

THE CHINESE VECTOR IN TAJIKISTAN'S FOREIGN POLICY

Khurshed DODIKHUDOEV

*Ph.D. (Political Science),
deputy head of the Administration of Foreign Policy and
Foreign Economic Development,
Center of Strategic Studies under
the President of the Republic of Tajikistan
(Dushanbe, Tajikistan)*

Vafo NIYATBEKOV

*Leading fellow
at the Administration of Foreign Policy and
Foreign Economic Development,
Center of Strategic Studies under the President of
the Republic of Tajikistan
(Dushanbe, Tajikistan)*

Independent Tajikistan is seeking diverse contacts with all interested states. Under Soviet power the Central Asian republics remained in the shadow of the rest of the country, the disintegration of which finally gave them a chance to develop relations with other countries. At first, the world community remained indifferent to their existence and limited itself to general declarations. The People's Republic of China, however, became aware that the three new Central Asian states in its northwestern provinces radically changed the foreign policy context.

On 4 January, 1992 Dushanbe made one of its first foreign policy moves by signing a joint Tajik-Chinese communique on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries at the embassy level.

The date itself is an eloquent sign of Beijing's interest in the political processes that swept the post-Soviet expanse in the late 20th century. China was one of the first states to recognize the independence of all the Soviet republics, including Tajikistan.

In 1993 Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of Tajikistan Emomali Rakhmonov paid his first official visit to China on an invitation from the Chinese leaders. He traveled to Nanjing, Shanghai, and Urumqi and met top Chinese officials: Chairman of the PRC Jiang Zemin and Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China Yang Shangkun. The talks proceeded in a friendly and businesslike atmosphere.

The sides discussed issues of mutual interest; Point 12 of the joint declaration said that relations between China and Tajikistan had good prospects. The visit produced another important decision on developing trade and economic relations on a priority basis. The sides pointed out their common position on the key issues.

The visit demonstrated that China supported the young independent state; without this support Tajikistan could hardly attain many of its foreign policy goals in Asia.

In 1996 the dialog between the two countries was given a new boost in the form of Presi-

dent Rakhmonov's second visit to China. The sides identified the cooperation spheres of greatest mutual interest: agriculture, transport, the textile industry, the production of mineral fertilizers, etc. Since 1996 the dialog has been proceeding in the multisided format of the newly established Shanghai Forum. Before that Dushanbe and Beijing cooperated within the U.N. and CICA. The Chinese have identified the stages on the road from the Shanghai Forum to the SCO.

- **The first stage (November 1989-December 1991).** The Soviet Union crumbled while the talks between it and China proceeded according to the "one on one" formula.¹
- **The second stage (November 1991-April 1997).** Bilateral talks featuring five countries—China, on the one hand, and four states (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), on the other, were held.²
- **The third stage (after April 1997).** Multisided talks among five equal countries that were members of the Shanghai Five: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. When the dialog on confidence-building measures in the military sphere and on mutual reduction of armed forces ended, the initial formula (bilateral talks with China as one of the sides and Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan acting together, as the other) became "multilateral talks among five countries—five equal participants."³

In 1997 relations between China and Tajikistan became noticeably more active; the sides signed a protocol on border issues and adopted a decision on transborder trade across the Murgab District of the Gorno-Badakhshan Auton-

¹ See: Xia Yishan, "Mekhanizm 'Shankhaiskoy piatiorki' i strategicheskoe vzaimodeystvie Kitaia i Rossii," in: *Kitay v mirovoy politike*, ed. by M. Torkunov, Rosspen, Moscow, 2001, p. 337.

² *Ibid.*, p. 338.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

omous Region. In 1997 a large and highly representative delegation of Chinese scientists visited Tajikistan.

In June and August of 1998 officials from the economic sector of the Chinese Cabinet, the Foreign Trade Ministry, and the Customs Committee of China visited Tajikistan.

Two months before his official visit to China the president of Tajikistan received a Chinese delegation headed by Vice Premier of the State Council Qian Qichen. The president of Tajikistan pointed out that the developing multisided cooperation was the result of the sides' common interests.

