRP leader Muhammad Sharif Himmatzoda (deputy chair). The IRP dominated the MIRT and commanded 8,000-15,000 fighters. The MIRT acted as a government in exile from 1993 to 1996. In addition to leading what it considered a *jihad* holy war in Tajikistan, the MIRT engaged in diplomacy. In 1995 its leaders visited the US and Western Europe, and established contacts with the UN, the OSCE, and international NGOs. At the same time they established close contacts with the authorities in Moscow and Tashkent. MIRT leaders also visited Libya, Iran and other Muslim countries and established close contacts with the Organization of the Islamic Conference. In 1994 MIRT joined the UTO and entered the inter-Tajik negotiations. In 1998 its armed forces began to be integrated in Tajikistan's regular army, a process that took more than a year to complete.

### **The Movement for National Unity and Revival in Tajikistan (MNURT)**

Known in Tajik as the *Harakati Vahdati Melli va Ehyoi Tojikiston*, this is Tajikistan's largest political movement. It is sponsored by the government and chaired by President Rakhmonov. The MNURT was formed in July 1997 and registered that August. It declared its aim as the unification of "different social layers and forces of Tajikistan and the establishment of a stable civil accord, mutual trust and agreement." The movement incorporates representatives of all regions and a majority of political parties and associations loyal to the president, including the People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan. The MNURT is ruled by a general assembly of founding organizations and governed by an executive council of elected and appointed representatives of all member organizations. Its chair, President Rakhmonov, heads an executive committee elected by this council.

### **The Party of People's Unity (PPU)**

This party was formed in the northern city of Khujand on 30 November 1994 and was registered on 16 December 1994. Its chair and founder is former Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullajanov. At the time of registration, it had 895 members, with branches in Dushanbe, Leninabad and Badakhshan, and some districts in the south. The PPU remained legal through most of the war but was banned in December 1998, following an attempt to assassinate Rakhmonov in Leninabad in April 1997 and an armed uprising led by Colonel Mahmud Khudoiberdyev in November 1998 that the government claimed was linked to Abdullajanov.

### **The People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDP)**

This government-affiliated party, known in Tajik as *Hizbi Khalqi Demokratii Tojikiston*, was formed on 10 December 1994 and registered five days later. It was initially called the People's Party of Tajikistan but at its third congress in June 1997 the word 'democratic' was added. The party membership in November 1998 stood at 20,000 and

included all regional and provincial administrators and some members of the intelligentsia. In March 1998, President Rakhmonov joined and was elected chair. The PDP's organizational structure resembles that of the former Communist Party of Tajikistan. It is a founding member of the MNURT. Five members of the PDP were elected to Parliament in 1995 and the party chair, Rakhmonov, was elected President in the November 1999 elections. The PDP considers itself a centrist, parliamentary political party which aims to unite "all citizens of Tajikistan, regardless of language, ethnic affinity, social status or political beliefs...for the establishment of rule of law and a sovereign, democratic and secular state." It asserts that "diversity in cultures, languages and religions is an invaluable treasure of the people of Tajikistan."

### **The Popular Front**

Known as *Sitod-i Melli* in Tajik, this predominantly Kulobi paramilitary force provided much of the military muscle that brought the Rakhmonov government to power. It emerged in May 1992 during the pro-Communist rally in Dushanbe, when then President Nabiev created a 'presidential guard' by distributing weapons – including an estimated 1,700 guns – to the demonstrators. Nabiev officially disbanded the guard several days later. Many Kulobis, however, took the Kalashnikovs they received back to Kulob, where they started to organize paramilitary groups. The self-proclaimed Popular Front first appeared in Khatlon province in the summer of 1992 and later surfaced in Hissar province near Dushanbe. Its most prominent leaders were Safarov Sangak and Faizali Saidov. It is thought that between May and November 1992 they received substantial support – including money, weapons and ammunition – from various sources supportive of the Tajik government, including those in Uzbekistan and Russia. In November 1992, at the 16th Session of the Supreme Soviet, all the important positions were given to Kulobis, who at the time held the military balance of power. Rakhmonov was elected leader. After the current government came to power in early 1993, the Popular Front was disbanded by presidential decree and its units became the core of the national army.

