

BORDER SECURITY OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES ON THE EVE OF THE ISAF PULLOUT

Pulat MAKKAMBAEV

*Ph.D. (Law), Doctoral Candidate,
Tashkent State Institute of Jurisprudence
(Tashkent, Uzbekistan)*

ABSTRACT

For over 30 years now, the conflict in Afghanistan has been and remains a source of international and regional instability. The crisis developments emerging in the territory of this country threaten the border security of the Central Asian states; what will happen in Afghanistan after the

ISAF pullout is causing even more concern. The author analyzes the impact of the Afghan conflict on the border security of the Central Asian states and concludes that bilateral and multilateral efforts to preserve border security should be improved to stave off the threats that might emanate from Afghanistan.

KEYWORDS: *Afghanistan, the United States, the Soviet Union, Pakistan, Central Asian states, the civil war in Tajikistan, the Taliban, the IMU, the U.N., limited contingent of Soviet troops, NATO, ISAF, Operation Enduring Freedom, state borders, border security, border guards, threats to border security, border cooperation.*

Introduction

In the latter half of the 20th century, mankind lived through cardinal changes in the international security system accompanied by the collapse of the socialist system, the Warsaw Treaty Organization, and the Soviet Union. Many experts and politicians think that the failure of socialism as a social system was caused by the defeat inflicted by its main geopolitical rival in the course of the Afghan war, which undermined the weak socialist economy.¹

The military-political developments in Afghanistan, which followed the defeat, made it clear that this economically backward country, living for many centuries in the midst of social, clan, ethnic, and confessional strife, has become a seat of instability and a threat to regional and international stability.

¹ See, for example: Zhao Huasheng, "Afghanistan: upushchennye vozmozhnosti?" *Uzbekistan & Central Asia* (Tashkent), No. 1, 2012, p. 10.

This strife was the result of the development of Afghan statehood strongly affected by various internal and external factors, rather than the product of one, no matter how important, historical event. This means that what is going in Afghanistan today is rooted in its social and political past.

In the 20th century, Afghanistan, which lived on the outskirts of the world economy and was far removed from the global hubs, was one of the least developed Eurasian countries. Its isolation from the worldwide trends of social and economic progress was caused by the archaic clan and tribal relations that dominated the country's social structure, made progressive property forms and industrialization practically impossible, and widened the gap between Afghanistan and the global communication lines.

Soviet Armed Intervention

The 1978 April revolution, which brought to power the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), created the prerequisites for wide-scale social, economic, and political reforms very much needed to resolve the contradictions among social, national, and confessional groups that had been piling up for centuries. The errors of the people at the helm, who mismanaged the process of dealing with political, economic, and social issues, caused a social crisis that engulfed wide circles of society. The limited contingent of Soviet troops, which sided with the new government to fight the armed opposition, added vehemence to the domestic conflict; very soon it became an international conflict that speeded up the country's disintegration.

The Soviet Union was guided by its national interests and geopolitical reasons: its government tried to secure the country's borders and protect the territory against the military threats created by the accelerating armed conflict in Afghanistan.²

On the other hand, the Soviet Union wanted to preserve its control over the buffer territory of immense geostrategic importance for its own safety and for upholding its interests in the Middle East. The national interests of the Soviet state contradicted the principles of international law: the U.N. GA described what the Soviet Union had done in Afghanistan as "foreign armed intervention."³

Today, contradictory globalization has made any conflict inside a state or between states a threat to regional security and the national and border security of the adjacent countries. The state power systems and legal regimes responsible for the safety of state borders are inevitably ruined in any country immersed in a domestic conflict; the borders become porous and the threats created by the conflict flow to neighboring countries.

The states endangered by the repercussions of the conflict in neighboring countries should act promptly to localize the conflict: they should take all appropriate measures within the international legal system to strengthen their borders in order to ensure their own security.

This has been amply confirmed by the conflict in Afghanistan, which has been going on for many years. The government forces, acting together with the limited Soviet contingent, failed to seal off the border with Pakistan, which allowed people from the North-West Frontier Province of Pakistan to cross the border to join the Afghan mujahideen; arms and ammunition were moved across the same border. The training camps and centers of mujahideen (fighters) who fought against the govern-

² See: M. Gareev, "Afghanskaia problema—tri goda bez sovetkikh voysk", *Mezhdunarodnaia zhizn*, No. 2, 1992, p. 25.