In August 1999 the president of Tajikistan visited China for the third time to raise mutual cooperation to a higher level. During the visit President Rakhmonov pointed out that his country hailed the historic reunification of Aomen (Macau) with China and deemed it necessary to confirm his country's position on the Taiwan problem. The sides agreed that the military-political crisis in Afghanistan should be resolved through the 6 + 2 talks suggested by the U.N. The Tajik president invited the PRC chairman to pay an official visit to Tajikistan. The invitation was accepted.

In the fall of 1999 Li Dezhu, Minister in charge of State Ethnic Affairs Commission, visited Tajikistan and pointed out that the relations between the two countries were developing successfully.

Early in July 2000 PRC President Jiang Zemin paid his first state visit to Tajikistan, which symbolized a much stronger political situation in the republic. The visit produced a joint declaration, Point 10 of which was of special interest. It registered the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the other state under any pretext, including "supremacy of human rights over the sovereignty" and "humanitarian interference." The sides pointed out that closer cooperation would serve the interests of both nations.

The Chinese leader declared that his country would support the Tajik leaders in their efforts to strengthen sovereignty, domestic stability, and economic development. The sides deemed it

necessary to point out that they had common views on international and regional issues.

The visit of the Chinese chairman coincided with the summit of the Shanghai Forum, which was attended for the first time by the president of Uzbekistan as an observer.

In August 2000 Head of the International Department, C.C. C.P.C., Dai Bingguo came to Tajikistan. He was received by the president of Tajikistan who pointed out that he valued highly the present level and quality of Tajik-Chinese relations and looked forward to new practical realization of mutually advantageous economic cooperation, military and political cooperation, and personnel training, exchanging experience on development issues, and close cooperation in the interests of regional security.⁴

At his credential presentation ceremony the then Chinese Ambassador to Tajikistan Wu Hongbin put in a nutshell the essence of the relations between the two countries by saying: "There are no serious political problems between Tajikistan and China, yet the present level of mutually advantageous cooperation does still not meet the potential and requirement of the two neighbors."⁵

In April 2001 Liu Guchang, the PRC president's personal representative, arrived in Dushanbe to discuss the central issues related to further development of the relations between Tajikistan and China. Special measures designed to promote these relations and stir up bilateral cooperation within the inter-governmental commission followed.

Early in 2002 the president of Tajikistan received a delegation of the State Council of the PRC headed by Ismail Aymat. The sides revised the results of the first decade of their cooperation and emphasized that the border issue remained a priority; they expressed their satisfaction with the first breakthroughs in trade and economic cooperation and agreed that U.N. should play the key role in the Afghan settlement.

⁴ See: Z.Sh. Saidov, *Vneshniaia politika Respubliki Tajikistan na sovremennom etape*, Avasto, Dushanbe, 2005, p. 201.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 281.

By May 2002, when the Tajik president paid visit to China, the regional situation had changed beyond recognition: the U.S.-led counterterrorist coalition had deployed its troops in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. China passed the developments over in silence even though it was absolutely clear that in the future the bases could be used against it. In general, the operation in Afghanistan was but the first step toward setting up the U.S. military infrastructure on China's northwestern borders. The American military contingent in the region was not large enough to threaten China, yet the bases can potentially be used to influence the developments in the PRC's regions.⁶

In the spring of 2003 President Rakhmonov arrived in Beijing for an informal meeting with former (until November 2002) PRC President Jiang Zemin. They agreed that bilateral cooperation had good prospects and that bilateral contacts should be spurred on.

In the fall of 2003 Foreign Minister of China Li Zhaoxing came to Dushanbe to discuss political and economic issues of mutual interest; the sides agreed that the SCO had developed into a strong regional structure. The political discussions were mainly geared to the legal side of closer cooperation in the anti-terrorist, anti-extremist, and anti-separatist struggle. The economic format was reduced to discussing much more constructive efforts within the functioning inter-governmental commission.

