Helena Rytövuori-Apunen (ed.)

# The Regional Security Puzzle Around Afghanistan

Barbara Budrich Publishers

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## Bordering Practices in Central Asia and Beyond

Barbara Budrich Publishers
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Unlike the other contributors, who all were researchers in the project, Professor Renée Marlin-Bennett participated as our "external" commentator. She did so in a workshop for launching the book project and also acted as the discussant for a panel that the project organized for the First ABS (Association of Borderlands Studies) World Conference in Joensuu and St. Petersburg in 2014. We owe her our gratitude for her insightful comments

and suggestions. Additionally, her role has been to co-author the Epilogue, which reflects on the research in the book from beyond the geographic region of its focus and with a view to showing how the book's contribution connects with the already established study of borders. Our search for this connection is inspired by pragmatism: a research orientation which sensitizes us to the limitations of perspective in the privileged discourses in policies as well as in the practices of research.

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*Helena Rytövuori-Apunen*

# List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| ADB | Asian Development Bank |
| ANSF | Afghan National Security Forces |
| AIIB | Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank |
| APEC | Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation |
| bbl/d | barrels per day |
| bcm | billion cubic meters |
| BOMCA | Border Management Programme in Central Asia (EU, UNDP) |
| CABSI | Central Asia Border Security Initiative |
| CASA-1000 | Central Asia–South Asia transmission line project |
| CAPS | Central Asian Power System |
| CAREC | Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation |
| CENTO | Central Treaty Organization |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| CSF | Coalition Support Funds (U.S.) |
| CSTO | Collective Security Treaty Organization |
| EEU | Eurasian Economic Union (also abbr. EAEU) |
| ETIM | East Turkestan Islamic Movement |
| EU | European Union |
| EurAsEC | Eurasian Economic Community |
| FATA | Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan) |
| FTAAP | Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific |
| FCR | Frontier Crimes Regulations (Pakistan) |
| GBAO | Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast' (Tajikistan) |
| GDI | gross domestic income |
| GDP | gross domestic product |
| HPP | hydropower plant |
| HuJI | Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami |
| IJU | Islamic Jihad Union |
| IMU | Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan |
| IPI | Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline |
| IR | International Relations (field of study) |
| IRPT | Party of Islamic Renaissance of Tajikistan; a.k.a. Islamic Rebirth Party of Tajikistan, Islamic Revival Party of Tajikistan |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force (NATO) |
| ISI | Inter-Services Intelligence (Pakistan) |
| ISIL | Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant; a.k.a. Islamic State (IS) |
| LeJ | Lashkar-e-Jhangvi |

| | |
|---|---|
| LeT | Lashkar-e Taiba |
| LNG | liquefied natural gas |
| LoC | Line of Control (Kashmir) |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| NDRC | National Development and Reform Commission (China) |
| NDN | Northern Distribution Network |
| NPT | Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (1968) |
| NSR | New Silk Road |
| ODA | official development assistance |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| OSCE | Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe |
| PATA | Provincially Administered Tribal Areas (Pakistan) |
| PMU | People's Movement of Uzbekistan |
| RSC | regional security complex (IR research) |
| RSFSR | Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic |
| SCO | Shanghai Cooperation Organization |
| SEATO | South-East Asia Treaty Organization |
| Tajik SSR | Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic |
| TAPI | Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India gas pipeline |
| TPP | Trans-Pacific Partnership |
| TTFS | Trade and Transport Facilitation Strategy |
| TTP | Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Program |
| UPS | unified power system |
| U.S. | United States of America |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| UTO | United Tajik Opposition |
| Uzbek SSR | Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic |
| WB | World Bank |
| WTO | World Trade Organization |
| WWII | World War II |

# Note on the Transliteration

This book makes extensive use of Russian-language sources. In transliterating the Cyrillic to the Latin script we have used common journalistic practice for well-known names of persons and places, but otherwise followed the Library of Congress system without diacritical signs other than the Russian-language soft and hard signs, which are marked, respectively, with ´ and ´´.

# Introduction: Bordering Practices Challenging State Borders

*Helena Rytövuori-Apunen*

The studies that have generated the present book have been sparked by a timely question: how does the waning of Western military presence in Afghanistan impact the wider region around this country? The implications of this process go far beyond the immediate effects of the reduction of U.S. and its allies' forces in the coalition led by NATO. The states in close geographic proximity to Afghanistan as well as other external powers, notably Russia, have interests in how the transformation of the regional security environment occurs. The political context is complex, because in Afghanistan's neighborhood the borders of the former Soviet republics are fused with historical affiliations and livelihood connections that leave these two-and-a-half-decade-old states interpenetrated; in the entire geographic area borderlines between states are mostly porous and, in some cases, barely exist. Under such circumstances the impacts of this transformation, the changes that it brings and the processes that it prompts, become rather more multifarious and unpredictable than in situations where states are distinct entities separated by the lines between them.

In Afghanistan's part of the world borderlands are intertwined with the habitual processes of life for reasons that relate to the everyday practices of livelihood and family connections. While illegal border crossings simply ignore the authority of the state, this authority is also systematically and intentionally challenged by the transborder loyalties and networks of non-state agents connected with ethno-political mobilization, insurgent activity, criminal economic organization and separatist pursuits. Beyond this it is also state agents, especially when they are powers with security interests in the wider region, who engage in policies and practices that serve to fuse the boundaries of sovereignty. Such fusion occurs through spaces claimed for forward-pushed defense, markets and economic resources, and cultural and ideological influence. In most cases the presence of extra-regional powers within the region relates more to their interest in controlling political outcomes, i.e. to ensure future collaboration and access to different types of resources, than it does to the old proto-imperial practice of achieving domination over territo-

ry. As a consequence of this the practices of power are subtle and persuasive rather than directly coercive, and they often operate through mutually conditional collaborative relations.

Due to the current stress moment created by Afghanistan for the countries in its neighborhood, borders around Afghanistan are also about region-wide security and development and, moreover, they are connected to global security. The year 2014 did not mark the "pivotal year" announced by President Obama in May of that year, who at that time stated that the combat mission would be concluded by the end of the year and that 2015 would see less than 10,000 U.S. troops (from then 32,000) remain in Afghanistan with the limited tasks of training the local security forces and "supporting counter-terrorism operations against the remnants of al-Qaeda."[1] In September 2014, U.S. and Afghan officials signed a bilateral security agreement which allowed the U.S. plus a few thousand NATO troops to remain in Afghanistan after the NATO-led ISAF mission (International Security Assistance Force) and the thirteen-year-old U.S. Operation Enduring Freedom expired at the end of 2014. Two months later, in November, Obama announced that Operation Resolute Support, which NATO had planned as a follow-up non-combat mission ("training, advising and assistance"), was to extend the U.S. combat mission in support of the Afghan security forces for at least one more year. In March 2015, the 2014 plan that half of the remaining 9,800 U.S. troops would leave by the end of 2015 was postponed and Obama announced that the specific trajectory of the withdrawal in 2016 would be established later that year. In October 2015 this plan was abandoned, thereby rejecting the idea that, prior to the expiry of Obama's presidency in January 2017, the U.S. military presence could be reduced to consist of only security advisers, who would be part of the embassy staff in Kabul. Instead, President Obama announced that U.S. troops would continue to remain in Afghanistan throughout most of 2016 but that the number for 2017 would decline to 5,500 as that year begins.[2]

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1 The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Statement by the President on Afghanistan, May 27, 2014, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/27/statement-president-afghanistan.

2 Matthew Rosenberg and Michael D. Shear, "In Reversal, Obama Says U.S. Soldiers Will Stay in Afghanistan to 2017," *New York Times*, October 15, 2015, http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html?_r=0; the White House, Office of the Press Secretary, "U.S.-Afghanistan Joint Statement," March 24, 2015, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/03/24/us-afghanistan-joint-

Rather than outlining definite plans for withdrawal, the announced dates mark change and ambiguity in and around Afghanistan for many years to come. In contrast to the more restrictive mandate advocated by the previous Afghan President Hamid Karzai, his successor Ashraf Ghani welcomed the support of the U.S. aircraft—F-16 fighters, B-1B bombers and Predator and Reaper drones—to Afghan forces in direct combat. While the responsibility for security had been transferred to the Afghan army and security forces by the end of 2014, these forces (350,000 in number) lacked crucial air-force capacity. The year 2014 saw the number of casualties amongst Afghan forces rise to 5,000, and twice as many Afghan civilians had been killed. Against the additional backdrop of the alarming advances made by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also known as Islamic State, IS)[3] in northern Iraq, a military solution to the endgame in Afghanistan prevailed in Washington against the argument that the U.S. should only be engaged in narrower counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda and thus help to generate better conditions for the government in Kabul to negotiate with the regional insurgents. The fact that the Taliban were able to occupy the city of Kunduz in northern Afghanistan for two weeks in September–October 2015 quickly put an end to the plans that a complete withdrawal of the remaining 12,500 troops that the U.S., other NATO members and NATO partners still had in Afghanistan in the beginning of 2015 was imminent.

However, in spite of the uncertainty over the future of Afghanistan, the political momentum of 9/11 has evaporated and the mission, which in autumn 2001 placed Afghanistan at the center of the Global War on Terrorism

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statement; Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "In a Shift, Obama Extends U.S. Role in Afghan Combat," *New York Times*, November 21, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/22/us/politics/in-secret-obama-extends-us-role-in-afghan-combat.html. The U.S. spent $1 trillion in its 13 year-long military mission, and an additional $100 billion were spent on reconstruction. By October 2015, more than 2230 U.S. service members had been killed. On December 1, 2015, the foreign ministers of the NATO member states confirmed that the alliance would sustain its Resolute Support Mission until the end of 2016. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "Foreign Ministers agree to sustain NATO's presence in Afghanistan, launch funding for Afghan forces," December 1, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_125364.htm.

[3] The name Islamic State was adopted in June 2014 by a group that previously had referred to itself as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This last-mentioned name had indicated the merging together of Islamic State of Iraq and ash-Sham (ISIS) and a number of other groups. The acronym "Da'ish" ("Daesh") from the Arabic *Dawlah al-Islamiyah fi al-Iraq wa al-Sham* (the Islamic State of Iraq and Sham) is mostly used by the group's opponents.

and within a decade's time had peaked at 140,000 troops,[4] is awaiting for its final conclusion. In the wake of the terrorist attacks in September 2001, the mission under the auspices of NATO and authorized by the UN grew into an entire state-building effort that arose from the U.S. military intervention, which had succeeded in toppling the Taliban from power within a few weeks. Infrastructure and institutions have been built, education and health care improved, but the mission leaves behind a state in which ethno-political conflict has been made more severe rather than being reduced; and security forces are only maintained through external financial support and military assistance. Tahir Amin in the present book argues (chapter 7) that the possibilities of Afghanistan's political future range from fragile power-sharing to yet another round in the civil war and a takeover by the Taliban. Although it is unlikely that Afghanistan will become a conventional threat to its neighbors (denoting the aggression of this state against another state), any strengthening of the Taliban and the groups connected with it within Afghanistan will also strengthen the radical Islamist opposition and its underground movement in the countries in its proximity.

The former Soviet republics, which are still in a process of transformation brought about by independence in the early 1990s, are especially sensitive areas in this regard. Unlike Pakistan and Iran, they are not Islamic States in name but, instead, secular republics. The remark of a presidential adviser in Tajikistan in June 2014 voices a concern felt in all capitals: "[I]f there are disturbances in Tajikistan, members of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Ansarullah, Taliban, Al-Qaeda and other terrorist and extremist organizations will appear here at once."[5] The conflict is more complex than can be conveyed by the concept of "asymmetric conflict" which juxtaposes state actors with transborder non-state agencies (typically armed insurgency and other criminalized activity). The conflict is not this plain anywhere here, but the armed insurgency also expresses and utilizes other dividing lines that are deeply embedded in the region's history and suppressed by a symbolism

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4 North Atlantic Treaty Organization, "NATO and Afghanistan," accessed December 15, 2015, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm; Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, *CRS Report*, April 27, 2015, 42, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf.

5 Sherali Khairulloyev, Presidential Adviser in Tajikistan, quoted in "The Main Orchestrators of Recent Events in Khorog are in Dushanbe, Says Presidential Adviser,"*Asia-Plus*, Dushanbe, June 7, 2014, http://news.tj/en/news/main-orchestrators-recent-events-khorog-are-dushanbe-says-presidential-adviser.

intended to unify the state. In such conditions the threat from Afghanistan prompts central governments to demonstrate the "credible security performance" that serves internationally as well as domestically as a sign of successful statehood. As the words of the Tajikistani adviser above already suggest, the threat is less about the rule of the Taliban as such than about a turbulent Afghanistan which provides opportunities for the militant insurgency that has been present in Central Asia since the 1990s and is increasingly connected with radical Islamist forces outside of the region.

When the momentum of 9/11 placed Afghanistan in the limelight of world attention, the question about the impacts and repercussions of the transformed security environment for the states and regions in its proximity was left in the shadow. Autumn 2001 started a process of pumping into Afghanistan a military capacity derived from the world's most advanced technology, and three of the surrounding former Soviet republics (Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan) as well as Pakistan were drawn into major transit and logistics networks. The territory of the three first-mentioned states became especially important after U.S.-Pakistani relations deteriorated in 2011. When the ISAF and U.S. mission was being wound down thirteen years after the autumn of 2001, the states around Afghanistan were once again affected. The withdrawal of troops, weapons and weapons systems reorganizes external military presence and capacity in this geographic area, and impacts the security environment in which these countries negotiate their position in the region and organize their relations with external powers. As Western military forces move out, the international community has little else but "development" to offer as a solution to security problems. Large-scale projects intended to connect Afghanistan to new region-wide energy networks have been initiated by the U.S. and also by China, which has its own economic and security interests in the region. Although the success of these efforts has much significance for regional countries' future, any such new interdependence can only modestly facilitate a solution to the difficult security puzzle that envelops the wider region. While tying countries together through joint efforts does indeed prompt cooperation, it also creates conflict over new economic and political frontiers. These frontiers are zonal and expansive, and they fuse the lines between effective influence and formal authority. All of this means that the future of Afghanistan is not only about Afghanistan itself, but also about the wider region that surrounds this state.

The 2010s have shown several signs of increased insurgent activity in the vicinity of, and stretching across, Afghanistan's borders. In central and southern Tajikistan, the country's government has responded to the political opposition, both armed and unarmed, in a heavy-handed manner and with a massive use of force. In the Ferghana Valley, which intertwines Tajik, Kyrgyz and Uzbek lands, communal conflict over land, water and road construction has sparked violent clashes involving both civilians and border guards. The conflicts in the Ferghana have led to state-level conflict in regard to the transborder disputes over non-demarcated and disputed territory. Casualties amongst security personnel—border guards, army soldiers and paramilitary units—have been reported to occur frequently in the zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Furthermore, the border between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, which until 2014 had remained relatively quiet, has repeatedly seen the slaying of Turkmen border guards, and these violent encounters have generated tensions between Ashgabat and Kabul. The year 2015 started out with new alarming reports on the concentration of armed militants in Afghan border areas near Tajikistan and the continuing hunt by the Afghan government of the Taliban members who, weeks before, had captured four Tajik border guards near the Panji Poyon (Nizhny Panj) border crossing checkpoint. Similarly ominous have been reports of the appearance of the black flags of Islamic State (IS) along the Afghan-Turkmen border, allegedly raised by Taliban groups and IS militants who were citizens of these Central Asian countries. Militant groups trained in Syria also were reported to have committed acts of violence in the Osh Region in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana Valley.[6] A few months later, U.S. sources and domestic experts in Afghanistan both confirmed that the recruits of the Islamic State in the region were mostly from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia and that this intake was dividing the Taliban, many of whom were disgruntled with a leadership that was considered too moderate.[7] Many of the border incidents related to

6 "Isil Militants Test Central Asia's Borders for Strength," *Asia-Plus*, Dushanbe, January 29, 2015, http://news.tj/en/news/isil-militants-test-central-asia-s-borders-strength. According to International Crisis Group, the estimate of the participants from Central Asia among the ranks of the Islamic State ranges from 2,000 to 4,000. The largest ethnic group is Uzbek, and recruitment takes place mostly among the migrant workers in Russia (Policy Briefing, Europe and Central Asia Briefing, no. 72, January 20, 2015). The figures are reasoned (and hence speculative) rather than empirical.

7 "IS, Taliban Pairing Up in Northern Afghanistan: Official," *Express Tribune*, May 8, 2015, http://tribune.com.pk/story/883104/is-taliban-pairing-up-in-northern-afghanistan-official/; "ISIS in Afghanistan a Rebrand of Militants Already in Battlefied," *Khaama Press*, June

these developments reportedly are intertwined with the flow of drugs by which the insurgents can build up their resource base. However, seeing hardened control of state borders as the main (or sole) response is a self-defeating approach because this also worsens the confrontation and deepens the conflict. Action is regrettably late when military confrontation already looms, but sustainable solutions—other than merely military solutions—require the same as proactive measures: an understanding of how the different flows across these borders, both legal and illegal, connect with the state-making practices and external interests that support or suppress them.

The current moment in Afghanistan prompts questions in which several issues are intertwined: In which ways do the geopolitical tensions relating to the reorganization of external military presence and the competition brought about by region-wide energy projects interact with the multi-ethnic regional states' ambitions? In which ways do these states seek to strengthen their position in the region and to consolidate their central powers in relation to the politically problematic areas at state borders which also extend to considerable depth within these countries? How do these internal conflicts connect with the external pressures and opportunities and thereby either strengthen or challenge the state's possibilities to control territory and people? Unravelling this bundle of problems requires examining two kinds of activity. The first is transboundary activities ranging from livelihood practices and representations of historical affiliation to militant insurgency and separatist ambitions. The second is the boundaries of effective control that take shape in the interactions of the regional states with external agents and powers whilst leaders in these states try to maintain their own line of policies and action and strive also to gain resources in order to strengthen their respective positions.

The complexity of these processes continue to elude us if we remain focused merely on the borderline and the management practices expected to "filter" interaction between states and if we, accordingly, report events as "incidents" (border incidents, violent incidents) as if they occurred only sporadically. Such an approach gives priority to a specific concept, the concept of the modern, "Westphalian" state and states system, which in the region around Afghanistan lacks a solid historical basis and where any related tradi-

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25, 2015, http://www.khaama.com/isis-in-afghanistan-a-rebrand-of-militants-already-in-battlefield-1238; also see U.S. Department of Defense, "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan," Report to Congress, December 2015, 17–19, http://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/1225_Report_Dec_2015_-_Final_20151210.pdf.

tion has only shallow roots.[8] The recognition that there are many temporal layers of borders, again, instructs us to look for an alternative in the more history-oriented concept of borders which finds its manifestation in the empirical study of the problems of nationalism and ethnopolitics in identity construction and institution-building. However, in such empirical study the entire frame of discussion has mostly consisted in the development of a territorially bounded state. The narrative of the state is the recurrent theme in area studies on political developments in Central and South Asia and it forms, in particular, the substance of the genre of studies approaching post-Soviet development through questions of nation-building and transition to democracy.[9] In order to overcome these conceptual limitations we approach borders as practices that shape reality. These are practices authorized by the institution of the state, and they are also practices wherein the very concept of states with fixed, non-overlapping borders has little meaning and habitual processes take place through ignorance, evasion and active resistance of the implications of this institution.

Borders may well be visible as lines but, more generally, they are things that mark limits and difference, inclusion and exclusion. The contributors in this book focus on examining those border-producing ("bordering") practices which claim control of some territorial space and which have practical implications for relations between states.[10] These practices may be institutional

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8 The Westphalian state refers to the historical sources of the modern state in pre-modern Europe. The principle, which in 1648 concluded the Thirty Years' War and put an end to the participation of the Holy See in the territorial power struggles between European rulers, determined that the rule in each country decides its religion (*cuius regio, eius religio*). Although the principle agreed by the European rulers in 1648 was not about borders but about making the state entities the sovereign powers in their respective territories, it laid the cornerstone for the bordering practices which through a variety of institutionalizing mechanisms including international law became constitutive for international relations.

9 Early works in this genre include Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition: The East European and East German Experience* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1996); among more recent works are Mariya Y. Omelicheva, ed., *Nationalism and Identity Construction in Central Asia: Dimensions, Dynamics, and Directions* (Maryland: Lexington Books, Rowman & Littlefield, 2014).

10 According to Charles Taylor, practices can be seen as more or less "stable configuration of shared activity" shaped by a pattern of what is regularly done and what is not. Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 204. Etymologically, "pragma" refers to that which is regularly done (Greek *pragmatikos*, *prassein*, to do). In the pragmatist sense this is the only "essence" of reality. Bordering practices are also ordering practices, as Henk van Houtum, Oliver Kramsch and Wolfgang Zierhofer argue in the Prologue of their edited book

and exhibit the symbolic markers of a state, or they may claim legitimacy based on other social conventions. Such claims can be explicit in policies or demonstrated through recurrent action. The symbolic markers of the agents performing such bordering practices thus range from state flags to private fences, and from letters of law to codes for clandestine action. The sustained control of some space—a bounded territory or a more diffuse functional space—is power. Rather than focusing on territory and its control as a projection of power, our interest lies in the border-related actions which, in their recurrence, are practices to organize control of territorial space and, in this way, to gain power.[11] Our aim is to find out how these practices shape the terrain of conflicts and the political landscape around Afghanistan, and how they do so when the uncertainty about the future of Afghanistan becomes an impetus to pursue bordering practices in exchange for security and development.

## Inner and Outer Neighborhood

In geographic terms, our main focus is the area covered by the former Soviet republics, which has drawn very little attention in its relation to the developments in the wider region although it constitutes the major part of the region around Afghanistan. Three former Soviet republics neighbor on Afghanistan: Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan. Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan connect the southern parts of Central Asia with Russia, which has been the dominating external power in the region north of the Amu Darya and the Panj rivers ever since a British-Russian border demarcation in 1885. This geographic area is all the more interesting when we take into account that Russia's interests concerning stability in Afghanistan do not fundamentally conflict with those of the U.S. and NATO.[12] Noticing that there is common in-

*B/ordering Space* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). The main focus of this book is identity-construction.

[11] Our argument must not be confused with the (re)emphasis of the importance of territory ("territory is back") which has received increasing articulations after the conflict in Ukraine unfolded and Russia annexed the Crimean area and the city of Sevastopol in spring 2014. From the perspective of the present book, the focus on territory suggests narrowly geopolitical connotations.

[12] Jeffrey Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia After 2014," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 2013, 1,

terest yet also disagreement nourished by mutual suspicions, we examine how the "post-Soviet" states around Afghanistan negotiate their positions in region-wide security and development, and what practical implications these processes have for bordering practices in the region. However, as soon as this question is raised, it also becomes clear that, due to the intermingled border problematique, our geographic focus must be expanded from Central to South-Central Asia.

On Afghanistan's southern and eastern borders, where the approximately 2,500-kilometer-long borderline[13] has not been recognized by any Afghan government, Pakistan's provincially and federally administered tribal areas (the PATA and FATA regions, respectively) bring together Central and South Asia. The 3.5 million-strong Pashtun population of the extensive unsettled frontier zone to Afghanistan offered British imperial administrators a front to influence events in Afghanistan from the area of present-day Pakistan, and this practice was continued through the support of U.S. intelligence to the Pashtun militant opposition which had fled to this border region to escape the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (December 1979–February 1989). Because security and development in Afghanistan and the entire region are integrally tied to the question of Pakistan's north-western borders, our geographic focus is broadened from Central towards South Asia so as to include Pakistan and its troubled border relations with India.

In addition to these areas in immediate geographic proximity to Afghanistan, the regional security puzzle includes an "outer" zone of external powers, both regional and global. Russia's presence is embedded in the modern history of the region in multiple ways. The geographic and historical proximity of China is clearly visible in the economic sphere and, increasingly, also in security as Beijing tightens its grip on developments which, in Mao's days, were named "splitism" and in the present time are described as "terrorism" and "extremism" in line with the international threat vocabulary. Iran's cultural ties with Tajikistan pave the way for expanding cooperation from the economic sphere to regional security issues. Iran is a historical power in the region, a power against which the nineteenth-century Afghan Emirs needed the British army and which today connects Greater Central Asia with politics in the Middle East. Iran, today, is part of the "outer" zone because of its am-

http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf.

13 The reported length of the Afghanistan-Pakistan borderline varies from 2,430 to 2,640 kilometers.

bitions relating to nuclear energy that have become a source of tensions in the relations of the U.S. and Russia. Although its state border with Afghanistan draws it into the "inner" zone, Iran is not in focus in the present book because Soviet and Russian influence has had no major impact on the borders of this country. Instead we examine another large country, Kazakhstan, which is poised for regional leadership and, in its cooperation with external powers, is part of the "outer" zone. Simultaneously its spongy borders with Kyrgyzstan, which have caused discord between the two countries, pull it into the "inner" zone of more direct impact arising from developments in Afghanistan.

The question of Russia's influence in the region is important not only for historical reasons. Russia is alertly keeping an eye on signs of political and religious "extremism" near its own state borders and within the former Soviet republics, where political forms of radical Islam threaten its Eurasian integration projects.[14] The threat of armed insurgency is intertwined with drug trafficking that for Russia poses a demographic problem rather than only a matter of law enforcement.[15] Russian foreign policy makers have repeatedly expressed concerns "about the time frame set by the USA for withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, which does not correspond to the situation in the country."[16] Russia supported the U.S. military operation in the wake of 9/11,

[14] The Eurasian Economic Union has been in effect since January 1, 2015. It was launched on the basis of the Customs Union established in 2006 between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan within the frame of the Eurasian Economic Community (EAC, alternatively EurAsEC or EAEC), which was created in 2000 by these three states plus Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) was created in 2002 on the basis of a treaty on collective security signed in Tashkent in 1992.

[15] Some 1.7 million of the drug-addicted people in Russia use opiates from Afghanistan, which started to flow into the country in the late 1990s. (The estimated total number of drug-addicted people ranges from 2.5 million in 2010 to 8.5 million in 2013, out of a total population of 143 million.) Afghanistan is the main source of the heroin consumed in Russia. "World Drug Report 2010, 1.2 The global heroin market," United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, www.unodc.org/documents/wdr/WDR_2010/1.2_ The_global_ heroin_market.pdf; "Russia battles Afghan heroin intoxication single-handedly," interview of Viktor Ivanov, director of the Federal Drug Control Service, RT TV, October 12, 2009, https://www.rt.com/news/afghan-heroin-drug-trafficking; Ivan Nechepurenko, "Russia Fights Addiction to Afghan Heroin," *Moscow Times*, May 27, 2013, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/russia-fights-addiction-to-afghan-heroin/480593.html.

[16] "We are concerned about the time frame set by the USA for withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan, which does not correspond to the situation in the country. The USA has been unable to fulfil the mandate that was approved by the UN, but is leaving the country in the midst of an armed conflict. The question is what the UN will have to do next." Statement by Russia's permanent representative at the UN, Vitaliy Churkin, quoted in "Churkin: Rossiia

thereby hoping to enhance cooperation with the U.S. and to gain international support for its own struggle against terrorism and radical Islam within and in the proximity of its state borders. Thus, although the difficulties experienced by Western countries to control Afghanistan perhaps are not bad news in the sense of the political competition between great powers, they also are a source of anxieties which increase the pressure on Russia to fortify its own military and political frontiers in the region. A statement from June 2014 by the Council of the Heads of State of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) declared that Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan is currently "the most dangerous area of the outer CIS boundaries related to the activities of international terrorist organizations and cross-border crime groups, organizing transit channels of militants, illegal migrants and drug trafficking."[17] A few months later in September, the Russian Secretary General of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Nikolai Bordiuzha warned about Islamist attempts to create an "underground extremist state" in Central Asia.[18] The gradual withdrawal of U.S. and ISAF troops has also generated suspicions in Moscow that the transit units will be tasked with surveillance and espionage, and that part of the military capacity will remain in the territories of the former Soviet republics under the banner of law enforcement training centers. While the U.S. rearranges its capacity to operate without significant ground troops, Russia responds in its own ways which reflect its bilateral relations and multilateral defense cooperation along its historical borders. In Russia's multilateral cooperation, not only the CSTO but also the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which adds China to the cooperation, has been growing in importance, all the more so since the SCO decided in 2014 to start a process of upgrading three of its observer-status participants—that is, India, Pakistan and Iran—to full members. Afghanistan gained observer status in 2012.

Security around Afghanistan is an extremely difficult puzzle; and it is unsolvable insofar as the puzzle is conceived in the Westphalian frame in which the pieces are territorially bounded state entities. Such a conceptual

obespokoena planami SShA po vyvodu voisk iz Afganistana," *RIA Novosti*, June 3, 2014, http://ria.ru/world/20140603/1010555595.html.

17 "CIS to Provide Assistance to Tajikistan in Strengthening of Tajik-Afghan Border Protection," *AKIpress*, Bishkek, June 5, 2014, http://www.akipress.com/news:542655/.

18 Nikolai Bordiuzha, Secretary General of the CSTO, quoted in Edward Lemon, "Russia Sees IS as Reason to Boost Control in Central Asia," *Eurasianet.org*, November 11, 2014, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/70866.

frame is unable to put together the actual pieces which overlap or, indeed, are missing altogether. They overlap or do not fit together because the practices of states are much more multifarious than the concept of the state with clearly delineated borders suggests; and pieces are missing because the activities of agents other than states are not recognized. In Central Asia the spaces of such missing pieces cut across states' boundaries in diffuse and changing shapes rather than carve out any specifically defined area (such as a pseudo-state, for example the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq). This reflects the diverse and country-specific circumstances in which underground opposition and insurgency, and in many cases also separatist ambitions, challenge central governments. In each country the outcomes of the interactions between the loyalties of the population (based on geographic region, ethnicity, and family ties) and public appeals to assume identities construed by the unifying symbolism of state and nation depend crucially on the historical experience that has accumulated in the political "periphery" of the substance of relations with the "center."

The problem of state-building that typically has burdened the former Soviet republics is that, upon their emergence after the dissolution of the USSR, the new, independent states have to varying degrees privileged some ethnic groups and their regions vis-à-vis other groups and regions. This conflict has deepened whenever it also recreated the distance between Soviet-era elites and other segments of the population. As a consequence, a mechanism for conflict escalation has been reactivated; and in cases where political situations polarize inside the countries and where paths of parliamentary participation for the political opposition are closed for any reason, this has brought the implication that different groups may join together and the underground movement and transborder connections for political opposition and insurgency may easily be strengthened. In this way the "puzzle" gains pieces that are not bounded entities but, instead, diffuse in their character and that take shape according to circumstances. These flickering pieces cut through state borders and surface in some places—"problematic zones" within countries or zones disputed between them. While during the Soviet decades the northern parts of Afghanistan in particular had become a shifting zone of bordering practices for politico-ideological and ethno-political inclusion and exclusion, after the dissolution of the USSR new and shifting frontiers erupted throughout the terrain of the new states and created interfaces of political and cultural bordering.

The mechanisms that produce the odd pieces of the puzzle are not very different outside the former Soviet republics, in South-Central Asia; but what makes the post-Soviet area a dramatic scene of transformations is their only a few decades-old Westphalia-modeled statehood to which the pressures generated by the uncertainty over the future of Afghanistan add an extra burden. The thrust of our argument is that we cannot grasp the dynamics of the developments in the region unless we examine borders in the sense of multiple types of bordering practices. The transformation sparked by the uncertain future of Afghanistan is the present-day context, which makes this general theme timely and pertinent. While it is important to bring into focus agents other than states, we also note that states—the central powers in the region and the leaderships of external states—do not only control and consolidate formal borders but also engage in fighting against or supporting other types of bordering practices and, thus, prompt collaboration, contestation or opposition among both non-state agents and other states. The patterns of these actions and policies in their mutual interaction and combinations are examined in their country-specific contexts in the different chapters of this book.

## Arrangement of Chapters in the Book

The chapters comprising the present book discuss the wider region around Afghanistan from the immediate post-Soviet transformations of the early 1990s to projections of future processes. The thematic landscape that we examine against this temporal horizon consists of the different agents' practices of borders, security and development. The introductory chapter is followed by Jeremy Smith's examination of how borders in the former Soviet republics in Central Asia were established at independence and how this ran parallel to setting up multilateral security cooperation. Smith also discusses how the issue of the rights of the ethnic Russians and the Russian-speaking population were embedded in the transformations following the dissolution of the USSR; and how this issue in Kazakhstan, where the Russian minority has remained large, from the early 1990s onwards created uncertainty over the stability of the northern borderline (chapter 1). In other parts of Central Asia significant minorities are no longer Russian but the state borders in all cases

cut through ethnic affiliations and complicate neighborhood relations at state and communal levels.

The uncertainty over the future of Afghanistan raises the political momentum about building up the state borders, which remain shallow as measured by the standards of the modern state: many are easy to walk across, such as the Panj River between Afghanistan and Tajikistan during dry periods. The border crossing points (BCPs), which have been established relatively recently, assign movement across the borderlines with the function of being legal interaction from the territory of one state to another state, but everyday livelihood practices do not always obey such institutional lines. Examining the Batken region in the Kyrgyz segment of the Ferghana Valley shared by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Steven Parham illustrates how the linear borders that conventionally mark state sovereignty are corroborated by the state's internationally assisted training and equipment while they, at the same time, are contested by the everyday practices of the borderland populations. Parham's discussion shows how the memory of Soviet times is present in the border discourse of the local population and what it means against the horizon of the new reality of building a distinct state (chapter 2).

The border zone around the Durand Line between Afghanistan and Pakistan is a state security problem in a very different register, and the situation has become ever more complicated since the U.S. military intervention in autumn 2001 ousted the Taliban from Kabul. In this case here no formally recognized borderline exists and the zone provides refuge to armed insurgency from all countries in the region. Simbal Khan discusses how this zone of instability and insecurity between Afghanistan and Pakistan curves up to Kashmir, the Himalayan region disputed by Pakistan and India, and how these two areas, together with the Ferghana Valley, form major hubs for very mobile and multifaceted movements of armed insurgency. In these areas formal state borders are contested and the border zones are extremely porous due to mutually conflated communities. These three areas, which all display very different characteristics, are also connecting points for the more global and highly mobile militant insurgency and illegal trafficking of drugs and other goods, and increasingly also of human beings. Khan's discussion exposes some of the main political and security threats which the regional states encounter at the border and inside their territories irrespective of the situation in Afghanistan yet critically nourished by it (chapter 3). The three chapters comprising this first part of the book show how border-related conflicts in

post-Soviet Central Asia and South-Central Asia are embedded in the history of external colonization and rivalries between regional powers.

The four chapters that follow in Part II discuss the policies and other practices through which four states directly bordering on Afghanistan—Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Pakistan—each deal with the present challenges of security and development. The chapters examine the specific problems encountered in Afghanistan's immediate geographic proximity and the issues which arise from a problematic relationship with Russia, which, for the former Soviet republics, is the historical horizon against which the main directions of policies must be interpreted and which, for Pakistan, relates to its conflict and rivalries with India. In both cases relations with Russia help to make sense of the deeper, not readily visible borders, which are part of the context of action and have practical meaning in terms of action consequences depending on the agents' interpretations.

The path chosen by independent Turkmenistan has been isolationist and based on its own kind of permanent neutrality. Slavomír Horák and Jan Šír discuss how the proximity of Afghanistan and the more recently launched energy cooperation shape policies in this energy-rich country and how the Turkmen leadership attempts to react to the new security challenges arising from the south (chapter 4). Tajikistan, again, is militarily Russia's frontier land and allied with it. Tajik identity is an integral part of the Afghan conflict and affects Tajikistan through its political underground opposition. On the border that runs along the Panj River history and identities are fused to such a degree that this geographic border, as Rytövuori-Apunen and Usmonov emphasize, cannot properly be described as "Tajik-Afghan"; in ethnic terms it is "Tajik-Tajik" instead (chapter 5). During the Soviet era, this specific border condition made Tajikistan an ideological frontier land towards Afghanistan, and even today Tajikistan plays a key role in Russia's approaches to Afghanistan.

The subtle power game and political conditionality in Moscow's relations with the stronger of the former Soviet republics is well illustrated by examining Uzbekistan; a country which, as Vadim Romashov explains, has been in and out of the Russia-led security cooperation and has correspondingly opened bases for Western use and, more recently, has welcomed the U.S. "train and equip" assistance for modernizing its military. Romashov discusses how the policy moves, which at first glance might look like a "zig-zag" or a "pendulum," make sense as a political game that utilizes the new

opportunities brought about by major changes in the security environment in order to help realize the country's long-term policy goals (chapter 6). Finally, because the border zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan is an inseparable part of the region's security problematique, the question of how Russia deals with conflict-ridden South-Central Asia through its bilateral relations with Pakistan must also be examined. Tahir Amin discusses Pakistan-Russia relations as a part of the security problematique around Afghanistan and argues that not only Western military presence but also its liberal world order is waning in the region whilst other discursive world orders gain influence (chapter 7).

The third part of the book examines the prospects which international development initiatives and cooperation present for Afghanistan and the wider region around it. The "New Silk Roads" approaches and projects launched by both the U.S. and China are examined by Mika Aaltola and Juha Käpylä (chapter 8). These projects, together with many other supported by international financing institutions, offer Afghanistan and the countries around it new opportunities to gain resources and develop cooperation, but they also bring competition and conflict. Chapter 9 has two authors, each with their independently written sections. Dmitry Malyshev analyzes Russia's current security interests in relation to Afghanistan and the ways in which the stress moment created by the uncertain future of this country is present in Russia's interactions and cooperation with the Central Asian states. Additionally, Malyshev gives an account of Russia's participation in the efforts by means of development to build stability in Afghanistan and explains how by cooperating with its allies in the wider region it plans to counter the multiple security threats and especially the possible expansion of the Taliban in Afghanistan's North as the U.S. and NATO-led coalition forces move out. Amongst the former Soviet republics in Central Asia it is especially Kazakhstan that is looking for a new development leadership in the region. Elnara Bainazarova discusses the regional role of Kazakhstan and especially scrutinizes the development policies which Astana has launched with emphasis on "Asian regionalism." These two authors each valorize the question of how the role of Kazakhstan in the region is complementary or competes with that of Russia, and what significance this bilateral relationship has for the stated goal of enhancing stability in the region through multilateral Eurasian cooperation.

Finally, chapter 10 wraps up the question of how development can contribute to security and argues that there are serious limits to the force-based and institution-building approaches which figure so prominently in Afghanistan. Simbal Khan and Helena Rytövuori-Apunen return to the question of border spaces discussed in chapter 3 and argue that the hope of permanently abolishing the breeding grounds of terrorism that these spaces can enclose lies in applying a combination of sophisticated and patient strategies: Contributing to the economic and social development of the respective populations while at the same time avoiding violent action and other extreme measures that amongst the local population accumulate the experience of injustice relating to the state. Khan and Rytövuori-Apunen argue that if the international emphasis on enhanced regional cooperation as a means to build security in the post-withdrawal situation in and around Afghanistan continues to stall over the difficult issues of the border spaces—transborder organization and its linkage to militant activity and jihadist causes—a crucial piece will be missing in the security puzzle.

Our discussions on borders, security and development are intended to contribute to the three- or four-decades-old interdisciplinary genre of border studies in the broader connection of the study of international relations and conflict. The Epilogue is a reflection on how the present book with its geographic focus relates to border studies which, as a research domain with already several signs of institutionalization (a journal, an association, regular conferences), has developed largely by gaining inspiration from the trends and developments on the U.S.-Mexico border. We conclude that because borders in Central Asia have a different dynamism, the use of the same thematic concepts as a framework of analysis and interpretation limits our understanding of the developments in the region. This is not just an empirical argument that two borders are mutually different (indeed, they always are); instead, it is to point out difference in the entire experience of the border and to emphasize that this makes a difference for analysis. This argument presents a critique of the subsumption of different "cases" for mutual comparison under the frame of defined concepts. We propose that the logic of analysis starts with articulating experience instead and thereby retains its connection with life-practices.

## Pragmatist Landmarks in the Study of Borders

In the academic study of international relations[19] the criticism of approaches that consider states as bounded entities (that is, that treat them as homogenous units confined by their territorial spaces and constituting the "international system") is already extensive and ranges from the behavioral focus on groups of individuals to the post-structuralist criticism of rationalist perspectives and the constructivist emphasis on social creation. While the starting point in all these approaches is theory and method which pit one school or approach against another, our motivation in writing the present book is more immediately practical and concerns itself with the means that are available for research in preventing the polarization and escalation of violent conflicts. "Practical," however, entails more than a question about the uses of knowledge.

We approach the physical reality of borders as an outcome of a series of actions (practices) which have some interpretative unity (that is, they form a policy, have a common basis of legitimacy, etc.). The effect and thus the whole meaning[20] of a border may be that it functions as a wall, literally or metaphorically, which may protect but also obstruct action, and which in both cases has a variety of "practical" (demonstrable) ramifications in the lives of people. Similarly, borders "are" what they (with recurrence and constancy of effects) "do" in the action environment of states. "Afghanistan" is a transboundary threat which in various ways represents the "border" and becomes an incentive for action and policies to strengthen present borders and to develop new borders of security and development.

In Central Asia, where the formal lines of separation between states are only a few decades old and fused with many other dividing lines, a focus on the state border alone cannot help to improve our understanding of these pro-

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[19] The academic study of international relations covers the varying historical and discursively specific concepts of International Relations (IR, historically intertwined with the rise of behavioral study), International Studies (the most accommodating term), International Politics (with its connotation of Realist approaches), World Politics (with a focus on power and geopolitics), Global Politics (states and other agents, processes of globalization) and International Affairs (with a focus on diplomatic practices).

[20] This understanding of border applies the "pragmaticist maxim" of Charles S. Peirce: "Consider what effects, that might conceivably have practical bearings, we conceive the object of our conception to have. Then, our conception of these effects is the whole of our conception of the object." *Charles Sanders Peirce: Collected Papers* (Charlottesville, VA: InteLex CD-ROM Databases, 1992 ("How to Make Our Ideas Clear," 1878).

cesses, which have multiple consequences for the very same border. This is the problem that "border management," which in the region seeks to learn from the "best practices" of the states with long-established borderlines, encounters in its operational environment. The contribution of research to help in solving this problem remains very limited if it, too, remains focused on the same policies and the problems of management at the border. From the very outset we identify a logical problem here: We cannot know about the processes that transform a border by merely focusing on the characteristics or conditions at the border (examining whether the border is "hard-soft," "open-closed," etc.). However, a broader empirical scope and the (scientific) inference which separates explanatory factors from the object of explanation cannot solve the problem we have in mind.[21] Research can do very little to fill in the lacuna of knowledge and understanding in so far as the study of borders employs predefined concepts and frameworks of analysis of which the formal state border is a prime (yet not the only) example. We argue that while this problem must be recognized borders must be included in the analytical problem of studying regional conflicts. This becomes necessary when our aim is to contribute to resolving or settling border-related conflicts—irrespective of whether our main interest is to control the developments at state borders, to gain deeper understanding of the practices that shape the terrain of conflicts and the political landscape in the region, or to increase awareness and facilitate emancipation from the dominant discourses. This leads us to the argument that a comprehensive understanding of borders as bordering practices is needed in order to track the transformations around state borders, and that pragmatism can help us to make sense of this complex reality.

Although pragmatism has not yet influenced the study of Central Asia in particular, this broad orientation of research has seen a modest rise in popularity amongst scholars of international relations during the past ten-to-fifteen years.[22] The clue to pragmatist study is the focus on practices: activities that

21 In the frame of scientific (inductive and deductive) explanation this is a question of defining the *explanans* and keeping it logically distinct from the *explanandum*. In interpretative research the assumption of the logical distinction is problematic due to language (semantic connections) and the mind's interaction with corporeality.

22 Pragmatism is grounded in the works of C.S. Peirce, J. Dewey and W. James. Recent works in International Relations using pragmatist perspectives include: "Pragmatism and International Relations," ed. Gunther Hellmann, the Forum, *International Studies Review* 11, no. 3 (September 2009): 638–62 (contributions by Gunther Hellmann, Helena Rytövuori-

are recurrent and demonstrate patterns which shape reality and can be anticipated to continue doing so in the future. In the pragmatist interpretation of reality (inspired by C.S. Peirce in particular) the observation of the signs of a given event and their subsequent interpretation so that they gain more general significance and imply recurrence are logically bound together with a third dimension of experience: the initial sensation that "awakens" the interpreter from routine responses and requests interpretation of the things encountered. The sensation (questioning what "is") and its relatedness to facts and the sense-making that brings it all together with social convention (the symbolic signs of words, concepts and discourses) are the three interrelated dimensions of interpreting "reality" (sign).[23] This logic of interpretation sensitizes us to the uses of concepts and symbols (conventional signs) in communication. It keeps us alert in respect to the predominance of convention in policies and in research practices by emphasizing that making sense of reality also includes the question of the "proof" derived from the signs of mind-independent reality and the sensation of dissatisfaction with previous ways of knowing that sparks the need to inquire and interpret.

Just as in many other "developing" parts of the world, the consolidation of the state border and strengthening of control over all mobility is the order of the day in Central and South-Central Asia. But while states make "West-

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Apunen, Jörg Friedrichs, Rudra Sil, Markus Kornprobst, and Patrick Thaddeus Jackson); Jörg Friedrichs and Friedrich Kratochwil, "On Acting and Knowing: How Pragmatism Can Advance International Relations Research and Methodology," *International Organization* 63, no. 4 (2009): 701–31; *Pragmatism in International Relations*, ed. Harry Bauer and Elisabetta Brighi (London and New York: Routledge, 2009); Renée Marlin-Bennett, ed., *Alker and IR: Global Studies in an Interconnected World* (Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2012); Iver B. Neumann, *At Home with the Diplomats: Inside a European Foreign Ministry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012). Other IR works, notably those of Hayward Alker (*Rediscoveries and Reformulations: Humanistic Methodologies for International Studies*, [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996]; *Challenging Boundaries: Global Flows, Territorial Identities*, [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996]) and Daniel J. Levine (*Recovering International Relations: The Promise of Sustainable Critique*, [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012]), demonstrate a broad consistency with pragmatism even if they are not explicitly pragmatist.

23 Peirce calls these dimensions of the sign (interpreted reality) Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness. Peirce's "Logic as Semiotic" provides a concise presentation of the logic of the sign. Relation (Peirce's Secondness) makes the epistemological point of departure realist. The initial sensation (Peirce's Firstness) again is the qualitative dimension of experience (thing in itself, rather than the relation it suggests) and may have "arbitrariness and variety in its essence." Charles S. Peirce, "Trichotomic," in *The Essential Peirce: Selected Philosophical Writings, (1867–1893)*, ed. Nathan Houser and Christian Kloesel, vol. 1 (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), 280.

phalian" statements on the need to control and strengthen the border and mark the border with corresponding symbols, such authoritative acts often do not bring the expected results because the conventions of the state are not the only social agreements which generate border-making practices and justify them for the local people.[24] The agile, shape-changing movements of armed insurgency and illegal economic activity become a "hard" reality for the controlling efforts of the state whenever such mobility persistently leaves the borderlines between states "porous" and "leaking." In the pragmatist sense, such "hardness" means that the practical consequences of the actions of other agents resist the implications inscribed in the concepts applied to them and, ultimately, are not changed by these concepts. This does not abolish the institutional reality (crossing is still legal or illegal), but failing to effectively control the practical consequences assigned to its authority leaves the institution (the state) weak: the demonstrable consequences of action do not realize the concept but leave its meaning empty. If the institution ceases to exist, the facts that exist with practical consequences and make sense within this institutional context also do so: the stamp that made border crossing "legal" is merely ink and the passport itself just paper, void of practical implications.[25]

Examining what words and stamps do in specific contexts also helps us to notice how concepts hold sway over multiple practices, both verbal and non-verbal, in ways that are intricate and concealed—for example, in the political authority attached to the concept of international community, which is argued to represent the principles of international law and instructs us to think of borders from the dualist perspective of respect versus breach of sovereignty and territorial integrity. These legal concepts are easy to politicize in that they can be used to juxtapose "responsible states" with those engaged in condemnable action—aggressive geopolitics, harboring terrorism, and the

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24 In the terminology of speech acts, this means that although the statements by state authorities in their illocutionary force are (serious) performatives, their perlocutionary effect (to reach the "audience") fails. John Langshaw Austin, *How to Do Things with Words* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1981).

25 Through the analytical and interpretative concept of the "institutional fact," John R. Searle argues that modern, institutional reality generates facts (reality) in accordance with the tasks assigned to the institutions. State borders are typically institutional facts, i.e. they exist and have practical consequences in the context of the institution (the state) which they manifest and symbolize. John R. Searle, *The Construction of Social Reality* (London: Allen Lane, 1995).

like—and, thus, become tools to heighten confrontation.[26] Our criticism is not about the state as a social organization (this would be a different type of research) but as a discursive limitation which does not help to solve border-related conflicts but can, instead, nourish them. The state is the concept which logically relates to state borders, and it is arguably the world's most heavily institutionalized concept, authorized as it is by international law and diplomatic practices. Consequently it is also the concept which in multiple ways pervades the study of international relations.

In the academic discourse of international relations "Westphalia" is a metaphor for the modern state. This usage has much less to do with Westphalen 1648 as a historical notion than it has with the reaffirmation of the research conventions that prioritize systemic approaches and consider the state as the basic, or main, unit of analysis. In a more general sense, this points to the primacy of concepts and theory as features of the discipline's discourse. The state is present in the scholarly debates of international relations not only because of its authority in all practical life but also because the concept is embedded in discourses dealing with power, the interstate system and international society.[27] In other words, the field is less characterized by directly "state-centric" approaches than by conceptual a priori and theory-driven discourses which premise the state as a basic unit or a point of reference. The use of a priori concepts is also typical of policy-related geopolitical discourses, which reduce geographic areas to theaters of war, "staging grounds," "strategic rear areas," and which designate them as "fault lines," "belts of uncertainty," "crisis regions," etc. In such discourses the events in the region become symbolic signs or indices of theory and concepts that have emerged from life-contexts and concerns elsewhere rather than in the region.

In the same way, the primacy of concept represented by theoretical frameworks erases the experience which originally inspired its elaboration

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[26] The practical wisdom of John W. Burton's conflict resolution is that once a conflict can be defined by the parties an outline for its solution also exists. Burton emphasizes the limitations of the legal approach which a priori defines conflict (and thereby determines who is right and who is wrong) and in this way obstructs its genuine resolution. See, for example, John Burton, *Deviance, Terrorism & War*: *The Process of Solving Unsolved Social and Political Problems* (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1979).

[27] Discourses about power typically apply the notion of national interest or deal with geostrategic projections and their geographic representations. The interstate system is the organizing concept of structural realist and neorealist approaches. In the international society approach, the state is the "unit" for two levels of analysis or approaches and by negation defines the third, the international society of groups and individuals.

and cannot convey this initial sensation in new contexts of application. An example of such research convention in studies dealing with Central Asia is the "regional security complex" (RSC). This is a theoretical framework which depicts post-Soviet Central Asia as a "weak subcomplex" in the RSC centered on Russia.[28] Questions about Central Asia are posed in the universal (context-independent) terms of the RSC theory; they ask whether and through which specific developments in relation to the parameters of the theory (such as boundary and polarity) this region may be moving towards a "proto-complex" and, hypothetically, towards a "mature RSC." In the theory elaborated before 9/11/2001, Afghanistan is proposed as an "insulator" separating South Asia from post-Soviet Central Asia and, thus, as an element constituting the boundary of the RSC. Later elaborations of the theory have suggested that Kazakhstan can take such a role and that the northern boundary of the RSC may consequently be drawn closer to Moscow.[29] We do not consider any of these countries to be such a boundary. This is not because we argue against the possibility of corresponding developments but because our interest lies in deepening the understanding of the processes in the region rather than in using the region for developing this (or any other) predefined theory or theoretical framework. The knowledge we search for is rather more nuanced and comprehensive than that which is gained when we are interested in primarily developing theory.

This point can be made in more general terms. The present book does not aim to pose problems in the terms of a timeless, universal theory—a style which Stephen Toulmin calls "theory-centered."[30] In a theory-centered ap-

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28 Buzan, Waever and de Wilde define security complexes as durable features of the inter-state system. They are sets of states "whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analyzed or resolved apart from one another" (Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*, [Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998], 12). The structure of a regional security complex (RSC) is defined by its boundary, anarchic structure, polarity (distribution of power among the units), and patterns of amity and enmity among the units. Troitsky focuses on examining the boundaries of the "Central Asian Regional Complex" and concludes that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan could pull southern Central Asia into the instability of the Afghan area and even split the complex (that is, the interdependence presumed by the concept). Evgeny F. Troitskiy, "Central Asian Regional Complex: The Impact of Russian and US Policies," *Global Society: Journal of Interdisciplinary International Relations* 29, no. 1 (2015): 2–22.

29 Troitskiy, "Central Asian Regional Complex."

30 Our criticism of the theory-centered "scientific" practice, which frames questions in terms that render them independent of context (Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity* [Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990], 21), is about its

proach the relations and occurrences in the geographic terrain of the region are taken into account in so far as these concrete details have relevance for the abstract parameters of the theoretical framework. Stated in different terms, the connotations of the research convention predefine the possible range of the denotations or the types of facts that are to be considered. They do so irrespective of whether the facts in the practices of hypothesis formulation are used to confirm or falsify hypotheses—and even if the ideal of theory testing is abandoned and theory is applied as the guideline for making sense of events and instances of experience. Although it may have merits in the theory development of disciplinary discussions, we argue that such an approach limits our understanding of the reality about which it speaks. It follows that we believe that Central Asia, like any region, should be spared from the predominance of this approach which is so characteristic of study in International Relations and even embedded in the identity of this field as "contending theories" and concept-driven approaches.[31]

It must be emphasized that although such a predefining approach is "rationalist" it is not adequate to use this term, which also has a vastly richer content and, furthermore, implicates questionable dichotomies (by invoking Romanticist notions of uniqueness, for example). Additionally, it may be noticed that criticizing the theory-centered approach implicates nothing less than criticizing the modern way of existence, the existence based on "world view" and the related "enframing" relation to reality—capturing and ordering reality for our potential use, as Martin Heidegger concludes. Such a general argument is beyond our focus in the context of this book.[32] While these

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predominance in research and the limited perspectives it offers in the study of international relations, in particular. We recognize its relevance for the specific analytical purposes of research which, for example, treats states as "discrete units" in order to study the "international system." Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1979) is an example.

31 *Contending Theories of International Relations* is the title of a standard textbook by James E. Dougherty and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, Jr. The book has been in use since its first publication in 1971 (New York: J. P. Lippincott). Rytövuori-Apunen argues that the theory-centered approach is the constitutive feature of the field of International Relations in so far as it is a research tradition. Rytövuori-Apunen, "Forget 'Post-Positivist' IR!" and "Catching a formative moment: Epistemic unity in the European plurality," *European Review of International Studies* 1, no. 1 (2014).

32 "*Gestell*," translated as "Enframing." Martin Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 23–28. For example Lewis' and Wigen's criticism of the "jigsaw puzzle view of the world," which in their argument is further bound up with the expectation that the "discrete pieces" are the mythical entities called nation-states (Martin W. Lewis and Karen Wigen, *The Myth of Continents: A Cri-*

points provide us with coordinates, we do not define an approach for ourselves. We do not privilege any particular theoretical or conceptual framework, and our critical attunement is not the empiricist criticism which detaches ideas and concepts from practice.[33] Instead we look at the practices: the events in their more general (that is, symbolic) representations as they arise from study. The interpretations of events do not, in our conclusions, become signs of theory discourses and policy concepts—which would be the case if we used, for example, the RSC to frame our questions. This is not in order to avoid deriving concepts from specifically "Western" academic and policy contexts but in order to critique the initial framings that instruct us to generate findings in terms of the denotations that have already been defined in their connotations and, thus, leave us encountering what we already had presented for ourselves as an image of reality constructed by theory and concepts. Pragmatism offers landmarks for interpretation, not a framing, and it asks for openness and humility in the search brought forth by the challenge of reality to conventional ways of sense-making. Following the same logic, we also do not approach the domain of study—the region—as an entity, as if it were defined for us by nature or social convention. Ours is a focus void of defined boundaries and a unity which, in principle, can emerge only in the interpretation of the relevant practices. If we could continue the present study and, for example, examine the possibilities to share water resources in commercial cooperation in the region, existing plans would instruct us to include the arid northeastern areas of Iran in this region.

The initial sensation that gave rise to the studies in the book is illustrated by the unease or puzzlement about "post-2016," which asks about the difference that this year brings in relation to all that Afghanistan has represented throughout the period of Western military presence since September 2001. This is a question that puzzles both observers outside the region as well as the region's inhabitants, who in their specific locations fear or welcome the signs of coming events arising on the temporal horizon. For us, it sparks the examination of the meaning—practical with consequences for action—of border-related issues. In the following chapters the authors express their spe-

*tique of Metageography* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997], 11) can gain a deeper sense from Heidegger's critique of the modern way of existence.

[33] Empiricism conceives ideas and concepts in a dualistic, "testing" relation to facts and thus detaches them from life-practices. The methodology is based on the bifurcation of the mind and its externally conceived world (solipsism).

cific unease and "irritations" (dissatisfaction as Peirce has it) about theory and policy concepts that are predominant in discourses and that thereby suppress the experience necessary for other interpretations to emerge. For example, for Mika Aaltola and Juha Käpylä, the source of unease and irritation is conventional geopolitical thinking; for Simbal Khan it is policy approaches which in Western practices have dominated the efforts to build security in Afghanistan; for Steven Parham it is concepts and policies which project national unity while history and culture have shaped a different sense of belonging. In Jeremy's Smith's contribution which opens this book it is the conflict models which forecasted that there would be far more violent conflict in Central Asia following the dissolution of the USSR than proved to be the case.

The authors of the following chapters seek to make sense of the activities of state and non-state agents and groups of people by examining how these activities embody and represent patterns in their recurrence. These patterns are practices concerning what it is that is occurring and how this challenges previous interpretations, and how it (as a sign of something more general) anticipates recurrence, entails qualitative features and gives legitimacy or justification to responses that shape reality. Because our empirical scope is wide and includes a variety of materials, the tridimensional sign ("reality") with its questions about sensation (what "is"?) and its relatedness to facts and the sense-making that merges it all into social convention provides us with clues and landmarks for analysis and interpretation. This application of pragmatism is but one amongst many possibilities and differs considerably from the far more intensive applications ranging from intricate semiotic study to the interpretation of structures in discourses. We would like to think that it is one way in which pragmatism can be made accessible to readers in a wide range of fields while being inspired by the Peircean idea of "semeiotic" as logic of the interpretation of reality (rather than a specific "semiotic" study).[34]

It remains to be emphasized that a focus on practices (of agents, societies, communities) does not suffice to make research pragmatist. While social

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[34] Logic in the sense of Peirce is *semeiotic*, encompassing the entire process of signification. Thus, formal logic in the sense of inductive and deductive inference is a very specific concept of logic relating to modern science. See, for example, Charles S. Peirce, "Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs," in *Semiotics: An Introductory Reader*, ed. Robert E. Innis (London: Hutchinson, 1986), 4–23.

research in general is typically preoccupied with the study of symbolic practices (social conventions) and patterns of conduct or behavior, the tridimensional logic of interpretation also asks about the difference in experience which distinguishes "experience" from the routine and convention that makes no difference to the sequence of life. This is the "primacy of practice," and this, in an instant, brings the interpreter—us as researchers—into formulating and arguing the problem. Thus, practice is not equivalent to "empirical," and it is not logically and philosophically opposed to theory and concept, although it does question their predominance in the signification processes that produce discourses. In the pragmatist spirit, we do not discuss pragmatism but instead apply it. While the individual chapters do this by focusing on the diverse bordering practices that exist beyond and in relation to the conventional concept of borders as formal state borders, the pragmatist logic of interpretation comes together (and opens up new rounds of inquiry) in the Epilogue.

The final pages of this book summarize the conclusions in the patterns of practices that characterize the border problematique in Central Asia which makes this region different from the geographic areas that have been the main focus of studies on borders during the past decades. In this respect the thematic approaches in border(lands) studies, which have emerged in the North American context of critical discussions, offer points of reflection as a matter of course. Thus, while we are dissatisfied with the limited perspectives on the dynamics of borders offered by the conventional understanding in International Relations of borders as state borders and criticize the approaches which make the concept a priori and detach it from practice, in the same vein of thought we must retain a critical attitude to the thematic perspectives in the emerging research area of border studies. We must be aware that these perspectives abstract from experience in specific life-contexts and that this experience cannot be conveyed in other contexts although the same concepts can be used. It is this interplay of similarity and difference in experience that is the starting point and logic of pragmatist research. The promise of the new opening, as we see it, is neither universalist (theory-centered, framing questions and seeking answers independently of context) in its ambition, nor is it focused on the particular (which would emphasize the uniqueness of this domain of study). Instead, it is about reaching towards a more global experience by means of a relational logic of interpretation.

PART I State Borders: Creation, Consolidation and Challenges

# Old Habits, New Realities: Central Asia and Russia from the Break-up of the USSR to 9/11

*Jeremy Smith*

In the years immediately following the break-up of the USSR, the five new states of Central Asia were the subject of a number of conflicting assumptions and expectations. On the one hand, Russian policy-makers and most Western analysts expected the Central Asian states to remain firmly within the Russian orbit. On the other hand, many commentators expected the region to be one dominated by internal conflicts. Ethnic violence in Osh and the surrounding regions of Kyrgyzstan, civil war in Tajikistan, and the consolidation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan to the south appeared to confirm the more pessimistic scenarios early on. However, as Neil Robinson has persuasively argued, Central Asia overall has confounded the conflict models forecast by political science and IR studies.[1] In particular, the theory of "democratic peace" and its subsequent refinement, Mansfield and Snyder's theory that states in transition to democracy are more prone to both internal violence and cross-border warfare than either stable democracies or stable authoritarian regimes,[2] suggested that Central Asia and Russia would be more prone to conflict than has been the case.

All five Central Asian states have, to a greater or lesser degree, displayed many of the attributes of a "failed state," associated in political science literature with a high potential for collapse and violence. The geographical grouping of the five Central Asian states with Afghanistan and Pakistan, part of what Zbigniew Brzezinski dubbed the "arc of crisis," has exaggerated expectations of crisis including warfare. But in spite of a number of internal conflicts, to date there has been no international war involving a Central Asian state, and only the occasional distant threat of war. Russian expectations have been equally disappointed. Each Central Asian state has developed its own

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1 Neil Robinson, "Why not more conflict in the former USSR? Russia and Central Asia as a zone of relative peace," in *Conflict in the Former USSR*, ed. Matthew Sussex (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 118–145.

2 Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2005).

multivector foreign and trade policy, in which China and Europe figure almost as heavily as Russia, with the United States not far behind. Kazakhstan led the way in this multivector approach, with Turkmenistan going it alone with its official policy of "neutrality." Predictions made in the early 1990s about Central Asia tended to be different from those made about Russia and Eastern Europe—but the empirical fact is that assumptions of instability and drift back to some kind of reincarnated USSR for the former were just as inaccurate as assumptions of a smooth transition from authoritarian rule to democracy were for the latter.

Robinson's analysis suggests that at least part of the reason for this is that the preoccupation with regime-building rather than state-building in Central Asia, while weakening state capacity, discouraged leaders from engaging in the kind of nationalist rhetoric and claims arising from border inconsistencies which might have led to wars which they were ill-equipped to engage in. At the same time, the capture by the regime of what resources there were allowed them, to a certain extent, to buy off potential regional foci of opposition, albeit not to the same extent as Boris Yeltsin did in the Russian Federation.

Closer examination suggests, however, that the Central Asian states did engage vigorously in the types of state-building activities which Mansfield and Snyder identify with the cause of conflict between democratizing regimes. A number of the disputes of the 1990s were between the Central Asian states themselves, but disputes between individual Central Asian states and Russia were more common overall. The classic ingredients for conflict between democratizing states as identified by Mansfield and Snyder—weak institutions, pursuit of parochial interests, populism resulting from regime insecurity, and ethno-nationalism—were all present not just in the Central Asian states but in Russia itself.[3] Countervailing factors such as the familiarity of the post-Soviet leaders with each other, engagement in internal conflicts (Tajikistan, Chechnya), and more pressing external ones (Transnistria, Nagorno Karabakh, Afghanistan) and the clear military superiority of one party (Russia), as well as the characteristics identified by Robinson, were at play. But for most Western commentators and observers, it was the general passivity of the Central Asian states, the preoccupation of regimes with internal

[3] Ibid. 60–65.

political struggles, and the readiness to follow Russia's lead that account for the absence of overt conflict.[4]

The record of events as examined in this chapter, however, suggests that even before the end of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian states were far from passive in accepting the shape of the post-Soviet space. Kazakhstan and its president Nursultan Nazarbayev were particularly important in negotiating the form of the break-up of the Soviet Union and in promoting Eurasian unity after it. And all five Central Asian states were not afraid to pursue their particular interests. Disputes arose frequently over three main areas: Borders, collective security arrangements, and the position of ethnic Russians and other ethnic issues. Borders and ethnic politics were frequently issues between Central Asian states, for example Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but here it is disputes with Russia that is the main focus. One feature that should be pointed out immediately is that in at least one way, these disputes with Russia did impact on relations between the Central Asian states themselves: not only did the five states fail to form any common general or specific strategies in opposing Russia, but on each issue a different constellation of states could be seen aligning themselves for and against the Russian position.

## Borders: Free Trade vs. National Security

Although the Central Asian republics are generally viewed as having played a passive role in the events culminating in the break-up of the USSR, their leaderships were not unaware of the direction of developments. During the summer of 1990 the leaders of the Central Asian republics excluding the Tajik SSR reached an agreement that Central Asia was a single cultural unit, but that the existing political arrangement into five entities would remain in place, and they pledged not to challenge any of the existing borders.[5] This agreement signaled the readiness of the leaders to hold the USSR together while preserving their own privileged political status in each of the republics,

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4 For a typical view of the passivity of the Central Asian republics in 1991, see Dmitri Trenin, *Post-Imperium: A Eurasian Story* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2011), 25–26: "Central Asia's five republics…did not secede from the Soviet Union. It was the Union that imploded and abandoned them."

5 Gregory Gleason, *The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence* (Boulder: Westview, 1997).

thus countering the aspirations of the emerging pan-Turkestani movement to create a unified political entity. Kazakhstan's president Nazarbayev confirmed this stance at a press conference at the time of the March 1991 referendum on the preservation of the Soviet Union—Nazarbayev declared Kazakhstan's full support for a continuation of the Union on the basis of a new agreement between sovereign states.[6] This is not to say that Central Asian leaders behaved as if it was "business as usual" as far as the USSR was concerned. The leaders of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan were using the opportunity to increase their own authority and freedom from Moscow. Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov justified the concentration of power in his own hands with the argument that "the transition period and the explosive situation that has developed in the country and here in our republic demand it."[7] These sentiments were regularly echoed by Nazarbayev who, like Karimov, had already succeeded in combining the posts of President and leader of the Republican Communist Party, as had Turkmenistan's Saparmurat Niyazov, thereby providing an unprecedented basis for personal power.

During the remainder of 1991, Nazarbayev was especially active in supporting Gorbachev's project to keep the USSR together. But his proposals went further than Gorbachev's in seeing the future Union as one between sovereign entities, which would have strengthened self-rule in the republics while reinforcing existing economic and security relations. Even after the failed August coup in Moscow Nazarbayev was the leading initiator of an effort to secure an economic agreement between the Soviet Republics,[8] and he maintained his support for a new Union Agreement as late as December 6, 1991.[9]

Nazarbayev was not a mere observer in this process, he was actively seeking to not only preserve some kind of union, but to shape it to his republic's own advantage, securing greater rights but also a coordinated economic system which he saw as absolutely necessary for the future prosperity of all of the republics. At the same time as supporting Gorbachev's project, however, Nazarbayev hedged his bets by paying careful attention to relations

6 E. Matskevich, "Nakanune referenduma," *Izvestiia*, March 13, 1991.

7 M. Berger, "Do vsego dolzhny doiti sami. Beseda s prezidentom Uzbekistana Islamom Karimovym," *Izvestiia*, January 28, 1991.

8 V. Ardaev and E. Matskevich, "Itogi vstrechi v stolitse Kazakhstana prevzoshli vse ozhidaniia," *Izvestiia*, October 2, 1991.

9 Iu. Orlik, "V Srednei Azii i Kazakhstane k obrashcheniiu Gorbacheva otneslis' s ponimaniem," *Izvestiia*, December 6, 1991.

with the RSFSR and its President Boris Yeltsin. Part of his strategy was to act as an intermediary who "…tried very actively to intervene, to bring their (Gorbachev's and Yeltsin's) positions closer together,"[10] in order to increase the chances of the preservation of the Union. But he also worked to develop bilateral relations between Kazakhstan and Russia. Nazarbayev and Yeltsin met in Almaty on August 16–17, 1991, just two days before the coup began. Following this meeting they issued a joint statement of cooperation which included an early commitment to the principle of territorial integrity: "preservation of the territorial integrity of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation is the most important guarantee for preventing disintegration of the country and its component states."[11] Thus the establishment of bilateral ties between republics was regarded as a means of preserving the Union, but at the same time Nazarbayev came under criticism for such independent actions. As he argued in an April 1991 interview: "The centre does not like our bilateral ties, although strengthening them is nothing more than an endeavor to protect the republics' economies at a time when the management mechanism is falling apart…I am deeply convinced that we can not get along without a Union, and our agreements are a real foundation for a Union Treaty."[12]

Nazarbayev was not alone among Central Asia's leaders in developing bilateral ties. The Central Asian republics made a series of agreements with each other, such as the establishment in August 1991 of an Interrepublic Consultative Council aimed at integrating the five economies.[13] They also individually concluded agreements with other Soviet Republics. In April 1991, Kyrgyzstan agreed a Treaty on Friendship and Cooperation with Ukraine which, along with economic and political provisions, included a commitment by Ukraine's leader Leonid Kravchuk for Ukraine to represent Kyrgyzstan through its seat at the United Nations.[14] At a symbolic level, the move to be represented at the UN by another republic (Belarus was the second republic to have its own UN representation), rather than through the So-

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[10] Valery Simonov and Yevgenia Dotsuk, "Odin iz 'nekotorykh, kto prel'stilsia zapadnymi ideiami'. Nashi korrespondenty beseduiut s Prezidentom Kazakhskoi SSR Nursultanom Nazarbaevym," *Komsomol'skaia Pravda*, April 13, 1991.

[11] Vera Kuznetsova, "Rossiia i Kazakhstan: vstrecha v verkhakh nakanune podpisaniia soiuznogo dogovora," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* August 17, 1991.

[12] Simonov and Dotsuk, "Odin iz 'nekotorykh, kto prel'stilsia zapadnymi ideiami'."

[13] "Tashkentskaia vstrecha zavershena," *Izvestiia*, August 15, 1991.

[14] Aleksandr Riabushkin, "Interesy Kyrgyzstana v OON predstavliaet Ukraina," *Izvestiia,* April 5, 1991.

viet Union's delegation, demonstrated a clear willingness to move away from the Soviet Union's orbit. Kyrgyz President Askar Akayev also signed a treaty with Yeltsin in July, providing for an 8 million ruble Russian loan and fixed prices for raw materials. In spite of protestations that bilateral ties could go hand in hand with the renewal of the Union, such moves were widely criticized as preparing the ground for the break-up of the Soviet Union. In particular, four of the Central Asian republics (Turkmenistan was not included) were among the prime movers behind a meeting of twelve of the Soviet Union's fifteen republics which met in Moscow in May the day after a meeting to discuss the new Union Treaty, to agree alternative plans for economic and foreign relations on a multilateral basis for 1992. Thus most of the Central Asian republics were preparing for a possibility of the dissolution of the Soviet Union throughout 1991, at the same time as supporting a new Union Treaty to stave off this eventuality.

Establishing the principle of territorial integrity and fending off any possible claims for border adjustments from Russia was a key aim of Nazarbayev's at his meeting with Yeltsin on August 16–17. But it soon became clear that Yeltsin did not share this commitment. At the Almaty meeting Yeltsin declared unequivocally that "there can be no question of our tolerating the seizing of any territory of Kazakhstan in favor of Russia." However, relations deteriorated dramatically following the failure of the coup and an apparent suggestion by Yeltsin that the borders between the republics may need to be revised. A statement signed by Yeltsin's press secretary Pavel Voshchanov stated: "The Russian Federation does not question the constitutional right of every state and people to self-determination. However, there is a problem of borders, a problem that can and may remain unsettled only given the existence of relations of union, codified in an appropriate treaty. If these relations are broken off [in other words, if the USSR ceases to exist—JS], the RSFSR reserves the right to raise the question of reviewing its borders."[15] This prompted Nazarbayev to brand Yeltsin a "great power chauvinist" and to condemn his undemocratic insistence on naming his own appointees to top government posts.[16] However, on August 29 Nazarbayev moved

15 Statement by the Press Secretary of the President of the Russian SFSR P. Voshchanov, *Rossiiskaia Gazeta*, August 27, 1991, cited in the *Current Digest of the post-Soviet Press*.

16 "Yeltsin assailed by president of Kazakhstan 'Chauvinist' attitude of Russia decried," *Baltimore Sun*, August 27, 1991, http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1991-08-27/news/1991239056_1_nazarbayev-yeltsin-kazakhstan.

to heal the breach by sending a telegram to Yeltsin, in response to which Russian vice-President Alexander Rutskoy travelled immediately to Almaty. There, Rutskoy and Nazarbayev signed thirty agreements covering the economy, collective security, and the rights of citizens and territorial integrity. At a press conference afterwards, Rutskoy explained his boss' earlier comments on borders as referring to the need for a general demarcation of inter-state borders on the basis of international norms.[17]

As soon as the dissolution of the Soviet Union became inevitable following the Belovezh accords between Russia, Ukraine and Belarus, the Central Asian states were quick not just to join in but to influence the creation of the Commonwealth of Independent States which would replace the USSR. At meetings in Ashgabat and Almaty on December 13 and 14, alternative resolutions were tabled by Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, but differences were only on technical details. All five Central Asian states insisted, successfully, that they would only join the CIS on the basis that they were considered as founder members, rather than as latecomers who were joining the original three Slavic states. They also referred to the CIS as a "Eurasian" union, a term that was not used at Belovezhskaya pushcha.[18] Thus the Central Asian republics, while they continued to support the preservation of the Soviet Union until the last possible moment, also worked vigorously to shape its future and, once the dissolution had become inevitable, the future of the CIS. In particular, Nazarbayev's condemnation of Yeltsin's threat in August 1991 to revise state borders and his vigorous insistence on the principle of territorial integrity thereafter,[19] ensured that the break-up of the USSR would, for the most part, be achieved without sparking damaging disputes over territory.

Through this process, Nazarbayev and other Central Asian leaders were looking to get the best of both worlds. On the one hand, they wanted to achieve the sovereignty for their republic which would allow them to follow nation-building projects through to the end and escape the personal humiliation encountered on being constantly reminded of their subordination to

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[17] Vladimir Desiatov, "Kazakhstan: Rutskogo v Alma-ate zhdali," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, August 31, 1991.

[18] V. Ardaev, "Itogi Ashkhabadskoi vstrechi vyzvali vzdokh oblegcheniia: v strane i mire eshche odna nadezhda," *Izvestiia*, December 14, 1991.

[19] V. Kononenko, "Rukovoditeli pravitel'stv SNG obsuzhdaiut voprosy ekonomicheskogo razvitiia," *Izvestiia*, December 24, 1991.

Moscow;[20] on the other hand, they would preserve the close economic interaction which was essential for their countries' prosperity. As long as these two aims were achieved, the question of whether this should happen within the context of Gorbachev's renewed Union or through multilateral and bilateral arrangements between independent states was of no overriding importance. It was not necessarily the choice of the Central Asian republics for the USSR to disappear, but once this became reality, they were ready to make the most of it.

The two key aims of state sovereignty and economic union, while not exactly contradictory, led to tensions which were in evidence through the course of 1991 and 1992. Yeltsin's ambivalent attitude to the integrity of existing borders in August 1991 has already been noted, and his insistence on Russia's special place in the security structure of the CIS and its responsibility for Russians living outside the borders of the Russian Federation (see below) also allowed for a flexible attitude to the new international borders. One implication of the hardening of republic borders into international borders had already been seen in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan in 1990: the more closed borders became, the more they were identified with a particular ethnic group, and the more politicized ethnic relations became. In and around Osh and other towns on the Kyrgyz-Uzbek border, ethnic violence in the summer of 1990 reflected, at least in part, fears over the implications of newly acquired sovereignty for ethnic minorities.

