



Summary Article: **Tajikistan**
from *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

Image from:

[Tajikistan's flag was adopted in 1993. It... in Philip's World Factbook 2008-2009](#)

(təʃɪkɪstæn'), officially Republic of Tajikistan, republic (2015 est. pop. 8,192,000), 55,251 sq mi (143,100 sq km), central Asia. It borders on China in the east, Afghanistan in the south, Kyrgyzstan in the north, and Uzbekistan in the west and northwest. Dushanbe is the capital and largest city.

Land and People

Parts of the Pamir and Trans-Alai mt. systems are in the east, and the highest peaks in the country are Ismoil Somoni Peak (24,590 ft/7,495 m) and Ibn Sina, or Lenin, Peak, also known as Kuh-i-Gamo and formerly called Kaufmann Peak (23,405 ft/7,134 m). The southeast is occupied by an arid plateau c.12,000 to 15,000 ft (3,660–4,570 m) high. The only extensive low districts are the Tajik section of the Fergana Valley in the north and the hot, dry Gissar and Vakhsh valleys in the southwest. In the Fergana Valley, there are two small exclaves of Tajikistan, one surrounded by Kyrgyzstan, the other by Uzbekistan. The Amu Darya, Syr Darya, and Zeravshan are the chief rivers and are used for irrigation. Dams and irrigation projects, notably the Nurek dam and the Great Gissar Canal, have opened almost 1 million acres (400,000 hectares) of land to cultivation and also provide hydroelectric power, but the country experiences critical energy shortages in the winter when water levels are lower. The planned Roghun Dam, on the Vakhsh River, is intended to help generate additional electricity, but it has strained relations with Uzbekistan, which is concerned over access to irrigation water and other issues. In addition to the capital of Dushanbe, other important cities are Khudjand, Uroteppa, and Qŭrghontepa.

Most of Tajikistan's people are concentrated in its narrow, deep intermontane valleys. About 80% of the population is composed of Tajiks (also spelled Tadjiks or Tadziks), a Sunni Muslim people who speak a language virtually indistinguishable from Persian (Farsi). The rest of the people are mainly Uzbeks (15%), Russians, Kyrgyz, and others. Tajik is the official language. Russian, once widely spoken as an interethnic common language, has become less prevalent since independence.

Economy

Tajikistan's economy is dependent on agriculture and livestock raising. Two thirds of the population is engaged in subsistence agriculture, and as much as half of the workforce has been employed in Russia or other foreign countries; the remittances of workers abroad forms a significant portion (40% to 50%) of Tajikistan's GDP. More than half the country's population lives in poverty, and official corruption is a serious problem.

Tajikistan's lowlands specialize in the cultivation of cotton, wheat, barley, fruit (including wine grapes), vegetables, and mulberry trees (for silk). Karakul sheep, dairy cattle, goats, and yaks are raised. The republic's mountains hold deposits of silver, gold, uranium, tungsten, zinc, lead, coal, antimony, salt, and mercury, and mining and aluminum, zinc, and lead processing are important industries. There is some petroleum. Tajikistan is well provided with hydroelectric resources, but due to poor management the country has suffered from seasonal power shortages in recent years. Other industries include light manufacturing (textiles, chemicals, and fertilizers) and food processing.

Aluminum, electricity, cotton, fruits, vegetable oil, and textiles are exported. Imports include electricity,

petroleum products, aluminum oxide, machinery and equipment. Trade is primarily with the Netherlands, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Turkey. The country's economic problems and political turmoil have led Tajikistan to become an important heroin smuggling transit point.

Government

Tajikistan is governed under the constitution of 1994. The president, who is head of state, is popularly elected for a seven-year term and is eligible for a second term (the limitation does not apply to President Emomali Rakhmon). The government is headed by the prime minister, who is appointed by the president. There is a bicameral legislature. The National Assembly has 34 members; 25 are selected by local deputies, eight are appointed by the president, and one seat is reserved for the former president. Members of the 63-seat Assembly of Representatives are popularly elected. All legislators serve five-year terms. Administratively, the country is divided into two provinces and the autonomous province of Gorno-Badakhshan, the eastern half of Tajikistan.

History

The people of Tajikistan are probably descended from the inhabitants of ancient Sogdiana. By the 9th and 10th cent., the Tajiks had achieved much success in fruit growing, cattle raising, and the development of handicrafts and trade. The Tajik territory was conquered by the Mongols in the 13th cent. In the 16th cent., it became part of the khanate of Bukhara. By the mid-19th cent., the Tajiks were divided among several internally weak khanates.

Russia took control of the Tajik lands in the 1880s and 90s, but the Tajiks remained split among several administrative-political entities, and their territories were economically backward and were exploited for their raw materials. In the aftermath of the 1917 Russian Revolution, the Tajiks rebelled against Russian rule; the Red Army did not establish control over them until 1921. Tajikistan was made an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan in 1924; in 1929 it became a constituent republic of the USSR. In the 1930s canals and other irrigation projects vastly increased cultivated acreage as agriculture was more thoroughly collectivized; population also increased rapidly. Further expansion of irrigated agriculture occurred after World War II, especially in the late 1950s, as the area became increasingly important as a cotton producer. In 1978 there were anti-Russian riots in the republic.