In 2003 President Rakhmonov met Premier of the State Council of the PRC Wen Jiabao at the Boao Forum for Asia held in China. The two leaders concentrated on the economic aspects of bilateral cooperation. The large-scale continental conference organized by China and attended by all the leading Asian states demonstrated Beijing's far-reaching political and economic ambitions: it offered the developing countries its development pattern. It is in Asia that the struggle between China and its main world and regional rivals (the

⁶ See: A. Kniazev, *Afganskiy krizis i bezopasnost' Tsentral'noy Azii (XIX-nachalo XXI v.)*, Donish Publishers, Dushanbe, 2004, p. 457.

U.S., Russia, India, Japan, Vietnam, Australia, etc.) is unfolding.

No important bilateral contacts took place in 2004. In July 2005 the Chinese delegation headed by Vice Premier Wu Yi signed four inter-governmental agreements in Dushanbe related to technical-economic cooperation between Huawei and Tajiktelecom and assistance in constructing the Shar-Shar tunnel.⁷

In 2006 the contacts were few and far between (in this respect the year was not very different from 2004) and limited to the SCO format. In January 2007 President Rakhmonov visited China; this event opened a new political year and was very important in many other respects. The Tajik leader needed foreign investments to revive the ailing Tajik economy—it was more probable that Chinese money and Chinese technologies (rather than West European or American) would reach the country. As distinct from all the previous visits this time the sides concentrated on economic issues; this is fully confirmed by the numerous meetings with the Chinese business community that showed an interest in the Tajik market.

At the meeting with Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of China Wu Bangguo the sides reconfirmed their mutual desire to develop communication.

They expressed their satisfaction with the level of their contacts, agreed that the border issue had been successfully resolved, and approved the signing of the Treaty on Good-Neighborly Relations, Friendship and Cooperation and the fact that multisided cooperation had acquired a solid legal basis. The sides commented on their shared approaches to the creation of a fair world order in the 21st century and their common contribution to the struggle against international terrorism, separatism, and extremism.⁸

The sides also discussed the humanitarian sphere: their shared opinions on cooperation in science, culture, and education and the pivotal points of bilateral cooperation.

⁷ See: *Azia-plus*, No. 30 (288), 28 July, 2005, p. 2.

⁸ See: "E. Rakhmonov v Pekine," *Narodnaia gazeta*, 24 January, 2007.

On 27 August, 2008 PRC President Hu Jintao paid his first state visit to Tajikistan to discuss the current issues of cooperation between the two countries and its future at the bilateral level and within international organizations. The sides were satisfied with the high level and impressive results of cooperation between the defense structures and the rising volume of reciprocal trade.

The summit produced several documents related to many aspects of bilateral cooperation, of which economy remained a priority.

Looking back at the history of contacts between 1992 and the present years, we cannot but notice that progress was uneven. Between 2000 and 2003 contacts were regular, followed by a short pause that ended early in 2007. The changed political situation in the Central Asian countries served as a catalyst for China's diplomatic efforts in the region. Beijing is not merely engaged in foreign political efforts, it is also offering its neighbors new approaches (much more attractive than those of other countries).

In the post-Soviet era China inevitably changed its traditional "northern" foreign policy vector. Moscow, likewise, realized that China had become a real political actor in Tajikistan and its Central Asian neighbors. Beijing's presence in the region shapes the latter's new image.

The political dialog between Dushanbe and Beijing has confirmed that both are interested in bilateral cooperation. The level and quality of the political dialog with China will largely determine the Asian vector of Tajik diplomacy in the near future.

Economic relations between the two countries rest on a firm foundation of mutual trust. From the very first days of diplomatic relations between them they have been involved in successfully developing trade and economic cooperation. It is guided by several inter-governmental protocols: on the economy and trade, on the stimulation and mutual protection of investments, on automobile transport, on cooperation in the fuel and energy sphere, etc. that serve as a firm legal basis for further trade and economic cooperation.

