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DE-RUSSIANISATION OF INTERNATIONALISMS IN THE TAJIK LANGUAGE

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Abstract

During the period of Russian and Soviet domination over Tajikistan there was extensive Russian influence on the Tajik language, which is attested, among other features, by the great number of lexical borrowings. Interestingly, in the case of most of these forms Russian served only as a vehicular language and many are internationalisms, often known well to speakers of various European languages. These words were russianised on their introduction into Russian, before being transmitted on to other languages of Russia / the Soviet Union, Tajik being an example. Thus they often reveal specific Russian features in their morphology, phonology or semantics. The present article deals with a tendency noticeable in the Tajik of today, namely to remove these specific Russian features.

1. Introduction

The terms ‘internationalism’ and ‘international word’ are often used both in professional and non-professional language. The understanding of these terms may be different in various cases, and a precise definition would be of use. Paul Wexler provides what we may call a core of the various existing definitions, noting that an internationalism is “a word attested in a number of unrelated languages or language families, sharing a similar orthographic or phonetic shape and a partial or identical semantic field” (Wexler 2009: 77). We will use this simple definition with one amendment: we will not insist on the languages in question being unrelated, as this would seem to exclude the possibility of the existence of internationalisms in related languages. This cannot be accepted, as Tajik and Russian are indeed related (even if distantly). This is even more relevant in the case of Iranian Persian

and Tajik and yet we are going to analyse international words exist in both of these Iranian idioms. Thus, instead of insisting on a lack of genetic affiliation between two languages, we would expect the propagation of the form not to be a result of this relationship.

As in the case of borrowings in general, the number of internationalisms may vary from language to language depending on various factors, including many that may be extra-linguistic. However, even taking into consideration the languages most reluctant to absorb foreign lexemes, it is difficult to imagine an idiom with no internationalisms at all.

Being a sub-class of loanwords, internationalisms may be classified in similar ways. In particular, one may try to indicate the original source of an internationalism (i.e. the language in which the form originated) and the vehicular language(s), i.e. the idiom(s) which served as the intermediary in transmitting the form from the original source to Tajik.

2. Russian Loanwords in Tajik

Taking into consideration the fact that Tajik has been heavily influenced by Russian for about one hundred years, one expects to find a lot of Russian borrowings in this Iranian idiom. Indeed, as early as in the 1960s, there were about 2,500 such forms (Bashiri 1994: 118). The frequency of such words in texts varied greatly, in some cases approaching an unbelievable level, see e.g. a fragment from 1932 presented by Rzehak, where it is quite difficult to find any native lexemes apart from verbal forms and pronouns (Rzehak 2001: 282–283). Switching to the Cyrillic alphabet in 1939 certainly made Tajik more prone to russification (Perry 1997: 12).

A careful analysis shows that only a part of the Russian loanwords in Tajik are forms of Slavonic origin (e.g. **самолёт**, **справка** etc.). Many others are internationalisms in which Russian served only as a vehicular language, e.g. **гормон** (Bertel's et al. 1954: 104), **нейтрон** (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 402), etc.

One may ask, at this point, if there are any internationalisms present in Tajik whose origins are Russian, apart from those for which Russian served as a vehicular language. The answer is that indeed there are, even if they form only a fraction of the whole class of international words and are mostly related to the Soviet reality, e.g. **колхоз** (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 279), **волшевик** (Rzehak 2001: 347), **спутник** (Moukhtor et al. 2003: 234), etc.

Many of the internationalisms transmitted via Russian reveal features specific to their vehicular language that are either phonetic (e.g. changing the original /h/ into /g/ as in **гормон**) or morphological (see the declension marker indicating gender in **пионерка**¹ and **дискета** beside **дискет**). These phenomena clearly indicate

¹ Tajik was written with a variant of Arabic script – just like Persian – until 1929. Then for ten years a modified Latin script was used, but this was substituted with the Cyrillic alphabet in 1939 (Perry 1997: 2).

Russian was a vehicular language in the transmission of these forms from their original source into Tajik.

The existence and persistence of these specifically Russian features in loanwords was supported by the official Soviet policy. All the words taken from Russian were to be written in accordance with the Russian (and not Tajik) orthography, even at the expense of phonological coherences (Perry 1997: 11).² Moreover, borrowing from other languages (esp. French or German) was excluded unless the words were in a russianised form (Perry 1997: 11).

