CHAPTER V

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The Republic of Tajikistan is located in the Southeastern part of Central Asia, surrounded by huge mountain systems of the world: Kunlun, Hindu Kush, Himalayas, Pamir and Tian Shan. Therefore, of 143.1 thousand square kilometers of the country’s total area, mountains comprise 93% beginning with the altitude of 300 to 7,495 meters.

Tajikistan is demarcated from Uzbekistan in the northwest, Kyrgyzstan in the northeast, China in the west, Afghanistan in the south. The population is more than 6.5 million, 72 percent of which is living in rural areas. Average life expectancy is 67 years. Number of inhabitants in 1km$^2$ is 45 people. Tajiks constitute 80 percent of the total population, Uzbeks – 15.3 percent, Russians and Kyrgyz’s – 1.1 percent each, Tatars and Turkmens –0.3 percent each. Prominent religion in Tajikistan is Islam; it is practiced by more than 95 percent of the population of Tajikistan, mainly Sunni branch of the religion. Only dwellers of Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast or Pamir with a small exception, is the followers of Ishmaelite branch of Islam.

Originally Tajiks belong to Indo-European anthropologic race. Millennia! history of the evolution of Tajiks, caused the current composition of Tajikistan’s Population. As a result of foreigners’ incursions (Greeks, Arabs, Mongols, Turks, Huns-Ephtalites and others), and demarcation of Central Asia in twentieth century, Tajiks were pushed from the fertile valley to foothills and mountains, which caused a great disarray in Tajik nation, A part of them remained in Samarkand and Bukhara, which joined Uzbekistan, some of them joined Afghanistan, the third part wandered around the world in the search of a better life, the rest died or assimilated in other countries.

Contemporary Tajikistan is a sovereign, democratic, secular and unitary state, with President as Head of the state, chief executive and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Tajikistan. Tajik Parliament – (Majlisi Oli) consists of two houses: Majlisi Milli (National Assembly) and Majlisi Namoyandagon (Assembly of
Representatives). Government consists of Prime Minister, his deputies, ministers, chairmen of committees and heads of national establishments.

The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 had its pros and cons. On the one hand the newly created borders between the liberated countries in Central Asia brought some serious hindrance in the field of trade, commerce and communication. As a result the region was further pushed in to economic crisis, and in Tajikistan the situation was deteriorated by civil war. On the other hand it opened the vistas of opportunities, of commerce and communication between the neighboring countries, such as Afghanistan, China, India and Iran.

The Tajik territory was a part of the Great Silk Road that passed through Eurasia’s major cultural and economic space encompassing India, China, Central Asia, West Asia, the Mediterranean and Europe. As Khursheed Dodikhudowv said: "All world empires (the Persian, the Arabian Caliphate, the Russian Empire and its heir the Soviet Union) never let the country out of sight. At different periods, the territory saw all great conquerors – Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan and Tamerlane."

The Tajik foreign policy has been shaped by its historical and cultural past and present, and it has been influenced by factors related to its near and remote neighboring countries, as well as its geo-strategic location in the chaotic Central Asia. The main objective is guarding territorial integrity and the borders and creating conducive environment for reforms and socio-economic development.

The collapse of Soviet Union which brought an independent Tajikistan in to the world political affairs, with the principle of transparent, fair, multilevel in its foreign policy. The conceptual structure of the Tajikistan foreign policy based on three fundamental components: First, pragmatism in foreign policy and equal mutually beneficial cooperation; Second, the legitimate interests of international acts in Central Asia region and; Third, to conduct predictability foreign policy in international relations.
In 2002 the Tajik government adopted a new strategy in its foreign policy, which was an “open door policy” it means open corporation with all the countries of the world on the principle of mutual respect, bilateral and mutual corporation. Russia and Tajikistan were tied up socially, economically and politically together for nearly 70 years. Relations between the two are based on the Agreement on cooperation and Mutual Assistance signed in Moscow on 25 May 1995. The geo-politics of Central Asian region and their common interest brings them together. Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Tajikistan and the United States of America were established on February 14, 1992. The Embassy of the United States in Dushanbe was opened in March 1992. After 9/11 Tajikistan was high in the US policy maker’s agenda as a key player in the war against terrorism. Tajikistan supported the US initiative to form an international anti-terrorism coalition. The Tajik-American relations are effectively developing in the following fields: trade, economic, humanitarian, security, military-political, fighting against the international terrorism, culture and education, public health services and etc.

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan formally established diplomatic ties on 22 October 1992. Because of cross border problems and ethnic tension between Uzbeks and the Tajiks the relations between the two countries has witnessed some ups and downs. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been successful in promoting good neighborly relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties on 14 January 1993. Diplomatic relations between Tajikistan and Kazakhstan were established on 7 January 1993, President Imomali Rahmon paid a state visit to Astana, the Kazakh capital, on 13 January 1993. The two countries signed several documents including the Bilateral Treaty on the Fundamental Principles of Inter-State Relations and the Agreement on Principles of Economic Trade Cooperation. Afghanistan, which shares a border with Tajikistan, provides a transit point for both Iran and Pakistan. In addition, there have been ethnic, cultural and religious commonalities between the people of Afghanistan and Tajikistan. As regards Tajikistan’s relations with Pakistan, the Central Asian republics came into direct contact with Pakistan after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In recent years the relations between Tajikistan and Pakistan have improved. The Karakorum highway has connected the two countries.
The historical bond between India and Tajikistan takes us to the very ancient ages; the linkage was marked by the constant flow of commerce and culture between the two countries, which was further strengthened by the stream of migrants from Tajikistan, most of them were scholars, scientists, technicians and artisans. Linguistically both the Indian and Tajik languages belong to the (Indo-Aryan). The medieval ages was characterized by the emergence of Tajik literature in the India, and a strong cultural relation between the two during the Mughal rule. The ties were further strengthened during the Soviet era in the field of science, politics, economic and cultural, when a strong cooperation was established between India and Central Asia. During the soviet period the Indo-Tajik relations reached its peak. The Eminent Tajik poet Mirzo Tursun-Zoda, was the chief player at the time who visited India several times and supported the Indian people in their freedom struggle against the British imperialism, during 1947-1949. He wrote several poems about Indian people and their bravery in attaining freedom from the colonial power and establishing a democratic system in India.