While the revival of the Cossack movement and of Russian nationalism in general did lead to some unrest along Central Asia's northern border with Russia, fears of similar bloodshed proved unfounded and this was not the main concern. Although Nazarbayev was committed to the belief that an open trade border with Russia was indispensable for Kazakhstan, he was already keenly aware of the dangers of being subject to an economic system over which he had no control. Before the break-up of the USSR, the RSFSR's unilateral decisions on price rises or price liberalization led to goods flowing across the border from Kazakhstan and worsening shortages there. In response, Nazarbayev ordered the establishment of customs posts on the border for a short period in September 1991.

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[20] See Valery Tishkov, *Ethnicity, Nationalism and Conflict in and after the Soviet Union: The Mind Aflame* (London: Sage, 1997), 44–45.

Although the principle of free trade was consistently agreed on by the CIS states, the temptation to follow protectionist policies proved hard to resist. On January 16, 1992, Kazakhstan and Russia signed an agreement On Removing Constraints in Economic Activity, which provided for the free movement of goods, services, labor and finance. Shortly afterwards, however, the Russian Federation set up customs points along the Kazakh border, leading to loud protests from Kazakhstan. When Kazakhstan in turn attempted to establish a customs regime with Russia in the summer of the same year, Russia responded by raising the price of energy exports to Kazakhstan until Nazarbayev backed down.

The logic behind the sporadic strengthening of the border regimes between CIS states who were supposed to have signed up to the free passage of goods and peoples across borders was outlined by Yeltsin at a meeting of his government on June 4, 1992. The transportation across borders of stolen goods, most seriously of firearms, was showing a rapid increase and was set to keep growing, according to experts. As well as arms entering Russia, reports from the Ministry of Culture of the disappearance of large numbers of icons and other cultural artifacts meant that traffic across the border was in need of control in both directions. Central Asian countries were picked out for having instituted visa-free agreements with non-CIS countries, which meant effectively that people could pass from the outside world to Russia and *vice versa* without any effective controls.[21]

The desire for free trade was in competition with a concept of international borders which, in the Soviet experience, were always hard to cross. In addition, the security and inviolability of national borders were an important part of the legitimization of the new state and were closely linked to the idea of nations as they were conceived across the post-Soviet states. As a result of this symbolic nation-building role of borders as well as the difficulties already encountered with Russia and other neighbors in the course of 1992, the Law on Borders passed by the Parliament of Kazakhstan in December 1992 and coming into force in 1993 was based on a very hard concept of borders. In discussions during the drafting of the law, the Border Guards' Service went as far as insisting on a right to close the border altogether in case of the

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[21] Vasilii Kononenko, "Rossiia pristupaet k ukrepleniiu svoikh granits," *Izvestiia*, June 4, 1992.

threat of disease epidemics or other emergencies.[22] Such a provision was not included in the final law, but the border forces did have almost unlimited rights to use weapons. The preamble to the law made clear the importance of the border to the nation of Kazakhstan, and its tone had much more to do with the defense of a border that divided the country from others, than it had about the free transport of goods. The final version of the law went further than previous drafts in establishing "border zones" at some distance from the border crossing points, which could be entered only by citizens with a special permit.[23]

Russia's border regime underwent similar developments, and while in principle international agreements were (as stated in the Kazakh law) to take precedence over national law, the reality was that neither side was ready consistently to abide by obligations, and the nature of the border swung first one way and then another. Things came to a head at the beginning of 1997, when Russia deployed Cossack units along the border with Kazakhstan, with the power to check documents and search the baggage of anyone crossing the border into Russia.[24] This move led to a downturn in Russian-Kazakh relations that lasted over a year.

Russia justified the move as necessary to curtail drug trafficking and smuggling. By the early 2000s such concerns had hardened, and in the immediate aftermath of 9/11 international terrorism was added as an even more pressing reason to increase the security of the border. Not for the first time, growing concerns over security coincided with moves to further promote regional economic integration, which became increasingly focused on Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, which were to go on to become the founder members of the Eurasian Customs Union, rather than the whole CIS. But that integration process was and still is hampered by the emergence by the beginning of the millennium of two incompatible discourses: one emphasized free trade, local cross-border cooperation in services, and cultural exchange; while the other emphasized the need to control drugs, terrorists, contraband, illegal migrants, and arms.

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[22] Natsional'nii arkhiv Respubliki Kazakhstan (National Archive of the Republic of Kazakhstan—hereafter NARK), f.2, op.1, d.79, ll.142, 146.

[23] NARK f.2, op.1, d.115, ll. 161–179.

[24] Mikhail Alexandrov, *Uneasy Alliance: Relations Between Russia and Kazakhstan in the Post-Soviet Era, 1992–1997* (Westport: Praeger, 1999), 141.

## Disputed Borders—the Caspian Sea

A different kind of border dispute emerged over the Caspian Sea. Here, as well as Russia and the Central Asian states of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Iran were involved. Previously the sea had been governed by a 1921 treaty between Soviet Russia and Iran, and a 1940 treaty between the USSR and Iran. Iran and the Russian Federation now argued that the terms of this treaty still applied and should be adopted by the four new states which were successors to the Soviet Union and, as agreed at the end of 1991, which were bound by the Soviet Union's international obligations. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan argued, however, that the earlier treaties could no longer be deemed valid now that there were five littoral states instead of two, and that the Caspian should be governed according to international maritime law.

There were significant geopolitical and economic issues at stake. Firstly, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan were keen to secure and develop the shipping route between Aktau and Baku, which could be used for oil and gas tankers to transport Kazakh and Turkmen energy resources through Azerbaijan and Georgia on to Europe without using Russian pipelines. But there was not much difference between the five states in terms of supporting the right of free navigation. The real issue which divided them was the exploitation of natural resources under the seabed. The significance of oil and gas deposits was becoming clear soon after the end of the Soviet Union, making the question of rights and ownership a crucial one. Under the Russian-Iranian proposals, the sea was treated as a common resource apart from a ten-mile fishing zone, with joint control over the exploitation of oil and gas. By contrast applying maritime law would have divided most of the sea up into zones controlled by each country according to the extent of their shorelines. The latter was clearly to Russia's disadvantage as the heaviest concentration of resources was in the more southern parts of the sea. It may also be that, while the geopolitics of energy were not as prominent in the early 1990s as in the 2000s, Russian policymakers were aware of the significance of a possible energy transit route which bypassed Russia.

Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan's legal case that the sea should come under international maritime law rested in part on an unconvincing argument that the Caspian was connected to the high seas through the Don-Volga river system. On the other hand, the United States, in pursuit of its own interests and

anxious to limit Russian power, was supportive of the Azerbaijani-Kazakh position. Things seemed to swing decisively in the direction of Russia and Iran in 1996, however, when Turkmenistan lent them its full support.[25]

As Russia, Iran and Turkmenistan pressed ahead with tripartite agreements on sharing resources in the sea, Kazakhstan, with the support of Azerbaijan, continued to insist on a full new agreement, rejecting concessions offered by Russia to allow for each state to claim exclusive ownership over a 45-mile strip along their coastlines. Nazarbayev's persistence appeared to have paid off when, in July 1998, he reached an agreement with Yeltsin to divide the northern seabed between Kazakhstan and Russia.[26] Russia did not stick by this commitment however, and today the status of the Caspian sea is hardly closer to being resolved than it was in 1994.

## Security—from Common Space to National Defense

Russia was widely expected to play a major role in the security situation in Central Asia, generally because it seemed intent on maintaining its ties with its former peripheries, and specifically because of the abundance of military bases, including nuclear installations, in the region. A plethora of security-related treaties and agreements were signed between Russia and the Central Asian states in the first half of the 1990s, but in reality financial pressures meant that Russia was unable to live up to many of its commitments and to implement the desired new security arrangements.[27] But this is not to say that Russia did not engage in the security situation in Central Asia, especially as long as the civil war in Tajikistan was raging, or that security arrangements were not a source of contention between Russia and the Central Asian states.

The assumption that Russia would take responsibility for the collective security of the whole of the former Soviet Union—or at least those parts of it that entered into the CIS—was embedded in the agreements that accompanied the Soviet break-up. These were more than mere declarations as far as Central Asia was concerned, especially once the neo-Eurasianists in Yeltsin's

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25 Alexandrov, *Uneasy Alliance*, 282–93.

26 Vladimir Isachenkov, "Yeltsin, Nazarbayev sign Caspian Pact," *The Moscow Times*, July 7, 1998.

27 Lena Jonson and Roy Allison, *Central Asian Security: the New International Context* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 2001), 2.

entourage had taken control of most aspects of Russian foreign policy around the middle of 1992. This coincided with an escalation of hostilities in Tajikistan and a more concerted effort on the part of Central Asia's leaders to ensure Russia live up to its security commitments in the region. The result of these pressures was the signing of a Treaty on Collective Security by Kazakhstan, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Armenia in Tashkent on May 15, 1992. The treaty referred to the external borders of the CIS as common external borders, and therefore subject to defense by a CIS force which in practice came under Russian command. The dispatch of a further 1200 CIS forces to the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan in July was one of the first consequences of this arrangement. The concern here was not with Tajikistan's internal conflict but with the collapse of the regime in Afghanistan and the emergence of Taliban and other Islamist forces there.

This did not, however, mean that Russian or Russian-led forces in the guise of CIS "blue helmets" were not a part of the military balance in the Tajik Civil War. Initially Russia's involvement was promised jointly with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, assuring support for the current Tajik leadership but urging responsibility.[28] However, in November 1992, following the failure of Russia's Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev to secure the support of the Kulyab faction for a coalition government in Tajikistan, Russia threw its weight behind the government of Emomali Rakhmonov and sanctioned the use of the 201st Motorized Infantry Division (which had been stationed in Tajikistan since autumn 1945) "to keep order" and played an active military role from then on.[29]

A few days after these developments, Kozyrev provided some insights into his thinking on the role of Russia in the region in an interview with *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*: "Russia's total withdrawal from Tajikistan would be detrimental to Russia's national interests and a betrayal of our neighbours (I mean the Tajiks). We must also remember that Russians live there…Russia must act as a peacemaker. Russia's current geopolitical interests in Central Asia do not involve a struggle for a sphere of influence. In order to protect

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[28] "Nazarbaev, Akaev, Karimov i El'tsin pishut rukovodstvu Tadzhikistana: Tadzhikskoe rukovodstvo pishet El'tsinu," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* September 5, 1992.

[29] Igor' Rotar', "Dva dnia Andreia Kozyreva," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* November 7, 1992. On Russia's and other countries' role in the Tajik Civil War, see further the chapter by Rytövuori-Apunen and Usmonov in this volume.

Russia's borders, we must try to achieve political stability in the states of Central Asia."[30]

Kozyrev and Yeltsin's perception of Russia's security role therefore had three elements: defense of the common external CIS border, internal security of each regime (with some option for backing one side or the other where there was more than one contender for leading the regime), and a special responsibility for the protection of the ethnic Russian population in the former Soviet republics. The all-encompassing nature of this role, and its links to Russia's own national interests, was underlined by Yeltsin in a speech in February 1993: "Stopping all armed conflicts in the territory of the former USSR is Russia's vital interest. The world community sees more and more clearly Russia's special responsibility in this difficult undertaking…"[31] What made this position controversial in the Central Asian context was that, while there was initially a general consensus over Russia's special role in CIS security, not all states agreed with Russia as to what that role should cover.

The single CIS army that had been promised as the key ingredient of a collective security strategy soon ran into objections from CIS members. Ukraine, Moldova and Azerbaijan never signed up to the idea of a unified joint command of CIS forces, which was agreed by the remaining CIS states (Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and the Central Asian republics minus Turkmenistan) at the Minsk summit of December 30, 1991. But even at that early stage, the right of each member to form its own army was kept open, threatening the whole idea of a single collective security arrangement. In the short term, however, individual states other than Russia were in no position to form such armies. Kazakhstan's President Nazarbayev was the most ardent champion of a unified military. But even his support was tempered by Russia's attitude. Yeltsin's insistence in January 1992, shortly after Russia became a separate state, that all military personnel swear a new oath of allegiance to the Russian Federation regardless of which republic they were stationed in, was immediately attacked by Nazarbayev, who preferred maintaining the previous oath to the now defunct USSR. This dispute underlined the central problem with maintaining a unified military rather than separate na-

[30] Igor' Rotar', "Moskva pytaetsia pogasit' Tadzhikskuiu mezhdousobitsu," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* November 11, 1992.

[31] Cited in Mohiaddin Mesbahi, "Russia and the Geopolitics of the Muslim South," in *Central Asia and the Caucasus after the Soviet Union*, ed. Mohiaddin Mesbahi (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1994), 305.

tional armies. All of the post-Soviet states, Russia included, were actively engaged in a nation-building project in which, as we have already seen, territory and sovereignty played a major part.[32] In spite of Nazarbayev's enthusiasm, the notion that armed forces controlled by another country or group of countries should be stationed within the borders of a sovereign state never sat easily with such a project. For countries like Ukraine which were also distrustful of Russian intentions, the objections were more than statements of a principle of sovereign statehood. For these reasons the project for a fully unified military command lasted only until April 4, 1992, when the Russian Federation announced it was creating its own national army, and within a month the Central Asian states had started to follow suit.

One of the reasons for the failure of the early collective security arrangements to stick was the perception of an arrogant attitude on the part of Russian military commanders. In July 1992, precisely as agreement was being reached between Russia and Turkmenistan over a joint command for Turkmenistan's border troops, Russian officers raised objections to the recruitment of Turkmen border guards to work alongside the Russian troops already in place, which this agreement entailed. Referring to the numerous tasks a border guard was expected to carry out Nikolai Reznichenko, the chief of the Border Defense Department of the Central Asian Border district, claimed "[t]he Turkmens, we have become convinced, are not yet capable of doing all these things…But when it comes to desertion and violating regulations, they are masters."[33] Only weeks later, Turkmenistan declared it was setting up its own border guard without any agreement on joint command, and cited Yeltsin's desire for greater control as the reason for withdrawing from joint arrangements.[34] Similar feelings were expressed when Uzbekistan quit the Collective Security Treaty seven years later, claiming objections to "Russia's military activities in certain CIS states" and blaming Russian heavy-handedness.[35]

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[32] See also Elizabeth Teague, "Citizenship, Borders, and National Identity," in *Russia's Engagement with the West*, ed. Alexander J. Motyl, Blair A. Ruble, and Lilia Shevtsova (Armonk: Sharpe, 2005), 17–32.

[33] Vladimir Kuleshov, "Sozdaiutsia sovmestnye pogranvoiska," *Izvestiia*, July 28, 1992.

[34] Igor' Zhukov, "Turkmenia: nezavisimaia strana dolzhna sama okhraniat' svoi granitsy. Prezident Niiazov opredelil status pogranvoisk," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* August 14, 1992.

[35] Vladimir Georgiev, "Uzbekistan zanial osobuiu pozitsiiu. Tashkent gotov vyiti iz Dogovora o kollektivnoi bezopasnosti," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* February 4, 1999.

By the middle of the 1990s a gap had clearly opened up between Russia and the Central Asian states over their respective understandings of Russia's role in the region. Differences went back at least to the end of 1991 when the leaders of the three Slavic republics met at Belovezhskaya Pushcha and decided on the dissolution of the USSR. According to Nazarbayev, he was not invited to these talks although he was in Moscow at the time, and instead was asked afterwards to sign the agreement already made, something which he refused.[36] Although the Central Asian leaders were able to succeed in achieving equal status with Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in the founding documents of the CIS, they had little possibility of challenging the Russian assumption of responsibility for security arrangements and broad political influence in the region: Central Asia had no military units of its own, and while it could call on conscripts from each republic it lacked any trained officers and the financial means or infrastructure. The leaders of the new states also faced political uncertainty and challenges to their own position. What Russian politicians seem to have underestimated was the fact that by the middle of the decade, that uncertainty had receded. Each country now had a strong president who was vigorously engaged in building up their land as a nation-state as well as reinforcing the legitimacy of their regimes and launching varying degrees of personality cult. Standing up to Russia, or at least not fawning to Moscow, was an important way of reaching each of these three ends. By 1995 Kozyrev appears to have taken some, but not all, of this on board. Now he was talking about "gathering" the former Soviet republics together using Russia's military influence, which had been exercised in resolving Tajikistan's civil war and could now be consolidated through the establishment of military bases throughout Central Asia.[37] But by mid-1999 Russian plans for a new, permanent, military base in Tajikistan had been dropped, and even Russian border guards had been ejected from one country after another, apart from Tajikistan where they remained continuously up until 2005. As border guards departed Kyrgyzstan in May 1999, they were pursued by hostile crowds hurling abuse.[38]

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[36] N. Zhelnorova, "Politicians answer for everything," *Argumenty i Fakty*, no. 2, January 1993, cited in the *Current Digest of the post-Soviet Press*.

[37] Boris Vinogradov, "S vvedeniem natsional'nykh valiut v aziatskikh stranakh SNG v Rossii voznikli novye problemy," *Izvestiia*, November 20, 1993.

[38] Aleksandr Chuikov, "Ukhodim: Rossiiskie pogranichniki pokidaiut Kirgiziiu v chem mat' rodila," *Izvestiia,* May 6, 1999.

As well as losing its military presence and vision of Russian-led collective security, between 1993 and 1995 Russia witnessed each of the Central Asian countries withdrawing from the ruble zone and introducing their own currencies. This was linked, in the eyes of Russian nationalists in particular but also in concerns raised by Kozyrev, to the apparent deterioration in the situation of ethnic Russians in Central Asia (see next section).[39] Turkmenistan continued to be closely tied to Russia and was the only country to reach an agreement on dual citizenship, largely because of its dependence on Russia's gas pipelines for its own exports; but even here there were differences over the nature of the energy relationship.[40] Nazarbayev repeatedly raised his vision of a Eurasian Union and in 1995 was even ready to return to the idea of joint military forces,[41] but the clear trend by the middle of the decade was for the Central Asian states to march to their own tune, much to the disappointment of Russian politicians and nationalists. From 1995 onwards high level contacts continued on a regular basis, but agreements tended to be restricted to trade and energy matters.

A renewed security role for Russia in the region was back on the cards as a result of events in the second half of 1999. Terror attacks in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, blamed on Islamic extremist Wahhabis, were linked by Russia's new Prime Minister Vladimir Putin to his own renewed war on Chechen terrorism. Putin promised support to Kyrgyzstan, received a standing ovation from Tajikistan's Parliament on a state visit there, and signed a new security agreement with Uzbekistan only ten months after Karimov had denounced Russia's military role. Putin declared that "Russia does not intend to declare any of the CIS countries to be zones of Russian strategic interests, for that would be inconsistent with our political tradition." Instead, he proposed a series of bilateral "strategic partnerships."[42] Global events had conspired to allow Russia to replace its stance of unquestioning military dominance in the region with a more equal relationship based on a campaign which was soon to embrace the Western world as well—the International War on Terror.

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39 Vinogradov, "S vvedeniem natsional'nykh valiut"; Lerman Usmanov, "Posleduet li za razvalom rublevoi zony raspad sodruzhestva," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* December 15, 1993.

40 "Vstrechi v Ashgabade," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta,* December 24, 1993.

41 Boris Sherman, "Rossiia i Kazakhstan sozdadut Ob''edinennye vooruzhennye sily," *Segonia*, January 21, 1995.

42 Leonid Panin, Yurii Stepanov, and Igor Shestakov, "Rossiia pomozhet Kirgizii razbit' islamistov," *Kommersant*, September 2, 1999; Arkadii Dubnov, "Rossiia khochet byt' 'neporochnoi'," *Vremia MN*, December 16, 1999.

## Ethnic Russians

In addition to the border issues discussed above, the large numbers of Russians now living outside of the borders of the Russian Federation after the break-up of the USSR constituted an important element in Russia's foreign policy. Russia's self-proclaimed right to protect ethnic Russians beyond its borders played some role in Russia's engagement in Tajikistan, where Russians made up 7.6 percent of the population in 1989.[43] As already noted above, in November 1992, Kozyrev justified Russian intervention in Tajikistan in part on the fact that "[w]e must also remember that Russians live there…Russia must act as a peacemaker."[44] Otherwise, the plight of ethnic Russians did not lead to any military or other direct cross-border activities in the 1990s. The Russian authorities did, however, use two other tools more regularly. One was to put direct pressure on governments to ensure the rights of Russians. These could be linked to international agreements or other forms of cooperation from Russia. Even before the end of the Soviet Union, in July 1991 a treaty signed between the RSFSR and Kyrgyzstan linked a loan of 800 million rubles to a guarantee of the rights of the populations of each other's republics.[45] In 1995, economic agreements made between Yeltsin and Niyazov were also linked to the protection of Russians in Turkmenistan.[46] The second tool was to provide direct material, financial and political backing to Russian organizations in the former Soviet states. In the first post-Soviet years, such efforts were focused especially on Cossack groups in Ukraine and northern Kazakhstan. In 1993–1994, the status of Cossack organizations became a source of some tension between Moscow and Almaty, as Cossacks in northern Kazakhstan declared their own regional self-rule and the Russian Ministry of Justice registered a "Siberian Cossack Force" which had four of its sixteen subdivisions in Kazakhstan. The Kazakh authorities responded by refusing to register any Cossack organizations until a compromise was reached whereby some Cossack organizations were registered with the proviso that they were not military formations.[47]

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43 Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 174.
44 Rotar', "Moskva pytaetsia pogasit'."
45 Aleksandr Riabushkin, "Dogovor Rossii i Kyrgyzstana," *Izvestiia,* July 22, 1991.
46 Aleksandr Koretskii, "Vizit Turkmenbashi v Moskvu," *Kommersant*, May 19, 1995.
47 Alexandrov, *Uneasy Alliance*, 121–22.

Russia also sought to extend the concept of citizenship on an ethnic basis to Russians abroad. A June 1993 amendment to the citizenship law allowed qualified people to obtain Russian citizenship even if such individuals had already acquired citizenship in another country. The right to dual citizenship was enshrined in Yeltsin's constitution that was brought in later the same year. This dual citizenship was at odds with practices elsewhere in the former Soviet Union (and in the Russian Federation before June 1993), and raised fears that substantial portions of the population in countries like Kazakhstan would be encouraged to develop their identification with the Russian state at the expense of the nation-building and state-building projects of Kazakhstan. Despite strong pressure from Russia to sign bilateral treaties on dual citizenship, Turkmenistan was the only Central Asian state that Russia was able to prevail on.[48] Even in that case, Turkmenistan repealed its agreement in 2003. The Central Asian states were equally cool about a Russian proposal in 1994 to create a common citizenship for CIS members.[49]

Rhetoric about the plight of Russians in Central Asia surfaced in the Russian press in response to new language laws and perceived discrimination against Russians. Concerns were highest in relation to Kazakhstan, where almost 4.5 million ethnic Russians remained by 1999 (down from 6.2 million in 1989). The language laws of 1989 and 1995, which relegated the Russian language to second place behind Kazakh while remaining an official language, were a constant source of protest. The move of the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana (formerly Akmola), on the edge of the predominantly Russian regions of northern Kazakhstan, in 1997 was widely interpreted in Russia as a move designed to keep an eye on those regions.[50] Press reports complained regularly of the rewriting of history in Kazakhstan to portray negative aspects of Imperial Russian rule, and linked this to discrimination against Russians.[51] In November 1993, in the wake of the collapse of the ruble zone, Kozyrev toured the Central Asian states with the main aim of highlighting the plight of ethnic Russians.[52] While official concerns about ethnic Russians generally became more muted after the mid-1990s, the issue

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48 "Vstrechi v Ashgabade."

49 Teague, "Citizenship, Borders, and National Identity," 22.

50 John Glenn, *The Soviet Legacy in Central Asia* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1999), 111–13.

51 Vladimir Moiseev, "Sovremennaia istoriografiia Kazakhstana," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, April 20, 1993.

52 Vinogradov, "S vvedeniem natsional'nykh valiut."

remained a popular one for Russian nationalists as well as Russian and Cossack groups within the region.

## Conclusion

The suddenness of the dissolution of the USSR left little time for the preparation of concrete visions of the post-Soviet order. The perception that it was Yeltsin and Russia that had brought about the end of communism and that the Central Asian states were late arrivers in the process reinforced the assumption that they would continue to operate firmly within Russia's orbit. But this assumption underestimated the readiness of Central Asian leaders to push forward with their own state building, and the collapse of Russia's economy propelled them to look in different directions for their economic relations—to China, South Asia and the European Union.

Central Asian governments, each at its own pace, were able to remove themselves from the Russian orbit without fear of serious consequences. In the mid-1990s, Russia was embroiled in the Chechen War, was struggling to overcome its economic difficulties and the consequences of the 1993 political crisis, and was at odds with the West over NATO expansion, Kosovo, and the pace of economic and democratic reform. Russia's deficit of power provided the opportunity, and a number of factors provided the incentive. In addition to geopolitical and economic realities, each of the Central Asian leaders had now embarked on a strategy of state and nation-building centered on the cult of the President, and standing up to Russia and promoting the national language and culture were central to that strategy.

By 1995, the reality that, in relation to Central Asia, the Soviet Union really had come to an end finally hit home, to a chorus of bitter recriminations. The influential Chair of the Duma Committee on International Affairs, Vladimir Lukin, noted "[b]eyond Kazakhstan, nothing is clear…this creates a completely unprotected country. Completely unmonitored with respect to narcotics, arms dealing, and all kinds of gangsterism generally. This is very

dangerous."[53] In a similar vein, two correspondents for *Moskovskie Novosti* complained "[i]t is not hard to see that Russia's influence in the Central Asian region has been steadily declining from year to year. Pushed out of the ruble zone and fenced in by customs posts and new borders, post-Soviet Asia is turning southward."[54] The malaise caused by the loss of Empire clearly kicked in at this time and, combined with the reverses of the Chechen conflict, served to undermine Yeltsin's popularity. It took the new shared discourse of the International War on Terror and a new leader, Vladimir Putin, to revive Russia's presence in the region as the new millennium dawned. Putin's War on International Terrorism in Chechnya became almost immediately an International War on Terrorism as the field of operations spread to Central Asia. From this position, Putin was able to respond to the attacks on New York and Washington of 9/11/2001 more rapidly and more confidently than any other European leader. For at least a while, he acted the part of international statesman to great effect. Reasserting some kind of Russian predominance in Central Asia was an important part of this, since it was Putin's readiness to approve the establishment of U.S. bases in Central Asia to support the new war in Afghanistan that made a genuine global coalition possible. This was not, however, an easy path for Russia, and the drift of the Central Asian states away from the Russian orbit in the course of the 1990s was never fully reversed.

[53] Mikhail Karpov, "'My okazalis' v ochen' plokhoi geopoliticheskoi situatsii': Predsedatel' Komiteta Gosdumy po mezhdunarodnym delam Vladimir Lukin o politike RF na Dal'nem Vostoke i na Zapade," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, March 14, 1995, 1–2.

[54] Azer Arif Ogl Mursaliev and Khasan Mustafaev, "Tikhaia voina za aziatskie kommunikatsii," *Moskovskie Novosti*, March 29, 1995.

# “The Problem With Our Borders in Batken”: Local Understandings of Border Control and Sovereignty in Kyrgyzstan

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When the post-Soviet state of Kyrgyzstan recently celebrated its twentieth anniversary, it was commemorating not just two decades of “standing up and flourishing” in the land where the “dreams of the people came true” under the “flag of liberty,” in the words of the national anthem adopted in 1992.[1] Exhortations in the new Constitution of 2010 to the state’s “unstinting conviction” to “protect state sovereignty and unity of the people” and to “serve for the benefit of the entire society” came amidst rising concern over precisely how much control the state actually has over the fate of Kyrgyz borderlanders in the country’s far-flung South.[2] In effect, the state was also marking twenty years of the concept of a citizenship tied to a very concrete notion of a national territory in which “rightful belonging” entitled Kyrgyzstanis—often subtly and problematically glossed as “Kyrgyz”—to claim the resources of the state in terms of a bordered identity. With the overwhelming majority of Kyrgyzstan’s more than five million inhabitants residing in the immediate vicinity of newly international borderlines, the ways in which the edges of the state are to be practiced in politically fractured spaces play a vital role in post-Soviet Kyrgyzstani lifeworlds and livelihoods. The Ferghana Valley in Kyrgyzstan’s south is such a region of contestation, made all the more immediate by its tattered borders, its traditional belonging to a larger area (the socio-economy of the Valley itself) than colors on the contemporary map would suggest, and its now century-long history of calling into question distant states’ policies of control.

1 In the Kyrgyz original, “Örkündöy ber, ösö ber” and “Atkarylyp eldin ümüt, tilegi; Zhelbiredi erkindiktin zhelegi.”

2 Quotes taken from, respectively, the Preamble and Article 5 of the unofficial English version of the “Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic” (adopted by referendum on June 27, 2010) translated from Russian by the European Union-UN Development Programme (EU-UNDP) Project on Support to the Constitutional and Parliamentary Reforms and OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, accessed February 7, 2014, http://www.ilo.org/dyn/natlex/docs/ELECTRONIC/87546/99880/F1398573553/KGZ87546.pdf.

The Kyrgyzstani *oblast'* (region) of Batken is the locus of a vibrant socio-political dynamism that is usually cast in terms of interethnic conflict and political instability arising from the complex intermeshing of contested state territoriality, uncertain ethno-political loyalties, and a new economic peripherality. Batken today is a region of Kyrgyzstan only tenuously connected to the state that Kyrgyz claim as their *meken*, their homeland: roads intersect non-Kyrgyzstani territories, water is predominantly used for the agricultural needs of those described locally as non-Kyrgyz, dialects differ from the language used by other Kyrgyz-speakers farther north. However, for the Kyrgyzstani state the territory of Batken *oblast'* has come to symbolize something much larger and more significant than its cartographic isolation suggests. Conflict in this administrative territory (which was carved out from Osh *oblast'* in 1999) plays a role far beyond these impoverished and remote villages: a monument erected in the very heart of Bishkek in 2004 eulogizes the "heroes of Batken" who gave their lives to defend this outpost from what has been termed an incursion by Uzbek militants in the months before the creation of the *oblast*'; and policy commentators in Moscow, Brussels and Washington debate local ethnic distribution and the capacities of the state here to defend its borders along trafficking routes for narcotics originating in Afghanistan and terminating in Russia and the capitals of Europe. "Our borders seem to interest all sorts of people [...]. Maybe they should come and spend some years living along them to see what the problems here are and are not?," a local historian and teacher exclaimed in Batken in September 2013 after a long conversation on local memories of border-making in the Ferghana Valley.

Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, all the new Central Asian Republics have been faced with complex socio-political realignments. In this they have been bound politically by the conventional rules of a "nation-state" system that tolerates no territorial inconsistencies in terms of state sovereignty and that is loath to renegotiate lines on maps. Formerly internal boundaries within the Soviet Union, which were in effect borders in only an administrative sense, have become state borders. This has allowed friction between groups that now find themselves on territories claimed by states struggling to assert their legitimacy to be expressed in three arenas: internally, to "their own" titular group as well as vis-à-vis non-titular citizens (frequently, and most controversially, sharing an ethnonym with a neighboring titular state); externally, to similarly new, neighboring titular states; and, on an interna-

tional stage, to an audience accustomed to regarding the entire region through the twin lenses of contested ethnopolitical categorization and a decline in geopolitical stability, so often (since 2001) expressed in terms of these post-Soviet states' proximity to Afghanistan. In the case of Kyrgyzstan's territory in the Ferghana Valley, these three arenas come together over the composition of this state's borders, which can be seen as the locus in which conflicts between villagers become weighty matters of state. Important questions arise over how such local conflict has the potential to become a conflict between the states of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; and how such conflicts highlight a larger, regional narrative that is of interest to non-regional parties such as the European Union (that provides the Kyrgyzstani state with logistical support and a framework of border management deriving from European contexts) and the Russian Federation (that provides military hardware to the state).[3]

This contribution shifts our attention away from representations of Kyrgyzstan's borders as being dysfunctional and in need of fixing because their "sub-basic infrastructure" in a region "especially prone to volatility" requires "cross-border collaboration [that] needs to improve considerably given the volatile security situation in the region."[4] Leaving aside vaguely defined notions of their role in threatening "regional stability," I focus on the interplay of how borders here are discussed and represented by Kyrgyz borderland inhabitants and the Kyrgyzstani state. Such a borderland perspective affords us an appropriate vantage point from which to reflect upon a range of behaviors as well as the parameters of local boundary-making and boundary-reproducing processes because it inflects readily observable inscriptions of the state in locales "where the operation of state power is both naked and hidden from view."[5] I ask how border control in Batken relates to powerful narratives of threat in this region of Kyrgyzstan where the state has been struggling to assert its control. I address this question by discussing, first,

3 According to the Border Service at the Kyrgyz National Security Committee, Russian support comes in the framework of the "Brothers Fighting for Fixed Borders" program (as quoted by Deidre Tynan, "Central Asia: Russia Taking Steps to Reinforce Security Relationships," *Eurasianet*, February 2, 2012, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/64946).

4 See the Introduction section of the Outline of the EU-UNDP Border Management Assistance Programme in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, April 2012, accessed February 7, 2014, http://www.bomca.eu/en/kyr.html.

5 Mark B. Salter, "The Global Visa Regime and the Political Technologies of the International Self: Borders, Bodies, Biopolitics," *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 31, no. 2 (2006): 185.

how state authorities and locals express, contest or argue for the new significance of border control; and, second, in which manner such Afghanistan-driven narratives relate to local lifeworlds in Batken. By using as my sources data generated in long-term and repeated anthropological fieldwork as well as local media reports and publications of donor organizations active in the Ferghana Valley,[6] I argue that the contentious question of enforcing control over a contested borderline (the "naked" control by the state) contains two dimensions, both of which revolve around a new practice of sovereignty. On the one hand, the state can be seen to pursue a course of centralizing control over Batken by casting local conflict as arising from the lack of sufficient and actually implemented border control, thus connecting border porosity here with the specter of increasing "regional instability" in Afghanistan's neighborhood. From the perspective of the borderlands themselves, on the other hand, conflict over control of land and water usage, both of which are issues with a long history of contestation, have increasingly come to be expressed in the language of citizenship rather than merely ethnic affiliation, thereby presenting us with an example of "hidden" state control.

Local understandings of border control and state sovereignty in Batken *oblast'* depend on perceptions of the manner in which the Kyrgyzstani state has chosen to inscribe control by the centre onto its periphery; thus, this contribution begins by discussing domestic representations of the status of the state's actual control over its territory and how this is communicated to the outside world. The role that border control plays in this regard, and the ways in which the state regards outside assistance in this domain, shall be critically examined in light of its impact on local lifeworlds. The second section focuses on how borderlanders in Batken themselves witness the waxing drive for central control over their locales. Here, by following local voices I present ways in which locals attempt to lay claim to bordering processes through their highlighting of historical and contemporary tropes of (dis)connectivity and belonging, and how new manifestations of border control are received and appraised by those most directly exposed to them. I conclude by discussing how borderlanders characterize their position in relation to processes un-

6 All quotations from interviews in this contribution were recorded during fieldwork conducted between August and November 2013. A total of twenty-one semi-structured interviews were conducted (sixteen in Kyrgyzstan's Batken and Osh *oblast's*, and five in Tajikistan's Sughd *oblast'*) in Russian; all translations into English are by the author. Names of interviewees have been altered throughout. The author expresses his especial gratitude to Martyn Aim and Erjan Sydykbekov for support during fieldwork.

leashed by Kyrgyzstani concern over how Afghanistan after the Western military withdraws might affect domestic lifeworlds as well as state sovereignty in Batken.

## Inscribing State Control onto Batken

Speaking of the pressures generated by a project of delimiting and demarcating the state's new borders, a Kyrgyzstani ambassador in a speech held at a seminar organized by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2011 clearly underlined the need for "strong political will" by the state in the face of local opposition to the work of boundary commissions charged with resolving disputes over contested territories, who are often "accused of treachery" by local inhabitants.[7] The inhabitants leveling such accusations of treachery at the Kyrgyzstani state are invariably borderlanders identifying themselves confidently as Kyrgyz—in other words, local villagers claiming specific territories inhabited by Kyrgyz as inalienable parts of Kyrgyzstan and not being up for territorial renegotiation with a neighboring state regardless of whether Tajiks or Uzbeks live there. As a successor state to the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan inherited strong regionally based patronage networks serving as the basis for the allocation of scarce economic and political resources, and which had been instrumental in developing robust administrative-territorial identities linked to the respective sub-divisions of the Union.[8] The Soviet Union had taken the process of nation-building very seriously, and the system of titular nations (the Kyrgyz, the Tajiks, etc.) still provides groups in this region with the parameters of the negotiation of political power. As a state, however, this heir to the USSR was not imbued with the resources to implement on-the-ground border control at its new borders: even in the immediate neighborhood of the capital city in the north, along the new Kazakhstani borderline, manifestations of state control at the frontier were not to appear until a decade had passed.

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7 Erik Asanaliev, Ambassador of the Kyrgyz Republic in Belarus, speaking at an OSCE Borders Team Seminar in Vilnius, May–June, 2011, http://www.osce.org/cpc/85263?download=true.

8 Pauline Jones-Luong, *Institutional Change and Political Continuity in Post-Soviet Central Asia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 69–73.

Such a pronounced dearth of symbols relating to the actual implementation of practices of territorial sovereignty has continued to this day to characterize the Kyrgyzstani state at its margins. In the far-flung south of the country, it was not until the "Batken war" of 1999 that central authorities found themselves unable any longer to ignore the issue of national control of "their" territory.[9] Represented as an infiltration of Kyrgyzstani territory by a large group of Uzbek militants belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, neighboring Uzbekistan began the contentious project of unilaterally laying mines along what it regarded as its borderline with Kyrgyzstan, at that time a line that was largely neither delimited nor demarcated in a mutually acceptable form.[10] A decade later, in another part of southern Kyrgyzstan, the borderline between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan was once again in the centre of regional states' attention when Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks, believing themselves to be persecuted by local (Kyrgyz) authorities in the southern city of Osh, temporarily fled across the border to Uzbekistan's section of the Ferghana Valley. Coinciding with the collapse of central authorities' power in Bishkek and the ouster of President Bakiev in 2010, the state's control over its territory was called into question even more fundamentally:

> "I cannot answer this question for sure—[whether] we control the territory in the south of my country 100 percent. That's because of such objective factors as the lingering tension between these two ethnic groups [and] because of the mistrust and lack of confidence of the ethnic Uzbeks and Kyrgyz communities toward local law enforcement bodies."[11]

The issue of the relationship between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks on Kyrgyzstan's territory is explicitly linked to failing control over the periphery by the cen-

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[9] By this time only roughly half of the 971-kilometre-long Kyrgyzstani-Tajikistani and a quarter of the 1,378-kilometre-long Kyrgyzstani-Uzbekistani borders had been officially agreed upon; see Necati Polat, *Boundary Issues in Central Asia* (Ardsley: Transnational Publishers, 2002), 51–59. Today this has remained at a similar level for the Kyrgyzstani-Tajikistani border and risen to nearly three-quarters along the Kyrgyzstani-Uzbekistani border (as reported in "Working groups on delimitation and demarcation of the Kyrgyz-Uzbek state border met in Uzbekistan," *Kabar*, January 29, 2014, http://www.kabar.kg/eng /politics/full/9040).

[10] George Gavrilis, *The Dynamics of Interstate Boundaries* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 108.

[11] Arslan Anarbaev, former Interim Head of the Kyrgyz Embassy in Washington, in an interview with *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, August 6, 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Kyrgyz_Envoy_To_US_Says_Interethnic_Reconciliation_Could_Take_Decades/2120445.html.

tre, in part at least deriving from local suspicions over the state's objectives in mediating between the fraught categories of ethnicity (as expressed in terms of tension between local communities) and the institutions of a centralized Kyrgyzstani state as represented by local law enforcement bodies.

While widely reported bloodshed between these groups was limited to Osh and its immediate environs, farther west in Batken incidents between Kyrgyz and their Uzbek and Tajik neighbors have become seemingly both more frequent and more violent since 2010. Such conflict often arises from the contentious purchase of construction land by non-Kyrgyz or the domination by certain groups (usually ascribed with a non-Kyrgyz ethnic identity but not necessarily non-Kyrgyzstani citizenship) over the few remaining economic lifelines leading out of remote valleys and, invariably, across borderlines even in cases where the ultimate anchor of exchange is itself on Kyrgyzstani territory (such as is the case in direct trade between Batken and Bishkek or Osh). Local media have reported a significant increase since 2010 in incidents that have included, inter alia, reciprocal kidnappings of Kyrgyz and Tajiks or Uzbeks, gun battles between borderlanders and border guards, the destruction of property linked to non-Kyrgyz ownership, and a barrage of accusations of border violations by citizens of Kyrgyzstan crossing into territory claimed by Tajikistan (the Vorukh enclave) or Uzbekistan (the Sokh enclave) and vice versa.[12] What is at stake here is, in the words of the government, "the social and economic development of borderline territories" which has been negatively affected by the "problem of border management and lack of border infrastructure."[13]

A majority of the Soviet Union's successor states have been confronted with an imprecise fit between territorial allocation of political power within units defined by the larger context of the USSR and actual control over bor-

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[12] See, for example, Natalia Yefimova-Trilling and David Trilling, "Kyrgyzstan & Tajikistan: Disputed Border Heightens Risk of Conflict," *Eurasianet*, August 2, 2012, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65744; Mirlan Alymbekov, "Border conflicts: no alternative to negotiations," *Kabar*, January 27, 2015, http://kabar.kg/eng/analytics/full/9002. For an excellent discussion of Sokh border conflict, see Madeleine Reeves, "The Time of the Border: Contingency, Conflict, and Popular Statism at the Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Boundary," in *Ethnographies of the State in Central Asia. Performing Politics*, ed. Madeleine Reeves, Johan Rasanayagam, and Judith Beyer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 198–220.

[13] OSCE, "Speech of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, H.E. Mr. Erlan Abdyldaev on the 20th session of the Council of the Foreign Ministers of the OSCE Member States," December 5, 2013, http://www.osce.org/mc/109230?download=true.

derland processes at the edges of those units. Kyrgyzstan, alongside its western and southern neighbors, has however benefited from the exceptional attention accorded to its borders and, by implication, to its weak central control over the movement of people and goods through its periphery by distant states due to its location. In a telling choice of imagery, the Foreign Ministry of Finland, which is a donor country that lacks a historical background to its relations in the region but which has been instrumental in recent years in broaching regional border porosity for the European Union and the OSCE, tersely introduces Central Asia with:

> "The geopolitical situation in Central Asia is challenging: drug routes run from Afghanistan through Central Asia to Russia and Europe, and the unpredictability of the situation in Afghanistan and the neighboring states causes concern about a build-up of extremist Islamic movements in the region."[14]

By emphasizing an imagery of regions that are successively penetrated, this European Union member state correlates the violation of European territory with failures of border control closer to the source of such undesirable new flows. To the European Union and, due to its position in-between, the Russian Federation, Kyrgyzstan (and its neighbors Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) seems to resemble what northern Mexico is to the United States: a drug-infested borderland that fails to stem the flow of narcotics to where those who consume most of these drugs reside. Following the caesura of September 2001, Kyrgyzstan took its commitment to ousting the Taliban in Afghanistan very seriously, going so far as permitting the operation of the first non-Soviet military base on former Soviet territory, which opened at Manas airport near Bishkek in December 2001. Mindful of public perceptions in a state that never rejected its crucial ties of socio-economic exchange with the Russian Federation, a second, Russian military base has similarly been permitted to operate at Kant since October 2003, in the immediate neighborhood of the airbase leased to the U.S. at Manas. The Russian state may well disagree with the military objectives and permissibility of such a base, and yet both of these outside forces share a common concern over the factors alluded to in the citation above. In effect, it is the status of Kyrgyzstani border management that

[14] The Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, "Wider Europe Initiative: Finland's Development Policy Framework Programme," June 2009, available at http://formin.finland.fi/public/default.aspx?contentId=167831&nodeId=15445&contentlan=2&culture=en-US.

is the focal point for such outside interest, and pressure has been brought to bear upon the Kyrgyzstani state to get its borders "under control" in the interest of "wider regional stability."

Alerted to global representations of Central Asia as a "first line of defense" in terms of preventing instability in Afghanistan from "spilling over" its borders, the Kyrgyzstani state has not argued against the imagery of global threat clinging to outside characterizations of local state weakness. Instead, such threats have been reformulated to relate to Kyrgyzstani lifeworlds in an immediate manner. Thus, Kyrgyzstani Foreign Minister E. Abdyldaev recently stated:

> "Kyrgyzstan is greatly influenced by the Afghan drug trafficking. In the last years drug-expansion has become more aggressive, being the main source of danger to the gene pool, contributing to transnational organized crime, terrorism, and extremism. Porous borders, weak equipment of the respective agencies, lack of human resources, and insufficient anti-drug propaganda affect the fight against illicit drug trafficking."[15]

The connection between internal processes and outside attention (which is, first and foremost, focused on matters pertaining to Afghanistan) has been made explicit in the context of the Ferghana Valley's contested borders. Thus, state elites suggest that there exists a direct correlation between local conflict in Batken and processes originating from beyond the state's borders. The combustible mix of new economic peripherality and insistent calls for the pre-eminence of the titular Kyrgyz within the Kyrgyzstani state has coincided with a steady increase in a rhetoric that links border violation from without with (in)stability within. In the words of A. Anarbaev, at the time Head of the Kyrgyzstani Embassy in the United States:

> "The interests of [certain] internal destructive forces match the interests of external ones, located in neighboring countries—radical Islamism and drug trafficking. Matching interests unite those groups and may, God forbid, create a new burst of tension in our country. That's why our government pays a lot of attention to border security."[16]

"Border security" and the juxtaposition of "internal and external destructive forces" are tropes that belong firmly within a language of enclosure that

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15 OSCE, "Speech of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic."

16 Arslan Anarbaev, in an interview with *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*.

characterizes the legitimacy of imposing sovereignty over the entire territory of the state. As a consequence of territorial enclosure, regions formerly at the heart of a larger market space can now become peripheral: deprived of its regionally predicated raison d'être, Batken has become an outpost of an eviscerated economy. The new reality of Batken's economic peripherality is highlighted, and its plight reproduced, by what has been described, in a more general context, as states' efforts to curb cross-boundary trade and transfrontier systems of production.[17] Such peripherality is a characteristic consequence of giving precedence to the political aspects of a borderland over and beyond its economic well-being: it stems from a core's political needs and not from considerations of economic opportunity, especially when a boundary divides (from the state's point of view) two political systems and two economic systems that are potentially in conflict with one another.[18]

The Kyrgyzstani state claims to identify the solution to local conflict along its southern borders as lying in better implementation of border control. Arguing that "[t]he present and future of a state depends not only on its internal development but also on the nature of that country's contact with the outside world and the ability to secure its interests, including through border security," this state locates a critical threat to national security in "the outflow of the working-age population from the border regions deeper into, as well as out of the country, resulting in land reclamation by inhabitants of neighboring states."[19] By characterizing local conflict over land and water in its remote southern region of Batken as crucially involving territorial violation arising from overly porous borders, the specter of ever increasing regional instability is invoked. Yet, as is evident in such pronouncements by state representatives, the state's desire for increased control over internal movement is intrinsic to the desire to control the borderlands themselves. It is such a desire to "monopolize the means of movement" that lies at the heart of the drive to introduce techniques of identification and thereby unambiguously establish state identities ("citizenships") through documentation such as passports, identity cards, and internal permits (*propuski*).[20]

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17 Niles Hansen, *The Border Economy* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 23–24.

18 James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd, "Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance," *Regional Studies* 33, no. 7 (1999): 593–604.

19 Resolution no. 183 passed by the government of Kyrgyzstan, March 6, 2012, accessed February 7, 2014, http://www.bomca.eu/en/partnership/92-ibm.html.

20 John Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport. Surveillance, Citizenship and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 5–10.

The speedy creation of new borderline infrastructure has not failed to come about because of a lack of societal experience and awareness of the functions of border control: a rarely acknowledged fact in the context of Central Asian border control is that the polity of Kyrgyzstan has a half-century history of actually implementing border control on certain parts of its territory, namely along the former external boundaries of the Soviet Union (to the east with the People's Republic of China, in this case). Practices of border control are widely remembered within societies that experienced a high degree of militarization even in the 1980s. Instead, this has not occurred because of, first, the newly independent state's incapacities in terms of the resources to construct new, state-internal rather than regional, infrastructures and, second, the development of a clear narrative of "neighborliness." Unable independently to muster sufficient resources for such an enterprise and unable to cooperate directly with neighboring states in the contemporary framework of mutual distrust over borders, state elites have found it expedient to turn to outside assistance. This assistance can be seen as a type of resource that the state has generated by pursuing a narrative of great interest to outsiders: proximity to Afghanistan and the perceived threats that that post-Taliban state poses beyond Central Asia's borders. It is suggested that more central control over such remote peripheries is to the advantage of a concerned outside world because it

> "[…] enhances national and regional security, promotes global security, creates preconditions favorable to the implementation and development of the individual and society, stimulates the socio-economic and democratic development of the state, enhances the role of law, [and] strengthens mutually beneficial relationships with other countries of the region and the world."[21]

In this formulation, the Kyrgyzstani state represents itself as a responsible member of an international community of states as well as professing its wish to promote "neighborliness." The existence of Kyrgyzstan as a state within such a community entails the *diktat* of sovereign control over territory, embodied by a new infrastructure of border closure – in effect, new regimes of border control. Border control, "the sum of a state's institutions to regulate the movement of people, communication, and goods across external bounda-

[21] Resolution no. 183 passed by the government of Kyrgyzstan.

ries,"[22] represents the most visible manifestation of a state's narrative of control over its territory by making the state legible to outsiders as well as to citizens, and it figures prominently in the international political system of states that dominates global discourses of foreign policy. The mechanisms and artifacts pertaining to the surveillance of the borderline itself project the parameters of sovereignty from the centre to the periphery through the micropolitics of border control and the powerful class of agents of border control, such as customs officials, border guards, and numerous police forces and state security agencies.[23] The functions that such normative control are meant to have are easily divided into vigilance, monitoring, and restriction. These functions are accomplished through militarization, surveillance techniques, and state-endorsed "gatekeepers" such as border guards and customs officials. Furthermore, such bureaucracies of control serve to "embrace" and keep track of both those who legitimately "belong to the state" (its citizens) as well as those temporarily on state territory.[24] It is this convention of border control that Kyrgyzstan has accepted through its emphatic endorsement of the border management concepts developed by the OSCE and the European Union's Border Management Programme in Central Asia (BOMCA), thereby embracing a narrative of keeping borders "open yet secure" in order to prevent "terrorism" and the smuggling of contraband.

But what does such assistance mean for the implementation of border control in a locality such as Batken? Forced to consider budget allocations, the state is moving away from the traditional Soviet-era convention of military and para-military border control to "a special, multi-disciplinary [sic.] national system, which operates with wide-ranging powers and capabilities for the integrated protection of the interests of the country at the state border, in the border area, and throughout the regions of the country."[25] In effect, this means the replacement of Kyrgyzstani army units with a professional corps of border troops and "the establishment of functioning civilian control over the activities of border security agencies, the gradual implementation of

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22 Andrea Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation. Border Controls in the Soviet Union and Its Successor States, 1917–1993* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), 19.

23 However, for a critical distinction between the goals of such control and the power of those actually implementing these goals, see Josiah McC. Heyman, "Putting Power in the Anthropology of Bureaucracy: The Immigration and Naturalization Service at the Mexico-United States Border," *Current Anthropology* 36, no. 2 (1995): 261–87.

24 Torpey, *Invention of the Passport*, 10.

25 Resolution no. 183 passed by the government of Kyrgyzstan.

operative-mobile methods in border patrol, the full professionalization of the border service (that is giving up enrolling conscripts in the border service)."[26] Such "professionalization" visibly goes hand-in-hand with the construction of watchtowers, training centers, and border post amenities; and it is accompanied by the appearance of new vehicles, patrol and sniffer dogs, and new uniforms. Contractors are constructing new border infrastructure (truck inspection units, border outposts, road upgrading as well as new road construction that by-passes pockets of extra-territorial spaces, communication towers, and barracks), and like this the landscapes of Batken's borderlands are slowly being transformed to resemble physically the outpost of Kyrgyzstan that they have long figured as in representations in far-away Bishkek.

## Borderlanders Laying Claim to Batken's Borders

Confronted with such remodeled border control designed to harden borders here, Kyrgyz borderlanders in Batken choose to emphasize their own participation in boundary-making and boundary-reproduction. By no means merely on-lookers while states have come and gone from the region, borderlanders clearly express their attitudes towards such changes. Local representations of such change here hinge on historical rights as marked on old maps, often by using a vocabulary of entitlement introduced from afar; and borderlanders violate borders when these do not agree with tried and tested forms of interaction with their neighbors. In order to approach the framework within which interaction with the state has taken place from a local perspective, I quote at length the sweep of history that Amir, a local historian in Batken and a former engineer with the Red Army in distant Chernobyl, used to introduce "the problem with our borders in Batken":

> "There was a time when the settled peoples of the Ferghana Valley feared us [Kyrgyz] as great warriors. In those days, all the cities in this region existed only due to the whim of the Kyrgyz: we controlled those who were in power in Qoqand, Khujand, Osh, Andijon. Then, Russia came and they created an office in Tashkent, which was still Kazakh back then. We Kyrgyz and Kazakhs could not read or write back then, but the Uzbeks could, and they used their skills to

[26] Outline of the EU-UNDP Border Management Assistance Programme in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

> steal much of our land. We were not so clever: we loved our freedom and our sheep and horses. But they learned Russian and drew the very borders we now fight over. Before the Bolshevik Revolution [in 1917] we roamed everywhere and defended our way of life [*byt'*]: this is why there are Kyrgyz in all Central Asia, and also in China and Afghanistan. Today in this region, we are left with just Batken. This is like an island, left over after the sea washed everything else away. Truly, our lands have shrunk!"[27]

By employing an ethno-political terminology which would have been unrecognizable in the period presented here, memories of connectivity are emphasized alongside the power that directly derived from such connectivity. Such memories of historical control are vivid and dominated by a Kyrgyz point of view that, in the nationalizing language of contemporary post-Soviet Central Asia, is able to draw upon commonly accepted notions of the Kyrgyz geobody,[28] that mountainous island "left over after the sea." Tellingly, it is the collusion of neighbors (the "Uzbeks") with outsiders ("Russia") that introduced the territorializing state here by employing a foreign language (Russian), and not the outsiders themselves. From such a perspective, Kyrgyz have been stranded in their lands by historical processes that have now culminated in enclosure.

### *Disconnecting the Formerly Connected*

Distant debates over narratives of enclosure and filtering along "suitable corridors," of the penetration of undesirable goods and individuals from Afghanistan, and of the need to reintegrate Kyrgyzstan into a world that, until 1991, it had clearly been a part of sit uneasily with a people that have a tradition of negotiating regional interaction in the face of a succession of polities claiming their allegiances to an array of political enterprises. Seen from the perspective of Batken, Kyrgyzstan's new territoriality represents a deterioration of local connectivity; "regional cooperation" was a given fact of socio-economic life in the decades prior to independence:

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27 As recorded in Batken Town, September 2013. Amir's imagery is closely related to the hagiography of Manas, the epic hero taken to represent the virtues of the "Kyrgyz people" and who conquered Chinese and Turkic peoples alike.

28 For the concept of the geobody, see Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped. A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 1994).

> "Before the end of the Soviet Union, Kyrgyz and Uzbeks and Tajiks would sit and discuss important matters like water and schools and family problems for many hours. Our respective *kolkhoz* cooperated on all these matters. These days we only meet to resolve business questions: what is the current price of potatoes or petrol in Osh [Kyrgyzstan], or Andijon [Uzbekistan], or Isfara [Tajikistan]? Where are the border guards today, and how much money do they demand if encountered? Before independence we all had the freedom to move, but now we have all shrunk in terms of geography and of ambition: we used to know the places personally that we talked about, our mines and mills and refineries worked, and we talked about more important things than potatoes and road blocks."[29]

It is the existence of such slowly decaying connectivity that poses the conundrum that Batken finds itself dealing with today and with which a new state rhetoric of territorial boundedness must compete: memories of recent and larger, regional exchange figure more prominently than do official contemporary characterizations of exchange across the new borders of the region. Rural and, in present-day geopolitical terms, remote, livelihoods here have for a long time depended on connectedness within the larger region of the Ferghana Valley. Traditionally, the entire valley successfully cultivated fruit and various cereal crops as well as being a renowned area for horse and cattle breeding. However, during the Soviet period and as a consequence of collectivization in the late 1920s, the valley's abundant water resources were redirected to cotton monoculture and the various food and fodder crops were subsequently heavily marginalized. Cotton production depended on the economic integrity of the entire region due to the vital necessity of the water resources from upstream Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and food for this region was imported from other parts of the Union, most notably from western Siberia. Hence, within the Soviet economy, Batken was intricately linked to wide markets and diverse supply chains. The dissolution of the USSR entailed the hardening of the formerly administrative borders, making the water supply for the cotton fields (predominantly in the Uzbekistani segment of the valley) an international issue, due to Kyrgyzstan's and Tajikistan's dependency on the same water for electricity generation. Today, the market space of the Ferghana Valley, the bread basket of the entire region, is politically (and hence economically) more fragmented than ever before in its ancient agricultural history. More significant for local residents in the three post-Soviet parts of

[29] Interview with Amir, September 2013, in Batken Town.

the valley, however, is that infrastructure was similarly designed with one market space in mind, thereby newly affecting the transportation of food and goods, none of which were any longer produced self-sufficiently by any one of these three states.

"Where did these new borders come from? When they were designed in my grandfather's days nobody could have wanted to mark them with fences, mines or police!"[30] For the longest part of their lifetime, the borders of the Ferghana Valley were indeed marked on paper only: there were no customs posts, border zones, or checkpoints on the infrastructure connecting the Republics. Locals in internal borderlands experienced the boundary's existence due to the existence of the respective Republic's state institutions (e.g., language use in schools and insignia on local militias' uniforms) rather than border control mechanisms. While archival information on internal boundaries remains difficult to obtain (and seems to have been marked in contradictory ways on Soviet-era maps),[31] the internal boundaries most Soviet citizens had to deal with in general were those engendered by the system of collectivization and the subsequent restrictions on freedom of abode rather than ones between Republics. "The boundaries of the *kolkhoz* [collective farm] were far, far more important to us than the borders to the neighboring Republics" is a common statement encountered in Batken when locals talk about their experiences with border control prior to the imposition of the new practices of the territorializing post-Soviet state of the early twenty-first century.[32]

The battle against *mestnichestvo* ("localism"), regarded as the antithesis of socialist nationalization policy, was fought in the arenas of internal delimitation (the bordering of *oblast's* and *raions*) and, most importantly, in the new institution of the *kolkhoz*. *Kolkhoz* were not simply units of production but rather socio-economic communities often bringing together several villages in order to establish the key locus of all in-depth economic development in the under-industrialized, un-urbanized South of the Soviet Union.[33]

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30 Interview with Dastan, October 2013, in Arka.

31 Such maps and contestations over unclear cartographic inclusion of specific territories (and the naming of individual villages in multiple languages) have figured prominently in diplomatic exchanges between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, just as they have in the long-standing but recently resolved disputes between the People's Republic of China and the Central Asian Republics along their common frontier.

32 Interview with Amir, September 2013, in Batken Town.

33 Olivier Roy, *The New Central Asia. The Creation of Nations* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000), 89–91.

Collectivization, economic modernization, and sovietization all had been part of the drive behind the creation of the *kolkhoz*, and *kolkhoz* served as the most immediate encounter locals in Central Asia had with the state's territorializing strategies, in particular after 1932, when a new passport system created categories of places for which individuals needed special permission to live. This had the effect of tying rural people to their respective *kolkhoz* and as such represented a central strategy in Soviet governing structures.[34] When people in Batken today emphasize perceptions of a loss of mobility and, through this, a depreciation of practices of socio-economic exchange, it is the loss of institutionalized patterns of exchange within and between *kolkhoz* "territories" that is inferred. Long experiences here with borders (through the *kolkhoz*) are centrally characterized by regarding them as marking the edge of a local belonging rather than in the enclosing and filtering function they are meant to fulfill for the sovereign states of the Ferghana Valley. It is these edges of local belonging that are now being claimed in the name of the state.

### *The Margins of Land and Belonging as a Local Resource*

The borders that figure so prominently in local lifeworlds in the tripartite Ferghana Valley are here to stay, even despite the observation that these former administrative-only boundaries were never designed to delimit independent and sovereign states. Characterizations by Kyrgyzstani borderlanders of their complexly bordered homeland in Batken overwhelmingly focus on conflict over enfranchisement and belonging rather than contesting the existence of these borderlines themselves:

> "This here is Kyrgyz land—Tajiks should not be allowed to build houses on it, and Uzbeks should not be allowed to steal the water that comes from Kyrgyz mountains and flows through Kyrgyz valleys. Tajiks and Uzbeks are neighbors and sometimes guests, and they should stay neighbors and guests rather than pretending to become family by moving in and demanding our things."[35]

In their interaction with anthropologists, journalists and government representatives, control over land and access to water is expressed in the language of citizenship in the post-Soviet state which, since the time of its inception as one of the ethno-territorial Soviet Republics, has come to be seen as a politi-

[34] Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation*, 64–65.
[35] Interview with Orozbek, September 2013, in Batken Town.

cal homeland for a specific titular ethnic "nation." Building upon an idiosyncratic selection of "national attributes," by 1936 (the year of the final changes to administrative borders in Central Asia) Soviet ethnographers and administrators believed they had identified territories that would be best suited as "containers" in which the national dialectic would play itself out and to which members of any given nationality would gravitate.[36] The socialist homelands thus devised, in theory, were to be ethnically homogenous in an administrative sense: cadre distribution, linguistic education, and control over resources (both in terms of economic extraction as well as symbolic control over these within the framework of the Soviet state) were to be in the hands of the titular group. Because of access to local institutions (such as schooling) and the right to "national particularities" (such as practicing certain socio-economic ways of life), the delimitation of homeland and nation (in effect, the "internal bordering" of the constituent parts of the Soviet Union) mattered greatly to those who found new administrative boundaries on their doorsteps and who, as a consequence, found themselves the objects of new narratives of exclusion and inclusion.

Contestation by locals here of the precise demarcation of territory belonging to one or another state-administered homeland is by no means a novel phenomenon: arguing for the renegotiation of borderlines by employing the language of contemporary normative orders has a long tradition in the Ferghana Valley. By using the terminology of the day, groups who were in the process of understanding themselves to be Kyrgyz or Tajik or Uzbek already petitioned the Soviet state throughout the 1920s and 1930s with the aim of securing certain territories (and with them, certain resources) for themselves. In doing so, "petitioners did not question the official assumption that 'nationality' was linked to land and other resources. Instead, the petitioners argued that they were entitled to such resources as a matter of national rights."[37] Archival research has shown that locals actively participated in this process and exhibited considerable skill in molding revolutionary territorial realignments into pre-revolutionary, pre-existing boundaries between

36 Robert J. Kaiser, *The Geography of Nationalism in Russia and the USSR* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 115.

37 Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations. Ethnographic Knowledge & the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 170.

local groups.[38] Thus, the delimitation of Ferghana borders was a dynamic process of interaction between local elites and the distant centre in Moscow, even if this process (as we have seen above) has come to be portrayed locally as a collusion of certain groups of locals ("the Uzbeks" in one common such representation) with the distant state.

By and large, the socialist state did not invent the categories to which people were to ascribe themselves, but it did objectify the categories of Kyrgyz-ness, Uzbek-ness, or Tajik-ness as well as tie them to a notion of rightful, and exclusive, territorial belonging.[39] Today's states in Central Asia have neither contested nor renegotiated these ethno-political identities, but today's borderlines between these states now apportion not only access to local institutions but also inclusion into mutually antagonistic and economically independent political systems. In an era of narratives that elevate allegiance to the state over locally defined and hybrid belongings—a time in which, most recently, sanctions for violation of territory have actually begun to be implemented—"nationality" as expressed through "citizenship" has remained a resource for borderlanders. Indeed, the increasingly strong language used by the state to argue the legitimacy of enforcing borders in places like Batken has made available a powerful weapon for locals in the fraught conflicts over land and water: by using citizenships to classify "theft" of land, villagers suggest a threat to the state as a whole rather than just conflict between individuals or residents of neighboring localities. In other words, while conflict between Kyrgyz herders over pasture rights should be resolved locally or by the *oblast'* police (who, however, are generally not seen locally as reliable or impartial arbitrators), conflict over water usage (that frequently depends on Soviet-era canals that criss-cross borders) attracts the attention of state security forces, the border police, and international observers alike and can, therefore, in local perceptions be assured to be decided *a priori* in favor of the Kyrgyz party's interest precisely because higher level authorities are not seen

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[38] For an analytical discussion of these archives, see Kathleen Collins, *Clan Politics and Regime Transition in Central Asia* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 83; and Arne Haugen, *The Establishment of National Republics in Soviet Central Asia* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 182–84.

[39] For a discussion of such ethno-territorial bordering processes in relation to Kyrgyz groups beyond the borders of the Kyrgyzstani state in China's Xinjiang Region and Tajikistan's Gorno-Badakhshan *oblast'*, see Steven Parham, "'Rightful' versus 'Real' Homelands: Changing Concepts of Kyrgyz Boundaries and Belonging on the China-Kyrgyzstan Frontier," *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 3 (2014): 265–85.

as acting impartially as long as "rightful belonging" is shown to be at stake. Once again, petitioning the state in support of local causes has become a strategy that can yield advantages, and this has become a crucial local resource in a region that in most other respects has had much to lose from the new disconnectivity of the early twenty-first century.

### *Reappraisals of "New" Border Control*

The new regimes of border control that have been taking hold steadily in Batken *oblast'* in recent years are a clear sign for residents that the state has finally arrived, on the ground and in everyday life. This arrival is taking place in an environment already characterized by strong discourses and traditions of interaction between groups marked by different categories of nationality and citizenship. I have shown how Kyrgyz borderlanders here emphasize "local shrinking," expressed in terms of the loss of regional-now-international connectivity and "ambition"; simultaneously, more direct avenues of interaction with the Kyrgyzstani state have opened up: relations between certain villages and villagers have become relations between states, and the forces of border control are the vehicles of this contextual shift. Equipped with a newly legitimated language of protection and sovereignty, these forces implement notions of citizenship through, for example, the practice of document checks. Adopting the "professional approach to border management" suggested to the government by foreign advisors and their donors and which forms a vital pillar of both Kyrgyzstan's international standing as well as providing much needed budgetary relief, the separation of intricately interwoven lifeworlds is rapidly taking place here. A striking feature of new notions of separated territoriality, and a clearly visible instance of the inscription of sovereignty onto local landscapes, has been the construction of new infrastructures to replace Soviet-era arteries that nowadays violate state boundedness. Critically supported by donor money, such new infrastructures that eliminate the need to cross borderlines allow the state to perceive its access to Kyrgyzstani villages as being completely under sovereign control rather than dependent on another state's regime of border control and, as a consequence thereof, subject to unilateral enclosure by a neighboring state. From the perspective of the newly accessible locales, however, the burgeoning narrative of disconnectivity of recent years is cemented through the *out-*

*side* support so loudly proclaimed on the ubiquitous information boards adorned with European Union flags.

The "professionalization" of the agents of border control very much has an impact on the ways in which local lifeworlds are changing:

> "The old system was for us—the new system is for them. Back then, if we didn't cooperate with Uzbeks or Tajiks we could be accused of being unpatriotic to the [Soviet] state, of undermining the friendship of the peoples. We were all in this together, back then. Now, if we cooperate one-to-one with them we are accused of being smugglers, of not being vigilant enough about militants coming here. Now, we are traitors to our nation."[40]

Significantly, border control matters because it matters to borderlanders—the agents of border control can be co-opted, cooperated with, or evaded but they cannot be ignored. In order to live their lives at the state's margins, the intricate and changing structures of hierarchical command, military control, effective gatekeeper power, and functioning bureaucratic channels and its language of interaction must be learned by locals. The "old" system, in force from the time of independence until the current drive for professionalization, was negotiated between borderlanders and the Kyrgyzstani border forces in the frame of Soviet-era legitimacies with its own specific conventions of interaction. In that environment, "border guards would depend on us for their everyday needs such as cash, food, and sometimes accommodation"[41]; salaries were not paid on a regular basis by the state, conscripts were young and inexperienced, and officers knew that basic survival depended on cooperation with locals. Cash was collected for the "crime" of violating an invisible border either through undocumented movement (in which case temporary exemption could be "purchased") or by using Tajik *somoni* or Uzbek *sum* instead of Kyrgyz *som* (where foreign currency would often in part be "confiscated"). The "new" system, however, is far less reliant on local support: increased scrutiny from outsiders and, concomitantly, the increased reliability of state bodies that are starting to seem like employers suggests that, increasingly, actually enforcing the borderline is to the advantage of border guards. Professionalization, in this regard, entails greater dependencies between such

40 Interview with Orozbek, September 2013, in Batken Town.
41 Interview with Erken, September 2013, on the Kyrgyzstani border with Uzbekistan's Sokh enclave.

agents and the state; for locals, the effect is most visible in fewer yet dearer "fines" for violation.

The juxtaposition between "us" and "them" points to the subtle shifts in locals' appreciation of Kyrgyzstan's new narrative of sovereignty. In casual conversation, locals in Batken are quick to point out their dislike of how borders are nowadays being controlled rather than, as I have argued above, refuting that borders themselves should in principle exist. Whereas conflicts invariably arising over land and water were negotiated between Kyrgyz, Tajiks and Uzbeks, and border control had been co-opted, now these parties are on less equal footing. Taking a transborder perspective in order to identify the new differentials in interaction between these parties, experiences of non-Kyrgyz "violators" cast light on this new reality:

> "He was a young and new border guard and he asked to see my documents. I said I was a Tajik who had been selling melons to Kyrgyz friends here in Arka and that I'd never needed documents before. He told me Tajikistan ended at the southern edge of the road and that I should go and sell them in Tajikistan. He told me I was a trouble-maker—you know, driving up prices, trying to buy property from the profit I make. I said I had a house and family in Gafurov [in Tajikistan] and had been coming here for fifteen years every autumn, and he then accused me of maybe smuggling heroin or proselytizing Islam through my local friends. The bribe I paid wiped out all my profit—that's the way it is these days I suppose, but why did he have to insult me by thinking I'm an Afghan?"[42]

The "us" of the old system included Tajik and Uzbek neighbors into negotiation with the Kyrgyzstani state's authorities; the new system's "them" is the state and its novel type of control. The spaces in which non-Kyrgyz borderlanders can interact with Kyrgyz have shrunk, and their power to affect Kyrgyzstani border control has all but evaporated. The development of "trade corridors," a central element in donor-sponsored activity here and designed, one suspects, with the state as a reference point rather than with the borderlands themselves in mind, both disregards the strong networks that already exist between borderlanders and valorizes such exchange as betrayal—in the words of Orozbek as quoted above, "treachery to the nation." Conflict between Kyrgyz and Tajiks certainly occurs frequently; and increasingly the Kyrgyzstani state is becoming involved by reinterpreting local conflict as a

[42] Interview with Jahandar, October 2013, in Tajikistan's Sughd *oblast'* between Arka and Khujand.

matter to be addressed with the Tajikistani state. It is in this way that ethnic boundaries have finally been converted into state boundaries.

Beyond the domain of conflict over land control and water usage, locals show themselves to be uneasy with fresh categories of violation that have been appearing along these borders: accusations of narcotics trafficking, the spreading of new readings of Islam, and cross-border networks of armed and systematic opposition to the legitimacy of the post-Soviet state—a new language of protection has taken hold, using the vocabulary of security, insurgency, and extremism. "Why does the OSCE build new guard posts up on the hills instead of much-needed new houses here in town?" is a legitimate question in the eyes of Batken residents, and an answer that quickly is given often highlights the fact that "such pointless endeavors are allowed because if *we* are all seen to be involved then *they* receive lots of money."[43] Suggesting that the state "sees heroin where there is none, and Taliban where there are none," and that this takes place because the government in "distant and corrupt" Bishkek gains resources through such discourse, is a common stance in Batken.[44] Accusing an unstable central government of corruption and self-interest is a damning statement by no means limited to remote Batken *oblast'*, and yet here locals have been intimately confronted with Kyrgyzstan's policies relating to the conflict in Afghanistan. A new generation of border guards serving here and trained in donor-financed facilities is armed with the knowledge that "[t]he Ferghana Valley area is especially prone to volatility, and the high degree of criminality associated with trafficking in drugs, arms and people is a major destabilizing factor mitigating against the rule of law, the development of social capital and increased living standards for the poor."[45] Locals muse on who, exactly, the new language of protection is designed to protect.

The ongoing delimitation of borders in the Ferghana Valley is, under such conditions, by no means a simple demarcation of the limit of the state's affairs and, thus, not at all a matter of little relevance to locals. Once agents of border control begin to actually implement the everyday separation of mutually dependent socio-economic systems by pressing the parameters of exchange into state-sanctioned modes, local interests will suffer:

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43 Interview with Orozbek, September 2013, in Batken Town; emphasis added.

44 Interview with Zhylbek, September 2013, near Nookat.

45 Outline of the EU-UNDP Border Management Assistance Programme in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan.

> "More borders mean more problems. These problems arise from us no longer knowing how to talk to our neighbors in a common language, or them to us. The conflict we then have makes Bishkek want more security for us. And this means more border control, and more borders than we already have. Of what use are new border markets then? We already have those, don't we? But they're illegal, or so they say."[46]

For borderlanders in Batken it is markets that play a central role. Trade and markets function as lubricants of interaction between different ethnic groups who are nowadays citizens of different countries. These markets thrive off price differentials arising from the "nationalization" of economies. The new enclosures that have been suggested to Kyrgyzstan put the state and its needs at the centre of the state's attention, as expressed in the (il)legality of certain types of exchange. In this reasoning, border control becomes a function of Kyrgyzstan's foreign policy rather than the sovereignty that it desires to deliver to its citizens. Interviewees in the Kyrgyzstani section of the Ferghana Valley are quick to point out that trade takes place *despite* the state, and not because of it or its "new foreign friends." From such a perspective, the "strong political will" invoked by the state in the context of its desire to clarify its limits through delimitation in order to resolve the dilemma of sovereign control over its territory can only be seen as treachery to the interests of those it purports to "protect": Kyrgyz in Batken understand very well that their livelihoods are directly interwoven with structures of interaction that by their very nature violate the precepts of "new" border control.

## Conclusion: Borders Beyond the Reach of the State

"The problem with our borders here in the Ferghana Valley is that everybody seems to have an interest in having them."[47] To be concrete, the spaces at Kyrgyzstan's edges have become populated by a complex mix of state representatives, delegates of outside concern, alleged agents of subversion of the state, and local borderlanders professing a belonging to mutually exclusive categories of ethnic and national identities, all of whom compete for a stake

[46] Interview with Rustam (himself originally from Nookat in Osh *oblast'*), November 2013, in Bishkek.

[47] Interview with Talaybek, September 2013, in Gülchö.

in the permissible parameters of local lifeworlds. The borders that exist here today are "problematic" not because they exist, but rather because their enforcement is seen as crucial to the notion of legitimate sovereignty in a young state. Borderlands, and with them borderlanders, loom large in their importance for the state, far outweighing their socio-geographic peripherality. They are very much seen as an integral part of state territory in all official understandings—to imply otherwise can be seen as calling into question a state's territoriality and, hence, a challenge to its integrity, its very existence. And yet this is precisely what processes within borderlands, and between borderlands and centers, seem to suggest: while the state may be seen by many as the geographical container of modern society, borderlands refute such assumptions by being, at least in part, larger than such containers.[48] In places like Batken notions of temporal and political spatialization go far beyond the borders of Kyrgyzstan when regarded through a local lens: borders here are reproduced by using languages of titularity and enfranchisement directly descended from an older order, designed with a different, supra-regional notion of inclusion in mind. In their argumentation today, Kyrgyz borderlanders invoke a Soviet-era, specifically Russian spatialization that outweighs Kyrgyzstan's "shrunken" spaces in its legitimacy, and this is strikingly underlined by the importance given by today's antagonists to maps drawn up by Russian emissaries that were originally intended to outline ethnic distribution in the Ferghana Valley but now are taken to denote "historic ownership" of specific territories.[49]

In its search for establishing a similar but contemporary spatial legitimacy, the post-Soviet state has turned to a new narrative that is to be inscribed into borderland locales such as Batken in order to aid "spatial socialization and the territorialization of meaning"[50] in a Kyrgyzstani context. Whereas in the Soviet period borderlander loyalty was directly wedded to a representa-

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48 Michiel Baud and Willem van Schendel, "Toward a Comparative History of Borderlands," *Journal of World History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 211–42.

