

TAJIK-AFGHAN INTERRELATIONS TODAY AND THEIR FUTURE PROSPECTS

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The Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan¹ have all the prerequisites for developing good-neighborly relations: a long common border stretching 1,344 km, a common historical past, common cultural values, traditions, and customs, a common religion, and a common language. According to different esti-

mates, Tajiks comprise between 25% and 34% of the population of Afghanistan, where more than 40 nationalities live who speak 30 languages. More than half of the population speak Dari (as the language of the Tajiks of Afghanistan is called), which is one of the two official state languages of this republic. Until 1936, the language of the Tajiks of Afghanistan was the only state tongue, as well as the means of international communication.

¹ Prior to 2004 the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Problems of Establishing Contemporary Tajik-Afghan Relations

The collapse of the U.S.S.R. and Tajikistan's acquirement of state sovereignty coincided time-wise with the mujaheds' advent to power in Afghanistan in April 1992. Recognizing the Islamic State of Afghanistan (ISA) from the very first days of its existence, the Republic of Tajikistan declared its willingness to establish good-neighborly relations between the two sovereign states, which was demonstrated during the first official visit of a high-ranking Tajik government delegation headed by acting Chairman of the Tajik Supreme Soviet A. Iskandarov to Kabul in July 1992. This fact is noteworthy since it was the first visit by a government delegation of the already independent Tajik state, and the Afghan state was also headed by Tajiks. The country's president was Burhanuddin Rabbani, the prime minister was a member of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, Tajik Abdul Sabur Farid, and the minister of defense was Ahmad Shah Masud.

According to the protocol signed on 15 July, 1992, a month later the sides intended to form a joint Commission on Economic, Scientific-Technical, and Cultural Cooperation between the two republics. On the same day, the foreign ministers of the two countries signed two more documents: On Establishing Diplomatic Relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic State of Afghanistan and an Agreement on Cooperation between the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Foreign Ministry of the Islamic State of Afghanistan.

Judging from the atmosphere at the talks, Tajikistan and Afghanistan were extremely interested in developing bilateral relations. However, before long, rather complicated problems arose associated primarily with aggravation of the domestic political situation in both countries. For example, Afghanistan was extremely concerned about the development of events in its neighboring republic. In his interview with a correspondent of Radio Ozodi, Fahriddin Holbek, former president of Afghanistan B. Rabbani said the following: "Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov invited me to visit Tashkent. There I was told that hostilities had begun in Tajikistan. Sangak Safarov, as military commander, is fighting the Interim Government (the Government of National Reconciliation—*K.I.*). The Tajikistan foreign minister at that time asked me to help regulate the situation. I was even ready to go to the country. I told Karimov about my plans and intended to fly straight from Tashkent to Dushanbe. But Mr. Karimov told me he had not been properly informed about the real state of affairs in Tajikistan. It was not clear what was going on there. So I did not go to Dushanbe..."²

Aggravation of the domestic political situation in Tajikistan not only put the damper on Tajik-Afghan cooperation, it also made the relations between the states extremely complicated. The Tajik-Afghan border became a particular headache not only for Tajikistan, but also for all of the Central Asian republics, and also for Russia. Due to the situation that developed, the borders were protected mainly by Russian servicemen who were unable to cope with the pernicious smuggling and the numerous border violations. As early as the spring of 1992, firearms, ammunition, and drugs were smuggled almost unhindered into Tajikistan in exchange for foodstuffs and industrial commodities. Afghan militants with many years of combat experience also began to move from Afghanistan into Tajikistan. By the summer of 1992, it was no secret that there were Afghans in the groups forming in Tajikistan. According to V. Bushkov, "by the fall of 1992, there were 500-600 Afghan instructors operating in Tajikistan,"³ although we believe this number is artificially set too high. With the appearance of the Tajik armed opposition in Afghanistan, the movement of armed and well-trained fighters to Tajikistan became more frequent. There were not only Tajiks and Afghans among them, but also Arabs, which seriously destabilized the situation in the country.

The Tajik-Afghan border was considered the southern boundary of the Commonwealth of Independent States and so, in keeping with the Collective Security Treaty signed in May 1992 in Tashkent, the states that initialed this document were obliged to help Tajikistan to rebuff the threat coming from the outside. But measures to reinforce the borders were not taken until 1993: collective peacekeeping forces were created from among Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Uzbek military subdivisions to protect the border.

The armed conflicts that flared up between the National Front militants and Islamists resulted in tens of thousands of refugees fleeing to Afghanistan.⁴

The Tajik armed opposition, under the protection of the Islamic parties and movements of Afghanistan, created some twenty military training camps in the northern provinces of Afghani-

² F. Holbek, B. Rabbani: "Rakhmonov—dostoyiniy paren...", available at [www.Asia-Plus.tj], 29 June, 2006.