³ Resolution of the U.N. General Assembly 35/37 of 20 November, 1980 The Situation in Afghanistan and Its Implications for International Peace and Security, available at [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/35/37&Lang=E&Area=RESOLUTION].

ment of Afghanistan and also among themselves, as well as crowds of Afghans seeking refuge in Pakistan destabilized the border areas and pushed the Islamic factor into the limelight.

In January 1980, the Soviet Union moved special units of KGB Border Guards into the northern provinces of Afghanistan to protect the Soviet-Afghan border. They were expected to create a “security belt” about 100 km wide along the border⁴ to prevent reconnaissance and the subversive activities of the mujahideen.

This was done because the opposition acting from third countries and its patrons instructed the warlords to organize subversive activities along the Soviet border to force the Soviet political leaders to draw the Soviet troops out of Afghanistan. Soviet troops were brought in on 25 December, 1979; the first fight on the stretch defended by the Khorog border guard unit took place on 13 February, 1980; it was in this skirmish that the first Soviet border guard fighting on the Soviet territory was killed.⁵

The fact that special units of Border Guards were stationed in the northern provinces of Afghanistan and armed intervention of the limited contingent violated the imperative principles of international law, but they prevented or cut short dozens of subversive acts of the mujahideen on the Soviet-Afghan border.

Border Security of the Adjacent States While the Taliban Remained in Power

The downfall of the PDPA pro-communist regime added vigor to the power struggle in Afghanistan: it became an ethnic, rather than ideological and political, confrontation among practically all the Islamic political parties and groups. It was then that the U.S. and Pakistani intelligence services created a new player in the Afghan conflict—the Taliban,⁶ which immediately plunged into a war against the mujahideen; it lived and operated on Saudi and UAE money.

The Taliban was resolved to seize power to transform Afghanistan into a theocratic state based on the principles of radical Islam. At first, the two camps were locked in an uncompromising and fierce struggle, their ferocity going beyond the fighting units to the ordinary people. After ascending to power, the Taliban became less inclined to take commands from the American and Pakistani special services.

As could be expected, the civil war tilled the soil for undermining the legal principles of Afghanistan’s statehood and turning the country into a hub of international terror. The common aim brought the Taliban, al-Qa’eda, and other international terrorist organizations closer together.⁷

Once it came to power, the Taliban became a real and serious threat to the neighboring states.

⁴ For more details, see: P. Makkambaev, “Obespechenie bezopasnosti sovetsko-afghanskoy granitsy spetsialnymi podrazdeleniyami Pogranichnykh voysk, dislotsirovavshimisya na territorii Afghanistana,” in: *Voенно-politicheskaia situatsia v Afghanistane i ee vlianie na pogranichnuiu bezopasnost gosudarstv Tsentralnoy Azii*, Adolat, Tashkent, 2013, pp. 168-213.

⁵ See: V. Shevelev, “Tysiacha dney moyey zhizni, ili Za zavesoy sekretnosti,” *Pogranichnik Sodruzhestva*, No. 4, 2004, p. 77.

⁶ See: E. Nikitenko, E. Golubeva, “Dvizhenie Taliban: proshloe ili budushchee?” *Voennaia mysl*, No. 4, 2004, p. 76.

⁷ See: Sh. Kamalov, “Afghanskaia strategiiia administratsii SShA na sovremennom etape,” *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia* (Tashkent), No. 3, 2010, p. 24.

The Soviet Union's disintegration made the Tajik-Afghan border practically non-existent; the former Soviet republic was plunged into a civil war between the supporters of the central government and all sorts of groups represented by the United Tajik Opposition, which escalated under the pressure of political tension in Afghanistan, among other things.

In June 1992, when Burhaniddin Rabbani was elected president, the Tajik opposition began receiving moral support and considerable military assistance from the leaders of the Islamic Society of Afghanistan (ISA) and Islamic Party of Afghanistan (IPA). It set up an extensive network of training camps in the north of Afghanistan and created corridors by which trained fighters were moved to Tajikistan.

The mujahideen, who operated in the border areas, acting on the explicit orders of their commanders, attacked posts of border guards along the border with Tajikistan and even joined the opposition fighting the government forces in Tajik territory.

In the fall of 1994, when relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan started going from bad to worse, President Rabbani turned to Russia for military assistance against the Taliban, which by that time had captured Kandahar and was readying for a march on Kabul. In an effort to achieve a settlement in Tajikistan, Rabbani organized two summits (on 17-19 May, 1995 in Kabul and on 10-11 December, 1996 in Talukan), which contributed to national reconciliation in Tajikistan.