49 The use of such maps is often mentioned by interviewees in Kyrgyzstan's borderlands. This practice has also most recently been adopted by state authorities; in early 2013, the Tajikistani foreign ministry requested such maps from the state archives in the Russian Federation (as reported in "Tajikistan Requests Documents On Borders From Russia," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, January 18, 2013, http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-requests-documents-borders-russia/24877111.html).

50 Anssi Paasi, "The Changing Discourses on Political Boundaries. Mapping the Backgrounds, Contexts and Contents," in *B/Ordering Space*, ed. Henk van Houtum, Oliver Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 20.

tion of the margins of the socialist state as being at the forefront of patriotism to a socialist project that understood itself as being an island within an inimical socio-economic environment,[51] today it is the ethno-territorial geobody of "the Kyrgyz" to which citizens are to subscribe. Choosing a narrative of diplomatic interaction which casts itself as part of, rather than aloof from, wider global concern over the dynamics playing out in Afghanistan since 2001, Kyrgyzstan has placed itself firmly within that state's neighborhood and, thus, directly connected questions of domestic control over its territory with its legitimacy as a state. This is how we can understand a contradiction often pointed out by "the unpatriotic" in Batken: the one form of exchange that today purportedly takes place across these borders, and which could be seen as a form of the "regional cooperation" proposed by international donor bodies, is precisely the one form of exchange that the state must interdict if it is to be part of today's world order—the trafficking of narcotics, a rare instance of a truly post-Soviet, transnational economic flow. Alongside the other undesirable transnational flow, namely that of a form of Islamic interpretation and teaching frequently glossed as "Wahhabi" or "fundamentalist" in this region, these two processes legitimate the need for the "new" border control discussed above as well as call its practices into question. Neither type of exchange will be permitted by the state to form the content of a new shared economic space in the Ferghana Valley. It is important to note that borderlanders in Batken are by no means equivocal in their opinions in this matter; these types of new flows find no support amongst them. However, local opposition to this type of post-Soviet exchange centers on the lack of resources generated at a local level rather than agreeing with outside condemnation of the qualitative nature of this exchange.

When asked about Afghanistan and their feelings regarding the end of Western involvement there in 2016, locals in Batken are dismissive:

> "It's not our problem but Bishkek's or Moscow's problem. We only care about the price of petrol and fruit here. We don't care for the Taliban and they don't care for us. There aren't any here, there never have been any here, and if they come after 2016 it will be to make war on [President] Karimov [of Uzbekistan] and not on us or on Bishkek."[52]

[51] Chandler, *Institutions of Isolation*, 24–28.
[52] Interview with Aynur, September 2013, in Osh.

In the Soviet period, the connection between the inhabitants of the Ferghana Valley and Afghanistan clearly derived specifically from the Soviet promotion of ethnic transfrontier ties between titular groups in Central Asia and their "national brethren" in northern Afghanistan in the 1980s, which were argued at this time to correspond to one another in the framework of socialist nationality policy.[53] And such ties were directed southwards, with the Soviet Republics serving as models within this system. As a consequence, an imagery of invasion predominates in the minds of the many individuals in Kyrgyzstan, the so-called *Afgantsy*, who participated in the Soviet war effort there between 1979 and 1988 as soldiers, engineers, and drivers. Importantly, what was being taken to the south and subsequently brought back home again was, among other things, the knowledge that the state was powerful. Now this has been turned on its head: whereas before locals were actively involved in such types of (Soviet) state activity, today a passivity is felt to predominate in the manner in which the (Kyrgyzstani) state seems to subject itself to its geopolitical environment. In this vein, in contemporary Kyrgyzstan it is not the dwindled ethnic Kyrgyz minority of Afghanistan's Badakhshan region that figures in Kyrgyzstani representations of Afghanistan and how that troubled state relates to the Ferghana Valley. Far more, in the language of the day it is the image of an Afghanization of the region in the sense of local insurgency financed by illicit trade networks and legitimated in the name of impermissible interpretations of religion that holds ascendancy. Seemingly at the mercy of a new type of global flow, the inscription of the state onto local landscapes embodies the *powerlessness* of the state. Today it is borderlanders themselves and their lifeworlds who are now "a problem to be dealt with" in the interest of the wider world.

A "border-less" world may well be developing for the new, highly mobile transnational elites of the Western world, where border crossing has become a formality and, within the European Schengen space, in effect an invisible process for the vast majority of crossers. Yet the Central Asian Republics have experienced the reverse of this development: for decades, crossing the internal boundaries of the Soviet Union (i.e., those lines that today represent formal state borders) was more a matter of internal travel documents related to the Soviet system as a whole. Today, however, the region

[53] Joseph Newman, Jr., "The Future of Northern Afghanistan," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 7 (1988): 732–34.

has become politically territorialized: goods need export/import documents, individuals might need permits and visas, and mutually exclusive citizenships have been created that superimpose a new nationality over ethnic identity. Thus, Central Asia has become less inter-connected over the past two decades, and borders have impacted local lives in ways never imagined before in the region. In this sense, “inter-connection” across borders today is shifting to signify the interaction of states with each other while borderland-to-borderland interaction is in steady decline. This is the arena in which the dynamics of post-2016 border-making and border reproduction are unfolding.

# Dynamic Militant Insurgency in Conflicted Border Spaces: Ferghana, the Afghanistan-Pakistan Border, and Kashmir

*Simbal Khan*

Most analysts agree that during the last fourteen years the presence of Western military forces has acted as a counterweight to the threat of militant and terrorist organizations to the security of South-Central Asian states.[1] These militant organizations are still viewed largely from the perspectives of globalization and terror. Both regional states and international stakeholders still routinely identify these organizations as a primary threat to regional stability. This chapter argues that the issue of transborder militant organizations is much more complex in character. A broad look at the most notable transborder militant organizations operating within South-Central Asia reveals that almost all of them, in one way or another, have cleaved to long-enduring geopolitical faultlines in the region. The faultlines that specifically interest us in this chapter run along the three most problematic borders which geo-spatially frame much of South-Central Asia: the state borders in the Ferghana Valley, the disputed Pakistan-Afghanistan boundary, and the Pakistan-India border in Kashmir. Notably, some of the better known and better organized transborder militant movements are associated with these three border spaces. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban, and Kashmiri militants are all intertwined with the complex histories of these border spaces.

At the same time as the global war against terror is becoming increasingly diversified and sophisticated in its technology, most accounts of transborder terrorism fail to ask the simple, yet crucial, question about how

[1] "Dangerous to Withdraw All Troops from Afghanistan: Experts," *First Post*, July 11, 2013, http://www. firstpost.com/world/dangerous-to-withdraw-all-us-troops-from-afghanistan-experts-947785.html; also see Seth G. Jones, "After the Withdrawal: A Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *RAND Corporation Testimony*, March 19, 2013, http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/testimonies/CT300/CT382/RAND_CT382.pdf; also see Jeffrey Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia After 2014," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 2013, 12, http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf.

regional states continue to relate to their conflicted border spaces. Also absent from analysis is how old geopolitical faultlines within the region have shaped the structures and created space for these transborder forces. Before 9/11/2001, South-Central Asia was seen as a hotbed for the proxy wars of the Cold War era. Some of these proxy struggles involved international actors, such as the U.S.-supported mujahedin war against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s.[2] Accounts also exist of U.S. and Pakistani intelligence collaboration in supporting the infiltration of transborder militant actors in Soviet Central Asia, notably in Tajikistan.[3] In other instances, regional states have used non-state actors as proxies to revise post-independence borders, including both Pakistan and India. Pakistan has used non-state actors in Kashmir starting as early as 1948 to support the independence of Kashmir.[4] India in 1971 successfully supported Bengali insurgents and helped in the secession of the eastern wing of Pakistan into an independent Bangladesh. Even now, the presence of armed non-state actors capable of attacking targets across borders, or what is being called the "sub-conventional threat,"[5] is extremely worrying when we consider that the nuclear security regime in the region, which has two nuclear-armed states (India and Pakistan), is extremely volatile and vulnerable.[6]

Since 9/11, however, old complexities of inter-state relations in the region and the conflicted geopolitics of borders have become subsumed by the dominant narratives of the Global War on Terror and concepts of "jihad"

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2 Vincent Burns and Kate Dempsey Peterson, *Terrorism: A Documentary and Reference Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2005), 5.

3 Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), 104–5.

4 Christine Fair, "The Militant Challenge in Pakistan," *Asia Policy* 11 (January 2011): 107; and see S. Paul Kapur and Sumit Ganguly, "The Jihad Paradox: Pakistan and Islamic Militancy in South Asia," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 114.

5 "The sub-conventional threat" is a term coined by George Perkovich referring to the presence of non-state actors carrying out attacks on behalf of, or against, nuclear-armed states. This threat is particularly dangerous because non-state actors such as terrorist organizations do not adhere to the "unitary rational actor model" that forms the basis of nuclear deterrence. See George Perkovich, "The Non-Unitary Model and Deterrence Stability in South Asia," *Stimson Center,* November 13, 2012, 1–2, http://www.stimson.org/images/uploads/research-pdfs/George_Perkovich_-_The_Non_Unitary_Model_and_Deterrence_Stability_in_South_Asia.pdf.

6 "Mumbai Attacks: India Raises Security Footing to 'War Level'," *Telegraph*, November 30, 2008, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/3536416/Mumbai-attacks-India-raises-security-footing-to-war-level.html; also see "Mumbai Attack Might have Led to Ind-Pak Nuclear War: Roemer," *Indian Express*, September 1, 2011, http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/mumbai-attack-might-have-led-to-indpak-nuclear-war-roemer/840092/0.

(holy war or struggle). Although most militant movements have subscribed to the ideas of “Islamic Jihad” and have freely used its populist narratives, such a one-dimensional characterization of their dynamic is too simplistic. Furthermore, this obscures the intricate ways in which ideational aspects of Islamic Jihad have intersected with geopolitical forces in the region to create transborder militant actors. U.S. preoccupation with the fight against al-Qaeda’s presence in the region and the need to ensure regional support for the war effort in Afghanistan have dominated the international agenda. There was an assumption amongst U.S. policymakers that the threat to regional security posed by transborder militant and Islamist organizations could be a common cause for greater regional cooperation between Central Asian countries.[7]

Many regional states also found it expedient to subsume all their domestic challenges and regional geopolitical agendas and couch them within meta-narratives related to the Global War on Terror. This has obscured the fact that states sharing these three troublesome political borders continue to attach great importance to unfinished conflicts related to these ill-defined spaces. All have complex interests intertwined with these borders, which have shaped and continue to shape practices towards the communities that straddle these borders as well as inter-state relations. In other words, state policies and practices have shaped the nature, forms, and actions of transborder militant organizations, and they continue to do so in significant ways.

This chapter explores the mechanism through which the peculiar geo-spatial aspects of the three conflicted border spaces intersect with community-level solidarity groups. This is intended to explain how the ability of groups to move across or transcend borders itself changes and transforms these groups. We examine this dynamic process of existence by asking how initial, more local agendas become scaled upwards, thereby embracing more international jihadist causes with expanding geo-spatial and regional links. This is followed by brief accounts of the three border spaces: the Ferghana Valley, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, and the Line of Control—the Pakistan-India border in Kashmir, which all relate to some of the largest transborder militant groups in the region. Finally, we conclude

[7] Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, “India and Pakistan: Is Peace Real this Time?,” (a conversation between Husain Haqqani and Ashley Tellis), April 1, 2004, 9, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/India-Pakistan.pdf.

that policies developed to address the issue of transborder militant actors must take into account two primary contexts: local conditions around border regions; and state practices towards their conflicted borders. The trend of militancy within border communities is without exception linked to economic marginalization and chronically low development.

## Border Spaces: Points Where Jihad and Geopolitics Intersect

The transformation of community-level solidarity groups into transborder organizations with links to regional and international jihadist causes is tied to the peculiar geo-spatial features of border spaces. A feature shared by all three border spaces, that is, the Ferghana Valley, the Pakistan-Afghanistan border zone, and the Line of Control in Kashmir, is that co-ethnic, transborder communities are present in significant numbers around these borders, hugging them very closely at certain points. Cycles of societal and political change in the region, such as the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 or periodic foreign interventions, have led to revolts, insurgencies and other forms of group mobilization in the region. The states connected with these areas have used coercion through their respective security apparatuses to deny space to opposition forces and defeat them, and have consequently maintained a status quo on power within their countries for the last quarter-century. The presence of transborder, co-ethnic communities straddling some borders has allowed threatened groups to secure their survival in sanctuaries across state borders.

The majority of the populations in the South-Central Asian region are Muslim. Consequently groups in the region have used the Islamic concept of "jihad" or struggle for a cause—both armed and peaceful—throughout contemporary history in reaction to the consequences of nineteenth-century imperialism and twentieth-century interventions in the region. The Basmachi uprising against Bolshevik expansion in Central Asia in the 1920s and 30s,[8]

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[8] The Basmachi Movement (or Revolt) was a national liberation movement that occurred from 1916 to 1934. It was carried out mostly by Turkic Muslims in Turkestan in response to attempts at the Sovietization of Central Asia. Enver Pasha, a former Turkish army general, led the movement at the height of the resistance. Pasha's death, as well as Soviet economic

and Afghan mujahedin-led insurgency during the 1980s[9] against the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, are examples of early and late twentieth-century struggle against foreign interventions. In both cases the concept of jihad was invoked by a coalition of religious and local communal leaders in order to rally resistance against domination by foreign occupiers.[10]

In both cases, these movements included solidarity groups that were either familial, clan or tribal, or that related to a mosque or madrassah and had wider transborder communal links. It is only over the last fourteen years, due to the Global War on Terror and the presence of al-Qaeda leadership in South-Central Asia, that there has been a conflation of practically all transborder armed actors waging jihad in the region with transnational terrorism.[11] This rapid change calls for an examination of the processes by which limited, national-level struggles of transborder organizations or solidarity groups grow to become associated with wider "jihads" being fought regionally. The Afghan Taliban, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Kashmiri mujahedin groups, all born out of very specific and limited geopolitical and spatial contexts have, over the years, gone on to embrace other causes that encompass regional "jihads." All three aforementioned organizations have at one point described their cause or struggle in the typical language of jihad, but all three remain bound to more localized geopolitical contexts which shape their goals and aspirations.

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and religious concessions, brought about the end of the uprising. See Didar Kassymova, Zhanat Kundakbayeva, and Ustina Markus, *Historical Dictionary of Kazakhstan* (Lanham: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 47.

9 The Soviet-Afghan War was a conflict that lasted from 1979 to 1989 and was fought between the Soviet army and the government of Afghanistan on one side and the mujahedin rebels and their foreign supporters on the other. The battle became a proxy war in the Cold War between the U.S. and the USSR, in which the U.S. funneled anti-aircraft weapons to the rebels through the Pakistani ISI. The mujahedin rebels became an emblem of Muslim resistance against foreign invaders, and attracted support from across the Middle East in the form of money, weapons and fighters. They eventually forced a Soviet pullout, thereby leaving behind a power vacuum and provoking civil war. See Alam Payind, "Soviet-Afghan Relations from Cooperation to Occupation," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 21, no. 1 (February 1989): 124.

10 Kassymova, Kundakbayeva, and Markus, *Historical Dictionary*, 47; also see Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006), 146.

11 Christine Fair, *The Counterterror Coalitions: Cooperation with Pakistan and India,* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2004), 24; also see Jacob N. Shapiro and Christine Fair, "Understanding Support for Islamist Militancy in Pakistan," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (Winter 2009): 88.

Much has been written about the jihad infrastructure in the region, including the training camps and sanctuaries in the Pakistan and Afghanistan border areas since the 1980s.[12] There are a number of accounts describing how these training facilities for the Afghan mujahedin brought together their local Pakistani supporters, Arabs, and other Muslims from around the world.[13] By most accounts, these training camps functioned as platforms for the cross-pollination of ideas, exposing Afghans and Pakistanis who trained there to the wider struggles in the Muslim world, which over time contributed to the formation of international terrorist networks in the areas covered by Pakistan and Afghanistan. The basics of jihad that were learned in these training facilities may very well have provided the ideational glue to bind together these denominationally different religious forces, thereby enabling them to cooperate across the geopolitical lines that separate them. For example, the Afghan Taliban (who are predominantly Pashtun) have cooperated with a whole spectrum of ethnic-based groups, including the Uzbek-Tajik IMU, which has been utilized to extend Taliban control to northern Afghanistan.[14] The Deobandi Taliban have also at times cooperated with the Pakistani extremist group Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), which is Ahl-e-Hadith, a different religious denomination, in eastern Afghanistan.[15] However, the focus on "jihad infrastructure," while it highlights the ideational aspects and the appeal of jihad as motivational factors for group actions, omits a discussion of the wider socio-political dynamics at hand.

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12 Coll, *Ghost Wars*, 83–87, 134; and see Peter Bergen and Katherine Tiedemann, *Talibanistan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 99–101; also see Rizwan Hussain, *Pakistan and the Emergence of Islamic Militancy in Afghanistan* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2005), 121–24.

13 Coll, *Ghost Wars,* 83–87.

14 Michael Fredholm, "Uzbekistan and the Threat from Islamic Extremism," *Conflict Studies Research Centre*, March 2003, 24, http://www.da.mod.uk/Research-Publications/category/69/uzbekistan-the-threat-from-islamic-extremism-8801; also see Ahmed Rashid, *Jihad: The Rise of Militant Islam in Central Asia* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 175–76; and see Jessica Stern, "The Protean Enemy," *Foreign Affairs* 82, no. 4 (July–August 2003): 2; and see Michael Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism as a Political Force," *Asian Cultures and Modernity Research Report*, no. 12 (October 2006): 19, http://gpfeurope.com/upload/iblock/874/fredholm%20islamic%20extremism%20in%20central%20asia%20rr12.pdf.

15 Stephen Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective: An Evolving Threat," *New America Foundation*, February 2010, 3–4, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/Lashkar-e-Taiba_in_Perspective.pdf; Alyssa Rubin, "Militant Group Expands Attacks in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, June 15, 2010, http://www. nytimes.com/2010/06/16/ world/asia/16lashkar.html.

One aspect of militancy in the region evident in all three cases which has received far less attention is that the spatial relocation of each organization within the region has also induced the relocation of varying numbers of dependents. This has been sufficiently documented over the years: in the case of the Afghan Taliban, literally millions of their co-ethnic communities still live in Pakistan and, over the years, have become part of the political economy of Pakistan's border spaces. The IMU's transborder migrations from Uzbekistan to Tajikistan to Afghanistan, and then to Pakistan, have been accompanied by the migration of family members from Andijon, Namangan and other border regions in the Ferghana Valley.[16] Although there is less evidence for the migration of families of Kashmiri fighters from Indian-controlled Kashmir, in recent years the patronage of the Indian Kashmiri diaspora by the Pakistani state already in early decades has had a profound impact on the agendas of Pakistan-based Kashmiri militant groups.[17] In short, transborder movements of Islamic militants in search of sanctuaries in South-Central Asia are accompanied by the migration of extended families, clans and in some cases entire communities. All states of origin, as well as host states, have used violence, retribution, torture and detention of family members of militants as a punishment for anti-state activities. In times of civil war, armed non-state actors and factions have also used ethnic violence against wider communities related to opposing solidarity groups. The Afghan Civil War in the 1990s is a good example of such communal violence.[18]

These migrations across geopolitical lines in themselves constitute an important next step in a group's transformation. Transborder militants and their community members are immediately confronted with the need to negotiate space and sanctuary. This negotiation for space by transborder groups takes place both at the level of local power elites, as well as with the agents of the host states, who are often members of intelligence and border

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16 Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism," 28; and see Noah Tucker, "Uzbek Extremism in Context, Part 1: The Uzbek Jihad and the Problem of Religious Freedom," *Registan*, September 12, 2012, http://registan.net/2013/09/12/uzbek-extremism-in-context-part-1-the-uzbek-jihad-and-the-problem-of-religious-freedom/.

17 Marta Bolognani and Stephen M. Lyon, *Pakistan and its Diaspora: Multidisciplinary Approaches* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 100–2.

18 Chris Johnson and Jolyon Leslie, *Afghanistan: The Mirage of Peace* (New York: Zed Books, 2004), 47–60.

security agencies.[19] In short, all sanctuaries come with strings attached; for a transborder group which finds itself in a new environment, becoming involved in and giving support to new local struggles or "jihads" may almost immediately become a means of survival. Their ideational co-optation into wider (regional or global) meanings of jihad probably follow later and take place through the common experience of formal training camps.

All the states in the region which share the three complex border areas—Kashmir, Ferghana, and the Pakistan-Afghanistan border—play a very significant role in shaping the agendas of these groups. This is primarily achieved through administrative policies and the use of state security apparatuses. State practices of coercion and the use of force against local opposition are not only responsible for denying space to these groups in their home bases but also for shaping how these transborder actors adjust within their new environments. The Uzbek government's brutal attempts to stifle all opposition changed the contours of the IMU by pushing group leaders into exile in Tajikistan. Participation in the Tajik Civil War broadened the IMU's agenda and regional network of contacts. The use of overwhelming force by the Indian military in Kashmir in the 1990s swelled the ranks of Kashmiri militants who found sanctuaries, training camps, and also financial support provided by the Pakistani state on the other side of the disputed border.[20]

Lingering inter-state disputes have distorted states' relations with border communities in these border areas, which often are referred to as being "ungoverned."[21] However, although these areas are predominantly rural and underdeveloped, and the state's capacity to provide goods and services there is limited, they are not beyond the reach of the state's security apparatus. Once on the other side, migrating groups are confronted with the

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19 Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism," 20–21, 25–27.

20 Stephen Phillip Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 25, no. 4 (December, 2002): 47–48; also see Haley Duschinski, "Destiny Effects: Militarization, State Power, and Punitive Containment in Kashmir Valley," *Anthropological Quarterly* 82, no. 3 (Summer 2009): 697.

21 Ahmad Raza Rumi, "Pakistan: Ungoverned Spaces," *Centro de Documentación Internacional de Barcelona*, July 2012, 2, http://razarumi.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Pakistan-Ungoverned-Spaces.pdf; and see David Danelo, "Anarchy is the New Normal: Unconventional Governance and 21st Century Statecraft," *Foreign Policy Research Institute*, October 14, 2013, http://www.fpri.org/docs/Danelo_-_Anarchy_the_New_Normal.pdf; also see Phil Williams, "Here Be Dragons: Dangerous Spaces and International Security," in *Ungoverned Spaces: Alternatives to State Authority in an Era of Softened Sovereignty*, ed. Anne L. Clunan and Harold A. Trinkunas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 39–40.

omnipresent, coercive security apparatus of the new host state. States with unresolved territorial conflicts with their neighbors view such local communities as the first line of defense against the revisionist or hostile designs of these neighbors and, consequently, they have developed complex political and security practices to control these border communities.

India has increasingly militarized the zone along the Line of Control in Kashmir and has recently hardened the border even further by fencing large sections of it. Its relations with the Muslim Kashmiri communities that live along the border are marked by suspicion.[22] The Indian-controlled Kashmir Valley remains excessively militarized, with over half a million Indian military forces deployed in a very narrow part of the territory. There is heavy penetration of state intelligence agencies within community groups, and the security force's special powers for detention have led to gross violations of human rights.[23] The Uzbekistani state has instituted arbitrary border control practices and put in place a complex web of checkpoints in order to control social and economic activity in the Ferghana Valley.[24] Its worsening relations, in particular with Tajikistan, are reflected in the coercive practices of border guards at checkpoints against significant Tajik minorities, who thereby become victims of extortion.

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22 Duschinski, "Destiny Effects," 700; and see Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," 48; also see Sameer Yasir, "Fear Stalks Villages on Kashmir Border," *International New York Times*, August 9, 2013, http://india.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/08/09/fear-stalks-villages-on-kashmir-border/?_r=0.

23 Nick Allen, "Wikileaks: India 'Systematically Torturing Civilians in Kashmir,'" *Telegraph*, December 17, 2010, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/wikileaks/8208084/WikiLeaks-India-systematically-torturing-civilians-in-Kashmir.html; and see U.S. Department of State, "2010 Human Rights Report: India," April 8, 2011, 1, http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/160058.pdf; also see Caitlin Huey-Burns, "Amnesty International Cites Human Rights Abuses in Kashmir," *US News and World Report*, March 28, 2011, http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2011/03/28/amnesty-international-cites-human-rights-abuse-in-kashmir.

24 International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: Border Disputes and Conflict Potential," *Asia Report*, no. 33 (April 4, 2002), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/central-asia/Central%20Asia%20Border%20Disputes%20and%20Conflict%20Potential.pdf; also see Nick Megoran, "Borders of External Friendship? The Politics of Pain of Nationalism and Identity along the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan Ferghana Valley Boundary 1999–2000," (Unpublished thesis, Cambridge: Sydney Sussex College, 2002), 46–50, https://www.staff.ncl.ac.uk/nick.megoran/pdf/nick_megoran_phd.pdf; also see Morgan Y. Liu, *Recognizing the Khan: authority, space, and political imagination among Uzbek men in post-Soviet Osh, Kyrgyzstan* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 2002), 164.

The most complex case here is Pakistan's relations with its tribal population on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.[25] The rise of a left-leaning Pashtun nationalist movement in the 1970s rekindled the Pakistani state's insecurities related to the old dispute over its border with Afghanistan. Pakistan inherited the Durand line, or the British-era border between India and Afghanistan, after its independence in 1947.[26] The refusal of subsequent Afghan governments to recognize the border, and claims on Pakistan's frontier regions by various Afghan leaders, have shaped the state's relations and practices with its border communities. Over the years it has cultivated local tribal elites through patrimonial practices enshrined in the British-era FCR (Frontier Crimes Regulations), with its archaic system of rewards and collective punishment.[27] The FCR guaranteed tribes a certain level of autonomy and patronage in exchange for their allegiance to the state and its interests. This allowed the Pakistani state to control tribal territories in border areas without deploying its regular military forces.

The 30-year cycle of war in Afghanistan and changes in the political economy of the tribal areas has led to the breakdown of societal structures and the system of the traditional tribal elite. The Pakistani state has responded by undertaking a complex set of practices, which seek to reconstitute its old patrimonial relations with the tribes around the new militant factions that have emerged as modern power elites.[28] Through neo-patrimonial relations built around an informal system of rewards and use of force, the Pakistani state continues to shape the politics of these militant factions in line with its own geopolitical and security interests.

The deployment of Pakistani military forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) since 2004 has had a destabilizing impact on Pakistan's tribal belt. It has brought the state into direct confrontation with some militant tribal factions, while also increasing its

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[25] Richard Sisson and Leo E. Rose, *War and Secession: Pakistan, India, and the Creation of Bangladesh* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 222.

[26] Jayshree Bajoria, "The Troubled Afghan-Pakistani Border," *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, March 20, 2009, http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/troubled-afghan-pakistani-border/p14905.

[27] Amir Mohammad Khan, "Justice Denied," *Newsline*, December 6, 2004, http://www.newslinemagazine.com/2004/12/justice-denied/; also see S. M. M. Qureshi, "Pashtunistan: The Frontier Dispute Between Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Pacific Affairs* 39, no.1/2 (Spring–Summer 1966): 99.

[28] Hussain, *Pakistan*, 137–41, 161–63, 183–84, 225; also see Fair, *The Counterterror Coalitions,* 19–25.

coercive power on the ground. Within this tight security environment, transborder migrant groups have few choices: they can either try to frame their goals and actions in line with pro-state local factions and assist them with their "jihads" in return for sanctuary, or they become allies of local militants who have taken up arms against the Pakistani state and military. The IMU, due to changing hostile state practices and local alliances, have taken the latter approach.[29] Afghan Taliban factions, such as the Haqqani network, have taken the former approach.[30] The Haqqani and other eastern Taliban groups have echoed the Pakistani state's regional policy preferences in acting against Indian presence in Afghanistan. Under the same principle, Afghan Taliban have allegedly assured the Chinese government that they will not allow the establishment of an Uighur sanctuary for dissident members of the East Turkistan Independence Movement (ETIM) or other separatists in Taliban-controlled areas.[31]

In short, conflicted and disputed border spaces in South-Central Asia have recreated geopolitical faultlines that have played a complex role as drivers of conflict in the region. These border spaces form the physical terrain along which much of the operational activity of transborder militant movements has taken place. Within this physical terrain, militant organizations demonstrate a remarkable ability to operate on various geopolitical fronts simultaneously. In addition, they have shown the capacity to shift their focus from one geopolitical hotspot to another, closely following the regional flashpoint of the moment. In turn, states in the region have sought to mitigate threats to their security and to maximize control over their border spaces. In doing so, they have responded to this challenge by

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[29] Antje Passenheim, "Back in the Business of Killing," *Deutsche Welle*, October 22, 2013, http://www.dw.de/back-in-the-business-of-killing/a-17175001; also see David Rohde and Mohammad Khan, "Ex-Fighter for Taliban Dies in Strike in Pakistan," *New York Times*, June 19, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/06/19/international/asia/19STAN.html.

[30] Jane Perlez, "Pakistan is Said to Pursue Role in U.S.-Afghan Talks," *New York Times*, February 9, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/02/10/world/asia/10pstan.html; also see William Dalrymple, "A Deadly Triangle: Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India," *Brookings Institution*, June 25, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/research/essays/2013/deadly-triangle-afghanistan-pakistan-india-c#.

[31] Jane Perlez, "China Shows Interest in Afghan Security, Fearing Taliban Would Help Separatists," *New York Times*, June 8, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/06/09/world/asia/china-signals-interest-in-afghanistan-after-nato-leaves.html; and see "Pakistan, China, Agree to Strengthen Intelligence Cooperation," *Dawn*, May 6, 2011, http://www.dawn.com/news/634744/pakistan-assures-china-of-intelligence-cooperation.

adopting a complex set of practices. We now examine more closely the three different conflictual border spaces and transborder militant networks which operate around them.

### *Nested in Ferghana: The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*

The above-described process through which transborder actors transform into regionally networked groups is clearly visible in the development of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. The IMU evolved from a small-scale, local vigilante-style "Adolat" (justice) movement in Namangan, a city in the Ferghana Valley.[32] The group emerged against the backdrop of the chaos that marked the early years of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, a period of extreme uncertainty and upheaval.[33]

In 1992, when the "Adolat" movement emerged onto the scene, it was one of several new political platforms formed by diverse groups to challenge the old guard of the incumbent communist party. Empirical accounts suggest that it was not the primary challenge facing Islam Karimov's regime as it grappled with post-independence chaos in Uzbekistan. It was the Tashkent-centered Birlik party (led by Abdurahim Pulatov) and its splinter group Erk (led by Muhammad Salih) which contested the first presidential elections against Islam Karimov.[34] At the time both Birlik and Erk had a significant following amongst the urban elite as well as intellectuals and students, and were a cause of greater concern for Islam Karimov and other ex-communist elites. By 1993, all three parties (including Adolat) had been banned, their members detained, and their leadership forced into exile.[35]

Escaping the Uzbek state's crackdown, Tahir Yuldashev, leader of Adolat, and his deputy, Juma Boi Namangani, both sought refuge in

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[32] International Crisis Group, "Central Asia: Islamist Mobilisation and Regional Security," *Asia Report*, no. 14 (March 1, 2001): 4, http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/central-asia/Central%20Asia%20Islamist%20Mobilisation%20and%20Regional%20Security.

[33] Fredholm, "Islamic Extremism," 19; and see Matthew Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Its Impact on Central Asia and the United States," *US Army Foreign Military Studies Office*, January 2013, 2.

[34] Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism and Washington's Security Agenda* (New York: Zed Books, 2005), 14–15.

[35] Ibid., 16; and see Meryem Kirimli, "Uzbekistan in the New World Order," *Central Asian Survey* 16, no. 1 (1997): 58–59.

Tajikistan.[36] Whereas over the years the Uzbekistani state's extreme and repressive practices against all political dissent—both Islamic and secular—led to the disintegration of the more urban-based Birlik and Erk, the geo-spatial relocation of Adolat helped the movement to survive and to sustain and transform its agenda. The transborder migration of the Adolat leaders with their small group of followers into Tajikistan was the first step towards the evolution of what later became the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.[37] The scaling up of the IMU's jihad agenda followed each stage in the spatial migration of the group; from invoking Islamic practices and social ideas to promising a remedy for the chaos in Ferghana, displacement to Tajikistan immediately led to a widening of its jihad agenda. Adolat leaders were quick in siding with Tajik Islamists against the ex-communists in Tajikistan's civil war.[38]

Repressive use of force and coercion by the Uzbekistani state also meant that Adolat members moved together with their families, if possible, or their families followed soon after.[39] Family members who were left behind faced detention, arrest and torture. Some reports suggest that three of Yuldashev's brothers were arrested and spent time in Uzbek jails, which are notorious for human rights violations, including torture. According to some sources, when Namangani arrived in Kurgan-Tyube (presently known as Qurghonteppa), Tajikistan in 1992, his entourage included only thirty Uzbeks and some Arabs who had served as emissaries to Adolat from Saudi Islamic charities (Saudi Arabia contained a large Uzbek diaspora, whose ancestors had fled during the 1918–1928 Basmachi Revolt).[40]

Subsequent migrations across multiple borders not only expanded the IMU's political agenda but also transformed the group as it negotiated space in new environments and faced new political and economic realities. In Tajikistan, Namangani started out with a small group of close members and went on to form a substantial personal military force composed mostly of Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Chechens, but also of Arabs. Many of the men were

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[36] John Schoeberlein, "Islam in the Ferghana Valley: Challenges for New States," in *Islam in Politics in Russia and Central Asia*, ed. Stéphane A. Dudoignon and Komatsu Hisao (New York: Routledge, 2009), 327.

[37] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 2.

[38] Ibid., 3; and see Mathieu Guidère, *Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalism* (Plymouth: Scarecrow Press, 2012), 156.

[39] Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 5.

[40] Ibid., 4.

accompanied by their families, and survival of the group in rural Tajikistan in the midst of a civil war necessitated finding new ways of adjusting to the political economy of the area.[41] Namangani and his group soon involved themselves in the drug trade;[42] and he appeared to have become heavily involved in the transportation of heroin from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and onwards to Russia and Europe, at times travelling to Afghanistan himself.[43] Reports suggest that despite the deaths of Namangani and Yuldashev long before, the IMU cadre remain an important link in trafficking routes for narcotics connecting northern Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and the enclaves in the Ferghana Valley.

More importantly, Yuldashev's move to Afghanistan together with the leaders of Tajikistan's Islamic opposition who refused to lay down their arms as required by the Russia-brokered peace settlement in the Tajik Civil War enabled him to launch a wider political and financial campaign to raise funds for the group.[44] Joining the Tajik opposition leaders in exile in Afghanistan further expanded the Uzbek group's network of alliances and consequently led to the broadening of their political agenda. Yuldashev's campaign to raise finances for the expanding group brought him into contact with Afghan Arabs and other radical groups, as well as their financiers in the foreign security agencies present in the region immediately after the Soviet war in Afghanistan ended in 1989.[45] According to various sources, Yuldashev travelled to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and later to Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Turkey, and perhaps the Caucasus as well, in order to make contacts with Uzbek diaspora members in these countries.[46] His travels seem to have expanded his links to the intelligence services in these countries and possibly allowed him to access their covert funds. His relationship with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI) is of particular interest here. According to some sources, he was based in Peshawar, Pakistan from

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41 Rashid, *Jihad*, 144, 145, 148.

42 Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 8–9; and see Ahmed Rashid, "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 6 (November–December 1999): 22–35.

43 Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 6; Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos* (New York: Viking, 2008), 69.

44 Vitaly V. Naumkin, *Radical Islam in Central Asia* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 71.

45 Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 68–69; explained further in Ahmed Rashid, "They're Only Sleeping," *New Yorker*, January 14, 2002, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2002/01/14/theyre-only-sleeping.

46 Naumkin, *Radical Islam,* 71.

1995 to 1998, where he operated out of the Center of the Afghan Arabs.[47] Many of the same Arabs went on to form the core of al-Qaeda at the end of the 1990s. Yuldashev also received funds from various Islamic charities and, according to Russian and Uzbekistani officials, from the intelligence services of Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey. The IMU's relationship with the Pakistani state security services was to change significantly in later years due to developments related to the U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and against al-Qaeda.

The changing nature of wars and geopolitical conflicts in the region has had a profound impact on the IMU's goals and structure, and increased its incentives to wage "jihad." A major triggering event was the end of the civil war in Tajikistan in 1997, which threatened the sanctuary and operational space of Uzbek militants and their dependents in this country. When the majority of Islamic groups, organized under the umbrella of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), signed the peace deal with ex-communists to share power, Namangani and his followers became isolated.[48] By this time, the group had come to include Uzbeks, Tajiks, Chechens, and Uighurs based primarily in the valleys of the Rasht region in central Tajikistan. It is at this point in time that Yuldashev, along with Namangani, decided to re-launch the group as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan with its stated goal—as posted on the internet in August 1999—as the "establishment of an Islamic state with the application of the Sharia" in Uzbekistan.[49] Thus, almost six years after the small Adolat group moved out of Namangan, the IMU emerged as its new hybrid face with a broader regional profile and agenda.

The emergence of the IMU coincided with Namangani and Yuldashev's relocation to Afghanistan. As the group was no longer welcome in post-civil war Tajikistan, the Afghan Taliban agreed to provide them with a sanctuary and a base.[50] With their goals still focused on Uzbekistan, the IMU launched armed incursions into Uzbekistan from the Batken exclave in the Kyrgyz part of the Ferghana in 1999.[51] Over the course of a year they continued to make forays into the Ferghana Valley by using routes out of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, attacking Uzbek border guards and taking some Japanese and

47 Rashid, "They're Only Sleeping."

48 Rohan Gunaratna, *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 170.

49 Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States,* 157.

50 Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 69; and see Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 6.

51 Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 4–5.

American hostages.[52] By 2001 the IMU incursions started to abate without any lasting impact on the Uzbekistani state's control in the Ferghana Valley. On the contrary, the IMU incursions were used by the Uzbek state to enhance its security presence in the conflicted border zones.[53] These incursions also allowed Islam Karimov's government to increase Uzbek engagement with the U.S. and other Western states, which were by now becoming increasingly focused on the global threat of terrorism.[54]

When the U.S. military attacks against the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan began in autumn 2001, the IMU fought on the Northern Front in Kunduz under the al-Qaeda-led 555 Brigade, which was commanded by Juma Namangani.[55] After the fall of the Taliban in November members of the IMU found refuge in the South Waziristan Agency, the territory of the Masood tribe in the Pakistani FATA.[56] Up to this point, the rhetoric on the website of the IMU still remained focused on Central Asian governments. Some messages appeared to be more in line with the objectives of other Afghanistan and Pakistan-based groups with which the IMU was coming into contact. It is important to note that Yuldashev's and the IMU's online messages started to directly attack the U.S. only after the group moved into Pakistani tribal regions in the FATA.[57]

In 2002, the IMU split into the IJU (Islamic Jihad Union), a group that has acted as al-Qaeda's recruitment and outreach wing to Europeans of Turkish descent.[58] Western European Muslims have also been trained by the IMU in camps in North Waziristan, Pakistan. German nationals of Turkish and Moroccan descent have been identified based on their threat messages

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[52] Ibid., 4; and Naumkin, *Radical Islam,* 91–92.

[53] Fredholm, "Uzbekistan," 6.

[54] Ibid., 11; also Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 69–71.

[55] Rashid, *Descent into Chaos,* 17; also EN Rammohan, *The Implacable Taliban: Repeating History in Afghanistan* (New Delhi: Vij Books, 2010), 29; for specific reference to Namangani as commander, see Seth G. Jones, *Hunting in the Shadows: The Pursuit of Al Qai'da since 9/11* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), 67.

[56] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 5–6; also David Witter, "Uzbek Militancy in Pakistan's Tribal Region," *Institute for the Study of War Backgrounder*, January 27, 2011, 2, http://www.understandingwar.org/sites/default/files/BackgrounderIMU_28Jan.pdf.

[57] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 12–13.

[58] Einar Wigen, "Islamic Jihad Union: al-Qaida's Key to the Turkic World?," *Norwegian Defense Research Establishment*, February 23, 2009, 8, http://www.ffi.no/no/Rapporter/09-00687.pdf; also Jeremy Binnie and Joanna Wright, "The Evolving Role of Uzbek-led Fighters in Afghanistan and Pakistan," *Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel* 2, no. 8 (August 2009): 2.

against Germany. In September 2009, Pakistani investigators discovered a "village" of mainly German insurgents, including Muslim converts from this country but also a number from Sweden, who were being trained in a camp controlled by the IMU in the Waziristan area of Pakistan.[59]

In 2007, under pressure from the U.S. and other Western partners, Pakistan's military launched an operation, with support from tribal forces under Maulvi Nazir, to evict the IMU from North Waziristan.[60] The Pakistani state's changing approaches and security perceptions regarding its own border spaces have had a profound impact on the changes that the IMU as an organization has undergone. IMU's original leaders, Yuldashev and Namangani, both had very clear goals, one of which was establishing an Islamic caliphate in the Ferghana Valley. After its move into Pakistan's tribal belt, much of the group's energy became focused on surviving in an increasingly hostile environment, as the Pakistani state's perceptions of the IMU changed. Yuldashev had to postpone his agenda of jihad in Central Asia as he and the IMU became more involved with local militant dynamics in FATA, including the Pakistani state's complex relations with some of these local militant groups. The IMU became closely associated with Baitullah Masood, the leader of the Masood tribal militants and IMU's main host in FATA.[61] As the leader of a group of militants based in South Waziristan, Baitullah Masood became increasingly hostile towards the Pakistani military. In 2007, he launched the umbrella militant organization Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP), which has waged a war against the Pakistani state and military. The IMU has become increasingly linked with the TTP.[62]

In short, the IMU's geo-spatial journey has not only influenced its agenda and scaled up its goals, but it has also changed the very nature of the

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59 Dean Nelson and Allan Hall, "Pakistan Discovers 'Village' of White German al-Qaeda Insurgents," *Telegraph*, September 25, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/pakistan/6226935/Pakistan-discovers-village-of-white-German-al-Qaeda-insurgents.html.

60 Daan van der Schriek, "The IMU: Fish in Search of a Sea," *Eurasianet.org*, March 13, 2005, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/pp031405.shtml; and see Witter, "Uzbek Militancy," 6.

61 Mansur Khan Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan: Militancy and Conflict in South Waziristan," *New America Foundation*, April 2010, 4, http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/4799~v~The_Battle_for_Pakistan___Militancy_and_Conflict_in_South_Waziristan.pdf.

62 Witter, "Uzbek Militancy," 6; also Amir Mir, "TTP Using Uzbeks to Conduct Terrorist Attacks," *The News,* December 18, 2012, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-149025-TTP-using-Uzbeks-to-conduct-terrorist-attacks.

organization itself. After the death of Namangani in 2001 and Yuldashev in 2009, the IMU seems to have lost its original focus on Central Asia. The list of martyrs posted on its websites by the organization includes ever fewer names of fighters of Central Asian origin.[63] The IMU of today appears to be made up mostly of members from northern Afghanistan and to be working in partnership with other local militant groups. Finally, the IMU's lack of clear end-goals makes it difficult to distinguish it from other militant groups operating in Afghanistan or Pakistan, particularly when the remnants of the IMU rely on local forces to stay operational. Within their southern zone of operation around the border spaces between Afghanistan and Pakistan, they operate closely with groups allied with the Pakistani Taliban, which are fighting the Pakistani military forces in FATA.[64] Intelligence reports suggest that the IMU cadre has also served as a bridgehead for the Taliban in helping them to expand influence in the northern zone of operation around the Afghanistan-Tajikistan border and in the Afghan border provinces of Kunduz and Baghlan.[65]

### *The Troubled Border Between Afghanistan and Pakistan*

The role played by Pakistani state policies, including those of its intelligence agencies, in shaping tribal transborder forces, such as the Afghan Mujahedin in the 1980s and Taliban in the 1990s, is well known and documented. What is less understood is how the thirty-year cycle of war and conflict within the border spaces between Afghanistan and Pakistan has accelerated the process of change within these areas and how it, in turn, has impacted state practices.

The political geography of the Pakistan-Afghanistan border shares some of the features of the borders in the Ferghana Valley described earlier. A colonial-era relic, the 2,600-km-long Durand Line is badly defined and in

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[63] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 13.

[64] Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 5–6.

[65] Riccardo Mario Cucciolla, "Uzbekistan, a Key Player in the Post 2014 Scenario," *Italian Institute for International Political Studies Analysis*, no. 263 (June 18, 2014), 2–5, http://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/uzbekistan-key-player-post-2014-scenario-10687; also Roman Kozhevnikov, "Al Qaeda Ally Claims Tajik Attack, Threatens More," *Reuters,* September 23, 2010, http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/09/23/us-tajikistan-security-idUSTRE68M28M20100923; also Guido Steinberg and Nils Woermer, "Escalation in the Kunduz Region: Who are the Insurgents in Northeastern Afghanistan?," *German Institute for International and Security Affairs Comments* 33 (December 2010): 6, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/comments/2010C33_sbg_wmr.pdf.

places practically nonexistent.[66] It is also largely unregulated and inhabited by transborder Pashtun tribal groups. The British Envoy, Sir Mortimer Durand, and the Amir of Afghanistan, Abdur Rahman Khan, agreed to this boundary in November 1893, but no Afghan government has ever officially recognized it as an international boundary.[67] Afghanistan was the only state in 1947 that opposed the admission of Pakistan into the United Nations after its independence from India.[68] The conflicted history of the border has had a complex impact on inter-state relations between the two countries.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing war in the 1980s critically transformed the demographic, societal, political and economic structures within the tribal regions of Pakistan. An important legacy of the war in the 1980s in Pakistan is the continued presence of more than 70 Afghan refugee camps and settlements scattered along Pakistan's western border. There are still 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, and Pakistan's internally displaced (IDPs) add a further 1.4 million (half of them caused by the ongoing security operations) to the people living in the camps maintained by the UNHCR.[69] The enduring refugee populations have had a complex impact on transborder militant networks and solidarity groups built around the camps, schools, and madrassahs attended by both Afghan refugees and local tribesmen. An example is the Shamshatoo Refugee Camp run for the last thirty years by the mujahedin leader Gulbadin Hikmatyar's group Hizb Islami.[70] It is still a recruiting ground for the Hizb today.[71] Over

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66 American Institute of Afghanistan Studies and The Hollings Center, "The Durand Line: History, Consequences, and Future," Report of a conference organized in July 2007, Istanbul, published in November 2007, 3, http://www.bu.edu/aias/reports/durand_conference.pdf.

67 Ibid., 4.

68 Sadika Hameed, "Prospects for India-Pakistan Cooperation in Afghanistan," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, August 2012, 6, http://csis.org/files/publication/120821_Hameed_ProspectsIndianPakistan_Web.pdf.

69 "Afghanistan-Pakistan: Pressure Mounts on Afghan Refugees," *IRIN*, July 24, 2012, http://www.irinnews.org/report/95937/afghanistan-pakistan-pressure-mounts-on-afghan-refugees; United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR), "Country Operations Profile—Pakistan," 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e487016, and UNHCR, "Global Appeal: Pakistan," 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/5461e60916.html.

70 Omid Marzban, "Shamshatoo Refugee Camp: A Base of Support for Gulbuddin Hekmatyar," *Terrorism Monitor* 5, no. 10 (May 24, 2007).

71 Ben Farmer, "Afghans Halt Convoy of Boys 'Headed for Suicide Training Camp'," *Telegraph*, February 23, 2012, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/9101670/Afghans-halt-convoy-of-boys-headed-for-suicide-training-camps.html.

the past three decades, the camp has become a small city of more than 64,000 inhabitants, with mosques, madrassahs, high schools, a university, a hospital, and even two local newspapers.[72] These camps have played a profound role in the recruitment strategies of militant organizations and the ability of groups like the Afghan Taliban to regenerate.

While the Afghan Taliban operate in Afghanistan, for the past three decades they have also become embedded within the social, political, and economic landscape of Pakistan's border zones. This includes Baluchistan province, parts of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK, formerly known as the Northwest Frontier Province), and key cities in the Pakistani heartland (e.g. Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta). The Afghan Taliban emerged from Deobandi Madaris (madrassahs) in Pakistan.[73] They have retained their nearly exclusive ethnic Pashtun and Deobandi sectarian orientation, which they share with a large number of Pakistani Pashtun tribesmen, many of whom have also studied in the same seminaries and madrassahs.[74] These multiple solidarity networks born out of the common experiences of war, conflict, and migration have resulted in a closely-knit network of contacts that have deepened connectivity between border communities from both countries.

The transborder movement of men and materials has become more varied and complex today than it was before the U.S.-led war. On the Pakistan-Afghanistan border, large refugee movements have now given way to labor migrations, along with continued social and cultural exchanges between the country of origin and the country of exile. This is facilitated by the presence of well-established transborder social networks on both sides. According to the UNHCR, approximately 80,000 to 100,000 Afghans cross the border daily into Pakistan from the two border crossings at Torkham and Spin Boldak for work as day laborers or for family visits.[75] The vast majority (almost 75 percent) of them are young, single, working-age males.[76] Most of

[72] Ron Moreau, "How Afghan Insurgents Recruit High School Students," *Newsweek*, April 24, 2011, http://www.newsweek.com/how-afghan-insurgents-recruit-high-school-students-66507.

[73] Christine Fair et al., *Pakistan: Can the U.S. Secure and Insecure State?* (Washington: RAND Corporation, 2010), 47–48.

[74] Ibid., 48.

[75] Eric Davin and Nassim Majidi, "Study on Cross Border Population Movements Between Afghanistan and Pakistan," *UNHCR* and *Altai Consulting*, June 2009, 4, http://www.unhcr.org/4ad448670.html.

[76] Ibid., 4.

the transient labor migrants are from southern and eastern Afghanistan. These regions still remain Afghan Taliban strongholds and the Taliban's main support bases in Afghanistan.

These networked interests between the Afghan Taliban and their Pakistani tribal affiliates have had a complex impact on the Pakistani state's security practices related to transborder militant groups. Forced into the tribal areas in support of the U.S. war in 2004, the Pakistani military has acted selectively and targeted only those groups with a narrower transborder support base. The IMU, with their Central Asian roots and their local hosts, the Masood tribal militants from South Waziristan, became the main targets.[77] Most military operations avoided taking on the Afghan Taliban and their close networks among Pakistani tribal militants.[78]

This selective targeting of transborder groups has led to a complex reconfiguration of the militant landscape within the border regions. For the IMU sanctuaries within Pakistani border regions have shrunk, especially since the Pakistani military's large-scale South Waziristan operation in 2009, and Operation Zarb-e-Azb launched more recently in June 2014 in North Waziristan Agency.[79] Consequently, most of the IMU fighters and their dependents have relocated to northern Afghan provinces bordering Tajikistan.[80] Some obdurate Central Asian fighters affiliated with IMU and IJU still remain in FATA and have joined al-Qaeda remnants and their other Pakistani affiliates in fighting the Pakistani military.[81]

On the other hand, the targeting of local Pakistani militants by the Pakistani military has led to the rise of another militant organization: Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan. The TTP operates as an umbrella group for organizations that endorse al-Qaeda's Takfiri[82] ideology and consider the Pakistani state,

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[77] "Uzbek militant group IMU claims involvement in Karachi airport assault," *The Guardian*, June 11, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/uzbek-militant-group-imu-karachi-airport-assault-pakistani-taliban-drone; and see Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 14–15.

[78] Tony Karon and Omar Waraich, "Under U.S. Pressure, Pakistan Balks at Helping on Afghan Taliban," *Time*, December 17, 2009, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1948207,00.html.

[79] Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 5–6; Farhan Zahid, "The Successes and Failures of Pakistan's Operation Zarb-e-Azb," *Terrorism Monitor* 13, no. 14 (July 10, 2015), http://www.jamestown.org/uploads/media/TerrorismMonitorVol13Issue14_02.pdf.

[80] Stein, "The Goals of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan," 5.

[81] Mahsud, "The Battle for Pakistan," 5–6.

[82] A Takfiri (from Arabic: تكفيري takfīrī) is a Muslim who accuses another Muslim of apostasy. The accusation itself is called takfir, derived from the word kafir (infidel) and is described

its citizens, and its cities legitimate targets because of their perceived complicity with the U.S. and the coalition forces in Afghanistan. Some Pakistani militant groups affiliated with the TTP from the Bajaur Agency in FATA and from the district of Swat have found sanctuary in the Kunar province in eastern Afghanistan.[83] From these sanctuaries, militant groups launched several armed cross-border incursions into Pakistani territory in 2011–2012,[84] to which Pakistani military has since responded with the shelling of border villages on the Afghan side.[85] This has added another dimension to the already tense inter-state relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Presently, more than 150,000 Pakistani military troops remain deployed along the border,[86] engaged in several small and large military operations against an assortment of militant groups. The selective use of force by the Pakistan military against some militant factions has had a transformative impact on militant group structures and agendas. It has pushed the TTP and IMU remnants in FATA closer to al-Qaeda's more internationalist jihad ideology. Since 2008, the U.S. has expanded the use of drone strikes to target al-Qaeda, the Afghan Taliban and their affiliates such as the Haqqani Network and their Pakistani networks in the tribal belt.[87] These strikes have inflamed local resentment and have been successfully exploited by anti-Pakistani state militants such as TTP and al-Qaeda in order to increase

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as occurring when "...one who is, or claims to be, a Muslim is declared impure." See Kepel, *Jihad*, 31.

83 Tahir Khan, "TTP Admits to Having Safe Haven in Afghanistan," *The Express Tribune*, June 26, 2012, http://tribune.com.pk/story/399205/ttp-admits-to-having-safe-haven-in-afghanistan/.

84 Kapur and Ganguly, "The Jihad Paradox," 134–35.

85 Maria Abi-Habib, "Afghan Villagers at Border Flee Shelling from Pakistan," *Wall Street Journal*, July 12, 2011, http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052702304584404576439591958759406.

86 Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon, "Pakistan Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security," *Brookings Institution*, November 29, 2011, 5, http://www.brookings.edu/~/media/Programs/foreign-policy/pakistan-index/index20111129.PDF.

87 Declan Walsh, Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud, and Ismail Khan, "Drone Strikes are Said to Kill Taliban Chief," *New York Times*, November 1, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/02/world/asia/drone-strike-hits-compound-used-by-pakistani-taliban-leader.html; and see Karen DeYoung, "U.S. Steps up Drone Strikes in Pakistan Against Haqqani Network," *Washington Post*, October 14, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia-pacific/us-drone-strike-kills-haqqani-insider/2011/10/13/gIQA5rT3gL_story.html.

recruitment.[88] The TTP, along with remnants of al-Qaeda, has retaliated to drone strikes and Pakistani military operations by launching terrorist strikes against soft targets in all major Pakistani cities and military installations.[89]

### *The Disputed Kashmir Border Between India and Pakistan*

The history of the disputed Kashmir border has defined inter-state relations between the two South Asian neighbors, Pakistan and India, for the past sixty years. This high altitude border in the Himalayan foothills has several features in common with the two other disputed borders described earlier. Transborder communities comprised of ethnic Kashmiris tightly straddle the 740-km-long border at certain points.[90] After the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, a dispute over the state of Jammu and Kashmir started in 1948–1949.[91] The military control line or the cease-fire line between the Indian and the Pakistani parts of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir became the de facto border. The Line of Control (LoC), to this day, does not constitute a legally recognized international boundary. Running through the heart of villages and communities, it divides families and clans and disrupts all normal societal interactions such as commerce and trade in these areas.

The presence of Kashmiri militant groups and their training camps within Pakistani-controlled parts of Kashmir has been a cause of inter-state tensions and war. The link between the Kashmir dispute and the Pashtun tribes from FATA dates back to 1948, when Pakistan used irregular forces and tribal militias from this area to infiltrate the state of Kashmir and prevent its accession to India.[92] This practice of state support for non-state actors as a tool of foreign policy by employing the principle of "plausible deniability" is not confined solely to Pakistan. For example, India used the same practice

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[88] Imran Awan, "U.S. Drone Attacks and Further Radicalizing Pakistan," *The Guardian*, June 2, 2013, http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jun/02/ us-drone-strikes-pakistan-terrorists.

[89] Fair, "The Militant Challenge," 123.

[90] Debiddatta Aurobinda Mahapatra, "Positioning the People in the Contested Borders of Kashmir," *Centre for International Border Studies Research Working Paper* 21 (2011): 14, http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/MahapatraContestedBordersKashmir.pdf.

[91] Victoria Schofield, "Kashmir: The Origins of the Dispute," *BBC*, January 16, 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1762146.stm.

[92] Fair, "The Militant Challenge," 107.

when it supported and armed transborder insurgent groups in East Pakistan in the 1970s, successfully helping Bangladesh to secede from Pakistan.[93]

The lingering disputes between India and Pakistan, and especially over Kashmir, have impacted how both states treat their border communities and transborder militants. The Indian state has had a zero-tolerance policy in regard to Kashmir-centered militant groups and has responded with brutal force to all political mobilization and dissent by Kashmiris. Since the 1990s, it has deployed a growing number of military forces to quell a populist uprising in the Kashmir Valley.[94] Starting in the 1990s and ending in 2004, India proceeded to install landmines and an electrified double fence along 550 kilometers of the LoC. In addition, it has deployed around 700,000 military and paramilitary forces within the narrow valley and along the border spaces, thereby making the LoC one of the hardest, most excessively militarized borders in the world.[95] A large number of Kashmiri militants have been forced to relocate to the Pakistani part of Kashmir so as to escape being killed or captured. This has allowed them to continue their armed struggle from the other side.[96] On the other side of the border, the Pakistani state has provided varying levels of support to Kashmiri militants, including training camps and financial support for militants and their dependents.[97]

Over the last two decades, the old conflict over the Kashmir border has become intertwined with the ebb and flow of war on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The links built between certain Kashmiri and Punjabi fighters from Pakistan with the Afghan mujahedin during the Soviet war in the 1980s have persisted and gone through various complex transformations. Most of these transformations have followed larger trends in the inter-state relations between India and Pakistan and other flashpoints within the broader region.

Several militant groups operating across the LoC proclaim Kashmir to be their sole focus. These include the Jamaat-e-Islami-based Hizb-ul-Mujahedin, or HuM, and Al Badr, which tend to be comprised of ethnic

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93 Subir Bhaumik, *Insurgent Crossfire: North-East India* (Delhi: Lancer Publishers and Distributors, 1996), 34–36.

94 Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," 47–48.

95 Mahapatra, "Contested Borders of Kashmir," 10; and see Sangeev Miglani, "India Says Pakistan Testing its Restraint in Kashmir," *Reuters*, August 19, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/08/19/us-india-pakistan-idUSBRE97I0EE20130819.

96 Cohen, "India, Pakistan and Kashmir," 47–48.

97 Ibid.

Kashmiris and have retained their focus on Kashmir.[98] However, there are a number of other groups with different religious denominations that have expanded their jihad agenda since the latest phase of the U.S.-led war in Afghanistan. These include Deobandi groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammad (JM), Harkat-ul-Jihad Islami (HuJI), and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), as well as the Ahl-e-Hadith group, Lashkar-e Taiba (LeT), which in the last ten years has moved away from an exclusive focus on Kashmir.[99] Various intelligence sources suggest that, since at least 2005, LeT has increased its focus on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border and currently operates in some areas in eastern Afghanistan, albeit on a limited scale.[100]

One reason for this shift in focus was the 2003 ceasefire agreement between India and Pakistan over the LoC.[101] According to the agreement, Pakistan would act to reduce militant incursions from the LoC into the Indian-held Kashmir Valley. A number of Pakistani and Kashmiri militants saw this as an act of appeasement by General Musharaff to the Indians and the U.S., and this led to the splintering of some of these groups.[102] Several of the splinter groups from Jaish, HuJI, and LeJ became more closely allied with al-Qaeda, which was being chased out of Pakistan by the U.S.-Pakistan counterterror operations. Currently, most of the splinter groups have joined the increasingly active TTP in order to open dual fronts against NATO-led troops in Afghanistan and against Pakistani state targets and its military in FATA.[103] Some Indian and U.S. analysts are currently projecting that the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO from Afghanistan will encourage some of the Kashmir-centered groups such as LeT and HuJI to return full circle to their focus on the Kashmir front, thereby escalating tensions between India

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98 Christine Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan: Implications for Al Qaeda and Other Organizations," *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 27, no. 6 (May 2004): 491; and see Praveen Swami, "The Jihad Online: Lashkar-e-Taiba on the Internet," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May 2006, 56; and see Muhammad Amir Rana, "Changing Tactics of Jihad Organization in Pakistan," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May 2006, 143.

99 Fair, "Militant Recruitment in Pakistan," 497.

100 Tankel, "Lashkar-e-Taiba in Perspective," 1–3.

101 K. Alan Kronstadt, "Pakistan-U.S. Relations," *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report*, January 11, 2008, 45, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=482417.

102 Ibid., 34; and see James K. Wellman and Clark B. Lombardi, *Religion and Human Security: A Global Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 71.

103 Wellman and Lombardi, *Religion and Human Security.*

and Pakistan. Since 2012, an increase in incidents of cross-border firing and attacks along the LoC give some credence to such analysis.[104]

## Conclusion

As the U.S.-led War against Terror and the Taliban in Afghanistan nears its end, al-Qaeda has responded with its own geopolitical strategy. Since 2010, a clear pattern has emerged whereby al-Qaeda operatives and their affiliates have tried to embed themselves and find a role in conflicts that are local in nature. Long-running local political disputes within the poorly governed border spaces of weak states such as Afghanistan and Pakistan (other examples include Yemen and Somalia) are providing opportunities for al-Qaeda and other groups to resurrect their weakening structures and operate through local partnerships.[105] There are certain similarities in the broad dynamics of how these organizations operate in these very diverse arenas. By aligning themselves with local political actors who are challenging weak states, they are able to find sanctuaries and space for the radicalization of local militants or insurgents into cells with transnational ambitions and goals. Crucially, al-Qaeda is finding space in these conflicts less as foot soldiers and more as "tech savvy" specialists bringing in specialized knowledge of new communication, explosives, and weapons technologies. The growing reliance on counterterrorism strategies by the U.S. is made evident by the sharp increase in the number of drone strikes from 2008 to 2012.[106] These strikes have inflamed popular resentment in Pakistan as well as in Yemen over issues of sovereignty, legality and human costs, and ultimately resulted in increased support for the militant groups.

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[104] Sadika Hameed, "Kashmir Violence Strains India-Pakistan Dialogue," *World Politics Review*, September 4, 2013, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13191/kashmir-violence-strains-india-pakistan-dialogue; and see Sanjeev Miglani, "India Army Chief Threatens Pakistan over Kashmir Killings," *Reuters*, January 14, 2013, http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/01/14/us-india-pakistan-idUSBRE90D08T20130114.

[105] Katherine Zimmerman, "The Al Qaeda Network: A New Framework for Defining the Enemy," *American Enterprise Institute*, September 2013, 9, http://www.aei.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/-the-al-qaeda-network-a-new-framework-for-defining-the-enemy_133443407958.pdf.

[106] Livingston and O'Hanlon, "Pakistan Index," 6–7.

Clearly, there are limits to what force-based strategies can achieve in containing the challenge of transborder militancy. In fact, the immoderate use of force by states in border zones has led to the metastasizing of militancy and extremism in South-Central Asia. As international engagement with the region is set to change with the U.S. and NATO military withdrawal from Afghanistan, it is imperative that the policies and practices of international actors and regional stakeholders take heed of the complex linkages between state policies, the geo-spatial features of borders, and transborder militants. There is a need for a fresh look at the problem and further exploration of ways in which conventional use of force may be coupled with other approaches to target root causes.

The two things that directly impact the presence of transborder actors are the local conditions that pertain in border regions, and state practices towards their conflicted borders. Only through a consistent recalibration of these two problem areas does it become possible to achieve long-term mitigation of the threat posed by militant actors. Economic marginalization and low development trends within border communities help sustain dynamics of militant transborder movements. There are no alternatives to painstaking but steady development within conflicted and marginalized spaces around border regions in order to sufficiently transform local conditions which breed and sustain transborder militant movements.

State practices towards militant actors in the region are linked in complex ways to enduring inter-state geopolitical issues. These intractable conflicts over territory, borders and resource issues have to be revisited whilst designing future responses. There are practical policy implications that emerge from this evaluation. The possible waning of the Global War on Terror does not mean that the challenges faced by regional states from these movements will dissipate. The presence of transborder actors will continue to pose complex problems for states in South and Central Asia that already suffer from varying degrees of governance and state capacity issues. For the regional states, however, the loosening of the "Global War on Terror" framework has meant greater possibilities of differentiation between groups. Increasingly, as trends suggest, the politics of militant groups and terrorism are likely to become a focus of national policies and practices. States in the region are making distinctions between groups who are using terrorism as a tactical tool for political ends and those who have more globalist and diffuse jihad agendas. Just as the U.S. and its allies are differentiating between Al

Nusra[107] and other radical groups fighting against the Assad regime in Syria, stakeholders in Afghanistan are beginning to differentiate the Afghan Taliban from al-Qaeda. Similarly, Pakistan continues to respond to the Afghan Taliban, the TTP, and Kashmiri militant groups focused on Kashmir differently from the Kashmiri groups aligned with al-Qaeda and attack the Pakistani state and its security forces.

Indeed, drawing distinctions between groups is a key to policies that can untie the linkages weaving together conflicts and confrontations in border spaces. Such policies are becoming all the more pertinent as also the Islamic State, which has developed in Syria and in Iraq, is gaining influence in the region. Regrettably, the present international emphasis on greater regional cooperation as a means to build security in the post-withdrawal situation in and around Afghanistan has largely stalled over the issue of transborder organization and its linkage to militant activity and jihadist causes. As a consequence, this extremely complex problem area is being left to mainly national policies.

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[107] "U.S. Blacklists Syrian Rebel Group al-Nusra," *Al Jazeera*, December 11, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2012/12/20121211170481177 23.html; see also Ewen MacAskill, "U.S. Blacklists Syria's al-Nusra Front as Terrorist Group," *The Guardian*, December 11, 2012, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/dec/11/us-blacklists-syria-al-nusra-front-terrorist.

PART II Bordering Afghanistan: Threats and Opportunities

# Turkmenistan's Afghan Border Conundrum

*Jan Šír and Slavomír Horák*

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 the former Soviet republics found themselves in an entirely novel geopolitical setting. One of the necessary steps in affirming their existence as new, independent states was for these post-Soviet republics to face the need of establishing their international borders. This process included both the creation of new international borders between the republics themselves as well as the transformation of their existing Soviet borders with third countries. In Central Asia, this challenge pertained clearly to Turkmenistan, the southernmost republic of the former Soviet Union that inherited the longest section of the southern Soviet borders with Afghanistan and Iran. In this chapter we focus on Afghanistan as a reference point in regard to this transformation of the former external Soviet border. We examine Turkmenistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan after 1991 and argue that the shaping of relations between the two neighboring countries is a specific case of building transborder ties, the evolution of which derives from the distinct path of Turkmenistan's foreign policy. Our analysis reveals the inner tensions inherent to the making of foreign policy in Turkmenistan, specifically the tensions that arise between the quest for alternative export markets for its most valued, and largely only, assets in energy and the imperative to preserve the newly established regime despite its perception as being largely incompatible with the open and geopolitically exposed international environment in which it is to function.

The chapter begins with an overview of the delineation and constitution of the border between Afghanistan and what traditionally used to be the Turkmen-inhabited tribal areas of Central Asia. The time span of our examination of the historical background extends from the late nineteenth century and the Soviet decades to Turkmenistan's independence. Following this, the chapter continues with four sections that each deal with one area of interaction between the two neighboring states. The first provides an overview of political relations after 1991 and outlines Turkmenistan's

foreign policy towards Afghanistan with a rough periodization up to the present. Next, we focus on trade and economic affairs where major infrastructure projects play an ever-growing role. There follows a discussion of the still rather infrequent people-to-people contacts between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan as seen from the point of view of the regime in Ashgabat. Finally, Turkmenistan's changing border security will be assessed through an analysis of the latest radical Islamist insurgency arising from Afghanistan and the subsequent border clashes that have taken place. We note here that regional affairs will not be in the center of our discussion. Nevertheless, we occasionally digress into the geopolitics of Central Asia so as to highlight the way in which, as we argue, Afghanistan matters most to Turkmenistan, that is, as a possible bridge linking it to its prospective export markets farther to the south.

## Historical Background

Historically, the Turkmen-Afghan border, and the very notion thereof as a border, occurred no earlier than the late nineteenth century, and it came about as a result of the delineation of spheres of influence within Central Asia between the Russian and British Empires. Until that time, Turkmen pastoral areas were under the reign of local tribal authorities, which were subject to constant interference from the rulers of Bukhara, Khiva and Persia. The advance of Tsarist Russia into the region was dictated by both commercial and military strategic interests. The eventual conquest of the Turkmen lands by the Russian army opened up the prospect of consolidating Russia's grip over the vast territories ranging from China to the Caspian Sea. In this sense, the Turkmen-Afghan borderlands became the setting for the final stage of the "Great Game" rivalries between Russia and Britain.[1]

[1] Evgenii Sergeev, *Bol'shaia igra, 1856–1907. Mify i realii rossiisko-britanskikh otnoshenii v Tsentral'noi i Vostochnoi Azii* (Moscow: KMK, 2012), 184. For Russia's conquest of Turkmenistan, see A. Karryev and A. Rosliakov, *Kratkii ocherk istorii Turkmenistana (ot prisoedineniia k Rossii do Velikoi Oktiabr'skoi sotsialisticheskoi revoliutsii, 1868–1917 gg.)* (Ashgabat: Turkmengosizdat, 1956); and M. Tikhomirov, *Prisoedinenie Merva k Rossii* (Moskow: Izdatel'stvo Vostochnoi istorii, 1960). For recent interpretations of Russia's advance into Central Asia, see Alexander Morrison,"'Nechto eroticheskoe,' 'courir après l'ombre'?—logistical imperatives and the fall of Tashkent, 1859–1865," *Central Asian Survey* 33, no. 2 (2014): 153–69. For a readable account of the Great Game,

The Turkmen-Afghan borderlands once again became unstable following the Bolshevik revolution in 1917, when the Russian civil war hit Central Asia. A local resistance movement, the *basmachi*, emerged and found footholds in the north of Afghanistan in order to rise up against the new Soviet regime from there.[2] Large groups of Turkmens subsequently left for Afghanistan in several waves. The proclamation of the Bukhara People's Soviet Republic in 1920, in effect, pushed out some 40,000–50,000 Turkmens, particularly from the regions of Charjew (today's Turkmenabat) and Kerki (or Atamurat).[3] Another 100,000 moved south from the Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic following the water and agrarian reforms and the anti-religious campaigns of the 1920s and 1930s.[4] Stalin's collectivization of agriculture caused some additional 50,000 Turkmens to flee to Afghanistan and Iran.[5] Migration continued for some years despite the closing of the border in 1932 and the often dire conditions of life on the Afghan side of the border. As a result, substantial parts of the north and north-west of Afghanistan were settled by ethnic Turkmens, and the local economy was enriched by, for instance, the famous *qaraqul* sheep industry.[6]

For most of the Soviet period the border between Soviet Turkmenia and Afghanistan remained closed, both in the administrative and in the physical senses. Border fortifications and barriers were erected alongside the delineation line by the Soviets, thereby making transborder flows

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see the classic by Peter Hopkirk, *The Great Game: On Secret Service in High Asia* (London: John Murray, 1991).

2 On Soviet-Afghan relations after the Bolshevik revolution, see Petr Novák, "Počátky sovětské politiky vůči Afghánistánu v období let 1917 až 1919," *Acta Universitatis Carolinae – Studia Territorialia* 14, no. 1–2 (2014): 11–47. For the Basmachi uprising, see Martha Brill Olcott, "The Basmachi or Freemen's Revolt in Turkestan 1918–24," *Soviet Studies* 33, no. 3 (1981): 352–69; and A. I. Plyev, *Basmachestvo v Srednei Azii: etnopoliticheskii srez (vzgliad iz XXI veka)* (Bishkek: Kyrgyzsko-Rossiiskii Slavianskii Universitet, 2006).

3 Charles Shaw, "Friendship under lock and key: the Soviet Central Asian border, 1918–34," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 3–4 (2011): 338.

4 Audrey C. Shalinsky, "Islam and Ethnicity: The Northern Afghanistan Perspective," *Central Asian Survey* 1, no. 2–3 (1982): 74–75.

5 Shokhrat Kadyrov, *Tainy turkmenskoi demografii* (Moscow: Institut vostokovedeniia RAN, 2010), 94–95; and Adrienne Lynn Edgar, *Tribal Nation: The Making of Soviet Turkmenistan* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 213–20. For the migration processes in the context of political developments in Turkmenistan under the Soviets, see also Rakhim Esenov, *Dukhovnaia oppozitsiia v Turkmenistane 1917–1935* (Moscow: s.n., 2002).

6 Viktor Korgun, *Istoriia Afganistana: XX vek* (Moscow: Kraft+, Institut vostokovedeniia RAN, 2004), 102.

increasingly more difficult. Due to the fact that the attitudes of the Afghan Turkmens, and in particular of their tribal elites, were far from sympathetic to the Soviet regime, there was little reason for them to maintain close ties with their brethren on the opposite side of the border. Afghan Turkmens were also recruited in large numbers to work for German or Japanese intelligence services before World War II as they hoped for the defeat of the Soviet Union and for a return to their homelands.[7]

Despite the Soviet involvement in Afghanistan's industrialization between the 1950s and 1970s, transborder contacts intensified again only with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan after 1979. The border crossing in Gushgy (today's Serhetabat, meaning "border town" in Turkmen) became one of the two key entry points for invading Soviet troops and the supplies entering Afghanistan. Moreover, the Turkmens, just as Uzbeks and Tajiks, were contracted in high numbers by the Soviet army, since they could serve as interpreters and possessed knowledge of local social conditions. Due to the increasing number of Turkmens switching sides and joining the Afghan anti-Soviet resistance, however, this practice was soon abandoned.[8]

The relationship of the Afghan Turkmen diaspora to their northern brethren, and to the Soviets in general, was characterized by caution. The historical memory transmitted by the descendants of refugees who had fled the Bolshevik regime in the 1920s and 1930s was largely negative in nature.[9] The Soviets were for the most part concerned about the Central Asian diasporas in Afghanistan, especially that of the Turkmens, because the mood for resistance amongst them was considered to be higher than amongst other minorities.[10] Curiously, this resistance among the Turkmens has not been transformed into a strong national movement on either side of the border.

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[7] Iurii Tikhonov, *Afganskaia voina Stalina. Bitva za Tsentral'nuiu Aziiu* (Moscow: IaUZA, EKSMO, 2008), 410–25.

[8] M. Hassan Kakar, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion and the Afghan Response, 1979–1982* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 183.

[9] Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), 30.

[10] Eden Naby, "Uzbeks in Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 3, no. 1 (1984): 1–21.

## Overview of Political Relations After 1991

The collapse of the Soviet Union marked a watershed for the Turkmens and their relations with their neighbors. This was not least because, prior to 1991, a state entity corresponding to the territory of today's Turkmenistan had never before existed. Accordingly, the status of the 800-km-long border with Afghanistan has also undergone change. Turkmenistan's foreign policy has been primarily an extension of the state and nation-building processes that have largely remained unfinished to this day. From the very beginning, the main function of its foreign policy has been the legitimization of the new regime and the securing of its survival.[11] In conceptual terms, since 1992 Turkmenistan's foreign policy has been based on the principles of "positive neutrality" which, in practice, quickly degraded to isolationism in international affairs under Turkmenbashi, the "Head of the Turkmens," as Turkmenistan's first president Saparmurat Niyazov was called; energy exports, however, remained a notable exception. This explains Turkmenistan's specific approach to, and its very selective engagement in, international affairs, which can be exemplified through its relations with neighboring Afghanistan.

