

## REGIONAL POLITICS

FERGHANA AS FATA?<sup>1</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

**T**he Ferghana Valley and FATA, two areas of regional importance, are gathering global consequence. Their unique geographic/geopolitical location and security issues have made them the main reference objects of Central and South Asian regional security complexes. In the era of the global war on terror, they are growing increasingly attractive for terrorists and extrem-

ists. The Ferghana Valley and FATA share a common legacy: the divide and rule policy of colonial powers alienated ethnic, cultural, and civilizational units and created a circumstance responsible for the current and future processes in these regions. The share of security factors (the triad "interests-threats-security), however, in the Ferghana Valley and FATA is not identical.

**KEYWORDS:** *Ferghana Valley, FATA, the Great Game legacy, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, global war on terror, economic interdependence, security dynamics, security issues.*

<sup>1</sup> FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas)—an administrative unit of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

## *Introduction*

The Ferghana Valley was and remains in the center of attention of students of this part of the world. Contemporary analysts of this strategically important sub-region of Central Asia describe it as a source of conflicts, a potential seat of instability, a “powder-keg”<sup>2</sup> and/or “cradle of Islamism.”<sup>3</sup>

It should be said in all justice that several widely known extremist and terrorist organizations—the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Union of Islamic Jihad (which branched off from IMU) and Aqromiya—are rooted in Ferghana. The valley’s Kyrgyz part has been an area of two bloody ethnic conflicts, the causes of which have not yet been liquidated. The valley has concentrated all main security challenges, as well as the still unresolved problems of interstate cooperation.

The processes underway in the valley have gathered certain trans-border dimensions; in other words, extremist/terrorist organizations spill over beyond the region’s borders to integrate with the global jihad. This situation was caused mainly by the Tajik civil war and the Afghan conflict. The latter has already become a transnational phenomenon and drawn all interested states and non-state actors into its orbit. The ideas of religious extremism and terrorism have acquired an international and even global scope.

Some of the authors compare the Ferghana Valley to the Tribal Areas of Pakistan, the hottest spot in South Asia, as far as the conditions, trends and prospects of the current sub-regional processes are concerned.<sup>4</sup>

It is commonly believed that another “front of global jihad” has been opened in Central Asia<sup>5</sup> and that after 2014, the valley, an ungoverned and uncontrolled space, may develop into an analogue of FATA to “serve as a safe haven, breeding ground, and staging area for violent extremist organizations and militants.”<sup>6</sup>

This article is intended as a critical analysis of the above-mentioned assumptions based on in-depth studies of the processes and their potentials unfolding in the valley and set against the background of FATA history and a discussion of the wider role these areas play in the regional security context of Central Asia.

## **The Ferghana Valley: A Source of Troubles or a Development Factor?**

### **Geography and/or Geopolitical Location**

The valley, with a total area of 22 thou. sq km, stretches over 300 km from west to east and up to 170 km from north to south and occupies a unique place in Central Asia best seen on the region’s

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<sup>2</sup> N. Lubin, B.R. Rubin, *Calming the Ferghana Valley: Development and Dialogue in the Heart of Central Asia*, The Century Foundation Press, New York, 1999, p. 14; M. Laumulin, “SCO—‘grandiozny geopoliticheskiy blef’? Vzgliad iz Kazakhstana,” Institut Français des Relations Internationales, *Russie. Nei. Visions*, No. 12, 2006, p. 7.

<sup>3</sup> A. Matveeva, “EU Stakes in Central Asia,” *Chaillot Paper*, Institute for Security Studies, European Union, Paris, No. 91, July 2006, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> See: T. Donnelly, “Ferghana as FATA? Central Asia after 2014 — Outcomes and Strategic Options”, *Connections: The Quarterly Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 1, Winter 2011.

<sup>5</sup> See: “Unrest in Uzbekistan: Fata Ferghana”, *The Economist*, 11 June, 2009; “Uzbekistan: If a Taliban Outpost Falls in Pakistan, Is the Ripple Felt in the Ferghana Valley?” *Eurasianet*, 26 May, 2009, available at [<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insightb/articles/eav052609.shtml>]; A. Rashid, “Tajikistan: The Next Jihadi Stronghold?” *New York Review of Books*, 29 November, 2010, available at [<http://goo.gl/0wJU7>].

<sup>6</sup> T. Donnelly, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

political map.<sup>7</sup> Under Soviet power, the valley was divided among Kirghizia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan; China is the only non-regional state, which borders on the valley in the Osh Region of Kyrgyzstan.

