5. Formal and Informal Political Institutions in Soviet Tajikistan

The state has traditionally been an important venue of political analysis in any society. True, ‘the state … merely provides one framework for political interaction … To proceed from here to the subordination of all other units to the state level is not only uncalled for, but probably misses the point as well’.¹ Still, it is imperative to understand the functioning of government mechanisms in order to investigate their dynamic relationship with other social actors. It has been argued that ‘the emergence of a strong, capable state can occur only with a tremendous concentration of social control. And such a redistribution of social control cannot occur without exogenous factors first creating catastrophic conditions that rapidly and deeply undermine existing … bases of social control.’²

This chapter investigates the instalment of Soviet political order in Tajikistan and its subsequent evolution. The role of coercive methods in administration, the centre–periphery relationship and especially the terms of contract between ‘rule-applying bureaucracies’ in Moscow and ‘task-achieving bureaucracies’ in the republic³ will be major points of discussion.

Restructuring of Political Authority

In 1959 Nazarsho Dodkhudoyev, the chairman of the Council of Ministers of the Tajik SSR, claimed, in a book intended for external audiences:

The Tajik people decide all their internal affairs themselves. Our government directs the entire economic and cultural development of the country. The Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. cannot annul decisions or revoke orders of the Tajik government. Finally, the sovereignty of our Republic is guaranteed by the right to secede from the Federation, granted to us by the Constitution of the U.S.S.R.⁴

Obviously, the reality was somewhat different. After all major spots of armed resistance in the territory of Tajikistan were quashed by the early 1930s, the

Soviet authorities continued to erect, at an accelerated pace, a new social order there that reflected the pattern implemented elsewhere in the USSR. It was based on

- a single universalistic ideology, which proclaimed the building of communism as the supreme goal of the country’s development
- a single economic system, heavily centralised and planned
- the principles of ‘Soviet federalism’, whereby the borderlands were gradually deprived of their autonomy in favour of Moscow, behind the ostensibly federal structure of the state.

The year 1928 was a turning point in the history of the Soviet Union. Stalin’s ‘Revolution from Above’ meant that the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (VKP[b]), or, more precisely, its administrative apparatus, had evolved as the sole centre of power in Soviet society. The period of relative political and economic liberalism of the early 1920s was over. The party now sanctioned and supervised the activities of all other social institutions. Tajikistan presented no exception to the emerging Soviet mono-organisational order. At the time of the creation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic in October 1929, the Communist Party of Tajikistan (CPT) was a formidable and well-organised force, with its 146 primary cells and 3848 members (up from 17 cells and 435 members five years before).

Moscow, however, had its doubts in regards to the loyalty of local cadres, many of whom were National Communists—carryovers from the jadid movement, such as Abduqodir Muhiddinov, head of the Tajik Government between 1926 and 1928. Until 1934, the effective management of Tajikistan remained in the hands of the Central Asian Bureau of the VKP(b) Central Committee and its proxies, such as the Central Asian Economic Council, the Central Asian Planning Committee, or plenipotentiary representatives of the All-Union Commissariats. Statements of Soviet historians to the effect that ‘this measure in no sense limited the sovereignty of the republics of Central Asia and did not infringe upon the rights of autonomous republics and regions’ are hardly credible, if

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5 As one contemporary Russian scholar observed, ‘[c]ommunism in its “purest”, utmost form implies the liquidation of the state. However, this very liquidation is viewed as the process of the absorption of all functions of the state … by the VKP [All-Union Communist Party], which would incorporate everything that is not yet the VKP … The Party’s monopoly in the state has been complicated by the state’s monopoly in all major spheres of social, economic and cultural life of the country. The state has substituted the people, and the Party has replaced the state. The Party’s monopolism has been squared.’ See: St. Ivanovich, VKP: Desiat Let Kommunisticheskoi Monopolii (Paris: Biblioteka Demokraticheskogo Sotsializma, 1928), pp. 5, 27.

6 Kommunisticheskaia partiiia Tadzhikistana v tsifrakh za 60 let (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1984), pp. 3, 22.

7 For a number of years, Ivan Fedko, the commander of the XIII Rifle Corps stationed in the republic, carried out the duties of Tajikistan’s People’s Commissar of Agriculture.

only for economic considerations: in 1931, 80 per cent of capital investments in Tajikistan were planned and implemented by the centre, bypassing local authorities.9

Stalin’s strategy of creating government structures in Tajikistan that would be unquestionably faithful to him and to the Central Committee’s Secretariat did not differ from the design applied elsewhere in the USSR and envisaged three measures: a) elimination of old cadres; b) large-scale posting of reliable officials from the centre; and c) quick promotion of suitably indoctrinated locals. The Central Asian Bureau of the VKP(b) Central Committee passed a resolution ‘About the Work of the Tajik Party Organisation’ in 1931, which stressed in particular that ‘alongside … the purification of Soviet, economic, cooperative and other apparatuses from class-antagonistic and bureaucratic elements, it is necessary to carry out mass promotion of cadres from amidst workers, kolkhoz members … tested during struggle against the bai’.10 Purges of party members and other elites in Tajikistan commenced in 1933 with the removal of the first secretary of the CPT Central Committee, M. Huseinov; the chairman of the Central Executive Committee, N. Makhsum; and the chairman of the Council of People’s Commissariat, A. Hojibaev. Their arrests were made with the standard accusations of being ‘bourgeois nationalists’, ‘enemy agents’, ‘counter-revolutionary elements’ and ‘saboteurs’.11 In May 1934, a group of 79 high-ranking officials including A. Muhiddinov, then the chairman of the State Planning Committee of Tajikistan, was executed. It was reported that Muhiddinov had objected to the renaming of Dushanbe as Stalinobod.12 In the months that followed, dozens of Tajik intellectuals, amongst them renowned poets Ikromi, Hakim Karim, Ghani Abdullo, Zehni, Fitrat, Alikhush, Hamdi and Munzim, were imprisoned, exiled or put to death. Even Sadriddin Aini, the founding father of contemporary Tajik literature, invariably loyal to the Soviet regime, was labelled ‘pan-Turkist’, ‘pan-Islamist’, a ‘Bukharan adventurist’ and a ‘homeless Baha’i’, and only the intercession of Russian colleagues saved him from arrest in 1937.13

The number of victims of Stalin’s reprisals is still to be revealed,14 however, the fact that 7883 people sentenced in Tajikistan from the 1930s to the 1950s

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9 Ocherki istorii narodnogo khoziaistva Tadzhikistana, p. 193.
12 Holiqzoda, Ta’rikhi siyosii Tojikon az istiloi Rusiya to imruz, p. 75.
14 According to the NKVD Order No. 00447, ‘On the Operation to Repress Former Kulaks, Criminals, and Other Anti-Soviet Elements’, dated 30 July 1937, 500 people were to be arrested and executed in Tajikistan, and 1300 more were to be sent to labour camps. There are reasons to believe that in its first two months alone the operation affected three times more people than originally planned. See: Y. Albats, The State within a State: The KGB and its Hold on Russia—Past, Present, and Future (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1994), pp. 80–2, and flyleaf.
have been rehabilitated (half of them posthumously)\textsuperscript{15} may be a fair indication of the scale of terror in the republic. The new leadership in Tajikistan was subservient and tolerably literate; it feared and readily obeyed directives from Moscow, if only to survive. The case of Munavvar Shogadoev, the chairman of the Central Executive Committee (later Presidium of the Supreme Soviet) of Tajikistan between 1937 and 1950, provides an excellent example of the Stalinist appointee.\textsuperscript{16} He had an impeccable social background (son of peasants, day-labourer at a cotton mill) and scant education (three years of rabfak\textemdash crash educational courses\textemdash in Tashkent). Shogadoev joined the party in the late 1920s and was appointed head of a district party committee in his native mountainous region of Gharm in 1930, where he showed himself to be an exemplary executant, having managed to recruit hundreds of fellow highlanders to take part in irrigation projects in south-west Tajikistan. He had a poor command of Russian, but the establishment of Russian schools in Gharm was amongst his main priorities. Shogadoev fully demonstrated his organisational skills and dedication in the 1940s, when, as head of the republic’s legislative body, he sanctioned and supervised the forced resettlement of tens of thousands of people from his native Gharm to the Vakhsh Valley—a project that cost scores of human lives.

The CPT, thoroughly purged and restaffed, became an organisation that could be entrusted with day-to-day management of the republic. The policy of nativisation was abandoned. Moreover, from 1930 to 1932 alone, 217 party officials were posted to Tajikistan from the centre.\textsuperscript{17} Table 5.1 illustrates the process of the ‘adjustment’ of the republic’s party structures to the demands of Stalin’s era.

### Table 5.1 Changes in the Membership and Ethnic Composition of the CPT, 1933–38

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total membership</th>
<th>Tajiks</th>
<th>Uzbeks</th>
<th>Russians</th>
<th>Others</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>14,329</td>
<td>52.9%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>7.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>4,715</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Kommunisticheskaia partiia Tadzhikistana v tsifrakh za 60 let (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1984), pp. 27, 33.