Despite some first tentative steps in the time of late perestroika, the process of establishing direct political ties with Afghanistan began only in the post-independence period. Diplomatic relations between both countries were established on February 21, 1992, on the occasion of the visit of Vice-President of the Republic of Afghanistan Abdul Rahim Hatef to Ashgabat. Voicing a readiness by the Najibullah government to open trading points in the ports on the Amu Darya River, the agenda proposed by Kabul focused mostly on procuring specialists from Turkmenistan to achieve the

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[11] For perhaps the most comprehensive account of Turkmenistan's foreign policy, see the book by Luca Anceschi, *Turkmenistan's Foreign Policy: Positive Neutrality and the consolidation of the Turkmen Regime* (New York: Routledge, 2008), who also convincingly made this case. For the best comprehensive works on post-Soviet Turkmenistan, see Sebastien Peyrouse, *Turkmenistan: Strategies of Power, Dilemmas of Development* (Armonk: M. E. Sharpe, 2012); and, from Russian language publications, also Sergei M. Demidov, *Postsovetskii Turkmenistan* (Moscow: Natalis, 2002); and Shokhrat Kadyrov, *"Natsiia" plemen. Etnicheskie istoki, transformatsiia, perspektivy gosudarstvennosti v Turkmenistane* (Moscow: Tsentr tsivilizatsionnykh i regional'nykh issledovanii RAN, 2003).

electrification of Afghanistan's north and north-west.[12] In order to facilitate these contacts, Turkmenistan opened consular missions in Mazar-e Sharif and Herat in 1993. The consulates did not cease their operations even during the fiercest period of fighting in the late 1990s and they remained Turkmenistan's main liaison offices in Afghanistan for nearly a decade.[13] However, the continuing fragmentation of the country was a problem in that control over Afghanistan's provinces in the north and north-west by the central government in Kabul, and hence its ability to ensure compliance with its policies, was contingent on its loose authority over local warlords who, in effect, administrated these territories. For this reason, in order to achieve progress Ashgabat was forced to clear any outstanding issues first with General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Mohammed Ismail Khan, the rulers of, respectively, Mazar-e Sharif and Herat.

In March 1996, President of the Islamic State of Afghanistan Burhanuddin Rabbani visited Ashgabat for a meeting with Turkmenbashi to discuss mostly transborder trade.[14] However, this first bilateral summit was to remain the last meaningful contact between Ashgabat and Kabul for a long time, as the north-west of the country around Herat by then had fallen under firm control of the Pashto-dominated Taliban movement, who proceeded to conquer Kabul later that year.[15] Moreover, by 1995 Turkmenistan had achieved the recognition of its declared neutrality by the United Nations[16]—a success it deliberately used as an ideological rationale for keeping its distance from any foreign policy activities that it deemed to compromise its high international status. Thus, for the following years most transborder

[12] Turkmen Press, "Priem u Prezidenta Turkmenistana," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, February 22, 1992.

[13] Postanovlenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana Ob otkrytii Konsul'stva Turkmenistana v Islamskom Gosudarstve Afganistan (g. Mazari-Sharif), *Sobranie aktov Prezidenta Turkmenistana i reshenii Pravitel'stva Turkmenistana,* no. 8, art. 1476 (1993): 46–48; and Postanovlenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana Ob otkrytii Konsul'stva Turkmenistana v Islamskom Gosudarstve Afganistan (g. Gerat), *Sobranie aktov Prezidenta Turkmenistana i reshenii Pravitel'stva Turkmenistana,* no. 11, art. 1647 (1993): 24–25.

[14] Press-kommiunike po itogam vizita v Turkmenistan pravitel'stvennoi delegatsii Islamskogo Gosudarstva Afganistan vo glave s Prezidentom B. Rabbani, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 8, 1996.

[15] For the Taliban taking over Afghanistan between 1994 and 1999, see Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban: Islam, Oil and the New Great Game in Central Asia* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2002), 31–81.

[16] United Nations. General Assembly. A-B: 90th plenary meeting December 12, 1995. Maintenance of international security. A. Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan. A/RES/ 50/80.

contacts consisted of illicit trade, in particular drug trafficking and possibly also arms smuggling, which increased in volume after the Russian border guards left Turkmenistan's "outer" borders at the end of 1999.[17] In 1999 and 2000, three rounds of unsuccessful peace talks were held, with great propaganda fanfare, between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance in Ashgabat under the auspices of the UN.[18] After these talks ultimately failed in late 2000, the UN Security Council imposed a nearly total embargo against the Taliban-ruled Islamic Emirate, thereby leaving Turkmenistan with little space for cultivating relations with its neighbor.[19]

The September 11 attacks and Operation Enduring Freedom provided the isolationist Turkmenbashi regime with both opportunities and challenges. Having only hesitantly joined the U.S.-led coalition in its War on Terror, in early 2002 Turkmenistan declined an official request from Berlin to establish a military base on its territory in order to support the German Bundeswehr in its operations in north Afghanistan.[20] Nonetheless it made available air and land corridors for the delivery of international humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and received a further incentive to enhance its diplomatic profile

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17 "Turkmenistan: vlasti stroiat 'zheleznyi zanaves' po retseptam stalinskoi diktatury," *Pravozashchitnyi tsentr Memorial*, July 31, 2001, http://www.memo.ru/d/183.html. See also Rustem Safronov, "Turkmenistan's Niyazov Implicated in Drug Smuggling," *Eurasia Insight*, March 28, 2002, http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/insight/articles/ eav032902.shtml. For an overview of the drug trade in the post-Soviet region and the Afghanistan connection, see Uwe Halbach, "Drogenströme durch den GUS-Raum. Symptom und Ursache von Unstabilität," *Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik*, November 2004, 22–24, http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/studien/2004_ S47_ hlb_ks.pdf.

18 Turkmen Press, "V poiskakh mira i soglasiia v Afganistane. Priem u Prezidenta Turkmenistana," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, February 12, 1999; Turkmen Press, "Uspekh ashkhabadskikh peregovorov. Afganskie storony vpervye dogovorilis' po kliuchevym voprosam," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 15, 1999; and Türkmendöwlethabarlary—TDH, "V stolitse neitral'nogo Turkmenistana posle dolgogo pereryva sostoialsia ocherednoi mezhafganskii dialog," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, December 12, 2000.

19 United Nations. Resolution 1333 (2000). Adopted by the Security Council at its 4251st meeting, on December 19, 2000. S/RES/1333 (2000). For Turkmenistan's highly critical stance towards the international sanction regime against the Taliban, see, for instance, Turkmenbashi's speech to the diplomatic corps accredited in Ashgabat from early 2001, published as "My zhelaem mira i blagopoluchiia dlia vsekh. Vystuplenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana na vstreche s inostrannymi diplomatami (15 fevralia 2001 goda)," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 5, 2001.

20 TDH, "Prezident Turkmenistana prinial Chrezvychainogo i Polnomochnogo Posla Germanii," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, January 8, 2002.

there by opening an embassy in Kabul.[21] Importantly, the increased international attention directed at Turkmenistan as an emerging transit hub gave Ashgabat an additional boost in its ambitious development plans, particularly in regard to the expansion of its transport infrastructure. Such infrastructure would become important to Turkmenistan once the foreign policy priorities of the Ashgabat government evolved at a later point in time.[22]

This finally happened under Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, who came to power in late 2006 following Turkmenbashi's unexpected death in office. From the very beginning the new Turkmen leader set an energetic foreign policy agenda. Gradually, and still in a selective and careful manner, isolationism began to be replaced by a diversification of external relations, particularly in the context of the gas industry where Turkmenistan achieved significant progress by opening new export routes to China and Iran. Obviously, regional cooperation plays a prominent role in these endeavors.[23] From the summer of 2007 onwards, when the first official top-level meeting of Presidents Berdimuhamedow and Karzai took place, relations between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan produced a series of summits as well as a noticeable activation in all spheres of interaction, from business to people-to-people contacts. At the same time, the two countries' cooperation improved also in select multilateral formats, as their most important joint projects are trans-regional in nature.[24] Curiously, Afghanistan also remains at the center of all major international initiatives set forth by Turkmenistan, for ideological reasons, through the United Nations. Berdimuhamedow's calls at

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[21] Ukaz Prezidenta Turkmenistana Ob otkrytii Posol'stva Turkmenistana v Afganistane (g. Kabul), *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 12, 2002.

[22] For an account of transport infrastructure projects in Turkmenistan by the end of Turkmenbashi's rule, see Firat Yildiz, "Turkmenistan," in *The New Silk Roads: Transport and Trade in Greater Central Asia*, ed. S. Frederick Starr (Washington: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2007), 141–66.

[23] For the beginnings of Turkmenistan's foreign policy under Berdimuhamedow, see Slavomír Horák and Jan Šír, *Dismantling Totalitarianism? Turkmenistan under Berdimuhamedow* (Washington: Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2009), 44–67. For Turkmenistan's geopolitics of natural gas, see Slavomír Horák, "Turkmenistan's Shifting Energy Geopolitics in 2009–2011. European Perspective," *Problems of Post-Communism* 59, no. 2 (2012): 18–30; and Martha Brill Olcott, "Turkmenistan: Real Energy Giant or Eternal Potential?," *Center for Energy Studies, James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, Rice University,* December 10, 2013, http://belfercenter.hks.harvard.edu/files/CES-Pub-GeogasTurkmenistan-121013-1.pdf.

[24] Aigozel' Aramedova, "Turkmenistan – Islamskaia Respublika Afganistan: ukrepliaia traditsii bratstva i dobrososedstva," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan,* May 27, 2011.

the UN General Assembly to host a peace conference in Ashgabat in 2010 on confidence-building measures in Afghanistan are an example of this.[25]

## Trade and Economic Affairs

In Turkmenistan it is politics, rather than business, that is the driving force for reaching out to foreign partners through external relations. Therefore, trade and economic relations after 1991 largely followed the pattern indicated above, with its initial upheavals and setbacks. Foreign relations have depended primarily on the changing perceptions within the regime of its own needs for legitimacy and survival. In mid-1993, Turkmenbashi passed a decree that outlined measures for improving economic cooperation with Afghanistan and a provision of technical assistance to its northern provinces. This act reflected proposals submitted to Ashgabat by two Afghan missions earlier in 1992. The measures that were to be adopted ranged from the construction of electric power facilities in Afghanistan, over prospecting and exploratory drilling for oil and gas, to road reconstruction and upgrading, road resurfacing and the reconstruction of a cement production plant; all of these activities were supposed to take place in the country's north and north-west.[26] In 1995 the first direct telephone landline connection was laid between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan's north-west. Furthermore, a new border crossing between Ymamnazar and Aqinah was opened in early 1996 after some delay, thereby complementing the one that already existed between Gushgy (Serhetabat) and Towrgondi.[27] Aside from a small number of local water irrigation projects, however, the presidential directive did not

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25 Vystuplenie na 65-i sessii General'noi Assamblei Organizatsii Ob"edinennykh Natsii (N'iu Iork, 20.09.2010 g.), in Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, *K novym vysotam progressa. Izbrannye proizvedeniia.* Vol 4 (Ashgabat: Glavnoe arkhivnoe upravlenie pri Kabinete Ministrov Turkmenistana, Arkhivnyi fond Prezidenta Turkmenistana, 2011), 396–403; Prioritetnye pozitsii Turkmenistana na 65-i sessii General'noi Assamblei OON. Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Secretariat. SEC.DEL/231/10, August 30, 2010. For an official account of this initiative, see Mergen Amanov, "Turkmenistan – Afganistan: s pozitsii neitraliteta i dobrososedstva," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, December 6, 2010.

26 Rasporiazhenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana, *Turkmenskaia iskra*, August 5, 1993.

27 Turkmen Press, "Ustanovlena telefonnaia sviaz' s Afganistanom," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, February 3, 1995; and Turkmen Press weekly digest, no. 6 (102), February 5, 1996. A digital file from the authors' personal collection.

produce much activity until the end of the decade, not least due to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan.

In late 1994 a first truck convoy from Pakistan reached Turkmenistan by way of Taliban-held Kandahar and Herat and returned safely with a shipment of Turkmen cotton, thus pointing to the vast opportunities that could be realized by building an "economic bridge" between Islamabad and Ashgabat.[28] In the 1990s, these multilateral projects were elaborated mostly according to the framework of the Economic Cooperation Organization, in which Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan all have been members. However, the time was not yet ripe for this despite the fact that Turkmenistan exhibited little unease in maintaining relations with the Taliban until their fall in 2001.[29] After the end of the Taliban regime, Hamid Karzai, then Chairman of the Afghan Transitional Administration, made a rare visit to Ashgabat in March 2002 and an important agreement on cooperation in matters of energy was signed, thereby paving the way for supplying north and north-west Afghanistan with electricity on a large scale.[30] Despite this limited progress, bilateral trade stagnated and remained low for most of the Turkmenbashi era.

An intensification in business relations occurred only after Berdimuhamedow took office in 2007 and slowly opened Turkmenistan to the outside world. During the Ashgabat summit in the summer of 2007, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan concluded an agreement on trade and economic cooperation, followed by sectoral agreements on, amongst others, international transit transport. The countries thereby reciprocally granted most-favored-nation status to each other as a first step towards the gradual

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28 A. Kurbanova, "Po 'Doroge mira' otpravlena pervaia partiia turkmenskogo khlopka," *Turkmenskaia iskra*, December 10, 1994.

29 On the Taliban connection, see Murad Esenov, "Vneshniaia politika Turkmenistana i ee vliianie na sistemu regional'noi bezopasnosti," *Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, no. 1 (13) (2001): 56–63; Sergei Kamenev, "Vneshniaia politika Turkmenistana," *Tsentral'naia Aziia i Kavkaz*, no. 4 (22) (2002): 90–103; and Railia Mukimdzhanova, *Strany Tsentral'noi Azii. Aziatskii vektor vneshnei politiki* (Moscow: Nauchnaia kniga, 2005), 125–34. For a good account of the rule of the Taliban and its fall, see William Maley, *The Afghanistan Wars* (Houndmills, Basigstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002): 218–83.

30 Sovmestnoe kommiunike po itogam ofitsial'nogo vizita Glavy Vremennoi administratsii Afganistana Khamida Karzaia v Turkmenistan, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 8, 2002. See also TDH, "Turkmenistan – Afganistan: sotrudnichestvo vo imia mira i progressa. Turkmenskie energetiki pristupaiut k stroitel'stvu novykh elektrolinii v Afganistane, stoimost' kotorykh prevyshaet 520 millionov dollarov SShA," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 14, 2002.

creation of a standard bilateral trading regime.[31] At the same time, a bilateral commission on trade, economic and technical cooperation was established in 2007, which held four meetings between 2008 and 2013.[32] In the absence of almost any meaningful private business initiatives, this inter-governmental body turned out to be the key instrument for identifying the main areas of future sectoral cooperation in line with the parties' national plans.

At present, trade and economic relations revolve around three strategic areas. First is cooperation in the electricity sector, which became possible due to an apparent stabilization of the security situation in large parts of Afghanistan after 2001. Between 2002 and 2004, Turkmenistan provided for the construction and further upgrading of two high-voltage power transmission lines linking the border settlements of Ymamnazar and Serhetabat, respectively, with Sheberghan and Herat. At the same time, Turkmenistan's power engineer specialists and constructors provided for the establishment of substations and other electric power infrastructure along these lines. This has allowed Turkmenistan to steadily expand supplies of electricity to the territories of Afghanistan's north and north-west, including the region's two most populated cities of Mazar-e Sharif and Herat.[33] Furthermore, massive investment projects have been under way in Turkmenistan's domestic power industry since 2011, with the aim of further increasing its power generation capacities and producing electricity for export to the south.[34] Nevertheless, existing plans to expand the two transmission lines to Kabul and Kandahar and, in a next phase, to link these to Pakistan's power grid remain on paper only.

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[31] Soglashenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana i Pravitel'stvom Islamskoi Respubliki Afganistan o torgovo-ekonomicheskom sotrudnichestve, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 6, 2007; and Soglashenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana i Pravitel'stvom Islamskoi Respubliki Afganistan o tranzitnykh perevozkakh, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 6, 2007.

[32] Sovmestnoe zaiavlenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana i Prezidenta Islamskoi Respubliki Afganistan, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 6, 2007; TDH, "Zasedanie mezhpravitel'stvennoi turkmeno-afganskoi komissii," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 12, 2008; and TDH, "Zasedanie Kabineta Ministrov Turkmenistana," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, December 14, 2013.

[33] TDH, "Turkmenistan uvelichivaet eksport elektroenergii v Afganistan," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, May 6, 2004; and Turkmenistan – Zolotoi vek, "Energiia sotrudnichestva," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, May 17, 2004.

[34] TDH, "Prezident Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov prinial uchastie v puske gazopererabatyvaiushchego zavoda i elektrostantsii," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, May 8, 2014. See also Aigozel' Aramedova, "Turkmenistan – Islamskaia Respublika Afganistan: vazhnaia vekha effektivnogo razvitiia partnerstva," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, February 21, 2012.

A second area of cooperation that has potentially far-reaching consequences for the geopolitics of Central Asia and beyond lies in joint transportation and communications projects. In this respect, Turkmenistan can capitalize on its pivotal geopolitical position and a strong complementarity of interests with the key international players engaged in "reconnecting" Afghanistan through a wide range of transportation and communications networks to the wider Central Asian region.[35] As of writing, the most important infrastructure project in place here is the new joint railway line Atamurat-Ymamnazar-Aqinah-Andkhoy, which was launched on the occasion of a trilateral Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan summit in spring 2013.[36]

Third, cooperation in the oil and gas industry is a matter of utmost priority for Ashgabat in the context of its diversification strategy aimed at securing multiple export routes to world markets. These efforts are embodied primarily in the project of a Trans-Afghanistan gas pipeline. Initiated with Pakistan in 1992 and following several unsuccessful attempts at its elaboration in the second half of the 1990s, this major capital investment project of trans-regional significance gained impetus with the trilateral Islamabad summit in May 2002. India eventually joined in 2006.[37] In 2010, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India signed a framework agreement on the gas pipeline, which would carry up to 33 bcm of natural gas annually from Turkmenistan's richest gas fields in the south-east of the

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[35] For the conceptual underpinnings of the resulting U.S. initiatives of the New Silk Roads, see S. Frederick Starr and Andrew C. Kuchins, "The Key to Success in Afghanistan: A Modern Silk Road Strategy," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Silk Road Paper,* May 2010, http://www.silkroadstudies.org/resources/pdf/SilkRoadPapers/2010_05_SRP_StarrKuchins_Success-Afghanistan.pdf; and Andrew C. Kuchins, "A Truly Regional Economic Strategy for Afghanistan," *The Washington Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 77–91.

[36] TDH, "Turkmenistan, Afganistan i Tadzhikistan sviazhet novaia zheleznaia doroga," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 21, 2013. For the new railway in the context of Turkmenistan's rail development plans, see also Dovletmurad Orazkuliev, "Masshtabnye plany zheleznodorozhnikov," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, February 6, 2012.

[37] Soglashenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Turkmenistana i Pravitel'stvom Afganistana i Pravitel'stvom Islamskoi Respubliki Pakistan o proektakh gazoprovoda i nefteprovoda Turkmenistan-Afganistan-Pakistan, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, May 31, 2002; and TDH, "Transafganskii gazoprovod: ot planov k deistviiam. Prezident Turkmenistana prinial chlenov Rukovodiashchego komiteta po realizatsii proekta stroitel'stva transafganskogo gazoprovoda," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, February 16, 2006. For the beginnings of this pipeline project, see also Evgenii Ogibenin and Pavel Grafov, "Transafganskii proekt: voprosov bol'she, chem otvetov," *Mirovaia energeticheskaia politika*, no. 5 (2002): 20–24.

country through the territories of Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian border town of Fazilka in Punjab.[38] Upon completion of all commercial contracts between the national oil and gas energy companies in 2013, the four parties proceeded to form the TAPI Pipeline Company, Ltd., which was designed to own, build and operate the pipeline. The Asian Development Bank serves as the transaction adviser in finding a consortium leader.[39]

Economic relations between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan have seen a steady recovery in recent years. According to official Turkmen sources, trade between these two countries has grown from some $40 million in 2005 to almost $1 billion in 2014.[40] Yet, the structure of this exchange is still largely underdeveloped. Trade has mostly consisted of Turkmen exports of electrical power and LNG, agricultural products, textile production, petrochemicals and other primary commodities and goods with low added value, partly as a form of humanitarian aid. Given the structural weaknesses of both national economies as well as the lack of an investment protection and promotion regime, this situation is likely to persist for some time. It must, however, be emphasized that, in the context of Turkmenistan's ambitious development and diversification plans, Afghanistan might not necessarily be considered solely as an actor on its own but rather as a bridge for extending relations with further players in the region, primarily the developing markets of Pakistan and India. In this respect, Afghanistan's role is set to grow yet further.

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38 TDH, "Dan start novomu energomostu – mostu v budushchee Azii! V Ashkhabade sostoialsia Sammit Turkmenistan-Afganistan-Pakistan-Indiia," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, December 12, 2010. For wider ramifications, see Robert Cutler, "Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Gas Pipeline Gets Official Four-Way Go-Ahead," *Central Asia–Caucasus Institute Analyst*, January 19, 2011, http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5479.

39 TDH, "TEK Turkmenistana prodolzhaet kurs na mirovuiu integratsiiu," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 17, 2013; and TDH, "Aziatskii bank razvitiia stal Tranzaktsionnym Sovetnikom proekta gazoprovoda TAPI. V Turkmenistane podpisano ocherednoe vazhnoe soglashenie po stroitel'stvu transnatsional'nogo gazoprovoda," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, November 20, 2013.

40 TDH, "Turkmenistan – Afganistan: sotrudnichestvo v interesakh mira i sozidaniia. Peregovory mezhdu Prezidentami Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedovym i Mokhammadom Ashrafom Gani," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, January 22, 2015. Annual trade statistics published by Kabul point to a somewhat lower level of exchange. See Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Central Statistics Organization, http://cso.gov.af/en/.

## People-to-People Contacts

Transborder relations between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan rest on close historical, cultural and religious ties that traditionally link the peoples of the two neighboring nations. As mentioned earlier, the very concept of a border in the given context is a relatively modern phenomenon. Moreover, as the result of a long common past as well as several migration waves in the early years of the Soviet period, a large Turkmen population exists in contemporary Afghanistan. Estimated at between half a million and, according to Turkmenistan's authorities, three million people, its exact size and composition is impossible to establish. No population census has been carried out in Afghanistan since the late 1970s. Regardless of their exact number they constitute a significant minority in their areas of compact settlement, particularly in the north and north-west of the country, with Turkmen villages dispersed throughout the provinces of Kunduz, Baghlan, Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan, Faryab, Badghis and Herat; small enclaves of Turkmen diaspora, mostly merchants, are also to be found as far as Helmand and in the capital city of Kabul.[41] This makes the Turkmen diaspora a primary target of any transborder policy for Ashgabat in its relations with Afghanistan.

Most of Turkmenistan's activities in this area are part of broader international efforts aimed at Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction and have taken shape since Berdimuhamedow came to power in 2007. This involves primarily humanitarian aid; already in 2001 Turkmenistan granted overflight and transit rights to the international community for these purposes. During the harsh winter of 2008, Turkmenistan sent an emergency convoy to Afghanistan consisting of over one hundred trucks carrying flour, fuel, clothes and oil pumps, worth $2 million in total, alongside the other

[41] Marat Durdyev and Shokhrat Kadyrov, *Turkmeny mira (istoriko-demograficheskii obzor)* (Ashkhabad: Kharp, 1991), 50–52; and Aina Babaeva, *Turkmeny Afganistana* (Ashgabat: Bilim, 1992), 6–21. For the historical context, see also A. Iagmurov, "Turkmeny Afganistana," in *Turkmeny zarubezhnogo Vostoka: Ocherki o turkmenakh Irana, Afganistana, Iraka, Sirii, Turtsii i Kitaia*, ed. Kh. Ataev et al. (Ashgabat: Turkmenistan, 1993), 101–36. For an introduction to the demography of Afghanistan, see Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 17–65.

emergency supplies which have been provided on a regular basis.[42] In addition, Turkmen specialists have successfully implemented a number of small-scale government development projects in north and north-west Afghanistan. In particular, a fully refurbished health center in the village of Qaramqul, Faryab, and a school facility in Hazara Toghai, Balkh, were opened in the summer of 2009 thanks to Turkmenistan's development assistance.[43] Recent projects, to be commenced in 2015, include the construction and equipping of a maternity home in the border village of Towrgondi, Herat, an orphanage in the district center of Sheberghan, Jowzjan, and a mosque in the town of Aqinah, Faryab.[44]

These activities have been accompanied by efforts aimed at human capacity-building in Afghanistan. Here, cooperation in education has advanced to a certain degree. Since 2002, each year up to thirty Afghan youths are offered free education in Turkmenistan's universities within national quotas in line with an inter-governmental agreement. Upon completion of their schooling as trained agronomists, power engineers, teachers and medical personnel, they will contribute to the painful recovery of the still narrow base of Afghanistan's human resources by providing badly needed professional skills.[45] Furthermore, some limited contacts have been established in health care where every year an additional sixty citizens from adjacent areas in north and north-west Afghanistan obtain medical treatment at the health facilities of Turkmenistan's Mary and Lebap regions.[46] In

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42 TDH, "V dar ot turkmenskogo naroda afganskim brat'iam," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, February 7, 2008.

43 Gulam Nabi Molla Meret, "Na printsipakh gumanizma i vzaimopomoshchi," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, August 5, 2009; and Abduleziz Nurkhan, "V podarok afganskim detiam – novaia shkola!," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, August 6, 2009. For an extensive official account of Turkmenistan's humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, see Begench Karaev and Mergen Amanov, "Turkmenistan – Afganistan: gumanitarnoe izmerenie dobrososedstva," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 31, 2009.

44 TDH, "Turkmenistan – Afganistan: sotrudnichestvo v interesakh mira i sozidaniia. Peregovory mezhdu Prezidentami Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedovym i Mokhammadom Ashrafom Gani," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, January 22, 2015.

45 Aliia Bektasova, "Govorit' na iazyke druzhby...," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, January 24, 2004; Idem., "Podgotovka spetsialistov dlia druzhestvennogo Afganistana," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, July 27, 2005; Idem., "Spetsialisty dlia sosednego Afganistana," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 4, 2009; TDH, "Khronika," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, September 19, 2014.

46 Sovmestnoe kommiunike po itogam ofitsial'nogo vizita Glavy Vremennoi administratsii Afganistana Khamida Karzaia v Turkmenistan, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, March 8, 2002.

theory, framework agreements on bilateral cooperation also exist in the fields of science, culture, art, as well as mass media, sports and tourism.[47]

In regard to the humanitarian sphere, finally, the issue of refugees merits attention, although this issue has not necessarily been an example of a model development of transborder relations. Turkmenistan has been affected by the huge migration flows originating from war-torn Afghanistan, albeit not as much as other countries in the region have been. It has served both as a first transit stop as well as the final destination for refugees seeking shelter and, possibly, a better life. Particularly in the second half of the 1990s, several waves occurred of Afghan migrants crossing the Turkmen border illegally in their thousands, sometimes with yurts, entire households and livestock, and settling, or being interned, in Turkmenistan's hinterland and causing headaches for the oppressive Turkmenbashi regime. As in all previous instances, little aggregate data are available concerning this politically sensitive topic. Still, there have been credible reports of instances where refugees were involuntarily handed back to the ruling Taliban regime from which they had previously fled, much to the outrage of international human rights organizations.[48] In total some 13,000 refugees were officially reported to have been granted asylum in Turkmenistan by 2004,[49] mostly from amongst the ethnic Turkmens of Afghanistan and Tajikistan, whose integration into Turkmen society was reasonably expected to be smoother than in the case of other ethnic and national groups.

Whilst definitely no longer negligible, Turkmenistan's activities in the humanitarian domain still lack one important feature that would make transborder interaction a true people-to-people policy: the existence of spaces in which spontaneous initiatives arise from below. For the moment all activities are limited to those authorized by the government and as such remain rather narrow in both scope and outreach, targeting almost exclusively the Turkmen diaspora in the provinces of Afghanistan's north

[47] TDH, "Turkmenistan neuklonno sleduet svoei politike mirotvorchestva v regione. Peregovory mezhdu Prezidentom Turkmenistana i Prezidentom Islamskoi Respubliki Afganistan," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, May 30, 2011; and TDH, "Priumnozhaia sozidatel'nyi i mirotvorchieskii potentsial turkmeno-afganskogo sotrudnichestva. Peregovory mezhdu Prezidentom Turkmenistana i Prezidentom Islamskoi Respubliki Afganistan," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, January 26, 2012.

[48] Nikolai Mitrokhin and Vitalii Ponomarev, *Turkmenistan: gosudarstvennaia politika i prava cheloveka 1995-1998* (Moscow: Pravozashchitnyi tsentr Memorial, 1999), 107–10.

[49] Tamara Molina, "Zdes' bratstvo – obychai i druzhba – zakon…," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan,* July 8, 2004.

and north-west. It is also here that the expected propaganda effect arising from these measures is at its greatest. Thus, for instance, since the early 1990s Afghan Turkmens have regularly been invited to attend the high-profile conferences of the Humanitarian Association of the World Turkmens, a government-affiliated body that strives to cultivate relations with the Turkmen diaspora abroad. Aside from this, Turkmenistan's humanitarian aid supplied to Afghanistan often consists of items such as books about the President (many of which have supposedly been written by him) that are of little practical value to people in need.[50] In addition to this, a very restrictive visa regime is in place that applies to foreign nationals including citizens of Afghanistan and which effectively hampers free transborder contacts. Nevertheless, a solid potential exists, largely as a side-effect of the joint infrastructure projects, which have been part of broader international efforts aimed at Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction that presuppose the integration of both Turkmenistan and Afghanistan within a wider regional context. However, the implementation of these projects is still pending and will depend not only on the political will of all concerned but also on the stabilization of the security situation in Afghanistan, the prospects of which remain unclear.

## Border Security

In the long term perspective, border security is the key security problem pertaining to Turkmenistan's policy towards neighboring Afghanistan. Unlike Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the two other post-Soviet states directly neighboring Afghanistan, Turkmenistan has afforded comparably little attention to the security of the border with Afghanistan after 1991. Doctrinal blueprints of Turkmenistan typically define the main threats for national

[50] For a report from one such early humanitarian mission to north Afghanistan, see TDH, "Turkmenistan – Afganistan: razvivaia traditsii druzhby i dobrososedstva," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, June 26, 2004. See also the report from Berdimuhamedow's meetings with the members of the Turkmen diaspora during his official visit to Kabul in 2008 by TDH, "Lidera Turkmenistana serdechno privetstvuiut predstaviteli turkmenskoi diaspory," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, April 29, 2008.

security as stemming from within, rather than from the outside world.[51] Nevertheless, in the light of the civil turmoil in Afghanistan and the possible spread of religious fundamentalism, terrorism and the illicit trade of drugs, border security has always figured high on the Turkmenistan agenda adopted by foreign powers and relevant international bodies. In 2005, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan finally entered into negotiations over demarcation and fortification works on the perimeter of their shared border.[52] Despite some progress, it is apparent that not every effort has been made to address this issue, particularly in the light of the volumes of funds and sectoral cooperation programs made available to Turkmenistan for this purpose by the international community.[53] Since 2013, the situation on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan border has gradually deteriorated, and events there have developed into what may turn out to be perhaps the most serious challenge for the ruling Ashgabat regime since independence.

Throughout 2013 militant Afghan groups acting under the umbrella Taliban brand, including allegedly hundreds of Turkmen fighters, spread their operations farther north and approached to within direct proximity of Turkmenistan's border.[54] First violent clashes on the border erupted in February 2014, killing three of Turkmenistan's border guards and several militants. Over the second half of 2014, the security situation in north-west Afghanistan further deteriorated and clashes broke out between militants and newly formed local Turkmen militias. Fighters linking themselves to various radical Islamist groups continued to extend their theater of operations into adjacent border provinces. There were incidental reports that the militants purportedly had some links to the radical Islamists from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL; also known as the Islamic State, IS). Nonetheless it appears that this movement is still only in the process of taking root in Afghanistan. As of early 2015, they were active mostly in the southern parts

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51 See, for instance, the latest wording of Turkmenistan's military doctrine from early 2009. Voennaia doktrina nezavisimogo, postoianno neitral'nogo Turkmenistana, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, January 23, 2009.

52 TDH, "Turkmeno-afganskie peregovory v Ashkhabade," *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, September 23, 2005.

53 Authors' conclusions from their working interviews with senior officials of Turkmenistan's State Border Service, Ashgabat, November 18–25, 2013.

54 Obaid Ali, "Moving East in the North: Transitioned Faryab and the Taleban," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, May 17, 2013, http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/moving-east-in-the-north-transitioned-faryab-and-the-taleban.

of the country.[55] But with the phased transition of authority and the final pullout of the U.S. and NATO forces, this risk may become relevant.

In the case of the Islamic State successfully establishing itself in Afghanistan, Ashgabat could be faced with a real threat as it is reasonable to assume that these militants would not necessarily respect current international borders and would attempt to destabilize Turkmenistan's secular regime from both outside and within.[56] Hypothetically, there is a risk that the radicals could take over the water management facilities in Turkmenistan and thereby shift the water resources away from the Amu Darya River and the main Garagum canal. The border area with Afghanistan is particularly vulnerable in terms of water security because its waters feed into most of the territory of Turkmenistan, which lies farther downstream. For the moment, however, it does not seem likely that the insurgents would be in a position to accomplish technically complex interventions in the existing water flow systems.[57] Facing worsening security along its borders, Ashgabat seems likewise concerned about the safety of the giant gas fields located in the south-east of the country. Unlike in Syria and Iraq, where oil is a major source of income for the Islamic State, however, the groups that operate near the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan border could not reliably count on the possibility of similar sales. The transportation of natural gas here depends almost entirely on gas pipeline systems.

Despite the fact that the imminent threat for Turkmenistan is still quite low, the incidental raids conducted by militant groups from Afghanistan have already forced Turkmenistan's leadership to engage in intense dialog with its southern neighbor, with a view of creating a buffer zone along the joint border in order to prevent armed insurgency on the territory of Turkmenistan. After some initial communication with the tribal elders and spiritual leaders in the north and north-west of Afghanistan, Ashgabat seems to have

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[55] Borhan Osman, "The Shadows of 'Islamic State' in Afghanistan: What threat does it hold?," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, February 12, 2015, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-shadows-of-islamic-state-in-afghanistan-what-threat-does-it-hold/; and Don Rassler, "Situating the Emergence of the Islamic State of Khorasan," *Combating Terrorism Center Sentinel* 8, no. 3 (March 2015): 7–11.

[56] Dzhumaguly Annayev, "Turkmen-Afghans confront Taliban on their own," *Central Asia Online,* September 9, 2014; and Dzhumaguly Annayev, "ISIL raises flag on Turkmen-Afghan border," *Central Asia Online*, February 5, 2015, both retreived from http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/, March 1, 2015.

[57] Alexander Knyazev, "Pod ugrozoi postavki gaza v Kitai iz Srednei Azii," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, February 2, 2015, http://www.ng.ru/courier/2015-02-02/11_turkmen.html.

backtracked from the idea of providing support to the local Turkmen militias. Instead, it adopted unprecedented steps to seal the border.[58] In 2014, in a rare move for unilateral demarcation, Turkmenistan's border troops captured pastures on the Amu Darya islands traditionally used by local Afghan Turkmens.[59] Further reshuffles are taking place within the military forces. Regular border guards are now being complemented and slowly replaced by elite army units. Meanwhile, Turkmenistan's sappers have started digging ditches and erecting additional perimeter protection fences. Here, Turkmenistan relies on the elements of a relatively well-equipped intrusion detection system inherited from the Soviet Union, which has been recently improved to some extent.[60] However, in the event of a concentrated insurgency or raid these border fortifications and barriers will be easy to penetrate, as was demonstrated several times already during 2014 and early 2015. In addition, a complete refurbishment and improvement of the fortification facilities along the entire borderline will take time and remains a challenge for Ashgabat to resolve before an armed insurgency eventually occurs.

Turkmenistan further encounters the problem of lacking well-trained border guards and army units that would be able to cover the entire perimeter of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan border. Poor organization of military recruitment as well as corruption and hazing are the main reasons for the persistently low combat readiness of Turkmenistan's border troops.[61] In order to reverse these trends, Turkmenistan implemented an acceleration of recruiting conscripts from among secondary-school graduates, university students and those studying abroad during the summer season of 2014.[62] Later that year, Turkmenistan's Defense Ministry began to mobilize reserves and launched a campaign designed to attract volunteers to serve in the

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58 Bruce Pannier and Muhammad Tahir, "Turkmenistan's New Afghan Border Policy," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, October 10, 2014, http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-afghanistan-border-policy/26631200.html.

59 Bruce Pannier and Muhammad Tahir, "Local Hopes Raised After Turkmen-Afghan Border Meeting," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 5, 2014, www.rferl.org/content/turkmen-afghan-border-dispute/25374099.html.

60 Ruslan M., "Turkmensko-Afganskaia granitsa: Problemy i perspektivy," *Khronika Turkmenistana*, May 7, 2014, http://www.chrono-tm.org/2014/05/turkmensko-afganskaya-granitsa-problemyi-i-perspektivyi/.

61 Arkadii Simakov, "Taliban sozdaet novye ugrozy na turkmeno-afganskoi granitse?," *Centrasia.ru*, February 2, 2015, http://www.centrasia.ru/newsA.php?st=1422825480.

62 "Oborona ili obrazovanie," *Khronika Turkmenistana*, August 27, 2014, http://www.chrono-tm.org/2014/08/oborona-ili-obrazovanie/.

army.[63] All in all, Turkmenistan's border guards and intelligence services, in close interaction with the elite brigades of Turkmenistan's army, might yet be able to prevent or suppress attacks stemming from within. However, it is unclear whether they would be able to counter a massive armed insurgency staged from beyond its borders. It is in this context that we can read the still-unconfirmed reports from spring 2015 that state that Russia's border guard officers have returned to Turkmenistan as military instructors so as to train Turkmenistan's forces in guarding Afghanistan's border.[64]

## Conclusion

The way in which Turkmenistan approached Afghanistan in the context of establishing itself on the world scene is illustrative of the evolution of Turkmenistan's foreign policy as a whole after 1991. Conceptually labeled as neutrality, Ashgabat's foreign policy following the Soviet collapse effectively evolved into an isolationism in internationally affairs. As a consequence, relations with its neighbors suffered. Foreign policy was largely understood as an extension of domestic policies aimed at the regime's legitimization and survival. This helps to explain the prevalence of Turkmenistan's rather restrained approach in reaching out to Afghanistan. Despite the fact that Turkmenistan and Afghanistan are historically close neighbors, the level of relations remained generally low for the entire initial period following independence, and their intensity and scope, as well as prime areas of interaction, were limited. A warming of relations, while still taking place rather selectively and targeting a small number of chosen areas, became apparent only with the change of power in Turkmenistan following Turkmenbashi's death in late 2006 and is part of Turkmenistan's gradual opening to the outside world. Under Berdimuhamedow, Turkmenistan has shifted away from isolation towards a diversification of external relations,

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63 "Vsekh pod ruzh'e," *Khronika Turkmenistana*, February 9, 2015, http://www.chrono-tm.org/2015/02/vseh-pod-ruzhe/. For relevant legislation changes, see also Zakon Turkmenistana O vnesenii izmenenii i dopolneniia v Zakon Turkmenistana O voinskoi obiazannosti i voennoi sluzhbe, *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, November 22, 2014.

64 "Inostrannye voennye pomogaiut okhraniat' granitsu Turkmenistana," *Khronika Turkmenistana*, March 23, 2015, http://www.chrono-tm.org/2015/03/inostrannyie-voennyie-pomogayut-ohranyat-granitsu-turkmenistana/.

including to the states of wider Central Asia. Still, this opening of Turkmenistan, just as was the case in its former isolationism, seems to be a result of a deliberate decision on the part of its ruling elites rather than a possible by-product of a complex interplay in the dynamically changing geopolitics of the region. Hence, this may change once again should the regime's perceptions of its need for legitimization and survival further evolve.

While regional affairs have not been the primary focus of this chapter, they nonetheless are important for an understanding of Turkmenistan's select priority areas of its engagement. Turkmenistan has been traditionally most active in areas of interaction that form the financial backbone of the regime. Obviously, this concerns primarily energy and the gas exports that critically depend on safe and stable transportation routes to world markets. In this context, for Ashgabat Afghanistan is not a matter of interest merely as a trading partner per se. Rather, its importance lies in its position as a natural and logical transit country for Turkmenistan to reach out to potential customers on the Indian subcontinent who, from Ashgabat's point of view, present a welcome alternative in overcoming its inherited dependence on Russia. In this respect, the pilot project likely to have the biggest impact on Turkmenistan's international standing to date is the TAPI gas pipeline jointly developed by four countries that aims to transport Turkmenistan's natural gas through the territory of Afghanistan to the fast-growing and unsaturated energy markets of Pakistan and India. Its importance for the bilateral relations of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan is comparatively meager. Yet, a stable and viable bilateral link is absolutely vital for the successful implementation of this infrastructure project; without this link the project will remain only on paper. Framed predominantly in humanitarian terms in domestic public discourse, that is, as Turkmenistan's contribution to Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction, this "pipeline of peace" will not only give impetus to increased trade but also provide Afghanistan, as the transit country, with a source of income, create new jobs and attract investments along the planned route and, in this way, prove key to the future stability, security and prosperity of the entire region.[65] In this sense, Afghanistan is an indispensable element in the vast majority of

[65] Vystuplenie Prezidenta Turkmenistana Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedova na Sammite Turkmenistan-Afganistan-Pakistan-Indiia (Ashkhabad, 11 dekabria 2010 goda), *Neitral'nyi Turkmenistan*, December 12, 2010.

Turkmenistan's international initiatives which have been raised under the aegis of the United Nations. It lends ideological credence to the declared peace-loving nature of Turkmenistan's neutrality.

Unlike other Central Asian republics, Turkmenistan has until recently not perceived neighboring Afghanistan primarily through the prism of potential security threats arising from within this largely failed state. However, the latest Islamist insurgency and recent border clashes appear to have changed this perception of Afghanistan and induced the Ashgabat regime to take decisive measures in order to counter these threats and improve the security of its border. How serious a danger this poses is difficult to assess at present. Yet, doubts remain about the ability of Turkmenistan to withstand major external shocks such as a large armed insurgency, in particular given the bad governance, low institutional performance as well as other features of the ruling regime, the legitimization and survival of which its foreign policy seeks to achieve. Therefore, much still remains to be done in the field of border security so as to make the border between Turkmenistan and Afghanistan a true "border of friendship and peace," as most bilateral documents in this area claim in the language of institutional foreign policy.

# Tajikistan's Unsettled Security: Borderland Dynamics of the Outpost on Russia's Afghan Frontier

*Helena Rytövuori-Apunen and Furugzod Usmonov*

How does Tajikistan seek to survive as a state as well as benefit from the geographic situation in which the uncertainty over the threats and opportunities offered by "Afghanistan after 2016" relates to the wider region's future? Our question arises from the fact that the state that emerged from a devastating civil war during 1992–1997 is still very much internally cleaved. We seek to answer this by studying the action and policies of the state in relation to three problem areas. First, we examine how Tajikistan's recent internal conflicts challenge the state, as represented by its central government and regime. Second, we ask how Tajikistan's relations with Russia evolve against the backdrop of threats that are both internal and external; and, third, we discuss how Tajikistan is utilizing the moment of international cooperation to develop energy infrastructure projects aimed at alleviating the security problem which Afghanistan represents in the region. These three focal points are meant to shed light on the practices that connect Tajikistan with an emerging configuration of regional security. We begin with a brief description of the situation in Tajikistan following the civil war that had left 60,000 dead, 100,000 missing and created 55,000 orphans.

The Peace Accords were agreed upon in June 1997, nine months after the Taliban had taken power in Kabul, Afghanistan. During the next two years, this agreement resulted in the formation of an interim government which included the two main parties of the United Tajik Opposition (UTO), namely the moderate Islamists (Party of Islamic Renaissance of Tajikistan, IRPT) and the Pamir party (Lal'i Badakhshan).[1] The core idea of the peace deal was the notion that power-sharing would incorporate the opposition into the central and local military, police and civil bodies on the basis of a thirty-percent quota. This was a political compromise meant to disarm and include the former guerrilla groups in a country-wide regime system cutting through all administrative levels and setting up the basis for the common state. The

[1] The third party was the small Democratic Party of Tajikistan.

more extreme political Islamist groups fled to Afghanistan and, later, to Pakistan; and the militant anti-Islamists again escaped to Uzbekistan.[2] The peace deal, which had been brokered by the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with the UN, thus remained under pressure from both sides from across the borders. The following decades did not consolidate the formula meant to establish legitimacy for a national state. In late August 2015, an order by the Ministry of Justice banned the IRPT, which since 1999 had been the only officially registered Islamic party in Central Asia and which had been poised to win the position of the second largest party in the country in the spring 2015 parliamentary elections. One month later, Tajikistan's Supreme Court declared the party to be an extremist and a terrorist organization.[3] The peace deal, which over many years was seen to set an example for Afghanistan, had ultimately failed, and the secular regime that had established its power already during the civil war with Russia's support prevailed alone in an increasingly polarizing country.

The political polarization which sets the supporters of a secular regime against various pro-Islamic forces intertwines with the dividing lines between regions where, during the civil war, armed groups fought for either the control of central power in Dushanbe or for greater autonomy from it. In the civil war the north led by factions from Leninabad (today's Khujand), which were competing yet also allied with eastern Khatlon (led by factions from Kulyab), fought against the Islamists with strongholds in Rasht in central Tajikistan, Gorno-Badakhshan in the south-east and Qurghonteppa (western Khatlon) in the south. Simultaneously Gorno-Badakhshan, which had been an Autonomous Oblast' (termed GBAO) in Soviet-era Tajikistan, fought for

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2 John Heathershaw and Edmund Herzig, "Introduction: The Sources of Statehood in Tajikistan," *Central Asian Survey* 30, no. 1 (April 2011): 5–19; see also Mohammad-Reza Djalili, Frédéric Grare, and Shirin Akiner, eds., *Tajikistan: The Trials of Independence* (New York: Routledge, 1998).

3 The ban on the Islamist party was introduced in 1993 and lifted again in 1999. In the March 2015 parliamentary elections, the Islamic Renaissance Party failed to pass the 5 percent vote barrier. Partial results had predicted that the party would win 7.7 percent of the votes, which would have made it the second-largest party. OSCE observers reported that the elections did not meet democratic standards. Qishloq Ovozi, "A Pyrrhic Victory In Tajik Parliamentary Elections," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, March 5, 2015, http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-islam-elections-parliament-history/26883637.html. For official information on the outlawing of the IRPT, see "Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan is declared extremist terrorist organization, and its activities are prohibited," *Khovar*, September 30, 2015, http://www.khovar.tj/eng/content/islamic-renaissance-party-tajikistan-declared-extremist-terrorist-organization-and-its.

more self-determination. A further feature of the anatomy of the initially fractured Tajikistani geobody is that its borders are not congruent with the idea of a bounded geographic identity. Like elsewhere in post-Soviet Central Asia, the borders of the state are fused with ethnic connections intertwined with family networks and economic activity. In terms of population, the greatest fusion is with Afghanistan: the Panj River leaves more ethnic Tajiks on the Afghan side (7–8 million in the north-eastern regions) than within the Republic of Tajikistan (80 percent of a total population of 7.5 million).[4] Even though Afghan and Tajik people have been separated since 1895, when the borderline was demarcated on the basis of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1872, Tajiks living on either side of the Panj River have maintained a bond of kinship and "brotherhood." During the years of heavy fighting in the civil war (1992–1995), groups from Afghanistan supported the Tajik Islamic opposition, and Tajikistan's territory provided shelter for the Northern Alliance fighting against the Taliban between 1996 and 2001. Following this Tajikistan became a part of the logistics network set up in the region for the ISAF, and the Dushanbe airport was used by mainly the French military contingent.

Simultaneously the state border with Afghanistan is Tajikistan's only border lacking controversy over the allocation of territory. The border between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is still largely mined and reveals the deep hostilities that surfaced after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The border to Kyrgyzstan is fraught with inter-communal conflict that is intertwined with land issues; and pressure from the Chinese government to buy land from eastern Tajikistan has proved too great for Dushanbe to resist. However, even if the relations between Dushanbe and Kabul are unproblematic in comparison with these other neighbors (and a possible return to power by the Taliban in Kabul is unlikely to change the situation much), the threat that developments in Afghanistan will pull Tajikistan deep into conflict is real because instability in Afghanistan reinforces the tensions that in Tajikistan have remained below the surface of the unifying projects of the state after 1997. In recent years (that is, during a time which coincides with the preparation of the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO-led troops from Afghanistan),

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4 Afghanistan's population of 30 million (in 2012) is 42 percent Pashtun, 27 percent Tajik, 9 percent Hazara, 9 percent Uzbek, 4 percent Aimak, 3 percent Turkmen, 2 percent Baloch; the remaining 4 percent are made up of smaller groups. "Tajiks" in Tajikistan includes Pamiri-language speakers; in the USSR before 1937 such speakers had been registered as nationalities separate from Tajiks.

Tajikistan has experienced several incidents of violent insurgency which, even when occurring deep within Tajikistani territory, have arisen through transborder connections and caused tension with neighboring states. All this means that the government in Tajikistan is already greatly burdened with problems resulting from fragmented power even while being expected by the international community to show that the Tajikistani state is “fit” to ward off security threats seen to be shared by other regional states and external powers.

The border to Afghanistan is heavily defended through the security guarantees given by Russia and the CSTO, and also the U.S. and China provide technical and material support in strengthening this border. The paradox of this international security cooperation and assistance is that whilst it strengthens external defense it also risks contributing to the increase of internal tensions in an already divided country. International cooperation for the security of borders is an authoritative statement about the existence of threats and can be used to support the legitimacy of measures that risk reproducing the conflicts left by the civil war inside the country. This situation is illustrated by the fact that the dissolution of the IRPT in early September 2015 coincided with armed attacks in the capital and in its vicinity, leaving at least 45 people (including 13 soldiers) dead, many wounded and some 139 detained in an anti-terrorist operation. General Abdukhalim Nazarzoda, a former deputy defense minister, and a group of his supporters were killed in an armed operation carried out by units of the Ministry of the Interior in the Romit Gorge some 150 kilometers from Dushanbe. This took place a few days after the occurrence of violent incidents that included weapons seizure and attacks on the police; the group was accused for planning a coup in favor of Islamic political forces within the country and charged with treason and terrorism. General Nazarzoda was one of the former UTO leaders who had been incorporated into the fragile power-sharing system but who ultimately came to symbolize its failure due to internal rivalries and power struggles. Russian commentary marginalized the significance of the events and Russian authorities reconfirmed their support for Tajikistan.[5] In the same month the CSTO held its summit in Dushanbe and Tajikistan hosted the Exercise Regional Cooperation 2015 organized by the U.S. Central Command, and the

[5] “Armed clashes in Tajikistan entail no destabilization in that country—CSTO Chief,” *TASS*, September 18, 2015, http://tass.ru/en/world/822247.

U.S. also announced a delivery of tactical equipment to Tajikistan's police. These were scheduled events, yet the temporal connection made them into signs of support for the regime.[6]

In the section that follows we examine how Tajikistan's initially fragile and forcibly welded political "geobody" takes shape in the signification of the "frontier land" through the government's responses, both verbal and kinetic, to three outbursts of violence which have created security alerts in Tajikistan during the 2010s: the Rasht events of 2010; the violence in Khorog in 2012; and the long-enduring conflict complex in Ferghana which, in 2014, attracted attention within the CSTO because it had started to impact state relations between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The three series of events all connect with different regions and border dynamics in Tajikistan. We then proceed to examine the role that Russia is taking as the guarantor of security in Tajikistan and the policies through which Tajikistan is striving to expand its space for deliberation and bargaining in determining their common interest. As an external border of the CSTO, Tajikistan's border with Afghanistan is a "common border."[7] Tajikistan hosts Russia's largest ground-force base beyond Russia's own borders and is firmly aligned with Russia. The 201st Russian Military Base (formerly Soviet 201st Motorized Rifle Division) near Dushanbe, with branches in Qurghonteppa and Kulyab in the south and with some 7,500 military troops (and announced plans to increase the number to 9,000), is emphasized in Moscow to be Russia's "outpost" on the southern CIS borders.[8] Following an examination of these issues, we discuss how the Tajikistani leadership seeks to benefit from the increased international interest that has propelled the states in Central Asia to the center of international efforts to foster economic and social development in and around Afghani-

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6 "Exercise Regional Cooperation has Nothing to do with Recent Security Operation Conducted in Tajikista [sic]," *ASIA-Plus*, Dushanbe, September 23, 2015, http://news.tj/en/news/exercise-regional-cooperation-has-nothing-do-recent-security-operation-conducted-tajikista.

7 Embassy of the Russian Federation in the Republic of Tajikistan, "Interv'iu Posla Rossii v Tadzhikistane I.S. Liakina-Frolova 'Narodnoi gazete'," accessed October 12, 2015, http://www.rusemb.tj/ru/index/index/pageId/535; "Prognozy po Afganistanu vse bolee pessimistichny," (Interview of Ambassador I.S. Liakin-Frolov), *Kommersant*, December 10, 2013, http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2364685.

8 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Interv'iu stats-sekretaria – zamestitelia Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii G.B. Karasina gazete 'Kommersant', 10 Sentiabria 2013 goda," September 10, 2013, http://www.mid.ru/BDOMP/Brp_4.nsf/arh/0E159670A3714F2344257BE200225B0B?OpenDocument.

stan. We conclude with a summary of the patterns of policies which shape Tajikistan in its uncertain situation.

## Tajikistan's "Problematic Regions": Recent Violent Encounters and Security Alerts

### *Rasht, August–September 2010*

On August 23, 2010, a group of twenty-five prisoners in Jail No. 1 of Dushanbe City escaped from the prison, killing several security guards, and scattering throughout the country. The escapees included not only criminals but also political prisoners. The Tajik government sent troops under the Ministry of Defense to search for the fugitives in all the regions of the country. On September 19, 2010, the motorcade of the Ministry of Defense, which had been sent to the Rasht region to locate fugitives, was attacked by an armed group. According to official data, 28 people died in a shootout; the number given by non-official sources was about 40. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) claimed responsibility for the attack. In a video the IMU announced its demand that the government was to abandon its current domestic and foreign policies.[9] The IMU has systematically organized armed attacks aimed at establishing the rule of an Islamic state in Central Asia. According to the government's version of events, the aim of the attack was to impede the law enforcement agencies from performing the tasks by which they represent the authority of the present regime and to gain control over the eastern part of Tajikistan.

The Tajik government announced that the leaders of the group behind the armed attack in Rasht were well-known Tajik warlords from the civil war—Mullo Abdullo (Abdullo Rahimov), Ali Bedaki (Alovuddin Davlatov) and Mirzokhuja Akhmadov. According to official sources, this group was attacking motorcades with the support of international terrorist networks. Several dead bodies of ethnically non-Tajik insurgents were brought forward as evidence. The Tajik government reacted "symmetrically"—with a determined use of military force—to what it unequivocally described as a terrorist

[9] Maksim Kulinov, "Ubiitsy tadzhikskikh voennykh obeshchaiut novye terakty," *Segodnia,* September 24, 2010, http://www.segodnia.ru/content/13998.

attack. In January 2011 government sources released the news that Ali Bedaki had been killed during military action. However, at the same time a video was posted on the internet that showed the detained Ali Bedaki being interrogated by government authorities. A short while later the government made an official announcement that the detainee in the video was not the real Ali Bedaki. Further, Tajikistan's most infamous terrorist, Mullo Abdullo, was killed during a military operation in Rasht in April 2011. This field commander in the civil war, who had rejected the 1997 Peace Accords and remained mainly on the Afghan side of the border ever since then, was rumored to have been establishing a terrorist camp in Rasht. Only Mirzohuja Akhmadov was granted amnesty during the military action for his loyalty and support of the government troops.

From the very beginning of the civil war onward the Rasht region had been the cradle of Tajikistan's Islamic opposition. By its heavy-handed military response to the attack in the gorge the Tajik government demonstrated that it had complete control over the country's territory. The result of these actions was the establishment of a power vertical which subordinated the Rasht region to Dushanbe's control. Through its response the government also made clear its uncompromising attitude towards anybody wishing to mobilize political forces for regime change. This message was sent not only to the local inhabitants; the Tajik authorities repeatedly made statements that they were aware of who had been supporting Tajikistan's domestic terrorists. This reference to outside forces was easily deciphered due to the fact that the Tajik radical Islamic opposition from Rasht had the reputation of being deeply connected with militant insurgent networks such as the IMU and the Taliban. The group attacking the motorcade was reported to be a combination of Tajik, Uzbek, Afghan and Arab radical Islamists. Following the government's military action in Rasht, region-wide insurgent organizations lost one of their strongholds in Central Asia. In addition to this, the Dushanbe government had now also accomplished the elimination of various key figures of the militant opposition of the civil war era. Since the civil war, Tajikistan has lived with the shadowy figures of the former "warlords." Some of these have physically returned to Tajikistan, whilst some repeatedly return to people's minds; yet already the rumors and stories of these nebulous figures of the former warlords of the civil war have had a mobilizing—and dividing—effect on the population, especially in rural areas.

It is reasonable to assume that the insurgents did indeed have connections with the Taliban and the IMU; the latter of these had already shown its presence in Afghanistan a decade earlier and were known to operate from the border zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Whether it was the IMU that was actually behind the attack is a different question; yet to assume this is to legitimize the use of force in the state's response. Credibility is stretched when the logical truth that an ethnic Uzbek or Afghan is not Tajik is suggested to further demonstrate that there are "foreigners" inside Tajikistan's borders who are participating in terrorist activities. The information that is available does not reveal from which side of the legal state border the non-Tajik insurgents came. Such facts are difficult to establish in a multi-ethnic region where family bonds extend beyond borders, and it is hardly credible that the official information on the origin of the insurgents could be based on identity papers carried by the insurgents. Interpretations driven by ideas and conventional concepts (the state confined by its borders, nationals vs. non-nationals) are useful in broadening the frame of legitimate action and make it possible to perform legal action in terms of one law rather than another. Although the evidence is not clear in multiethnic Tajikistan, where Uzbek and Afghan ethnic faces are encountered every day, the features argued to demonstrate the presence of "foreign" elements make it possible to frame the events as terrorism steered from abroad. Such interpretations also contribute to an ethnonationalist project of state-building by constructing a distinctly "national" project of security.

Another question crucial for the meaning of the event is whether the militant insurgents included ethnic Arabs and whether the event, on this basis, can be called "international terrorism" in a wider sense rather than merely regional connections? The evidence provided by official information sources consisted in photographs of bodies, which are data easily manipulated by modern techniques. Again, we cannot know how facts were used to support the argument by which the global war on terror is used to legitimize action eliminating figures (both corporeal and mythical) that have remained from the civil war and that are perceived as acute threats today. The horizon of interpretation we need to introduce in order to make sense of the events and the government's responses that they elicit hinges on the specific future envisioned by decision-makers in Dushanbe. It was important for the government to gain control of the Rasht region before it could become a node in international militant insurgent networks. This is a real threat if and when the Tali-

ban intensify their fight, even if their own goals remain focused on Afghanistan. In the stress moment over the uncertainty of the future of Afghanistan, the government in Dushanbe is under pressure to show that it is capable of controlling its own territory and of fulfilling the tasks expected of an independent state.

### *The Pamir, July 2012*

In 2011 Tajikistan's parliament acquiesced to China's territorial claims and allowed 5.5 percent of Tajikistani territory in the mountainous Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast' to be ceded to China. The fact that this raised civil protests nowhere else other than in this region itself tells about the political isolation of this ethnically non-Tajik part of Tajikistan from the rest of the country. While Dushanbe was content in having been able to reduce China's demands by fifty percent, within GBAO the deal re-awakened civil war-era arguments about the need for the devolution of the central state.[10] The Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (Pamir) has never been effectively included into the judicial system of the republic since Tajikistan became independent. The institutions representing the central power—the Court of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Prosecutor's Office of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region of the Republic of Tajikistan—have little legitimacy in the eyes of the local people and it is local leaders who hold authority in judicial matters. During the Soviet decades this ethnically and geographically distinct region was an external border of the USSR directly linked to Moscow as a special military district which residents from elsewhere in Tajikistan could not enter without a special permit. But although the entire GBAO was a border region towards China, the far-western parts of China were still habitually closer to the population along the ethnically mixed border than were Dushanbe, Tashkent or Moscow; these capitals were distant not only logistically and geographically but also because of Soviet state practices.[11]

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[10] "Tajikistan cedes land to China," *BBC*, January 13, 2011, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-pacific-12180567.

[11] Steven Parham, "'Rightful' versus 'Real' Homelands: Changing Concepts of Kyrgyz Boundaries and Belonging on the China-Kyrgyzstan Frontier," *Asian Ethnicity* 15, no. 3 (July 2014): 265–85.

In July 2012 conflict culminated in a violent encounter between government troops and local inhabitants and resulted in a large number of casualties. This was preceded by a series of incidents, among them occasions on which prosecutors and other representatives of the republic's juridical system as well as members of the police staff had been physically abused by local leaders. The murder of General Abdullo Nazarov, the head of the Pamiri branch of the Committee of National Security, on July 21, 2012, in the vicinity of Khorog was the event which triggered Dushanbe's response. The official authorities announced that the General had been killed by order of Tolibek Ayombekov, a local criminal leader accused of drug trafficking and the smuggling of tobacco and gemstones. Ayombekov had a background of being a "warlord" in the civil war and, until recently, he was deputy chief of the border unit in the Ishkashim district.[12] His person illustrates how, at the conclusion of the civil war, the militia of the opposition forces laid down their arms and became a part of the state, contesting "their share of the rents of statehood."[13]

When the events in Khorog were officially reported, their course at first seemed relatively clear: the central government had shown its determination to punish the General's murderers. The population of Khorog, the region and the entire country could sigh in relief because the government troops and the armed Pamir groups had agreed on a truce and thereby suspended the military operation with its use of air, artillery and special units of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the Committee of National Security. Imam Aga Khan had once again demonstrated his skill at successfully concluding a peacemaking mission: Ayombekov, who initially argued that the operation was a pretext for increasing the grip of central power over the region, himself emphasized that his group surrendered their weapons because Imam Aga Khan had asked them to do so and to cease fighting against the government.[14] However, the situation at the conclusion of the military action was far more contradictory.

The government of Tajikistan had sent around 800 troops (or more than 1000, according to some media sources) to Khorog, where they were faced

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12 Statement of the General Prosecutor's office of the Republic of Tajikistan, "Za chto ubili generala Nazarova?," *Avesta.tj*, July 28, 2012, http://www.avesta.tj/goverment/13360-za-chto-ubili-generala-nazarova.html.

13 Jesse Driscoll quoted in Heathershaw and Herzig, "The Sources of Statehood," 11.

14 "Interv'iu Toliba Aiombekova pered sdachei," InoZpress Press Digest (source: *Radio Svoboda*), August 15, 2012, http://inozpress.kg/news/view/id/36829.

with fierce armed resistance by a group of local leaders whom the government termed "militants." The active stage of the military action took place on July 24, 2012. According to official data, 30 people from a militant criminal group and 12 members of the law enforcement bodies of the Republic of Tajikistan died while a further 23 people were injured. According to a number of other (including Russian) media sources about 200 people died, more than half of whom were unarmed, ordinary citizens.[15] As opposed to the Rasht events, in which the majority of the population supported the government and were able to accept the harsh military measures, the events in the Pamirs divided public opinion throughout the country. In Rasht militant insurgents, allegedly affiliated with radical international jihadist groups, had fought against the secular regime. In Khorog, the opposition consisted of local inhabitants, both unarmed people and armed groups, and their action was aimed at increasing the autonomy of regional policies and businesses. The government defined the events in Rasht as a terrorist attack, whereas the response to the situation in the Pamirs was described as a struggle against criminal groups. Bringing the army into the region with armored personnel carriers and helicopters—an operation which necessitated closing the Khorog-Dushanbe highway and switching off internet servers—made the action appear as a massive demonstration of the state's power in the classical sense of its monopoly over the means of violence. Whether this showing of the presence of the state's power was intended to deter the pursuit of regional autonomy from governance structures or whether it was designed to crush illegal local enterprise is difficult to ascertain; in all likelihood, both reasons pertain.

The Pamiri population took an active part in the information war against the government's military action. Local residents had access to the mass media and international organizations, and they were able to organize a popular campaign against the government's military action through their social networks. The demonstrations organized by the Pamiri people near Tajik embassies in various countries showed that the government's regular measure—to close down Tajik and Russian internet providers—was not effective due to the wider international connections of the Pamir population. Pamiri representatives evaluated the government's actions as an ethnicity-based repres-

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15 "Okolo 200 chelovek pogibli v khode spetsoperatsii v Tadzhikistane - SMI," *RIA Novosti*, July 24, 2012, http://ria.ru/world/20120724/708131588.html.

sion of Badakhshan's inhabitants.[16] Both internal and international pressure forced the Tajik government to start negotiating an agreement with local leaders. While the government's measures in Rasht were able to benefit from the international condemnation of terrorism, in Khorog international opinion constrained action. The Tajik government also needed to take into account that a prolonged conflict would affect the economic situation. The Pamir region is one of the main gateways for the transit of goods between Tajikistan and China even if in recent years it has been losing its pre-eminence to the more accessible routes through southern Kyrgyzstan.

Very little was achieved from the government's point of view. The conflict was merely brought to a standstill but, unlike in Rasht, the central government did not continue its efforts to establish full authority over the Pamir territory. The majority of local leaders who had participated in the violent outburst remained free. No guarantees were established to prevent the conflict from reigniting, and armed clashes relating to protests prompted by the detention of locals again flared up in December, 2013 as well as in May, 2014. In summer 2012 the need to maintain a peaceful political climate before the upcoming presidential elections of November 2013 (in which the incumbent president was re-elected) was one of the reasons requiring the cessation of the conflict before it threatened to proliferate. The decision-makers in Dushanbe also had to consider the sensitivity of the political situation in Badakhshan, where local leaders have close connections with Afghan Badakhshani across the border; the latter would likely support their "brothers" were a conflict to flare up between the Pamir region and Tajikistan's central government. In light of the draw-down of the U.S. troops from Afghanistan, such cross-border bonds are likely to be further strengthened. There were also rumors—reinforced from government-related sources one year later, in July 2013—that a new country, "Greater Badakhshan" (which would combine the two regions straddling the border) is being supported by countries external to the region.[17] If "Greater Badakhshan" was in fact believed to be on the "New Great Game" chessboard in order to better control Afghanistan after the Western military withdraws, Dushanbe's show of force

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[16] In Tajikistani state practices, the Pamiri are not considered as a separate ethnic group but instead as a sub-group of the Tajik people who speak a different dialect and adhere to the Ismaili branch of Islam.

[17] "Russia and China will help prevent creation of 'Great [sic] Badakhshan,' says Tajik Expert," *ASIA-Plus*, July 12, 2013, http://news.tj/en/news/russia-and-china-will-help-prevent-creation-great-badakhshan-says-tajik-expert.

was also a message sent to the alleged plotters. However, for the domestic audience the lack of transparency about the purpose and the goals of the operation were striking. All the same it became clear that while the uncertainty over the developments in Afghanistan was an important reason for the Tajikistani government to implement its measures in Rasht, in Khorog and the Pamir region a massive use of force would generate a backlash and, ultimately, prove to be counterproductive. Alongside these local and regional dynamics, a more general, country-wide political polarization also impacts the region. The region is not spared from the crackdown on Islamist politicians that is taking place throughout the country and which affects not only radical wings but also the more moderate Islam of the IRPT, that is, of the political force which, at the conclusion of the civil war, was meant to prevent political polarization. Because the international war on terrorism has made it commonly acceptable to claim that phenomena described as political and religious "extremism" predict terrorist acts and, consequently, in legal codes and in other policies and action can be legitimately brought under the concept of the "threat of terrorism," violent acts or their preparation are not needed as evidence of the threat situations which can legally invoke the government's response, including the use of armed security units. The alleged enemy is not limited to the militant insurgency which challenges the state's authority but also includes the rather more diffuse ideological enemies, in which case the evidence of subversive activity can be as arbitrary as the existence of family relations and religious habits. This practice of political polarization, which has been present and on the increase ever since the first years following the implementation of the peace settlement, diminishes the space for a middle ground in politics and, in this way, strengthens authoritarianism. The uncertainty over Afghanistan has become a further push towards such development.

Russia did not directly involve itself in the conflict events in Rasht and the Pamirs but it did support Tajikistan's authorities through the regional institutions within the frame of the CIS and, especially, by providing military and technical assistance and training for the Tajik enforcement bodies through the CSTO. The Russian president and foreign ministry, like also the state leaders in Tajikistan's Central Asian neighbors, expressed their concern over the need to restore stability and public order in the problem regions yet

refrained from any active involvement in the conflicts.[18] Only the president of Belarus, Alexandr Lukashenko, presented a demand that the CSTO should react to the events in the Pamirs in order not to undermine its own goals as a serious organization. In his response to this demand, Nikolai Bordiuzha, the general secretary of the CSTO, underlined that the situation in Tajikistan was that country's internal affair and that its authorities were capable of solving the difficulties in question on their own. Lukashenko's intervention, just like Bordiuzha's more technically worded emphasis on the need to "monitor" the situation, shows that the CSTO continues to closely observe the situation in Tajikistan and that there are pressures to develop support which would decrease the need to become directly involved in a member state's internal conflicts.[19] In the Moscow media a few months later, Bordiuzha assured that the use of servicemen at the Russian base in Tajikistan in conflicts such as those in Khorog was categorically "ruled out" because the bilateral agreements between the two countries dealt with Russia's assistance only in relation to external threats.[20] Because non-interference applies to "internal" conflicts, it is also in Russia's interest that these conflicts can be internally contained and that its support, which continues to cleave the political landscape in the country, remains in the background.

### *Sugd, Spring 2014*

The third region in which recent violent outbursts with cross-border implications have taken place is Sugd, Tajikistan's part of the Ferghana Valley. Ever since the final years of the Soviet Union, the Ferghana Valley has been a high-risk area for violent social and interethnic conflict. Violent outbursts in recent years have arisen mostly from conflicts over development resources—in particular over land, water and road construction. Because the valley is today a habitual space divided between three states (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan

18 "IDUt k 'OKNU'?," *Novaia Gazeta*, October 21, 2010, http://www.novgaz.com/index.php/2-news/529-идут-к-'окну.'

19 Anna Analbaeva, "Pora vmeshat'sia," *Vzgliad*, July 31, 2012, http://www.vz.ru/politics/2012/7/31/591112.html.

20 "Russian troops will not be used for suppressing protests in Tajikistan, says CSTO Secretary General," *ASIA-Plus*, November 21, 2012 (the article makes reference to *RIA Novosti* and Bordiuzha's interview in *Moscow News*), http://news.tj/en/news/russian-troops-will-not-be-used-suppressing-protests-tajikistan-says-csto-secretary-general.

and Kyrgyzstan), the eruption of violence in one part of the region affects another part and, like this, becomes an issue which involves the territories of various states. The large number of enclaves and the absence of delimited and demarcated borders increase the complexity of communal and ethnic relations. The fertile valley, where land is scarce due to dense population and where one ethnic group so often lives surrounded by another, is commonly perceived as an ethno-political powder-keg. Tensions escalate when violent incidents in one country not only draw attention in the neighboring country but also prompt it to mobilize its security forces to prevent the disorder from spreading, thereby unleashing mutual accusations over the operation of foreign agencies and terrorist groups in their respective territories. The role of the Ferghana Valley as one of the main routes ("the North corridor") for narcotics from Afghanistan and its reputation, brought about in the late 1990s, for being a "hub" of Islamic activities, increase the complexity of conflict at the inter-state level.

Ethnically polarized conflicts between the Kyrgyz, Tajik and Uzbek populations have occurred frequently over the past three years in the Kyrgyzstani Batken and Osh regions.[21] On January 11, 2014, a border skirmish over road construction resulted in violent conflict that included hostage-taking amongst the Tajik and Kyrgyz populations in the enclaves in the undemarcated border zone between the two countries.[22] During May 7–8, about 60 people on both sides were reported to have been injured in interethnic clashes which resulted in the blockage of the Isfara-Vorukh road by the Kyrgyz and the Batken-Isfara road by the Tajiks; the former road runs through a Kyrgyz village, and the latter through a Tajik village. Because these territories are deeply intertwined violence has erupted on the Kyrgyz as well as the Tajik (and Uzbek) sides, even if media attention has focused on Kyrgyzstan in particular.[23] The neighboring states have complained that Kyrgyzstan's social

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21 "Vorukh vyshel iz blokady," *Radio Ozodi*, April 28, 2013, http://rus.ozodi.org/content/tensions-in-vorukh-ended/24970574.html; Malika Sharif, "Kak izmenilis' otnosheniia mezhdu kirgizami i uzbekami posle konflikta," *Deutsche Welle online*, July 22, 2010, http://dw.com/p/ORdt.

22 "Na kirgizsko-tadzhikskoi granitse proizoshla perestrelka mezhdu pogranichnikami, est' ranenye," *REGNUM*, January 11, 2014, http://www.regnum.ru/news/17533343.html#ixzz2s4fyQ1Ta.

23 "Rasstrel demonstrantov v Andizhane – prestuplenie, ne imeiushchee istoricheskoi davnosti," *Jarayon.com*, May 23, 2015, http://jarayon.com/ru/index.php/2012-04-03-17-13-06/

and ethnic tensions and political conflict, as well as Bishkek's changing regimes, have resulted in the inability of the country's central authorities to properly govern the difficult territory in the south of Kyrgyzstan. Kyrgyzstan, for its part, has blamed local Tajiks for "hooliganism," and initiatives were formulated that ranged from closing the border crossing points to increasing the fees for transit, although these were only partly implemented. Alexander Knyazev, a Russian analyst, expressed the opinion that "the Kyrgyz officials are looking for an external enemy to mobilize the population; and Tajikistan, in comparison with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, with which the Kyrgyz Republic also has border tensions, is the least dangerous country."[24] Both countries started constructing longer road routes that bypass the villages populated by the titular ethnic group of the neighboring country.

However, the fact that closing the border would have negative consequences for the economies of both countries ultimately pushed the two governments to try to resolve the conflict by diplomatic means. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have had a joint border commission since 2002 and have been able to define 50–60 percent of their almost one-thousand kilometer-long mutual borderline. Although the CSTO, of which both countries are members, refrained from openly intervening in the conflicts that erupted in spring 2014, its assistance was clear from the results of the visit of the organization's Secretary General, Nikolai Bordiuzha, to Dushanbe and Bishkek in February 2014: after this meeting Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan continued their negotiations without further outbursts of violence.[25] Earlier, in late spring 2010, the social upheaval and interethnic violence between Uzbek and Kyrgyz populations in south-western Kyrgyzstan and the city of Osh had demonstrated how such conflicts could create dissent within the organization and negatively affect its reputation. In spring 2015, at a time when Tajikistan and

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item/347-rasstrel-demonstrantov-v-andizhane-prestuplenie-ne-imeyushchee-istoricheskoj-davnosti; "Tadzhiksko-kirgizskii konflikt: Dolgoe molchanie Tadzhikistana bylo obosnovano," *Pressa.tj*, January 16, 2015, http://rus.pressa.tj/news/tadzhiksko-kirgizskiy-konflikt-dolgoe-molchanie-tadzhikistana-bylo-obosnovano.

24 Alexander Knyazev interviewed in Viktoriia Panfilova, "Kirgizy s tadzhikami deliat nebo," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, January 29, 2014, http://www.ng.ru/cis/2014-01-29/7_kirgizia.html.

25 "ODKB sledit za protsessom uregulirovaniia pogranichnogo konflikta i predlagaet konsul'tativnuiu pomoshch'," *KGinform*, January 16, 2014, as cited in CSTO "Informatsionnyi Biulleten' Sekretariata ODKB," January 17, 2014, http://www.odkb-csto.org/obzor-pressy/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=3162; Denis Kozhemiakin, "Bordiuzha kak bordiur mezhdu kirgizami i tadzhikami," *Soiuz nezavisimykh zhurnalistov Tsentral'noi Azii*, February 15, 2014, http://ca-snj.com/bordyuzha-kak-bordyur-mezhdu-kirgizami-i-tadzhikami.

Kyrgyzstan were already in diplomatic negotiations to solve the problems of communal violence in Ferghana, they also confirmed their willingness to cooperate in their search for solutions to these conflicts within the frame of the CIS.

