ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan - Central Asian perspectives on regional security

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FOI-R--3880--SE

June 2014

FOI

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(Conference report, Almaty 22-23 May 2013)

Cover: A Tajik soldier overlooking the border with Northern Afghanistan.

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Previously published at http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62042

Titel

Title	ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan: Central Asian perspectives on regional security
Rapportnr/Report no	FOI-R--3880—SE
Månad/Month	Juni/June
Utgivningsår/Year	2014
Antal sidor/Pages	120 p
ISSN	1650-1942
Kund/Customer	Ministry of Defence/Försvarsdepartementet
Forskningsområde	8. Säkerhetspolitik
Projektnr/Project no	A14104
Godkänd av/Approved by	Maria Lignell Jakobsson
Ansvarig avdelning	Försvarsanalys

Sammanfattning

Denna rapport syftar till att lyfta fram perspektiv från Afghanistan, Centralasien, Ryssland och Kina på regional säkerhet i Centralasien i ljuset av att den NATO-ledda International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) lämnar Afghanistan samt att diskutera implikationer av detta. Rapporten behandlar säkerhetsfrågor såsom de gestaltade sig fram till i mitten av 2013. Den berör därför inte följderna av Rysslands aggression mot Ukraina under 2014 och hur det kan komma att påverka Ryssland och hur det interagerar med Centralasien och världen.

Denna rapport har fyra huvudslutsatser. För det första, när den NATO-ledda styrkan International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) dras tillbaka under 2014 torde säkerhetsläget i Afghanistan försämras. Västvärldens intresse för säkerhet i det angränsande Centralasien (Kazakstan, Kirgizistan, Tadzjikistan, Turkmenistan och Uzbekistan), som varit ett stödområde för insatsen i Afghanistan, torde därefter avta. Ökad instabilitet i Afghanistan kan påverka Centralasien. För det andra, regional säkerhet blir då en fråga de centralasiatiska länderna och för kvarvarande externa aktörer – Afghanistan, Ryssland och Kina, alla med begränsad förmåga att påverka säkerheten. De centralasiatiska staternas låga förmågor och nuvarande eller latenta instabilitet gör att ett säkerhetsvakuum växer fram i regionen.

För det tredje, den viktigaste säkerhetsfrågan i Centralasien med koppling till Afghanistan i hur den påverkar både regionen och omvärlden, är den illegala narkotikahandeln. Den påverkar folkhälsa, och föder korruption på alla nivåer. Militant islamism är också en viktig regional säkerhetsfråga. Det är ofta små grupper som genom att underblåsa latenta spänningar fungerar som ett slags destabiliserings-multiplikatorer. Islamism kan även ses som en långsiktig politisk utmaning för regionens regimer.

Den fjärde slutsatsen är att det nuvarande regionala samarbetet inte räcker för att hantera de gemensamma säkerhetsutmaningarna. Både förmåga och ömsesidigt förtroende saknas. Omvärlden kommer därför att spela en central roll för regionalt säkerhetssamarbete, antingen internationella organisationer, såsom FN eller Organisationen för Säkerhet och Samarbete i Europa (OSSE), eller länder som Ryssland och Kina.

Afghanistans centralasiatiska nordliga grannar har olika ansatser. Turkmenistan, en svag stat som försökt att isolera sig från Afghanistan, är sårbar för påverkan från sin sydöstra granne. Uzbekistan har bättre kontroll gränsen till Afghanistan än Turkmenistan och ser även främst ekonomiska möjligheter i Afghanistan. Tadzjikistan, som ligger närmast Afghanistan både geografiskt, kulturellt och språkligt, är en svag och sårbar stat, vars säkerhet kräver ett säkert Afghanistan.

Hur kan de Centralasiatiska staterna hantera regionens två viktigaste Afghanistanrelaterade problem, narkotikahandel och militant islamism? Det finns många andra säkerhetsutmaningar såsom svaga statsbildningar, okontrollerade

gränser, omfattande korruption, latenta etniska och territoriella konflikter samt dispyter om naturresurser. Centralasiens stater har, både individuellt och kollektivt, svårt att motverka narkotikasmugglingen och dess effekter. Det skulle kräva att man inte bara angriper utbudet/produktionen (Afghanistan) utan också efterfrågan (t.ex. Iran, Ryssland och Europa) samt transiteringen däremellan (genom t.ex. Centralasien). Centralasiens regimer ser militant islamism som en säkerhetsutmaning, men är oense om dess natur och hur den skall hanteras. Islamismen har i huvudsak inhemska rötter, men kopplas ofta felaktigt till Afghanistan. Det regionala multilaterala samarbetet är svagt. Regimerna föredrar bilaterala relationer eller samarbete som inkluderar antingen stormakter eller internationella organisationer.

Vad driver Afghanistan, Ryssland och Kina, externa aktörer som är fortsatt engagerade i Centralasien? Afghanistan kan drabbas hårt av oro i Centralasien. Kina hanterar Afghanistan-relaterade utmaningar bilateralt, genom att skapa geografiska buffertzoner och samarbete i regionala multilaterala fora. Rysslands prioriteringar för regionen är euroasiatisk integration, bekämpning av narkotikahandel, och regional säkerhet.

Nyckelord : Centralasien , Afghanistan , Kazakstan , Kirgizistan , Tadzjikistan , Turkmenistan , Uzbekistan , Ryssland, Kina , NATO , ISAF , narkotika handel , militant islamism , CSTO , Eurasian Union , SCO , regionalt samarbete .

Summary

The aim of this report is to provide perspectives from Afghanistan, Central Asia, China and Russia about future regional security in Central Asia in the light of the withdrawal of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and to discuss its implications. The study deals with some long term security factors as of mid-2013. It will therefore not deal with the implications of Russia's aggression against Ukraine 2014 and how it may affect Russia and how it interacts with Central Asia and the world.

This report has four main conclusions. First, in the spring 2014 as ISAF is gradually withdrawing, the security situation in Afghanistan is generally seen as deteriorating. Western security interest in adjacent Central Asia, hitherto a support area for operations in Afghanistan, will diminish. Increasing instability in Afghanistan may affect Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). Second, the region will be left to itself and to remaining external actors – Russia, China and Afghanistan, all with limited abilities to influence security. The Central Asian states' low capabilities and current or latent instability create an emerging security vacuum in the region.

Third, the most important Afghanistan-related security challenge for Central Asia, and the world, is the drugs trade. It affects public health, spreads HIV and increases the influence of organised crime and breeds corruption at all levels. Another important challenge for the region is militant Islamism, often linked to small groups that can act as destabilisation multipliers able to exploit current tensions. Islamism is also a long-term *political* challenge to the region's regimes.

Fourth, today's level of regional cooperation is not enough to handle the region's security challenges. Capabilities and trust are missing. The outside world – international organisations such as the UN or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), or powers such as Russia or China – will play a key role in any multilateral security cooperation.

The perspectives of Afghanistan's Central Asian northern neighbours vary. Turkmenistan, a weak state that has tried to isolate itself from Afghanistan, remains very vulnerable to influences from its south-eastern neighbour. Uzbekistan has tighter control over its border with Afghanistan than Turkmenistan, but also sees opportunities in Afghanistan. Tajikistan, the central country in the Afghanistan – Central Asia nexus, is closest to Afghanistan geographically, culturally and linguistically. For a weak vulnerable state as Tajikistan, security requires a secure Afghanistan.

How can Central Asia handle the two main Afghanistan related security challenges, drugs trade and militant Islamism? In addition, there are many other security challenges, such as porous borders, weak states, pervasive corruption, latent ethnic, as well as territorial and resource conflicts. The effects of the drugs trade are a problem, that is too big for Central Asia's states to handle, both

individually and collectively. Handling it requires addressing not only supply (Afghanistan) but also demand (Iran, Russia and Europe) and the transit in between (such as Central Asia). Central Asian regimes see Islamism as a security challenge, but they disagree on its nature and how to handle it. Islamism has mainly domestic roots, but is often wrongly linked to Afghanistan. Regional multilateral cooperation is weak since the regimes' prefer bilateral relations or cooperation involving either major powers or international organisations.

What are the perspectives for Afghanistan, Russia and China, outside actors that remain involved in Central Asia? Afghanistan can be affected by unrest in Central Asia. China handles Afghanistan challenges bilaterally, through geographical buffers and cooperation in regional multilateral forums. Russia's priorities in the region are Eurasian integration, combatting drugs trade and regional security.

Keywords: Central Asia, Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Russia, China, NATO, ISAF, illegal drugs trade, militant Islamism, CSTO, Eurasian Union, SCO, regional co-operation.

Contents

Preface

There seems to be a general agreement that ISAF's withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 will affect not only Afghanistan itself, but also its immediate and regional neighbours as well as global powers. Rather than *if*, the question seems to be *how*. The Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) has previously published extensively about Afghanistan (see www.foi.se/asia) and about Russia (www.foi.se/russia), but with less attention to the five former Soviet republics north of Afghanistan: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. This conference report, therefore, fills a gap in the FOI output up to now.

The Swedish Armed Forces have participated in operations in Afghanistan since early 2002. In early 2012, the Swedish Ministry of Defence was seeking to develop a deeper understanding of how a NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan could affect Central Asia. A study that was subsequently commissioned from the FOI and became a joint endeavour of the agency's Russia Studies Programme and Asia Security Studies Programme, drawing on the latter's experience of Afghanistan and Iran as well as South and East Asia.

As a start, four FOI researchers – Jakob Hedenskog, Erika Holmquist, Johan Norberg and John Rydqvist – undertook research trips to Moscow (February 2012), Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (March 2012) and Kazakhstan (October 2012) in order to find out what questions and possible concerns existed in the region and Russia looking to the year 2014. The positive responses and penetrating analysis from both academia and government interlocutors in Central Asia gave birth to the idea of organising a conference and publishing a report based on papers written by scholars from the region itself.

Against this background, FOI contacted Fatima Kukeeva and Kuralay Baizakova, distinguished professors at the department of International Relations at Al-Farabi Kazakh State University in Almaty, Central Asia's most prestigious academic research establishment, to jointly organise a conference to discuss these issues in further depth. The conference took place at Al-Farabi University on 22–23 May 2013 and included speakers from all five Central Asian countries, Russia, China and Afghanistan. FOI analysts and professors from Al-Farabi University acted as moderators and discussants and documented the discussions. The presentations subsequently became the bases for the analytical essays that are the core chapters in this report.

A number of people deserve our thanks for their participation and the help that they have given in realising this report. First and foremost, we would like to thank the presenters at the conference in Almaty – Rustam Burnashev, Emil Dhuraev, Ye Hailin, Azamjon Isabaev, Said Reza Kazemi, Vadim Kozyulin,

Murat Laumulin, Muzafar Olimov and Nina Startseva. Thomas Ruttig and Sultan Akimbekov generously shared their wealth of knowledge in the discussions.

We would also like to thank Sweden's ambassador to Kazakhstan, H.E. Manne Wängborg, and Gulmira Abidkhozhaeva at the Swedish Embassy in Astana as well as Professor Martha Brill Olcott of the al-Farabi Carnegie Program on Central Asia for their help throughout the work. Furthermore, we are grateful to H.E. Veronika Bard Bringéus, Sweden's ambassador to Russia, and deputy defence attaché Lt-Col Johan Huovinen for their help in Moscow and in Central Asia. We are also grateful to H.E. Ambassador Ivar Vikki, former head of the OSCE Office in Tajikistan, and his colleague Maria Gratschew, for help in Dushanbe. Special thanks go to the Swedish journalist and Central Asia expert Torgny Hinnemo and Professor Houchang Hassan-Yari, Royal Military College of Canada for valuable comments on the draft report and to Ms Eve Johansson, who language-edited and copy-edited the report. Dr Per Wikström at FOI created the map of Central Asia. Finally, we would also like to thank Dr Karimzhan Shakirov, the dean at the IR department at Al-Farabi Kazakh University, and his staff for their help in facilitating the conference.

Almaty and Stockholm, June 2014

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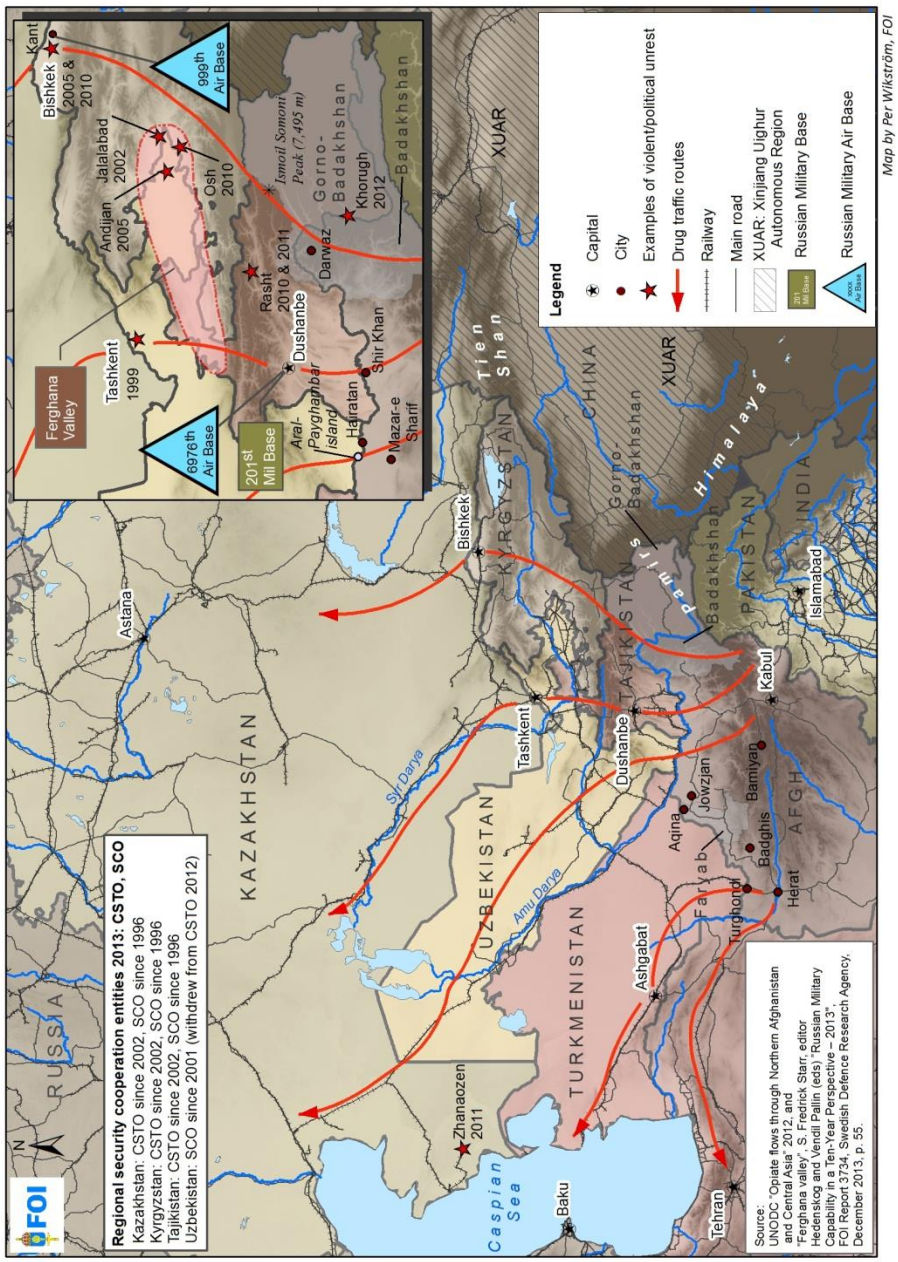
Map of Central Asia



Introduction

The relation between Afghanistan and Central Asia is important for several reasons. First, Central Asia will be affected by developments in Afghanistan such as Islamism, drugs smuggling and sectarian and inter-ethnic conflict. Few are optimistic about the immediate future after the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) leave Afghanistan. Second, the five Central Asian states are weak states destabilised by several domestic economic and political challenges. Relations between them are characterised by mistrust and even enmity. Their ability to handle complex regional security challenges is often questioned. There may well be both inter- and intra-state armed conflict, even without any spillover from Afghanistan. Third, Russia's political leadership sees Central Asia as a part of Russia's sphere of influence and a factor in Eurasian integration. For Sweden, a neighbour of Russia in the west, it is important to understand Russia's concerns and ambitions in other parts of the world.

There are many articles published in the West assessing and commenting on Central Asian security and Afghanistan. Western interest in Central Asia in the field of security has been related to the Western presence in Afghanistan. This is likely to decrease in the future. It is important to listen to the views of those who remain involved in Central Asia in order to understand the future security challenges related to Afghanistan. The countries that will have to deal with the region's future security challenges are foremost Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as the external actors Russia and China. The aim of this report is to give voice to views from Afghanistan, Central Asia, China and Russia about future security situation in the region after the withdrawal of ISAF and to discuss its implications.

The preparatory phase of this study concluded that there were many important factors that had to be addressed for an analysis of security issues in Central Asia. Challenges include terrorism, Islamism, drugs smuggling, ethnic ties, weak states, porous borders, corruption, poor economic development, political repression and unrest, and the spillover of instability from Afghanistan into Central Asia. The region is often described as violent in the political sphere as well (Graubner, 2012) and has seen violent political unrest many times (see map on page 12). To further explore these issues three study trips were conducted in 2012, resulting in more than 50 interviews with politicians, researchers, journalists and government officials in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Russia (Hedenskog and Holmquist, 2012a; 2012b). The interviews made it easier to understand Central Asian views on how developments in Afghanistan might influence the region. They also helped to single out the two main challenges for Central Asia emanating from Afghanistan that became the key issues in this report: first, the illegal trade in narcotics, here referred to as the drugs trade; and, second, Islamism as both a political and a security factor. Unfortunately, it was not possible to visit Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Overview

The report is divided into three sections and a concluding discussion. Section A covers the perspectives of the Central Asian countries sharing borders with Afghanistan i.e. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Apart from their geographical proximity to Afghanistan they also have links to minorities of their ethnic kin in Afghanistan. In chapter one 'How may the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan affect Turkmenistan?', *Nina Startseva* notes that Turkmenistan is a weak state which has tried to isolate itself from problems in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Turkmenistan remains very vulnerable to influences from its south-eastern neighbour. Chapter two, *Azamjon Isabaev's* 'Uzbekistan and Afghanistan – security challenges post-2014', describes how Uzbekistan, which has tighter control over its border with Afghanistan than Turkmenistan does, sees opportunities in Afghanistan, but explains that the challenges are great and the Central Asian countries' abilities to handle them are limited. In chapter three, 'North-east Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan – post-ISAF security challenges' *Muzaffar Olimov* outlines how Tajikistan's close relations with Afghanistan balance between trade and transit opportunities and grave security challenges. Security in Tajikistan requires a secure and stable Afghanistan.

Section B focuses on regional perspectives on the two major security challenges for Central Asia that emanate from Afghanistan – the illegal drugs trade and Islamism – as well as the viability of regional cooperation to handle these challenges. Chapter four, *Emil Dzhuraev's* 'Drug trafficking in Central Asia after 2014: towards a broader and more realistic view' puts the narcotics issue in a wider context, noting that not only supply and transit should be targeted, but also demand. This seemingly intractable transnational problem is too big for Central Asia and must be handled in a wider international framework. In the fifth chapter, 'Why Islamists are not the most important regional security challenge for Central Asian states', *Rustam Burnashev* notes that Islamism is framed as a security challenge by Central Asian regimes. It has primarily domestic roots, but is often wrongly connected with Afghanistan. The regimes agree on neither the nature of the threat nor how it should be countered. The preconditions for regional cooperation are poor, and *Murat Laumulin* notes in the sixth chapter, 'Regional efforts of the Central Asian states regarding Afghanistan', that the Central Asian states focus either on bilateral relations or on wider cooperation involving major powers or international organisations. Without these, security cooperation between the Central Asian states is unlikely to develop.

Section C is devoted to perspectives on Central Asia from outside actors that remain involved in the region either in security (primarily Russia) or economically (both China and Russia as well as Afghanistan). In chapter seven, 'Afghanistan and the Central Asian states: reflections on the evolving relations after 2014' *Said Reza Kazemi* challenges the whole approach of this report – that

events in Afghanistan will impact on Central Asia – by noting that the reverse may well be true, that self-generated turmoil in Central Asia would impact adversely on Afghanistan. In chapter eight, 'China, Central Asia and the future of Afghanistan', *John Rydqvist* and *Ye Hailin* note that China handles challenges from Afghanistan through geographical buffers, cooperation in regional multilateral forums and bilateral relations, but they also question the correctness of China's central tenet that prosperity is a universal remedy. Chapter nine, *Vadim Kozyulin*'s 'Russia and Central Asia: relations, opportunities and challenges in the light of Afghanistan post-ISAF', focuses on the growing Eurasian ambition of Russia's political leadership as the framework for Russian multi-level and multi-speed economic integration in Central Asia. Russia's priorities are combatting drugs trafficking and improving regional security.

The overall conclusions of this report are that the situation in Afghanistan is generally seen as deteriorating and that this will affect Central Asia. ISAF is leaving Afghanistan and Western interest in Central Asia is consequently set to diminish, leaving the region to itself and to the remaining external actors – Russia and China. In combination with the Central Asian states' weak capabilities, both militarily and as states, and their current or latent instability, this contributes to an emerging security vacuum in Central Asia.

The main Afghanistan-related security challenge in terms of the consequences in the region, and the world, seems to be the drugs trade. In addition to adverse effects on public health and the spread of HIV, the drugs trade also increases the influence of organised crime and breeds corruption on all levels of society, including the very highest. The often-debated threat of Islamism, often associated with terrorism, consists of small groups acting as destabilisation multipliers that can exacerbate current tensions in Central Asia and turn them into armed conflicts. Islamism is also a more long-term political challenge to the region's regimes.

There is little chance that regional cooperation to handle the joint security challenges will evolve any time soon. Both capabilities and trust are missing for that. The outside world in the shape of either international organisations, such as the UN or the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), or major powers such as Russia or China, is likely to be key to any multilateral security cooperation.

Tajikistan is the central country in the Afghanistan-Central Asia nexus. It is the country closest to Afghanistan geographically, culturally and linguistically. But this is also arguably the region's weakest state and hence very vulnerable to security challenges. It is very exposed to influences from Afghanistan. However, not all is gloom, and Afghanistan's northern neighbours also see economic opportunity in Afghanistan.

This study illustrates some of the factors at play as of mid-2013 and is in a sense a snapshot from that time. The interaction dynamics between Afghanistan and Central Asia are evolving continuously, and so is the outside world. One clear example is Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea in March 2014. It is likely to influence both Russia – how Russia relates to Central Asia and the world – and how former Soviet republics in Central Asia view Russia. As of June 2014, the full effects of the Crimea crisis remain to be seen.

In this report each author writes in his or her own name and capacity as an expert and with due regard to their respective realities. They have consequently chosen different approaches. The report includes both traditional research texts and opinion pieces. As editors, we welcomed different types of contributions. The important point is that these are opinions stemming from those who will remain in the realities of Central Asia when Western countries leave Afghanistan. It is, after all, their countries that will have to live with the region's evolving security challenges. Inevitably, some of the contributions overlap to some extent.

Researchers from the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) developed the overall approach for the study and co-organised the workshop in Almaty in May 2013 together with Al-Farabi University. FOI has also been responsible for translating and editing the Russian texts into English as well as editing the final report. As for the actual content of the report, FOI researchers are responsible for the framework. This included the report's introduction, the introduction to each of the sections, and the summaries appearing at the top of each chapter as well as the final discussion and the overall conclusions.

Terminology and limitations

What is Central Asia? History and today's geopolitics provide a range of different geographical interpretations. There are many cross-border relations and influencing factors around Afghanistan. For this report, however, we and our authors agree that the term Central Asia means the five former Soviet republics that gained independence in 1991: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

Afghanistan is obviously a key factor in this report and has close geographical, historical, ethnic and cultural proximity to Central Asia. The focus is, however, on security issues related to Afghanistan. Other aspects such as ethnic and cultural ties and history are touched upon when they relate to the discussion about security. For the purposes of this report, however, our definition of Central Asia makes Afghanistan an outside actor.

As for international forces in Afghanistan, the authors refer to the foreign troops in different ways. Terms like 'NATO', 'the West', 'American' or 'the coalition forces' all refer to the NATO-led ISAF, which has operated with a UN mandate

(UN Security Council resolutions 1386 and 1510) in Afghanistan since 2001. ISAF is dominated by US forces with additional troops being contributed from many countries, primarily from Europe. The around 58,000-strong ISAF (ISAF, 2014) is expected to withdraw its combat troops in 2014. A much smaller force, some 10,000 for mentoring the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and protecting international staff in Afghanistan, is a possible replacement. As of April 2014, the future size and scope of a foreign military presence in Afghanistan after ISAF was still a subject for discussion. NATO may retain a role in this. The ANSF comprise both the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). Over the past few years NATO has gradually handed over responsibility for security in Afghanistan to the ANSF, a process also known as the transition.

