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## BETWEEN CO-OPERATION AND INSULATION

### *Afghanistan's Relations with the Central Asian Republics*

#### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The various problems in Afghanistan, from security to economics, are often acknowledged as having a regional component. In this context, rightly so, the focus is mostly on Pakistan and, to a lesser extent, on Iran. Other states and actors in the broader region are given less attention by analysts. This report seeks to address, in a comprehensive manner, one region of concern within the various foreign relationships of Afghanistan – the former Soviet republics of Central Asia to the north. In contrast to many other reports that treat these countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan; only the former three directly bordering Afghanistan) as if they were a homogenous region (the ‘-stans’), here they are analysed separately, as each forms its own foreign policy – often in a bilateral manner, eschewing genuine regional co-operation. In addition, the US and Russian roles played in security, economic and counter-narcotics fields within Central Asia will be illuminated, as both of those states have recently increasingly seen their engagement in Central Asia as related, by varying degrees, to Afghanistan.

On the Afghan side, special attention is given not just to the formulation of foreign relations with the Central Asian republics by the central government in Kabul, but also to the actions and motivations of influential actors in northern Afghanistan towards them. This includes an assessment of connections between current northern Afghan political opposition

and neighbouring Central Asia and of local government authorities, commanders, traders, insurgents and Islamists in northern Afghanistan, although all these categories are often overlapping.

The research in this report focuses especially on local and regional security trends involving Afghanistan and the Central Asia republics. In this regard, both state and non-state level interactions are analysed. The findings of this report note the difficulty in not only accurately assessing current security-related trends, but especially so in predicting future security scenarios. Nevertheless, this report argues that security risks that link Afghanistan to the former Soviet republics of Central Asia are often highly exaggerated, especially so the alleged link between narcotics trafficking and radical Islamist groups. In reality, throughout Central Asia the main players in narcotics trafficking are government employees, security officers and mafia figures. Further findings point to a lack of a serious threat to the Central Asian republics from terrorists and insurgents in northern Afghanistan, who are overwhelmingly recruited from among Afghan citizens and focused locally.

Attributing a significant level of insurgent activities to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and trans-national fighters is an exaggeration and politically motivated. The anti-government fighters in the north are of a local character, with the Uzbek insurgents among them being Afghan Uzbeks rather than being from across the border in Uzbekistan and not necessarily linked to the IMU.

As for ethnic connections in general, the findings of this research are that Central Asian governments and citizens do not share any remarkable affinity for their co-ethnics in Afghanistan. Rather, relations – in narcotics trafficking, business, strategic relations, etc – are largely formed based on mutually beneficial interests, not on ethnic sympathies.

Overall, the governments of Central Asia are focused on internal threats to their rule – threats which have little to nothing to do with Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is by far the most insulated from Afghanistan, and the modest security risks it faces are tied to other regions. In contrast to all other Central Asian leaders, Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev rejects the post-2014 “catastrophic theories” of security in Central Asia related to Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is somewhat notable for its attempts to position itself as a mediator or leader for various small initiatives related to Afghanistan, such as hosting conferences for diplomatic and multilateral initiatives, offering a wide range of student scholarships to Afghan students, and assisting Afghanistan via its international development agency KazAid.

Kyrgyzstan faces a similar situation, with threats to security and stability being overwhelmingly internal. Like Kazakhstan, incidents of militant violence here are also more so connected to the North Caucasus, not Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan is geographically isolated from Afghanistan and, with the closure of the US air base near the capital Bishkek, has increasingly few concerns related to Afghanistan. Unlike Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan does not have the resources or international clout to contribute much to regional multilateral and bilateral initiatives focused on or including Afghanistan.

Meanwhile, Turkmenistan, while noted for its apparent isolation from Afghanistan, has actually often quietly formed obscured arrangements with various actors in Afghanistan over the last two decades. Turkmenistan has hopes for some significant economic infrastructure that would tie it to Afghanistan, especially the proposed TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline. Nevertheless, scepticism remains about its fate amidst deteriorating security and a lack of funding.

Uzbekistan, with arguably the most formidable domestic security forces in the region, perceives a certain level of security risk from Afghanistan (even after a decade without any serious security incidents with ties to Afghanistan), and has formulated a policy of engaging on select economic projects and supporting certain proxies within Afghanistan while strongly restricting population movements and independent trade across the very short Afghan border. Nevertheless, the government of Uzbekistan, while publically declaring instability in Afghanistan to

be a threat, does not subscribe to alarmist assessments in private. Rather, the focus is on domestic controls over the people of Uzbekistan and potential – and realistic – rivals for power inside Uzbekistan.

Tajikistan is left as the most vulnerable state in Central Asia with regard to trends in Afghanistan. Its relatively weak government and unprofessional security forces have not proved highly successful in recent years. However, security problems in Tajikistan are highly localised and have few, if any, direct connections to Afghanistan. Near-term risks in Tajikistan, as in other Central Asia countries, are overwhelmingly domestic despite being more comprehensively connected to Afghanistan than the other Central Asian republics. As for economic connections, the post-2001 increase in cross-border trade has not been large enough to make Afghanistan a valuable trade partner for Tajikistan. Ethnic connections and personal ties between northern Afghan powerbrokers and Tajik government officials have not created any solid and lasting relations that can compensate for the lack of common interests in forging stronger cross-border bonds.