Both the tightened security situation in the region as well as the benefits that are expected to accrue from mutual economic cooperation have brought Dushanbe and Bishkek together in trying to find solutions to communal violence in the Ferghana Valley. However, without Uzbekistan's participation the bilateral efforts to control the flow of drugs and militant insurgency cannot be effective.[26] In the Alay mountain ranges the borders of the three states converge in rough terrain that shelters illegal trade routes as well as insurgent groups linked with IMU and Hizb ut-Tahrir. If the routes in Ferghana were closed they could be redirected through Pamir areas, and new air routes using small planes across the largely mined land border of Uzbekistan could also be opened. The hostilities between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, which have to do with historical conflicts and present-day economic and energy relations, have created obstacles to the mutual cooperation of the two countries throughout the years of their independence. Tajikistan's tightened policies towards the political forces of Islam have an appeasing effect on relations with Uzbekistan because Dushanbe's moderate policies were not initially in line with Tashkent's expectations. Throughout the three countries' years of independence Uzbekistan's suppression of radical Islam has pushed these forces across its borders. More recently this has meant that the IMU has connected with especially the activity of Jamaat Ansarullah ("Allah Associates Society") in the north of Tajikistan—a group that has been vocal in condemning the Russian military presence in Tajikistan.[27] Closing the front of radical Islam in the intersection of the three countries requires Uzbekistan's cooperation; and burying the peace deal by banning the IRPT is conducive towards this end.

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[26] The borderline between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan is 1,378 km, of which 337 km have been agreed upon (as of June 2014); the rest remains disputed and under negotiation.

[27] Igor Rotar, "Moscow and Dushanbe Strengthen Their Military Alliance," *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, no. 184 (October 16, 2013), http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=41493&tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=685&no_cache=1#.VqNjKY9OJy0.

## Negotiating Frontier Security with Russia

In the military sense Russia's role in Tajikistan today does not fundamentally differ from the role it played there during the civil war when it sent forces to secure the Dushanbe airport and the Afghan border, nominally in the CIS frame and under the Tashkent treaty (CST). However, while this backing at that time was used to weld together a country from the pieces of the former Soviet republic, today its military presence provides external backing to the burial of the process envisioned in the Peace Accords. From the point of view of both Russia and Tajikistan, the dilemma is that while insecurity in the wider region seems to necessitate tightening the belt of security vis-a-vis not only the Taliban but also the Islamic State (IS) which provides support and intermingles with regional insurgency, this belt also threatens to break up Tajikistan from the inside and to deepen the conflict north of the Panj and Amu Darya rivers.

Russia's two-track approach in security cooperation, which includes multilateral cooperation in the CSTO and cooperation based on bilateral agreements, provides it with a decisive role in most issues while at the same time allowing it to use the formal legitimacy of the multilateral frame of co-operation. Such complementarity is practical in the situation that pertains here, where the organization's collective security (that is, aggression against one is considered as aggression against all) applies at the Afghan border, but the actual threat from the south as well as from other directions appears in other forms. Terrorism, religious extremism and narcotraffic are the actual issues on the cooperation agenda between Russia and Tajikistan. On the eve of 2015, Russia's special representative to Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov, warned that up to five thousand "Islamists" were concentrated in northern Afghanistan and that at least three camps were each training some fifty militants every two months with recruits from the Central Asian countries.[28] While the Taliban is growing with these non-Pashtun groups, this ebbing towards Afghanistan threatens to turn into a returning flood, thereby creating a new "Afghan front" for Russia and leading to the crumbling of the outer edge of its power that had been set by the Soviet withdrawal in 1989. This

[28] "Russian Ambassador Warns of Afghan Problems Spilling across Border," *ASIA-Plus*, Dushanbe, December 30, 2014, http://news.tj/en/news/russian-ambassador-warns-afghan-problems-spilling-across-border. Kabulov's original interview was given to *Interfax*.

means that Tajikistan's role is more than one of being merely a control zone for violent insurgency and illegal economic transactions: it is also a zone of containment for ideological influence.

Russia has a long historical tradition of flexible outer borders that intertwine geopolitics and ideology, and the habitual space shared by Tajiks inside Afghanistan has played a significant role in such frontier dynamics in Central Asia. Historians have argued that the Tajik Soviet Socialist Republic, which was established in December 1929 to replace the Tajik ASSR within the Uzbek SSR, was actually formed to reflect and politically utilize the closely bonded relations between Tajiks on both sides of the bordering river.[29] By providing the Tajik population with the privilege of having their own titular republic within the USSR, Moscow's decision-makers wished to attract the "new Afghanistan" and bring it under Soviet influence. Such an opportunity existed when, in early 1929, ethnic Tajiks came to power in Afghanistan as a people who represented the lower stratum of Afghan society and, thus, were able to share in the ideology of the Soviet state. However, events soon took another course: Pashtun tribes and Great Britain supported Muhammad Nadir-shah, who captured Kabul in October 1929 and was declared king.

Another opportunity to connect Afghanistan to the Soviet sphere came half a century later, in 1978, with the establishment of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. A coup known as the Saur Revolution brought to power the communist People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, which, however, soon succumbed to ideological strife between its radical and moderate wings. In December 1979 the Soviet Union intervened to support the moderates led by Babrak Karmal and, much too late in 1986, to launch a policy of national reconciliation under the leadership of Muhammad Najibullah. During the decade-long Soviet quagmire, which ended with the withdrawal of Soviet troops in the months from May 1988 to February 1989, ethnic Tajiks acted as advisers and interpreters and in this way played a bridging role between Afghan authorities and Soviet power. Because the Russians were unable to understand Dari (the variety of the Persian language spoken in Afghanistan), they invited Tajiks to implement Soviet policies.[30]

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[29] A. D. Bogaturov, *Sistemnaia istoriia mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii*, vol. 1 (Moscow: Kul'turnaia Revoliutsiia, 2007), 210.

[30] The communist leaders were all Pashtun, but in Afghanistan and Tajikistan Babrak Karmal was also recognized as a nephew of the ethnic Tajik Habibulloh (Bachai Sako) from his

Even after the Soviet troops had pulled back from Afghanistan to the Tajik border in early 1989, and the Panj and Amu Darya rivers had, for the first time in their history, become a militarily sealed borderline, Moscow still considered the northern part of Afghanistan—inhabited as it was by ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks—very much as its external borderland. There were still hopes that northern Afghanistan could be linked with Soviet Central Asia in energy networks and other economic cooperation, and that the Hindu Kush mountain range in the east could in this way be included in a line of defense against the political unrest and clan turmoil to the south. However, the following years made it clear that the line of containment of radical Islam was much farther to the north, along the banks of the border river.[31] This was a line, thin not only in terms of geo-space but also ethnically and politically, as well as in terms of the law enforcement structures that could be established in order to curtail the trade in opiates and other illegal border crossings. Already during the final years of the Soviet Union, Tajikistan's economic situation had been dire, and its southern regions had been hit by starvation. When the civil war brought a further drastic deterioration in social conditions, the contraband of opiates and gemstones in the Pamir region became a way of survival for large parts of the civilian population. It also became a source of income for those militant Islamist groups who had refused to disarm and chosen to regain their strength on the other side of the southern border.

The civil war led to the withdrawal of the radical opposition and militant insurgency into the Afghan and Pakistani border zones, and the massive ISAF presence held the situation in abeyance. Nevertheless, it was not until 2005–2006 that the Russian border guards left the border to Afghanistan under Tajikistan's control. The return of Russian border guards to the Afghan border has been on and off the bilateral agenda ever since December 2010, when Russia began to apply pressure on Tajikistan over this issue.[32] Russia's

mother's side. However, Pashtun was his declared ethnicity and, in practice, formed a condition of becoming a general in Afghanistan.

31 During the 1980s Moscow had sought to initiate national reconciliation in Afghanistan. By autumn 1987 it had become clear that this had failed in regions south of the Hindu Kush. Joseph Newman, Jr., "The Future of Northern Afghanistan," *Asian Survey* 28, no. 7 (July 1988): 729–39.

32 In 2005 Tajikistan decided against continuing the agreement from 1992, which had tasked Russian troops with controlling the border. The number of Russian border guards amounted to 12,000 (70–80 percent of whom were Tajikistani citizens employed by the Russian border guard corps). The Russians left in 2005–2006 (after having been there ever since the borders of the Uzbek SSR began to be guarded in the 1930s). Some 300 advisers and ex-

expressed concern was over the massive flow of opiates across the border, but Tajikistani authorities were able to deflect this by arguing that this specific problem could not be solved by increasing manpower at the border.[33] Solving this problem, they argued, required international cooperation in several multilateral formats, including the CIS and the SCO. At the CSTO meeting in Sochi in September 2013, President Rakhmon (Rakhmonov with the Slavic names ending used until March 2007) asked for support for the Tajikistani law enforcement bodies in their task of managing the border with Afghanistan, and at the next meeting in Moscow in May 2014, he called to mind that the promises of a CSTO resolution on the provision of military technology had not been fulfilled. A few weeks later the Council of the Heads of State of the CIS reached a decision signed by the CSTO members (Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan) on assistance to Tajikistan in regard to the fortification and development of the border area with Afghanistan; its implementation was left to the bilateral relations between Tajikistan and the other signatories.[34] The smaller members of the CSTO have little reason to commit any substantive amounts of their own scarce resources but, within Tajikistan, an increase in the number of partners clearly serves a policy profile that seeks to show Tajikistan's independence from Russia.

After Tajikistan's parliament in October 2013 ratified the agreement that extends the Russian use of the base in Tajikistan until 2042, a series of bilateral agreements have ensured Russia's military presence in the country and, thus, also the possibility to quickly mobilize troops along the border. Russia's direct and permanent presence at the border has little strategic military significance in relation to the bilateral cooperation developed inside the country for tracking illegal border crossings and setting up the collective air force of the CSTO. In December 2014, the leaders of the CSTO member

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perts remained. Their number was later reduced to several tens only. More recently, the number has once again been increased and today also the border agency of the CIS member states focuses on the Afghan border.

33 See *Introduction*, note 15 in this book. The drug traffic has increased in recent years despite international efforts to curb opiate cultivation in Afghanistan, and the economic situation in Afghanistan leaves little economic and political space for the regime in Kabul to curb the flow. Sergei Balmasov, "Russian Border Guards to Fight Taliban," *Pravda.ru*, December 17, 2010, http://english.pravda.ru/hotspots/conflicts/17-12-2010/116248-russia_tajikistan_afghanistan-0/.

34 "CIS to Provide Assistance to Tajikistan in Strengthening of Tajik-Afghan Border Protection," *AKIpress*, Bishkek, June 5, 2014, http://www.akipress.com/news:542655/.

states agreed upon developing a comprehensive and functionally flexible collective air force which includes military transport and special aviation units of not only the armed forces but also police forces, interior troops and security agencies.[35] The collective force remains effectively under Russian control, and the disparity of capabilities is especially striking in relation to Tajikistan, which possesses but one squadron of small aircraft.

An episode in this development has been the negotiations between Tajikistan and Russia over the use of the Ayni airfield, which is located in the vicinity of Dushanbe and lies just ten minutes away from the Rasht region by air, and which was reopened in autumn 2010 after its modernization with Indian technical and financial support worth $70 million. The question over the use of Ayni had gone unanswered since summer 2007, when Tajikistan announced that it was not negotiating over the use of the base with India.[36] However, it was not until May 2013 that an announcement was made to the effect that the Ayni airfield would be part of Russia's military base in Tajikistan and, together with the facilities in the south, would be used as the key base for the CSTO Collective Rapid Reaction Force.[37] Tajikistan used Ayni as a bargaining chip in the bundle of issues concerning the financing of the Rogun hydropower station and the rents that could be gained from the use of the main base as well as Ayni. Although Russia did not signal that it would make any promises in regard to financing the Rogun power station, and although Russia's opinion on compensation was that this would come in form of modernizing Tajikistan's security forces, the negotiations over Ayni and the delay in the ratification of the agreement on extending the Russian base in Tajikistan show Dushanbe's determination in trying to bargain for resources in exchange for Russia's military presence.

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35 "CSTO Summit Adopts Joint Statement, 19 Resolutions, Two Protocols," *TASS*, Moscow, December 23, 2014, http://tass.ru/en/world/768706.The cooperation in the CIS frame in the 1990s already included development of joint air force.

36 India did not jeopardize its relations with Russia with favorable arms deals because of Ayni. It was left with the smaller field in Farkhor, which it had renovated for some $10 million.

37 In October 2014, President Rakhmon met with Nikolai Patrushev, head of Russia's federal security services; the details of the discussion have not been made public. "Russia Concerned Over Tajik-Afghan Border Security," *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, November 11, 2014, http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/field-reports/item/13087-russia-concerned-over-tajik-afghan-border-security.html.

## High Stakes for Energy Sufficiency and Beyond

The lack of energy is the primary resource problem undermining Tajikistan's eight million inhabitants' support for the government. Coal-burning during cold winters is a health hazard and has even led to deaths, and the repeated cut-offs initiated by Uzbekistan in the flow of energy have seriously harmed the state-owned Tajikistan Aluminum Company (Talco) which, in Turzunzade in the immediate vicinity of the Uzbekistani border, produces more than 60 percent of Tajikistan's export revenue.[38] As a consequence it is crucially important for the Tajikistani government to capture the political moment in regard to developing Afghanistan in order to diversify its economic relations and to participate in large-scale energy projects that could drastically reduce its dependence on Russian investment and energy and, above all, on the energy resources of neighboring Uzbekistan. Throughout the years of independence the conflict-ridden relationship with Uzbekistan—the country through which Tajikistan must transit to Russia and Europe—has created major obstacles to developing its economic capacities. Air traffic between Tashkent and Dushanbe was halted in 1992, and Uzbekistan has on many occasions halted trains transporting vital items for Tajikistan's agriculture and industry. This has become all the more burdensome because the bilateral economic relations in terms of Russian investments in Tajikistan and any structural development of the mutual economic relations have been in sharp decline. At the same time as Eurasian economic integration has been advanced within the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU, also abbreviated as EAEU), Tajikistan has lost the kind of individualized, special relationship it had still had with Moscow in the aftermath of its civil war.[39]

Moscow's failure to fulfill its initial promise to support the modernization of the Soviet-era power plant in Rogun has caused major disappointment in Tajikistan. With a height of 335 meters the Rogun dam was planned to become the tallest dam in the world and to make Tajikistan a major exporter

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[38] In order to avoid such extreme vulnerability, Talco has developed a capacity to use domestic coal instead of Uzbek gas, which causes its own environmental problems.

[39] Russia has not made any major investments in Tajikistan since the Sangtuda hydropower station in 2009. The treaty for the establishment of the EEU was signed on May 29, 2014, by Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, and it became effective on January 1, 2015, following its ratification by the parliaments of those three countries. Armenia signed the agreement on accession in October 2014, and Kyrgyzstan in December 2014.

of electric power. The Russian aluminum giant RUSAL negotiated a bilateral agreement with Tajikistan in 2004 as a trade-off for a nominal one-dollar lease for Russia's military base, yet it withdrew from the deal to avoid conflict arising between Tashkent and Moscow. Uzbekistan, a downstream country and ill-disposed to Tajikistan's entry into the energy market, has been fiercely opposed to the Rogun plan and shown itself willing only to accept a far smaller hydropower station. Although Moscow's "promise" was a deal concluded through an oligarchic company and never resulted in a plan that would also have committed the Russian government, the withdrawal of support left not only Tajikistan's elites but the entire population disillusioned: Russia had signaled very clearly that it would not risk its relations with the larger and economically stronger Uzbekistan by showing solidarity with Tajikistan.[40]

In 2008, Tajikistan founded the Open Joint-Stock Company NBO Rogun and, in 2010, launched a country-wide campaign which obliged every family in this poorest of countries in Central Asia to buy stocks of the $3–5 billion megaproject which had now become a national symbol and personally associated with the president. In September 2014, after several years of delays due to ongoing environmental impact assessments in the frame of the World Bank, an evaluation came to the conclusion that, subject to design changes and safety measures based on three design options ranging from 1,220 to 1,290m, the dam was the type of high-risk yet potentially highly rewarding hydroelectric power project that the World Bank would accept under the condition that the resettlement of some 42,000 people could be adequately solved. Using the political momentum of developing energy grids benefiting the development of Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been seeking to invite external investment by lobbying hard in the world's capitals and exempting (by way of a presidential decree in February 2014) the Rogun HPP construction owner and contractor from taxes.[41]

A potentially game-changing endeavor for Tajikistan is the CASA-1000 power transmission project—a $500 million project financed by a group of

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40 After the U.S. had left the base in Karshi-Khanabad following the Andijon events in 2005, Uzbekistan became ready to rejoin the CSTO.

41 Human Rights Watch, "Q&A: The Human Fallout from Tajikistan's Dam Project," June 25, 2014, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/06/25qa-human-fallout-tajikistans-dam-project; "Finalized Assessment Studies for Rogun Project Find It's Possible to Safely Build and Operate Dam," *AKIpress*, Bishkek, September 3, 2014, http://www.akipress.com/news:546870/.

global development banks and connecting Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to export electric power.[42] The Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan electricity network is planned to be operational by 2018 and will use the excess of summer energy in Tajikistan made possible by new facilities there. The use of summer energy is envisioned by the Tajikistani leadership to be only the first phase. The ultimate, game-changing prospect for Tajikistan in the CASA-1000 project is that if the Rogun power station construction could be completed in time (current plans aim for 2021–2022), this would massively increase Tajikistan's capacity to produce electricity for export. The plan to construct Rogun awaits external financing, and in the meantime CASA-1000 represents rather more than just this one project for Tajikistan: it is a base for performing a "quantum leap" that could turn energy-poor Tajikistan into an electric power-exporting country. As the flagship for the "New Silk Roads" approach launched by the U.S., the project has exceptional political weight internationally. However, building the transmission line in the Afghan-Pakistani border zone is a major challenge because of the deeply conflictual political terrain, and this problem can be solved neither in the Inter-Governmental Council set up by the four states nor through the agreements of the Joint Economic Commission of Dushanbe and Islamabad.[43]

Tajikistan did not join the Eurasian Economic Union as readily as did Kyrgyzstan (which joined in December 2014); instead, it has set up six working groups to study the benefits and problems of membership.[44] In a country where 50–70 percent of the active workforce are migrant workers in Russia there is no alternative to joining. Moreover, the EEU is the only frame which exists in the region for comprehensive economic integration, and it can also be expected to offer new possibilities, in particular in the context of the planned integrated energy market.[45] Nonetheless the EEU, which brings in

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42 The main financers of the $500 million project are the World Bank, the International Bank for Development, the Islamic Development Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Initially, Russia proposed a $500 million investment for the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan energy line, but the reimbursement and other conditions were not accepted by these two countries. Contrary to its previous plans, the Asian Development Bank decided in late spring 2013 not to participate due to the security risks in Afghanistan.

43 Tajikistan and Pakistan have established a Joint Economic Commission and reached agreement on the CASA project at the governmental level.

44 Saodat Olimova, "Tajikistan's Prospects of Joining the Eurasian Economic Union," *Russian Analytical Digest*, no. 165 (March 17, 2015), http://www.laender-analysen.de/russland/rad/pdf/Russian_Analytical_Digest_165.pdf.

45 The Organization of Central Asian Cooperation (OCAC, established in 1991) never became operative due to mutual distrust, territory claims and other disputes between the Central

Kazakhstan and other member states, does not offer a sufficient frame for a consortium to finance Rogun as long as Russia declines to play any major role. This situation forces Tajikistan to seek investment from elsewhere, including from China, Iran and the Arab states; this, in turn, may remain a long-term prospect should China choose to wait and see how the EEU impacts the region, and should Western states' commitment to financing CASA reduce their interest in contributing to the regionally controversial Rogun project. Additionally, the richer Arab states are unlikely to make significant contributions to a project that angers Uzbekistan, which is a far more important market than Tajikistan due to its energy wealth and population of 28 million.

Because Russia's economic support for Tajikistan has declined, Tajikistan looks for economic resources first and foremost in its relations with China. The fact that Tajikistan is a neighbor of the world's second-largest economy is visible not only in the commodity market but, increasingly, also in major infrastructure projects including energy, industry and the construction business (in particular, building roads and tunnels as well as urban environments). In spite of Uzbekistan's strong opposition and lobbying efforts, China is building a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which is economically more rational than the longer route through Uzbekistan. As this project also shows, Dushanbe is logistically coming closer to China through Kyrgyzstan, which connects the northern Sugd region to trade flows from China. Because Chinese interests are seen to largely follow business and economic rules, cooperation with China is considered to be more promising in terms of long-term stability than is cooperation with Russia, which has the reputation of prioritizing political interests.[46] While relations with Russia are increasingly focused on security, Tajikistan needs to look elsewhere for economic help. In relation to the EEU, it cannot avoid accession (in order to avoid the political and economic consequences of not joining) and is waiting to see what benefits this integration perhaps could bring in the future.

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Asian states. In 2005 it merged with the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), which had (on paper only) preceded the EEU.

46 Khamrokhon Zarifi, "Tadzhikistan i Kitai: dobrososedstvo, druzhba i sotrudnichestvo vo imia mira, stabil'nosti i protsvetaniia," *People's Daily*, April 27, 2010, http://russian.people.com.cn/31521/6964733.html.

## Conclusion: the Problematic Equation of Security

Tajikistan's government has repeatedly confirmed its determination to fight terrorism, extremism and criminal groups, both through its action and in its announcements. This sends a message to its declared enemies and also signals that Tajikistan is a responsible member of the international community and able to control its own territory; not doing so would leave room for speculation over its status as a "failed state" and raise questions about the need for external intervention (that is, intervention by Russia and the CSTO) in order to secure the southern border. Similarly, the aim to expand the space for independent policy-making and to decrease dependence on Russia induces Tajikistan's leadership to welcome security cooperation with a large number of countries, including the U.S. (in the context of its regional cooperation and bilateral assistance) and China (its assistance in improving the facilities of the border guard corps and army). Nonetheless it is the Russian military presence which is the whole backbone of security; and not only as a collective security arrangement for external security but also as political support to the government in Tajikistan.

Simultaneously the relationship with Russia is increasingly problematic: at a crucial moment when the Taliban may be increasing its power in Afghanistan's north, the relationship with Moscow is narrowing and becoming emphatically security-related and ever more of a security guarantee against radical Islamist influence, which again easily makes the conflicts stemming from Tajikistan's civil war resurface. The fact that Russia is no longer helping to build Tajikistan as a state but, instead, seeks to increase its own military presence in the country by expanding the base system and inviting more Tajiks to serve in its own forces, undermines the legitimacy of the close relationship with Russia and leaves a large part of the population disillusioned whose experience of the greatness of the huge country they were part of in the Soviet era may yet be an asset to build the future. In this situation it is understandable that the Tajikistani government attempts to repair the social elements of legitimate relations with Russia by bargaining economic resources in exchange for Russia's military presence. Tajikistan's bargaining attitude has been met with annoyance in Moscow, where the argument per-

tains that Russia is in Tajikistan so as to avert common threats.[47] Clearly, the bargaining that Tajikistan's leadership can accomplish remains within the limits of the considerations relating to its own position and power in the cleaved state. All the same, such bargaining shows how the smaller party is trying to negotiate resources and expand the space of its independence within the context of its own difficult security situation and geopolitical location.

While the consequences of economic integration into the EEU cannot yet be established, the picture in the field of security is already clear: Tajikistan is being developed as a terrain for Russia's forward-pushed defense and, unlike the borderline to which the Soviet Union withdrew in 1989, the border is now a space prepared for the projection of power. Russia consolidates its base system in Tajikistan, and it also modernizes the Tajikistani army. However, it does not use nearly as many funds to renovate the Tajikistani forces as it uses for Kyrgyzstan (which in autumn 2012 was promised a sum exceeding $1 billion, a figure which is almost double the amount Tajikistan has received since 2005). This does not signal that Russia is drawing away from the Afghan border and towards the north but, instead, that the border is becoming a wider zone of defense arrangements. The extent to which Russia also participates in the collective effort to train and equip Afghanistan and makes arrangements for security cooperation with the government in Kabul is a welcome development from the perspective of Dushanbe: rather than focusing on Tajikistan as the theater of its forward-pushed defense, Russia now moves across the border and defends Tajikistan from within the territory of Afghanistan. However, as long as Russia remains unwilling to cross the border with troops and heavy weaponry, the pressure on Tajikistan as Russia's "Afghan border" can only marginally be decreased.

These developments have buried once and for all the already initially rather weak idea that Tajikistan's Peace Accords could present an example for Afghanistan, and Tajikistan's leadership is now in the process of looking for a new role to play in mediating in the conflict. Based on the "Persian" cultural profile which has been built in post-civil war Tajikistan, the argument frequently proposed by the Tajik president has been that, because Tajikistan alone amongst the "Persian countries" has the tradition of a secular regime, it is well-positioned to act as a mediator in negotiations in which Afghanistan

47 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Interv'iu stats-sekretaria – zamestitelia Ministra inostrannykh del Rossii."

and Iran are one party and the world community led by the Western states the other party.[48] The notion of cultural identity is a strategy to raise Tajikistan's diplomatic profile and help to resolve the political bottleneck of Iran, which is hampering the building of those logistical routes that would also benefit Tajikistan. While the gamble of Tajikistan's leadership in the energy field to create a financing consortium for Rogun entails a game-changing "quantum" leap, the same can be concluded in regard to an idea which attempts to appeal to actors as diverse as Iran, Afghanistan and the U.S. These diplomatic efforts convey much about the unifying identity project of the Tajikistani state and no doubt will succeed to some extent in fusing shut the ideological lines of division which the frontier towards the Taliban and the Islamic State in Afghanistan is tearing open within Tajikistan. However, these divisions can only be significantly alleviated by improving the economic situation and the social conditions of life within the country. It is for this reason that the stakes are high in the infrastructure projects of energy cooperation: should they fail, social pressures will increase and there will be political forces to utilize these; the government would further tighten its grip and political polarization would increase. In this case, the conflict smoldering beneath the surface in Tajikistan would become increasingly difficult to contain and the landscape of war and violence could also open up north of the Panj and the Amu Darya.

48 "Rakhmon predlozhil privlech' k rabote v OBSE Afganistan," *24 Mir TV*, January 23, 2014, http://mir24.tv/news/politics/9723906.

# Uzbekistan's Balancing Act: A Game of Chance for Independent External Policies

*Vadim Romashov*

In Uzbekistan, like in the other countries in the region, the uncertainty related to the current developments in Afghanistan as well as the declarations of the U.S. on reforming the military mission there have affected the geopolitical environment and aroused speculation regarding the transformation and relocation of the foreign military presence. Compounded by the increasing rivalry between the U.S. and Russia for regional influence, Uzbekistan's main goal is to retain maximum independence in its external policies. Tashkent holds its foreign partners at a distance with divergent regional strategies whilst simultaneously keeping all avenues open for additional security guarantees in order to ensure stability at its state borders.

Since gaining independence in 1991, Uzbekistan's external policy has been characterized by constant fluctuations in its relations with international actors who aim to project their political and economic power onto the region. Uzbek analysts traditionally share the view that the country pursues a "multi-vector" policy, referring to this as "foreign policy pragmatism" or "foreign relations diversification."[1] Outside experts often describe Uzbekistan's policy as one that "swings" between a close relationship with Moscow and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and cooperation with Washington and the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Such terms, notably "pendulum diplomacy" or "zigzag policy," have been applied repeatedly to describe frequent reorientations in the direction taken by Uzbekistani external policy.[2] However, labeling Uzbekistan's foreign policy in such ways

[1] For example, see Adhamdjon Yunusov, Yakov Umansky and D. Zainutdinova, "National Interests and Pragmatism in the Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," in *Building a Common Future: Indian and Uzbek Perspectives on Security and Economic Issues*, ed. P. Stobdan, (Delhi: Hardev Printers, 1999), 20–36; Rafik Saifulin, "How Myths Are Born: A View from Tashkent on the CSTO and Central Asia," *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 3 (July–September 2012).

[2] For examples of the use of the terms "swing," "pendulum," and "zigzag" see Jyotsna Bakhshi, "Russia and Uzbekistan Sign 'Treaty of Alliance Relations'," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses Comment*, December 27, 2005,

has several serious conceptual limitations. This chapter aims to address the limitations of the "pendulum perspective" on Uzbekistani policies and employs another approach, which allows a better understanding of the complex relations Tashkent has with its foreign partners.

From physics we know that a pendulum-like motion implies moving to one direction with a synchronous departure from another, opposite direction and to which it must ultimately return. Applying this logic to Tashkent's diplomacy, policy must constantly swing back and forth between the two sides, but in fact the external strategy of Uzbekistan is far more complicated than this logic implies. It may include simultaneously moving in both, seemingly opposite, directions and, thus, contraposing and superimposing one strategy over another. Moreover, an idealized model of the "geopolitical pendulum" commonly places Uzbekistani diplomacy in-between the two positions characterized as pro-Russian and pro-U.S. directions. Such an approach based on the dualistic division of its policy orientation neglects the country's important relations with China, Turkey, the European Union (EU), Iran, India, and other influential actors involved in the region's politics.

A view of Tashkent's foreign policy in the frame of the swinging pendulum, however, presupposes that there is a period of time available in which to calculate policy reorientation. Thus, we may identify a predictivist perspective here, a belief in the possibility to forecast foreign policy transformations with calculated certainty. This belief induces fallacious expectations of an inevitable, radical shift in Uzbekistani external strategy within a defined period.[3] In this way, the importance of chance, changing circumstances and situational junctures in foreign and domestic affairs is downplayed. The ana-

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http://www.idsa.in/idsastrategiccomments/RussiaandUzbekistanSignTreatyofAllianceRelations_jbakshi_271205; Nathan Hamm, "Uzbekistan Exit from CSTO Reveals Limits of Russia's Eurasian Integration Plans," *E-International Relations*, July 17, 2012, http://www.e-ir.info/2012/07/17/uzbekistan-exit-from-csto-reveals-limits-of-russias-eurasian-integration-plans/; Marlene Laruelle, "Factoring the Regional Impact of Uzbekistan's Withdrawal from the CSTO," *German Marshall Fund Policy Brief*, August 2012, http://www.gmfus.org/publications/factoring-regional-impact-uzbekistan%E2%80%99s-withdrawal-csto; Farkhod Tolipov, "Flexibility or Strategic Confusion? Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan," *Uzbekistan Initiative Papers*, no. 2 (February 2014), http://origin.library.constantcontact.com/download/get/file/1110347635144-152/UI+papers+ht2-Farkhad+Tolipov.pdf.

[3] For instance, Murat Laumulin, a Kazakh researcher, estimates that the "Uzbek pendulum" swings every two to three years. See Laumulin, "Virtual Security of Central Asia: The CSTO in the face of NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan," *Russia in Global Affairs*, no. 3 (July–September 2012).

lytical idea of a pendulum-like external policy mechanism can also affect strategic decision-making in the countries that are engaged in Central Asian politics. As a final point, such an approach does not answer the critical questions of why the policy pendulum oscillates and what would constitute its "equilibrium position."

Taking into consideration the limitations of the pendulum approach, this chapter presents an alternative view of Uzbekistan's external policy as a "balancing act" that essentially refers to balancing feats performed by a tightrope walker rather than to the realist concept of "balance of power." From this perspective, the rope that is stretched taut above the ground appears to be the path to a given destination defined by the long-term goals of the country's government, acting as a "tightrope walker," which aims to position Uzbekistan as an independent and strong leader of Central Asia. The strategic track towards independence and leadership is seen as an equilibrium position of Uzbekistani policy, while a tumble from the tightrope would mean the loss of the country's advantageous position in the region. Therefore, the fluctuations of Tashkent's foreign policy are not the swings of a pendulum but rather represent efforts to hold the strategic equilibrium. Similar to a tightrope walker, who by receiving inertia from many different directions holds onto the wire, Uzbekistan attempts to obtain political, military, and economic support from various international actors in order to secure its independence and leading position in the region. Obviously, the wider the amplitude is of the wire's sway caused by circumstantial changes, the bigger the inclination of the ropewalker to that side that is able to provide better assistance in maintaining the balance.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the practices forming the pattern in Uzbekistan's balancing act. I argue that the drastic changes in the external and internal security environment cause the Uzbekistani strategic "rope" to sway and, thus, force the country's leadership to lean in different foreign policy directions. Importantly, for Uzbekistan the changes represent both a chance to achieve an advantage in regional politics as well as the risks associated with subsequent actions taken by foreign and domestic forces as a reaction to the fluctuations of the country's policy. Such a game of chance and risk played by the Uzbekistani government introduces an element of political gamble to state policies. The goal of this game is to implement independence in a way that builds on an Uzbek tradition of power and historical past associated with the country's previously central position in the region.

The revival of the past serves the present-day purpose of constructing a unified national identity in support of the state organization that has been formed under the long-lasting reign of President Islam Karimov.

Any examination of Uzbekistan's relations with Russia must take into account Moscow's indirect influence on strategic decision-making in Tashkent. Russia's policy practices tend to exert specific influence on the policy practices of Uzbekistan through various spheres of the interaction between the two states, which recently has been affected by conflictual relations between Tashkent and the CSTO, the modification of Russia's role in the security system of Uzbekistan, and the emergence of Eurasian economic initiatives within the region. By focusing on regional security influenced by Moscow-Tashkent relations, this chapter examines important internal-external dynamics in the formation and transformation of borders within and around Uzbekistan. It analyses official speeches, foreign and defense policy legislation, international agreements, and media and expert accounts. A broad range of sources is needed to alleviate the problem that characterizes research on Uzbekistan: limited access to a number of important Uzbekistani official documents, including the concepts of National Security and Foreign Policy Activity.

## "Eternal Independence" and the Balancing Act

Independence Day is a widely celebrated holiday in Uzbekistan, to which Islam Karimov devotes his long and emotionally colored speeches. At the celebration of the twenty-second anniversary of Uzbekistan's independence in 2013, Karimov stated,

> "[The] achievement of independence is precisely an opportunity to fulfill our great and sacred obligation, that is, to command our destinies and the fate of our country on our own, along with its natural, economic and intellectual resources… Independence means to be independent of anyone at any time, to secure sustainable growth rates of the economy, consistently boost the wellbeing of the popula-

> tion, and bolster the standing and prestige of our country at the international arena, taking into account our national interests and long-term objectives."[4]

The idea of the country's "eternal independence" for which Uzbek "forefathers had strived for centuries" is a fundamental element of national ideology, and state policy practices have been designed accordingly.[5] Foreign policy is aimed at positioning Uzbekistan as a regional leader, independent from external influence in its decision-making. The country's aspirations to regional leadership are rooted in Central Asian history associated with the dominance of Uzbek tribal groupings in Transoxiana, the power of Uzbek khanates, and a special role assigned to the Uzbek SSR during Soviet rule. Neil Melvin observes that during the national delimitation process in 1924–1925 held by Moscow planners, Uzbekistan gained the pre-eminent historic centers of the region, including most of the territory of the three former khanates, and Tashkent became the main city of Central Asia, all of which contributed to the further development of a strong Uzbek identity.[6]

The balance between the extra-regional powers anchoring influence in the region, primarily Russia, the U.S. and China, appears to be the way in which Uzbekistan realizes its long-term goals. While China's sources of influence are based mostly on economic power, Moscow and Washington are deeply involved in security cooperation with Tashkent.[7] Proceeding from the view that Russia and the U.S. are geopolitical rivals in the region, Tashkent avoids crossing "the point of no return" in its relations with them. The Uzbekistani leadership strives to keep all directions open as options for receiving security guarantees in case the political conjuncture were to develop in a way that would force Uzbekistan to affiliate itself with one of the centers of power in order to eliminate immediate security threats and to bargain for better treatment from a powerful state or international organization. In the context of the strategic goal to maximize political independence, third-party se-

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4 Islam Karimov, "Greeting Address at the Festive Event to Celebrate 22nd Anniversary of Uzbekistan's Independence," *Press Service of the President of Uzbekistan*, August 31, 2013, http://www.press-service.uz/en/news/159/.

5 Ibid.

6 Neil Melvin, *Uzbekistan: Transition to Authoritarianism on the Silk Road* (Florence, KY: Gordon & Breach Publishing, 2000), 91.

7 Unlike Uzbekistan's 2004 Strategic Partnership Agreement with Russia and the 2002 Declaration on Strategic Partnership with the U.S., the 2012 Declaration on Strategic Partnership with China is less focused on security issues and instead concentrates on economic cooperation.

curity guarantees mean a promise by an outside power to provide concrete resources and assistance in eliminating security threats, rather than an assurance of direct military intervention to protect the state in situations of threat.

Since independence, the immediate policy objective of Uzbekistan has been to reduce Russian influence in Central Asia. However, the civil war in Tajikistan that erupted in 1992 between the central government and the United Tajik Opposition of Islamist and democratic forces, compelled Russia and Uzbekistan to maintain security cooperation. Apprehensive of the spread of Islamic radicalism to Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov backed the pro-Russian forces of Emomali Rakhmonov (Rakhmon), who became the president of Tajikistan in November 1994. In order to neutralize the risks of a possible expansion of the Tajik war and rapidly escalating tensions in Afghanistan, the Uzbekistani leadership actively supported the idea of creating a collective security system with Russia. In May 1992, in Tashkent, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan signed the Collective Security Treaty (CST). As an additional security guarantee, in 1994 Russia and Uzbekistan concluded a military cooperation agreement, which involved among other issues the joint use of military facilities located on their territories. Thus, the shared interest of Russia and Uzbekistan in suppressing what was referred to as "Islamic extremism" provided the stimulus to preserve security ties between the two states.

In August 1998, the Taliban defeated the forces of Abdul Rashid Dostum, the warlord of a separatist movement in the northern, Uzbek-populated region of Afghanistan, and proceeded to approach the Uzbekistani border. These events prompted Tashkent to conclude that relying solely on military ties with Russia was not sufficient to ensure state security, and contacts with the U.S. and NATO were activated. In April 1999, Uzbekistan refused to renew its membership in the CST and, at the NATO summit in Washington, announced its decision to join GUAM, a bloc of pro-Western post-Soviet states formed by Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova. However, in summer 1999 the security situation along Uzbekistan's borders deteriorated and slowed down any rapprochement with Western countries: the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), created in Afghanistan in the mid-1990s, attempted to infringe upon Uzbekistani territory by way of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Increased danger at the borders brought Tashkent to realize that by severing close security ties with Russia this unstable situation could take a turn for the worse. Hence, in 1999, Moscow and Tashkent signed an accord

on the further enhancement of comprehensive military and military-technical cooperation. In May 2001, the two states concluded a cooperation agreement on border issues that covered the joint fight against terrorism, illegal migration, arms and drug trafficking, and the mutual exchange of information, logistical support, officer training, etc. In addition, later in 2001 the two states signed an agreement on the joint use of air forces and air defense systems.[8]

A chance for Uzbekistan to abandon its security dependence on Russia occurred following the 9/11 events in 2001. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) began anti-Taliban military operations in Afghanistan, and Tashkent offered its support to the U.S. However, President Karimov underlined that in order to provide assistance to the anti-terrorist campaign, Uzbekistan would need to have "guarantees of national security and territorial inviolability" and be able to "enhance the combat ability of the armed forces and the vigilance on borders."[9] In October 2001, Uzbekistan and the U.S. signed an agreement on the use of the Karshi-Khanabad airbase (K2) for military operations in Afghanistan and released a joint statement about consultations between both states in case of a threat occurring to Uzbekistan's security and territorial integrity. Based on this cooperation, in March 2002 the two states signed a Declaration on Strategic Partnership and Cooperation. In exchange for the use of the airbase, the U.S. increased the budgeted assistance to Uzbekistan, especially in relation to the objective of "peace and security enhancement."[10] According to Dmitry Gorenburg, military assistance from Washington included two armored river patrol boats, radios, upgrades for helicopters, navigations systems, facilities renovations, and support in training. During the period 2001–2005, the U.S. and Uzbekistan

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8 Sobranie zakonodatel'stva Rossiiskoi Federatsii, "Soglashenie mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan o sovmestnom primenenii Voenno-vozdushnykh sil Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Voisk protivovozdushnoi oborony i Voenno-vozdushnykh sil Respubliki Uzbekistan v interesakh obespecheniia bezopasnosti vozdushnogo prostranstva Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Respubliki Uzbekistan," *Biulleten' mezhdunarodnykh dogovorov*, no. 6 (June 23, 2005).

9 "Uzbekistan May Allow U.S. To Use Its Air Space for Humanitarian Flights," *Interfax*, September 27, 2001 as cit. in "Turkmen Report," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, September 29, 2001, http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1347103.html.

10 See Jim Nichol, "Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests," *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report*, August 21, 2013, 24–25, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RS21238.pdf.

had a broad-scale military cooperation program, and Uzbekistani forces participated in a number of NATO-led military exercises.[11]

In 2001, whilst trying to keep its foreign policy balanced, Uzbekistan joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Nevertheless, its external policy remained largely one-sided until the SCO summit of June 2004, held in Tashkent, when Uzbekistan made new attempts to balance its policy. The SCO adopted a decision to establish a Regional Antiterrorism Structure with headquarters in the capital city of Uzbekistan, and Islam Karimov signed a Strategic Partnership Treaty with Russia, which provided for close cooperation in creating "an enduring and effective system of regional security in Central Asia."[12] The parties agreed to form consultative mechanisms through relevant ministries and agencies to fight terrorism. Once again, the terrorist threat was on the agenda: in spring 2004, reportedly, the Islamic Jihad Union, a splinter group of the IMU, perpetrated a series of bomb attacks in Uzbekistan.[13]

In May 2005, the Andijon events suddenly swung Uzbekistan's strategic path towards an independent policy. Western governments attacked Islam Karimov over the cruel suppression of riots and repeatedly called for an international investigation into the incident; this was rejected by the president on the grounds that it would violate state sovereignty.[14] The U.S. and EU restricted aid and arms exports to Uzbekistan as well as visas for Uzbek officials, and their assets were frozen. Tashkent turned to Russia and China for support. On a visit to Moscow in June 2005, Karimov accused Western countries of backing "extremist and radical forces" in Andijon,[15] and shortly after Uzbekistan left GUAM. At an SCO meeting in July 2005, the president

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[11] Dmitry Gorenburg, "External Support for Central Asian Military and Security Forces," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Working Paper*, January 2014, 52, 56, http://www.sipri.org/research/security/afghanistan/central-asia-security/publications/SIPRI-OSFno1WP.pdf.

[12] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Dogovor o strategicheskom partnerstve mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan," 2004, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/0/04545C3F32532D6DC3257DB9004735F1 (translation by Vadim Romashov).

[13] Jim Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," *Congressional Research Service*, *CRS Report*, June 6, 2006, 8, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/68821.pdf.

[14] Nichol, "Uzbekistan," 16–17.

[15] President of Russia, "Beginning of a Meeting with Uzbekistan President Islam Karimov," June 28, 2005, http://archive.kremlin.ru/eng/speeches/2005/06/28/1824_type82914_90517.shtml.

of Uzbekistan joined in the declaration of the organization that called for the parties of the anti-terrorist coalition in Afghanistan to "set a deadline for the temporary use of… infrastructure facilities of the SCO member states and for their military presence in these countries."[16] Thereupon, Tashkent demanded that the U.S. withdraw all military units from the base in Karshi-Khanabad within six months, and in November 2005 the base was closed.

Under these changed circumstances, Tashkent needed to demonstrate to the Western states that the country could not be isolated within its borders from the rest of the world, and that it had other strategic partners that could help to ensure national security. In November 2005, Russia and Uzbekistan signed a Treaty of Alliance, which stipulates that

> "If an act of aggression is committed against one of the sides by any state or group of states, this will be viewed as an act of aggression against both sides…. the other side... will provide necessary assistance, including military assistance, as well as giving aid through other means at its disposal."[17]

The Treaty called for consultations in the event of a security threat to either country and emphasized that the states were to pursue the enhancement of stability and security at global and regional levels.[18] Furthermore, in January 2006 Uzbekistan joined the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) and, in May of that year, Karimov announced the country's accession to the CSTO. The accelerated deepening of Russian-Uzbekistani military-political cooperation must be seen as an attempt by the government in Tashkent to receive inertia from the Russian side in order to keep its balance on the oscillating "strategic wire." The aim of the Uzbek policy-makers was to induce a change in the attitude of Western states so that they would recognize Uzbekistan as an independent regional power.

Contacts between Uzbek and U.S. officials resumed by 2007, and at the end of 2008 Western countries started to soften sanctions on the Uzbekistani government. In turn, U.S. military personnel received permission to transit through the Termez airbase near the Afghan border (leased to Germany) and to use the Navoi airport for transportation of non-lethal goods to Afghanistan. In 2009, Washington restarted military cooperation with Uzbekistan in

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[16] Cit. as in Nichol, "Central Asia," 15.

[17] Cit. as in Bakhshi, "Russia and Uzbekistan."

[18] The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Dogovor o soiuznicheskikh otnosheniiakh mezhdu Rossiiskoi Federatsiei i Respublikoi Uzbekistan," 2005, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/0/72EF98B3AEF0CDC9C3257DB90047370E.

the field of military education and training, and initiated Annual intergovernmental Bilateral Consultations (ABC), which have significantly improved security cooperation and boosted high-level official contacts between the two states.[19] Uzbekistan assumed a central role in the Northern Distribution Network for non-lethal military supplies to Afghanistan. In parallel with the restoration of Uzbekistan's relations with Western states, and as a part of the balancing act, its cooperation with Russia was curtailed. In November 2008, the country's officials announced the suspension of their participation in the EurAsEC. However, Uzbekistan's formal commitments within CSTO were still hindering the reinforcement of a pro-Western direction, which at that time was seen in Tashkent as a way to achieve a position of regional leadership and independence from Moscow. Therefore, the Uzbekistani policy of balancing acts required further steps to expand the space for independent external relations.

## The Policy toward Multilateral Cooperation and Russia's Response

The strategic goal of Uzbekistan to achieve "eternal independence" is manifest in policy practices aimed to distance the state from multilateral formats of any deeper international integration. In 2011, Islam Karimov stated,

> "When it comes to the formation of various inter-state associations, it is possible that they will go beyond economic interests and gain political color and content, which in turn may adversely affect the already established contacts and cooperation of the members of the association with other external partners, the development of integration processes with third-party countries."[20]

Following this guideline, Uzbekistan assumed nominal participation in the CSTO yet left aside any substantive engagement with the organization. Uzbekistan did not take part in the CSTO military exercises, it opposed the creation of the Collective Rapid Reaction Forces, and finally, on June 28,

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[19] See Nichol, "Uzbekistan," 18–20; and Gorenburg, "Central Asian Military and Security Forces," 62.

[20] Islam Karimov, "Doklad na torzhestvennom sobranii, posviashchennom 19-letiiu Konstitutsii Respubliki Uzbekistan," *Press Service of the President of Uzbekistan*, December 7, 2011, http://www.press-service.uz/ru/news/4913/ (translation by Vadim Romashov).

2012, the CSTO Secretariat received the official note from Uzbekistani authorities regarding their decision to suspend participation in the organization. It is not accidental that Tashkent sent the official note two weeks after the Uzbek and Russian presidents signed a Declaration on the Further Consolidation of Strategic Partnership and a Memorandum of Understanding on Measures for Uzbekistan's Accession to the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) Free Trade Zone Agreement. The signature of the documents and the decision to suspend its participation in the CSTO testify to the intention of the Uzbekistani government to switch to bilateral relations with Russia and to participate only in those inter-state integration associations that do not imply close political engagement but do bring economic benefits.

However, an unidentified "source from Uzbekistani Foreign Ministry" explained this decision to the Russian media by referring to Tashkent's disagreement with the CSTO's strategic plans towards Afghanistan, which imply a joint approach to relations with that country.[21] Islam Karimov repeatedly underlined the irreplaceable nature of bilateral relations with Kabul. At the September 2014 SCO summit he stressed that "Uzbekistan builds and will continue to build steady and friendly relations with Afghanistan deriving from the national interests of both countries and exclusively on [a] bilateral basis."[22] A bilateral relationship with Afghanistan, as opposed to a unified policy within an inter-state alliance, widens Tashkent's maneuvering room for cooperation with different foreign partners.

The decision by Uzbekistan to suspend participation in the CSTO triggered guesswork in the Russian media and the expert community on the real motives behind this policy action. Most accounts immediately speculated that Tashkent had bargained for certain security guarantees from Washington. Increased political contacts between Uzbek and American officials were presented in support of this conjecture.[23] Some experts assumed that Tashkent and Washington were discussing the possibility of the resumption of a U.S. military presence in the country in exchange for excess military equipment from Afghanistan, including the return of the military base to Karshi-Khanabad or, alternatively, the substitution of German troops in Termez by

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21 Gennadii Sysoev, Elena Chernenko, and Maksim Iusin, "Uzbekistan otryvaetsia ot kollektivnoi," *Kommersant*, June 29, 2012, 6.

22 Islam Karimov, "Speech at the SCO Summit," *Press Service of the President of Uzbekistan*, September 12, 2014, http://www.press-service.uz/en/news/5005/.

23 "Uzbekistan poluchit garantii bezopasnosti ot SShA, schitaiut eksperty," *RIA*, June 29, 2012, http://ria.ru/world/20120629/687946170.html.

U.S. forces.[24] At the same time, Uzbekistan was portrayed as a troublesome member of the CSTO, an "enfant terrible," as a Kazakh analyst had it, meaning that it had been problematic for the CSTO participants to conduct constructive dialogue with Tashkent regarding the deepening of security integration and enhancement of the organization's functionality and efficiency.[25] The General Secretary of CSTO, Nikolai Bordiuzha, reasoned that Uzbekistan's decision had arisen from the country's divergent views on the formation of a system of collective security, which had led to difficulties of co-operation within the organization itself. At the same time, the "Gen Sec" admitted that it would be challenging to build "the most effective" system of collective security in Central Asia without Uzbekistan, and he added that Tashkent would not be able to form its national security goals without the participation of the CSTO members.[26]

In order to decrease oscillations caused by the growing speculative enthusiasm of the Russian media and the expert community, as well as the annoyance of the political elite in Moscow, at the end of August 2012 the Senate (the upper chamber of Uzbekistan's Parliament) adopted a Concept of Foreign Policy Activity. The Concept proclaims that Uzbekistan is free to join any inter-state organization but reserves the right to withdraw in case that organization becomes a military-political bloc. This principle was already enshrined in the 1992 Law on Defense and in the 1996 Law on Main Principles of Foreign Policy Activity. The 2012 Foreign Policy Concept replaced the 1996 Law on Foreign Policy Main Principles and made significant amendments to the 1995 Military Doctrine, which ruled out any participation of Uzbekistani forces in international peacekeeping operations. Presenting the concept to the Senate, Abdulaziz Kamilov, Foreign Minister of Uzbeki-

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[24] Sysoev, Chernenko and Iusin, "Uzbekistan"; "Eksperty: Demarsh Uzbekistana v otnoshenii ODKB podstegnet pohozhie tendentsii v Kirgizii i Tadzhikistane," *Regnum*, June 29, 2012, http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1546578.html; Kirill Belianinov and Elena Chernenko, "Tsentral'nuiu Aziiu razdelili po bazovomu priznaku," *Kommersant*, August 23, 2012, 6.

[25] Laumulin, "Virtual Security of Central Asia"; Aleksandr Shustov, "ODKB bez Uzbekistana," *Strategic Culture Foundation*, July 6, 2012, http://www.fondsk.ru/news/2012/07/06/odkb-bez-uzbekistana-15357.html.

[26] Nikolai Bordiuzha in interview with *Russia in Global Affairs*, November 21, 2012, http://www.globalaffairs.ru/event/Intervyu-generalnogo-sekretarya-ODKB-Nikolaya-Bordyuzhi-agentstvu-RIA-Novosti-gazete-Moskovskie-novo.

stan, stressed that "the Uzbek soldiers would never fight in foreign countries." [27]

The main provision of the Concept, which aims to reassure Moscow of Tashkent's reliability as a strategic partner and an ally of Russia, states that Uzbekistan does not allow the deployment of foreign military bases and facilities on its territory. However, there are many nuances in the document that allude to the continuing balancing act. The real engagement of Uzbekistan with the principle of the non-deployment of foreign military on its territory is questionable, as the adoption of the Concept did not affect the German airbase in Termez. Moreover, the document does not ban access to the country's military facilities and, in fact, Uzbekistan may allow other foreign troops to use its own infrastructure.

By adopting the Concept, Tashkent aimed to demonstrate that it does not intend to engage closely in terms of military and political cooperation with NATO and the U.S., and neither with the CSTO and Russia. Additionally, the document casts a shadow on Uzbekistan's commitments under the Treaty of Alliance with Russia. In particular, the commitment to mutual support in case of aggression against one of the parties is called into question. One of its important components, military assistance, is limited by the Concept's provision of non-participation of Uzbekistani soldiers in operations abroad. However, Uzbekistan has not declared neutrality and has thus left room for political maneuvering with its international partners. To emphasize the independence of Uzbekistan from foreign actors, the Concept states that "no integration should be imposed from the outside" and "problems in Central Asia should be solved by the states in the region without interference from external forces." [28]

Thus, the adoption of the foreign policy concept closed the door that had previously been left ajar following the notification of suspension of participation in the CSTO. The member states of the security organization decided not to accept the conduct of their "enfant terrible" and locked the door shut. Instead of upholding Tashkent's wish to suspend its participation only, the

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27 "Senat Uzbekistana zapretil chlenstvo strany v voennykh blokakh i razmeshchenie na ee territorii voennykh baz," *Vestnik Kavkaza*, August 30, 2012, http://www.vestikavkaza.ru/news/Senat-Uzbekistana-zapretil-chlenstvo-strany-v-voennykh-blokakh-i-razmeshchenie-na-eye-territorii-voe.html.

28 D. Azizov, "Senat Uzbekistana odobril zakon o kontseptsii vneshnepoliticheskoi deiatel'nosti," *Trend.az*, August 30, 2012, http://www.trend.az/print/2060201.html (translation by Vadim Romashov).

Council of Collective Security adopted a decision at the CSTO summit on December 19, 2012 to suspend Uzbekistan's membership entirely. In this way the member states deprived Tashkent of the right to use the capacity of the system of collective security in case of security crises and to participate in the organization's decision-making process. The Council laid down a key condition for Uzbekistan's possible return: Tashkent would have to sign and ratify all the international agreements and decisions adopted under the CSTO.[29]

The transformations of Uzbekistan's foreign policy in 2012 signal the country's return to the strategic path toward an independent policy of being a regional leader and, through this, a pivotal actor in Central Asia. The immediate motivation for the decision to leave the CSTO was the maximization of gains from relations with Western countries, who had announced the withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan and expressed an intention to gift surplus military equipment to Central Asian countries. Therefore, Tashkent has striven to demonstrate that NATO and the U.S. remain better security providers for the border between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan than are the CSTO and Russia, and has inclined towards negotiating security guarantees primarily with Washington. However, in this situation Uzbekistan risks undermining its strategic relations with Russia and departing from its policy of balancing act.

## Threats to National Security and Regional Stability

Along with a chance for gaining the advantage in regional politics sought by the Uzbekistani leadership, the reorganization of the U.S. military presence in Afghanistan brings with it risks for national security. Tashkent often draws attention to its anxiety that the withdrawal of Western troops from Afghanistan will result in deterioration of the security environment along Uzbekistan's borders. At the SCO summit in September 2014, Islam Karimov warned,

[29] Collective Security Treaty Organization, "Ob itogakh sessii Soveta kollektivnoi bezopasnosti ODKB," December 19, 2012, http://www.odkb-csto.org/news/detail.php?ELEMENT_ID=1536&SECTION_ID=91.

> “[T]he withdrawal of international security assistance forces from Afghanistan can lead to mounting threats and growing instability, expanding terrorist and extremist activities as well as increasing scales of drug trafficking not merely in the wider Central Asian region, but also far beyond its rims… [A]ny vacuum emergent in Afghanistan can within a short period of time be filled by various destructive and terrorist groups.”[30]

However, Uzbekistan is not overly concerned about its own 137-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan, the shortest Afghan border amongst the Central Asian states. The frontier is well secured by the Uzbekistani military with heavy arms and a border barrier with two barbed wire lines (one of which is electrified) and landmines, which was erected by Tashkent after the Taliban victories in Afghanistan. The presence of the German airbase in Termez and a natural barrier, the Amu Darya River that separates the two states, also contribute to border protection. The only bridge across the river can be closed at any time if danger arises from the southern neighbor, just as was the case in the period of 1996–2002. Simultaneously, the heavy security at the border is not conducive to building relationships of trust between local people and authorities on the two banks of the Amu Darya. The Uzbek population is numerically prevalent in the northern districts of Afghanistan, but the cross-border flows of people are substantially restricted. Moreover, Uzbekistani authorities commonly present the frequent border incidents that result in civilian deaths as terrorist attacks and infiltration.[31]

The state border with Afghanistan is not the only border to create concern for the Uzbekistani government. In the Central Asian context, the words “Afghan border” do not mean merely any particular country’s national border with Afghanistan but also carry the connotation of the former Soviet Afghan border. The general expectation is that the security threat emerging after the military withdrawal of ISAF may reach the territory of every single Central Asian republic. Uzbekistan’s geographic location in the middle of Central Asia with its apparent strategic and economic advantages also creates specific security challenges for Tashkent. In light of this threat, the Uzbekistani government considers its frontiers with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as its “secondary Afghan borders.” According to Christian Bleuer and Said Reza

[30] Islam Karimov, “Speech at the SCO Summit.”

[31] For an example of this type of presentation, see “Grazhdane Afganistana napali na pogrannariad Uzbekistana, imeiutsia zhertvy,” *12news.uz*, March 16, 2013, http://www.12news.uz/news/2013/03/grazhdane-afganistana-napali-na-pogra/#more-19254.

Kazemi, such a perception, coupled with the belief that its neighbors are not able to prevent incursions of "militants and terrorists" through their territory and into Uzbekistan, reinforces the conviction of the necessity to maintain heavy security measures at the Tajik and Kyrgyz borders.[32] In effect this increases distrust (high as it is already) between Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Tajiks, and adds to the instability at their joint borders; and the conflict-ridden relations between these neighboring states play into the hands of those termed "extremists."

In the recent past, the main territorial target for the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has been the Ferghana Valley, which is situated in the immediate vicinity of Tashkent, the center of Uzbek power. The instability at the crossroads of the three countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan can undermine security and the political situation in the entire Central Asian region. Besides this region with its troublesome reputation, there is a threat that a new channel for the infiltration of insurgents into Uzbekistan's territory might occur through the Afghan-Turkmen border. Since 2013, the Taliban and its allies have intensified their activity in Afghan provinces adjacent to Turkmenistan. Some areas were temporally taken in the province of Faryab, and in Badghis province a group of gunmen stormed the border checkpoint.[33] In February and May 2014, militants from these two provinces, reportedly of Turkmen and Uzbek ethnic origin, crossed the border and attacked Turkmenistan's border guards.[34] In comparison with the Afghan borders of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, the Afghan-Turkmen border is poorly defended. Tashkent pays considerably less attention to the border with Turkmenistan than it does to its turbulent frontiers with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. As a consequence, the IMU and other insurgent groups could be in a position to use the Afghanistan–Turkmenistan channel to intrude into Uzbekistan's territory.

Related to these developments, the crisis in Ukraine that began in late 2013 also poses a threat to Tashkent's authority. The domestic opposition

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32 Christian Bleuer and Said Reza Kazemi, "Between co-operation and insulation: Afghanistan's relations with the Central Asian republics," *Afghanistan Analysts Network Thematic Report*, January 2014, 43–44, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/20140608-Bleuer_Kazemi-Central_Asia.pdf.

33 "V afganskoi provintsii Badgis unichtozhen zamestitel' lidera Talibana," *Voennyi Obozrevatel*, October 28, 2013, http://warsonline.info/afganistan/v-afganskoy-provintsii-badgis-unichtozhen-zamestitel-lidera-talibana.html.

34 Bruce Pannier and Muhammad Tahir, "More Turkmen Troops Killed along Afghan Border," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, May 27, 2014, http://www.rferl.org/content/qishloq-ovozi-turkmen-troops-killed-afghan-border/25400833.html.

and external actors have received a stimulus for their actions taken in response to Uzbekistan's policy practices. In spring 2014, along with the developments in Crimea, the activity of a little-known movement "Alga Karakalpakstan" fighting for the independence of Karakalpakstan, an autonomous republic in Uzbekistan, suddenly increased. The Alga Karakalpakstan activists held several protests urging the exercising the republic's constitutional right to organize a referendum on secession from Uzbekistan. The activists called for Moscow to support their aspirations and even to admit Karakalpakstan to the Russian Federation in spite of the absence of common border. The pro-Karakalpakstan activists made similar requests to neighboring Kazakhstan on the basis of the argument that it is the Kazakh language which is closest to Karakalpak. Such appeals have been backed by references to the history of Karakalpakia.[35] The leaders of Alga Karakalpakstan emphasize that accession to Russia or Kazakhstan is not a goal in itself but instead a possible way "to protect the sovereignty and the future development" of Karakalpakstan.[36] Even though the strength and viability of this movement remains unknown, the Karakalpak precedent may trigger centrifugal tendencies also in Bukhara and Samarkand, Uzbekistan's cities with large Tajik populations and historically significant for Tajik identity. Furthermore, Karakalpakstan is the site of the "Jaslyk" prison, which houses many inmates allegedly jailed for crimes related to outlawed Islamic organizations, mainly from Hizb ut-Tahrir but also from the IMU. Although the Islamic radicals in the Karakalpak opposition for the time being form only a small group numbering around 50 people based mostly in Kazakhstan and partly in Karakalpakstan,[37] the prison might represent a particular interest for radical Islamists to "liberate" their associates. There is no reliable information on links with terrorist groups from Afghanistan, but members of the IMU and other Islamist radical organizations may attempt to infiltrate Karakalpakstan through Turkmenistan in order to manipulate potential separatist aspirations,

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[35] According to the 1873 Guendeman Peace Treaty, Karakalpakstan was ceded to the Russian Empire by the Khanate of Khiva. From 1924 to 1930, it was a part of the Kazakh Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic and an entity within the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic from 1930 until 1936, when it was transferred to the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic.

[36] Marip Kungradskii, "Nastalo vremia ob'ediniat'sia i deistvovat," *Shiraq*, May 21, 2014, http://shiraqnews.com/news/marip-kungradskij-nastalo-vremya-ob/.

[37] Ibid.

destabilize the situation, and undermine the authority of the government in Tashkent.

The Ukrainian developments in 2013–2014 have also inspired Uzbekistan's political opposition, in particular the People's Movement of Uzbekistan (PMU), which in February 2014 called for the use of arms to unseat President Karimov.[38] The leader of the Movement, Muhammad Salih, resides in Turkey, and, as his representatives do not fail to mention, Karimov is concerned about the possibility that Istanbul could provide political and financial support to the PMU.[39] Such concerns were linked with the country's presidential election in 2015, in which Karimov was re-elected despite rumors that the aging incumbent would not participate in the election and was searching for possible successors.[40] However, as experts note, the moment of power transition from 77-year-old Islam Karimov is inevitably approaching and this heightens internal risks notwithstanding his re-election to the presidential office.[41]

In order to ensure stability inside the country and at its borders, Tashkent expects security guarantees primarily from Washington because, amongst other issues, these guarantees may involve the delivery of military hardware from Afghanistan through the Excess Defense Articles program. Uzbekistan's military equipment is mostly of Soviet origin and, unlike in Kazakhstan, it has not undergone extensive modernization.[42] Despite the fact that the Uzbekistani army appears quite capable of suppressing opposition unrest and of fighting against small groups of Islamist insurgents, the condition of its hardware is unworthy of a country that purports to be a regional leader. From this point of view, Tashkent seeks high military capability for the improvement of its political position in the negotiations over water issues and border conflicts with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and the strengthening of its position

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38 Usman Haknazarov, "Islam Karimov reshil pozhiznenno ostat'sia u vlasti," *Narodnoe Dvizhenie Uzbekistana*, February 3, 2014, http://uzxalqharakati.com/ru/archives/6624.

39 Usman Haknazarov, "Prezident Karimov gotov poiti na poklon dazhe k osnovnomu vragu – Emomali Rakhmonu," *Ozodagon*, July 23, 2014, http://catoday.org/centrasia/15325-usman-haknazarov-prezident-karimov-gotov-poyti-na-poklon-dazhe-k-osnovnomu-vragu-emomali-rahmonu.html.

40 For the pre-election situation in Uzbekistan, see Alexey Malashenko, "Exploring Uzbekistan's Potential Political Transition," *Carnegie Moscow Center*, July 2014, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/CP_Uzbekistan_web_Eng2014.pdf.

41 See Evgeny Minchenko et al., "Assessment of political risks for foreign investors in Central Asian countries: comparative analysis," *Minchenko Consulting Report*, February 2015, 5, http://www.minchenko.ru/netcat_files/File/Political_risks_CA_2014.pdf.

42 See Gorenburg, "Central Asian Military and Security Forces."

in relation to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan's main regional competitor. Therefore, receiving even second-hand NATO equipment is a better option for Tashkent than the continued use of obsolete Soviet arms, the maintenance of which contributes to preserve Uzbekistan's dependence on Russia's technical service and supply of components.

In 2012, Moscow decided to provide unprecedented direct military-technical aid to Kyrgyzstan worth $1.1 billion as well as $200 million for the Tajik army, including aviation, armored vehicles, artillery, air defense weapons and small arms.[43] This decision points to Russia's response to the increased military cooperation between Washington and Tashkent and an attempt to restrain Uzbekistan's conduct toward its neighbors. The increasing dependence of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan on Russian military supplies substantially reduces U.S. influence in these countries, and the simultaneous prolongation of the lease contracts for Russian military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (for twenty and for thirty years, respectively) further consolidates Russian presence in the region. In autumn 2012, Moscow also made an effort to outbid the U.S. for a possible military deal with Uzbekistan and signed a bilateral program with Tashkent on arms supplies until 2020. At the time of writing, details on the implementation of this program remain unavailable.

Despite these Russian actions, Uzbekistan and the U.S. have continued to intensify their military cooperation. In March 2013, NATO redeployed its Central Asian Liaison office from Astana to Tashkent. Although the organization's representatives asserted that the redeployment is part of a regular regional rotation process, it raised a new wave of speculations about the future development of the office into a military structure.[44] No matter what the real motive is for this, the move indicates that NATO is not going to leave the region. In May 2014, following the official opening of the office, James Appathurai, the NATO Secretary General's Special Representative for the Caucasus and Central Asia, stated that "curtailing of combat units in neighboring Afghanistan does not mean the end of cooperation with the countries of the region" and added that "just a small change in the mission will hap-

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43 Ivan Safronov, Sergei Strokan', and Elena Chernenko, "Kirgiziiu i Tadzhikistan vooruzhat rossiiskimi den'gami," *Kommersant*, November 6, 2012, 1; Ivan Safronov and Elena Chernenko, "Rossiia vooruzhit Kirgiziiu i Tadzhikistan," *Kommersant*, October 2, 2013, 8.

44 Joshua Kucera, "NATO to Open Liaison Office in Uzbekistan," *Eurasianet.org*, May 26, 2013, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67021/.

pen." Appathurai promised assistance to Uzbekistan in its military reforms, which include the modernization of military institutions, defense structures, and military training.[45]

The trend of increased military cooperation between the U.S. and Uzbekistan has cemented the conviction in Russian expert opinion that Washington plans to reset its military presence in Uzbekistan.[46] However, the transfer of Western excess military equipment to Uzbekistan is still unspecified, and Tashkent continues to maintain its military cooperation with Russia. In December 2014 at a meeting with President Vladimir Putin, Islam Karimov underscored that Tashkent "supports a systematic and active expansion of contacts in this strategically important area for full and effective implementation of the adopted long-term intergovernmental agreements and programs." He explained this position due to "serious security threats, unpredictable situation in Afghanistan after the upcoming withdrawal of ISAF peacekeeping forces, the increasing scale of terrorism and drug trafficking, and […] creeping expansion of militant extremism and religious radicalism."[47]

The intentions of the U.S. and Russia to enhance military cooperation with Uzbekistan reveal that Uzbekistan remains their important strategic partner in Central Asia. However, the future format of the rival powers' military presence in Uzbekistan depends on Tashkent's decision on how to counter the threats to its national security and the attacks on its authority within the state. These risks are concomitant to the gamble for wider political independence, which Uzbekistan actively engages in by balancing between the extra-regional powers whilst the international military presence in Afghanistan is undergoing reorganization.

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[45] James Appathurai in an interview with *Podrobno*, May 17, 2014, http://podrobno.uz/cat/politic/otkr-buro-nato-v-tash/?sphrase_id=21108 (translation by Vadim Romashov).

[46] For example, see Viktoriia Panfilova, "SShA ishchut zamenu Manasu," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, June 23, 2014, 7.

[47] President of Russia, "Nachalo rossiisko-uzbekistanskikh peregovorov v rasshirennom sostave," October 10, 2014, http://news.kremlin.ru/transcripts/47215 (translation by Vadim Romashov).

## "Triumvirate" Politics and the Eurasian Detour Around Uzbekistan

Russia's attempts to involve Uzbekistan in the Eurasian integration projects following the rupture of Tashkent's relations with Western states after the 2005 Andijon events have not succeeded. The choice of the Uzbekistani government to favor bilateral relations instead of multilateral formats of co-operation is not ultimately to Moscow's liking because of the low engage-ment it achieves in integration initiatives. Moreover, Uzbekistan continues its traditional policy towards the neighboring states, above all in regard to Kyr-gyzstan and Tajikistan, from the position of strength, which takes full ad-vantage of its central location in the region. In disputes with its neighbors, Tashkent from time to time employs energy and transport blockades as poli-cy instruments in order to demonstrate its dominant position. Nevertheless, if the security situation requires support from the Russian side, or if there is a need to balance policies, Uzbekistan is willing to normalize relations with Moscow's Central Asian allies. This foreign policy conduct is not merely a manifestation of Uzbekistan's balancing act; it also stems from its identity as a regional leader. Against the background of Uzbekistan's history, it is even possible to argue that the attitudes to its neighbors, which change from exert-ing pressure to expressing benevolence, reflect something of the practices of the khans' relations with their vassals.

However, the Uzbekistani leadership has a different attitude to Kazakh-stan and sees it as a strong state that can be an equal partner. Taking into ac-count this view of Tashkent, Russian and Kazakh experts promote the idea of a "triumvirate," in other words the trilateral cooperation of Russia, Kazakh-stan and Uzbekistan. Trilateral cooperation would grant a "privileged" status to Uzbekistan as a regional leader on a par with Russia and Kazakhstan. The "triumvirate" is supposed to be based on Russia's comprehensive bilateral relations with the two regional leaders as well as the strategic bilateral coop-eration between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and complemented by coopera-tion in the frame of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU).[48] In June 2013, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan took the first political step in this direction by signing an agreement on strategic partnership that brings closer Kazakhstani-

[48] See Viktoriia Panfilova, "Triumvirat evraziiskikh soiuznikov," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, June 11, 2013, 6.

Uzbekistani and Russian-Uzbekistani cooperation. At a December 2014 meeting of Putin and Karimov, it was announced that the parties discussed the possibility of signing an agreement on a free trade zone between the EEU and Uzbekistan.[49]

Alexander Knyazev, a Russian expert on Central Asia, believes that the scheme of trilateral cooperation will contribute to regional security as a common strategy of the three major states in addressing threats, primarily those related to the developments in Afghanistan.[50] However, the intensified Uzbekistani-U.S. military-political dialogue does not strengthen confident relations between Moscow and Tashkent, which are necessary for the creation of a sustained trilateral structure of security cooperation. Therefore, the Russian government is developing an alternative approach in its relationship with Uzbekistan, an approach that potentially brings considerable risks for Tashkent's leadership aspirations in the region. It implies setting up a detour around Uzbekistan in order to substantially decrease the dependence of Russia and its allies on this country as the main transit territory and energy supplier.

Uzbekistan is the sole gas exporter to Tajikistan and the south of Kyrgyzstan, and this arrangement provides Tashkent with powerful leverage that backs its position in territorial and water disputes with the neighboring states. Tajikistan has not received gas from Uzbekistan since late 2012. In April 2014, the Uzbekistani gas transit company UzTransGaz cut off supplies to Kyrgyzstan. In addition to the political motives to apply pressure to the Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani governments, there are economic reasons for suspending supplies. A variety of problems related to the exploration and development of gas fields as well as growing domestic demand limit the export potential of Uzbekistan. Moreover, part of the resources are consumed for developing the Turkmenistan–China gas pipeline system. In order to secure a share in the strategically important and profitable Chinese energy market, Uzbekistan has to provide the pipeline with gas almost at maximum capacity and at the expense of traditional customers.

Tashkent's position in regional energy politics has left Moscow with both the opportunities and the need to organize gas deliveries to southern

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49 President of Russia, "Press statement following Russian-Uzbekistani talks," December 10, 2014, http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/23373.

50 Alexander Knyazev, "Slozhitsia li os' bezopasnosti Astana-Tashkent-Moskva?," *Zonakz*, June 14, 2013, http://zonakz.net/articles/69429.

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Gazprom has allocated 65 billion rubles to construct the gas pipeline connecting the north and south of Kyrgyzstan by the year 2016. In order to provide the Osh region, which is completely deprived of gas, with alternative energy sources before this date, the gas company has earmarked 20 billion rubles as a soft loan to the Kyrgyzstani Ministry of Energy.[51] In December 2014, the president of Kyrgyzstan, Almazbek Atambayev, announced that there is also an agreement with Gazprom on the construction of a gas pipeline from a gas field in Batken province to the Osh and Jalal-Abad provinces.[52] In order to substitute gas imports in Tajikistan, the company plans to start gas production at the Sarykamysh field near Dushanbe and to exploit resources from the Western Shaambary field.[53] Moreover, the fourth line of the aforementioned gas pipeline to China is planned to run via Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which would allow both Central Asian countries to purchase Turkmen resources directly from the pipe. Eventually, Tashkent may lose the "gas cudgel" that it traditionally has employed toward Dushanbe and Bishkek.

Tashkent plays an important role also in the regional electricity distribution network due to the fact that most of the transmission facilities of the Central Asian Power System (CAPS), including its dispatch center and personnel, are placed in Uzbekistan. During the Soviet period, the CAPS was a key mechanism that united Central Asian republics within an integrated system of redistribution of water and energy. When relations became market-based following the dissolution of the USSR, Tashkent gained additional leverage with its neighbor states. The parties are frequently unable to finalize contracts on electricity transit and, as a result, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan suffer from energy shortages in winter. Kazakhstan is in a better position because transmission in the northern parts of the country operates in parallel with the Russian Unified Power System (UPS) and it is only the southern regions that depend on CAPS. In 2003, Turkmenistan disconnected the na-

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51 Aziza Marat kyzy, "Gazprom prolozhit gazoprovod s severa na iug Kyrgyzstana," *Gezitter.org*, September 2, 2014, http://www.gezitter.org/economics/32812_gazprom_prolojit_gazoprovod_s_severa_na_yug_kyirgyizstana__/.

52 "Atambaev ob itogakh goda: izmeneniia Konstitutsii i chlenstvo v EAES," *MIR24*, December 27, 2014, http://mir24.tv/news/economy/11849728.

53 "Gazpromu dali eshche 4 goda na dobychu gaza v Tadzhikistane," *Radio Ozodi*, January 14, 2014, http://rus.ozodi.org/content/article/25229539.html.

tional transmission grid from CAPS and managed to create a separate power grid.

In June 2014, Tajik state energy company Barki Tojik announced that Astana, Bishkek and Dushanbe plan to revive CAPS without the involvement of Uzbekistan.[54] For the first time the idea of connecting Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan's South to the joint power grid of Kazakhstan and northern Kyrgyzstan was officially announced in 2010.[55] In 2013, this idea gained additional momentum when Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia decided to create a common energy market within the EEU.[56] The initiative implies the deeper integration of national energy systems and the joint export of electricity to the power grids of other countries. In this situation, it is essential for Kazakhstan to detach itself from the unstable operation of CAPS, which provides Tashkent with a central role, and to connect Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the common energy market. Participation in this will be profitable for Kyrgyzstani and Tajikistani hydroelectric power stations, which produce surplus electricity in summer. If these plans are realized, Uzbekistan's leverage deriving from its advantageous position as the dispatch center of CAPS could turn into leverage for its neighbors, who by creating an independent electricity grid would become able to control water discharge according to their own needs.

The construction of a transmission line from Khujand in Tajikistan to Datka in Kyrgyzstan is part of the U.S.-initiated CASA-1000 project.[57] Its extension to Shymkent in Kazakhstan (as a part of the Kazakh-Kyrgyz-Tajik UPS) would connect the CASA-1000 project with the EEU market. Like this, a large energy market could be formed that would limit Uzbekistan's participation and reduce the influence of the U.S. Against the backdrop of this possibility it can be understood why, in 2011, Russia radically changed its atti-

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54 "Tadzhikistan, Kazakhstan i Kyrgyzstan rassmatrivaiut vopros o vosstanovlenii edinoi energosistemy Tsentral'noi Azii," *Avesta.tj*, June 17, 2014, http://www.avesta.tj/business/25861-tadzhikistan-kazahstan-i-kyrgyzstan-rassmatrivayut-vopros-o-vosstanovlenii-edinoy-energosistemy-centralnoy-azii.html.