An important theme in this study is the role of Islamist movements. Being an Islamist means to have the belief that 'Islam should guide social and political as well as personal life' (Burnashev's definition, see p. 56). Islamist movements are often associated in Central Asia's official discourses with terms like religious fundamentalism and/or extremism. The movements most important to this discussion are those prone to use violence, including terrorism, to further their aims. The term 'Islamism' will be used in this report bearing this connotation in mind. The terms 'narcotics trade' and 'drugs trade' without exception refer to the illegal trade in such substances. Afghanistan is assessed to produce 90 per cent of the world's heroin supply. Writing and editing took place throughout 2013, with some sources being verified in early 2014.

Acronyms and abbreviations

ANA	**Afghanistan's National Army**
ANP	Afghanistan's National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces (ANA and ANP)
BOMCA	Border Management Programme In Central Asia
BSA	Bilateral Security Agreement (US–Afghanistan)
CADAP	Central Asia Drug Action Programme
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
CU	Customs Union
EAEC	Eurasian Economic Community (also EurAsEc)
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
GDP	gross domestic product
Ha	hectare
IJU	Islamic Jihad Union
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IRA	Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
LAO	limited access order
KAZBRIG	Kazakhstan's Peacekeeping Brigade
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDN	Northern Distribution Network
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
USD	US dollar
XUAR	Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region

A. Neighbours

Each of the five Central Asian republics has a unique relation with Afghanistan as well as its own interpretation of what developments in Afghanistan post-ISAF will mean in terms of opportunities and threats. But there is room for some generalisation. The countries bordering Afghanistan in the north, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, have greater concerns and are more susceptible to problems coming from Afghanistan because of their geographic proximity. Their main shared fear is that the situation in Afghanistan will deteriorate further and bring instability even closer to them, thus make already existing problems worse. The other two states, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, do not have borders with Afghanistan and are therefore less concerned, which is reflected in their policies on Afghanistan. Both, however, would be heavily influenced by increasing instability in the other three countries.

As a result of Soviet policies, Central Asia's set of ethnic, lingual and religious identities defy today's political borders. The cultural make-up of the region therefore contains multiple potential channels for cross-border influence. It is easy to think that the interests of shared ethnic groups are part of the equation in the Central Asian countries' dealings with Afghanistan. This is partly true. Tajikistan seems to be the country with the most interaction with its ethnic kin in Afghanistan, while Turkmenistan is the least and Uzbekistan somewhere in between. This relation also reflects the differences between Tajik and Turkmen involvement in the Afghan civil war in the 1990s, when Tajikistan was affected and involved while Turkmenistan mostly was not. Today, ethnic and linguistic ties underpin political, cultural and trade ties, including drugs smuggling.

Central Asia's secular political elites, many of whom have been in place since Soviet times, seem increasingly out of sync with the region's evolving post-Soviet re-Islamisation. Central Asia's governments seem to perceive religion in general as a potential challenge and religious extremism, especially in its violent forms – jihadists – as an important threat coupled to developments in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is not, however, only portrayed as a source of problems. It holds economic potential for its neighbours, as a market in itself and as a pathway to markets in South Asia and the Persian Gulf.

The withdrawal of ISAF in 2014 brings uncertainties since it may upset the fragile regional balance that has been underpinned by the international community's efforts to contain Afghanistan's challenges within the country. The first to feel any changes are likely to be Afghanistan's immediate neighbours. The following chapters will outline the interests, fears and approaches of Afghanistan's three closest northern neighbours: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

1 How may the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan affect Turkmenistan?

Nina Startseva

Turkmenistan, a closed country with political repression, poverty and unemployment, is a weak state with a weak civil society. It is ill prepared to handle the effects of a deteriorating situation in Afghanistan after 2014 in which today's problems (such as border security, militant Islamists or drugs smuggling) would be exacerbated with additional problems of refugees and illegal migrants. In contrast to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan has so far neither been very involved with its ethnic kin in Afghanistan nor too influenced by militant or political Islam. But worsening security in Afghanistan after 2014 will impact on Turkmenistan. Despite maintaining good relations with all actors in Afghanistan, it will hardly to be able to handle the challenges in its own. The country may be reassessing its neutrality which limits its chances of building security relations with others.

The aim of this chapter is to assess how the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan in 2014 may affect the security situation in neighbouring Turkmenistan and its role in Central Asia. The discussion will also cover the likelihood of possible ensuing changes in Turkmenistan, including threats to security and stability. The key aspects of security are the situation in the border areas, the spread of religious extremism and drugs trafficking across the Afghan–Turkmen border.

The discussion addresses several questions. What are the threats from Afghanistan to Turkmenistan, both actual and perceived? What is the nature of the perceived threats and how do they affect relations between the two countries? The chapter concludes that the key factors are religious extremism and terrorism, security and territorial integrity, increasing drugs trafficking and the actual situation on the practically open Turkmen–Afghan border.

The chapter consists of two parts. The first outlines Turkmenistan's current situation and its relations with adjacent Afghanistan, especially the regions of Afghanistan where ethnic Turkmens live. The second part discusses how the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan may affect Turkmenistan, for example regarding security, since Afghanistan remains associated with terrorism.

TURKMENISTAN'S WAY FROM THE 'LIGHT OF COMMUNISM' TO 'RENAISSANCE'

In its security policy, Turkmenistan, a former Soviet republic that gained independence in 1991, has opted for permanent neutrality status, recognised by the United Nations. Both under Saparmurat Niyazov, who ruled Turkmenistan from independence until 2006, and under his successor, the current president, Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, the country has lacked fundamental freedoms and seen massive violations of human rights. Turkmenistan has not undergone any significant political changes. A personality cult of the president and a state ideology permeate all aspects of society.

The authorities control all mass media and limit access to the Internet. The only Internet service provider is the government-controlled Turkmentelekom. The country lacks an independent press. All newspapers, magazines, and television and radio stations are state-owned and the founder of all media is the president. Consequently, there is no significant public debate on policy.

Despite its richness in natural resources such as oil and gas – Turkmenistan ranks fourth in the world in natural gas reserves – the country's economic situation is dire. The average salary is 200 USD, on which making ends meet is very hard (Dursunbaeva, 2012). Despite a low average salary, unofficial data indicate that unemployment is approaching 50 per cent (Ashirmuradov, 2013). Scant employment opportunities have led to an increasing number of young people becoming drug addicts. Drugs are cheap – 1 gram of heroin costs about 50 USD – and readily available (Chronicles of Turkmenistan, 2012). For some, trafficking and selling drugs is often the only way to make money. For others, using drugs is the only way to escape a hopeless reality.

Immediately after independence, Turkmenistan isolated itself. It became almost impossible for foreigners to visit it or for Turkmen citizens to leave. In short, Turkmenistan remains a closed society with massive repression, high unemployment and very limited access to information. It is a very weak state and a weak civil society, and consequently ill prepared to handle potential problems that may arise from Afghanistan after 2014.

RELATIONS BETWEEN TURKMENISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN: CONTRACT RATHER THAN FRIENDSHIP

Independent Turkmenistan's relations with neighbouring Afghanistan have evolved quite smoothly. Turkmenistan's political leadership in Ashgabat, the capital, has maintained good relations with all regimes in Kabul, whether the Taliban or the current, official, authorities. Few countries officially recognised the Taliban regime and had diplomatic relations with it. Turkmenistan, however, established good political contacts with the Taliban and opened consulates in the

Afghan cities of Herat and Mazar-i-Sharif. In turn, Afghanistan was among the first countries to recognise the independence of Turkmenistan (Sabir, 2012).

Since 2001, neutral Turkmenistan has chosen not to participate in international military anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan. Furthermore, over the entire period of the military anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan has refused to allow foreign military bases or airbases and only opened its airspace for humanitarian transports to Afghanistan (PenzaNews, 2011a). In other words, the agreement between the two neighbours seemed to be 'We [Turkmenistan] do not interfere in your internal conflicts, and you [Afghanistan] control the possible threat to us in the border areas'. Unofficial reports claim that such a tacit mutual agreement has been central to Turkmenistan's policy towards Afghanistan (PenzaNews, 2011b).

Turkmenistan has a 744 km-long and poorly protected border with neighbouring Afghanistan. In contrast to Uzbekistan, whose border with Afghanistan is either shut or heavily guarded by armed forces, the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan border is a fairly open and poorly guarded space. Turkmenistan has never really had to protect its border, which partly explains today's situation. During and immediately after the Soviet Union, Russian forces guarded the border. After 11 September 2001 and the ensuing military operations in Afghanistan and the fall of the Taliban regime, the Afghan side of the border came under the control of ISAF. Formally, Turkmenistan's border guards patrol the border with Afghanistan, but many factors hamper their effectiveness. The border is long, and the border guards' technical capabilities are weak, lacking both night-vision goggles and basic communications between border guards' posts. The physical border infrastructure is damaged. In short, when ISAF leaves Afghanistan, the burden of border security will weigh more heavily on Turkmenistan, whose operational tradition and capability to handle it are both weak.

More than 15 per cent of the drugs produced in Afghanistan, including 20 per cent of the heroin, are smuggled to Europe via Central Asia, including Turkmenistan, and Russia. The main concern for Turkmenistan concerning the border with Afghanistan is the smuggling of narcotics (UNODC, 2012). Furthermore, Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian country that borders Iran, a link in another smuggling route from Afghanistan that continues across the Caspian Sea into the Caucasus, Turkey and the Balkans. Iran gets 35 per cent of Afghanistan's opium production (UNODC, 2012).

Unlike Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan, which goes through remote mountain regions, Turkmenistan's border is primarily on a plain with solid ground and easy to cross. Former Turkmen special services employees claim that this makes it easier for Afghan couriers to transport up to 10 kilograms (kg) of heroin at a time (Ataballyev, 2013).

According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), drug seizures on the Afghanistan–Turkmenistan border in 2010 amounted to 104 kg of heroin and 757 kg of opium (UNODC, 2012: 50). Turkmenistan's border guards claim that the quantities of heroin from Afghanistan are not very large, between 2 and 20 kg each time, and are smuggled into Turkmenistan in remote areas (UNODC, 2012: 51). Total seizures of heroin in 2010 are estimated to account for 3–5 per cent of the total flow of drugs into Turkmenistan.

Today, drug trafficking through Turkmenistan seems to be increasing for two reasons. First, security measures on the Tajikistan–Afghanistan border have been strengthened. Second, there is reportedly a drugs processing laboratory in Afghanistan near the border with Turkmenistan. In addition, the lack of cooperation and information exchange between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan complicates anti-drug operations. Another complication is that the power structures in Turkmenistan seem to have been involved for a long time in controlling the regular flow of drugs into the country (UNODC, 2012: 51–52).

According to US experts, drug abuse in Turkmenistan has become a public issue. In 1989, the Turkmen Soviet Republic had 124 drug addicts per 100,000 inhabitants – almost five times the USSR average. Today, that number has tripled according to official statistics. In reality, the number may be more than ten times higher, since at best only one out of ten drug abusers is actually registered (Chronicles of Turkmenistan, 2012).

There are two main causes of drug addiction in Turkmenistan. Unemployment is almost 50 per cent, causing an increasing number of youngsters to start using drugs. Second, Turkmenistan is the first stop on the transit routes for the drugs trade, which means that drugs are sold there at nearly factory prices (Berdyieva, 2010). The price per gram of heroin is about 50 USD. Dealers split 1 gram of heroin into 50 pieces of 0.02 grams which sell for some 1.5–2 USD each (Chronicles of Turkmenistan, 2012).

Of Afghanistan's population of around 23 million, about 1 million, some 3 per cent, are ethnic Turkmens, living primarily near the border to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The Turkmen minority did not participate in Afghanistan's civil war in the 1990s and maintains friendly relations with all ethnic groups in Afghanistan. In 2011, the Afghan Turkmen offered President Hamid Karzai their assistance in the Afghan reconciliation process (Oguz, 2011).

Ashgabat is not, however, particularly interested in the fate of Turkmenistan's ethnic kin in Afghanistan. During Afghanistan's decades of war not a single refugee camp for Afghan Turkmens was organised in Turkmenistan, in contrast to Pakistan or Iran, where such camps exist. Turkmenistan did not offer support when ethnic Turkmen refugees from Afghanistan asked for asylum during the violent attacks of the Taliban in the late 1990s. For ethnic Turkmens from Afghanistan, a visit to their historical homeland is fraught with difficulties such

as Turkmenistan's very complicated visa procedure. Residents in the border region complain that Turkmenistan's border guards repeatedly arrest ordinary people involved in cross-border trade and in farming on the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan border (Oguz, 2011).

HOW POST-ISAF AFGHANISTAN MAY AFFECT TURKMENISTAN

It is difficult to predict how Afghanistan will evolve after the reduction of NATO forces in 2014 and how it will affect its neighbours. Turkmenistan, like the other neighbours, is concerned about security and there are indications that the issue is having an impact on security policy. The main potential problems for Turkmenistan could be drugs trafficking, the effects of the fight against international terrorism, illegal border crossings, possible armed attacks by the Taliban on the border of Turkmenistan, refugee flows and increasing illegal migration. In other words, should the situation in Afghanistan deteriorate, today's problems will be exacerbated and there may be the additional problems of refugees and illegal migration.

Concerns about Afghanistan seem to be having an impact on Turkmenistan's neutrality policy. The government of Turkmenistan is consolidating efforts with its regional neighbours, perhaps because it feels that its own efforts may be insufficient in the event of a real threat from Afghanistan. One sign of this is that on 2 October 2012 in Ashgabat, the presidents of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan met to discuss border security in relation to the withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan. The leaders seemed to be interested in coordinating proactive measures to ensure the security of their citizens. During the talks the presidents agreed to defend their borders together (Sodikov, 2012).

Another threat to Turkmenistan's future security could be increased drugs trade, both through and within in the country. Today ISAF can monitor the border on the Afghanistan side and can, in theory, intervene in the massive traffic in narcotics across the border to Turkmenistan. What will happen when ISAF leaves?

Experts agree that in the near future Turkmenistan could become a major transit corridor for drugs from Afghanistan through Russia to Europe. Turkmen border guards do not seem particularly good at stopping drugs trafficking on the border. For several years the official press has not reported any large seizures; border guard officials admit privately that amounts seized are often very small, just a few grams (Tadjiev, 2012).

Moreover, all Turkmenistan's border posts, even the best-equipped ones that have received help from the international community, are open due to corruption. Entry into Turkmenistan can always be negotiated, as can the acquisition of a false passport, and border guards can be bribed not to examine documents. If

there are similar developments on Afghanistan's side of the border after ISAF leaves, this could further facilitate the drugs trade.

Turkmenistan's Service for the Control of Illicit Traffic of Narcotic Substances deals primarily with petty dealers and drug users, while wholesale and larger-scale transit of drugs seems to work unhindered. It is no secret that drugs trafficking and drug abuse have long been an unspoken scourge of Turkmenistan (Tadjiev, 2012). In sum, most factors point to an increase in the drugs trade.

The openness of Turkmenistan's border with Afghanistan holds another risk. The possibility of instability in Afghanistan causing the relocation of ethnic minorities in the northern region of the country cannot be excluded. Ethnic Turkmens living in Afghanistan's northern regions such as Herat, Badakhshan and Bamiyan and in the central region of Afghanistan fear that the withdrawal of ISAF could lead to renewed civil war.

Trying to avoid more Turkmens leaving Afghanistan, Turkmen community leaders are working to strengthen ties to other groups. Some have even joined the Karzai government. Kvarkvin Noor Mohammad was head of Karzai's electoral campaign and then minister of education. However, most Turkmens support ethnic Uzbeks such as Abdul Rashid Dostum, the leader of Afghanistan's Uzbek community. Turkmens in Afghanistan are aligning themselves with the Uzbeks since Turkmenistan's government is unlikely to protect them (Ghente, 2013b).

Turkmenistan, in contrast to other Central Asian countries, does not face significant challenges of religious extremism. The government of Turkmenistan may therefore feel less anxious about possible penetration of armed Islamists. Furthermore, in Turkmenistan only Sunni Islam is officially allowed. There are therefore few Shi'ite Muslims in the country. The authorities try to keep religious extremism in check. However, destabilisation in Turkmenistan as a result of the activities of religious extremist groups from Afghanistan cannot be entirely discounted.

In April 2013, reports from Afghanistan claimed that fierce clashes were taking place in the north-west of the country, near the border with Turkmenistan. Reportedly, militants seized control of several villages in the usually peaceful Faryab province. A thousand people were forced to leave their homes, among them women and children. The provincial governor's spokesman said that more than 60 Taliban fighters were killed (BBC Russian Service, 2013).

The events in Faryab should be taken seriously by the political leadership in Turkmenistan. Fighting on the Afghan side of the border near Turkmenistan has happened before, but more between ethnic groups competing for influence in certain areas. In particular, forces under General Dostum (mainly Uzbeks) fought Tajiks and Pashtuns. Until recently, Faryab has been considered relatively calm, without clashes that would be seriously disturbing to inhabitants on both sides of

the border. The Faryab province's strategically important water resources supply the province itself as well as Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Volkov, 2013).

These clashes should serve as a wake-up call to the Turkmen government. Today ISAF is fighting militants in Afghanistan. There are, however, no guarantees that Afghanistan's authorities can control the situation when ISAF has transferred authority to the Afghan government. Turkmen border guards can probably handle occasional armed smugglers entering Turkmenistan's territory, but they are unlikely to be able to handle clashes with larger groups of armed and well-trained Islamist fighters. That would require additional forces which in turn could lead to an escalation of tension between the two countries. Perhaps Turkmenistan hopes that its neutrality will protect its borders from problems coming from Afghanistan. It is also fully possible, however, both that the Taliban will gain control of Afghanistan's northern territories and that they will not respect the neutrality of Afghanistan's neighbour.

TURKMENISTAN IS NOT READY FOR AN UNSTABLE FUTURE

In Turkmenistan it is well understood that the withdrawal of ISAF, no matter how gradual, is the beginning of an unstable future. The risk of instability is made worse by the uncertainty surrounding Afghanistan's 2014 presidential election. According to the constitution, Hamid Karzai has to resign. After that, the Taliban could well take control of the southern part of the country and parts of the central regions. A coalition government consisting of the Taliban and the influential Pashtun groups is quite possible. Northern Afghanistan is already seeing a process of ethnic groups striving for greater autonomy. All in all, the north is unlikely to be stable (Ghente, 2013a).

Ashgabat always negotiates with Kabul regardless of who is in power. Today, as under former President Saparmurat Niyazov, Turkmenistan has dialogues with all political forces, even the Taliban. Good relations with all major actors in neighbouring Afghanistan are Turkmenistan's only hope if it is to avoid further difficulties after 2014. There are, however, no guarantees that the government in Kabul can control all security-related problems: drugs trafficking, terrorism, refugee flows and threats to the territorial integrity of Turkmenistan. One cannot but reflect that in such a situation for closed Turkmenistan it would be useful to enlist the support of other allies.

The bottom line is that Turkmenistan has the following problems when the ISAF withdraws from Afghanistan: a weak state organisation, a well-developed repressive system, a closed society with limited access to information, and high unemployment. A poorly developed civil society and high consumption of drugs hardly brighten the picture. The drugs trade is well established across the Afghanistan–Turkmenistan border with ensuing transit to Iran, Russia and Europe. The border with neighbouring Afghanistan is virtually open. The

military and border guard structures are underdeveloped. Turkmenistan's 'permanent neutrality' does not allow the country to compensate for its own weaknesses by forming alliances or ensuring security jointly with other countries. In sum, Turkmenistan is likely to be affected by the development dynamics in Afghanistan after ISAF leaves and will hardly be able to respond to these challenges on its own.

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2 Uzbekistan and Afghanistan – security challenges post-2014

Azamjon Isabaev

For landlocked Uzbekistan trade with and through a peaceful Afghanistan is an important opportunity. A deteriorating situation in Afghanistan is therefore a key concern for Uzbekistan and it would affect the other Central Asian states. Regional cooperation to handle such challenges is hampered by the Central Asian states preferring bilateral relations with their neighbours. Their individual and collective capabilities to cope with major instabilities emanating from Afghanistan, such as challenges from religious extremists or the drugs trade, are insufficient. Without common threat perceptions and experience of collective effort towards Afghanistan, the region is unlikely to be able to overcome its security challenges without external support.

This chapter aims to discuss how developments in Afghanistan as ISAF withdraws may affect Uzbekistan. For more than a decade the US and NATO have played the primary role in shaping a peaceful Afghanistan. Though the immediate success of the 2001 invasion quickly began to fade as the Taliban gained momentum and became increasingly resilient, the Western presence has been able to stave off the collapse of central government, an escalation of the domestic situation, and any spillover into adjacent Central Asian republics.

Now, as NATO is scaling back by transferring the main responsibility for security across the country to Afghan forces, a huge stake is being placed on the capacities of the Central Asian neighbours in post-2014 Afghanistan.

Without doubt, Afghanistan is the number one concern in terms of both regional and national security for many of the five Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan. For a landlocked country such as Uzbekistan, a stable Afghanistan is of strategic interest as it would open up broad trade and economic opportunities with and through Afghanistan.

Uzbekistan, together with other parties involved, has already been participating in an array of economic and social projects in Afghanistan, ranging from building bridges, railways, and power lines to assisting the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), ISAF's supply routes through Central Asia.

However, as the Taliban remain robust and the area of poppy cultivation increases, the foreign troops' withdrawal poses a serious challenge for the future of Afghanistan and the Central Asian region as a whole. Furthermore, the real

capabilities of the Afghan forces remain highly controversial: according to the Pentagon, only one of 23 Afghan Army brigades was able to carry out a military operation independently without any backup from ISAF in 2012 (Bumiller, 2012). Increasing numbers of 'green-on-blue' attacks are raising additional apprehensions about the reliability of local forces, which are to take the leading security role in the country after 2014.

When highlighting the importance of regional cooperation in a post-war Afghanistan, one should avoid overemphasis on the potentials of Central Asian republics. Support from key outside powers will still be needed if the situation in Afghanistan worsens substantially.

In this regard, a balanced approach is required. Accordingly, Uzbekistan is pursuing a collective solution for Afghanistan involving both regional and key non-regional powers.

PROJECTING POST-2014 AFGHANISTAN

Based on the present tendencies inside the country it is not too difficult to predict a deterioration of the domestic security environment in post-2014 Afghanistan.

Since 2011 the frequent green-on-blue attacks, when coalition forces are attacked and killed by their Afghan counterparts, have become a major threat for international coalition forces. In 2012 these accounted for 15 per cent of coalition deaths, which is 2.5 times as much as in the previous year (Roggio and Lundquist, 2013). According to the same source, between 2008 and April 2013, the number of those attacks totalled 76, with 44 of them carried out last year. One quarter of insider attacks were reportedly due to Taliban infiltration (Shanker, 2012). In the light of the ongoing drawdown and the transfer of main security responsibilities to the local army and police, the growing number of subversive actions in the ranks of Afghan soldiers puts the prospects of their providing domestic security after 2014 without close international assistance into serious doubt.

Moreover, the Afghan Army, which was supposed to take the over the lead in all combat operations in the country by mid-2013 (The White House, 2012), still lacks competence and strength sufficient for it to fight effectively against Taliban and other anti-government movements. For example, the Afghan Army's low credibility was evident in April 2013 when Afghan forces were only able to overcome hard resistance from a Taliban stronghold after nearby US forces supported them with an air strike (Ahmed, 2013).

Another major threat emanating from Afghanistan is opium cultivation. In 2012 the total area under opium cultivation increased to 154,000 hectares (ha) compared to 131,000 ha in the previous year (UNODC, 2012). Over a year opium production fell to 3,700 tons from 5,800 tons (due to plant disease and bad

weather), but high prices remain the fundamental factor underlying continuing opium cultivation in Afghanistan. It should be noted that approximately 95 per cent of the opium crop is produced in the southern and western provinces, the most insecure parts of the country: there is a close relation between the (in)security of these provinces and the level of opium production there. As is known, highly active anti-government elements exist in the southern and western provinces of Afghanistan, and there is little or no access for United Nations (UN) units and other international organisations.

Afghanistan is a major producer of drugs with 90 per cent of world supply of heroin. Almost 375 tons of heroin are transported annually from Afghanistan to global markets. Roughly a quarter of that volume passes through Central Asia, via the Northern Route (UNODC, 2013).

As can be seen, the present domestic situation in Afghanistan is highly challenging. Given the current potential of the Afghan forces it is unlikely that they will be able to cope with a Taliban insurgency on their own. Accordingly, an increase in instability will simultaneously escalate the drug situation in the country.

