

# Democratisation Process in Central Asia; a case study of Tajikistan

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## Abstract

The post-communism debate in Central Asia revolved around the chances of Western-style Democracy in the region. Though, ultimately neither did liberal democracy nor did Islam was Successful in filling the ideological vacuum of post soviet era. Instead, Central Asian states have grown into Secular authoritarianisms. The purpose of the research is to examine the Democratisation process in Central Asia post breakdown of Soviet Union with Tajikistan as a case study. It also analyses the major constitutional and democratic institutions in Tajikistan.

**Key Words:** Central Asia, Democracy, liberal democracy, Islam, Democratisation process, Soviet Union and Tajikistan

## Introduction:

Democracy is a form of government in which a substantial proportion of the citizen directly or indirectly participates in ruling the state. Today the essential features of democracy, as understood in the Western world, are that citizens be sufficiently free - in speech and assembly, for example- to form competing political parties and that voters be able to choose among the candidates of these parties in regularly held elections. Democratization is the process of introduction of a democratic system or democratic principles. It can be defined as a transition of a sovereign state from a nondemocratic to a democratic one through changes in political regimes. It's the deed of making everything available to common people.

After the collapses of Soviet Union, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have all been independent and sovereign states for more than two decades. Yet, oftentimes writers and experts regularly write and talk about these countries' problems as if they existed in a vacuum, paying little attention to how much has changed over the past two decades and to how the countries in the region have managed to find ways to move forward in spite of the challenges they still face. In the days just after the dissolution of the USSR, discussions in Washington and Moscow were often filled with doom-and-gloom scenarios about the future of Central Asia. These states, it was said, were certainly not expecting independence and would be incompetent in sustaining it.

After disintegration of Soviet Union, four of the nations the acquired political structures were similar; First Secretaries which were appointed by Mikhail Gorbachev stayed in power as presidents, irrespective of which these national pioneers embraced astoundingly different monetary, political and social techniques. The Kyrgyz Republic worked in line with the guidance from Western organizations and supported fast, rapid and dynamic regime change also, with restrictions; its leader encouraged the rise of the most liberal administration in the region. Turkmenistan was the total inverse, where the president had built up an identity clique and had limited financial change. Kazakhstan in the beginning of 1990s had all the earmarks of going with the Kyrgyz Republic on their liberal regime, but as the decade advanced, the president turned out to be more autocratic which resulted in a centralised economy where just a small group of people got hold of economy, media and banks. Uzbekistan held a firm control over the entire political framework; that too without the personality factor of Turkmenistan, also, its monetary reforms were progressive and just. Tajikistan's case was different from the other four, in the sense that it was the only country which couldn't evolve peacefully in the transition from Soviet republic to independent state under unchanged and unaltered leadership. The civil war of 1992-93, which ended with ceasefire in 1996-97, overshadowed political evolution and delayed the execution and implementation of a genuine, consistent economic and political strategy.

### **Tajikistan:**

After Tajikistan got sovereign status, a sharp question concerning the change of political, economic and other social frameworks and also the choice about the course of the political order instantly broke out among the provincial elites. At the point when confronted with the customary fracture of Tajik society into particular regional groupings, the old concentrated structures of the Soviet state were immediately distorted after the break down of the Soviet Union. Promptly after autonomy, the territorial elites started to permeate the state with a Tajik character. The process of state building is difficult in Tajikistan as the concept of nation and nationhood is vague due to people's strong association with tribal, clan loyalties and transnational identities like Islam. This association with their respective identities overpowers the feeling of nationhood.

Due to the failure of not being able to develop nation-state association, there is emergence of neo-patrimonial regimes. Also, there is lack of trust among people due to the state institutions, as there are practices of bureaucratic red tapism among the state officials. There is a wide disparity gap between the haves and have nots. Some say that it's a modern day feudalism established by Emomalî Rahmon, the President of Tajikistan. Rahmon has stayed in power for almost twenty seven years till now; this has led to an authoritarian rule. Since 9/11, he has become extremely powerful, due to the international attention that he gained. (Lewis 2008).

