

RUSSIAN-TAJIK RELATIONS: PRESENT STATE AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

Parviz MULLOJANOV

*Political scientist,
Director of the Public Committee
for Promoting Democratic Processes
(Dushanbe, Tajikistan)*

Tajikistan is traditionally considered one of Russia's most devoted and stable geopolitical allies in the post-Soviet space. Nevertheless, there have been both warming up and cooling off periods in the history of Russian-Tajik relations, and they are fraught with a number of stumbling blocks, ulterior motives, and rather acute contradictions. So, a closer look reveals that the future of Russian-Tajik relations is not as surefire and problem-free as it may

appear, at least, in the long term. The main thing to be figured out is what are the predominating problems and trends today in the development of the relations between the two countries and how will they affect the future? Will Tajikistan remain an outpost of Russian foreign policy in the Central Asian region, or will it gradually distance itself from Russia, turning into an independent geopolitical player or satellite for other regional and world powers?

A View of Russian-Tajik Relations from Russia— From Democratic Idealism to the Triumph of Geopolitical Pragmatism

In 1991, after the Soviet Union collapsed and the former Soviet republics paraded their sovereignty, for some time, the Russian government regarded the events going on in Tajikistan as a struggle with the remnants of the communist past. Democrats, people from the Democratic Russia movement who had made their careers during the struggle with Gorbachev and suppression of the August coup of 1991, still predominated in President Yeltsin's close circle at that time. The Russian democrats in power openly lobbied the interests of the Tajik opposition, with the leaders of which they enjoyed close relations since as early as perestroika times. In so doing, most of them genuinely believed that new Russia's future lay in eradicating the old communist elites and establishing democratic conditions throughout the post-Soviet expanse. The group of so-called great power nationalists represented by professional government officials and employees of the national security and defense ministries were against this formulation of Russia's foreign policy in the post-Soviet space. As a result, Russia's policy toward Tajikistan was essentially paralyzed for several months, when the political leadership

(at least a significant part of it) lobbied the interests of the Tajik opposition, and the national security and defense employees, particularly at the local level (in the form of border guards and the 201st motorized rifle division), openly supported the pro-government People's Front.

The situation did not begin to change until the fall of 2002, when the viewpoint of the great power nationalists ultimately took the upper hand in the Russian leadership. In October of the same year, the Russian Federation moved toward open political and military support of the pro-government forces, which brought about the rapid defeat of the opposition by the beginning of 2003.

Since that time, Russia's foreign policy not only in Tajikistan, but also in the other CIS countries was formed under the influence and with the direct participation of the great power nationalists, whose viewpoint was distinguished by exclusive pragmatism. The emphasis was not placed on the ideology of a particular regime or post-Soviet leader, but on their geopolitical orientation and attitude toward the Russian Federation. In this respect, clearly communist and leftist movements, which did not hide their nostalgia for the united past and had a negative attitude toward both the Islamic world and Western civilization, ever frequently became the natural "allies" of Russia's foreign policy in the former Soviet republics.

Of course, the transition to "stark" pragmatism did not come about overnight, rather it took several years. During Yeltsin's time, the momentum of the past was still in effect, which was expressed in regarding the CIS states as a natural continuation, a kind of inheritance new Russia had acquired from the united Soviet and imperial past. Correspondingly, military-economic assistance and indulgences to the former Union fraternal states were still perceived for a relatively long time by both the giving and receiving sides as something that went without saying. It was only a few years later that the Russian leadership began making full use of the economic levers at their disposal to ensure the pro-Russian orientation of the post-Soviet power regimes.

But it was not until President Putin came to power that full priority was placed on pragmatism when determining Russia's geopolitical allies and adversaries. Today, as distinct from the past, pragmatism is essentially openly declared when defining the goals, interests, and priorities of Russia's foreign policy.