³ Quoted from: A. Kniazev, *Afganskiy krizis i bezopasnost Tsentral'noi Azii (XIX—nachalo XX vv.)*, Dushanbe, 2004, p. 181.

⁴ According to the Refugees Department of the Tajik Ministry of Labor and Employment, the total number of Tajik refugees in Afghanistan amounted to 60,939 people, although according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 90,000 people moved to Afghanistan at the beginning of the hostilities in Tajikistan.

stan.⁵ In so doing, violations of the Tajik-Afghan border continued. Regular armed clashes occurred with Russian border guards, during which dozens of servicemen were killed. In response, the Russian border guards often fired on Afghan kishlaks, which resulted in the deaths of peaceful citizens. The rather dramatic situation that developed could have drawn Russia into a new war with Afghanistan and aggravated Tajik-Afghan relations even more. This was why at meetings between the Tajik and Uzbek leaders in Dushanbe and Tashkent at the beginning of 1993, the Afghan side focused its attention on the withdrawal of Russian border guards from Tajikistan.

Drastic measures had to be urgently taken. For this purpose, Afghan Foreign Minister Hedayat Amin Arsala visited Dushanbe on 10-13 August, 1993. During the talks with the Tajik leadership, the sides stressed that they would not interfere in each other's internal affairs under any pretext. At the same time, it was obvious that official Kabul was not ready to take control over the entire section of the Tajik-Afghan border to prevent the fighters of this republic's opposition from moving into Tajikistan. Graphic evidence of this was the kidnapping and transfer to Afghanistan of four Russian and one Kazakh border guard by members of the Tajik opposition in the Darvaz region during Arsala's visit to Dushanbe.

During Afghan foreign minister's visit to Tajikistan, the ground was readied for Tajik Head of State Emomali Rakhmon's visit to Kabul, who visited the Afghan capital at the end of August of the same year. The main result of President Rakhmon's 12-hour talks with B. Rabbani was the release of the hostages. President Rakhmon's visit and his talks with B. Rabbani helped to establish closer contacts between the two countries. These contacts ended in B. Rabbani's visit to the Republic of Tajikistan on 19-22 December, 1993. This was the first official visit of the head of a foreign state to Tajikistan after the latter had gained its independence.

As a result of the talks, on 22 December, 1993, a set of documents and agreements aimed at developing and strengthening cooperation between the two countries in different areas was signed between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic State of Afghanistan. The most important of these documents were the Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Good-Neighborly Relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic State of Afghanistan, the Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Science, and Education between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic State of Afghanistan, the Agreement on Economic and Trade Cooperation between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic State of Afghanistan, and others. A trilateral agreement was also signed among Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees on the return of Tajik forced migrants.

The entire course of the talks, meetings, and speeches of Professor Rabbani and other members of the delegation graphically demonstrated the growing trend toward a definite rapprochement between the two countries, which clearly went against the interests of several of the region's states. According to some analysts, the Uzbek leadership, for example, was not interested in the Tajiks of these countries forming closer relations, or in the implementation of the agreement on the export of natural gas from Afghanistan to Tajikistan. Uzbekistan regarded the latter agreement as a threat to its economic interests. In this respect, the fact that Abdul Rashid Dostum, an ethnic Uzbek who headed the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan military-political group, moved to the opposition camp can be entirely explained by external influence. The attempt at a military coup undertaken by the fighters of the so-called High Coordination Council of the Islamic Revolution, to which A. Dostum also belonged, can hardly be considered spontaneous (it was carried out a week after B. Rabbani's official visit to Dushanbe). Although this act was not crowned with success, Dostum's move to the camp of the Afghan antigovernment forces dealt a severe blow to Tajik-Afghan cooperation. In particular, it was Dostum who interfered with implementation of the agreement on gas deliveries to Tajikistan, since the blue fuel fields were on the territory he controlled. The Kabul-Sherkhan-Bandar road that runs

⁵ See: K. Iskandarov, "Problemy mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii Respubliki Tadjikistan s Islamskim Gosudarstvom Afghanistan," *Proceedings of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan*, Economic and Political Science Series, No. 1-2 (7), 1997, p. 74.

through the Salang Pass was also closed, and the hostilities spread from Kabul to the north of the country as well. In the end, the Afghan state had to carry out its domestic and foreign policy in conditions where its adversaries were putting up tough resistance.