The present article focuses on those internationalisms that have lost their features that were specifically of Russian origin, but despite this remained the same, in the sense that they are still derived from the same original source.

3. De-russianisation of internationalisms in Tajik

In 1991 the Soviet Union collapsed and Tajikistan declared independence. Linguistically an important aspect of this was the lifting of the barriers preventing the Tajiks from having any contacts with the Dari-speaking Afghans and Persian-speaking Iranians. These contacts were re-established after a century of isolation, during which a modern literary Tajik norm was created and a massive influx of Russian borrowings took place.

It is, however, difficult to determine any particular direction in the development of the Tajik language nearly a quarter of a century after the declaration of independence. Instead we may talk about a number of tendencies and the present article focuses on one of these. We will see that some of the internationalisms that had previously been borrowed into Tajik via Russian, have acquired new variants since independence.

3.1. **ТАНК** : **ТОHK** 'a tank (military)'

Tanks appeared for the first time in history on the battlefields of WW I. The first (*Little Willie* and *Mk I*) were built by the British, though other countries (e.g. France) were working on similar projects at that time. The word *tank* was introduced into the English language in 1916 and it was a totally arbitrary code name (Chant 2004: 9, 49).

In Tajik, the form **ТАНК** is attested in a military dictionary of the early forties (Eršov 1942: 183). It appears beside forms like **ТАHKИСТ** (Eršov 1942: 183), which makes it very probable that the word was borrowed from Russian. Later the same word is well attested in Tajik lexicography (Bertel's et al. 1954: 380; Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 581; Nazarzoda 2008: 2,308).

Some newer sources use, however, another form of the same internationalism, i.e. **ТОHK** (Rūzgor 2011-04-27; Muhammad 2011-03-16). Probably the only way to

² A good example is provided by the so called hard sign **Ъ**, which was used in Russian and Tajik in entirely different roles (Perry 1997:11).

explain the appearance of the vowel /-o-/ instead of /-a-/ is by accepting the idea of a Persian/Dari influence. Indeed, in Persian the word for tank is تانک /tānk/ (Asadullaev & Pejsikov 1965: 917; Omid 1373: 369) and in Dari we find an identical form (Ostrovskij 1987: 352). The form **ТОНК** complies with the standard correspondences between Tajik and Persian vowels (/o/ – /ā/).

However, an interesting question is, why does Persian have /tānk/ instead of the expected */tank/, which would have been closer to the pronunciation of this internationalism in the languages that might have served as the immediate source of this form (English, French or even Russian). To understand this problem we have to note that, despite the differences in the writing systems, Persian loanwords from European languages are often based on, or at least influenced by, the orthographical form in their language of origin, e.g. the word فابريك /fābrik/ ‘factory’ was taken from the French **fabrique** (Omid 1373: 897). The Persian loanword, in general, mimics the original pronunciation quite faithfully. However, there is one exception, in that the vowel of the first syllable is /-ā-/ even though /-a-/ would have been a better approximation of the French original (/fabRik/ see Oxford-Hachette 2013: 180). This is so, because the letter aleph was chosen to represent the original -a-. Cf. analogous examples like ديريژابل /dirizābl/ (not */dirizabl/) from the French **dirigeable** /diRizabl/ (Oxford-Hachette 2013: 135) سلوفان /selofān/ (not */selofan/) from the French **cellophane** (Omid 1373: 749) /selofan/ (Oxford-Hachette 2013: 66). Similarly the form تانک /tānk/ has the /-ā-/ vowel, even though the potential sources (both English, French and even Russian) have vowels much closer to the Persian /-a-/.

Moreover, the existence of potentially homographic forms (in this case تنک /tonok/ ‘narrow, etc.’) may also strengthen the tendency to write the borrowing in a different manner.

3.2. **БОМБА : БОМБ** ‘a bomb’

The word بومبه was introduced into Tajik in the pre-Soviet period and its immediate source was most probably the Russian **БОМБА** (Rzehak 2001: 137), which is indicated by the word-final **-a** (there is no justification for this in Tajik itself and Russian seems to be a much more probable source than e.g. Italian or a Slavonic language other than Russian).