Even after the Taliban captured Kabul in September 1996, Rabbani went on with his efforts to achieve reconciliation in Tajikistan.⁸ He helped Tajik refugees who had crossed into Afghanistan in the fall and winter 1992 to return to their homes. Training camps of Tajik fighters in Afghan territory, which were functioning along the border in the strip controlled by the ISA, were gradually liquidated.

It should be said that the conflict in Tajikistan created a climate in which the international terrorist groups stationed in Tajikistan could organize subversive actions along the Kyrgyz-Tajik and Uzbek-Tajik borders. In August 1999, a unit of about 700 fighters of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) crossed the border with Kyrgyzstan, invaded the Batken District, and captured three population centers (Zardoli and Khodzha-Achkan). It took Kyrgyz armed units three months to drive the terrorists back to Tajikistan.⁹

On 19 October, 1999, Uzbekistan sent a note to the Foreign Ministry of Tajikistan, which said in part that "the Uzbek side hopes that the government of Tajikistan will fulfill its earlier obligations to neutralize the bandit groups that invaded the south of Kyrgyzstan. A large part of them recently retreated, unopposed, to the eastern regions of Tajikistan. The Uzbek side also hopes that the Tajik-Kyrgyz border will be fortified in the interests of continued peace and stability in Central Asia."¹⁰

In November 1999, an armed group of fourteen IMU fighters invaded Uzbekistan at the Pangaz Pass (Akhangaran District, Tashkent Region) and was liquidated in Yangiabad.

In July 2000, about twenty IMU fighters invaded the Sariosiyo District, Surkhandarya Region near the village of Zevar to carry out several acts of subversion and terrorism along the Tajik-Uzbek border.

In August of the same year, 20 armed IMU fighters crossed the Tajik-Uzbek border near the village of Terakli (Akhangaran District, Tashkent Region); all of them were liquidated by the special units of Uzbekistan in the mountains of Bostanlyk.¹¹

⁸ See: V. Korgun, "Islamskiy ekstremizm u granits SNG," *Azia i Afrika segodnia*, No. 1, 1999, p. 13.

⁹ See: N. Ziiamov, "O mezhdunarodnom ekstremizme i borbe s terrorizmom," *Obshchestvennyye nauki v Uzbekistane* (Tashkent), No. 11-12, 1999, pp. 58-59.

¹⁰ "Kto i chto meshaet mirnomu protsessu v Tadjikistane?" *Pravda Vostoka* (Tashkent), 20 October, 1999.

¹¹ See: B. Zhamolov, R. Akbarov, Kh. Mirzaliev, "Prigovor. Imenem Respubliki Uzbekistan," *Narodnoe slovo* (Tashkent), 23 November, 2000.

Afghanistan became a hub of international terrorism, leaving the world community no other option but to interfere in the country's domestic situation. The U.N. SC passed a resolution, saying that the U.N. SC "Expresses its readiness to take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September, 2001, and to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations."¹²

The NATO Military Operation and the Situation along the Borders with Afghanistan

Operation Enduring Freedom carried out in 2001 can be described as an important military and political measure the international community undertook to stabilize the domestic situation in Afghanistan. The specifics of the theater of military actions largely diminished the effects of what the coalition forces had done; however, the operation contributed to the security of Central Asian borders.¹³ Indeed, the number of subversive acts carried out by international terrorist groups on the borders of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan dropped noticeably.

In Pakistan, on the other hand, the operation echoed in a different way. Shamsudin Mamaev has rightly written that "the rout of the Taliban in Afghanistan started a process of Taliban-ization of Pakistan: the following year, fundamentalist Islamic parties won the elections in the North-West Frontier Province."¹⁴

In fact, NATO repeated the mistake of the Soviet commanders who had, on the whole, neglected the factors that figured prominently in the east, south-east, and south of Afghanistan. Very much like the mujahideen before them, the defeated Taliban drew new fighters into their ranks; the movement received arms and ammunition from the North-West Border Province of Pakistan and also used its territory to escape strikes by the counterterrorist coalition.

The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan should have been closed to deprive the Taliban of its safe haven.

