

Agrarian Reform of Tajikistan: Weak Governance Diluted Donor Intentions

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Abstract

Governance of a recipient country likely affects aid efficacy and internal reallocation of aid resources in the country. Tajikistan, a Central Asian country ruled by a corrupt authoritarian regime, is an interesting context in foreign aid. Taking particular interests in foreign aid that supported Tajik farmland restructuring and cotton-sector privatization, this article shows Tajik authorities and elites were agile aid players: they were able to elude fulfilling donor-imposed aid conditions while keeping donors from interfering implementation of domestic agrarian policies. Several factors appeared to influence aid outcomes that were highly favorable to Tajik elites: donors' initial promotion of liberal-democratic state building instead of prioritizing the 1997 peace agreement, geostrategic importance of Tajikistan for regional security concerns, institutional leeway for aid manipulation, and local elites' capacity to take advantage of their authorities. Donors interacting with Tajikistan should fully understand de facto political workings on the ground to avoid their aid inadvertently helping Tajik elites strengthen their political and economic clout.

Keywords: Agrarian reform, Aid, Corruption, Cotton, Farmland, Governance, Tajikistan

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I. Introduction

Central Asia started to be involved in international aid with the collapse of the Soviet Union. Among the Central Asian countries, Tajikistan is a resource-poor authoritarian state whose regime has been centered on the President Emomali Rahmon and his ruling presidential family (Hofman and Visser 2021; Kluczevska 2020). It is considered a weakly governed state with rampant corruption (World Bank). At the same time, the country has managed to maintain aid inflows since its independence, providing an interesting research context with foreign aid.

Tajikistan first drew substantial donor attention due to the 1992-1997 civil war, and the United States (US) war on terrorism in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 (Kluczevska 2020). Tajikistan and donors emphasized the same aid goals - development and security. However, they had clearly different notions on what constituted development and security of the country: donors underscored macro-economic liberalization and democratization: Tajik leadership justified its authoritarian state and corruption as roots of perceived stability arguing they sustained the status quo (Boonstra and Shapovalova 2012). Despite the wide divergence between Tajikistan and donors, the country received average 6.6% of gross national income as net development aid during the last three decades (World Bank Data a). While receiving aid, the country was able to leave part of donor-imposed aid conditions unfulfilled, and this was particularly evident with donor-supported agrarian reform.

Tajikistan has received limited academic attention in foreign aid on its own. Relevant studies include Abduvaliev and Bustillo (2020) that assess overall aid effects on Tajik economic growth, Lee (2024) that analyses aid practices by bilateral donors in Tajikistan, and Nakaya (2009) that investigates Tajik transition to oligarchy and roles of foreign aid in the post-war period. Yet, studies examining aid efficacy under the country's weak governance appear particularly lacking. With those settings, the article presents Tajikistan with its agrarian reform to argue that weak governance combined with a unique recipient situation was a decisive driver of poor aid outcomes. In detail, the Tajik case shows Tajik authorities and elites were able to manipulate foreign aid with institutional arrangements and local settings, resulting in evading donor-imposed aid conditions and keeping donors from interfering implementation of domestic agrarian policies. Close examination of the Tajik case can contribute to the relevant literature in

two ways: first, it fills the research gap on Tajikistan for better insights into the country in the context of foreign aid; second, it reinforces the existing argument that weak governance is a threatening obstacle to aid efficacy and development (e.g., Burnside and Dollar 2000; Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol 2009; Öhler, Nunnenkamp, and Dreher 2012).

The rest of this article is organized as follows: section two builds theoretical background, section three illustrates Tajikistan within the contexts of foreign aid and governance, section four discusses Tajik farmland and cotton reform processes supported by foreign aid donors, and section five concludes. Before the article proceeds, two points should be noted. First, this article limits its scope to Tajik agrarian reform assisted by foreign aid donors, and historical backgrounds of the country are beyond its scope. Second, the term ‘elite or elite group’ is referred to as one that is politically affiliated to the ruling regime or with blood ties to the political affiliates (Hofman, 2016).

