Freedom House

NATIONS IN TRANSIT 2017

Tajikistan

CONSOLIDATED AUTHORITARIAN REGIME

6 /100

Democracy Percentage	5.95 /100
Democracy Score	1.36 /7

LAST YEAR'S DEMOCRACY PERCENTAGE & STATUS

8 /100 **Consolidated Authoritarian Regime**

The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year. The Democracy Percentage, introduced in 2020, is a translation of the Democracy Score to the 0-100 scale, where 0 equals least democratic and 100 equals most democratic.

Score changes

- Judicial Framework and Independence rating declined from 1.25 to 1.00 due to the continued campaign against human rights lawyers and their families, and the selective use of the judicial system to punish dissent.
- Independent Media rating declined from 1.75 to 1.50 due to new guidelines that officially acknowledge the government's right to censor the independent media, and the establishment of a Single Communications Nexus allowing the government to monitor calls, text messages, and online activity of citizens.
- Corruption rating declined from 1.50 to 1.25 due to ample evidence of dominance of all sectors of the economy by a small group of families tightly linked to President Rahmon.

Executive Summary

By EDWARD LEMON

In 2016, the government consolidated many of the authoritarian developments of the previous year. Although opposition parties exist, Tajikistan resembles a one-party state. In May, following a flawed referendum, President Emomali Rahmon became "Leader of the Nation," elevating him above the law and allowing him to rule the country indefinitely. Rahmon has increasingly developed a cult of personality centering on himself; the state media praise him for his achievements in developing the nation. On November 16, citizens celebrated President Day for the first time to mark the 24th anniversary of Rahmon's leadership. Insulting the "Leader of the Nation" will be punishable by up to five years in jail, after the parliament approved changes to the Penal Code in November. The official narrative warns of the dangers of "foreign" culture—both Western and Islamic—calling on Tajik citizens to support the government as it builds "peace" and "stability."

At the same time as strengthening its own position, the government continued to marginalize the opposition in 2016. The constitutional amendments passed in the May

referendum included an article banning faith-based political parties. This prevents the country's leading opposition party, the Islamic Renaissance Party—which was banned in 2015—from reforming. Party leader Muhiddin Kabiri, who currently lives in exile, was placed on the INTERPOL wanted list in September. The Supreme Court gave fourteen leading members of the party long prison sentences in June. Following a silent protest of opposition activists at the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in September in Warsaw, counter-protests against the opposition took place across Tajikistan. The security services detained up to 50 relatives of opposition members and mobs attacked family members.

The government has also targeted those reporting on the political situation or helping the opposition. Criminal defense lawyers have been implicated in the crimes of their defendants, and the already weakened criminal defense system is almost non-existent in the country. Two human rights lawyers who defended opposition activists were accused of "extremism" and given long prison sentences by the Supreme Court in October. Websites reporting stories that portray the government negatively are routinely blocked. In January, President Rahmon signed a law requiring internet providers to offer their services to clients via the government-controlled Single Communications Nexus, allowing it to monitor the internet more closely. Despite the fact that journalists practice self-censorship, in August the State Committee on Television and Radio nonetheless published guidelines granting the government the right to censor independent television and radio stations, as well as those controlled by the state.

Civil society continues to operate under growing pressure from the government. Following amendments to the Law on Public Associations in 2015, a March 2016 decree adopted by the government stipulates that NGOs need to notify the Ministry of Justice about all new grants received from foreign donors within 10 days. While the implementation of the law remains inconsistent, it constitutes a further restriction on the activities of civil society in the country. Under the guise of fighting extremism, the government continued to restrict the activities of outwardly religious citizens. Police have forcibly shaved men with beards, forced women to remove their hijabs, and a 2011 law prohibits children from praying in mosques.

From traffic police soliciting small bribes to multi-million dollar embezzlement, corruption and cronyism pervade all levels of Tajik society. Corrupt officials control key public economic assets, such as the Talco aluminum smelter, and have created personal slush funds by diverting profits to offshore accounts. President Rahmon has appointed relatives to key government and business positions. In January 2016, he appointed his daughter Ozoda head of the presidential administration. The constitutional amendments approved by the May referendum lowered the minimum age for presidential candidacy to 30 years. This would allow Rahmon's son, Rustam Emomali, to run in 2020.

