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# Imagined Past, Uncertain Future

## *The Creation of National Ideologies in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan*

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Erica Marat

National ideologies were a crucial element in the process of state-building in the independent Central Asian states.

WHEN the Central Asian nations inherited statehood as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union in late 1991, their political elites quickly realized that the new states needed to cultivate a unifying ideology if they were to function as cohesive entities. What with the region's fuzzy borders and the dominance of the Russian language and Soviet culture, Central Asian leaders had to develop a national idea that would solidify the people's recognition of post-Soviet statehood and the new political leadership. The urgent need for post-communist ideological programs that would reflect upon the complex Soviet past, accommodate the identities of majority and minority ethnic groups, and rationalize the collapse of the Soviet Union emerged before the national academic communities could meaningfully discuss the possible content and nature of such ideologies. Attributes for ideological projects were often sought in the pre-Soviet period, when there were no hard national borders and strict cultural boundaries. It was in this idiosyncratic setting that the Central Asian regimes tried to construct national ideological conceptions that would be accessible to the mass public, increase the legitimacy of the ruling political elites, and have an actual historical basis.

National ideologies were a crucial element of the state-building processes in the independent Central Asian states. They reflected two major goals of the ruling elites. First, the elites were able to strengthen themselves against competing political forces by mobilizing the entire public domain in support of the national ideologies they produced. Second, the elites were able to expand their politi-

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cal and economic power. In practice, national ideologies helped the ruling elites to dominate society by subduing intra-elite confrontations and obtaining desirable election outcomes. However, in their efforts gain dominance, the Central Asian ruling elites ran into a dilemma typical of many developing states: While increasing their authority against competing forces, they failed to enact effective state policies.<sup>1</sup> Although significant resources were allocated to develop and spread the national ideologies, they were not genuinely embraced by either the populace at large or by other state actors.<sup>2</sup>

This article supports the foregoing arguments by describing general trends in the production of national ideologies in the Central Asian states, focusing on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan as case studies. The national ideological programs in these two states each had a unique dynamic. Kyrgyzstan's first president, Askar Akayev, tried to find a balance between civic and ethnic nationalism to meet the demands of his russified and nationalist people, whereas Tajik president Emomali Rakhmon's main goal was to prevent the Islamic opposition from fomenting a competitive national ideology.<sup>3</sup> Akayev was Kyrgyzstan's main ideologue and himself authored most ideology projects, whereas his Tajik counterpart heavily relied on the ideological advice of a group of historians. Ironically, the advisers of both presidents had been trained at leading universities in Russia. The analysis of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan offers two general paths that their Central Asian neighbors could use to produce their own national ideologies. Like Rakhmon, Uzbek president Islam Karimov and Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbayev relied on academics in developing national ideologies. The late Turkmen president Saparmurat Niyazov, on the other hand, was the main author of the pervasive national ideologies in Turkmenistan.

## Creating Ideologies in Central Asia

In producing state ideologies, all Central Asian leaders faced a similar set of difficulties. First, since all the Central Asian states are multi-ethnic, with at least one ethnic group representing more than 10 percent of the total population of each state, it was necessary to find a balance between a conservative ethno-nationalist public and the ethnic minorities. Any ethnocentric ideological concept inevitably suppresses ethnic minority identities. However, the push by political elites toward ethnocentrism is often stronger than the incentives for a balanced inter-ethnic policy. The Soviet tradition of treating ethnogenesis—a shared common genetic background—as the only possible

explanation for the modern existence of ethnic groups and ethnic identities, as opposed to treating ethnicity as a social construct pertinent to a specific territory and state, is still predominant across the Central Asian region. Most political leaders responsible for the production of ideologies rarely question the scientific underpinnings of the approach and therefore routinely refer to it.

Second, to obtain international recognition, Central Asian political elites cannot fully ignore the concept of citizenship—the individual's legal membership in a state. But not all political elites seem to want or know how to separate citizenship from ethnicity. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were more successful in bringing the idea of citizenship into the discourse on state ideology. Both Nazarbayev and Akayev, in constructing their national ideologies, referred to the equality of citizens and respect for civic rights as more important than ethnic identity. Citizenship was based on territory, including anyone who lived within the country's borders, rather than membership in a specific ethnic group. In Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, however, citizenship is only rarely an element in discussions of the role of state ideology in the state's functioning. Most of the time the category of citizenship is used interchangeably with ethnicity, which prevents the larger public from understanding the differences between the two. This fuels inter-ethnic confrontation between ethnic minority and majority groups.

Third, all post-Soviet Central Asian political elites need to address the role of Islam in state ideologies. Following a mass demonstration by the Islamic movement Adolat in the Uzbek city of Namangan and the beginning of an armed conflict between the Tajik government and the United Tajik Opposition in 1992–97, the Central Asian regimes became increasingly worried about challenges to their hold on power stemming from the Islamic opposition. This worry prompted the Central Asian leaders to isolate politics from Islam, but at the same time to prevent the emergence of more violent forms of Islamic opposition.<sup>4</sup>

As in the other post-communist Eurasian states, even the rare instances of civic nationalism in the Central Asian states contained elements of ethno-centrism. Often the two categories overlapped and blended into each other.<sup>5</sup> In fact, what often is considered to be civic nationalism in the post-communist Eurasian states could also be interpreted as a variation of ethno-nationalism because a dominant ethnic group is identified.<sup>6</sup> None of the former Soviet republics use civic-based nationalism to represent an open acceptance by state and society that ethnic differences are not driven by concrete characteristics or that



Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev often wore a kalpak, the traditional Kyrgyz hat, as seen in this March 7, 2005, file photo. (AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev, File)

national belonging and citizenship could be identical. Indeed, such cases are rare in general. But the idea of civic nationalism is largely alien to Soviet-educated politicians, academics, and societies. Even Akayev and Nazarbayev's ideological projects articulated a more primordial rather than a modern definition of ethnicity. They considered ethnicity to be based on ancient ties, rather than a more flexible contemporary construct.

Most Central Asian state ideologies in the post-Soviet period are backward-looking. This feature is in striking contrast with Soviet ideological projects. The Soviet Union's concept of the "Soviet people," for instance, was primarily forward-looking. It was an ideology of continuing "ethno-historical evolution" to enhance the Soviet Union's internal cohesion.<sup>7</sup> By contrast, ideologies in the post-Soviet period seek vigor in the experiences of the past by drawing analogies with historical events, peoples,

and personas. With the partial exception of Nazarbayev's "Kazakhstan-2030" agenda, all the other Central Asian leaders looked to the past for ideological inspiration. In this respect, the political elites largely left the role of the Soviet Union out of the narrative. As one Kyrgyz historian notes, the best summary of Central Asian ideologies today would be: "In order to understand the present and predict the future, we need to understand the past."<sup>8</sup> The most common claims in the revised versions of national history refer to the antiquity of the nation's existence as an ethnic group and its experience in statehood.