In Russian the word has been attested since the times of Peter the Great, although it is difficult to demonstrate how it made its way into that language (Černyx 1999: 103). It might have been borrowed from French or German (Preobraženskij 1958: 36). The original source, however, is the Greek **βόμβος** which has inter alia the meaning of ‘a sound, noise’ (Groves 1844: 116), hence the Latin **bombus** ‘a noise, buzz’, from which we have the Italian **bomba** ‘a bomb’ and the French **bombe** with the same meaning (Černyx 1999: 103).

In Tajik lexicography, the form **БОМБА** (a Cyrillic counterpart of بومبه) is dominant (Eršov 1942: 20; Bertel’s et al. 1954: 79; Nazarzoda 2008: 1.228; Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 116 etc.). However, in the most recent texts we notice another form, namely **БОМБ** (Radyo-i Ozodi 2011–06–23), which is also mentioned in Nazarzoda’s

dictionary as a variant typical of conversational language (Nazarzoda 2008: 1.228). This may be a re-borrowing from Persian.³ However, there is an important difference if we compare this to the previous example (/tonk/ ← /tānk/), namely the traditional correspondence of vowel sounds between Persian and Tajik is not respected here (one would expect a form like */bumb/). Retaining the /-o-/ in this form may be a result either of the influence of a formerly used form or e.g. of the English spelling.

It is interesting to note that in Pashto and Dari (probably the former influenced the latter).⁴ We find forms like **بام** /bam/ (Lebedev 1989: 31, 52) (from the spoken English **bomb** /bʌm/ (Summers 1995: 135) possibly via Urdu).

3.3. **гормон : хурмун** 'a hormone'

The word *hormone* is a pseudo-classical word created in English, but based on the Greek verb **ορμαω** 'I arouse to activity' (Mutt 1982: 232). It is difficult to determine which vehicular language(s) took part in the transmission of the word from English to Russian. What we see is that on entering the Russian vocabulary it underwent a typical phonetic change, with the initial /h/ becoming /g/. Together with this modification the form was further transmitted to other languages including Tajik, hence **гормон** (Bertel's et al. 1954: 104; Asimov & Arzumanov 1985: 184; Saymidinov et al. 2006: 152; Nazarzoda 2008: 1.330).

However, in some modern texts we notice another form of the same internationalism, namely: **хурмун** (BBC Persian 2009–05–14). This form lacks the sound change typical of Russian and, moreover, its vowels are different. The latter fact is particularly interesting, as it makes the word compatible with the dominant forms we find in Persian, i.e. **هورمون** /hormon/ (Asadullaev & Pejsikov 1965: 164), **هورمون** /hormon/ (Omid 1373: 1212).

To sum up, the most probable hypothesis is, in this case, that the same form has been re-borrowed from a different source (Persian).

3.4. **почтаи электрон(ик)ӣ : пости ...** 'electronic mail'

This example is quite different from the previous ones. We are dealing here with a word group built of two internationalisms that appears in three variants in the Tajik language, all with the same meaning, namely 'electronic mail, e-mail'. The whole phrase is in its turn a calque of forms that exist in many other languages. The forms in question are of quite recent origin and are not mentioned in the Tajik dictionaries available to the author. They are all, however, attested in other sources: **почтаи**

³ Whenever the term *re-borrowing* is used in the present article it has the sense of 'borrowing a form for the second time (esp. from a different source)', and not 'transmitting a form back from the destination language to the source one' which is the case in many linguistic publications (see e.g. Pulcini et al. 2012: 11; Watson 2002: 65).

⁴ A lot of military terms in Dari are loanwords from Pashto (Dorofeeva 1960: 65).

электронӣ (Sobirov 2007: 150), **почтаи электронӣ** (Rozi 2011–10–19) and **постӣ электронӣ** (Kimyo-i Sa'odat 2010–06–05).

What is relevant to our discussion is the first element of the group, i.e. the word **почта** / **пост**. The word **почта** has been taken from RU, where it is most probably a loanword from the Polish **poczta** (earlier **poszta**). The origin of the latter, in its turn, may be traced to the Italian **posta**, which is based on the Latin **posita (mansio)** (← **positus**) (Fasmer 1987: 3.348).

The word **пост** without doubt may be traced back to the same original source, however, its transmission into Tajik must have been via a different route. It lacks the Polish/Russian affricate which is used in these languages instead of the spirant that is prevalent in most of the languages of the world that use this internationalism. Because the form **post** is much more common it is difficult to suggest the immediate source of this re-borrowing with any certainty. Nevertheless, Persian, where the form with /s/ appears (Gacek 2007: 19), seems to be a strong possibility.