Tajikistan remains the poorest country in postcommunist Eurasia. While money sent back from migrants working outside of the country comprises an equivalent of one third of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), remittances fell by 67 per cent in 2015. With a rising number of non-performing loans and a weakening currency, Tajikistan's banking sector is in crisis. [1] TojikSodirotBonk, the country's second largest lender, went into crisis administration in May due to its insolvency.

Outlook for 2017: With leading opposition movements classified as "terrorist" groups, we can expect to see a continued crackdown on all forms of dissent, as well as on the families of those exiled as a result of their political activities. Meanwhile, President Rahmon is increasingly creating a personality cult centered on the "leader of the nation". His new title gives him the right to run beyond his current term, which ends in 2020. Few Tajik citizens are reaping the rewards of independent statehood. As the economic slowdown in Russia looks set to continue, remittances sent back by the one million Tajik citizens working abroad will remain low.

National Democratic Governance 1.00-7.00 pts

Considers the democratic character of the governmental system; and the independence, effectiveness, and accountability of the legislative and executive branches.	**1.00** / 7.00

- Although opposition parties nominally exist, the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) dominates the political field, and President Emomali Rahmon has held power since 1992. Tajikistan increasingly resembles a *de facto* one-party

state. Rahmon relies on a system of patronage, pliant judicial bodies, the monopolization of the production of information, and the State National Security Committee (GKNB)—the country's ruthless secret police—to maintain control. The state media and institutions extol the benefits of the current regime, praising Rahmon, who has increasingly cultivated his own cult of personality.

- In May 2016, a referendum approved 41 changes to the constitution, including declaring President Rahmon to be "leader of the nation" and "founder of peace," rendering him legally immune and allowing him to rule indefinitely. A previous referendum in 2003 had extended his term from five to seven years, allowing him to run until 2020. The changes also included a ban on faith-based political parties, which prevents the Islamic Renaissance Party from reforming.
- The changes pave the way for President Rahmon to remain in power indefinitely. The 64-year-old Rahmon is increasingly thinking towards political succession. The evidence suggests that he aims to keep the government in family hands. The constitutional amendments also included lowering the age limit for running for president from 35 to 30, allowing Rahmon's 29-year-old son, Rustam Emomali, to potentially stand in the 2020 presidential elections. Known in Tajikistan as something of a playboy, Rustam Emomali was promoted through the ranks of the government, being appointed head of the State Agency for Financial Control and Measures against Corruption in 2015. Rustam does not enjoy the same popularity or legitimacy that his father.
- Having blamed the opposition Islamic Renaissance Party (IRPT) for an attempted "coup" in September 2015, and classified it as a "terrorist organization" a few weeks later, the government continued its crackdown on members in 2016. In June, the Supreme Court sentenced 14 leading members of the party to between two years and life in prison. [2] They join hundreds of other political opposition members in prison.
- The government of Tajikistan continued to pursue opponents based outside of the country. In July, the government announced that INTERPOL issued an international arrest warrant, or Red Notice, against IRPT leader Muhiddin Kabiri. [3] The Minister of Interior, Ramazon Rahimzoda, announced that since 2015, 151 "extremists", including 133 members of Islamic State, were repatriated to

Tajikistan, with 75 of them returning "voluntarily". [4] However, the government has not always been successful in its attempts to return dissidents forcibly. In February, Group 24 member Shabnam Khudoydodova sought asylum in an EU country after being released from nine months' detention in Belarus. [5]

- Having failed to force political activists to return to the country, the government has placed pressure on their families still residing in Tajikistan. After opposition activists took part in the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's annual Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) in Warsaw in September, the Tajik delegation walked out of the conference. [6] The government detained those relatives of IRPT and Group 24 participants still residing in the country, and some family members were attacked by mobs. On September 22, the brother, sister, and mother of the former head of the IRPT in Sughd region, Ilhomjon Yakubov, were threatened with repercussions if Yakubov continued his activities. [7] In the following days, their homes were placarded by protestors, some of whom threw rocks. [8] Protestors also attacked and verbally assaulted the young daughter and niece of another participant, Shabnam Khudoydodova. Police refused to help both families. Human Rights Watch reported that 50 family members were detained in the crackdown. [9] In September, after events in Warsaw, officers from Kyrgyzstan's State Committee for National Security briefly detained the wife of Group 24 activist Sobir Valiev in Bishkek, suggesting that allied security services in the former Soviet Union are aiding Tajikistan in its crackdown. [10]