Despite quite considerable growth since 2001 that has benefited people in the border areas and beyond (but starting from a very low level), particularly locally along the frontier between Afghanistan and Central Asian republics, economic integration in the region will continue to suffer. This is due to Afghanistan and the countries of Central Asia being marginal economic hinterlands connected not so much among each other but in different directions (Afghanistan to Pakistan and Iran; Central Asia to Russia and China), combined with serious security and infrastructure problems, as well as the tendency of the states in this region to avoid genuine multilateral co-operation while embracing restrictive border regimes. US strategic plans to move the Central Asian republics away from the Russian sphere of influence and connect the region economically to Afghanistan and South Asia failed completely – aside from some modest gains in terms of electricity exports to Afghanistan. The real gains in economic ties to Central Asia have been made instead by China.

For Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, their economic ties are overwhelmingly in the direction of China and Russia. Afghanistan cannot be expected to offer anything of significance to their economies. For Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the economic significance of Afghanistan can only be felt in some of the smaller towns immediately adjacent to the Afghan border. Closer to the centres of power in these two states there are some individuals and companies with economic interests in Afghanistan. However, the accumulated interests are quite modest when measured against other, far larger, trade partners.

The comparatively short period of time immediately after the fall of the Taliban was squandered in terms of using the relatively good security conditions to bolster regional trade, infrastructure and economic connections with the Central Asian republics. It is unsure whether plans for the near future to make up for lost time with new electricity, gas and railway connections will gain traction considering the deteriorating security situation and difficulty in securing international funding and delivering it locally. The trans-border narcotics trade between Afghanistan and Central Asia – supported, managed and/or protected by government officials and security forces on both sides of the border – is the one enduring economic connection that has demonstrated resilience since the fall of the Taliban, as well as promise for the future. It is the only true cross-border economic activity that is truly supported by all relevant state and non-state actors.

Afghanistan and the countries of Central Asia remain strangers, with historic ethnic and religious ties not being able to overcome the numerous barriers to more substantive connections. On the Afghan side of the border, different groups of people (political-military figures, government authorities, traders, students, former migrants and other local people), mainly in northern areas, interact with neighbouring Central Asia on a limited basis. However, their cross-border relations do not amount to a basis for any enduring and significant relationship. Central Asia cannot be expected to be an important factor in Afghanistan in the same manner as are Pakistan and Iran.

Central Asian states will continue to face domestic problems, both economic and political – with Afghanistan having very little role to play there now and in the near future. Central Asian governments are aware of this, whether they publically acknowledge this or not. For this reason, they overwhelmingly focus their efforts on repressing internal forces, with Afghanistan being used only – with the notable exception of the relatively wealthy Kazakhstan – as a rhetorical tool to seek Russian and western funding and support while scaring their populations away from pressing for political change. Europe, the US and Russia will continue to engage Central Asia, particularly in supporting the security sector (the police and military forces).

For the US and various European countries, the focus in Central Asia is switching from transit logistics and support for military operations in Afghanistan to a more focused effort on training of security forces and border programme support. What future role the countries of Central Asia will continue to play in supporting western forces in Afghanistan is at the moment unclear, as there is yet to be a decision made on the Afghan-US agreement that would be the

basis of a continued deployment and, when this happens, on the number of western forces to remain in Afghanistan after 2014. Nevertheless, the future co-operation of Central Asian countries with the US and various European countries for their operations in Afghanistan, if required, would likely be assured – at a price (eg, security assistance, human rights waivers, economic support, etc). For Russia, the goal is to maintain its military presence in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan while attempting to keep Uzbekistan, which is more independent in its military and strategic relations at the moment, from moving too far outside of the Russian sphere of influence. Recent Russian involvement in the ongoing crisis in Ukraine can be seen as either a warning that Russia is willing to intervene in the former Soviet republics (which includes Central Asia), or that its energies are focused in the direction of Europe, not Central Asia and Afghanistan.

In the near-term, an important development to watch out for is the outcome of the presidential elections in Afghanistan and whether it heralds significant shifts in its domestic and foreign policies, coupled with the on-going international security and economic drawdown, and whether and how these impact current trends in Afghan-Central Asian interactions.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Given the changing political, military and socio-economic environment in Afghanistan, and to a lesser extent in the former Soviet republics of Central Asia<sup>1</sup> (we will use 'Central Asia' from here on), this report examines how Afghanistan and these countries are managing their relations at the state and non-state levels. A particular focus of the analysis here will be on the resulting effects of Afghanistan-Central Asia relations and connections on local and regional security trends. In this report, both state and non-state level interactions will be analysed. These will include diplomatic and direct state-to-state relations, cross-border ethnic relations (e.g., Tajiks, Turkmen and Uzbeks in Afghanistan and Central Asia), business and trade, migration and refugees, drug trafficking, violent and non-violent Islamist groups, insurgent and terrorist groups, outside third party actors (NATO, the US, Russia, etc.) and other relevant factors.

Despite a growing body of literature on the connections and relations between Afghanistan and Central Asia, there is still a need to further illuminate the interests of the various local and external actors under unpredictable circumstances. The most pressing Afghanistan-related concern at the moment for states in the region is the drawdown of NATO/ISAF forces through 2014 (though negotiations for maintaining a residual force have been contentiously and inconclusively going on between the US and Afghanistan) and the continued deterioration of security in Afghanistan as the country works its way towards the second round of presidential elections. The answer to the question of whether or not long-term mutually beneficial bilateral and multilateral relations between Central Asia and Afghanistan can be maintained under these circumstances is at the moment unclear.