### **The United Tajik Opposition (UTO)**

In response to the conflict that had forced most of their leaders into exile, in early 1994 the IRP, the MIRT, the DPT, the Coordination Centre of Democratic Forces of Tajikistan in the CIS (formed in Moscow in 1993), the *Umed* association of Tajik refugees and other movements joined together to take part in the inter-Tajik negotiations. During the talks their coalition crystallized and was named the United Tajik Opposition in November 1994. In 1997, the La'li Badakhshan movement joined. The UTO, led by Nuri, was dominated by the MIRT and strongly influenced by the IRP. After the DPT split in 1994, the DPT Tehran platform left the UTO, while the DPT Almaty platform remained a member. The UTO

coordinated the opposition's military strategy and its participation in the negotiations between April 1994 and June 1997. The General Agreement provided for a Commission on National Reconciliation (CNR) with equal representation of government and UTO members. Nuri became head of the CNR and was thus responsible for overseeing implementation of the agreement. In 1998-99 the UTO suspended its activity in the CNR several times, claiming that the Rakhmonov government had failed to honour its responsibilities under the Agreement. Before the October 1999 presidential elections, the UTO suffered serious setbacks. The DPT Almaty platform left the UTO soon afterwards and La'li Badakhshan left in December. The UTO then effectively ceased to exist, as the IRP was its only remaining member.

## States

### Afghanistan

Afghanistan and Tajikistan share a 1,200-km border and their affairs have been closely entwined during the twentieth century. Muslim Basmachi fighters based in Afghan territory harassed Soviet authorities in the 1920s and early 1930s. Many Tajiks later fled to Afghanistan to escape persecution and forced collectivization. In the mid-1930s, the Red Army closed the Tajik-Afghan border, thus ending migration flows in both directions. On the eve of the Soviet invasion in 1979, the number of ethnic Tajiks in Afghanistan was between four and eight million – equal to or exceeding the number of Tajiks in Tajikistan. At the beginning of the 1990s, central government functions collapsed almost simultaneously in both countries. The Tajik-Afghan border region again became a hotbed of political and military instability.

From 1992, an estimated 80,000 or more Tajikistanis – mostly opposition supporters – fled to northern Afghanistan and in 1993 the Tajik opposition established military bases there. Tajik Islamicists received considerable support from their Afghan counterparts in the form of military training and supplies and some Afghan units fought alongside the Tajik opposition against the Tajik government and Russian frontier guards. However, the UTO's closest Afghan allies were the factions supported by Russia – those led by President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masud, both ethnic Tajiks. The partnership was probably motivated as much by cooperation in the immense cross-border narcotics trade as by an idealistic desire to help co-religionists and ethnic kin.

The ascendancy of the Taliban, comprised predominantly of ethnic Pushtuns, in 1994 encouraged the Tajik opposition and government to enter negotiations. Rabbani also encouraged mediation and supported the Tajik peace process. The first meeting between Rakhmonov and Nuri took place in Kabul in May 1995.

The Taliban's capture of Kabul in September 1996 provided further incentive for Tajik reconciliation. On 11 December 1996 Rakhmonov and Nuri met again under Rabbani's sponsorship in the Afghan village of Khos Deh, where they signed an important protocol about the ceasefire and the Commission on National Reconciliation. This marked an important turning point in the peace process.

The Taliban's northward advance in 1997 forced almost all Tajik exiles to leave Afghanistan for Tajikistan. It has since been reported that a Tajik opposition faction has established secret ties with the Taliban and enjoys their support. The Taliban's rise indirectly helped Russia to strengthen its position in Central Asia, whose governments have strengthened their military links with Russia to protect themselves from the perceived threat of militant Islamicist movements. An end to the war in Afghanistan remains a significant concern for Tajikistan. A peaceful and friendly Afghanistan will help to transform Tajikistan from a 'frontier zone' buffer state trapped in the geopolitical conflict between CIS states and Afghanistan to a potentially important crossroad between Southern and Central Asia and between the Near and Far East.

### Iran

The majority of people in Iran and Tajikistan share membership in the Persian language family. Most Iranians, however, are Shi'a Muslims, whereas most Tajiks are Sunni. Iran's leaders maintained amicable relations with Tajiks from opposing sides of the conflict throughout the 1990s. Tehran never officially supported the Tajik Islamicists' aspiration to create an Islamic state but directed their efforts towards a peaceful settlement of the civil war. Tehran did, however, support the emergence of the Tajik opposition in 1991-92 and it hosted Tajik opposition leaders from 1993 to 1998. Yet its general policy was to maintain good relations with Russia. Both states wished to prevent greater involvement by the Taliban, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in Tajikistan. They also aimed to minimize US and Turkish influence in the region and keep them at a distance from the inter-Tajik negotiations. Iran was a key sponsor of the negotiations and had the status of an official observer of the process. It hosted the second, sixth, and the eighth rounds of the negotiations, one consultative meeting, and two meetings between Rakhmonov and Nuri.