Members of traditional elite groups, even those who had hailed the advent of Soviet power, were singled out for extermination. The wave of terror affected not only the representatives of institutionalised Islam and the old status hierarchies (such as sayids\textemdash descendants of the prophet Mohammad; khojas\textemdash descendants

\textsuperscript{15} Alimov and Saidov, Natsionalnyi vopros, p. 34.

\textsuperscript{16} Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 12 April 1991.

\textsuperscript{17} E. S. Postovoi, A. I. Polskaia and N. T. Bezrukova, Ocherki istorii Kommunisticheskoi partiia Tadzhikistana (Dushanbe: Irfon, 1964), pp. 82, 101.
of the first four caliphs; *turas*—progenies of the Timurid rulers; *pirs* and *ishons*—
dynastic leaders of Ismaili and Sunni communities; and *mirs*—chieftains and
old landed aristocracy), it also destroyed the whole stratum of the Bukharan
literati, who had carefully preserved and propagated old cultural values. This
campaign swept Tajikistan in 1937—much later than in other Central Asian
republics18—but was waged with the same ferocity and yielded similar results.
Contemporaries testified that in the city of Uroteppa (Istaravshon) the public
baths were heated for a month by burning confiscated books and manuscripts
of ecclesiastical works and classical poetry.19 Naturally,

the subsequent formation of the Tajik intelligentsia largely rejected
the old cultural tradition. It consisted mainly of newcomers from the
peasantry, often the products of children’s homes and boarding schools
to whom Soviet rule had given everything and for whom a totalitarian
regime was a familiar and accustomed reality. The new intelligentsia was
not only formed by the authorities, it was also tied to representatives of
the structures of power by close, almost literally kinship bonds.20

**The Structure and Performance of Government**

The institutional foundations of the Soviet state in Tajikistan were laid in the
Constitution of 193121 and were further elaborated in the Constitution of 1937,
which was a carbon copy of the All-Union Constitution adopted in 1936. The
republic acquired a ramified set of governmental organs that was characterised
by a relatively clear-cut separation of powers and a stable structure. The official
legislature of the Tajik SSR was the Supreme Soviet, elected every four years on
the basis of universal suffrage by citizens over eighteen years of age. Articles 15,
22, 23 and 28 of the Constitution of 1937 conferred upon the Supreme Soviet the
status of the sole authoritative law-making body of Tajikistan. Yet in reality it
had little power to elaborate or endorse independent policies and acted primarily
to furnish the party’s directives with a veil of legitimacy. During 1946 and 1953,
in the heyday of Stalin’s command-administrative system of government, the
Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan was not even approached for a formal approbation
of the annual plan for economic development of the republic, in direct violation
of Article 15 of the Constitution.22

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18 *An eminent Soviet scholar dates the mass anti-religious drive in Uzbekistan from 1928. See: Saidbaev, Islam i obschestvo, p. 165.*
19 Holiqzoda, *Ta’rikhi siyossi Tojikon az istiloi Rusiya to imruz*, p. 78.
21 *In fact, the first comprehensive body of laws was ready in 1929, at the moment of the formation of the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, but its provisions could not be fully implemented at the time when large parts of Tajikistan were yet to be pacified.*
The composition of the Supreme Soviet was carefully regulated and remained stable for decades (Table 5.2), despite an impressive turnover rate of more than 50 per cent.\textsuperscript{23} It was meant to emphasise the representative nature of the republican legislature, on the one hand, and its inseparable links with the party, on the other. The chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet was always a member of the CPT Central Committee’s Bureau, and for many party functionaries, work in the organs of the national parliament provided a necessary step for their future career. Additionally, the Supreme Soviet served as a symbol of statehood of the Tajik nation: it usually had a distinct Tajik majority, inconsistent with the actual ethnic mosaic in the republic.\textsuperscript{24}

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|c|c|c|c|c|}
\hline
Convocation & Number of deputies & Women & Workers and peasants & Party members \\
\hline
IV (1955) & 300 & 33.0\% & 47.8\% & 71.8\% \\
VI (1963) & 300 & 33.0\% & 48.0\% & 69.3\% \\
VIII (1971) & 315 & 34.0\% & 50.4\% & 68.9\% \\
X (1980) & 350 & 35.1\% & 50.6\% & 68.3\% \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{Composition of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan}
\end{table}

Elections to the Supreme Soviet and local legislative bodies (regional, district, city and village soviets) were not contested; sometimes all 100 per cent of eligible voters turned up at polling stations and unanimously supported the candidate of the ‘bloc of communists and non-party people’. Plenary sessions of the Supreme Soviet conducted twice a year were formal and tedious affairs, where hardly any deputy would dare vote against a decision or abstain. Even during Gorbachev’s perestroika, important bills would be put to the vote and approved without discussion due to the apparent lack of interest on the part of the Tajik MPs.\textsuperscript{25}

At the inception of the USSR in 1922, the constituent republics were given a high degree of autonomy in handling domestic matters. Maintenance of law and order, public health, education, social welfare and agriculture was within the competence of the republics’ executive institutions; the formation of dominant federal organisations was not envisaged.\textsuperscript{26} The republics also enjoyed broad


\textsuperscript{24} Rakowska-Harmstone, \textit{Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia}, p. 112.


\textsuperscript{26} ‘Postanovlenie Plenuma TsK RKP(b) o vzaimootnosheniiakh s nezavisimymi Sovetskimi Sotsialisticheskimi respublikami. 6 oktyabria 1922g.’, in KPSS v rezoilutsiiakh i resheniiakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, Vol. 2 (Moscow: Gospolitizdat, 1970), pp. 401–2.
financial independence within their share of the All-Union budget. In the late 1920s and early 1930s, however, as the country was preparing for rapid industrialisation and forced collectivisation, the republics’ autonomy was dramatically reduced, and federal and local executive bodies were transformed to fit a super-centralised chain of command based on the branch rather than the territorial principle.

Article 39 of the 1937 Constitution identified the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan as the highest executive and administrative organ in the republic. At the same time, its status and prerogatives were not clearly defined—for example, technically it did not have the right to initiate legislation, though in reality draft bills were often prepared in ministries and state committees. Article 41 stipulated that Tajikistan’s Council of Ministers act to implement decrees and orders given by the USSR’s Council of Ministers. The latter also had the right to suspend the execution of the former’s directives, but in more than 50 years such a contingency never arose.

As elsewhere in the USSR, in Tajikistan the ministerial structure consisted of two tiers: republican ministries, answerable exclusively to the Council of Ministers of Tajikistan, and union-republican ministries of dual subordination that took orders from the central institutions (and ultimately from the Council of Ministers of the USSR) but simultaneously were under the jurisdiction of the republic’s Council of Ministers (Table 5.3). Gregory Gleason has rightfully observed that ‘this overlapping authority frequently has resulted in an awkward pattern in the distribution of responsibilities’, often leading to disputes over competence. In practice, however, the centre always had the upper hand. Its dominant positions in Tajikistan were reinforced by the fact that more than half of the republic’s gross industrial output was produced by enterprises under direct control of All-Union ministries, which are beyond even nominal control by Tajikistan’s government. Such vital industries as mining, machine-building, metallurgy, chemicals and electricity generation in Tajikistan were developed exclusively under the auspices of central institutions that did not necessarily take the republic’s demands into consideration. In the 1980s only 7–10 per cent of all industrial enterprises in Tajikistan were subordinate to the republic; the rest operated in the interests of various All-Union branches rather than those of the local economy.

Table 5.3 Ministries in Tajikistan, 1976

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>State committees and main administrations</th>
<th>Ministries</th>
<th>State committees and main administrations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union-republic organs</td>
<td></td>
<td>Republic organs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Affairs</td>
<td>Justice</td>
<td>Local Industry</td>
<td>Labour Resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interior</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>People’s Control</td>
<td>Statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Cinematography</td>
<td>Prices Policies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milk and Meat Industry</td>
<td>Land Reclamation and Irrigation</td>
<td>Vocational Technical Education</td>
<td>Agricultural Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Industry</td>
<td>Food Industry</td>
<td>Radio and TV</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procurement</td>
<td>Health</td>
<td>Supplies</td>
<td>Publishing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance</td>
<td>Trade</td>
<td>Fruit and Vegetables</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Rural Construction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building Materials</td>
<td>Communications</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total: 18</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 13</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Total: 5</strong></td>
<td><strong>Total: 1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a situation in which the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan was little more than a ceremonial institution and the republic’s executive organs acted as mere extensions of central ministries, it was the party apparatus that carried out decision-making and served as the vehicle to articulate the republic’s needs at the federal level. The party institutions permeated the entire society and were well geared to implement social control, political indoctrination and economic management. Party organs at lower levels—regional, district and city committees—had a similar configuration, with a ramified network of specialised departments that covered every aspect of life of the populace in a given territory. In the USSR, the Communist Party ceased to be just a major centre of power *primum inter pares* in the late 1920s. Under Stalin it not only became the core of the government, it also eventually subjugated or liquidated all other formal social institutions, thus putting in place the Soviet mono-organisational order where the party ‘is entrusted with integrating all the others into a single organisational whole, and does so primarily by appropriating and exercising on their behalf the key prerogatives of any autonomous organisation, namely determination of their goals, structures and leadership’.