Encouraged by the governments of the two countries, its sphere is constantly expanding and

foreign trade turnover is rising. According to the figures of the State Customs Administration of China, the total foreign trade turnover of China with Tajikistan reached the figure of \$141.7 million in the eleven years between 1992 and 2002. During this time Tajik import from China was \$74.355 million, while Tajik export to China amounted to \$67.345. In 2002 the figures of their foreign trade turnover reached \$12.39 million (15.2 percent compared to the previous year). Tajikistan imported \$6.5 million-worth of goods from China (an increase of 22.6 percent) while Tajikistan's export to China amounted to \$5.89 million (an increase of 8 percent). During the first four months of 2003 (January-April) foreign trade turnover was \$5.72 million (an increase of 143.6 percent compared to 2002). Tajikistan imported \$3.72 million-worth of products from China (an increase of 245.8 percent) and exported \$2 million-worth of its products to China (an increase of 57 percent). In 2004 trade turnover was \$63.1 million; in 2005 it amounted to \$98.2 million; and in 2006 foreign trade turnover reached a record of \$158.9 million.⁹ In 2008 trade turnover climbed even higher to reach \$351.95 million (an increase of 162 percent compared to the previous year) between January and October.¹⁰

Tajikistan buys electric appliances, equipment, machines, textiles, communication devices, furniture, consumer goods, etc. from China. China, in turn, imports aluminum and aluminum products, hides, cocoons, lint, etc. from Tajikistan. Trade between the two countries is developing; Tajikistan started buying high tech products in China, TV equipment in particular.¹¹

In recent years trade and economic cooperation has been gaining momentum. To keep up the pace, an exhibition and trading fair of the goods exported by the Kashgar District of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region was opened in Tajikistan between 15 and 18 September, 2005.

⁹ See: *Statisticheskiiy ezhegodnik Respubliki Tajikistan. 2007*, p. 323.

¹⁰ See: *Sotsial'no-ekonomicheskie pokazateli Respubliki Tajikistan. 2008*, p. 92.

¹¹ See: Jin Yulong, "Kitai-Tajikistan: rasshirenie torgovo-ekonomicheskogo sotrudnichestva," *Biznes i politika*, 20 June, 2003, p. 1.

It was attended by 150 companies that exhibited 350 different products.

On the whole, 2005 brought good results: the Tojikmatlubot Supply and Trade Organization of Tajikistan and the Lokomotiv Foreign Trade House signed a \$1-billion-worth contract.

The signing ceremony chaired by Vice Chairman of the XUAR Foreign Investments Societies Liu Xihe was attended by Vice Chairman of the XUAR People's Congress Standing Committee Dalekhan Mamekhan and Vice Secretary of the People's Government of XUAR Yusup Khasym.

The sides entered an agreement on the following:

- (1) the Tochmatlubot Supply and Trade Organization of Tajikistan empowered Lokomotiv to trade as a monopolist in the Chinese market for the next 10 years;
- (2) during the entire cooperation period the Tajik side pledges to buy commodities totaling at least \$100 million (about 800 million yuan) from Lokomotiv every year and increase its purchases by 20-30 percent every year, mainly clothes, consumer goods, agricultural produce, construction materials, mechanisms, etc.;
- (3) Lokomotiv is Tajikistan's general agent of tenders and contact work in China.
- (4) the Supply and Trade Organization of Tajikistan is responsible for full investments in building of the market and processing enterprises (with joint investments) of Lokomotiv in Tajikistan as well as for the security of Chinese citizens and their property;
- (5) the sides set up their offices and set off spendings against each other.¹²

Several projects with Chinese investments are working successfully in Tajikistan; their range

¹² See: "Vneshne-torgovy dom 'Lokomotiv' Sindhania podpisal zaiavku zakaza na 1 milliard amerikanskikh dollarov," *KONTIMOST*, No. 6, 2005, p. 19.

is very impressive: telecommunications, agriculture, construction, the textile industry, etc.

A large \$269-million-worth contract on the rehabilitation of a strategically important highway Dushanbe-Ayni-Istaravshan-Hudjand-Buston-Chanak (on the border of Uzbekistan) can be described as one of the latest achievements. The road is 410 km long; \$281.2 million of the total \$296 million are being invested as the Chinese government's long-term loan. The project will be carried out by the China Road Company.

Transportation services will probably become one of the key cooperation spheres. The China Railway Engineering Corporation won the tender for building the Shar-Shar tunnel some 80 km to the southeast from Dushanbe; the tunnel will be 2.3 km long. It will shorten the Dushanbe-Kulob road by 7 km (38 minutes of driving). The project, which will cost \$40 million, will take three years and two months to be completed.

