

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Democracy in Difficult Terrain: The Outcome of Western Democracy Promotion in Tajikistan

Daniel Munday

Democracy promotion is a key foreign policy tool for western actors in Tajikistan, yet the prevailing opinion amongst academics is that current efforts have failed to provide meaningful democratisation. Examining two levels of democracy promotion through government and civil society, this article argues that a basic ‘package’ of values that enable democracy, such as economic liberalisation, have been established. Furthermore, a focus has been made upon civil society with the anticipation that the younger generation of Tajiks, who are without the experience of the civil conflict and a drive to seek stability will push the state towards western liberal democracy in the future. Thus, this article acknowledges the failure of fully fledged democracy but demonstrates that the current outcome of democracy promotion in Tajikistan is one of looking forward towards the next generation.

Keywords: Tajikistan; democracy promotion; civil society; government; foreign policy; young voters

Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, democracy promotion has been a vital component of western foreign policy. Democratising non-western states provides a range of benefits for the west; utilising liberal theory democratic states provide increased peace, prosperity and pluralism (Lagon, 2011), expanded upon in the first section. Despite these advantages however, democracy promotion has come under criticism (Putz, 2015a, 2015b) with the US accused of putting a moral attachment on democracy ahead of logical, strategic concerns (Lagon, 2011). These concerns are amplified when critics point to democracy promotion ‘failures’; states where democratisation attempts have produced little headway. One such state is Tajikistan in Central Asia. Tajikistan has had over 25 years of sustained attempts by western actors to bring liberal democracy, with allocated funds from the US alone reaching the hundreds of millions of dollars (USAID, 2014, p. 1). During this time Tajikistan has played an important role in the War on Terror, hosting coalition forces conducting operations in neighbouring Afghanistan. The results of democracy promotion have been varied, with swings from possible democratic opening in aspects of Tajik society to further repression and restrictions upon citizen freedoms, pushing Tajikistan further from liberal democracy than previously seen. To this end the research question asked is:

‘What has been the outcome of western liberal democracy promotion in Tajikistan?’

To elaborate upon this, various sub-research questions are addressed throughout the next few sections:

1. ‘What did promoters hope to achieve in Tajikistan following the state’s independence in 1991?’
2. ‘How has the process of western democracy promotion developed since 1991?’
3. ‘What has been the difference in outcomes between government-targeted democracy promotion and civil society development in Tajikistan?’
4. ‘What have been the shortcomings of western democracy promotion in Tajikistan?’
5. ‘How have these shortcomings impacted upon the outcome of democracy promotion in Tajikistan?’

These questions will provide a rounded answer to the outcome of work done in Tajikistan. The work of the US and EU provides an interesting case study. Despite other western actors such as Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) operating in the state, for the sake of simplicity only these two actors will be discussed.

This paper argues that contrary to some academics – notably Olcott (2007, 2012) and Crosston (2008) – the outcome in Tajikistan is not a complete failure. This paper takes a nuanced approach, assessing multiple layers of democracy promotion and providing a picture of successes amongst a backdrop of limited government democratisation. In particular, this paper highlights civil society as the way forward; although government focussed democracy promotion has provided little in the way of reform, civil society with its ability to circumnavigate the government has allowed promoters to focus their

efforts upon the youth, who are more accepting of liberal democracy than the current ex-Soviet populace.

The first section examines the efforts of promoters from Tajikistan's independence in 1991 until the present strategies established in policy papers (European Dialogue, 2016; USAID, 2014). This section assesses decisions made and their effectiveness, as well as addressing sub-research questions one and two. Finally, it addresses the arguments made in regards to interests overtaking values during this period, which ties into the argument of this paper. The values versus interests argument is used as leverage in arguing that democracy promotion has failed, whilst this section highlights the remaining presence of values and moral guidance in both actor's approaches, and the subsequent successes seen.

The second section examines government-focussed democracy promotion. Research question three is addressed through the second and third sections, providing a closer analysis of democracy promotion by both actors. This section argues that despite increasing autocracy that has led many to believe government democracy promotion has failed, advances have been made in the 'package' of prerequisites both actors push for in laying the foundations for a democratic state. Developmental aspects such as economic liberalisation and diplomatic cooperation have been enhanced by both promoters, and as such assessing this aspect of democracy promotion as a complete failure is contested.

The third section examines the success of western-funded civil society in democratising the state, with advances made through youth work and education. This section demonstrates civil society's success at bypassing government repression and promoting democratic values freely. Furthermore, an assessment of backlashes through a lack of western engagement with Tajik social structures will be analysed, and the argument made that despite this it remains the most effective method of pursuing democracy through a long-term process of targeting future generations.

The fourth section concludes by analysing shortcomings of democracy promotion. This section examines the phenomenon of Russian and Chinese autocracy promotion in Tajikistan. It also looks at the notion of western democracy and political stability in Tajikistan, and how a desire for stability amongst current Tajiks based off their experiences in the civil war solidifies the authoritarian regime. This section addresses sub-research questions four and five, concluding that both these shortcomings have proved only minor hindrances for western promoters, especially when considering their aim for a long-term change to democracy.

In order to frame promoter's actions, it is necessary to understand post-independence Tajik history. Tajikistan since the dissolution of the Soviet Union can be characterised through war and instability (Putz, 2015b). Olcott (2012) and Akiner and Barnes (2001) provide accounts of the conflict, including its root causes and the rise of President Emomali Rahmon. Both authors stress that the conflict is not easily evaluated however their versions of events provide an excellent basis for this

section and how the conflict resonates with Tajiks, thereby impacting democratisation efforts.

Despite demonstrations and violence in the Tajik capital Dushanbe, presidential elections were held in December 1991 and a multiparty system established, with Communist leader Kakhar Makhkamov elected versus a pro-democracy opposition, Tajik Islamists and a party controlled by the pre-independence leader, Rahmon Nabiyeu (Akiner and Barnes, 2001, p. 16). Makhkamov was soon removed and replaced with Nabiyeu, yet the situation deteriorated into a power struggle between the aforementioned groups (Olcott, 2012, pp. 1–2). Reasons for the struggle are mixed; Olcott (2012, p. 2) points to resistance from those 'who were unhappy with seeing another northern ruler in power' referencing Nabiyeu. Furthermore, the isolated landscape of the country and ethnic differences led many groups to oppose one another when seeking power (Akiner and Barnes, 2001, pp. 17–18). This ethnic divide is certainly a strong reason; it has hampered promoter's efforts in the 21st century when working on aspects of civil society and encompassing social structures as seen in the third section. Poor living standards were compounded by discontent from high unemployment that occurred following the removal of Soviet support. As noted, this caused basic provisions, such as continual electricity and clean water supplies to cease, aggravating many (Akiner and Barnes, 2001).

The situation soon fell into civil war. Between 1992 and 1997 an estimated 50 to 100,000 died in the violence, with up to 250,000 fleeing across state borders (Akiner et al., 2001; Olcott, 2012; Putz, 2015a). The economic cost was great; Gross Domestic Product (GDP) contracted up to 65% by 1995 (World Bank, in Kubicek, 1998, p. 33). During the conflict, two groups emerged opposing Nabiyeu; the United Tajikistan Opposition (UTO) and the Popular Front. It is important to note that despite ethnic cleavages the opposition in Tajikistan were not aiming to secede from the state; the conflict was seen as a 'struggle for [political] power and resources' (Ewoh et al., 2012, p. 2) or to promote values such as Islamism (Akiner and Barnes, 2001).

President Rahmon came to prominence through the Popular Front (Olcott, 2012, p. 2). Gaining the presidency in 1994, Rahmon faced a number of opposition coalitions, spending three years crafting a peace agreement. Russian peacekeepers were deployed, clashing with Islamists (Crosston, 2008). With the 1997 peace accords the opposition were reformed into political parties, including Tajikistan's only religious party, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). A 30% parliamentary quota was established for the UTO, whilst pledges were made to curb the power of the executive (Putz, 2015a).

However, these concessions were not enforced. Rahmon gradually tightened his grip. After pledging to not seek re-election after his second win in 1999, the constitution was amended in to allow him to stand again (Olcott, 2012, p. 12). After further changes his re-election limit was abolished, cementing his position as the sole credible figure in Tajik politics (Agence France-Presse, 2016). Crosston (2008) notes that the quota agreement lapsed in 2000, and soon after the opposition's presence

in government was diminished. This culminated in the abolition of the IRP in 2015 under the guise of eliminating extremism (Putz, 2015a). Similarly, citizen freedoms have been repressed, such as bans on public religious displays (Neef, 2010; Putz, 2015a) and media restrictions (Akbarzadeh, 2006).

There is however surprising compliance by Tajiks towards the regime. As raised by Kendzior (2013), the chaos and unrestricted violence of the civil war has aided the regime. Despite repressing freedoms, Rahmon is also seen as a Tajik symbol of steadiness. He unified warring factions with the peace deal and therefore established solid foundations for Tajikistan to recover (Kendzior, 2013). Furthermore, actions that compromise peace have been twisted as politicised moves; campaigning for reforms has been portrayed by the regime as a desire to reignite civil war-era violence (Kendzior, 2013). Parshin (2013) argues that Rahmon's track record of standing up to global powers such as Russia has solidified his respect amongst Tajiks. Indeed, this notion of stability is an important component of why democratisation has faltered at times and will be referred to throughout this paper.