### **Kyrgyzstan: Akayev and Ethnic Minorities**

At the time of independence in 1991, there were more than ninety nationalities in Kyrgyzstan. Ethnic Russians, Uzbeks, Uighurs, Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians were the largest groups. In the early 1990s, as ethnic Russians, Jews, Germans, and Ukrainians emigrated in massive numbers, Akayev developed a national concept, "Kyrgyzstan Is Our Common Home," that underscored the importance of civic rights while also emphasizing the ethnic identity of each group living in Kyrgyzstan. This inspired the creation of the People's Assembly, a non-governmental organization that encouraged all ethnic communities to join in order to participate in the political and cultural development of the country. The Russian and Uighur communities were especially active in the assembly. As part of the ideological project, Akayev organized a gathering of the peoples of Kyrgyzstan in December 1993. The event, organized within the framework of the People's Assembly, accommodated representatives of Kyrgyzstan's largest ethnic groups. Among them were Russian Orthodox clergy as well as leaders of the Korean, Uighur, Turkish, Kurdish, Tajik, Uzbek, Karachai, Azeri, Belarusian, and other communities. Renowned Kyrgyz scholars and writers also participated in the gathering, which received widespread publicity in the local mass media. Using this ideology, Akayev's government also encouraged the formation of cultural centers representing various ethnic groups.

Akayev's definition of citizenship in the early years of independence was more liberal than the approach in any other Central Asian state. Right from the outset, he differentiated the concepts of "nationality" (*natsionalnost*) and "people" (*narod*). While the first category referred to ethnic groups, the second embodied a more inclusive, civic-based understanding almost synonymous with citizenship. According to Akayev, the two concepts co-existed in Kyrgyzstan, and their coherence was vital for the country.

In his public speeches, he elaborated on the importance of revisiting the Soviet understanding of ethnicity. More than his Central Asian compatriots, Akayev emphasized that democracy is a means for eradicating ethno-nationalistic views, and he often used term *mezhdunarodnoe soglasie* (international accord). Here, “international” meant relations between the nationalities living in Kyrgyzstan. In his early addresses to the nation, Akayev warned that nationalism in Kyrgyzstan was risky if promulgated by former communists and socialists.<sup>9</sup> Instead, he called for the revival of traditions that existed in pre-Soviet times that could have a positive impact on contemporary politics. In naming those traditions, Akayev discussed how the cultural heritages of Russia and Uzbekistan were also revived during the independence period.

Akayev’s civic-based ideology acknowledged the contribution of various ethnic groups to the development of Kyrgyzstan during the Soviet era. He appealed especially to the Russian-speaking groups, including the Russians, Germans, and Jews, who traditionally comprised the highly educated urban population. Whenever the issue of ethnicities in Kyrgyzstan was brought up in public discourse, Akayev expressed his gratitude to the Russian minority by praising Russia’s contribution to Kyrgyzstan’s development in the 1920s. He mentioned the importance of Russian influence in economic development as well as in introducing high standards of education and culture. In his address to the People’s Assembly in 1994, Akayev declared, “People’s hearts are at pain because our brothers are leaving—Russians, Germans, Jews, Ukrainians. From that our country is becoming only poorer.”<sup>10</sup> Kyrgyzstan’s Germans were acknowledged for having imported international standards of agricultural planning, the development of small-scale industry, and hard work during the first German settlements in northern Kyrgyzstan in the late nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> To welcome the expansion of Russian culture in the country, Akayev made Russian the second national language and renamed the Kyrgyz-Slavic University after Russia’s first democratically elected president, Boris Yeltsin.

In practice, however, Akayev’s civic-based ideas were not as successful and persuasive might seem. Although Akayev pioneered the modern definition of citizenship in Kyrgyzstan and the Central Asian region, Kyrgyz political elites and the people at large found it difficult to differentiate among the ideas of citizenship, nationality, nation, and ethnicity. In addition, at the start of his reign, his ideas conflicted with Kyrgyzstan’s legislative base, for the constitution always defined “titular nationality” and “titular language” in terms of the ethnic Kyrgyz.

Attempts to embrace all of the country’s ethnic groups into a common idea about the Kyrgyz nation-state inevitably created tensions with politicized neo-nationalist movements. A number of parliamentarians were highly critical of the concept, emphasizing that it was a terrible mistake to deny the nation’s past in order to build a stable future.<sup>12</sup> Their resistance to civic-based nationalism confirmed that some political elites despised Akayev’s liberal ideas and held more conservative views on what should constitute the national ideological belief. Ultra-nationalist politicians called for the return of Kyrgyz cultural and religious traditions through cults of historical personas and periods. For example, Dastan Sarygulov, a well-known politician and businessman, is an active propagator of Tengrism, an ancient Turkic philosophy dating to the fourth century B.C.E.<sup>13</sup>

***Manas-1,000 and the Rise of Nationalism.*** To accommodate the rising ethno-nationalist feelings in the mid-1990s, Akayev shifted the focus of his ideology to the *Epic of Manas*, the world’s longest oral narration and a poetic jewel of the Kyrgyz cultural tradition. A special governmental committee on cultural and educational affairs extracted seven maxims from the epic and included them in the official state ideology. Akayev emphasized the importance of *Manas* in his public openings and speeches and authored a book dedicated to the epic.<sup>14</sup> A special state committee worked to promote the epic both among Kyrgyz citizens and abroad.

For the Kyrgyz government, the *Manas* epic represented a comfortable option for a national ideological framework. The epic recounts the history of major intertribal and inter-ethnic battles and victories, it delineates the foes and friends of the Kyrgyz people and reflects the philosophy of national unity, and it relates the heroic actions of the protagonist and his followers. Its hero, Manas, is the ideal, collective image of what it means to be a male, warrior, defender of the motherland, exemplary son, husband, and father. The epic depicts the Kyrgyz people’s lifestyle and the value system of their societal relations. The seven maxims captured in the epic were not only tools for the reconstruction of a national self-image among the Kyrgyz, but generalized principles of ethnic tolerance, respect for elders, and care for the young, as well as other positive social obligations and principles.<sup>15</sup>

By publicizing these maxims, the government sought to achieve a twofold goal. On the one hand, the maxims were meant to satisfy the demands of the nationalistically oriented segments of the public and political elites. The *Manas* ideals could aspire to a central role in Kyrgyzstan’s

national consciousness because of the epic's cultural richness and world-scale grandeur. At the same time, the maxims were not direct calls for ethnic nationalism or the prioritization of the Kyrgyz as a titular ethnic group. They were intended to be accepted by the entire population regardless of ethnic background, since they portray more general values. However, as a result of this subtle dualism, neither group was satisfied by the *Manas* ideals.