The same strictly pragmatic approach is used with respect to Tajikistan as it is with the other CIS countries: for the Russian Federation, it is important that Tajikistan, like the other Central Asian states, remains in the zone of Russia's influence. Russia finds it totally unacceptable that military bases of third countries, primarily those representing the Western bloc and NATO, are present in Tajikistan. In so doing, the Russian viewpoint is based not so much on political, as on economic considerations.

Today, one of Russia's key priorities is to link all the transport routes (including the shipment of energy resources) to the Russian Federation, as well as to prevent the opening of alternative routes that bypass Russian territory. The reasons for this are as follows.

- First, the Russian budget receives significant dividends for the transit of goods and freight from Central Asia to Europe and back. For Tajikistan, on the other hand, which is essentially in a geopolitical and transport impasse, Russian transit is in fact its only access to the Western markets: the bulk of Tajik import and export, primarily energy resource deliveries to the republic, passes through Russia. It goes without saying that if new transportation routes bypassing the Russian Federation do indeed open (such as the railroad branch that is planned from Tajikistan to Iran through Afghanistan), the Russian budget will be deprived of millions of dollars.¹

¹ See: M. Pirogovskiy, "Bol'shoye gazovoe ob'edinenie, Kaspiyskiy truboprovod dostalsia Rossii," available at [<http://www.globalrus.ru/comments/783920/>].

- Second, the Central Asian energy resource market has acquired a greater, even strategic, significance for Russia. At present, Russian energy companies, for example, Gazprom, deliver gas and oil to the West at high prices, and the shortage of energy sources on the domestic market is compensated for by purchasing cheaper energy resources in the Central Asian countries. If European consumers gain direct access to the Central Asian market, and local suppliers can raise the price of the energy resources delivered to Russia, the entire system, which had been developing for years and been extremely profitable for the Russian budget, would be destroyed. Moreover, if this happens, it will be much more difficult for the Russian Federation to fulfill its plans to become a world energy power that essentially has monopoly over the delivery of energy resources to the EU countries, that is, to solve the geopolitical task that currently forms the backbone of the country's strategic development.

Although Tajikistan is not a supplier state, it is, due to its geographic location, an important element in ensuring the sustainability of the above-mentioned system. The republic is a kind of "window" to Afghanistan, with further access through its territory to South Asia and the Middle East. There can be no doubt that the pro-Russian orientation of the Tajik government would do much to ensure that this "window" to Asia remains closed for as long as possible.

Of course, there are Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, which also have opportunities to implement new transport alternatives—through Iran and Afghanistan. But the Iranian vector is totally unacceptable for Western companies and, in the long term, will not be used; this leaves Afghanistan, with which Tajikistan has the longest border.

The Tajik "window" can also be opened in the opposite direction. At this juncture, it should be kept in mind that most of the Tajik-Afghan border passes through rugged mountainous terrain with a complex relief. So, if the situation in Afghanistan destabilizes and a regime such as the Taliban comes to power, radical Islamic groups could pave themselves a way to Tajikistan and on to other countries in the region, thus threatening the viability of the local pro-Russian regimes and, correspondingly, the sustainability of energy resource deliveries to the Russian Federation.

Therefore, the ideal alternative for the Russian leadership would be to, first, have geopolitical partners in the form of their Tajik colleagues, who are sufficiently orientated toward Russia, in order to prevent the growing influence of other players on its territory, particularly of the U.S. and NATO. Second, to have a political regime that is sufficiently strong to control the situation in the country and sufficiently economically developed not to depend on direct subsidies from Moscow, but at the same time not stable enough to be able to conduct an independent foreign policy.

In this sense, it is much easier today for Russian political technologists and diplomats to ensure the long-term loyalty of the Uzbek regime. After the Andijan rebellion was crushed underfoot in 2005, Uzbekistan became an outlaw state, and as a result was deprived of the opportunity to maneuver between Russia and the West in its foreign policy. Pro-Russian moods are growing stronger in Kyrgyzstan, where there has been political instability for the second year running, and the government and opposition are vying with each other to make curtsies before Moscow in the hope of enlisting its support in the domestic political struggle.