3.5. **лампа** : **ламп** 'a lamp; an electric bulb'

Structurally, the situation of these forms is quite similar to the pair **бомба** : **бомб** (v. sup.). Bashiri (1994: 118) mentions the form **лампа** 'lamp' as a substitution for the native چراغ **чароғ** /čarog/, together with the word **врач** 'doctor' which took the place of **ҳаким**, and he gives them as an example of a second level of russification, in which even ideas already known to the Tajiks were given new Russian names. This was not, however, a simple substitution. The word **лампа** seems to have primarily meant a new type of lamp, previously unknown in Central Asia, e.g. electric lamp or kerosene lamp (see Bertel's et al. 1994: 118), with some modern dictionaries even defining the word as referring to a 'new (type) of lamp' (**чароғи навъ**) (Nazarzoda 2008: 1.711).⁵

The form **لمپه** **лампа** is well attested in lexicological sources and we find it in many dictionaries apart from the two already mentioned above (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 314; Kalontarov 2007: 101; etc.). Even though today the native word **чароғ** may be freely used when referring to any type of lamp (cf. **чароғи барқӣ** (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 701) and similar terms), the internationalism in question is still well attested.

The original source of this form is the Greek **λαμπάς** 'a torch', whence the Latin **lampas** and the French **lampe**. The word was borrowed from French around the 17th century into Russian (Černyx 1999: 465).

Just as in the case of the pair **бомба** : **бомб**, we notice the emergence of a new variant of this word in Tajik, a word deprived of the final /-a/: **ламп** (BBC Persian 2009–08–20).

3.6. **цензура** : **сензура** 'censorship'

This example is much more subtle and difficult to analyse than the previous ones. There is little doubt that the immediate source of the Tajik **цензура** was the Russian

⁵ Similarly, the word **врач** might have primarily designated 'a western type of doctor' as opposed to the 'traditional' **ҳаким**.

цензура, just as in the case of the related forms **цензор** ← **цензор** (see Bashiri 1994: 120). The original source of the form is the Latin *cēnsūra*, whence the German **Zensur** and subsequently the Russian form (Fasmer 1987: 298).

The word **цензура** has been attested for a long time in Tajik lexicography (Yershov 1942: 203; Bertel's et al. 1954: 435). However, more recent dictionaries present an alternative form **сензура**, with an initial fricative instead of an affricate (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 536). This variant is also attested in modern texts (Čarx-i Gardun 2011–01–20; Millat 2012–09–03).

We may even provide the date when the orthographical change from **ц-** to **с-** took place. From the time of Stalin it was obligatory to write loanwords from Russian in accordance with their original spelling. However, in 1998 a reform of the orthography took place and the letters **ц, щ, ы, and ь** were officially removed from the Tajik alphabet (Perry 2005: 36). Some Tajiks had refrained from using these letters before this, de-russianising even proper names like the surname of the first Russian president, Yeltsin (Perry 1997: 12).

Thus, as far as the spelling is concerned, everything seems clear. However, this is not the case with regard to the pronunciation. It seems that Tajik-speakers are divided in their articulation of the affricate /t͡s/ in loanwords. Historically it was absent from both Tajik and Persian phonological systems. However the massive influx of Russian loanwords together with the preference for bilingualism among educated people, meant certain speakers of Tajik became capable of articulating this affricate and it is audible in the pronunciation of some Tajiks even today (Gacek 2012: 358).

Thus, in the case of **цензура** and similar examples we are dealing with the de-russianisation of the orthography and – in the case of only some speakers – of the pronunciation.

3.7. **биологӣ** : **биоложӣ** 'biological'

The form in question is an adjective and analysing it we can observe specific features in the Tajik lexical system that are related to the vocabulary borrowed from Russian. In the case of groups of related lexemes, normally only the basic form (usually a noun) was borrowed and the remaining forms were recreated from this, e.g. **самолёт** → **самолётрон, самолётронӣ, самолётсозӣ** (Bertel's et al. 1954: 339); **колхоз** → **колхозӣ, колхозчӣ** (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 279), etc. Moreover, in some cases the final word-formational morpheme of the Russian form is rejected in favour of forming new derivatives based on an abstract stem, e.g. **реактивӣ**,⁶ in which the Russian adjective **реактивный** was reduced to a pseudo-stem **реактив**,⁹ to which the Tajik adjectival suffix **-ӣ** was added.⁷