In the summer of 1995, Akayev organized celebrations for the epic's symbolic millennium. Although the epic's hero is semi-mythic, the government mobilized artists and architects to produce and distribute images related to the narrative. Some of the images were borrowed from the Soviet depiction of the narrative, but a myriad of new versions were created as well. Among them, national dances, games, and plays were staged in Talas, *Manas*'s native city. The event's highlight was a giant three-story yurt, an exotic and grandiose construction built according to local perceptions. A collection of new decorations and honorific titles with names taken from the *Manas* epic was introduced.

In embracing *Manas* in this way, Akayev abandoned his earlier idea of citizenship as a central element of the state ideology and returned to the Soviet-era concept of ethnogenesis. In his books and speeches on the significance of the *Manas* heritage in the Kyrgyz national consciousness, Akayev argued that every nation has its own "genetic code" that was formed thousands of years ago.<sup>16</sup> The epic, he explained, was a physical representation of this code for the Kyrgyz.<sup>17</sup> Akayev compared the significance of the epic for the Kyrgyz to that of the New Testament for Christians, hinting that it had near-religious connotations for the Kyrgyz. The epic mentions various historical periods as well as geographic locations, including China, India, the Crimea, and Hungary. According to Akayev, *Manas* helped the Kyrgyz nation to interpret the events of these periods and understand their importance in the present-day reality.

Akayev also linked the *Manas* epic with Kyrgyz's negative experience in the 1930s and 1940s, when the Soviet government massively repressed the local intelligentsia. He argued that the persecution of *Manas* supporters was part of a broader campaign to suppress Kyrgyz nationalism. Akayev recalled the names of important political figures from that time who resisted the Communist Party's pressure and continued to support the epic's popularity. Among them were Iskhak Razzakov, the secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Kyrgyzstan, who spoke out about the significance of *Manas* for the Kyrgyz nation.<sup>18</sup> Akayev also maintained that Moscow

took a dim view of *Manas* because the epic depicted Kyrgyz victories against the Chinese and therefore could have jeopardized Soviet-Chinese relations.

The celebration of *Manas* in 1995 coincided with the first presidential elections in independent Kyrgyzstan. By scheduling the event four months before the elections, Akayev mobilized the country's political elites, scholars, artists, actors, and even its sports teams for the preparations. The involvement of virtually the entire public sector in staging the celebrations minimized the possibility of administrative support for other presidential candidates. All of the other Central Asian presidents adopted similar techniques—arranging grand celebrations just before presidential elections. Rakhmon, for example, organized several celebrations a few weeks before the 2006 presidential elections.

Akayev also used the *Manas* celebrations to prevail over his political allies and rivals. While promoting *Manas*, Akayev changed his definition of state nationalism by branding anyone opposing the *Manas* ideology as unpatriotic. The major resistance, according to him, stemmed from communist ideologues who were against the idea of venerating the *Manas* ideals.<sup>19</sup> His main rival at the time was Absamat Masaliyev, another former secretary of the Kyrgyz Communist Party, now a member of parliament, who still carried significant weight in political circles and opposed the growing nationalism. In the 1995 presidential elections Masaliyev scored 80 percent of the votes in southern Kyrgyzstan, his native region. Losing the south convinced Akayev to pay more attention to the city of Osh. Shortly before the presidential elections in 2000, Akayev organized celebrations of the 3,000th anniversary of Osh. The "Osh-3,000" celebrations, as well as the separation of Batken oblast from Osh oblast, pointed to the government's growing concern about the southern regions of the country. Akayev also felt pressure from the Uzbek minority in the south, which sought greater autonomy and better representation in public institutions.

After the 1995 elections, Kyrgyzstan's economy showed signs of recovery following a protracted crisis in the early 1990s. Akayev was quick to associate these positive developments with the overall strengthening of the national consciousness and as signs of the power of the *Manas* ideals, which were spreading thanks to the grand celebrations in 1995.<sup>20</sup> In his analysis of the country's economic growth, he observed that the "people's spiritual uplift is able to do miracles."<sup>21</sup> In contrast, he blamed global financial developments in Asia and Russia for the sudden slowdown of Kyrgyzstan's economy in the late 1990s.

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Despite the epic's rich trove of traditions about Kyrgyz culture and history and its potential value for developing a national consciousness, the Kyrgyz public never fully embraced the *Manas* maxims or the epic itself. The russified public and ethnic minorities saw the ideology of *Manas* as a state-imposed idea and an unnatural way for a present-day national identity to develop. In their view, the epic was an ethnically discriminatory story that no longer had relevance. It raised discontent among Russians and made them distrust the state. The civic-based policy "Kyrgyzstan Is Our Common Home" enjoyed greater popularity in these sectors of the population and competed with *Manas* as an ideology.

***The 2,200th Anniversary of Kyrgyz Statehood and Akayev's Political Struggle.*** Despite such difficulties, the *Manas* epic provided a rich foundation for transforming the national ideology into a more generalized, less ethno-centric ideological project in the early 2000s. Faced by his rapidly decreasing popularity, economic underdevelopment, and rampant corruption, Akayev moved to implement another major ideological project that emphasized the ancient history of Kyrgyz statehood, the "2,200 Years of Kyrgyz Civilization." The project was developed during Akayev's controversial third term as president, when there was widespread public acknowledgment of the pervasive involvement of his family members in the country's economy. The "2,200 Years of Kyrgyz Civilization" project was widely criticized. It turned into a theme for jokes about the actual economic and political situation in the country as opposed to the ideology's far-reaching ambition. Although broadly promoted across the country, it was the least popular of Akayev's projects. The president's falling popular approval rating also played a negative role. Akayev was counting on "2,200 years of Kyrgyz Civilization" to improve his popularity before the scheduled 2005 presidential elections, which eventually did not take place because of the change of regimes that March. The project failed to conceal the shortcomings of Akayev's regime.

***After Akayev.*** Besides developing national ideological projects geared to the local public, Akayev cultivated a unique international image for Kyrgyzstan. During the first few years of his presidency, he promulgated the notion of Kyrgyzstan as the "Switzerland of Central Asia" and an "island of democracy" in the region. Both concepts played an important role in Kyrgyzstan's appeal for the allocation of international investments and credits in the private and public sectors. The country's positive external

image boosted confidence in the regime at home. The belief in the possibility of democratic development and the international community's support for reforms in the early 1990s set a precedent for Kyrgyzstan's further move toward liberal reforms. However, these internationally popular notions about Kyrgyzstan were largely abandoned both at home and abroad after Akayev began suppressing the opposition in the late 1990s and early 2000s.