Connections between Central Asia and Afghanistan increased in scope and intensity after 2001: Central Asian governments supported US and NATO operations in Afghanistan; Central Asian states involved themselves with the post-Taleban government and non-state actors in Afghanistan; both the narcotics as well as legitimate trade increased; major economic projects were re-invigorated or new ones proposed, including the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, the Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) project, particularly its current sole existing CASA-1000 component, and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan (TAT) railway

project; people-to-people contacts were expanded and to some extent strengthened (e.g., Afghan businesspeople and students in Central Asia), etc. All of these trends were facilitated or encouraged by outside actors such as the US, Russia and the EU. Central Asia came to be quickly viewed as part of a system of 'managing' Afghanistan – albeit to a lesser extent than via the complicated and all-important Pakistan relationship, for example (e.g., when trade levels and military logistics are compared). Nevertheless, military transit and basing rights in Central Asia, in addition to new economic connections, became a vital part of supporting the post-Taleban Afghan government and supporting continued military operations in Afghanistan.

Central Asia cannot be expected to be as significant to Afghanistan as Pakistan or Iran, as it certainly has had less involvement in its southern neighbour's politics and economy. But with a less – at least perceived as less – negative and destructive involvement in Afghanistan, the Central Asian countries are free to implement a far more constructive engagement than Iran and Pakistan, albeit on a smaller scale. People-to-people contacts and economic co-operation between Afghanistan and Central Asia could potentially increase. The range of possibilities at the moment, however, includes cautious engagement, isolation or a strict military-to-military relationship. Furthermore, Central Asia cannot be treated as a unified region with a single strategy and common interests. Each of the five states crafts its own relations with Afghanistan, and forces within Central Asian society (e.g., businesses, militants, etc.) will also form interactions with Afghans and Afghanistan. In terms of the spread of instability, the question of whether or not the countries of Central Asia will be seriously affected by Afghanistan (i.e., 'spillover' effects) is yet to be conclusively settled – a situation that will likely remain so for the near future.

This thematic report is based on both desk research and fieldwork in the region. These include a survey of relevant published and unpublished material from both outside and within the region (in English, Dari, Russian, Tajik and Uzbek), key informant interviews and e-mail communication with knowledgeable individuals, as well as personal observations and fieldwork by the authors in Afghanistan (regularly), Kazakhstan (one author's brief research trip in 2013), Kyrgyzstan (both authors: 18 months combined from 2011-2013), Tajikistan (one author: 24 months total from 2009 to 2014) and Washington, DC (regularly). Due to the restrictive research environments in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, no field research was undertaken in these two countries. The lack of fieldwork here was compensated for with research trips to the adjacent areas of Afghanistan that border

<sup>1</sup> For this report, we use 'Central Asia' in the narrowest Western definition: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.



or interact with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, and by a thorough survey of secondary sources and consultations with informants familiar with the factors relevant to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan's relations with Afghanistan. This publication also builds on earlier research that one of the co-authors carried out when working for the Afghanistan Analysts Network, and on work that the other conducted while on an OSCE (Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe) Academy Teaching and Research Fellowship in Kyrgyzstan and on an IREX-funded research project in Tajikistan.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The present-day area of northern Afghanistan and the adjacent regions of southern Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were, for much of history, a common cultural and economic space. The modern river borders formed by the Amu Darya and Panj rivers (and by the 'empty spaces' of the Afghanistan-Turkmenistan border) never constituted any serious obstacle to migration, trade, the flow of religious and cultural ideas or the projection of political power. Even as late as the 19th century, the Durrani Empire (as well as the later Barakzai Dynasty), Persia and the Bukharan Emirate (i.e., contemporary Afghanistan, Iran and Uzbekistan/Tajikistan, respectively) struggled to gain control over Balkh – the most important centre in what was then a contested area with a number of independent statelets. The region of what is today northern Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics to the north was subjected to the same ethnic trends: the indigenous, sedentary population who spoke Eastern Iranian languages (e.g., Bactrian, Soghdian, etc.) and had the same religious practices converted to Islam and, minus parts of Badakhshan and other small enclaves, switched to a Western Iranian language (Persian). For over a millennium until the 17th century, Turkic migrations into this region followed a unified trend on both sides of what is now a modern-day border, resulting in the exact same groups being

present on both sides of the Afghan border (e.g., Uzbeks, Turkmen and smaller groups such as Karluks, etc.).<sup>3</sup>

However, this common cultural, religious and economic space would come to be firmly divided in a decades-long process starting at the end of the 19th century. By this time the Afghan state had managed to secure control over much of the north, while the Russians had moved south and taken control of Central Asia (through both direct and indirect rule). The Russian and British empires agreed to keep Afghanistan as a buffer state and signed a series of agreements between 1873 and 1895 that delimited the border that still remains today as the boundary between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Russian tsarist authorities did not, however, attempt to introduce any radical changes to local societies in Central Asia. But the Soviet leadership would have very different plans and attacked local economic structures and religious practices, as well as the political and social authorities. Although the Soviet transformation of society did not work out as initially planned, enormous changes did result – changes that created obvious differences that have remained to this day and mark northern Afghanistan and the regions to the north as distinctly different cultural, political and economic spaces.<sup>4</sup> A further effect of the Soviet assault on local society was the emigration of hundreds of thousands of Uzbeks, Tajiks and

<sup>2</sup> Due to issues of security, authoritarian government tactics and bureaucratic punishment (i.e., of informants within NGOs and international organisations), most informants are cited anonymously. Christian Bleuer would like to thank all those anonymous people who helped during his approximately 30 months of fieldwork from 2009 to 2014 in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The authors would also like to acknowledge the critical – and valuable – feedback received from the many busy people who took the time to read a draft of this report. Said Reza Kazemi would like to thank several anonymous people inside and outside Afghanistan for accepting to be interviewed in person or via the Internet.

