

## A CLOSE-UP VIEW OF INDIAN-TAJIK POLITICAL COOPERATION: THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

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Indian researchers cannot seem to arrive at a consensus about the prime tasks of the new relations between the newly independent republics of Central Asia, on the one hand, and the South Asian countries (particularly India and Pakistan), on the other. Some experts assert that the economic aspect prevails over the political and that India is primarily interested in economic trade cooperation with the Central Asian states and evaluates political (including ethnic, confessional, etc.) factors only on the basis of its economic interests. Other specialists, on the contrary, believe that during the 1990s India was in fact preoccupied with preventing political instability in the Central Asian region and not with economic cooperation with the Central Asian republics. Politics prevailed over economics. Only

after the political situation in Central Asia became more stable did India start considering economic cooperation with the region.<sup>1</sup>

Whereby it is worth noting that Tajik-Indian contacts have been traditionally characterized by a clear prevalence of precisely the economic component. The migration of various groups to the Indian subcontinent over the centuries through or directly from the territory of present-day Tajikistan,<sup>2</sup> unification of the Tajik and Indian regions within the same states (the Achaemenid Empire, Alexander Makedonsky's Empire, Bactria, the Kushan Empire, the Hephthalite state, the state of the Gaznevids and Timurids, etc.), and even the rule in the South Asian Delhi Sultanate of the ethnic Tajik Gurid dynasty could not compare in terms of significance with the role of the cultural-civilizational and economic trade cooperation between both sides. Several researchers believe that this cooperation began as early as the Upper Paleolithic Age when the first economic relations arose between the bearers of the archeological cultures of South Tajikistan and North-West India.<sup>3</sup> During the Bronze Age, the northern trade route of the cities of the Harappa Indus civilization passed through Badakhshan; and a Harappa trade colony—the site of the ancient town of Shortugai A (2200-2000 BC)—was discovered on the south banks of the Panj.<sup>4</sup> Active economic contacts between the present-day territories of India-Pakistan and Tajikistan were established during the flourishing of the Kushan Empire and particularly in the late Middle Ages and recent times. This was when Tajikistan's city centers and Tajik-populated Bukhara and Samarkand were drawn into large-scale economic (not only trade but also financial and credit) contacts with India and also began playing an active intermediate role in Indian-Russian trade.<sup>5</sup>

In the Soviet period, India regarded the Tajik S.S.R. both as an example of the Soviet Union's economic achievements in Central Asia and as an ethnically and politically kindred Asian region. "As long as the Central Asian Republics were part of the U.S.S.R., India's relations with them were routed through Moscow but their Asian nature was noticed."<sup>6</sup> This was precisely why representatives of these republics, including Tajikistan, were invited to the Inter-Asian Conference in 1947 where the future development of the Asian states as a single historical-geographical and cultural-civilizational bloc was discussed.<sup>7</sup>

When the Central Asian states acquired their political independence, India placed greater emphasis on the political aspect in its cooperation with Tajikistan.

<sup>1</sup> From a conversation with Doctor Gulshan Sachdeva of 20 October, 2006.

<sup>2</sup> With respect to this fact, Indian authors note the Indo-Iranian "kinship" of the Indian Aryans and Tajiks (see, for example: T. Firdous, "India and Central Asia. A Case Study of Indo-Tajik Relations," in: *Central Asia: Introspection*, ed. by M.A. Kaw, A.A. Bandy, University of Kashmir, Srinagar, 2006, p. 321). Incidentally, representatives of Tajikistan also pay attention to this circumstance (see: A. Juraev, "Socio-Cultural Challenges of Tajikistan in the 20th Century," in: *Thesis for the Conference on "Central Asia in Retrospect and Prospect"*, Center for Central Asian Studies, Srinagar, August 2006, p. 5; U.A. Nazarov, "The Present State of Tajikistan-India Relations," in: *Thesis for the Conference on "Central Asia in Retrospect and Prospect"*, p. 1).

<sup>3</sup> G.M. Bongard-Levin, G.F. Ilyin, *Indiia v drevnosti*, Chief editorial board of Oriental literature of Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1985, p. 595.

<sup>4</sup> See: B.A. Litvinskiy, "Drevnie sviazi Indii i Srednei Azii (do VII-VIII vv. n.e.)," in: *Rossiia i Indiia*, ed. by N.A. Khal'fin, P.M. Shastitko, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1986, p. 11; G.F. Ilyin, I.M. Diakonov, "Pervye gosudarstva v Indii. Predgorodskie kul'tury Srednei Azii i Irana," in: *Istoriia drevnego mira*, Book. 1, *Ranniia drevnost'*, ed. by I.M. Diakonov, V.D. Neronova, I.S. Svetsitskaia, Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1989, pp. 165, 172-173.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example: M. Haidar, *Indo-Central Asian Relations. From Early Times to Medieval Period*, Manohar Publishers & Distributors, New Delhi, 2004, pp. 260-261, 265; D. Kaushik, *India and Central Asia in Modern Times. A Study in Historical-Cultural Contacts from the Early Nineteenth Century*, Satvahan Publications, Delhi, 1985, pp. 24, 26-30, 35-36.