Akayev fled to Moscow following popular protests on March 24, 2005, and Kurmanbek Bakiyev became the new president. His government largely ignored the positive perceptions of Kyrgyzstan's course toward democracy. This was not because of Bakiyev's less democratic policies or more obvious corruption, but because it had withdrawn support from all of the ideological concepts developed by Akayev. Bakiyev was able to gain a measure of short-lived popularity with his anti-corruption slogans. He received roughly 90 percent of the vote in the July 2005 presidential elections due to his political alliance with Felix Kulov, the opposition leader during Akayev's presidency. With such high public support, he made no attempt to reconstruct the old ideological projects or launch new ones. In contrast to Akayev, Bakiyev ignored the power of national ideology to cement his own legitimacy and popularity.<sup>22</sup>

One year into Bakiyev's presidency, Kyrgyzstan's political circles were already discussing the possibility that he might be forced to leave office before his first term expired in 2010. Although well aware that his popularity was falling rapidly, and that a mass upheaval could oust an unwanted political leader, Bakiyev was nonetheless reluctant to make any visible effort to boost the economy and curb corruption. He had no interest in formulating long-term policy, including ideologies. Thus, the major difference between Akayev and Bakiyev was their perception of the durability of their reigns. Whereas Akayev hoped to hold on to the presidency as long as possible and perhaps to pass his power on to his family members, Bakiyev's low popularity just one year after the Tulip Revolution made it clear that he was unlikely to be re-elected in 2010. Akayev's search for a suitable ideology was influenced by his fluctuating domestic popular approval rating in the late 1990s and early 2000s. In contrast, Bakiyev's image was so negative that he had little motive to formulate popular political concepts.

Bakiyev appointed a committee to produce a new ideological project, but after two years it had failed to publicize any fresh project. The committee members, mostly scholars, civil society activists, and politicians, were reluctant to develop ideological projects due to a

lack of motivation and organizational coherence. In March 2007 Kyrgyz State Secretary Adakhan Madumarov announced that the ideological committee had decided to replace the term “ideology” with “nationwide idea.”<sup>23</sup> As Madumarov claims, the Kyrgyz people would realize that the state should not be the main producer of national ideologies. Instead, the national idea would be based on constitutional principles and take the form of a document, such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence, rather than an epic poem. The main values of the “national idea” would primarily include “statehood, nationwide unity, people, the state power’s character, the rule of law, country, patriotism, self-realization, freedom, and economy. . . . the main goal—is freedom of speech.”<sup>24</sup> In essence, the ideological committee embraced Western democratic values without hinting at ethno-centrism or nationalism. Although the committee decided to develop a document on the national idea, it did not initiate any means for disseminating the document among the masses.

Bakiyev’s failure to develop a national ideology is a rather uncommon development in the Central Asian context. Regional leaders followed Akayev’s example, and today Kyrgyzstan is the only country in the region that lacks a state-fostered ideology. There is, however, a strong possibility that any ideological project developed under Bakiyev is bound to fail, given his low public approval ratings. Such dynamics in the realm of ideology production mean that Akayev was the country’s main ideologue by default. His ability to express ideas not only popularly, but also academically, while enjoying the status of president, overshadowed attempts by other elites to construct national ideologies. Despite the strong criticism of his regime, not all of his ideological projects are bound to fail. His three main ideologies (“Kyrgyzstan Is Our Common Home,” “*Manas*-1,000,” and “2,200 Years of Kyrgyz Statehood”) are often used as reference points in analyses of the nation- and state-building processes in the country.

Despite the fact that Akayev’s ideological projects were widely condemned, they played an important role in the social cohesiveness of Kyrgyzstan in the 1990s. The Bakiyev government would be mistaken to take for granted the social cohesion among various ethnic groups. Even small-scale street confrontations between members of different ethnicities risk mutating into conflicts that involve more people. As in the early 1990s, poverty and unequal distribution of economic capital among ethnic groups in rural areas can spark greater tensions among Kyrgyz and ethnic minorities. The confrontations between ethnic Kyrgyz and Chechen organized-crime groups in northern

Kyrgyzstan are an example of this type of underground struggle based on ethnic ties. Other cases of tensions among ethnic groups exist between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in southern Kyrgyzstan, and among Kyrgyz, Dungan, and Uighur groups. In April 2007, escalating tensions between the government and the opposition were perceived as an inter-regional fight between the northern and southern political camps led by Bakiyev and opposition leader Felix Kulov, respectively.

## Tajikistan: Religion and Politics

Tajikistan’s experience in producing national ideological projects deviates from that of the other Central Asian states. It is a highly complicated case of intermixed ideological thinking, in which the Tajik government long refrained from playing a leading role. Since the end of the five-year civil war in 1997, Tajikistan’s two major political forces—Rakhmon’s regime and the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP)—have been competing over whose views will be more dominant in the national ideology. The government and the opposition have developed a culture of dialogue since the end of the war, but they nevertheless vie for their ideational dominance among the masses.<sup>25</sup>

Since 1997 Rakhmon has promulgated three broad projects based on the Samanid historical legacy, the Zoroastrian period, and the Aryan civilization. All of his projects are similar in the way they aim to marginalize the role of Islam and the Islamic opposition in state politics. Rakhmon counterbalanced the importance of a secular state with the possibility of renewed hostility and bloodshed with the religious opposition. As he sees it, separating religion from politics is sure path to stability. In his book *Tajikistan at the Threshold of the 21st Century*, he maintains that “for the purposes of preserving peace in Tajikistan, today there is no need for a politically charged religious ideology that contains the danger of drastic, catastrophic changes in people’s lives.”<sup>26</sup> Rakhmon accused religious radical forces of instigating the war in 1992, but refused to identify specific actors among these forces.

In his effort to promote a secular politics, Rakhmon has accepted the fact that some elements of the populace support the Communist Party, still one of the main political forces in Tajikistan, and he emphasizes that the communists are secular. The Communist Party currently claims to have about 40,000 members, but some local experts estimate that membership has significantly shrunk in recent years and does not exceed 20,000 people.<sup>27</sup> Although the Tajik communists inherited a vast Soviet-era infrastructure with members spread throughout the





Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, left, talks with Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon during their meeting in Dushanbe, July 25, 2006. Ahmadinejad arrived in Tajikistan on a two-day visit expected to focus largely on bilateral economic ties. (AP Photo/Misha Japaridze)

country and offices located in virtually every village, the party is only a nominal structure with insignificant leverage over political processes. Recognizing its weakness, Rakhmon's government has not hindered its functioning. The communists, like other political parties in Tajikistan, represent a "loyal opposition" to Rakhmon.