<sup>3</sup> Hasan Kawun Kakar, *Government and Society in Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir 'Abd al-Rahman Khan*, Austin and London, University of Texas Press 1979; Audrey C. Shalinsky, *Long Years of Exile: Central Asian Refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America 1993; Jonathan L. Lee, *The 'Ancient Supremacy': Bukhara, Afghanistan and the Battle for Balkh, 1731–1901*, Leiden, EJ Brill 1996; Christine Noelle, *State and Tribe in Nineteenth-Century Afghanistan: The Reign of Amir Dost Muhammad Khan, 1826–1863*, Surrey, Curzon Press 1997; Gunnar Jarring, *On the Distribution of Turk Tribes in Afghanistan*, Lund Universitets Årsskrift, N. F. Avd. Bd 34. Nr. 4. Lund/Leipzig, C.W.K. Gleerup/Otto Harrasowitz 1939, esp. 13–35, 52–64.

<sup>4</sup> For a case study on the Soviet transformation of society in Tajikistan, see Kirill Nourzhanov and Christian Bleuer, *Tajikistan: A Political and Social History*, Canberra, The Australian National University Press 2013, <http://press.anu.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/whole.pdf>. For a brief description of this process across the region, see Thomas Barfield and Amy Hawthorne (eds), 'Afghanistan's Other Neighbors: Iran, Central Asia, and China', Conference Report, organised by the American Institute of Afghanistan Studies (AIAS) and the Hollings Center for International Dialogue, Istanbul, Turkey, 24–26 July 2008, (report released February 2009), [http://www.bu.edu/aias/reports/aon\\_conference.pdf](http://www.bu.edu/aias/reports/aon_conference.pdf).

Turkmen out of the Soviet Union in the 1920s and early 1930s. While many of those who fled likely died as refugees, many made it to India, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and elsewhere. An undetermined number stayed in Afghanistan, with some identifying as *muhajirs*<sup>5</sup> and resisting assimilation in Afghanistan (at least initially<sup>6</sup>), seeing themselves as superior to local Afghans of the same ethnicity. However, there is no indication that these Central Asians living in Afghanistan maintained any significant ties at all with their homeland, even after the fall of the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

In the later Soviet period, after World War II, Moscow maintained mostly cordial relations with the non-aligned Afghan state and participated in the state-building there through agricultural, industrial, cultural and military assistance programmes. This interaction was directed and implemented not just through Moscow, but also through the government structures of the Soviet republics in Central Asia that had co-ethnic populations inside Afghanistan (i.e., the Turkmen, Uzbek and Tajik Soviet Socialist Republics). These relations, driven partly by competition with the United States and its proxies in Pakistan, soon led to ever deeper relations with revolutionary forces within Afghanistan. As a result of the late-April 1978 communist revolution/*coup d'état* in Afghanistan that soon caused widespread popular resistance, the Soviet Union, having started decades earlier with cautious engagement, was now compelled to intervene to prop up a reckless and violent communist government. The military operation that started in late 1979, initially planned to be a short-term presence in Afghanistan, instead resulted in the decade-long Soviet-Afghan war.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> A category of refugees who claim a special Islamic status as righteous refugees who flee in order to preserve their Muslim practices.

<sup>6</sup> Unfortunately, no recent studies have been carried out on these communities.

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Shalinsky, *Long Years of Exile* [see FN 3]; Kamoludin Abdoullaev, 'Central Asian Emigres in Afghanistan: First Wave, 1920–31', *Central Asia Monitor* 4&5, 1994; K. N. Abdullaev, *Ot Sin'tszyanya do Khorasana: Iz Istorii Sredneaziatskoy Emigratsii 20 Veka* [From Xinjiang to Khorasan: The History of the Central Asian Emigration of the 20<sup>th</sup> century], Dushanbe, Irfon 2009; Gabriele Rasuly-Palczek, 'Alignment politics and factionalism among the Uzbeks of northeastern Afghanistan', in *Ethnicity, Authority, and Power in Central Asia: New Games Great and Small*, ed by Robert L. Canfield and Gabriele Rasuly-Palczek, London, Routledge 2010.

<sup>8</sup> How the Soviet Union sold its invasion of Afghanistan within its space (i.e., Central Asian and other Soviet republics such as Belarus, Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia and the Baltic states) is fundamentally different: “.

As a result of the war in Afghanistan, the divisions between the republics of Soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan hardened even further. Soviet Muslim soldiers from Central Asia carried out their duties just as well as Soviet soldiers of European ethnicities while developing no particular affinities to their cross-border co-ethnics and fellow Muslims.<sup>9</sup> When independent researchers were eventually able to access Central Asia, they found that local Muslims had little desire to interact with their southern Muslim neighbours and, in fact, held strongly negative views, especially towards Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup> Aside from cultural and religious connections, there was also a continued economic disconnect. After the dissolution of the USSR, the independent states of Central Asia remained connected to Russia in terms of trade – the civil war in Afghanistan and the very low levels of economic activity there (and Afghanistan's connections to Iran and Pakistan) being large factors in blocking any sort of economic integration or serious trade relations (aside from narcotics).