<sup>6</sup> A. Deshpande, "Videnie Aziatskogo sotrudnichestva Jawaharlala Nehru—kontekstual'naia, kontseptual'naia i sinopticheskaia tochka zreniia," in: *Jawaharlal Nehru i sotrudnichestvo v Azii*, Collection of articles, ed. by A. Mishra, Indian Cultural Center, Almaty, 2006, p. 157.

<sup>7</sup> See: J. Nehru, *Invitation to Inter-Asian Relations Conference*, Selected Works, Second Series, ed. by Gen. S. Gopal, in 35 volumes, Vol. 1, Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Fund, New Delhi, 1989, p. 483.

There are many reasons for this.

- First, India, to a greater extent than other Central Asian states, associates Tajikistan both with the aggravated threats to its internal and interregional political security and with the ways to eliminate these threats. An analysis of the works of Indian authors that appeared during the 1990s shows that the Indian side followed the events in Tajikistan associated with the civil war quite closely and even with some apprehension. In so doing, India was generally on the side of the secular regimes. India clearly supported and approved of the end of the war and, most important, the way it ended. It can even be ascertained that this circumstance diffused to a certain extent the Indian side's tension and anxiety about the current and possibly unfavorable events in the future throughout the entire Central Asian Region. In addition, Indian analysts began noting that "the most strategically located country from India's security point of view is Tajikistan that shares borders with Afghanistan and China. It is also located in close proximity to PoK [Pakistan-occupied Kashmir]."<sup>8</sup>
- Second, India regarded Tajikistan as a state with potentially negative predominance of the Islamic component in everyday life: "in Tajikistan, Islam remains a strong factor."<sup>9</sup> This factor is also generally associated with India's overall idea about ensuring security in the Central Asian Region and throughout Central and South Asia, although it deserves a separate look. In this respect, four circumstances can be mentioned to which Indian authors have paid and continue to pay special attention.
  - (1) The religious undertone of the domestic conflict itself in Tajikistan.
  - (2) The common Tajik-Iranian historical-ethnic and cultural-civilizational ties. India justifiably regards Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, and Saudi Arabia as four of the main states fighting among themselves for dominance in the Central Asian Region, including for the opportunity to offer the republics of this region their own model of Islam. Whereby the Indian side believed that Tajikistan would most likely prefer the Iranian model.<sup>10</sup> And although India's direct political and economic relations with Iran could be described as generally positive, it is unlikely that New Delhi will set up a model of Muslim theocracy in Tajikistan. Moreover, in the mid-1990s Indian analysts even believed that "it is most likely that Iran will play the Tajik card against Russia, if the latter does not concede to its position on sharing the Caspian resources."<sup>11</sup>
  - (3) Tajikistan's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC). Incidentally, the Indian side was only initially worried about this. We know that India's presence as a leader in the South Asian Region is nowhere as restricted as it is in the OIC, an organization formed on a religious basis. South Asia is represented on this basis by Pakistan, Bangladesh, and the Republic of Maldives. Naturally Pakistan plays the most active role among them in the OIC, striving to realize its anti-Indian objectives there. At the same time India, which is the second largest state in the world in terms of Muslim population, almost always strove itself "to establish relations with Islamic countries to en-

<sup>8</sup> P. Stobdan, "Strategic Emergence of Central Asia—Implications for Indian Ocean States," *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1, April 2004, p. 39.

<sup>9</sup> P. Stobdan, "Central Asia and India's Security," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 28, No. 1, January-March 2004, p. 71.

<sup>10</sup> See: M.H. Nuri, "India and Central Asia: Past, Present and Future," *Regional Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 1992-1993, p. 81; M.K. Palat, "India and Central Asia," *World Focus*, Vol. 14, No. 3-4, March-April 1993, p. 40.

<sup>11</sup> P. Stobdan, "Regional Issues in Central Asia: Implications for South Asia," *South Asian Survey*, 1998, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p. 253.

sure their not becoming a party to Pakistani strategies threatening India.”<sup>12</sup> In particular, the fact that the Resolution on Kashmir, with its tough stance regarding India, was adopted as the meeting of OIC member states in Karachi in 1993 could not help but make New Delhi nervous.

But soon after this meeting, the heads of the Central Asian states, as though justifying themselves to India, stated repeatedly that they had signed the Resolution exclusively under Pakistan’s pressure as the host party.<sup>13</sup> Subsequently it was the representatives of the Central Asian states that made the greatest efforts to tone down the general anti-Indian rhetoric at meetings of the OIC members, if it arose. The membership of the Central Asian countries in this organization made India feel more comfortable, now it was convinced that Islam in these countries does not present a threat to it. Moreover, some researchers believe that although “New Delhi’s growing interest in Central Asia goes beyond off-setting Pakistan’s influence in the region... India could cultivate the opinion of the Muslim world on Kashmir by encouraging Muslim Central Asian states to present New Delhi’s case in the Organization of the Islamic Conference.”<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it was precisely the Central Asian factor that slightly downplayed Pakistan’s position in the OIC, since it sharpened its contradictions with other leading states of the Islamic world during their struggle for influence in the Central Asian Region.