CENTRAL ASIA, AFGHANISTAN AND THE FOREIGN POLICY OF UZBEKISTAN

Since the 1990s Central Asia has evolved as a region consisting of five post-Soviet states. Though some scholars see it as a little broader by including East China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, or even Mongolia in terms of geography and history, a scholarly consensus has already emerged that on international policy agendas the region consists of the five republics only.

Since the 1990s, the Central Asian states have gone through various integration models. Interestingly, all the existing models have one common specific: no regional integration structure has emerged without the participation of an outside actor – the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and so on. Central Asia has not yet become a pure ‘Central Asian’ integrated entity. Furthermore, almost all the existing regional communities have a wide range of internal inconsistencies. EurAsEC is proceeding on the path of ‘two-speed integration’ with the establishment of the Customs Union by Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, and others following behind. The SCO is currently experiencing a stalemate situation and facing a ‘dilemma of enlargement’, not to mention differences between the Russian and Chinese perspectives on the SCO, which are becoming more and more evident.

Among the Central Asian states, Uzbekistan (and possibly Turkmenistan as well) has frequently portrayed itself as a state with a bold individual posture on various regional affairs and with a distinct reluctance to speed up integration processes within the region. In November 2008 Uzbekistan suspended its participation in EurAsEC due to 'duplication of many tasks and measures with those within other organisations such as the CIS' (Ria Novosti, 2008), and in June 2012 Tashkent submitted an official proposal to suspend its membership in the CSTO by reasoning (reportedly) that Uzbekistan does not support the organisation's plans to strengthen military ties within it (Kartashov, 2012).

Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the CSTO has provoked analytical speculation trying to explain the real reason for that step. Most commentators tended to view it as a sign of yet another turn towards the US, to the detriment of Russia, that is, Tashkent was supposedly starting another balance-of-power game by playing major external powers off one another. Observers increasingly asserted that Uzbekistan was definitely to (re)install a US military base on its soil.

To all those allegations Uzbekistan responded by adopting a Foreign Policy Concept. Though the full content of the concept was not available, some principal points of the document have been described in published sources several times (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, 2012). In particular, Uzbekistan reserves the right to join international organisations and withdraw from them in accordance with its national interests. Furthermore, Uzbekistan does not participate in military blocs and can leave any integration community which is to transform into military one. The most important message of the concept was that Tashkent will not allow the deployment of foreign bases and facilities on its territory.

In fact, the concept did not deliver anything surprising. It has merely formalised the pragmatic foreign policy approach which Uzbekistan has taken since independence. From the outset, the core of Uzbekistan's foreign policy has been a preference for bilateral relations rather than multilateral ones by keeping a sharp distinction between them: Russia remains the largest trading partner and ally of Uzbekistan despite its withdrawal from EurAsEC and the CSTO.

Towards Afghanistan Uzbekistan is pursuing a differentiated approach by promoting bilateral trade and economic ties on the one hand, and advocating a multilateral solution for comprehensive peace and security in Afghanistan on the other.

Uzbekistan is one of the most active economic players in Afghanistan in the transport and energy spheres. In November 2010, with financial support from the Asian Development Bank, Uzbekistan completed the construction of the railway branch between Hairaton and Mazar-e Sharif. There are plans to connect the railway with Herat and further to Iran and Iranian ports in the future. Since 2009 Uzbekistan has allowed overland transport of goods for the International Security

Assistance Force (ISAF) through its territory. The route via Uzbekistan might be used for reverse transit as well. Where energy is concerned, Uzbekistan is the principal supplier of electricity to Kabul.

Since the early 1990s, Uzbekistan has constantly striven to elaborate on strategic policy recommendations for Afghanistan by bringing together both regional and key non-regional powers. It is symbolic that 20 years ago, back in 1993 at the 48th session of the UN General Assembly, Uzbekistan called for the immediate settlement of the Afghan problem (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, 2012). During 1997–2001 a negotiation framework was in place consisting of the six immediate neighbours of Afghanistan as well as Russia and the US. In 1999 in Tashkent this group was able to issue a joint declaration on Afghanistan, which was supported by the UN. Based on this positive experience, in 2008 Uzbekistan initiated the revival of that framework under UN auspices by including NATO.

Today, in the light of the drawdown in Afghanistan, most Western scholars insist that the Central Asian republics take on much, if not all, of the responsibility for any possible implications of post-2014 Afghanistan. Yet almost all projections expect the return of pre-9/11 Afghanistan, and expect it to sink into another permanent (inter-ethnic) civil war as soon as ISAF substantially withdraws.

In such conditions, the Central Asian states will hardly be able to cope with any escalation of the domestic situation in Afghanistan, let alone the drug threat and its impact on the overall security climate in the region.

First, Uzbekistan will have to consider a direct threat from Afghanistan. In the late 1990s and early 2000s the south-east borders of the country were violated by attacks by militant groups based in Afghanistan. Second, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the weakest states in the region, may be the targets most affected given the shaky security situation in both countries for the past several years (for example, the tragic conflict between the Kyrgyz and Uzbek populations in Kyrgyzstan; and the penetration of militants into the Rasht Valley and their armed clashes with the government army in Tajikistan). Moreover, these countries regrettably have very porous borders; in particular, inadequate control of the Tajik–Afghan border considerably raises the probabilities of drugs trafficking and penetration by militants.

Thus the capacities of the Central Asian states, which currently consist solely of providing economic assistance, will not be sufficient to ensure a fundamentally stable security environment in Afghanistan. For that, the support of powerful external actors will be needed.

The past decade has demonstrated a quite effective practice of close cooperation between regional states and external actors in dealing with threats emanating from Afghanistan. Yet the region has no experience of applying a collective effort towards Afghanistan without external engagement.

One of the most serious obstacles to shaping a united Central Asian posture towards Afghanistan is the mismatch of threat perceptions among the Central Asian states. Evidently, the indirect neighbours of Afghanistan – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan – do not feel the same level of concern as the immediate neighbours – Uzbekistan and Tajikistan as well as Turkmenistan – do. Furthermore, in comparison to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan has very strong cultural and linguistic ties with Afghanistan. Not only are Tajiks the second-largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, they are also well represented in the ranks of Afghan military officers, not to mention local political leaders. For Dushanbe this factor is much too important not to be considered as part of its foreign policy agenda towards Afghanistan.

Last but not least, an integrated Central Asia with a united approach towards Afghanistan in particular is less probable because of the lack of necessary theoretical preconditions. Using the terminology of Buzan and Waever (2003), I argue that the Central Asian states (and the majority of other post-Soviet states) will not succeed in shaping their own robust integration model unless they overcome their basic 'modern state' imperatives. Indeed, the Central Asian republics, to various degrees, still belong to the 'modern state' category: they are largely preoccupied with such basic concerns as territorial integrity, safe borders and non-interference in their domestic affairs. They are as yet far from joining the 'postmodern' states, which have already desecuritised much of their traditional security threats, prioritising economic and political integration processes globally (Buzan and Waever, 2003). For these conceptual reasons, the Central Asian states remain concentrated on their own national development strategies, which at this stage do not necessarily always overlap (e.g., hydro-energy projects). These very intra-regional inconsistencies, in turn, incite balance-of-power games by interested outside powers too.

This might explain why Central Asian cooperation over Afghanistan has only been realised through external involvement. Even though that cooperation has been the result of individual agreements between each Central Asian state and an external power such as the US, NATO or a force such as ISAF, in the end it has produced a multilateral effect on Afghanistan. It would therefore also be reasonable to project post-2014 Afghanistan as a challenge demanding a collective effort of both regional and non-regional states. This is probably the only option for any possible collectivity in the region.

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3 North-east Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan – post-ISAF security challenges

Muzaffar Olimov

Tajikistan's relation to Afghanistan balances between trade and transit opportunities and grave security challenges. The last decade has seen increased cooperation in energy, trade and transit between the two countries in addition to their already broad political cooperation and a shared language and culture. This closeness means that security in Tajikistan requires a secure and stable Afghanistan. Security challenges include territorial integrity and border security, religious extremism, the illegal drugs trade and potential migration from Afghanistan. Tajikistan's responses include attempts to strengthen its border and the active promotion of regional and international multilateral cooperation around Afghanistan.

This chapter aims to provide an analysis of how developments in Afghanistan when ISAF withdraws may affect Tajikistan. Relations between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (IRA) and the Republic of Tajikistan (RT) have always been strong, primarily due to close cultural, linguistic and historical ties between the two countries. In addition to broad political cooperation and a shared language and culture, cooperation in energy, trade and transit has brought the two countries even closer in the last decade.

Nevertheless, the Afghan factor, especially in the light of the withdrawal of ISAF from the IRA in 2014, sets some important challenges and tasks for Tajikistan: national security, taking advantage of new economic opportunities, tough intra-regional competition and the need to participate in a complex multi-stage game between major external actors, such as the United States, Russia, China, and the European Union (EU) as well as emerging regional leaders Iran, Pakistan and India.

The West is reducing its military presence in Afghanistan. The main future uncertainty is about Afghanistan's statehood when the United States and its Western allies formally hand over responsibility for security in the country to the government of Afghanistan. At the same time, the West is not leaving the region completely. Western countries have committed themselves to support the government in Kabul until 2024. They will also keep military bases in Afghanistan and neighbouring countries (Saidov, 2013). This increasing

uncertainty about security for the Central Asian countries might reduce confidence and hence add to existing tensions in the region.

The political leadership of Tajikistan recognises that security in Tajikistan is impossible without the restoration of security and stability in Afghanistan (Kholov, 2011). Reasons for this include a long shared border (1344 kilometres (km)), close links between the population of the border regions of Tajikistan and Afghanistan, especially in divided regions such as Badakhshan and Darwaz, Tajikistan's forced reorientation towards the south through Afghanistan because of the transport blockade of Uzbekistan, and cross-border criminality controlling trafficking and the smuggling of drugs, people and weapons.

Tajikistan's Afghanistan policy is under revision as President Emomali Sharipovich Rahmon in March 2013 proposed to revise the country's Foreign Policy Concept (Rosbalt News Agency, 2013b). Nevertheless, Tajikistan's policy towards Afghanistan has two main goals (Chorshanbiev, 2013).

First, Tajikistan's political leadership and elites want Afghanistan to be a reliable political ally. This can be ensured by preserving Afghanistan as a unitary state where the holders of political power are multi-ethnic so that Dari-speaking elites would be represented. Strong ties between Tajikistan's political elite and the ethnic Tajik elites in Afghanistan facilitate concerted action in politics and security (Chorshanbiev, 2013). Tajikistan also supports Afghanistan both in international organisations, such as the UN, and in regional organisations, such as the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), to promote regional stability and security (Zarifi, 2008: 1).

Tajikistan's political leadership wants to develop trade and economic relations with Afghanistan and believes that the reconstruction of Afghanistan should integrate the country in the region through economic and trade cooperation with neighbouring countries (Federal Drug Control Service of the Russian Federation, 2012; Khovar News Agency, 2012). The implementation of transport and communication projects involving Afghanistan is crucial for Tajikistan. Such projects allow Tajikistan both to resolve its current transportation impasse and to activate economic relations with Afghanistan. Today there are five bridges under construction on the Tajikistan–Afghanistan border and another three have been commissioned. This will strengthen cross-border trade and promote development in both countries' border areas. There are also discussions about construction projects and railways, which could link Tajikistan with third countries through Afghanistan (Kabulov, 2013). Tajikistan's most prominent plans for Afghanistan concern energy projects. Tajikistan has been exporting electricity to Afghanistan since 2008 and plans to increase the volume of its exports considerably (Trend News Agency, 2013).

The Tajik political leadership may want to develop trade with Afghanistan, but at the same time Tajikistan's legislation reflects concerns about threats to its national security such as terrorism, extremism and human trafficking (Kholov, 2011), all have of which links to Afghanistan. The focus here is on border security and territorial integrity, terrorism, religious extremism, drugs trafficking and refuges.

TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY AND BORDER SECURITY

Territorial integrity and border security are the main objects of securitisation of modern states. From this perspective, instability and uncertain prospects in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of ISAF may cause border violations and threats to the territorial integrity of Tajikistan, two major threats to national security. There have been two fundamental changes on the Tajikistan–Afghanistan border. First, in 2005 the Russian Border Guards handed over responsibility for border protection to the Tajik Border Service, whose material and human capabilities were not so good. Second, the border regime was relaxed by the opening of new bridges, border markets and more border crossing points. Consequently, in the border areas joint Tajik–Afghan criminal groups were formed in addition to the existing drugs trafficking, corruption, arms smuggling, hostage-taking and trafficking in human beings. Another threat to Tajikistan's national security is the growth of cross-border smuggling. Fuel and electricity come from Tajikistan; drugs, cigarettes, cement and agricultural products come from Afghanistan. This fuels corruption and corrodes the border services and other law enforcement agencies.

An obvious answer to these challenges is to create viable border forces in Tajikistan. In 2003, the Central Asian countries, the European Commission and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) agreed on setting up the Border Management Programme In Central Asia (BOMCA), a capacity-building programme. The programme supports training centres for border agencies, assists in setting up border crossings and helps develop the skills of both managers and staff through national and regional courses. Another project is TAJE24, 'Strengthening Control along the Tajik–Afghan Border', aimed at facilitating closer cooperation between the border agencies of Tajikistan and Afghanistan. On 6 June 2013 the United Kingdom granted Tajikistan 1.8 million USD to strengthen the border with Afghanistan (Khovar News Agency, 2013). Nevertheless, the combination of the complex topography of the border area, the pervasive corruption and the weakness of Tajikistan's border guards all hamper effective protection of the border. The practically open border enables terrorists to move freely between the countries.

Terrorism is one threat that is related to weak borders and weak territorial integrity. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan had to handle

terrorism in its various manifestations. After the signing and implementation of the 1997 Peace Accords after the Tajik Civil War, subversive and terrorist activities subsided. Key field commanders were stopped and terrorism became a thing of the past. But Tajiks did not forget terrorism. Experience and organisational capacity exist in the country, but so does a profoundly conspiratorial underground movement that has not surrendered its weapons.

Tajikistan's proximity to Afghanistan adds to these concerns since in Afghanistan, to some extent, terrorists can have bases and undergo training. The biggest concern for Tajikistan is the increase in the numbers and activities of militants in the north-eastern Afghan province of Badakhshan, some 30–40 km from Tajikistan's border. The Taliban have striven for years to establish a military-political bridgehead in northern Afghanistan. Taliban groups, mainly Uzbeks, Chechens, Tajiks, Turkmens and Pakistanis, have taken partial control of the Vardudzh district (Badakhshan province). In early 2013, the Taliban increased its influence in neighbouring districts, and built up a local military infrastructure and local support. In early March 2013, the Taliban carried out two daring operations and declared itself the main force in northern Afghanistan (Serenko, 2013). Under the Taliban the Vardudzh district has become a military-political springboard to be used for large-scale military operations in northern Afghanistan. It could also be used for attacks on neighbouring countries (Serenko, 2013).

There is also growing fear in Tajikistan about other aspects of terrorism. Terrorism is gradually merging with organised crime such as trafficking in drugs, arms and human beings (Rosbalt News Agency, 2013a). Moreover, there are many professional fighters in Afghanistan who are ready to participate, against payment, in terror acts against any country, any object and any people, including in Tajikistan. Finally, ISAF's counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan have had two damaging results. First, they have strengthened the military factor, in Afghanistan and its neighbours, especially Tajikistan, thus adding to the militarisation of the region. Second, they have complicated relations with the Islamic world.

RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM

Religious extremism in Central Asia is mainly a product of the post-Soviet transition. It is only indirectly linked to religious extremists in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, they still have some contacts across the border and influence on militant Islamists in Tajikistan. Thus, the Taliban had a major impact on the radicalisation of Salafists not only in Tajikistan, but also in the other Central Asian countries. The Taliban provide military training to jihadists from Central Asia in areas under their control in Afghanistan and Pakistan (Tekushev, 2012: 11–12).

The strengthening of the Taliban in Badakhshan also plays an important role. Since 2001 the Taliban have trained a whole generation of supporters from Badakhshan in madrassas in Pakistan. According to local sources wishing to remain anonymous, some 40,000 people from Badakhshan thus received a religious education and the spiritual rank of *mavlavi*. Despite most of these people being Pushtuns, the influence of the *mavlavi* is spreading across all of Tajikistan, and not only in the border areas.

Furthermore, the deeply divisive sectarian conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites, the two main *madhhabs* (doctrines) in the Islamic world, is reaching Tajikistan through Afghanistan, which may be fatal for Tajikistan. The Taliban, promoting a deeply conservative version of Sunni Islam, are enemies of Shi'ite Iran. This does not bode well for Tajikistan, which is Sunni, but traditionally oriented to Iran. Tajikistan's currently assertive religious policy reduces the spread of radical ideas on the one hand, but also nourishes radicalism and opposition sentiments.

THE DRUGS TRADE

Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are located on the 'Northern Route', a transit route for drugs from Afghanistan to Central Asia, Russia and Europe. Afghanistan is assessed to have accounted for 82 per cent of the world's production of opiates in 2011 (National Centre for Monitoring and Prevention of Drug Addiction, 2012: 44). Afghanistan's Anti-narcotics Police think that 15 per cent of the drug exports left the country through the Northern Route in 2012 (Faskhutdinov, 2013).

The exact nature of the problem is unknown. The available figures are contradictory. In 2012, Tajikistan's authorities seized some 6 (metric) tonnes of narcotics including heroin (515 kg), raw opium (630 kg), and cannabis (4.8 tonnes), 41.1 per cent more than in 2011 (Korolev and Mamaev, 2013). Tajikistan's law enforcement agencies explain the growth of drug seizures not only by their own improved performance, but also by a growing traffic from Afghanistan. However, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) says that recent years have seen a fall in drug seizures in Tajikistan, despite investments in border management and anti-drug activities. In 2010, 985 kg of heroin were seized (UNODC 2012: 58). Possible explanations for the decrease could be drugs traders adapting their modus operandi and changing their routes (ibid.: 60).

Diseases have reduced poppy harvests, but an increase in drugs trafficking can nonetheless be supported by huge reserves of opiates, reportedly up to some 15,000–20,000 tonnes, stockpiled in the Hindu Kush. There has also been an increase in cannabis production compared to poppy. In contrast to opiates, seizures of cannabis have increased, reaching nearly 5 tonnes in 2012. One of the reasons could be the expansion of cannabis plantations in neighbouring

Afghanistan and intensified attempts to smuggle drugs into neighbouring countries (Faskhutdinov, 2013).

Future prospects are bad. Many experts predict a rise in drugs trafficking and transit of Afghan drugs through Tajikistan in 2014, suggesting increased instability and a further weakening of government control. Increasing prices may further stimulate drug production and trafficking. Although recognising the scale and urgency of the problem, representatives of Tajikistan's anti-drug agency also recognise its broader aspects and are considering various options for developments in 2014: 'Getting ready for any eventuality, including negative ones. But we do not rule out that maybe some things may improve. Everything will depend on developments in Afghanistan. The situation in the region is directly linked to what happens there' (Faskhutdinov, 2013).

Tajikistan has several countermeasures in place, in Afghanistan, bilaterally with Afghan authorities and at home. A key part of an effective Tajik anti-drug trafficking policy is the development of state structures in Afghanistan, including restoring state control over the territory, which would help the fight against drugs trafficking. Today's grave situation must be addressed as a regional problem, including further cooperation between both the anti-drug and the border agencies of the Central Asian states and Russia.

Given the problems expected in post-ISAF Afghanistan, Tajikistan has developed a National Strategy for Combating Drug Trafficking for 2013–2020 (Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency, 2013). Tajikistan is actively involved in all areas of international anti-drug cooperation (Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency, 2012) and supports international cooperation on Afghanistan, participating in the EU-funded Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP). The ministries of interior of Afghanistan and Tajikistan have developed cooperation between the two countries' counter-narcotics agencies including regular meetings, joint operations to identify and destroy heroin laboratories, exchanging operational information, and detecting smugglers and drugs crime activities related to the Taliban (Khovar News Agency, 2012).

At home, Tajikistan has developed and implemented measures to combat drugs trafficking (Tajikistan's Drug Control Agency, 2012). The creation in 1999, with the financial support of the UNODC, of the Agency for Drug Control under the president of Tajikistan had an impact on the narcotics situation by establishing a system for seizing drugs and for the agency to collaborate and communicate with its counterparts in Russia, Afghanistan and other countries and to do joint training. Unfortunately, the facts of the decline in drugs seizures in recent years and a rapidly increasing number of drug addicts in Tajikistan raise the question how effective these programmes are.

All these programmes include relevant and useful activities. The drugs trade, however, is a powerful structure and strongly influences Tajikistan's government

structures. Talk of progress is therefore unrealistic. The drugs trade cannot be stopped completely, but only reduced, which a few individual honest counter-narcotics policemen are trying to do along with doctors treating drug addicts.

REFUGEES AND MIGRATION

International organisations, such as the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), suggest that Tajikistan could face more refugees from Afghanistan in the coming years. In the 1990s Tajikistan had a steady influx of Afghan refugees, but much less than Iran and Pakistan. According to the UNHCR, Tajikistan is home to over 4,000 Afghan refugees, with another 600 waiting to receive refugee status. There are also a few illegal Afghan immigrants. Some 400 came in the first nine months of 2012 (Centrasia.ru, 2012). Most of them were to be forwarded to third countries. Although the number of Afghan migrants to Tajikistan increased slightly in 2013, there is little reason to expect significant growth in the coming years. Previous experience shows that Afghans prefer to flee to Pakistan and Iran, where the systems for the reception of refugees are better and they will be better able to organise their lives than they would be Tajikistan.

TAJIKISTAN'S RESPONSE TO THE CHALLENGES RELATED TO POST-ISAF AFGHANISTAN

Along with strengthening borders and anti-drug-trafficking measures, Tajikistan is advocating stronger international cooperation and the formation of a broad coalition of countries interested in building a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. For Tajikistan, it is critical to work actively with the international community to form and train the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and other law enforcement agencies. Tajikistan is contributing to the training of Afghan officers, including with the BOMCA and CADAP programmes and at the OSCE Border Management Staff College, opened in Dushanbe in 2010, where staff from the ANSF have been trained (Tajikistan, 2012; Khovar News Agency, 2012). Tajikistan has raised the political profile of Afghanistan issues, and, in 2011, appointed a special representative of the president of Tajikistan on Afghanistan issues (Khovar News Agency, 2012).

Regional cooperation is hampered by for example disputes about water and hydroelectric resources and energy. Such tensions are likely to increase in Central Asia, irrespective of developments in Afghanistan. There is also fierce competition for exports to the fast-growing markets of Afghanistan and South Asia. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are competing fiercely to export electricity to Afghanistan, which has caused their relations to deteriorate, even threatening regional security in Central Asia. In 2013, the plan was for Tajikistan to export

more than 1 billion kW/h of electricity to Afghanistan, almost twice the figure for 2012 (Top News, 2013). Tajik electricity costs 3.64 cents per kW/h, lower than Uzbekistan's prices starting at 7.5 cents per kW/h. This competition means that countries are unable to agree on water allocation and water management in Central Asia.

Tajikistan has proposed a larger role for the OSCE in supporting Afghanistan, which borders southern OSCE member states. The OSCE Permanent Council has granted Afghanistan, upon Tajikistan's proposal, the status of cooperation partner (Khovar News Agency, 2012). Stronger international cooperation must make maximum use of the potential of the UN, the EU, the OSCE, NATO, the SCO, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and other organisations to fight terrorism. This includes a combination of preventive measures against radical actions by means of visionary and constructive initiatives, and proposals for a peaceful regulation of the Afghan crisis (Ibid). Tajikistan has proposed that Afghanistan be discussed between heads of state in regular tripartite meetings between Tajikistan, Afghanistan and either Iran or Pakistan, and in quadripartite meetings between Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Russia (Tajikistan's Drug Control Service, 2012).

Tajikistan's political leadership believes that the Afghan problem cannot be solved by military means only. Peace and security in Afghanistan can be achieved by promoting economic growth and education. Hence, projects that contribute to the economic recovery of Afghanistan are important for building security. Tajikistan is paying special attention to the construction of facilities and infrastructure in Afghanistan, especially communications, air traffic, international transit roads, railways, dams, power plants and transmission lines (Zarifi, 2008) which would bring economic benefits. Tajikistan's and Afghanistan's complex and multifaceted relations are forcing Tajikistan's politicians and diplomats to conduct a policy in Afghanistan that is strong and independent but also very cautious. However, many Tajik actors are involved in Afghan affairs. Officials, businessmen, members of the military, regional elites, drugs traders, religious leaders and Tajik nationalists often have competing interests, policies and strategies. The policy of Tajikistan towards Afghanistan in and after 2014 will therefore retain a high degree of uncertainty.