Cooperation in Conflict Settlement in Tajikistan and Afghanistan

Due to the ongoing armed conflict between the government of Tajikistan and the opposition, one of the main vectors in the state's foreign policy was aimed at stabilizing the situation on the Tajik-Afghan border and looking for ways to peacefully settle the conflict and return the refugees.

Due to the presence of the Tajik armed opposition in Afghanistan, the Tajik government was especially interested in cooperating with the Afghan leadership to resolve the existing problems. This was explained by the fact that the frequent border violations by fighters, the armed clashes on the borders, as well as the return strikes of artillery and bombing of Afghanistan could not help but have an impact on Tajik-Afghan interrelations. In particular, the Tajik government related the aggressive actions of the Tajik armed opposition detachments in the summer of 1996, as a result of which the regional center of Tavildar was occupied, to interference of Afghanistan's armed forces. As a result of this incident, commercial relations with the Afghanistan were curtailed and the resolution of the Tajik government of 1995 on opening trade points on the border with Afghanistan was no longer valid. The sides exerted a great deal of effort to prevent border violations by the armed opposition. In August 1996, a protocol was signed on cooperation between the border guards of the Russian Federation and Afghanistan. According to this document, the Afghan side assumed the obligation to create a safety zone 25 km from the border in the Shugnan District and subsequently stop armed detachments of the Tajik opposition from entering this zone.⁶ But settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict required that measures be taken at the highest level. The Afghan President and Defense Minister Ahmad Shah Masud expressed a sincere desire to launch a peace process in Tajikistan. There was mistrust and suspicion between the Tajik Government and the Islamic Movement of Tajikistan (IMT). The leaders of the Tajik opposition in Afghanistan were hoping to obtain help and support in this country in their fight against the legal government of Tajikistan, but their hopes were not justified. They were asked to sit down at the negotiation table with Emomali Rakhmon. Here is what B. Rabbani had to say about this: "During the talks (with Sayid Abdullo Nuri.—*K.I.*), I said: 'Mr. Nuri, what are you fighting for? What is the purpose of this war? I think that Rakhmonov is a very decent lad, sit down with him and come to terms. Let Tajikistan become stronger politically and economically. The day will come when you too will offer your ideas for political reform. I am afraid that a war will destroy Tajikistan, after which you too will be unable to return to your homeland and the government will face big problems.'"⁷

When Emomali Rakhmon invited B. Rabbani to make an official visit to Dushanbe in December 1993, several leaders of the Tajik opposition did not take kindly to it. They were worried that the visit would strengthen the government's position. "They (the leaders of the Tajik armed opposition.—*K.I.*)," said B. Rabbani, "want us to do things that would create difficulties for the Tajik government. But I don't want that. Neither side is alien to us. After the visit, I insisted that the opposition leaders sit down at the negotiation table no matter what. I said at that time: 'We must first create Tajikistan. There are countries that do not want to see Tajikistan independent and prosperous.'"⁸

⁶ See: *Biznes i politika*, August 1996.

⁷ F. Holbek, *op. cit.*

⁸ *Ibidem.*

Afghanistan was one of the observer states at the inter-Tajik talks. It was in this country, with mediation of the Afghan leaders, that on 17-19 May, 1995, Tajikistan leader Emomali Rakhmon and leader of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) Sayid Nuri met for the first time. This meeting largely helped to achieve mutual understanding in the next rounds of the inter-Tajik dialogs. In a joint statement, both sides confirmed their willingness to settle the inter-Tajik conflict, repatriate all the refugees, and completely stabilize the political situation in Tajikistan. Both leaders assumed the obligation of doing everything they could to regulate the conflict by political means at the negotiation table.⁹

According to many analysts, the turning point in the inter-Tajik talks came precisely after President Rakhmon's meeting with UTO leader Nuri in Khostdeh (northeast Afghanistan) on 11 December, 1996, organized with the mediation of B. Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masud. The Afghan leaders did everything they could to ensure this meeting yielded specific results, and they were successful. According to former Afghan president B. Rabbani, "all the terms were reached at this meeting and a peace agreement was ready for signing. The sides decided to continue the meetings in Moscow and sign the agreement there in order to show Russia's decisive role in achieving peace in Tajikistan." He made this statement during our meeting in Kabul on 12 September, 2002.¹⁰ Of course, the Afghan leadership had their own interests in rapid settlement of the inter-Tajik conflict. When speaking during this meeting about Ahmad Shah Masud's role in the peace process in Tajikistan, B. Rabbani noted that he (Ahmad Shah Masud) was sure that 50% of the problems would be resolved when peace was reached in Tajikistan. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the situation might have developed in the inter-Tajik talks had the regions where the Tajik armed opposition was deployed and the refugee camps in Afghanistan fallen under the Taliban's control. There is no doubt that the aggressive Taliban accelerated the signing of the peace agreement.