- (4) And finally, the very fact of lightweight, according to the Indian side, Islamization of Tajikistan. On the whole, India, while objectively pointing to the religious and ethnic problems in the South Asia Region as such, is watching them in a hypertrophied way in Central Asia, which is largely due to the religious situation in such states as Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. “The recognition of Islam as a force to be reckoned with in the newly emerged Central Asian states ... has been giving an impetus to Islamic resurgence in the world;”<sup>15</sup> “a fundamentalist Central Asia ... is not outside the realms of possibility,”<sup>16</sup> and so on. In addition, India is also paying increased attention to the Islamic threat posed to the Central Asian states themselves, which the Indians are inclined to overly exaggerate. “Financial resources generated by drug trade in the region have given a certain amount of autonomy to the terrorist and fundamentalist forces.”<sup>17</sup> The “ideological struggle between secular and extremist forces, an unremitting flow of foreign funds to the latter and the unresolved conflict in Afghanistan are the principal factors for religious extremism in Central Asia... Religious extremism and international terrorism would remain challenges to Central Asian security and stability... The local population is not capable of resisting Islamic prohibitions when imposed.”<sup>18</sup> There are

<sup>12</sup> J.N. Dixit, “India’s Security Concerns and Their Impacts on Foreign Policy,” in: *Indian Foreign Policy: Agenda for the 21st Century*, ed. by L. Mansingh *et al.*, Vol. 1, Konark Publishers Pvt Ltd, New Delhi, 1997, p.157.

<sup>13</sup> See: S.D. Muni, “India and Central Asia: Towards a Co-operative Future,” in: *Central Asia: The Great Game Replayed*, ed. by N. Joshi, New Century Publications, New Delhi, 2003, pp.118-119.

<sup>14</sup> Sh. Akbarzadeh, “India and Pakistan’s Geostrategic Rivalry in Central Asia,” *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol. 12, No. 2, June 2003, p. 227.

<sup>15</sup> K.S. Sidhu, “Islamic World and Central Asia: Turkey, Afghanistan and Pakistan,” in: *Central Asia: Present Challenges and Future Prospects*, ed. by V.N. Rao, M.M. Alam, Knowledge World, New Delhi, 2005, p. 175.

<sup>16</sup> S.N. Bal, *Central Asia: A Strategy for India’s Look-North Policy*, Lancer Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 2004, p. 332.

<sup>17</sup> S.D. Muni, *op. cit.*, p. 98 (see also p. 103 for the same considerations).

<sup>18</sup> R. Dwivedi, “Security Scenario in Central Asia: An Indian Perspective,” in: *Conceptions and Approaches to Regional Security: Experience, Problems, and Prospects of Cooperation in Central Asia. Data from the 4th Annual Almaty Conference (7 June, 2006)*, Kazakhstan Institute of Strategic Research under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Almaty, 2006, pp. 147, 157-158.

several reasons for this opinion; for example, the Indians see the popularity of Islamic organizations in Central Asia in the fact that “almost 60 per cent of the population there is under the age of 25, unemployed, uneducated, and hungry and hopes that establishment of the *Caliphate* will be a miraculous solution to their woes.”<sup>19</sup> None of the above-mentioned provisions can apply in any serious way to Turkmenistan or particularly to Kazakhstan since they reflect a situation that has primarily emerged in the Tajik-Uzbek region.

Tajikistan is perfectly well aware that most of the threats that worry India are associated precisely with Islam; so in this respect “bilateral cooperation [of India and Tajikistan] has to be very careful and well-balanced.”<sup>20</sup>

- Third, Tajikistan views India mainly from the political perspective because it is closer to the Afghan-Pakistani belt.

India (as in fact most states of the world) views the Afghan problem in all its aspects as the main threat to regional and global security. And here Tajikistan is seen as the most vulnerable spot, on the one hand, and as a significant guarantee for resolving this problem, on the other. Depending on Tajikistan’s success or failure, it is faced with the choice of either disappearing as a state or extending its present boundaries to become the most powerful country in the region.<sup>21</sup> Several works by Indian authors point out that there are more Tajiks in Afghanistan than in Tajikistan itself. This assertion essentially passes from one study to another and allows India, if not to entirely equate at least to closely correlate the situation in Tajikistan with the Afghan problem. In so doing, the Indian side clearly feels Tajikistan’s support both in directly helping to settle the Afghan problem and in defending India’s national interests in the region in general. “...Given the present India-Pakistan relations, access to Afghanistan is not possible for India through Pakistan. As a result, it has chosen the Central Asian route and that too through Tajikistan, the most reliable and close ally during the Taliban’s days in power. The facility provided by Tajikistan has enabled India to remain involved in the developmental process in Afghanistan.”<sup>22</sup>

Based on the situation that has emerged in Afghanistan and its contiguous territories, India is very worried about the threats posed by illegal migration and drug trafficking,<sup>23</sup> as well as the spread in Tajikistan of destructive radical Islamic elements under the influence of the Afghan-Pakistani belt. Such fears are indeed justified since the Tajik-Afghan border is a convenient corridor for illegal migrants, including radical Islamists, and drug dealers to reach the other states of Central Asia;<sup>24</sup> “Tajikistan, devastated after a long and bloody civil war, had been at the receiving end of religious terrorism from Afghanistan.”<sup>25</sup> Indian experts are

<sup>19</sup> S.N. Bal, op. cit., p. 359.