Electoral Process 1.00-7.00 pts

Examines national executive and legislative elections, the electoral framework, the functioning of multiparty systems, and popular participation in the political process.	**1.25** / 7.00

- Emomali Rahmon and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) have dominated every presidential and parliamentary election since independence. Although the 1994 Constitution and 1999 Law on Elections provide the basis for a multi-party system, elections have been marred by irregularities and allegations of fraud, including widespread ballot-stuffing, proxy voting, and intimidation. There is no

central voter register. Instead, each local electoral commission compiles voter lists, making elections susceptible to voter fraud. Opposition rallies are not permitted and the state media campaigns for the ruling PDP. After the 2015 parliamentary election, observers from the OSCE said the vote itself had "significant shortcomings, including multiple voting and ballot box stuffing," repeating their conclusions in the 2010 parliamentary and 2013 presidential elections. [11] The PDP controls the Assembly of Representatives (*Majlis Namayandagon*), holding 51 seats in the 63-seat body. Following the 2015 parliamentary elections, five opposition parties hold seats in the assembly. With the exception of the Communist Party, none of these parties offer effective opposition to government policies. The two most vocal critics of the government—the Islamic Renaissance Party and the Social Democratic Party—no longer hold seats in the assembly after the 2015 elections.

- The constitutional referendum on 22 May passed with 92 percent voting in favor. Before the vote, state media encouraged voters to approve the amendments. There was no real debate over the merits of the changes. Despite the state-controlled Central Commission on Elections and Referenda claiming that 94.5 percent of the registered electorate turned out to vote, independent journalists reported that polling stations remained largely empty throughout the day. [12] Observers from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) monitored the vote, but the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) did not. Tajik citizens could vote at 3,239 stations across the country and 38 located outside of the country. [13] If the 94.5 percent turnout were true, for example, then the majority of the one million Tajik citizens living in Russia must have voted. With only three polling stations in Russia, this would mean over 300,000 people voted at each. [14]

Civil Society 1.00-7.00 pts

Assesses the organizational capacity and financial sustainability of the civic sector; the legal and political environment in which it operates; the functioning of trade unions; interest group participation in the policy process; and the threat posed by antidemocratic extremist groups.	**1.50** / 7.00

- Western attempts to create a civil society within a democratic and capitalist Tajikistan emerged only in the 1990s, and a lack of financial sustainability continues to plague civil society. Although the country has over 2,800 registered NGOs, most are dependent on external financing; when this runs out, their activities cease. [15] The Tajik government has displayed a growing hostility toward international and domestic NGOs in recent years. Officials have frequently accused western-backed NGOs of plotting to destabilize the country. In September, the state media accused the OSCE of seeking to undermine stability in the country after it allowed opposition members to participate in an international conference in Warsaw. [16]
- Amendments to the Law on Public Associations, introduced in 2015, require all NGOs receiving foreign funding to report this to the Ministry of Justice. The Minister of Justice, Rustam Shohmurod, justified the law to "prevent foreign grants from supporting terrorists and extremists." [17] In March 2016, the government adopted a decree stipulating that NGOs need to notify the Ministry of Justice about all new foreign grants within 10 days. [18] Although the law remains unevenly enforced, it can be used to close down NGOs. After spending a week in Tajikistan in March, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, David Kaye, concluded that "protections are eroding as the Government punishes dissent, limits access to alternative voices in the media and online, and shrinks the space for civil society." [19] The government uses inspections by the Tax Committee and the Labor Regulator to pressure NGOs working in politically sensitive fields. Civil society representatives have reported seeing letters from the State Committee on National Security ordering the Tax Committee to initiate inspections. [20]
- Meanwhile, Tajikistan's government actively supports the creation of an "imitation civil society", in part by adopting a separate standard of law enforcement for self-proclaimed grassroots movements holding views consistent with the government's anti-opposition rhetoric. [21] The Ministry of the Interior, for example, provides support to Avangard, an ostensibly independent youth movement established in 2015 to fight extremism, to spread the government's narrative among students. [22] Avangard was behind rallies in several Tajikistani cities—including one outside the OSCE office in Dushanbe—

protesting the opposition presence at the Warsaw HDIM conference in September. [23]