***Samanid Dynasty.*** In the late 1990s the Tajik government and the IRP stressed the importance of competing concepts in their ideological constructs.<sup>28</sup> While the government emphasized the idea of statehood, the IRP focused on the role of Islam. Government–opposition competition over ideology was especially evident in their interpretations of the importance of the Samanid dynasty in Tajik history.<sup>29</sup> The Samanid period (819–1005), during which Central Asia was ruled by a Tajik empire with Bukhara as the capital, is remembered as a great Islamic dynasty.<sup>30</sup> The government's attempts to weave the Samanid epoch into the collective consciousness symbolized its effort to accentuate the importance of the strong Tajik statehood

that politically dominated the region at that time. In 2001 the Tajik government initiated a celebration of the 1,100th anniversary of the Samanid empire. Rakhmon's official stance was that the "Samanid epoch—the golden age of Tajiks—enlightens thousands of years of their history," and "there emerged the idea [of] working for the unifying of Tajiks."<sup>31</sup>

Starting in the early 2000s, Rakhmon stressed the need to draw parallels between Samanid statehood and current state-building processes in Tajikistan. In this discourse, Rakhmon emphasized the stability of Samanid society and its ability to withstand external pressures. Like Akayev's position on the importance of the historical idea of Kyrgyz national statehood in today's reality, Rakhmon was keen on linking the Samanid era with the present day. He argued that although the Samanid dynasty collapsed, the idea of Tajik statehood prevailed in the national consciousness throughout the centuries,<sup>32</sup> and he found it significant that the language of state administration in Central Asia is Farsi.<sup>33</sup>

In parallel, the IRP, representing a religious alliance of anti-governmental forces, used the Samanid epoch to draw a link with current religious identities. However, the opposition's voice was much quieter. The competition between Rakhmon and the opposition only lasted until the parliamentary elections in February 2005, when the IRP won only two seats. The elections signified that Rakhmon's People's Democratic Party (PDP), which enjoyed access to public administrative resources, was able to suppress other political parties.

Rakhmon organized celebrations for a number of national ideological projects in advance of the November 2006 presidential elections. Two months before the elections, Tajikistan's grand celebrations included a celebration of 2,700 years of Kulyab, Rakhmon's natal city; the promotion of the Aryan civilization; assemblies of Tajiks and Farsi-speaking peoples; and Tajikistan's independence day. All of these celebrations and ideological projects acknowledged Tajiks' cultural role in the Persian and Turkic civilizations. As Rakhmon wrote: "In the span of their long history the Tajiks made a substantial contribution to the world culture. They take pride in such great names as Rudaki—the father of Tajik literature, Firdusi—the great poet, Abu Ali Sina—the founder of Eastern medicine and well known poets of the world Hafiz, Omar Khayam, Nosir Khoustrav, Jami, Rumi, Saadi."<sup>34</sup>

Rakhmon's ideological projects arguably tried to keep the northern elites from gaining political and economic power.<sup>35</sup> As a native of southern Kulyab, Rakhmon emphasized the city's antiquity and cultural purity. Some of his political allies wanted Kulyab to become the national capital because of its historic heritage. However, Tajikistan's northern elites, traditionally the country's leaders before Rakhmon came to power, accused his government of discriminating against other Tajiks, and the Kulyabi Tajiks of regarding themselves as more ethnically pure than people from other regions.<sup>36</sup> Despite the accumulating discontent about Rakhmon's effort to elevate the status of Kulyab, there are no signs of open tension in Tajikistan. The November 2006 presidential elections illustrated that fear of a renewed civil war is a powerful political instrument for Rakhmon. He and his government repeatedly remind the public about the costs of the war.

As Rakhmon's government became more centralized, the president more assertively took credit for the country's stability. The Tajik population largely welcomed Rakhmon's purges of former war commanders, some of whom had fought on the government side and others for the opposition. A decade after the peace accord between the Tajik government and the United Tajik Opposition,

Rakhmon was able to subdue all the former war commanders, including Faizali Saidov, Gafor Mirzoyev,<sup>37</sup> Makhmud Khudoiberdiyev, Ibodullo Boitmatov, Yakub Salimov,<sup>38</sup> and Shamsiddin Shamsiddinov.<sup>39</sup> The suppression of former field commanders who still had access to arms, controlled groups of soldiers, and were involved in the drug economy was done in the name of national peace. The Tajik populace preferred to have the country's regions controlled by the central government rather than former warlords, as had been the case for a few years after the end of the civil war.

By the 2006 elections Rakhmon had become a symbol of post-war stability. His politics were now more personal, bordering on the personality cult of President Saparmurat "Turkmenbashi" Niyazov in Turkmenistan.<sup>40</sup> Like Turkmenbashi, Rakhmon's portrait decorates public places, and the president is frequently praised in the local mass media. Rakhmon's glamorous public celebrations of family events are another instance of his overt egocentrism. A few months before the November 2006 presidential elections, six new books were published dedicated to Rakhmon's politics and personal qualifications.<sup>41</sup> Two books, *Emomali Rakhmon: Year of Culture That Conquered the World* and *Emomali Rakhmon: The Year of Aryan Civilization*, lauded his effort to rediscover the heritage of the Aryan civilization. Rakhmon also "authored" several books on the pre-Soviet history of Tajikistan.

**Zoroastrianism.** As a prelude to highlighting the historical significance of the Aryan civilization, Rakhmon emphasized the importance of Zoroastrianism in Tajik history. He sought to use Zoroastrianism as a means of excluding Islam from domestic politics. However, in part because records of the Zoroastrian period (628–551 B.C.E.) are scarce, vague, and offer only a loose connection with the modern Tajik identity, his government was fairly unsuccessful in promoting the idea.<sup>42</sup> Rakhmon dedicated the year 2003 to celebrating the heritage of Zoroastrianism. With Rakhmon's initiative and UNESCO approval, Tajikistan commemorated 3,000 years of Zoroastrian civilization. The Tajik government and UNESCO jointly published the book *From Songs of Zarathustra to Melodies of Borbad*, with contributions by authors from Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, France, Germany, Canada, and the United States. Rakhmon's chapter, "Tajikistan: The Motherland of Zarathustra, as the First Prophet of Justice," opened the book. Uzbek historians found historical evidence to support the theory that Zoroastrianism was once prevalent in Uzbekistan. This view was voiced by Koregi Zhumayev, director of the Sitorai Mohi Khosa

museum in Bukhara. Zhumayev claimed that Zoroastrianism, the “world’s first religion,” was born in Khorezm, an Uzbek city located on the Silk Road.