<sup>20</sup> U.A. Nazarov, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> See: P. Stobdan, “Central Asia in Geo-Political Transition,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 22, No. 1, 1998, p. 102.

<sup>22</sup> A. Patnaik, “India-China Cooperation in Central Asia,” *Security and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 2, Summer 2005, p. 88.

<sup>23</sup> In this respect, Indian authors note that “a rapid expansion of the traditional cultivation of opium in Afghanistan and parts of Central Asia has helped to finance the growth of religious fundamentalism in the Indian states of Punjab and Jammu and Kashmir and the Central Asian republic of Tajikistan as well” (D. Kaushik, “India and Central Asia: Renewing a Traditional Relationship,” *South Asian Survey*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1998, p. 241); “Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan developed important opium routes and became significant opium producers themselves... In the areas bordering with Tajikistan, drug traffickers have stored tens of thousands of tons of opium” (M.S. Roy, “India’s Interests in Central Asia,” *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 24, No. 12, March 2001, p. 2279).

<sup>24</sup> See, for example: L. Nikolaeva, “Migratsiia v Tadjikistane: pliusy i minusy,” *Azia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 6, 2007.

<sup>25</sup> A. Patnaik, “Central Asia and Indo-Pak Relations,” *World Focus*, Vol. 22, No. 10-12, 2001, p. 56.

carrying out numerous studies about this threat and its influence on the situation in India itself, noting that “the growth of relations between the two countries is to be viewed in terms of the geo-strategic scenario existing around them in Central and South Asia.”<sup>26</sup> On the whole, India, referring to the fact that a possible spread of the Afghan problem is affecting its immediate interests, is trying to resolve it in different ways: on the basis of military-strategic cooperation with Russia in the Central Asian Region; within the framework of multilateral cooperation with the Central Asian states; and independently, by means of bilateral cooperation with Tajikistan through assistance in defending its borders. Incidentally, the Declaration on Further Expansion of Friendly Relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Tajikistan signed in 1995 mentions the need for active cooperation between the two countries in protecting its state structures from terrorist threats.<sup>27</sup> This is also mentioned in the Indian-Tajik Agreement on Creating a Joint Working Group for Fighting International Terrorism of 2003, as well as in the Treaty on Extradition and the Agreement on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Cases.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, India is vigorously fortifying its military-political position in Tajikistan, both in cooperation with other actors in world politics and on an individual basis. In particular there was talk about it creating the “first military ‘outpost’ in Tajikistan at Farkhor, adjoining the Tajik-Afghan border.”<sup>29</sup> India also built a military hospital in Tajikistan, which was later moved to Kabul, and an air strip “to help the Northern Alliance.”<sup>30</sup>

As for Pakistan, most researchers believe that the political factor is still the dominating one in the initial prerequisites for establishing contacts between the Central Asian countries and Pakistan. This implies the calls of the Pakistani side to restore the broken historical relations and addressing the ideas of the Muslim fraternity and Pakistan’s use of the religious factor to create its strategic depth in Central Asia, which has always put India on the alert. In particular, some Indian researchers have unequivocally decided that “with the appearance of five nominally Islamic neighbors in 1991, Pakistani policy-makers initially envisioned a Muslim security belt stretching from Pakistan to Turkey.”<sup>31</sup> Most Pakistani authors usually recognize the predominance of the political factor in this respect and even call on their leadership to shift the emphasis from it to the economic factor, the lack of attention to which has had a negative effect both on Pakistan’s direct cooperation with the Central Asian states and on its image in the eyes of the world community as a whole. Although individual representatives of the Pakistani side have been making attempts to show their state’s interest in the Central Asian Region, primarily from the economic viewpoint, such attempts usually failed. Inclusion of the Central Asian states in the Muslim Economic Cooperation Organization<sup>32</sup> (ECO), largely by Pakistan’s efforts, only aggravated the sit-

<sup>26</sup> T. Firdous, op. cit., p. 323.

<sup>27</sup> See: A. Sengupta, “India and Central Asia,” *World Focus*, Vol. 21, No. 8, August 2000, p. 23.

<sup>28</sup> See: A. Patnaik, “India-Central Asia Relations: The Growing Prospects,” *World Focus*, Vol. 24, No. 10-12, 2003, p. 50.

<sup>29</sup> G. Sachdeva, “India’s Attitude towards China’s Growing Influence in Central Asia,” *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly*, Vol. 4, No. 3, 2006, p. 24 ff.