The party performed its integrative role through: a) prescribing the innumerable rules of behaviour in the society based on its unchallenged political legitimacy; b) empowering its organs at all levels with control and coordination functions; and c) placing its cadres at the head of non-party hierarchies. Soviet legitimation—that is, ‘an acceptance, even approbation, of the state’s rules of the game, its social control, as true and right’—was based on the supreme goal of building communism, the validity of which was never allowed to be questioned. The leadership deduced intermediate tasks and objectives from this ultimate goal. Accordingly, as T. H. Rigby has noted, ‘the central role in the [Soviet] political system is played by institutions concerned with formulating the goals and tasks of the constituent units of society and supervising their execution’.

This state of affairs found formal reflection in the USSR Constitution of 1977 (Article 6) and the 1978 Constitution of Tajikistan (Article 6). Of course, it would be incorrect to assume that before this time party directives had not been legally binding for all Soviet citizens, as they most certainly were.

Officials in the legislature, government institutions, judiciary and law enforcement agencies, industrial and agricultural managers as well as the party

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33 The most obvious illustration is myriad decrees issued jointly by All-Union and republican central committees and councils of ministers on almost every matter of any importance, including staff structure, programs and budgets of public associations, theatre repertoire, erection of monuments, and so on. See: Muksinov, *Sovet ministerov soiuznoi respubliki*, pp. 28, 131, 136–7.
membership were subordinated to the party apparatus through an effective system of personnel appointments, the so-called nomenklatura system that was characterised by

first, the concentration of important positions in all official and ‘voluntary’ organisations in the nomenklature of party committees; second, the inclusion of elective positions (and most of the more important ones are in form elective); and third, the comprehensiveness of the system, which omits no position of any significance in the society, and thereby incidentally converts the occupants of nomenklatura positions into a distinct social category.34

Party organisations exercised the power of personnel selection and placement according to the administrative level on which they operated. Their spheres of jurisdiction changed frequently, but in the postwar period the general trend was for the republic and regional party committees to acquire more independence in staffing official structures.

In the 1930s, almost all positions of authority in Tajikistan, including secretaries of district and city party committees, were in the sphere of duty of the VKP(b) Central Committee.35 After Stalin’s death the situation changed dramatically. In 1960, there were more than 7000 officials of authority (otvetstvennye rabotniki) in the republic who were answerable to local party committees,36 1779 of whom were in the nomenklatura of the CPT Central Committee.37

As Rolf Theen has astutely observed:

[W]e must be aware that the appointment, advancement, transfer, and dismissal of key personnel in the apparatuses of the trade unions, the Komsomol, the central and local soviets, the administrative organs (police, courts, procuracy), the vast ministerial structure, as well as all economic and cultural organisations, are subject to a nomenklatura process controlled by the leading officials in those institutions, that is, almost invariably by members of the CPSU or non-party individuals who are considered politically trustworthy.38

37 XIII s’ezd Kommunisticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana, p. 173.
### Table 5.4 Examples from *Nomenklatura* Lists of Party Organisations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party organ</th>
<th>Powers of appointment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| CPSU Central Committee               | a) First secretary of the CPT CC, heads of departments and party control of the CPT CC, first secretaries of regional party committees  
                                         | b) Members of government, the KGB chairman, members of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, chairman of the Supreme Court  
                                         | c) Chairman of the council of trade unions, first secretary of the Komsomol, editor of the republican newspaper *Kommunist Tadzhikistanad*  
                                         | Directors of crucial industrial enterprises (for example, VOSTOKREDMET uranium complex in Chkalovsk)                                                  |
| CPT Central Committee                | a) Regional and city party secretaries and heads of departments, secretaries of district party committees in the districts of republican subordination  
                                         | b) Chairmen of the executive committees of the regional soviets and cities, judges at all levels  
                                         | c) Heads of public associations such as Society for Nature Protection, regional Komsomol leaders, editors of newspapers and magazines  
                                         | d) Directors of industrial enterprises, research and cultural institutions                                                                   |
| Regional Party Committee (obkom)*    | a) Party functionaries at the district and city levels, secretaries of primary party organisations of large factories and farms  
                                         | b) Chairmen of the executive committees of districts  
                                         | c) Secretaries of the district Komsomol committees, trade union leaders of districts  
                                         | d) Chairmen of collective farms (kolkhozy) and directors of state farms (sovkhzozy), engineers and managerial personnel of industrial enterprises,  
                                         | directors of vocational training colleges, university professors                                                                             |
| District and City Party Committee    | a) Raikom and gorkom instructors, heads of primary party cells  
                                         | b) Chairmen of local representative organs (mahalla soviets)                                                                                   |
| (raikom, gorkom)                     | c) Heads of primary Komsomol cells, functionaries of primary trade union organisations (mestkoms)                                                          |
|                                      | d) Brigade leaders at factories and farms, schoolteachers, librarians                                                                               |

* The administrative division of Tajikistan provided for the existence of districts subordinated directly to Dushanbe. In their cases, the prerogative of staffing the most important positions belonged to the CPT CC, which thus fulfilled the role of an obkom.


*Nomenklatura* lists of various bodies often overlapped and contradicted one another, but party organs always had the final say in matters involving movement of cadres. For example, the Ministry of Culture of Tajikistan would appoint graduates of its training institutions as directors of provincial clubs,
libraries and museums, but district party committees would not let them work, nominating their own candidates, who sometimes ‘could not carry out their duties on the grounds of not knowing the job’.  

It was general practice that the party committees, on top of providing universal coordination and staffing for all other agencies, were directly involved in executing local and specialised measures, especially in the economic sphere. Setting tasks for the economic development of national republics always featured prominently on the agenda of the CPSU Central Committee; suffice to say that of the 56 cases between 1931 and 1980 when Tajikistan was mentioned in resolutions passed by the highest party bodies, 49 (or 88 per cent) were of a purely economic nature and only three dealt with political issues.  

The lower the level of a party committee, the more it focused on the running of the economy. The CPT Central Committee issued one-year and five-year guidelines for economic development of the republic wherein, within the limits set by the centre, all major economic indicators and the ways to attain them were specified in a very detailed manner. At the district level, the raikoms eventually ran industrial enterprises and collective farms. As a Soviet source has stated, the district party committees often had to bear the economic-distributional functions uncharacteristic of them: to allocate funds for supply of agricultural machinery and other materials, to be thoroughly immersed into the questions of growing various crops, to coordinate the activities of economic partners, to arbitrate, etc. All this placed an excessive burden on the Party apparatus and did not allow it to indulge fully into organisational and political work.

Failure to fulfil the directives of the party organs usually meant sacking for the manager in question. The turnover amongst agricultural administrators was especially high: in 1956, more than 50 per cent of kolkhoz chairmen were replaced.  

In 1984, the first secretary of the Qurghonteppa obkom, F. Karimov, assembled more than 400 kolkhoz chairmen, brigade leaders, agronomists and other specialists from the region in a conference hall and in the course of five

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39 A. Kuvatov, ‘Podgotovka, rasstanovka i vospitanie kadrov kulturno-prosvetitelnykh uchrezhdenii (1956–1965gg.)’, in Materialy k istorii Kommunisticheskoi partii Tadzhikistana, Vypusk 4, chast II, ed. K. N. Gavrilkin (Dushanbe: Izdatelstvo TGU, 1972), p. 334. A certain Akhunov was appointed by the Kolkhozabad raikom as director of the library at Uzun only because he was an old party member, had a big family and suffered from some disability. He was barely literate at that, so this position became a genuine sinecure for him (ibid., p. 333).

40 Calculations are based on: KPSS v rezoliutsiyakh i resheniyakh s’ezdov, konferentsii i plenumov TsK, Vols 5–13 (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskoi literature, 1970–81).

41 Rol’ selskih raikomov partii v osuschestvenii agrarnoi politiki KPSS v sovremennykh usloviakh (Moscow: Izdatelstvo politicheskii literature, 1987), p. 81.

hours a special commission questioned every single one of them about his/her performance during an extraordinarily bad harvest campaign; those who could not come up with a plausible account of their work were dismissed or demoted on the spot.\textsuperscript{43}

Generally, the structure of the political system in Tajikistan conformed ideally to the common Soviet model, which remained stable from the 1930s; it consisted of a core organisation, the Communist Party of Tajikistan, and a number of specialised agencies with varying degrees of autonomy. The entire decision-making process was concentrated almost exclusively in the CPT Central Committee, which: a) initiated projects and settled conflicting interests vested in them; b) mobilised support for their implementation by launching public campaigns, coercion or otherwise; and c) put them into effect. Consequently, in Tajikistan until the late 1980s political activism was confined to covert struggle amongst units within the CPT hierarchy or to bargaining with the superior organs of the CPSU for more resources and the freedom to use them.