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B. Regional cooperation

Two issues prevail in the Central Asian discourse on security threats coming from Afghanistan. The first was drugs trafficking, and the other militant religious extremism. The political leaderships in the five republics think very differently about how important these security threats are and about their potential impact on the region. Since the peoples in Central Asia are nominally predominantly Muslim, the perceived threat of religious extremism generally signifies Islamist militant extremism. This threat entails both the impact of radical ideology on political systems and the violence caused by religiously motivated terrorism. The terms 'Islamist' or 'religious' extremism appear to be labels used for a range of security threats with varying connections to Afghanistan.

In contrast to Islamism, the link between Afghanistan and drugs trafficking is self-explanatory. Afghanistan is the world's leading heroin producer. The size of this threat is quantifiable in terms of assessments by the UNODC of the amounts of narcotics trafficked through Central Asia to Russia and Europe. Exact information about the drugs trade's impact on the economic and social spheres of Central Asia is scarce and conditions vary between the countries. Although widespread corruption exists in the region in symbiosis with the drugs trade, the five republics are affected in different ways. The UNODC believes that Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are the most vulnerable countries because drugs smuggling networks permeate the state power structures.

Corruption aside, several other structural problems facilitate the drugs trade in Central Asia. There are few regional mechanisms for dealing jointly with transnational problems – not only drugs trafficking but also religious militant extremism. Two reasons for this are the different states' varying threat perceptions and a high degree of mistrust between them. Thus, cooperation between Central Asian countries seems generally to be bilateral or heavily influenced by concerned outsiders, for example, within the CSTO or the SCO. This section of the report further investigates the effects on Central Asia of the two main threats, militant religious extremism and drugs smuggling. It also includes perspectives on the viability of regional cooperation between the Central Asian states in order to handle security threats emanating from Afghanistan.

4 Drugs trafficking in Central Asia after 2014: towards a broader and more realistic view

Emil Dzhuraev

Central Asia's porous borders are one main reason why the 'northern' transit route for drugs from Afghanistan is growing fast. Demand is increasing, primarily in Russia. The drugs trade will therefore continue to grow and so will the related problems, ranging from violent crime and corruption to threats to political stability and public health. They are exacerbated by the complacency and even complicity of the regimes in the region. The profitability of the trade makes it hard to counter. Its transnational nature requires a transnational response. The regimes in Central Asia are unable to generate that response, but will use the problem to justify harsh domestic policies. The way ahead is a pragmatically oriented international approach with all the countries affected, including outside the region. This should include institutional development, transnational communication and security cooperation. Without this, fighting the drugs trade is futile.

Drugs trafficking from Afghanistan through Central Asia is rightly one of the top concerns in thinking about the year 2014 and afterwards. Whether it stands first or second or third in importance is impossible to determine meaningfully, but that it is a major threat is undisputed. However, amid plentiful rhetoric from political leaders, security experts and international stakeholders about post-2014 drugs trafficking, it is very important to consider it soberly to see what this phenomenon represents and what general problems of security and governance it brings in its wake.

This chapter attempts to situate the drugs problem in its actual context and thus to highlight some directions in which the perception of this threat in Central Asia must be broadened. Drugs trafficking is extremely difficult to tackle because it is transnational and requires the concerted efforts of all affected countries; such cooperation has been difficult to achieve, and is likely to continue to be lacking. It is also a very profitable illicit business, which means that in poor economies with weak institutions drugs trafficking is likely to thrive. These points are the key message of this chapter and are elaborated in the second section below.

The first section provides a brief outline of the drugs problem in the region to date. Here the point is rather to set the context for this chapter than to supply

exhaustive data. Such data are available in many UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reports and other documents – granted that any data on drugs trafficking are extremely difficult to collect and always contain serious margins of error. The last section of the chapter ventures more explicitly into the post-2014 period. Two points are made – one, that it is rather unlikely that a major rise in Afghan drugs production and trafficking will occur, and, two, that anti-drugs efforts must be conceived more broadly in order to encourage regional and international trust and cooperation, and to support general institutional and governance development.

DRUGS TRAFFICKING IN CENTRAL ASIA

The five post-Soviet Central Asian states – with the partial exception of Turkmenistan – are the 'Northern Route' for Afghanistan's drugs output, so far still the smallest route but growing faster than the more important 'Western Route' (towards Iran) and 'Southern Route' (towards Pakistan). With the main markets for Afghan drugs being Russia and Europe, it is natural that the Northern Route – which includes over 2000 kilometres (km) of the Afghan border with Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan – should be getting busy. But, more than just geography, it is the permeability of the borders along this route that explains the growing northward traffic.

The Central Asian states are not themselves producers of any significant amounts of the drugs; opium is not known to grow in any of the countries; some cannabis has been planted in limited quantities and is thought to be limited to the local markets. Both raw opium and manufactured opiate drugs passing through Central Asia originate from Afghanistan. In 2010, about 90 tons of heroin and up to 40 tons of opium were trafficked into Central Asia (and some 75–80 tons of heroin went on towards Russia) (UNODC, 2012a: 46, 48). Hence a sharp rise in drugs trafficking after 2014 is a threatening prospect, and has been frequently cited as one of the top two or three concerns of Central Asian authorities.

Each of the regional countries has a functioning state agency specifically charged with leading the fight against drugs trafficking. It should be noted that the drugs control agency of Kyrgyzstan was briefly abolished in the latter part of President Kurmanbek Bakiev's rule in 2009, to much criticism from the country's neighbours and partners, and was reinstated as soon as he was toppled in April 2010. In each country, drugs are illegal (only a very limited 'legal use' allowance exists in Kyrgyzstan), and drugs trafficking is a crime. Over recent years, seizures of trafficked drugs have been steady, estimated altogether to comprise a very small part of the total traffic, fluctuating in recent years at around 5 per cent or less of the drugs being trafficked from Afghanistan, according to recent UNODC reports.

While the objective difficulty of seizing trafficked drugs is part of the explanation for this mediocre interception rate, there is also the fact of complacency or even complicity on the part of relevant institutions in the region. As Sebastien Peyrouse (2012) notes, drugs trafficking has been classified into three groups: 'green' – drugs trafficking as a complementary activity of religious militant groups (mostly for fundraising); 'black' – small-scale trafficking by individuals or small groups, often for delivery in domestic markets; and 'red' – the most serious kind of trafficking, in large amounts, by organised transnational groups who often enlist law enforcement officers and even political figures. It is this latter kind of trafficking that accounts for the largest part of the overall traffic, and it is rarely intercepted. Tajikistan has been viewed as especially entrenched in this 'red' category of drugs traffic (Paoli et al., 2007; UNODC, 2012a: 12).

The range of drugs-related security problems in Central Asia is wide, even if not all of the problems are at a critical point. They range from drugs-related violent crimes, including organised crime, to negative effects on political stability, to an extensive unaccountable 'shadow economy' around drugs, and, of course, a growing prevalence of drug use, impacting on public health. Kazakhstan has registered significant numbers of drugs-related crimes in recent years. Organised drugs-trafficking groups have been frequently cited as key contributors to the ethnically-based violence in June 2010 in the south of Kyrgyzstan. The violence between government forces and the Badakhshani drug-based crime groups in the city of Khorog in the summer of 2012 has been the most recent major episode in Tajikistan.

Trafficking through the territory of Central Asia has also seen a growing rate of drug use in these countries, leading to a rapid increase in the numbers of HIV/AIDS-infected persons (due to injected drug use) and of drug-use-related violence and deaths. The governments in the region, and most vocally that of Kazakhstan, have recognised illicit drug use as a major security and health concern. All five countries have seen steadily growing estimates of opiate (opium, morphine and heroin) use, with Turkmenistan – where reliable information is least available – cited as possibly the most affected.

DRUGS TRAFFICKING IN CONTEXT

Thus, to return to the question of the significance of drugs trafficking as a threat in Central Asia: it is an important threat, even if the public do not entirely realise this. After 2014, it is likely to grow in importance due to the increasing numbers of drug users within the region, to the enormous market in Russia, where most of the drugs traffic via Central Asia goes, and to the stable or possibly increasing levels of production (cultivation and manufacturing of opiates) in Afghanistan. The significance of drugs trafficking, however, lies not in its sheer volume or

destructive potential per se but in its intractability (due to its transnational nature and its profitability) on the one hand, and its implications for regional and state capacities (for transnational cooperation and for domestic governance) on the other hand.

The drugs trafficking business is intractable for several reasons. Suffice it here to point out two of them, the one being its transnational nature, and the other its lucrative nature. Drugs trafficking in Central Asia is transnational: the cultivation and production of drugs happen almost entirely in Afghanistan; the end market for the largest share of trafficked drugs is Russia, joined to a smaller degree by European markets; and the Central Asian states – while drug usage is growing – are still mostly a transit region. What this implies is that even with the best and most earnest efforts the individual Central Asian states can only deal a marginal blow to the illicit business. With 'supply' and 'demand' – at the two ends of the chain – remaining strong, it seems especially difficult to curtail the business through the 'delivery' part.

This transnational nature of drugs trafficking requires correspondingly transnational anti-trafficking efforts. Here the regional and international cooperation records of recent times indicate that more often than not the countries involved have been incapable of coming together in transnational anti-drug efforts (see Peyrouse, 2012; Rickleton, 2013). Cooperation against the drug business has been on the table at all relevant international gatherings and processes over the years, but in actual fact the regimes in Central Asia and Russia have been far from ready to cooperate in this regard due to lack of trust, lack of interest, and/or corruption and complicity of officials in the business. Unless well-considered and direct new initiatives are promoted in the near future, it is unlikely that this transnational crime will get an adequate transnational response.

The other factor that makes drugs trafficking intractable is its profitability. The UNODC estimated that in 2010 nearly 350 million USD in profits was made by traffickers into Central Asia, and about 1.4 billion USD by trafficking on to Russia (UNODC, 2012a: 85). In this 'journey' the heroin that cost 3,000 USD per kilo in Afghanistan would be worth 22,000 USD per kilo in Russia – and, notably, at its purest (70 per cent) when leaving Afghanistan, heroin would be diluted and weigh more by the time in reached the final market (ibid.). Even on a conservative reading of all these estimates, the amount of profit that drug business can bring in makes it a crime that is hard to resist – and hence even harder to fight. Given the state of the economies in Central Asia – with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan especially poor and providing few legitimate business alternatives – the lucrative business of trafficking drugs will continue to be highly attractive.

The profitability of drugs trafficking also reflects upon state capacities. While capabilities for transnational cooperation, as mentioned above, are weak due to

distrust, lack of interest, and even possible complicity of officials in the illicit business, the capabilities of states within their own borders suggest serious problems in the political development of these countries in general. The Central Asian countries are generally weak states, or more specifically, variations of 'limited access orders [LAOs]' (North et al., 2007): they are regimes with weak impartial institutions and law, and with a preponderance of inter-elite bargains where the status quo is preserved through the distribution of rents, and the state as such is to a great extent a rent-making enterprise for the elites. There are differences in the degrees of weakness of states in the region, but even the strongest of them – Kazakhstan, arguably – does not qualify as an 'open access order' – a regime governed by impersonal institutions and rule of law and capable of exercising a monopoly over the legitimate use of force (ibid.). Afghanistan is by far the weakest in this regard (see Goodhand, 2012) but it is still in the same class with its northern neighbours. Such weak – or LAO – regimes, as a rule, feature any or all of high degrees of corruption, a convergence between the state and crime, an incapacity to impose rules or to enforce law, an orientation towards inter-elite balances of power as opposed to the maintenance of the public interest and the law, and much else.

Confronted with the profits of the drugs traffic, LAOs naturally provide a hospitable ground for the business. With weak law enforcement, especially against the major groups and cartels – the 'red' category of traffickers – the risks of drugs trafficking are relatively low in Central Asia, and they are decisively outweighed by the profits it brings. High levels of corruption mean that drugs traffickers are able to secure a way through, both by bribing and by enlisting the support of accomplices among influential officials and politicians. This discouraging situation is moreover likely to persist for some years to come.

DRUGS TRAFFICKING BEYOND 2014

One of the foremost concerns expressed by Central Asians leaders at the mention of the year 2014 has been drugs trafficking. How is drugs trafficking likely to evolve in the years following 2014, and to what extent is it likely to become an even greater threat than it currently is?

Given the undemocratic and rather repressive nature of the regimes in Central Asia, the danger of drugs trafficking stands to become – and is already becoming – a useful political rallying cry that automatically confers legitimacy on harsh security policies, on repressive police tactics, on the closure of borders or tightening of border controls, and so on. Put differently, it is a convenient issue for securitisation – a framing tactic to which states, especially undemocratic ones, frequently resort in order to issue themselves 'blank checks' (see Buzan et al., 1998). Drugs trafficking as such being a rather low-visibility phenomenon, a

'phantom crime' of which people hear often but know little, it easy to securitise no matter what the actual results of anti-drugs trafficking efforts.

In fact, there is no firm reason to believe that opium cultivation or heroin production will seriously increase in Afghanistan after 2014. Production levels are already very high, having peaked at over 8,000 tons of opium in 2007 and averaging above 6,000 tons in recent years (UNODC, 2012b: 26). State anti-drugs efforts are weak, and the Western coalition has essentially given up on this matter. While it is not impossible, it is not necessarily the case that that with the drawdown of Western troops, and any outcome of the 2014 Afghan elections, opium production will rise significantly.

There is little likelihood of regional and international cooperation against drugs improving significantly (see Rickleton, 2013). There is also little likelihood that the political regimes in Central Asia will soon become either more democratic or more capable. Furthermore, neither the supply nor the demand side of drugs is likely to change significantly in either direction soon. If this analysis is correct, what looks very likely is the continuation of the current status quo in drugs trafficking, with a tendency towards steady growth, imposing its social, economic and security costs on Central Asia just as it does on all other societies.

Looking beyond 2014, then, the international effort against Afghan drugs must become more comprehensive, aiming beyond specifically drug-control mechanisms to include institutional development, improvement of transnational communications, and cooperation on security, economic development and viable alternatives to the drugs economy, as well as democratisation. While political and ideological differences among some key actors – such as the United States and Russia – will be difficult to overcome, it is possible to build a more pragmatically-oriented regime of cooperation among states which are all seriously affected. Some actors – the European Union, the United Nations, Turkey, and possibly the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) with its relatively light political baggage and its greater ability to communicate with all parties, should lead in efforts to set the agenda broadly and to get all stakeholders take genuine part. The 'Istanbul Process', for all the criticism it gets, can serve as one beginning to generate effective cooperation.

In sum, drugs trafficking is not likely to explode or reach dramatically larger proportions or deepen soon after 2014. With some fluctuations expected, of course, the parameters and trends of drugs trafficking, both in Central Asia and in the major end markets, are likely to stay stable. Drug use rates in Central Asia are steadily growing, and that trend is also likely to continue. Does this all make drugs trafficking the main threat or one of the main threats to security in Central Asia? No matter how it is rated, it certainly is a significant threat. However, without addressing some problems in the broader context of the drugs problem – problems such as weak state capacity, lack of transparency, corruption, and

interstate distrust – fighting drugs trafficking per se alone would be a futile battle.

CONCLUSION

The year 2014 is here, and some serious changes in the regional status quo are expected with it. Bad governance in any of the states involved – first and foremost in Afghanistan – and poor regional and international cooperation are the conditions that favour drugs trafficking. The overall harm done by the drugs business in the world is clear and enormous, even if its relative harmfulness may differ in different regions and countries. The scale of the overall harm it causes among the Central Asian countries is not clearly outweighed by the profits made through it by those in the 'state-crime nexus', and the ability of the drugs business to bribe is a very potent advantage. The growing domestic damage done by drugs is still a fact of which only governments and limited parts of society are aware, with the general public not sufficiently alerted to it.

In these circumstances, countering this illicit business has to be viewed within the complex of larger problems, both substantively and geographically. It cannot be fought effectively within the borders of a single state, and it cannot be fought effectively if all other issues of the states involved are viewed separately from it. As the situation stood in mid-2013, it was not encouraging in either regard. For the post-2014 regional security scenario to improve, the horizons of cooperation against drugs trafficking must expand beyond state borders and beyond the region, and they should become comprehensive and not narrowly focused on drugs only.

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5 Why Islamists are not the most important regional security challenge for Central Asian states

Rustam Burnashev

In Central Asia the regimes link Islamists with terrorism and violence, thus framing them as a security challenge (securitisation of Islamism), often with (wrongly) alleged roots in Afghanistan. To these regimes, state security actually denotes security for the regime rather than for the people. This exacerbates the already low identification between society and state, a key feature of weak statehood in Central Asia. The lack of agreed codes and rules for competition and coexistence in the public debate result in a fragmented public discourse with little continuity. Instead, multiple centres of power seek to improve own security and influence at others' expense. Doctrinal documents reveal big differences in how the regimes see the Islamist challenge. Is it primarily a political or a military threat? Is this threat primarily external or internal? In sum, Islamism is primarily a challenge to the regimes in the region and is unlikely to abate. Little underpins regional action and regimes' mainly individual responses will not change.

The 2014 transformation of NATO's presence in Afghanistan is raising questions about the involvement of the Central Asian states in Afghanistan's development and a possible reformatting of the wider Central Asian region. Simultaneously, several security challenges in Central Asia are coming to the fore such as drugs trafficking, weak governance, porous borders – and Islamism, that is, using Islam as a means for social and political mobilisation and 'the belief that Islam should guide social and political as well as personal life' (Berman, 2003: 258). This chapter shows that securitisation – 'the discursive process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed … to treat something as an existential threat' (Buzan and Wæver, 2003: 491) – of challenges from Islamist structures, for example the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), is a structural characteristic of the dominant security discourses in Central Asia. The basis of this characteristic seems to be an insecurity dilemma. Accordingly, the challenges posed by Islamism are not so much external as internal and focus on its potential effect on the regimes in the Central Asian countries. This chapter aims to discuss Islamism as a security challenge for Central Asia.

SECURITISATION – THE CHALLENGES FROM ISLAM

Islamism in Central Asia is a type of identity politics. The foundations for the securitisation (Wæver, 1995) of Islamism, i.e. creating a perception that Islamism is primarily a security problem, in Central Asia were laid in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Leaders of the Central Asian states (mainly belonging to the former Soviet Communist Party elite) merged the dominant and competing nationalist and statist ideologies together by emphasising 'elite-state-nation-culture /ethnicity' as core values. Thus former party elites seized the initiative from nationalist movements and pushed them to the periphery of the political struggle. But religious opponents proved more difficult. Islamic ideology questions the legitimacy of secular power. Any inclusion of Islamist currents in the dominant political discourse would hence limit the freedom of manoeuvre of the regime. Islamic ideology also opposes nationalism. All this displaced religion from the political space.

The securitisation of Islam in Central Asia is closely linked to the civil war in Tajikistan (1992–97), where one of the warring sides, primarily the Islamic Renaissance Party, wanted a bigger role for Islam in the country's social and political life. After that, Islamism became increasingly linked to two types of actors in the region. The first were illegal structures operating in the countries of Central Asia with the aim of *spreading Islamism as an ideology*, such as the international and pan-Islamic Hizb ut-Tahrir and its local counterparts, such as Uzbekistan's Akramia. The second were groups that emphasised the *use of force to spread Islamism*, such as the IMU, which took part in clashes in 1999 and 2000 in the border zones between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

The activities of these and some other movements were also linked by media and government agencies to terrorist attacks that took place in some Central Asian countries in the second half of the 1990s and the first half of the 2000s. One example is the alleged links between terrorist attacks in Tashkent on 16 September 1999 and Tohir Yuldashev, who later became known as a leader of the IMU (Turkiston Press, 1999). In recent years, governments, analysts and public opinion have tended to associate Islamism with events such as an attack on a military convoy in Tajikistan's Rasht Valley on 19 September 2010 (Avesta.Tj, 2011; *Le Figaro*, 2010) and a series of attacks in Kazakhstan in 2011–12 (Institute of Political Solutions, 2011; 2012).

In Central Asia, the Islamist challenges are usually linked to Afghanistan, but this connection is actually secondary. Groups considered as Islamist and operating in the Central Asian countries generally lack intrinsic connections with Afghanistan. When the IMU focused its activities on the Ferghana Valley (until 2000) it had no ties with Afghan Islamists. After 2001, when the movement became more involved in Afghanistan, its interests moved away from Uzbekistan. In Kazakhstan, the group Jund al-Khalifa, allegedly based in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for several failed terrorist actions. The group,

however, has a phantom character. After posting a series of statements on the Internet in 2011, it has not shown any activity.

ISLAMISM IN THE DOMINANT SECURITY DISCOURSES OF CENTRAL ASIA

Today's political elites in Central Asia generally see the radicalisation of Islam[1] as one of the most important challenges that can build up in their countries. Here, the differences between the countries are discussed by analysing how official doctrinal and strategy documents and statements by key figures relate to Islamism. The threat assessments concerning Islamism in security discourses are analysed in two dimensions. First, on the horizontal axis, is the threat assessed to be Islamism's influence by ideology or is it rather influence by violence (i.e. to what degree is it a military threat)? Second, on the vertical axis, is the threat external or internal? (See Figure 1.)[2]

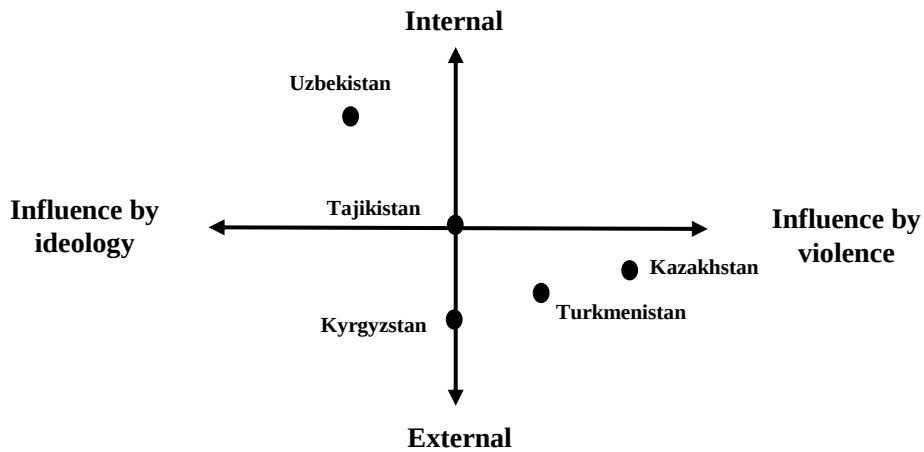

Figure 1. An illustration of the fragmentation of the Central Asian states' assessments of the challenge of Islamism.

Kazakhstan stresses the violence aspect of Islamism and treats it as primarily an external, but also to some extent an internal threat. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has linked religious extremism to terrorist activities and pointed to both internal and external causes of their spread. He has emphasised that 'the dangers of religious extremism in Kazakhstan ... are seen primarily in a destructive influence from the outside and can proceed from the neighbouring regions of Eurasia, where it has become a very real danger and where elements of extremism already exist' (Nazarbayev, 2003: 101). A similar position is fixed in the Military Doctrine of 2011 (Kazakhstan, 2011). Moreover, Kazakhstani documents link the external aspects of the threat of Islamism with Afghanistan.

For example, in April 2013, President Nazarbayev underlined the threat of religious extremism as a regional problem, and highlighted Afghanistan is the 'source and exporter of terrorism and extremism' (Nazarbayev, 2013).

Kyrgyzstan's Concept of National Security from 2012 examines the 'expansion of international terrorism and religious extremism' solely as an external threat that has both violence and ideological dimensions. The document links the threat directly to the military and political situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, where the 'basic ideological and military forces of terrorism, religious extremism, and special training camps for militants [...], which are operating in Central Asia, are concentrated'. Internal factors such as 'the impoverishment of a certain part of the population, a significant social differentiation and the weakness of the state ideology against the degradation of the educational and intellectual capacity of the people' are treated merely as a condition enabling the 'activation of terrorist and extremist manifestations' (Kyrgyzstan, 2012).

Tajikistan's Military Doctrine of 2005 sees a 'preservation and growth ... [of] religious contradictions, destabilizing both within the state and in the Central Asian region' as one of the main sources of a latent military threat (Tajikistan, 2005). In accordance with the Law 'On Security', 'political extremism in any form, including incitement [...] [of] religious enmity or discord' is considered a threat to the security of the Republic of Tajikistan. Calls for 'the use of existing denominational differences and different religious beliefs for political purposes' are seen as disruptive (Tajikistan, 2011). The document's approach, seeing Islamism as a military and an ideological issue as well as a problem for both Tajikistan internally and the wider region, puts Tajikistan at the axes' intersection.

According to Turkmenistan's Military Doctrine from 2009, 'international terrorism, separatism and religious extremism' are linked to external threats that have a violent more than an ideological character. Threats such as 'plan of action aimed at changing the constitutional order' and 'the activities of extremist and separatist parties, aimed at destabilising the political situation in Turkmenistan', are ascribed to the internal type of threat, but the external aspect is assessed here to be the dominant one (Turkmenistan, 2009).