**Aryan Civilization.** In 2003, Rakhmon decided to dedicate the year 2006 to a commemoration of the Aryan civilization of ancient Iran and its legacy in Tajikistan. However, Tajikistan’s embrace of a supposed Aryan heritage is a controversial issue. Although there is no solid, universal consensus about the Tajik connection to Aryan civilization, Tajikistan’s academic community voiced little opposition to the idea of placing the Aryan heritage at the center of the national ideology. As Rakhmon himself asserts: “The word ‘Tajik’ is a synonym of the word ‘Aryan’ and it means generous and noble. In the modern Tajik language this word means ‘having a crown’ and ‘peace loving people.’”<sup>43</sup>

The Aryan project already had a central place in Tajik historiography during the Soviet period. Bobodzhon Gafurov, a former first secretary of Soviet Tajikistan and a famous Tajik academician, was the leading promoter of the Aryan background of the Tajik ethnic group.<sup>44</sup> Gafurov’s influential works include *Istoriia tadjikov* (History of the Tajiks) and *Tadjiki: Drevneishaia, drevniaia i srednevekovaia istoriia* (The Tajiks: Antique, Ancient, and Medieval History), published in 1947 and 1972, respectively.<sup>45</sup> In both books Gafurov argued for the Tajik ethnic connection with the Aryans and depicted Uzbekistan as usurping Tajik territory in the early twentieth century. As interpretations of the significance of the Aryan civilization in Tajik nationhood in the independence period, Soviet works on this controversial subject also have anti-Turkic and anti-Uzbek connotations.

Today, the Aryan identity serves a dual role in Rakhmon’s politics. The alignment of the Tajiks with other modern nations and ethnic groups that have more obvious ties to the Aryan civilization gave force to his linking of the Tajiks and the Aryans. He depicts the Tajiks as connected with the Taldysh, Ossetians, Kurds, Iranians, and the peoples of India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Aryan identity also connects the Tajiks to the civilization of Europe, thus raising Tajikistan to a global scale.<sup>46</sup> At the same time, by accentuating its Aryan heritage, Tajikistan creates its own regionally distinctive identity. According to Tajik historian Polat Shozimov, the Aryan civilization deters the turkization of the Tajiks and contributes to Tajikistan’s uniqueness in Central Asia.<sup>47</sup>

Linking Tajiks to the Aryan civilization also marginalizes the role of Islam in the national ideology. By promoting principles of humanism and creativity, the ideology

of the Aryan civilization represents a system of beliefs that can stand as an alternative to Islam. It reaches out to some of the most important events in the history of Eurasia, including Alexander the Great’s conquest of Central Asia. Some Tajik scholars incorporate anti-fascist slogans in elaborating the significance of the Aryan civilization’s pacifist principles in modern life.<sup>48</sup> Tajik scholars also claim that the lessons learned from the history of the Aryans should be juxtaposed with the current global trends of rising terrorism and religious fundamentalism. Without making a direct linkage to Nazi Germany, Tajik leaders considered promoting the swastika as a national symbol. The Aryan system of pacifist values and beliefs was presented as predating the Islamic era.

The preparations for the nation-wide celebrations of Aryan civilization in 2006 took almost two years. The government mobilized professionals to find creative ways to spread the idea. As Rakhmon himself noted: “Scholars, poets, writers, architects, and members of the arts community felt an innovative impulse in their creativity that goes back centuries.”<sup>49</sup> The president argued that the celebrations were necessary to recover the Tajik national consciousness and “liberation from self-destruction.”<sup>50</sup> Much as Akayev linked the *Manas* celebrations with the country’s subsequent economic growth, Rakhmon asserted that “Chaos and bewilderment in the minds of the best part of society changed to a hope of real possibility to attain new and reincarnate lost values.”<sup>51</sup>

Rakhmon incorporated historical figures from the pre-Soviet and Soviet periods into the discourse on how the heritage of the Aryan civilization was preserved until the present day. The list included Jamshed and Faridun, Cyros and Darius, Spitamen and Ardasher, Ismail Samani and Abulfazl Balami, Akhmadi Donish, Shirishsho Shotemur, Nusfatullo Makhsum, Chinor Imomov, Sadriddin Ayni, and Babajan Gafurov.<sup>52</sup> The interpretation of the Aryan civilization in Tajikistan obviously has deep ethno-nationalist undertones. In particular, the Aryan civilizational approach offers a counter-balance to Uzbekistan’s powerful promotion of its regional leadership in Turkic civilizational development. Tajikistan’s Aryan doctrine embraces the area of Central Asia and Afghanistan where ethnic Tajiks now reside.

A renowned Tajik historian and academic, Rakhim Masov, was one of the foremost promoters of the Aryan civilization’s significance in Tajikistan’s national ideology. Masov published several provocative books and articles on Tajik history in which he condemned (mainly Uzbek) chauvinists who tried to prevent the formation of Tajikistan in the 1920s and 1930s. Masov also rationalized

the Tajik territorial losses in the early years of the Soviet Union. While not condemning the intent of the 1917 Revolution, he denounced the pan-Turkism that prevailed among Uzbek political elites at that time.<sup>53</sup>

Rakhmon enthusiastically picked up on Masov's interpretation of the modern Tajik connection with the Aryans. The president often refers to vague notions of "foreign invasion," "the iron fist of imperialism," and "abnegation and appraisal of the alien," all embedded in the idea that throughout history enemies have tried to destroy the Tajiks, but they have survived over the millennia by preserving their national dignity and culture.<sup>54</sup> Rakhmon's speeches often mention undefined enemies of the Tajik nation in the early twentieth century who "reiterated that the Tajik people are backward and incapable of self-government."<sup>55</sup> He is subtly referring to destructive Turkic and Uzbek influences. While acknowledging that the Tajiks and the Uzbeks have lived side-by-side for centuries, the president has continued to foster an abstract foe: "Our enemies did not want the construction of Tajik statehood and rejected the existence of the Tajik people and Tajik language."<sup>56</sup>

For Tajikistan, the revival of these historical narratives inevitably raises grievances and feelings of discontent about the fact that the key historic cities of the Samani dynasty, Samarqand and Bukhara, are today part of Uzbekistan.<sup>57</sup> Not only do historical memories link the Tajiks with these places, but family ties have been established since the Soviet era. According to the Russian historian Sergei Abashin, the issue of "Who is to blame?" for Tajikistan's reduced territory has become part of its national ideology.<sup>58</sup> The question permeates all discussions of Tajikistan's history and current situation.

Masov, a flamboyant critic of Uzbek historical chauvinism against Tajiks and other Central Asian nationalities, met with extensive criticism from his Uzbek counterparts. His main ideological opponents were Uzbek historians who claimed that Turkic civilization had a far greater impact on the Tajiks than Aryan civilization. Masov engaged in fierce debates on this matter with the Uzbek historian Akhmadali Askarov, in particular.<sup>59</sup> In essence, the two academics were contesting whether it was the Turkic or the Aryan civilization that was more dominant in Eurasia. Their debate had political implications in that each accused the other of ethno-nationalism. Masov tagged Askarov's arguments as pan-Uzbek and pan-Islamic; Askarov accused Tajikistan of promoting pan-Iranism.

