

Background:

In May 1992 the Republic of Tajikistan became embroiled in a civil war as the forces of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) attempted to seize power from the Tajik Supreme Soviet government. The UTO was later defeated in December 1992 and a reconstituted Tajik government, led by President Emomali Rakhmonov, assumed power. The country remained beset by fighting as the UTO, led by Abdullo Nuri, continued its insurgency.

Soon after the outbreak of conflict the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) deployed a peacekeeping force to assist in the stabilization of the situation. Russia unilaterally deployed, with the consent of the Tajik government, its border forces along the Tajik-Afghan border in order to repel infiltration by the UTO. These regional forces were supplemented by the presence of a UN military observer mission which was deployed in 1994 to monitor the fragile cease-fire that was reached between the two countries.

On June 27, 1997 a Comprehensive Peace Accord was signed by the Tajik government and the UTO which brought a series of earlier Protocols into force. These Protocols were preliminary agreements on a variety of issues ranging from the creation of a unified armed forces, the problems of refugee reintegration, to the creation of a National Reconciliation Commission.

The roots of the conflict are to be found in a variety of economic, social, and religious factors. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, rapid political and economic change placed stress on traditional institutions and power structures. Ethnic groups which had been excluded from political affairs expected fuller participation in the new republic and their demands led to struggles within traditional clan based structures for a redistribution of the political pie. This political tension occurred alongside growing economic hardship and religious tension between the limited religious orientation of Rakhmonov and the more hardline Suuni orientation of the UTO. In terms of regional support, the Tajik government still retains links to the Russian Federation as is demonstrated by the deployment of Russian border guards with Tajik forces, and the political support which Moscow provides to Rakhmonov. Russian concerns are focused on the potential expansion of the Taleban movement north from Afghanistan. Tehran, on the other hand, supports the UTO and desires a revival of Tajik culture and religion within the borders of Tajikistan. Both Russia's and Iran's primary interests lie in stabilizing the situation on their respective borders.

Conflict Resolution Initiatives:

The most intensive conflict resolution initiatives in Tajikistan have been conducted by Russia, Iran, and the United Nations. Russian and Iran have been essential in bringing both the Tajik government and the UTO to the negotiating table. The dependence of each party on these regional powers has meant that the peace talks have occurred largely in response to pressure from Moscow and Tehran. The Russian Federation appointed its Foreign Minister Kozyrev as the Special Representative for Tajikistan with the intention of promoting talks between the UTO and government as well as among the surrounding states of Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Kyrgystan and Turkmenistan. Russian President Yeltsin hosted a summit meeting of the leaders from these same states and called on the international community to support efforts on reconciliation in Tajikistan. Tehran has been instrumental in talks between Kabul