### Pakistan

Tajiks have traditionally had a close connection to the peoples of the northern part of the Subcontinent. Pakistanis, like Tajiks, are predominantly Sunni Muslims and the Tajik Farsi language was once widely spoken in Pakistan. A thin strip of Afghan territory ranging from 15 to 50-km wide along the Eastern Pamirs at an elevation of 3,000m and higher now separates the two countries. Pakistan's involvement in the Tajik civil war is unclear but

it is rarely viewed as a major player. Yet it was an official observer of the inter-Tajik negotiations and Islamabad hosted the third round of peace talks in October–November 1994. It is possible that groups based in Pakistan supplied weapons and other forms of military support to the opposition, perhaps with the complicity of government officials, but no firm evidence is available. Pakistan does not welcome Russian military engagement in Tajikistan, especially in the light of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in 1989. Afghanistan remains a source of tension in Tajik–Pakistan relations. Each provides extensive support to opposing forces: Tajikistan (with Russia and Iran) backs the Northern Alliance and Pakistan backs the Taliban.

### **The Russian Federation**

Russia was a key external player in the Tajik civil war. Russian control over Tajik-populated territories in Central Asia was established in the second half of the nineteenth century. Since the establishment of Soviet rule in 1921, Russia has maintained military forces in Tajikistan and it was the only country in Central Asia where the government did not demand the withdrawal of Russian troops after independence. Dushanbe delegated the protection of its Afghan and Chinese borders to the Russian Federation until it could develop its own frontier troops. Tajikistan hosts the 201st Division of the Russian army. The Russian government and army maintained official neutrality in the Tajik civil war but there are claims that the army supported pro-government forces with vehicles, ammunition and weapons. If this was the case, it might have been due to the actions of individuals rather than to Moscow's directives. During the 1992 clashes in Dushanbe, the Russian garrison served as a shelter for leaders under threat and the venue for negotiations between opponents. From 1993, many members of the opposition, particularly those from the DPT, were given refuge in Russia. Although initially it engaged in official relations only with the Tajik government, from mid-1993 Russia played an important role in encouraging the parties to talk and then served as a key sponsor and observer of the inter-Tajik negotiations. It hosted several of the most important rounds of negotiations – the first one and the final two – as well as one consultative meeting and two meetings between Rakhmonov and Nuri. The General Agreement was signed in Moscow and witnessed by Russian President Boris Yeltsin on 27 June 1997. Four years later, Tajikistan remains Russia's closest ally in Central Asia. The military aspect of their cooperation prevails over the economic and cultural dimensions.

### **Uzbekistan**

The Uzbek and Tajik peoples have been close neighbours for centuries. Although Uzbeks speak a Turkic language that differs from the Persian (Farsi) Tajik language, most Tajiks and Uzbeks are Sunni Muslims and have

traditionally lived in sedentary communities. This differentiates them from the traditionally nomadic Kyrgyz and Kazakhs. Minority populations of ethnic Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks, numbering more than one million each, live on either side of the border. The ancient Tajik urban cultural centres of Bukhara and Samarqand were incorporated into Uzbekistan early in the Soviet era. Uzbekistan today is significantly larger in area and population, and richer in natural resources.

Uzbekistan played a significant yet ambivalent role in the Tajikistan war and peace process. It is widely thought that Uzbekistan provided military assistance to pro-government forces in 1992–93 to support their fight against Islamicist opposition, thus contributing to the rise of President Rakhmonov. From 1995 Uzbekistan's attitude to Rakhmonov shifted. Karimov began to criticize his government's intransigence in the peace process and became concerned about Russian military engagement in Tajikistan.

Uzbek President Islam Karimov also helped initiate UN involvement in peacemaking when, in September 1992, he appealed to the UN Secretary-General to address the deteriorating situation. Uzbekistan was an official observer in the inter-Tajik negotiations. It objected initially to the 1997 General Agreement and did not sign up as a guarantor of the treaty but it later joined the Contact Group to support its implementation.

Cross-border invasions by armed insurgents is a sensitive issue in relations between the two countries. In November 1998, anti-Rakhmonov forces led by Col. Mahmud Khudoiberdyev launched an attack on Leninabad from Uzbek territory. The Uzbek government denied involvement. The Tajik government, for its part, denies supporting militant groups of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which launched attacks in 1999 and 2000 into Kyrgyz and Uzbek territory from Tajikistan. Uzbekistan retaliated by bombing villages in eastern Tajikistan in October 1999.

Karimov's brief visit to Dushanbe in 2000 notwithstanding, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan do not coordinate closely. They tend to promote opposite approaches to regional security affairs. Tajikistan and Russia support the anti-Taliban alliance in Afghanistan, while – drawing on the experience of the Tajik peace process – advising Karimov to negotiate with the IMU. Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic denounce the Tajik government for insufficient effort to destroy IMU forces on Tajik territory and have begun to engage directly with the Taliban. Uzbek authorities have questioned the Uzbek–Tajik border and have unsuccessfully attempted to demarcate it unilaterally. Since late 2000, a joint Uzbek–Tajik commission has been working on border demarcation.