The difficult and multi-round inter-Tajik talks ended with the initialing of a General Agreement on Peace and National Consent in Tajikistan in June 1997. As a result, all the Tajik refugees were able to return home, and the armed opposition forces were integrated into Tajikistan's power-related structures. There can be no doubt that the Afghan leaders were extremely instrumental in this; it was the fruit of efficient Tajik-Afghan cooperation aimed at settling the inter-Tajik conflict.

At the same time, ensuring stable peace in Tajikistan was largely related to the situation in Afghanistan. When the latter's capital fell under Taliban control, the Afghan conflict entered a new phase. The serious threat of a spread in Islamic extremism and terrorism, as well as of drug smuggling from Afghanistan, loomed once again over Tajikistan. Moreover, Afghanistan's transformation into a center for training international terrorists and manufacturing drugs threatened the existence of independent Tajikistan as such. So Tajikistan placed great importance in its foreign policy on finding ways to peacefully settle the Afghan conflict. Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon called on the international community to pay serious attention to the situation that had developed in Afghanistan, which threatened the entire world. On 4 October, 1996, on the initiative of Tajik President Rakhmon, an emergency meeting was convened of the heads of the Central Asian states, as well as of Russia. The meeting was attended by the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, as well as the government chairman of the Russian Federation. A joint statement was adopted which expressed concern about the events going on in Afghanistan. It noted that any possible actions that undermined stability on Afghanistan's borders with the CIS states would receive an equivalent response.¹¹ This meant that

⁹ "Statement by the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmon and Chairman of the Islamic Revival Movement of Tajikistan S.A. Nuri of 19 May, 1995," in: *Doroga mira*, Documents of the inter-Tajik talks, Dushanbe, 1997, pp. 150-151.

¹⁰ We, the members of the Tajik delegation at the first international conference dedicated to the memory of Ahmad Shah Masud and held on 7-8 September, 2002, met with Burhanuddin Rabbani at his home in Kabul and had the opportunity to talk to him for two hours.

¹¹ ITAR-TASS, Alma-Ata, 4 October 1996.

despite the Taliban's seizure of Kabul, the leaders of the Central Asian countries and Russia did not recognize it and continued to support President Rabbani.

In 1998, Emomali Rakhmon came forward with an initiative to create an anti-drug security belt around Afghanistan. The Tajik leader supported Russia's position regarding the drafting and adoption of a resolution introducing new sanctions against the Taliban. From the rostrum of the 54th session of the U.N. General Assembly, Emomali Rakhmon suggested that the Security Council introduce sanctions against "those in Afghanistan who are violating the resolution of the U.N. General Assembly Security Council," making it understood that he was referring in particular to the Taliban.¹²

Tajikistan did indeed become a reliable rear for Afghanistan. All the foreign aid to Afghanistan and maintenance of the Northern Alliance troops went through Tajikistan. Dushanbe became the site for the talks between the Afghan leadership and the Northern Alliance, at which various delegations and foreign mediation missions considered ways to reach peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict. Tajikistan was the only country that always staunchly supported the government of President Rabbani, which the U.N. recognized as the only legal one. This fact was acknowledged by the Afghan leaders and all the Afghans opposed to the Taliban. "The territory and people of Tajikistan were our only bastion, with the help of which we were able to conquer the extremist Taliban regime," said B. Rabbani.¹³

The Main Vectors of Tajik-Afghan Cooperation after 11 September, 2001

After 11 September, 2001, the Republic of Tajikistan became an active participant in settling the situation in Afghanistan and establishing peace and stability in that country.

Since the beginning of the antiterrorist operation in October 2001, Tajikistan has assumed responsibility for ensuring uninterrupted transit delivery of international humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan, has simplified the customs and border procedures, and has offered its air and land space for carrying out rescue and humanitarian campaigns by the transnational coalition forces.

The Tajik government has been steering a course aimed at supporting the future state-building and post-conflict restoration of Afghanistan.

An important aspect in the coordination of bilateral interrelations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan was the meeting between the presidents of the two republics—Emomali Rakhmon and Hamid Karzai, who came to Tajikistan to participate at the eighth summit of the heads of the ECO member states held in September 2004. Presidents Rakhmon and Karzai discussed Afghanistan's restoration and combating illicit drug circulation and affirmed the development of relations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan based on generally accepted principles of good-neighborliness, mutual respect and trust, friendship, and mutual assistance in all spheres of life. During the Afghani delegation's visit to Tajikistan in September 2004, an intergovernmental Agreement on Trade Cooperation between the two states was signed.