The Development of Western Democracy Promotion in Tajikistan

This section considers the first two sub-research questions, noting what the US and EU aimed to achieve through democracy promotion and how the process developed. Looking at the aims and actions of both promoters, it is clear to see that contextual changes occurred that led to varying levels of success (Olcott, 2007). This section is divided by actor and also by the impact of September 2001. The attacks in New York on 11 September 2001 (9/11) provided contextual change that impacted upon Tajik democracy promotion due to its proximity to Afghanistan. As seen, interests are noted to have overtaken values following the need for strategic coordination around Afghanistan. This section argues that despite interests becoming increasingly important, certain actions demonstrate that morally guided democratisation still existed. This, tied in with what will be demonstrated as the 'package' of democratic values led to some success as the groundwork for democracy in Tajikistan was laid.

The actions, motives and ambitions of US democracy promotion pre-9/11 included differing schools of thought. Olcott (2007) views the US as failing in its initial ambitions for democracy. A lack of comprehensive policy and the hampering of work due to interests are seen to have led to this failure. Although a valuable viewpoint, Olcott's nuance is lacking; her picture of the situation is bleak and fails to mention the advantageous work done that is highlighted in this section. Omelicheva (2015) gives a more balanced perspective; values were still present despite strategic interests. Although focussing on other Central Asian states the basic analysis of democratisation is still valid, with US policies covering the region instead of individual states. This gives Omelicheva's work leverage, and provides the basis for the conclusion that progress was made. Beyond this Diamond (1992) provides an analysis of 1990s democracy promotion, though being a source

written from the American perspective in the immediate post-Soviet situation is blatantly pro-US. Nevertheless, this is useful when assessing US intentions and this is furthered by Brinkley (1997) and US administration sources (Epstein et al., 2007; Talbott, 1997), though they promote the work of their respective presidencies.

US thinking held two ideas concerning democracy promotion. Firstly, the US was intrigued by the advantages a democratic state could provide, whilst considering it a moral duty to pursue democratisation. The US' desires for Tajikistan is seen through Diamond (1992, p. 25), who noted that a 'multipolar, fluid and volatile world' existed following the collapse of the Soviet Union, dominated by fragile states. State fragility created instability in the international system, and therefore US policy demanded an overhaul of the political order. Democracy had won the 'great ideological struggle' (Diamond, 1992, p. 25) and a new world order of democratic states would provide peace (Bush, in Diamond 1992, p. 25). Democratisation was therefore at the forefront of foreign policy (Epstein et al., 2007, p. 4).

Strong state institutions, free and fair elections and liberalised markets were construed as essential for any democratisation project (Omelicheva, 2015, pp. 39–40). This was the essence of the 'package' of democratisation reform; the US aimed to address all these values simultaneously. Although from the outset the fulfilment of these international norms seems ambitious, significant progress was anticipated. Indeed, Tajikistan was seen as a 'blank slate' for promoters; it existed in a little-known area and it was assumed that US values would be easily implemented (Olcott, 2007, p. 1). It is therefore easy to understand why the US imagined a fully realised liberal democracy as Tajikistan's endpoint.

It is important to consider why democracy was promoted in Tajikistan, and this encompasses the values versus interests debate. US interests in Tajikistan were numerous, and the blank slate mentality assisted in that. Diamond's (1992) 'volatile world' provided impetus for promoters to push for democracy under the idea of security in the international system through democratic peace theory. Lagon (2011) proposes other US interests, such as mutual prosperity and the liberalisation of markets that allows for a greater trading atmosphere. For President Clinton, economic liberalisation was prioritised (Brinkley, 1997). Foreign investment was also pursued in industry (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 37). In terms of geopolitics, the US was aware of the strategic position Tajikistan held. Esposito et al. (2012, pp. 51–52) in Stepniewski's book examining regional strategic rivalry notes that the US established diplomatic relations to combat Iranian influence.

Referring to the 'lack of action' assertion, Tajikistan was not seen a priority. Omelicheva (2015, pp. 35–37) notes that Kazakhstan was a more attractive option for democracy promotion as market liberalisation included access to natural resources, providing economic benefits to the US. Similarly, Russia was a more pressing problem due to its nuclear weapons stockpiles that could fall into the wrong hands (Esposito et al., 2012). This lack of

attention is noted through Tajikistan's negligible level of US aid versus other ex-Soviet states (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 36), which is reiterated as a reason for its failed democratisation (Olcott, 2007, p. 1). A lack of funding caused by the state's low priority, followed by a focus on interests created a skewed idea of democracy in the state, leading to an imperfect situation and a lack of progress later on. However, it is argued that this picture is flawed since values were present. Furthermore, the situation Tajikistan faced heavily impacted democratisation. What emerged from the 1990s was a basis for further democratic intervention, opening bilateral negotiations and allowing the US to operate through government and civil society.

Indeed, US action proves that their work was pushed with moral desires for democracy. The US considered itself to have a moral duty to promote it where and when it was needed. This duty was codified in H.W. Bush's Freedom for Russia and Emerging Eurasian Democracies and Open Markets (FREEDOM) Support Act which targeted states to provide democratisation support. Free media and civic education was pushed to bolster state bureaucracy following the withdrawal of Soviet expertise (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 36). As Olcott (2012, p. 85) concedes, this act made significant progress. Tajikistan avoided economic collapse (before the civil conflict) assisted by 'prodding from the outside'. The embassy establishment can be seen as another example of the US' moral commitment to democracy. Indeed, it established the precedent for the US to engage in bilateral talks, plus the legitimacy for the US to comment upon democratic infringement in the state from a ground level perspective (Talbot, 1997). Furthermore, it should be noted that the Tajik conflict halted western democratisation work. With no clear state leadership and continued violence until 1997, it is unsurprising that US aid was lower in Tajikistan than other states unaffected by violence. US work should not be criticised, either for slowness or for a lack of action. Advances were made in promoting liberal norms and values; industries were privatised and pushed into the global market. Furthermore the ground work was laid for bilateral talks. Although Olcott's conclusions should be acknowledged, what should be noted are the advances made towards democracy despite a 'volatile world' (Diamond, 1992, p. 25) and the difficult contextual situation.

The values versus interests debate for the US continued beyond 9/11. Assistance increased dramatically, however much of this aid was criticised for being focussed towards military needs and maintaining stability along the Afghan border (Olcott, 2007; Omelicheva, 2015). Subsequently the rhetoric of democratic values was attacked for masking geopolitical intentions. Asides from continuing to reference Olcott, Crosston (2008) looks at US 'duplicitous democracy' in Tajikistan, arguing alongside Cooley (2012) that pressure upon Rahmon to reform was abandoned post-9/11. Akbarzadeh (2006) notes a changing policy, where democratisation at times interest based, before switching to values. However other sources including Rumer et al. (2016) pursue the idea that political and economic reforms were present, but diminished due to necessary US strategic and security assurances. This

section continues the argument previously made that despite interests being present, reforms were made, and advances such as G.W. Bush's codified democratic commitment furthered work done.

The US throughout this period has been criticised for its concessionary attitude to democracy promotion. That is, the US focussed upon appeasing Rahmon to maintain his positive attitude towards them in order to achieve their interests. For one, Tajikistan developed into a vital arena for the US. The Afghan border was seen as a channel for extremism, and thus worthy of assistance (Olcott, 2012, p. 1). Furthermore both Russia and China were vying for influence in the state (see the fourth section). The US therefore toned down their democratic attitude; geopolitics had replaced desires for further democratisation. The scale of this change is highlighted by Akbarzadeh (2006, p. 563); instead of demands for democracy, then-defence secretary Rumsfeld pledged \$3 million in aid to Tajikistan in 2001 requesting further Afghan border securitisation. The worries that drove this cooperation with Rahmon were soon realised when US military bases were forcibly closed by the Uzbek and Kyrgyz governments (Akbarzadeh, 2006; Cooley, 2012).

This concessionary attitude has, in some eyes, defined democracy promotion. Olcott (2007) argues it set Tajik democratisation back by years, with the rise of state authoritarianism unhindered by this concessional attitude. Cooley (2012) argues that the War on Terror gave Rahmon leverage to clamp down on civil freedoms – values the US itself associates with liberal democracy – under the guise of assisting coalition forces. Indeed, restrictions on Islam continue; the argument of curtailing extremism was used to ban the IRP in 2015 (Neef, 2010; Putz, 2015a). Crosston (2008, pp. 162–166) notes the destruction of the UTO as a direct consequence of the lack of US oversight. The US, he asserts, ignored Rahmon's removal of the 30% opposition party quota set by the peace deal. This increase in repression meant that by 2008 Tajikistan violated FREEDOM Act aid requirements; they failed to make a 'concerted effort for democracy' (Crosston, 2008, p. 166).