The Ferghana Valley (Ferghana depression) is a large intermountain basin in the Tien Shan system; it is practically isolated by mountain gorges—the Qurama and Chatkal in the northwest, the Ferghana in the northeast, and the Turkestan and Alai in the south. All the administrative regions are separated from the republic's center by natural frontiers that can be accessed through mountain passes, the main ones being the Anzob and Shakhristan in Tajikistan, Tyuz-Ashuu in Kyrgyzstan, and Kamchik in Uzbekistan. There is a narrow pass formed by the Mogoltau Mountains and the offshoots of the Turkestan Mountain Gorge, the so-called Khujand Gates (8 to 10 km long), which connect the valley with the Mirzachul steppe.

The valley's geopolitical importance is created by its proximity to the Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region of China, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of Tajikistan, and several other administrative units of Tajikistan, as well as the fact that the valley borders on Afghanistan, FATA, and Kashmir. These countries and territories form a crescent along the valley's borders and affect, in different ways, what is going on there.

Soviet policy of national and territorial delimitation of the 1920s-1930s deliberately ignored the local reality (the single geographic landscape, the common and very complicated irrigation system, and the ethnic and civilizational factors), which perpetuated the valley's geopolitical image. After acquiring independence, the new states gained certain "geopolitical advantages" together with parts of the valley's territory.

The plain (the area best suited for agriculture) belongs to Uzbekistan<sup>8</sup> and forms the core of the sub-regional transportation systems.

Primarily mountainous Kyrgyzstan is known for its hydropower potential, on the smooth functioning of which the Uzbek and Tajik parts of the valley depend.

The Khujand Gates allow the Sogd Region of Tajikistan to control the transport corridor that links the valley with the rest of the region.

Ethnically, the valley is a patchwork, which explains the high percentage of ethnically mixed marriages and the fairly wide range of kinship relations along the valley's borders.

### ***The Ferghana Valley: Development Potential***

The valley's demographic potential is huge: today, its 7 regions, which constitute about 3% of the total territory of the three republics (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan), are home to over 13 million people, or about 20% of Central Asia's 60 million-strong population.<sup>9</sup> The population

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<sup>7</sup> Its total area, which includes the watersheds, is about 84 thou. sq km (see: *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan*, Vol. 9, National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan State Scientific Publishers, Tashkent, 2005, p. 199; O. Abdullaev, *Ferghana Valley: Socioeconomic Development*, Namangan Publishers, Namangan, 2000, p. 18, both in Uzbek).

<sup>8</sup> The Uzbek part about 19 thou. sq km (out of the valley's total 22 thou. sq km): the Namangan Region, 7.44 thou. sq km; Ferghana, 6.8 thou. sq km and Andijan, 4.2 thou. sq km (see: *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan*, Vols. 1, 6, 9, 2000-2005, pp. 362 [Vol. 1], 251 [Vol. 6], 195 [Vol. 9]).

<sup>9</sup> There are over 8.5 million living in three regions of Uzbekistan (2.8 million live in Andijan; 3.2 million, in Ferghana, and 2.5 million in Namagan regions; the valley's Kyrgyz part is home to over 2.5 million (450 thou. live in the Batken, 1 million in the Dzhahalal-Abad and 1.1 million in the Osh regions); the Sogd Region of Tajikistan has a population of 2.4 million.

density is, likewise, much higher than in other parts of the region: the highest (650 per 1 sq km) is in the Andijan Region of Uzbekistan.<sup>10</sup>

Today, social and economic activity is gradually shifting to the towns. There are over 40 large and small cities and towns in the valley,<sup>11</sup> the biggest of them being Namangan with a population of 450 thou., Andijan (380 thou.), Ferghana (350 thou.), Osh (232 thou.), and Khujand (167 thou.). Khujand and Osh, two very important historical and cultural centers, are deeply involved in the domestic policies of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, respectively.

The rapidly developing urbanization is caused by internal migration (including labor migration), population growth, diversification of the national economies, the gradually decreasing share of agriculture in the countries' GDP,<sup>12</sup> etc.

Central Asia and the Ferghana Valley as its part can boast of a fairly developed social infrastructure (health care and education), which makes it one of the world's best educated regions.<sup>13</sup> There are nearly 20 higher educational establishments in the valley, 12 theaters, 30 museums, and other social infrastructure facilities.

The valley's industrial potential is substantial: Ferghana, Kokand, Kuvasai, Andijan, and Khujand are important industrial centers with a great role to play in the national economies of their respective republics. Khujand is second to Dushanbe, the republic's capital, in terms of industrial development. Ferghana hosts the region's largest oil refinery and (together with Kokand) the most developed chemical industry; Andijan boasts the only automobile plant in Central Asia started by Koreans and owned by General Motors.

The valley occupies about 3.8 million hectares, 1.3 million hectares being plough land.<sup>14</sup> Syr Darya, the region's longest river, which crosses several countries, and its more than 20 large and small tributaries, canals,<sup>15</sup> and hydropower facilities<sup>16</sup> form an integrated hydropower and irrigation system.

