

«One should not expect a radical alteration of the current management system and economic model from the future government and the team of Rustam Emomali», - mentioned Parviz Mullodzhanov, a political analyst from Tajikistan in his article for CABAR.asia.

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In the last decade, the issue of sustainability and continuity of post-Soviet political elites has become one of the most discussed topics in the former Soviet Union countries. This is not surprising, since most post-Soviet leaders came to power in the 1980-1990s and the change of generations in the leadership of these countries becomes more and more inevitable with each passing year.

Accordingly, the question immediately arises about the transit of power - that is, how exactly will the transfer of power to the next generation of politicians take place? Will the transit of power lead to serious political consequences, will it cause a temporary or even long-term destabilization of society? Another group of questions concerns the prospects for a change in the political and economic course of the country. In other words, will the transit of power lead to a significant change in foreign and domestic policy in the post-Soviet states.



The new position makes Rustam Emomali the second person in the republic. Photo: prezident.tjasia

This year, all this group of questions became the subject of discussion several times, as well as connections with Tajikistan. The reason was first the recent nomination of Rustam Emomali, the son of the current president of Tajikistan, to the position of candidate for the upper house of the Tajik parliament, and soon, on March 27 of this year, his election to the post of Chairman of the National Council of the Republic. The new position makes Rustam Emomali the second person in the republic. The question is what exactly this appointment means for Tajikistan and whether the transit of power is already a de facto solved problem in the republic.

Transit of power - what is it?

The term “transit of power” is used very often in modern political science and journalism – meanwhile, there is no single definition for it. Some scholars use this term only to mean a transition from an authoritarian to a democratic form of government. – that is, more simply, from authoritarianism to democracy. Others mean by this term only transfer of power from one government or ruling elite to another. Most likely, in our post-Soviet realities, the

transit of power means precisely the transfer of the fullness of political power from one ruler to another - this will also be a change of generations, or simply a transition from one political faction to another.

Thus, the political elites of the post-Soviet countries, consider the transit of power only as a controlled process, that is, under the control of the top authorities on the part of the current government. Apparently, post-Soviet leaders prefer just such a controlled way of transferring power, which guarantees them the preservation of their current political and economic resources accumulated by them during their stay in power.

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The managed form of transit of power is not initially recognized by the international community as democratic - because, as a rule, democratic institutions (such as general elections) play a secondary role in this process - in fact, the entire transit process and its specific results are determined from above. However, in practice, the international community is forced to put up with this form of transit of power in authoritarian countries - because, in any case, the appearance of a democratic alternative in them is clearly not expected in the near future.

Today we see that many post-Soviet elites are in the process of developing a mechanism for the transit of power - and nowhere does this process seem to be completely finalized. The problem is that in the modern world it is not enough just to transfer political power - it is also necessary for the political successor or successors to be able to continue maintaining full power and guarantee their obligations, which is becoming increasingly difficult in today's fast-paced world.

Features of national transit

Today, regarding the political transit of power in Tajikistan, the following preliminary conclusions can already be made:

First, in Tajikistan, apparently, they also made a choice in favor of a controlled transfer of power. For quite a long time, the intrigue was only in the personality of the successor - whether he will be from the family of the current president (as it happened in Azerbaijan) or he will be elected from among closest associates and subordinates of the current president (model of Uzbekistan). Today, after the election of Rustam Emomali as Chairman of the National Council (Majlisi Milli), this issue looks already resolved - the transfer of power will

most likely occur within the framework of one family - from the older generation to the younger. In any case, most experts and observers today believe that the identity of the main political successor has already been determined.



Rustam Emomali has clearly been trained for many years for the role of the successor. Photo: fft.tj

Secondly, it should be emphasized that the country is only at the beginning of the process of the transit of power. Of course, there is still an intrigue - the possibility that Rustam Emomali will be nominated in the next presidential election (this fall). However, most political observers consider this scenario unlikely. Most likely, the candidacy of the incumbent president will be put forward in these elections, who will thus remain in power for another seven years.

Thus, at today's initial stage of transit, it is more about ensuring the continuity of the highest political power. The future recipient of the political heritage is determined - and, according to the law, in the event of any force majeure, the chairman of the National Assembly is automatically considered as acting president.

Thirdly, it should be emphasized that the Tajik system of power provides for the special role and status of the Leader of the Nation (Peshwoi Millat), which the current president Emomali Rahmon has. This means that even if Rustam Emomali goes to the next election and becomes president already this year, his father will in any case be able to control the decision-making process, being as if above the authorities - perhaps in the same form as it is currently done by the Kazakh president. Thus, even in this case, a complete transfer of power from one ruler to another is questionable to occur - most likely, there will be a kind of ruling duumvirate or tandem. At the same time, how exactly the spheres of responsibility will be divided between the two highest political figures in this case is still difficult to say today. Most presumably, the details will already be determined in the course of internal agreements.