<sup>30</sup> A. Patnaik, “India-China Cooperation in Central Asia...”, p. 87 (for more detail on the Indian military-strategic activity at Farkhor during NATO’s Afghan campaign, see: R. Bedi, “India Dabbles in the New ‘Great Game,’” *Jane’s Intelligence Review*, Vol. 13, No. 6, June 2002, p. 19; idem, “India and Central Asia,” *Frontline*, Vol. 19, No. 19, 14-27 September, 2002, p. 60).

<sup>31</sup> A. Dhaka, *South Asia and Central Asia: Geopolitical Dynamics*, Mangal Deep, Jaipur, 2005, p. 152.

<sup>32</sup> See: Ibid., p. 150 (see also: P. Mann, *India’s Foreign Policy in the Post Cold War Era*, Harman Publishing House, New Delhi, 2000, p. 49; R. Khan, “Emergence of Central Asia and Its Relevance to India,” *Mainstream*, Vol. 30, No. 24, April 1992, p. 21). Incidentally, some Pakistani researchers also describe the OEC as an “economic bloc of the Muslim

uation in India's eyes, particularly at the initial stage. Pakistan's "exclusion of India from key political issues like the Tajik and Afghan conflicts, while trying to resolve them within an Islamic framework like the OIC and ECO ... posed immediate challenges to Indian policy-makers."<sup>33</sup>

In so doing, whereas some Indian researchers have been expressing the opinion that the situation in Tajikistan will make it easier for Pakistan to worm its way into the Central Asian Region, others, on the contrary, believe that Tajikistan is not the place where Pakistan will be able to reach its goals. The Central Asian states, particularly Tajikistan, have been put on the alert by Pakistan's Afghan policy and overemphasis on the religious aspect; they are particularly concerned about Pakistan applying this approach to them in particular.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to this, India has always been bothered by Pakistan's official and unofficial cooperation with the Islamic organizations of the Central Asian states. It was noted in particular that the "major fundamentalist organization, the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) of Tajikistan ... had an office in Peshawar, and Tajik recruits were given a five-year religious course at the *madrassahs* in Peshawar."<sup>35</sup>

- Fourth, the predominance of the political component in Indian-Tajik relations has been related to certain problems and even failures in the attempts to expand Tajikistan's economic cooperation with the South Asian states. Diplomatic relations between India and Tajikistan were established as early as 1992 (incidentally, later than with other Central Asian states). Since then quite a number of reciprocal visits have taken place at different levels and a whole series of bilateral documents were signed that encompass a wide range of spheres of potential cooperation, including economic. But the first meeting of members of the Indian-Tajik Joint Commission on Trade was not held until the end of 2001 (whereas the agreement on creating this commission was signed back in 1995), which clearly shows that not enough has been done to establish bilateral economic contacts at the top level. The average figures showing the level of trade contacts between Tajikistan and India are the lowest in the Central Asian Region.

For more than fifteen years Indian researchers have been giving the same description of Tajikistan's economy (rich in mineral resources, can generate a large amount of electricity, its main export commodities are raw cotton, fruit, and so on) and name essentially the same spheres for potential Indian-Tajik economic cooperation (primarily sharing Indian experience in different fields).<sup>36</sup> For example, Tajikistan showed an interest in India's experience and technology for purifying and disinfecting water, ensuring the rational use of hydropower, building mini power plants, and processing natural building materials. India offered its assistance in setting up the production of semiconductors in Tajikistan using its own raw materials, and so on. The Indian side has also been showing an interest in developing Tajikistan's mineral resources (particularly participation in works at silver mines). In addition, Indian-

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countries" (N. Ghufuran, "The Islam Factor in Pakistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics," in: *Pakistan. Fifty Years of Independence*, Vol. 2, *Independence and Beyond: The Fifty Years—1947-1997*, ed. by V. Grover, R. Arora, Deep&Deep Publications, New Delhi, 1997, p. 378).

<sup>33</sup> P. Stobdan, "Regional Issues in Central Asia: Implications for South Asia..." p. 257.

<sup>34</sup> See: R. Khan, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> A. Patnaik, "India-China Cooperation in Central Asia..." p. 81.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example: M.H. Nuri, op. cit., p. 81; P.S. Yadav, "India and the Central Asian Republics," *World Focus*, Vol. 20, No. 10, October-December 1999, p. 63; M.S. Roy, op. cit., pp. 2275, 2280; A. Patnaik, "India-Central Asia Relations: The Growing Prospects..." p. 51; T. Firdous, op. cit., p. 322.

Tajik cooperation has been designated in such spheres as environmental protection, tourism, the textile, leather, and chemical industry, public health (including pharmaceuticals), civil aviation, telecommunication, science, and so on.<sup>37</sup> Tajik representatives expressed their desire to create joint ventures with the Indian side in such branches as the production of electrical engineering equipment, precision tool engineering, optics, and so on. But not all of these ideas have come to fruition.