On 18 August, 2008, President of Pakistan Pervez Musharraf lost his post because he used military force to stabilize the situation in Waziristan (the province where the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban kept their main forces). Pakistan, a key American ally in the region of long standing, gradually moved to the camp of those who opposed the American presence in Afghanistan. This was "prompted by an airstrike NATO helicopters had delivered in the small hours of 26 November, 2011 on two Pakistani military outposts in the border zone with Afghanistan that killed twenty-four Pakistani military... The boycott was one of Islamabad's answers to the incident; it also blocked ground supply routes to NATO forces in Afghanistan."¹⁵ Early in July 2012, that is, seven months later, the two countries resumed talks on the southern ground supply route.

It seems that security in Afghanistan depends on the security of its border with Pakistan, which so far remains the main channel between the "communicating vessels" (by which I mean Afghanistan

¹² U.N. Security Council, Security Council Resolution 1368 (2001) Threats to International Peace and Security Caused by Terrorist Acts, Adopted by the Security Council at its 437th meeting, 12 September, 2001, S/RES/1368, available at [<http://www.refworld.org/docid/3c4e94557.html>].

¹³ See: I. Safranchuk, "Afghanistan in Search of Balance," available at [http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/person/p_1260].

¹⁴ Sh. Mamaev, "Odin na odin s Talibami. Perekhivet li NATO krizis v Pakistane?" available at [<http://www.politjournal.ru/preview.php?action=Articles&dirid=40&tek=8157&issue=219>].

¹⁵ O. Nessar, "Political Crossroads of the Afghan Crisis," *International Affairs*, No. 2, 2012.

and Pakistan) used by the Taliban and international groups of terrorists to carry out their subversive activities.¹⁶

Sealed off, this border will make it easier to discontinue the anti-government activities of the Taliban and the Pashtun tribes in Afghanistan and will create conditions conducive to similar measures in the border areas of Pakistan. We have already learned from previous experience that these tasks in the two territories cannot and should not be addressed until the state borders have been closed. We all know that the good-neighborly relations between these two countries largely depend on settlement of the long-standing border line issue. It is for the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to initiate the talks and act as an intermediary. Both states are fully aware that the Taliban and the reactionary Pashtun tribal elders are capitalizing on the unresolved border issue to fan enmity between the people living on both sides of the border.

The international community should help Pakistan to demilitarize the territories along the Afghan border once the counterterrorist operation in Afghanistan has been completed. For over 30 years now, this area remains dotted with training camps and bases, first, of Afghan mujahideen and later the Taliban.

A successful conclusion of the operation in Afghanistan will lead to a dialog between Islamabad and the Pashtun tribal elders about disarmament of the illegal armed groups and putting an end to subversive activities against each other. The government of Pakistan will probably need an international military contingent to liquidate the al-Qa'eda camps in the North-West Frontier Province and to disarm the Pashtun armed units.¹⁷

Peaceful Settlement and Afghanistan's Security

The years 2001-2005, when the Bonn Agreements on Afghanistan were implemented, proved to be the first important stage of political settlement in the country up to and including creating new and restoring the old institutions of power with equal representation of political, religious, and ethnic groups achieved through elections.

This stage served as a solid political foundation on which the process of national reconciliation could be further developed, even though the problem of security of the local people and their protection against armed anti-government elements remained unresolved.

Between 2006 and 2010, the world community, which tried to implement the London Agreements on Afghanistan, failed to achieve the declared aims (security, sustainable governance, rule of law, human rights, and economic and social development); it likewise could not defeat drug production for the simple reason that none of the above could be achieved in a country that lacked security.¹⁸

In January 2010, the ISAF had over 100 thousand under its command, however, the Afghan national army, expected to become the main antiterrorist force, was still unable to spread its control to nearly a third of the country's territory.

¹⁶ See: R. Makhmudov, "Rasklad afghanskikh sil," *Tsentr ekonomicheskikh issledovaniy. Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie* (Tashkent), No. 5, 2012, p. 57.

¹⁷ See: A. Davydov, "SShA ostaiutsia v Afghanistane? Joe Biden uzhe ne obeshchaet vyvesti amerikanskije voyska iz Afghanistana v 2014 godu," available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1295244180>].

¹⁸ See: I. Berg, "Prichiny porazheniya NATO v Afghanistane (nemetskiy vzgliad)," available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1270017300>].

On 17 July, 2011, the Afghan government began to spread its responsibility for maintaining security over the entire territory on a stage-by-stage basis (Inteqal). This meant that the Afghan security forces were determined to cope with the problems created by the subversive activities of anti-government elements.

