



## **Understanding society and politics of Post-Soviet Tajikistan: Continuity and change**

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### **Abstract**

Tajikistan is a civilization country. To understand the society and Politics of Tajikistan, it is essential to identify the sources of power, which explains the dynamics of struggle for power and nature of society, culture and traditional values. On the basis of evaluation of the existing political development model, the study would try to conclude which model is more acceptable and applicable in Tajikistan. The paper will examine the event and paradigms of Tajikistan in various phases- one phase start from independence (9 sep. 1991) to before civil war. Second phase covers the period of civil war from 1992 to 1997. In the second phase of political development country fails to maintain stability, but it secures its independence. And third phase start from end of civil war (General Agreement between Tajik Government and United Tajik Opposition on 27 June 1997) to till today. In these phases study focused on differences of level of analysis of determinants of society and politics which are playing important role in process of democratisation in the country. Further, the study also highlights the role of media and civil society in the country.

**Keywords:** Tajikistan, Post-Soviet, endogamy, heterogeneous and clan etc

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### **Introduction**

Tajikistan is young nation but old cultural Civilization with many traditions. Its history has been marked by more than 2000 years of conflicts as great empires of the past fought to control the commercial lifeline linking Europe with Asia by the Silk Route. The richness of the past from which the Tajik choose to trace their history and alternative identity are buried in their history. The future can be never be a return to the past, but past may offer guidelines for future policy. Thus framework for the national consciousness is crucial. The Tajiks president Rakhmonov (2004) written that "We live in a time when many nations and nationalities are challenged to make choice and decide their fate." The Tajik authorities have undertaken some much hyped initiatives in this respect, the celebration of 1100th anniversary of Samanid state in 999 (proclaimed as first Tajik statehood), and declaration of 2006 as the "year of the Aryan Civilisation". The History of country has great influence from pre-Islamic Iranian civili-zation, through the coming of Islam, then the Turks and the Mongols, to its incorporation into the Russian Empire. In 1991, Tajikistan was born as independence as a result of the breakup of Soviet Union. Just after independence country found itself into bloody and protracted civil war. (Rakhmonov 2004: 6, Gafurov, Bobojon (1987) <sup>[7]</sup>.

### **Nature of Politics in the Constitution Tajikistan: Political Values**

Palombara (1963) infer that a modern political system is one which operates in a society that is relatively highly urbanised, that manifests a relatively high degree of literacy and social mobility, that contains a relatively high degree of specialisation of occupational roles, that has gone considerably beyond the take off stage in economic development, that has achieved a high degree of sophistication and efficiency in conversion of information and recourses into energy, and that is secular or rational in performance of societal functions. This argument focused that the development goals of the new nations which are primarily economic secondarily social and casual in political character (Palombara 1963: 36)

The Constitution of Tajikistan Republic was adopted in April 1994. It is modern and drafted by the specialists. The nature of Tajik political system in Tajikistan Constitution is sovereign. Tajikistan ruled by principle of 'rule of law'. Freedom, equality and liberal democratic right are protected by constitution. The nature of political system was describes in Constitution of the Republic of Tajikistan as: "A sovereign, democratic, secular, united Republic based on the rule of law Tajikistan is a social state whose policies are directed towards creating conditions to ensure a worthwhile life and the free development of the person (Article 1)." The Constitution of the Republic established the presidential form of government in the Republic. The power structure of these states is based on the principle of "separation of power". The President is the Centre of all the powers in Tajikistan. The executive machinery in all countries of the region is structured to have governor (Mir) in Tajikistan. The governor is appointed by the President, through whom the President exercises direct control over the region and regional assemblies. The national assembly or parliament has the powers of law-making. (Constitution of Tajikistan 1994).

### **Party System and Pressure Group in Tajikistan**

In Tajikistan, social life develops on the basis of political and ideological pluralism. No state ideology or religion may be established. Social associations are formed and operate within the framework of the Constitution and laws. The state provides them with equal possibilities in their operations. Religious organizations are separate from the state and may not interfere in governmental affairs. (Article 8, Constitution of Tajikistan 1994).