II. Literature background

Foreign aid is generally justified as a response to recipients’ needs, and its amount and form may vary depending on the contexts of recipient countries. Literature on foreign aid identifies various factors that likely affect aid and its efficacy, including governance quality of recipient countries. Studies show aid is more effective in recipient countries with good institutional environments (e.g., Burnside and Dollar 2000; Claessens, Cassimon, and Van Campenhout 2009), and poor governance is a major bottleneck to aid effectiveness (e.g., Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol 2009; Öhler, Nunnenkamp, and Dreher 2012). On the other hand, others show aid inflows are not necessarily associated with governance quality of recipient countries. They argue more corrupt governments receive more aid because those countries in need of aid tend to have weak governance and lack proper institutions (e.g., Acht, Mahmoud and Thiele 2015; Alesina and Weder 2002).

Some studies that link aid and governance quality suggest foreign aid reinforces corruption in recipient countries, hinders governance improvement, or helps authoritarian regimes survive (e.g., Ahmed 2012; Cooley and Heathershaw 2017; De Mesquita, Bueno

and Smith 2009; Jablonski 2014). Svensson (2000) asserts aid increases the size of available resources for the corrupt privileged (Svensson 2000): Ahmed (2012) suggests autocratic polities strategically channel foreign income to finance patronage to ensure their political survival (Ahmed 2012): Jablonski (2014) shows aid distributions favor the incumbent's political supporters, and the constituencies who share the ethnicity with the incumbent (Jablonski 2014). This is probably possible when donors lack information about local institutions and political dynamics, thus have to entrust aid funds to the recipient government.

From a different perspective, studies indicate different types of aid have different influences on governance quality of recipient countries. Multilateral aid is considered relatively neutral, although not completely apolitical, compared to bilateral aid: bilateral aid is often considered tied to political, military or economic agendas of donor governments (e.g., Bukovansky 2002; Öhler et al. 2012). Consequently, multilateral donors are less likely constricted to handle corruption and penalize violators than bilateral donors (Alesina and Weder 2002). Studies such as Charron (2011), Dadasov (2017), and Okada and Samreth (2012) suggest multilateral aid is associated with lower corruption levels in recipient governments, while the negative association between the two tends to be significant after the late 1990s (Charron 2011).

Around the mid-1990s, the Brenton Woods institutions emphasized fighting corruption and improving governance in recipient governments. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) began its campaign against corruption in 1996, and the World Bank (WB) tied anticorruption practices to its list of aid conditionality (as quoted in Bukovansky 2002). The effects of conditional aid by the international financial institutions (IFIs) however remain debatable. Dreher (2009) concludes aid conditionality does not seem to increase the likelihood of success of IMF programs (Dreher 2009). Part of the criticism about IMF points out the institution tends to be lenient with noncomplying recipient governments that are deemed important to US, the largest voting country (Öhler et al. 2012).

Overall, the literature suggests mixed findings about the association between foreign aid, its efficacy, and governance quality of recipient countries. However, it seems likely that donors regularly interacting with nondemocratic poorly governed countries are alert to the possibility of aid misuse, and concerned about effectiveness of their aid. At the same time, donors who lack information about specific institutional arrangements and local settings probably have to rely on recipient governments. This brings a potential

dilemma to donors who stress governance quality in recipient countries. Against this literature backdrop, the following section discusses Tajikistan in the context of foreign aid and governance, which helps better understand the country. Then Tajik agrarian reform is examined in detail as a specific case to support the argument that weak governance combined with a unique setting of a recipient can be a decisive driver of ineffective aid.

III Tajikistan in contexts of aid and governance

Tajikistan has received foreign aid since the collapse of the Soviet Union (World Bank Data a). Around the late 1990s and 2000s the country received noticeable amounts of aid against its economic size (World Bank Data a for ODA/GNI ratios and Annex <Table 1> for more general ODA) due to the 1992-1997 civil war, and the US war on terror in Afghanistan. The 1992-1997 civil war is a singular historic incident of the country with at least 50,000 people killed and a tenth of its population internally displaced (Kevlihan 2016). Nourzhanov (2005) explains the civil war was essentially a power struggle among regional sub-ethnic groups, triggered by the inept leadership of the President Rahmon Nabiev who failed to harmonize distinctive regions of the country (Nourzhanov 2005).

During the civil war, international donors were mainly engaged in humanitarian aid, and the United Nations (UN) was brought in to mediate a peace agreement between fighting blocs. Following the UN-mediated 1997 peace agreement, donors started engaging in post-war peace and state building (Kluczevska 2020). Between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, IFIs, notably, IMF, WB and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) became the main development supporters in Tajikistan. Those institutions focused on macro-economic liberalization, privatization of formerly state-owned companies, and creation of legal environments, all of which would be conducive to private entrepreneurship. Critics however argue donors failed to prioritize the implementation of the 1997 peace agreement, and their push for liberalization and democratization of the country resulted in reinforcing political power of the incumbent regime (Kluczevska 2020; Nakaya 2009).