## The Civil War and its Aftermath:

After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), political competition and conflict began to escalate in Tajikistan. Nine presidential candidates contested the first multi-party elections, which were won by a former leader of the Communist Party. Yet a popular consensus on the legitimacy of his presidency remained elusive. Tension between supporters of the government and the opposition parties intensified to the point where different factions took up weapons. Less than a year after independence, Tajikistan was engulfed in civil war (Akiner and Barnes 2001)

Tajikistan's civil war dragged on for over five years, leading to huge casualties. According to different sources, approximately 157,000 people were killed, 37,500 households were destroyed. Some 600,000 people fled to neighbouring Afghanistan, and 195,000 were dispersed across other post-Soviet states. More than 1.5 million people became refugees within their own country. As a consequence, change in Tajikistan has been sudden, vicious and uncontrolled. Until 1997, the steps towards building up and actualizing political control were determined totally by the war-related hostility. On 27 June 1997, with the end of the civil war, this underlying period of changed procedures came to an end. This transition period came down to a more-or-less peaceful period through the elections, for a new Parliament June 1997-February 2000. So, it's only post 2000 that one can measure up for the conciliation of the transformation in the institutions of the country. (Akiner and Barnes 2001)

Two primary groupings were formed during the civil war: the Popular Front, of which the present president Rahmon was a section, and the United Tajik Opposition (UTO). The last was a coalition of resistance gatherings with the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan (IMT) as the main constraint. The Islamic Revival Party frames the centre of the IMT. Amid the civil war they propelled their mujahedeen to battle to change Tajikistan into an Islamic state. The Popular Front rose successful from the initial segment of the civil war towards the end of 1992. The pioneers of the Islamic Revival Party and a few pioneers of other restriction parties fled the nation, established the UTO estranged in abroad (1995) and proceeded with the fight against the administration from bases in Afghanistan. After the triumph by the Popular Front (the capital, Dushanbe, was seized on 10 December 1992), the group elites from Kulyab area built up themselves as the pioneers of the state. The hover at the exceptionally best set out to shape Tajikistan into "their country." This occurred in two phases. The primary stage stretched out from the military triumph until the main parliamentary elections. The striking components of this stage were the hurdles due to the resistance of opposition party, the foundation of military power regarding clearing retaliations, a choice on the first constitution and Rahmon's race as president. The specific character of state development incited other provincial elites. In the debate about characterizing or reclassifying their own place in the new state structure, these elites started to vivaciously propel their own particular advantages.

It was with the intervention of the United Nations, Russia and Iran in intra-Tajik talks, 1994–1997, that the civil war came to an end on 27 June 1997 in Moscow with the signing of the General Arrangement of Peace and National Reconciliation in Tajikistan. A soul theme of the agreement was based on a split of powers between both the parties. The trade off depended on an understanding that, for a transitional period until the new parliament, the President, Emomali Sharipovich Rahmon, and the CNR under the course of the leader of the UTO, Said Abdullo Nuri, would settle on accord choices on the key political inquiries of combining the peace and national compromise. It was additionally concurred that UTO delegates would possess 30 % of the authority positions at all managerial levels. (Peace Agreements 1997)

The Civil war affected the country horribly, along with the economic loss it led to a huge brain drain, a large number of intelligentsia moved to Russia which led to a loss of technocratic thinkers in the government. Also, with Rahmon's incredible esteem as a convener of peace turned out to be a definitive factor for his party, People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDP) in the parliamentary elections. For the state to overcome from the societal turmoil and administrative chaos, as they were created by the contention laden transition, put just one aim on the field: to re-establishing peace and order in the society. Since a solid state structure is vital to peace and security, it became a need. A strong state requires a strong leader to ensure stability, due to this factor, Rahmon framed the structure in a way where there is less or limited democracy. Surveys in Tajikistan demonstrate that people prefer any sort of corruption or cheat over peace (Lewis 2008).

### **Tajikistan under Rahmon**

Rahmon has very smartly used international aid, which originally was for state-building and national reconciliation, purely for the strengthening of his rule. Since the time of his re-election in 1999 and again in 2006, he has been using all the external help for the utmost fulfilment of his own needs and interests, instead of putting it to genuine use. (Heathershaw 2009). He has even centralised the government, also, has also been successful in extending his reach to the warlord's of state and has created differences in the opposition (Jonson 2006). For example, Mahmadrusi Iskandarov, leader of the Democratic Party of Tajikistan was abducted and there was a huge case due to this as later after Russian investigation, Tajik authorities rejected to extradite him.