The Political Elite in Tajikistan: Composition, Mobility and Patronage-Building

Being on the nomenklatura list of the CPT Central Committee was a fair indication of belonging to the elite in Tajikistan; however, the governing elite (that is, according to S. F. Nadel, the group of political rulers who had decisive pre-eminence over other social and specialised elites)\textsuperscript{44} was somewhat smaller. Its membership ‘was synonymous for all practical purposes with the membership of the Central Committee of the Tadzhik Communist Party’.\textsuperscript{45} As Table 5.5 shows, ethnic Tajiks dominated the governing elite in Tajikistan in the postwar period. Prior to 1946, except for a short period in 1937, the republic’s party organisation was headed by people dispatched from Moscow,\textsuperscript{46} but after the removal of Dmitry Protopopov—a career CheKa and OGPU (both secret police organisations) and People’s Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) officer who bore personal responsibility for the purges amongst local cadres and intelligentsia—this position remained invariably in the hands of a Tajik.

\textsuperscript{43} Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 19 February 1985.
\textsuperscript{44} Adapted from: Geraint Parry, Political Elites (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), pp. 70–2.
\textsuperscript{45} Rakowska-Harmstone, Russia and Nationalism in Central Asia, p. 146.
Table 5.5 Ethnic Composition of the CPT Leadership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CC members</th>
<th>CC candidate members</th>
<th>Members of the CPT Revision Commission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Locals</td>
<td>Russians and other non-locals</td>
<td>Locals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1958</td>
<td>95 (79.8%)</td>
<td>24 (20.2%)</td>
<td>51 (86.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>96 (78.0%)</td>
<td>27 (22.0%)</td>
<td>53 (79.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1976</td>
<td>108 (78.3%)</td>
<td>30 (21.7%)</td>
<td>45 (76.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>108 (78.3%)</td>
<td>30 (21.7%)</td>
<td>45 (73.8%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Documents of the eleventh, thirteenth, eighteenth and nineteenth congresses of the CPT.

With the end of Stalin’s era of uncontrolled despotism and terror and the emergence of more stable, institutionalised and reciprocal patterns of exchange amongst various units of the Soviet leadership (the process that T. H. Rigby has referred to as the emergence of a ‘self-stabilising oligarchy’), the indigenous elites in the national republics gradually increased their participation in the administration of their respective territories. The impressive economic growth and diversification, the continuous process of social mobilisation, and the expansion of education and culture necessitated and made possible the rise of ethno-territorial bureaucracies that ‘often sought to use feelings of local “ethnofidelity” to promote government policies, and, often enough, their personal political agendas’.

The recruitment and movement of elite cadres in Tajikistan, as in any other republic of the USSR, were based on, a) objective-rational, and b) personality, factors. If under Stalin and, to a lesser degree, Khrushchev, elite careers were made and ruined primarily at the discretion of higher officials in the party hierarchy, in later years knowledge, technical and administrative skills and ‘life experience’ played an ever-growing part in the elite’s upward mobility. To advance rapidly through the party/state ranks, a person was required

- to be a Tajik
- to have a lengthy record of party membership (minimum of five years for obkom secretaries, three years for raikom secretaries and one year for primary cell secretaries)
- to have a good education (Table 5.6)
- to possess practical experience as a government official or an industrial or agricultural manager
- to show commendable administrative performance.

47 Rigby, Political Elites in the USSR, p. 217.
49 In the postwar period, all first secretaries of the CPT CC, except Bobojon Gafurov, were promoted from the position of chairman of the republic’s Council of Ministers.
Grey Hodnett has put Tajikistan into the ‘partly self-administering’ category of the Soviet republics in his exhaustive study of personnel movement in the USSR,\(^{50}\) using the criterion of native occupancy of all leading positions in a given republic. Indeed, certain crucial jobs (second secretaries of the CPT CC and regional and district party committees responsible for personnel matters, heads of industrial departments of the CPT CC and the Council of Ministers, the KGB chairman, and so on) were reserved for non-natives, usually Russians. It should be kept in mind, though, that these officials arrived in Tajikistan for a tour of duty and after its completion were transferred to other regions of the USSR. At the same time, native cadres in Tajikistan had the lowest age thresholds for positions of authority of all Soviet republics; they also faced less competition for primary leadership jobs than aspirants elsewhere in the USSR.\(^{51}\) All these favourable conditions for the Tajik elite existed only within the boundaries of the republic; it was almost impossible for a Tajik party or state official of high standing to be transferred to a higher or equal position in the All-Union hierarchy. Unlike their colleagues from Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Tajik party leaders never made it to the Politburo or Secretariat of the CPSU Central Committee. Secretaryship of the CPT CC appeared to be the limit in terms of upward mobility for local cadres; upon reaching the level of a regional party secretary or deputy minister (usually, stepping-stone posts in the Soviet personnel system), a Tajik would find it extremely difficult to make further merit-based advancement. This may explain why obkom functionaries in Tajikistan had the most protracted initial tenures in office in the entire Soviet Union: 191 months, 2.5 and three times longer than those of their Uzbek and Kazakh peers respectively.\(^{52}\)

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The tendency to let officials occupy one position in a particular region for a substantial period, especially salient under Brezhnev’s policy of ‘stability of cadres’ (1964–82), was conducive, alongside other factors, to the creation of well-established networks of informal exchange amongst elite groups in Tajikistan. As S. N. Eisenstadt has shown, the monolithic Soviet political system gives rise to areas of uncertainty which … create conditions under which patron–client relations thrive. Such conditions are also fostered by the monopolistic character of the ruling groups, which seemingly reinforces the possibility of control by various ‘stronger’ groups over access to markets and to public goods. The combination of these factors allows a very far-reaching spread of patron–client relations, their continuous reappearance, and their concentration into somewhat more enduring patterns among the central elites.\(^{53}\)

Practices of favouritism, cronyism, protection, overt and covert sponsorship not only flourished in the context of bureaucratic contacts but also pervaded the daily life of the populace under the circumstances of scarcity of the most basic commodities (food, clothes, housing) in the USSR. In Tajikistan, the viability of patronage networks was reinforced by the existence of particular patrimonial, family and sub-ethnic social institutions.

Due to a number of systemic determinants (small population, low level of industrial development, and remoteness from the centre), Tajik political leaders constantly failed to establish strong personalised cliental relationships with top bureaucrats in Moscow. Perhaps Tursun Uljaboev, the CPT CC first secretary from 1956 to 1961, came close to acquiring status as Khrushchev’s protégé: he had been selected for promotion to the position of secretary of the CPSU CC, but anti-Khrushchev opposition in the Central Committee (F. R. Kozlov, G. I. Voronov and L. F. Ilichev) effectively removed Uljaboev from the political scene.\(^{54}\) Tajikistan retained only token representation in the Central Committee, the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers of the USSR, and henceforth its elite had limited opportunities to lobby for resources. The importance of direct access to the All-Union top leadership in terms of distribution of funds to national republics can be illustrated by the following fact: over the period 1971–85, per capita investment in Uzbekistan was 1.75 times higher than in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan or Kyrgyzstan; irrigation works in Uzbekistan consumed 20.4 billion roubles of capital investments compared with the figure of 7.9 billion roubles for the three other republics combined, although the return from those investments in Uzbekistan was two to five times lower.\(^{55}\) Obviously, Sharaf


Rashidov, the first secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan (CPUz) CC, a candidate member of the Politburo and a crony of Leonid Brezhnev, was in a good position to persuade the centre to allocate additional funds to his republic.

At the level of the republic, the creation of potent patron–client dyads was a natural product of the peculiar nature of the centre–periphery relationship in the Soviet polity. Moscow assigned local authorities specific economic tasks, which were to be met at any cost. If in the course of their implementation the prescribed standard operation modes were violated or altered, the centre, more likely than not, would turn a blind eye, provided that the plans were (or appeared to be) fulfilled. In Gregory Gleason’s words:

[F]or local leaders to succeed in their charges, they must develop and steward the resources necessary to inspire, enthuse, mobilise, and promote within their republics. That is, they must develop political resources. To the extent that they succeed at this, they concentrate in their hands the ability to conduct politics in the traditional sense of the word, namely, to help friends and hurt enemies.\(^{56}\)

**Informal Political Exchange**

The concept of goal rationality as the source of the legitimation of authority in the USSR, put forward by T. H. Rigby, implied, amongst other things, that at all levels of the Soviet polity ‘the dominant rationale for evaluating social action is the achievement of prescribed tasks’.\(^{57}\) And while command mechanisms predominated in Soviet society, exchange continued to play a substantial role in coordinating social activity due to the sheer magnitude of the problems the country faced, and the physical inability of controlling institutions to offer quick and plausible solutions. Under circumstances in which the main mode of institutionalised exchange—contractual relations based on private property rights—was anathema, ‘grey’ and ‘black’ markets, corruption and other forms of informal exchange inevitably came to the fore. These phenomena were not necessarily detrimental to the Soviet system; in fact, some sociologists agree that they may have served as ‘a stabilising or conservative force in systems experiencing rapid change and institutional decay’, and they may have had ‘positive functions that were not adequately performed by formal institutions and legally devised arrangements’.\(^{58}\) The black market ‘was allowed to flourish precisely because much of the time it distributed goods and services more

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\(^{56}\) Gleason, *Federalism and Nationalism*, p. 96.


efficiently than the formal institutions of the state’. According to official statistics, in 1991 the black market accounted for 8 per cent of the USSR’s gross national product (GNP). There are reasons to believe that the figure for Central Asia, the region with strong traditions of entrepreneurial activity, was even higher. The fact that in the late 1970s an underground congress of criminal leaders adopted a resolution to charge illegal shops producing unregistered products a 15 per cent commission could be regarded as an indicator of the steady growth in the shadow economy.