The 1997 peace agreement importantly included 30% quota for the representation of

an opposing party, the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) in all levels of the government apparatus. The objective was to reverse the central state's control over power and establish an inclusive decision-making structure in the Tajik government (Nakaya 2009). Starting in the early 2000s, the incumbent regime began removing the UTO representatives from the government apparatus. Those dismissals were carried out under donor-funded institutional reform, especially the Institutional Building Technical Assistance Project by WB. This reform framework recommended the country remove, downsize, or reorganize several ministries and committees in the government structure (Hofman 2021; Nakaya 2009).

In addition, some state agencies established by donor recommendations became the regime's tool to eliminate its political threats and economic rivals. For instance, the tax police created by IMF's advice became weaponized to threaten opposing leaders with corruption charges. None of the international organizations including UN raised objections to this process. As a result, some of the institutional reform programs ended up helping the Tajik regime consolidate political control, and deepening the sense of sociopolitical exclusion of opposing groups (Nakaya 2009).

Foreign aid to Tajikistan experienced a shift with the US war on terror in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 9/11. Tajikistan shares the entire southern border with Afghanistan, and this made the country a more important strategic ally, especially to US and the European Union (EU). Donors feared a failure of the Tajik state would raise the level of insecurity in Central Asia and beyond. Consequently, they paid more attention to Tajik governance and the country's connection to illegal flows of people, drugs, weapons, and other illicit goods (Boonstra and Shapovalova 2012; EU n.d.; Kluczevska 2019; Kluczevska 2020).

Around 2003, Tajikistan became the largest recipient of EU's Border Management Program in Central Asia (BOMCA). Tajik authorities and EU considered BOMCA effective, although critics doubt its contribution to strengthening the border security. Critical observers state no major drug network was brought to justice because drug-trading networks had infiltrated Tajik elite circles for protection of drug flows across the border (Boonstra and Shapovalova 2012). Relatedly, a media report narrates 'A lot of the border and drug assistance being given to Tajikistan by foreign powers is wasted. Money is either being misspent, or siphoned off to cronies and political elites' (Ayyub 2016). Donor assistance to strengthen Tajik security agencies ended up helping the regime employ repression more effectively with the regional and domestic security

issues serving as a pretext for Tajik authorities (Boonstra and Shapovalova 2012; EU n.d.).

Tajikistan, since 1994, has been essentially ruled by the President Emomali Rahmon: he won the 2020 election as well as the four previous presidential elections, none of which western monitors considered democratic (RFE/RL's Tajik Service 2020). The country under Rahmon's leadership has been criticized for its heavy crackdown on government critics, intense censorship of the media, and rampant corruption, all indicative of poor governance (HRW Tajikistan). The World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators ranks Tajikistan at the bottom 12 percentile: higher numbers correspond to higher governance quality ranks (Annex <Table 2>). With corruption control in particular, the country is ranked average the bottom nine percentile. Despite the poor governance with widespread corruption, foreign aid has continued flowing into the country, which could offer Tajik elites a potential opportunity to capture aid. Tajik agrarian reform supported by donors provides a clear example. In the mid-1990s, donors considered agrarian reform - including farmland restructuring and privatization of the cotton industry - a priority as farmland and cotton have been an irreplaceable instrument for Tajik elites to stay in political economic power (Hofman and Visser 2021).

IV. Tajik agrarian reform and international assistance

1. Tajik farmland restructuring

Tajikistan is an agrarian society where agriculture contributes to over 20% of its gross domestic production, and employs approximately half the domestic labor force (World Bank Data b). The Tajik state formerly owns land, and farmers obtain land use rights that endow farmers with inheritable rights over land (Müller and Rommel 2018). In the early years of the country's independence farmland reform was initiated to transform the former Soviet collective and state farms. Over the course of 1990s decrees were issued for farmland reorganization with the first land reform being initiated in 1992. The law 'On Dehqon Farms' established the right of every citizen to create dehqon farms - commercially oriented individual farms set on the former state or collective farmland. The civil war interrupted the initial farmland reform with Tajik

rural dwellers migrating from the war-afflicted rural localities (Mukhamedova and Wegerich 2018; Nekbakhtshoev 2021).