Today, Tajikistan has a relatively good image in the eyes of the world community, the secular opposition has essentially been neutralized, and the only more or less influential opposition party—the Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan (IRPT)—is not seen as ally, keeping in mind the Islamophobia of the current Russian leadership. So Russian diplomacy has fewer and fewer levers in Tajikistan for putting pressure on the domestic political situation. Tajikistan's only Achilles' heel is the continuing mass labor migration to Russia. Without it, the Tajik economy will undergo an inevitable collapse—the total hard currency income into the country from labor migrants amounts to between one and two billion dollars every year, while the state budget does not top 500 million dollars.

In this respect, the Law on Migration adopted recently in the Russian Federation can very well be used in Russian foreign policy interests for putting pressure on countries, whose economy is kept afloat only due to labor migration. The thing is that this document envisages establishing quotas of the number of labor migrants for each main supplier state of workforce to the Russian labor market. As a result, Russian politicians acquired an excellent and entirely legal mechanism in the form of this legislative act for putting pressure on most of the CIS countries, and particularly on Tajikistan. Indeed, states that have chosen an “incorrect” orientation may have their quota cut back, since this is justified by the needs of the Russian market. For “correct” states, the quota may be increased, or at least a blind eye turned to the presence of a large number of foreigners in Russia.

All the same, labor migration is such a complex phenomenon that its use as a geopolitical truncheon could lead to unpredictable consequences, including in the sphere of future Tajik-Russian interrelations. The truth is that in a country with no strong opposition, it is often impossible to predict who will come to power in the event of new political upheavals and the extent to which the new leaders will be loyal to the Russian Federation.

In this way, the further development of Russian-Tajik relations requires new approaches and the use of new mechanisms of influence. The Russian Federation has been trying to solve these diplomatic tasks for the past few years. The main achievement in this direction is the following: today, Russia has come to the understanding that if it does not take into account the interests of the Tajik side, any strategy it develops for ensuring Tajikistan’s long-term pro-Russian orientation will be ineffective.

View from Tajikistan— Interests of a “Little Brother”

When the Russian leadership made the decision in 1991 to withdraw from the U.S.S.R., it followed a rather simple logic: there is no point in expending the Russian Federation’s resources, which are insufficient anyway, on raising the backward economies of other Soviet republics. On the contrary, all the available reserves are required for carrying out the Russian reforms, taking a leap forward, and returning both to the world arena and the post-Soviet expanse in a new way and with new strength. In so doing, the possibility of the former Soviet entities leaving the sphere of Russian influence was not taken seriously: first, reform of the Russian economy, as people confidently thought back then, should not take much time, and second, the economies of most of the Soviet republics were so closely tied to the metropolis that, it seemed, they simply had no other choice.

In the first decade after it acquired its independence, Tajikistan presented itself as a living example of a country that indeed had no choice. During the civil war, the economy was essentially in a state of collapse, the state’s territory was divided into zones of influence, and the ruling regime was still too weak, holding onto power mainly with the help of Russian military assistance and economic privileges. In this situation, the Tajik government carried out an essentially one-vector foreign policy, and Tajikistan was one of Russia’s main outposts in Central Asia. Suffice it to say that it was the only country in the region where Russia’s widespread military presence was preserved in full: the contingent of Russian border guards alone was estimated at around 17,000 servicemen in the mid-1990s. Of course, the Tajik authorities, being completely dependent on Russia’s assistance, did not talk openly of their interests, expressing them only in the form of requests and wishes, which the Russians could either meet or not meet, this having no effect on Russian-Tajik relations.