Unlike the other Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan sees the threat of Islamism as mainly internal, as outlined by President Islam Karimov as early as in 1997 (Karimov, 1998). Furthermore, Uzbekistan's National Security Concept (1997) links 'religious extremism and other manifestations of religious intolerance' to internal political threats. When assessing the violence in May 2005 in Andijan, Karimov did not exclude external intervention, but also noted that such intervention is effective only when enough protest potential has been accumulated in a country and when state power is weak (Karimov, 2005: 20–23). With the above understanding of the Islamist challenge in mind, events in Afghanistan are seen in Uzbekistan as a challenge to its security, although

actually not closely related to Islamism. Afghanistan is seen more as a template according to which internal armed political factions can act.

WEAK STATES AND THE SECURITISATION OF ISLAMISM

The securitisation of Islamism in the dominant discourses of the Central Asian countries is determined by a special positioning between the securitising actor and referent object. The securitising actors here are the governments/regimes having 'a relation of singularity and externality, and thus of transcendence, to his principality' (Foucault, 1991: 89–90). Accordingly, the aim of a government is to maintain, strengthen and protect not the state, but the *regime*. Regimes in Central Asia have thus become the primary referent objects eligible for long-term legitimacy and special protection to be provided through stability and security.

The country's top leadership thus cannot be 'replaceable' even through a democratic process. It cannot be criticised within the framework of a liberal procedure, since liberal-democratic procedure could blur the 'unity' of the nation and the state under the regime. The securitisation of Islamism in Central Asia is not related so much to national or state security as to regime security. Criticism of Islamism is largely linked to attempts to reduce the variety of ideologies competing with the dominant discourse, in other words, to insulate regimes and state power from competition.

The Central Asian regimes often stress the threat of Islamism. Portraying any violent activity as Islamist justifies stronger political control of all aspects of life. The population thus becomes the object of control through the minimisation of both the personal and social (non-politicised and non-securitised) spheres as well as the public policy spheres through the process of securitisation. In fact, policy in Central Asia is not public. Political participation and access to public discussion (primarily in the mass media) are limited by censorship, the poorly developed infrastructure and widespread poverty.

Tellingly, dominant discourses in Central Asia describe domestic security incidents as Islamist even though they can often be explained by other factors. For example, the activities of militants in Tajikistan's Rasht Valley in 2012 can be explained by a harsher regime policy towards members of the former United Tajik Opposition, one of the warring sides in the 1992–97 Civil War, and by aggravated inter-clan rivalries. Another example is events in Kazakhstan, such as the suicide bombing on 17 May 2011 inside the Aktobe offices of the National Security Committee and two bombings on 31 October 2011 in Atyrau, which, in the light of the political context as well as the character of the events, can be explained by an intensification of the struggle for power between several special interest groups rather than Islamism. It is easy to agree with Chausovsky that 'any developments on the militant front in the region need to be examined within

the context of the internal power struggles and political dynamics of each country in addition to the Islamist angle' (Chausovsky, 2012).

A key factor in this securitisation of Islamism is the weak statehood of the Central Asian states, their weak infrastructure and, most importantly, a low level of identification between society and state. As Grzymala-Busse and Jones Luong show, '[n]o one single agent has uniform influence or authority across all state sectors, and state action is neither centralized nor coherent' (2002: 532–33). Another key feature of weak states is a lack of generally agreed codes and rules for coexistence and competition in the public discourse. Consequently there is no continuity of discourse and it is rather fragmented. As a result, the dominant discourse centres not so much on the state and the nation as on the regime. Power structures in weak states are not built on a 'centre–periphery' scheme. The multitude of power centres compete to acquire and preserve a dominant position for their own discursive and non-discursive practices (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Each special interest group acts as one of many centres of power and seeks to improve only its own security. This produces insecurity in the rest of the system in a kind of zero-sum game. This insecurity dilemma (Job, 1992; Sørensen, 2007) is self-sustaining. When a regime attempts to strengthen its security and government, other groups resist and challenge the regime's authority, thus undermining the institutional framework of the state and the security of society as a whole (Job, 1992; Jackson, 2010: 187).

With increasing limitations on personal and social space as well as public policy discourse, some special interest groups lose the 'right to speak' and get into a 'security of silence' dilemma, that is, 'a situation where the potential subject of security has no, or limited, possibility of speaking its security problem', when 'raising something as a security problem is impossible or might even aggravate the threat' (Hansen, 2000: 294, 287). The securitisation of Islamism in the dominant discourses in the Central Asian states means that articulating religious concerns can give the speaker even more problems. There are several possible responses to this. The first is non-traditional communication channels built on networks. Two examples are the religious cells that are typical of Hizb ut-Tahrir and Akramia, or the social networks used by Islamist groups, and others, in the Arab Spring. The possibility that this might repeat itself is discussed Central Asia. A second is taking to the streets, a call to non-discursive actions, for example through extremist protest actions that are typical of the IMU. Sometimes governments have staged such actions to discredit Islamist groups that are in fact based on non-violent methods.

At the heart of the insecurity dilemma is the fact that the transcendence of the Central Asia regimes provides them with security, but at the same time it also destroys the possibility of reaching consensus on policy issues by distancing both interest groups and the general population from the regime. The regimes limit special interest groups' ability to express their positions and, consequently,

people's ability to hear them, which pushes these groups into non-discursive actions. The lack of a public policy debate forces groups and movements either underground and/or onto the streets.

The insecurity dilemma and the security of silence dilemma are the most important problems for the Central Asian countries. The structural features of the discursive space of these countries make it likely that challenges from social groups based on identities competing with the regimes' – ethnic, religious, kinship and ideological – will be subject to a securitisation process and, simultaneously, be unappreciated (external) for the dominant discourse, that is, they will be framed by the regimes primarily as a security issue rather than a legitimate political challenge.

The non-discursive sphere of securitisation of Islamism is determined, first of all, by the growth of unresolved internal problems in the countries of Central Asia, such as poverty, unemployment, the harsh socio-economic stratification of society, and corruption. The regimes lack effective strategies to address these problems, which contributes to people seeking alternative, new, both political and socio-economic as well as identification, models. The models offered by Islam integrate social and religious factors and seem to be among the most acceptable to people.

CONCLUSIONS

Accentuating the challenges from Islamism is a structural characteristic of the dominant discourses of security in Central Asia originating in the early 1990s. At the base of the securitisation of Islamism is a security discourse structure in which the main securitising actor and the referent object are the current political regime as represented by the government and state. The securitisation of Islamism in Central Asia has less to do with national or state security than with regime security. This, however, also creates a reverse process, shaping a perception that the regime is the main threat to the state/national security. Equally important are the governments' attempts to use and apply political power in all aspects of human life.

In the dominant government-sponsored discourse the challenge from Islamists is seen primarily as internal destructive forces trying to undermine Muslims' confidence in the state and to destabilise the situation. The basis of this understanding of the challenge of Islamism is that all the Central Asian countries are weak states, each with multiple centres of power competing for the dominant position. As each of these centres seeks to improve its own security at others' expense, insecurity spreads in the rest of the system – the insecurity dilemma – while the dominant discourse pushes competing discursive practices away from the discursive space – the 'security as silence' problem.

The incoherence of discourse space, state weakness and the emphasis on internal security shared by all the countries of Central Asia adversely affect the already weak relations between them. Central Asia has yet to acquire a holistic nature forming structural relations of a regional security complex (Buzan et al., 1998: 13). As the analysis of dominant discourses showed, the threat of Islamism is understood differently in each of the Central Asian countries and cannot therefore be a unifying factor, despite regular pronouncements about the need for joint regional action. The regimes in Central Asia often point to a link between the challenges from Islamism and the situation in Afghanistan. The Islamist challenge is, however, actually primarily an internal factor. In sum, few developments in Central Asia today indicate that the challenges from Islamism to the region's regimes will abate or that today's responses are likely to change in nature.

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Notes

[1] The term ‘Islamism’ is almost never used in Central Asian official discourses, but is often replaced by terms such as ‘religious fundamentalism’ and ‘religious extremism’, often combined with ‘terrorism’.

[2] The analysis is based on official regulations and policy texts of Central Asian leaders. Unfortunately, all documents cannot be considered equally. In Uzbekistan, many such documents, for example the Defence Doctrine of 2000 and Foreign Policy Concept of 2012, are not published. In Kyrgyzstan, texts produced by the presidents can hardly be seen as programmes due to the lack of continuity of power.

6 Regional efforts of the Central Asian states regarding Afghanistan

Dr Murat Laumulin

The drawdown of NATO forces may destabilise Afghanistan and neighbouring Central Asia. The closer neighbours – Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – are more concerned than more distant Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. All the Central Asian states see economic potential in Afghanistan, but also security threats such as terrorism, religious fundamentalism and drugs trafficking. As for peace in Afghanistan, they agree that there is no military solution. Economic restoration should play a bigger role; a political process must be Afghan-led and involve all actors (which means the Taliban as well) and respect Afghanistan's traditions and culture; and, finally, the UN and the international community should be more involved. Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are likely to rely on multilateral institutions, while Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan prefer bilateral relations. But the middle road between them – regional efforts between the five Central Asian states – will be less travelled.

A SECURITY PROBLEM SET TO REMAIN

Afghanistan is still facing serious security, political and economic challenges. The threat of terrorism is the primary cause of instability. All the Central Asian states understand that ongoing counter-terrorism campaigns, particularly military deterrence, have no future in Afghanistan. Despite the international effort aimed at creating the conditions for Afghanistan's sustainable development, the situation in the country is not improving. Afghanistan is still not succeeding in tackling instability, setting up a viable government or fostering economic development. In these circumstances, the drawdown of coalition forces, primarily from the United States and other NATO countries, might act as a catalyst to destabilise the situation both in Afghanistan and in the neighbouring states, including Central Asia. Afghanistan and Central Asia will in that case face challenges that are persistent, certain and, at this stage, insurmountable. Terrorism, feeding on extremism and militancy, threatens national governments and exploits ethnic, sectarian and secessionist conflict. It also destabilises regions with the threat of interstate wars, which may even draw in global powers. Furthermore, terror groups are capitalising on the Afghan drugs trade and robbing all actors of the chance of realising economic opportunities, which in turn leads to the displacement of large populations. Against this background, this chapter aims to discuss the prospects for multilateral security cooperation in Central Asia in the light of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of ISAF.

Relations between Central Asian states and Afghanistan revolve primarily around issues of national security and, to some extent, political stability. The Central Asian states view Afghanistan as a source of long-term threats such as terrorism, religious fundamentalism and drugs trafficking. The impact of these threats varies from country to country by virtue of their geographic location. Consequently, the Central Asian governments have different views on Afghanistan and the priority that should be given to agendas relating to Afghanistan. Altogether, this makes it harder to alleviate the Central Asian states' concerns about post-ISAF Afghanistan.

Several problems need to be successfully addressed if the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are to be able to evolve as an adequate security tool after the planned withdrawal of ISAF. A limited Western anti-terror and training force needs to stay behind after the combat forces leave. Financial and technical support for the ANSF must be expanded and the flow of aid sustained. Reduced corruption, a legitimate political transition and more active and effective regional diplomacy would also help. All this would make it easier for the ANSF to defend and provide security for Afghanistan, and safeguard it from the Taliban or a return of al-Qaeda. This in turn would help to reduce the risk of renewed civil war and create better conditions for development, for economic growth and for consolidating democratic institutions and other gains made since 2001. It might even nudge regional actors towards acting more with a collective interest in mind. The wish list is long, but none of these factors is likely to materialise. Instability related to Afghanistan is likely to continue to influence Central Asia in the foreseeable future.

The level and nature of the concerns of the Central Asian states regarding Afghanistan vary with distance. By virtue of their geographic locations, the Central Asian states fall into two groups. The first group, Afghanistan's immediate northern neighbours – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan – border Afghanistan and are consistently involved in processes related to their southern neighbour. The second group – Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in the wider neighbourhood – lack common borders with Afghanistan and are consequently less involved than the members of the first. Below, each country is dealt with separately within the framework of each group.

THE IMMEDIATE NEIGHBOURS

Two basic assumptions lie at the core of Uzbekistan's position on Afghanistan. First, the resolution of the Afghan problem cannot be achieved by force alone. Second, for this reason, economic measures should take a more prominent role in conflict resolution in and the restoration of Afghanistan. More concrete Uzbek interests are borders and geopolitics. Uzbekistan shares a small and tightly monitored border with Afghanistan. Uzbek concerns pertain more to the porous

nature of the Afghan–Tajik border and Tajikistan's ability to maintain border control. Uzbekistan also sees the crisis in Afghanistan as an opportunity to create an international role for itself that is independent of Russia.

Uzbekistan's key message is that restoration of the economy is the only way to reduce the conflict potential inside Afghanistan. Priority, therefore, should be given to targeted economic assistance to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is one of the most important neighbours of Afghanistan in the conflict regulation process. Initially, from the 1990s Uzbek diplomacy worked on coordinated international efforts to promote a dialogue between Afghanistan's warring factions in various formats that included Afghanistan's neighbours and major powers. This however enjoyed limited success, and Uzbekistan consequently focused on bilateral cooperation.

In July 2012, the Foreign Policy Concept of Uzbekistan was adopted. It includes several principles that are relevant for Afghanistan. Policy towards neighbouring countries should be based on open and pragmatic relations. Conflict resolution in Afghanistan should be based on mutual respect and non-interference. Political, economic and other measures should be taken to avoid involvement in armed conflicts in its neighbourhood. No foreign military installations will be allowed in Uzbekistan.

Apart from diplomacy, Uzbekistan has also implemented economic projects in Afghanistan such as railway construction, the extraction industry and educational exchange projects. More specific examples include Uzbekistan's participation since 2002 in the construction of 11 bridges between Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul, and building a 442 km-long power grid from Kabul to the Uzbek border, as well as setting up Internet cable infrastructure and mobile communications. Trade between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan almost doubled between 2010 (when it amounted to 557 million USD) and 2012 (1.073 billion USD). In 2012 Uzbekistan became Afghanistan's second most important trading partner, surpassed only by Pakistan, with 1.477 billion USD.

Given the stipulations of the Foreign Policy Concept, Uzbekistan's future policy towards Afghanistan is likely to entail intensified action to facilitate a domestic political dialogue between different political forces in Afghanistan in order to strengthen and preserve a unified Afghan state. It will also prefer bilateral settings, since multilateral formats have proved ineffective. Uzbekistan will assist in the resolution of the social and economic problems of Afghanistan and will implement specific projects aimed at creating a viable economy. It will base its actions on its experience of concrete project-based cooperation.

In the long term, Uzbekistan would have wanted a continued US presence in Afghanistan in order to keep on gaining economic dividends without itself having to succumb to political reform. By aligning itself with the US, the regime gained political legitimacy and Uzbekistan became something of a counterweight

to Russia and a privileged zone of influence and leadership in the region. If all this fails, Uzbekistan can always nurture its relationship with the ethnic Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and his party in Afghanistan to create a buffer zone against Taliban advances in the north of Afghanistan.

Tajikistan's political elite believes that Afghanistan is a key determinant for its country's future. Tajikistan's stance on Afghanistan is based on several principles. Tajikistan advocates rational neighbourly relations and wants to preserve Afghanistan's integrity and independence, whilst recognising that military action is not a solution. Furthermore, Tajikistan emphasises the need for international consensus on Afghanistan and refrains from emphasising ideological, ethnic and regional aspects in its Afghanistan policies. Afghanistan should be a partner on both energy and security issues. As for illegal drug production, the focus should be on workable solutions both within Afghanistan and regarding trafficking outside Afghanistan, as well as restoration of the social fabric in Afghanistan. Finally, Tajikistan also wants to develop a coordinated, regional, Central Asian policy on Afghanistan focusing on joint development of Afghanistan's markets (energy and food) and mutually beneficial use of infrastructure and transport links between Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Tajikistan, like Kyrgyzstan, sees the possibility of stabilisation in and reconstruction of Afghanistan as an opportunity to export electricity to Afghanistan and to energy-poor India and Pakistan. Tajikistan has made numerous proposals for how to develop future electricity exports should it successfully develop the Rogun hydropower dam. One is to build transmission lines from Rogun to Iran through Mazar-e Sharif and another to go through Kunduz and Kabul and on to Jalalabad in Pakistan. The problem with these proposals is that Tajikistan struggles with its own electricity supply during winter. Furthermore, the construction of the Rogun dam is being challenged by neighbouring Uzbekistan, which weakens the prospects for sustainable cooperation. Tajikistan also hopes to benefit from trade and transport routes to Afghanistan. Should plans for improving the railway system inside Afghanistan materialise, Tajikistan would want to build a Dushanbe–Kurgan Teppe–Kunduz railway.

Undoubtedly there are good prospects for relations between Tajikistan and Afghanistan based on equal rights and mutual advantage, provided that the situation in Afghanistan remains stable. The further development of these relations, including the realisation of planned joint projects in the fields of hydro energy and transport, depends to a great extent on the military-political situation in Afghanistan and in the region as a whole after the withdrawal of ISAF.

Currently it is difficult to account for Turkmenistan's position on the Afghan issue, since Turkmenistan is not represented on the regional security agenda. Turkmen President Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov seems to wants to make it an international issue, for example by saying that the only way out of the crisis is

through negotiations, through the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA). The Turkmen government maintains contacts with the Turkmen community in Afghanistan, around 2 per cent of the population, but is not involved in the local political struggles.

THE REGIONAL NEIGHBOURS

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have formal relations with Afghanistan, but without common borders there is limited scope for interaction. Both countries are extending reconstruction assistance. Their shared overall view is that international efforts should be geared to making Afghanistan less dependent on aid and more economically stable so that it can develop financial relations with its extended neighbourhood and become a more attractive destination for investment. Afghanistan could also become an important transit centre.

Kazakhstan's position on the resolution of the Afghan conflict is based on several premises. Afghanistan's stability and sustainability are prerequisites for containing threats like international terrorism, religious fundamentalism and the drugs trade. The international community and the UN should work with the Afghan government and play an active role in a political resolution of the conflict in Afghanistan. Afghanistan's dependence on humanitarian aid should gradually be replaced by foreign investment, preferably by transnational corporations rather than foreign governments. Nevertheless, Kazakhstan's contribution today focuses on targeted economic aid for financial assistance, the construction of social, industrial and infrastructure facilities, and staff training. In a future vision for regional economic integration, Kazakhstan may have a leading role to play as a potential donor to and investor in regional infrastructure projects, including in Afghanistan.

Where security and cross-border threats emanating from Afghanistan are concerned, Kazakhstan is the least affected of the Central Asian countries. It participates in multilateral programmes on Afghanistan through NATO, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), and is especially active in the latter two organisations' Afghanistan-related working groups. However, in Kazakhstan's view neither NATO nor the SCO is appropriate for stabilising Afghanistan as neither organisation has Afghanistan as its natural focus. While all international processes and organisations should be used, Kazakhstan prefers the United Nations. Kazakhstan stresses that outside nations should not interfere in Afghanistan's domestic and foreign policy. If Afghanistan opts for neutrality, this should be supported. Kazakhstan did have a debate about despatching a contingent from its peacekeeping brigade (KAZBRIG) to support ISAF in

Afghanistan, but the parliament finally vetoed it. Kazakhstan also has a political and economic stake in the success of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN).

In bilateral relations, the concrete measures taken by Kazakhstan have given it an advantage over the other Central Asian republics in Afghanistan. It has provided humanitarian aid (food aid and grain), implemented several large-scale social projects, assisted Afghanistan's parliament, and introduced scholarships worth 50 million USD for the education and training of Afghan nationals.

Kyrgyzstan is less involved with Afghanistan for two reasons. It is relatively weak in resources and its domestic political situation is unstable. Kyrgyzstan hosts one of the most important military installations on the NDN, the Transit Centre at Manas Airport near Bishkek. Kyrgyzstan, although lacking a border with Afghanistan, has been an important player in NATO's efforts by leasing out this military base. It also made a brief attempt to propose a political solution for Afghanistan before it became engulfed in its own political turmoil. Kyrgyzstan, like Tajikistan, also sees potential for exporting electricity to Afghanistan.

COMMON INTERESTS OF THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

The Central Asian countries differ in their positions on Afghanistan, but a comparative analysis reveals that they take a common stand on a number of issues. All see economic potential in Afghanistan as a transport route to South Asia. All (except Turkmenistan) are implementing programmes on education and for developing professional skills among Afghans. In security matters, they share the concerns about the two main threats from Afghanistan, religious fundamentalism and Afghan-produced drugs. They also share perceptions about five areas of peace and stability in Afghanistan. First, there is no military solution to the Afghan problem. NATO's strategy to pacify Afghanistan is not expected to yield the anticipated results. Their preference would be for a greater use of intelligence rather than military force and a search for a political solution through national reconciliation.

Second, priority should be given to peace through economic reconstruction as a way to achieve security through regional integration, and to incentives such as tackling the problems of poverty, unemployment and quality of life in Afghanistan in order to alleviate the conditions that are driving instability in the region. Third, any Afghan solution must show full respect for the traditions, customs and values of Islam of the people of Afghanistan. Fourth, Afghan talks should be primarily Afghan-led and include all relevant actors – in other words, not only the Taliban but also the Northern Alliance – which would facilitate reconciliation based on power sharing between the different ethnic groups. Finally, the UN and its specialised agencies should be engaged more actively.

The Central Asian countries' interest in Afghanistan as a transit route to South Asia opens the way for further discussion of the New Silk Road initiative.[1] This discussion would be made easier if the ideological connotations were removed and the focus put on seeking solutions to specific transport, trade and politico-military problems.

Other (non-Central Asian) countries also have a major role in shaping the approaches of the Central Asian states to Afghanistan. Some Central Asian countries currently play a more important role in addressing Afghanistan-related problems. Tajikistan is a key actor, for objective reasons, as it feels the direct impact of the developments in Afghanistan more than other regional countries. Uzbekistan can play a pivotal role: thanks to its resources it can have the strongest influence on processes inside Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is the most resource-rich Central Asian state with a bigger potential than the others to contribute to (primarily) economic developments. The other two countries will play more limited roles, Turkmenistan due to its isolationism and unwillingness and inability to get involved, Kyrgyzstan because of its internal stability problem and reduced importance once the transit through Manas becomes less important.

CONCLUSIONS

Central Asian governments are not openly discussing the possible geopolitical transformation in the region following the NATO drawdown in Afghanistan, but experts believe that this transformation may become a crucial key factor for future regional destabilisation.

A number of uncertainties may affect Central Asian countries' positions and approaches towards Afghanistan, including short- and medium-term changes in the social, economic and political conditions such as possible political shifts due to attempts at changes like the Orange Revolution or Arab Spring, or power transitions if there are leadership changes. Another uncertainty is the format, strategy and tactics of the NATO drawdown from Afghanistan and the possible agreements between NATO member states (most notably the US) and Central Asian countries with respect to the drawdown of forces from Afghanistan.

Judging from the current situation in and around Afghanistan, the Central Asian countries are most likely to bolster their efforts to establish political dialogue with all forces inside Afghanistan, as well as with neighbouring countries and leading powers that support a unified Afghan state. They are likely to assist Afghanistan in addressing social and economic concerns and supporting projects to develop a growing and sustainable Afghan economy. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, in all probability, will focus on bilateral relations, while Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are more likely to rely on multilateral institutions that are already involved in the restoration of Afghanistan. But the

middle road between them – regional efforts between the five Central Asian states – is unlikely to be taken.

Notes

[1] The New Silk Road initiative spells out a vision for creating an 'international web and network of economic and transit connections' that would make Afghanistan a hub for linking Central and South Asia through creating trade and transport corridors and 'removing bureaucratic barriers and other impediments to the free flow of goods and people'. It was first launched by the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on 20 July 2011 during a speech in the Indian city of Chennai (Consulate General of the United States, Chennai, 'Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton speaks on India and the United States: a vision for the 21st century', 20 July 2011, http://chennai.usconsulate.gov/secclintonspeechacl_110721.html).

C. Remaining external actors

This section deals with the perspectives of some of the Central Asia actors that will influence regional developments after ISAF leaves Afghanistan. Their perspectives on how security developments in Afghanistan will affect Central Asia in the future are important for one simple reason. They will be the ones who have to deal with it.

When ISAF withdraws from Afghanistan, Western interest in the evolving security situation in Central Asia is likely to diminish. The region is no longer needed as a support transit or staging area for operations in Afghanistan that have been going on for more than a decade. Combat operations had, as of early February 2014, claimed the lives of more than 3,400 soldiers (icasualties, 2014) and have become increasingly hard to justify to voters and taxpayers. Troop-contributing countries are unlikely to volunteer troops for military operations in inaccessible mountainous countries in the heart of the Eurasian landmass, the politics and cultures of which are of little concern to them.