- The government continued to use the fight against terrorism to legitimize its close management of religious practices in the country. According to official statistics, at least 1,400 citizens have travelled to Syria and Iraq to take part in hostilities there. [24] The government claims that the majority of these individuals are conservative Salafi Muslims. [25] Responding to this perceived threat, the government has introduced measures to tightly regulate religious expression. The 2012 Law on Parental Responsibility forbids minors from praying in mosques and restricts access to education. Since 2014, the government has paid imams a salary, and imams are required to read sermons prepared by the authorities. [26] Officials have also dissuaded citizens from displaying signs of piety, framing this as "foreign" to national culture. [27] In January, officials in Khatlon claimed to have "encouraged" 13,000 men with beards to shave, to have closed 160 shops selling hijabs, and to have convinced 1,773 women to stop wearing the headscarf. [28] While 19 madrassahs operated in the country until 2009, the government refused them registration and then finally announced their closure in September. [29] The state keeps a close eye on potential sources of opposition, in particular religious practices. Local officials use a mixture of informal and formal measures to monitor citizens. In October, Dushanbe mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaydulloev signed a decree requiring all of the capital's mosques to install surveillance cameras to guarantee "public safety." [30]

Independent Media 1.00-7.00 pts

Examines the current state of press freedom, including libel laws, harassment of journalists, and editorial independence; the operation of a financially viable and independent private press; and the functioning of the public media.	**1.50** / 7.00

- Tajikistan's government continues to severely curtail freedom of information. While the constitution, the Law on Access to Information, the Law on Television and Broadcasting, and the Law on Periodical Print and Other Mass Media grant

freedom of expression, and prohibit censorship and state interference with the media, in reality, the state tightly regulates the independent media. Article 137 of the Criminal Code prohibits "slandering" the president, and Article 330 prevents journalists from insulting other officials. Most journalists practice self-censorship. Journalists who write critical stories are likely to receive threats from the intelligence services, or to face libel charges or even arrest.

- The government controls most printing presses, newsprint supplies, and broadcasting facilities in the country. Tajikistan's media licensing commission routinely denies licenses to independent outlets, or otherwise obstructs the licensing process. No member of an independent media outlet or civil society is currently a member of the licensing committee. [31] The State Committee on Television and Radio (SCTR), headed by a presidential appointee, regulates and oversees broadcasting at the national and regional level. In May, amendments to the Law on the Periodical Press and Other Mass Media were signed into law. The law makes it easier for the government to close down media outlets. [32] In August, the government introduced new "guidelines for the production of television and radio programs." Unlike previous decrees, which were limited to censoring state media, the new guidelines gave the State Committee on Television and Radio the right to "regulate and control the content of all television and radio networks regardless of their type of ownership." [33] The decree called on journalists to produce work that was in keeping with "national values" and helps to maintain "unity". Although self-censorship is widely practiced by independent journalists, this was the first time the government of Tajikistan legalized the censorship of independent media.
- As of May 1, 2015, there were 580 registered media outlets in Tajikistan; 378 of these were non-state media, including private, public, independent, and unsubsidized outlets. [34] The independent media operates under both financial and governmental pressure. In November, the newspaper *Nigoh* and website TojNews both halted publication. [35] Although 44 television and radio stations operate in Tajikistan—of which 28 are non-state owned—state-controlled television channels that praise the ruling party are the only media outlets broadcasting nationwide. [36] Most people have access to international, primarily Russian, channels via satellite television. Newspaper circulation is

small, with state-owned newspapers having the largest circulation. Most independent agencies print under 4,000 copies per week, while estimates of state-run newspaper *Minbari Khalq* and *Jumhuriyat's* circulations differ drastically. [37]