Some think that the Taliban promptly revived after the defeat and even became more active because:

- The international community proved unable to deprive it of its shelter in Pakistan¹⁹;
- It proved impossible to stem the flow of fighters hired outside the country and brought to Afghanistan;
- The border between Afghanistan and Pakistan remained uncontrolled.

The two countries organized several bilateral and multilateral summits and meetings of the joint Peace Jirga; the Pashtun tribes on both sides of the border signed several non-aggression agreements; however, the situation along the border remained the same. The ISAF trained Afghan border guards to improve the service at the check points, but the entire stretch of border was barely guarded and barely controlled.

The pace with which the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police Force were being formed left much to be desired. In the past, when the Soviet Union pulled out its limited contingent, the Afghan army was about 400-450 thousand strong²⁰ and could oppose the mujahideen for three years on its own, today, at the beginning of the Inteqal process, it is barely 200 thousand strong. In 2005, the newly formed units of the Afghan army were involved in anti-Taliban operations together with the ISAF; on 30 August, 2008 (seven years after the first stage of Operation Enduring Freedom), the Afghan army assumed responsibility for the country's capital.

Thirty years of the Afghan war have demonstrated that the use of force is not enough to achieve peace and reconciliation. The members of the first U.N. SC mission, who came to Afghanistan in November 2003, pointed out that reconciliation with the opposition was badly needed; the process, however, began in 2010. The delay was probably caused by the fact that by 2010 the pro-government political alliances had not yet divided power among themselves, which meant that the talks would have been senseless.

The consultative Peace Jirga convened on 2-4 June, 2010 formulated the organizational and legal conditions for a dialog with the opposition; it also adopted a Program of Peace, Reconciliation, and Reintegration, as well as set up the High Peace Council and its provincial committees. The talks between Hamid Karzai and the leaders of the Taliban and Islamic Party of Afghanistan and the efforts of the local provincial committees to seek reconciliation with the local warlords showed that, in principle, a mutually acceptable compromise could be achieved. The uncompromising criticism coming from Western experts of the mechanisms (direct talks with members of the Afghan government, reliance on intermediary countries, etc.) and instruments used for reconciliation (buying posts in state structures, corruption, etc.) shows that the West knows little, if anything at all, about the specifics of the Afghans' national psychology and worldviews.²¹

The London Conference on Afghanistan, which took place on 28 January, 2010, announced that the partnership between the Afghan government and the international community had entered a new

¹⁹ See: "NATO na poroge porazheniia v voynе s talibami," available at [http://www.trud.ru/article/27-07-2010/247163_za_vojskami_ssha_v_afganistane_prishel_prizrak_ssr.html].

²⁰ See: A. Korbut, "Afghanskaia avantiura prirastaet stranami SNG," available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1261040400>].

²¹ See: R. Khapalwak, D. Rohde, "U.S. Buying Tribal Loyalties in Afghanistan," available at [<http://afpakwar.com/blog/archives/3897>].

(transition) phase: the Afghan government would acquire broader powers in security and wider responsibilities for the future of its country, while the international community pledged to help the government of Afghanistan.

The traditional Loya Jirga convened in November 2011 supported the government, which intended to sign an agreement on strategic partnership with the United States based on full respect for Afghanistan's statehood.

Despite the widely publicized intention of the counterterrorist coalition to complete pullout before 2014, the world community announced at the Bonn Conference held on 5 December, 2011, that it was prepared to help the Afghan government after the pullout, from 2015 to 2024, to develop the economy and consolidate peace and conciliation.

The international community is proceeding from the policy of reconciliation of all the opposing military and political groups and transfer of full responsibility for the country's domestic situation to the Security Forces of Afghanistan. The policy of peace and security in the country fully conforms to the local reality.

The National Army of Afghanistan is seen as the main guarantor of success at the present stage of the peacekeeping operation; it should be large enough to control at least the administrative centers and main districts in every province. This will facilitate an agreement with the moderate and radical opposition leaders, who respect force and weapons. This means that the pullout should be coordinated with the time the National Army is prepared to assume full responsibility for maintaining peace in the country.²²

Security of the Tajik-Afghan Border

Today, the ability of the border guards of Tajikistan to protect the Afghan stretch of the state border 1,387 km long causes a lot of concern in view of the planned ISAF pullout.²³ In 1992, the border was guarded by about 5 thousand Russian border guards; later their number was brought up to 18 thousand (that is 13 border guards per 1 km of the border) to cope with the more frequent subversive acts.