In the mid-1990s, WB assisted in facilitating the agrarian reform as one of the prioritized economic reforms (World Bank 1999). The WB's 1999 Farm Privatization Support Project privatized ten pilot collective state farms and divided them into 5,872 farms with secure land use certificates. Other areas adopted the WB project's model to varying degrees, and by 2003 approximately 21,000 private farms were established covering 0.35 million ha of farmland (World Bank 2005). In 2005, WB approved a follow-up project, the Land Registration and Cadastre System for Sustainable Agriculture Project, and the follow-up project was revised in 2012 to further facilitate immovable property registration as well as farmland restructuring (World Bank 2012). The follow-up project provided 122,723 certificates to individual and family farms for secured land use rights, covering 32% of the Tajik arable land (World Bank 2017). However in many localities, farmland reform stagnated because the process to obtain *dehqon* rights relied heavily on access to information, networks and resources. As a result, the process favored individuals such as collective-farm administrators, state officials and their relatives, and businessmen because they likely had such essential access (Hofman and Visser 2021; World Bank 1999).

Farmland restructuring in fact did not provide full rights to control land, only rights to access land in some localities: the Tajik government defined land reform as individualizing farm units. This definition did not necessarily grant control rights over land, and became a strategic tool to maintain the elites' privilege over farmland and agricultural production. Furthermore, successors of large state and collective farms were renamed into *dehqon* farms, and the renamed farms were lumped into the same category as small *dehqon* farms. The new law 'On *Dehqon* Farms', promulgated in 2016, also did away with differentiating *dehqon*-farm types: the 2016 law distinguished *dehqon* farms only with legal entities and natural persons. The lumping of all farm units enabled Tajik authorities to claim that Tajikistan fulfilled the donor requirement by showing a growing number of *dehqon* farms (Hofman and Visser 2021). The tactic succeeded in complicating donors' understanding of farmland restructuring, helping the Tajik state subvert further pressure from the donor community.

This situation was exactly what WB had initially been concerned with its projects. The bank stated 'If not managed carefully, this situation would result in the lack of fair and transparent processes and inequities in land distribution. Alternatively, superficial

adjustments might result by merely changing the nomenclature of collective farms' (World Bank 1999, page 3). Another WB document noted the risk factors were largely institutional, and one of them was opposition by groups with vested interests such as former collective farm managers and government agency personnel. The bank suspected those groups perceived farmland reform to be threatening because improved transparency in individual farm operations could increase farm autonomy and reduce their opportunities to demand informal payments for public services (World Bank 2012).

Reform policies are generally crafted at a national level, but their implementation can be left up to local authorities, elites and institutions. As local elites often have divergent interests from national elites, studies identify local elites as an agent that limits reform effects (Luong 2004). In Tajikistan, one conduit that local elites could manipulate farmland reform is taking advantage of institutionalized processes for obtaining land rights. The petitioning process requires individual farmers to request the District Land Committee to issue legally recognizable land certificates. This institutional arrangement necessitates local authorities to implement the central laws and policies, granting them high degrees of decision-making power (Hierman and Nekbakhtshoev 2018). The other conduit that local elites could twist farmland reform is controlling key farm resources, particularly irrigation systems due to the fixed and indivisible nature of landed resources. Yet, not all collective farm members may wish to be separated from collective farms. Some members probably stay in the collective farm structure: if a farm manager provides necessary farming inputs that individual farmers have difficulty obtaining, or if farmers perceive farm management to be highly risky due to, for example, lack of sales outlets (Hofman and Visser 2021).

Other factors that complicated the progress of farmland reform include geographic characteristics, specific orientations of donor aid, and relative levels of rural resources that Tajik elites could extract. For instance, Sughd, the western high land region, continued to maintain collective farms at least until the mid-2010s partly because donors in Sughd focused more on emergency reliefs than farmland reform. On the other hand, Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), the eastern high land region, experienced farmland restructuring independently from the central government. The unique situation of GBAO is attributed to several factors: first, GBAO comprises only 2% of the country's arable land in which Tajik elites saw little potential for profits: second, a strong regional identity of GBAO with its contested state-region relation constrained Tajik authorities' influence on land reform: third, GBAO had a lead donor

who played a pivotal role in its farmland restructuring, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) (Hofman and Visser 2021; Mukhamedova and Wegerich 2018).