Olivier Roy argues that solidarity networks based on kinship and/or patronage allow a population to resist the interference of an authoritarian state, or to ‘compensate for the weakness or corruption of the state’. Schoeberlein-Engel notes, however, the role of patronage/kin networks in ‘corruption’:

Since virtually all property and resources are state-controlled, connections are essential in order to negotiate the extra-legal and unofficial mechanisms that regulate access to the resources necessary for any kind of economic activity: permission to sell goods on the market, provision of raw materials, access to vehicles or buildings— even simply freedom from the legal or illegal interference of ‘law enforcement’ authorities. All this requires an elaborate and effective network of mutual back-scratching relationships, which most readily develop within the family framework … However, as each person seeks to maximize the breadth and effectiveness of her network, it is often expedient to draw on criteria of connections that extend beyond the family to a larger community.

This creates a tautological problem of ‘circular cause and consequence’: did state corruption force people into what is often termed ‘clan behaviour’? Or did pre-existing ‘clan behaviour’ create the corruption and the weakness of the state? It can be at least argued that the two are mutually reinforcing. Navruz Nekbakhtshoev points out the mutually reinforcing nature of the cycle,
blaming it for the proliferation of ‘clan behaviours’. He argues that the corrupt behaviour by ‘members of clan networks’ creates shortages in the economy for others and therefore creates a situation in which those outside the dominant network replicate the behaviour of that dominant group and engage in the same ‘clan behaviours’ to compensate for the shortages that were created. Rafis Abazov, for his part, sees the patronage networks of the Soviet era in Tajikistan as not a completely new phenomenon, but rather as a continuation of ‘tribal and communal (i.e., mahallagaroyi) affiliations’. As an example of such behaviour, one woman from a village in Varzob attended university in Dushanbe in the 1960s and rose through the ranks of the party. Once in a position of some power, she used her position to favour her village in the allocation of state resources, much to the resentment of people in neighbouring villages.

The ‘stability of the cadres’ during the Brezhnev era—when local officials remained in their regional positions for lengthy tenures—allowed patronage networks to thrive. Regional elites, serving long careers in the same locality, were able to strengthen their power bases and further strengthen personal allegiances and ‘localism’ (in Russian: mestnichestvo, in Tajik: mahallagaroyi). At the height of Soviet rule in the Tajik SSR, patronage networks, as well as other forms of ‘semi-legal and illegal exchange’, were commonplace. The characteristics of the centre–periphery relations in the Soviet Union allowed patronage to flourish. If local authorities could meet, or appear to meet, the goals of the prescribed economic plans, the violations on the ground would be ignored. Political patronage networks thus ‘diverted, undermined and used state power for their own end—facilitating benefits for the group’.

Regional affiliations were an important aspect of this patronage. During the Soviet era these affiliations became a source of economic and political power for the elites and a source of political and economic resources for the masses. At the republic level this patronage relationship united the elites and their regional constituencies in the competition for the resources controlled by the state.

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64 Nekbakhtshoev, Clan Politics, p. 92.
65 Nekbakhtshoev, Clan Politics, p. 92.
66 Abazov, ‘Central Asia’s Conflicting Legacy and Ethnic Policies’, p. 66. Nekbakhtshoev also portrays the clan behaviour of the Soviet era as an adaptation by pre-existing clans. See the previous note.
67 Tett, Ambiguous Alliances, pp. 75–6.
68 Kilavuz, Understanding Violent Conflict, p. 93. Kilavuz also argues that the increased ratio of the titular nationality in positions of power resulted in the expansion of local patronage networks (ibid., p. 94). See also: Akiner, ‘Prospects for Civil Society in Tajikistan’, p. 156. Bobojon Gafurov, the first secretary of the Tajik Communist Party (1946–56), wrote in 1959 that he ‘deplored “localism and friendship ties” which led to the selection of ignorant, inexperienced people who lacked “political faith”’. B. G. Gafurov, Nekotorye voprosy national’noi politiki KPSS (Moscow: Gospolizdat, 1959), p. 2, as cited in Nekbakhtshoev, Clan Politics, p. 53.
71 Roy, ‘Soviet Legacies and Western Aid Imperatives in the New Central Asia’, p. 128.
And at the oblast level the first secretaries of the local party committees (obkoms) formed local patronage networks with the help of their power to distribute resources and appoint people to official positions within the province. Beyond enriching themselves, regional leaders used their powers of economic distribution and appointment to benefit their families, friends or persons who could provide some ‘reciprocal benefit’. This system ensured that the people and the elites both had strong incentives to be loyal to their ‘regions’.

Despite the importance of regional identity, it should obviously not be mistaken as an all-determining factor for social and political behaviour. At the elite level, there are divergent interests and divisions within the ‘regionally based elite networks’ and links between elites from different regions with mutual interests. The various ‘regional identities and loyalties, while important, are not the only factor in the formation of elite networks’. Regional identities, despite their importance, should not be overstated. They are often ‘crosscut’ by other considerations. Regional identity is just one factor in the formation of high-level political power networks. Factors of ‘education, career and work experiences, self-interest, and personal relationships’ are also important in the formation of these ‘political networks with regional bases’. Kilavuz argues that these networks, while they may have a regional base, should not be considered ‘unitary actors’, as ‘[p]eople from the same region can be rivals, while people from different regions can be allies’. There are ‘sub-factions’ within a region that can both ‘ally with each other against a common competitor’ and ‘clash’ with each other.

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74 T. H. Rigby and Bohdan Harasymiw, eds Leadership Selection and Patron–Client Relations in the USSR and Yugoslavia (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), p. 6, as cited in Kilavuz, Understanding Violent Conflict, p. 92. Antoine Buisson describes a similar process: ‘Political factions work in accordance with the rule of “localism” (or mahallgerayi in Tajik, mestnichestvo in Russian), which consists in relying on people from one’s region of origin to make a career of oneself, and to promote them in return once a position has been obtained in state structures or elsewhere. This involves practices of cronyism, nepotism and patronage. Another specificity is that these solidarity networks are articulated with the state production sector. As well as with the informal and criminal sectors that were already vibrant at the end of the Soviet period. Apparatchiki and technocrats got used to diverting state economic resources and channelling them to their solidarity networks. This involved the mobilization of illegal groupings and activities that could prosper under the protection these influential political figures could ensure by working in the Party-State apparatus.’ See: Antoine Buisson, ‘State-Building, Power-Building and Political Legitimacy: The Case of Post-Conflict Tajikistan’, China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly, Vol. 5, No. 4 (2007), p. 136.
75 Luong, Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia, pp. 62–3.
76 Kilavuz, Understanding Violent Conflict, pp. 13, 80.
77 Akiner, Tajikistan, p. 41.
78 Kilavuz, Understanding Violent Conflict, pp. 14, 113.
80 Kilavuz, Understanding Violent Conflict, p. 119.
The elites in a single region may have divergent interests, making it difficult to accurately predict political behaviour based on region of origin. And as the political environment changes, the nature of these regional bases may also change. Regional loyalty is not a ‘definite or reliable criterion’ as some politicians will cooperate with whomever has the strongest network and switch their allegiance when it is in their own private interest to do so. A client will be loyal to his patron (for example, a kolkhoz boss or an obkom secretary) as long as the patron continually provides the benefits and resources (‘providing employment, promotions, assistance, welfare, permits, access to important goods and services, land, etc’). Lawrence Markowitz also rejects the notion of unitary regional political blocs in Tajikistan. He instead stresses the political contestations within these ‘blocs’ as well as the individual crosscutting ties between the blocs.