The valley's transportation system, which in the past was part of the Great Silk Road, has considerable potential; the transportation arteries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan connect these former Soviet republics among themselves and with their closest neighbors.

The total length of the valley's railways (the main type of transportation means) is 864 km; 525 km (or about 20% of the country's railways) run across the valley's Uzbek part; 176 km (44%), across the Kyrgyz; and 163 km (35%), across the Tajik part.<sup>17</sup>

In 2013, Uzbekistan and China launched an impressive project to build a 129 km-long electrified railway, Angren-Pap, which includes a 19 km-long tunnel at the Kamchik pass to connect the republic's central parts with the valley.

<sup>10</sup> See: *The Andijan Region*, available at [<http://www.ut.uz/andijan/andizhanskaya-oblasty>] (see also: *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan*, Vol. 1, 2000, p. 327).

<sup>11</sup> See: O. Abdullaev, op. cit., p. 64.

<sup>12</sup> For instance, the share of agriculture in Uzbekistan's GDP has shrunk from 30.1% in 2000 to 16.8% in 2013 (see: *Report of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. Karimov at the Meeting of the Cabinet of Ministers on the Results of Social and Economic Development in 2013 and the Key Economic Priorities for 2014*, 18 January, 2014, available at [<http://www.press-service.uz/ru/news/4875/>]).

<sup>13</sup> According to Asian Development Bank estimations, the average literacy rate of people aged 15 and above in Central Asia is 99.3% (see: *Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation Member Countries: Regional Cooperation Strategy and Program (2005-2007)*, ADB, July 2004, p. 56).

<sup>14</sup> Uzbekistan has about 6% of plough land in the valley; Tajikistan 16%, and Kyrgyzstan 50% (see: *Uzbekistan State Committee for Land Resources. Atlas, Land Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan*, 1st ed., Tashkent, 2001, pp. 12-13 (in Uzbek); O. Abdullaev, op. cit., pp. 148-157).

<sup>15</sup> The main channels are the Grand Ferghana (an inter-state channel 370 km long); the Northern and Southern Ferghana, the Grand Andijan, and the Grand Namangan channels.

<sup>16</sup> This includes the hydropower resources of the rivers Naryn and Kara Darya, the Andijan, Kasansay, Kayrakkum, Karkidon, and Panan water reservoirs, and the Uchkurgan and Andijan hydropower stations.

<sup>17</sup> *National Encyclopedia of Uzbekistan*, Vol. 11, 2005, p. 17; O. Abdullaev, op. cit., p. 185.

## The Main Security Factors

The triangle of conflicts (Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan) holds a special place in the Central Asian context of international relations—it has concentrated all the major security challenges that largely determine the regional security dynamics.

The countries in the valley have security problems in common, which are of a transborder nature. For geographic, civilizational, ethnic, and economic reasons, security challenges cannot remain locked within national territories for long—they will inevitably spill over to other parts of the region.

On the other hand, the local countries need contacts with the regional and international environment, which calls for their coordinated efforts and concentration of their means. So far, however, the relations among the Central Asians states lack the necessary level of mutual trust when dealing with common problems and moving toward common aims. This is best illustrated by border delimitation within the international legal system.

The newly independent states are especially sensitive to the problems of disputable territories and border stretches. Their settlement may help the countries involved to resolve many other nagging problems (efficient use of transborder rivers and transportation communications) and start economic cooperation.

The religious factor is an inalienable component of the security dynamics in the Ferghana Valley, the population of which has been highly religious at all times. Islamic values constitute part of social life; they are an important element in educating the younger generations and shaping ideas about the world in people's minds. Enriched by the traditions and mentality of the Muslim peoples, these values have developed into a protective shell/system that keeps all negative external and internal impacts (extremist and radical ideas included) away. "Forced secularization and militant atheism (practiced in the Soviet Union.—*Ed.*) failed to crush the Islamic identity of most local people."<sup>18</sup>

Bakhtier Babadjanov, a leading Uzbek expert in religious studies, has pointed out: "The formation of the IMU and similar organizations did not result solely from confrontations between believers and the state, for an intra-confessional conflict was also unfolding. Most believers followed the traditional theologians of Central Asia, whose positions had developed over the many centuries of the community's interactions with non-Muslim political and cultural substrata."<sup>19</sup>

Martha B. Olcott, a leading American political scientist, has written that "at that time the IMU succeeded, to a great extent, because state power was falling apart together with the Soviet Union not because the local people sided with the Islamist ideas."<sup>20</sup>

Today, the south of Kyrgyzstan is seen as the weakest link in the valley's security complex—regimes and political courses have been changing too frequently, while nothing has been done to carry out real social and economic reforms and pursue a balanced national policy amid the never ending power struggle between the North and the South; this has contributed to the growth of ethnic nationalism and led to regrettable clashes between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks in the country's south, which has largely damaged the valley's security.