55 Askar Muminov, "Sviazannye odnim tokom. Astana reanimiruet OES?." *Kursiv.kz*, June 18, 2014, http://www.kursiv.kz/news/details/vlast/ svyazannye_odnim_tokom_astana _reanimiruet_oes_/.

56 Artem Borisov, "Al'ternativa, kotoroi ne bylo," *Kapital*, October 22, 2013, http://kapital.kz/details/22436/alternativa-kotoroj-ne-bylo.html.

57 Sunil Kumar Khosla and John Irving, "CASA-1000: Progress and Review" (presentation at Energy Sector Coordinating Committee Meetings of Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, September 10–12, 2013).

tude to CASA-1000 (from opposing the project to supporting it) and proposed $500 million as investments to build the Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan line.[58] Tashkent has been against the CASA project and believes that it is directly related to the construction of giant hydropower plants (HPP) in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.[59] Being a downstream country, Uzbekistan has concerns that the power plants will create a mechanism that "will enable its owner to dictate unilaterally the harsh terms of water discharge to downstream countries," and "this mechanism can be converted into explicit tool of political pressure."[60]

In fact, "the owner of the mechanism" to which Tashkent refers is not Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan but rather the Russian state-run companies. In 2012, the Russian and Kyrgyz governments signed agreements on building and operating Kambaratinskaya-1 and the Upper Naryn Cascade HPP. Since the Russian side finances the projects, parts of Kyrgyz shares in the joint organizations created for operational management of the projects are transferred to the Russian founder companies or the financing organizations. The Russian side is authorized to conduct strategic and operational management of the projects for the period of payback and the return of borrowed funds.[61] The realization of these plans will help Russia to increase its influence in Central Asia by gaining control over the Naryn, one of the most geostrategically important cross-border rivers in the region. Similar perspectives also appear for the long-discussed Rogun HPP in the case that Tajikistan, following the positive conclusion in September 2014 of the World Bank's final assessment report on the plant's construction, finds itself unable to fund the project without Russia's participation and if Moscow subsequently resumes its promises in regard to contributing to its construction.

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58 "Rossiia reshila vlozhit' $500 mln v energoproekt CASA-1000," *Rosbalt*, December 18, 2013, http://www.rosbalt.ru/exussr/2013/12/18/1212762.html.

59 Svetlana Ponomareva, "Pochemu Uzbekistan protiv proekta CASA-1000," *Market Leader*, March 21, 2014, http://www.profi-forex.by/news/entry5000023918.html.

60 Rustam Azimov, Statement (proceedings of the High Level Meeting of Regional Riparian Issues in the Context of the "World Bank Note on Key Issues for Consideration on the Proposed Rogun Hydropower Project," August 4, 2014).

61 The Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Soglashenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Kirgizskoi Respubliki o stroitel'stve i ekspluatatsii Verkhne-Narynskogo kaskada gidroelektrostantsii," 2012, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/0/7F9B6F8E7BAA8705C3257DB900473228 and "Soglashenie mezhdu Pravitel'stvom Rossiiskoi Federatsii i Pravitel'stvom Kirgizskoi Respubliki o stroitel'stve i ekspluatatsii Kambaratinskoi GES-1," 2012, http://www.mid.ru/bdomp/spd_md.nsf/0/D7F6557D40148EACC3257DB9004734AD.

Russian transport infrastructure initiatives in the region are similarly aimed at by-passing Uzbekistan and thus ensuring the independence of its Central Asian allies by avoiding transit through Uzbekistani territory. Tajikistan is the most dependent country because all of its railroad lines to other countries run through Uzbekistan. The railroad connecting Uzbekistan and Tajikistan has remained inoperative since November 2011 (reportedly) due to an explosion on a railway bridge near the border of both states; as a consequence, the southern regions of Tajikistan have become cut off from the Central Asian main line. In response to these developments, Russia and its allies in the region have developed a project that can undermine the Uzbekistani role as the main railroad hub of Central Asia. In March 2013, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan signed a memorandum on the construction of a railway connecting the three countries. It is planned that the Afghan and Tajik parts of the railway will be financed under the CAREC (Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation) programs. In September 2013, the Russian delegation at a meeting of Joint CAREC Transport Sector Coordinating and Customs Cooperation Committees proposed to connect the project with the Russia-Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan railroad construction plans discussed at an informal meeting of the CSTO heads of states earlier in May.[62] The combination of the two projects would provide not only Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, but also Russia, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan with better access to Afghanistan and, potentially, South Asia. For Tajikistan this would mean breaking the transport blockade, and it would also undermine Uzbekistan's advantageous position in the region.

The dissociation of Uzbekistan from the Eurasian integration projects and regional initiatives would lead to a significant degree of isolation of this state from the economies of the ex-Soviet republics and also sever trade relations with Russia. The government in Tashkent would lose its non-military mechanisms of influence on Bishkek and Dushanbe. It goes without saying that such a scenario is not conducive to the Uzbekistani strategic path of aspiring to being a regional leader. Tashkent thus faces a dilemma that requires performing new balancing feats on the "strategic wire" in order to prevent

[62] Zarina Ergasheva, "Russia offers construction of railway to Tajikistan via Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan," *Asia-Plus*, October 3, 2013, http://news.tj/en/news/russia-offers-construction-railway-tajikistan-kazakhstan-and-kyrgyzstan; "Uchastniki sammita ODKB obsudili proekt zheleznoi dorogi Rossiia-Kazakhstan-Kyrgystan-Tadzhikistan," *ITAR-TASS*, May 28, 2013, http://itar-tass.com/glavnie-novosti/582254.

negative developments and to remain an independent leader of Central Asia. Concerns over its increasingly difficult position perhaps were in the background when the Acting Head of Freight and Commercial Operation of Uzbekistan Railroads, Utkur Astanov, in July 2014 announced that the Uzbekistani side had decided to launch Tajikistan's transit transportation on a new line.[63] Easing relations with neighbors is also essential for maintaining stability at the borders in the situation of Afghanistan's uncertain future and changing geopolitical conjunctures.

## Conclusion: The Risks Involved in Uzbekistan's Game of Chance

The long-term goal of achieving "eternal independence" declared by Uzbekistan is an important element of the project of nationalizing state identity. This makes the foreign policy of Tashkent different from the policies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In those countries, the well-established set of security, political and economic links with Moscow significantly limits the maneuvering room in relations with other countries. Striving to be as independent as possible in its foreign policy, Uzbekistan performs a balancing act in its relationships with international actors. Proceeding from the interpretations of the changing external and internal dynamics, this act entails a simultaneous reduction and enhancement of one direction or the other. Any radical changes in the regional and domestic security environment have an impact as "shock points" or "explosions" that send out waves leading to the oscillation of the "wire" upon which Uzbekistani strategic goals are strung. In tune with such oscillations, the country's foreign policy inclines in those directions and can thus provide immediate support for state security. However, when the explosive wave calms and the security environment stabilizes, and the "wire" settles into a state of gradual motion, Uzbekistani policy subsequently returns to its strategic balancing act. Eventually, in Uzbekistan's game of chance, maintaining a balance depends on how successfully the opportunities and risks inherent in the changing environment are met.

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[63] Dar'ia Beloglazova, "Zhdut reaktsii kolleg," *Gudok*, July 30, 2014, 5.

By pursuing its desire to be an independent Central Asian leader, Tashkent plays a risky game that affects developments in the region. Since this policy is based on contraposition rather than complementing the external directions, the Uzbekistani gamble is fraught with increasing confrontation between the country's foreign partners, who try to anchor their presence and influence in Central Asia by counterbalancing the policies of each other and design their regional strategies correspondingly. Because external and internal developments are connected to each other, this political environment also threatens the domestic situation in Uzbekistan. The radicalization of the opposition and the problematic areas in the Ferghana Valley, Karakalpakstan and the Tajik-populated territories, in addition to the uncertainty related to the upcoming transfer of presidential power, can foster the fragmentation of state organization. If the political elite in Tashkent loses its grip on domestic affairs, the risk of major internal crises will increase. In this situation, both the states engaged in the region's politics as well as transborder groups of insurgents will try to gain a stake in the redistribution of political power in Uzbekistan for their own benefit, which again will accelerate confrontation between the foreign actors.

Any instability arising in the Central Asian states can undermine Russia's influence in the region and prompt its proactive foreign policy measures in the security sphere, including the use of military force in accordance with the commitments in the framework of the CSTO and bilateral agreements. To secure its regional presence Moscow tries to engage Tashkent in the Eurasian integration processes, but such efforts have thus far not been successful. For this reason the integration projects have been redirected to make a detour around Uzbekistan. Currently, the intensification of Russian political, economic and military ties with the Central Asian CSTO members and the simultaneous dissociation of Uzbekistan from regional economic arrangements are the points of departure for Moscow's policy toward Tashkent, which aims to persuade the Uzbekistani government to participate in Eurasian integration. However, the leadership in Tashkent perceives close engagement with the emerging Eurasian Union as a threat to national independence and its right to rule the state.

As the country's participation in the CSTO shows, Uzbekistan with its high level of vertical integration is incapable of making compromises in multilateral frames of cooperation. In the Central Asian states any initiative for the delegation of authority to supra-national institutions encounters uncom-

promising perceptions of sovereignty. Additionally, mutual distrust between these states amplifies contrasting opinions over security-related issues. Security is strongly associated with the survival of personified regimes in these countries, and a collectivistic approach has little chance of developing due to divergent views on common threats. Political organization in Uzbekistan, which is centered upon the leader, President Karimov, makes it difficult for Tashkent to accept a multilateral regional institution led by another and more powerful state. By contrast, the Uzbekistani leadership feels more comfortable in bilateral contacts: in such cases there is no need to coordinate political agenda with a number of different actors and no risk of finding one's own position marginalized by a group of associated states with concordant opinions. Moreover, bilateral relations provide the possibility of informal arrangements that suit Uzbekistan's balancing act amidst extra-regional powers. In bilateral cooperation, Tashkent is able to demand "equal rights" treatment from powerful foreign partners. At the same time bilateral agreements are easier to break than those adopted in multilateral formats.

The policy choices made by Russia, which are aimed at depriving Uzbekistan of its tools of influence over its neighbors, affect the present structure of state borders in Central Asia. Russian initiatives for regional energy and transport projects that by-pass Uzbekistan, and its plans for military supplies to Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, strengthen the relative positions of Bishkek and Dushanbe in border disputes with Tashkent. The implementation of these initiatives can also reshape the Central Asian borderlands in those areas through which the routes of Uzbekistan's economic interaction with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan traditionally run. The aggravation of Uzbekistan's relations with its neighbors perhaps can be alleviated by means of the joint efforts of extra-regional actors focused on regional development and linked with such initiatives as the "New Silk Roads" proposed by the U.S. and China, as well as the projects within Eurasian integration promoted by Russia and Kazakhstan.

Since independence the Uzbekistani leadership has attempted to rely on its own sources of power for resolving domestic problems, while the protection of the Afghan border, both official and "secondary," has required support from international actors. The reorganization of the foreign military presence and the change of power in Afghanistan drives the government of Uzbekistan to active negotiations regarding security guarantees with its foreign partners. In this process, two security systems are in competition with

each other: the Russian-led CSTO and the U.S.-led NATO. In the field of security, the EU does not have much to offer Uzbekistan separately from the U.S. and NATO, and its emphasis on good governance, human rights and, more generally, democratization is counterproductive to building relations with the independent-minded ruling elite in Tashkent. The structure of security guarantees provided by Washington is flexible because it is based mostly on rather vague political declarations. The security interaction between Moscow and Tashkent has a solid foundation with legally binding security guarantees that are enshrined in numerous agreements on military cooperation between the two states, and above all, in the Treaty of Alliance.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that Uzbekistan favors a more pro-Russian direction that would eventually mean drawing the country into the deeper political integration within the developing Eurasian association. To avoid this scenario Tashkent has shifted from the format of collective security cooperation to a bilateral alliance with Russia. The Uzbek "task of the day" is to bargain for such security guarantees which involve minimum interference of an external authority in decision-making concerning issues within the political boundaries of the country; boundaries relating to both domestic politics and interaction with international actors. The balancing act of Uzbekistan implies the diversification of foreign policy directions in order to ensure security on its path towards "eternal independence." However, this game of chance also entails the continuous risk that the path could result in a loss of the positions that this state aspires to in regional political and economic affairs; and this risk is growing due to the increasingly tense relations between the rival security arrangements of Russia and the U.S. in the region.

# Pakistan-Russia Relations and the Unfolding "New Great Game" in South Asia

*Tahir Amin*

The historical and territorial conflict between India and Pakistan dominates the political scene in South Asia, and this conflict is also one of the regional tensions that keeps the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan unsettled and agitated. Because India-Pakistan relations are very much a "zero-sum" conflict (that is, a loss for one party is interpreted as a corresponding gain for the other party), the region is a type of political terrain that readily absorbs the geopolitical rivalries of external powers and weaves them into the bilateral conflict. It is against this background of the Cold War legacy in the region that this chapter examines the present-day relationship between Pakistan and Russia. It inquires how this bilateral relationship has transformed since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and what prospects it has for contributing to the security and stability of the region when the Western military presence declines in Afghanistan.

Although the wider region has undergone profound changes over the past decades, change in Pakistan-Russia relations has been only modest. The problematic legacy of their mostly hostile relationship with each other during the Cold War continues to cast its shadow. From the point of view of Islamabad, any improvement in this relationship is difficult when Russia at the same time continues to maintain a robust strategic relationship with India, thereby raising serious security concerns in Pakistan over strategic stability in South Asia. Russia also supports India in its goal to gain a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. The interpretation is common in Islamabad that the main reason why Russia seems reluctant to engage in closer cooperation with Pakistan, especially in regard to the sale of military hardware, is the priority it gives to its relations with India.[1] Despite high-level visits from both countries not much concrete progress has been generated in Pakistan's

[1] The following articles discuss Russia-Pakistan relations from the perspectives of the two countries: Vyacheslav Belokrenitsky and Sergei Kamenev, "Russia and Pakistan: A view from Moscow," *Pakistan Horizon* 66, no.1–2 (January–April 2013); Muhammad Nawaz Khan and Beenish Altaf, "Pakistan-Russia Rapprochement and Current Geo-politics," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute Journal* 13, no. 1 (Winter 2013).

relations with Russia during the last decades. However, more recently there have also been signs of change.

In the wake of the on-going Ukrainian crisis and the implementation of American and European sanctions, Russia has begun to re-evaluate its policies in South Asia as part of Russian President Putin's "reaching East" strategy. A new opening in the relationship was provided by the visit of Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu in Islamabad on November 20, 2014. This was the first high-level visit since the visit of Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov to Pakistan in April 2007. Shoigu's visit was all the more significant due to the fact that President Vladimir Putin's visit, which had been planned for October 2012, had been unexpectedly cancelled, and this had been widely interpreted as a "major setback" which had made it clear that the post-Cold War relationship between the two countries still lacked a solid basis.[2] Shoigu's visit also bore concrete results: a cooperation agreement on security and defense issues was signed and, thus, the relationship between both states became more institutionalized.

The consequences of the "endgame" in Afghanistan will be significant in the wider region and they will immediately be felt in Pakistan,[3] but it is still too early to argue what exactly they will be and how they will impact Pakistan's relations with Russia in particular. The question that has inspired the writing of this chapter is how the Pakistan-Russia relationship is preparing for the change. We argue that a potential convergence of interests is on the horizon in Pakistan-Russia relations as the U.S. and its allies prepare to depart from Afghanistan.[4] Russia is interested in cooperation with Pakistan in terms of building a defense capacity around Afghanistan so as to prevent the spreading of unrest from this country into surrounding areas and, ultimately, to Russia's borders. While this is in harmony with the approach of its policies in Central Asia as well, the problematic issue is how the two parties will be able to build cooperation against the background of their

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2 Raja Mohammad Khan, "Deferral of Putin's Schedule Visit," *Pakistan Observer*, October 1, 2012, http://pakobserver.net/201210/01/detailnews.asp?id=176091.

3 Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko, *Afghanistan: A view from Moscow* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010); Thomas Kunze and Michael Logvinov, "Central Asia facing ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan: Islamist threats and regional solutions," *International Reports of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung*, December 18, 2013, http://www.kas.de/wf/doc/kas_36412-544-2-30.pdf?131218151342.

4 Nazir Hussain, "Pak-Russia Relations: Lost opportunities and Future Options," *Journal of Political Studies* 19, no. 1 (Summer 2012): 78–89.

contradictory interests in regard to India and the mutual suspicions that have existed between them throughout the decades since Pakistan achieved its independence.

Research on Pakistan-Russia relations generally employs traditional realist frameworks when analyzing the relationship between the two countries.[5] While this approach can be helpful in analytical reconstructions of the "zero-sum game" between India and Pakistan, it provides very limited perspectives for analyzing the more comprehensive regional dynamics that exist. Western presence is waning not only militarily but also economically and culturally, and Russia cannot offer any social order to replace the Western liberal order. Because the issues of a desirable social order today cannot be left to the side, and because the region cannot be considered merely a chessboard for the mutual rivalries of major powers—as is the case when the notion of the historical "Great Game" is invoked—it is also misleading to interpret a possible increase of Russian influence in the region from the perspective of its geopolitical rivalry with the U.S. Rather, we may recognize that a "new great game" is unfolding with intricate patterns of interaction that involve both strategic competition and economic cooperation between multiple "world orders." Such orders are not simply predetermined by nature or history; instead, they are geographically linked socio-historical unities of practices. These interpretative unities are identifiable on the basis of patterned regularities in the relationships between international or world actors or in their relations with their social and natural environment.[6] The regions of Central and South-Central Asia are a good illustration of how

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[5] As examples of previous research on Pakistan-Russia relations the following can be mentioned: Mohammad Ahsen Chaudhri, *Pakistan and the Great Powers: A Study of Pakistan's Foreign Policy 1954–1970*, 2nd rev. ed., (Karachi: Royal Book Co., 1999); Werner Levi, "Pakistan, the Soviet Union, and China," *Pacific Affairs* 35, no. 3 (Autumn 1962): 211–22; G. W. Choudhury, *India*, *Pakistan, Bangladesh and the Major Powers: Politics of a Divided Subcontinent* (New York: The Free Press, 1975); Mahboob A. Popatia, *The Perspective of Pakistan-Soviet Union Relations 1947–1979* (Karachi: Pakistan Study Center, 1988); Hafeez A. Malik, ed., *Soviet-American Relations with Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1987); Syed Riffat Hussain, "Pak-Soviet Relations since 1947: A Dissenting Appraisal," *Strategic Studies* (Spring 1987): 64–88; Maqbool Ahmad Bhatti, *Great Powers and South Asia: Post-Cold War Trends* (Islamabad: Institute of Regional Studies, 1996).

[6] This perspective synthesizes insights from the Dialectics of World Orders approach articulated by Hayward Alker, Thomas Biersteker, Takashi Inoguchi and Tahir Amin. According to these authors, multiple world orders are socio-historical entities that can be identified in our multi-cultural and multi-religious world. See Renée Marlin-Bennett, ed., *Alker and IR: Global studies in an Interconnected World* (London: Routledge, 2012).

multiple world orders—some authors have identified the Western liberal, Russian-Slavic, Islamic, Indic, and also a residual Socialist order—overlap, intermingle and coexist simultaneously.[7] In the following, we review the past decades of Pakistan-Soviet and Pakistan-Russia relations and examine how the present changes unfold in such broader contexts.

## Historical Burden of the Soviet Decades

Although the frame itself was ideological, it was mainly as a geopolitical contest that Soviet policies were perceived in South Asia. It did not go unnoticed in Pakistan that the Soviet Union under Stalin initially displayed an indifferent attitude towards the emergence of India and Pakistan in 1947. It regarded their independence as "illusory," indeed, as a part of British policy to "divide and rule" in order to perpetuate its control over India by creating two hostile states and acting as arbiter between them.[8] Nationalist leaders in the two countries were seen as "stooges of British imperialism." The creation of Pakistan was considered even worse than that of India because of the religious rationale of the independence movement. It was against the backdrop of the unfolding Cold War that the Soviet Union, when the U.S. invited Indian Prime Minister Jawahar Lal Nehru to visit in 1949, immediately extended an invitation to Moscow to Pakistan's Prime Minister Liaqat Ali Khan—even though Pakistan at that time had not even established diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union. However, Liaqat Ali Khan chose to go to Washington instead of Moscow, possibly using the Soviet invitation as a bargaining chip to extract an invitation from the U.S. This incident created deep mistrust between the Soviet Union and Pakistan.[9]

Pakistan joined the U.S.-sponsored alliances of SEATO (1954) and CENTO (1955), which were aimed at the containment of communism, and it eventually become "the most allied ally" of the United States in Asia. The main purpose of the Pakistani decision-makers was to seek military assistance against India, which was four times larger and perceived as

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[7] Tahir Amin, "World Orders in Central Asia," in *Alker and IR*, 71–86.

[8] D. N. Durke, *Soviet Russia and Indian Community in 1917–1947* (New York: Broochman Associates, 1959), 269–83.

[9] Choudhury, *India*, *Pakistan, Bangladesh*, 123.

Pakistan's principal security threat because of the unresolved dispute over Kashmir.[10] Soviet-Indian relations were further strengthened during the 1960s, when India became a leading country in the Non-Aligned Movement. The Soviet Union gave its strong support to India on the Kashmir issue and twice used its veto in the UN Security Council in India's favor. It also began to cultivate its relations with Afghanistan and extended its support for the issue of Pashtunistan, which had developed into a border issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan.[11] Soviet-Pakistani relations hit rock bottom when a U.S. U-2 plane (flown from Peshawar in Pakistan for espionage purposes) was shot down by the Soviets in 1960 and Premier Nikita Khrushchev subsequently threatened to annihilate Peshawar with rockets.[12]

Anxious over the threats issuing from the Soviet Union and also increasingly disenchanted with the U.S. for courting India (as U.S.-India relations were intensified in the wake of the Sino-Indian war of 1962), Pakistan moved to normalize its relations with the Soviet Union and to strengthen further its relationship with China.[13] It signed an agreement on oil trade with the Soviet Union (1960) as well as a boundary agreement with China (1963). In April 1965, Pakistan's President Ayub Khan visited Moscow and, one year later in the wake of the Indo-Pakistani war of 1965, the Soviet Union successfully mediated between the warring parties at Tashkent.[14]

When the political crisis in East Pakistan (which led to another India-Pakistan war in 1971 and resulted in the birth of Bangladesh) started brewing, the Soviet Union again moved closer to India. Pakistan's role in bringing rapprochement between Washington and Beijing by arranging Henry Kissinger's (then President Richard Nixon's National Security Advisor) secret trip to China further alienated Moscow from Islamabad. These developments eventually led to the Indo-Soviet friendship treaty of 1971, which extended Moscow's full support to India during the Indo-

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[10] W. Wilcox, *India, Pakistan and the Rise of China* (New York: Walder & Co, 1964), 40.

[11] Speech by Soviet Premier Nikolay Bulganin in Kabul during his visit on December 16–18, 1955, reported in *Dawn*, December 18, 1955.

[12] Mohammed Ahsen Chaudhri, "Pakistan's Relations with the Soviet Union," *Asian Survey* 6, no. 9 (September 1966): 492–500.

[13] M. Ayub Khan, "The Pakistan-American Alliance: Stresses and Strains," *Foreign Affairs* 42, no. 2 (January 1964).

[14] Tahir Amin, *Tashkent Declaration: Third Party's Role in the Resolution of Conflict* (Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies, 1980).

Pakistani war of that year.[15] Pakistan's Prime Minister Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto visited the Soviet Union in 1972, and again in 1974, in an attempt to normalize the relationship between Pakistan and the Soviet Union. Pakistan withdrew from U.S.-sponsored military alliances and adopted a non-aligned foreign policy. It started to play an active role in the Non-Aligned Movement and more vigorously espoused Third World causes in international forums. By taking these measures, Pakistan adopted a course designed to distance itself from the West and to move closer to both China and Russia.

The Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979 led Pakistan once again to seek the support of the U.S. and Western countries.[16] The containment of communism—the "red menace"—now became the focus of its policies. Pakistan feared the expansionist designs of the Soviet Union towards the Indian Ocean and lent its full support to the Afghan mujahedin against the Soviet troops. The Soviet Union again sought support from India and threatened to further dismember Pakistan, from which Bangladesh had separated only eight years earlier in 1971.[17] Pakistan-Soviet Union relations remained intensely hostile until 1988, when the Soviet Union started to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan. A new phase in the relationship between the two countries was opened when the Soviet Union disintegrated and the Russian Federation was established in December 1991.

## Post-Cold War Overtures

During the Soviet decades, Moscow's political rivalries with Washington worsened the conflict between India and Pakistan and increasingly made the region an arena for geopolitical contest. When the Soviet Union disintegrated, geo-economical competition gradually grew more important. Simultaneously, issues related to identity, culture and "civilization" assumed greater significance. Realist and traditional geopolitical interpretations lost their earlier significance and the new complexity of world politics made it increasingly important to understand these processes as an interplay of

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15 Choudhury, *India*, *Pakistan, Bangladesh.*

16 Tahir Amin, *Afghanistan Crises: Implications and Options for Muslim World, Iran and Pakistan* (Islamabad: Institute of Policy Studies, 1982).

17 Ibid.

multiple world orders. The change of times was immediately manifested in the identity debates in which Russia found itself.[18] Is Russia part of the West, as the new Atlantic-oriented foreign policy elites liked to argue; or is it a Eurasian power with a unique bridging position towards both Europe and Asia; or perhaps a more isolated historical-cultural formation with its own, distinctly "Slavic" features? Should Russia pursue an abiding policy towards the West, a pragmatic policy, or a more aggressive nationalist policy that would keenly protect Russia's own national interests?[19] During the first years of the re-born Russia, it was the Atlantic's policy of "looking towards the West" that dominated. The new Russia that emerged under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin and his foreign minister Andrey Kozyrev was more interested in becoming part of Europe than representing Asia. Asia was regarded as an area of low priority. In these early years, Central Asia (as a former part of the Soviet Union) was mainly regarded as being part of the Islamic world and as a "burden" to be shed in the new post-Cold War era.[20]

In the first decade of the new Russia, South Asia assumed an even lower priority in the eyes of Moscow's decision-makers. Russia-Pakistan relations focused on the issues of terrorism, Afghanistan and drug trafficking emanating from the region. The Russian government accused the Pakistani government of sponsoring terrorism in Chechnya and the Caucasus.[21] Pakistan sought to allay Russian concerns by explaining that it was neither sponsoring nor encouraging terrorist movements in Central Asia or in any part of the Russian Federation. In 2000, during the second Chechen war, Pakistan even sent the Chief of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) General Mahmud Ahmad to reassure Russia that the Pakistani government was not involved in any of these activities.[22] Another concern in Moscow was Pakistan's support for the Taliban movement in Afghanistan, which

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[18] Christian Thorun, *Explaining Change in Russian Foreign Policy: Role of Ideas in post-Soviet Russia's Conduct Towards the West* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

[19] Stephen White, *Understanding Russian Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[20] Andrei Kortunov and Andrei Shoumikhin, "Russia and Central Asia: Evolution of mutual perceptions, policies and interdependence," in *Ethnic Challenges Beyond Borders: Chinese and Russian Perspectives of the Central Asian Conundrum*, ed. Yongjin Zhang and Rouben Azizian, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), 20–26; Irina Zviagelskaia, *The Russian Policy Debate on Central Asia* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1995).

[21] Rashid Ahmad, "Pakistan-Russia Relations: Moscow's new approach towards South Asia," *The Diplomatic Insight* 5, no. 7 (2012): 5–6.

[22] Hussain, "Pak-Russia Relations."

Moscow's decision-makers interpreted as having the ability to potentially undermine the status quo in entire Central Asia.[23] Against the backdrop of Tajikistan's Civil War (1992–1997) and the fragile peace attained to conclude it, Russia was deeply concerned about the spread of the armed insurgency to the other Central Asian states and to southern parts of Russia.[24] These concerns were intertwined with the drug-trafficking business from Afghanistan which very easily reached Russia through the territory of Central Asia's former Soviet republics.[25] Pakistan was thus looked at from a perspective that connected it with this troubled zone and Russia's burdensome historical "backyard."

Islamabad, in turn, had hoped that the formulation of policy in the newly established Russian Federation would set New Delhi and Islamabad at an equidistance from Moscow. Strategic stability in South Asia continued to be the main concern of Pakistan's decision-makers, who feared that the continuity of Indo-Russian ties, and especially the sales of sophisticated military hardware to India, would affect the precarious military balance between Pakistan and India. Immediately in 1992, the first year of the existence of the Russian Federation, Foreign Minister Sardar Assef Ahmad Ali and the Foreign Secretary Akram Zaki visited Moscow in order to voice Pakistan's concerns and to allay Russian fears over Pakistan's support of militant insurgency in the region and even on Russian territory; and this message was repeated when Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif visited Moscow in 1999.[26] The prospects of economic cooperation were also discussed and a joint commission to promote trade and economic cooperation between the two countries was formed in 1999. Although this was regarded as a sign of a new beginning, no major breakthrough followed that could ease the historical burden in the relationship.

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[23] A. Z. Hilali, "Pakistan-Russia Relations: Bitter Cold War & Better Today," *The Diplomatic Insight* 5, no. 6 (2012): 17–18.

[24] Hussain, "Pak-Russia Relations."

[25] Mohammad Farooq Afzal, "Pakistan-Russian Relations warm up," *Business Recorder*, June 12, 2013, http://www.brecorder.com/supplements/88/1269401/.

[26] Zahid Anwar, "Pakistan-Russia Relations in the Regional and Global Context," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute Analyst*, June 30, 2004, http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/2237.

## Relations After 9/11

Autumn 2001 became a turning point: Pakistan's volte-face in its policy on Afghanistan and its participation in the War on Terror removed a major irritant between Russia and Pakistan. Russia had been quite uncomfortable with Pakistan's support of the Taliban, and all this was reversed in the wake of the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan. In addition to Afghanistan and the Taliban, Moscow's interests specifically focused on issues of terrorism, drug trafficking and the non-proliferation of nuclear materials (neither Pakistan nor India have joined the non-proliferation regime established in the NPT of 1968). In February 2003, Pakistan's President Pervez Musharraf visited Moscow and categorically declared that Pakistan regarded Chechnya as Russia's internal problem and that it had no role whatsoever in encouraging or sponsoring Islamist networks in Central Asia or any areas of Russia. Although neighboring Afghanistan was a concern in Pakistan, its main interest in relations with Russia continued to relate to strategic stability in South Asia and the prospects of trade and economic cooperation between the two countries.[27] This order of priorities was Islamabad's own but was certainly facilitated by the presence of the U.S. and NATO-led forces in Afghanistan.

Musharraf's visit paved the way for more institutionalized cooperation between the two countries. Joint Working Groups on the issues of counter-terrorism, strategic stability, and economic and cultural cooperation were established. In April 2007 Mikhail Fradkov was the first Russian Prime Minister to visit Pakistan. President Asif Ali Zardari visited Russia in 2011 and invited President Vladimir Putin to Pakistan. Putin's visit to Islamabad, planned for early October 2012, was cancelled at the last moment, and the event was immediately interpreted as a major setback in the attempts to improve relations. Moscow sent foreign minister Lavrov to assure Pakistan that the visit had been merely postponed because of scheduling issues.[28] High-level visits of both Pakistani and Russian military and civil officials continued throughout 2013 and after. General Asif Kayani, the commander-

[27] Mohammad Faheem Khattak, "Pakistan-Russia Relations since 9/11: Implications for Pakistan's Security," (master's thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 2011).

[28] "Lavrov Stresses Ties With Pakistan After Putin Cancels Visit," *The Moscow Times*, October 5, 2012, http://www.themoscowtimes.com/news/article/lavrov-stresses-ties-with-pakistan-after-putin-cancels-visit/469309.html.

in-chief of Pakistan's army, visited Moscow twice and Russian military and Air Chiefs paid visits to Islamabad. However, this did not signal any breakthrough in the relations between Russia and Pakistan.[29]

Pakistan facilitated Russia's entry into the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC), and Russia reciprocated by helping Pakistan to gain observer-status (and later in 2014 to start accession procedures to full membership) in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[30] Russia also agreed to the re-export of 150 engines of JF-17 planes from China to Pakistan and helped Pakistan in launching a communication satellite, Badar 11.[31] Russia has also signed a memorandum of understanding on the upgrading of a major steel mill in Pakistan, and it has expressed interest in the new strategic energy pipelines, of which the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India gas pipeline (TAPI) and the Iran–Pakistan–India gas pipeline (IPI) are major examples. All this has meant that Russia's annual trade with Pakistan has grown to half a billion dollars. Simultaneously, Russia has left relations with Islamabad in the cold by continuing to sell highly sophisticated military hardware to India and by supporting India's case for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council.[32]

It is against the background of a long period of "no breakthrough" that the visit of Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu in Islamabad on November 21, 2014, and the signing of a deal on military cooperation were hailed as a "milestone development" by Pakistan's Ministry of Defense.[33] The agreement provides for the exchange of information on politico-military issues, cooperation in promoting international security, an intensification of counter-terrorism and arms-control activities, the strengthening of collaboration in various military fields, and sharing experiences in peace-keeping operations. Joint efforts in fighting international terrorism and drug

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29 Zahid Ali Khan, "New Trends in Pak-Russian Relations since 9/11," *Journal of the Research Society of Pakistan* 48, no. 2 (2011).

30 Asif Manzoor, "Pakistan Russia Relations in the Post-Cold War Era," (master's thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 2014). The accession process for Pakistan's membership in the SCO started at the organization's summit in Ufa on July 10, 2015.

31 Ibid.

32 Ibid.

33 "Pakistan, Russia ink milestone defence pact," *The News*, November 21, 2014, http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-34246-Pakistan-Russia-ink-milestone-defence-pact. The agreement also includes cooperation in the spheres of education and culture, as well as in a variety of scientific fields (medicine, topography, hydrography, etc.).

trafficking were also discussed.[34] The announcement by Shoigu confirming that "during the meeting, we agreed that bilateral military cooperation should have a great practical focus and contribute to increasing combat efficiency of our armed forces" was met with much appreciation in Islamabad.[35] Reportedly, Russia gave its "political approval" to a deal to sell twenty MI-35 helicopters to Pakistan.[36]

The significance ascribed to this new opening in Pakistan illustrates the great importance attached to cooperation in the military sector in this country. These developments also show how change in Pakistan-Russia relations reflects wider changes in world politics. Since 2014, the deterioration of Russia's relations with Western states because of the crisis in Ukraine and the economic sanctions posed against it have alienated Russia from the Western liberal world order. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the triumph of this order had been made manifest in the foreign policy and international relations debates that claimed that the "end of history" (that is, the coming of Western liberal democracy and a downplaying of all differences making matters political) and "complex interdependence" were now the order of the day.[37] In South Asia, specifically, it is India's increasing collaboration with Western states—its move closer to the West through its multi-billion-dollar arms deal with a number of Western countries, its deals on civilian nuclear cooperation, and the development of a strategic partnership with the U.S.—which has pushed Russia to re-evaluate its policies and to move closer to Pakistan, which is a crucial player in the "end-game" in Afghanistan.

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[34] Ibid.

[35] Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan, Russia sign landmark defence cooperation agreement," *Dawn*, November 21, 2014, http://www.dawn.com/news/1145875.

[36] Ibid.

[37] These are the broad political implications of the debates which, in research literature, crystallize in works such as Francis Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man* (Toronto: Maxwell, 1992) and Joseph S. Nye Jr. "What New World Order?," *Foreign Affairs* 71, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 83–96.

## Future Prospects

From Russia's perspective the possibility to exchange information and intelligence with Pakistan is extremely important to its prospects for controlling the processes shaping the region. Russia has repeatedly voiced its anxieties to Islamabad about the possible chaos that threatens to destabilize the borders of Central Asian regimes and also spill across the southern borders of Russia. These concerns were summarized by Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey A. Ryabkov when he visited Pakistan on January 24, 2011:

> "The ultimate objective of Pakistan and the Russian Federation is to combat the growing menace of terrorism and militancy, and to sabotage the nexus between transnational terrorist organizations. The transnational militant organizations have been undermining both states' internal security. The link among al-Qaeda, Afghan Taliban, Tehrik-i-Taliban, the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan and militants from the North Caucasus and other Muslim Russian regions has been devastating and destabilizing for both Pakistan and Russian Federation."[38]

Pakistan, too, is deeply concerned over the developments on its own border with Afghanistan—the Durand line, which even without the current pressures is extremely problematic. The Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) movement has been fighting Pakistani armed forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) since 2007, and the erosion of the writ of the Pakistani state in the tribal areas adjacent to Afghanistan keeps Islamabad on alert. Pakistani military forces have launched a major military operation, *Zarb-e-Azb*, in these areas with the stated goal of eliminating all those terrorist groups fighting against the Pakistani state. Thus, whilst Pakistan is fighting for the unity of its own state, it is also working to prevent the kind of anarchy (the "Coming Anarchy")[39] that, within the liberal world order, is seen to result from a decay of state structures in many non-Western parts of the world and prepare breeding grounds for terrorism. At the same time the border is far too much of a political and ethnic mosaic, and the inter-state relations in the region too conflicted, for any consistent and all-encompassing front against militant insurgency to develop. The strong reactions of the

[38] Cited in Khan, "New Trends in Pak-Russian Relations."

[39] Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly* 273, no. 2 (February 1994): 44–77.

Pakistani government against the U.S. drone strikes in its western regions illustrate policies that emphasize formal sovereignty; yet, they also show just how much the Pakistani government needs the support of the large populations living in the north-western regions and the wide stretch of land along the border with Afghanistan. Because it is highly problematic for Pakistan to participate in the U.S.-led global war against terrorism on its own territory, its fight against the anarchy in which the self-image of the Western liberal order crumbles cannot but be fraught with contradiction.

Due to this very complex border problematique, any development in Afghanistan will immediately impact the political and ethnic mosaic in the unsettled border areas of Pakistan and stir the pieces into the form of a new puzzle. The revival of the Pashtunistan issue between Pakistan and Afghanistan has been one of the perennial problems for Pakistani leaders. If the Taliban were to achieve victory in Afghanistan, the TTP, which already claims the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, would be further emboldened: a separate enclave along the border could be demanded, thereby also reviving the dispute over an independent Pashtunistan. Other possible courses of development are the maintenance of the status quo; the eruption of a full-scale civil war between the contending groups, or at the least a form of prolonged chaos; and the reaching of an agreement over a broad-based power-sharing formula amongst the contending groups. Each of the above alternative developments has different implications for Afghanistan and the wider Central Asian region, and also for Pakistan-Russia relations.[40]

The enthusiastic turnout of voters in the presidential elections in Afghanistan in 2014 gives hope that perhaps the status quo can hold even after the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO-led forces from Afghanistan. In September 2014, Ashraf Ghani, the new president of Afghanistan following these elections, agreed to the Bilateral Security Assistance Pact with the U.S. which his predecessor Hamid Karzai had been reluctant to sign. President Ghani has visited Pakistan to seek improved relations and he has undertaken an initiative to bring the Taliban into negotiations. However, the maintenance of the status quo seems unlikely in the case of the Western military almost entirely (leaving hundreds rather than thousands of troops in place) withdrawing from the country. The Afghan National Army would be

[40] Seth G. Jones and Keith Crane, "Afghanistan After the Drawdown," *Council on Foreign Relations*, Special Report no. 67 (November 2013).

unlikely to withstand the onslaught of Taliban insurgents for a longer period of time. The regime may hold for some time; but it would eventually start to crumble as a result of desertions from the national army and shrinking international support.

A Taliban victory would spell disaster for the region as it would revive fears in Russia, China, the Central Asian states, India, Iran, and Pakistan over the potential instability of their borders. Although the Taliban are less likely to spread beyond Afghan borders out of fear of international reaction, their victory within the country would create a backlash from other ethnic groups in Afghanistan. This situation would be very difficult for the Taliban to handle and, therefore, the third possible scenario for future developments is the re-eruption of civil war between the major ethnic groups of Afghanistan. These groups would seek the help of their international supporters, possibly recreating the scenario of the 1990s when Pakistan was supporting Pashtun groups and Tajik, Hazaras and Uzbeks were being supported by India, Russia, the Central Asian states, and Iran. A new civil war could also bring about the balkanization of Afghanistan and lead to the creation of separate ethnic enclaves. The fourth possibility for the future would be that Afghanistan's ethnic groups could devise some broad power-sharing formula amongst themselves without involving outside parties. Such a solution could not only bring peace to Afghanistan but also stabilize the wider region. However, when power-sharing formulas are incomplete and do not work to the satisfaction of all parties, the only option that remains for those opposing the regime is to move across the borders and start preparing a new round in the conflict. This is a common pattern in many states of the region and can only be prevented if Afghanistan grows to become a strong state, both internally as well as externally. Today, just as much as it was in the wake of 9/11/2001, this is an unachievable mission if foreign forces are not prepared to sustain the Afghan state militarily and economically.

## Conclusion

At present the relationship between Pakistan and Russia is no longer hostile for ideological reasons that could be perceived as threatening Pakistan from the inside and forcing it to crumble along its land borders. On the contrary, a

convergence of interests in respect to Afghanistan and its potentially destabilizing effects on Central Asia and parts of southern Russia has induced Russia and Pakistan to cooperate with each other. However, the fact that substantive cooperation has only recently developed despite its preparation at the declaratory level over the years, tells us that Russia continues to consider its policies towards Pakistan in relation to its policies with other countries and, especially, its relations with India. If India increasingly integrates into the world order of the Western states, its strategic partnership with Russia will relatively come to weigh less, and Russia in turn will be willing to explore new markets in the region and to look for them also in Pakistan. The fact that China also fears the possible spillover effect of Islamic militancy in Afghanistan that could destabilize its already potentially restive Xinjiang region may further promote Pakistan-Russia cooperation in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

The Chinese or "Sinic" world order is expanding in Central and South Asia, and the practical implications of this process depend on how this order takes shape within China's internal discourses: whether or not China should act as a "strong state," and whether it should follow a pragmatic policy or, rather, more aggressively pursue a nationalist policy.[41] Indic and Islamic world orders are also waxing in the region and can be similarly identified through the identity debates that prescribe alternative visions of the world for action (for different foreign policy strategies).[42] Thus, while the Western withdrawal means that the influence of the Western liberal world order enjoys fewer prospects in the region, its retreat is not due to radicalized militant Islam. Although Afghanistan is the pivotal point of a deeply "civilizational" struggle, the impacts of Islamic, Indic and Sinic culture will be increasingly felt in the economies and everyday lives in the region quite independently of such a struggle. In this setting, Russia's possibilities to gain influence depend on its collaboration with other countries and its ability to connect with especially the Islamic, Indic, and Sinic world orders (arguably, it is already connected with the Western liberal order). These orders, as

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[41] Edwin O. Reischaur, "The Sinic World in Perspective," *Foreign Affairs* 52, no. 2 (January 1974): 341–48; Suisheng Zhao, "Chinese intellectual's Quest for National Greatness and Nationalistic Writing in the 1990s," *The China Quarterly*, no. 152 (December 1997): 725–45; Wang Jisi, "China's Changing role in Asia," *The Atlantic Council of the United States,* January 2004.

[42] Amin, "World orders in Central Asia."

already emphasized, are not given entities; rather, they are sets of practices embodied in action and discourse.

One such discourse is the "Clash of Civilizations," which together with those already mentioned (and many others not mentioned) are symbolic representations of the Western liberal world order.[43] We conclude this chapter by calling attention to the practical implications of this concept which basically puts traditional realist "struggle for power" in the frame of "culture." Although the conflict between Islamic religious forces and secular (mostly authoritarian) governments in Central and South Asia is very much a "clash" of "civilizational" proportions, it is far from being a conflict between cultural entities with distinct boundaries. Under present circumstances when the Taliban, its associates and, more recently, also the Islamic State is preparing to strengthen their positions in Afghanistan, images like this can obstruct our identification of real problems. The question for the coming years is whether the fear of transnational militant Islam, which in recent years has been on the rise in the region of our focus due to the developments especially in northern Afghanistan, can bring about a broad-based collaboration against these specific forms of Islam. Such a "new great game" puts Pakistan in a pivotal position and requires wise policies which avoid treating different groups as simply "enemies." Unless such a "front" can be built on the ground, any international cooperation on it remains ineffective. Concerning the role of Russia specifically, the policies which deepen the conflict between Pakistan and India can best be kept under control if "multipolarity"[44] as a basis of communication is chosen from amongst the many discourses articulating the Western liberal order.

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43 Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and Remaking of World Order* (London: Simon & Shuster, 1996).

44 "Multipolarity" is a term that provides a nexus between Russian foreign policy discourse and the realist discourse in the study of International Relations which developed largely in the decades following World War II in reflection of the interests of the U.S. as a "rising Power." More recently, multipolarity has been discussed in J. J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2001).

PART III Development and Projects of Regional Leadership

# U.S. and Chinese Silk Road Initiatives: Towards a Geopolitics of Flows in Central Asia and Beyond

*Mika Aaltola and Juha Käpylä*

When the geostrategic gaze meets the geography of Central Asia, the scene can be communicated to wider audiences when the description connects with conventional historical knowledge and invokes imaginaries of a glorious and famous distant past to build identities for the present. The specific contours of the geographic landscape are then reimaged in terms of the possibilities they seem to possess when being transformed by the new functions which make them part of a strategic idea. Both the U.S. and Chinese strategic visions for the future of Central Asia are based on the Silk Road concept. The Silk Road originally refers to the ancient trade and cultural routes between China and South and Central Asia, Europe and the Middle East that started to emerge already during the Han dynasty in the 2nd century BC and met their ultimate demise with the rise of the growing influence of Tsarist Russia and then the Soviet Union in Central Asia and the Caucasus. Since the 1990s, the concept has resurfaced in the context of various logistics and energy projects across the greater Central Asian region.[1] This chapter focuses on two recent Silk Road initiatives by the U.S. and China—on their design, intent and consequences in Central Asia in the context of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Strategic thought emerges from the context of some actual political problem that cannot be solved by routine action and the means previously available. For the U.S., the central problem in contemporary Central Asia has been Afghanistan: how to create sustainable economic and political conditions in the country after the withdrawal of U.S. military presence while at the same time responding to global geopolitical games involving other great powers. For China, the problematic has been more complex, involving domestic security and economic issues in Western China, regional security issues in Cen-

[1] Sreemati Ganguli, "The Revival of the Silk Roads Topic: A Contemporary Analysis," in *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*, ed. Marlène Laurelle et al. (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 61–72.

tral Asia, global geostrategic scenarios following the U.S. rebalancing to Asia, as well as energy and trade factors in (and beyond) the region. The two Silk Road concepts represent contemporary solutions to these dilemmas. Following pragmatist insight, strategic ideas are best understood as "rules of action"[2]; they are not abstract reflections or even accurate representations[3], but intimately related to organizing new action, thus having practical effects in socio-political reality.

From the U.S. perspective, the global space is organized according to U.S.-centric networks.[4] These networks are comprised of logistic flows of resources, people, goods, and data. The focus is on the ways in which these flow-systems with their hub-and-spoke topologies combine with circulations of power. Mobility networks become signs of a landscape that has been mastered. This vision contrasts with decaying or non-existing networks that often signify anarchy.[5] The hub-and-spoke structure has a history of being read as a "health indicator" of mastered environments. Ikenberry, for example, draws an explicit parallel between the changing global power hierarchy and the air-mobility systems, where all "major power centers (airlines) have their own distinct and competing hub and spoke system."[6]

The transformation into a hub-and-spoke pattern is what Ikenberry indicates might be happening to the global hierarchy of power. Ikenberry makes a distinction between a more unipolar hub-and-spoke arrangement and a multilateralist situation, where actors coordinate their actions based on mutually agreed upon and shared rules and principles. The earlier Pax Americana hub-and-spoke relationship was clearly more unilateralist: one hub makes the decisions and expects the spokes to conform.[7] In his later 2009 analogy, the hub and spoke is considerably more "fragmented," with the emergence of

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2 Charles Sanders Peirce, "How to Make our Ideas Clear," in *Pragmatism: A Reader*, ed. Louis Menand (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 33.

3 This is a particularly "neo-pragmatist" claim; see e.g. Juha Käpylä and Harri Mikkola, "'Getting Things Right?': A Reconsideration of Critical Realism as a Metatheory for IR," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 14, no. 4 (2011): 413–14.

4 See e.g. Mika Aaltola, "The international airport: The hub-and-spoke pedagogy of the American empire," *Global Networks* 5, no. 3 (2005): 261–78; Mika Aaltola, Juha Käpylä, and Valtteri Vuorisalo, *The Challenge of Global Commons and Flows for US Power: The Perils of Missing the Human Domain* (New York: Ashgate, 2014).

5 Robert D. Kaplan, "The Coming Anarchy," *The Atlantic Monthly* 273, no. 2 (February 1994): 44–77.

6 G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Order and Imperial Ambition: Essays on American Power and World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 85.

7 Ibid., 241, 248.

competing China as a hub that has partially overlapping spokes with the American-led liberal hub (thereby instigating a growing need to compromise on practices of governance). Thus, it seems that the geo-economics of (asymmetric) interdependence is propelling ways of seeing strategic maps and transforming landscapes that goes beyond mere traditional geopolitics. With the emergence of U.S. and Chinese Silk Road initiatives, the geopolitics of Central Asia can also be seen to be in transformation.

This chapter investigates the two strategic visions in and around Central Asia: the U.S. "New Silk Road" and China's "one belt, one highway" initiatives which primarily highlight the establishment of infrastructure for regional and global flows of resources, goods and people and which have strong secondary geopolitical relevance. The two approaches are similar yet exhibit particularities in design, execution and intent. The U.S. vision is Afghanistan-focused, vertical, multilateral and seen as a Central Asia-India connection. The Chinese vision is more diffuse, horizontal, bilateral and state-based in its concrete investments, and seen as a broad march towards the west. The key question is whether they can, or ought to be, read as competitive or complementary. These contrary interpretations leave the future ambiguous from the perspective of power politics. However, the two initiatives will have a large impact on the daily lives of the people in the region, particularly when they are integrated into the processes of global logistics and flows. The U.S. initiative faces multiple challenges whereas the Chinese version, despite its challenges, is the one which is more likely to shape practices in the region.

## The U.S. Silk Road Initiative

### *A Regional Economic Strategy*

In a speech on July 20, 2011 at Chennai in India, the Secretary of State Hillary Clinton laid out the outlines of the U.S. strategy for Afghanistan and Central Asia after the withdrawal of the majority of U.S. (and ISAF) combat forces from Afghanistan—at the time envisioned to take place by the end of

2014 but today set to happen in 2016.[8] The strategy was based on three elements: (1) a new strategic partnership framework to define the U.S.-Afghanistan relationship after the U.S. withdrawal—a pact that was finally signed in September 2014 following the power-sharing deal to secure the new Afghan presidency for Ashraf Ghani;[9] (2) active diplomatic efforts with regional powers to facilitate a responsible political solution in Afghanistan, including a chain of meetings in Istanbul, Bonn and Kabul to obtain formal pledges of non-interference coupled with confidence-building measures from regional players; and (3) an economic strategy to increase commercial ties and activity in South and Central Asia so that goods, resources, capital, and people could flow more easily across borders and, thus, enhance economic growth in the region.[10]

Washington's economic strategy took the form of the New Silk Road (NSR) initiative. The primary focus of the NSR is Afghanistan, with the aim of making Afghanistan economically and politically sustainable after the withdrawal of the main part of the U.S. and ISAF forces. However, as Afghanistan is unlikely to achieve this alone and isolated from its neighbors, the NSR has a specific regional emphasis aimed at connecting and boosting all the land-locked economies of Central Asia that are seen to possess vast natural resources and growing markets but to have remained relatively unintegrated, both regionally and globally.[11] The overarching idea of the initia-

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8 The U.S. will maintain a reduced military presence in post-2016 Afghanistan through NATO's Operation Resolute Support (ORS), which will replace the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

9 Steve Holland and David Brunnstrom, "Ghani named Afghan president-elect after deal to end election dispute," *Reuters*, September 21, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/21/us-afghanistan-election-idUSKBN0HG0PQ20140921.

10 Hillary Clinton, "Remarks on India and the United States: A Vision for the 21st Century," *U.S. Department of State (USDS)*, July 20, 2011, http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013 clinton/rm/2011/07/168840.htm; and Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report*, August 17, 2015, 30, 40–41, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf.

11 Vladimir Fedorenko, "The New Silk Road Initiatives in Central Asia," *Rethink Paper* 10 (2013): 2–3, http://www.rethinkinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Fedorenko-The-New-Silk-Road.pdf and USDS, "U.S. Support for the New Silk Road," accessed June 11, 2015, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/ci/af/newsilkroad. Afghanistan, however, has been connected to various, often illicit, global networks and flows. From a historical perspective, Central Asian economies have long provided raw materials for industrial production in the USSR and later on Russia, which has meant that licit connections elsewhere—particularly to its southern neighbors—have remained relatively undeveloped. See e.g. Jonathan Mendel, "Afghanistan, Networks and Connectivity," *Geopolitics* 15, no. 4 (2010): 726–51

tive is that Afghanistan needs to move from aid-dependency to a sustainable economy, and that this in turn requires the combination of government leadership, private sector investment, and regional cooperation and connectivity. As Secretary of State Clinton put it, "[f]or Afghans to enjoy sustainable prosperity, they will have to work alongside all of their neighbors to shape a more integrated economic future for the region that will create jobs and will undercut the appeal of extremism." [12]

In more detail, the NSR initiative is a regional approach to peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. It goes beyond the limited focus on Afghan internal dynamics or even Afghanistan-Pakistan relations and aims at integrating the whole region into an international network of trade, transit, and communications links along the north-south axis with Afghanistan as the main hub––as the new "heart of Asia."[13] The goal, as Mankoff explains, is to connect Afghanistan and its neighboring Central Asian countries to the growing economies of South Asia—Pakistan and India—which in turn will help draw in new foreign investment, open up new sources of hydrocarbons and minerals, and give Central Asian actors a stake in economic development that will turn them away from violence and radicalism.[14] In this vision, says Clinton, "Turkmen gas fields could help meet both Pakistan's and India's growing energy needs and provide significant transit revenues for both Afghanistan and Pakistan. Tajik cotton could be turned into Indian linens. Furniture and fruit from Afghanistan could find its way to the markets of Astana or Mumbai and beyond." [15]

The NSR initiative suggested the development of hard and soft infrastructure as two particular ways of advancing trans-regional connectivity and economic activity in Central and South Asia. The key part of the proposal was the construction and extension of hard infrastructure in order to connect

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and Jeffrey Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia after 2014," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 2013, 20, http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf.

12 Hillary Clinton, "Remarks at the New Silk Road Ministerial Meeting," *USDS*, September 22, 2011, http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/09/173807.htm.

13 Fedorenko, "The New Silk Road Initiatives," 4, and Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, "Central Asia and Afghanistan: Insulation on the Silk Road, Between Eurasia and the Heart of Asia," *Peace Research Institute Oslo Paper* 3 (2012), http://www.operationspaix.net/DATA/DOCUMENT/6912~v~Central_Asia_and_Afghanistan__Insulation_on_the_Silk_Road_Between_Eurasia_and_the_Heart_of_Asia.pdf.

14 Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia."

15 Clinton, "Remarks at the New Silk Road Ministerial Meeting."

Central Asian states to Pakistan and India via Afghanistan. In this task, the U.S. State Department identified up to 40 infrastructure projects to pursue in the region.[16] These included initiatives to develop energy transmission networks, energy pipelines, transport connections (e.g. roads and railways) and information networks (e.g. fiber optic cables). The two flagship projects in the U.S. initiative, illustrated in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*, are the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India (TAPI) gas pipeline, which is to transport Turkmen natural gas to growing markets in India that currently have only half the natural gas that they require, and the CASA-1000[17] energy transmission network, which could transport surplus summer hydropower from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, all three of which are states with significant energy deficits.[18]

*Figure 1:* TAPI Pipeline

Source: The Hindu (2014). Illustration: Kauko Kyöstiö.

These efforts complement existing infrastructure initiatives in the region that the U.S. has supported diplomatically or through indirect financial support via multilateral organizations, such as the World Bank (WB) or the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The work of the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) program is a prime example.

[16] Joshua Kucera, "The New Silk Road?," *The Diplomat*, November 11, 2011, http://thediplomat.com/2011/11/the-new-silk-road/.

[17] CASA-1000, "CASA-1000," accessed June 17, 2015, http://www.casa-1000.org/.

[18] Robert O. Blake, "The New Silk Road and Regional Economic Integration," *USDS*, March 13, 2013, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2013/206167.htm and USDS, "U.S. Support for the New Silk Road."

CAREC is an ADB-coordinated development program that brings together 10 Asian countries and 6 multilateral institutions. It was established in 1997 to promote cooperative regional development, with the aim of accelerated economic growth and poverty reduction. The backbone of CAREC is its investments in transport and trade facilitation projects, to date worth of $18 billion. Since 2008, these projects have been pursued in the framework of Trade and Transport Facilitation Strategy (TTFS), the goals of which include "establishing competitive corridors; facilitating the movement of goods and people through these corridors; and providing sustainable, safe, and user-friendly transport and trade networks" through Central Asia.[19] Among the key projects are the six multimodal transport corridors that seek to facilitate regional connectivity and trade flows. According to TTFS, some of the original corridors remain incomplete, with inadequate connection to maritime ports and intermodal logistics hubs. This limits their effectiveness in enabling increased trade flows and necessitates ongoing improvement and extensions.[20] Many of these extensions currently seem to emphasize the north-south focus of the NSR initiative even if they also serve broader interests, including those of China in its own Silk Road initiative.

These regional hard infrastructure projects complement the multibillion U.S. nation-building effort in Afghanistan,[21] part of which has focused on rebuilding infrastructure that could ultimately enable Afghanistan to become the new crossroads of Asia. The U.S. has financed the construction or rehabilitation of over 3,000 km of roads as well as key bridges to facilitate trade, transport and people-to-people connectivity in Afghanistan and beyond. Prime examples are the 2,200-km-long Afghan Ring Road connecting major Afghan cities and the $40 billion and the 672-meter-long Tajikistan-

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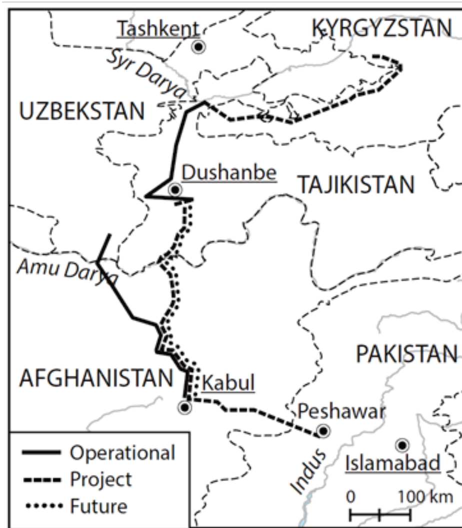
[19] ADB, "CAREC Trade and Transportation Facilitation Strategy 2020," 2014, http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/institutional-document/34107/files/carec-ttfs-2020.pdf.

[20] "CAREC Trade and Transportation Facilitation Strategy 2020," 13.

[21] The cost of Operation Enduring Freedom, and particularly of reconstruction efforts within that operation, is difficult to estimate, not least because of various funding sources. According to official figures for fiscal years 2001–2014, Congress granted the State Department and USAID $33.6 billion, part of which was used for reconstruction. Similarly, the Department of Defense has been granted at least $647.3 billion, part of which has also been used for reconstruction in the context of counterinsurgency warfare. But it is safe to say that the total cost of reconstruction efforts is multiple billions of dollars. See Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *Congressional Research Service*, *CRS Report*, December 8, 2014, 19, http://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf.

Afghanistan bridge across the Panj River.[22] The U.S. has also provided financial support for the construction of energy transmission lines, hydropower plants and related reforms across the country, worth more than $2 billion in total.[23] According to one estimate, the most significant development has been the connection of Afghanistan's and Uzbekistan's electricity grids for the provision of electricity to Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif.[24] In the cyber domain, the U.S. has provided technical assistance to the establishment of a 4,000-km-long network of fiber optic cables in the country.[25]

*Figure 2:* CASA-1000 electricity network




Source: CASA-100 Homepage. Illustration: Kauko Kyöstiö.

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22 "US-made Tajik-Afghan bridge opens," *BBC*, August 26, 2007, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/6964429.stm. The bridge connecting Panji Poyon in Tajikistan and Shir Khan Bandar in Afghanistan was co-financed by Norway.

23 Lynne M. Tracy, "The United States and the New Silk Road," *USDS*, October 25, 2013, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2013/215906.htm.

24 Frederick S. Starr and Andrew C. Kuchins, "The Key to Success in Afghanistan: A Modern Silk Road Strategy," *Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, Silk Road Paper,* May 2010, 39, http://csis.org/files/publication/100610_key_to_success_in_afghanistan.pdf.

25 Tracy, "The United States and the New Silk Road."

In addition to improving connectivity, the U.S. has also emphasized the creation of potential hubs and spokes for the emerging trade and transport flows in and through Afghanistan. These have included the port of Shir Khan Bandar[26] in Kunduz province that began to grow after the completion of the adjacent Tajikistan-Afghanistan bridge in 2007, as well as the port of Hairatan[27] in Balkh province that hosts one of the country's few international rail connections.

The establishment of hubs and connections is also related to Afghanistan's natural resources that could be extracted and shipped out in return for revenue to sustain the country. Consequently, the development of extractive industries in Afghanistan has also been identified as important, not least because the U.S. Geological Survey has verified that "Afghanistan sits on top of at least $1 trillion in mineral wealth—iron, copper, gold, rare earth elements, and others." [28]

The rest of the U.S. proposals in the NSR initiative fell into the category of soft infrastructure development that aims to accelerate the free flow of resources, goods, services and people in the (assumedly) increasingly connected region, particularly along the north-south axis. This amounts to an attempt to pursue economic growth through trade liberalization while at the same time seeking reduction in crime and corruption. While it is recognized that the underdeveloped hard infrastructure (as well as the security situation) in the region remains a formidable challenge, significant obstacles to smooth cross-border trade are perceived to be institutional, bureaucratic and political in nature. Inefficient border bureaucracy, corruption and rent-seeking, and differing national regulations are seen to stall efficient movement, create unpredictability, and add significantly to the cost of cross-border trade.[29] In order to alleviate this situation, the NSR initiative has emphasized the need to

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[26] Ministry of Commerce and Industries of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Shir Khan Port," accessed September 29, 2015, http://moci.gov.af/en/page/7760.

[27] Ministry of Commerce and Industries of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Hairatan port," accessed September 29, 2015, http://moci.gov.af/en/page/7761.

[28] Robert D. Hormats, "The United States' 'New Silk Road' Strategy: What is it? Where is it Headed?," *USDS*, September 29, 2011, http://www.state.gov/e/rls/rmk/20092013/2011/174800.htm.

[29] Starr and Kuchins, "The Key to Success in Afghanistan," 26–28. It has been estimated that up to 40 percent of total travel time in EU-Central Asia trade may derive from delays at the borders, and up to 60 percent of the trip time in Central Asian shipping can be spent at border crossings; the latter alone may amount to over 60 percent of the overall cost (see Ibid., 33).

upgrade border crossing facilities and procedures, remove bureaucratic trade barriers, and coordinate trade policies in the region.[30] Increasingly professional customs administration and standardized customs procedures coupled with more harmonized regional trade policies are expected to amount to savings in time and reductions in the cost of regional trade. U.S. activities include[31]:

- Support of various border security initiatives in the region to prevent the exploitation of growing trade and transit by terrorists, narco-traffickers and other criminals. The U.S. State and Defense Departments have also increased the capacity of customs and border control officials in all Central Asian countries as well as supported the work of the OSCE to train officials, several hundreds of whom are Afghans, both in its Border Management Staff College in Dushanbe and its Customs Academy in Bishkek.

- Agreement with the Central Asian countries upon a Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA), through which the parties seek to identify opportunities for new economic activities and work toward the removal of impediments to trade and investment flows amongst the agreeing parties and Afghanistan. The U.S. has also provided technical assistance for the realization of the 2010 Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade agreement (APTTA) and supported the Cross-Border Transport Agreement (CBTA) between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan.[32]

- Support for Kazakhstan and Afghanistan has resulted in their accession to the WTO. The U.S. has also welcomed Uzbekistan's efforts to revive its WTO negotiations and Turkmenistan's renewed interest in the organization.

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30 Clinton, "Remarks at the New Silk Road Ministerial Meeting" and Susan M. Elliot, "Remarks at Northern Distribution Network Conference," *USDS*, May 8, 2012, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2012/189499.htm and see also Kucera, "The New Silk Road?."

31 Tracy, "The United States and the New Silk Road" and USDS, "U.S. Support for the New Silk Road."

32 ADB, "Afghanistan Joins Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic Cross-Border Transport Accord," August 29, 2011, http://www.adb.org/news/afghanistan-joins-tajikistan-kyrgyz-republic-cross-border-transport-accord.

- Afghanistan's decision to rejoin the International Road Transport Convention (IRTC) in 2013 was seen as a positive move by the U.S. as this convention harmonizes the formalities of transporting goods by road in all Central Asian countries. The U.S. has also helped to establish the National Rail Authority and develop a national rail plan to facilitate enhanced transport and logistics in the country.

Moreover, in addition to improving hard and soft infrastructure the NSR initiative also maintains that regional economic connectivity should involve a people-to-people aspect and particularly the improvement of opportunities for youth, women and minorities to participate in social and economic life in Afghanistan and the broader region. This creates a conditional aspect to the U.S. strategy and connects it to a broader recognition among Western experts according to which "improving the status of Afghan [and Central Asian] women and girls is also important for the nation's [region's] political development and stabilization."[33] In order to support these aims in the context of the NSR initiative, the U.S. has funded university studies of Afghan students across the region, sponsored economic and entrepreneurship symposiums for women in Central Asia and South Asia, and organized trade delegations and conferences in the region.[34]

### *The U.S. Initiative in Its Long-Term Policy Perspective*

Contrary to the word "new" in the name of the initiative, the very idea of a Silk Road is not a novelty in the U.S. strategic discourse on Central Asia. The notion can be traced back to Washington's broader geopolitical considerations which, during the 1990s and 2000s, focused on democratic transition, human rights promotion and economic cooperation in "Greater Central Asia," thus ultimately connecting it to the Caucasus region, Turkey and Europe in the West rather than to the North (Russia) or the East (China). Kucera notes how the U.S. in the late 1990s, "pushed for the construction of pipelines leading from the Caspian Sea through Georgia and Turkey, for the first time breaking Russia's monopoly on the region's rich oil and natural gas re-

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33 Catherine Powell, "Women and Girls in the Afghanistan Transition," *Council on Foreign Relations Working Paper*, June 2014, http://www.cfr.org/women/women-girls-afghanistan-transition/p33152.

34 USDS, "U.S. Support for the New Silk Road."

serves."[35] This was meant to solidify the sovereignty of newly independent Central Asian states and counter the influence of Russia as well as China in the region—thus feeding into the competitive "great game" in Central Asia.[36]

The events of September 11, 2001, however, changed the situation and Washington's long-term strategy was replaced by short-term military expediency. The more recent idea of the New Silk Road as a post-withdrawal economic strategy emerged from discussions in think tanks in Washington and was adopted in a condensed form by government policymakers—initially at the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and, subsequently, at the more skeptical State Department and White House.[37] In particular, the new initiative drew from experience and lessons learned in the war in Afghanistan, particularly in regard to the issue of military logistics in the Afghan theater of operations.

In order to sustain its combat forces in Afghanistan, the U.S. has had to deliver a wide range of materiel to the country. Initially, the majority of non-lethal U.S. military materiel was delivered to the Pakistani port of Karachi and then transported overland to Afghanistan by commercial trucking companies. As a result of a number of disrupting factors, including a lack of inexpensive alternatives, trucking strikes and increased insurgency activity, in 2009 the U.S. sought to establish a more flexible and reliable northern supply network into Afghanistan to support the growing number of its forces. The shutdown of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border following the death of several Pakistani soldiers in a NATO incursion on Pakistani soil made clear that the northern dimension was vital.[38] Through a combination of diplomatic pressure and financial incentives, the U.S. was able to establish a number of lo-

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35 Joshua Kucera, "U.S. Checked in Central Asia," *International New York Times*, November 4, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/11/05/opinion/us-checked-in-central-asia.html?_r=0.

36 Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia," 21, and Ganguli, "The Revival of the Silk Roads Topic," 67; and see also Ivan Safranchuk, "The New Silk Road Concept and American Policy in Greater Central Asia," *International Affairs* 59, no. 5 (2013): 47–48. As Kucera points out, Henry Kissinger, for example, "called for the creation of a pro-Western 'buffer zone' in the region separating Russia and China," Joshua Kucera, "U.S. Checked in Central Asia."

37 Graham Lee, "The New Silk Road and the Northern Distribution Network: A Golden Road to Central Asian Trade Reform?," *Occasional Paper Series* 8 (2012): 9, http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/OPS-No-8-20121019.pdf; Safranchuk, "The New Silk Road Concept and American Policy in Greater Central Asia," 52, and Kucera, "The New Silk Road?."

38 Joshua Kucera, "Great Game in Central Asia after Afghanistan," *The Diplomat*, March 27, 2013, http://thediplomat.com/2013/03/the-great-game-in-central-asia-after-afghanistan/.

gistical routes that utilized existing rail and road networks as well as commercial carriers in Europe, Russia and Central Asia. Together, these routes constituted the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), illustrated in *Figure 3*.[39]

*Figure 3:* The Northern Distribution Network

Source: Kuchins et al. (2010). Illustration: Kauko Kyöstiö.

Given the successful transport of materiel through the NDN—according to official reporting over 66,000 containers by May 2012[40]—Washington's NSR strategy envisioned that the NDN could work as a foundation for regional commercial interaction in the future. In May 2012 Susan M. Elliott, the U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of South and Central Asia, argued that "[b]ecause we're using existing infrastructure and commercial transit routes, these same routes can and should be used by the private sector

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39 Andrew C. Kuchins, et al., "The Northern Distribution Network and the Modern Silk Road: Planning for Afghanistan's Future," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, December 2009, http://csis.org/files/publication/091217_Kuchins_NorthernDistNet_Web.pdf. and Andrew C. Kuchins et al., "Afghanistan: Building the Missing Link in the Modern Silk Road," *The Washington Quarterly* 33, no. 2 (2010): 33–47.

40 Susan M. Elliot, "Remarks at Northern Distribution Network Conference," *USDS*, May 8, 2012, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2012/189499.htm.

to continue trade across the region, where there is ample opportunity for growth." [41]

Leading think tanks and Central Asia experts in Washington had argued precisely this point prior to the adoption of the NSR initiative. Frederick Starr and Andrew Kuchins, in particular, have been prominent in this respect. For example, in 2009 the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) report by Kuchins *et al.* suggested that:

> "By linking Afghanistan with Europe, the Caucasus, and Central Asia through commercial carriers, existing infrastructure, and multiple routes, the NDN is proof that the embattled country is currently accessible. Unfortunately, the flourishing export trade of Afghan-grown opiates to Asia, Central Asia, Europe, Iran, and Russia also serves as proof of transit potential. At the same time, the NDN is creating additional demand for transcontinental transport services, bolstering the logistical links between Afghanistan, NDN ports of origin, and NDN transit states. Through this demand, the U.S. military is helping create and sustain transcontinental transport capacity that could one day service the MSR [Modern Silk Road] and become the engine for Afghanistan's economic growth as prioritized in the 2008 Afghan National Development Strategy."[42]

In 2010, another CSIS contribution by Kuchins *et al.* argued that "[w]hile the creation of the NDN was motivated by the U.S. military's immediate logistical needs, its establishment nonetheless offers a unique opportunity for Washington to lay a foundation for a Modern Silk Road, which would help stabilize Afghanistan in the long term and transform Eurasia."[43] In the same year, Starr and Kuchins together concluded more broadly that:

> "The U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom radically changed [the] situation by reopening Afghanistan's northern border to long-distance trade for the first time since 1936, and by creating similar potential on Afghanistan's eastern border with Pakistan. This action, entirely unintended and largely unnoticed in America or elsewhere, is one of the most transformative developments on the Eurasian landmass in the past century. Today, the best, and possibly only, way for America to consolidate and expand its military gains in Afghanistan is to build on this achievement."[44]

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41 Ibid.
42 Kuchins et al., "The Northern Distribution Network and the Modern Silk Road," 21.
43 Ibid., 37.
44 Starr and Kuchins, "The Key to Success in Afghanistan," 11.

The New Silk Road concept, based on successful experience in commercial and logistics transactions towards the north and north-west along the NDN, was the model and way forward for the U.S., Afghanistan and greater Central Asia. Furthermore, as the U.S. was to withdraw the majority of its combat forces from Afghanistan, the existing NDN routes were to be used to transport out U.S. military equipment and, as such, they were expected to persist not only throughout the exit phase but also beyond it.

### *The Rationale for the U.S. Initiative: Goals in Afghanistan and Beyond*

The U.S. has had various security-related and geostrategic reasons for launching the NSR initiative. As stated explicitly, the U.S. required a plan to transition from a costly, security-oriented mission to a comprehensive but less taxing long-term engagement with Afghanistan that would enable an economically self-sustaining and extremism-averse Afghan society to emerge in the context of an increasingly interconnected and interdependent Central Asia. The costs of the absence of such a long-term plan or an "exit strategy" were considered to be quite significant. First, gains in security and stability would be short-lived if the U.S. and its Coalition partners abruptly were to lose interest in Afghanistan. Second, the Afghan population would not be the only party to draw the disillusioned conclusion that the U.S. is a self-interested player unwilling to work for the Afghan goal of socio-economic development. Third, non-engagement would also signal that the U.S. presence and interest in Central Asia was declining, thus creating further incentives for Russia and China to increase their influence in the region. Fourth and finally, a failure to accomplish the broader goal of a stable and self-sustaining Afghanistan would be likely to undermine the willingness of NATO and non-NATO partners to join U.S.-led missions in the future.[45]

Furthermore, the NSR initiative embodies broader U.S. geostrategic interests in the region, among them the potentially growing strategic partnership with India in combination with strategic rivalry between the U.S., China and Russia. The Obama administration has defined India as its "indispensable partner" for the 21st century, based on converging strategic interests, shared democratic values, and a common problem-solving mentality in re-

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[45] Ibid., 13.

gional and global affairs.[46] However, political speech and practices have not always coincided. The indispensable partnership has become tested in recent years as the U.S. has "devoted less attention to India than to its rivals China and Pakistan, pursuing economic links with the former and counterterrorism ties with the other."[47] Nevertheless, India is still seen as an important regional leader as well as a democratic counterbalance to China in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in the maritime domain.[48] The U.S. would like to consider India as a key "pillar of economic and political stability in the Asia Pacific."[49] This strategic perspective explains why the U.S. NSR vision favors vertical connections that seek to link Central Asia and Afghanistan to India instead of the largest—and growing and expanding—market in the region, namely China. This is expected to both enable the rise of India and to constrain the rise of China, including the Chinese expansion towards the west.

It is also worth noting that, despite its vertical design, the official NSR strategy excludes both Russia and Iran from the equation—even if Russia did facilitate the emergence and continuation of the NDN throughout the war in Afghanistan. These exclusions reflect both the ongoing U.S. effort to limit Russia's influence in Central Asia, for example *vis-à-vis* Russia's infrastructure (energy) and political projects (Custom's and Eurasian Economic Union) in the region, as well as the U.S. interest in limiting Iran's participation in potentially lucrative trade relations and in the stabilization of Afghanistan.[50]

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46 Wendy Sherman, "The United States and India: An Indispensable Partnership for the 21st Century," *USDS*, April 2, 2012, http://www.state.gov/p/us/rm/2012/187401.htm.

47 Nicholas Burns, "Passage to India: What Washington Can Do to Revive Relations with New Delhi," *Foreign Affairs* 93, no. 5 (September–October 2014).

48 The role of India as an additional counterbalance to China is particularly relevant in the maritime domain, where intensified activity and territorial claims by China are seen as jeopardizing regional security and freedom of maritime movement. In this context, President Obama and Prime Minister Modi recently agreed "to intensify cooperation in maritime security to ensure freedom of navigation and unimpeded movement of lawful shipping and commercial activity, in accordance with accepted international law." See Steve Holland and David Brunnstrom, "Obama, Modi work to deepen improving U.S.-India ties," *Reuters*, September 30, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/09/30/us-usa-india-modi-idUSKCN0HP1IM20140930; "U.S. seeks to step up India trade talks," *Reuters*, November 24, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/24/us-india-usa-trade-idUSKCN0J80MW20141124.