After the Soviet disintegration the diplomatic ties between India and Tajikistan steadily developed since the establishment of diplomatic relation in 28 August 1992. Today Tajikistan is have similar position on various issues and Dushanbe has consistently supported India’s initiatives and efforts at platforms of the UN system, SCO and other international and regional organizations. The political leadership of Tajikistan backs India’s position on key international issues such as the reform of the UN solution to the Kashmir dispute and future development of post-conflict Afghanistan. India’s problems with cross-border terrorism and separatism in Jammu and Kashmir have roots not only across the border but also in Afghanistan. Thus, stability in Afghanistan is also vital for India. To this end India’s strategic cooperation with Tajikistan is indispensable.

The tone for Tajikistan-India political relations was set by the visit of Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdullojanov in February 1993 to India. After February 1993, President Imomali Rahmon came on an official visit to India in December 1995, a working visit on 22 January 1999 and other official visit in May 2001 and state visit in August 2006. Each visit brought Tajikistan and India closer. From the Indian side Prime
Minister Vajpayee paid an official visit to Dushanbe in November 2003 and President Pratibha Devisinh Patil visited Tajikistan in 2009. There have been host of other important visits. Further, there are regular interactions amongst various Ministries and Departments of both countries. Joint Working Groups and Inter Governmental Commissions on matters of mutual interest have been constituted which meet at regular intervals. India opened its Embassy in Dushanbe in 1994 and Tajikistan opened it Consulate in Delhi in 2003, which was upgraded into a fully fledged Embassy in 2006.

The common concern about the threats of terrorism and religious and ethnic extremism and separatism found reflection in various declarations signed by the two countries. They have signed the joint Declaration on Friendship and Cooperation and Extradition Treaty and also established a Joint Working Group (JWG) on Counter-Terrorism. India fully supported the attempts of Tajik leadership to accommodate opposition forces in the political system. Tajikistan is the only country in the region today where there is power sharing arrangement with the opposition. Tajikistan fully supports India’s claim for a permanent membership of the UN Security Council. The Indian side, in view of the accelerated development of the Tajik economy and the very favorable conditions for investment in various sectors, including energy has taken a great interest in the processing of aluminum, as well information technology has the established an Information Technology Center in Dushanbe.

Tajikistan is keen to invite cooperation and investment in the realization of strategic projects in the field of energy, regional railways, transport and road construction and communication. They are particularly keen to build large hydropower stations and a regional electro-transmission line to exploit their enormous potential in this field and to sell it to the neighbouring countries including India.

Tajikistan and India are working together in many spheres. For example, pharmaceuticals, education, health, energy, telecommunications, infrastructure, etc. In 2006 several joint ventures were opened in Tajikistan. These included the production of medicines, and production line for processing of fruit and juice which was opened at the Centre for Information Technology under the Ministry of Economic Development and
Trade of the Republic of Tajikistan in Dushanbe. The Indian company CHL International Ltd is also constructing a new five star hotel in the capital of Tajikistan.

There are several branches of the economy in which increased cooperation will be mutually beneficial to Tajikistan and India. In particular, there is ample potential in the areas of power, engineering, high technology, chemistry, processing and production of cotton fabrics as well as processing of agricultural produce. Today, the task at hand is to expand the gamut of joint activities and lay stress on the spheres of advance technology, manufacturing and services.

India could be a big consumer market for Tajik energy. Tajik entrepreneurs are ready to set up joint enterprises with Indian businessmen for production of electro-technical equipments, precision instruments, textiles and leather goods. Tajikistan has the capability to supply phosphorus fertilizer products and many other items to India. Another important area of our cooperation and potential of profitable investment is tourism. The favorable climate, the unique nature of mountains, healing springs, and quality and environmentally friendly products of Tajikistan are extremely favorable for the development of tourism, and in particular, mountain tourism.

India’s strategic interest in the region as a whole is caused by the issues of the regional security, influence on the Afghan internal conflict in the region’s processes as well as joint measures against proliferation of narcotics and religious extremism. Tajikistan and India have been cooperating in defense field in a variety of ways. It covers a wide spectrum of bilateral interests which includes exchange of information, material support and joint military exercises/trainings. Of significance to Tajikistan is India’s programme for training of defense officers and human resources development, English language training, establishment of English language centre, IT centre and reconstruction of the military airfield at Ainy, near Dushanbe. India would also extend assistance to Tajikistan to raise and build an effective air force. The Ainy facility is the first home for Tajikistan’s infant air force.
In the end we can sum up by stressing that Tajik – India relations are built on the basis of ancient historical, cultural and linguistic ties and in modern times on shared interests and common security concerns. The two countries have deep mutual trust and high expectation for a long term fruitful cooperation particularly in the energy sector.