Both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have valid reasons, due to their ethnic composition, to worry about the rising nationalism in the neighboring countries. The Tajik population in Uzbekistan numbers roughly 1 million and

is the fastest-growing ethnic minority. Moreover, most of the Tajik minority lives in Samarqand oblast, along the border with Tajikistan. Its rights to ethnic identity have been suppressed since Soviet times. The sense of national pride cultivated by Rakhmon's government might serve as a strong factor in the political mobilization of Uzbekistan's Tajiks. Conversely, nationalist feelings could lead to the repression of Tajikistan's 1 million Uzbeks, who comprise 15 percent of the total population. Confrontation between the two countries on issues pertaining to their "cultural legacies" is the root of their deteriorating economic and political relationships. Ideological battles are, in fact, a product of deeper obstacles in Tajik-Uzbek relations.<sup>60</sup>

The ideas of a "Greater Tajikistan" or a "Historical Tajikistan" permeate post-Soviet reconstructions of national history by Tajik scholars.<sup>61</sup> The idea presumes that the current territory of Tajikistan does not match with the nation's historical influence. In his book on national history, Tajik academic Numan Nigmatov has a map of "Historical Tajikistan" that includes almost the entire territory of modern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, as well as parts of Kazakhstan, China, Afghanistan, and Iran.<sup>62</sup> The concept of a greater Tajikistan triggers the feelings of Tajiks living in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. In addition to ethnic Tajiks living in Uzbekistan and parts of Kyrgyzstan, Tajiks in Afghanistan are also included in the concept of a greater Tajikistan, although to a lesser extent.

Despite his oppression of the religious opposition, Rakhmon cannot afford to fully exclude either the IRP or the representatives of the northern elites from the political process. He has to allow the IRP to have a symbolic presence in the parliament and the government to foster his image as a democratic leader. This persona is necessary if he is to continue to receive international humanitarian and development aid. Rakhmon also recognizes the possibility that tensions would increase if the IRP were completely excluded from the political domain. In response, the IRP has turned itself into a "loyal opposition" for Rakhmon, since its leaders recognize that they have little political power. With both sides calculating their capabilities against each other, the Tajik political system today represents a balance between a strong government and a weak opposition that for now remains passive.

## Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that state ideologies helped Kyrgyz and Tajik leaders to prevail over competing politi-

cal forces. Former Kyrgyz president Askar Akayev and incumbent Tajik president Emomali Rakhmon each acted as his nation's chief ideologue and tailored the discussion of economic and social issues to fit the ideological project he adopted. Akayev maneuvered between ethno-centric and civic-based nationalism to alleviate the double pressure of a nationalist public and a vital Russian-speaking minority. Rakhmon, on the other hand, had to consolidate his government in the aftermath of a civil war and had to deal with an influential Islamic opposition. It was imperative for him to design a political ideology that could compete with the religious program promoted by the opposition. Akayev himself authored national ideological projects, whereas Rakhmon actively cultivated the help of the academic community. Both president staged national commemorative events that mobilized academics, journalists, and members of the arts community to celebrate the grandeur of the nation's anniversaries and historic places. These events were usually scheduled to occur shortly before presidential elections. Expressions of skepticism about the significance and meaning of such celebrations by politicians or academics was downplayed as unpatriotic.

Akayev made a greater effort than any other Central Asian leader to distance his nation from Soviet historiographical traditions and concepts of citizenship, nationality, and ethnicity. Nonetheless, he used ideological projects to mobilize the state apparatus to work for the continuity of his own hold on power. He used the *Manas* epic and the Osh-3,000 celebration to rally support before the 1995 and 2000 president elections. Although his ideological projects were widely criticized, Akayev has been Kyrgyzstan's chief ideologue since the country became independent. Bakiyev, in contrast, underestimated the role of state ideologies. To some extent this deepened the divide between the northern and southern political elites. But Bakiyev's ignorance also induced local civil society groups to participate in developing a national unification program.

Tajikistan's production of ideology based on historical narrative became a highly strategic issue after the end of the civil war in 1997. Rakhmon's ideological projects sought to increase his presidential powers and subdue the Islamic opposition. The Aryan myth proved to be the central element in the politics that helped him to consolidate the public sector in the wake of the presidential elections in November 2006. Since the Aryan project had not been adopted by any other Central Asian state, it enabled Rakhmon to point at Tajikistan's regional distinctiveness. Since Aryanism emphasized the antiquity of

the Tajik ethnic group, it implied that they had a certain cultural superiority. Finally, the Aryan project checkmated the Islamic opposition and linked Tajikistan with Europe. To a significant degree, Soviet ethnographic and historiographic traditions influenced the formulation of this ideology in independent Tajikistan. The primordial definition of ethnicity as well as the category of ethno-genesis helped to focus Rakhmon's ideological program. Although the Tajiks' connection to Aryan civilization does not enjoy unambiguous scholarly recognition even in Tajikistan, Rakhmon nevertheless institutionalized the idea by subsidizing scholarly works on the subject, as well as through his own books and speeches, and by means of the grand celebrations in September 2006. In this respect Rakhmon's approach resembled Akayev's fostering of the creation of visual images of the mythic hero Manas. Both presidents strengthened their positions relative to competing political elites, but neither was able to win wholehearted support for their ideas among all the relevant state and society actors.

#### Notes

1. Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, and Vivienne Shue, eds., *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

2. Laura Adams demonstrates this with regard to Uzbek elites; see her "Cultural Elites in Uzbekistan: Ideological Production and the State," in *The Transformations of Central Asian States and Societies from Soviet Rule to Independence*, ed. Pauline Jones Loung (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003), pp. 93–119.

3. In March 2007 the Tajik president changed his surname from Rakhmonov to Rakhmon, explaining that he wished to follow Tajik naming traditions. His published works, however, bear the name "Rakhmonov."

4. Adeb Khalid and Douglas Northrop discuss the complex relationship between the Soviet regime's treatment of Islam and the current understanding of Islam among political leaders and people in the Central Asian states. Douglas Northrop, *Veiled Empire: Gender and Power in Stalinist Central Asia* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Adeb Khalid, *Islam After Communism: Religion and Politics in Central Asia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

5. Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Revenge of the Past: Nationalism, Revolution and the Collapse of the Soviet Union* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1993), p. 281.

6. Taras Kuzio has demonstrated this phenomenon in the case of Ukraine. See his "Kravchuk to the Orange Revolution: The Victory of Civic Nationalism in Post-Soviet Ukraine," in *After Independence: Making and Protecting the Nation in Postcolonial and Postcommunist States*, ed. Lowell W. Barrington (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), pp. 187–224.

7. Rogers Brubaker argues that the concept of a "Soviet people" was oriented toward the future, representing an evolutionary stage in the development of Soviet nationalities when ethnic identity would fade away. See his "Nationhood and the National Question in the Soviet Union and Post-Soviet Eurasia: An Institutional Account," *Theory and Society* 23, no. 1 (1994): 47–78. Francine Hirsch shows how Soviet ethnographers equated ethnic development with the rise of socialism in *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Nations* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005).