- An estimated 3.7 million Tajiks use the internet. [38] As the internet has gained popularity among Tajiks, and became a forum for discussing political issues, the state-run Communications Service, led by Rahmon family member Beg Zukhurov, has routinely blocked websites and social networks that broadcast criticism of the authorities in recent years. Such blockages most often come at times of instability, or the when government fears unrest. In October 2014, for example, opposition movement Group 24 used social media to call for protests in Dushanbe. The authorities quickly blocked access to hundreds of websites. [39] In January 2016, President Rahmon signed a law requiring internet providers to offer their services to clients via the government-controlled Single Communications Nexus. [40] The move allows the government to monitor all communications, and could facilitate the blocking of sites and the prosecution of political activists. [41] In May, news websites *Ozodagon*, *Asia Plus,* and *Radio Ozodi* were inaccessible in the country. [42] Officials from the Communications Service have repeatedly denied blocking websites. [43]

Local Democratic Governance 1.00-7.00 pts

Considers the decentralization of power; the responsibilities, election, and capacity of local governmental bodies; and the transparency and accountability of local authorities.	**2.00** / 7.00

- Tajikistan's local government bodies serve as an extension of the central government's power. Tajikistan is divided into four administrative provinces (*viloyat*) with limited autonomy. These provinces are further divided into 58 districts (*nohiya*) and 406 municipalities (*jamoat*), in addition to numerous towns and villages. Although the 1994 Constitution granted Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous status, in reality the central authorities have curtailed its autonomy.

- In recent years, the central authorities have brought areas that enjoyed some autonomy, such as the Rasht Valley and Gorno-Badakhshan, more firmly under its control. This process of state consolidation has relied on coercion and cooptation. The authorities have forcibly removed local leaders and their supporters. Many of these local leaders fought with the opposition during the civil war and were incorporated into the government as part of the 1997 peace deal, and have been replaced by individuals with greater loyalty to the central authorities. [44] While the 2009 law on local self-governance provided for the devolution of power, the central authorities maintain a tight grip over the regions. The law included a provision by which municipal councils could design their own budgets and elect jamoat leaders, but the government has failed to devise a mechanism to realize this despite millions of dollars of donor assistance.
- Following the practice of the Soviet Union's central government, President Rahmon appoints the governors of provinces and districts, including the long-serving mayor of Dushanbe. Although most only hold these appointments for a brief period, a few individuals have managed to keep their positions for longer periods, amassing personal fortunes. Dushanbe mayor Mahmadsaid Ubaydulloev has held his position since 1996. Another person who has used his position in local government to build his power base is Prime Minister Kohir Rasulzoda, who was Chairman of Sughd region from 2006 to 2013.
- Approximately 70 percent of Tajikistan's population lives in rural areas. Agricultural production, primarily cotton production, accounts for almost 20 percent of the country's GDP and two thirds of the domestic labor force. [45] Since 1997, land has slowly been decollectivized. While the state owns all arable land, 83 percent of this is now worked by 108,035 privately owned *dekhan* (peasant) farms. In August, President Rahmon signed a new "Law on Dekhan Farms", developed with the support of USAID. [46] The law recognizes *dekhan* farms as legal entities and extends shareholder rights to sell products, set prices, and to construct structures on land. [47] Despite this land reform, problems with governance and corruption persist. Many *dekhan* farms have remained only nominally private and are collective in all but name. [48] The financial benefits of farming in Tajikistan largely favor the investment-monopoly

intermediary firms that act as loan sharks, providing agronomic inputs to the farmers at inflated prices and reserving the right to purchase the year's harvest at low prices. [49]

Judicial Framework and Independence 1.00-7.00 pts

Assesses constitutional and human rights protections, judicial independence, the status of ethnic minority rights, guarantees of equality before the law, treatment of suspects and prisoners, and compliance with judicial decisions.	**1.00** / 7.00