However, it is argued that advances towards democracy were still made. Despite Crosston and Cooley's assertions, democracy promotion programs were still going ahead. Funds were allocated towards opposition parties and independent media; \$100,000 was spent on projects focussed on electoral reform and educating opposition groups. The US printed banned newspapers in neighbouring states to be distributed throughout Tajikistan (Akbarzadeh, 2006, pp. 568–573). Efforts were made to enact a stronger judiciary and pluralistic legislature (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 36). These demonstrate that a moral belief in democracy was still held despite strategic interests. The assertion of pure interest-led US foreign policy does not sit well with the aforementioned democratisation projects.

This argument is furthered by democratic rhetoric. G.W. Bush 'elevated the goal of advancing democracy to the United States' ... predestined mission' (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 40). Democracy was portrayed as the inevitable

endpoint for societies, echoing the normative assumption of the 1990s. Democratic peace theory was presumed, with liberal democracy the only viable option for societal stability and as a method of combatting extremism (Omeliicheva, 2015, pp. 340–42). This work materialised in the Advance Democratic Values, Address Nondemocratic Countries and Enhance Democracy (ADVANCE) Act, with a commitment to institutions and civil society (Epstein et al., 2007; Omeliicheva, 2015). It aimed to rectify issues of the 1990s; a 'lack of a clear definition of democracy and... [an] understanding of its basic elements' (Epstein et al., 2007, p. 1). Indeed, codifying aspects of democracy promotion and acknowledging civil society as an agent of change demonstrates that democracy promotion was still a moral target despite interests. Although points regarding Tajik governmental repression may stand, a clear shift towards a proper basis for democratisation work occurred, providing democratic successes seen later.

Bush's drive for democracy was met with cautious optimism (Buxton, 2009). The US' engagement with civil society was seen as a breakthrough (Glen, 2011, p. 280). Nonetheless issues appeared. Democracy was soon associated with foreign intervention after Iraq. Democracy promotion had connotations of imperialism and as an attack upon sovereignty. US work in Tajikistan also focussed on pro-US groups, which eliminated support towards the Iran-backed IRP (Omeliicheva, 2015, p. 42). It is clear that although values were present in the post-9/11 arena, interests were in mind. However, what should be understood is the opposition to the idea that democracy promotion was abandoned and developed into concessions based upon interests. The Bush administration did much to strengthen the path of democracy promotion, pushing it towards the focus on civil society seen today. Although Tajik repression increased, US values were in place, and morally backed programmes of democracy promotion continued.

The EU's efforts pre-9/11 were less concerted than the US. An immediate response to Tajikistan's independence was non-existent. Indeed, the EU is seen by Warkotsch (2006) as a lacking democracy promoter. Plenty of rhetoric was seen, but little action followed. Warkotsch's opinion is valid and well sourced, yet this section argues that progress was made. Warkotsch's assertions originate through analysis of actions focussed explicitly upon democracy rather than democracy prerequisites.

These assertions can be explained primarily through the Tajik Civil War. A need for military action versus democracy promotion until 1997 rendered the EU useless (Akbarzadeh, 2006). In addition the EU's codified program of democratic assistance, the Partnership and Co-operation Agreement (PCA), could not be implemented with a contested government (Warkotsch, 2006, p. 511). Omeliicheva (2015, p. 37–39) proposes that democracy promotion was new and untested and that the EU's preferential focus on economic liberalisation could not begin until stability was achieved. That is not to say that liberal values were not present; these ideas appeared in agreements with Tajikistan but were merely uncoded (Omeliicheva, 2015, p. 38).

The EU's aims encompassed this normative commitment to democracy. Warkotsch (2006, p. 510–512) notes that PCAs for each state confirmed their commitment to liberal democracy with the aims of market liberalisation, human rights and constitutional reform. Tajikistan's PCA focussed upon economic cooperation but also stressed democratic values and accountability (EEAS, 2012). The EU's desire for trade liberalisation demonstrated their anticipation that Tajikistan's move towards prosperity will increase stability, allowing a move towards democracy.

Warkotsch's (2006) assertion that the EU lacked action should also be assessed in regard to the EU's commitment through various instruments. In this regard, the EU made considerable progress. The Office for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) held a heavy presence in Tajikistan and focussed upon peacebuilding with the aim to further democratic opening. Stability projects were established to strengthen the government and prevent state collapse (OSCE, 2004). Work on capacity building projects were codified in Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) agreements to improve transparency (Ibid. 2004; Stepniewski, 2012). These actions demonstrate that contrary to Warkotsch, EU instruments provided for long term democracy, establishing prerequisites that strengthened the state to endure democratic change. However, rhetoric pushed for more. The EU reaffirmed their commitment to full democracy (Warkotsch, 2006) yet these actions were not blatantly 'promoting democracy'. This is possibly to avoid accusations of imperialism, or it could be understood that – as seen later – the factor of stability made it too unpopular to transfer the country to a full democracy soon after the civil war. However, these actions should be seen as a long-term effort to establish democratic foundations. Improving stability created a stronger state to withstand later democratic change. Although not matching rhetoric it would be wrong to assume that little action was taken.

Although 9/11 didn't constitute as big a policy change for the EU compared to the US, developments towards an interest-led policy occurred, leading to a repeat of accusations that democratisation was hampered. Matveeva (2006) attests that concerns about terrorism, drug trafficking and security created an interest-led agenda. Similarly, Esposito et al. (2012) notes a change in EU policy due to energy demands.

As funding increased, strategic interests became apparent. Resource acquisition was prioritised through infrastructural development (Esposito et al., 2012, pp. 129–130). Although Tajikistan was not directly involved (having no oil or gas present) infrastructural work was carried out on the supply end. Esposito et al. (2012, p. 130) attests that this was carried out with energy demands solely in mind, and indeed that is a major reason. However, the building of infrastructure has served as a preparatory action for further democratisation projects (Olcott, 2012). Transport links have increased connectedness, serving to increase democratic engagement (Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016). Recent projects focussed on educating rural Tajiks about democratic processes with opposition politicians

travelling into previously isolated regions to engage with citizens (Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016). Infrastructural work should be seen as a project of dual purposes instead of purely interest-led.

The lapse of the TACIS declarations led to a focus upon 'traditional' aspects of democracy promotion that did not align to strategic interests. Democratic transition was acknowledged as slow, and that civil society was under pressure from Rahmon's government (EU, 2002; OSCE, 2004). Focus was put upon good governance. Credible institutions were seen as the key to establishing democracy, with major drives to reinforce institutional capacity (OSCE, 2004, p. 14). This work was construed as a priority of state legitimisation, reinforcing the EU's commitment to democratic change (EU, 2002).

Conditionality, the method of employing democratic barriers to gain financial assistance has been criticised as poorly executed (Warkotsch, 2006; Youngs, 2010). Indeed, conditionality was badly transmitted, but this was not down to the ineptitude of actors. Conditionality was curbed by the contested government during the civil war, and the lack of rules regarding its use. Conditionality was employed through aid suspension after the murder of an EU expert in 1997 (Matveeva, 2006, p. 86). In the 21st century conditionality has been criticised; Rahmon's autocratic regime has received the same amount of funding despite its regressive approach to democracy (Warkotsch, 2006, p. 517). This goes against EU rules, which stipulate conditionality should be used if 'contractual obligations' towards democracy are not followed (EU, 2002, p. 27). However, this failure may be through strategic reasoning; Matveeva (2006, pp. 112–113) notes that conditionality can harm citizens more than the government. Furthermore, it can lead Tajikistan to align more with Russia and China, isolating the EU. Issues pertaining to this are analysed further in the second section.

Problems exist with conditionality, yet its use demonstrates that the EU maintained a commitment to values and interests equally with democracy promotion. It is clear that if interests were of sole importance to the EU, conditionality would not be attached to values such as a respect of human rights. In terms of democracy promotion's outcomes in this section, it is clear that coercion has worked to some degree. The detainment of journalists was reversed following EU condemnation (Matveeva, 2006) and dialogues routinely occurred over Tajikistan's commitment to democracy (EEAS, 2015). The EU's substantial investment in democracy promotion throughout this period developed them into an actor with enough clout to force change (Matveeva, 2006, p. 115). Furthermore, it is clear that the work carried out provided change despite regressions in the Tajik government, and using a nuanced outlook it is clear that actions previously portrayed as interest-led instead demonstrated values.

Democracy Promotion through Government

Democracy promotion at a governmental level – that is democratisation aimed at recipient governments – has been a traditional option for both actors. As seen in

the first section, democracy promotion has focussed in part on Rahmon's government; the US allocated funds for institution building, such as establishing a more robust judiciary (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 36). For the EU conditionality and bilateral talks were used to encourage democratic principles (EU, 2002; Matveeva, 2006). Much of this work continues; both actor's current strategies attempt to influence government towards democracy through a varied methodology. This section shows that although governmental democracy promotion is an integral part of both actor's work, governmental resistance and continuing strategic interests have driven both actors to pursue alternate means of democratisation, as seen in the third section. With this section it may be apparent that the argument of this article is redundant yet it will be shown that progress has been made in prerequisites of democracy.