The local states are worried about the "open doors policy" Bishkek declared some time ago that gave radical and extremist organizations freedom of maneuver; religious parties, banned in many

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<sup>18</sup> B. Babadjanov *et al.* "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Between National Identity and Islamic Alternative," in: *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*, ed. by S.F. Starr, B. Beshimov, I.I. Bobokulov, P. Shozimov, M.E. Sharpe, New York, London, 2011, p. 304.

<sup>19</sup> For more details, see: *Ibid.*, p. 326.

<sup>20</sup> M.B. Olcott, "Velika li ugroza jihada v Tsentralnoy Azii?" available at [uisrussia.msu.ru/docs/nov/pec/2009/2/ProEtContra\_2009\_204.pdf].

countries, are legal in Kyrgyzstan; those public organizations and state structures that insist that radical and extremist organizations of the Tablighi Jamaat type should be banned are severely criticized. It is invariably pointed out that these organizations are not radical and not extremist.<sup>21</sup>

The low educational level and low qualifications of the clergy is one of the reasons why the struggle against radical ideas in Kyrgyzstan is ineffective. According to former head of the State Commission for Religious Affairs of Kyrgyzstan Kanybek Osmonaliev, in 2009, “ten to fifteen percent of the 36 members of the Ulama Council had basic education; the others were, in fact, self-educated.”<sup>22</sup> Only 30 to 40% of the imams have specialized theological education.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, nearly half of the mosques functioning in the republic (that are over 1 thou. of them) have no state registration.

On the one hand, the government lacks a clear program of action<sup>24</sup>; while on the other, the economic, social, and ethnic reality all over the country reduces to naught what is done to contain radicalism and extremism. More and more frequently, members of religious radical movements find their way into the organs of state power and governance<sup>25</sup>; as a result, these movements join forces with political parties and criminal groups. Kyrgyzstan may become a source of the ideas of radical extremism, which will spread far and wide across Central Asia.

External factors, likewise, affect the valley’s security. The geographic location of the Gorno-Badakhshan Region between the Ferghana Valley, the XUAR, and Afghanistan, its difficult terrain, etc., together with political factors,<sup>26</sup> have already made it a channel by which fighters and drugs are moved from Afghanistan to the valley.<sup>27</sup>

It should be said that the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) have been using the autonomous and nearest regions of Tajikistan as a base for its activities and of the IMU, which fought in the UTO ranks. After the peace of 1997, Juma Namangani and his units settled in the town of Khoit in the Karategin (Rasht) Valley,<sup>28</sup> from where he raided the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley (in July-August 1999 and a year later in August 2000). The planned pullout of coalition forces from Afghanistan may encourage the IMU to step up its activities in the region.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>21</sup> See: “Malikov: Liudi iz “Tabligi Jamaat”—ne ekstremisty,” available at [[http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan\\_malikov/24979209.html](http://rus.azattyk.org/content/kyrgyzstan_malikov/24979209.html)].

<sup>22</sup> M. Kalishevskiy, “Kyrgyzstan. ‘Islamizatsia’ neobratima?” 27 January, 2014, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1390856880>].

<sup>23</sup> See: T. Sarbagyshev, “Salafism v Kyrgyzstane—put k radikalizatsii,” 14 January, 2014, available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1389711240>].

<sup>24</sup> Early in 2014, the Defense Council of Kyrgyzstan was entrusted with the task of drafting the State Concept of Policy in the Religious Sphere of Kyrgyzstan until 2020 (see: [<http://www.kabar.kg/rus/society/full/74717>]).

<sup>25</sup> See: B. Babadjanov, “‘Tablig’—politicheskaia organizatsia tsel kotoroy—islamizatsia mira,” available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1234595940>]; A. Keldibek, “Shchupaltsy religioznogo spruta okhvatyvaui silovye struktury Kyrgyzstana,” available at [<http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1362719640>]; T. Keneshev, “Idei ‘Tabligi-jamaat’ ovladevaui umami kyrgyzstantsev,” available at [<http://www.arba.ru/forum/6943>].