Like Nazarbayev, Rahmon has mastered the art of appealing to different international partners. Though his resource base is considerably less than that of oil-rich Kazakhstan, The large presence of international organisations, NGOs, and special diplomatic missions in the capital, Dushanbe, has legitimised Rahmon's

rule, while he has evoked the spectre of the civil war and potential destabilisation to justify his increasingly authoritarian tendencies (Cooley 2012).

### **Democratic institutions in Tajikistan:**

The Republic of Tajikistan as "sovereign, majority rule, established, common and unitary" substantiates Tajik citizenship and guarantees that all nationals have the same community rights. The state is broadly secularized as a legacy of Soviet run the show. The Islamic resistance raised doubt about the state's mainstream character, yet it was perceived as a piece of the peace understanding "in return" for the authorization of religious gatherings. The relationship amongst mosque and state and in addition the elucidation of Islam's part in the arrangement of state character remains purposes of contention, be that as it may. Inside the setting of an arrival to customs, re-islamification is on the ascent. In 1997, 97 % of the populace purported the Islamic confidence. The managerial framework is every now and again subject to rebuilding and is just restrictively powerful. In spite of the fact that open security and request have been enhancing since the finish of the civil war, they keep on being hampered by neighbourhood outfitted clash and murder.

As indicated by the constitution, the Parliament (Majlis Oli) has authoritative power, the administration is driven by a president having official power, and a sacred court and a Supreme Economic Court have legal power. Regardless of the way that the OSCE appraised the constitution of Tajikistan (embraced in 1994) as one of the best among post-Soviet change expresses, the OSCE specialists noted genuine imperfections. Basically, they reprimanded confinements on the adjust of forces. The president is extreme expert, through the Parliament's energy to translate the constitution and laws bringing about a lessening of the sacred court's power, and insufficiencies as for the autonomy and forces of the courts.

The prevalent model of portrayal in Tajikistan to intercede between the state and society is structure-bound and divided. Its sub-national (ethno-provincial, nearby, faction and family) structures are the general public, which is the reason the model of portrayal does not have a national premise, but rather still just an incomplete, sub-national one. Under these conditions, the perfect state would speak to the whole of these sub-national structures. Be that as it may, this is still not the situation, since it speaks to just a single of these sub-provincial structures. The distinction between the present state and the perfect one is constructing principally with respect to political power. The present model won in a civil war and fights with alternate structures for authenticity. In spots where it is denied authenticity, it implements it. This model of portrayal intervenes between sub-national structures rather than between the state and society. Consequently, gatherings are additionally for the most part established just in societal pieces, the larger part of which are territorial, neighbourhood, family-based or identity based. Gatherings are systems of sectionalist patronage. Parties and developments that are upheld by assets that rise above the boundaries of locale and prepare more



extensive strata of the populace have prospects for more extensive national acknowledgment; they may likewise envelop types of awareness (religion, ethnicity) or social disappointment. In this sense, Islam and social grievances like destitution are the vital assets. These change over religious, direct radical (Hizb-ut-Tahrir) and social progressive gatherings into possibly more persuasive gatherings than territorially tied down gatherings like the president's PDP. Indeed, even in the previous, the territorial, nearby, family-based or identity based reference remains the overwhelming example of enlistment and intercession (UNCTAD 2015).

The administration does changes, yet they are acknowledged just halfway or in varying quality. There are particular deficiencies concerning political changes and the change of the detachment of force. Open administrations miss the mark concerning the necessities. Debasement is handled verbally and with single measures. Yet, despite everything it stays one of the basic hotspots for money and spans to decision circles of the world class. Joining peace, inward security and the social compromise of interests makes agreement working among the distinctive local elites in Tajikistan and in addition between these elites and the decision part a focal prerequisite to control state development and change. On the off chance that, in Tajikistan's unique social system, the perfect state speaks to the whole of sub-national structures, then the proceeded with absence of an instrument for accommodating interests between the ethno-provincial groups, whose usefulness and implement ability is intrinsically tied down and ensured free of who holds political power, remains the weakest connection in democratization and in addition in the supportability of the present peace structure.

### **Conclusion:**

Due to the failure of building up of Nation-state loyalty, there emerged a personalised neo-patrimonial regime with the absence of an effective State-ideology. Patrimonial rule undermined the rule of law in most of the cases with courts being biased towards the ruling families and their favourites. This led to corruption in ruling elite and decline of legitimacy in ruling class.

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