Recently a seasonal high mountain road that connects the two states (Dushanbe-Kulob-Karakorum-Kulma) through the difficult terrain of the Sarykol Mountain range was commissioned. Its importance cannot be overestimated: not only will it provide Tajikistan with the shortest access to the ports on the Indian Ocean coast, it will also increase the trade turnover between China and Tajikistan.

Bilateral cooperation greatly benefited the agro-industrial complex: for several years now the Tian Ye Company from Xinjiang has been using a new water-saving irrigation system in the Sogd Region of Turkmenistan. It saves up to 70 percent of water and 30 percent of fertilizers and increases the yield by 218 percent. Water shortages in the republic's north make the Chinese irrigation system doubly attractive—over time it will be used elsewhere.

The present breeds optimism about the future of bilateral relations, which have not yet exhausted their potential in many respects. Hydropower plays a key role in Tajikistan's national economy, which means that Chinese companies with their vast experience are more than welcome in the republic's energy market. It should be said

that many states, Russia and Iran included, are working in Tajikistan.

It is natural that the largest companies involved in hydropower projects are showing an interest in Tajikistan. Its hydropower potential in absolute figures and per sq km is colossal. The annual runoff is 65.1 cu m of water and its hydropower potential is 4.1 billion kW per 1 cu m of runoff, that is, 299.9 billion kW. It terms of the size of the republic's territory its potential is 2.1 million kW per 1 sq km.¹³

China depends for its energy security on its diplomatic skills and trade contacts with other countries, as well as on its vast cooperation with various regions and the implementation of energy transportation projects. The United States first moved into the Eurasian continent, one of the major oil producers, in 2001 to carry out the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan and later, in 2003, to wage the war on Iraq. This, undoubtedly, challenges China's energy security. This means that today its position will depend on its ability to cooperate with other countries, in the economy, trade, and primarily energy supplies, within the WTO and SCO.¹⁴

Tajikistan is a sunny and highly productive country: every year it grows a lot of fruit and vegetables, which means that the processing of agricultural products might develop into another sphere of mutually advantageous cooperation.

Early in 2007, during his last visit to China, the president of Tajikistan met members of the Chinese business community, including the head of the Shanghai-Belalkatel Company that planned to supply the Kurgan-Tiube-Kulob railway with the latest transportation service means totaling \$20 million.

Cooperation in TV and radio communication was discussed with the Huawei Company that opened its office in Tajikistan in 2005.

¹³ See: S. Verkhoturov, "Kitayskie investitsii v Tajikistane sviazany s razvitiem SUAR," *Fakty i kommentariy*, 18 May, 2006, p. 8.

¹⁴ See: O. Dolzhikova, A. Kaukenov, *Strany Azii v usloviakh globalizatsii*, ed. by L.M. Muzaparova, Institute of World Economy and Politics under the Fund of the RK First President, Almaty, 2006, p. 122.

During his talk with Cheng Yusheng, president of the China Road and Bridge Corporation, the sides discussed details of the joint Dushanbe-Chanak and Ayni-Penjikent project being implemented by the corporation.

The meetings with the banking sector were equally promising. The CITIC-Group will supply the Administration of Railways of Tajikistan with 23 diesel locomotives. It also intends to use debt capital to take part in two railway projects—Dushanbe–Kurgan-Tiube and Rumi–Nizni Panj—and in electrification of a stretch of the Kanibadam-Bekabad railway.

Exim-bank was involved in discussing the funding of joint Tajik-Chinese projects in energy, transport, and communication.

Inter-bank cooperation was discussed in detail with Vice President of the State Development Bank of China Yo Zong Min.¹⁵

Today, the world community is confronted with a different China that seeks development and wider contacts with other countries, its closest neighbors in particular. Today, the share of Chinese business in Tajikistan's economy is much higher than before. Chinese firms are successfully competing with firms from other countries and counterbalancing the growing capital of Russia and the Islamic countries. In fact, stronger contacts with China meet Tajikistan's national interests: the People's Republic of China is a reliable and predictable partner.

Tajikistan is very much concerned with its security for two reasons: first, Afghanistan, its closest neighbor, is still growing opium poppy and, second, the renaissance of Islam after seventy years of state atheism is accompanied by the aggressive proliferation of militant extremism.