In order to focus on both actor's strategies, policy and human rights reports are utilised (Epstein et al., 2007; USAID, 2013a, 2014; US Department of State, 2009). In terms of opinion, little exists beyond the outlook of failure. Olcott (2012) expands upon economic liberalisation, whilst Rumer et al. (2016) analyse US policy, arguing that change is needed following the cessation of operations in Afghanistan.

As mentioned in the introduction, the state of Tajikistan is characterised by repression with little democratic opening. Reports talk of 'an authoritarian state... political life is dominated by the President' (US Department of State, 2009, p. 1). Since the deal to provide an opposition quota lapsed, power is centred upon the executive, with opposition groups and rival political parties banned (Crosston, 2008). Indeed, when assessed using western democratic criteria the state has regressed in all areas (Rumer et al., 2016, p. 5).

This is not to say that both actors are unaware of regression. USAID (2014, p. 1) states that a 'second chance' at democratisation in Tajikistan after the 1990s did not materialise. New strategies have attempted to spark democracy. Differences appear between both actors on how this is done, though the existence of strategies with clear methodology demonstrates a determined effort to reverse authoritarianism.

Although dogged by post-9/11 accusations of a lack of commitment to values, both strategies focus on the principles of liberal democracy. Two development objectives the US pursues are targeted at state and government; diversifying trade and economic liberalisation, and the promotion of effective institutions to serve the public good (USAID, 2014). The EU pursues human rights violations, whilst strengthening the judiciary to provide better oversight on the executive (European Dialogue, 2016, iv–v). Pushing these points provides democratic prerequisites and raises the prospect of consolidation; USAID (2014, pp. 3–4) states that democratic institutions provides increased accountability, whilst economic diversity provides poverty alleviation. The push for these objectives takes the form of government-led initiatives such as bilateral talks. Programs initiated by the US State Department have focussed on providing aid to support election procedures (Epstein et al., 2007,

p. 18). These procedures include publicly commenting upon Tajik elections, noting them as failing international democratic principles (Olcott, 2012, p. 19) and issues pertaining to human rights (Akbarzadeh, 2006; OSCE, 2004). This method attacks Tajikistan's international standing; routine condemnation of their political processes damages its credibility as a state. OSCE work on electoral monitoring and human rights documentation for the EU has become the leading method for compliance (European Dialogue, 2016, v). These actions are employed by both actors and have produced results; human rights are acknowledged by the Tajik government and issues such as illegal detainment of foreign nationals have been addressed (European Dialogue, 2016; US Department of State, 2009). However, there is pessimism towards this practice. Hypocrisy is highlighted; human rights violations are seen to have been committed by the US in Iraq and Afghanistan, whilst Tajikistan is punished when carrying out what it sees as similar actions (Olcott, 2007, v). Versus other options, dialogue does balance the problem of violating sovereignty, which is an issue the US wishes to avoid (Akbarzadeh, 2006). It also negates accusations of neo-imperialism levelled at both actors by Rahmon (Olcott, 2007).

As seen in the first section, conditionality has also been used as a coercive tool, with the US following this method across all arenas of democratisation. The new strategies withhold humanitarian aid, technical assistance and economic opportunities if Rahmon's government does not abide to rules determined by each actor. The focus lies upon human rights violations, with the US highlighting these abuses as an obstacle to continued assistance (Rumer et al., 2016, p. 24). Both actors have employed conditionality on a low level with a limited effect. The EU has restricted aid (see the first section) whilst the US has removed Rahmon's government from regional talks (Akbarzadeh, 2006). However, conditionality has never been implemented with appropriate consistency; the aforementioned EU sanctions were lifted despite little democratic change (Matveeva, 2006, p. 86) whilst criticism has been directed towards the US for failing to adhere to its own policy during increased government repression against opposition groups. Both these examples can be characterised by interests overtaking values; economic conditionality harms the promoter as much as the Tajik government, as it targets valuable commodities such as energy resources that come through the state (Stepniewski, 2012). The US sees the threat of extremism as more important than laying sanctions upon the state which would hamper counter-terrorism efforts by the Tajik government (Crosston, 2008). The threat of radicalism amongst the Tajik people is also a cause for concern with conditionality; the process is seen to target the people by harming their economic opportunities and access to goods versus the government, who have the option of assistance from other states and the black market. Therefore, conditionality is obsolete; it increases resentment amongst the populace towards promoters and drives the elite to seek out more corrupt means of recouping economic losses, perpetuating the rampant

corruption which is seen as a barrier to democratisation (Olcott, 2007; Youngs, 2010).

The alternative is to incentivise reform, offering assistance to Rahmon's government in return for democratic change. The US established the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) to provide financial incentives and economic opportunities if a move was made toward democracy. Amongst the indicators for participation include the standard democratising values of the US; human rights, transparency and the rule of law (Youngs, 2010, p. 7). For Tajikistan however – and this is highlighted as a shortcoming – Rahmon's adherence to US security demands are assessed (Akbarzadeh, 2006) which means that the democracy indicators are removed as a pillar of incentivisation (Youngs, 2010, p. 7). The EU separately uses enlargement as an incentive, with promises of further economic aid if democracy and human rights are adhered to yet this again fails to be successfully implemented for Tajikistan (European Dialogue, 2016; Youngs, 2010). Russia has its own neighbourhood policy which trumps the incentives offered by the EU (Youngs, 2010, p. 8). Furthermore, the EU's offer of enlargement does not apply to Central Asia, and thus the main incentive they provide of full access to the European common market is hollow when applied to Tajikistan (Ibid, 2010).

So far, the picture looks sobering as any effort besides high level talks has failed to provide meaningful democratisation. Recent evidence has pointed to a failure on multiple levels to enact change that either actor wanted as established in the first section (Rumer et al., 2016). However, the prerequisites to democracy, policies such as economic liberalisation should be considered as successes. Indeed, economic liberalisation and subsequent GDP growth occurred and continued throughout the 2008–09 economic downturn (Olcott, 2012, p. 85). Looking at the US strategy, the State Department and other agencies are looking beyond the basics of democracy such as elections and instead provide alternate programs that expand the government's capacity and increase the state's resilience. Following reports that dismissed elections as the sole source of democratic change (Epstein et al., 2007, p. 13) USAID moved to programmes such as the New Silk Road project, which pushes for market liberalisation to connect Central Asia to the rest of the continent economically (USAID, 2014, p. 5). This move to highlight dialogue on other issues links into a change towards areas of democracy promotion that don't actively focus upon regime change, negating the issues of hypocrisy and accusations of subversion. Tackling corruption and promoting transparency is routinely noted in bilateral dialogues when the US addresses issues such as privatisation (Olcott, 2012, pp. 55–56). The EU has moved towards an approach of making 'initiatives' focussed on issues such as the rule of law and human rights, modelled on responses from Tajikistan's government on what areas need to be addressed. In this way, issues such as border management and police transparency have been noted, issues which, as the EU state, promote stability in Tajikistan in order to assist democratic transition through other means (European Dialogue, 2016). This focus on

mutual interest allows the EU to hand responsibility to Tajikistan, negating accusations of imperialism, as well as addressing deeper issues with little coercion.

As seen, more work is needed to develop the Tajik government into a democratic model, aligned with both actor's ideals. Many issues remain with government-led democracy promotion, and the use of high level talks has provided little real change. Coupled with the lessened use of conditionality, it is clear that little work has been done on this level of democracy promotion, with accusations of interests taking precedence and a desire to maintain the status quo (Olcott, 2007, 2012). Indeed, maintaining the status quo may be a favourable option, yet this section has demonstrated that a move to current objectives and strategies shows a desire to lead Tajikistan towards democracy through new methods, focussing on wider ideas of what a democratic state entails. As the third section illustrates, the work done at government is minimal, though this is due to the far more favourable conditions of civil society as a level to enact democratic change.

Democracy Promotion through Civil Society

This section develops further the outcome of democracy promotion, rounding off the third sub-research question by highlighting the alternate picture through civil society development. Akiner (2002, p. 150) terms civil society as the evolution of state-society relationships, put in the frame of the European and American experiences. Civil society can be seen as the realm between state and society which is populated by autonomous organisations who protect and extend their values (Ottaway and Carothers, 2000, p. 9). For promoters, autonomy is not inclusive, indeed promoters establish and manage their own civil society organisations that extend their values over the state and people. Within this section civil society work is framed as a method of democracy promotion that deliberately avoids Rahmon's government in order to provide more meaningful change versus the limited work in the second section. However, repercussions have been seen, including the government promoting its own civil society groups in an attempt to control this area of democracy promotion. To counter the argument of democratic failure in Tajikistan, this section highlights civil society 'successes' as detailed by Yusuff et al. (2007) who have analysed NGOs and projects supported by both actors. Furthermore, these successes counter the argument levelled by Akiner in her chapter of Sajoo (2002). Akiner argues against further civil society work in Tajikistan due to a lack of infrastructure, instead preferring institutional reform. Although Sajoo's book is over a decade old, many of the issues noted by Akiner still exist. This section instead argues that the work supported by the EU and US is necessary to provide future development and that institutional reform will be resisted at upper levels unless significant pressure is put upon the government, again threatening instability. Further sources consulted in this section include Ottaway and Carothers (2000) who provide further critiques of civil society such as its exclusivity for certain portions of society. This idea is further by Freizer in Ziegler's

book (2015), who conceptualises civil society as divided between communal groups and neoliberal internationally supported civil society, the focus of this section. Freizer's argument is not utilised in this section, but her assertions concerning government infiltration into civil society provides evidence for the shortcomings seen later.