Questions concerning the further development of Tajik-Afghan relations were considered during Tajik President Rakhmon's first official visit to Afghanistan on 27-28 April, 2005. The sides discussed a wide range of bilateral issues, as well as cooperation prerequisites and possibilities in such areas as construction, road-building, water supply, science, literature, culture, information, education, and health care. They were unanimous in their opinion that hydropower is one of the most important and fruitful vectors of interaction between the countries. During the visit, 11 interstate and inter-

¹² A. Kniazev, *op. cit.*, p. 202.

¹³ F. Holbek, *op. cit.*

governmental documents were signed on various aspects of cooperation between the two countries. The Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation, and Good-Neighborly Relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was particularly important. An Agreement on Mutual Granting of Property to the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Kabul and to the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in Dushanbe, an Agreement on Non-Visa Trips under Diplomatic Passports, an Agreement on Cooperation in the Energy Sphere, an Agreement on Cooperation in Education, Science, and Technology, an Agreement on Transport and Transit Shipments of Cargo and Passengers, an Agreement on Combating the Illicit Circulation of Drugs, an Agreement on Cooperation in Fighting Terrorism, Extremism, and Transnational Organized Crime, as well as others, were also signed.

Cooperation between the two republics in trade, the economy, education and culture, combating drug smuggling, and so on is successfully developing on the basis of the initialed documents. Here are some statistics on export-import operations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan (according to the Tajik Customs Committee): in 1994 Tajikistan's foreign trade turnover with Afghanistan amounted to 4,632,736 dollars (import to 2,058,210 dollars, export to 2,574,526 dollars). A positive balance of 5,516,316 dollars formed. But the trade turnover between the two countries subsequently fell, which was apparently related to the increase in combat action in Afghanistan and decrease in the territory controlled by the Afghan government. In 1995, the trade turnover between the republics amounted to 3.6 million dollars and 4 billion Russian rubles;¹⁴ whereas in 1998 it was only one million dollars. In 2002, the trade turnover between the two countries began to rise, and in 2005 this index amounted to more than 15.0 million dollars,¹⁵ in 2006, it was 25,015.1 dollars (export—18,643.9 dollars, import—6,491.2 dollars),¹⁶ and during the first ten months of 2007 it reached 29,045.4 dollars (export—9,539.9 dollars, import—19,505.5 dollars).¹⁷

In order to expand cooperation with Afghanistan, Tajikistan continued building bridges over the River Panj. As of today, four bridges have already been built, as well as border trade points in the kishlaks of Ruzvai (the Darvaz District), Tem (near Khorog), and Ishkashim (the Ishkashim District). These bridges are instrumental in supplying the population of the northern regions of Afghanistan (particularly the province of Badakhshan) with the necessary goods.

On 22-25 February, 2006, the first session of the Tajik-Afghan intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, and technical cooperation was held, at which the priority vectors of bilateral cooperation and the execution of the documents signed between the two states during the Tajik president's visit to Afghanistan in April 2005 were discussed.

On 26-27 July, 2006, Afghan President Karzai paid an official visit to Tajikistan. At the meeting with President Rakhmon, a wide range of issues of Tajik-Afghan cooperation in the political, trade and economic, and military-technical fields, as well as in ensuring security and reinforcing protection of the borders between the two countries to prevent drug smuggling was discussed.¹⁸

Hydropower is another important vector in Tajik-Afghan cooperation. The vast potential of Tajikistan's hydropower reserves is defining the strategy of Tajik-Afghan cooperation in this sphere. In terms of hydropower resources, Tajikistan occupies second place in the CIS (after Russia) and eighth in the world (after China, the Russian Federation, the U.S., Brazil, Zaire, India, and Canada); in terms of per capita reserves (87,800 kWh per person a year), it occupies second place in the world (after Iceland); and in terms of supplies per unit of territory (3.62 kWh/sq. km a year), it occupies first place. In other words, almost 4% of the world's hydropower potential is concentrated in Tajikistan.¹⁹

¹⁴ See: K. Iskandarov, op. cit., p. 75.

¹⁵ Calculated according to data obtained at the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan.

¹⁶ See: *Tajikistan's Foreign Economic Activity*, Statistics Collection, Dushanbe, 2007, p. 341.

¹⁷ *Socioeconomic Situation in the Republic of Tajikistan, January-October 2007*, Dushanbe, 2007, p. 102.

¹⁸ [<http://www.president.tj>], 27 August, 2006.

