

Source: *Elita* “«ЭЛИТА»: 10 ЧЕҲРАИ ТАЪСИРГУЗОРИ ИНТИХОБОТ-2013 («ELITA»: 10 Influential Personalities of [Tajikistan’s] 2013 Elections),” July 2012.

Elita is a Dushanbe-based magazine. Chief Editor: **Daler Ghufonov**

Translation by “**eTajikistan**”
[photos added]

«ELITA»: 10 Influential Personalities of [Tajikistan’s] 2013 Elections

The speed of events is closing in on time for holding the presidential elections of Tajikistan

Our intention behind this analysis is to determine which personalities will play an important role in the impending presidential elections? Our focus is not merely on the domestic political forces of the country; more important, we focus on the powers which, regardless of our will, outside of the borders and territory of this country, desire or have the capability of playing a determining role in the fate of our people and government.

The reasons for such encounters are known to us: We are a small country, our economic potential is limited, economically and socially we cannot provide for ourselves, that is, since we have our hands out and surely due to objective and subjective reasons, we allow others to rule over us.

The next presidential elections in Tajikistan is scheduled for next year [November 2013].

Without a doubt, this is the most important political event of the country in the past 7 years (the previous presidential elections were held in 2006). To hold this political event, preparations are long taking place, but in what level, it is not yet clear, but this problem is not part of our discussion. Overall in this issue, discussion will also not surround the possible candidates for the seat of the president of Tajikistan: That is because such a thing does not necessarily appear as important considering the realities of the country.

Now, we will divide the personalities or influencing circles on the presidential elections of the country into [two] groups of: Foreign powers [and] Domestic political forces.

№1 Player



The first and most important personality, which as an outside power has the potential to directly or indirectly bring about changes [or influence on Tajikistan] is the president of the Russian Federation, **Vladimir Putin** [photo: topnews.in]. The main reason for this reality is that Central Asia is a region under the influence of the Russian Federation—a global power. Since our country cannot provide its people with [sufficient] work, over 1 million active population of Tajikistan are engaged in work in Russia and there exist the possibility for this huge force to always be used against us as a weapon [by Russia]. What is disastrous is that the forecast for solving this problem is unclear. This

condition implies that Russia's influence will remain on our state and government. Unfortunately, this is not the only reason for our dependence on Russia as there are many such points against us. From this perspective, at the moment, it is not clear what position the Russian leadership, which appears not to have such good relations with Tajikistan's authorities, will take in the upcoming presidential elections.

№2 – Islam Karimov



The president of Uzbekistan is considered among the most vehement entities interested in the presidential elections of our country. It is clear that the relations between the two neighbors are not good. Naturally, with regards to **Islam Karimov**, who considers himself the main power in the region and desires a Tajikistan leadership which is obedient, there's the possibility that he will play a role in relation to the 2013 presidential elections. The sensitivity of the problem is in this: Will in reality [Karimov's] interests in the region play a decisive role or not? This is [important] because although Uzbekistan may be a large neighbor of ours, it is still no Russia. But if in this process [Karimov] is to be able to align Kremlin's position towards himself, then this truly should be a reason for concern.

Barak Obama – Player №3



In most regions of the world, when discussion surrounds around an influential foreign element, first and foremost the face of the world superpower—USA and its leader **Barak Obama** [photo: whitehouse.org]—comes to mind. However, in the Central Asian region, the mission of the White House does not have much of a reach. As such, in our ranking, the president of the United States not only comes after the leadership of Russia, but even is placed after Islam Karimov. The geopolitical reality of our region requires this: In Central Asia, America is not America! At least for today. As such, there remains the possibility that the position of the White House vis-à-vis next year's elections of Tajikistan will not differ much as compared to that of Kremlin. One can conjecture that for us Barak Obama is “harmless”. We can be confident that [the US] will not insist on “implementing democratic principles” [in Tajikistan] as it does in some other countries. This is because as it is clear, when it comes to economically poor countries (read with no oil), democracy is not so much important.

Hu Jintao – Leader of China



It is clear that our large neighboring state—the People’s Republic of China—is a power with a future. Currently, this country is not directly influential on the political trends of the region, specially domestic events. But this global industrial power is further extending its position in Central Asia using its economic capabilities. Reality shows that the language of capital is among the most influential in this process. The recent visit of Tajikistan’s leadership to this country and the promise of US\$1 billion of investment will be the best tool [for China’s] interaction in the development and formation of the economic and political trends of ours. This is specially the case while these agreements coincide with the start of the process of elections in [Tajikistan]. On the other hand, in general, in order to implement any changes, the countries of the region are in need of support, at least psychologically, of one of the powers. However, as has been observed, the efforts and support of China and its leadership is more than just psychological.