Looking at western-funded civil society, two primary areas are central in order to provide meaningful democratic change in Tajikistan. Both focus upon youth empowerment and educational programs as primary methods for change. Youth work focuses upon employment strategies, and youth perception of appropriate government action. Educational programs provide crucial components of western democracy promotion; awareness raising of democratic process, the importance of transparency, free speech and independent media (European Dialogue, 2016; USAID, 2014).

With the EU, it is apparent that civil society has become a major component of democracy promotion. Significant leverage is given to 'investing in the future'; youth and education (European Dialogue, 2016, v). Thousands of euros are spent in these two areas; seminars are held, bringing together Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) to talk about issues that concern them (Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Tajikistan, 2016) including corruption and the state of government institutions (EEAS, 2015, pp. 2–3).

The US has also focussed upon education and youth work, though this is not a codified strategy. Both aspects are bolstered, however, by USAID's focus on civic engagement, with work done to give citizens active voices in the political sphere. Funds are allocated towards promoting greater inclusiveness for marginalised peoples, which is key in an ethnically diverse state such as Tajikistan (USAID, 2013b). In terms of education, the US has expanded its American Corner programme, which focuses on youth education in key areas such as the rule of law, as well as educating them upon the US model of governance (Rockower, 2013).

This focus accompanies a change towards 'social values' (Matveeva, 2006, p. 107). A previous focus on technical civil society such as funding local election monitoring groups has been criticised by the Tajik government and citizens alike. A technical agenda of development to sustain a culture of democracy (European Dialogue, 2016, v) was seen as 'preaching' by citizens (Matveeva, 2006, p. 107) and a subversive tactic by Rahmon (Associated Press, 2006). Furthermore, the notion of stability again comes into play; Tajiks noted the chaos following the 'Colour Revolutions' in other states and believed that more overt civil society development would bring about destabilising regime change (Matveeva, 2006, p. 107).

A more covert focus on liberal democratic values is the basis of current civil society projects. Indeed, the drive for youth engagement is unsurprising. USAID (2014, p. 36) notes that under-30s constitute 20–30% of the population. Furthermore, they are often more detached from communal structures such as *Jamoats* (communities centralised around mosques) and *Mahallas* (neighbourhoods) where western hostility is rife (Akiner, 2002; Matveeva, 2006). This detachment translates into an

ample opportunity for the youth to be persuaded towards western liberal ideas which can crucially be passed to a state level once the youth become future leaders.

It is with this anticipation of future change that drives critics to see civil society development as a failure. Olcott (2012, pp. 57–58) notes that International Financial Institutions (IFIs) see little point in engaging with civil society as it is worth more to invest in education for current technocrats. Akiner (2002) argues that Tajikistan has little infrastructure to develop sustainable civil society; western civil society development must hold off until the basic state provisions are established. However civil society should not be seen as a fruitless endeavour, or as a clash with infrastructure. As seen, governmental democracy promotion has faced severe resistance. Furthermore, successes through the field of social values have been seen. The expansion of education is highly successful as it widens the scope of Tajik education, instilling democratic ideas that provides them with the necessary liberal ideals to reform the state in a more preferable model for western promoters (Yusuff et al., 2007, pp. 68–69). Although on the surface this adheres to Akiner's (2002) concern for western developed civil society running Tajikistan's institutions and promoting dependency, Yusuff et al.'s example should be seen as the opposite. These democratic ideals are not those that would permeate through the Tajik education system. Schools and universities are controlled by the state and any threat to the government is suppressed (Olcott, 2012, pp. 288–290). Therefore western-promoted CSOs provide an alternative to the existing state education structure, deploying democratic ideals at a grassroots level.

This furthers the strongest argument for civil society development providing effective change; based upon other experiences it allows western promoters to enact values-based promotion without the inclusion of the Tajik government (Basombrio, 2000, p. 269). After the disappointing progress of governmental democracy promotion, the work done in civil society is pushed through without the constraints of government censorship and repression. Most apparently this occurs in USAID's work with independent media; USAID protects independent journalists through their association with the US government (Buxton, 2009; USAID, 2013b). Indeed, when the Tajik government pressured CSOs to conform to legal requirements that eliminated many, it was only western-sponsored CSOs who were saved through their association (Matveeva, 2006; Ottaway and Carothers, 2000). In this way, western CSO promotion presents a significant challenge to Rahmon's government. They perpetuate democratic ideals and target young people yet the government's ability to shut them down is limited.

Having refuted the idea that civil society should not be engaged, it is apt to discuss the effectiveness of civil society and how the Tajik government challenges western promotion. Freizer (2015) makes the distinction between communal civil society (comprising of *jamoats* and *mahallas*) and neoliberal, western-sponsored civil society. Communal civil society was seen by western promoters as potentially dangerous; they were nationalistic and possible

promoters of extremist Islam (Freizer, 2015, p. 282). The subsequent focus on neoliberal organisations and CSOs that were leaning towards favourable ideals for western promoters however developed an issue of social isolation (Giffen et al., 2005, p. 10). The US and EU neglected social constructs that preceded Soviet rule and ran deep in Tajik collective consciousness. Akiner (2002, p. 171) notes that these social groups act as support for Tajiks, where bonds transcending generations are created. What is addressed here is the Tajik government's attempts to politicise and control these communal CSOs, negating the power that western promoters have on civil society democracy promotion. Government control has developed *mahallas* into semi-bureaucratic organisations with salaries for communal leaders (Akiner, 2002, p. 171). In turn, they are more loyal to the government and their policies versus western promoters (Ewoh et al., 2012, p. 3); they justify the continued existence of the regime by focussing on nationalism and 'communal rights', denouncing attempts by western promoters to 'control' Tajik's rights through civil society (Freizer, 2015, p. 283). These communal groups are the opposite of western-sponsored CSOs; they are not financially transparent, poorly managed and fail to challenge the government on corruption as many neoliberal organisations do (Freizer, 2015, p. 298).

The reasons for this resistance are clear to see; western actors are perceived to be interfering in state affairs and imposing democracy by Rahmon (Associated Press, 2006). Furthermore, the aforementioned 'untouchability' of western-associated CSOs demonstrate their danger to the Tajik government. As highlighted in the fourth section, non-western actors such as Russia highlight the 'political motivation' of CSOs; in Russia's eyes they are a method of causing instability and regime change (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 62).

The danger of Tajik government-funded groups for western democracy promotion is limited. Ewoh et al. (2012, p. 4) note that they can only combat the work of western-sponsored groups when the provisions are there for them to do so. With poor funding from Rahmon's government versus the vast resources of the west, it is often the case that their efforts are undermined, especially in urban areas where western-sponsored CSOs operate most effectively (Ewoh et al., 2012, p. 4; Giffen et al., 2005, p. 14). Furthermore, *mahallas* disassociated with the state are seen to align better with western promoters; Freizer (2015, p. 298) notes that some *mahallas* promote citizen empowerment and government democratisation. Nevertheless, it is easy to dismiss communal organisations as a failed government attempt to exert influence in the difficult to contain area of civil society. As Ewoh et al. (2012, pp. 4–5) note the Colour Revolutions and subsequent government pressure did much to create anti-western sentiment, with citizens seeing western-sponsored CSOs as the source of instability in a society focussed upon avoiding chaos.

The failure to engage communal groups should be seen as a reminder that democratisation through civil society is not a straightforward solution for western promoters. Although far more effective than the second section's

option of governmental democracy promotion, civil society is still a difficult field to promote in. Technical assistance aimed at the current generation prompts hostility and accusations of subversion, whilst the Tajik government's attempts at controlling communal groups show that they consider civil society promotion an outright hostile act against their rule. Nevertheless, this paper argues that successes are seen, and this section reaffirms that. Building upon the foundations of economic liberalisation and talks on issues of human rights and the rule of law at a government level, work done at a civil society level is preparing the next generation to turn the state towards democracy. It is clear through the hostile interpretation of civil society development by the current generation who have lived through the civil war and hold anti-western sentiments that they are unreceptive to democratisation. The work seen here targets on the only realistic choice in meaningful democratisation by focussing on the youth. Democracy promotion in Tajikistan is therefore a long-term project for western actors; one that transcends the current elite of this generation who exist from the Soviet era and towards the youth coming afterwards who are more responsive to western ideals of liberal democracy. These two sections have addressed the third sub-research question, providing a clearer picture of democracy promotion that aligns with this paper's argument. Conceding that western expectations of a liberal democratic state have not materialised, it is instead apparent that complete failure has not come about and instead a redirection of focus upon the youth through civil society has occurred, both due to practicalities of circumventing the repressive government, and to focus on a generation less aligned to anti-western sentiment and a fear of instability and regime change.