The most obvious outside actor in Central Asia is neighbouring Afghanistan. Developments there are crucial to this analysis. Our authors agree that events in Afghanistan have the potential to influence Central Asia in a decisive way, but offer varying assessments of how. Damaging security developments may not only start in Afghanistan and spill over to the north. The Central Asian states are generally perceived as very weak and incapable of handling the potential security threats they face. Instability in Central Asia may thus spill over to the south and exacerbate developments in Afghanistan.

China has so far played a more limited role in regional security and focused on supporting Chinese investments and trade, leaving it to others to bear most of the security burden in the region – the West in Afghanistan and Russia in Central Asia. With regional instability that may well affect Chinese interests in Central Asia adversely looming in 2014, can China over time resist calls for it to consider a wider range of measures, including military measures?

The single main regional security actor in Central Asia is Russia. Russia is pursuing a two-pronged policy: economic integration and underpinning security. In the economic field, Russia's policy towards Central Asia is a part of Russia's wider Eurasian integration efforts. These efforts could be shattered by deteriorating security in the region. Russia is therefore making considerable efforts to underpin regional security, both in bilateral relations with all the Central Asian countries and by promoting multilateral security cooperation, primarily within the CSTO, but also to a lesser extent in the SCO. Russia is today the most militarily capable actor that is both willing to and actively preparing to intervene in Central Asia should the security situation deteriorate. But for Russia Central Asia is but one strategic direction demanding both resources and attention.

7 Afghanistan and the Central Asian states: reflections on the evolving relations after 2014

Said Reza Kazemi

This chapter discusses how state-to-state ties between Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia will evolve after 2014, given the ongoing transition in Afghanistan and a probable decline in the interest and engagement of the Western-led international community in the neighbourhood. It tentatively argues that Central Asian governments, and particularly those of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which remain the most closely affected by events in Afghanistan, might increasingly resort to adopting defensive behaviour rather than engaging in meaningful regional cooperation, at least for the time being. The relationship between the Afghan and Central Asian governments is certainly varied. Finally, one should keep in mind whether and how any further drastic deterioration in Afghanistan's politico-security situation would affect Central Asia, and conversely whether and how any potential Central Asian turmoil would impact on Afghanistan.

Although relations between Afghanistan and the Central Asian states are deeply rooted in common geography, history and culture (see, e.g., Shalinsky, 1993; Lee, 1996) where non-state actors play a not insignificant role, this chapter looks at the intergovernmental relations between Afghanistan and the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia. The focus will be on the period up to and after 2014 – the year during which Afghanistan's crucial transition (at the security, political and economic levels) is supposed to take place. More specifically, it looks at how the growing Afghan–Central Asian state-to-state ties, particularly since 2001 – the year the Taliban were removed from power as a result of the US-led military intervention in Afghanistan – are evolving.

In addition to these thematic (state-to-state ties) and temporal (the period after 2014) focuses, this chapter is also focused geographically, in at least two respects. First, it concentrates particularly on relations between mainly northern Afghanistan and each of Afghanistan's three direct Central Asian neighbours, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan – the states in Central Asia that continue to be most closely connected to developments in Afghanistan. Second, it briefly discusses the developing interstate connections between Afghanistan and the two non-immediate Central Asian neighbours, namely Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.

A tentative argument of this chapter is that, given the growing uncertainty and a looming potential decline in the Western-led international community's interest and involvement in the neighbourhood, the region's governments, particularly in neighbouring Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, might increasingly resort to adopting defensive behaviour (tightening borders, restricting interactions at governmental and public levels, and supposedly protecting themselves otherwise). Alternatively, they might start meaningfully participating in multilateral regional political, economic and other forms of cooperation not only to address the emerging risks but also to obtain potential gains in the medium to long term. As things stand, however, the former (defensive behaviour) seems to outweigh the latter (regional cooperation), at least for the time being.

AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMMEDIATE CENTRAL ASIAN NEIGHBOURS

Spurred by the Western-led international community, Afghanistan and its three direct Central Asian neighbouring countries (Tajikistan in the north-east and north, Uzbekistan in the north and Turkmenistan in the north and north-west) have been expanding their mainly bilateral state-to-state ties post-2001 (Fjæstad and Kjærnet forthcoming; Laruelle et al., 2013; Tadjbakhsh, 2012a). Quite considerable developments have taken place in the diplomatic, economic, cultural and other spheres. Diplomatically, Afghanistan and its northern neighbours have (re)opened and are operating embassies and at least eight consulates (see, e.g., Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs) which facilitate ongoing intergovernmental dialogue and coordination on areas such as border management, trade, counter-narcotics and law enforcement.[1] Economically, currently one major area of interaction is the export of electricity, with varying levels of capacity, from all the three northern neighbours to Afghanistan. There is also cross-border trade in commodities, especially at the Shir Khan (Afghanistan–Tajikistan), Hairatan (Afghanistan–Uzbekistan) and Aqina and Turghondi (Afghanistan–Turkmenistan) border crossings (see also Parto et al., 2012). There have also been some cultural developments both formally and informally, which indicate the endurance of ethnically oriented, but so far limited, ties across the border between ethnic Tajiks, Uzbeks and Turkmens in Afghanistan and neighbouring Central Asia. For instance, there are extensive interactions between Tajik intellectuals (writers, musicians, film-makers) in Afghanistan and Tajikistan; Turkmenistan has been the key supporter of the Turkmen Language and Literature Department of Jowzjan University in northern Afghanistan and has sustained ties, albeit patchy so far, with its co-ethnics in Afghanistan (Turkmenistan.ru, 2012); and Afghanistan's Uzbeks, at least partially supported by Uzbekistan, have been promoting the Uzbek language and culture in Kabul and in the north and are operating several local radio and TV stations and one nationwide TV channel called Aina (a Dari word meaning

'mirror').[2] These developments, however, currently fall significantly short of suggesting or indicating any manifestations of ethno-nationalism among Afghanistan's Central Asian ethnic groups in the north.

Growing uncertainty and the evolving ties

There is not only an unfortunate general lack of awareness in Afghanistan about Central Asia – and in Central Asia about Afghanistan – but there also are serious stereotypical perceptions that haunt the region as a whole (Kazemi, 2012a). Central Asian stereotypes have, by and large, reduced Afghans to 'religious extremists', 'drugs traffickers' and 'the backward'. Typical Afghans, by contrast, generally perceive Central Asia as a 'free', 'rich' and 'advanced' area,[3] while the region is, in practice, ruled by authoritarian governments (with the possible recent exception of Kyrgyzstan) with notorious disregard for human rights and freedoms, is generally poverty-stricken (excluding parts of Kazakhstan) and is one of the world's most internally divided regions, characterised by conflicts over 'water-sharing, border delineation, trade and transit, and other issues' (such as ethnic discrimination and ill-treatment) (Nichol, 2013: 12). According to Aziz Aryanfar, former head of the Centre for Strategic Studies at the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'in Tajikistan, Afghanistan is always looked upon as the epicentre of brewing instability towards Central Asia and particularly Tajikistan' (Shahryar, 2012; see also Olimov and Olimova, 2013). These (mis)perceptions may become more pronounced in the present uncertain times.

Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are, of all the five Central Asian states, most intimately connected to developments in Afghanistan for historical, social (mainly ethnic), economic and political reasons. Having the longest border (1206 km) and the largest co-ethnic group that is socio-politically significant in Afghanistan and, at the same time, being one of the poorest and most vulnerable of the Central Asian states, Tajikistan will probably be most affected if there is a significant spillover of Afghanistan's armed conflict northwards. It seems that Tajikistan has (re)started investing in its relationship, albeit so far in a limited and largely unorganised way, with Afghanistan's ethnic Tajik leaders[4] within the northern Afghan leadership, and that it is further restricting ordinary Afghans' ability to visit the country.[5] In specific terms, Tajikistan, which faced its own presidential elections in November 2013, is – rightly or not – concerned about Afghanistan's instability breaking through the frontier in terms of potentially violent extremist and terrorist ideas and acts, higher and more dangerous levels of drugs and other forms of trafficking, and unmanageable refugee flows.

As for Uzbekistan, Central Asia's strongest military power, the fear in Afghanistan and perhaps elsewhere is that it might increasingly overreact to any possibilities, whether justified or not, of Afghanistan's armed conflict spilling over northwards, and that it might simply seal off the border again as it did in the

1990s (see also Modasser, 2012a). Uzbekistan's border (137 km long) with Afghanistan's northern Balkh province is one of the world's most heavily guarded frontiers, although the country is most concerned about threats originating from Afghanistan penetrating Uzbekistan via the restive Ferghana Valley (Tadjbakhsh, 2012b). The government of Uzbekistan has reported 22 cases of what it called 'border violations' by people from Afghanistan. In one case in mid-March 2013, in circumstances that remained controversial, the country's border guards opened fire on and killed at least three Afghans near Aral-Paygambar Island in the middle of the Amu Darya (see, e.g., Rotar, 2013). At the same time, Uzbekistan has growing economic stakes in Afghanistan (electricity transmission, trade, transit) and is anxious about how the contracts and the underlying economic interests might stand after 2014. It has also apparently been reaching out to Uzbek and Hazara 'strongmen' in northern Afghanistan.[6]

Turkmenistan, bordering on Afghanistan's northern and north-western provinces of Faryab, Jowzjan, Badghis and Herat (the border is 744 km long), has been the least involved in Afghan affairs and is hence the least worried (see also Modasser, 2012b). This is mainly because interaction between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan at both governmental and public levels has been very limited, although economic relations have existed throughout recent history and have been expanding since 2001. The country has had good but circumspect relations with various Afghan regimes, including the Taliban, given its stated policy of 'positive neutrality', and has been mainly interested in making attempts, so far inconclusively, to export gas through Afghanistan to South Asia under the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) project (for historical detail, see e.g. Brill Olcott, 2006). Recently, Turkmenistan has been leading the idea of building a trilateral railway linking it with Afghanistan and Tajikistan, but important questions over security and funding remain unaddressed, although the construction of Turkmenistan's stretch of the railway was inaugurated on 5 June 2013 (see e.g. Gurt, 2013 and Yari, 2013). Furthermore, it is reportedly the most indifferent of all the three direct northern neighbours towards the conditions of its 'ethnic kin' in Afghanistan.[7]

The defensive behaviour recently shown by some of Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbours is not favoured by the Afghan government, which is struggling to replace it with meaningful regional cooperation, particularly through the Afghanistan-focused 'Heart of Asia' or Istanbul Process. First, the Afghan government is trying to organise relations with neighbouring Central Asian states through intergovernmental channels and does not support growing ties between the Central Asian states, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, and the mainly anti-Taliban, non-Pashtun, co-ethnic political opposition in the north (on recent developments with regard to what is called the 'northern front' in Afghan domestic politics, see Ruttig, 2013). Second, perhaps more importantly, the Afghan government is struggling to galvanise regional political, economic and

other forms of cooperation, involving, inter alia, its direct Central Asian neighbours, for security and development in Afghanistan and its near and extended neighbourhood. However, the initiative, given the region's current socio-political divergence, has been unrealistic, despite achieving some practical, albeit haphazard and mainly bilateral, results so far (Kazemi, 2013a; for further detail on 15 previously identified regional investment projects, see Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012). Moreover, one wonders how the controversial 'Heart of Asia' regional process, including neighbouring Central Asia, can continue to progress if there is an imminent significant reduction of the Western-led international community's interest in and engagement with the neighbourhood (Kazemi, 2013a; Kazemi, 2013b). Despite this, the regional initiative has so far been an achievement for the burgeoning Afghan diplomacy, backed by its key international supporters, but it may take years, if not decades, to come to fruition, if it does come to fruition at all.

Finally, given the deteriorating security situation in northern Afghanistan (for example, in Badakhshan and Faryab provinces where the Afghan security forces have recently been engaged in fierce, violent clashes with a multiplicity of armed opposition groups, including reportedly the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan), unilateral defensive behaviour seems to outweigh multilateral regional cooperation, at least for the time being. This, however, does not in any way mean that a full-blown spillover of Afghanistan's armed conflict into the Central Asian neighbourhood is likely, because the broader politico-security dynamics affecting Afghanistan are mostly divergent from those of Central Asia (Kazemi, 2012; Kazemi, 2013c). One should continue to closely monitor whether and how any drastic deterioration in Afghanistan's politico-security situation – due, for instance, to a failed presidential election (currently slated for 5 April 2014) – might affect Central Asia.[8] Importantly, in a converse and paradoxical way, one should also ask whether and how a potential crisis in neighbouring Central Asia (due, for example, to a looming political succession in Uzbekistan or rising Uzbek–Tajik tensions over water sharing and other issues) will have destabilising ramifications for Afghanistan.

AFGHANISTAN AND THE NON-IMMEDIATE CENTRAL ASIAN NEIGHBOURS

Although Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are further afield both physically and mentally, interstate relations, mainly between Afghanistan and Kazakhstan, have been developing in an almost unprecedented manner.[9] Kazakhstan has supported Afghanistan's involvement in regional structures, provided economic assistance to Afghanistan, financed scholarships for Afghan students to study in the country and bolstered its trade relations, mainly through its bilateral commission with Afghanistan (Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the US, 2013; see also Kozhirova, 2013). Moreover Kazakhstan intends to further expand its

relationship with Afghanistan in the security field as well by considering repairing and modernising Afghan military equipment and training Afghan security forces in its military training institutions (Weitz, 2013). As for Kyrgyzstan, its intergovernmental relations with Afghanistan have been the most limited of all the five Central Asian states, but the country has been hosting the crucial Manas transit centre on the basis of bilateral negotiations with the US and has turned into an important Central Asian destination for Afghan students. Kyrgyzstan has also been rhetorically concerned about the conditions of its Kyrgyz 'ethnic kin' in Afghanistan's Pamir region and has rather dramatically expressed its concerns about the negative impact of the post-2014 situation on Central Asia (Dzhuraev, 2013; Kazemi, 2012a; Kazemi, 2012b).

The Afghan government sees its relationship with the Kazakhstani government as a model for other Central Asian states to follow, for several reasons. The relationship is organised, is developing and is being reinforced through intergovernmental channels. Kazakhstan gives economic support to the Afghan government as part of the broader regional process centred on Afghanistan and enjoys the support of key international actors, especially the US. The Afghan government, however, needs to realise that Central Asia is really five different countries (Kazakhstan is particularly distinct), and certainly not a homogeneous region. As for Kyrgyzstan, the existing state-to-state relationship is generally insignificant and it is unclear how it might develop now that Kyrgyzstan has finally opened its diplomatic representation in Kabul.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has briefly discussed how interstate relations between mainly northern Afghanistan and its immediate and non-immediate post-Soviet Central Asian neighbours will evolve beyond 2014, given the transition in Afghanistan and a probable impending decline in the Western-led international community's engagement in the region. It has tentatively argued that Central Asian governments, particularly those of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, might increasingly resort to adopting defensive behaviour rather than engage in regional cooperation under, most importantly, the Afghanistan-focused 'Heart of Asia'/Istanbul Process. Furthermore, the relationship between the Afghan and Central Asian governments is heterogeneous: Tajikistan will probably be most affected if there is a significant spillover of Afghanistan's conflict northwards; Uzbekistan might over-respond to any possible Afghan spillover; Turkmenistan is the least involved and the least worried; Kazakhstan is viewed by Afghanistan as a model of regional cooperation; and Kyrgyzstan is the least significant country when it comes to a direct state-to-state relationship with Afghanistan. Finally, one should keep in mind whether and how any further drastic deterioration in Afghanistan's politico-security situation would affect Central Asia and, conversely, whether and how any potential Central Asian turmoil would impact upon Afghanistan.

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Notes

[1] Afghanistan has embassies in Dushanbe, Tashkent and Ashgabat, the capitals of Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan respectively. It also operates a consulate in Khorog, the capital of Tajikistan's eastern Mountainous Badakhshan Autonomous Region, and a consulate in Turkmenistan's southern city of Mary, the centre of Mary province – both Khorog and Mary border on Afghanistan. Tajikistan has its embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital, and three consulates in Afghanistan's north-eastern and northern provincial centres of Faizabad (Badakhshan province), Kunduz (Kunduz) (reportedly temporarily closed) and Mazar-e Sharif (Balkh). Uzbekistan has its embassy in Kabul and a consulate in Mazar-e Sharif. Turkmenistan has its embassy in Kabul and two consulates in Mazar-e Sharif and western Herat city (Herat province).

[2] Most recently, several mainly Uzbek-language TV channels have mushroomed. Batur, named after and owned by Afghanistan's Uzbek 'strongman', Abdul Rashid Dostum's eldest son Batur Dostum, is broadcasting programmes in the Uzbeki and Turkmeni languages in Sheberghan, the centre of Jowzjan province, a staunch Dostum stronghold, and on satellite channels. Birlik (Uzbeki, meaning 'solidarity') is supported by Mohammad Alem Sa'i, former provincial governor of northern Jowzjan province. Almas (Arabic/Dari/Uzbeki, meaning 'diamond') has started broadcasting in Uzbeki in Mazar-e Sharif. Finally, Ai (Uzbeki, meaning 'moonlight') plans to go on air in Kabul and northern Takhar province. Almas and Ai are reportedly funded by some influential Uzbek businesspeople in Afghanistan (their identity is so far unknown to this author).

[3] In addition to several local people in Hairatan, an Afghan man who had just returned from a few days' trip to attend a wedding of his relative in Uzbekistan described to this author his experience of 'prosperity' in Central Asia and 'misery' in Afghanistan. The fact is that Afghans and Central Asians generally do not know much about life on the other side of the Amu Darya.

[4] Two examples are Atta Mohammad Nur, the unusually powerful provincial governor of Balkh, and Abdullah Abdullah, Afghanistan's former foreign minister and currently leader of the National Coalition of Afghanistan, a major political opposition grouping.

[5] Author's interviews and communications with local reporters in Kabul and Dushanbe, December 2012 and March 2013.

[6] Two examples are Uzbek leader Abdul Rashid Dostum and Hazara leader Mohammad Mohaqqeq. They are two of few Afghan leaders who have sufficient weight to facilitate business and other interactions (in the legal as well as illegal domains) between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan.

[7] Interviews, on behalf of the author, with at least two local Turkmen representatives in Afghanistan, April 2013.

[8] The author thanks Thomas Ruttig for this point.

[9] Afghanistan has active diplomatic representation in Kazakhstan (an embassy in Astana and a consulate in Almaty) and Kazakhstan has its embassy in Kabul. Afghanistan also has a small embassy in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and Kyrgyzstan has finally opened its embassy in Kabul.

8 China, Central Asia and the future of Afghanistan

John Rydqvist and Ye Hailin

This chapter discusses three key factors shaping China's policy towards Central Asia's republics and Afghanistan. The first is the threat of transnational extremism affecting western China. The second is the importance of energy imports and the prospect of future cross continent trade through the region. The third factor is the continued importance of China's western neighbourhood for Beijing's wider geostrategic calculus. Recent developments look bright for China. The US will not remain in large numbers in the region. The threat of strategic encirclement in the west will not materialize. Afghanistan remains a challenge, but one China thinks it can manage. Those in the international community that have invested in transforming and stabilizing Afghanistan are unlikely to completely abandon it. China will most likely remain cautious and balance between its ambition to increase westward heading trade and ensure that its relations with states in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization promote regional stability.

INTRODUCTION: CHINA AND CHINESE INTEREST IN CENTRAL ASIA

For the leaders in Beijing, relations with the Central Asian republics and Afghanistan and developments in Central Asia at large are neither a top priority concern nor a key geostrategic focus. The most essential economic prospects and security concerns are concentrated in and emanate from the Western Pacific theatre. During the Cold War era the Central Asian region, from the Chinese perspective, was defined as a border region around which military and political tensions with the Soviet Union were played out. Before that the region, including Chinese Xinjiang, was an important transit area for trade going west via the Silk Road, as well as an area where Chinese and Turkic peoples interacted and vied for influence.

During the last twenty years Chinese focus on Central Asia has changed significantly. Three key factors have been driving this change. First Beijing fears that Islamist Salafist ideology combined with the rise of armed radical groups fighting in Afghanistan could spread and throw the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) into a state of uprising or worse. Separatism has always been a key concern for the central leadership in China who equate national cohesion

with system legitimacy. While a comprehensive strategy towards Central Asia is yet to be formulated, first steps towards forming a new national policy on the region were taken with the formation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) in 2001, still one of the foremost instruments for Chinese Central Asia policy (Oldberg, 2007).

Second, the western neighbourhood has gone from being a Soviet border area, to being a region where great power interests meet, compete and vie for influence in newly independent republics. The region is key in Beijing's relationship with Russia. US involvement there has been viewed as attempts at encircling China. Meanwhile developments in Afghanistan including NATO's presence affect Beijing's ties with Pakistan and the dynamics of Sino-Indian relations. Lately Beijing seems to have reversed its perceptions coupled to US involvement in Central Asia and Afghanistan. The US presence is no longer seen as a threat or at least it could be argued that its actual impact on Chinese security is not as important as has sometimes been suggested.

Third, as China has risen economically, policymakers have had to address the regional inequalities manifested in the underdeveloped western part of China. Trade and expanding economic relations with Central Asian states are becoming an increasingly important factor in realising the *Develop the West-policy* aimed at improving the economy of underdeveloped provinces and eliminating discontent amongst the population of the poor hinterlands. Energy is a second interest driving economic policy towards Central Asia as China needs to expand and diversify its imports. Chinese President Xi Jinping's visited four Central Asian states in the autumn of 2013 *(Xinhua, 2013:1),* only 11 months after assuming the leadership. This unprecedented high level visit underscored the increasing attention China is giving to the western neighbourhood. During the visit, President Xi proposed a "Silk Road Economy Belt" to enhance Chinese cooperation with Central Asia. The details remain unclear, but it at least indicates Chinese interest in creating a new framework, beside the SCO, to deepen its economic ties with the Central Asian states and boost regional economic integration.

Beijing prefers to deal with Central Asian republics bilaterally, like with all other countries. China, however, complements these relations with a multilateral instrument of consequence, that of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). It is the only regionally defined multilateral organisation of any importance that China is actively involved in. The SCO was conceived because Beijing and Moscow saw the need to limit competition and hedge against contention in the newly formed independent Republics. But since its inception in the 1990's it has developed into something more. Apart from its instrumental value in security affairs, it is a template and a learning field for Beijing's foreign policy operators on how to manoeuvre in a multilateral setting outside of the UN.

ISLAMISM, EXTREMISM AND THE XUAR

For the Chinese government the threat of extremism, terrorism and separatist movements striving for an independent XUAR is of key concern. The continued cohesion of the People's Republic of China is not only a question of state integrity but it is also directly linked to the Communist Party's claim to power. Any movement or group striving to decouple the XUAR from China poses a direct challenge to Party legitimacy and cannot be tolerated.

The problems in the XUAR are not new and precede any current policy initiatives related to the western neighbourhood. The fears of revolts and invasions emanating from tribes and nations in Central Asia run back centuries. During Soviet times large scale military defence was a primary prism through which Beijing viewed its western territory. With the end of the Soviet Union the need to focus on large scale military defence in Xinjiang disappeared. Instead initiating relations with new neighbours became a focus. The rise of Islamist inspired movements as a result of the Afghan wars, especially the Taliban, would increasingly influence policy formulation vis-à-vis the region from the mid 1990's and onwards. Chinese authorities see unrest, for example the 2009 riots in Urumqi, as proof that Islamist ideology if not jihad fighters, are being exported from hot spots in Central Asia to XUAR (Lee 2009a) and act accordingly. Since 2013 concerns about extreme Islamism have become more pressing for Chinese authorities. This is not only due to escalating violence in the XUAR but also because violent attacks have been launched in other parts of China. In the eyes of the authorities the risk of an expansion of conservative Islamic and violent prone ideology across ethnic divides is a very worrying trend.

A two-pronged approach has been taken internally. First, the party has drawn the conclusion that economic development is the key instrument in promoting party legitimacy (Pantucci and Petersen, 2013). Thus if the west of the country can be developed it will be "won". Content people with jobs and income have no reason to challenge the system. Thus China launched a "Go West" policy around 1999 when Jiang Zemin proclaimed that the Central Committee had endorsed a development program for Western China (Lee, 2009b). The focus was on infrastructure projects with the aim of drawing the west into and linking it with the eastern trade flows. Yet progress during the first ten years was not as hoped for with the western regions lagging behind and attention still focused on the more prosperous foreign trade flowing out of the East. In 2010 a renewal of the Go West policy was attempted, possibly in the light of growing discontent in China (Moxley, 2010). The second internal response has been to tighten security and this is where China has seen the need to revamp its relationship with its western neighbours.