‘Clans’, Elite Families and Patronage Networks: Corruption in Action

In a situation in which lawfulness of means of achieving state goals was of secondary importance, those ‘who played by the informal rules could be assured of protection … The corrupt system was widely understood, and, for many years, quite stable’. In Tajikistan, informal political, parochial, kinship and criminal networks often overlapped and were inseparable from one another. The life and career of Abdumalik Abdullojonov, the prime minister of independent Tajikistan from 1992 to 1993, is especially illustrative in this sense. His rise began in 1983, when he divorced his Ossetian wife and married the daughter of the chief KGB officer responsible for the Nov district (now Spitamen). The bride’s mother happened to head the procurement authority of the same district. Almost immediately, the hitherto inconspicuous engineer was appointed director of the Nov bakery. Connections within the KGB helped Abdullojonov shortly afterwards: acts of embezzlement were uncovered at the bakery, but he avoided jail and was even promoted to deputy minister of grain products of Tajikistan. At this juncture he started to build his own entourage. Abdullojonov pulled some of his former subordinates out of prison and placed

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83 Kilavuz, *Understanding Violent Conflict*, pp. 121, 123.
84 Markowitz, *Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia*, p. 4.
86 Details of Abdullojonov’s biography were collected during a number of interviews in Dushanbe and Khujand in February–April 1995 and also derive from an extensive article in *Sadoi Mardum* (11 June 1994) as well as from a book by a well-known Tajik politician (Nasridinov, *Turkish*, pp. 236–86).
them throughout the republic. More than one furtive director of a bakery found protection from deputy minister, later minister, Abdullojonov, in return for particular services. The most spectacular case involved Partov Davlatov—head of the grain procurement authority in the city of Tursunzoda. The Inspectorate of the Ministry of Finances produced a 946-page report in early 1991 in which Davlatov was accused of stealing thousands of tonnes of grain. Abdullojonov sacked Davlatov, only to appoint him to a similar position in the capital city of Dushanbe a few months later, after destroying all evidence of malfeasance. Davlatov instantaneously turned the Dushanbe baking combine into his personal enterprise, where all 400 employees were either his relatives or originated from his native village. Abdullojonov’s positions in the republic grew even stronger after the collapse of the Soviet Union when grain, which constitutes the basic (and sometimes the only) element of people’s rations in Tajikistan, became a scarce commodity and selling stolen grain on the black market became an exceptionally profitable occupation. With the absence of superior independent control authorities, it also became, in Partov Davlatov’s words, ‘a very easy occupation, since all leading officials in the Ministries of Grain Production and Finance and other agencies involved are actually our people’. 87

At the beginning of 1992, Abdumalik Abdullojonov’s personal wealth was widely rumoured to exceed 2 billion roubles. He had loyal protégés in every corner of Tajikistan, and after becoming prime minister in September 1992, he worked feverishly to promote them to higher positions. Thus, Abdujalil Homidov, formerly director of the Nov bakery, was made chairman of the executive committee of the Leninobod region; Timur Mirzoev, a distant relation of Abdullojonov, received the post of mayor of Dushanbe; Farhod Mirpochoev, Abdullojonov’s nephew, became adviser to the Cabinet of Ministers, and so on. Much in line with the changing times, Abdullojonov was behind the creation of several private firms (Edland, Somoniyon, Tojikbonkbiznes, Timur-malik) that easily received export licences and lavish credits from the state. Even three years after Abdullojonov’s dismissal, so many people owed their positions and influence to him that he was seldom criticised for his deeds and still remained in the public service of his country, as Tajikistan’s ambassador to Turkmenistan. He eventually fell too far from grace, however, and fled into a comfortable exile in California. 88

The example of Abdumalik Abdullojonov’s patronage network is not typical for Tajikistan, in the sense that it was constructed primarily along professional linkages and encompassed people of different nationalities and from different regions of Tajikistan who could relatively easily break away after their patron’s

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88 In early 2013, Abdullojonov narrowly escaped extradition to Tajikistan from Ukraine, his former location of university studies, which he was visiting on business.
dismissal. This is exactly what happened to Abdujalil Homidov, who was in hostile opposition to Abdullojonov when the latter was running for president in 1994. In their ideal state, patron–client webs in Tajikistan bear an imprint of kinship solidarity and are characterised by: a) less pronounced inequality and asymmetry in interaction amongst those involved; b) lifelong endurance; c) more diffused spheres of penetration—far beyond strictly professional activities; and d) relative closeness. These hierarchal structures could be, with some qualifications, referred to as clans, for they have some consonance with the attributes of a classic agnate clan

- common ancestry of the nucleus of the entity
- territorial unity (the clan coincides with the local group)
- social integration inside the clan—in particular, the coopting of new members through marriage.  

The importance and authority of the patriarchal authority figure within the ‘clans’, or rather extended families, are reflected in the fact that many of the ‘clan divisions’ are named after them. And far from being a new phenomenon, some of the elite families have been prominent since before the Soviet era, an example being the Arabovs of northern Tajikistan. Rural elites, in particular, engage in strategically sending younger members to urban areas to expand their network and its ability to access resources. The urban Tajik is often not an ‘isolated entity’, but rather in fact still a part of the rural networks. He/she has many connections to the ‘extended family or clan’ that is based in the village or region of origin. Family elders push an individual member towards a certain profession and expect that the city-dweller will provide benefits and resources to family members back in the village. And reciprocally, the city-dweller often seeks resources such as agricultural products from the extended rural family. Schoeberlein-Engel gives the same description of the urban family member providing resources from the city to rural relatives; however, he specifically names the ‘rural elite’ as engaging in this strategic behaviour of sending their children to the city for a university or technical education. He notes that many of them will return, but others will remain in the city in order for the extended family to access ‘scarce’ resources.

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90 Mikulskii, The History of Civil War in Tajikistan, p. 12, as cited in Nekbakhtshoev, Clan Politics, p. 32. The example of several extended families (tup) in a village in northern Tajikistan is given by Mikulskii: tup-I Niyoz, tup-I Hofizi, tup-I Qozigi, and tup-I Mullotolibi.
91 Schoeberlein-Engel, Identity in Central Asia, p. 276.
94 Schoeberlein-Engel, Identity in Central Asia, p. 277.
Figure 5.1 The Leninobod-Kanibodom Group of Families

Source: Author's research.
Two ‘clans’ from different parts of Tajikistan featured prominently in the republic’s life in the postwar period. The Leninobod-Kanibodom clan (Figure 5.1) had its base in the north of the republic and consisted of six major families: the Arabovs (Bukhara-Leninobod), the Yaqubovs (Leninobod), the Karimovs (Kanibodom), the Asrorovs (Leninobod), the Chuliubaevs (Leninobod) and the Bobojanovs (Leninobod-Dushanbe). The Arabov family, the stem of the clan, migrated to Khujand from Bukhara in the late nineteenth century. While not belonging to the prestigious status groups of sayids, its members traced their roots to the times of Arab rule, of which their family name was an indication. Jurabek Arabov was a successful entrepreneur and land developer under the tsarist regime and in 1917 managed to transfer all his capital to Germany. In 1925, he was executed by the OGPU, but legends about his unclaimed treasures linger in Tajikistan.

The Asrorovs, as an old family from Bukhara, enjoyed great respect and bestowed additional lustre on people connected with them. From the 1940s to the 1960s, Khol Yaqubov and Hilol Karimov joined them and subsequently played a significant role in expanding the power of the clan. Yaqubov was responsible for agricultural matters, sheep-breeding in particular, in the central committee, and Karimov was an influential member of the Tajik intelligentsia. He was the creator of the first textbooks of contemporary Tajik, and he and his relatives for decades dominated academia in Tajikistan. In a situation in which education remained a relatively rare commodity but presented a crucial element to social mobility, the ability to control admission to tertiary institutions inevitably gave certain groups within Tajikistan’s prestigious elite a valuable resource to offer in exchange for favours. A sociological poll conducted amongst school-leavers in the republic in May–June 1989 yielded results that generally confirm this postulate (Table 5.7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 5.7 Main Criteria for Admission to Higher Education Institutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Each respondent could give two preferences.


In later years, Hilol Karimov’s son, Jamshed Karimov, became the pivotal member of the clan. He was born in 1940, educated in Moscow and for a long time

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95 Data for the genealogical schemes were collected during fieldwork in Tajikistan in 1994–95. The authors would like to express gratitude to M. A. Arabov—the oldest surviving son of Abduqodir Arabov, who made invaluable comments and alterations to them.
worked in the Tajik State University, where he acquired the degree of Doctor of Economics. In 1983, he was appointed the deputy chairman of the State Planning Committee of Tajikistan and in 1988 was promoted to head it, with the concomitant rank of deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers. During 1989–91, Jamshed Karimov held the important position of first secretary of Dushanbe gorkom. In 1992, he returned to the government as first deputy prime minister; in December 1994 he became prime minister and served in that position until February 1996. Several cabinet members owed their posts directly to Karimov—Shavkat Ismoilov, minister of justice, for one. It was Karimov’s support that allowed Ismoilov to retain his portfolio during the tumultuous period in early 1995 when President Rahmon was extremely dissatisfied with his performance. Entrepreneur Solaimon Chuliubaev and the commercial bank Sharq with which he was closely connected increased their operations dramatically thanks to the benevolent attitude of the prime minister’s office.

According to information supplied by a member, the clan’s families met regularly to discuss household and business matters. There is no longer strict subordination to elders, but the oldest surviving Arabov—Mamadqul, son of Abduqodir—always presided over ceremonial gatherings despite his modest position as a director of documentary films. Junior members of the clan were encouraged to pursue careers in such relatively new fields as business and the diplomatic service. In the immediate post-independence era, some members had already found employment with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and foreign missions in Dushanbe—the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in particular.