Both the peoples and governments of Central Asia preferred to mostly insulate themselves from

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... the Soviets were told their troops were in Afghanistan fulfilling their 'international duty,' building hospitals and schools, planting trees and generally helping the Afghans build a socialist state' – a Soviet *mission civilisatrice* for Afghanistan." See Svetlana Alexievich, *Zinky Boys: Soviet Voices from the Afghanistan War*, trans. by Julia and Robin Whitby, x, New York, WW Norton and Company Inc 1990. For the Soviet disengagement from Afghanistan, see Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal*, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1995; Artemy M. Kalinovsky, *A Long Goodbye: The Soviet Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Despite earlier claims – sourced to anti-Soviet analysts and pro-*mujahedin* figures in the 1980s – of ethnic sympathies between Soviet Central Asian soldiers and the local Afghan co-ethnic and co-religious population, it has become clear that Muslim and Central Asian Soviet soldiers overwhelmingly did not feel strong sympathies for local Afghans. See Christian Bleuer, 'Muslim Soldiers in Non-Muslim Militaries at War in Muslim Lands: The Soviet, American and Indian Experience', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 32:4, 2012, 493–6; Mark Galeotti, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Union's Last War*, London, Frank Cass 1995, especially 29, 159.

<sup>10</sup> M. Nazif Shahrani, 'Islam and the Political Culture of "Scientific Atheism" in Post-Soviet Central Asia: Future Predicaments', in *The Politics of Religion in Russia and the New States of Eurasia*, ed by Michael Bourdeaux, London, ME Sharpe 1995, 291; John Schoeberlein-Engel, *Identity in Central Asia: Construction and Contention in the Conceptions of "Uzbek," "Tajik," "Muslim," "Samarqandi" and other Groups*, PhD Dissertation, Harvard University 1994, 251.

Afghanistan, with those in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan being successful in doing so. But Tajikistan would have no choice. Starting in 1992 Tajikistan descended into civil war, with around 90,000 refugees and opposition fighters seeking refuge in northern Afghanistan.<sup>11</sup> Hosted mainly by Shura-ye Nazar, the forces led by Ahmad Shah Massud, the Tajik opposition used northern Afghanistan as a safe haven from which to support insurgent operations inside Tajikistan. Eventually, the rise of the Taliban resulted in Russia, Iran and Massud pressing the two sides in Tajikistan's civil war – a serious distraction for what was becoming a united front against the Taliban – to reach a compromise. By the time a peace deal was signed in 1997, Tajikistan's role as a base of operations for funnelling weapons and other forms of support to anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan who had been cornered by the Taliban was secured. The relationship between Tajikistan and Afghanistan was, however, highly securitised. No broader social or economic interactions resulted during this time. Of most concern to Central Asian governments during this period was the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), which was being hosted by the Taliban government inside Afghanistan (it had bases in eastern Tajikistan for a time as well). Their raids into Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1999 and 2000, while not successful in bringing about anything more than momentary and isolated incidents of instability, shocked the Central Asian governments into becoming even more wary of Afghanistan.<sup>12</sup>

A new era of relations began in late 2001 when the Taliban were removed from power and the IMU forces in northern Afghanistan were decimated in the wake of the US-led international military intervention in Afghanistan. But, despite the apparent pacification of northern Afghanistan, at least until 2009 when the Taliban had again established themselves in that area,<sup>13</sup> the neighbouring states of Tajikistan,

Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan did not attempt to seriously boost their economic relations. While the increase in trade sounds impressive (multi-fold in Uzbekistan's case), it went from an almost non-existent level to a comparatively modest level, especially when compared to Afghanistan's trade turnover with Pakistan and Iran.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, there has been no flowering of cultural ties, with Central Asia mostly looking towards Russia, and even those who have embraced a stronger Muslim identity look anywhere but Afghanistan for inspiration. Afghanistan and Central Asia, despite their linguistic and religious similarities, remain strangers. However, with the resurgence of the Taliban and possible further weakening of the Afghan central government, Central Asia may soon have no choice but to further isolate itself from Afghanistan or to become involved in internal military and social trends across the border (e.g., supporting northern Afghan political figures) – or, as Uzbekistan did in the second half of the 1990s, isolate itself in terms of trade and movement of people while supporting a proxy force inside Afghanistan. In any case, as geographical neighbours, Central Asia and Afghanistan lack the ultimate option of completely disengaging from one another's worlds.

### 3. AFGHAN GOVERNMENT'S ENGAGEMENT WITH THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES

After 2001, the Afghan government (i.e., the central administration in Kabul and provincial administrations in the eight provinces bordering on Central Asia in the north<sup>15</sup>) has increasingly engaged politically and economically with its Central Asian counterparts.

<sup>11</sup> The civil war in Tajikistan drove approximately 90,000 people out of mainly southern Tajikistan to northern Afghanistan (of this figure, an estimated 27,500 in a refugee camp near Mazar-e Sharif in Balkh province and 25,000 in three refugee camps in Kunduz and Takhar provinces). Some 60,000 stayed in Afghanistan for a significant period. See Human Rights Watch, 'Tajik Refugees in Northern Afghanistan: Obstacles to Repatriation', May 1996, 8, <http://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/t/tajikstn/tajik965.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> This entire paragraph is the consensus view that emerged from eight years of the author's work (2005–13) on the civil war in Tajikistan.