The situation began to change somewhat after the Peace Treaty was entered in June 1997, which put an end to the many years of civil war. The ensuing political stability promoted sustainable growth of the macroeconomic indices; the standard of living was raised slightly, and post-war restoration of the republic's destroyed infrastructure progressed at a rapid rate. The central government gradually put an end to the tyranny of the warlords, disarmed the units of the military opposition, and neutralized the political parties, which today are no longer able to communicate with the government on equal terms. The sustained stability made the country more attractive for foreign investments, and today their flow into the republic is detained only by the incompetent investment policy of the Tajik authorities, as well as by the high level of corruption in the local government apparatus. Tajikistan was chosen as one of the member states for the U.N. Millennium Development Goals program, which in the long term guarantees it access to privileged loans and investments from international donor organizations.

As a result, Tajikistan gained the opportunity to carry out an extended multi-vector foreign policy, sometimes deviating from the Russian vector to such an extent that this aroused Moscow's anxiety and irritation. Over time, Tajikistan began to state its interests with increasing adamancy during contacts with the Russian side.

The main interests of the Tajik side in foreign policy can be formulated as follows.

- First, the Tajikistan leadership was interested in attracting large investments into the energy and aluminum sectors as quickly as possible, which were called upon, as the Tajik state economists intended, to play the role of a driving force in the republic's economic development. The implementation of a mega project drawn up in the 1960s by the U.S.S.R. State Planning Committee to build a hydropower plant cascade on the Vakhsh River was endowed with special importance. The matter primarily concerns the completion of the largest Rogun hydropower plant.² The government's strategic task is essentially to turn Tajikistan into the same supplier of energy resources as neighboring Kazakhstan or Turkmenistan, only electric power will be the raw material it supplies.³
- Second, ensuring security, both within the country and within the region, is important for the Tajik side. In this respect, the matter concerns not only and not so much security as a whole, as ensuring stability of the existing political regime and preserving the power distribution system that has currently developed.

The certain cooling off in Russian-Tajik relations during 2002-2003 was due to the growing dissatisfaction of the Tajik government regarding Russia's clear unwillingness to invest in the state's economy. Tajikistan was not so much in need of economic assistance as of real large investments. Since it did not receive them from the Russian Federation, the Tajik authorities began looking for financial sources beyond the CIS, which aroused Moscow's irritation.

In so doing, the Russian Federation remained the most preferable investor and strategic partner for the Tajikistan leadership. Both sides were tied by long years of partner relations, while the Tajik political elite has always been distinguished by pro-Russian sentiments. For the most part, it is much more convenient for the Central Asian leaders to cooperate with Russia than with Western countries and international donor organizations, which hinge the assistance they render on an entire slew of additional demands regarding human rights and the democratization of society. The Rus-

² The building of the largest hydropower plant in Central Asia began in 1976. The projected capacity of the Rogun hydropower plant amounts to 3,600 MW with an annual electric energy output of 13.1 billion kW/h. In 1992, the building of the hydropower plant was halted due to insufficient budget funds.

³ See: B. Jusupov, "Gidroenergetika Tadjikistana: segodnia i zavtra," *Analitik.ru*, available at [<http://www.easttime.ru/analitic/1/10/172.htm>].

sian Federation, on the other hand, usually takes a more pragmatic approach, without placing any “inconvenient” demands on its partners, apart from the unvoiced, but easily performed, requirement to maintain loyalty.

However, the Tajik economy was in dire need of investments, and by the beginning of 2002, the republic’s government did not really care where they came from—from Russia, China, Iran, or the West. In this way, the Tajikistan leadership gradually moved toward the use of tough pragmatism in foreign policy by placing practical issues above ideological and historical elements or personal preferences.

Third Parties—Interests of Transnational Companies

In October 2004, an event occurred in the relations between the two countries that journalists and experts described as a “historical breakthrough” and Russia’s “triumphant” return to the region. Fifteen agreements were signed during Russian President Vladimir Putin’s visit to Tajikistan. The most important for the Tajik side were agreements on investments in the republic’s economy of approximately 2 billion dollars (primarily in the energy industry and aluminum production). In response, the Tajik authorities consented to several significant concessions in military-strategic cooperation, thus taking steps toward meeting the desires of the Russian side. In particular, an agreement was entered about creating a permanent Russian military base in Tajikistan and transferring the Nurek opto-electronic center, which is of particular significance for the Russian army, to Russian ownership.