- Tajikistan's justice system remains highly politicized. Trials of political opponents take place behind closed doors and the proceedings lack transparency. Justice is selectively meted out, with loyal officials enjoying impunity and potential rivals facing punishment. "Extremism" remains loosely defined in the Law on Extremism and Criminal Code, allowing anyone who threatens the government to be labelled as such.
- The government continues to implicate criminal defense attorneys in the crimes of their defendants. Human rights lawyers Buzurgmehr Yorov and Nuriddin Mahkamov, who defended clients—including members of Group 24 and the IRPT—accused of "extremism", were tried behind closed doors in September. In October, the Supreme Court sentenced Mahkamov to 21 years in prison and Yorov to 23 years. [50] Yorov's brother, Jamshed, also a lawyer, was detained on August 22, and later released without charge. [51] Having arrested two lawyers who defended former Industry Minister Zaid Saidov in 2014, a local court sentenced the son of the third lawyer Iskhok Tabarov to 13.5 years in prison on "extremism" charges in February. [52] Another of Tabarov's sons was arrested in March 2016, and in June was sentenced to six months in jail. [53] Such practices have weakened criminal defense to the extent that it is barely functioning in the country.
- Tajikistan employs a confession-based investigative and policing system, and despite an official denial by the Supreme Court, law enforcement bodies often use torture to extract confessions. [54] In May, the government passed amendments to the Law on the Procedure and Conditions for the Detention of

Suspects, Accused Persons and Defendants. [55] The law guarantees access to lawyers and visitation rights for the relatives of detainees. Yet, at the same time, the security services have had their legal powers extended. In October, amendments to the Law on National Security Agencies were introduced to parliament. These changes give the security services the right to search property without a court order. [56]

- Those detained on politically motivated charges are particularly susceptible to mistreatment. Opposition activists report that in the summer of 2016 two detained IRPT members, Kurbon Mannonov and Nozimjon Tashripov, died in prison. [57] According to his family, Tashripov's body showed visible signs of torture. The authorities have also reportedly denied medical care to Hikmatullo Saifullozoda, a vocal critic of the government and former chief editor of IRPT's newspaper. [58] IRPT deputy chairman Mahmadali Hait legs were reportedly broken, although his wife denied the allegations when visiting him on August 20. [59] The security services nonetheless detained Hait's wife and son two days later. [60]
- Tajikistan's conscription-based army upholds a culture of hazing and abuse. Numerous recruits die each year as a result. In recent years, the government has appeared to crack down on such practices, prosecuting those responsible. In May, a military court sentenced two officers and a soldier to between four and 14 years in prison over their role in the death of border guard Farrukhjon Haitaliev. [61] Charges were laid against another officer for the killing of Ramazon Sobirov in August. [62]
- To celebrate the 25th anniversary of Tajikistan's independence, in August the Ministry of Justice announced an amnesty affecting approximately 12,000 detainees, persons on probation, and those subject to ongoing investigations. [63] The amnesty primarily benefited women, veterans, minors, those over 55 years of age, foreign nationals, and those with health problems. The law specifically ruled out pardons for those convicted of murder, terrorism, and religious extremism. Human rights lawyer Shuhrat Qudratov, who was accused of bribing judges and sentenced to nine years in January 2015, [64] was released under in the amnesty. [65]

Corruption 1.00-7.00 pts

Looks at public perceptions of corruption, the business interests of top policymakers, laws on financial disclosure and conflict of interest, and the efficacy of anticorruption initiatives.	**1.25** / 7.00

- Nepotism, cronyism, extortion, and bribe-seeking by government officials pervade all levels of Tajikistani society. From small bribes paid to traffic police to families spending hundreds of dollars in informal payments to avoid compulsory military service, corruption is a part of everyday life in Tajikistan.
- Tajikistan remains a kleptocracy. A small group of families close to the president dominates politics, the domestic market, and foreign trade. Business and politics are inextricably intertwined. Control of state agencies allows businesses under the authority of the presidential family to avoid following regulations, or paying taxes and tariffs. At the same time, state agencies are used to drive competitors out of business with allegations of corruption and fines for breaking regulations. Those who challenge the presidential family face severe repercussions. Successful businessman Abubakr Azizkhojayev lost his contract to produce license plates to the president's son in law. After publically complaining, Azizkhojayev was accused of "inciting national, racial, regional, or religious hatred" in February and sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison. [66]
- The president has appointed many of his family members to senior government posts. Rahmon's brother-in-law, Hasan Asadullozoda, controls Tajikistan's largest private bank, and owns an airline company and a firm that supplies bauxite for Talco, the country's state-owned aluminum company. [67] In September 2009, Rahmon appointed his then 30-year-old daughter, Ozoda Emomali, deputy minister of foreign affairs, and elevated her to first deputy minister in 2014. [68] In January 2016, he appointed her head of the presidential administration. [69] Rahmon's elder son, Rustam Emomali, was appointed head of the State Agency for Financial Control and Measures against Corruption in March 2015. [70] Officials have elevated their positions by marrying into the first family. Eldest daughter Firuza married into the Sohibov family, which has interests in cement and energy. [71] Ozoda's husband, Jamoliddin Nuraliyev, was appointed first