Tajikistan was the first among the former Soviet republics to come to grips with the problem of terrorism and drug trafficking. During the years of civil confrontation the country was shaken by terrorist acts instigated by the domestic political context. Reconciliation did not solve the problem: the terrorist act of 1998 that killed U.N. officials in Tajikistan resounded all over the world.

¹⁵ See: "E. Rakhmonov v Pekine."

By the time the former Soviet Central Asian republics gained their independence China already had vast experience in dealing with the drug business. Its southwestern provinces border on the Golden Triangle states; drug smuggling across the Chinese border has never stopped since the late 1970s. In 1999, the Chinese law-enforcers solved 65 thousand criminal narcotic-related crimes; they confiscated 5,364 tons of heroin, 1,193 tons of opium, 16,059 tons of methamphetamine (also known as "ice"), cocaine, yaotuwán (otherwise known as ecstasy [MDMA]) hemp, etc. The total number of exposed cases and amount of confiscated drugs increased compared to 1998 by 2.4 and 33.6 percent, respectively. In 1991 there were 148 thousand registered drug addicts in China; in 1995 the figure increased to 520 thousand; and in 1999 there were 681 thousand.¹⁶

The above shows that the problem is a burning one. The Chinese nation has its own historical reasons (the notorious "opium wars") to fight the evil.

The narco-syndicates negatively affect the two countries' social and economic development; neither of them produces drugs—they are transit states. Drugs reach Europe via their territories. Tajikistan is one of the five states in which drugs are confiscated in huge amounts. In fact, all interested sides should pool their efforts; they need a common and long-term anti-drug program. The problem has no simple answers and defies prompt solutions.

From the very beginning the national Army of Tajikistan has been receiving financial support from China extended on a free basis. In the last ten years the republic received \$10 million to improve the combat-worthiness of its army.

In July 2006 the NUCTECH Company of China held a presentation of control complexes at the Drug Control Agency of Tajikistan; they are technical devices that use ion rays to identify prohibited substances (explosives, drugs, ammunition, fissionable materials, etc.) in bulky cargoes and transportation means.

¹⁶ See: "Bor'ba s narkotikami v Kitae," Press-Kantseliaria Gossovetu KNR, Beijing, June 2000, p. 1.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The two countries are actively cooperating within the SCO, which within a short period of time became one of the regional security elements.

Today its members are facing several domestic and foreign threats. Drug trafficking is one of the latter: the amounts of illegally moved narcotics cannot be identified with any degree of precision, yet we know that terrorists survive and operate on drug-related money. The aggressive propaganda of radical Islam spread far and wide mainly by citizens of the neighboring Islamic states is another equally dangerous threat.

The rapid dissemination of religious extremism in the region is largely spurred on by the worldwide consolidation of radical forces. Extremist ideas and ideologies are thriving where cultural-moral values are neglected or misrepresented. This is a serious threat to regional stability and security. Hizb ut-Tahrir was involved in setting up the Taliban in Pakistan; today it has moved to Afghanistan.¹⁷

“Access to that resource and sharing in its potential wealth represent objectives that stir national ambitions, motivate corporate interests, rekindle historical claims, revive imperial aspirations, and fuel international rivalries. The situation is made all the more volatile by the fact that the region is not only a power vacuum but is also internally unstable. Every one of its countries suffers from serious internal difficulties, all of them have frontiers that are either the object of claims by neighbors or are zones of ethnic resentment, few are nationally homogeneous, and some are already embroiled in territorial, ethnic, or religious violence.”¹⁸

The dynamics and evolution of terror across the former Soviet Union are fairly impressive. In the past a terrorist act meant assassination of a top figure or a limited explosion—today terrorists do not hesitate to launch full-scale hostilities. Terrorism has become modernized: it is equipped with the latest gadgets inaccessible to many special services.

It was in 1999 that terrorists first undertook a large-scale operation: fighters of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan moved into Kyrgyzstan; a year later they repeated their attempt and ignited hostilities in the mountains.