<sup>26</sup> The events of 2009 and 2010 in the Rasht Valley and in 2012 in Gorno-Badakhshan show that the “i’s” have not been dotted in the informal part of the national reconciliation agreement (redivision of spheres of influence and business) (for more details, see: E. Chausovsky, “Militancy in Central Asia: More Than Religious Extremism,” *Security Weekly*, 9 August, 2012, available at [[http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/militancy-central-asia-more-religious-extremism?utm\\_source=freelist-f&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=20120809&utm\\_term=sweekly&utm\\_content=readmore&elq=aa6bb89fc950407bb3ed07da3ecd137](http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/militancy-central-asia-more-religious-extremism?utm_source=freelist-f&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=20120809&utm_term=sweekly&utm_content=readmore&elq=aa6bb89fc950407bb3ed07da3ecd137)]; Th. Ruttig, “Talebs in Tajikistan? The ‘Terrorist Spill-Over’ Hype,” 10 October, 2013, available at [<http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/talebs-in-tajikistan-the-terrorist-spill-over-hype>]; S. Peyrouse, “Battle on Top of the World: Rising Tensions in Tajikistan’s Pamir Region,” August 2012, The German Marshall Fund of the United States, available at [<http://www.gmfus.org/archives/battle-on-top-of-the-world-rising-tensions-in-tajikistans-pamir-region/>]).

<sup>27</sup> The routes of drug trafficking run from Khorog to Osh and from Kulob to Dushanbe and Khujand to be moved to Russia, Europe, and China.

<sup>28</sup> See: A. Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia*, Penguin Books, New York, 2003, p. 144.

<sup>29</sup> See: A. Abdrakhmanova *et al.*, “Is Uzbek Guerrilla Force Planning Homecoming?” *IWPR Special Report*, 18 November, 2009, available at [<http://iwpr.net/report-news/uzbek-guerrilla-force-planning-homecoming>].

The XUAR is an inalienable part of Central Asia and the Turkic civilization; today this is evidenced by the presence of kindred ethnic groups on both sides of the border,<sup>30</sup> the interconnected economies, transportation routes,<sup>31</sup> and the shared security problems. In its Central Asian strategy, China proceeds from the “triad of evil,” which the region’s states have accepted as a threat to their security—terrorism, religious extremism, and separatism. The SCO Antidrug Strategy adopted in 2011 transformed the triad into a quartet. The same factors are taken into account when the interconnections between the Ferghana Valley and the XUAR are analyzed.

## FATA—A Great Game Legacy and a Hostage of the Global Counterterrorist Struggle

### Prehistory

FATA is an administrative unit of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan (IRP), its area of 27,500 sq km is populated by about 4.5 million.<sup>32</sup> The total area is divided into seven political agencies: Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, Kurram, and North and South Waziristan. All of them (except Orakzai) have a common border with Afghanistan. The majority of the local population is Sunni Pashtuns; there are also Shi‘a Pashtuns of the Turi tribe spread across the Kurram Agency. There are over 1.5 million Afghan refugees<sup>33</sup> in FATA who regard the region as their historical homeland and refuse to recognize the state border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This is explained by the history of the Federal Administered Tribal Areas.

The Sulaiman Mountains are the “cradle of the Afghan people”<sup>34</sup> or, as Vasily Bartold put it, “the core from which the contemporary Afghan state emerged.”<sup>35</sup> It is an established historical fact that the territory of contemporary Afghanistan was “Pashtun-ized” by Turkic and Iranian rulers. The Pashtuns, skillful and fearless fighters, were actively involved in India and other military inroads of Mahmud of Ghazni, Shakhrukh, Babur, and Nader Shah.<sup>36</sup> It was under Mahmud of Ghazni that Pashtun tribes were given lands around Ghazni, Kabul, and Peshawar, under Shakhrukh they settled in Kandahar.<sup>37</sup>

The Baburid Empire devalued the territory of contemporary Afghanistan as a foothold of the Indian conquerors, which “created space for the Afghans.”<sup>38</sup>

<sup>30</sup> According to certain sources, there are about 350 thou. ethnic Uighurs living in Central Asia, mainly in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

<sup>31</sup> XUAR is over 4 thou. km away from China’s sea routes, which confirms that fundamental geographic imperatives are important for the realization of interdependence and should be taken into account when discussing integration of the transportation sectors of XUAR and Central Asia.

<sup>32</sup> See: “Special Report: Pakistan,” *The Economist*, 11-17 February, 2012, p. 4.

<sup>33</sup> See: Sh. Nawaz, “FATA—A Most Dangerous Place: Meeting the Challenge of Militancy and Terror in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas of Pakistan,” *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 2009, pp. 1-2.

<sup>34</sup> A.E. Snesarev, *Afghanistan*, Russkaia panorama, Moscow, 2002, p. 61, available at [pashtoon.ru/downloads/files/Snesarev.pdf].

<sup>35</sup> V.V. Bartold, *Raboty po istoricheskoy geografii i istorii Irana*, Prepared for publication by E.V. Zeymal, V.A. Livshits, Reprinted from 1971 edition, Vostochnaia literatura, Moscow, 2003, p. 93.