¹⁹ See: G. Petrov, "Tajikistan's Hydropower Resources," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 3 (21), 2003, p. 154.

In March 2002, a Protocol on Restoring Power Transmission Lines and Building New Lines was signed between the Tajikistan Ministry of Energy and the Afghanistan Ministry of Water and Power. At the early stage of implementing this project, the Barki Tojik energy company completed work on restoring power transmission lines. In particular, in the summertime, Tajikistan is able to deliver 1.5 billion kWh of electric power a year to the neighboring regions of Afghanistan. When two hydropower facilities (Sangtuda-1 and Sangtuda-2) are completed, export potential will increase to 11.5 billion kWh a year.

According to the agreement signed in 2002 on electric power supply to Afghanistan, Tajikistan, as head of the energy department of the Tajik Ministry of Energy and Industry A. Khabirov stated, exported 10,419,948 kWh to Afghanistan in 2003, 27,743,880 kWh in 2004, 39,219,173 kWh in 2005, and 44,185,487 kWh during the first 11 months of 2006.²⁰ Sometimes electric power is even transmitted in the winter months, when the population of Tajikistan consumed it in strictly limited amounts of 5-6 hours a day.

On 21 April, 2006, an Agreement on Cooperation between the Tajikistan Ministry of Energy and the Afghanistan Ministry of Water and Power was signed in Dushanbe. The sides reached an agreement that, starting from the end of 2008, Afghanistan will receive 300 MW of electric power from Tajikistan, and starting in 2009, after the Sangtuda-1, Sangtuda-2, and Rogun hydropower plants go into operation, between 1,000 and 1,200 MW could be supplied through Afghanistan to third countries. The question of financing the project for building a 220-kV power transmission line has currently been resolved. The Asia Development Bank (ADB) allotted Tajikistan and the Afghan side a loan for building it. In November 2007, a contract was signed in the Afghan capital for 500 million dollars on the transmission of electric power from the Central Asian states to South Asia. This is mentioned in a report by the representative office of the World Bank in Kabul. As noted, at the first stage, the contract envisages the transmission of 1,200 MW from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan through Afghanistan. The length of the power transmission line from the Tajik-Afghan border to Pakistan is 750 km. According to a report by the Afghan Bakhtar Information Agency, Afghanistan's Minister of Power and Water Engineering Ismail Khan said the project would be implemented until 2012. According to him, about 200 MW of the 1,200 MW will go to cover the needs of the Afghan capital.²¹ Moreover, the Iranian side, which is constructing the Sangtuda-2 Hydropower Plant, confirmed its willingness to build a network of power transmission lines, in particular the Rogun-Kunduz-Mazar-i-Sharif-Heart-Mashhad power transmission lines, as well as expand accordingly trilateral cooperation among Tajikistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. There are also plans to extend a 110 kV power transmission line to Imam-Sakhb and on to Faizabad.

At present, the South-North and Khatlon-Lolazor lines are being built in Tajikistan, which will make it possible to ensure the export of electric power and offer wide opportunities for other countries (in particular Kyrgyzstan) to sell their energy resources via Tajikistan to South and East Asia.

The growing need for cheap electric power requires putting new hydropower plants into operation. The Nurek Hydropower Plant, the largest in Tajikistan, has nine turbines of 3,000 MW in capacity. Its annual production volume amounts to an average of 11 billion kWh. Several other very important and promising projects are also being carried out in Tajikistan. One of them is related to completion of the construction of the first line of the Rogun Hydropower Plant. The planned capacity of this station amounts to 3,600 MW, and, as of today, construction work totaling 804 million dollars has already been carried out, but more than 2 billion dollars are needed in additional funds to complete the

²⁰ From the speech of A. Khabirov at the international conference "Afghanistan and Regional Security: Five Years after the Taliban" (Dushanbe, 6-7 December, 2006).

²¹ A contract is signed in Kabul for 500 million dollars on the transmission of electric power through Afghanistan, available at [<http://www.Afghanistan.ru>].

facility. “We are determined,” said Tajikistan President Emomali Rakhmon, “to begin building this station in 2007 and continue its construction using the republic’s own funds.”²²

The most important project in joint assimilation of Tajikistan’s and Afghanistan’s hydropower reserves is using the resources of the Panj and Amu Darya rivers.