Thus, internal Chinese threat perceptions have come to shape and influence relations with the neighbouring states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tadzhikistan and Pakistan. From this perspective the formation of the SCO and its early focus

on anti-terror activities has been a support for the domestic Chinese approach towards the XUAR. The importance China and the other SCO members place on the terrorist threat is seen in the establishment in 2004 of the Regional Anti-terrorist Centre (RATS) in Tashkent. It is one of but two permanent bodies of the SCO, the other being the secretariat in Beijing. Terrorism was not the only reason for forming the SCO, but may from the Chinese perspective have been more important than appreciated in the West. That China, despite the preference for using bilateral relationships or the UN, has chosen to invest in a multilateral security agreement with Russia and Central Asian partners underlines that its view on its neighbours to the west differs from its views on other areas.

AFGHANISTAN AND THE GREATER GEOSTRATEGIC GAME IN THE CHINESE CALCULUS

To policy makers in Beijing Afghanistan is a distant neighbour that mostly has had little influence on Chinese foreign policy, its security or its economy. The short border has only one crossing point, a trail across the Wakhjir pass (4900 metres above sea level) leading west into the narrow, long and rugged valley of Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor. Geography limits interaction and the physical threats emanating directly from Afghanistan (Wong, 2010). Yet the spread of ideology has no respect for borders and the risk that political and religious extremism will take root has been a concern for the government in Beijing.

China sees the American presence in Afghanistan as a mixed blessing. The foreign forces have on the one hand addressed a key Chinese concern, the Islamist extremism of al Qaeda. On the other hand the massive Western deployment runs counter to a central policy tenet of Beijing, the non-interference in other countries internal affairs policy (Xinhua, 2013:b). The Afghan war has also run parallel to a general geostrategic shift towards the Western Pacific during the 2000's, a shift closely linked to the international debate about the rise of China. Western suspicion and, in the Beijing analysis, politico-military overreactions have risked isolating and encircling China militarily. The US foothold in Afghanistan and Central Asia can be and have been viewed by many analysts in China as the westernmost region where an encirclement strategy is being played out. This was made clear when the SCO members including China at the organization's 2005 summit called on the US to set a timetable for leaving Central Asia (Hu Qihua, 2005).

Recent statements suggest a change in the Chinese calculus on the US presence in Afghanistan and the wider Central Asia. It is becoming clearer even to cautious military analysts in the People's Liberation Army (PLA) that the US does not intend to remain with a significant number of troops in the region. Beijing now sees much less of a risk, and is less concerned that the US is trying to build a military stepping stone against China in Afghanistan and Central Asia. This view is seen in the Chinese support for the US-Afghanistan Bilateral

Security Agreement (BSA). A December 2013 cable reported that China supports consultations to sign the BSA (Xinhua, 2013:c), which was corroborated US congressional hearings (Dobbins, 2013). Karzai is reported to have said the same at the November 2013 Loya Jirga (Samad, 2013). Clearly, the encirclement argument has given way to a realisation that the continued but limited US and NATO presence in the region will further China's key goal of a stable neighbourhood.

In this sense China will welcome any stable future government in Kabul, preferably one that could be engaged constructively. If that government is also able to find a balance of power within Afghanistan that promotes general stability and peace, China would most probably expand its bilateral relations with the Kabul government. Pragmatic policy vis-à-vis Afghanistan is to be expected. If Afghanistan again descends into chaos or civil war, it is not certain China's strategy of withdrawing and distancing itself from Afghan affairs (using the geographical buffer of the Wakhan corridor once again) will work. However, the threshold to taking a more active approach in helping a stumbling Afghanistan will be very high. Only if radicalism or instability is actively spreading from Afghanistan into China in a qualitatively new way will Beijing consider a more substantial policy adjustment and involvement.

Afghanistan is only a small part of the security dynamics affecting China's western borderlands. Apart from the focus on border security to counter a growing Islamist and extremist threat and a partnership of sorts with Afghanistan's neighbour Pakistan, Beijing has had little in the way of defence relationships with and no permanent military presence in Central Asia or Afghanistan (Ye, 2009). China would prefer to avoid military worries about its western borders. Security challenges in the eastern strategic direction, into the Pacific, are the primary concern and most resources are needed to ensure Beijing's needs in that direction.

Chinese military planners have until now seen few conventional military threats emanating from the west. The Central Asian states have neither interest nor ability to challenge China militarily. The partnership with Russia including in the SCO eliminates detrimental Russian military influence in that direction in the near term. The Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) primarily focuses on crisis management capabilities. It has an important but mainly symbolic military presence in the region (Norberg, 2013). It manifests the traditional Russian dominance of the region in order to satisfy Russia's needs. That gives it added value in Chinese eyes. It contributes to keeping tensions between the two continental superpowers at bay, and is an asset in the SCO anti-terror initiatives. But it does neither challenge China's economic activities nor does it pose a direct military threat.

Geopolitical friction may in the medium and long term affect Beijing's Central Asia policy. Should Russian revanchism, as some in China fear, lead to further

interventions similar to that in Georgia in 2008, China may be forced to revisit, and perhaps even rebalance its relationship with Russia. The Chinese political dilemma will centre on the importance of the principle of non-intervention on the one hand juxtaposed with how Beijing values its special relationship with Russia. This will directly affect bi- and multilateral cooperation between China and Russia regarding Central Asia. Principles related to how to deal with separatist movements in an SCO context and effects on economy are likely to come to the fore.

ECONOMY

Party legitimacy in the view of policymakers in Beijing hinges to a large degree on the economic performance of the country. To the Chinese government supporting industry and enhancing economic opportunities is therefore always an important goal, be it for the state owned or private sector. Trade with and investment into some of the Central Asian states, notably Kazakhstan which is China's largest trading partner in the region, have seen a sharp increase during the 2000's, albeit from a low level. The economic links have two distinct national interests to China, energy imports and trade with the underdeveloped western regions, notably XUAR. The former is a large part of the increase in imports from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Import of Turkmen gas to China has increased more than one-hundred fold, from 38 million USD in 2009, to 8 billion USD in 2012 (*International Monetary Fund 2013, p. 156).* A similar but not so substantive trend is oil imports from Kazakhstan, up by more than 100% since 2009. This increase from Kazakhstan depends on the relatively newly opened Kazakhstan-China pipeline, which currently ends in the XUAR *(U.S. Energy Information Agency, 2013).*

Albeit limited, the trade with Central Asian republics likely carries more political, symbolic and even economic importance for Beijing than mere trade figures suggest. As discussed above developing the western and less advanced part of China has been a key policy objective of the leadership in Beijing for many years. This is equally true of the new leadership under Xi Jinping. Even a limited increase of trade westwards could make a big difference and possibly be an important supplement to other measures the central government seeks in its quest to develop the XUAR and other western provinces. Xi therefore took another important step in advancing the economic links with Central Asia when he made a state visits in the region in September 2013. The concept of a Silk Road Economic Belt was introduced, a process that step by step will "gradually form overall regional cooperation" (Xi Jinping, 2013). In fact Xi hinted at a region broader than merely Central Asia and encompassing the whole Eurasian landmass. This is an important next step in the economic relationship. China's economic priority is underlined by it hosting the 2014 Heart of Asia Istanbul

conference, a process coupled to Afghanistan's future but with ambitions of enhancing regional trade at large (Heart of Asia, 2013).

Another key observation is that China is the dominant trade partner for four of the Central Asian states. This unbalanced economic relationship is not only evident in trade figures. The Kazakh oil industry is dependent on Chinese investment. This may be seen as a mixed blessing in Central Asia. While the economic prospects look bright, Chinese investments might not make as great a contribution to the local economies as hoped. Chinese companies often prefer to employ Chinese workers, prompting complaints. Being too dependent on trade and investment from China is also viewed as a challenge if not threat by the regional governments. The ability to effectively balance out the dominant powers – a key strategic posture for at least Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kirgizstan – risks being hampered if China becomes too powerful economically. This seems to be appreciated in Beijing and China keeps a relatively low diplomatic profile.

Even more important from a Chinese government point of view are the energy prospects in Central Asia. Energy is a key national interest. Expanding oil imports from Kazakhstan and the possibility of gas deliveries from Turkmenistan and even Iran bypassing the Russian pipe-line networks is a tempting prospect for energy ministries and agencies in China.

Afghanistan's role in these economic dynamics is small. If anything Chinese interest has declined. The deal with Afghanistan on development of the Aynak Copper mine, which was heralded as a watershed project in the development of Afghanistan's raw material sector, was for all practical purposes abandoned in 2013 (O'Donnell, 2013). With it hopes that a growing mining sector could be a basis for Afghan state revenues dwindled. Given security uncertainties, a disappointing lack of infrastructure development and a possible downturn in global resource prices future Chinese investment is bound to remain low.

To conclude, Chinese business involvement in and approaches towards Central Asia are not a purely state-driven enterprise. Government interest is strongest in the energy sector where China is seeking reliable suppliers of oil and gas. Through its economic might China has become the dominant power in the region.

CONCLUSION

Beijing's slow but steady increase in its focus on its Western neighbourhood has evolved in parallel to and has been heavily influenced by Beijing's domestic politics in Xinjiang. Since the early 1990's it has gone through two distinct phases. The first phase focused on forming relationships with the newly independent Central Asian states and trying to keep Islamist ideologies on the rise in Afghanistan and elsewhere from having any impact in the XUAR. The

most tangible result of this phase was the formation of the SCO. The second phase involved the accelerating economic interaction seen from the early 2000 and onwards. The hitherto most visible evidence of the economic focus is the high level visit of Chinese president Xi Jinping to Central Asia in 2013. Both of these phases evolved as China in its overall policy focused increasingly eastwards into the Western Pacific.

China would prefer a stable and secure western neighbourhood where its policies can focus on supporting economic development and increasing access to non-Russian energy imports. While Chinese state owned businesses are part of the economic landscape in Central Asia, China is not a monolithic economic actor. Much of business is private and overall China relies on market economic processes, albeit with (sometimes substantial) state support. In this regard China is not unlike other foreign actors in Central Asia.

China does not want to get involved in Central Asia's security more than necessary. Unlike in its policy on its eastern neighbourhood China has worked to eliminate contentious issues that could spark conflict with its Central Asian neighbours. Territorial disputes for example seem to have been settled with Tajikistan, Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan. China's only real Central Asia related security interest is to stop the flow of extremist ideologies and terrorist elements crossing into Xinjiang. Economic development in Xinjiang is seen as the key to eliminating Uighur grievances and that is why economic development in western China is linked to increased economic interaction with Central Asia. Authorities may however be pushing a strategy that will ultimately fail. Grievances and the increasing polarization of society that is taking place have many causes and the economy may not even be an important one. The economy centred and securitized approach Beijing is pursuing in the XUAR might well backfire. Grievances amongst the Uighur population are as much about social marginalization and educational discrimination as they are about economic inequality, something which is not acknowledged enough.

Afghanistan will remain a distant neighbour that China will have limited direct involvement with. Few scenarios that would bring China to get directly involved in security operations in Afghanistan can be envisioned. China will closely monitor any developments that would lead to increased extremism or terrorism into XUAR. If this is increasingly the case after 2014 countermeasures for China will include distancing itself from the Afghan dynamic rather than getting involved. Economic interaction with Afghanistan will remain limited as long as instability remains and infrastructure is lacking. This is unfortunate for Afghanistan since China is one of the primary economic powers that could have helped the Silk Road economic region to prosper and Afghanistan to build a stronger economy.

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9 Russia and Central Asia: relations, opportunities and challenges in the light of Afghanistan post-ISAF

Vadim Kozyulin

The growing Eurasian ambition of Russia's political leadership is the framework for today's Russian efforts for a multi-level and multi-speed integration in the post-Soviet space including Central Asia. This primarily economic integration can work with many of the post-Soviet countries, which, after getting used to independence, are unlikely to respond positively to Russian desires for deeper political integration. The main potential for instability in Central Asia is not Afghanistan but lies within the Central Asian states themselves. The reasons for this include poverty, unemployment, corruption and poor governance. Russia's priorities in this are combating drugs trafficking and bolstering regional security. Despite gloomy forecasts about Afghanistan post-ISAF, the perceived threats from Afghanistan may serve to push the Central Asian states closer to Russia.

On 23 June 2011, US President Barack Obama issued a statement about the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. The aim was to complete the withdrawal in 2014 (White House, 2011). Other nations contributing troops to the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) followed suit. On 3 October the same year, Russia's President Vladimir Putin published an article outlining his vision of Eurasian integration, with the aim of building a new Eurasian Union to be formed in 2015 (Putin, 2011). The aim of this chapter is to discuss how these two strategies may affect the five Central Asian states and Russia's policy towards the region.

RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA – PART OF A WIDER INTEGRATION EFFORT

Russia's bilateral relations towards the five Central Asian republics have gone through several phases since 1991. In 1992–95, political relations and economic ties collapsed. The Russian leadership wanted to get rid of what seemed like the dead weight of the Central Asian republics, a social and economic burden. The contemporary ambition to build a strategic partnership with Europe and the United States, however, quickly changed. In 1995–99 the competition with the United States for regional dominance returned. Russia restored relations with the

republics of Central Asia. This materialised in the following decade, 2000–10, in the form of various integration projects such as the Eurasian Economic Community (EAEC) in 2001, the CIS Anti-Terrorist Centre (2001), and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2002. Since 2010, Russia has had a stronger ambition for Eurasian integration, seen in a multi-level and multi-speed integration in the post-Soviet space to facilitate a gradual implementation of Russia's Eurasian Union ambitions.

Vladimir Putin outlined his vision for the CIS as ' … a model which has helped preserve the myriad of civilisational and spiritual threads that unite our peoples'. At the same time, he puts the emphasis 'primarily on the development of trade and industrial relations' (Putin, 2011). Advocates of economic integration hope to capitalise on the fact that the former Soviet republics still use structures and systems of the USSR such as industry standards, power systems, water supplies, road and rail networks and education standards. In a sense, integration aims at restoring the USSR's achievements, not the ideology, but in the economic sphere. Sceptics see this as a Russian desire to return former Soviet republics to its orbit of influence before the European Union (EU) or China (Gorbatov, 2012).

Many observers think that Russia's motives for integration efforts such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) are primarily political, not economic. Eurasian integration would then indicate a Russian desire for the country to become a centre of political and economic attraction in order to strengthen its global position and influence, and a desire to encourage partners to make irreversible integration choices. One concrete aim is to remove the need for technical equipment on Russia's external borders (Sherov-Ignatiev, 2012).

Today, Russia's policy towards Central Asia is outlined in the Foreign Policy Concept (Foreign Policy Concept, IV Regional Priorities, 2013). In the economic sphere, Russia considers the priority task to be that of forming a Eurasian Economic Union, aiming not only to restore economic ties within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), but also to become a model for other states' integration and a link between Europe and the Asia-Pacific region. The plan is that the EEU will be built in 2015 based on the Eurasian Economic Community, the Customs Union (CU) and the Common Economic Space and through the strengthening of the Eurasian Economic Commission (see also Gryzlov, 2011).

In the area of security the basic element is the CSTO with an emphasis on 'strengthening the mechanisms of [its] rapid response mechanisms and peacekeeping potential and improving the coordination of foreign policy between the CSTO member states' (Foreign Policy Concept, IV Regional Priorities, article 48e, 2013). In the social and human sphere, Russia intends to preserve and enhance the overall cultural and civilisational heritage. Particular attention will be given to supporting compatriots living in CIS states (Foreign Policy Concept, IV Regional Priorities, article 45, 2013).

PRIMARILY ECONOMIC INTEGRATION, NOT POLITICAL

The political appetite for further integration is more apparent in Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, in Kyrgyzstan (whose accession to the CU was announced in 2011), and in Tajikistan (which will join the CU only after Kyrgyzstan since it lacks common borders with other CU members). Participating in further integration is also on the political agenda in Armenia and possibly even in Ukraine.

Each country sees economic incentives to participate in the EEU. Belarus enjoyed some 10 billion USD energy subsidies from Russia in 2012, equalling some 16 per cent of Belarus' gross domestic product (GDP). Furthermore, between summer 2011 and spring 2013, the Ministry of Finance of Belarus received five of the six tranches of the Eurasian Economic Union Anti-Crisis Fund, totalling some 3 billion USD. Russia supplied the lion's share of the fund's resources (Timarov, 2013).

The programme to create the EEU is ambitious not only in the economic but also in the political and security spheres. Meanwhile some of the planned measures may meet difficulties and others may not be implemented at all. It may seem paradoxical, but the integration processes may not limit but rather strengthen the power of the member states' leaders. Integration will be welcome as long as it improves the positions of national elites. Measures transferring national political power to a supranational body are, however, likely to meet ulterior though still fierce resistance. Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev for example made this clear when discussing the prospects of the EEU in the Kremlin on 24 December 2013. In his view, the protection of the state borders, migration, defence and security systems, health, education, science, culture, and legal assistance in civil, criminal and administrative cases 'are not relevant to economic integration and cannot be transferred to the format of an economic union' (Netreba and Butrin, 2013).

Some of the goals are therefore unlikely to be achieved (at least in the foreseeable future). One example is coordination of foreign policy. Whilst demonstrating compliance and unified will on many issues, each member country is likely to retain the right to act independently in foreign policy. Another example is a single currency. Member states would not risk losing the right to print their own national currency. Finally, despite the creation of some integrated units within the CSTO, the plans for unified armed forces appear unrealistic.

But is the Eurasian Union a Great Russian neo-imperial project to re-establish Russia's hegemony and revive the USSR? Not really. Since the states of the former Soviet Union have reached such a level of independence and built such extensive relations with various world powers they will not allow Russia to

dominate new integration formats. The Russian political leadership has also carefully avoided setting itself such a task.

ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The basis of the integration processes is the participating states' economic interests. Evaluating the integration of security and social/human issues is challenging. Financial and economic figures provide a much better indication of the success of integration. The countries concerned therefore use them to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of participating in various integration projects. Russia is also interested in the economic efficiency of integration projects. Only Russia can offer economic attraction potential for new members such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Ukraine. Some figures for 2012 seem to support optimism. GDP growth in the Customs Union's members was 3.5 per cent and their mutual trade grew by 8.7 per cent, higher than the growth in foreign trade in general, which was 3.2 per cent (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2013b). Trade within the CU increased 1.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2013 in comparison to the first quarter of 2012 (without taking into account oil and gas products) (Eurasian Economic Commission, 2013a).

Despite Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan having not yet joined the CU, they are quite well integrated with the CU countries. Much of the working population in these republics already work in Russia and Kazakhstan and are, in a sense, integrated into a common professional and cultural space. Many even hold a second citizenship.

Despite the generally positive image of CU integration between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, there are signs of problems with the swiftly emerging new economic realities in certain industries and for some groups. The new customs rules have brought unexpected costs to which the authorities are turning a blind eye. First, World Trade Organization (WTO) and CU rules do not seem to be fully compatible. Kyrgyzstan may have to pay compensation to WTO states to settle a conflict between the provisions of the CU and those of the WTO (KNews, 2013). The image of the CU is also suffering. There are allegations that the CU has led to higher prices in Kazakhstan and that some entrepreneurs have even gone bankrupt. National authorities have, at least temporarily, lost control over cross-border financial flows. Opposition parties in some republics have made CU membership a target for criticism. Finally, serious pressure has been put on the Central Asian republics by external players, starting with then US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton saying that the US will try to prevent 're-Sovietisation' of the post-Soviet space (Radio Free Europe, 2012).

Inspired by the Customs Union's initial success, its architects want to widen integration, both regarding members and regarding themes (Laktionova, 2013). CU members are expected to coordinate their respective activities with the

European Union. This could in the long run facilitate the development of a common format for agreeing principles of free trade from the Pacific to the Atlantic. Beyond this, some optimistic pundits argue for an even wider integration – a Great Eurasian Union including China, India and even Iran (Toma, 2012).

POST-ISAF AFGHANISTAN – IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA

Despite the withdrawal of coalition forces from Afghanistan in 2014 a significant foreign military presence will remain in the country. The US will retain key military installations, combat aircraft, unmanned aircraft and assets for technical and human intelligence as well as Special Forces units. The government of Afghanistan in Kabul receives significant amounts of weapons and military equipment and will not lack ammunition. The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), i.e. the police and the army, are therefore assessed to be able to handle the Taliban, who without aviation and heavy machinery are unlikely to be able to carry out decisive military operations but will be limited to low-intensity guerrilla operations. The American assets that remain are likely to continue to be the primary target for Afghan opposition forces.

The Taliban forces are likely to keep on fighting the foreign military presence and will hardly be able to expand operations into neighbouring Central Asian republics. There are, however, Islamist fighters with citizenship from Central Asian states in Afghanistan. A potential threat is that some of them may apply the combat skills and experience gained in Afghanistan at home. The CSTO is preparing for such scenarios and will be ready in 2014 to repel occasional attacks by small groups of Taliban.

The main potential for instability in Central Asia lies not in Afghanistan but within the Central Asian states themselves. The reasons for this are their high levels of poverty, unemployment, corruption and poor governance. Obviously, the CSTO is not intended to handle such threats. Authorities in the Central Asian republics will exaggerate the danger of extremism from Afghanistan and try to connect it to the political opposition in each country. Central Asian leaders will probably try to harness the CSTO's support to increase their own legitimacy in fighting domestic opposition.

The widespread notion that the Central Asian republics are interested in using economic projects to integrate Afghanistan into the region is exaggerated. It reflects the wishes of the West, rather than the aspirations of the East. The peoples of Central Asia are more interested in isolating Afghanistan, which lives in a different era, with an alien culture and different values. Infrastructure projects between the Central Asian republics and Afghanistan are limited to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan and the neighbouring provinces of Afghanistan where

there are concentrations of their own ethnic kin. This may help to revive the Northern Alliance rather than integrate Afghanistan with Central Asia. For the Central Asian states, expanded ties with Afghanistan bring with them the risks of increased drugs trafficking and the export of fundamentalism and extremism. These risks still outweigh the incentives of expanding trade, cultural exchanges, establishing transit routes or investments in Afghanistan.

Instability in Afghanistan, and perhaps Pakistan, may return the two states to the buffer status they had before the US invaded Afghanistan. That would exclude integration and infrastructure projects from Central Asia southwards towards India and Iran. Remaining landlocked, the republics of Central Asia are unlikely to get easy access to southern ports at any time soon, which, theoretically, would facilitate quicker integration into the world economy. In short, for the foreseeable future, the choice of partners for infrastructure projects in Central Asia will be Russia and China.

The threat of extremism and the risk of domestic instability will push the Central Asian republics to cooperate more with Russia, the CSTO and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The CSTO will have opportunities to prove itself in operations that, if successful, would increase its relevance and credibility. Dealing jointly with shared problems will promote integration, primarily in the security field, but also in the economic and social/cultural fields.

RUSSIAN POLICY IN CENTRAL ASIA

The prospects for Afghanistan after the withdrawal of ISAF have influenced Russian policy in Central Asia and there are now two Russian priorities: combating drugs trafficking, and regional security. The perceived threats emanating from Afghanistan and a potential destabilisation in Central Asia have become major policy challenges for Russia and the CSTO. Consequently, Russia has increased its efforts where regional security, military cooperation and support to build national military forces are concerned. Russia is providing 1 billion USD in military aid to Kyrgyzstan and 200 million USD to Tajikistan for an unspecified period of time (Lenta.ru, 2013). Tajikistan can also receive 250 million USD more if Moscow does not levy duties on fuel and lubricants. This is close to the rent payment the Tajik government demanded for the 201st Russian Military Base in Tajikistan. The base has also provided Tajikistan with significant amounts of weapons for two decades, which could explain why Russia spends less military aid money on Tajikistan than on Kyrgyzstan.

Drugs trafficking is another Russian concern. Russia wants to create a comprehensive system of regional counter-trafficking measures that are linked to the international community's efforts. The aim is a decisive change in the global fight against drugs trafficking. Practical measures include layers of anti-drug and financial security measures around Afghanistan and involving law enforcement

officials in Afghanistan in joint anti-drug operations and training for Afghanistan's anti-drug agencies (Ivanov, 2011).

The CSTO has taken measures to prepare for the threats of extremism and terrorism from Afghanistan. The organisation has established a Collective Operational Reaction Force and a separate collective peacekeeping force. There are standards for unit structures, supplies of equipment, interoperability, and training and funding for forces earmarked for the CSTO. Russia provides free training for military personnel. Some 2,500 officers from CSTO countries have received training at Russian military academies since 2000. In 2013, Russia's military educational institutions received about 400 students from CSTO allies.

The CSTO also has plans to develop a collective response to emergencies. It has deployed humanitarian centres with equipment and supplies with comprehensive financial and logistical support in regions of the CSTO assessed to be at risk. The CSTO countries have established regional networks of rescue teams supported by a system of equipment warehouses (Draliuk, 2013). There is also coordination of information; and CSTO states are coordinating activities related to the transit of forces leaving Afghanistan through their territories.