<sup>13</sup> For example, see Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter, 'The Insurgents of the Afghan North: The rise of the Taliban, the self-abandonment of the Afghan government and the effects of ISAF's "capture-and-kill campaign"', Thematic report 04/2011, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*,

May 2011, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/AAN-2011-Northern-Insurgents-summ.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> For further analysis on this issue, see the section on Uzbekistan.

<sup>15</sup> Eight of Afghanistan's 34 provinces border on Central Asia: Badakhshan, Takhar, Kunduz and Balkh border on Tajikistan in the northeast and north (1,206 km); Balkh also borders on Uzbekistan (137 km) in the north; and Jowzjan, Faryab, Badghis and Herat border on Turkmenistan in the north and northwest (744 km).



### 3.1 Regional Co-operation

#### 3.1.1 Afghanistan-Focused 'Heart of Asia'/Istanbul Process

At a larger regional level, the central Afghan government, spurred on by the international community, has been struggling to galvanise region-wide co-operation on security and development in Afghanistan and its neighbourhood under what is called the 'Heart of Asia', or Istanbul, Process since November 2011.<sup>16</sup> This regional process involves all the five Central Asian states, among several other participating and supporting states and international and regional organisations – with Kazakhstan hosting the third ministerial conference in April 2013. However, the initiative, given the region's current socio-political divergence (e.g., the multiplicity of serious political conflicts between Afghanistan and Pakistan, between India and Pakistan, between Iran and the US, between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, etc.), has been overly unrealistic in its stated ambitions and

timeline for implementation, despite achieving some practical, albeit haphazard and mainly bilateral, results so far.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, doubts remain about whether or not the process can continue with the imminent drawdown of NATO/ISAF forces and a likely decrease in the Western-led international community's interest in and engagement with the region.<sup>18</sup> The regional initiative can rather be read as part of the broader narrative of *enteqal*, or transition, of political and security affairs from the West to Afghanistan by gradually leaving Afghanistan and its fate to itself and to the larger region. Despite this, the regional initiative has been an achievement for Afghanistan's fledgling diplomatic efforts, backed by its key international supporters such as the US, Turkey and Kazakhstan, but it may take years, if not decades, to come to fruition, if at all.

A key shortcoming of the Heart of Asia/Istanbul Process is that it continues to lack organisational and funding mechanisms – due to lack of political will – for the six adopted implementation plans (on counter-terrorism; counter-narcotics; disaster management; trade, commercial and investment opportunities; regional infrastructure; and education). The participants have failed to overcome this problem since the process was launched in late 2011 because there seems to be no serious determination to create another regional organisation in an area where several already existing regional South Asian, Central Asian and Eurasian organisations (e.g., Economic Co-operation Organisation, South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation, Central Asian Regional Economic Co-operation, Shanghai Co-operation Organisation, Collective Security Treaty Organisation, etc.) barely function. The Afghan government's proposal to establish a trust fund failed to gain consensus at the Almaty conference and was subordinated to further discussion, which took place during the meeting of senior officials on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly meeting in New York in September 2013 – further delegating a final decision on the issue to a review of an expert study of funding modalities by senior officials on 17 January 2014 in India.<sup>19</sup> This

<sup>16</sup> The Afghanistan Analysts Network has been analysing these developments from the beginning. See Thomas Ruttig, 'Afghanistan Conference in Istanbul: The clogged arteries of the "Heart of Asia"', 1 November 2011, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistan-conference-in-istanbul-the-clogged-arteries-of-the-heart-of-asia>; Said Reza Kazemi, 'Upcoming Regional Co-operation Conference on Afghanistan: A Primer', 13 June 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/upcoming-regional-co-operation-conference-on-afghanistan-a-primer>; Niamatullah Ibrahim, 'Heart of Asia Hardly Beating at the Second "Heart of Asia Meeting"', 22 June 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/guest-blog-heart-of-asia-hardly-beating-at-the-second-heart-of-asia-meeting>; Said Reza Kazemi, 'Afghanistan Conference in Kazakhstan: Will the "Heart of Asia" Start Throbbing?', 25 April 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghanistan-conference-in-kazakhstan-will-the-heart-of-asia-start-throbbing>; Said Reza Kazemi, 'Over-promising, Under-delivering: The Outcome of the Afghanistan Conference in Kazakhstan', 30 April 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/over-promising-under-delivering-the-outcome-of-the-afghanistan-conference-in-kazakhstan>. For outcome documents so far reached by the 'Heart of Asia' participating and supporting countries and organisations, see Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Republic of Turkey, 'Istanbul Process on Regional Security and Cooperation for A Secure and Stable Afghanistan', 2 November 2011, <http://www.mfa.gov.tr/istanbul-process-on-regional-security-and-cooperation-for-a-secure-and-stable-afghanistan.en.mfa>; Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Istanbul Process: A New Agenda for Regional Cooperation in the "Heart of Asia"', 14 June 2012, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/10569>; Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Istanbul Process: Stability and Prosperity in the "Heart of Asia" through Confidence Building and Shared Regional Interests', 27 April 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/19668>.

<sup>17</sup> Kazemi, 'Afghanistan Conference in Kazakhstan' [see FN 16]. For further detail on 15 previously identified, but largely un-implemented, regional investment projects involving Afghanistan and the broader region, see Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Regional Investment Projects and Policy Priorities', 14 September 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/Content/files/13%20-%20RECCA%20V%20-%20Regional%20Investment%20Projects.pdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Kazemi, 'Over-promising, Under-delivering' [see FN 16].