<sup>36</sup> The Pashtun cavalry formed the core of the personal guard of Nader Shah; it was commanded by Ahmad Shah Abdali, founder of the Afghan state.

<sup>37</sup> See: A.E. Snesarev, op. cit., p. 59.

<sup>38</sup> See: Ibidem.

The favorable political context of the first half of the 18th century (the disunited north, the weakening Baburids in the east and the Safavids in the south) allowed Pashtun tribal groups and alliances to set up an independent Afghan state with its capital in Kandahar.

This enlarged the Pashtun-populated areas and consolidated the power of the Pashtuns, while the traditional contacts between the ethnic periphery and the center survived. The Sulaiman Mountains, as a matrix of sorts of ethnic Pashtuns, remained a component part of their political, cultural, and civilizational space.

The Great Game upset the balance.

The rivalry between the British and Russian empires, known as the Great Game, made a buffer state of Afghanistan.<sup>39</sup> Delimitation and the division of spheres of influence were carried out in full conformity with the best traditions of colonial policies, one of them being divide and rule.

The border between Afghanistan and British India, which divided the tribal area (known as the Durand Line, after the British official who signed the bilateral agreement), was a catastrophe for the Pashtun statehood. The decision imposed on Emir Abdur Rahman Khan left many Pashtuns outside Afghanistan; what was even more important was the fact that the Sulaiman Mountains, the “cradle of the Afghan people,” was left outside the new territory of Afghanistan.<sup>40</sup>

The division of the tribal area which created FATA was part of the U.K.’s “big strategy:” FATA was intended as another buffer zone to keep Russia at arm’s length. The new border did not disrupt the natural contacts between people and did not upset the sustainability of the ethnic center and the periphery. It, however, played a negative role in the fates of the FATA peoples.

### **FATA: Political and Legal Context**

Britain preserved the minimum state penetration system of governance in FATA<sup>41</sup> in line with the traditional institutions of local social organization, such as Pashtunwali and Loya Jirga; the maliks and khans continued playing their roles of social regulators. The Frontier Crime Regulation of 1901 was used to deal with crimes of state importance. With minor changes, it is still used in this part of Pakistan.

Pakistan preserved the tribal system of governance established by the Brits: the khans, maliks, and elders of clans and tribes were *primus inter pares* (the elite nature of social relations in the tribes that prevents autocratic leadership). Tribal heads were intermediaries between the tribes and the government represented by political agents.

Today, FATA has a special constitutional status: it remains under the jurisdiction of the president and is ruled by the governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who appoints a political agent whose absolute power is valid in the territories of the agencies; his decisions are final and without appeal. The patronage system has been and remains the most efficient instrument of tribal governance—an agent is free to distribute benefits among his closest circle and the most loyal tribal members.

FATA was not represented in the parliament; all political parties and NGOs, as well as political activities were banned from its territory; its population, with the exception of the most reliable maliks (recommended by a political agent), had no election rights. Law and order in this territory were outside the jurisdiction of Islamabad.

<sup>39</sup> Significantly, to avoid direct contacts, both empires did not leave point blank in the buffer area. The Wakhan Corridor, a narrow strip of mountains between the Pamir and Hindu Kush, was transferred to Afghanistan, a legal act supported by British subsidies (see: B.R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 2nd ed., Yale University Press, 2002, p. 49).

<sup>40</sup> See: V.V. Bartold, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

<sup>41</sup> See: I. Khan, “Challenges Facing Development in Pakistan’s FATA,” *NBR Analysis*, Vol. 19, No. 3, August 2008, p. 16.



Starting in 1947, no regular armed forces were stationed in FATA, “The Pakistan Army is seen as an alien force inside FATA.”<sup>42</sup> They appeared in FATA on a regular basis when the country joined the international counterterrorist struggle; in June 2002, the armed forces of Pakistan carried out the first antiterrorist operation in South Waziristan.<sup>43</sup>

The government has not yet abandoned its efforts to integrate FATA into Pakistani society. In 1996, adults over 18 received the right to vote.<sup>44</sup> In 2002, a secretariat appeared with the right to pass decisions on certain issues. In 2004, the agencies were complemented with councils as local representatives of the central government. In 2011, the president of Pakistan issued a law that extended the jurisdiction of the Law on Political Parties of 2002 to FATA. This moved political activities into its territory.<sup>45</sup>

Certain facts cast doubt on the efficiency of what has been done in this respect: there is no clear delimitation between the secretariat and the councils.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, the parliament has no power there, which makes the role of the FATA deputies vague. There is another and even more important fact—real power in FATA belongs to the army and other defense and security structures rather than to the president and the government.