It seemed that the many years of efforts of the Tajik government were finally crowned with success, and the time would very soon come when the driving force of the local economy would work at full capacity, as was planned back in the Soviet period. All strata of Tajik society, from officials to members of the opposition and the mass media, experienced euphoria over the imminent opening up of new prospects, but soon several additional circumstances appeared that complicated implementation of the agreements reached.

- First, the agreements did not envisage direct participation of the Russian Federation’s official structures in the investment programs. Two of the largest representatives of Russian business assumed responsibility for implementing the Tajik mega projects—transnational companies Rusal and RAO UES of Russia. Moscow essentially acted only as a mediator between Russian business and the republic’s government. In practice, this meant there were no viable guarantees on the part of the Russian state—the Tajik leadership would now have to come to terms on the details of implementing the agreements directly with the heads of both companies. Correspondingly, if a consensus could not be reached during talks with investors, the contract would become invalid. On the other hand, an agreement on cooperation could prove to be far less advantageous to Tajikistan in its final form than it seemed at first glance.
- Second, it transpired that the Russian companies have their own interests, which they are naturally very keen to observe. Neither structure had any intentions of working at a loss, out of altruistic considerations. Consequently, they tried to invest as little as possible in the projects, while stipulating the maximum amount of profit.

Construction of the Rogun hydropower plant was only of interest to Rusal, one of the world’s largest aluminum companies, from the viewpoint of obtaining access to cheap electric power, which

would make it possible to increase smelting and lower net production costs. Correspondingly, the project was economically profitable for Rusal only if the company had full control over the entire aluminum manufacturing process—from extraction and delivery of the raw material by means of the toll system to Tajikistan, generation of electric power on the spot, as well as of the metal itself, to sale of the product on the world market. In order to do this, Rusal had to take control of TadAz (the Tajik aluminum plant), the main source of hard currency revenue into the republic's budget. In this case, TadAz and the Rogun hydropower plant (plus another aluminum plant which Rusal planned to build in the south of the country) were supposed to become part of an international aluminum production and sale system operating within the framework and under the full control of Rusal.⁴

As for RAO UES of Russia, the company regarded the building of the Sangtuda hydropower plant in Tajikistan only from the perspective of acquiring the most profit from subsequent sale of electric power abroad. Correspondingly, RAO UES planned to invest as little as possible in the project, trying in so doing to obtain at least some of the necessary finances from the Russian budget, which significantly prolonged implementation of the project. On the other hand, RAO UES insisted on increasing the pay-off period of the project (that is, the period during which the investor uses the enterprise's profit for covering his expenses).

It is not surprising that soon the talks on implementing the mega projects turned into exhausting bargaining between the customer (the republic's government) and the investors. As a result, the talks with Rusal did not lead to anything. The construction of the Rogun hydropower plant was halted before it had barely begun, and on 26 April, 2007, the Tajikistan authorities announced the cancellation of the billion-dollar transaction. To the displeasure of the Tajik officials, Rusal refused to modernize TadAz, which is located close to the Uzbek border. According to the Tajik government, the political pressure applied by Uzbekistan forced Rusal (and possibly the Russian political leadership as well) to curtail its plans regarding both the Rogun hydropower station and the aluminum plant.

At that time, the Tajikistan president stated that the country would finish building the Rogun hydropower plant using domestic resources. But at the same time, the republic's government is actively looking for new investors, this time beyond the CIS. In so doing, it was announced that any Russian company, apart from Rusal, could join the international consortium created to complete the Rogun project.

Talks with RAO UES were more successful, but the Tajik government had to concede to significant concessions, thus almost doubling the pay-off period of the Sangtuda hydropower plant. This in fact means that the country's budget would receive real dividends from the completed hydropower plant and the sale of the electric energy it generated (the first block is to be launched in December 2007) much later than the previously designated time.