Cooperation is primarily being accomplished in India's provision of loans and grants to Tajikistan for purchasing goods and services from India. India is also rendering Tajikistan gratuitous assistance in building small enterprises (for example, a fruit-processing plant in Dushanbe) and hotels, supplying medication, and supporting Tajik municipal structures.

Since India does not directly border on Tajikistan, it depends on Pakistan for acquiring hydropower from Tajikistan. Pakistan itself is one of the official investors showing an interest in Tajikistan's energy resources; Dushanbe has been holding talks with Pakistan on a project to finish building the Rogun Hydropower Plant. Tajikistan asked foreign investors to finance the construction of a 500-kW power transmission line from the south to the north of Tajikistan with subsequent transit to Afghanistan and on to Pakistan and Iran.<sup>38</sup> But due to the U.S.'s resistance to cooperation with Iran, as well as the protests of Pakistani society itself, it seems unlikely that this project will be implemented.

There are no projects for any of the existing or planned transport and pipeline corridors linking Central and South Asia to pass through Tajikistan.<sup>39</sup> In the southerly direction, the Central Asian-South Asian routes are to pass through Turkmenistan or Uzbekistan; Tajikistan has not been mentioned anywhere yet in this respect. (The Central Asia-China-India transport corridor project that existed in the 1990s, which was potentially to run through Tajik territory, was soon dropped from consideration due to its obvious unprofitability. The Chakhbakhar-Kabul-Kunduz-Badakhshan route, on the other hand, was viewed not so much from the economic as from the strategic perspective.)<sup>40</sup> So Tajikistan will be on the periphery of such routes and will depend to a certain extent on its Central Asian neighbors in terms of economic cooperation with the South Asian states.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that in those few spheres where Indian-Tajik cooperation is initiated, it is very successful.

Moreover, India is actively developing cooperation with Tajikistan in the educational sphere. In particular, Tajik students are being given full scholarships for obtaining an education in India under a program of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), while candidates from the four other Central Asian countries are not paid round-trip expenses to India. Tajik students also enjoy additional privileges in India itself. Representatives of Tajikistan are also making active use of the ITEC educational program, particularly in management, economics, and finances. In addition, in the defense sphere, along with partial modernization of Soviet military equipment (since both states have quite a lot of similar hardware of Soviet-Russian manufacture), India is holding training courses for the personnel of

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<sup>37</sup> See: M.S. Roy, "Redefining India-Central Asia Relations," *World Focus*, Vol. 23, No. 6, June 2002, pp. 22-23; U.A. Nazarov, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>38</sup> See: D. Fayzullaev, "Tajikistan. V geopoliticheskikh labirintakh," *Aziia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 8, 2007, pp. 28-30.

<sup>39</sup> For more detail on the various alternatives for laying these corridors, see: A.E. Abishev, *Kaspiy: nefi' i politika*, Center of Foreign Policy and Analysis, Almaty, 2002, pp. 266-268; D.B. Malysheva, "Geopoliticheskie manevry na Kaspii," *World Economic and International Relations*, No. 5, 2006, pp. 74-75; N.K. Mohapatra, "Caspian Cauldron: Role of State and Non-State Actors," *Contemporary Central Asia*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1999, p. 50; *Middle East and Central Asia. Data-book*, ed. by Edwards Economic Research Inc. Europa Publications, London, 2004, pp. 158-159, and others.

<sup>40</sup> See: T. Firdous, op. cit., p. 324.

Tajikistan's land and air forces.<sup>41</sup> Indian students are continuing to obtain an education at the Tajik State Medical University.

- Fifth, India has a keen interest in Tajikistan politically due to its own foreign policy orientation.

Tajik-Russian cooperation is particularly important to India. The Indian side is especially inspired by the overall pro-Russian mood that exists in Tajikistan since it believes that positive relations between the Central Asian countries and Russia are very conducive to India's interests. Moreover, representatives of the Indian side also talked unofficially about the possibility and even necessity of Indian-Russian political cooperation not *with involvement* of the Central Asian countries, but *over* these states. (This incidentally should in no way be seen as negative, the thing here is that India has certain reasons to fear that the Central Asian countries themselves will not be able to independently deal with some of the regional threats. So problems with ensuring security in Central Asia have always aroused concern in India: "civil strife and turbulence in Tajikistan and Afghanistan ... is having a spillover effect on the Indian state of [Jammu and] Kashmir;"<sup>42</sup> "should the destabilizing pattern of local conflicts as manifested in ... some of the Central Asian states, especially Tajikistan, continue unabated, the security environment of Southern Asia ... is likely to become more explosive."<sup>43</sup>) In this respect, Tajikistan can be seen as an accomplished example of this kind of Indian-Russian cooperation, primarily in the military-strategic sphere. "At present, Russia, along with Tajikistan and India, is equipping a new base at the Ayni aerodrome 25 km from Dushanbe... There are plans to deploy an aviation group of the Russian military base at Ayni, ... as well as Tajik and Indian aviation equipment. India will deploy 12 MiG-29 fighter planes and one operational trainer for training Tajik pilots."<sup>44</sup>

Back the mid-1990s the Indian side was pleased that all the Central Asian states were worried about the spread of the Tajik syndrome; India also highly appreciated their promotion of Russia's activity aimed at eliminating the conflict in Tajikistan.<sup>45</sup>

India also highly assesses the fact that, in contrast to Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan did not permit the U.S. armed forces to use its territory,<sup>46</sup> nor gives too clear a

<sup>41</sup> See: A. Patnaik, "India-China Cooperation in Central Asia..." p. 87.