In 2005, the task was transferred to the border guards of Tajikistan; today, the armed forces of Tajikistan number about 20 thousand,²⁴ 5 thousand of whom are stationed on the border.²⁵ They are spaced along the entire stretch of the border, which means 3.5 border guards per 1 km.

An inadequate number of border guards is not the only problem; there is also the problem of border checkpoints.²⁶ In 2002, the Aga Khan Foundation allocated \$1.7 million to build four bridges across the border River Panj (near Teme, Darwaz, Langar, and Ishkashim), which connected these Afghan districts with Tajikistan.²⁷

²² See: V. Kaspruk, "Afghanistan: ukhod mozhet byt prezhdvremennym," available at [[http://www. zn.ua/1000/1600/70224](http://www.zn.ua/1000/1600/70224)].

²³ See: [<http://www.skpw.ru/Tadg.htm>].

²⁴ See: A. Tsyganok, "Rossia i problemy bezopasnosti aziatskikh stran SNG," *Rossia i sovremennyy mir*, No. 4, 2008, p. 208.

²⁵ See: "Vooruzhennyye sily Tadzhiqistana," available at [<http://belarmy.by/army-mira/vooruzhyonnye-sily-tadzhiqistana>].

²⁶ Until 2002, there was only a river check point Nizhny Panj-Sherkhan Bandar.

²⁷ See: "Regionalnaia deiatelnost po sotrudnichestvu v Tadzhiqistane," available at [http://www.akdn.org/tajikistan_regional_r.asp].

In June 2007, a motor road bridge 600 m long between Nizhny Panj on the Tajik side and Sherkhan Bandar on the Afghan side built on American money (\$37.1 million) was opened.²⁸

The newly built bridges were expected to improve transborder communications, invigorate trade and economic ties, develop transborder trade, and, in general, promote closer cultural and friendly relations between the two countries. The people living on both sides of the border could enjoy a simplified border-crossing regime.

The new bridges and simplified regime on the border cannot but cause concern: the Taliban and its allies can use these advantages to organize subversive acts along the borders of the Central Asian countries; this happened in 1999-2000 when the border was entrusted to the Russian border guards. At that time, the Tajik army and the law-enforcement structures ensured law and order inside the country, while the IMU fighters camped in the mountains (Tavildara, Jirgatol, etc.); from time to time they came down to invade the Uzbek and Kyrgyz border areas.

These concerns were confirmed in July 2012: an armed operation in Gorno-Badakhshan, where units of the national army beat off 6 to 8 terrorist units (from 60 to 90 fighters in all), cost Major-General Nazarov, Department Head of the State National Security Committee for Nagorno-Badakhshan, his life.²⁹ In 2012 alone, about 150 potential members of terrorist and religious extremist organizations were arrested in Tajikistan.³⁰

Border Threats in Central Asia

There is no agreement in the expert community on how the 2014 pullout will affect regional security. Some experts fear that it will be undermined; others believe that even negative developments in post-2014 Afghanistan, where the Taliban might regain control of the country, will not threaten the Central Asian borders. These experts refer to the period between 1996 and 2001 when the Taliban controlled the north and north-west of Afghanistan and when there were no serious incidents either on the Turkmen or Uzbek borders with Afghanistan.

Vadim Sergeev, Third Secretary of the Department on Issues of Security and Disarmament, Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has written: "Important evidence that the Taliban have no intention of invading Central Asia lies in the fact that, in the fall of 1996, they approached the Turkmen border, which was patrolled by Russian troops at that time. Over the next five years, until the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, they did not engage in any hostile activities and established peaceful relations with the Turkmen government and Russian soldiers."³¹

Indeed, at that time, the Taliban, not strong enough to defeat the Northern Alliance, preferred to steer clear of open intervention against its northern neighbors.

At the same time, today as in the past (during the 30 years of civil war in Afghanistan), the power struggle in Afghanistan is fanned by external players rather than kept smoldering by domestic circumstances. This means that in the future, too, much will depend on whether the world community manages to maintain stability in the country.

²⁸ See: "Prezidenty Tadjikistana i Afghanistana otkryli most cherez reku Panj," available at [<http://www.easttime.Ru/news/1/1/298.html>].

²⁹ See: "V Gorno-Badakhshanskoy oblasti Tadjikistana slozhilas napriazhennai obstanovka," available at [<http://n-idea.am/ru/news.php?id=19468>].