The second clan (Figure 5.2) is of special interest because it has been developing in strict coordination with the sociopolitical processes in Tajikistan. Aqasharif Juraev, whose centenary was widely marked in 1995, was born in Darvoz (Qalai Khumb) and throughout his life remained an ardent propagandist of its traditional music and folklore culture. As an extraordinarily talented musician, he was amongst five or six Tajiks who were allowed to travel abroad from the 1940s to the 1960s. His tours of Iran in 1957 and of Afghanistan in 1959 attracted tens of thousands of admirers. Juraev was a friend of first secretary Tursun Uljaboev, who helped him and his big family to settle comfortably in Dushanbe. His son Qandil, a member of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan, was also an outspoken advocate of interests of the southern mountainous districts—for example, he vehemently opposed the abolition of the Gharm oblast in 1955.
Figure 5.2 The Gharm-Pamirs Group of Families

Source: Author’s research.
Mirsaid Mirshakar, the author of the gigantic poem ‘Lenin at the Pamirs’, stayed on good terms with all postwar party leaders in Tajikistan. He was richly decorated for his literary works glorifying Soviet rule, ascended to the CPT CC membership and finally was elected chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan in 1966. He patronised scores of young Pamiri poets and writers and made a substantial contribution to the establishment of a thriving community of intellectuals from Badakhshan in Dushanbe. This was a significant accomplishment, since in the 1950s and 1960s people from Gharm and the Pamirs were rapidly losing ground in Tajikistan’s political structures. The appointment of Mehrabon Nazarov as minister of culture in 1966 should be regarded as an exception. The younger generation of the clan in question realised itself mostly in creative and artistic capacities. Davlat Khudonazarov, arguably the brightest of them all, became a symbol of the Pamiri cultural renaissance in the late 1980s. He was elected as a deputy to the last Supreme Soviet of the USSR and made numerous contacts amidst political figures in Moscow in the late Gorbachev period. His relation, colleague and close friend Valery Ahadov became famous throughout the USSR as the director of popular comedy movies. Links with the Moscow intelligentsia established by Khudonazarov and Ahadov proved to be useful for Khudonazarov’s political career—during the 1991 presidential campaign in Tajikistan, he managed to use Moscow’s TV channels to canvass the electorate. Needless to say, Khudonazarov’s clan did a good job mobilising the masses to vote for him, too: he received an almost 100 per cent result in the Pamirs.

Almost every locality in Tajikistan can boast one or more patronage networks. They may take the form of a purely cliental dyad, as in Abdumalik Abdullojonov’s case, or that of ‘clans’—kinship structures with primarily horizontal links and tacit obligations. They can run to the national level and beyond, but they can also be confined to a certain village or district. The point is that all these informal organisations have always played an important role in regulating life and channelling resources within the community in Tajikistan. S. N. Eisenstadt has made a general observation for the USSR that patron–client relations there, ‘just as in most modern democratic societies’, constituted ‘above all an addendum to the institutional centre of the society’. This notion was only partly true for Tajikistan with its still potent traditional society; the formalised exchange prevailed there so long as uniform institutionalised organisations executed effective social control, through coercion and meeting the basic needs of the majority of the populace.

Informal exchange and its most obvious form—corruption—were tacitly recognised parts of political life in Tajikistan. In 1975, A. Schelochinin, procurator-general of Tajikistan, disclosed the details of a major fraud in the

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republic’s system of consumer goods retailers, which ostensibly ran ‘for decades’ and implicated Tajikistan’s minister of the food industry, a deputy minister of trade and 28 directors of shops and warehouses who ‘had developed their own standards of behaviour, their own morale and office ethics’. 97 Those exposed usually received relatively mild penalties, unless Moscow directly ordered otherwise. 98 Belonging to the nomenklatura on the one hand and to a patronage network on the other was the best guarantee against imprisonment. Over the period 1965–90 only nine officials were punished for official crimes in Tajikistan (two were removed from their posts and seven were incarcerated)—the lowest figure in all five Central Asian republics. 99

Bribery was instrumental in fulfilling economic plans. The Kommissants deplored the methods of a certain district party committee secretary, who ‘intercepted fertilisers and fodder designated for others. He acquired them using bribes collected from the kolkhozes of his district.’ 100 There existed a fairly rational system of bribes along the following chain: director of a collective farm or industrial enterprise, raikom secretary, obkom secretary, minister or the CPT CC secretary. Eventually, it came to resemble a taxation system, since the accrued funds were spent mostly on economic development and social welfare. 101 Promotions, mentions in the awards list or honorary titles were to be paid for separately. Another ingenious way of amassing shady money was based on manipulation of cotton procurement. Unlike their colleagues in Uzbekistan, officials in Tajikistan did not indulge in upward quantitative distortion. They preferred instead to decrease the fibre content in raw cotton (from the average of 34.4 per cent in 1962 to 29.4 and even 18 per cent in 1984), which gave them a robust additional revenue of 140 roubles per tonne gathered. 102 Given the fact that in the 1980s the annual cotton crop in Tajikistan was in the vicinity of 900 000 t, there could be as much as 126 million roubles in unregistered profits from cotton sales a year (of which collective farms retained 50 per cent), amounting to approximately 8 per cent of the entire republican budget. 103

97 Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 5 April 1975.
98 Another interesting case occurred in 1961, when a group of high-ranking officials in Dushanbe was caught red-handed embezzling public funds to build private homes (one of the accused was Mahmud Ismoilov, then chairman of the Judicial Commission of the Council of Ministers). It took one year, three articles in the central Izvestia newspaper and intervention on the part of the CPSU CC to induce the Tajik leadership to take any serious action in this regard. See: The Current Digest of the Post-Soviet Press, Vol. 14, No. 16 (1962), p. 28; Vol. 14, No. 24 (1962), p. 24.
101 In the Kolkhozobod district a raikom secretary used to require chairmen of 13 collective farms to contribute 5000 roubles a year to the ‘slush fund’ in order to organise summer camps for children, build kindergartens, and so on (Taped interview with Moazza Osmanova, deputy head of Kolkhozobad hukumat [district administration], 27 March 1995).
103 Calculations are based on: Kommunist Tadzhikistana, 6 December 1985.
It is worth noting that long career association with Tajikistan made non-indigenous officials equally susceptible to local models of exchange and behaviour. For example, P. S. Obnosov, a Russian second secretary of the CPT CC, posted to Tajikistan in order to monitor the activities of first secretary T. Uljaboev, formed a sort of *entente cordiale* with him. Together they even managed for some time to block the work of the special investigative commission sent in 1961 to Tajikistan by the CPSU Central Committee. The CPSU CC Presidium member F. R. Kozlov, who came to Dushanbe in order to rectify the affair, accused Obnosov of ‘having been Tajikicised’ and of concealing facts of corruption and mismanagement. As it became clear from Obnosov’s speech at the thirteenth congress of the CPT (in February 1960), he had created his personal clique of protégés in the republic, which included native first secretaries of the Gharm, Komsomolobod and Jerghatol district committees and Uroteppa city committee.

It may be appropriate to outline the major attributes, or role expectations, of a member of Tajikistan’s governing elite under Soviet rule:

- conformity with the set of rules and directives prescribed by Moscow
- commitment to the cause of the development of the republic
- development of personal political resources inside and outside Tajikistan
- conflict avoidance, settlement of disputes with peers as unobtrusively as possible.

As long as a national leader could strike the right balance between contradictory loyalties to the centre and to the republic, as long as he managed to build up and maintain networks of informal exchange without attracting too much attention from the centre’s control organs, and as long as he could successfully lobby for centralised allocations, his job would be secure and he would be in a position to make policies, especially in the cultural sphere, that stuck. After Uljaboev’s dismissal, the leaders of Tajikistan more or less succeeded in these endeavours, and the conclusion made by Gregory Gleason that ‘by the early 1980s, with the end of Brezhnev’s *zastoi* period, the bureaucratic structures within the fifteen national republics of the USSR had developed an unprecedented basis of internal political resourcefulness’ was fully applicable.