Cooling Off Period

Today, observers note the advent of another cooling off period in the relations between the two states. The Tajik leadership is not pleased, to put it mildly, about the halt in construction of the Rogun hydropower plant and the entering into less beneficial agreements with RAO UES. It is very possible that some high-ranking Tajik officials are extremely irritated about the fact that during the talks in 2004, Russia achieved essentially all the concessions advantageous to it in the sphere of military-strategic partnership, while agreements on cooperation in the economic sphere, which are so important for Tajikistan, remain unimplemented for the most part.

⁴ See: D. Verkhoturov, "Tadzhikistan vprave trebovat' ot 'RusAl' bolshei otvetstvennosti," *Avesta.Tj*, available at [<http://sngnews.ru/archive/2005/09/25/>].

The Russian side, in turn, is unlikely to feel happy about the increased activity of Tajik diplomats and officials beyond the CIS. Recently, China,⁵ Iran, and India have been showing an interest in the republic's energy sector, and there is an active search for other foreign investors, both in the West and in the Near and Middle East countries. Iran has already assumed responsibility for and is successfully implementing the Sangtuda-2 HPP construction project. It is very possible that the PRC will soon enter an agreement to build two medium-capacity hydropower plants on the Zeravshan River.⁶

But it can be presumed that the Russian side is particularly displeased about the growing activity of the Tajik authorities with respect to Afghanistan. This includes the plans actively lobbied by Iran to open new transportation routes (for example, the building of a railroad branch and a power transmission line) from Tajikistan through Afghanistan to Iran and beyond. Pakistan says it is willing to invest 500 million dollars in building a 1,000-kilometer power transmission line from the Rogun hydropower plant being built in Tajikistan through Kabul to Peshawar.

Moreover, the plans to carry out joint Tajik-Afghan hydropower mega projects on the Panj border river, lobbied by the U.S., are unlikely to find understanding and support in Russia.

In this way, the multi-vector nature of Tajik diplomacy is gradually intensifying, largely by means of the Russian vector. But there is no need to talk in general about Tajikistan reorienting its foreign policy from Russia to third countries. The Russian vector remains the dominating one, and in the near future the situation is unlikely to dramatically change.

Further Prospects— Possible Alternatives

In the long run, three main development alternatives for Russian-Tajik relations can be forecast. *Alternative one—integration.* Strengthening of the Russian vector in Tajikistan's foreign policy, right down to revival of a unilateral orientation or integration into a single state formation. Economic gain and dividends for both sides, whereby primarily for Tajikistan, are the prerequisites promoting this scenario. This presumes at least expansion of the existing and creation of new Russian investment projects in the republic.

Moscow's political and military-strategic influence is becoming increasingly dependent in present-day Tajikistan on the development of cooperation in the economy. The country's complex socioeconomic situation is increasingly forcing the Tajik officials to regard foreign policy issues through the prism of economic interests.⁷ Tajikistan could agree to integration with former Soviet fraternal states in the form of creating a united customs union or other association, membership in which would bring the Tajik treasury significant economic dividends. But the big question is whether the other CIS states, for example, Uzbekistan or Russia, will agree to reducing transit fees for transporting Tajik goods and freight through their territory.

This alternative also presupposes the arrival of big Russian business in Tajikistan. Today, the Russian government is unable to assume responsibility for implementing investment projects in the former Soviet Union, while large transnational Russian companies, which have significant financial resources and the ability to lobby their interests in the higher echelons of the Russian government, do

⁵ See: V. Panfilova, "V ozhidaniiu ekspansii," *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 15 January, 2007, available at [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2007-01-15/6_expanison.html].