³⁰ See: "Okolo 150 terroristov i ekstremistov zaderzhano v Tadjikistane v 2012 godu," available at [<http://www.kyrtag.kg/?q=ru/news/34501>].

³¹ V. Sergeev, "The U.S.A. in Afghanistan," *International Affairs*, No. 2, 2012.

To prevent negative developments in Afghanistan, up to and including subversive activities of anti-government forces on the Central Asian borders, NATO should establish closer cooperation with the regional security structures (SCO, CIS, and CSTO)³² at the stage of the ISAF pullout to coordinate their actions.³³

The Central Asian countries, on the other hand, should pool forces to improve bilateral and multilateral cooperation along the borders: they should coordinate their actions to prevent or rebuff the subversive activities of the Taliban and international terrorist structures (similar to those that took place on the Tajik border between 1992 and 1997).

To be able to act together to stem the transborder threats emanating from Afghanistan (if the military and political situation in this country develops according to a negative scenario), the Central Asian states need an adequate international legal context.

An analysis of what is going on in Afghanistan and the planned pullout of the counterterrorist coalition forces suggest that the Central Asian countries will have to cope with the following threats to their border security:

- Wide-scale subversive activities by Afghan armed groups on the state borders;
- Armed invasion of the territories of the Central Asian states by groups of international terrorists³⁴;
- Infiltration of members of religious extremist parties and movements³⁵;
- Drug trafficking organized by criminal groups across Central Asian territory³⁶;
- Ethnic conflicts deliberately stirred up in the border areas.³⁷

It should be said that these threats are not imagined: they are probable and may become real if the Afghan government loses control over the Northern provinces, or if the war between the north and south is rekindled. During the civil war in Tajikistan, these threats were lurking on the Tajik-Afghan border; today the reactionary and extremist forces in Afghanistan might return to their old subversive tactics.

This means “in order to check the spread of terror, extremism, and drugs from Afghanistan, it is absolutely indispensable to close the frontiers and use the latest technology for this purpose. The Central Asian member states of the SCO and CSTO, as well as NATO/EU members, will equally profit from this. In fact, the members of the European Union and the Alliance may extend very much needed aid to the regional countries. It will be useful to discuss the advisability of creating a joint unit based on special SCO and NATO forces to stop the flow of drugs from Afghanistan.”³⁸

The Central Asian countries should not be left alone to face a wide-scale Taliban subversive campaign: the numerical strength of their border guard forces is absolutely inadequate for this. They need national armed forces trained to protect the state borders, which should be equipped with ade-

³² See: “Kakovo budushchee Afghanistana bez NATO?” available at [<http://www.islamnews.ru/news-22158.html>].

³³ See: B. Seydakhmetova, “Afghanistan segodnia,” available at [<http://www.np.kz/index.php?newsid=5924>].

³⁴ See: B. Pulatov, A. Khasanov, “Formy sovershenstvovaniya mezhdunarodnogo sotrudnichestva v borbe s terrorizmom,” *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, No. 2, 2008, pp. 47-51.

³⁵ See: I. Yakubov, “Islamskiy radikalizm: prichiny aktivizatsii, mery protivodeystviia,” *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, No. 2, 2005, pp. 14-20.

³⁶ See: F. Mukhammedov, “Mezhdunarodniy narkobiznes: poniatie i istoria vozniknoveniya,” *Filosofia i pravo* (Tashkent), No. 2, 2008, pp. 80-82.

³⁷ See: D. Malysheva, “Posle ‘chernogo vtornika.’ islam i terrorizm v Rossii i SNG,” *Mirovaia ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, No. 3, 2002, p. 56.

³⁸ Yu. Morozov, R. McDermott, “Organizations and Alliances in Central Asia: Cooperation Prospects as Seen from Moscow and London,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 6 (54), 2008, p. 33.

quate high tech equipment to ensure coordination and cooperation between the armed units and uninterrupted control over their actions.

Direct threats of wide-scale activities on the borders will call for launching regional security mechanisms; so far this is impossible because the regional organizations (CIS, CSTO, and SCO) are still working on their structures and have not yet acquired mechanisms for opposing wide-scale border threats.³⁹

International law related to regional security and prevention of aggression against a member of one of these organizations has not yet acquired clear rules of collective action, the types, forms, and means of such action have not been specified, nor have the methods for arriving at timely decisions to carry out military operations.