In Dec., 1990, the Tajikistan parliament passed a resolution of sovereignty. The Republic of Tajikistan declared its independence in Sept., 1991, and in December it signed the treaty establishing the Commonwealth of Independent States. When the acting president sought to suspend the country's Communist party, the Communist-led parliament replaced him, and former Communist party chief Rakhmon Nabiyev was elected president in Nov., 1991. In 1992, Nabiyev was deposed by opposition militias.

An ethnically based civil war quickly erupted. Forces allied with the former Nabiyev government retook the capital and most of the country, and the parliament elected Russian-supported Emomali Rakhmonov president. Fighting between government troops, supported by the Russian army, and pro-Islamic forces, with bases and support in Afghanistan, persisted along the Afghan border despite a number of cease-fires. In the Nov., 1994, elections, which were boycotted by the Islamic opposition, Rakhmonov defeated another former Soviet leader to retain the presidency. In early 1996 there was a brief mutiny by Uzbek commanders, who seized towns in the south and west.

A peace accord was signed between the government and opposition forces in mid-1997, but some

factions continued fighting. In a 1999 referendum, voters backed constitutional changes that would extend the president's term to seven years and allow the formation of Islamic political parties, and Rakhmonov was subsequently reelected. By the end of the 2000 a truce prevailed in most of Tajikistan. From 30,000 to 100,000 were estimated to have died in the fighting, and war and neglect had devastated much of the country's infrastructure, making the nation one of the poorest in the world. The government has continued to mount crackdowns against any Muslims that it regards as extremists, closing a number of mosques, contributing to simmering Islamist militancy.

Tajikistan remains dependent on support from Russia's military to preserve its tenuous stability and security, although Russian help patrolling the Afghan border ended in 2005 and Russia's military presence was scaled back a decade later. Russian economic aid is also extremely important. A drought in W and central Asia in the late 1990s had particularly severe consequences in impoverished Tajikistan. The Feb., 2005, parliamentary elections resulted in a lopsided victory for the ruling People's Democratic party (PDP); the results were denounced by opposition parties, the usually progovernment Communist party, and European observers. The president's reelection in Nov., 2006, was boycotted by the main opposition parties and generally regarded as neither free nor fair. In Mar., 2006, President Rakhmonov called upon Tajiks to revive their national traditions and derussify their names; he changed his surname to Rakhmon.

Long-standing tensions with Uzbekistan over Tajikistan's construction of additional hydroelectric facilities on the Vakhsh River, which could reduce the flow of water needed for irrigation in Uzbekistan, led Uzbekistan to withdraw from the Central Asian power grid in late 2009, preventing the importation of electricity into Tajikistan during the winter months. In further moves to isolate Tajikistan, Uzbekistan also has held up transit of goods via rail, increased tariffs on goods transported to Tajikistan, and interrupted natural gas as well as electricity supplies to Tajikistan.

In Feb., 2010, the PDP again won a lopsided victory in the parliamentary elections, and the balloting was again denounced for failing to meet democratic standards. An ambush in September of government forces in the Rasht valley in the east led to fighting in the region between government forces and militants that continued into 2011; in mid-2012 there was fighting around Khorugh between government forces and armed groups associated with several warlords. President Rakhmon was reelected in Nov., 2013; the only significant opposition candidate had been banned from running. The PDP again secured a landslide parliamentary electoral win in Mar., 2015.

In Sept., 2015, the government accused a deputy defense minister and others associated with the former opposition forces of attempted mutiny; the minister was ultimately killed in fighting. Amid a severe political and religious crackdown, the only Islamist party was accused of complicity and banned, and a number of its leaders were sentenced to prison in 2016. The president was awarded the title of "Leader of the Nation" and he and members of his family were granted immunity from prosecution in Dec., 2015. In May, 2016, a constitutional amendment that exempted Rakhmon from presidential term limits was approved in a referendum. Ties between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were increasingly normalized in 2017–18, and in early 2018 a number of closed border crossings were reopened and sales of electricity and natural gas between the two nations resumed.

Bibliography

See Akinev, S. , *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union* (1986).

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Tajikistan. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/tajikistan>



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018



The Columbia Encyclopedia, © Columbia University Press 2018

APA

Tajikistan. (2018). In P. Lagasse, & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia* (8th ed.). New York, NY: Columbia University Press. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/tajikistan>

Chicago

"Tajikistan." In *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, by Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University. 8th ed. Columbia University Press, 2018. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/tajikistan>

Harvard

Tajikistan. (2018). In P. Lagasse & Columbia University, *The Columbia encyclopedia*. (8th ed.). [Online]. New York: Columbia University Press. Available from: <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/tajikistan> [Accessed 21 May 2019].

MLA

"Tajikistan." *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, Paul Lagasse, and Columbia University, Columbia University Press, 8th edition, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/tajikistan>. Accessed 21 May 2019.