

Tajikistan

Vanderbilt

Tajikistan is coded as a single-party authoritarian regime from independence in 1991 until 1992, at which time it becomes a personalist authoritarian regime lasting through 2008.

Rakhmon Nabyev, KPT (Communist Party), ruled as president in 1991. During the second half of 1992 civil war broke out. Nabyev and his cohort of elites attempted to frame the conflict as between themselves, the legitimate rulers of Tajikistan, and radical Islamic fundamentalists who were trying to turn the country into a repressive Islamic regime like those in Iran and Afghanistan. The reality was much more nuanced; in fact, the conflict was between the elites of the old communist regime who had not desired independence from the USSR and were desperate to hold on to power, and a disparate group of opponents made up of “disenfranchised regions, democratic liberal reformists, and Islamists loosely organized,” according to the US Department of State (2009). Nabyev was hostile to these groups. He rejected a coalition government proposed by the Russians to end the conflict. Consequently, his opponents, gaining the upper hand temporarily, forced him to resign at gunpoint in August 1992. The speaker of the Supreme Soviet and a close associate of Nabyev, Akbarsho Iskandarov, became acting president (US Library of Congress 1996; Cahoon 2010). This is not a SOLS change. US Library of Congress (1996) explains this tumultuous time:

“The political and military battles for control continued through the fall of 1992. In November the Iskandarov coalition government resigned in the hope of reconciling the contending factions. Later that month, the Supreme Soviet, still dominated by hard-liners, met in emergency session in Khujand, an antireform stronghold, to select a new government favorable to their views. When the office of president was abolished, the speaker of parliament, Imomali Rahmonov, became de facto head of government. A thirty-eight-year-old former collective farm director, Rahmonov had little experience in government.”

We code Imomali Rakhmonov’s (also known by Emomali Rahmon) accession to power as a SOLS change since he establishes his own personalist regime distinct from the Communist Parties single-party regime that had been in power before. However, this is a tricky case because, at least initially, Rakhmonov was supported by the same old regime communist elites as Nabyev. According to Freedom House (2010) Rakhmonov was “a leading Communist Party member” although Cahoon (2010) lists his SOLS as unknown until 1998, when it becomes Hizbi Demokrati-Khalkii Tojikston (HDKT). Rakhmanov was elected Communist Party chairman in 1992 and president in 1994. Apart from the Communist Party, Rakhmanov has no clear party affiliation. He was a member of the Kolyab clan (also known as Kulobi), however, and had risen through the Kolyab regional executive Soviet (Brown 1996). Like other leader of central Asian states, he relied on his clan for support and provided his fellow clan with important positions in government. Seddon (2004), for example, argues that Rakhmanov’s support originated from the People’s Front forces, which originated from the Southern Kolyab and Kurgan-Tube regions as well as from members of the northern economic elite of Leninabad. The other source of leadership support was provided by Russia, as Tajikistan experienced constant internal conflict during the 1990’s (Seddon 2004, Anonymous 1994). Collins (2006) suggests that because Rakhmonov did not have the broad legitimacy that would be provided by pact between the most

influential clans - as occurred in some of the neighboring countries - he established the Hizbi Demokrati-Khalkii Tojikston (People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan - HDKT) in 1998. Until 1998, some of his source of support came from the Kolyab Clan and the People's Front forces (Seddon 2004, Anonymous 1994).

Although the “neo-Soviets” had the reins of government after 1992, the fighting continued until 1997. Peace talks arranged by the United Nations were held in between 1994 and 1996 resulting in unstable peace fire agreements. Finally, at the end of 1996, Rakhmonov signed a peace agreement with the leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), “a coalition of secular and Islamic groups that had emerged as the main force fighting against Rakhmonov’s government” (Freedom House 2010). The accord “called for the merging of opposition forces into the regular army, granted an amnesty for UTO members, [and] provided for the UTO to be allotted 30 percent of senior government posts” to begin in 2000 (Freedom House 2010). However, after Rakhmonov’s party emerged victorious following the February 2000 elections (which were not considered fully democratic by international observers) “important provisions of the peace accord remained unimplemented, with demobilization of opposition factions incomplete and the government failing to meet the 30 percent quota for UTO members in senior government posts” (Freedom House 2010). The UN peacekeeping mission that had arrived in 1996 left after the 2000 elections, clearing the way for Rakhmonov to abuse power unimpeded. In 2003 Rakhmonov succeeded in passing a constitutional referendum to allow him multiple reelections. He was reelected in 2006 and ruled through 2008.

References:

- Anonymous Author. 1994. “Tajikistan: Another Afghan War?” the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (1): 56-59.
- Cahoon, Ben. "Tajikistan." *World Statesmen.org*. Web. 29 June 2010.
<<http://www.worldstatesmen.org/Tajikistan.html>>.
- Brown, J. F. 1996. The OMRI annual survey of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, 1995: building democracy. M.E. Sharpe
- Collins, Kathleen. 2006. Clan politics and regime transition in Central Asia. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Freedom House. 2010. “Freedom in the World 2010: Tajikistan.” Available from
<<http://www.freedomhouse.org/template.cfm?page=22&country=7930&year=2010>>.
- Seddon, David. 2004. A political and economic dictionary of the Middle East. Taylor & Francis.
- U.S. Department of State. 2010 “Background Note: Tajikistan.” 2010. September 22, 2010.
Available from <<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5775.htm>>. Accessed October 5, 2010.

U.S. Library of Congress. 1996. "A Country Study: Tajikistan." Available from
<<http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/tjtoc.html>>. Accessed October 5, 2010.

Coded by Anna Carella October 5, 2010
Checked by Michaela Mattes 11/01/2010
Updated by Mariana Rodriguez 9/19/11
Updated by Matt DiLorenzo 07/21/2012
Revised by Bryan Rooney 10/17/2012
Edited by Andrew Wood (Rice) 05/24/2014