Shortcomings of Democracy Promotion

As seen throughout this paper there have been a number of challenges towards democracy promotion. In examining the history of democracy promotion in the first section, the debate over values versus interests was explored, and the assertion that interests taking precedence has hampered the process of democratisation. This section resolves the fourth and fifth sub-research questions, analysing further issues that have been seen to negatively affect the process of democracy promotion.

Instead of trying to cover the many issues of democracy promotion academics have raised that warrant more space than this paper allows, this section focuses upon two issues that directly affect US and EU promotion in Tajikistan. Firstly, is the idea that western liberal democracy is unsuited to Tajikistan owing to the notion of stability desired by the populace. This assertion is framed by Kubicek (1998), who lays out the range of factors that (at the time) contributed to democratic resistance. He asserts that any attempt to further liberal democracy will threaten stability, exacerbate ethnic tensions and destabilise social structures. Kubicek draws upon Kyrgyzstan as an example, although many of his findings can be applied to Tajikistan. Of course it is difficult to predict what Kubicek's findings would cause in Tajikistan, besides the obvious drawback of

his article dating from before the major turning point of 9/11. However, it is still a valuable piece to use and assess.

The second argument concerns a developing issue surrounding western democracy promotion that has applied directly to Central Asia due to its strategic location. The use of 'autocracy promotion' by Russia and China in Tajikistan has been seen to negatively affect the prospects of the EU and US. As a basis for this section, Melnykowska et al.'s (2012) paper examining the prospects and threat of autocracy promotion is useful, contributing to the growing literature on this subject, as well as providing a basis for why alternative actors are seen as more attractive to Rahmon's government versus the US and EU. Furthermore, Blank (2011) and Way (2015) examine two crucial aspects; stability as a desire of both Russia and the Tajik government, and their belief that the US promotes democracy to cause regional instability and damage Russia's prospects. On the Chinese side, Rumer (2006) examines the balance of power in Central Asia, arguing that the Shanghai Cooperation Agreement (SCO) has attempted to offset US influence, whilst countering EU attempts to secure energy resources. Although all papers are valuable in an infrequently studied area of democracy promotion, they face downfalls in their scope. None of the papers are from the perspectives of these alternate actors, with every in-depth study originating in the west. This prevents a significant viewpoint from being explored, yet this paper cannot pursue any further research into this area through time constraints.

In furthering the argument of this paper, it is asserted that due to progress seen in the second and third sections, these shortcomings have not ground western democracy promotion to a halt. Rather it is seen that issues with democracy promotion in other states has driven the US and EU towards an appreciation of the long-term nature of democratisation. With autocracy promotion, Way's conclusion will be followed, although expanded through other findings. It is argued that although both China and Russia hold influence in Tajikistan, Rahmon's close relations with the US and his government's resistance to assertive non-western efforts of compliance has demonstrated that significant autocracy promotion has failed. The continued authoritarianism in the state should be attributed to other factors such as a desire for stability and not blamed upon autocracy promotion.

The first argument assessed in this section concerns power and instability in Tajikistan. Kubicek (1998) provides a whole range of factors that he sees to have influenced authoritarianism in Tajikistan, and provided an impetus for democratic incompatibility. A major notion concerns the structure of the state and power relations that are likened to khanates versus modern state rule (Kubicek, 1998, p. 30). Power structures have already been analysed when looking at communal civil society in the third section, yet what is alluded to here is that the Tajik elite are populated with ex-Soviet rulers who instil a form of authoritarianism that defers power from the citizens to leaders akin to a focus of power upon the patriarch in a family. This bears similarity to the notion of stability; this form of centralised power has arisen

due to the desire amongst people to have a 'strong man' figure who is respected enough based upon his civil war record and peace making. Although Kubicek's assertions were made directly after the instability of the collapse of the Soviet Union they still bear semblance to the current situation seen with more recent sources (Kendzior, 2013; Parshin, 2013). This then points to little prospect of democracy; existing problems and attitudes in Tajikistan take precedent. As seen in Uzbekistan, a 'cult of instability' has been established by the state to remind people of past chaos and to prevent any descent into violence. Opposition parties are banned for this reason, and reforms are closely managed by the state (Kubicek, 1998, p. 32). Furthermore, the few free elections seen in Central Asia such as Kyrgyzstan have resulted in overwhelming results for conservatives, who have started policies of repression under the auspices of stability and maintenance of order. This points to the idea that the Tajik system may be simply following the desires of the people who wish for security and stability that a change to democracy and uncertainty may not provide (Kubicek, 1998, p. 31).

However as seen earlier in this paper the resistance to liberal democracy is not seen as strongly with younger generations and this has been capitalised upon by western promoters. What Kubicek (1998, pp. 30–32) describes focuses upon ex-Soviet citizens, where he notes that neo-traditional power structures prevail, focussed upon clans and specific families rather than a broader idea of state-wide representation. Whilst the familial structure exists in Rahmon's government – with family members running multiple state institutions (Olcott, 2012, pp. 55–56) – western promoters have adapted to the lessening of these ties amongst the younger generation. These younger people have no experience of the civil war that brought about much of the desire for stability, allowing a more 'uncertain' form of democratic governance to filter through and be adopted (Kubicek, 1998; USAID, 2014, pp. 37–39). As Kubicek notes (1998, pp. 41–42), and as has been referenced throughout this paper, the process of democratisation taking into account the aversion to change and the notion of stability has been slowed down and will take many years. In this way, Kubicek's noted shortcoming of democracy has been acknowledged and is being solved by promoters; western actors are bypassing the current generation averse to change and focussing upon the more open and willing younger generation in Tajikistan.

Autocracy promotion also presents a definite challenge to western liberal democracy promotion. As seen throughout this paper, Russian and Chinese actions have consistently been a factor in the development and effectiveness of western democracy promotion. Both are seen as credible and occasionally more attractive actors for Rahmon's government to align with; as previously stated in terms of conditionality and incentives for state development, both non-western actors are common in not often wanting significant regime change in the state, and certainly not towards democracy (Way, 2015). Autocracy promotion is characterised as a concerted attempt to promote an alternative to democracy. For Russia,

autocracy promotion has taken a variety of forms; CSOs promoting a pro-Russian image and rival education and independent media outlets have all been established in an approach 'copycatted' from the US (Omelicheva, 2015, pp. 60–61). On a government level much similar work to western actors has been seen; immense levels of bilateral aid covering technical and developmental assistance has been given to Tajikistan (Way, 2015, pp. 692–693). Furthermore, Russia has routinely disputed the discourses given by both promoters, contesting election monitoring reports and claiming that western comments about a lack of transparency and democratic competition are results of politically motivated regime change (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 62). China is seen to have more of an assertive geopolitical role in autocracy promotion; although not having as active a role in Tajikistan as Russia, it stresses state sovereignty and encourages western actors to respect territorial integrity (Omelicheva, 2015, pp. 63–65). In addition to this Tajikistan's membership of the SCO (which includes both China and Russia) signals its discursive allegiance to what Rumer terms a 'significant obstacle to U.S. policy' in Central Asia. The SCO is seen to challenge the US on issues of military presence and governmental affairs; it has repeatedly called for American disengagement across Central Asia (Rumer, 2006, p. 1).

Both non-western actors are seen to have enticing discourses for the Tajik government. As Omelicheva (2015, p. 59) notes, they have stressed the importance of territorial integrity and sovereignty for the Central Asian states, whilst also making sure that their views on governance are not as strongly promoted as the ideals of liberal democracy that are very vocally prioritised by the US and EU. Furthermore, both non-western actors are averse to the controversial policy of conditionality (Way, 2015, p. 694). These discourses are favourable for Rahmon's government; it addresses their criticism and equal fear of interference in Tajikistan's affairs, especially after the Colour Revolutions in neighbouring states. In addition, it prioritises the non-western actors as credible alternatives for development assistance without conditionality; China pushes its agenda as a 'win-win' situation for Tajikistan that only seeks to create a 'harmonious region' for both actors as it highlights along with Russia the principle of non-interference (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 59). Besides territorial integrity, Russia is seen to target the notion of stability for Tajikistan; Blank (2011, pp. 215–217) notes that Russia sees the US as attempting destructive regime change that would not only eliminate Rahmon's regime, but also remove Russian authority in the region.

The notion of enticement from both non-western actors represents a danger to the US and EU. Rumer et al. (2016, p. 3) in examining US policy for the future note that Russia is moving towards a monopoly over Central Asian energy sources. This danger also applies to the alternative models of democracy that both actors promote. China provides an attractive model of democracy for Tajikistan; their idea of a strong state-centric model of governance that prevents a collapse of stability due to its rigid form of citizen control aligns well with the existing power base of Rahmon and the setup of the Tajik state (Omelicheva, 2015, p. 69). This

has received a good level of support in alternate Central Asian states. For the three alternate states Omelicheva (2015) examines in her work, the non-western model of democracy with strong executives promoting stability is far more popular versus western democracy. This then threatens the very basis of western liberal democracy promotion; with alternative models of governance aligning better to existing models of governance and the preferences of the people in these states, then democracy promotion efforts seen in this paper are not only unpopular amongst the current generation, but will be fruitless in the long term if the promotion of attractive forms of autocracy are continued in Tajikistan.