## Regional Elite Competition

As the ratio of the titular nationality serving in positions of power within the governments of the Uzbek and Tajik SSRs increased, it lessened the importance
of cleavages between the titular nationality and non-titular groups such as the Russians and increased the importance of cleavages within the titular nationalities, therefore increasing the social and political significance of ‘regionalism’.\textsuperscript{107} Khujandis from Leninobod dominated the Tajik Communist Party and the government, but they did not hold positions of power exclusively, as the central Soviet government attempted to maintain a balance between the regions in regards to elite appointments.\textsuperscript{108} According to Davlat Khudonazarov, from 1956 to 1961, first secretary Tursunboy Uljaboev ‘balance[d] the representation of the regions’ and distributed resources equally before being removed on the pretext of falsifying cotton production figures, a very common practice at the time.\textsuperscript{109} The argument that Leninobod politically dominated Tajikistan is qualified by Shirin Akiner. She notes the much larger population, higher levels of education and political awareness, as well as the industrialised economy of Leninobod and argues that it would be natural that this area would produce the elite of the state.\textsuperscript{110} Matteo Fumagalli makes a similar argument, crediting the Leninobodi elite’s dominance in the Tajik SSR to ‘economic, socio-cultural and geographic factors’.\textsuperscript{111}

At the republic level, the Soviet government divided the state apparatus among the various factions, which produced competition for power and resources among the different region-based factions.\textsuperscript{112} The Leninobod/Khujand-based ‘faction’ came to dominate the Tajik government after World War II.\textsuperscript{113} The Khujandi elite maintained their dominant position by constantly changing the administrative status of the other regions. The elite from other regions were not able to develop a region-wide patronage network as they lost their province (oblast, viloyat) status and found their networks disrupted.\textsuperscript{114} There was, however, a level of power-sharing involving the Kulobi elites in a patronage relationship starting in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{115} Of course, the Kulobis were in the junior position. The various reasons given for the relationship are that it was a response

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{Kilavuz}Kilavuz, \textit{Understanding Violent Conflict}, p. 94. Kilavuz notes that in Tajikistan the Tajiks, between the 1940s and the 1960s, held 45 per cent of the positions in the Communist Party. By 1980 it was 61 per cent.
\bibitem{Kilavuz2}Kilavuz, \textit{Understanding Violent Conflict}, pp. 97, 102–4.
\bibitem{Akiner}Akiner, \textit{Tajikistan}, pp. 19–20.
\bibitem{Fumagalli}Fumagalli, ‘Framing Ethnic Minority Mobilisation in Central Asia’, p. 575, n. 18.
\bibitem{Kilavuz3}Kilavuz, \textit{Understanding Violent Conflict}, pp. 108–12.
\end{thebibliography}
to the Leninobodi elite being challenged by local competitors or even, as argued by Stephane Dudoignon, that is was a result of economic exchanges between the two involving cotton. Indeed, the creation of the South Tajik Territorial Manufacturing Complex resulted in the creation of stronger ties between Khujand and Kulob (see the earlier section on Kulob). As for the other groups, Akiner stresses that the power held by Leninobodis (mostly from Khujand) was not exclusive. She argues that positions in the higher levels of the Tajik government were often held by Russians, Pamiris and Gharmis as part of the power balancing of the elite; however, the positions held by Gharmis and Pamiris were generally not portfolios that held significant power, an example being the chairmanship of the Supreme Soviet (see further below). And during this time the Tajik SSR’s large Uzbek minority in the north had an informally protected status thanks to the Tajik Communist Party’s close links to Uzbekistan and the political domination of the Leninobodi faction that secured benefits for the north’s population, including the Uzbeks. The exceptions, according to Akiner, were the Kulobis, who, despite holding many high-ranking positions in the security forces and having started a patronage-network relationship with the Leninobodis in the 1970s, were generally marginalised at the national level. Akiner offers an alternative explanation for the exclusion of Kulobi elites from the national level: lack of interest in pursuing positions outside Kulob. Within Kulob the local elites had autonomy and development projects that were directly funded by the central Soviet government, as well as enjoying ‘status, wealth (often illegally acquired) and a social environment in which they were at ease’. As a result, there was not a need to pursue appointment at the Tajik SSR level. Still, some secondary positions below Khujandis in the bureaucracy in Dushanbe were given to Kulobis.

Concerning the Gharimi elite, the position of chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan was ‘reserved’ for Gharims; however, for almost the entire Soviet era it was a position of little power and influence that held no significant economic or


118 Matteo Fumagalli, The Dynamics of Uzbek Ethno-Political Mobilization in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: 1991–2003 (PhD Thesis: University of Edinburgh, 2005), p. 217; Shale Horowitz, ‘Explaining Post-Soviet Ethnic Conflicts: Using Regime Type to Discern the Impact and Relative Importance of Objective Antecedents’, Nationalities Papers, Vol. 29, No. 4 (2001), p. 650. The close relationship between the Leninobodis and Uzbekistan was partly owing to Tajikistan’s status as part of Uzbekistan from 1924 to 1929, when Tajikistan was an autonomous republic within the Uzbek SSR. Also, until 1929 Khujand was part of the Uzbek SSR.

119 Akiner, Tajikistan, pp. 19–21.

120 Collins, Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia, pp. 163, 199.
bureaucratic decision-making authority. As a result, Gharmis had ‘relatively little stake’ in national-level power structures and a greater one in the ‘emergent market economy’ and in the national academy of sciences, which Barnett Rubin calls the ‘principle institution of national cultural identity’. The exclusion from government and economic institutions meant that Gharmis could not create any patronage networks on the scale that the Leninobodis and Kulobis could, at the national and provincial levels, respectively.

Markowitz notes that the party positions at district (raikom) and province (obkom) levels became the focus of local power struggles. From these positions one could access resources from the centre and even work towards higher-level postings. As these positions were ‘aggressively sought after’, local political manoeuvring became ‘perhaps the most fluid and uncertain venue of political contestation within the Soviet state structure’. In Qurghonteppa the Leninobodi elite installed their own people (Leninobodis, those of Leninobodi descent or ethnic Uzbeks) as collective farm chairs and district raikom secretaries in order to control the region’s wealth-producing bases, while Kulob, with its relatively modest economic base, was of much less interest to the Leninobodi elite. The stability of the cadres under Brezhnev took away a tool for the Leninobodis to control southern Tajikistan: the regular turnover of local officials. As a result the Leninobodis used their national-level positions to distribute patronage and manage networks based on resources distributed from the national level. Using resources derived from their patronage relationships with the centre, local elites in Kulob and Qurghonteppa were able to maintain local patronage networks. By the late Soviet era the local elites in Qurghonteppa and Kulob were using the ‘informal economy’ as a power base, but still needed their relationships with the Leninobodi-dominated centre to protect this base from scrutiny. By the late 1980s Gharmi Tajiks, Kulobi Tajiks and Uzbeks were fighting over administrative positions in Qurghonteppa; however, this was a time when state capacity was steadily weakening—resulting in the inability of the government to effectively manage this competition.

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The political system in Tajikistan under Soviet rule was formed according to the basic principles of Moscow’s nationality policy, which in its turn was yet

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121 Rubin, ‘Russian Hegemony and State Breakdown in the Periphery’, p. 160, n. 64.
125 Markowitz, Collapsed and Prebendal States in Post-Soviet Eurasia, pp. 34, 56, 59–60.
another aspect of the all-out mobilisation of the population for state building and extensive economic growth. And, with the aid of repression ... this worked about as well as the rest of the system during its decades of expansion under Stalin and Khrushchev. The Kremlin managed to create the administration in Tajikistan, which was largely nativised, reasonably efficient and thoroughly dependent on centralised decision-making. The bureaucratic structures of the Communist Party of Tajikistan constituted its centrepiece, and, from the republic level downwards, in the power triangle made by party committees, coercive organs and legislative bodies, the last played the least important role.

The notion of 'Russian hegemony' in the Soviet multinational state could be misleading; there never was a deliberate policy of Russification in the political realm in the USSR. It is much more appropriate to speak about the policy of complete subjugation of national interests to the 'hegemonistic strength of the sole true minority' in the country—that is, the CPSU leadership. As a result, the Tajik political elite was afflicted by a dichotomy between allegiance to the central party institutions, to which it owed its privileged position in the first place, and its native cast and the specific cultural environment in which it had to operate. The particulars of compromise reached between these two opposing tendencies varied, but until the mid 1980s the general trend was towards the emergence of a cohesive self-regulated state bureaucracy in Tajikistan that was in a position to implement directives and redistribute resources sent from Moscow in a rather flexible manner, operating beyond the prescribed rules of administration. In Martha Brill Olcott’s characterisation: ‘the conditions of zastoi ... were well suited to Central Asia’s party elite. They ruled like feudal overlords, free to steal and spend as they wished, once they had dispatched the required tribute to Moscow.’ Patterns of informal understandings, semi-legal and illegal exchanges, and patronage networks were widespread; in the Brezhnev era, ‘the system of social relations based on the combination of the feeling of impunity, mafia-type solidarity and security from the so-called “common people” embraced the not so narrow circle of persons. It included not only obkom secretaries but academics, journalists and other intellectuals as well.’

In Tajikistan, perhaps more than elsewhere in the USSR, the process of decision-making was concealed from public view; it was essentially crypto-politics,

concentrated largely within the limits of the CPT Central Committee and its apparatus. Under Brezhnev the governing elite in Tajikistan transformed itself into a self-stabilising oligarchy that could retain its status even without resorting to blatant coercion. The overall sum of authority enjoyed by the communist state was impressive; it effectively coped with the problems of legitimation, compliance and distribution in Tajikistan. At the same time, as this chapter and the previous one showed, its success in penetrating a number of social institutions and containing rival identities and loyalties within society was much more modest; this was fraught with potential for political upheavals. This opportunity would arise along with the reforms implemented by Gorbachev.