49 Sherman, "The United States and India"; see also Geoffrey Pyatt, "Next Steps on the Silk Road," *USDS*, November 15, 2011, http://www.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rmks/2011/177179.htm. The US has also welcomed Indian contributions to the development of Afghanistan, such as investments in natural resources sector and the training of Afghan civil servants. See Sherman, "The United States and India."

50 Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia," 21.

However, although the U.S. has not encouraged connections between Afghanistan and Iran, it also has not banned them. In official statements the U.S. has recognized, for example, "India's historical linkages with Iran and Persian culture" and understands "its interest in developing Iran as a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia."[51] India's possibilities to propose and execute road and rail projects connecting Afghanistan to the port of Chabahar in Iran have not been restrained.

However, these efforts to limit Russian, Iranian and especially Chinese influence in the region whilst simultaneously trying to develop and stabilize Afghanistan through increased economic integration and activity are extremely challenging. If the stabilization of Afghanistan is premised on its economic growth, and economic growth is to a large degree a function of Afghanistan's integration with the region and the region's integration into broader global markets, then it must also be noticed that Russia and particularly China are geographically so favorably placed that they, too, play a role in this process. Both of them, and more recently especially China, have already managed to penetrate the region and wield growing influence in Central Asia. For example, Chinese investments in developing Turkmenistan's natural gas and Kazakhstan's oil infrastructure provide China with leverage over and beyond the competitive advantage that sheer geographic proximity provides (more on this further below). Given the constraints on U.S. resources due to the financial crisis and budgetary challenges coupled with a lack of private sector investment, it is regional players and especially China that are likely to fund many of the critical projects in the long term. This, in turn, gives China a say in the content and consequences of such endeavors.[52]

Whether this is necessarily a negative thing from the U.S. point of view remains an open question. On the one hand, China's significant investments in the region do facilitate the region's integration into the global economy as well as its economic self-sufficiency—the two mechanisms that the U.S. emphasizes in the long-term development of Afghanistan and Central Asia. This is something that U.S. official statements have come to recognize:

> "We welcome the efforts of China to develop energy and transportation infrastructure in the region, including projects announced during President Xi's recent [2013] visit. We see all these efforts as mutually reinforcing and beneficial to the

[51] Sherman, "The United States and India."
[52] Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia," 21.

> Central Asia countries and Afghanistan. We are realistic. The United States is an important partner for all the countries of the region, and our companies are major players there […]. But China, as a neighbor to these countries and as a result of its own dramatic growth, is naturally going to be leader there in trade and investment. We want to work with China […]."[53]

On the other hand, China has paid much less attention to Afghanistan and much more attention to other Central Asian states than the U.S. did after 9/11 when Afghanistan was a strategic priority in the Global War on Terror. As a consequence of this, Chinese influence in the region has grown as a function of successful investments, mostly outside of Afghanistan and not necessarily in favor of the development in Afghanistan that is the emphasis of the U.S.

## China's Silk Road Initiative

### *Two Roads in One Initiative: The Economic Belt and the Maritime Road*

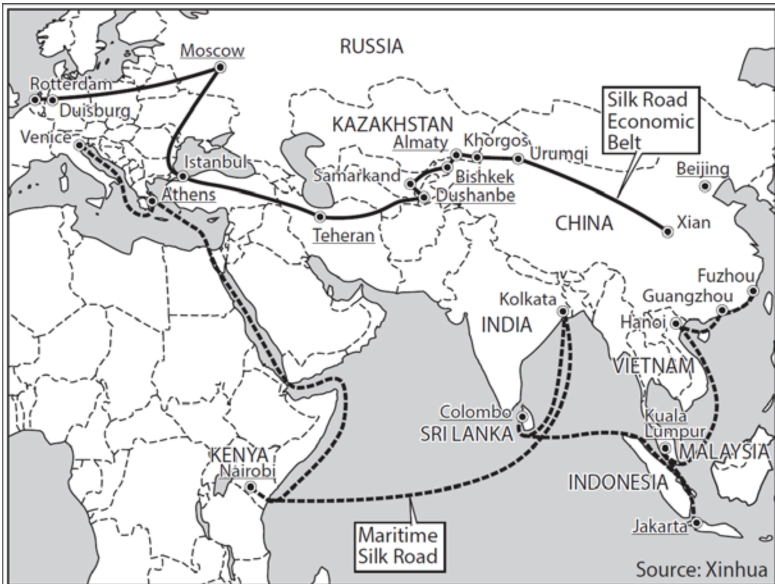
The idea of the Silk Road has a long history in China, dating back to the original route(s) and its subsequent utilization in Chinese political discourse. China has proposed its own concrete vision of the modern Silk Road that imitates, yet goes beyond, the U.S. strategy initially suggested by Hillary Clinton in 2011. The proposal includes both terrestrial and maritime roads that connect China not only to Central Asia but much of the world, including Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. The terrestrial part of this vision was presented by President Xi Jinping in a speech at Nazarbayev University in Astana, Kazakhstan, while visiting Central Asia in September 2013. President Xi proposed that China and the Central Asian countries build an "economic belt along the Silk Road" that would span the Eurasian continent from the Pacific to the Atlantic and the Baltic Sea—a massive economic area with close to 3 billion people that "represents the biggest market in the world with unparalleled potential."[54] Later on, in a speech during his Southeast Asian tour on October 3, President Xi spoke of the importance of a 21st-century

53 Tracy, "The United States and the New Silk Road."

54 "Xi proposes a 'new Silk Road' with Central Asia," *China Daily*, September 8, 2013, http://usa.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/08/content_16952304.htm.

maritime Silk Road. According to the vision, “the seaway that bridges China and foreign countries is as prestigious as the Silk Road that connects the East and West.”[55] This maritime vision of the Silk Road was echoed almost simultaneously by the Chinese premier, Li Keqiang, in the October 2013 ASEAN-China summit in Brunei, as a part of his seven-point proposal for cooperation in the South-East Asian maritime domain.[56]

*Figure 4:* Chinese Silk Roads




Source: Xinhuanet (2015). Illustration: Kauko Kyöstiö.

More recently, the state owned *Xinhua News Agency* has provided one of the few visual illustrations of the Chinese vision and particularly its immense scope (*Figure 4*; see also Tiezzi 2014).[57] The subsequent release of an offi-

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55 “China to pave way for maritime Silk Road,” *Xinhuanet*, October 11, 2013, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2013-10/11/c_132790018.htm.

56 Ibid. Li’s proposal is often called the “2+7 co-operation framework” that includes a consensus on two issues and seven concrete proposals; see Justyna Szczudlik-Tatar, “China’s New Silk Road Diplomacy,” *Polski Instytut Spraw Międzynarodowych Policy Paper* 34, no. 82 (December 2013): 3–4, https://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=15818.

57 “Xinwen ‘laoba cha’: ‘21 shiji haishang Sichou zhi Lu guoji yantaohui’ Si Lu pingshu,” *Xinhuanet*, February 2, 2015, http://www.hq.xinhuanet.com/news/2015-02/12/c_

cial policy paper by China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has elaborated on Chinese aspirations in more detail.[58] It has become obvious that China's "One Belt, One Road" initiative is not reducible to the two specific terrestrial and maritime routes suggested in *Xinhua's* image. In fact, already in his 2013 speech on the "economic belt," President Xi put forward a five-point proposal to develop the broader economic area to strengthen relations between China, Central Asia and Europe. This proposal emphasized increased policy communication to help joint economic cooperation, the development of transport and other networks to facilitate intra- and intercontinental trade, and the improvement of trade relations by eliminating trade barriers and reducing trade and investment costs. Two more highlights were the enhancement of financial cooperation with the aim of decreasing transaction costs and reducing financial risks and the strengthening of cultural relations, for example through government-sponsored scholarships, study tours and various kinds of cultural events.[59]

Policy communication, infrastructure development and financial cooperation are currently the three most topical embodiments and tools of the Silk Road initiative. In order to establish a favorable political environment, China has engaged in active high-level political dialogue with prospective partners along the maritime and terrestrial Silk Roads. It has established strategic partnerships with all five Central Asian states (Kazakhstan in 2005 and 2011, Uzbekistan in 2012 and Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in 2013) as well as with ASEAN countries (Malaysia in 2013 and Indonesia in 2005 and 2013).[60] The typical policy is that bilateral relations are upgraded to strategic partnerships and coupled with mutually beneficial ("win-win") economic cooperation and projects. Concretely, this has meant infrastructure development to facilitate economic flows and ultimately also Chinese economic and political influence along the two Silk Roads. Through financing and by carrying out construction projects China continues to pursue the establishment

1114350540.htm; see also Shannon, Tiezzi, "China's 'New Silk Road' Vision Revealed," *The Diplomat,* May 9, 2014, http://thediplomat.com/2014/05/chinas-new-silk-road-vision-revealed/.

58 National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) of People's Republic of China, "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," March 28, 2015, http://en.ndrc.gov.cn/newsrelease/201503/t20150330_669367.html.

59 Szczudlik-Tatar, "China's New Silk Road Diplomacy," 3, and "Xi proposes a 'new Silk Road' with Central Asia."

60 Szczudlik-Tatar, "China's New Silk Road Diplomacy," 5.

of a vast network of international connections: transport corridors overland (roads, high-speed railways) and at sea (sea routes), oil and natural gas pipelines as well as extraction infrastructure, telecommunications infrastructure ("Information Silk Road"), airports and ports, special economic zones, and so on.[61]

In regard to the "economic belt" across Central Asia, in particular, these include more localized initiatives with strategic value, such as the establishment of an agricultural free trade zone along the Xinjiang-Tajikistan border[62] and the establishment of the Kashgar special economic zone[63]. They also include broader, regional and trans-regional initiatives with strategic significance, such as: the Kazakhstan–China oil pipeline that bypasses Russia and transports Caspian oil directly to China[64]; the Central Asia–China gas pipeline that bypasses Russia's Gazprom-Transneft network and transports natural gas from Turkmenistan via Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan to China's new West-East pipeline[65]; the establishment of a China-Pakistan overland transport corridor between Kashgar and the Chinese-operated port of Gwadar in Pakistan in order to provide China with alternative access to Middle Eastern oil[66]; the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railroad that could move Chinese low-value goods from Xinjiang to Central Asia and bring Central Asian products, such as uranium from Uzbekistan, to China[67]; and the China-Europe railroad to connect inland China to Central Europe (illustrations in *Figures 5* and *6*).[68]

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61 NDRC, "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt," and Scott Kennedy and David A. Parker, "Building China's 'One Belt, One Road'," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, April 3, 2015, http://csis.org/publication/building-chinas-one-belt-one-road.

62 Zhendong Pu, "China, Tajikistan eye free trade zone in agriculture," *People's Daily Online*, September 5, 2013, http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90778/8389951.html.

63 Alessandro Rippa, "Kashgar on the Move," *The Diplomat*, October 14, 2013, http://thediplomat.com/2013/10/kashgar-on-the-move/.

64 Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 92–93.

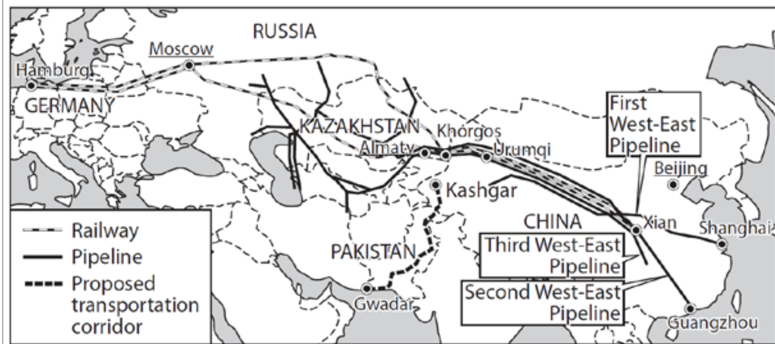
65 Ibid., 94.

66 Stratfor, "China's Ambitions in Xinjiang and Central Asia: Part 1," September 20, 2013, https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/chinas-ambitions-xinjiang-and-central-asia-part-1?0=ip_login_no_cache%3D35a6054bbc3be23be9604aa0e6c88666.

67 Stratfor, "China and Central Asia's Railroad Ambitions," November 20, 2012, https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/china-and-central-asias-railroad-ambitions.

68 Xinhuanet has reported that there is "a total of 23 key projects with an investment of close to 20 billion Yuan (3 billion U.S. dollars) [including] 5 railways, 14 highways and 3 airports" that will go into construction in 2014 alone. "Joining the dots along Xinjiang's

*Figure 5:* China-Central Asia Transport and Energy Connections.




Source: Stratfor (2013). Illustration: Kauko Kyöstiö.

To facilitate infrastructure development, China has not only financed projects bilaterally (e.g. loans as prepayments of natural resources), but also moved to establish new funding mechanisms. In November 2014, China announced the establishment of a $40 billion Silk Road Fund, managed by Chinese policy banks, to fund infrastructure, resource extraction, industrial and financial cooperation projects along the two Silk Roads. In the previous month representatives of 21 Asian nations had gathered in Beijing to sign a memorandum of understanding on establishing a new multilateral Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)—a Chinese alternative to the Asian Development Bank dominated by Japan—with capital of $50 billion to finance various infrastructure projects in the greater Asian region.[69] Simultaneously the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization financing institution is under discussion amongst the member states.[70]

Silk Road," *Xinhuanet,* March 22, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-03/22/c_133206639.htm.

69 "China to create US$40 billion Silk Road Fund to upgrade Asia links," *South China Morning Post,* November 9, 2014, http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1635391/china-create-us40-billion-silk-road-fund-eurasian-infrastructure; "21 Asian countries sign MOU on establishing Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank," *Xinhuanet,* October 24, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/business/2014-10/24/c_133740149.htm; "China pledges 40 bln USD for Silk Road Fund," *Xinhuanet*, November 8, 2014, http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/china/2014-11/08/c_133774993.htm, and Wang Zheng, "China's Alternative Diplomacy," *The Diplomat*, January 30, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/chinas-alternative-diplomacy/.

70 NDRC, "Vision and Actions on Jointly Building Silk Road Economic Belt."

### *The Rationale for the Chinese Initiative: Broad Objectives in Geostrategic Contexts*

In order to understand China's Silk Road initiative, we must see it as a part of a broader and ongoing Chinese westward expansion—"March to West"[71] or "Pivot to West"[72]—that began with a domestic focus. As Wang explains, modern China's strategic attention has been directed at its coastal areas in the east. When China began to open up, contact with Western powers and Japan took place primarily by maritime routes, which resulted in the placing of many of the Chinese cities and its industry on the East coast. This led to an accumulation of population and wealth in coastal regions. The establishment of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in south-east China further emphasized this focus. These developments meant that throughout much of China's modern history, its Western regions have remained socio-economically backward as well as lacking contact with the rest of the world.[73]

Beginning with the launch of the *Great Western Development Strategy* by the central government in 2000, China began to pay serious economic attention to developing its Western regions.[74] This regional modernization and industrialization has borne economic fruits. One expert sees "the beginnings of an economic boom in the inland provinces, producing a particularly noticeable impact since 2010."[75] As a consequence, migration flows to the more industrialized coastal area have lessened as work has become available closer by (thereby contributing to labor shortage and a rise in salaries in the East). Furthermore, increased economic activity has resulted in increased demand for energy that could be found close by and through much more direct supply routes from the Middle East and Central Asia.

The development strategy is related to the Chinese aim to secure territorial integrity and maintain political stability in its Western regions, most notably in the multiethnic Xinjiang borderland region that rebelled from the Republic in the interwar-period and remains the home of a critical and politi-

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71 Jisi Wang, "'Marching Westwards': The Rebalancing of China's Geostrategy," *International and Strategic Studies Report* no. 73 (October 7, 2012).

72 Ankit Panda, "China's Pivot West," *The Diplomat,* October 29, 2013, http://thediplomat.com/2013/10/chinas-pivot-west/.

73 Wang, "Marching Westwards," 1–3; see also Szczudlik-Tatar, "China's New Silk Road Diplomacy," 2.

74 Wang, "Marching Westwards," 1–3, and Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 77.

75 Chen Yo-Jung, "China's Westward Strategy," *The Diplomat,* January 15, 2014, http://thediplomat.com/2014/01/chinas-westward-strategy/.

cally active Uighur population.[76] The official Chinese policy assumes that the promotion of rapid economic development—supported by massive state investments and subsidies—coupled with increased contact with the east will change local ethnic and cultural identities over time, thus decreasing the danger of regional political instability or outright separatism. China has also not shied away from using coercion in the region to suppress Uighur organizations with either nationalist or separatist agendas—to combat what the Chinese consider the "three evils" of religious extremism, separatism and terrorism. Since the early 2000s, China has advanced regional security cooperation through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to combat these "evils" in its Western parts and beyond in Central Asia.[77]

Today, the Chinese march to the West is increasingly international in character. China is not ignorant of political instability due to ethnic tensions, intertwined borderlands and border disputes, and the presence of the "three evils" close by in Central Asia. In particular, China fears a potential "domino effect" in which instability in neighboring states would spill over into Western China. Much like in Xinjiang, China has an interest in stabilizing the region through a combination of improved political relations, economic development and security cooperation. The first of these is pursued with strategic partnerships, the second through growing economic investments in the region, particularly in the hydrocarbon sector and infrastructure projects, and the third through multilateral cooperation in the SCO in order to improve its regional capability in fighting the "three evils."[78]

The Chinese march to the West is also related to a broader geostrategic scenario within which China finds itself confronting foreign powers. While China remains broadly committed to the global liberal economic order, it pursues regional hegemony in the Asia-Pacific. To counter the rise of China

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[76] China's relatively neglected western regions, such as Xinjiang, can be seen as buffer zones that have been incorporated in order to protect its heart in East China, see Stratfor, "China's Ambitions in Xinjiang and Central Asia."

[77] Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 76–77, and Tyler Roney, "The Shanghai Cooperation Organization: China's NATO?," *The Diplomat,* September 11, 2013, http://thediplomat.com/2013/09/the-shanghai-cooperation-organization-chinas-nato-2/. Some analysts, such as Roney, argue sharply that the SCO conception of security is deeply troubling from the perspective of human rights (or lack thereof) and that, even if they are a part of an international frame of "counterterrorism," the "three evils" amount to nothing more than a "catch-all excuse for domestic crackdowns."

[78] Camille Brugier, "China's way: the new Silk Road," *European Union Institute for Security Studies Brief* 14 (May 2014), http://www.iss.europa.eu/uploads/media/Brief_14_New_Silk_Road.pdf, and Szczudlik-Tatar, "China's New Silk Road Diplomacy," 5.

in general and in the Asia-Pacific in particular, the U.S. has been rebalancing its strategic attention to the region.[79] This has meant that China increasingly perceives itself as being a target of a comprehensive U.S. policy of "containment" pursued through strengthening military partnerships and efforts to undermine Sino-ASEAN political relations as well as Chinese-led regional economic integration, notably the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP) through the promotion of the U.S.-led Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). In this potentially zero-sum situation, where both the U.S. and China are seeking to expand (or at least maintain) their own influence in the region, China recognizes the danger of an open confrontation with the U.S. and pursues a policy that combines gradual military build-up at home with new politico-economic diplomacy abroad.[80]

A growing geostrategic emphasis on regions to the west of China—including Central Asia and the Middle East—currently presents the leadership in Beijing with a more favorable option than open U.S.-Sino confrontation, with much less to lose and much more to gain. The U.S. withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan opens up geopolitical and geo-economic space into which China can advance and from which it can reap economic (resource extraction, market penetration), political (conversion of economic influence into political power) and security (development of Central Asian countries) benefits with almost no risk of a direct military confrontation between the two—something that is much more difficult to achieve in the Asia-Pacific. Although China's Silk Road initiative is a rival to the U.S. economic strategy, there is potential for a cooperative U.S.-China relationship in the region, for example because of common interests in economic investment, energy issues, counterterrorism and maintaining regional stability as a whole.

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79 Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy* 189, (November 2011): 56–63. For a critical discussion, see Elisabeth C. Economy, Michael Fullivore, and Sheila A. Smith, "What Happened to the Asia Pivot in 2013?," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 2013, http://www.cfr.org/china/happened-asia-pivot-2013/p32108?cid=rss-analysisbriefbackgroundersexp-what_happened_to_the_asia_pivo-122013.

80 Sun Yun, "March West: China's Response to the U.S. Rebalancing," *Brookings Institution*, January 31, 2013, http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/01/31-china-us-sun; Wang, "'Marching Westwards'," and Zheng, "China's Alternative Diplomacy." In the military sphere, China has been pursuing so-called anti-access and area denial capabilities to counter U.S. maritime presence in the Asia-Pacific. In the politico-economic sphere, China has adopted a two-track approach whereby it pursues its interests by establishing new favorable regional economic initiatives (Silk Roads) and institutions (AIDB, FTAAP) whilst at the same time continuing its participation in existing, less favorable organizations (e.g. the WTO, WB, and ADB).

In Afghanistan, in particular, the U.S. has signaled that China could contribute more to the stabilization of the country.[81]

As China has become an important investment and trade partner in Central Asian states, Beijing's vision of the "economic belt" also contests Moscow's attempt to establish the multi-dimensionally challenged Eurasian Economic Union[82] in the region. While sharing the strategic interest of countering U.S. hegemony, Moscow is uneasy about a significant expansion of Chinese economic reach including energy and transport links to Central Asia that will not only diminish Russia's economic footprint but will also be converted into Chinese political power in Russia's traditional sphere of influence, thereby reducing its role to that of a mere "junior partner" for Beijing.[83] As a result of the crisis in Ukraine, Russia has found itself increasingly isolated from the West and it has turned its attention to the east and, particularly, to China. This has meant new energy deals and investments from China—notably for expensive hydrocarbon extraction projects in eastern Siberia and the Arctic—with terms that may turn out to be unfavorable to Russia.

As a growing market, China expresses rising demand for a stable and secure supply of energy from alternative sources. As a consequence of this, access to energy reserves in Central Asia has become increasingly important for China.[84] This has also suited Central Asian countries, which have been looking for new export markets so as to reduce their dependence on Russia.[85] From this perspective, President Xi's tour in the region in September 2013 was illustrative. During the trip, a range of investment, trade and loan agreements were reached with strategic partnership countries, in total worth over $50 billion. Oil-rich Kazakhstan was the prime target of the trip with deals amounting to up to $30 billion, primarily related to oil extraction and the transport thereof. China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) invested $5 billion in the Kashagan offshore oil field in the Caspian Sea from which oil is transported to China via existing pipeline infrastructure (*Figure 5*). Another

81 Yun, "March West," and Wang, "'Marching Westwards'."

82 Sean Roberts et al., "The Eurasian Economic Union: Breaking the Pattern of post-Soviet Integration?," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, FIIA Analysis* 3 (2014).

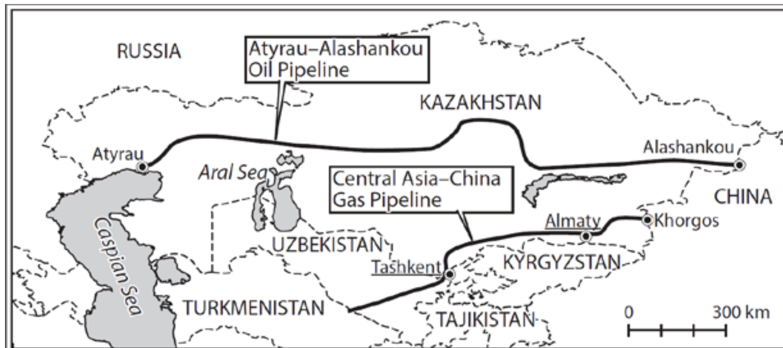
83 Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 70–71; see also Martha Brill Olcott, "China's Unmatched Influence in Central Asia," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, September 18, 2013, http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/09/18/china-s-unmatched-influence-in-central-asia/gzw2.

84 Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 90.

85 Marlène Laruelle and Sébastien Peyrouse, *Chinese Question in Central Asia: Domestic Order, Social Change, and the Chinese Factor* (London: Hurst & Company, 2012), 63.

set of agreements was reached in Uzbekistan where Beijing and Tashkent completed oil, gas and uranium deals worth of $15 billion. In Turkmenistan, China's interests were primarily related to the expansion of production and supply of Turkmen natural gas to China. The Turkmen government pledged to supply China with an additional 25 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually by 2020, and in return Beijing agreed to finance the redevelopment of the massive Galkynysh gas field—the second largest in the world—and additional pipeline projects to carry the increased supply to China.[86]

*Figure 6:* Central Asia–China Oil and Gas Infrastructure




Source: Cooley (2012). Illustration: Kauko Kyöstiö.

Until the early 1990s, China was self-sufficient in oil. With subsequent growth rates exceeding 10 percent per year, it soon became dependent on foreign oil.[87] In 2009, China became the second-largest consumer of oil after the U.S. and, assuming continued economic growth, it will surpass the U.S. in the near future. While coal remains the primary source of energy (around 70 percent), a significant part of the total energy consumption in China—18 percent in 2011—is covered by oil. China's overall demand of oil reached 10.7 million barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2013 and more than half of it—circa 5.6 million bbl/d—was imported to China. According to 2011 statistics, the single largest exporter of oil to China is Saudi Arabia, with a volume of over

[86] Emily Feng, "Marching West: Regional Integration in Central Asia," *Huffington Post,* January 11, 2014, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/china-hands/marching-west-regional-integration_b_4581020.html. For a discussion on Chinese interest in Central Asian energy pre-date 2013, see Laruelle and Peyrouse, *Chinese Question in Central Asia*, 66–68.

[87] Laruelle and Peyrouse, *Chinese Question in Central Asia,* 64.

1 million bbl/d, whereas Iran with 0.5 million and Iraq with 0.27 million bbl/d are also important sources of oil for China.[88] In conjunction with the worst-case geostrategic scenario in which the U.S. would cut the supply of oil by blocking the Strait of Malacca, this increases the importance of alternative transport routes for Middle Eastern and African oil.

To alleviate its over-reliance on the Asia-Pacific maritime routes, China has investigated the possibility of an alternative maritime corridor (Northern Sea Route), energy sources (Yamal LNG) and logistics hubs (Iceland) in the opening Arctic.[89] It has also invested in the development of transport and energy infrastructure as well as logistic hubs on land in order to bypass the Strait of Malacca. We have already mentioned the transport corridor between Kashgar (Xinjiang) and the Gwadar port in Pakistan. In April 2015, President Xi unveiled infrastructure and energy projects, worth $46 billion in total, for its establishment as an economic corridor with road infrastructure, railways and oil and gas pipelines. Previously China had already invested in the development of the trans-shipment terminal in Gwadar, with several multipurpose berths and oil terminals. In 2013, China took over operational control of the port as the Singaporean company, PSA International, was replaced by the state-run Chinese Overseas Port Holdings (COPHC).[90]

Finally, China also has a long-term interest in developing transport infrastructure to facilitate trade flows connecting growing Western China with the global market place. In its immediate neighborhood, Central Asia exhibits some potential for economic growth[91] which China has an interest of tapping

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88 Energy Information Administration (EIA), "China: Overview, 2011," accessed February 5, 2015, http://www.eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=ch.

89 Juha Käpylä and Harri Mikkola, "The Global Arctic: The Growing Arctic Interests of Russia, China, the United States and the European Union," *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Briefing Paper* 133 (2013), 5, http://www.fiia.fi/assets/publications/bp133.pdf.

90 Zahid Ali Khan, "China's Gwadar and India's Chahbahar: an analysis of Sino-India geostrategic and economic competition," *Strategic Studies* 32/33, no. 4/1 (Winter 2012–Spring 2013): 79–101; Qandeel Siddique, "Deeper than the Indian Ocean? An Analysis of Pakistan-China Relations," *Centre for International and Strategic Analysis*, *SISA Report*, no. 16 (February 2014): 34–35, http://strategiskanalyse.no/Publikasjoner%202014/2014-02-27_SISA16_Sino-Pak_QS.pdf; Stratfor, "China's Ambitions in Xinjiang and Central Asia"; Katharine Houreld, "Chinese president to launch economic corridor link in Pakistan," *Reuters*, April 19, 2015, http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/04/19/us-pakistan-china-idUSKBN0NA12T20150419. On the military strategic value of the base, see Khan, "China's Gwadar and India's Chahbahar," 82.

91 See OECD, "Competitive outlook for Central Asia: Key Findings," July 2011, http://www.oecd.org/globalrelations/46973993.pdf.

into, at least by providing the region's markets with low-cost products from western Chinese manufacturing sites. However, other markets, most notably those in Europe, are the main target. This requires the establishment of a comprehensive land-based transport network consisting of highways and high-speed railroads to Eastern and Central Europe. In rail transport, this has already started to become a reality when the China-Europe railroad from Zhengzhou in Henan province to Hamburg, Germany was inaugurated in 2013. While certainly not a full-blown alternative to maritime logistics, continental railways do provide some economic incentives as it reduces the time (by 2 weeks) and expenses (by 25 percent) for transporting certain manufacturing goods from China to Europe. The savings in expenses are even higher when compared to air logistics. The electronics company Foxconn, computer manufacturer Hewlett-Packard and the logistics company DHL already utilize this railway to ship their products from western Chinese manufacturing sites to European markets.[92]

## Silk Road Initiatives and the Future of Central Asia

What future should one expect for Central Asia in the light of these two strategic Silk Road initiatives? While both rely primarily on the establishment of resource and trade flows and related infrastructure, the strategies suggest two alternative approaches for organizing the practices that make economic and political space in Central Asia. The U.S. Silk Road initiative emerges from the specific problem of Afghanistan and amounts to a limited regional economic strategy that emphasizes vertical (North-South) terrestrial interconnectivity between Central Asia and India, i.e. energy and logistic connections between land-locked Central Asian countries and India with Afghanistan as the gateway and benefactor in between. The current strategy, as discussed, is derived from the experience of the Northern Distribution Network during the war in Afghanistan. Paradoxically, though, the NDN was more extensive in scope and varied in direction as its routes

[92] Stratfor, "China's Ambitions in Xinjiang and Central Asia"; see also Keith Bradsher, "Hauling New Treasure Along the Silk Road," *International New York Times*, July 20, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/21/business/global/hauling-new-treasure-along-the-silk-road.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0; Laruelle and Peyrouse, *Chinese Question in Central Asia*, 52.

shipped U.S. military equipment through Europe, the Caucasus and Russia to Afghanistan.[93] In the interest of facilitating regional interconnectivity in Central Asia, the U.S. strategy is a politically multilateral approach that seeks to leverage the cooperation of regional states (as responsible stakeholders), international organizations (the World Bank) and the private sector, with the latter two serving as primary sources of finance.

China's Silk Road initiative differs from the U.S. version in crucial aspects. First, it is more varied in nature, including the maritime and terrestrial parts, the latter of which contains various routes for logistic and resource flows. It is also significantly broader in scope, consisting of routes that span not only the Eurasian continent but also the whole of the southern maritime route to Africa, the Middle East and Europe. And lastly, it is primarily horizontal (East-West) in its direction of interconnectivity, and aims to connect China to European commodity markets as well as to African, Middle Eastern and Central Asian resource bases.

All this suggests that the Chinese Silk Road strategy is not merely the manifestation of a "neighborhood policy"[94] designed to create a favorable geopolitical environment in Central (economic belt) and South-East (maritime road) Asia, but also reflects China's global approach to secure its own economic growth and political stability ("go out" policy), and through them, its growing global political aspirations. The focus on adjacent geopolitical regions such as Central Asia can be seen as a necessary step in China's broader objectives in the long term. In this respect, and again unlike the U.S., China's political approach emphasizes bilateral strategic partnerships, such as those China has formed in Central Asia, through which a favorable geopolitical climate can be established. China also emphasizes public capital to fund costly infrastructure projects with these strategic partners. This is even the case with the establishment of the new multilateral Asian financial instrument in which China, as the leading country, assumes the greatest burden in financing.

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93 In a more speculative mode we may argue that at best, and if successful, the U.S. Silk Road initiative could be read as a first step for the integration of "Greater Central Asia" into the global economy via India, i.e. by using the "pull effect" of the growing market and global maritime connectivity of this country. The U.S. rhetoric, however, has emphasized for the most part a regional and terrestrial approach, with Afghanistan as the relevant backdrop.

94 Marc Julienne, "China's relations with Central Asia," in "China's Neighbourhood Policy," *European Council on Foreign Relations* and *Asia Centre*, February 2014, http://www.ecfr.eu/page//China_Analysis_China_s_Neighbourhood_Policy_February2014.pdf.

Of these differing strategies, it is the Chinese initiative that is currently the more feasible one—at least if regarded through the prisms of resource commitments, security and regional geopolitics. First, in terms of resource commitments China has been remarkably successful in implementing difficult and costly infrastructure projects by combining strategic partnership with significant, and mutually beneficial, public funding (and often-imported workforce) with various key countries, notably in Central Asia. The newly established Silk Road Fund and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank further highlight Chinese seriousness about implementing the strategy and its numerous projects. The U.S., on the other hand, has struggled to match financial commitments with great ambitions, such as the TAPI gas pipeline and the CASA-1000 energy network that remain "work-in-progress." Much of the U.S.'s reticence stems from post-2008 economic challenges, the memory of high financial—as well as human and political—costs of its engagement to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan for over a decade, and a domestic political environment opposed to new costly involvement abroad.[95] The U.S. has directly supported the flagship CASA-1000 project with a mere $15 million following the March 2014 commitment of $526 million by the World Bank (in which, however, the U.S. remains a major donor).[96] This captures the current U.S. sentiment that Silk Road projects are to be realized "with limited government support." [97]

Second, the Chinese Silk Road initiative—particularly its terrestrial "economic belt" across Central Asia—suffers less than the U.S. strategy from the increasingly fragile security situation in Afghanistan.[98] Apart from relatively limited Chinese investments in Afghanistan, notably in its resources sector, the majority of Chinese hard infrastructure projects bypass Afghanistan and are directed to other Central Asian countries, such as Kazakhstan for oil and Turkmenistan for gas, or beyond Central Asia

[95] President Obama's 2012 decision to end the era of U.S. stability operations finalized the demoted strategic importance of Central Asia. See Aaltola, Käpylä, and Vuorisalo, *The Challenge of Global Commons and Flows*, 106.

[96] USDS, "U.S. Support for the New Silk Road."

[97] Hormats, "The United States' 'New Silk Road' Strategy."

[98] Davin Alexander and Phil Stewart, "Afghan casualties on battlefield at unsustainably high level: U.S. general," *Reuters*, November 5, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/11/05/us-usa-afghanistan-idUSKBN0IP2MM20141105; Kay Hormats, "Civilian deaths in Afghanistan war reach new high in 2014: U.N." *Reuters*, December 19, 2014, http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/12/19/us-afghanistan-casualties-idUSKBN0JX1ZS20141219.

altogether. Furthermore, as Chinese have been reluctant to become involved in the Afghan stability operation and have, in fact, had a long relationship with the Taliban (and their *de facto* sponsor, Pakistan), they are less likely than U.S. forces or projects to become the target of anti-government violence to begin with. Much like in South Sudan, China even appears to have sought to broker a deal between the Taliban and the Afghan government by hosting Taliban representatives in China.[99] Simultaneously China has its own problem with indigenous Uighur Muslim separatists in Xinjiang that have connections to groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan (and in bordering Central Asian countries). Thus, the fragile security situation in Afghanistan does affect via proxy the western part of China through which infrastructure projects enter and exit China.

By contrast, the U.S. Silk Road strategy is particularly vulnerable to the security situation in Afghanistan. Afghanistan is the "heart" of the whole strategy, and insecurity in the country undermines the economic, social and political recovery of the country in general. Furthermore, key infrastructure projects of the U.S. strategy—the TAPI gas line and the CASA-1000 energy network—are to pass through volatile Afghan and Pakistani territory where continued insecurity will risk financial prospects and practical implementation.[100] This entails that stability in the country is paramount for the successful execution of the strategy; such is not the case and the U.S. has found itself faced with a conundrum. Moreover, given the currently limited capability of Afghan security forces, full withdrawal would be likely to create a security vacuum in which anti-government and other radical groups could achieve territorial control at least in certain parts of Afghanistan, thus annulling the effort of the U.S. and the coalition forces over the course of more than a decade to stabilize the country as well as endangering any prospect for economic recovery envisaged in the Silk Road initiative.

In order to respond to resurging violence, Afghan security forces have decided to resume the controversial "night raids" into private homes—banned in 2013 by President Karzai due to their offensive nature—in order to hit the Taliban when and where they are at their most vulnerable. However, Afghan forces lack the capability to execute this effectively, thereby

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[99] Shannon Tiezzi, "China hosted Afghan Taliban for talks: Report," *The Diplomat*, January 7, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2015/01/china-hosted-afghan-taliban-for-talks-report/.

[100] Reid Standish, "The United States' Silk Road to Nowhere," *Foreign Policy,* September 29, 2014, http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/09/29/the-united-states-silk-road-to-nowhere-2/.

prompting President Obama to quietly continue limited combat operations with the remaining U.S. forces in Afghanistan. This means in particular the provision of "combat enabler support," including air support, transportation, intelligence, and communications that are critical in mobile night raids.[101] Whether this will solve the security problem remains to be seen but appears unlikely, given that even the 2009 surge was not able to accomplish this.

Third, while the antagonistic regional geopolitical situation remains challenging for both strategies, the Chinese are, and have already been, more successful than the U.S. in navigating these stormy waters. By relying on bilateral partnerships and lucrative financial arrangements, the Chinese have clearly recognized that Central Asia, where the former Soviet republics are particularly wary about defending their sovereignty and where conflicts have erupted over poorly demarcated borderlines and strategically important water resources and hydropower installations[102], is not likely to become a unitary regional grouping with aligned policies. Moreover, by involving all countries China has not only succeeded in diversification but has also established incentives for national elites to secure Chinese projects, even amidst rising nationalistic fears of "Chinese take-over" or poor employment practices in the region.[103] Furthermore, as Chinese investments are not conditional on social transformation, e.g. the promotion of democracy or human/gender rights, not only are the Chinese more welcome among many of the region's elites, but China itself considers to have contributed to regional security by bolstering national economic development and the resources of governments and local elites.

While the U.S. did pursue bilateral arrangements, including substantive and often murky financial compensation, with Central Asian governments and elites during the war in Afghanistan, most notably in order to secure

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[101] Rod Nordland and Taimoor Shah, "Afghanistan Quietly Lifts Ban On Nighttime Raids," *New York Times,* November 23, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/24/world/asia/afghanistan-quietly-lifts-ban-on-night-raids.html?_r=1; Mark Mazzetti and Eric Schmitt, "In a Shift, Obama Extends U.S. Role in Afghan Combat," *New York Times*, November 21, 2014, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/22/us/politics/in-secret-obama-extends-us-role-in-afghan-combat.html.

[102] See e.g. "Central Asia: South Asia Energy Project a Pipe Dream?," *Eurasianet.org*, June 20, 2013, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67151.

[103] For an example of antagonistic relations from Kyrgyzstan, see David Trilling, "Kyrgyzstan: Chinese respond to latest Mine attack," *Eurasianet.org*, October 30, 2012, http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66121.

important military bases and fuel supply[104], the U.S. Silk Road strategy has pursued a multilateral approach that overestimates the potential for trust and cooperation in a divided and conflict-prone region—particularly so in the absence of direct U.S. financial compensation and strong diplomatic pressure. For example, disputes over water resources and hydropower installations are likely to affect negatively the finalization of the CASA-1000 project that ought to transport hydropower from Central Asia all the way to India. Moreover, the U.S. approach has also overestimated the willingness of private investors given both Afghan insecurity and regional geopolitical uncertainty. The U.S. initiative has also included elements of social transformation, e.g. in relation to human rights/gender issues, the fight against corruption and improved border control, that may be difficult to accomplish in some countries, the former because of enduring patriarchal practices and fears of bottom-up democratization processes and the latter two due to the systemic nature of corruption.[105] Conditionality is unlikely to advance U.S. efforts.

Regional geopolitics is further complicated by the presence of a third great power, Russia. While the collapse of the Soviet Union meant the loss of Russia's formal authority over the five Central Asian countries, China recognizes Russia as a notable player in the region in various relevant spheres.[106] First, and foremost, Russia leads the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and continues to have a notable military presence in the region, including bases in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Russia also has already existing economic and energy relations, and has been pursuing regional integration through the Customs Union and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU, alternatively abbreviated EAEU), even if the future of this project is uncertain.[107]

Both the U.S. and Chinese Silk Road initiatives can be read as geo-economic alternatives to the EEU. While the U.S. Silk Road strategy explicitly excludes Russia—and given current East-West tensions this is unlikely to change—the Chinese have remained relatively ambiguous about

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[104] Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 28–29.

[105] Lee, "The New Silk Road."

[106] Hongzhou Zhang, "China's Proposed Silk Road: Problems and Priorities in Central Asia," *Rajaratnam School of International Studies Commentary*, no. 167 (August 20, 2014), http://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CO14167.pdf; Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules*, 51–73.

[107] Roberts et al., "The Eurasian Economic Union."

possible cooperation or conflict (of interest) between the "economic belt" and the EEU. After the EEU entered into force in January 2015, Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated that China was open to "win-win" cooperation with all interested parties, no matter whether they were countries or organizations.[108] It also must be noted that although China's interest lies in maintaining stability in Central Asia, it has no willingness to pursue the role of being a security guarantor in the region and, thus, is prepared to accommodate Russia. Offering economic lifelines to Russia serves China in two key respects: first, it seeks to guarantee that Russia remains a strategic partner in its opposition to the U.S. on the global scene without jeopardizing China's strategic interest in maintaining access to Western markets; and second, by bolstering the "economic belt" it further undermines the already challenged U.S. Silk Road initiative in Central Asia.

## Conclusion

Our analysis shows how both the U.S. and China emphasize the establishment of resource and logistical connectivity in their respective strategies and how the suggested direction, scope and means of establishment are unique in each. By seeking to establish energy and logistics infrastructure, the U.S. Silk Road initiative amounts to a regional and multilateral economic strategy along the vertical axis; it aims to connect resources that can be extracted from the Central Asian countries to emerging and energy-hungry markets in Pakistan and India, with Afghanistan as the critical gateway and benefactor in-between. The Chinese initiative again leverages primarily bilateral relations and state-funding to establish mutually beneficial, complex horizontal infrastructure connectivity not only in Chinese neighborhood, such as in Central Asia, but also beyond, all the way to Europe and Africa. So far, Afghanistan has been a relatively minor part of Chinese investments, but the withdrawal of the majority of U.S. forces and the continuously fragile security situation are likely to demand increased attention from China, too. Based on resource, security, and geopolitical

[108] Ministry for Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Wang Yi: 'Belt and Road' is 'symphony' jointly performed by all countries," February 2, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1234406.shtml.

considerations, the Chinese strategic initiative is likely to be the more significant external driver of transformation in Central Asia in the near future.

Although it remains uncertain whether the individual projects (and either of the initiatives as a whole) will meet all the expectations attached to them, the practical implications of these developments also have a more general significance. The Silk Road initiatives suggest that the contemporary geopolitical environment in Central Asia is increasingly organized, and defined, by the development of hard (and soft) infrastructure as well as the emerging and strengthening force of regional and global flows through them. This implies a strategic shift of balance away from traditional geopolitics emphasizing the significance of separate territorial entities and strict borders[109] towards also taking into account the interconnections in energy and logistics networks, and with them new dependencies and interdependencies, within and across existing politico-juridical boundaries in the region. All sovereign actors discussed above rely on various strategic flows to a growing degree, even if that degree differs from case to case. At the same time, their abilities to establish, maintain and ultimately secure these networks of infrastructure and flows—precisely the kinds of abilities which are central to state power in today's "geopolitics of flows"[110]—differ from each other and depend on their positions and resources within the network. The search for these positions, and the accumulation of resources by inviting external assistance and investment so as to open critical bottlenecks, is in full swing in Central Asia. Despite already existing in Western policies linked to Afghanistan, this wider reorganization of the whole region has gathered its own momentum and provided Afghanistan with an instrumental role as a geographic gateway and as a political cause in which to engage in developing the region.

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[109] John Agnew, "The territorial trap: the geographical assumptions of international relations theory," *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (Spring 1994).

[110] For previous discussion on the geopolitics of flows, see Aaltola, Käpylä, and Vuorisalo, *The Challenge of Global Commons and Flows* and Mika Aaltola et al., "Towards the Geopolitics of Flows: Implications for Finland." *The Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Report* 40 (2014).

# Russia and Kazakhstan: Mutually Different Interests for Regional Leadership

*Dmitry Malyshev and Elnara Bainazarova*

This chapter concerns itself with the mutually different policies through which two countries that both pursue leadership in Central Asia, namely Russia and Kazakhstan, each respond to the security threats that they perceive as arising from Afghanistan. The first section, written by Dmitry Malyshev, discusses two dimensions in Russian policies: the re-establishment of bilateral relations with Kabul, and the specific emphases in policy in Russia's relations with its close allies amongst the Central Asian republics—Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This examination shows how Russia is preparing itself to meet the security challenges in the region and the way in which the development of relations with Afghanistan is part of a wider belt of flexible security arrangements. The second section in the chapter, written by Elnara Bainazarova, deals with the development assistance through which Kazakhstan sharpens its policy profile and contributes to the solution of the security problems in Afghanistan and the more impoverished Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan is one of Russia's most important allies in the entire post-Soviet space, and although the interests of the two countries diverge on issues such as the future direction of Eurasian integration, they coincide on the threats that both perceive is presented for the entire Central Asian region due to the current condition of Afghanistan. However, the policies of the two countries arise from mutually different interests: Russia seeks to maintain its influence in the region for reasons related to its economy and the security of its own zonal borders; whereas Kazakhstan is in the process of building not only a regional but also a more globally oriented profile by spearheading policies that generate prestige for it within the international community. While for Russia Afghanistan is a threat that should bring Central Asia together under its security leadership, for Kazakhstan it is not only a direct security threat but also presents a crucial question mark in relation to its possibilities to expand economically and, consequently, to expand the space for its independent policies.

## Russia: Preparing to Contain the Threats from Afghanistan

Although the final move to completely withdraw the U.S. forces from Afghanistan has been postponed several times due to the deteriorating security situation in the country, the change that is being brought about in the years 2014–2016 is already drastic: For the first time since the U.S. intervention in Afghanistan in September 2001 and the establishment of the NATO-led international coalition by a UN Security Council resolution in December 2001, the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will take full responsibility for fighting the Taliban and other militant insurgent groups within the country.[1] Simultaneously serious doubts persist about the effectiveness of the Afghan army and its ability to confront the Taliban, which insists on the unconditional withdrawal of all foreign forces and promises to continue the armed struggle "as long as the last foreign soldier does not leave Afghanistan."[2] Casualties have risen dramatically since the handover of security responsibilities to Afghan forces.[3] Experts have argued that even if the Taliban loses in popularity among the population in Afghanistan, its military capability remains considerable with some 25,000–30,000 experienced insurgent combatants.[4] According to the information that was released by the Afghanistan Contact

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1 The U.S.-led coalition ended its combat mission in Afghanistan in December 2014. Three months later, and following a request by Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani, President Obama announced the suspension of the previous plan that had aimed to reduce the number of U.S. troops in Afghanistan to 5,500 by the end of 2015. Patrick Goodenough, "Obama Slows Down Drawdown After Afghan President Asks That U.S. Troops Stay Longer," *CNS News*, March 24, 2015, http://cnsnews.com/news/article/patrick-goodenough/obama-slows-down-drawdown-after-afghan-president-asks-us-troops-stay; "Ashraf Ghani: U.S. Critical To Afghanistan's Future," *National Public Radio*, March 22, 2015, http://www.npr.org/blogs/thetwo-way/2015/03/22/394660553/ashraf-ghani-u-s-critical-to-afghanistans-future. Also Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah Abdullah, "The Importance of the U.S.-Afghanistan Alliance," *Washington Post*, March 20, 2015, http://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/the-importance-of-the-us-afghanistan-alliance/2015/03/20/faecf0de-cf06-11e4-a2a7-9517a3a70506_story.html.

2 "NATO: 1 Service Member Killed in Afghanistan 'Enemy Attack'," *Associated Press*, July 28, 2014, http://hosted.ap.org/dynamic/stories/A/AS_AFGHANISTAN?SITE=AP&SECTION=HOME&TEMPLATE=DEFAULT&CTIME=2014-07-28-06-18-34.

3 "What Kind of Afghanistan Will Foreign Forces Leave?," *BBC*, December 17, 2013, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-25410582.

4 Farhod Tolipov, a researcher from Uzbekistan, assures that "the Taliban's popularity among the population of the IRA today is only about 3%." Russian International Affairs Council, "Tsentral'naia Aziia–Afganistan-2014: v zone povyshennoi otvetstvennosti," April 21, 2014, http://russiancouncil.ru/inner/?id_4=3553#top.

Group of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in July 2014, about 40 percent of Afghanistan's territory is controlled by the Taliban and some of its leaders are closely cooperating with al-Qaeda.[5] One year later, various Taliban groups had pledged to associate with the Islamic State (IS) either openly or clandestinely, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) had announced its allegiance to the IS, and government officials in Afghanistan reported IS militant activity in the provinces of Ghazni, Kunduz and Faryab in central and northern Afghanistan.[6] The International Crisis Group reported that as the international military effort winds down "a resilient insurgency demonstrates its clout countrywide, particularly in rural areas."[7] These concerns also leave Russia and the Central Asian states facing new challenges: the possible collapse of the Kabul regime which the U.S. has helped to set up and the subsequent revenge meted out by the Taliban and radical Islamists—a new chaos followed by a new round of armed confrontations.

This section examines the emerging pattern of Russian policies as Moscow prepares for increased uncertainty over the political future of Afghanistan. The focus is, first, Russia's policies towards Afghanistan and, second, its policies in Central Asia, where three countries—Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—are Russia's close military and political allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the processes of economic integration within the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). This discussion delves into how a multidimensional arrangement of practices with multiple paths of cooperation is being developed in order to contain the instability and violence in Afghanistan and to prevent its spillover into the Central Asian republics. Zones of fortified security are being created around Afghanistan, and especially on its northern border, by multilateral (CSTO, SCO) and bilateral security cooperation and also by the means provided through other international cooperation to counteract the multifaceted threats of terrorism, Islamic extremism, drug trafficking, organized crime, and uncontrolled migration. While Russia avoids direct military involvement in Af-

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5 "Taliby zakhvatyvaiut vlast' v Afganistane," *Izvestiia*, July 17, 2014. The Afghanistan Contact Group of the SCO was established in Beijing on November 4, 2005.

6 Jan Agha Iqbal, "IS Threatens Afghanistan Peace Hopes," *Asia Times*, March 5, 2015, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/SOU-01-050315.html.

7 International Crisis Group, "Afghanistan's Insurgency after the Transition," *Asia Report*, no. 256 (May 12, 2014): 1, http://www.crisisgroup.org/en/regions/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/256-afghanistan-s-insurgency-after-the-transition.aspx.

ghanistan, it seeks to develop cooperation with the government in Kabul in security matters and supports the economic development of the country.

### *Russian Policies on Afghanistan: Objectives for the Immediate Future*

Russia's concerns about Afghanistan are reflected in its official Foreign Policy Concept that was approved in 2013:

> "The ongoing crisis in Afghanistan and the forthcoming withdrawal of international military contingents from the country pose a great security threat to Russia and other CIS members. The Russian Federation together with Afghanistan and concerned countries, the United Nations, the CIS, the CSTO, the SCO and other multilateral institutions including Russia-NATO projects, will make consistent efforts to find a just and lasting political solution to the problems faced by this country with due respect for the rights and interests of all its ethnic groups and achieve a post-conflict recovery of Afghanistan as a peace-loving sovereign neutral state with stable economy. Comprehensive measures to reduce terrorist threat from Afghanistan and eliminate or reduce illicit drug production and traffic in a significant and measurable manner will be an integral part of those efforts. Russia is committed to further intensifying international efforts under the auspices of the UN aimed at helping Afghanistan and its neighboring states to meet these challenges."[8]

An inclusive government system ("due respect for the rights and interests of all its ethnic groups") and neutrality are Russia's long-standing objectives in a number of post-Soviet conflicts which have become sites for the rival interests of Russia and the Western states, for example in Ukraine and Moldova. In relation to Afghanistan Russia has kept a low profile; the emphasis of its action lies on the other side of the Amu Darya and Panj Rivers—in the former Soviet republics where it seeks to contain the threats from Afghanistan and to also maintain a strategic balance towards the U.S. military influence in Afghanistan.

Simultaneously the present uncertainties about the future of Afghanistan are lowering the political borderline which was set upon the river in 1989

8 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Concept of the Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation, approved by President of the Russian Federation V. Putin on 12 February 2013," http://mid.ru/bdomp/nsosndoc.nsf/ e2f289 bea62097f9c325787a0034c 255/0f474e63a426b7c344257b2e003c945f!OpenDocument.

when the Soviet Union pulled back to this line and ended its then almost one-decade-long effort to gain control of Afghanistan. Addressing a meeting of the Collective Security Treaty Organization in October 2014, President Vladimir Putin stressed that Afghanistan "can count on Russia's support after the withdrawal of NATO troops from Afghanistan." "We understand that the withdrawal of the international military contingent will not make the situation easier," Putin said and expressed Russia's commitment in yet undefined, metaphoric terms: "[…] in case of necessity, we will be ready to lend our friends in Afghanistan a shoulder to lean on in order to keep the situation in this country stable and with perspectives of development."[9] From April 11, 2013, Afghanistan has been an observer state to the Parliamentary Assembly of the CSTO.

Russia's immediate priority is to prevent Islamist militants from infiltrating the Central Asian republics and to terminate the colossal drug trade from Afghanistan via the Central Asian republics to Russia.[10] In this connection, the practical meaning of lending "a shoulder to lean on" seems clear: by strengthening defense in the proximity of the borders of Afghanistan, Russia helps to prevent the insurgents from seeking shelter in these regions where they could prepare new attacks on Afghan territory. While this is a task that Russia and its allies prepare for in all cases—irrespective of whether insurgents will cross borders because the government in Kabul remains in power or because it fails to do so—being ready to lend a shoulder tells about a new active approach to cooperation on these issues.

A few months later, in February 2015, Ambassador Alexander Mantytskiy in a meeting with the second Deputy Chief Executive Officer of Afghanistan Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq expressed the wish of Russia's authorities to enhance interaction with Afghanistan in order to stabilize the situation in the region. Russia offered to conclude an agreement with Afghanistan on cooperation in the field of security. Deputy Chief Executive Officer Mohaqiq welcomed the idea that Moscow could take measures against the threat of the

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9 Nasir Azizi, "Russia to Help Support Afghanistan Post-2014," *TOLOnews*, November 7, 2014, http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/17038-russia-to-help-support-afghanistan-post-2014.

10 According to Viktor Ivanov, the Director of the Federal Drug Control Service, "[…] the south, Central Asia, is the main direction [from which these drugs are coming]." "Afghan drugs inundate Russia—Federal Drug Control Service," *Interfax*, September 13, 2013, http://rbth.com/news/2013/09/13/afghan_drugs_inundate_russia_-_federal_drug_control _ service_29790.html.

expanding influence of the Islamic State in the region.[11] Even if Russia continues to reject ideas about being directly militarily involved in Afghanistan, such cooperation will open a new phase in its participation in the fight against international terrorism and extremism beyond the territories of the states that are its allies in Central Asia. In relations with Afghanistan, the Western withdrawal is giving a boost to the re-establishment of relations which has been taking place very slowly after a standstill of almost a quarter-century.

### *Leaving Behind the Burden of the Past*

Russia's approaches on Afghanistan have been heavily influenced by the negative experience of its own history: the Soviet-Afghan war (1979–1989) that resulted in the loss of 15,000 Soviet troops. The events of that war have not been forgotten by the Russian public, and Moscow's decision-makers have been firm on the point that Russia's military forces will not be involved in Afghanistan again. However, the fact that Moscow's policies towards Afghanistan have shown little willingness to take anything but a minimum of risks and to keep avoiding any direct intervention in Afghanistan's affairs has not prevented Russia from cooperating with ISAF under the Russia-NATO agreement ratified in May 2007. Most importantly, Russia has allowed the coalition forces—the "Western military bloc" in Russian parlance—to use Russian territory to transfer their troops and cargo including heavy weaponry and combat aircraft.[12] Russia has also directly assisted the government in Kabul by donating helicopters and other equipment for military uses. Nevertheless, the determination not to send troops has remained consistent over the past twenty-five years; hence any speculation that Russia could advocate the idea that the Western coalition should be replaced by the forces of the CSTO or the SCO member states is merely hypothetical.

The traumatic memory of the Soviet-Afghan war in Russian society and the lack of bilateral relations after the Soviet withdrawal has kept Moscow

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[11] "Rossiia gotova podpisat' soglashenie s IRA o sotrudnichestve v sphere bezopasnosti," *Afghanistan.ru*, February 23, 2015, http://afghanistan.ru/doc/82594.html.

[12] In 2011 the Coalition requested Russia's cooperation in the withdrawal of the troops and equipment from Afghanistan, and a logistic center was built near the city of Ulyanovsk. However, both Russia and NATO decided against making Ulyanovsk a hub for this purpose due to the excessive costs involved.

and Kabul at a distance from each other. Omar Nessar, Director of the Russian Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan and editor-in-Chief of the web-site "Afghanistan.ru," explains:

> "Bilateral relations between Moscow and Kabul were under severe pressure from Russian domestic political factors. Over many years, the media and expert community produced a negative image of post-Communist Afghanistan, introducing it as an "American project" for Russian public opinion. Moreover, in Kabul anti-Russian elements had frozen Russia's initiatives to establish economic and humanitarian ties with the country. The relevant government agencies of the Russian Federation clearly lacked the political will to develop bilateral relations. This was primarily because in Russia's foreign policy direct bilateral relations with Afghanistan did not possess any kind of priority."[13]

No signs of change could be seen until 2012, when a joint Russian-Afghan Commission on trade and economic cooperation was established that provided an institutional basis for the economic partnership of the two countries. As a result of this new opening, Russia has started a gradual "return to Afghanistan" and increased its economic cooperation and development assistance for infrastructural projects and humanitarian[14] cooperation. In Afghanistan the improved relationship has brought back memories about previous cooperation. Former President Hamid Karzai is amongst those who have commented positively on the Soviet model. "The Soviet money went to the right place and they were efficient in spending their resources through the Afghan government," Karzai said in an interview to the *Washington Post* in March 2014.[15] During the International Conference on Afghanistan in London in 2010, where the participating states were requested to contribute with development assistance to help stabilize Afghanistan, the Russian delegation

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13 Omar Nessar, "Evoliutsiia Afganskoi politiki Moskvy," *Nezavisimaia Gazeta*, January 26, 2015, 9 (translation by Dmitry Malyshev).

14 In Russian linguistic practice, "humanitarian" does not only refer to relief work; the word has the broader connotation of being focused on human beings instead of state structures and institutions.

15 Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, "Full Transcript of President Karzai's Interview with Washington Post," March 5, 2014, http://president.gov.af/en/news/full-transcript-of-president-karzais-interview-with-washington-post; Kevin Sieff, "Interview: Karzai Says 12-year Afghanistan War Has Left him Angry at U.S. Government," *Washington Post*, March 2, 2014, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/interview-karzai-says-12-year-afghanistan-war-has-left-him-angry-at-us-government/2014/03/02/b831671c-a21a-11e3-b865-38b254d92063_story.html.

proposed to reconstruct or modernize more than 140 facilities that had been built as part of the Soviet Union's development assistance and that had been destroyed in the civil war of the early 1990s.[16] The Kabul House-Building Factory is one of these Soviet-era projects; another is the Russian Center of Science and Culture in Kabul, which was originally built in 1982.[17]

In addition to such "goodwill" projects that are visible to the public and are meant to improve the popular image of the donating country, Russia has contributed to Afghanistan's economy by canceling more than $11 billion of Afghanistan's sovereign debt during the decade that followed the ouster of the Taliban regime in autumn 2001.[18] The legacy of Soviet-era development assistance—from the time when Russia was the most important donor country for Afghanistan—also plays a positive role in Russia's readiness to participate in the international donor community to support Afghanistan's development. At the International Conference on Afghanistan in Bonn in 2011, foreign minister Sergey Lavrov emphasized that Russia was "ready to make large investments" in major infrastructure projects in the region, such as the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India pipeline project (TAPI) and the Central Asia–South Asia transmission line project (CASA-1000).[19]

These two projects are the key elements in implementing the U.S.-initiated idea of "New Silk Roads" to enhance economic development in Afghanistan (see the contribution by Mika Aaltola and Juha Käpylä in this book). Beyond this there are several other plans for infrastructure development in South and Central Asia which specifically suit Russia's interests in developing rail and transportation networks in the wider region. One is the 1,340-kilometer-long road and rail line to connect Pakistan's Chitral with Dushanbe, which would bring into the twenty-first century the idea of the old trade routes connecting the Muslims and Hindus of the Indian subcontinent with the Tajiks. Another is a road and rail link between Islamabad and the

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16 Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko, "Afghanistan: A View from Moscow," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2010, 27, http://carnegieendowment.org/files/trenin_afghan_final.pdf.

17 The new building complex opened in fall 2014 at a reported cost of $20 million; it includes auditoriums, a library of Russian literature, a concert hall, a multi-media center, and sports and leisure facilities.

18 Nick Allen, "Russia, the USSR and Afghanistan, Yesterday and Today," *Russia Beyond the Headlines*, 2014, http://rbth.com/longreads/afghanistan.

19 Andrei Dörre and Tobias Kraudzun, "Persistence and Change in Soviet and Russian Relations with Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 31, no. 4 (December 2012): 425. The article provides an extensive analysis of Soviet-era development assistance to Afghanistan.

Ferghana Valley; this would provide Russia with access to Pakistani ports, and Pakistan with access to markets in Central Asia and Siberia. For Russia, just as for other major states, the international task of developing Afghanistan is intertwined with the interest for projects which are being developed independently of Afghanistan but gain significant normative legitimacy from it in international contexts. In bilateral relations with Afghanistan the gradual resumption of economic cooperation and Russia's support of the efforts of the Western international community to create stability in Afghanistan through infrastructure development has paved the way for a type of security cooperation with strategic significance for the capability of Russia and its allied countries to maintain stability to the north of Afghanistan.

### *Security Arrangements in Central Asia and Beyond*

Central Asia is a region which Russia, as phrased by Dmitri Trenin and Alexei Malashenko, "seeks to keep within its orbit."[20] However, the metaphor of the planet carving out its sphere of influence determined by the gravitational forces of power reveals very little about the ties that bind this space together. The argument frequently formulated in Russian policy-making circles is that if Russia were to withdraw its military presence from Central Asia and cease being interested in maintaining its economic influence in this region, such a course of action would inevitably affect Russia itself because of the economic interconnectedness and structural interdependence built during the Soviet decades. It is generally observed that over the past ten years the economic importance of Central Asia has in fact increased because the region provides ample opportunities for Russian business and its military-industrial complex. Central Asian supplies of uranium are needed to run Russia's nuclear power stations, and Russia is interested in building closer cooperation with the region's oil and gas exporters (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). In addition to energy, investment priorities include communications and traditional industries such as cotton.[21]

While maintaining influence in the region is seen to serve Russia's economic capacity and, hence, its status as a great power, it is also understood as

[20] Trenin and Malashenko, "Afghanistan," 15.

[21] Gennadii Chufrin, *Rossiia v Tsentral'noi Azii* (Almaty: Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2010), 75–99.

a necessity dictated by geography: due to Russia's very long land borders and the specific threats emerging from this region, the Russian Federation's national security depends crucially on stability in Central Asia. Decision-makers and politicians emphasize that because the traditional and non-traditional security threats stemming from Central Asia affect Russia much more directly and acutely than they do any other state beyond the region, Russia cannot ignore them. The drug problem with its pronounced marks in the population is an example. Russian officials and politicians have repeatedly expressed their concerns over the immense increase of narcotics production during the twelve years of ISAF's presence in Afghanistan.[22]

Because geography is seen to tie the Central Asian states to the "Afghan issue," these states are expected to cooperate in order to counter terrorism, extremism, organized crime and drug trafficking. Simultaneously it is recognized that these states do not have a sufficient capacity to accomplish such tasks alone. Russia sees itself to be in the position to provide such assistance; it recognizes its responsibility in Central Asia and tries to operate ahead of developments by using the variety of policy tools made possible by the multi-level structure of cooperation within the CSTO and the economic integration projects led by Russia in the region. It is emphasized that Russia's special position and responsibilities in relation to Central Asia follow from the fact that Russia, unlike the other resource-rich states providing external assistance in the region, has a vital interest to stop the drug traffic and fight against terrorism and religious extremism in the region. Russia's interests in the stability of Afghanistan are consequently interwoven with these regional interests; and this makes Russia's participation in the development of Afghanistan much more than the symbolic act of a responsible member of the international community led by the Western states.[23]

Russia's economic as well as security cooperation in Central Asia is a combination of bilateral and multilateral relations. Due to a combination of

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22 Despite years of international efforts to restrain drug production in Afghanistan, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in its report in 2014 finds that opium production in Afghanistan "has increased dramatically." "Gripped by electoral crisis, Afghanistan needs 'statesmanship, not brinksmanship'—UN envoy," *UN News Centre*, June 25, 2014, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=48130#.U60vHbGtxX0. During his visit to Kabul in December 2013 Sergey Naryshkin, Speaker of the Russian State Duma, underlined that: "Narcotics production [has] increased 44 times in the 12 years that ISAF has been present in Afghanistan." Allen, "Russia."

23 President of Russia, "Meeting with members of political parties represented in the State Duma," August 14, 2014, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/46451.

historical, political-diplomatic and strategic reasons, it is considered rational to develop multidimensional economic cooperation with the Central Asian states. While bilateral relations continue to have their own dynamic, particular attention is being paid to strengthening integration processes within the frame of the CIS, i.e. the formation of a single economic space by following the two tracks of a free economic zone and the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU, another common abbreviation is EAEU).[24] Similarly, security cooperation is a combination of multilateral policies in the frame of the CSTO and bilateral relations with Russia's allies and partners. The result is a flexible system in which the two sets of relations can be mutually supportive; however, such a system also easily breeds controversies and generates confusion. This, in turn, highlights the importance of leadership and decision-making.

According to its 2013 foreign policy concept, Russia's major objectives in Asia include: "establishing itself as a key transit country between Europe and Asia," "participating in and shaping regional integration processes," and "improving the regional security environment."[25] It is easy to see that Kazakhstan's geographic position and active political role in the region make it a key partner for Russia as Moscow's decision-makers seek to realize these objectives. Among all former Soviet republics, Kazakhstan stands out as a "success story." In spite of its complex multiethnic composition it has preserved its political stability and become one of the leaders of economic growth. From a Russian perspective Kazakhstan's geographic position makes it both a "buffer" and a "gateway" between Russia and the other countries in Central Asia. The large landmass of the country separates the territory of the Russian Federation from the "troublesome South." In the geo-economic sense, this geographic position makes the country a nexus point for the transit of energy and mineral resources to both western and eastern markets. Moreover, Kazakhstan's resource potential is very large due to its access to the oil and gas deposits in the Caspian Sea. Additionally, it has large stockpiles of uranium; and in Russia, their import is considered a strategic interest.

In international political cooperation Kazakhstan is one of Russia's most important economic partners amongst the CIS member states, and in Russia President Nursultan Nazarbayev is recognized to have played a vital role in the advancement of Eurasian integration with landmark decisions on the

[24] Gennadii Chufrin, *Ocherki evraziiskoi integratsii* (Moscow: Ves' mir, 2013), 128.
[25] Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Concept of the Foreign Policy."

EEU (2014) and, before this, on the Eurasian Customs Union (which has been established in several stages since 1995). Because Kazakhstan and Russia both are in the key position to stimulate this process, the effectiveness of policies requires that Russia increasingly coordinates initiatives with Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan is close to Russia also because it has the second largest number of ethnic Russians amongst all post-Soviet republics: 23.7 percent of the total population (Ukraine ranks first with about 40 percent). This connection no longer exists in the case of the other Central Asian states. For all these reasons the maintenance of the political stability that has become part of Kazakhstan's good reputation and diplomatic prestige among the Central Asian states is crucially important to Russia.

Because Kazakhstan possesses considerable military potential, the two states' cooperation in the efforts to secure Central Asia's southern borders has great burden-sharing importance for Russia. Much important materiel created by Soviet military and industrial structures was produced in Kazakhstan, and Russia has much at stake in maintaining the connections developed over decades between the enterprises of the two countries. Russia has a significant role in re-equipping Kazakhstan's national defense force, and both countries are actively participating in the creation of an integrated multi-level security system in Central Asia. Although Kazakhstan, which is rich in oil and other natural resources, does not need external assistance, cooperating with Russia gives it the opportunity to play a crucial role in maintaining security in the neighboring states and, as a consequence, around its own borders. However, although both countries have grave concerns about the growth of potential threats to Central Asian security arising from Afghanistan, it is Russia which bears the main burden in assisting the countries directly bordering Afghanistan—Tajikistan in the first place—to repel the threats.

Tajikistan's president, Emomali Rakhmon, has repeatedly emphasized the need to raise wide-based international support for the protection of the border towards Afghanistan. Russia's foreign minister Sergey Lavrov reconfirmed Russian policy in July 2014 by stressing that Tajikistan and Russia "are going to take these measures as bilateral within the framework of the full implementation of the relevant decisions of the CSTO."[26] In the next

[26] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, "Statement for the mass media by the Russian Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, during the joint press conference summaris-

spring Russia and Tajikistan carried out joint drills in the Badakhshan region, where the borderline runs through mountainous areas that greatly complicate border protection along Tajikistan's 1,340-kilometer-long borderline with Afghanistan.[27] Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov's decision was firm after he visited Dushanbe in January 2015: Russia would assist Tajikistan in modernizing and strengthening its armed forces and reinforce its 201st military base in the country.[28] While the Russian base already has branches near the Afghan border south of Dushanbe (in Khatlon and Qurghonteppa), the transborder Badakhshan region is the most under-populated and inhospitable region for enforcing border control; yet it is also a region in which Russia has long-term experience, unlike any other state contributing to border security in Tajikistan: in the Soviet period this was a border region not only with Afghanistan to the south but also with China to the east. In addition to military cooperation Russia has also assisted Tajikistan by re-equipping its border troops (on the issue of the return of Russian border guards to Tajikistan's southern border, see the contribution by Rytövuori-Apunen and Usmonov in this book).

Nevertheless, it is Kyrgyzstan which is the largest recipient of Russian loans and grants. During President Putin's visit to Bishkek in September 2012, Russia wrote off Kyrgyzstan's $500 million debt. This was part of a comprehensive agreement on the terms of strengthening Russia's military presence in Kyrgyzstan. The deal includes the Kant airbase, the underwater weapons-testing site in Karakol, the military center in Kara-Balta, and the radio-seismic laboratory in Mailuu-Suu. Although Kyrgyzstan is not in the immediate geographic proximity of Afghanistan, Moscow's decision-makers emphasize that this small republic is not capable of confronting the security challenges emerging from Afghanistan on its own and that its geographic position leaves it with no other sustainable solutions but to rely on Russia.

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ing the results of the negotiations with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Tajikistan, Sirodjidin Aslov, Dushanbe, 30 July 2014," July 30, 2014, http://archive.mid.ru//brp_4.nsf/0/F803762237E567CB44257D2700203ECF.

27 "Na rossiiskoi 201-i baze v Tadzhikistane budut obuchat' mestnykh voennykh," *Lenta.ru*, January 21, 2015, http://lenta.ru/news/2015/01/21/201_base. The military contingent of the base and their families have a status equal to the administrative staff of the Embassy of the Russian Federation. According to the agreements concluded during the official visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin in Tajikistan (October 5–6, 2012), the 201st Russian military base located in Tajikistan will be maintained until 2042.

28 "Rossiia usilit voennuiu bazu v Tadzhikistane," *Lenta.ru*, January 27, 2015, http://lenta.ru/news/2015/01/27/militarycamp/.

Russia intensified its military and economic presence in the Kyrgyz Republic after major riots related to ethno-political conflict and power struggle once again (after the instability of the early 1990s) struck the country in spring 2010 and continued to simmer in the years that followed. Russia's economic presence is evident in the fact that Russian companies are the largest investors in the country's energy sector. Development assistance plays a very minor role in Russian policies on Central Asia and is mainly to be found in debt relief for the two countries with fewest resources, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. In addition, there is the general form of humanitarian cooperation consisting of scholarships for youth from all over the region to study in Russian institutions of higher education.[29]

The territory of the Kyrgyz Republic is a nodal point not only in the north-south axis—in relation to Afghanistan—but also towards the east, in order to control China's expansion in the energy economy of the region. Ever since Russian policies started their "turn" towards Asia the paramount importance of China has been steadily growing, both as a cooperation partner and as a rival in the infrastructure industry; and also India, Pakistan and Iran are becoming increasingly significant for the Russian economy and in terms of political cooperation. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is the main regional frame for cooperating with China, and this organization is extending its geographic scope considerably with the membership of India and Pakistan (which both entered the formal membership process in July 2015) and also of Iran (once the UN sanctions relating to Iran's nuclear program cease to apply). While the military cooperation of the CSTO in Central Asia has shrunk to only three states (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan), the SCO is gaining in importance as the far wider regional frame for developing cooperation in non-traditional security threats—drug trafficking, terrorism and extremism. Although the backbone of Russia's defense arrangements in Central Asia is still formed by the CSTO with its Russian military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as Russia's aim to establish joint regional air defense systems with all three countries, the SCO offers a much wider arena for specific forms of cooperation between groups of countries.

In Afghanistan Russia, like the Soviet Union previously, has emphasized cooperation in the northern areas of the country, where the ethnic composi-

[29] V. M. Sergeev, A. A. Kazantsev, and V. I. Bartenev, *Assisting Development in Central Asia: Strategic Horizons of Russian Engagement* (Moscow: Russian International Affairs Council, 2013), 37.

tion of the population is largely Tajik and Uzbek. Focusing on these northern areas means that Russia continues to build its future influence in Afghanistan on the close ties it developed with the Northern Alliance. These ties did not suddenly emerge from Russian opposition to the Taliban but have a history which goes back to the first decades of the Soviet Union (see the chapter by Rytövuori-Apunen and Usmonov in this book). In his aforementioned address to the CSTO meeting in October 2014, President Putin specifically referred to "our friends" in Afghanistan. This undoubtedly refers to those who are able to establish contacts for mutual interest, but this historical context also must be taken into account in order to grasp the full meaning of Putin's words. If we interpret the "shoulder to lean on" against the backdrop of the historically much wider zonal border represented by the historical ethnic connections that exist across the Panj and Amu Darya Rivers, it also entails support for a type of political development that secures the position of the Tajik and Uzbek populations within Afghanistan's system of government.

As a consequence, Russia's present policy objectives to develop wider regional cooperation include not only the Central Asian states; they also envision India and Iran as allies in the efforts to support non-Pashtun ethnic groups to consolidate their representation in top-level power structures in Afghanistan and, thus, to contain the expansion of the Taliban in the north by political means. Relations with "friends" lead to the development of a zonal border extending across the formal border and help to solve security problems more effectively than could be accomplished by trying to create impermeable borderlines. Moreover, it is not only along Afghanistan's border with Tajikistan that support provided to Tajiks and Uzbeks can be functional for Central Asian security. Currently Russia cannot envision the establishment of a military base in Uzbekistan, yet the security threats for which it must prepare include the possibility that insurgents from Afghanistan, and especially the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, may try to break into Uzbekistan and threaten also Tajikistan from the territory of neighboring Uzbekistan. Ever since the IMU swore allegiance to the leadership of the Islamic State in summer 2015, it has come to make much sense in Moscow to extend defenses across the Panj and the Amu Darya and to do so by means that do not involve military troops. Staying on this path requires sophisticated skills as well as well-functioning networks with other countries. Hence, it is no coincidence that Russia is also in the process of developing security cooperation with Pakistan, as Tahir Amin explains elsewhere in this book. The key ques-

tion for the success of these policies is how the conflicts between pairs of countries—starting with Afghanistan and Pakistan, Pakistan and India, and including also U.S.-Russia relations—can be managed or held in abeyance through the cooperation required by the emerging war front.