The foundation's assistance, which started in 1993 after the civil war, was strongly influenced by its religious affiliation to GBAO (Kevlihan 2016). As the lead aid organization in GBAO, AKF gradually took over the governmental role in the region, and pushed farm break-up with provision of agricultural extension services (Hofman and Visser 2021). Not all religion-affiliated aid institutions walked the same line as AKF in Tajikistan. The Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation, known as the Iranian government's main channel for humanitarian aid, started to provide Tajikistan with aid in 1995 (Cordier 2007). In the late 2010s however, Tajik authorities ordered Iranian organizations including the Imam Khomeini Relief Foundation to suspend their activities on account of the rising diplomatic friction between Dushanbe and Teheran (Ahmad 2017).

Overall, farmland restructuring in Tajikistan progressed within a complex web of the civil war, donor assistance, and multiple actors with vested interests at all levels. As recent as in 2015, a substantial portion of aid was still directed toward farm restructuring under the donor premise that farm break-up would help improve rural livelihoods (Müller and Rommel 2018). Together with farmland, cotton has been key to Tajik national and rural economies, thus the crop became an important part of the donor-supported agrarian reform.

2. Tajik cotton industry reform

In the Central Asian countries where cotton is the main cash crop for tax revenues and national economies, cotton-connected elites tend to retain centralized control over the cotton sector, preserve land ownership, and continue the Soviet-style planned economy (Hofman and Visser 2021). Cotton, referred to as white gold, is key to the Tajik government's revenue, and the crop's importance was even observed during the civil war: the central cotton-producing region changed hands six times among the infighting militias (Hierman and Nekbaktshoev 2018; Nourzhanov 2005). Arguably, strong vested interests in the major cotton-producing regions stalled Tajik farmland reform because farm managers, district administrators, gin operators, and government officials all had strangleholds on the cotton industry (World Bank 2005). Thus, donors considered liberalization of the Tajik cotton sector essential to the agrarian reform they

supported.

The Tajik government had subsidized agriculture including the cotton industry, and IMF conditioned its aid on the country ending the subsidizing practice (Van Atta 2009). Pressured by IMF, the Tajik state eliminated the official state procurement system of crops in 1996, and established a futures system where anticipated cotton prices would serve as collateral for cotton-tied prepayment to farmers (Hofman 2021; Hofman and Visser 2021). Additionally, the Tajik government issued an order to privatize all cotton gins to satisfy IMF's conditionality in 1999 and 2000. The futures system, however, resembled the former state procurement system, only controlled by private actors who were closely connected to the post-war power. Even so, the on-paper replacement appeared to meet the IFI's requirement, i.e. withdrawal of the state support from the cotton sector and the sector's demonopolization (Hofman and Visser 2021; Van Atta 2009).

With the on-paper cotton privatization, local elites continued to extract cotton revenues, and their exploitative practice was partly justified by the central government's emphasis - or rather insistence - on an increase in cotton yield for maximized export earnings and rural employment (Nekbakhtshoev 2021; Van Atta 2009). Local elites therefore were able to pressure farms to allocate large portions of their land to cotton. Yet, their control on cotton was not applied to all regions, and geography played a part in cotton reform. For instance, the autonomous eastern region, GBAO was little affected by cotton elites because farms in GBAO were hardly involved in large-scale centralized cotton production. Those farms supplied small quantities of produce for local consumption, making the region little appealing to cotton elites (Kreutzmann 2003).

Lack of competition in the Tajik cotton sector allowed cotton elites to distort the sector as well: cotton elites were able to set ambiguously inflated prices of farming inputs and suppressed raw-cotton prices for maximized profits. The issue with the structural distortion, also raised by WB (World Bank 1999), eventually drove cotton farms to accumulate high levels of debts. Cotton-tied debts kept farmers from obtaining land use rights as farmers would have to assume a share of their debt proportional to the land size. As a result, cotton-tied debts played a critical obstacle to farmland redistribution while serving as a tool for Tajik local authorities/elites to control both cropping patterns and farmland (Nekbakhtshoev 2021; World Bank 2005).