8. Author's interview with a Kyrgyz historian, Bishkek, 1997.

9. Askar Akayev, *Kyrgyzstan: Na puti stanovleniia nezavisimosti* (Kyrgyzstan: In the Process of Formation of Independence) (Bishkek: Uchkun, 1995), p. 5. This volume contains a selection of his speeches.

10. Akayev's speech to the Kyrgyzstan's People's Assembly in Bishkek, January 22, 1994.
11. Akayev's speech at the German Forum in Bishkek, July 7, 1992.
12. For example, the ultra-rightist Kyrgyz ombudsman, Tursunbai Bakir Uulu, in the early 2000s.
13. Katarina Radzihovskaya, "Interview with Dastan Sarygulov 'Ot tengriantstva v gosudarstvennyu doktrinu Kirgizii mogli by voiti'" (From Tengrism, Kyrgyzstan's National Doctrine Could Adopt), *Belyi parohod* (July 25, 2005).
14. Askar Akayev, *Kyrgyzskaia gosudarstvennost i narodnyi epos Manas* (Kyrgyz Statehood and National Epic Manas) (Bishkek: Uchkun, 2002).
15. Widely publicized, they included national unity and solidarity; international harmony, friendship, and cooperation; national dignity and patriotism; prosperity and welfare through painstaking and tireless labor; humanism, generosity, and tolerance; harmony with nature; and strengthening and protection of Kyrgyz statehood.
16. Askar Akayev, *Trudnaia doroga k demokratii* (Difficult Road to Democracy) (Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia, 2002), p. 177.
17. Askar Akayev, *Otkrovenny razgovori* (Frank Conversation) (Moscow: Sovershenno sekretno, 1998), p. 24.
18. Akayev, *Kyrgyzskaia gosudarstvennost i narodnyi epos Manas*.
19. Akayev, *Trudnaia doroga k demokratii*, pp. 187–188.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 192–193.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 193.
22. Erica Marat, "Kyrgyz Government Unable to Produce New National Ideology," *Central Asia–Caucasus Analyst* (February 22, 2006).
23. 24.kg (March 2, 2007). 24.kg is a Web-based wire service.
24. *Ibid.*
25. Pulat Shozimov, "Tajikistan's 'Year of Aryan Civilization' and the Competition of Ideologies," *Central Asia–Caucasus Analyst* (October 5, 2005).
26. Emomali Rakhmonov, *Tadjikistan na poroge XXI veka* (Tajikistan on the Threshold of the 21st Century) (Dushanbe: Sharq ozod, 2001), p. 6.
27. Author's interview with a Tajik opposition leader, Dushanbe, June 2006.
28. Pulat Shozimov, presentation on Tajikistan at Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC, March 4, 2005.
29. Shozimov, "Tajikistan's 'Year of Aryan Civilization'."
30. Rahim Masov, *Tadjiki: Vytesnenie i assimiliatsiia* (The Tajiks: Displacement and Assimilation) (Dushanbe: Tajik National Museum, 2003).
31. Rakhmonov, *Tadjikistan na poroge XXI veka*, pp. 50–51.
32. *Ibid.*, p. 51.
33. Tajikistan's state language is a member of the Iranian family of languages.
34. Emomali Rakhmonov, *Tadjhiki v zerkale istorii* (Tajik People in the Reflection of the History) (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1999), p. 109.
35. Shozimov, "Tajikistan's 'Year of Aryan Civilization'."
36. Author's interview with a Tajik journalist, Dushanbe, June 2006.
37. Sentenced to life imprisonment in August 2006 after being convicted on charges of terrorism and plotting to overthrow the government.
38. Sentenced to fifteen years' imprisonment for state treason and banditry on April 2006.
39. Sentenced to sixteen years' imprisonment in January 2004 for organizing a criminal gang, polygamy, and illegal border crossings.
40. Opinion expressed by a Tajik opposition leader, author's interview, Dushanbe, June 2006.
41. *Tajikistan Online* (August 30, 2006).
42. *Deutsche Welle* (January 8, 2005).
43. Rakhmonov, *Tadjhiki v zerkale istorii*, p. 100.
44. Marlene Laruelle, "The Return of the Aryan Myth: Tajikistan in Search of a Secularized National Ideology," *Nationalities Papers* 35, no. 1 (2007): 51–70.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Marina Strukova, "Svet s vostoka" (Light from the East), *Zavtra.ru* (December 29, 2004).
47. Shozimov, "Tajikistan's 'Year of Aryan Civilization'."
48. Mamadsho Ilov, "Nasledie nashikh predkov" (Our Ancestors' Heritage), *Narodnaia gazeta* (June 22, 2005).
49. Rakhmonov, *Tadjikistan na poroge XXI veka*, p. 58.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 50.
51. *Ibid.*
52. Ilov, "Nasledie nashikh predkov."
53. Sergei N. Abashin, "Zarozhdenie i sovremennoe sostoianie sredneaziatskikh natsionalizmov" (The Birth and Current Condition of Central Asian Nationalisms), *Centrasia.ru* (May 9, 2005).
54. Rakhmonov, *Tadjhiki v zerkale istorii*.
55. *Ibid.*, p. 113.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 114.
57. Masov is one of the most outspoken scholars on this view; see his *Tadjiki: Vytesnenie i assimiliatsiia*.
58. Abashin, "Zarozhdenie i sovremennoe sostoianie sredneaziatskikh natsionalizmov."
59. In an article in response to Askarov's claim that the Aryan civilization is also part of the Turkic civilization, Masov accused Askarov of falsifying history to foster Uzbek nationalism. The dispute precipitated extensive discussion in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. See Rakhim Masov, "Turkizatsiia ariitsev: chush ili nedomyslie" (The Turkization of Aryans: Nonsense or Folly?), *Centrasia.ru* (January 6, 2006); Akhmadali Askarov, "Ariiskaia tsivilizatsiia: novye podkhody i vzgliady" (Aryan Civilization: New Approaches and Views), in *Istoriia Uzbekistana v arkhologicheskikh i pismennykh istochnikakh*, ed. A.A. Anarbayev (Uzbekistan's History in Archeological and Scriptory Sources) (Tashkent: FAN, 2005).
60. Alik Nazarov, "Ethno-natsionalizm kak panatseia ot revoliutsii" (Ethno-nationalism as Panacea from Revolution), *Prognosis.ru* (December 21, 2005).
61. *Ibid.*
62. Nugmon N. Nigmatov, *Tadjhikskii fenomen: Teoriia i istoriia* (The Tajik Phenomenon: Theory and History) (Dushanbe: Nashrieti Oli Somon, 1997).