## Kazakhstan: Policies for Regional Leadership in Development

This section explores the ways in which Kazakhstan is building a policy profile of its own through its contributions to the international efforts to stabilize Afghanistan and to enhance development and cooperation in Central Asia. Kazakhstan is one of only two Central Asian countries classified as an "upper-middle-income" economy by the World Bank (the other is energy-rich and traditionally isolationist Turkmenistan), and it alone amongst the Central Asian states has been ranked by the UNDP as a country with "high human development" since 2013 (the four other Central Asian states are ranked as countries with "medium," and Afghanistan with "low," human development).[30] The positive image gained by investing not only in economic growth but also in the education and health of its people has prompted Kazakhstani policy-makers to sharpen foreign policy with a distinct emphasis on "soft" power, that is, a values-driven leadership in the region that serves Kazakhstan's own interests of modernization and economic integration and also defines how it contributes to international efforts that seek to create political stability in Afghanistan. The leap that Kazakhstan has taken during the 2010s from being a recipient of international development aid to becoming a donor country establishes a new basis for its international policies.

In the Third Ministerial Conference of the Istanbul Process on Afghanistan held in Almaty in April 2013, President Nursultan Nazarbayev stressed that "… the key for solution of Afghanistan [sic] issues is in the hands of the Afghan people and the government as the official representative

[30] The Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Pakistan are "lower middle-income" economies. See the World Bank Data on Countries and Economies, http://data.worldbank.org/country/; United Nations Development Programme, "The Rise of the South: Human Progress in a Diverse World, Kazakhstan," Human Development Report, 2013, http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/Country-Profiles/KAZ.pdf.

of the nation. The international community should foster development of the inter-Afghan dialogue. Those who demonstrate readiness for the establishment of peace and accord in Afghanistan must receive our support."[31] Kazakhstan also emphasizes that the full development of any inter-Afghan dialogue will be possible only if there is multilateral cooperation between regional players. Afghanistan should bring the wider region together instead of deepening the involvement of powerful external states in its problems. Afghanistan's instability and development problems were considered within the context of regional security in 2010 by the Astana OSCE Summit, which declared the concept of "Eurasian security," and later also by the APEC Summit in Vladivostok 2012, where President Putin introduced the idea of the flexible involvement of Eurasia in the Asia-Pacific region.

Regional cooperation was further boosted after the U.S. shifted its policies to emphasize the Asia-Pacific region within its "New Silk Road" initiative and China came forward with its concept of the "Silk Road Economic Belt." However, the "New Silk Roads" ideas and the support thereof with reference to the need to develop Afghanistan are by no means novel; for many years experts in the region have discussed the prospects of involving Afghanistan in transport and logistics networks in South and Central Asia. Kazakhstan is intent on making the most of these new developments, which, in essence, are perfectly matched with its interests: should these new networks accelerate economic development in the region as envisioned, it will be possible for Kazakhstan to fully develop its potential as a transport-logistics hub not only between East and West but also South and North. Even in the face of growing competition between external powers, Kazakhstan would thus gain leverage to continue in its pursuit of its "multivector" foreign policy, which aims to develop close relations with multiple states and to expand the political and diplomatic space for its independent policies. Consequently, the question of how Afghanistan's future will turn out is much more than merely an issue of regional security and stability; it is closely connected with Kazakhstan's economic prospects and the future of its foreign policy. If the security situation deteriorates

[31] Central Communications Service under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan,"President addressed Ministerial Conference of Istanbul Process for Afghanistan," April 26, 2013, http://ortcom.kz/en/news/president-addressed-ministerial-conference-of-istanbul-process-for-afghanistan.1223.

drastically, Central Asia will be kept isolated and Kazakhstan will be prevented from gaining access to transport routes from the South. At the same time Kazakhstan will be spared from the more dire consequences of a process that is the inevitable consequence of the growth in trade cooperation: mass migration from Afghanistan, Pakistan and other populous South Asian states. However, as this challenge is not likely to diminish in the long term, Kazakhstan must prepare policies that ensure the stability of its borders. Its location at the heart of Central Asia makes it crucial that it not rely on fence-building policies but instead maintain close relations with neighboring states in a whole range of issues, from economic and political development to the maintenance of regional security and stability and countering non-conventional security threats. The frame for such policies has been prepared in the foreign policy concept defined for the years 2014–2020.

### *The Foreign Policy Concept and ODA Policy*

The presidential decree "On the Concept of foreign policy of Kazakhstan for 2014–2020" explains the strategy of what can be called Kazakhstan's "soft" power. The foreign policy concept was developed in accordance with the instructions given in the Address of the President to the Nation "Kazakhstan-2050 Strategy: New Political Course of the Established State."[32] It is a set of principles and approaches, goals and priorities as well as specific tasks of foreign activities.[33] The key strategic directions of Kazakhstan's long-term development include investment in human development, improvement of the institutional environment, development of a science-driven economy, and accelerated development of infrastructure. In this context the core idea of "soft power" is about investment in human resources: a population with knowledge and skills as well as sustained health is considered the best means to generate prosperity, the promise of which, again, is needed in order to maintain the consensual fabric of society required for peace and stability in the geographically largest country in Central Asia and in a state that contains

[32] "Address by the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Leader of the Nation, N. Nazarbayev 'Strategy Kazakhstan-2050: New Political Course of the Established State'," *Official web site of the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan*, accessed September 28, 2015, http://www.primeminister.kz/page/article-101?lang=en.

[33] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan,"Foreign Policy Concept for 2014–2020," April 25, 2014, http://www.mfa.kz/index.php/en/foreign-policy/foreign-policy-concept-for-2014-2020-republic-of-kazakhstan.

more than 130 different ethnic groups. Essentially, the foreign policy concept is designed to facilitate Kazakhstan's integration into the international community by defining the objective for policies and developing appropriate conditions. The positive image that Kazakhstan has gained beyond its borders due to its social stability, development record and active diplomacy is an asset in promoting this process, especially when expectations about increasing prosperity weaken and collective mobilization becomes more difficult to maintain.

Kazakhstani policy has shown itself skillful in combining that which is necessary from its own perspective with what is generally desirable and has normative value within the international community. It utilizes the good reputation which Kazakhstan has gained to increase the credibility of its economic capacity beyond its borders and to strengthen the diplomatic activity through which its regional leadership becomes manifest. The primary element of these policies is the official development assistance (ODA) policy established by a law in December 2014.[34] The legal basis of the new policy envisages a full development assistance program focusing on Central Asia and Afghanistan. While the Concept adopted to instruct the activities of foreign policy during 2014–2020 makes "near neighborhood" a strategic priority, the ODA policy is meant to foster bilateral socio-economic cooperation and enhance a more prosperous neighborhood along Kazakhstan's southern borders.[35] During the 8th Astana Economic Forum, President Nazarbayev reiterated Kazakhstan's intention to focus on regional security issues by addressing the socio-economic needs of countries. This profile-sharpening statement gave a boost to setting up the Kazakhstan Agency for International Development (KazAID) in order to implement the ODA policy. The ODA policy entails that the donor-country role under construction is in harmony with Kazakhstan's national interests: Kazakhstan contributes to the stabilization of the socio-economic and political situation in its partner countries. Joint action prevents illegal migration flows, drug

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34 Zakon Respubliki Kazakhstan Ob ofitsial'noi pomoshchi razvitiiu [Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan On Official Development Assistance], December 10, 2014, published by *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda,* http://www.kazpravda.kz/uploads/redactors/files/548a64437d4621418355779.pdf.

35 Ukaz Prezidenta Kazakhstana ot 9 aprelia 2013 goda no. 538 Ob utverzhdenii Kontseptsii Respubliki Kazakhstan v sphere ofitsial'noi pomoshchi razvitiiu [Presidential Decree no. 538 On Official Development Assistance Concept of the Republic of Kazakhstan], April 9, 2013, http://online.zakon.kz/Document/?doc_id=31374898.

trafficking and other forms of crime, and it also improves the options available in the fight against terrorism and extremism. The role assumed by Kazakhstan through its aid policies serves to maintain a "secure neighborhood belt" whilst simultaneously strengthening the state's international position and its positive image.[36]

Kazakhstan's vision for the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the policy tools by which the interethnic struggle for power and the radicalization of religious groups can be mitigated emphasize investment in infrastructure projects and social policies that improve the quality of life. Since 2009 the government of Kazakhstan has allocated more than $52 million to the reconstruction of socially important facilities (schools, hospitals, roads and railway lines), the training of Afghan students, support for agricultural production, participation in the reconstruction and construction of new dams, and the modernization of power plants.[37] Economic and humanitarian cooperation with Afghanistan is promoted through the Kazakh-Afghan intergovernmental commission; and it is achieved by facilitating Kazakh production and investment in the Afghan market, and by training Afghan experts in Kazakhstan in fields such as economy, industry, finance, transport and education. In the frame of a $50 million educational program, up to one thousand Afghans are being provided with higher education at Kazakh universities in the period of 2010–2020.[38] In addition to Afghanistan, aid is allocated to improving the border infrastructure at Kyrgyzstan's border with Kazakhstan. Although Kazakhstan's development assistance focuses on Central Asia and Afghanistan, it can also be directed to other regions as part of international development assistance in order to attain maximum impact of the policy. Examples include the Caucasus, Africa, Latin America, Small Island Developing States (SIDS), least developed countries, and landlocked countries.

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[36] Ukaz Prezidenta Kazakhstana ot 9 aprelia 2013 goda no. 538.

[37] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Pozitsiia Respubliki Kazakhstan po Afganistanu," December 4, 2014, http://mfa.gov.kz/index.php/ru/vneshnyaya-politika/kazakhstan-i-voprosy-globalnoj-i-regionalnoj-bezopasnosti/uregulirovanie-situatsii-v-afganistane.

[38] "Na obuchenie Afganskoi molodezhi v Kazakhstane vydeleno 50 millionov dollarov SshA – K. Saudabaev," *Zakon.kz*, July 20, 2010, http://www.zakon.kz/178852-na-obuchenie-afganskojj-molodezhi-v.html.

The operating budget of the ODA technical assistance (that is, aid in tied-grant form, both bilateral and allocated through multilateral channels) is expected to be 0.01 percent of GDP ($15–22 million) in 2012–2016. Kazakhstan has also announced the OECD target (which has been set at 0.7 percent of the GNI) as its long-term perspective and, thus, joined the large group of developed countries which, since 1970, have given similar statements.[39] For reasons relating to Kazakhstan's own development needs and the fact that its ODA policy was formulated only in recent years, the contribution on a bilateral basis is still limited in terms of the volume, form and geographic scope of the aid. Kazakhstan's experience of assistance on a multilateral basis conducted under the auspices of the UN is much more extensive and has included projects in the fields of environment, population, health, women's rights, assistance for landlocked countries, measures to curtail the drug trade, etc. In 2012, the disbursements to international development assistance agencies amounted to almost $2.8 million. According to UN statistics, during 2006–2011 Kazakhstan allocated $53.7 million in humanitarian aid, of which $30 million was to Central Asia. With this number Kazakhstan ranks third in providing humanitarian aid in Central Asia. The sum total of Kazakhstan's humanitarian assistance during 2006–2011 is roughly $100 million.[40] However, the absence of a systematic approach has resulted in low efficiency and poor project management and, therefore, has hardly served to lay a basis for the desired outcomes and donor image.

Kazakhstan's foreign policy representatives and experts are aware that development assistance must avoid those mistakes that are commonly made when programs designed to improve public administration, build democracy, and create good governance are imposed on local populations in recipient countries whilst the needs and mentality of these people are left aside. At the same time as the operative principles of KazAID emphasize modern norms

[39] Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Osnovnye napravleniia gosudarstvennoi politiki Respubliki Kazakhstan v sfere ofitsial'noi pomoshchi razvitiiu na 2016–2020 gody," September 2, 2015, http://mfa.gov.kz/index.php/ru/informatsiya-o-ministrestve/proekty-npa-dlya-obshchestvennykh-obsuzhdenij/12-material-orys/4667-osnovnye-napravleniya-gosudarstvennoj-politiki-respubliki-kazakhstan-v-sfere-ofitsialnoj-pomoshchi-razvitiyu-na-2016-2020-gody.

[40] Ukaz Prezidenta Kazakhstana ot 9 aprelia 2013 goda no. 538.

of transparency, accountability, and ecological and social impact assessment, relations with recipient countries are shaped by a traditional style of cooperation that present-day experts have gathered under the banner of "Asian regionalism."[41] This means that the organization of cooperation is seen as a flexible network instead of being fixed by statutes and formal agreements; the process itself is of greater importance than are pre-defined results. Universal principles are locally applied with decisions made in mutual consent, and the style of negotiation is non-confrontational. Importance is attached to personal ties rather than to institutional rules, and mutual respect is shown in conduct. Unlike the institutional procedures typical of Western democracies, these guidelines are considered to allow for situational considerations—including the possibility to join or opt out of specific projects (which often happens in multilateral contexts where the non-formal ties are less binding than in the case of just two parties). In countries like Afghanistan which seek to make advances by combining modern constitutionalism with the traditions of a tribal society, cooperation guided by such flexible and mutually respectful principles is expected to have an appeal that extra-regional actors lack.

Following these guidelines the ODA policy conceptually entails that the activity must serve to sustain "good neighborhood" in the proximity of Kazakhstan's borders. The key principles of this policy emphasize an individualized approach to each recipient state as well as horizontal cooperation models (that is, donor-recipient relations are conducted on an equal "win-win" basis). They prioritize technical assistance to transfer complex know-how in those areas in which Kazakhstan has a high level of competence and make it a requirement that the recipient country expresses its interest for a progressive development of such bilateral cooperation. However, from a long-term perspective Kazakhstan's interests lie in region-wide transport and logistics. In relation to Afghanistan, Astana's proposal for arrangements to enable freight from Afghanistan to use the port of the city of Aktau on the Caspian Sea is a notable political gesture to help invigorate Afghanistan's economy. Kazakhstan also has a strategic interest in the development of the TAPI pipeline, which provides South Asia with Turkmenistan's natural gas and runs from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan and

[41] Amitav Acharya, "Asia is Not One: Regionalism and the Ideas of Asia," *Institute of South East Asian Studies Working Papers on International Politics and Security Issues*, no. 1 (2011), http://www.asia-studies.com/asia/ISEAS/Asia-is-Not-One1.pdf.

Pakistan and farther to India. The economic network in the region is envisioned to engage the countries of Central and South Asia and connect them in cooperation with all major economic powers on the Eurasian continent—Russia, China, India and Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway under construction in Kazakhstan since 2009 is designed to increase trade from Central Asia to the south tenfold and connect southwest Kazakhstan to the Persian Gulf.[42] As these commercial interests grow stronger, the ODA policy, which in its initial period (2012–2016) emphasizes assistance in form of grants, is under pressure to become more business-oriented. Consequently, the next ODA period (2017–2020) may well emphasize concessional rather than grant aid and raise the share of loans (in form of tied credits at favorable conditions) from the 50 percent set for the initial period. The pressures for such changes indicate a gradual transition from the interpretation of ODA as a tool of "soft" power to seeing it as a tool of "smart" power that uses credit for tying together developmental, economic and political networks.

Development assistance thus connects with more than merely the security of Kazakhstan's borders (which is the kind of reasoning that the U.S. "Silk Roads" initiative entails); far beyond the monetary contribution made in its name, the concept is a vehicle for opening up ways for economic integration that strengthens Kazakhstan's international position. The government in Kazakhstan considers soft-power tools such as the ODA policy to be efficient foreign policy approaches; and efficiency, again, is a way to evaluate and legitimize policies as a means to achieve pre-defined ends. Kazakhstan's development assistance is "soft" power in the sense that it is categorically different from the "hard" power of the military cooperation that allies Kazakhstan with Russia. However, although such soft-power policies are meant to make Kazakhstan attractive in international connections, the main characteristic of these policies is not the kind of soft power that Joseph S. Nye has in mind when he speaks about a power that does not use coercion or payment to induce others to want the same things

[42] President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Sovmestnaia press-konferentsiia Prezidenta Kazakhstana Nursultana Nazarbaeva i Prezidenta Irana Khasana Rukhani," September 9, 2014, http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/akorda_news/press_conferences/page_217849_sovmestnaya-press-konferentsiya-prezidenta-kazakhstana-nursultana-nazarbaeva-i-prezidenta-irana-khasan.

that the soft-power user wants[43]; instead, it is power to consolidate Kazakhstan itself, both internally as well as in its external policies. Thus, the ODA concept is not only greater than the monetary contribution which it legitimates but is also, in the context of foreign policy, greater than the field of activity that it specifically denotes. Policy concepts are important in Kazakhstani political context because they authoritatively instruct policies and action; and in the post-Soviet situation, where the presence and influence of the former power remains a problem, they are relevant in relation to especially Russia. At the same time as Kazakhstan is militarily allied with Russia in the CSTO and one of its strategic partners in initiating Eurasian economic integration, the question of the future direction that the EEU, which has been in force since January 2015, keeps it alert about Russia's intentions. While Kazakhstan cannot stay out of the union that gives it considerable influence within the entire CIS area and facilitates its cooperation with the former Soviet subjects in its own neighborhood, it also resists seeing the EEU as a tool in geopolitical and geo-economical competition against the U.S. or China.

### *Asian Principles of Cooperation and European of Modernization*

In the years following the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the "Eurasian" identity of the wider region became an issue debated not only in Russia but also in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstani discussions focused on the historical nomadic features of the region and therefore took a direction different from Russia's "Neo-Eurasian" discourses, which are focused on promoting a political identity that is opposed to Western liberal values. This background is essential in understanding the difference between Nazarbayev's "open regionalism" and the perspectives on the region as mainly a geographic space for exclusive national-cultural projects or great-power aspirations. In particular in relation to the EEU, open regionalism envisions a liberal economic union that strengthens cooperation and thereby increases mutual benefits and also leaves space for developing partnerships and integration with other customs unions and organizations of economic cooperation.[44]

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[43] Joseph S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 7.

[44] Vladimir Fedorenko, "Eurasian Integration: Effects on Central Asia," *Rethink Paper* 23 (September 2015), http://www.rethinkinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/

Instead of aligning itself with any one party, Kazakhstan's interest lies in opening its territory for transport routes in the spirit of its "multivectoral" external relations. Any other policy is considered to jeopardize a future that prognosticates the Asia-Pacific region as becoming a driving force for global economic growth. In order to be able to pursue this policy line Kazakhstan has repeatedly emphasized that it considers the Eurasian Union as a purely economic integration model.[45]

Kazakhstan's approach to political cooperation on security issues similarly emphasizes openness and connectedness to counteract bloc-formation. An important conclusion that it has drawn from its chairmanship of the OSCE in 2010 is that the participants in this organization recognize that eleven of its 57 members are in Asia and that, as a consequence, the "Euro-Asian" security dimension must complement the "Euro-Atlantic" dimension within the organization's programs and activities. The idea of wide "continental" security had already motivated President Nazarbayev's initiative in 1992 in convening the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA). This initiative was inspired by the "confidence-building" approach that had been elaborated to facilitate East-West cooperation in European political and arms control contexts during the 1970s and 1980s. The specific rationality of the approach then had been that the build-up of tensions could be proactively prevented by increasing transparency and communication through regular institutional interaction, and that this process would gain in momentum and become self-sustaining. When Kazakhstan started its ambitious programs of social and economic modernization in the 2010s, the idea that tasks could be accomplished by generating processes through a set of rules was elaborated as a policy tool to define planned steps for implementing the programs. The top-down management tool drew its inspiration from the exact sciences and was termed "algorithm." The basic idea has been to design ordered sets of steps by means of which Kazakhstan would become able to meet global challenges with the limited time and resources that are available.

The idea of improving the accomplishment of tasks also inspires Kazakhstan's views on multilateral organizations in the region. According to

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Fedorenko-Eurasian-Integration-and-Central-Asia.pdf.

45 "Glava MID Kazakhstana: EAES–eto ne sekretnyi plan Putina," *Tengri News*, June 2, 2014, http://tengrinews.kz/other/glava-mid-kazahstana-eaes-eto-ne-sekretnyiy-plan-putina-256335/.

President Nazarbayev, the efficiency of the activities of these organizations can be increased by implementing "the best international practices, both Asian and European."[46] The effectiveness of this "algorithm" is envisioned to show itself in the advances made in the mega-projects initiated in the areas of transport infrastructure and energy in a number of regional organizations and, especially, in the SCO advised by its "Shanghai Spirit." The specific "Asian" principles of cooperation—that is, universally applicable principles of cooperation and a flexibility of organization that allows optional participation in specific areas of cooperation—are envisioned to enable working towards a cultural convergence of Europe and Asia in the frame of mutually beneficial projects. In the Eurasian identity project that is considered to unify "the country of the great steppe"[47] nomadic historical culture entails a European background and represents the kind of mobility that modern connectivity requires. Because the steppe constitutes a large part of the Eurasian landmass it is seen as the natural interface of its two parts, Europe and Asia. Kazakhstan's aspirations for development make it a cultural space for a normatively-oriented regional leadership, and these policies are sharpened with development assistance. As a consequence, Afghanistan plays a rather more significant role in Kazakhstani policies than might be expected if we consider only the more obvious concerns over security and instability in its geographic proximity: it is the best example of how Kazakhstan's policies in the regional context are globally oriented. This practice, as we have already explained, is helpful in expanding the political space for pursuing Kazakhstan's interests. In Central Asia, specifically, it enables Astana to develop its own profile of policies.

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46 Nursultan Nazarbayev, *Strategiia nezavisimosti* (Almaty: Zhibek Zholy, 2010), 295.

47 President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, "Uchastie v torzhestvennom sobranii, posviashchennom 550-letiiu Kazakhskogo khanstva," September 11, 2015, http://www.akorda.kz/ru/events/astana_kazakhstan/participation_in_events/uchastie-v-torzhestvennom-sobranii-posvyashchennom-550-letiyu-kazahskogo-hanstva; Michel Casey, "Take Note, Putin: Kazakhstan Celebrates 550 Years of Statehood," *The Diplomat*, September 14, 2015, http://thediplomat.com/2015/09/take-note-putin-kazakhstan-celebrates-550-years-of-statehood/.

## Conclusion: Collaboration to Achieve Mutually Complementary Goals

Since the early 1990s Kazakhstan has assumed an active role in presenting initiatives for regional cooperation and settling violent conflicts among the former Soviet subjects (examples include Tajikistan's civil war and Nagorno-Karabakh), and the war that was ignited in Ukraine in spring 2014 later extended this role also to Europe. Instead of being merely formal in nature with an emphasis on good services in the traditional mode of diplomatic mediation, this role seeks to advance international practices that realize Kazakhstan's interests. Thus, for example, when President Nazarbayev emphasizes to European audiences that politics must be separated from economics, his message is not merely that the EU should lift the economic sanctions it has imposed on Russia because of Russia's involvement in eastern Ukraine. More fundamentally, it is to promote such practices that do not obstruct economic interaction for political reasons relating to either external alignment or specific policies.[48] In fact, Astana's determination to develop economic cooperation both within the EEU and with the EU is, in principle, the path that Moscow had recommended for Ukraine when that country's free trade area and the political association agreement in the frame of the EU's Eastern Partnership were being prepared between Kiev and Brussels in an accelerated time schedule in late autumn 2013 and early spring 2014.

But whereas Ukraine was initially too divided to become an economic interface between Russia and Europe, Kazakhstan's future vision is to make its Eurasian space a bridge between the economically rising Far East and the West. The role in relation to Russia is merely the current context for promoting these general objectives; moreover, it is a context that gives Kazakhstan a diplomatic role in Europe. From Moscow's perspective, the active role assumed by Astana signals to the West that Moscow is supported by its allies; in addition, Kazakhstan's diplomatic activity is clearing the way for the type of non-exclusive policies of economic cooperation which are

[48] "Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev Friday Urged the European Countries to Lift Sanctions Imposed on Russia over the Ukrainian Crisis," *Sputnik International*, October 9, 2015, http://sputniknews.com/europe/20151009/1028248618/nazarbayev-calls-eu-to-lift-sanctions-against-russia.html.

also in Russia's interest—especially when its relations with the West have been gridlocked through its emphatically military responses (and the borders that have been raised through them) and it is itself unable to gain credibility for similar policies in the West. This symbiosis in specific issues requires that Russia supports stability in Kazakhstan and that issues regarding the Russian minority or the northern borders are not brought forth. Any threats to Kazakhstan's stability would spell disaster for Russia not only in Central Asia but also for its prospect of improving relations with the Western states.

Both countries regard the SCO as the main organizational frame for expanding their influence in global politics. The repeated mention of the organization's resources as indicated by its vast landmass and the total number of the organization's members and observers—covering about 50 percent of the world's population—reveals just how much this organization represents a potentiality.[49] Although the expanded SCO will be very heterogeneous with its Chinese, Russian, Turkic, Persian, Hindu and Muslim cultural influences, it does provide a political space for developing economic relations and specific forms of security cooperation in order to maintain regional stability. In autumn 2015 Afghanistan joined Iran in applying for full membership, and the organization's Secretary-General Dmitry Mezentsev has revealed that the country has a special place in the agenda due to its importance for regional stability: "Cooperation with Afghanistan must be built not only on combating terrorism or drug trafficking but also in the economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres."[50] The aim is to help Afghanistan raise itself to the status of being a respectable state after two decades of chaos and to include it in the organization's cooperation. This, in turn, will counteract Western political influence in the region even if Western military support remains necessary.

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[49] The six full members of the SCO (Russia, Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) account for about 60 percent of the land mass of Eurasia and its population is a quarter of the world's population. With observer states included (India, Pakistan, Iran, Mongolia, Afghanistan and Belarus) the organization covers about half of the world's population. The accession process for India and Pakistan to join the SCO as full members was started at the organization's summit in July 2015.

[50] "Afghanistan Seeks Full Membership in the SCO," *Asia-Plus*, Dushanbe, October 9, 2015, http://www.news.tj/en/news/afghanistan-seeks-full-membership-sco.

# Limits of Force-based Strategies and Institution-Building: a Focus on Border Spaces in the Security Puzzle

*Simbal Khan and Helena Rytövuori-Apunen*

In response to the events of 9/11, the U.S. and its international coalition used military force almost reflexively to dismantle al-Qaeda and remove the Taliban government and its associated networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As the Taliban resurged in 2004–2006[1] from their sanctuaries in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan, it was widely believed that it was the lack of regional governments' capacity to launch effective counterterrorism operations and to police their borders which fueled transborder militancy.[2] Afghanistan, along with its Central Asian neighbors, as well as Pakistan, received high levels of support to undertake large-scale security sector upgrades.

This chapter argues that force-based strategies have achieved certain results during the last fourteen years: counterterror strategies such as kill-capture campaigns have been successful in decimating foreign al-Qaeda-related actors from South-Central Asia.[3] However, the success of such operations is limited and short-term in their effect when applied against transborder militants due to a failure to account for the dynamic nature of these actors. Unlike foreign al-Qaeda elements, these forces are linked to the ever-changing socio-political and economic dynamics within the border spaces in which they operate. Use of excessive military force against them within their larger communities has accelerated societal change and concomitantly changed the very nature of these groups. The Pakistani military's initial deployment to the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) region in

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1 Thomas H. Johnson, "On the Edge of the Big Muddy: The Taliban Resurgence in Afghanistan," *China and Eurasia Forum Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (2007): 94, 98.

2 Sergey Golunov, "Border Security in Central Asia: Before and After September 11," *Austrian Federal Ministry of Defense*, April 2005, http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?lang=en&id=91419.

3 "Obama: Taliban, al-Qaeda Diminished in Afghanistan," *Jerusalem Post*, December 16, 2010, http://www.jpost.com/International/Obama-Taliban-al-Qaida-diminished-in-Afghanistan; also see Dave Boyer, "Obama: Al Qaeda 'On the Way to Defeat'," *Washington Times*, August 7, 2013, http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2013/aug/7/obama-al-qaeda-way-defeat/.

2004, and the continuous military operations of the past ten years, has given birth to the Pakistani Taliban, an umbrella group of more than thirty smaller groups resisting the Pakistani state.[4] Simultaneously the on-going war and conflict in border spaces has limited the political and institutional outreach of governments in these areas. Several border districts in Afghanistan have no permanent civilian government presence due to poor security.[5] In Pakistan, military operations in border zones over the last ten years have weakened established governing institutions and marginalized the role of the Political Agent (PA), which previously headed the civilian administration in FATA.[6]

While the establishment of border crossing points provide legalized channels to some of the people and goods that flow across the border, border management alone cannot possibly significantly diminish the illegal flows and control the movement of insurgent groups between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Control of the approximately 2,600-kilometer-long border is a daunting task for a number of technical and political reasons, not least because the administrative reforms and measures on the Afghan side are insufficient unless they are mirrored by similar structures on the Pakistani side. Even after more than a decade of border management and security sector reform, Afghan Taliban still manage to travel unimpeded through the border zone between Pakistan and Afghanistan.[7] The Pakistani Taliban offshoot, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has in fact grown to develop its own capacity for transborder operations.[8] Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) remnants have been able to shift between Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal

4 Jayshree Bajoria and Jonathan Masters, "Pakistan's New Generation of Terrorists," *Council on Foreign Relations Backgrounder*, September 26, 2012, http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/pakistans-new-generation-terrorists/p15422.

5 Fabrizio Foschini, "One Year of Transition: A Look Back," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, March 18, 2012, http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/one-year-of-transition-a-look-back-1/ and http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/one-year-of-transition-a-look-back-2/.

6 International Crisis Group, "Pakistan: Countering Militancy in FATA," *Asia Report*, no. 178 (October 21, 2009), http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/southasia/pakistan/178_pakistan___countering_militancy_in_fata.pdf; also see Zulfiqar Ali, "Political Administration Not Prepared to Replace the Army in FATA," *Dawn*, December 16, 2013, http://www.dawn.com/news/1074269.

7 Zia Ur Rehman, "Taliban Militants Striking Pakistan from Afghan Territory," *Combating Terrorism Center,* September 26, 2012, https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/taliban-militants-striking-pakistan-from-afghan-territory.

8 S. Paul Kapur and Sumit Ganguly, "The Jihad Paradox: Pakistan and Islamic Militancy in South Asia," *International Security* 37, no. 1 (Summer 2012):134–135.

Areas and northern Afghanistan and into Tajikistan,[9] which has facilitated their connections with al-Qaeda and the Islamic State. While the border spaces obviously are a test of the capability and willingness of neighboring and regional states to cooperate with each other, they also are the ultimate test of the sustainability and determination of the policies of the international community to build up peace and stability in and around Afghanistan.

## International Security Assistance and the War on Terror

According to a Congressional Research Service report released in August 2015, the U.S. has provided about $100 billion to Afghanistan since the change of the government in Kabul in autumn 2001, of which about 60 percent has been for "train and equip" missions for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), including the ANA (Afghan National Army) and ANP (Afghan National Police).[10] Since 2010, Afghanistan has seen an immense expansion of its military and police forces designed as substitutes for the anticipated departure of international troops. By September 2012, the ANSF had grown to 352,000 troops; and this number has become the rough standard for the post-withdrawal situation.[11] At the Tokyo summit held in July 2012, the U.S., NATO, and other donors pledged $16 billion over four years, from 2012 to 2015, amounting to $4.1 billion per year in security sector support. Later, this support was extended to continue beyond 2015, initially for the next two years and subsequently until the end of 2020.[12]

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[9] Frank Shanty, *The Nexus: International Terrorism and Drug Trafficking from Afghanistan* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2011), 128; and see Matthew Stein, "Uzbekistan's View of Security in Afghanistan After 2014," *Military Review* 92, no. 3 (May–June 2012): 75–76, 78.

[10] Kenneth Katzman, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, *CRS Report*, August 17, 2015, summary, https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf. The plan for 2016 is $5.3 billion, of which $3.8 billion for the ANSF (ibid.). These figures do not include the cost of U.S. combat operations, which is estimated to be around $686 billion from October 2001 to December 2014 (Amy Belasco, "The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11," *CRS Report*, December 8, 2014, summary, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/RL33110.pdf).

[11] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 31.

[12] The Tokyo Conference took place on July 8, 2012. It was an international meeting to discuss strategy and financial support for Afghanistan's security and its political and economic development beyond 2014 in anticipation of the U.S. military withdrawal from the region. See Anthony Cordesman, "Afghanistan and the Tokyo Conference: Hope,

Pakistan also began to receive unprecedented levels of security sector assistance from the U.S. after it joined the U.S.-led coalition as a "frontline ally" in 2001. For the period of 2002–2013, it received approximately $25 billion, out of which around $17 billion was security assistance, including $10.7 billion packaged as Coalition Support Funds (CSF).[13] The CSF funding reimburses Pakistan for costs incurred by the military during its counterterror and counter-insurgency operations on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. By June 2015, CSF funding amounted to $13 billion and the authorization for the next fiscal year (until end June 2016) was $1.5 billion.[14]

By comparison, U.S. security assistance to Central Asian states has been far smaller but has increased significantly since September 2001,[15] despite congressional restrictions on U.S. security assistance to governments with human rights violations (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, for example).[16] By the end of 2001, the U.S. had negotiated with the governments of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to station military troops on their territory and gained access to the Karshi-Khanabad base in Uzbekistan as well as the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan.[17] Between 2001 and 2005 the United States Army, Air Force and Marine Corps maintained the military base in Karshi-Khanabad (also known as K2 and "Stronghold Freedom") for support missions against al-Qaeda in neighboring Afghanistan. Under a joint declaration titled "Strategic

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Fantasy, and Failure," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, July 9, 2012, http://csis.org/publication/afghanistan-and-tokyo-conference-hope-fantasy-and-failure; also see Thomas Ruttig, "Jumble of Figures: How much money came out of Tokyo?," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, July 9, 2012, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/jumble-of-figures-how-much-money-came-out-of-tokyo/; also see "Afghanistan Aid: Donors Pledge $16bn at Tokyo Meeting," *BBC*, July 8, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18758148. On December 1, 2015, the foreign ministers of the NATO member states agreed on the need to secure funding for the ANSF until the end of 2020. North Atlantic Treaty Organization, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_125364.htm.

13 K. Alan Kronstadt and Susan Epstein, "Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002–FY2014," *Congressional Research Service*, April 11, 2013, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/207789.pdf.

14 Ibid.; "Pakistan Gets $336m in Coalition Support Fund, Foreign Reserves Climb to $19bn," *Dawn*, Karachi, July 28, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1196920/pakistan-gets-336m-in-coalition-support-fund-foreign-reserves-climb-to-19bn.

15 Jim Nichol, "Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests," *Congressional Research Service, CRS Report*, November 20, 2013, 50–51, http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/218963.pdf.

16 Ibid, 53; also see Roger N. McDermott, *Kazakhstan's Defense Policy: An Assessment of the Trends*, (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), 13, 17, 22.

17 Jeffrey Mankoff, "The United States and Central Asia After 2014," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, January 2013, 3, http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf.

Partnership and Cooperation" (2002) the U.S. also assured Uzbekistan of its commitment to destroying IMU bases in northern Afghanistan.[18] The U.S.-Uzbekistan military and security partnership unraveled in autumn 2005, but as the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) was expanded half a decade later, the U.S. began re-engaging Uzbekistan by first providing modest non-military security assistance (subsequent developments are discussed by Vadim Romashov in this book).[19] The U.S. continued to use the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan for troop deployment and logistical purposes until late spring 2014. ISAF also established direct military cooperation with Tajikistan, which has included refueling operations for coalition aircraft, hosting a small contingent of French jets at Dushanbe airport, and allowing coalition aircraft to cross its territory. Additionally, the Central Asian states, and especially Tajikistan with its 1,340-kilometer-long border with Afghanistan, have received multilateral assistance to improve the security and management of their borders. Since 2003, the Central Asia Border Security Initiative (CABSI) has functioned as a coordinating forum that brings together the EU, U.S., Russia, China, Japan and Turkey as well as a wide range of global organizations to discuss border-related issues with the five Central Asian states and Afghanistan. The prime motor in this activity has been the Border Management in Central Asia (BOMCA) program which was initiated by the European Commission in 2003. BOMCA was allocated €36.5 million for the period of 2003–2014, out of which €33.6 million was provided directly by the European Commission. An additional €5 million has been allocated for the period 2014–2017.[20] Such programs proclaim broad-

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[18] Nichol, "Central Asia," 16; also see Jim Nichol, "Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests," *Congressional Research Service*, *CRS Report*, April 26, 2007, 25–26, 31–33, https://www.hsdl.org/?view&did=473486.

[19] Daniil Kislov, "U.S. Ambassador in Uzbekistan George Krol: 'We Recognize Democracy May Develop and Look Differently in Uzbekistan'," *Journal of Turkish Weekly*, September 25, 2012, http://www.turkishweekly.net/2012/09/25/news/us-ambassador-in-uzbekistan-george-krol-we-recognize-democracy-may-develop-and-look-differently-in-uzbekistan/; also see U.S. Department of State, "State's Blake on U.S. Policy in Central Asia," *U.S. Embassy Bishkek*, October 18, 2012, http://bishkek.usembassy.gov/states-blake-on-us-policy-in-central-asia-october-22-2012.html.

[20] CABSI was founded in 2003 by the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior as a platform for dialogue and discussion on border management activities in Central Asia. Each year the CABSI Consortium meets to review the progress of BOMCA with its five Central Asia partner countries. United Nations Development Program (UNDP) is the implementation agency for BOMCA for the EU along with the International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) as an implementing partner. European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, "Central Asia—Border

based political support; however, the sums received by the individual Central Asian states are seven-digit in comparison with the billions allocated for Afghanistan. Among the largest items of non-military assistance is the U.S. support for improving the capabilities of the Drug Control Agency in Tajikistan, which amounted to several millions of dollars in 2015.[21]

### *Civilian Assistance to Afghanistan and Pakistan*

In Afghanistan, the civilian assistance provided by the U.S. alone between 2001–2014 has amounted to $37.4 billion, and a further, almost equivalent sum has come from other sources. Besides reconstruction of physical infrastructure, a substantial amount of this assistance has flowed into rebuilding Afghanistan's governmental institutions, improving its rule of law and governance, and boosting its political structures, including its electoral system. Pakistan has also received enhanced assistance for its civilian sectors from the U.S. and other donors. Non-military assistance from the U.S. during 2002–2014 totalled $9.3 billion.[22] Civilian aid to Afghanistan accelerated during 2010–2014, generally doubling aid figures from the middle of the last decade. In Pakistan this peaked in 2010, after the U.S. Congress approved the Enhanced Partnership with Pakistan Act in 2009, and then stabilized in modest declines for each subsequent year.[23]

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management," accessed June 6, 2015, https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/regions/central-asia/eu-support-border-management-central-asia_en.

21 The U.S. Central Command has provided more than $130 million in assistance to law enforcement agencies in Tajikistan since 2007. "US Embassy Dushanbe Provides Tactical Equipment to Tajikistan's Agencies Involved in Counter-narcoti [sic]," *Asia-Plus,* Dushanbe, August 12, 2015, http://www.news.tj/en/news/us-embassy-dushanbe-provides-tactical-equipment-tajikistan-s-agencies-involved-counter-narcoti; also see Embassy of the United States, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, http://dushanbe.usembassy.gov/index.html.

22 A great majority of direct overt aid to Pakistan is in the form of Economic Support Funds (ESF). Katzman, "Afghanistan," 72, 75; K. Alan Kronstadt and Susan Epstein, "Direct Overt U.S. Aid Appropriations for and Military Reimbursements to Pakistan, FY2002–FY2016," *Congressional Research Service*, September 30, 2015, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/pakaid.pdf.

23 Simultaneously the share of economic-related assistance to Pakistan has increased in relation to security-related assistance. This was the rationale of the Enhanced Partnership for Pakistan Act (commonly known as the Kerry-Lugar-Berman bill, KLB), which sought to untie economic-related aid from security issues and thus make it more stable. The act authorized a tripling of U.S. economic and development-related assistance to Pakistan ($7.5 billion over five years, FY2010 to FY2014). Center for Global Development, "Aid to Pakistan by the Numbers," accessed June 10, 2015, http://www.cgdev.org/page/aid-pakistan-numbers.

This enhancement in civilian assistance occurred in parallel to the ongoing war in Afghanistan and military operations in Pakistan's border zones. The underlying political rationale of civilian assistance in this instance is that better governance, especially at the district and local levels, would increase state capacity in providing goods and services to the people and thereby reduce the popularity of groups such as the Taliban. In 2009–2010, more than 70 percent of USAID civilian assistance flowed into Taliban-dominated war zones in southern and eastern Afghanistan.[24] However, initial optimism about the possibilities to build administrative, educational, and business infrastructure even in the remote areas began to fade over the course of the decade, partly for reasons commonly related to development assistance: the lack of local infrastructure fit for the allocation of funds as well as a socio-cultural environment in which it was difficult to operate without engaging in practices such as those pertaining to bribery amongst law enforcement officials. However, there was also a more specific reason: large counter-insurgency operations of "clear, hold and build"[25] launched in southern and eastern Afghanistan in 2009 did not decimate the Taliban. Instead, they served to push fighters across the border into Pakistan's tribal belt in order to regroup and reorganize.

### *Multilateral Support Structures*

In international non-military cooperation on Afghanistan the concentration of efforts on rebuilding political institutions and governance structures with external assistance has obscured political and cultural dimensions and aspects of local politics that have sustained the support for the Taliban and its networks, especially within the border communities.[26] The political approach to rebuilding the post-Taliban Afghan state has been two-pronged: the

[24] Gregory Johnson, Vijaya Ramachandran, and Julie Walz, "CERP in Afghanistan: Refining Civilian Capabilities in Development Activities," *Prism* 3, no. 2 (2012): 82–85.

[25] "Interview: McChrystal Says Solution in Afghanistan is Developing Governance," *Radio Free Europe/Radion Liberty*, June 30, 2009, http://www.rferl.org/content/Interview_US_Commander_In_Afghanistan_Says_Real_Solution_Is_Developing_Governance/1765881.html; also see U.S. Department of Defense, "Commander's Initial Assessment," news release, *Washington Post*, September 21, 2009, http://media.washingtonpost.com/wpsrv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?hpid=topnews.

[26] Siegfried Wolf, "Taliban and Democracy: The Unequal Equation," *Panorama*, June 28, 2013.

international community has assisted in building political institutions as well as the massive reconstruction process within Afghanistan and Pakistan; and institution-building practices have been extended to the region as a whole in order to promote region-wide inter-state cooperation. Since 2001, this has been the focus of many noteworthy political initiatives. The Bonn 1 process in 2001[27] created optimism for the future of regional cooperation centered on Afghanistan. All of Afghanistan's neighbors, as well as other regional actors such as India, Turkey, and the Arab Gulf states, cooperated with Afghan and international actors to produce the framework for the reformed Afghan state. With the beginning of President Obama's first term in 2009, there was a renewed focus on reviving regional initiatives that created new diplomatic instruments, such as the "Contact Group" and a regional security and economic cooperation forum.[28] International diplomacy focused on creating various trilateral and multilateral platforms within the region, with Afghanistan as a centerpiece.

The most well-known initiative to revive regional cooperation is the 14-member "Istanbul Process."[29] Also known as the "Heart of Asia," it was launched in Istanbul in November 2011. Initially, the Istanbul conference was designed as a platform for developing regional arrangements to support the security of Afghanistan after 2014. The Afghans, in particular, demanded binding guarantees about mutual non-interference under the aegis of the United Nations that would start the process of shutting down insurgent safe havens beyond Afghan borders. Because the proposal was rejected during the initial stages of negotiation, it remains unclear what precisely it was that the Afghan delegation was proposing. While some sources suggest that the Afghans were hoping to set up a structure similar to the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), Pakistan, Iran and Uzbekistan re-

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27 Afghanistan Government, "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions," accessed June 10, 2015, http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm.

28 Office of the President, "White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group's Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan," March 2009, 2, http://www.whitehouse.gov/assets/documents/Afghanistan-Pakistan_White_Paper.pdf.

29 The "Heart of Asia" Ministerial Conference Declaration, "Istanbul Process: Stability and Prosperity in the 'Heart of Asia' through Building Confidence and Shared Regional Interests," April 26, 2013, http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/19668; also see U.S. Department of State, "State's Blake in Kazakhstan on Istanbul Process," April 26, 2013, http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/texttrans/2013/04/20130429146581.html#axzz2j7GGZNWd.

jected the draft declaration even before the conference began.[30] In rejecting this new arrangement, which had originally been proposed by the U.S., other Western countries and India, the government of Pakistan maintained that regional security issues could be handled within existing regional frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[31] At the Ufa summit meeting held in July 2015, both India and Pakistan entered the process to become full and permanent members of the SCO.[32]

The founding members of the SCO (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) as well as the new members, India and Pakistan, all face varying challenges from militant organizations. Chinese authorities see Uighur militant groups such as ETIM in northern Afghanistan and in Pakistan's tribal belt as a separatist threat in Xinjiang province, which links China with Central Asia and farther afield to Europe through geo-economic strategies under construction (see the contribution by Mika Aaltola and Juha Käpylä in this book). Muslim Uighurs originating from Xinjiang have found sanctuaries within co-ethnic communities in Central Asia and, increasingly, in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Central Asian states have all faced the threat of the transborder Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and its offshoot, the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), and since 2014 the support given by the Islamic State to this regional insurgency has been renewing fears that had been fading about the presence of al-Qaeda within the region. Russia has had a long history of conflict with Chechen and Dagestani rebels, who move around within the region seeking resources and support from other regional militants.[33]

However, the expectation that the SCO could develop region-wide cooperation in order to counter these threats is likely to remain only wishful speculation. This is because, firstly, inter-state disputes over conflicted borders and natural resources such as water still impact relations between the countries. Secondly, the politics of transborder militants is intertwined with

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30 Thomas Ruttig, "Afghanistan Conference in Istanbul: The clogged arteries of the 'Heart of Asia'," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, November 1, 2011, https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistan-conference-in-istanbul-the-clogged-arteries-of-the-heart-of-asia/.

31 Yousaf Kamran, "Pakistan to Attend Istanbul Conference with Low Expectations," *The Express Tribune*, October 31, 2011.

32 "Pakistan, India, join Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Dawn*, July 11, 2015, http://www.dawn.com/news/1193717.

33 Alexander Shlyndov, "Certain Aspects of Russian-Chinese Collaboration in the International Arena," *Far Eastern Affairs* 34, no. 2 (2006): 68–81.

the histories of these borders and how state practices are developed to achieve state interests. From time to time such groups serve at least the tactical interests of regional states vis-à-vis neighboring states.[34] Thirdly, the states cooperating in the frame of the SCO are generally reluctant to become engaged in developing multilateral cooperative structures that could restrict their sovereign decision-making. Therefore it cannot come as a surprise that the idea of creating a structure similar to the OSCE aroused the suspicions of Pakistan and other states. A region-wide security organization modelled on the OSCE remains unlikely in a region where countries resist maneuvering themselves into a restrictive framework akin to that experienced by Afghanistan. During the past ten years the OSCE had come under the criticism of Russia, Belarus and some other states, who had claimed that the organization's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) was promoting the political interests of the West through its election observance missions. The SCO, which was formed in 2001 by China and Russia on the basis of the Shanghai Five, was contrarily seen as a platform to develop policies in accordance with the governments' preferences to confront threats such as radical Islam and transborder militant actors.[35] The idea that institution-building practices could be extended to the region as a whole, and that such region-wide cooperation could open pathways in solving security problems, resonates with the Western experience of integration and can be easily presented as a design for politically appealing policy in international forums. However, the non-institutional approach that is based on tradition and nowadays promoted as "Asian regionalism" within the region (see the contribution by Elnara Bainazarova in this book) may be a more realistic way to gain concrete results because it, in spite of perhaps being idealized for purposes of identity and prestige, is an already present, living tradition as well as a diplomatic practice to which the states are accustomed in their mutual cooperation.

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[34] Paul Ames, "Afghan governors call for more international aid for border regions," *Associated Press*, May 7, 2008, http://www.genocidewatch.org/images/Afghanistan_08_05_07_Afghan_governors_call_for_more_international_aid_for_border_regions.doc.

[35] Thomas Ambrosio, "Catching the 'Shanghai Spirit': How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 60, no. 8 (October 2008): 1334.

## Conclusion

Afghanistan since 2001 has made remarkable progress in institutional development in all primary state sectors, as a result of international support for the Afghan reconstruction and rehabilitation process. Its National Security Forces, in particular, are an important step in building Afghan sovereignty and state capacity in order to provide its population with a minimum degree of security once international forces withdraw. Yet, the international donor community has been slow to consider the consequences of the fact that the process of institution-building was undertaken almost entirely through the enormous infusion of external funds. In 2015, donor aid was estimated to account for more than 95 percent of Afghanistan's GDP and at least two-thirds of its government expenditure.[36] Therefore, the long-term sustainability of many of the institutions developed over the course of the last fourteen years in Afghanistan remains in question.

While these issues cannot be avoided for as long as international funding continues, our focus has been a question that does not draw as much public attention. We argue that such institution-building has failed to address the problem of transborder militancy in the region, and that force-based approaches have in fact strengthened the dynamics causing the problem to worsen in the long term. In chapter 3 in this book, Simbal Khan discusses in detail the complex mechanism that has allowed transborder militant movements to survive within the conflict-laden spaces in South-Central and Central Asia. Both in Afghanistan and Pakistan these movements remain tied to the conflicted situation within border spaces. Furthermore, the presence of foreign troops has not made the central governments' approaches to the populations in the border areas any gentler; contrarily, it has disrupted communities and served to prepare the ground for yet more conflict. Continued suppression, the experience of injustice, and economic plight prepare the ground in which local insurgency gathers strength and becomes receptive to regional and extra-regional jihadist connections. Although the public image of the coalition troops on the Afghan side differs greatly from the reports of the U.S. drone attacks on the Pakistani side, these are two sides of the same conflict. Broadcasts reveal little of the horrors of nocturnal raids

[36] Katzman, "Afghanistan," 53.

and the fear by which the ANSF, backed by foreign forces, rules these border areas.

In the cases where it has been successful, the use of military force has been mostly limited to maintaining an uneasy status quo, evident for example in increased border fencing and the hardening of border controls by the Indian military to prevent infiltration by Kashmiri militants. Even here, however, the status quo seems to be uncertain, as border violations have increased since 2012.[37] Our conclusion is, first, that while most interventions by international and regional actors in and around Afghanistan have relied on use of force strategies along with a focus on institution-building, this approach alone has failed to address persistent conflict involving border areas. Second, there is no other way but to contribute to economic and social development within conflicted and marginalized spaces around border areas. The main challenge here is less about resources than about gradual community development. These issues call for close cooperation between donor agencies and local communities as well as the use of regional governments' own channels for development work, despite their propensity for corruption and other problems. Third, the long-term effects of policies of violence must be recognized. Whenever local populations' sense of justice is violated by military operations in a situation where the possibility for retributive justice does not exist, these operations—the acts of the government-supported security forces, national and foreign—are likely to generate new cycles of violence. The dilemma is that where the rule of law does not exist and the state can violently disrupt the everyday lives of the people, the state itself—the concept of the unified national state, its army and other institutions—becomes part of the conflict and the source of violence. It remains impossible to establish rule of law and democracy—the Western concept of the state—by force in an environment where these ideas do not already exist and make a sensible difference in the lives of people but where, instead, experiences with the state are characterized by violence and repression. While this is a general problem that leads us to immanent criticism of Western approaches and juxtaposes idealist construction of society (ideas—reforms—are defined in one context and implemented in

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[37] Sadika Hameed, "Kashmir Violence Strains India-Pakistan Dialogue," *World Politics Review*, September 4, 2013, http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13191/kashmir-violence-strains-india-pakistan-dialogue.

another context)[38] with pragmatist realism (ideas arise from the life-experience to which they consequently apply), it is most acute in border spaces which draw in and shelter political dissent.

To sum up, we find that a crucial piece of the puzzle in which development is thought to facilitate security will remain absent for as long as the international emphasis on greater regional cooperation as a means to build security in the post-withdrawal situation in and around Afghanistan continues to stall over the issue of transborder organization and its linkage to militant activity and jihadist causes. The agencies who participate in implementing the various region-wide designs for energy cooperation and other border-crossing projects, which are meant to enhance regional economic development, would do well to include direct benefits not only for population centers but also for border communities in their goals. A step forward would be that the donors—international development banks, organizations and countries—include the benefits generated for the border communities in the initial conditions of funding and require this item to be a part of impact assessment. This would also be a way to pressure regional governments to seriously consider the economic and social condition of their border communities. The challenge for the international community, then, is whether these issues can also open up space for wider forms of regional and international cooperation to alleviate the dire economic situation of border communities, and whether such cooperation can be sufficiently broad-based so as to also include the historical powers in the region, Russia among them. This is important in order to ensure that external actors will not support regional states along ethnic lines as has been the case in the past and, possibly, remains a tempting practice in conflict situations involving international rivalries. This, of course, brings the question of border spaces back to the political roots of the problem at hand, which is the question of ethnically and regionally inclusive government on different levels of administration. Border spaces are not just a "missing piece" that calls for our attention but a piece in a more comprehensive puzzle.

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[38] U.S. Foreign Assistance for Afghanistan Post Performance Management Plan-2011–2015, Volume I-Summary (August 28, 2010, https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1871/Approved%20PMP%20updated%2010-02-2010.pdf), is a typical example of an idealist approach where development is about the implementation of western values of government. The goals in relation to the insurgent communities are mainly about delegitimizing their communications by means of media.

# Epilogue: Charting Border Studies Beyond North American Grounds

*Helena Rytövuori-Apunen and Renée Marlin-Bennett*

In the present book, the authors have sought to deepen our understanding of Central and South-Central Asia, of the complexities of life amidst multiple borders, of the varieties of states' bordering practices, and of the challenges arising from both changes wrought by 9/11 as well as by the anticipated changes leading up to and following further reductions in the U.S. forces in Afghanistan after 2016. We have done so by drawing on a pragmatist sensibility which explores reality as practice and approaches the "what"-question about things (the threat posed by Afghanistan, for example) by looking at the practical implications these things have, or may have, in the action of agents and the lives of people. It is like this that we are able to attain more nuanced understandings than if we had initiated our research with pre-defined concepts and theoretical frameworks. In this Epilogue, we reflect on how our efforts here are situated within and beyond Border Studies, an interdisciplinary field of study that is especially well suited to benefit from the richness of a pragmatist approach. We begin with a review of the phases in which Border Studies has unfolded, and we comment on Central and South Central Asia's uneasy fit with the earlier problematique of Border Studies. We then return to explore how a pragmatist approach to Border Studies serves to generate fruitful insight.

The Association of Borderlands Studies was founded in 1976, at a time when political issues of the U.S.-Mexican border, in particular migration, were of especial concern within the United States.[1] Initially, "borderland" studies referred specifically to the study of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands, a place where differences of language, ethnicity, wealth, and political systems

[1] Anthony Marro, "Illegal Aliens Stir Competing Power Blocs," *New York Times*, December 24, 1978; William H. Newell, "The Intertwined History of Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Education and the Association for Integrative Studies: An Insider's View," *Issues in Integrative Studies* 26 (2008): 1–59, http://wwwp.oakland.edu/Assets/upload/docs/AIS/Issues-in-Interdisciplinary-Studies/2008-Volume26/03_Vol_26_pp_1_59_The_Intertwined_History_of_Interdisciplinary_Undergraduate_Education_and_the_Association_for_Integrative_Studies_An_Insider's_View_(William_Newell).pdf.

made interaction complex. Stoddard's (1986) retrospective of what was then an emerging area of study refers to these years as the culmination of the six-decade-long period of "Interpretive Research" which, according to his measure, followed the "Early Empiricism" before World War I and persisted until the 1980s.[2] Motivated by the study of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands—a zone on the Northern American map seen to evince "pathologies" in need of scholarly inquiry—the research of this period privileged themes of difference and penetration (migration, disease) and of conflict (interstate and intergroup).[3] Such a focus on interpreting the pathologies of border relations evolved into two distinct yet related themes during the 1970s and early 1980s. In the first theme, which Stoddard calls "Border Issues and Diplomatic Solutions," border relations were studied by focusing on the processes, conditions and consequences of violence, criminality and other socially problematic forms of behavior. The main idea was that the "border [is understood as the] dividing line between nations" and the border itself allows researchers to look at two cultures comparatively and to examine the "pathological and undesirable behavior patterns" that remain "unresolved by international diplomacy." "Border Division" perhaps is a better title than the one used by Stoddard to describe the idea. The second theme, "Border Integration," moved away from the assumption that borders divide and, as a consequence, evince pathological behavior. Attention turned to the question of how the

[2] Ellwyn R. Stoddard, "Border studies as an emergent field of scientific inquiry: Scholarly contributions of U.S.-Mexico borderlands studies," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 1, no. 1 (1986): 1–33.

[3] Works in the genre include William H. Form and William V. D'Antonio, "Integration and Cleavage among Community Influentials in Two Border Cities," *American Sociological Review* 24, no. 6 (1959): 804–14; Orrin E. Klapp and L. Vincent Padgett, "Power Structure and Decision-Making in a Mexican Border City," *American Journal of Sociology* 65, no. 4 (1960): 400–406. The U.S.-Canada border, in contrast, did not attract similar interdisciplinary scholarly attention, and the attraction of policy-focused research was not paralleled by research institutions until 9/11 transformed all U.S. borders. A search for research articles about the U.S.-Canada border appearing in 1965 or earlier reveals little that can be called "borderland studies"; the closest we find is a collection of documents published in 1960 on the Windsor, Canada border crossing to the United States (Ernest J. Lajeunesse, *The Windsor Border Region, Canada's Southernmost Frontier; A Collection of Documents* [Toronto: The Champlain Society for the Government of Ontario and University of Toronto Press, 1960; repr. as e-book, Delhi: Vendeur Gyan Books, 2013]). The events of 9/11 provided a rationale for establishing the Border Policy Research Institute at the Western Washington University in 2005. This institute focuses on studying the U.S.-Canada border.

border can join together rather than separate. "Borderlands [are understood] as [a] single symbiotic system separated by an arbitrary political line."[4]

Are Stoddard's themes of pathologies of border division and border integration useful for grasping the complexity of life in the borderlands of Central and South-Central Asia? The reference to pathology reveals thematic negativity. In its Greek etymology, pathology is derived from *pathos*, a noun that denotes suffering and feeling, but also refers to the feelings aroused by such a condition (pity, sorrow, sympathy, compassion).[5] The "pathologies" of border relations emerged as the new focus of research because U.S. researchers approached the conditions on the U.S.-Mexico borderland as problems. The situation there was abnormal; it deviated from what was taken by them as being sound or proper. This assumption of pathology was applied in order to provide insight and perspectives for borderlands studies. In the present day, at a time when border(lands) studies are expanding to become more global while researchers hope to retain a body that distinguishes it from other research areas and traditional disciplines, it is relevant to ask how this focus on pathology, an idea that was important at a formative moment in interdisciplinary borderlands research, can be applied to the study of other geographic areas such as Central and South-Central Asia—regions which so far have featured very little in border(lands) studies.

First we turn to pathologies of border divisions. Although we do indeed see divisions along borders that evince suffering, the way these borders exist and are divided in Central and South-Central Asia is different from what we witness along the U.S.-Mexico border. The pathologies of rich-versus-poor along the U.S.-Mexico border and the situation in Central and South-Central Asia are a case in point. In contrast to the U.S.-Mexico border, the state borders between the former Soviet republics in Central Asia as well as the complex zone between Afghanistan and Pakistan do not evince many of the pathologies of the border that stem from sharp differences of development and culture between the regional states. Instead, the entire region is a wide zone where urban elites share the lifestyles of the transnational elites, and where the lives of these urban elites are distanced from those of the poor, and particularly from those of the rural poor. The gap within national economies, which also spills across borders here, marks the existence of a "developed"

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4 Stoddard, "Border studies as an emergent field of scientific inquiry," 5.

5 *Pathein*, to suffer, to feel (Webster's New World Dictionary, Third College Edition, Cleveland: Simon & Schuster, 1988).

and an “underdeveloped” world. While Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (according to the criteria of the World Bank IDA) are “upper-middle-income” economies and Afghanistan and Tajikistan “low-income” economies,[6] this gap persists nevertheless. Institutional facts—the labels applied by the World Bank to countries because of statistical medians—have significance for future prospects (e.g., attractiveness to investment) and sentiments of national pride rather than marking difference between entire populations. The borders between segments of populations are instead to be found between the elite-urban-developed and the poor-underdeveloped. In essence, what might be called “development-culture borders” in the Central and South-Central Asia regions are not congruent with state borders. This is an important difference to characteristics identified along the U.S.-Mexico border. Unlike at the U.S.-Mexico state border, the global development difference is not symbolized by any particular line on the map or by fences at the border; it is ubiquitous throughout the region and surfaces at multiple junctions in the flexible networks of illegal economic activity.

Another major difference in Central and South-Central Asia is the “pathology” generated by the emergence of a border that divides proponents of political Islam from proponents of secular ideas of social organization. Neither the U.S.-Mexico state border nor the North American region provides an equivalent example of this type of highly politicized religious-secular border. Differences in culture and religion do not make dividing lines in the way that political (and politicized) Islam does in Central and South-Central Asia. In the former Soviet republics political tensions frequently build up with the frustrations created by unsuccessful or absent power-sharing in the central government and on different administrative levels. Cultural and religious differences are fomented by the fear of violence and political takeover by insurgent groups, and these local threats are amplified by the global discourse on terrorism and political and religious extremism. While political Islam (in the form of social organization that includes suppressed political parties) is part of everyday life in a largely Muslim region, the radical forms of an Islamic state and society based on the religious law of prophetic religion (*Sharia*) is more of a threatening image than rooted in the heterogeneous terrain of an insurgency which has developed in country-specific and

[6] The Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan and Pakistan are “lower middle-income” economies. The data pertain to the fiscal year 2015, see http://data.worldbank.org/country.

regional conditions. However, the "pathology" is that militant radicalization can be accelerated and the threat be made more real by the mechanisms of power, which distribute human security unequally. The uncertainty over Afghanistan nourishes these states' competition for external resources in building statehood and strengthening the power of the central governments against their internal opposition. This increases political polarization and induces local and regional insurgents to join forces under the umbrella of a radicalized Islam with overseas connections and support. Local insurgency is "regionalized" when groups seek shelter across state borders by using their transboundary networks and affiliations and adapt to the conditions which support them. With its external nourishment from the capitals of world powers and the *madrassas* (religious schools) in several Arab countries, it is this mechanism of power and security that is the main "pathology" characterizing the region. Local *madrassas* operate underground, and states accuse their neighbors of supporting the radicalization of their youth. Although the historical root causes vary throughout post-Soviet Central Asia and South-Central Asia, the general mechanism of deepening the conflict to a regrettable circle of "pathological" developments is similar in all these cases.

Nevertheless, there are notable similarities regarding the state borders of the Central and South-Central Asian region and the state border between the U.S. and Mexico. Of special concern are the pathologies related to labor-related migration and illegal economic activity—the trafficking of human beings, the colossal trade in drugs and other common forms of contraband, and the corruption in administrative and law enforcement structures that sustains these activities. Illegal activities have effects across the borders between the Central and South-Central Asian states that are similar to what we observe in the U.S.-Mexico borderlands. While on the one hand such practices disrupt the functioning of what can be considered a sound society, they also provide the livelihoods of some local people, albeit livelihoods with simultaneously more risk and greater potential for large profits than do ordinary forms of livelihood.

In Central and South-Central Asia, state borders—the lines on the map—cannot be considered the only, or even the most important, borders that exist. Consequentially, it is sharply problematic to approach them as the dividing lines for comparisons between "two cultures." Although states and borderland populations often hold hostile (i.e., "pathological") attitudes toward their neighbors, hostility is mainly the consequence of competing state-

building projects among cultures otherwise not easily differentiated. Cultures on both sides of the formal border are intermingled and fused in the multi-ethnic societies of these states. Hostilities tend to flare up when historical sensitivities and conflicts among the titular nations of former Soviet republics are reactivated in connection with contemporary controversies. The relations between the "Ferghana Three" (Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) offer ample examples. Nevertheless, it also must be noted that Stoddard's starting point of "two cultures" can be analytically fruitful in studying the encounters between extra-regional agents and agents within the region. Examples include social tensions over the region-wide energy development projects supported by the international community and between foreign military staff and local communities.[7]

The other theme identified by Stoddard, the pathologies of border integration, focuses on problems that arise from seeing borders as sites of joining rather than separating. In relation to Central and South-Central Asia, examining border integration leads to questioning, for example, how social habitats that have developed in the past are operative across the state borders and have meaning in borderland populations' life-contexts. In post-Soviet Central Asia, where integration across administrative borderlines was a given before independence, new state architecture on borders has prompted negative and, as demonstrated by the communal conflicts in the Ferghana area, violent reactions from the population when previously routine mobility is prevented. Ferghana also illustrates how little the establishment of borders with flow-regulating border crossing points can do to ease tensions when formal state boundaries do not coincide with people's lives. Efforts to set up legal frames for the interaction of transborder communities also easily stumble into inter-state conflict and rivalry fueled by history. The long-lasting disputes between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan over energy-supply arrangements during the Soviet era is one such example. The strife over Tajikistan's need for electricity from Uzbekistan and the Rogun hydropower plant cannot be explained without considering its background in the structurally integrated Soviet economy. When the post-Soviet borders came to separate state authority, the joint use of resources became a source of conflict. Weak in their newly established national economies, states were unable to resolve the problems left by the

[7] The events in connection with the Manas base in Kyrgyzstan are an example. See Bruce Pannier, "Good-Bye, Manas," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, April 2, 2014, www.rferl.org/content/kyrgyzstan-manas-base-us-afghanistan/25318711.html.

Soviet division of economic resources across the then-administrative borders. Personalized relations between leaders and the reactivation of historical grievances over the "ownership" of sites and places for identity purposes served to accelerate mutual conflict and spurred hostilities which, due to their repetitive appearance, began to look "pathological." The bitter disputes over Samarkand and Bukhara in Tajik-Uzbek relations are additional examples of this dynamic. Tajikistan "lost" these two ancient cities to Uzbekistan when it attained the status of full Soviet republic in 1929, yet continues to regard them as paramount symbols of its own historical Persian culture and pre-Russian independence.[8]

This brief review demonstrates, we suggest, that an analysis will remain limited if we approach this analysis by looking for pathologies of border division and border integration. On the one hand, investigating the pathologies of borders and power is arguably a research task by which academic research can provide systematic knowledge for the design and assessment of policies. It can contribute to building border architecture which, in its efforts to direct transborder flows and interaction into legal and controlled formats (such as cross-border markets and free trade zones), needs to both restrict and facilitate cross-border mobility and interaction. On the other hand, however, when identifying mechanisms of the "pathologies" of borders and power typical for different regions, we also must remain aware of the discursive boundaries of the concept as it is used in border(lands) studies. The limitations of discourse become discernible when we pause to reflect on the idea of the "sound" condition, and in particular how this condition reveals morally dissatisfactory, "pathological" features in the behavior and states of affairs that we observe. If we start with a functionalist assumption, the discursive effect of such a choice is to consider borders as arbitrary obstacles to the natural interaction and mobility of borderland populations. Such an assumption predisposes us to think of social development in terms of an idea of nature according to which there is a predefined form to every living thing, like the seed to a flower, that outlines its full potentiality and range of possible existence. The notion of borderlands as symbiotic systems in which transborder communities complement each other's "natural" development conveys such a biological metaphor of social development.

[8] The defeat of the Amir of Bukhara by the tsar's army in 1867 marks the subordination of southern Tajikistan to Russian rule.

Seeing "nature" (in the sense of the "natural" and therefore "sound") as an ideal for society has a long and intricate lineage with numerous branches in Western culture. It is manifest in the belief in self-generating modernization (functional differentiation on an ever larger scale) as well as in ideas about "alternative development" and "greening" as becoming closer to (the idea of) nature. It is also expressed by the modern idea of science as a means to disclose the "secrets" of nature. These ontological assumptions can be traced back to the question of *esse/posse* (actual being and potentiality, centered on God) in Western Christianity and the conception of nature which, in the pre-given "natural process," claims a moral authority derived from divine *telos*.[9] Whilst omnipresent in Western culture, the idea has specifically been cultivated as the ideational background against which the "New World" has built its identity vis-à-vis the "burden of history" and an imposed (corrupt, decaying) culture in the "Old World." Arguments about healthy markets and self-correcting democracy are sustained by the discursive power of "nature." The idea that we trace here is more specific and shows its contours against the Romanticist elevation of ordinary life as the moral value vis-à-vis other values (such as religious and theoretical contemplation and the citizen's participation in a polity). The development of modern identity, including what Charles Taylor calls "the affirmation of ordinary life," is a crucial discursive condition for the emergence of the "social problem" as a concern over substandard living environments in Western societies.[10] In Central Asia, historical conditions are entirely different, and the closest equivalent, perhaps, is the Soviet affirmation of the power of the state made explicit through the raised standards of living in ordinary life.[11] Our point in touching upon this immensely wide and culturally weighty field is limited to the argument that it valorizes the background practices of the deep-seated historical, and thus

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9 John Passmore notes that the Latin etymology of "nature" is *nascere*: to be born, to come into being. He emphasizes that while the signification of nature in the Old Testament is that nature exists to glorify God ("Life"), the New Testament expresses the conception that nature is God's creation for man's uses and stewardship. See John Passmore, *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions* (London: Duckworth, 1974), 32.

10 Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 211–302.

11 While ordinary life is not the high value which it is in the liberal tradition, it takes extreme forms in consumption patterns which emulate the grandeur of the public sphere of power. See Arpad Szakolczai, "Citizenship and Home: Political Allegiance and Its Background," *International Political Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (2008): 57–75.

existential, experience from which the idea(l) of a sound and proper (borderland) condition emerges and instructs observation of the actual developments in their malfunction and abnormal deviation.

It is here that we arrive at the key point of our research: by drawing our attention to practices, pragmatism leads us to reflect on borders and bordering practices as well as on our own interpretive practices. In contrast to the biological metaphor that privileges its idea of "nature" as the ideal for developing society, reflective attitudes questioning the background practices of interpretations acknowledge the existential tension embedded in the relation of the interpreting subject and the world that is thus experienced. A critical sensitivity about projecting a unifying *logos* onto reality instructs us to adopt a path of inquiry about how borders between states or polities represent symbols of rule and instances of geo-power which have been built, demolished, accumulated and annexed to previous constructs over longer periods of time. This analytical point of departure perhaps can be best illustrated by the iconic representations of constructed history in the architectonic symbols of rule and power in urban landscapes, such as the world's tallest flagpole rising up 165 meters in Dushanbe (second-tallest at the time of writing) and the colossal National Library that has been erected not far from it; a building which literally awaits the width and depth of a national culture still under construction (rather than bursting out in its already existing potentiality, as the preformist metaphor would argue) and that is to be displayed within its walls. These constructs of political landscape are symbols of the contemporary regime's ambitions and pieces of historical archeology akin to the Ak Orda Presidential Palace in Astana or the National September 11 Memorial in New York. When an unreflective Western eye leaps to judgments about Asian constructs as being an unnatural, and even a perverted, display of power due to their physical size, these constructs are being viewed from a perspective where the conditions for that which is morally satisfactory are different and have to do with what is considered "organic" in society and argued to have some immediate functionality in the everyday lives of the people. We do not argue that these views are right or wrong; instead, they tell us about qualitative difference in the background practices of interpreting experience. "Two cultures," then, can be one way of articulating the initial sensation of pragmatist questioning; it is existential and does not impose the coherence of "cultures" upon reality. In other words, the recognition of the situatedness of

Stoddard's "two cultures" of pathologies of border division and border integration is used as a starting point for further reflection.

While the "preformist" logic of development may seek to conquer and settle borders with reasoning and justification by referring to the "nature of things"—such as the argument that ideas and needs do not have borders because the human being is universal—the recognition of segments of historical experience allows us to see many borders, none of which create absolute divisions. In Central and in South-Central Asia the experience of borders as externally imposed rules and administrative lines (set up primarily by British and Russian/Soviet rule) has left borders with two sides: those that are official and rule-related, and those that relate to everyday practices.[12] This recognition of difference does not lead us to apply common theoretical frameworks under which "cases" are subsumed for their mutual comparison in the tradition of comparative research (such as is done in comparative politics). Instead, the recognition of difference is the momentary experience (sensation) which instructs inquiry without assuming difference in the sense of distinct entities such as "two cultures," a point of departure which also risks exoticizing reality by projecting immanent nature.

In short, the sensibility of the research presented in this book as a whole starts with practices, draws meaning from those practices, and looks for useful understandings that can prevent polarizing and deepening conflicts. This brings us back to the consideration of pragmatism as a productive approach to border studies. In his outline of the thematic development of border studies, Stoddard mentions the early 1980s as a turning point towards a more global perspective, and he sees "Comparative Border Studies" as an opportunity for opening up scholarship to the question of the "communality of border problems and functions throughout the world."[13] Border studies have since expanded to include approaches from critical geography, postcolonial studies, and other critical and reflexive starting points. The path we would like to propose at such junctions (which are constantly present in research)

[12] This dualism was used by Stalinist state-building policies which made private "happiness" a symbol of state success. In Central Asia Soviet rule did not systematically destroy the fabric of everyday life like it did in Eastern Europe as a result of the failures of its social disciplining. In Central Asia the project of modernization was less sweeping in society and focused on mainly export-oriented agriculture (Szakolczai, "Citizenship and Home").

[13] It is from within this more global perspective that the *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, the scholarly journal of the Association of Borderlands Studies, began publication in 1986. Stoddard's article on the phases of the research opened the first issue of Volume 1.

begins with an awareness of the difference of experience rather than the conceptual a priori of theoretical frameworks and theory-building that disconnect research from practice. In this way the problem formulation is not universalist (or particularist, in the same vein of logic), and it also does not argue for the "uniqueness" of the subject in focus. Instead, it is relational and, by reflecting on difference, can extend interpretations to cover an ever more global domain while also reproducing the body of research in some respect, such as the thematic notion of "pathologies" of border relations. Thus the difference is not only about the experience of the region but also about study: it makes us aware of how our perspectives are culturally limited, and it turns these limitations into new openings for interpretations of experience.

Because a pragmatist approach to such inquiry calls for modesty and humbleness, some reservations are called for in relation to the epistemic attitudes suggested by Stoddard's notions on the earliest phases of borderland studies. He traces these to what he terms "archival preservation and impressionism" inspired by the documents and diaries of Columbus's journey to the Americas (1492) and the subsequent journeys of Cortés, Coronado, and other early European explorers and conquerors. These "proto-borderland studies," in his measure, lasted until "Early Empiricism" emerged in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Tracing the path of research back to Columbus and the truly paradigmatic changes brought about in the following centuries in conceptions concerning man and nature arguably conveys the powerful metaphor of a bold determination to sail uncharted oceans. Pragmatist research shares such openness, and it does so by leaving behind not only the belief in scientific certainty (which pre-modern explorers also did not have). It also rejects the assumption that the mind-independent world in itself has coherent substance, which was suggested to Columbus and his followers by the divine spirit and the mundane authorities who claimed to be some part of it, and which has contemporary parallels in similar ontological assumptions about power, ethnicity, material determination, etc.

The paradigm-changing proposition of pragmatism vis-à-vis the conventional idea of "the mind as the mirror of nature"[14] is that the reality which human interpreters encounter as signs (interpreted reality) is practice. The idea of anything that "is" lies in its practical implications. The pragmatist

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[14] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979).

explorative endeavor does not claim to conquer new territories, i.e. domains of study and approaches that define schools and disciplines. Instead, it proposes to examine borderless (initially unframed) landscapes from perspectives other than their established conventions. The present book started out by arguing that pragmatism offers a way to steer clear of the closed harbors of convention offered by the traditional concept of inter-national relations and that it, in the same vein of logic, enables us to connect this field with the young multi- and interdisciplinary field of border(lands) studies. This book concludes by articulating the practical meaning of the same critical logic of interpretation in relation to border(lands) studies. This argument, we hope, should find resonance in the places of anchorage which this research community, already past the phase of setting sail, is presently establishing in Europe, Latin America, Africa and, in East Asia, particularly in Japan. Thus, while our goal is to contribute to bringing Central and South-Central Asia onto the global map of border studies, the region is also something more: it is an example of the different experience that forms the ground for attaining more global knowledge in contexts which are inevitably local.

Our goals for this book have thus been two-fold. The studies provided by the contributors promise to contribute to scholarship on the complex bordering practices of Central and South-Central Asia. In this way we hope that this book will provide important empirical analyses of a region that is rife with conflict and potentials for conflict but also filled with opportunities for more peaceful and just outcomes. The pragmatist research to which this book is attuned, we further hope, provides inspiration for reflective research that begins with the consideration of factual events and the multiple practices which can be interpretatively unraveled rather than with conceptual frameworks limited by their definitions. The work is not and cannot be definitive. Instead, we end with a question, which is essentially where we began: What are the borders here and how do they continue to matter in our dynamic world?

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