Focal Personality



Now we come to the role and position of domestic political forces in the process of the 2013 presidential elections. Surely [and] without a doubt President **Emomali Rahmon** is considered a key personality in the important political events of this country. Along with that, now that he is the head of state, he has already been introduced as candidate N^o1 for the upcoming presidential elections. It is interesting that in the previous elections, the [ruling] People’s Democratic Party would always stay in the background and remain silent until the very start of the elections; during this time, the opposition forces would take up space and would utilize their potential. But now, the situation appears the opposite. Possibly, the 2010 parliamentary elections (which many refer to as the elections of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan or its leader Muhiddin Kabiri) was a lesson for the People’s Democratic Party of Tajikistan. Now, in the first instance, even prior to the holding of the convention, [the ruling party] has introduced its candidate. This act by the ruling party has brought to mind such thoughts that the government may feel threatened. But to be sure, if influence from outside were not to come forth, under any scenario, Emomali Rahmon will come out as the winner of these elections.

Right-hand Man



The head of the National Council [upper house] of the [Parliament] of Tajikistan, mayor of [Dushanbe] the capital city, **Mahmadsaid Ubaidulloev**, is considered as one of the other influential personalities in the process of next year's presidential elections. He is the right-hand man of the president. As an influential and powerful personality, it is natural that he will work hard to preserve his current position—being the second person [in the republic after the president] according to the Constitution. For Emomali Rahmon's victory, influence and power is necessary; now, the [influential] reputation of Mr Ubaidulloev is more so than ever of importance for candidate №1.

Left-hand Man



In the civilized world all important political and economic events are inseparably linked to economic and financial trends. It is here that even in America and Europe, as well, in the tradition of elections, good use is made of the backing of influential investors. The reality of Tajikistan as well is no exception. The chair of inspectors' council of one of the largest financial institutions of the country «Orion Bank» is **Hasan Asadullozoda**, known as one of the people close to President Rahmon [he is also his brother-in-law]. It is natural that this influential investor will use the possibilities at his disposal in favor of victory of candidate №1.

Opposition Figure



One can call the chair of the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan [IRPT], **Muhiddin Kabiri**, as one of the key government opposition figures of the country. But it is certain that he will not be participating in next year's presidential elections, because many would interpret this action to be equivalent to the ending of his political career; thus is Kabiri's role in the high politics of the nation. But how long this reluctance [to run] will last is not so clear at the time being. Experts consider such a decision on the part of the leader of the IRPT to lie in the distant future: This is because in the process of the country's developments, when looking at the «Kabiri» factor, there's the more sensitively-viewed «Islam» factor. As such, at present, he can only have one mission: To tame society as much as possible towards Islam, [the party of] which Kabiri leads. He thinks less on the issue of power and specifically elections 2013, and more clearly that is how it should be.

Stamp: «Elections-2013»



Hoji Akbar Turajonzoda is one of the influential spiritual-political personalities of the country, which on him, whether one likes it or not, «Elections-2013» has been stamped. Turajonzoda's "participation" will be in any form possible. His participation in the 1999 and 2006 presidential elections, wherein he supported the candidacy of Emomali Rahmon was considered specially influential. Now considering the recent developments in his relations with the leadership of the state (limiting the activity of the Turajonzoda mosque), it is expected that he will not endorse the candidacy of №1. The question is what position and decision will he take? Now only one thing is clear: His support be influential on whomever he backs.

The Sleeping Party



If we turn to the not so far history of the problem, we come to the conclusion that the 2005 parliamentary elections to an extent belonged to the Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan (now the Republican Social-Democratic Party of Tajikistan), or that of [its leader] Rahmatillo Zoirov. That is, despite the fact that this party received miniscule votes, in reality it was able to unite the opposition forces around itself and create a space. It is correct that later Zoirov was not able to take his work further, despite the intellectual potential of this party among other parties at that time having been possibly been on top. But given that this party has its own special ideology, it is possible that it can revive itself at any time. Being situated between the former communists and Islamists, from a strategic perspective, can serve as an «advantage» for this party, but surely for Zoirov during next year this characteristic will not be helpful. Because this party for the time being is in a condition of depression, but if it can preserve its existence, more importantly if it can find the ear of the voters, in the future it can be among the important players in the nation's political environment.

«ЭЛИТА», July 2012 issue