### **FATA— A “Hostage” of the Counterterrorist Struggle**

Today it is a platform where Pakistan is dealing with Afghanistan and India, its two neighbors, the status itself a product of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the global counterterrorist struggle. It should be said that all forces present in this area (the Taliban of Afghanistan and Pakistan, al-Qa’eda, the IMU, etc.) are controlled and used accordingly. Any signs of disobedience from Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and members of the “terrorist international” are suppressed by the Pakistani government using all sorts of measures, arrests, murders, the balance of power, and what is presented as handing over criminals to interested structures within the framework of the counterterrorist struggle.

The traditional policy of using third forces as an instrument of Pakistan’s national security<sup>47</sup> in the context of the state’s weak economic, social, and humanitarian presence<sup>48</sup> has allowed all sorts of radical religious organizations to step up their activities in the tribal areas.

In the 1980s, FATA began gradually developing into the home country of the Islamist Jamaat-i-Islami party, a vehicle of Islamabad’s official policy of cooperation with the Afghan mujahedins and, later, the base of Jamiyat-i Ulema-i Islam, the spiritual teacher of the Taliban and its comrade-

<sup>42</sup> Th.M. Sanderson, D. Kimmage, D.A. Gordon, *From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asian Jihadists*, A Report of CSIS Transnational Threat Project, March 2010, p. 11.

<sup>43</sup> See: F. Taj, *Taliban and Anti-Taliban*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011, p. 87.

<sup>44</sup> In 1997, the region voted at the national elections for the first time. Today, there are 12 FATA deputies in the National Assembly and 8 in the Senate (see: N.A. Shinvari, *Understanding FATA: Attitudes Towards Governance, Religion and Society in Pakistan’s Federally Administrated Tribal Areas*, Vol. V, CAMP, 2012, p. 22).

<sup>45</sup> See: N.A. Shinvari, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>46</sup> See: I. Khan, op. cit., pp. 16-17.

<sup>47</sup> According to Ahmed Rashid, “the foreign policy we pursue is still essentially rooted in the Cold War syndrome” (see: *Pakistan on the Brink: The Future of America, Pakistan, and Afghanistan*, Transcript by Federal News Service, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington D.C., 22 March, 2012, p. 1).

<sup>48</sup> The following figures provide an exhaustive picture of the FATA social infrastructure: one doctor per 7,670 people, the country’s average being 1,226; the literacy level (17.42%) is 2.5 times lower than the average national (which is 43.92%), the figures for men being 29.51% and for women 3%. There is no social infrastructure and no higher educational establishments (see: *Federally Administrated Tribal Areas (Strengthening and Rationalization of Administration)*, Draft Report 2006, Islamabad, April 2006, pp. 63-65. Quoted from: Sh. Nawaz, op. cit., p. 8).

in-arms. This was when religious schools began mushrooming across the areas (over 5 thou. according to certain sources), planting the “Kalashnikov culture” and supplying the mujahedin ranks with fresh forces in the 1980s and the Taliban with trained fighters in the 1990s.

The global counterterrorist struggle tipped the balance of power in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas. Today, money and, hence, real power belongs to the Taliban leaders and allied forces. This undermined the authority and power of the agents and tribal chiefs and discredited the traditional mechanisms of social regulation.<sup>49</sup> The traditional triangle—agent-tribal chief-tribe—has been replaced with the institutionalized power of Islamists. The maliks and khans are removed from the political scene by different means, up to and including assassinations.<sup>50</sup> Today the FATA areas controlled by the Taliban live under parallel power structures complete with a taxation system and administrative structures.<sup>51</sup>

Under the pressure of the Great Game legacy, FATA, being pushed to the side politically and economically, failed to fully integrate into Pakistan society. Its traditional institutions of social regulation fell apart, while confrontation between different religious and ethnic communities continued. This transformed FATA into a safe haven of global jihadism.

On the other hand, since the 1990s, the leaders of Uzbekistan have been sparing no effort to prevent similar developments in the Ferghana Valley. Indeed, the highly acute social and economic problems and atheism inherited from Soviet times, which has created a religious vacuum, weak state structures, etc., might have contributed to the rise in an alternative government there. *Islom lashkarlari* and *Adolat* have made several attempts to replace the law and order structures and state power system with alternative constructs.

## Why is the Ferghana Valley not FATA?

Both sub-regions are footholds and key elements of the security complexes of their corresponding regions. Their special statuses are explained by their geographic/geopolitical importance, their past, and their historical, religious, and ethnic reality.

Their fates are very similar, not to say identical. The corresponding colonial powers destroyed the centuries-old ethnic, cultural, and civilizational ties and the natural development course. Today, this policy crops up at the level of relations between ethnicities/communities and the states. It will be no exaggeration to say that the absence of an interstate agreement on the acutest problems of the valley and FATA is a negative heritage of the far from simple past.