deputy finance minister in 2008, and in 2015 became a deputy to the chairman of the National Bank. [72] Another daughter, Parvina, is married to the son of the former Minister of Energy, Sherali Gul. Sixth daughter, TV presenter Zarina, is married to Sievush Zuhurov, the son of the head of the communications service. [73] Other relatives hold senior positions in the tax service, diplomatic service, and local government.

- Relatives of the president control key industries including cotton, cement, aluminum, and energy. Corrupt officials have used offshore accounts to siphon billions of dollars from state-owned banks and enterprises. The state-controlled Talco aluminum smelter, for example, is owned by companies based in the British Virgin Islands. [74] Instead of being reinvested into the state budget, the revenue raised by Talco was used as a slush fund for leading officials to spend on themselves. The International Monetary Fund has previously estimated that around $3.5 billion, or more than a third of the country's annual GDP, has been transferred to offshore accounts from Tajikistan. [75] In March, the Norwegian parliament launched an investigation into Talco and its dealings with aluminum company Norsk Hydro, with the view to uncovering Talco's beneficial owner. [76]
- A United Nations report in 2012 indicated that roughly one third of Tajikistan's GDP comes from the trafficking of heroin across the country's 1,350-kilometer border with Afghanistan. [77] Other experts have given a more circumspect estimate of 20 to 30 per cent. [78] Whereas approximately 100 to 115 tons of heroin and opium transits the border each year, law enforcement offers seized just 1.75 tons in 2015. [79] Low public sector salaries and a culture of corruption help explain these low seizure rates.
- While corrupt officials are plundering the state, the government claims to be fighting corruption. According to President Rahmon, since 2011, 1,200 individuals have been prosecuted on corruption charges. [80] Corruption charges serve as a way to remove political opponents. In 2013, for example, former industry minister Zaid Saidov was charged with corruption after he attempted to establish a political party. Saidov was arrested and jailed for 51 years. [81]

AUTHOR: Edward Lemon is a postdoctoral research scholar at the Harriman Institute, Columbia University, New York

Note

The ratings reflect the consensus of Freedom House, its academic advisers, and the author(s) of this report. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s). The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 7 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 1 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year. The Democracy Percentage, introduced in 2020, is a translation of the Democracy Score to the 0-100 scale, where 0 equals least democratic and 100 equals most democratic.

Footnotes

1. "Republic of Tajikistan: Financial System Stability Assessment Report", International Monetary Fund, 9 February 2016, https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/cat/longres.aspx?sk=43683.0
2. "Tajikistan: Opposition leaders sentenced to life in jail", EurasiaNet, 2 June 2016, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/79041
3. "ВКД: Интерпол дар ҷустуҷӯи Кабирӣ аст" [Police: Interpol is looking for Kabiri], Radio Ozodi, 22 July 2016, http://www.ozodi.mobi/a/27873506.html
4. "МВД: В Таджикистан возвращены более 150 граждан, обвиняемых в терроризме и экстремизме" [MIA: More than 150 citizens accused of terrorism and extremism returned to Tajikistan], Asia Plus, September 2016, http://news.tj/ru/news/tajikistan/security/20160920/mvd-v-tadzhikistan-...
5. "Шабнам Худойдодова на свободе!" [Shabnam Hudoydodova is free!], Blog, 22 February 2016, http://nadejda-atayeva.blogspot.com/2016/02/blog-post_22.html

More footnotes

On Tajikistan

See all data, scores & information on this country or territory.

See More

Country Facts

Global Freedom Score

9 /100 **Not Free**

In Other Reports

Freedom in the World 2017

Other Years

2020

Be the first to know what's happening.

Email

Subscribe

Join the Freedom House monthly newsletter

ADDRESS

1850 M St. NW Floor 11
Washington, DC 20036
(202) 296-5101

GENERAL INQUIRIES
info@freedomhouse.org

PRESS & MEDIA
press@freedomhouse.org

@2020 FreedomHouse