Bearing this in mind there is a loanword from Russian in Tajik: **биология** 'biology' (Bertel's et al. 1954: 72; Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 105), the origins of the form

⁶ In the izofat phrase **самолёти реактивӣ** 'jet plane' (Bashiri 1994: 120)

⁷ It is worth mentioning that this suffix has a variant **-вӣ**, so the whole form suits the Tajik morphology particularly well.

may be traced to the Greek lexemes βίος ‘life, existence, etc.’ (Groves 1844: 114) and λόγος ‘word; reason, understanding, etc.’ (Groves 1844: 372).

There is also an adjective derived from **биология** in Tajik, namely **биологӣ** (Bertel’s et al. 1954: 72; Nazarzoda 2008: 1.205). This seems to have been created in a similar way to the adjective **реактивӣ** (see above).

What we see in more recent sources is a variant of the same adjective: **биоложӣ** (Davlat R. 2003–07–09; Kimyo-i Sa’odat 2010–04–17). This form differs from **биологӣ** in one detail only, i.e. the stop /-g-/ is substituted with the fricative /-ž-/. This seems to be the influence of the Persian form بیولوژی /biyoloži/ (Omid 1373: 301), which is a loanword from French. However, it is worth noting that while the consonant has been changed, the vowels of the form remain unchanged. That is they do not comply with the standard correspondences between Persian and Tajik.

3.8. **машина : мошин(а)** ‘a machine; a car’

The form **машина** is undoubtedly a loanword from Russian, which served as a vehicular language. Originally it derives from Greek, cf. the Doric **μᾶχανά** and the Attic **μηχανή**, whence it came into Latin: **māchina** (Černyx 1999: 517). From Latin developed the French **machine**, which was borrowed into German (**Maschine**) and the latter is the source of the Russian word (Fasmer 1987: 2.586).

The Tajik **машина** is attested in older lexicography (Bertel’s et al. 1954: 220) with the more recent publications mentioning it only as a variant (Nazarzoda 2008: 1.783) or neglecting it completely (Saymiddinov et al. 2006).⁸

Indeed **машина** is substituted in more recent dictionaries by either **мошин** (Arzumanov & Asimov 1985: 470; Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 356; Nazarzoda 2008: 1.819) or **мошина** (Saymiddinov et al. 2006: 356; Nazarzoda 2008: 1.819; Moukhtor 2003: 144).

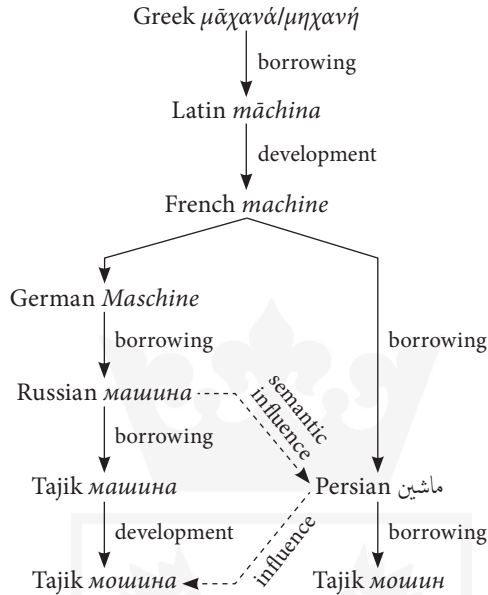
The dropping of the final /-a/ may be an aspect of de-russianisation and the substitution of the vowel /-a-/ in the first syllable with /-o-/ may be a sign of Persian influence (cf. ماشین /māšin/). However, we have to bear in mind that in this case the change took place decades before the other analysed forms were de-russianised.

We should also note the same phenomenon occurs in the Persian form, as in the case of the word تانك /tānk/, i.e. the vowel of the first syllable is rendered by /-ā-/ rather than /-a-/; probably due to the influence of the orthography of the original.