The Ferghana Valley and FATA are equally threatened by terrorism represented in these regions by the IMU. The 1997 truce between the Tajik opposition and official Dushanbe drove those who refused to accept it, many IMU militants among them, to Afghanistan.<sup>52</sup> Later, when the regime of the Taliban fell, the most radical of them fled to South Waziristan.

<sup>49</sup> The radical Taliban ideology strengthened the status of the mullahs, a position of secondary importance in traditional Pashtun society; they depended for functioning on the maliks and, therefore, had no political consequence (see: Th.M. Sander-son, D. Kimmage, D.A. Gordon, op. cit., p. 14).

<sup>50</sup> According to Farhat Taj, more than 200 tribal chiefs and those who wanted to organize *lashkar* (tribal militia) to drive foreign fighters from South Waziristan were murdered (see: F. Taj, op. cit., p. 83).

<sup>51</sup> See: *Ibid.*, pp. 82-120.

<sup>52</sup> It was in January 2001 that Juma Namangani together with 300 militants finally left Tajikistan on board Russian helicopters. In the summer of 1998, in Afghanistan, Yoldosh and Namangaini announced that they had set up the IMU (see: A. Rashid, “They’re Only Sleeping: Why Militant Islamicists in Central Asia Aren’t Going to Go Away,” *New Yorker*, 14 January, 2002, available at [[http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/01/14/020114fa\\_FACT](http://www.newyorker.com/archive/2002/01/14/020114fa_FACT)]).

Foreign militants stirred up disagreements between the Pashto tribes and clans in FATA. In April 2007, IMU fighters were accused of murdering tribal leaders, which caused unrest among the local people; the militants were driven from Wana, the administrative center of the South Waziristan Agency controlled by Mullah Nazir into North Waziristan and those parts of South Waziristan controlled by Baitullah Mehsud.<sup>53</sup>

The share of factors responsible for the security dynamics in FATA and the Ferghana Valley is not and cannot be identical. The “interests-threats-security” as components of the same triad present in the Ferghana Valley are not dividing, rather they might become a unifying force. A rational nationalities policy and efficient coordination of what the states are doing at the regional level may promote interstate cooperation.

In FATA similar results are much harder to achieve; over the course of time, the problems have become even more complicated, which means they will not be resolved any time soon. Indeed, FATA should be fully integrated into Pakistan, while Islamabad should stop using radical organizations as a political instrument, recognize the Durand Line as a state border,<sup>54</sup> and reintegrate the Taliban into Afghanistan’s political system. The list is far from complete.

Stability has a material dimension. The Ferghana Valley is self-sufficient; it has acquired a middle class which, judging by world practice, ensures economic and social development, an indispensable condition of peace and stability.

There is no vacuum of security in the valley; the special services and law and order structures of the three states present in the valley have learned how to oppose security threats. The potential of civil society and the traditional makhala institution have been tapped.

International cooperation is strengthening—there are interstate agreements among the Central Asian countries that are actively involved in international regional structures (SCO, CIS, CSTO, PfP NATO, and EU programs). This helps create an effective regional security system.

## *Conclusion*

Political Islam in Central Asia has no social soil to develop and spread. The radical religious organizations that sprang into being and were very active in the Ferghana Valley were largely a result of the centrifugal trends and acute socioeconomic problems in the late 1980s-early 1990s; they were born of the revived national and religious values and caused by wide gaps in religious education.

The predicted revival, after 2014, of jihadism in Central Asia caused by the expected return and much greater activity of the IMU has invited the following comments:

- *First*: threats cannot be avoided, they are a norm of international life caused by the nature of international relations in the contemporary world. The IMU, however, cannot threaten the further existence of the region;
- *Second*: during the years of independence, the state and society have consolidated their economic, spiritual, and social pillars; people are much better off than before, while the market mechanisms are functioning more smoothly;

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<sup>53</sup> See: F. Taj, op. cit., pp. 91, 102. The latest events have confirmed that the IMU militants are under pressure from three sides—“a combination of ethnic violence, CIA drone strikes, and Pakistan Army operations” (see: Th.M. Sanderson, D. Kimmage, D.A. Gordon, op. cit., p. V). It should be said that starting in 2001, practically all the top IMU leaders, including Tohir Yoldosh and also Mullah Nazir and the leader of the Pakistan Taliban Baitullah Mehsud, were killed in drone attacks.

<sup>54</sup> There are no territorial disputes in the classical legal sense because the local countries have accepted the *uti possidetis* (as you possess) and non-violability of borders principles. This ruled out territorial disagreements and lowered the possibility of serious conflicts.

- *Third*: there is a much more efficient security system; the competent state structures (the army, law and order structure, and special services) are strong enough to oppose the ideas of radicalism and extremism.
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