Afghanistan post-ISAF has prompted a large-scale rearmament of the CSTO countries. The organisation's united air defence system (comprising Russia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) has been expanded. In 2012 an agreement was signed with Belarus, and in January 2013 one with Kazakhstan. There are also plans for collective Air Forces (Arutiunian, 2013). CSTO member states can buy arms at reduced prices – S-300PMU2 Favorit air defence missile systems, Mi-17-1V helicopters, Su-30MKI fighter aircraft, T-90 tanks, BMP armoured infantry fighting vehicles, Smerch multiple-launch rocket systems and Cheetah patrol ships (Bordiuzha, 2012).

THE IMPACT OF AFGHANISTAN POST-ISAF ON RUSSIAN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

As of early 2014, the situation developing around Afghanistan is one of conserved conflict. This may actually benefit Russian interests. An unstable Afghanistan will keep Central Asia away from external temptations. Furthermore, the threat of extremist Islamism is pushing former Soviet republics closer to Russia. The US will remain the main target and stimulus for the region's radical extremists. The international community pays most of the ANSF.

The withdrawal of ISAF from Afghanistan is also causing concerns for Russia. One such concern is the possibility of the Central Asian states receiving US military hardware being pulled out of Afghanistan (Kozyulin et al., 2010). Some Russian analysts are also concerned about the possible expansion of the US presence and economic influence in Central Asia (Mixednews, 2013; Higher

School of Economics, 2013). The main challenges for the future will, however, remain the same. The Russian authorities have to find solutions to the main threats from Afghanistan – terrorism and drugs trafficking. The problems are not new for the Russian authorities. Russia has, generally, found ways if not to cope then at least to coexist with them.

The main threats to Russia's Eurasian integration ambitions are linked not to Afghanistan but more to the global economic situation and the level of energy prices. Another factor is the health of the state budget, from which Russia is planning to finance the rearming of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and investment and infrastructure projects in Central Asia.

So far, integration efforts have mainly concerned the economic sphere and, to some extent, security. Russia's political ambitions have until now been greater than the other countries'. But, even if Eurasian Union project fails for economic or political reasons, the leaders of the member states can, if they wish, declare its successful implementation. Indeed, since 1997 citizens of Russia and Belarus have been living in a union state without much realising it. Experience hence shows that integration projects can be to a great extent virtual.

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D. Discussion

As of 2014 some of the troop-contributing countries are downsizing their contributions to ISAF and dismantling operations. The transition of responsibility for security to the ANSF is to be finished by the end of 2014. NATO will go from conducting combat operations to training and advising the ANSF (NATO, undated). President Obama announced in late May 2014 that the US, the largest contributor to ISAF, would remain in Afghanistan with some 9,800 troops after 2014 (Ackerman, 2014). Such a reduced military presence will be able to influence security even less than ISAF. In sum, outside powers, primarily the contributors of troops to ISAF, will not influence Afghanistan's security in any decisive way after 2014. Afghanistan will be left to its own devices and to the influence of its neighbours.

Some of the interviews conducted for this study and some of its authors convey a perception that NATO will somehow remain and 'do' hard security in Afghanistan after 2014. But with widespread Afghanistan fatigue, few policymakers and voters in countries contributing troops to ISAF would agree. ISAF and its primarily European contributors are leaving Afghanistan. Consequently, Western interest in Central Asia as a support and transit area for military operations will decrease.

Pessimism about developments in post-ISAF Afghanistan dominated almost all of the interviews conducted. The authors contributing to this study almost unanimously agree. Or, as an anonymous Western diplomat in Afghanistan noted, 'Things will get much worse in Afghanistan before they get any better. If they get any better'. In short, Afghanistan will remain volatile and unstable and this will have an impact on Central Asia. If the scale or the scope of the challenges from Afghanistan and/or from within the region increases, the Central Asian states are unlikely to be able to handle them.

The interviews conducted for this report in Central Asia in 2012 revealed a surprisingly limited concern about the challenges emanating from post-ISAF Afghanistan. The argument was that 2014 would not bring any new problems from Afghanistan after ISAF leaves. Central Asia already had problems with the drugs trade and Islamism and they would not change just because of the drawdown. This attitude is understandable assuming that Islamist movements in Afghanistan might somehow be tied down there, for example by a renewed Afghan civil war, and consequently unable or unwilling to operate in Central Asia. However, even if they do not seem to be a coherent force with an agenda for the entire region, they may nevertheless have a potential as a destabilisation multiplier which may prove to be a very difficult challenge for the region.

AN EVOLVING SECURITY VACUUM

All the authors note the unpredictability of Afghanistan's development after ISAF as a major challenge for the region and its countries. Taken together, Central Asia's current numerous security challenges – such as weak states, poverty, Islamism, the drugs trade, corruption, border and ethnic tensions, succession power struggles and resource competition – all give the region a big potential for upheaval. Who can deal with a worsening situation, especially if it changes rapidly?

Afghanistan's neighbours fear that the ANSF cannot uphold security and that they will have to deal with any negative spillover. The Central Asian states' capabilities to influence the Afghan security situation vary. The lack of trust and coordination between them makes regional cooperation difficult. With the West eventually out of the picture it is likely that a security vacuum will evolve. Several authors (Laumulin, Isabaev, Kazemi) noted that regional cooperation on security issues requires outside pressure. With less Western involvement, Russia and China are the only countries that could apply such pressure. While China is reluctant to engage in issues beyond the economic sphere, Russia is inclined to address regional security, as shown through its commitment to the CSTO. Without real alternatives, this is currently Central Asia's best bet. However, any military forces Moscow needs to commit to back up its policies in Ukraine in addition to those deployed to Crimea after its annexation by Russia will not be available for intervention in Central Asia.

The security challenges facing the region, both from Afghanistan (drugs trade, Islamism, spillover of instability) and from within and between the Central Asian states (weak and corrupt states, border conflicts, ethnic tensions, resource competition), outweigh the collective ability to handle them. In early 2014, there is a fragile status quo in the region. But one can doubt the capability of any of the five states to handle a situation in which the challenges would be aggravated. As for the ability to handle challenges collectively, the lack of common understandings of the problems, the lack of trust and a tradition of preferring bilateral relations do not bode well. The only actor that is taking active measures on a wider scale to prepare for the security challenges in Central Asia is Russia.

THE INTRACTABLE DRUGS TRAFFICKING

In terms of consequences for both Central Asia and beyond, the biggest issue is the drugs trade. Emil Dzhuraev rightly underlines the need to contextualise the drugs trade. Demand is increasing in Central Asia and in the huge Russian market and no decrease of production is in sight. The point is not only the volume of the trade or its dire consequences but that it simply is intractable. It is too profitable and too transnational for any of the Central Asian states, all more or less weak states, to combat it effectively. Muzaffar Olimov agrees, calling the

drugs trade in Tajikistan a structure too powerful to be changed. Nina Startseva has a similar analysis of how drugs affect Turkmenistan. Comprehensive regional countermeasures seem unlikely to materialise, and national measures are either feeble or too limited. The drugs trade stokes corruption and organised crime. It undermines already weak state structures, making them even more unable to respond. It has adverse impacts on public health. It seems set to expand and will continue to plague the region.

Drugs trafficking is a truly regional problem for Central Asia, a passable transit route between supply from Afghanistan and demand, mainly in Russia, but also beyond her borders. Russian media reported in 2012 that the head of Russia's Federal Drug Control Service had said that 90 per cent of the country's almost 9 million drug addicts use heroin, the world's highest per capita figure in 2012. (RIA Novosti, 2012) Furthermore, between 30 000 and 40 000 people die from drug related illnesses in Russia every year (Ibid.) i.e. twice as many as the number of Soviet soldiers killed during the entire 10-year occupation of Afghanistan (Trenin, 2014). This can explain Russia's long-term efforts at integrating anti-drug efforts into the CSTO (CSTO, 2014) and why the issue has long appeared on the agenda in Russia's Security Council (Security Council of the Russian Federation, 2001; 2009).

Even if the Central Asian states could deal better with the drugs trafficking, the region is only a transit area, with limited possibilities to affect demand and supply, which are the driving forces of any market. Supply from Afghanistan seems to be steady. The most effective way to change the problem of drugs trafficking could then be to try to reduce demand. In that case, the ball is in the court of the countries from which demand for drugs comes, such as Russia, Iran and Europe. The best they could do to combat the drugs trade plaguing Central Asia is drastically to increase anti-drug measures at home in order to curb demand.

On this issue, Afghanistan, Central Asia and the outside world are perhaps more strongly interlinked than they are in others. The Central Asian states definitely need the support of outside actors to combat the drugs trade. The outside world needs both Afghan and Central Asian countermeasures to work better. It is also an issue where important outside actors, Russia, Iran and Pakistan, and the EU and the US, stand a good chance of finding ground for pragmatic cooperation. Re-framing policy towards the region from geopolitics and fighting terrorism to combating drugs may be a good way ahead.

ISLAMISM – A DESTABILIZATION MULTIPLIER AND AN EMERGING POLITICAL FORCE

Is Islamism an inflated issue in the discussions about how events in Afghanistan may affect Central Asia after ISAF leaves? All authors contributing to this study mention Islamism as a problem, but differ on how serious it is. The perceptions of this problem and the accompanying political rhetoric influence both domestic and foreign policy, mainly in Central Asia and Russia but also to some extent in China. Interestingly, the discussions about Islamism seem to be evolving into discussions more about what they could do, rather than what they have done. Gruesome as it is, terrorism nevertheless has had a far smaller impact than the drugs trade. But the perceptions and (regime) fears of it influence domestic, regional and international politics.

In Central Asia, the issue seems not to be the religion as such but the potential impact of organisations related to Islam. Rustam Burnashev broadly defines Islamism as the use of Islam as a way for social and political mobilisation and the belief that Islam should guide social and political as well as personal life. That may not sound very dangerous. But to Central Asian regimes it could be, in broadly speaking two ways: militants as destabilisation multipliers and Islam as a political force for systemic change.

First, armed militant groups are potential destabilisation multipliers that with limited but violent operations can turn any of Central Asia's existing tensions either in or between countries into violence. One such conflict could be succession struggles after the current rulers in Uzbekistan or Kazakhstan step down, or renewed ethnic conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in Kyrgyzstan's border areas, with Uzbekistan, the region's strongest military power, possibly intervening using force. Border conflicts could erupt between Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in the Ferghana Valley. There is socio-political tension, for example the north–south divide in Kyrgyzstan and inter-regional tensions in Tajikistan (Lang, 2013: 44–45).

Radical Islamist groups are different. Salafists, Jamiat-e-Tabliq and Hizb-ut-Tahrir are either more peaceful or of lesser importance, despite being accused of being conduits for bringing young Muslims into more militant groups. More related to Afghanistan are the radicalised militant groups that are ready to use force, including terrorism. Two affect Central Asia: the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU). Both use northern Afghanistan to conduct operations and recruit new members. The IMU has an estimated 10,000 people (of which 3,000 are militants), and the IJU up to 1,000 militants (Lang, 2013: 17). Despite having combat experience, they are, even taken together, hardly a big enough military force to take and hold territory to set up a viable Islamic state. The implication of this is that the question should be asked whether conventional military force is the correct countermeasure to militant Islamism.

Russian policymakers are concerned about such radical militant Islamist movements since their activities with radicalisation and recruitment take place not only in Central Asia, but also in Russia. They recruit for example among Russia's millions of Muslim labour migrants from Central Asia, who are already increasingly religious because of their poor living conditions and the harsh treatment they often receive in Russia. They also recruit among Russia's indigenous Muslims, e.g. the Bashkirs and Tatars, and among Russian converts to Islam (Lang, 2013: 34–35).

ISLAMISM'S POTENTIAL AS A WIDER POLITICAL FORCE

In addition to its militant dimension, Rustam Burnashev points out in his chapter that Islamism also has a wider political dimension. Central Asian regimes and their media outlets have long portrayed Islamism as a threat in the political discourse. After 1991, newly independent former communist elites pushed nationalist movements to the margins of politics. But it was more difficult to handle religious opponents. Islamist ideology questions both secular power and nationalism. Both ruling elites and nationalists therefore wanted Islamism out of politics. This securitisation of Islamism, the systematic portraying and perception of something as a security threat, was furthered by the civil war in Tajikistan.

Today, the challenges of Islamism for the Central Asian states are more domestic than external. Burnashev dismisses the link between Islamists in Central Asia and Afghanistan as secondary, but notes that a perception of such a link is often used by the Central Asian regimes to justify repression. For them, Islamism is both a possible violent destabilisation multiplier in the short term and a political challenge as a unifying factor for opposition movements in the longer term. But the regimes disagree fundamentally about the exact way in which these two factors affect their respective countries (see Burnashev's model, p. 58). Combined with a low level of trust between the political leaderships in these countries, this makes regionally coordinated responses hard to agree on, let alone carry out.

The Central Asian regimes mainly portray Islamist movements as militants bent on terror. These regimes largely fail to provide public goods such as security and justice and seek rather to ensure their own survival. According to an Uzbek who wished to remain anonymous, there are cases in Uzbekistan of Sharia courts already filling a vacuum and handling some conflicts that the corrupt official judicial system fails to deal with. This indicates that Islamism could be a competing social and political model for Central Asian regimes. The view that a call for an Islamic state based on Sharia is actually a call for the rule of law, for a legal state justified by law and governed through it (Feldman, 2012: 9), can hardly be reassuring for rulers who are used to being above the law. Tajikistan seems to be most exposed to the influence of Islamism, both as a wider political

force and the destructive potential of militant radical Islamists (Lang, 2013: 44–45), but it is also the only country that has allowed some form of Islam-based political opposition, albeit in a restricted framework. Restrictions in religious freedom in Central Asia generally aim to hamper both aspects of Islamism, but are being justified in terms of countering external security threats. Both Islamist ideology and Islamist militancy could ignite brewing discontent into violence. Murat Laumulin notes that many uncertainties may affect Central Asian countries' positions towards Afghanistan, including changing social, economic and political conditions, such as attempts at changes like the Orange Revolution or Arab Spring or power transitions after leadership changes.

DON'T EXPECT REGIONAL CO-OPERATION BETWEEN WEAK STATES …

The preconditions for a concerted effort between the Central Asian states to handle regional security challenges are not good. The Central Asian states are mostly described as weak and focusing on internal rather than external issues. Emil Dzhuraev observes in his chapter that weak state structures are characterised to a varying degree by '…weak impartial institutions and law, and with a preponderance of inter-elite bargains and status quos of rent distribution, and the state as such is to a large degree a rent-making enterprise for the elites'. The state should provide for the ruling elites rather than for the people. Add to this Rustam Burnashev's thought that for Central Asia's political elites, regime security and state security are the same and that judicial systems serve those in power. In addition, several states are facing future political succession struggles. Further interstate complications include competition over resources, border conflicts and ethnic tensions. This undermines mutual trust for multilateral cooperation and the preconditions for regional cooperation. It also creates socio-political volatility, undermining the ability of each of the states externally.

As for post-ISAF Afghanistan, Laumulin notes that the Central Asian countries are likely to bolster their efforts aimed at political dialogue with all forces inside Afghanistan, with neighbouring countries and with leading powers supporting a unified Afghanistan, and to support the development of a growing and sustainable Afghan economy. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan will focus on bilateral relations, while Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are more likely to rely on multilateral institutions already involved in the restoration of Afghanistan. But the middle road between them – regional efforts between the five Central Asian states – is unlikely to be taken.

… WITHOUT THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

Russia and China are the two major external powers involved in Central Asia. Both are concerned by regional issues such as separatism, extremism and terrorism. If they spread, such trends could have dire consequences for two such vast nations as Russia and China. Both would therefore rather confine these issues to Central Asia. It is easy to imagine that Russia and China have a division of labour in Central Asia: China does the economy and investment; Russia does security. Neither China nor Russia is hampered in the eyes of the region's regimes by strings attached in terms of democracy, political freedom and human rights. Their value-neutral approach to the region's mainly autocratic regimes can be expedient in the short term.

China clings to its economic priorities and works primarily bilaterally and through the SCO. The SCO has a security dimension. The scale and scope of this – mainly annual multilateral anti-terrorism exercises involving a few thousand troops – fosters regional security cooperation, but is too small to create the potential to make a real difference given the region's challenges. President Xi Jinping's trip to the region in the autumn of 2013 underlined both the importance Beijing attaches to Central Asia and its preferences for economic relations and business. China's ambitions are noted in Central Asia. Many interlocutors expressed concerns that the interests of small Central Asian states may be overrun by China, but also noted that the theme of worries about Chinese influence was absent from the state-controlled media, probably to avoid creating friction with Beijing.

Russia sees Central Asia as a part of its wider Eurasian integration ambitions. Russia remains the country most involved in Central Asia's security challenges, with good reason. Afghan drugs are having dire effects in Russia. Russia faces its own challenges with Islamism, both as a militant force and as a competing social and political model in the North Caucasus, in the Volga-Urals area and among the millions of Central Asian primarily Muslim migrant workers all across Russia but mainly concentrated in Moscow (Norberg, 2013). A wider destabilisation in Central Asia may undermine Eurasian integration. In order both to increase its own influence and to bolster regional security, Russia is the driving force behind the CSTO, currently the only mechanism for multilateral security cooperation involving Central Asian states. This is weakened since Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan do not participate, but Russia partially compensates for this weakness through bilateral security relations with both countries.

Central Asia lacks a multilateral framework for regional cooperation on hard security issues involving all five states that can make a significant difference after 2014. The SCO is too limited in scope. The region's major military power, Uzbekistan, stands outside the CSTO together with neutral Turkmenistan. As ISAF is leaving Afghanistan, NATO's interest in the region is likely to decline.

None of the three security organisations has Afghanistan and its influence on Central Asia as a natural focus. All the states in the region are weak and can rapidly succumb to internal or external conflict. The OSCE and the UN include all the five states but have a very limited role where hard security is concerned. On the other hand, they are the organisations that are most likely to be acceptable frameworks for the states in the region. They are consequently not ideal, but nevertheless likely to be the best multilateral frameworks for security cooperation after 2014, especially since they give an opportunity for international actors other than Russia and China to stay involved.

TAJIKISTAN – CENTRAL IN CENTRAL ASIA

Tajikistan comes across as the central country in the Afghanistan–Central Asia nexus. It is geographically in the middle and has the closest historical, cultural, ethnic and linguistic links with Afghanistan. Interestingly, it also lands at the very centre of Rustam Burnashev's model of how Central Asian states perceive the challenge from Islamism. Tajikistan is the Central Asian country most dependent on developments in Afghanistan for its own security. But it is also the weakest and most vulnerable Central Asian state. Apart from the drugs trade and the potential disruptive force of militant Islamist groups in northern Afghanistan near Tajikistan's border, the country is Farsi-speaking Sunni Muslim and has close links to Iran. Should a Sunni-Shi'a sectarian divide worsen in Afghanistan and drag Iran into the equation, this would affect Tajikistan seriously. But, interestingly, Tajikistan comes across in the work done for this study as the most optimistic country regarding Afghanistan.

NOT ALL IS GLOOM

Afghanistan also constitutes an economic opportunity for Central Asia. Some of our authors note that the five states actually see economic opportunities and believe that economic development is an important component in achieving greater regional stability (Olimov, Kazemi, Isabaev). The same idea is pronounced in Afghan policy towards Central Asia. There is potential for mutually beneficial economic cooperation. Afghanistan needs to rebuild infrastructure and the Central Asian countries want to expand their trade networks in and through Afghanistan, onwards to South Asia, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. The Central Asian states agree that for economic cooperation to accelerate Afghanistan needs to remain stable after 2014. So far economic cooperation has been limited due to the security situation. Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are the most active with several infrastructure projects; Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have no economic cooperation to speak of while Kazakhstan mainly gives economic aid.

But the competition for economic opportunities also creates obstacles to integrating Afghanistan with its Central Asian neighbours. The competition for natural resources in the region is illustrated by the ongoing conflict between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan caused by the latter wishing to expand the volume of its electricity exports to Afghanistan and beyond. Tajikistan is planning to build a hydropower dam for this purpose which will limit water supply to downstream Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan also wants to export electricity to Afghanistan. Another aspect of the Uzbek–Tajik disagreement is that for landlocked Tajikistan, Afghanistan is an opportunity to get out of its transport deadlock caused by Uzbekistan's restrictions in allowing railway transport through its territory. If unresolved this may further destabilise the region. There is only a slight chance that economic opportunities can outweigh the political and security challenges in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In sum, there is much pessimism about the future of Afghanistan. A security vacuum seems to be emerging in Central Asia. Drugs smuggling remains an intractable problem and has far reaching effect in the Central Asian states. Militant Islamism is a potential destabilization multiplier. Political Islamism has a potential as a political alternative to today's regimes. Regional security cooperation is weak unless outside actors are involved. What conclusions can be drawn against such a background?

E. Conclusions

After 2014, Central Asia may well face security challenges it is unable to handle. Apart from the seemingly all-pervasive drugs trade, surprisingly few of them come from Afghanistan. The challenges the region faces are more rooted in Central Asia's own recent history and current politics. At the same time, a security vacuum is likely to evolve in Afghanistan and in Central Asia. With ISAF not succeeding in building security and the international community not succeeding in building a functioning Afghan state, it is unlikely that the ANSF and Afghan institutions will do so. A deteriorating situation in terms of renewed civil war and a *de facto* partition of the country is hard to dismiss. With the possible exception of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the military capabilities of the Central Asian states are unlikely to be equal to handling the regional security challenges without outside support, which is currently only provided by Russia. Even if all five countries perceived the challenges from Afghanistan in the same way, one can doubt if they have either the ability or the mutual trust to act jointly.

Influences from Afghanistan may actually be more catalysts than driving forces for conflicts in Central Asia. If the situation in Central Asia deteriorates, it might seem like splitting hairs to discuss whether this originated in Afghanistan or not. The point is that, whilst the West and Russia today have little appetite for addressing security issues in Afghanistan, bolstering the Central Asian states' own capacities may be a better way to increase regional resilience and to limit the negative influences from Afghanistan, primarily the drugs trade.

In other words, Central Asia seems to need external support to handle its regional security challenges. The question is how. Current multilateral frameworks either do not cover all of Central Asia (the CSTO) or all of the issues (the SCO, UN, OSCE). Russia and China are the only major powers set to remain involved, but both have their own agendas in which Central Asia is only a part of the equation. After withdrawing from Afghanistan, the West seems to lack appetite for getting involved in the region. The only remaining security issue of collective interest seems to be to combat the drugs trade.

There is a Russian saying that 'A sacred place is never empty'. Given the region's current security outlook, both regional and external forces seem set to fill any emerging void.

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Biographies

Rustam Burnashev is a professor at the Kazakh-German University and the director for analysis at the Institute of Political Solution in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Dr Burnashev has worked in academic institutions and thinks tanks in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. He received his PhD from the Muminov Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Academy of Science of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 1998. His academic research includes international security, the military and political security of Central Asian countries, the security of weak states and non-Western security studies. Dr Burnashev has published 50 works in Germany, India, Kazakhstan, Russia, South Korea, the US and Uzbekistan. He is the author of a monograph entitled *Security in Central Asia: Methodological Frameworks for Analysis (Military Sector of Security)*, 2006.

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Murat Laumulin is an experienced diplomat and political analyst. In 1993–94 he served in Kazakhstan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and subsequently served for three years as chief researcher at Kazakhstan's Institute for Strategic Studies (Russian acronym KISI). In 1998 he started four years of service as first secretary and then counsellor at the Embassy of Kazakhstan to the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn and then Berlin. Since March 2002, Dr Laumulin has been a vice-director and chief researcher at the KISI. He has often commented on international affairs in Kazakhstan's mass media, for example, the magazine *KontinenT*, and on his personal TV programme 'International Panorama' on the TV channel Astana (in Astana). He has been a visiting scholar at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (1992), the University of Maryland (1994), the East–West Center, Honolulu (1995) and the German Foreign Office (1994). Dr Laumulin was awarded the Fulbright Scholar Program scholarship (1995) and contributed to conferences at the German Academy of Sciences (1997), the MacArthur Foundation (1997), the Kennan Institute (1998) and the NATO Defence College in Rome (2003).

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For Central Asia as a region, the two key security challenges related to Afghanistan are militant Islamism and the illicit trade in narcotics from Afghanistan. The region's security challenges are many, but the countries' collective ability to handle them is low. Regional security cooperation is weak unless external powers are involved. Arguably a security vacuum is emerging in Central Asia. The withdrawal of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) may cause additional instability in neighbouring Afghanistan.

How may this affect security in Central Asia? This report gives perspectives from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, China and Russia complemented with analyses of militant Islamism, the drugs trade and regional cooperation. The report is based on a conference held in Almaty on 22–23 May 2013 co-organised by the Swedish Defence Research Agency and Al-Farabi Kazakh National University.

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ISSN1650-1942

www.foi.se