It should be said that the roots of terrorist movements differ from one SCO member to another even though all of them go back to Islamism. The Eastern Turkestan movement, for example, has hoisted an Islamic banner to set up an independent Uighur state, while in Central Asia the local terrorists aspire to replace the local regimes with a theocratic state.

All terrorist groups that operated in Tajikistan have been liquidated even though the officially banned Hizb ut-Tahrir distributes anti-government leaflets.

The problem of terrorism has no state borders, which means that the SCO members should fight it together.

China, which has suffered from Uighur and Tibet separatism, has always insisted on a united front to fight international terrorist organizations of all hues.

In January 2002 the press chancellor of the PRC State Council published a “white book” in which it presented the official position on the Uighur problem. According to official information, “between 1990 and 2001 the terrorists of the Eastern Turkestan movement in China and outside it committed over 200 acts of terror and violence that killed 162 people of different nationalities, per-

¹⁷ See: K.D. Jalilov, I.R. Rakhmatov, “Afghanistan i geopoliticheskaia obstanovka v Tsentral’noy Azii,” *Materaily konferentsii “Afghanistan: vozrozhdenie i perspektivy razvitiia,”* Dushanbe, 2005, p. 16.

¹⁸ Z. Brzezinski, *The Grand Chessboard. American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives,* Basic Books, New York, 1997, p. 125.

sonnel of local structures, and clerics; over 440 were wounded.” The official Chinese sources assert that the Uighur organizations have contacts in Afghanistan. In February 1998 the Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkestan based outside China moved several scores of its members (trained as demolition experts in Afghanistan) over to Xinjiang and the interior regions and cities of China where they set up 15 clandestine training centers. They trained 150 people from different corners of the country and used the receipts they brought from abroad to make explosives and explosive devices out of chemical materials they bought in huge amounts.¹⁹

In his book *Kriticheskoe desiatiletie* (The Critical Decade) President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbaev has written: “A simple analysis of the processes that were unfolding in the world late in 2001 and the first half of 2002 indicates that the level of terrorist activity is growing. The number of terrorist acts in 2002 might become even greater than in the last 10 years, starting with 1992. The figures confirm this lamentable prospect.

“In the first eight months of 2002 alone the world was shaken by 390 terrorist acts, a 10-percent increase compared to the whole of 2001. The figures of terrorist acts for the first eight months of 2002 are higher than the figures for 1992, 1994, 1996, and 1997.”²⁰

Developments confirmed the above: international terrorism has been acquiring a global nature while local terrorism looked outmoded. In Central Asia terrorism and the narcobusiness are inseparable.

In the 21st century all sorts of criminal transborder groups stepped up their activities. This made the Central Asian countries the first targets of narco-cartels and terrorist organizations. Complicated or even strained relations among the local states defy any efficient cooperation among them: they have too many unresolved border issues and no concerted position on regional security.

Until recently it was believed that security threats were limited to armed aggression. Today everything has changed: subversive information is spread through the Internet and there is information on “the ancient and unique culture” of this or that nation designed to fan nationalism. As a SCO member Tajikistan strives to liquidate the seats of international terror in Central Asia. This is not an easy task: there are too many related geopolitical and geoeconomic problems.

In the summer of 2003 an operational group of the Ministry of Defense of Tajikistan took part in the Cooperation-2003 military exercises organized under the SCO agreements on the adjacent territories of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China and the Semipalatinsk Region of Kazakhstan. The military learned to rebuff and liquidate groups of international terrorists. The very fact of military exercises that involved the defense ministries of five states showed that the SCO was gaining international and regional weight.

In August 2007 Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan, hosted a regular SCO summit also attended by the presidents of Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan. India and Pakistan were represented at the ministerial level. The event was also attended by deputy U.N. Secretary General.

The summit was concluded by joint antiterrorist exercises of the SCO members at the Chebarkul training ground (Cheliabinsk Region) called Peace Mission-2007. It involved 6 thousand military as well as artillery, aviation, and tanks. This very fact shows that the SCO countries take the threat of terror seriously. These exercises can be described as a response to the worsened military-political situation in Afghanistan where the Taliban has been successful. This cannot but cause concern among Afghanistan’s Central Asian neighbors as well as in Russia and China.