<sup>42</sup> D. Kaushik, "India and Central Asia: Renewing a Traditional Relationship..." p. 241.

<sup>43</sup> M.S. Roy, "India's Interests in Central Asia..." p. 2276.

<sup>44</sup> D. Fayzullaev, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>45</sup> See: J. Bakshi, "Russia, India and the Central Asian Republics: Geo-political Convergence," *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 5, August 1996, pp. 735-736.

<sup>46</sup> Despite the prevalent opinion that India is a potential bearer of U.S. interests in the Central Asian Region, Indian authors themselves talk unanimously about the undesirability of the U.S.'s presence in the Central Asian states. This shows the ambiguity of India's attitude toward the idea of Greater Central Asia, which implies the political and economical unification of Central and South Asia through Afghanistan. For example, Professor A. Patnaik talks about how he is "against the idea of a Greater Central Asia à la Frederick Star-Condoleezza Rice, since this region will not realistically include (and even exclude) India, Russia, Iran, and most of China. The presence of American military bases in Central Asia, as it turned out, did not eliminate the threat of the spread of terrorism in the region; on the contrary, by intervening in Afghanistan and Iraq the U.S. helped the Taliban, which was previously mainly concentrated in Afghanistan, to move beyond its borders and spread its activity to Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Jammu, and Kashmir" (A. Patnaik, *Speech at the conference dedicated to the 15th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of India and the Republic of Kazakhstan*, 18 February, 2007). Incidentally, the U.S. may have participated in this idea, or to be more precise, the U.S. could have carried out some actions in this vector that were of benefit to India itself. For example, according to Doctor G. Sachdeva, the U.S. is eager to unify Central and South Asia under the artificial mode of integration. It is of benefit to India and a good opportunity since the U.S. could even compel Pakistan to make the peace with India. India should use the U.S.'s presence in Afghanistan to expand its contacts with Central Asia no matter how complicated this may be (from a conversation with Doctor Gulshan Sachdeva on 20 October, 2006). Admittedly, India interprets this idea in its own way, primarily insisting that the U.S.'s intervention in its realization be limited.

political preference to China. Indian researchers also note that “the closeness of India to two important frontline states for combating international terrorism — Tajikistan and Afghanistan — should prompt China to seek Indian cooperation in this respect.”<sup>47</sup>

- Sixth, India endows Tajikistan with political importance due to its traditional closeness to the states of the South Asian subcontinent in the political-cultural respect. However, the influence of this factor should not be overestimated, as some researchers and particularly official are wont to do. The most India is capable of is dividing Central Asia in the historical perspective into settled (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan) and nomadic (Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan) blocs. India does not usually make a distinction among the individual states in each of these blocs and the Indian side’s provisions on “ancient traditions” of cooperation with Tajikistan could apply equally to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan.

Incidentally, this approach (not distinguishing among individual states within the Central Asian Region), which is also true of the present, makes it possible for India to project Tajik reality to a certain extent onto the entire Central Asian Region. We talked above about transferring the Muslim factor in the Tajikistan scenario to all the Central Asian countries.

Based on the example of the civil war in Tajikistan, several Indian researchers believe that the stability and internal security of *all* the Central Asian states largely depend on external factors: on the Great Game of the world nations, on transnational phenomena—terrorism, extremism, Islamic fundamentalism, and so on. The “politically, economically and militarily weak regimes of Central Asia are prone to future instability, particularly in the event of leadership change.”<sup>48</sup> The “region ... is fraught with politics of identity and ethnic nationalism, topped with authoritarian regimes, making it potentially a region of conflict.”<sup>49</sup> As already noted, many people in India are still inclined to believe that the Central Asian countries are so weak that they are incapable of withstanding such threats independently and will either need constant political support from the outside (as in the case with Tajik-Russian cooperation), or, in its absence, can objectively expect internal instability and chaos. “The role of external players in sustaining order, especially in the strategic setting of this region, would be substantive.”<sup>50</sup> Whereby it is noted that “prior to 9/11, the Central Asian states, except Tajikistan, somehow had been managing their security affairs with varying degrees of success.”<sup>51</sup>

Several domestic problems and certain Tajik-Uzbek differences of opinion regarding the historical and ethno-linguistic affiliation of some territories are making people in India believe that there are serious contradictions, right down to conflicts, among all the Central Asian countries and within each of them separately, which also has a negative effect on stability in the region. “As the borders of the Central Asian Republics do not coincide with the linguistic and cultural affinities of different groups living in the respective states, there have been lingering inter-state territorial disputes.”<sup>52</sup> “The unresolved conflicts between the Central Asian states tend to promote feelings of insecurity. Due to the differences on account of

<sup>47</sup> A. Patnaik, “India-China Cooperation in Central Asia...,” p. 93.