Despite the reality on the ground, the Tajik government asked donors to help deal with the cotton debt crisis, and IFIs stepped in. In 2002, ADB approved a loan for the

Agriculture Rehabilitation Project, and associated advisory technical assistance for the Farm Debt Resolution and Policy Reform (Van Atta 2009). Later in 2007, WB approved the Cotton Sector Recovery Project, which included a debt resolution component, i.e. financing development of rule-based mechanisms for debt repayment. This was to be achieved by the establishment of a debt resolution agency responsible for a repayment process and provision of information on debt resolution (World Bank 2015). The WB project was coordinated with another ADB cotton project, the Sustainable Cotton Subsector Project which also included a cotton farm debt component. However, the debt component in the WB project was dropped during the project revision, and ADB changed the debt component to improved access to quality cotton seeds (Asian Development Bank 2014; World Bank 2015). The removal of the debt component was attributed to a delayed agreement among the Tajik government, WB, and ADB on debt resolution mechanisms (Asian Development Bank 2014).

The problem with the cotton debt resolution was exacerbated in 2008 when IMF announced Tajikistan had systematically misled IMF about the country's hard-currency reserve status in order to provide covert state financing to the cotton sector. The National Bank of Tajikistan admitted its misuse of the loans for the cotton sector. This audit made donors reconsider their cotton reform support (Hofman and Visser 2021; Van Atta 2009). In the meantime, following a series of high-profile meetings with donors, the Tajik government formally allowed cotton-farm debts to be cancelled under the 2009 presidential decree. Yet, farm managers continued to use cotton-tied debts to deny shareholders their land rights by making farmland access contingent on immediate debt repayment. This practice violated the law that grants shareholders an unconditional right to withdraw their land share without making debt repayment a condition precedent (Nekbakhtshoev 2021). Nonetheless, the scare tactic appeared to accentuate the risk of private farming for cotton farmers, compared to their status quo (Hierman and Nekbakhtshoev 2018; Nekbakhtshoev 2021).

Besides cotton-tied debts, other cotton-related factors affected the donor-supported agrarian reform (Hierman and Nekbakhtshoev 2018; Hofman and Visser 2021; Müller and Rommel 2018). First, a reduced tax on cotton-planted field incentivized farmers to grow the crop. Before 2010, cotton-planted farmland was taxed 50% lower than farmland planted with other crops. The unified tax, introduced in 2010, was supposed to end the tax incentive on cotton, but cotton farmland in many localities is still subject to a lower tax. Second, the non-perishable nature of cotton reduces farming risks,

encouraging farmers to continue to cultivate cotton. Third, lack of farming alternatives pushes farms to produce cotton due to shortage of quality crop seeds or difficult access to bank credits. Fourth, the collectivized cotton-producing structure more favors poor farmers: it allows them to grow non-cotton crops in a strip of the land for personal consumption, pays them in-kind with cotton residue (an important fuel source), and enables them to pilfer small assets. To some degree, the collective cotton-farm structure serves as a safety net for poor farmers (for more extensive research, refer to Kassam 2011). Fifth, the Tajik socio-cultural feature to respect the authoritative status of local elites influences farmers to follow decisions on cotton cultivation by local elites. Sixth, cotton yield itself is a likely affecting factor for farm break-up: low cotton yield appears to be a necessary condition for farm individualization in districts distant from the capital city. Farm managers responsible for unproductive cotton farms may have few incentives or little capacity to prevent cotton farmers from defecting from the collective organizations.

With the gradual donor withdrawal from the Tajik cotton sector, the Tajik state has attempted to attract Chinese agribusinesses, signaled by increases in Chinese investment around the early 2010s (Hofman and Visser 2021). In 2012 when Chinese agribusinesses acquired Tajik farmland, Tajik rural people neither protested nor did they in the later years. Their reaction made a stark contrast to responses in Kazakhstan where public outcries erupted for fears of Chinese land grabbing (BBC 2016). Hofman (2016) speculates Chinese farmland acquisition in Tajikistan appears to serve individual Chinese to produce for self-consumption or local markets, and Chinese agro-companies to demonstrate technologies for export purposes (Hofman 2016). Regardless of the exact Chinese motivations with Tajik farmland acquisition, Chinese entities may be unable to operate without building political connections to Tajik authorities, local elites and brokers. In that sense, Tajik authorities and elites have means to profit from the Chinese investment in farmland and agriculture.