### **Freedom of Expression**

Each person is guaranteed the freedoms of speech and the press, as well as the right to use information media. Governmental censorship and prosecution for criticism are forbidden. A list of information considered secrets of the state is determined by law (Article 30). The country's Constitution envisages doing away with censorship mechanism. However, the Constitutional guarantee for prohibition of censorship is not yet fully been implemented (Article 46, Constitution of Tajikistan 1994).

### **President, Parliament and Judicial System in Tajikistan**

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan is the Head of the state and of the executive authority (Government). The President is elected in secret ballot by citizens of Tajikistan on the basis of general, equal and direct right of suffrage for 7 years. Any citizen of age from 35 to 65 knowing state language and being a resident of Tajikistan for not less than 10 last years can be promoted as a candidate for the position of the President of the Republic. A person the candidature of which is supported by not less than 5 percent of electorate can be registered as a candidate to the position of the President. One and the same person can be the President not more than two periods at a run. The President of the country is a Commander-in-chief of all military forces of the Republic of Tajikistan (Constitution of Republic of Tajikistan, 1994). Parliament is the highest representative and legislative organ of the Republic of Tajikistan. Parliament is elected for a five year term (Article 48, Constitution of Tajikistan 1994).

The judicial power is independent and protects the rights and freedoms of individuals, the interests of the state, organizations, and institutions, and legality and justice. Judicial power is exercised by the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court, the High Economic Court, the Military Court, the court of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region, and regional, Dushanbe city, city, and district courts. The organization of and work procedures of courts are determined by constitutional law. Judges have terms of five years. The creation of emergency courts is forbidden (Article 84, Constitution of Tajikistan 1994).

Characteristics of the Tajik culture and Society:

The culture and society of Tajikistan have civilization roots and multicultural characteristics. Lucian Pye has mentioned culture as tool in mapping different route of political development. It treats seriously the nuances of behavior patterns which actually are critical in distinguishing between success and failure. In the subject of cultures are to be found both the values a people seek and obstacles that must be overcome if their goal is to be reached; By beginning with the culture, therefore we are allowing the different Asian people to define for themselves what they want with the respect to modernization (Pye 1985: 21).

Ethnic Composition of Tajikistan:

Tajikistan is a heterogeneous country in Central Asia. The Tajiks are ethnically divided peoples. Whereas four million of them live in the republic, in Afghanistan three million second largest ethnic group after Pushtuns, in Uzbekistan one million, in Iran several thousands and in China around fifty thousand. This situation has come about as a result both of centuries long displacement and mixing of the ethnic groups in the region, and several waves of Tajik emigration in late 19th century, in late 1920s, and since late 1992 (Kuzmin 2001: 175) <sup>[5]</sup>. The composition of ethnic groups like Tajik, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Russian play an important role in ethnic politics in country. The 90% of its 6,863,752 (July 2003 est.) million population is Muslims and 65% of the population is Tajiks. Second largest population is Uzbeks who comprise 25% of the population (CIA 1998).

### **Religious revivalism and Fundamentalism**

Most of the population of Tajikistan traditionally embraces Sunni Islam, with the exception of the Pamirians, who are Shii-Isma'ili. The decades of Soviet rule, when the Muslims were persecuted and atheist propaganda was circulated throughout the society, resulted in the emergence of a complex structure of clandestine Islam, in addition to the formally recognized Muslim religious groups and the official clergy. According to experts, the openly functioning mosques and mazars (prayer houses at tombs) accounted for less than 1% of places of worship. From the late 1980s, a rapid growth was seen in the number of the registered mosques, 17 Friday mosques in January 1989, 47 a year after, 150 in early 1993 and 204 in 1997, plus more than 5,000 prayer houses (Kuzmin 2001: 179) <sup>[5]</sup>.

By 1991-92, a complex underground network of Wahabi militant squads had been created in Dushanbe, Karategin and Kurgan-Tyube, becoming the shock force of the Islamic-democratic bloc in the struggle for power and, from the summer of 1992, the tool of the massacre of its adversaries. The religious fanaticism of the 'Wahabis', which justified the use of terror and torture against the heterodoxes, was used for the ideological justification of bloody reprisals. The crude violence of the Wahabi fighters was a major factor in the decision of a sizeable part of the population to support the Islamists model of the Islamic revolution. Besides the Sunnis, there are Shi'i-Isma'ilis in Tajikistan. They are closely connected with the world Isma'ili leadership, its head

Agha Khan. Aga Khan called on the Ismailis of Tajikistan for national reconciliation and cooperation with the Dushanbe authorities (Kuzmin 2001: 181) <sup>[5]</sup>.

