



Tajikistan — Va-PoReg Country Report

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07/23/1867 Start Part of Other Country [of Russia]: From 1864 to 1885, the Russian Empire gradually gained control over the entire area of Russian Turkestan, which included the Tajikistan region previously held by the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Kokand. Russian Turkestan was officially established on 07/23/1867.^{238F}¹ By 1885, Tajikistan's land was under the rule of either the Russian Empire or its dependent state, the Emirate of Bukhara.^{239F}²

11/07/1917 Continuation as Part of Other Country [of Russia, Communist Ideocracy]: On this date the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) was proclaimed.³ On 04/10/1918 the Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (initially, the Turkestan Socialist Federative Republic) was officially proclaimed. The Turkistan ASSR was an autonomous republic of the RSFSR, which included territories of present-day Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Fedorenko 2015: 3).⁴ We code this regime change event as a strategic autocratic restructuring, as the regime change in the dominant political authority (Russia) resulted in the formation of the Soviet republics and the incorporation of Tajikistan into the new federal structure. In the immediate aftermath of October 1917, pockets of resistance did emerge—most notably the Kokand Autonomy in the Ferghana Valley, which was suppressed by Red forces in mid-1918—but these efforts did not coalesce into a Tajik national civil war. Rather, these uprisings formed part of what is often called the “Central Asian Front” of the broader Russian Civil War. During 1918–1920, Muslim guerrilla bands collectively known as the Basmachi waged sporadic campaigns to expel Bolshevik influence. However, they were not fighting a “Tajik state” per se; they represented various local and tribal interests across Central Asia, including areas that later fell within Uzbek, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen borders as well as those that would become Tajikistan.⁵ The Bukharan People’s Soviet Republic was proclaimed on 10/08/1920, the territory of which was mostly in Uzbekistan with parts in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.⁶

12/28/1922 Continuation as Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]: With the establishment of the USSR, Tajikistan became a part of the Soviet Union.⁷ In October of 1924, the Tajik Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Tajik ASSR) was established as part of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.⁸ In October 1929, the Tajik ASSR was upgraded to the status of a Soviet Socialist Republic (Tajik SSR). Additionally, the Khujand region (now Sughd Province) was incorporated into the Tajik SSR from the Uzbek SSR.⁹ The implementation of communist rule, occurring roughly from 1927 to 1934, included land redistribution, forced collectivization of agriculture, a rapid development of cotton monoculture, and the introduction of Tajik-language education as part of Moscow-led “nationalization” policies. The Soviet ideology in Tajikistan had to confront strong Islamic and clan-based traditions. Attempts to replace Islamic institutions with secular, communist alternatives met with limited success, as traditional authority persisted in private and local affairs. Soviet authorities created Tajik national symbols and a Tajik-language print culture, but Russification and domination by non-Tajik officials remained prominent, especially in urban and administrative life. The Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) was the nucleus of power, but significant decisions were made by Moscow and the regional Soviet administration. Two Moscow-directed rounds of purges, the first between 1927 and 1934 and the second from 1937 to 1938, led to mass expulsions from the Communist Party of Tajikistan. The freed positions were subsequently filled by Russians. The Tajik SSR remained one of the Soviet Union’s most rural and underdeveloped republics, with the lowest living standards in the Union.

Russians and other Slavs composed a substantial portion of the party elite, more so than in the neighboring Uzbek or Kyrgyz SSRs. Tajik national identity was shaped by Moscow's border and language policies and mountainous isolation meant Sovietization penetrated only superficially in many areas, contrasting with Kazakh or Turkmen republics, which saw more rapid cultural Russification.¹⁰

LIED and V-Dem's PCLI consider Tajikistan since 1990. For the rest of that period, LIED identifies political liberties as absent, while V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties.

09/09/1991 End Part of Other Country [of USSR, Communist Ideocracy]/Start Non-Electoral Transitional Regime: On this date, Tajikistan became independent. The government was still formally controlled by communist leaders in the Supreme Soviet that had been elected in February 1990 (Hiro 2009: 321, Geddes/Wright/Frantz 2014: 99).¹¹ However, when Qadriddin Aslonov took over the presidency on 08/31/1991, he signed an edict calling for the cessation of all activities of the Communist Party on the territory of Tajikistan. On 09/20/1991, Aslonov resigned from the Tajik Communist Party as well as from its Politburo. On 09/23/1991 conservative deputies in his government overthrew Aslonov. The parliament installed Rahmon as president who reversed Aslonov's actions. According to FH, for the regime period under consideration, a score between 9 and 10 makes the country not free, which aligns with our interpretation of rather not free. LIED identifies political liberties as absent, and V-Dem's PCLI is classified by us as ambiguous regarding the status of political liberties. During this regime period, V-Dem's JCE is classified by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were limited, while V-Dem's LCE is classified by us as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also limited.