V. Conclusion

Tajikistan has remained a corrupt authoritarian regime despite the initial donor-imposed reform to democratize the Tajik society. Maytdinova (2017) debates the

donor-led reform was left incomplete because donors failed to take into account the realities on the ground, including the Tajik economic basis, the quality of human resources, and its civil society (Maytdinova 2017). Nonetheless, a general consensus seems Tajikistan is an agile player with foreign aid, and Kluczevska (2017) summarizes it fittingly: Tajikistan appears to have socialized the international organizations towards maintaining its status quo more than they have socialized Tajikistan towards accepting the neoliberal world order (Kluczevska 2017).

The aid manipulation by Tajik elites was evident in the donor-supported agrarian reform processes. During the processes, Tajik authorities eluded not only fulfilling donor conditions attached to agrarian reform assistance, but also donor interferences in agrarian policy implementation. Farm break-up occurred rather selectively depending on the localities' importance or potential for Tajik authorities' private gains. Nonetheless, the on-paper farmland restructuring appeared to complicate donors' understanding of the reform outcomes. Particularly inseparable from the farm restructuring was the cotton sector: farmland planted with cotton equals political capital to Tajik elites. In spite of the IFIs' conditions attached to the cotton sector reform, exploitative practices of Tajik elites and their dominance across the cotton industry were hardly dissolved, resulting in donors' gradual withdrawal from the sector. Realities of Tajik cotton farmers seem to remain little changed. An article reports a farm-gate price of cotton was four to five somoni per kilogram in 2019 while a cotton production cost was estimated over six somoni (Ashurov 2019). Cotton farmers looking for livelihood alternatives may choose to grow other crops, and buy a document that testifies their fulfillment of their cotton quota. Other farmers may continue producing cotton under the controlled system, fearing punishment or loss of access to land (Hofman 2021).

Overall, the process and outcome of the Tajik agrarian reform show donor-imposed aid conditions unintentionally left enough leeway for the Tajik incumbent leadership and elite groups to strengthen/maintain their political and economic status quo. This is closely relevant to the argument put forward by Cooley and Heathershaw (2017): an active cooperation with foreign governments and international institutions enables authoritarian regimes in Central Asia to suppress domestic opposition, helping their regimes survive (Cooley and Heathershaw 2017). Also, the Tajik case supports the existing argument that weak governance can be a decisive driver of poor aid outcomes.

Foreign aid is vital to the country's economic development, and Tajik citizens deserve foreign aid. A recent study on foreign aid in Tajikistan shows aid has positive

effects on the country's economic growth, but the positive effects disappear once the Tajik institutional environment is considered (Abduvaliev and Bustillo 2020). Donors who support Tajikistan under the corrupt authoritarian regime should be fully alert to the possibility that aid capture is highly likely. In order to minimize aid capture by elite groups and promote economic development, donors should be fully aware of de facto power structures, political workings, and institutional arrangements in poorly governed recipient countries. Finally, donors' examination of those factors should not be limited at a national level, but include within-country variations as local institutions can be as important as central for aid efficacy.

Annex.

<Table 1> Official development assistance to Tajikistan from 2003 through 2022 by OECD Statistics

Year ¹	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Bilateral DAC ² (USD million)	115.4	122.9	138.3	125.2	121.5	161.4	146.6	164.9	148.1	160.5
Bilateral Non-DAC (USD million)	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.1	2.0	0.3	9.4
Multilateral (USD million)	38.9	113.2	129.4	221.4	77.2	89.0	154.6	271.0	180.2	230.6
Total (USD million)	154.3	236.1	267.7	346.6	198.7	250.4	301.3	437.9	328.6	400.5
Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Bilateral DAC (USD million)	150.2	179.3	147.9	124.3	121.1	144.3	116.0	117.0	130.9	135.1
Bilateral Non-DAC (USD million)	8.9	8.3	24.8	53.0	23.4	33.4	26.5	36.9	40.2	27.6
Multilateral (USD million)	238.4	179.5	330.3	262.7	264.6	272.2	270.7	632.4	415.7	501.9
Total (USD million)	397.4	367.0	503.1	440.0	409.1	449.9	413.2	786.3	586.8	664.5

1 Data on official development assistance to Tajikistan were not available in the earlier years.

2 ODA amounts are constant prices in 2022 USD million.

<Table 2> Estimates of the World Bank Worldwide governance indicators of Tajikistan