The Central Asian countries exposed to the threats emanating from Afghanistan and lacking reliable and efficient mechanisms of border security should arrive at a compromise on the key regional problems⁴⁰ so as to be able to initiate collective border security measures and, later, collective decisions related to the safety of their borders.

In fact, in 1993 and 1994 the Central Asian countries had experience of concerted efforts on the Tajik-Afghan border when their national armed forces were still at the initial stage of modernization intended to adjust them to the new tasks created by the new geopolitical realities.

Today, there is every reason to believe that in the past twenty years the national armed forces have acquired the adequate skills to cope with the regional security problem.

Regional stability calls for the active involvement of the Central Asian countries in Afghanistan's economic revival.

Bahodiy Ergashev, Director of the Center for Economic Research, Uzbekistan, has written: "Uzbekistan has been convinced and is still convinced that the military component of the Afghan settlement should be trimmed to pay more attention to economic revival. This alone will lower the level of military confrontation inside the country."⁴¹

Conclusions

The above suggests the following conclusions.

- First, the threats to the border security of the Central Asian countries emanating from the territory of Afghanistan threaten their constitutional order; those who threaten the region's countries want to replace their secular state order with radical theocratic regimes (this happened in Afghanistan when the Taliban came to power).
- Second, the pullout of the military contingent of the counterterrorist coalition will endanger the border security of the Central Asian states (no matter which of the numerous possible scenarios is realized) as long as the positions of the present government of Afghanistan remain shaky. The intensity of these threats will depend on the direction in which the conflict in Afghanistan develops.

³⁹ See: R. Saifulin, "How Myths are Born. A View from Tashkent on the CSTO and Central Asia," available at [<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/How-Myths-Are-Born-15693>].

⁴⁰ See: S. Reva, N. Dosaliev, "Vozmozhnosti stran Tsentralnoy Azii i ikh realizatsia pri sozdaniy sistemy regionalnoy bezopasnosti v ramkakh ATT's SNG," in: *Vneshnepoliticheskaya orientatsiya stran Tsentralnoy Azii v svete globalnoy transformatsii mirovoy sistemy mezhdunarodnykh otnosheniy*, ed. by A.A. Kniazev, A.A. Migranian, Bishkek, 2009, pp. 229-231.

⁴¹ B. Ergashev, "Prioritetny Afghanistan," *Tsentr ekonomicheskikh issledovaniy. Ekonomicheskoe obozrenie*, No. 5-6, 2009, p. 19.

- Third, in the absence of reliable and efficient regional security mechanisms, the Central Asian countries must work together to stem the transborder threats arising in Afghan territory.⁴² The Central Asian countries should concentrate, first and foremost, on arriving at concerted and mutually acceptable border security measures, i.e. preserving the integrity of the state borders and protecting infrastructure along the border strips and in the border zones. These measures do not exclude prevention and localization of the transborder threats by regional organizations. The latter, which rely on the collective efforts of the Central Asian states, should guarantee that the struggle against transborder threats will not develop into full-scale armed conflicts.
- Fourth, to ensure their border security, each of the Central Asian states should develop its bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the regional countries in the following key vectors:
 - Improvement of the international laws related to mutual assistance in crisis situations on the borders;
 - Unification of the system of border control to be able to identify potential terrorists;
 - Timely exchange of information about the developments on the state borders;
 - Organization of cooperation and coordination of border guard activities on the state border;
 - Joint command-post exercises to improve protection of the state borders in crisis situations;
 - Joint scientific studies of how to ensure border security in the conditions of the emerging military and political situation in the region.
- Fifth, to achieve peace and stability in the CA, the regional countries should be actively involved in the efforts to stop the civil war in Afghanistan. This means that the Central Asian countries, acting within the international projects designed to establish national reconciliation in Afghanistan and its gradual reintegration into the world community, should use diplomatic instruments to contribute to military and political stability in the country and along its borders.

This will diminish transborder threats and will facilitate transfer to good-neighborly relations and mutually advantageous trade and economic cooperation with Afghanistan.

This means that the civil war in Afghanistan has been and remains the main source of threats to regional and international security. The transborder threats taking shape in Afghanistan are spear-headed against the transborder security of the Central Asian states in particular.

The Central Asian countries should act together to consolidate regional security and contribute to conflict settlement in Afghanistan, otherwise their security woes will never end.

⁴² See: A. Durrani, "Post-NATO Afghanistan: Implications for Regional Security," available at [<http://eng.globalaffairs.ru/number/Post-NATO-Afghanistan-Implications-for-Regional-Security-15823>].