⁶ See: B. Jusupov, *op. cit.*

⁷ See: "Tadzhikistan: Chto vliiaet na otnosheniia s Rossiey?" *IWPR*, 4 April, 2007, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php4?st=1175669520>].

have this opportunity. At present, analysts are singling out seven or eight main “centers of influence” in big Russian politics—so-called nomenklature-political groups (NPG) or alliances (among them are Gazprom, Rosneft, the shareholders of Russia Bank, Federal State Unitary Enterprise Rosoboronek-sport, RAO Russian Railroads, and Basic Element company),⁸ which came to replace the financial-industrial groups defining Russian policy in the 1990s. In contrast to their predecessors, NPGs are distinguished by a high level of amalgamation with the government and, correspondingly, by a higher level of loyalty. Most likely, Russia’s foreign policy will be defined in the future not only by purely state interests, but also by the interests of Russian NPGs. Russian diplomats and NPGs are increasingly acting in tandem in the CIS countries, complementing and supporting each other. But if big Russian business does not have an interest in the economies of the CIS states, all the statements and plans for economic cooperation and integration will remain on paper.

Only those NPGs that specialize in the energy industry and the production of nonferrous metals are interested in Tajikistan. In the extremely monopolized Russian economy, there are very few such companies—primarily Rusal, whose relations with the Tajik leadership have become hopelessly spoiled, and RAO UES, which is already involved in the construction of Sangtuda-2. But the state of affairs in the Russian energy industry leaves much to be desired. All of RAO UES’s resources are currently being used to reform the industry. Since this kind of reorganization essentially fell through in the U.S. recently (the head of RAO UES Anatoly Chubais, who initiated the Russian reforms, referred to American experience), it is unlikely that RAO UES will have new opportunities in the near future to enlarge its presence in Tajikistan.

So there are few resources for building up Russia’s economic presence. Correspondingly, there is less likelihood of the pro-Russian vector in Tajik foreign policy becoming stronger.

Alternative two—confrontation. This presumes a relatively abrupt decrease in Russia’s influence in Tajikistan and reorientation of the latter’s foreign policy toward third countries. In the event such a scenario develops, the economic factor will also play a decisive role, presuming that a third country begins pumping large investments into branches of the economy that are strategic for Tajikistan. In this event, the Tajik leadership could quite easily agree to expand military-strategic cooperation with a third country, right down to opening a military base or entering geopolitical alliances and associations unfriendly to Russia (for example, GUAM).

Russia’s reaction to this development of the situation can be predicted based on the state of current Russian-Georgian or Russian-Moldovan relations. The only effective lever of pressure on the Tajik government is labor migration to Russia. By intercepting or even significantly reducing the flow of Tajik migrants, the Russian leadership could aggravate the sociopolitical situation in the republic to such an extent that the matter might go as far as survival of the regime. In this event, stakes might be placed on replacing the country’s government and promoting a more loyal candidate from among the ruling elite as leader.

But using such a powerful lever of pressure as labor migration could lead to unpredictable consequences. Today, there is no opposition party or movement in Tajikistan on which Russian political technologists can rely. Therefore socioeconomic destabilization could activate uncontrollable political processes and the advent to power of a party or movement with an extremely anti-Russian orientation.

Alternative three—evolution. Preserving the status quo with gradual strengthening of the multi-vector nature of Tajik foreign policy. On the one hand, this alternative presumes that cooperation between the two countries in military and strategic partnership will be preserved at the former high level. On the other, Tajikistan will relatively peacefully, without abrupt upheavals, and gradually withdraw from its unilateral orientation toward Russia.

⁸ See: E. Rudneva, “Kto vliiaet na Putina,” *Vedomosti*, No. 99 (1873), 1 June, 2007.

The evolutionary alternative is the most acceptable for both states with respect to observing mutual interests. The long-term results of the first and, especially, the second alternatives are difficult to predict from the point of view of economic and political risks.

So, as likely as not, the development of Russian-Tajik relations will ultimately progress according to the third alternative. Nevertheless, the aforesaid does not exclude the fact that difficulties will arise during implementation of this scenario. It is likely that periods of cooling off and misunderstanding will occur for both Russia and Tajikistan. In this event, much will depend on the ability of the leadership of both countries to steer clear of conflict.