<sup>19</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Istanbul Process senior officials meet in New York', 24 September 2013,

latest meeting also delayed decision-making over a funding mechanism for the fourth ministerial conference to be held in August 2014 in China.<sup>20</sup> As a result, *ad hoc, but politically motivated*, financing arrangements will continue to be the practice. This means that actual implementation will have to wait until the next ministerial conference in China in summer 2014, indicating, all in all, that the process will hardly be anything more than a talking shop, at least until that time. In one way, the political and other consultations conducted as part of the regional process are achievements in a region where governments do not talk to one another often. The Afghan government's recent statements that the "region is at a crossroads", that "[l]iving in isolation is not an option" and that there is a need "to be guided by a positive narrative that capitalizes on our gains of the past 12 years"<sup>21</sup> need to be assessed within a neighbourhood perspective, clarifying that everything in the region does not revolve around Afghanistan and that other greater problems and priorities dominate the agendas of the key participating states.<sup>22</sup>

### 3.1.2 Regional Energy and Infrastructure Projects

The governments of Afghanistan and its 'near and extended neighbours' in Central and South Asia have

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<http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/istanbul-process-senior-officials-meet-in-new-york>.

<sup>20</sup> See, for example, Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Opening Remarks of Mr. Ershad Ahmadi at Istanbul Process "Heart of Asia" Senior Officials Meeting 17 January 2014 New Delhi', 17 January 2014, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/opening-remarks-of-mr-ershad-ahmadi-at-istanbul-process-heart-of-asia-senior-officials-meeting--17-january-2014-new-delhi>; Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 'Opening Remarks by Foreign Secretary at Senior Official's Meeting (SOM), Istanbul-Heart of Asia Process in New Delhi', 17 January 2014, <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22757/Opening+Remarks+by+Foreign+Secretary+at+Senior+Officials+Meeting+SOM+IstanbulHeart+of+Asia+Process+in+New+Delhi>.

<sup>21</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Statement of Mr. Ershad Ahmadi, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan at the Senior Officials Meeting of the Istanbul Process 23 September 2013', 24 September 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/statement-of-mr-ershad-ahmadi-deputy-foreign-minister-of-the-islamic-republic-of-afghanistan-at-the-senior-officials-meeting-of-the-istanbul-process-2>.

<sup>22</sup> Kristian Berg Harpviken, 'Caught in the middle? Regional perspectives on Afghanistan', in *Troubled Regions and Failing States: The Clustering and Contagion of Armed Conflicts*, ed by Kristian Berg Harpviken, Emerald Group Publishing 2010, 277–305.

re-vitalised long-standing (or began anew) trilateral and multilateral negotiations on three major regional energy and infrastructure projects after 2001. These include the oft-discussed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline project; the newly proposed Central Asia–South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) project, particularly its sole existing CASA-1000 element; and the recently planned Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan railway construction project.

The TAPI project has seen fresh movement, but continues to fall short of generating credible and actionable commitments from the stakeholders involved (for recent developments, see Appendix 3; see also the section on Turkmenistan). The four governments re-convened several times and signed what the Asian Development Bank (ADB) called "historic agreements" after "more than 20 years of delicate negotiations", turning TAPI into not only a "peace pipeline" but also a "pipeline to prosperity".<sup>23</sup> More recently, in August 2013, the Afghan government reported that TAPI will be constructed by end-2014 and will start operations by end-2017.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, the Afghan government stated that some 9,000–12,000 security forces will be created to ensure security for the project on Afghan soil.<sup>25</sup> However, given the deteriorating security situation along the pipeline's route in Afghanistan (along the ring road through Herat down to Kandahar) and in Pakistan (through the restive Baluchistan province), it is unlikely that the project's construction will begin by 2014 and, if so, that it will see smooth implementation through 2017 (see the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan).

The CASA-1000 regional electricity export project (from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan and Afghanistan), as part of the bigger planned CASAREM, has been in negotiations for around eight years (for an overview of the project's evolution, see Appendix 1). The idea came from international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the ADB – which actually withdrew (temporarily) from the project in mid-2009 most probably over Tajikistan's move to link CASA-1000 with its contentious Roghun dam – rather than from the four countries involved (i.e., Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and

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<sup>23</sup> Asian Development Bank, 'Historic Agreements Bring Long-Awaited TAPI Pipeline Closer to Reality', 12 May 2012, <http://www.adb.org/news/historic-agreements-bring-long-awaited-tapi-pipeline-closer-reality>.

<sup>24</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 3 August 2013.

<sup>25</sup> *Tolo TV*, 06:00pm news, 17 July 2013 (author's media monitoring).

Pakistan).<sup>26</sup> This partly explains why, so far, the regional countries themselves have taken little practical action. The CASAREM central office was initially to be based in Kabul because almost half of the transmission lines pass through Afghanistan (562 of 1,200 kilometres), but it was moved to Almaty, Kazakhstan,<sup>27</sup> probably due to lack of capacity on the Afghan side. At least from the Afghan side, the entire regional process has been so disorganised that the country is, about eight years since the project's initial conceptualisation, yet to appoint its representative to the central office.<sup>28</sup> This is despite the fact that Afghanistan sees many dividends in the project for itself and for its broader politico-economic relations in the region.<sup>29</sup> Most negotiations and decisions have, therefore, taken place at the top ministerial level.