Year	1996	1998	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Voice and accountability	4.0 ¹	7.5	10.4	15.4	15.9	14.4	11.1	9.1	10.6	10.1	10.4	8.5
Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism	3.2	5.9	7.4	19.6	18.1	12.1	10.7	11.1	22.2	18.3	16.1	15.6
Government effectiveness	6.0	5.5	9.3	7.0	10.8	14.4	11.3	13.7	13.6	13.1	12.4	18.7
Regulatory quality	6.0	8.2	13.0	7.6	15.1	13.4	12.7	13.7	13.6	16.5	14.8	18.2
Rule of law	3.0	5.0	6.5	15.9	16.4	13.0	14.4	10.5	8.1	8.2	8.1	10.0
Control of corruption	5.9	4.8	5.3	6.9	8.5	7.4	12.2	16.1	15.0	9.2	6.7	4.8
Average governance	4.7	6.1	8.7	12.1	14.1	12.5	12.1	12.4	13.9	12.6	11.4	12.6
Year	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Voice and accountability	9.9	8.5	6.1	6.9	5.9	5.9	4.9	4.9	3.9	3.9	3.4	3.9
Political stability and absence of violence/terrorism	16.6	12.3	13.3	23.3	18.6	20.0	22.9	19.8	26.4	26.9	23.6	21.2
Government effectiveness	17.5	19.4	14.2	21.2	18.6	12.4	11.0	11.4	12.4	21.9	29.5	23.6
Regulatory quality	19.0	17.1	15.2	15.4	12.9	11.0	11.9	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.4	11.3
Rule of law	9.9	9.4	8.5	13.5	12.4	10.5	7.6	7.6	8.6	9.0	10.5	10.8
Control of corruption	7.1	6.6	7.1	12.0	11.9	11.9	8.1	6.7	9.0	8.1	6.7	6.1
Average governance	13.3	12.2	10.7	15.4	13.4	11.9	11.1	10.3	12.0	13.5	14.2	12.8

¹ Percentile ranks are among all countries, ranging from 0 (lowest) to 100 (highest) rank. Higher numbers correspond to better governance in ranking

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저자소개

이혜진은 미국 Washington State University에서 농업학 박사학위를 취득하였으며 현재 건국대학교 KU국제개발협력원 조교수로 재직중이다. 전공분야는 개발도상국 농업과 식량안보이며 주로 원조와 관련하여 개발도상국 농업 및 식량 이슈를 연구하고 있다. 최근 논문으로는 “Overview of the Current Status of Uganda’s Banana Sector: Formalizing the Matooke Sector may not be the Best Policy Option” (The Open Agriculture 17호 2023년) 그리고 “Bilateral aid to Tajikistan; donor tactics and responses to troubled governance (Development Studies Research 11호 2024년) 등이 있다.

타지키스탄의 취약한 거버넌스와 비효과적인 농업개혁 지원 원조

이혜진 (건국대학교)

국문요약

중앙아시아에 위치한 타지키스탄은 취약한 거버넌스에 따라 성장 잠재력에도 불구하고 저소득 개발도상국에 머물러 있음. 구소련 연방 붕괴와 내전 이후 지속적으로 해외 원조를 받고 있으나 그 효과성은 논쟁의 여지가 있음. 본 연구는 타지키스탄 특권층 권력 유지의 핵심 도구로 여겨지는 농지 및 목화 산업의 개혁을 지원한 원조가 성과를 거두지 못한 이유를 취약한 거버넌스와 공여기관들의 낮은 지역특성 이해에서 찾고자 함. 타지키스탄이 농업개혁을 위한 원조 조건을 지키지 않고도 공여기관들이 지속적으로 지원할 수 있도록 유도한 요소는 (1) 공여기관들이 자유민주주의와 시장개방을 강조하며, 내전 후 국가통합을 위한 1997년 평화조약 이행을 적극적으로 촉구하지 않은 점, (2) 원조의 투명한 사용과 원조 조건 이행을 모니터링하기 어려운 타지키스탄의 복잡한 제도와 사회적 장치, (3) 지방 특권층의 지역제도와 지리적 특성 활용 등으로 요약할 수 있음. 타지키스탄을 지원하는 공여기관들은 타지키스탄 특권층이 활용할 수 있는 중앙 및 지방제도의 특성과 사회 문화를 명확히 이해하여야, 원조가 특권층 권력 강화에 사용되는 것을 최소화 할 수 있을 것임.

주제어: 거버넌스, 농업개혁, 농지, 목화, 부패, 원조, 타지키스탄