Central Asia will remain an important factor of the international and regional counterterrorist efforts for a long time to come. International terror is not a temporary phenomenon; it is the world community’s chronic disease with frequent aggravations. For internal and external reasons and be-

¹⁹ See: A.A. Kniazev, op. cit.

²⁰ N.A. Nazarbaev, *Kriticheskoe desiatiletie*, Atamura, Almaty, 2003, p. 37.

cause of its geographical location Central Asia is extremely vulnerable to the threat of international terrorism, on the one hand, and may serve the outpost where the threats can be monitored and from which the anti-terrorist struggle can be launched, on the other. China regarded it as the key factor in its struggle against the separatist Eastern Turkestan Movement and as a factor designed to maintain security and stability in Northwestern China.

China can keep the situation in this region under control but it cannot resolve it. This means that it will need the Central Asian states on its side in the struggle against separatism and terrorism of the Eastern Turkestan Movement. In fact, terrorism should be uprooted in Central Asia, otherwise it will be hard, if not impossible, to stop “nationalist terrorism” in Xinjiang.²¹

The counterterrorist struggle of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization has already dampened terrorist activities in the region. To uproot international terrorism in Central Asia and China, which is the SCO's final aim, all the interested sides should consolidate their efforts.

Throughout its history the SCO has been engaged in an active and constructive dialog. Nevertheless, there is an opinion that the Central Asian states are still overshadowed by China and Russia and that this contradicts their national interests. Those who say this are probably correct; at the same time this means that these states' place and role in the SCO fully correspond to their potential. Today the SCO members have no alternative to further consolidation of their organization. In the last couple of years the relations among the leaders have moved closer to strategic partnership, which breeds hopes.

Tajikistan's active involvement in the SCO speaks for itself: Dushanbe highly assesses the potential of this structure, which has posed itself the task of strengthening regional stability and encouraging economic integration.

Conclusion

In 2009 the Republic of Tajikistan and the People's Republic of China will mark the 17th anniversary of their diplomatic relations. The two sides have achieved a lot during this short period of time; they are engaged in a fruitful political dialog and economic cooperation in various fields of the two countries' national economies. Cooperation in the humanitarian sphere is progressing; the newly opened departments of the Chinese language in higher learning establishments scored an instant success with the Tajik youth. An exhibition of Tajik folk art was organized in Beijing within the framework of cultural cooperation; it familiarized the Chinese public with Tajik suzani, miniatures, national clothes, and jewelry. This event marked the 5th anniversary of the SCO and 15 years of independence for the Republic of Tajikistan.

The republic's foreign policy confirms that the Chinese vector, together with the Russian, American, Iranian, Indian, and West European, is one of the key trends in its diplomacy. The fact that bilateral relations with China are treated as a priority is explained not only by geographic proximity but also by China's pragmatic position on regional and world politics. Today Tajikistan and the other CIS countries are living through a period of economic difficulties; in this context the Chinese experience of economic reforms, which has been recognized throughout the world, could be used.

Beijing, in turn, is pursuing strategic goals: a stronger position in the priority economic branches of the Central Asian countries.

²¹ See: Zhao Huasheng, “Vzgliad Kitaia na rol' SShA po obespecheniu bezopasnosti v Tsentral'noy Azii,” *Materaily Mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii “Sotrudnichestvo stran Tsentral'noy Azii i SShA po obespecheniu bezopasnosti v regione,”* Almaty, 2005, p. 42.

The level and dynamics of bilateral relations are free from fundamental contradictions as far as issues of mutual interests are concerned. The regulatory base makes it possible to raise bilateral cooperation at a higher level with the help of the still untapped potential. To achieve this it is necessary:

- (1) to strengthen the political dialog;
- (2) to make activities of the Tajik-Chinese intergovernmental commission more practical in order to make implementation of joint projects more effective;
- (3) to improve interaction between the military and law-enforcement structures with the aim of preventing threats to the two countries' national security;
- (4) to achieve closer economic cooperation within the SCO.
- (5) to find new roads leading to closer humanitarian contacts. This is suggested by accelerated globalization, which means that the two countries should achieve closer cultural, scientific, and educational contacts.