<sup>48</sup> V.N. Rao, “Introduction,” in: *Central Asia: Present Challenges and Future Prospects...*, p. 17.

<sup>49</sup> A.M. Chenoy, “Central Asian Republics: Geo-Strategy and Human Security,” in: *Central Asia: Introspection...*, p. 169.

<sup>50</sup> K. Kak, “India’s Strategic and Security Interests in Central Asia,” in: *Central Asia: Present Challenges and Future Prospects...*, p. 208.

<sup>51</sup> P. Stobdan, “Central Asia and India’s Security...,” p. 60.

<sup>52</sup> K. Warikoo, “Security Challenges in South and Central Asia,” *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, January-March 2006, p. 7.

territorial, ideological and ethnic variations, the probability of a clash continues to inspire the Central Asian states to equip themselves.”<sup>53</sup> “The Central Asian Republics ... are beset with ethnic and religious conflicts because of varying composition.”<sup>54</sup> “Regional and clan rivalry have been a tacit constant of Central Asian politics.”<sup>55</sup> “[There is] quite a complex range of challenges in Central Asia. They are—the fragile states and political instability, ... a highly complex ethnic and religious mosaic with potentials of tension and conflict.”<sup>56</sup> “Tajikistan provides a clear example, where clans from different regions become enemies ... in the pursuit of power.”<sup>57</sup>

However, the partial perception of all the Central Asian states through Tajikistan also has clear positive aspects. For example, during the 1990s, Indian authors often immediately projected Tajikistan’s interest in India onto the entire Central Asian Region.<sup>58</sup> This helped to compensate for the temporary lack of interest from other Central Asian countries (primarily Kazakhstan) in the eyes of the Indians.

Here it should be noted that from the very beginning India became one of the priority states for Tajikistan in the Asian vector of its foreign policy, which also helped to enhance Indian-Tajik political relations<sup>59</sup> (something that is unfortunately lacking so far in Kazakhstan). In this respect, India was included on the list of countries envisaged in the Tajik Resolution on Measures to Create a Simplified System for Submitting Applications and Obtaining Visas for the Citizens of Some Foreign States.<sup>60</sup> This circumstance should interest the Kazakh side as well, which often creates difficulties for Indian citizens who want to obtain a visa to visit Kazakhstan.

India has a favorable opinion of Tajikistan’s internal development at the current stage. Since the Central Asian states obtained their independence, India has been concerned about their internal social and political stability. This particularly applies to the status of the opposition. “The country can’t stay without freedom for opposition, otherwise instability would come from inside, not outside the country as blocked oppositionists pose more challenges for the country’s stability compared to open ones. India has no intention to cooperate with a country where instability comes from the blocked opposition.”<sup>61</sup> The Indians believe that Tajikistan is the only Central Asian state where the opposition’s status is relatively satisfactory; the other four Central Asian countries have still not achieved the necessary success in this issue.<sup>62</sup>

- In conclusion it can be noted that in its cooperation with Tajikistan, India places special emphasis on its political components for the abovementioned reasons. In so doing, this emphasis on the political aspect of cooperation, which is positive in itself and generally meets the interests of both countries, also has several problems.
  - First, the economic side of cooperation is suffering, being not simply overridden by the political aspect, but also greatly complicated by it.

<sup>53</sup> K.S. Sidhu, op. cit., p. 177.

<sup>54</sup> A.M. Chenoy, op. cit., p. 185.

<sup>55</sup> A. Dhaka, op. cit., p. 110.

<sup>56</sup> S. Jha, “Russia’s Policy Towards Central Asia After Soviet Disintegration,” in: *Central Asia: Introspection...*, p. 199.

<sup>57</sup> P. Stobdan, ‘Regional Issues in Central Asia: Implications for South Asia...,’ p. 249.

<sup>58</sup> See: N.K. Mohapatra, op. cit., p. 49.

<sup>59</sup> See: U.A. Nazarov, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>60</sup> See: Ibid., p. 8.

<sup>61</sup> From a conversation with Muthu Kumar, Joint Secretary, India’s Ministry of External Affairs, 19 October, 2006.

<sup>62</sup> See, for example: Shams ud Din Ahmad, “Geo-Politics, Violence and Regime Change in Central Asia,” in: *Central Asia: Introspection...*, pp. 143-153.

- Second, India's pessimistic perception of the situation in Tajikistan undermines its authority on the world arena. As an analysis of the statements of Tajik representatives quoted in the works of Indian researchers shows, the latter are mainly paying attention to the difficulties and problems of the Tajik side.
- Third, this perception is partially projected onto the entire Central Asian Region, which could be negatively perceived by Tajikistan's regional neighbors.

In this respect, it appears that the Tajik side should exert certain efforts to shift the emphasis away from politics. India and Tajikistan should also continue looking for ways to step up cooperation in different spheres of the economy and in environmental protection, which seems to be just as important at the current stage as working on strictly political problems.

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