Apparently, the Tajik authorities attach great importance to the issue of succession of power. Emomali has clearly been preparing for the role of successor for many years, successively transferring from one leadership position to another, which allowed him not only to gain management skills, but to establish contacts and form his own team. The de facto appointment of an official successor tells the domestic political elites and factions that

the authorities will not tolerate any covert political struggle between them.

This is also evidenced by the fact that recently, President Emomali Rahmon is increasingly appearing in public next to his son, their joint photographs are also progressively appearing in the press. On this basis, one can conclude that the president himself has already made his choice and designated it for all other domestic political players. The modern Tajik political system is strictly centralized – all decision-making levers are in the hands of the president. Therefore, domestic players will be forced to reckon with his decision one way or another – in any case, at this stage. Once again, President Rahmon, having the status of the Leader of the Nation, will in any case continue to play the role of supreme arbiter within the ruling elite, leveling out possible contradictions between its fractions.

Fourth, the Tajik authorities clearly demonstrate the continuity of political power for external players as well. In general, no official statements by Russia, China or Western leaders regarding the Tajik transit of power have not been made yet.

At the same time, judging by the expert and media publications, the general reaction can be described as restrained and critical – the current development of events coincides with most of the existing forecasts. In other words, the international community does not look surprised – the Tajik authorities did not expect any “less manageable”, more democratic transit options.

The main concern and doubt are expressed not so much in relation to the mechanism of transit of power, but in the stability of the current economic model of the country.

Apparently, the geopolitical partners of the Tajik authorities today are more concerned with the next question – whether the country’s economy will withstand the growing global crisis and how the Tajik authorities are going to increase its stability. In other words, from the point of view of external partners, for example, Russia, referring to the final result of the transit of power – that is, the effectiveness and adequacy of political successors. It is depending on the answers to these questions that they will determine their attitude to the mechanism of transit of power and the new political elite of the country.

Future prospects: what to expect in the next ten years?

Thus, based on the nature of the process of transit of political power that has begun, one can already make an approximate forecast regarding the dynamics and form of development of Tajikistan over the next ten years. In other words, since we know exactly who will be in power in the next few years after the election, we can draw preliminary conclusions about

how their administration will look.

In this regard, the future development of the country is as follows:

First of all, in Tajik realities, political continuity also means continuity in the economic sphere. In other words, one should not expect a radical alteration of the current management system and economic model from the future government and the team of Rustam Emomali. Representatives of the new generation of the ruling elite, who can come to power in a few years, in spite of a better education and already existing management experience, are quite adaptable and comfortable in the current system of government, which is prone to corruption and nepotism. They by no means seem to be supporters of large-scale reforms - most likely, they are aimed at modernization, and not at restructuring (*perestroika*).

From the future government and the team of Rustam Emomali, one should not expect a radical alteration of the existing management system and economic model.

Tajik transit means betting on the continuation of the current model - first of all, the main political factions and business elites clearly look interested in maintaining it. This model can be designated conditionally as state-monopoly capitalism, which means a merger between the political and business elites. In this model, development occurs through large companies that maintain a monopoly in the key and most profitable sectors of the economy. The main stake, as will now be done on macroeconomics and large-scale development projects, while microeconomics is traditionally given secondary attention.

**Possible reforms will be carried out
precisely in the framework of this model
today.**

By all accounts, even with a generational change, possible reforms will be carried out precisely within the framework of the today's model - in order to make it more viable and sustainable, able to withstand various crises and shocks, both regionally and globally. In this regard, it is possible to alleviate the conditions for small businesses, introduce modern management methods, a digital economy, the latest management methods - but, again, as part of the modernization of an existing system.

On the other hand, the existing model of economics and management is clearly unable to cope with new challenges. It is necessary to restructure the entire system of decision-making and response, but changing decisions, the creation of mechanisms and tools for real-

time assessment of events, development of strategies and so on. The way authorities of Tajikistan reacted to the coronavirus pandemic indicates serious structural problems in the public administration and management system.

In addition, the current crisis associated with the COVID-19 pandemic could drastically change the socio-economic situation in the country in the future, aggravate the contradictions between various business and political elites and lead to difficult to predict consequences.

External threats are increasing, events such as a pandemic or a fall in world oil prices pose a serious threat to the stability of the current model. Therefore, the future success of the transit of power in Tajik is in many ways more and more dependent on external factors. In addition, the Tajik authorities have less time and room to maneuver in order to neutralize the impact of these new global challenges.

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