What is, however, particularly striking about the Persian ماشین /māšin/ and the related Tajik forms is their meaning. Looking at their etymology we notice that the Greek **μᾶχανά/μηχανή** (Groves 1844: 379, 394), the Latin **māchinā** (Anthon 1865: 522), the French **machine** (Kupisz & Kielski 1990: 477) and the German **Maschine** (Chodera & Kubica 1984: 535) all have a principal meaning ‘machine’. Initially (i.e. during the reign of Peter the Great) the Russian form, too had this general meaning. However, in modern times the word is usually used in spoken language to denote ‘automobile’ (Černyx 1999: 517). Strikingly, not only all the Tajik forms, but also spoken Persian

⁸ There are few exceptions (see Kalontarov 2007: 107).

share this semantic characteristic.⁹ In other words, the Russian form is not only the immediate source of the Tajik **машина**, but most probably it also influenced semantically the Persian word in question.¹⁰



3.9. **манипулятор** : **монипулятор** ‘[computer] pointing/input device’

The form **манипулятор** has without doubt been transmitted into Tajik via Russian. This is especially evident from the structure of the penultimate syllable. The word – at least in the sense mentioned – is particularly attested in the most recent sources, as it refers to computer peripheria (Komilov & Šarapov 2003: 38 passim; Samsung 2013: 58).

The original source of this internationalism seems to be mediaeval Latin and the verb **manipulo** ‘I perform an action with my hand’ (Tokarski 1980: 451).

Interestingly, it is sometimes possible (even in the same sources) that use the form **манипулятор** to find a close variant, namely **монипулятор** (Komilov & Šarapov 2003: 54). However, certain factors make the interpretation of this form difficult. Theoretically it could be the same form, although influenced by Persian, as **مانیپولاتور** is attested in this language. Thus it might have been a case similar to that of **мошина**. However, we should not overlook the fact that the form **монипулятор** is attested in Russian as a variant of **манипулятор** (Google search, “монипулятор” conducted 2013–11–14). This variation is understandable: thanks to the Russian phonetic phenom-

⁹ Even if Persian dictionaries ascribe to the form in question the general meaning of ‘machine, device’ (Omid 1373: 1040), still the dominant denotation is ‘automobile’. A Google image search for **ماشین** produces more or less ten images of machinery other than automobiles among the first 500 results (Google image search, keyword: **ماشین**, date: 2014–03–01).

¹⁰ The author feels indebted to the anonymous reviewer of this article for drawing his attention to the problem of the semantical value of the analysed forms.

enon referred to as “akanye”, the unstressed /o/ is pronounced in the same way as /a/. Thus, with foreign words, native speakers are prone to mistake the letters **o** and **a**. In other words, the immediate origin of the form **манипулятор** remains unclear and it may be either the influence of Persian or of non-standard Russian spelling.

4. Conclusions

Even the limited material presented in the present article entitles us to claim that the de-russianisation of internationalisms borrowed into Tajik via Russian is a tendency which certainly exists. It is achieved in a number of ways:

- Re-borrowing from another vehicular language (esp. Persian),
- Phonetic adaptation,
- Morphological adaptation.

The result is always the same – the evidence of Russian serving as a vehicular language in transmitting these forms to Tajik is lost. A similar process is observed in the case of geographical names previously introduced via Russian and now often de-russianised in various ways, cf. **Италия** and **Итолиё** (Perry 2005: 488–489).

This de-russianisation of internationalisms is only a part of a wider phenomenon, as some words of this type are not de-russianised in the manner demonstrated, but instead substituted or accompanied by lexemes of an entirely different origin, e.g. the new word **резпардозанда** (Nazarzoda 2008: 2.161) rivals the internationalism **микрпроцессор** (Komilov & Šarapov 2003: 33).¹¹ The tendency to substitute forms borrowed from or via Russian with Persianisms was noticed eight years ago by Perry (2005: 489). Other forms are simply falling out of use as their designated meaning became obsolete, e.g. a compound of two internationalisms taken from Russian **парткабинет** ‘(communist) party cabinet’ (Sobirov 2007: 150). In some cases an internationalism – even introduced via Russian – seems to be preferred to a Slavonic lexeme. For example the form **врач** (see above) seems to have lost – after a century – the competition with the internationalism **духтур**.

To sum up, not only is the influence of Russian – more than 20 years after the collapse of the Soviet Union – weakening, but we are also observing a trend to harmonise the Tajik lexica with that of Iranian Persian.

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¹¹ This **резпардозанда** is much more likely to be a borrowing of the Persian ریزپردازنده /rizpardāzande/, rather than an independently created calque of the English **microprocessor**, as Sobirov (2007: 150) believes.

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