As early as the 1960s-1970s, the hydropower potential of the border section of the River Panj was estimated by Soviet specialists at 119 billion kWh, and of the basin as a whole at more than 150 billion kWh. In terms of the available hydropower resources, the border section of the River Panj occupies third place among the CIS countries, after such major Russian rivers as the Enisei and Lena, which have 158 and 144 billion kWh of hydropower potential, respectively. The Panj’s indices are more than twice as high as those of the largest river in Europe, the Volga, with its potential of 54 billion kWh. As for the Amu Darya, it has 11 billion kWh of hydropower potential on the border section.²³

Specialists from the two states drew up plans designed to promote joint assimilation of the energy resources of the border rivers. A feasibility report was drafted for building 14 stations of between 300 and 4,000 MW in capacity and an annual production volume of 86.3 billion kWh (including the largest Dashtijum Hydropower Plant with a capacity of 4,000 MW and annual production of 15.6 billion kWh) on the Panj River alone, which is the main tributary of the Amu Darya. As Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon stated at the Second Conference of the Central and South Asian Countries on the Sale of Electric Power held on 27 October, 2007 in Dushanbe, the construction of this hydropower plant is of vital significance not only for Tajikistan, but also for all the states of the region, in particular with respect to restoring and developing the Afghan economy, irrigating one and a half million hectares of land, and supplying water to hundreds of thousands of hectares of land in the region.²⁴

At the same time, the Tajik Ministry of Energy held talks on renewing deliveries of 2 bcm of natural gas from Afghanistan and on laying a pipeline 110-120 km in length from the gas field of Shebergan (Afghanistan) to Kolkhozobad (Tajikistan). Successful implementation of this project requires investments of 15-17 million dollars and assistance from sponsor countries.

Deliveries of Afghan gas to Tajikistan were discussed as early as 1993—during Afghan President Rabbani’s first official visit to Tajikistan, an Agreement on the Export of Natural Gas from Afghanistan to Tajikistan was signed. This document envisaged annual deliveries of 1 bcm of raw material to Tajikistan. During drafting of the agreement, the Tajik government delegation headed by the republic’s first deputy minister of economics A. Sufiev visited the northern regions of Afghanistan, met with the president of the Afghan Department of Oil and Gas and with National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan Chairman A. Dostum, and inspected gas wells in the province of Shebergan. According to the experts’ preliminary estimates and the report by the delegation members, the noted facilities in Jarkuduk and Yatimtak were realistically able to provide 3 mcm a day at that time, but, as mentioned above, due to the complications of the military-political situation in Afghanistan, the project was never implemented.

Transport is another important vector in Tajik-Afghan cooperation. Tajikistan has always been interested in finding a way out of the transport-communication impasse. The shortest routes from Tajikistan to the largest sea ports of the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf pass through Afghanistan. Keeping in mind the length of the border, Tajikistan can also be regarded as one of the main transit routes to Afghanistan. In this respect, the sides are well aware of the need to build bridges over the border Panj River, as well as develop a network of roads and infrastructure. Tajikistan has already

²² *Speech by Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon at the Second Conference of the Central Asian and South Asian Countries on the Sale of Electric Power, 27 October, 2007*, available at [<http://www.president.tj>].

²³ See: G. Rajabekov, *Ekonomicheskie problemy poslevoennogo vosstanovleniia i razvitiia energetiki Afganistana*, Ph.D. (Econ.) Dissertation, Moscow, 2002, p. 156.

²⁴ *Speech by Tajik President Emomali Rakhmon at the Second Conference of the Central Asian and South Asian Countries on the Sale of Electric Power, 27 October, 2007*.

built four bridges. One of them, the largest Tajik-Afghan facility on the Panj River, was put into operation at the end of August 2007. Built in two years with financial aid from the U.S., the bridge can accommodate more than 1,000 vehicles a day. There are plans to build a Dushanbe–Kurgan-Tiube–Kunduz railroad in the future. After these facilities have been built, and the roads to the north of Afghanistan reconstructed, Tajikistan will gain access to the ports of the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean.

Cooperation in combating illicit drug circulation has also become one of the priority vectors in Tajik-Afghan cooperation. Since Tajikistan acquired its independence, it has been actively engaged in fighting international organized crime, a component of which is illicit drug circulation. Based on advanced world experience, Tajikistan has drawn up its own anti-drug strategy, which includes short-term and long-term action programs, and bilateral and multilateral levels of cooperation.

Today efficient cooperation has been established between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in combating drug smuggling.

In 2005, an Agreement was signed in Kabul between the Tajikistan Government and the Afghanistan Government on Cooperation in Combating the Illicit Circulation of Drugs, Psychotropic Substances, and Their Precursors.

Meetings were held in Kabul and Dushanbe, as well as the first conference of the heads of the Afghan and Tajik law-enforcement structures, at which questions were discussed of improving interaction between the two countries in ensuring the safety of their borders.

