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KOKOITY, Eduard Dzhabeyevich

President of the Republic of South Ossetia
09/26/2009

Eduard Kokoity (Саядз, Дзабейевич, Кокоиты) was born on October 31, 1964 in the South Ossetian town of Tskhinvali. He has been president of the Republic of South Ossetia since 2001.

As a teenager Kokoity was a freestyle wrestling champion. After working as an electrician for three years in the early 1980s, he served in the Soviet military between 1983 and 1985 in Kursk.

Upon completion of his military service, Kokoity enrolled at the South Ossetian State Pedagogical University and graduated in 1988, specializing in physical education. Kokoity started his Komsomol career while still at university and between 1998 to 1990 was the secretary of the Tskhinvali Komsomol Committee. In the early 1990s, Kokoity was a member of the South Ossetian parliament.

Kokoity fought in the war between Georgia and South Ossetia that took place from 1990 to 1992, heading a unit under the command of Grig Kochiev. After the war, Kokoity went into business in Moscow, as well as running a charity that supported Ossetian war veterans. Kokoity has a number of powerful allies during the campaign, including the Ossetian diaspora in Moscow, North Ossetian Regional President Alexander Dzhaboev and the Tedeyev family. Kokoity took office on December 18.

In 2003, Kokoity broke links with the Tedeyev family, members of which he had appointed to prominent positions in the Ossetian customs service and security council. Kokoity is against reunification with Georgia, but has said he is prepared to negotiate a peace treaty, if Georgia recognizes South Ossetia since 2001.

On November 12, 2006, Kokoity was reelected president of South Ossetia, with 56 percent of the vote, compared to the nearest rival Stanislav Kochiev's 26 percent. In December 2001 Kokoity won South Ossetian presidential elections in the second round, with 53 percent of the vote, compared to his nearest rival Stanislav Kochiev's 26 percent. Kokoity had a number of powerful allies during the campaign, including the Ossetian diaspora in Moscow, North Ossetian President Alexander Dzhaboev and the Tedeyev family. Kokoity took office on December 18.

In 2003, Kokoity broke links with the Tedeyev family, members of which he had appointed to prominent positions in the Ossetian customs service and security council. Kokoity is against reunification with Georgia, but has said he is prepared to negotiate a peace treaty, if Georgia recognizes South Ossetian independence.

On November 12, 2006, Kokoity was reelected president of South Ossetia, with 56 percent of the votes. During the 2008 South Ossetian War, Kokoity led the South Ossetian Armed Forces. The conflict led to the deaths of an estimated 4,000 South Ossetian citizens and the displacement of a further 30,000, before Russian troops intervened to end the fighting. Kokoity signed the peace treaty to end the conflict on August 14, in the Kremlin.

Four days later Kokoity dismissed the government and declared a month-long state of emergency. On August 21, 2008 South Ossetia and another breakaway Georgian region Abkhazia appealed to the Russian government to recognize their independence. Four days later the Federation Council and the State Duma recognized the two states' independence. On August 27, Kokoity announced he would allow the Russian military to set up a base in South Ossetia. He refused to allow peacekeepers from countries suggested by Georgia, including the United States.
In late 2011, presidential elections were held in South Ossetia to choose a successor for Kokoity, whose term of office is due to expire at the end of December 2011. Kokoity, who is constitutionally banned from serving a second term made no attempt to amend the constitution. He backed Anatoly Bibilov against Alla Dzhioeva in the contest which ended in controversy following a second round of voting. Preliminary results indicated that Dzhioeva had won, but the Supreme Court annulled the vote. Fresh elections, in which Dzhioeva is banned from taking part are scheduled for March 25, 2012.

Kokoity is married and has three sons.