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**Indian Council of World Affairs**  
**Sapru House, Barakhamba Road**  
**New Delhi**

**Report**

on

**Seventeenth Sapru House Lecture**

by

**H.E. Mr. Sirodjidin Muhridinovich Aslov**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan

at

**Sapru House, New Delhi**  
**12 May, 2015**

The Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA) hosted the 17<sup>th</sup> Sapru House Lecture on May 12<sup>th</sup> 2015, which was delivered by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, H.E. Sirodjidin Muhridinovich Aslov.

Ambassador Yogendra Kumar, while presiding over the function, in his opening statement, talked about the close historical links that India and Tajikistan shared, which go deeper than language, religion and culture. He initiated the talk by stressing on the importance of Tajikistan not only bilaterally, but also how it played a strategic role against the *jihadi* elements in Afghanistan, which strengthened the security environment of the region.

The function was also graced by the Tajik Ambassador to India, H.E. Mirzosharif Jalolov; the Joint Secretary of ICWA, Shri Anwar Haleem along with many Tajik and other diplomats, academicians and researchers from India.

Foreign Minister Aslov, in his lecture, said that the modern world is in the process of fundamental and dynamic transformation. While it provides ample opportunities for cooperation, it also widens and deepens significant levels of differences between nations. He stated that force in any form or of any nature cannot be a solution to any existing crisis, which would eventually steer the region as well as the world into deeper predicament.

A constant rethinking of priorities remains the need of the day, which guided the Republic of Tajikistan to lay fresh guidelines and thinking in their foreign policy decision making in 2015. While discussing various facets, factors and priorities in the foreign affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, he stressed on the importance of international laws, rules and regulations that act as the guiding factor for the country.

Following are some of the main principles of foreign policy of the Republic of Tajikistan as stated by Minister Aslov – recognition of equality, respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity, inviolability of borders, non use of force, commitment to peaceful solution of disputes and conflicts, non interference in each other's domestic politics, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, fulfilling obligations that arise from being part of international laws and regulations.

He stressed that a strong and secure region with friendly and cooperative neighbours, who are confident of their mutual interests and relations, remains a priority for the promotion of national interests of Tajikistan, which would ultimately improve the living standards of the people, along with enhancing the economic security of the country. He also stated that the Tajik government gave importance to the need of energy independence and food security.

Rising economic inequalities, increasing competition for access to markets and strategic resources, deepening financial and economic crises, terrorism, drugs and arms trafficking, transnational organised crime, religious and political extremism, ethnic and racial separatism and conflicts, civilisational and ideological clashes, domestic and regional conflicts, escalation of political tensions in the region and beyond, intensification of democratic problems, poverty, indigenous unemployment and massive uncontrolled migration, lack and deficit of essential material resources, water and nutritional shortage, climate change and various other challenges threaten the nation and its foreign policy making.

There are also many regional factors that significantly influence the foreign policy of Tajikistan, like rising extremism, low intensity conflict, border and various other issues, which hinder inter-regional development and cooperation.

The Tajik foreign policy has a harmonious connection with the economic base of the state. To enhance economic cooperation among nations, it follows a multifaceted foreign-economic policy. Tajikistan adopted an 'open door' foreign policy in 2004, which was built on mutual respect and cooperative development by nations together. The Tajik government believes that an open and constructive foreign policy, which is based on cooperation, can have mutual beneficial role. The country's foreign policy is a balance between the process of globalisation and the process of reconciliation with its national interests.

The priorities of foreign policy of Tajikistan can be enumerated as follows:

- Bilateral cooperation.
- Multilateral cooperation and diplomacy.
- Economic diplomacy.

- Regional diplomacy – energy cooperation in the region – including water cooperation diplomacy.
- Cultural and humanitarian diplomacy.

Tajikistan and India share very close links. They have identified areas that can strengthen and mould a cooperative relation on the basis of economic, strategic and cultural cooperation, and the bilateral relations between these two nations cover various aspects of international cooperation. From 1992 till date, 59 bilateral agreements in different areas have been signed between the two nations.

The Indian Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has taken a serious initiative for strengthening relations between India and Tajikistan, making India's presence in the latter nation more active. However, with more investments, India and Tajikistan can strengthen their economic and trade relations significantly. In the cultural sphere, the Indian Council of Cultural Relations (ICCR) has taken a positive step by providing more than 150 scholarships for Tajik students completing their Graduate and Doctoral studies.

Central Asia is currently facing serious problems, which pose a serious threat to its internal and external security. Terrorism is not a problem of any individual country. It has gone through a fast pace of development because of the thrust of globalisation; nations in Central Asia should also be able to play a positive role on the international platform due to the availability of vast natural resources and development potential. Tajikistan foreign policy takes into account all these realities that affect not only the region, but the entire international political and strategic spectrum.

Minister Aslov made it clear that Tajikistan advocates a just and democratic world order, which will create a favourable climate for the development of constructive, friendly and mutually beneficial relations.

During the Q&A session, Minister Aslov addressed questions related to increasing role of ISIS in cohort with the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan, which as per Minister Aslov,

would increase the chance of instability in the region; Tajikistan's greater strategic dialogue with India was the need of the day; Tajikistan's perception of the growing instability in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of US forces, where Minister Aslov clearly stated that Afghanistan is capable of curbing the rising violence and maintaining stability in the region; India's future role in the Afghanistan-Pakistan-Tajikistan Trade and Transit Agreement, where Minister Aslov showed pleasure about bringing India in the fold of the agreement in the future; and the status of Tajikistan joining the Eurasian Economic Union where Minister Aslov stated that the government of Tajikistan is seriously considering the pros and cons of such a Union before fully committing to it.

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