Although the picture looks bleak, autocracy promotion has significant problems. Chiefly amongst these is the assertive nature both Russia and China use as opposed to the methods favoured by western actors. Although autocracy promoters often highlight the lack of conditionality in the promotion of their models of governance, Melnykovska et al. (2012, p. 79) point to the aggressive nature Russia takes when controlling Tajikistan, and how this is employed in coercing Rahmon's government towards Russian dependency. They note the high levels of trade to Russia (a disproportionate 50 percent of all exports) and the control of a majority of energy resources in the region have been used as leverage in coercing Tajikistan to comply with Russian demands. In addition, Russian oligarchs have purchased large swathes of land and property in Central Asia as well as resources and assets in a bid to isolate the states and finance trade deals favourable towards Russia. Elsewhere it's noted that Russia attempts to force through its own deals and governments by blockading states that resist its forms of government. Way (2015, pp. 695–696) notes this as one of the main failings of autocracy promotion, arguing that this aggressive approach demonstrates that Putin has no normative commitment to autocracy or development of Central Asia's state models, but instead is using the notion of autocracy promotion to simply further Russia's economic goals and consolidate its control over the region. China follows a similar path, noted as a 'lack of strategic direction' similar to Russia. China is seen to have capitalised upon the situation in Tajikistan by focussing on its own domestic problems; stability is desired in order to deal with the ethnic problems of Uighurs in Xinjiang province, bordering Tajikistan (Rumer, 2006, p. 5). Unlike any form of western conditionality, where norms and values that will shape the government are offered in return for assistance in various forms, China has opted for a different situation whereby economic aid is given in return for seceding territory to China (Melnykovska et al., 2012, p. 80). Not only then do these dealings offer little in normative commitment or, as Rumer (2006, p. 6) notes, a long-term strategy for the development for Tajikistan, but they damage Tajik sovereignty and future development by reducing state boundaries in return for development opportunities. Furthermore, both promoters are content to maintain the status quo with little done to further the administrative capacity of the state or to reduce corruption, both major issues preventing meaningful development (Rumer, 2006, p. 6).

A number of these aspects have led towards active resistance against Russia's attempted isolation of Tajikistan, and China's demanding forms of coercion. In some ways, these actions have assisted, rather than hindered western democracy promotion; Blank (2011, pp. 211–215) notes that Rahmon has moved to make closer ties with the US for development assistance than Russia or China. In particular he notes that Putin has been 'clumsy' in this regard; his aggressive nature has isolated Rahmon, who has used the situation and the rivalry between Russia and the US to garner better treatment from the latter. Akbarzadeh (2006, p. 566) goes further, arguing that Rahmon- despite his position as an autocratic leader- saw friendly relations with the US as more favourable for development, and a chance to gain more financial leverage following the huge US engagement with Afghanistan versus the minor role Russia played. China similarly is not ideal in Rahmon's eyes; besides economic investment for unfavourable terms, China is seen to focus on the east as strategic partners, and their interest in Afghanistan and the War on Terror is negligible (Rumer, 2006, p. 5). Autocracy promotion therefore has been shown to be an overstated danger; despite the initial poor outlook, much of the action carried out by Russia and China has been far too aggressive to receive a positive return from Rahmon.

This section has discussed two significant problems for democracy promotion in Tajikistan, but in addressing the sub-research questions noting democracy promotion shortcomings and their effectiveness, it is argued that the danger from both to western democracy promotion is overstated. Whilst stability has been seen throughout this paper as a hampering factor, this shortcoming has been dealt with. A focus on the next generation, those less attached to familial ties and memories of the civil war provides western promoters with the opportunity to enact democratic change in the future. Furthermore the idea of autocracy promotion has not materialised in the dangerous fashion some sources believe. Although pushed by powerful actors in the region who provide attractive alternatives of development versus western promoters, this method has failed to provide any break in western democratisation. Additionally a lack of normative commitment to change by Russia and China, and less harmful and coercive methods of development being used by western promoters has meant that autocracy promotion has become a better tool of leverage for the west than a hampering of democracy promotion.

Conclusion

Within this paper the main research question and sub-research questions have been answered. In the first section the elements of what both promoters – the US and EU – aimed to promote in Tajikistan from the very beginnings of democratisation programmes in the 1990s was addressed, answering the first question. This section demonstrated that a 'package' of democratic norms and principles was established by both actors as a mainstay of democracy, and subsequently promoted within Tajikistan over the next couple of decades. Subsequently the development of democracy promotion was followed, answering the second question. The attacks on 9 September 2001 have

been highlighted as a turning point for democratisation, with what many academics see as a fall in priority of values and a rise in interests as a necessity. This paper has acknowledged this fact, as it is clear that interest in Central Asia drastically increased following the start of the War on Terror, yet it has maintained the view that values were still present in the everyday promotion of democracy through civil society means and less overt democratisation work on a government level.

The third question has been answered over the third and fourth sections, which analysed democracy promotion on two main approaches, through government and civil society. As seen, government targeted democracy promotion has resulted in little change, with much of the work being dismissed as subversion and attempted regime change from the west. Subsequently the method of conditionality, once touted as the main coercive technique for promoters has fallen from favour, with both actors focussing on dialogue and civil society development. Indeed, in contrasting government targeted promotion with civil society it is clear that the latter has provided more impetus for change, with both actors able to circumvent the Tajik government and provide the basis for democracy in the state through the younger generation and in aspects such as civic education and youth empowerment.

The fourth and fifth questions concerning shortcomings were analysed in the fourth section. Focussing upon two main aspects of democratic hindrances, this section demonstrated that the idea of democratic resistance through the notion of stability has affected democracy promotion amongst the current generation. However, and as seen with civil society, the younger generation have little to no memory of the chaos of the civil war and no recollection of the Soviet power structure that Rahmon operates through are therefore the target of current democratisation efforts, being more likely to adopt democratic principles. Finally the notion of autocracy promotion was discussed, with the actions of Russia and China in Tajikistan analysed. Although seen as a factor that can hamper democracy promotion, both non-western actors were seen to have significant problems associated with their actions that discouraged Rahmon from aligning with them. This then led to his allegiance with the US for favourable aid terms, instead of the more general principle of democracy.

Finally throughout this paper the argument has been made against the analysis of Tajikistan as a democratic failure despite western efforts. As seen, the current picture is bleak and little progress has been made in terms of apparent democratic opening. Yet the argument has been made and demonstrated here that the basis for democracy; the 'package' of norms and principles that both actors aimed to establish in the state has been made over the past twenty years. Within the first section the argument was made that contrary to suggestions that the impetus for change was not there, values existed at a government level that allowed for change through economic liberalisation and the attempted establishment of a multiparty system. In the second section this argument was continued, showing that the aforementioned basis of

democracy was laid in establishing economic dynamism, institution building and discrediting the current system of government. The third section completed this by demonstrating the move towards civil society and the adoption of a long-term program for change focussing on the youth. Indeed, the younger generation is the key for change that a number of sources have ignored. As both the US and EU focus on new strategies for Tajikistan, it is with an acknowledgement that the rhetoric of previous decades has failed, but still utilising this basis of democracy that has been developed.

It is with this look forward that this article has completed the research question established in the introduction. After examining multiple levels of democracy promotion by the US and EU, the various instruments and actions pursued, the outcome of western liberal democracy promotion is one where a long-term plan is underway; after the expectations of a blank slate state amid an inevitable development towards democracy have been dismissed after little change, it is the shift towards civil society and the expectations of democratic change in the next generation that are the current outcomes of democracy promotion in the state, and the plan going forward for further democratic change in Tajikistan.

Competing Interests

The author has no competing interests to declare.

References

- Agence France-Presse** 2016 'Tajikistan Parliament paves way for president to rule for life' *The Guardian*. [Online]. 22 January. [Accessed 6 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/22/tajikistan-parliament-approves-constitutional-changes-presidential-term-emomali-rahmon>.
- Akbarzadeh, S** 2006 'Geopolitics versus democracy in Tajikistan'. *Demokratizatsiya*, 14(4): 563–578. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3200/DEMO.14.4.563-578>
- Akiner, S** 2002 'Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan'. In: Aryn, S (ed.), *Civil Society in the Muslim World: Contemporary Perspectives*, 149–194. I.B. Tauris, London.
- Akiner, S and Barnes, C** 2001 'The Tajik Civil War: Causes and Dynamics'. *Accord*, 10: 16–21.
- Associated Press** 2006 'Tajik President Wins Re-Election'. *The Washington Post*. 7 November. [Online]. [Accessed 8 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/11/07/AR2006110700120.html>.
- Basombrio, C** 2000 'Civil Society Aid in Peru: Reflections from Experience'. In: Ottaway, M and Carothers, T (eds.), *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, 269–290. Carnegie Endowment for Peace, Washington DC.
- Blank, S J** 2011 'Challenges to Russia in Central Asia'. *American Foreign Policy Interests: The Journal of the National Committee on American Foreign Policy*, 33(5): 209–221. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10803920.2011.620513>
- Brinkley, D** 1997 'Democratic Enlargement: The Clinton Doctrine'. *Foreign Policy*, 106: 110–127. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1149177>