### **Regionalism and Civil War**

Another major factors as the causes of the war that regionalism played an important role. According to Oliver Roy one of the principal reasons of the Civil War was regionalism. He states that: the principal explanation of the structure of the conflict was “regionalism”. Tajik national identity is weak; more important is membership in regional “clans.” The Gharmis and Pomiris supported the opposition. The Sughdi clan which had dominated the communist nomenklatura led the government, while the Kulobi and Hisori clans provided the armed forces that won the war (Oliver 1995: 50).

The strength of the tradition and affection of the Tajiks for their own regions is clear from the fact that interregional marriage are much more unusual than even inter-ethnic ones. According to some Tajiks the people of the north are descended from the Sogdians and those of the south from the Bactrians. Although, on the whole, fragmentation of the Tajik society into regional communities was becoming a thing of the past, the rapid politicization of the late 1980s and early 1990s and the ensuing civil war resulted in its re-emergence, and it became the dominant element in political life.

### **Tajik Family**

In Tajikistan as well as Central Asia joint family was the basic social unit based on clan. The joint family usually consisted of only two generations. Among both nomad and sedentary, the authority of the head of the family was paramount, which used to regulate matters such as marriage, allotment of property and family duties (Badan 2001: 23). There were some social restrictions on women; they were obliged to put on veils. The women were generally not allowed to attend school, and work outside the home. The practice of child marriage and the tradition of Kalym (bride-price) were part of the tradition and customs of Central Asian society. In the Central Asian region, the tradition of marriage of family members followed two types: (a) exogamy; and (b) endogamy. Most of the nomadic population of Central Asia practiced exogamy, i.e., marriage outside the group. Where exogamy was practiced, a Muslim man could marry non-Muslim women, but a Muslim girl could only marry a Muslim man (Wheeler 1964:183).

### **Tajik Marriages and Endogamy**

The sedentary Tajiks followed the rules of endogamy. The marriage ceremony did not take place in the same village. The pattern of marriage was patriarchal. Before the October Revolution of 1917, the inter-marriage between the various ethnic groups was less in practice. The marriage was regarded so important that the families of the boy and girl had to be of the same social and economic status, i.e., the son of a haji was expected to marry the daughter of a haji (Badan 2001: 25, 71-72). Both polygamy and monogamy were in practice. However, it was mostly the rich people who practiced polygamy. The Central Asian often had more than one wife (Sharma, 1979: 211).

### **Languages and Scripts**

In January 1992, the Tajikistan and other Central Asian governments declared to replace the Cyrillic alphabet with Latin and launched a cultural revival campaign which called for teaching of the Persian and Arabic languages in the public school system. In Tajikistan, the Tajikistan Kaziate has been instrumental in the revival of mosques and prayers houses. Idul-Fitr has been declared as a national holiday in the region. These republics are broadcasting Persian and Arabic programmes with the help of Iran. This is the most potent cultural instrument to revive the native culture. The family system was patriarchal. Joint family system was prevalent all over the region. Joint family played an important role in the process of socialisation as the system was based on close relations among the members of the family. Through socialisation process joint family protected the values of society. In the family, mother played an important role in socialising a child (Badan 2001:25).

### **Conclusion**

The Post-Soviet Tajikistan's society is heterogeneous and sedentary in nature. It has multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic and plural in characteristics. Despite majority is Sunni Muslims but it having big Iranian influence on their culture and traditions. The Samanid past is pride of Tajik culture and way of life. Soon after independence Tajikistan have experienced bloody civil war from 1992-1997 and finally it came to agreement by recognizing and giving 25 percent share in power sharing. Finally Tajikistan has multi-party system and periodic election with high percentage of voting share. There is dominance of Presidential role in power exercise and rule making. Judiciary and media is also playing role with critics. Politics of Post-Soviet Tajikistan still have challenges of Ethic conflict and regional imbalance, freedom of press and social media. 21st century of Tajikistan is moving towards development and nation building.

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