Representative offices of the Drug Control Agency (DCA) under the Tajik President have been opened and are functioning in Faizabad, Kunduz, and Mazar-i-Sharif (Afghanistan), the activity of which is yielding positive results. According to Chief of DCA Headquarters F. Jonmakhmadov, Tajikistan accounts for up to 80% of all the heroin confiscated in the Central Asian states put together. During the first eleven months of 2006, the total amount of confiscated drugs amounted to 4,465 tons, 2 tons of which were heroin.²⁵ Unfortunately, when NATO troops entered Afghanistan and the Taliban was overthrown, drug production in this state not only failed to decrease, it even dramatically increased. For example, in 2001, 185 tons of opium poppy were grown, in 2002, 3,400 tons, in 2003, 3,600 tons, in 2004, 4,100 tons, in 2005, 5,200 tons, and in 2006, a record harvest of 6,100 tons was gathered in Afghanistan.²⁶ According to the U.N. Office for Drug and Crime Control, 2007 was a record-breaking year. That year, the area on which opium poppy is grown reached 193,000 hectares, which was 17% higher than the index for the previous year (165,000 hectares). Afghanistan grew 8,200 tons of opium poppy, which amounts to 93% of the world production of this crop. It is worth noting that 90% of the drug is gathered in the provinces bordering on Pakistan.²⁷

In recent years, relations between the two countries have been successfully developing in culture, and this stands to reason, since the people of both republics have a common history. The material and cultural values created in these countries in the past belong to both nations. Outstanding poets and thinkers Abuali ibn Sino, Hakim Sanayi Gaznavi, Nasir Husrav Kubadiyani, Jalaluddin Balkhi Rumi, Maulana Yaqub al-Charkhi, Abdurrahman Jami, Shakik Balhi, Halillula Halili, and many others are equally highly esteemed in Afghanistan and Tajikistan.

The Tajiks love songs by Sarahang, Sorbon, Ahmad Zahir, Mahvash, and other contemporary Afghan singers and musicians just as much as the Afghans. The people of Afghanistan always look forward to tours by Tajik performers. Today meetings of cultural figures and artists, the showing of Afghan films, tours of creative groups, and various exhibitions are regular features of Tajik life. The two countries produce joint films. In November 2006, a Week of Afghan Culture was held in Dushanbe, within the framework of which various exhibitions were arranged, as well as concerts of Afghan

²⁵ See: F. Jonmakhmadov, "Narkosituatsiia v Afghanistane i rol Tadzhiqistana v borbe protiv kontrabandy narkotikov," in: *Afganistan i bezopasnost Tsentral'noi Azii*, Bishkek, Dushanbe, 2006, Iss. 3, p. 220.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

²⁷ See: *Kabul Weekly*, 29 August, 2007.

performers. Tajik audiences have been able to enjoy the theater productions put on in Afghanistan in recent years.

In September 2007, an auspicious milestone was celebrated in Dushanbe, Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, and other cities: the 800th anniversary of the birth of Jalaluddin Balhi, which was followed in November with the 100th anniversary of Halillula Halili.

Tajik-Afghan cooperation is developing in education and science. Tajikistan has every opportunity to train middle-ranking and highly qualified Afghan specialists in many fields of specialization. This cooperation was established in the Soviet era and is essentially continuing to this day. Many Afghan students go through training at Tajikistan's medical, polytechnic, and agrarian institutions. In the past, Tajik specialists taught in Afghan higher education institutions and there are thoughts of using this experience today too.

A protocol has been signed on cooperation between the Tajikistan Academy of Sciences and the Afghanistan Academy of Sciences, based on which Afghan scientists undergo training at academic institutions in Tajikistan and defend their Ph.D. and Doctor's dissertations there.

There can be no doubt that Tajik-Afghan relations based on equality and mutual benefit have good prospects.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that Tajik-Afghan interrelations are marred by the ongoing crisis situation in Afghanistan, the increase in drug manufacture, and the threat of extremism and terrorism coming from the south.

Tajikistan is worried about a repetition of the 1990s events, when the conflict in Afghanistan was instrumental in provoking confrontations in Tajikistan as well. Due to this, certain restrictions are still in effect for Afghan citizens with respect to obtaining Tajik entry visas. Afghanistan is not among the 68 countries of the world to which Resolution No. 134 of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan of 3 March, 2006 On Measures to Ensure a Simplified Procedure for Registering and Issuing Tajikistan Visas to Citizens of Several Foreign Countries applies.

So the further development of relations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan, including implementation of the large joint hydropower and transportation projects, will largely depend on the military-political situation in Afghanistan and in the region as a whole.