- Buxton, C** 2009 'NGO Networks in Central Asia and global civil society: potentials and limitations'. *Central Asian Survey*, 28(1): 43–58. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930902775129>
- Cooley, A** 2012 'The New Great Game in Central Asia: Geopolitics in a Post-Western World'. *Foreign Affairs*. Online. 7 August. [Accessed on 23 March 2016]. Available from: <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/central-asia/2012-08-07/new-great-game-central-asia>.
- Crosston, M** 2008 'Compromising Coalitions and Duplicitous Democracy: US Support for Tajikistan after 9/11 and its Security Implications'. *Central Asian Survey*, 27(2): 156–167. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02634930802364719>
- Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Tajikistan** 2016 'List of Projects'. Online. [Accessed on 5 March 2016]. Available from: http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/tajikistan/projects/list_of_projects/projects_en.htm.
- Diamond, L** 1992 'Promoting Democracy'. *Foreign Policy*, 87: 25–46. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2307/1149159>
- Epstein, S B, Serafino, N M and Miko, F T** 2007 'Democracy Promotion: Cornerstone of U.S. Foreign Policy?' *Library of Congress Washington DC Congressional Research Service*.
- Esposito, K, Jankowski, D P and Swiezak, P** 2012 'The Policy of the United States in Central Asia'. In: Stepniewski, T (ed.), *The New Great Game in Central Asia*, 51–75. Lublin: Institute of East-Central Europe/The Catholic University of Lublin Publishing House.
- European Dialogue** 2016 'The EU and Central Asia: Strategy for a New Partnership'. Online. [Accessed on 12 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.eurodialogue.eu/eu-central-asia-strategy/10>.
- European External Action Service [EEAS]** 2012 'Summary of Treaty: Partnership and Cooperation Agreement establishing a partnership between the European Communities and their Member States and the Republic of Tajikistan'. Online. [Accessed on 12 March 2016]. Available from: <http://ec.europa.eu/world/agreements/prepareCreateTreatiesWorkspace/treatiesGeneralData.do?step=0&redirect=true&treatyId=7341>.
- European Union [EU]** 2002 'Strategy Paper 2002–2006 & Indicative Programme 2002–2004 for Central Asia'. Online. [Accessed on 6 March 2016]. Available from: http://eeas.europa.eu/central_asia/rsp/02_06_en.pdf.
- Ewoh, A I E, Nazarova, F and Hill, R N** 2012 'Civil Society Organizations and Policy Process in Tajikistan'. *Journal of Emerging Knowledge on Emerging Markets*, 4(9): 2–12. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7885/1946-651X.1094>
- Freizer, S** 2015 'Bridging the Divide between Neoliberal and Communal Civil Society in Tajikistan'. In: Ziegler, C E (ed.), *Civil Society and Politics in Central Asia*, 277–308.
- Giffen, J, Earle, L and Buxton, C** 2005 *The Development of Civil Society in Central Asia*. 1st Edition. Oxford: INTRAC.
- Glen, P J** 2011 'The ADVANCE Democracy Act and the Future of United States Democracy Promotion Efforts'. *Santa Clara Journal of International Law*, 27(3): 274–307.
- Kendzior, S** 2013 'The Curse of Stability in Central Asia'. *Foreign Policy*. Online. 19 February. [Accessed on 12 March 2016]. Available from: <http://foreignpolicy.com/2013/02/19/the-curse-of-stability-in-central-asia/>.
- Kubicek, P** 1998 'Authoritarianism in Central Asia: Curse or Cure?' *Third World Quarterly*, 19(1): 29–43. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436599814514>
- Lagon, M P** 2011 'Promoting Democracy: The Whys and Hows for the United States and the International Community'. *Council on Foreign Relations*. [Online]. [Accessed on 21 February 2016]. Available from: <http://www.cfr.org/democratization/promoting-democracy-whys-hows-united-states-international-community/p24090>.
- Matveeva, A** 2006 'EU Stakes in Central Asia'. *Chaillot Paper*, No. 91.
- Melnikovska, I, Plamper, H and Schweickert, R** 2012 'Do Russia and China promote autocracy in Central Asia?' *Asia Europe Journal*, 10: 75–89. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10308-012-0315-5>
- Neef, C** 2010 "'There will be another war": An Islamist Uprising in Tajikistan'. *Der Spiegel International*. Online. 5 November. [Accessed on 12 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/there-will-be-another-war-an-islamist-uprising-in-tajikistan-a-727526.html>.
- Office of Security and Co-Operation in Europe [OSCE]** 'OSCE Magazine July 2004'. Online. [Accessed on 5 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.osce.org/sec/retariat/13613?download=true>.
- Olcott, M B** 2007 'Democracy Promotion in Central Asia: From High Expectations to Disillusionment'. [Online]. [Accessed on 8 March 2016]. Available from: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2007/02/10/democracy-promotion-in-central-asia-from-high-expectations-to-disillusionment>.
- Olcott, M B** 2012 *Tajikistan's Difficult Development Path*. 1st Edition. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for Peace.
- Omelicheva, M Y** 2015 *Democracy in Central Asia: Competing Perspectives and Alternative Strategies*. 1st Edition. Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5810/kentucky/9780813160689.001.0001>
- Ottaway, M and Carothers, T** 2000 'The Burgeoning World of Civil Society Aid'. In: Ottaway, M and Carothers, T (eds.), *Funding Virtue: Civil Society Aid and Democracy Promotion*, 3–18. Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for Peace.
- Parshin, K** 2013 'Tajikistan: Stability is better than uncertainty?' *Al Jazeera*. [Online]. 14 December. [Accessed on 11 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/12/tajikistan-stability-better-than-uncertainty-201312375133865833.html>.

- Putz, C** 2015a 'Death of the Tajik Opposition'. *The Diplomat*. [Online]. 23 July. [Accessed on 12 March 2016]. Available from: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/death-of-the-tajik-opposition/>.
- Putz, C** 2015b 'Tajikistan's Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Year'. *The Diplomat*. [Online]. 16 December. [Accessed on 5 April 2016]. Available from: <http://thediplomat.com/2015/12/tajikistans-terrible-horrible-no-good-very-bad-year/>.
- Rockower, P** 2013 'This American Corner'. *USC Center on Public Diplomacy*. [Online]. 15 April. [Accessed on 16 March 2016]. Available from: <http://uscpublicdiplomacy.org/blog/american-corner>.
- Rumer, E B** 2006 'China, Russia and the Balance of Power in Central Asia'. *Strategic Forum*. No. 223.
- Rumer, E, Sokolsky, R and Stronski, P** 2016 'U.S. Policy Toward Central Asia 3.0'. [Online]. Available from: <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/01/25/u.s.-policy-toward-central-asia-3.0/it2s>.
- Stepniewski, T** 2012 'The European Union's Policy towards Central Asia'. In: Stepniewski, T (ed.), *The New Great Game in Central Asia*, 115–143. Lublin: Institute of East-Central Europe/The Catholic University of Lublin Publishing House.
- Talbott, S** 1997 'A Farewell to Flashman: American Policy in the Caucasus and Central Asia'. Online. [Accessed on 25 February 2016]. Available from: <http://www.usembassyisrael.org.il/publish/press/state/archive/1997/july/sd20722.htm>.
- United States Agency for International Development [USAID]** 2013a '20 Years of USAID Economic Growth Assistance in Europe and Eurasia'. [Online]. [Accessed on 14 March 2016]. Available from: https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/EE_20_Year_Review.pdf.
- United States Agency for International Development [USAID]** 2013b 'Supporting Vibrant Civil Society and Independent Media'. [Online]. [Accessed on 14 March 2016]. Available from: <https://www.usaid.gov/what-we-do/democracy-human-rights-and-governance/supporting-vibrant-civil-society-independent-media>.
- United States Agency for International Development [USAID]** 2014 'Central Asia: Regional Development Cooperation Strategy 2015–2019'. [Online]. [Accessed on 15 March 2016]. Available from: <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1861/RDCSCentralAsia.pdf>.
- US Department of State** 2009 '2008 Human Rights Reports: Tajikistan'. Online. [Accessed on 7 March 2016]. Available from: <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/sca/119141.htm>.
- Warkotsch, A** 2006 'The European Union and Democracy Promotion in Bad Neighbourhoods: The Case of Central Asia'. *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 11: 509–525.
- Way, L A** 2015 'The limits of autocracy promotion: The case of Russia in the "near abroad"'. *European Journal of Political Research*, 54(4): 691–706. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-6765.12092>
- Youngs, R** 2010 'The end of democratic conditionality: good riddance?' *FRIDE Working Paper*, 102: 1–12.
- Yusuff, Y, Rustam, B and Kuntuvdiy, N** 2007 *Civil Society Development in Tajikistan* 1st Edition. Allavida, Farnham.

How to cite this article: Munday, D 2018 Democracy in Difficult Terrain: The Outcome of Western Democracy Promotion in Tajikistan. *Undergraduate Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 1(1): 6, pp. 1–15, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22599/ujpir.76>

Submitted: 31 August 2016

Accepted: 07 February 2017

Published: 13 March 2018

Copyright: © 2018 The Author(s). This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC-BY 4.0), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited. See <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.