11/24/1991 End Non-Electoral Transitional Regime/Start Electoral (Personalist) Autocracy: On this day, presidential elections were held for the first time, resulting in a victory for Rahmon Nabiyeu of the Communist Party of Tajikistan with 60% of the vote.¹² In 1992 Tajikistan was engulfed in civil war. In August 1992, demonstrators in Dushanbe seized Nabiyeu and forced him at gunpoint to resign. The speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Akbarsho Iskandarov, a close associate of Nabiyeu, became acting president. Hence, the regime did not change. On 11/06/1994 Emomali Rahmonov, who had held the position of de facto president since 1992, campaigned for the reinstated position of president with the backing of the Communist Party of Tajikistan, although he was not formally nominated by the party. He secured 59.5% of the votes and emerged as the winner. According to a 1995 report by the US State Department, the election process was deemed unfair as it favored the incumbent ruler and there were reports of intimidation, ballot-box stuffing, and suspected vote rigging.¹³ Rahmonov has held the presidency since 1994, and has secured reelection victories in 1999, 2006, 2013, and 2020.¹⁴ All these elections have been criticized as unfair and lacking in freedom.¹⁵ Parliamentary election on 03/02/2025 took place without any independent international observers present, and the results were as expected: an overwhelming victory for the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP). Led by President Emomali Rahmon, the PDP secured 49 of the 63 seats, further solidifying the regime's long-standing dominance. The election process was widely criticized by international bodies due to the lack of formal guarantees for observer access and limited media accreditation.¹⁶ Elections in Tajikistan can be largely seen as a façade intended to portray democratic processes and institutions to an international audience. Both local and international observers have consistently labelled elections as fraudulent, lacking even the most basic political competition. Based on our observations, multiparty executive and legislative elections were held during this period, which aligns with the observations of LIED. Throughout the entire period, according to the LIED indicator, no competitive elections were held. V-Dem's CEI suggests that from 1992 to 1993, the cleanliness of elections was ambiguous. In 1994, the indicator reflects a shift towards elections that were not genuinely clean, and from 1995 onwards, the CEI indicates a complete lack of electoral cleanliness in the country. V-Dem's EF&FI indicator suggests that elections from 1991 to 1993 had some degree of freedom and fairness. However, from 1994 to 2014, the indicator shows a steady decline, with elections becoming increasingly devoid of real freedom and fairness. Between 2015 and 2019, the EF&FI reflects a total absence of electoral freedom and fairness. Since 2019, the indicator suggests a slight improvement, although the

elections are still not truly free and fair. Presidential leadership has remained unchanged since 1994, with the president-led People's Democratic Party of Tajikistan (PDPT) controlling the parliament since 2000. The PDPT has served as a mechanism for consolidating regional elites and the president's allies under a single political entity. Consequently, public trust in the election process is minimal.¹⁷ Per FH's evaluation for 1991, the country scores from 9 to 10 as not free, which we categorize as rather not free. As classified by FH for the rest of the regime period, the country is scored from 11 to 14 as not free, which corresponds to our interpretation of not free. Regarding the political liberties they were not present according to LIED. Our interpretation of V-Dem's PCLI states multiple changes during the time. Not really political liberties were present in 1992, from 1998 to 2001, and from 2004 to 2014. Between 2001 and 2003 political liberties were in an ambiguous state. In the remaining years no political liberties were present. According to Polity5, from 1991 to 1997, the executive encountered slight limitations on decision-making power imposed by other institutions. From 1998 to 2002, the executive's constraints were categorized as Intermediate Category 2, between slight and substantial limitations. From 2003 onward, the executive's authority was subject to minor institutional constraints during this time. Since 1992, V-Dem's JCE is interpreted by us as indicating that judicial constraints on the executive were absent, and V-Dem's LCE is similarly interpreted as indicating that legislative constraints on the executive were also absent.

Electoral (Personalist) Autocracy as of 07/01/2025 continued.

Additional sources (Atkin 1997, Grotz 2001a)

Notes

- ¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Turkestan
- ² <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajikistan>
- ³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Soviet_Federative_Socialist_Republic
- ⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turkestan_Autonomous_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_Asian_Front_of_the_Russian_Civil_War
- ⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bukharan_People%27s_Soviet_Republic
- ⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Soviet_Union#Treaty_on_the_Creation_of_the_USSR
- ⁸ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajik_Autonomous_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajik_Autonomous_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ¹⁰ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tajikistan#Soviet_Rule_\(1920%E2%80%931991\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_Tajikistan#Soviet_Rule_(1920%E2%80%931991)),
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tajik_Soviet_Socialist_Republic
- ¹¹ <http://tinyurl.com/8fmesb3>
- ¹² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1991_Tajik_presidential_election
- ¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1994_Tajik_presidential_election
- ¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_Tajikistan
- ¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2020_Tajik_presidential_election
- ¹⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2025_Tajik_parliamentary_election
- ¹⁷ <https://bti-project.org/en/reports/country-report/TJK>

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