



**Center for Global & Strategic Studies
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Tajikistan – A Road to Prosperity

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Clock was striking three at night when we landed at the airport in Dushanbe, capital of Tajikistan. I was accompanied by a Pakistani journalist Hafeezullah Usmani and a representative of CGSS and High Vision Asif Qazi. CGSS is a well reputed think tank which is playing a commendable role to promote trade and tourism between Pakistan and the Central Asian states. High Vision is the premier production company of Pakistan which makes documentaries on tourism in the aforementioned states. As soon as we stepped out of the plane, officers of Tajikistan Foreign Office Mr.

Mohiyuddin, Mr. ShukrAllah and Miss Shehla welcomed us to their country. We also shared flight with some journalists from India, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. Mr. Sandeep Singh from India, Mr. Haroon Najfi zada from Afghanistan, Mr. Umer Yousuf from Saudi Arabia and Mr Muhammad Islamuddin from Qatar were there with us. We were escorted to the Tajikistan hotel by the team of Foreign Office. The way they were treating us with utmost respect speaks loud of their hospitality which is embedded in the blood of Tajik nation. We were provided special cards and told to be up and be ready at seven in the morning.

The next morning, journalists from all across the globe were seemingly tired and weary because of the long tiring journey but when the tour started the signs of tiredness evaporated. One of the reasons of this instant change in mood was probably the way we were received and warmly welcomed in the traditional Tajik way. Wherever we went, we were welcomed by the women wearing tradition dresses, dancing on the local tunes. They offered us a special kind of bread which the people there eat with honey. A worth mentioning thing is that the Tajik people have not forgotten their culture and they are strongly attached to it. Undoubtedly the great nations stay connected with their past and don't forget their culture.

We visited Rogan Hydro Electric dam which is being built on Vakhsh River. This dam consists of six parts and each part will produce 600 Megawatts of electricity. When completed, this dam would be the biggest Hydro Electric project of Asia. There was inauguration ceremony of the second part of the dam. President of Tajikistan, Imam

Ali Rehman was there for inauguration. He is very close to the heart of the Tajik nation. He possesses a charismatic personality and the way he orated unfolded the pages of our history before us when we had a leader of great oratory skills in Pakistan, the unparalleled Bhutto. In my meeting with the President, I found him a man of strong nerves. His feelings for Pakistan were wrapped in brotherly love which impressed me a lot. He made the Tajikistan, which was once the most neglected and impoverished state of USSR and which was badly infested with the menace of internal disruption, into a self dependent country. Tajikistan is emerging as a new economical power today and its reason is the utmost struggle which the leadership and people there made to uplift the country. I observed deep love and respect in the eyes of people when the President addressed the gathering at the eve of 28th Independence Day of Tajikistan. A respectful standing ovation was observed not only when he was invited to the podium but also during his speech. When historians will write the history, they will be convinced to shower the words of praise for the man who changed the fate of his nation and led it to the way of progress.

Pakistani ambassador in Tajakistan Imran Haider is a lively man. He invited us for dinner in the most famous restaurant of Doshambe. Imran being a Lahore born is open hearted and friendly in nature. Commerce Attach é of Pakistani embassy Rashid Imtiaz was also there. Despite its limited resources, Pakistani embassy is doing a wonderful job. Central Asian states have to become a part of CPEC in near or distant future so there is a need of energetic and enthusiastic ambassadors like Imran Haider in those countries.

Our tour was very hectic as we had limited days and we had to visit all the important and worth-seeing places. We were glad to observe that the Tajik women were in no way back in race from men and they are even spearheading some fields. Gender equality is a seeming reality there.

We also met with some journalists from Central Asian states. Miss Sharafat from Uzbekistan, Mr. Asghar and Mr. Gul zada from Kyrgyzstan, Miss Gul Nara, Miss Mahnoor and Mr. Umer from Kazakhstan are some of them. We came to know from them that the salaries of journalists were meager in their states but they were optimistic of the future because according to them, rays of hopes were emanating which would brought the prosperity and enhance the life style of all and sundry.

A journalist from Iran, Ali Shareefi, was also the part of tour and when journalists from Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and India share the same table, a heated debate with innuendos become mandatory. Each one tries to belittle the other with jingoistic remarks and chauvinistic logics. Superiority and inferiority in defense, economy and technology is discussed. But we ended the discussion with a unanimous conclusion: Clouds of war are hovering over this region and if (God forbid) a war starts, its repercussions and devastations would be beyond the control of the whole World. This war could burn the World with its flames. We all agreed that CPEC is one of the reasons of the incumbent disturbance in the region. United States of America won't be ready to lose its hegemony over the World and Uncle Sam could go to any extent to counter the Chinese ambitions. We all agreed that war brings the young coffins

which the old parents are unable to carry; it opens the gateway of human rights abuses and grave violations of men's dignity. Peace for all is what need today.