The CASA-1000 project faces funding difficulties<sup>30</sup> and risks worsening already contentious water disputes in the Central Asian region, particularly between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (see also the section on Tajikistan). Reportedly, Tajikistan's moves to link CASA-1000 to its controversial Roghun dam-building project has been so negatively received, not only by its rival Uzbekistan but also by the World Bank, that it is considered a deviation from the CASA-1000 understandings (particularly the "no new generation expansion" clause) and may defeat the project as a whole.<sup>31</sup> More significantly, on the Afghanistan side,

the CASA-1000 project, similar to other regional co-operation schemes, has to overcome formidable constraints related to crime and insecurity.<sup>32</sup> Thieves stole parts of the metal electricity towers on the way from Pol-e Khomri (Baghlan province) to Kunduz city, according to an official of Afghanistan's only and state-owned electricity company.<sup>33</sup> Furthermore, in the most dramatic instance of insecurity disrupting imported electricity supplies thus far, four times during a two-week period in June 2013, the Taliban exploded transmission towers and opened fire on electricity cables in Dawlatabad district of Faryab province. This cut off imported Turkmen electricity for the district and for Maimana, the provincial capital (see also the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan).<sup>34</sup> Most recently, the Asia Development Bank announced that it was withdrawing from the CASA-1000 project (of which the ADB was to fund 40 per cent) for fiscal reasons – as opposed to earlier reports that stressed security problems in Afghanistan as the reason for withdrawal. Nevertheless, the countries involved continue to express their optimism publicly, and in mid-February 2014, the parties signed an agreement committing further to the project.<sup>35</sup>

Finally, the TAT railway project has been making some rapid progress since the three countries signed a memorandum of understanding in March 2013.<sup>36</sup> Construction work has started in Turkmenistan<sup>37</sup> and

<sup>26</sup> Interviews with Russian and Kyrgyz researchers, Bishkek, September 2012; interview with senior official of Afghan Ministry of Energy and Water, Kabul, 28 August 2013.

<sup>27</sup> Interview with senior official of Afghan Ministry of Energy and Water, Kabul, 28 August 2013.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> In the wake of the ADB withdrawal from the project in mid-2009, the Islamic Development Bank joined the World Bank to finance the project. The Russian government has also said it would allocate 500 million USD to the completion of the project, but the four CASAREM governments have given no joint definitive response to the Russian proposal. See *Tolo news*, 'Bank-e jahani va bank-e tawse'a-ye eslami darbarez-ye sarmayagozari dar prozhe-ye "CASA 1000" tawafuq kardand' [World Bank and Islamic Development Bank Agreed to Invest on the 'CASA 1000' Project], 20 Jawza 1392 [11 June 2013], <http://www.tolonews.com/fa/business/10810-world-bank-and-idb-agree-on-casa-1000-electricity-project>; Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'Rais-e jamhur ba namayanda-ye khas-e Rusia bara-ye Afghanistan didar kard' [The President Met Russia's Special Envoy to Afghanistan], 3 February 2013, <http://president.gov.af/fa/news/6711>.

<sup>31</sup> Fozil Mashrab, 'Tajikistan deviates from CASA script', *Asia Times*, 24 January 2013,

[http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/CEN-01-240613.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/CEN-01-240613.html).

<sup>32</sup> Interviews with *Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat* authorities, Kabul, Pol-e Khomri and Mazar-e Sharif, July and August 2013.

<sup>33</sup> Interview, Pol-e Khomri, 4 July 2013.

<sup>34</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Taliban dar Faryab dakalha-ye barq ra monfajer kardand' [Taliban Exploded Electricity Towers in Faryab], 24 June 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/07/130724\\_k02-taliban-electricity-towers.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/07/130724_k02-taliban-electricity-towers.shtml).

<sup>35</sup> Payrav Chorshanbiyev, 'ADB will not participate in CASA 1000 Project', *Asia Plus*, 17 January 2014, <http://www.news.tj/en/news/adb-will-not-participate-casa-1000-project-0>; 'Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan sign CASA-1000 Project agreement', *AKI Press*, 19 February 2014, <http://www.akipress.com/news:535705/>.

<sup>36</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'MoU of Railway Construction Signed Between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan', 20 March 2013, <http://president.gov.af/en/news/18555>.

<sup>37</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'President Karzai Leaves for Turkmenistan to Inaugurate Railway Project between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan', 5 June 2013, <http://president.gov.af/en/news/21026>.

the three countries have recently finalised a route, linking Atamyrat (Turkmenistan) through Aqina-Andkhoy-Sheberghan-Mazar-e Sharif-Kunduz-Sher Khan Bandar (Afghanistan) with Panj-e Payan (Tajikistan).<sup>38</sup> However, major challenges continue over funding, especially for the construction of the Tajik and possibly Afghan sections of the railway, and security in northern Afghanistan, particularly in Faryab and Kunduz provinces, through which a large part of the railway passes on Afghan soil (see Appendix 2 on TAT's evolution, Appendix 6 on recent reported security incidents in Faryab and the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan). Furthermore, Turkmenistan recently voiced its objections to Tajik and Afghan plans for the finalised route in undiplomatic terms. Turkmenistan may be the first spoiler of this project, following its regular pattern of committing to regional projects and then later withdrawing or not living up to agreed terms.<sup>39</sup>

### 3.1.3 Trade Relations in a Wider Afghan-Central Asian Perspective

Afghanistan-Central Asian trade continues to be limited not only by the fact that Pakistan and Iran remain Afghanistan's most important trade partners, but also because of a range of other administrative and cultural constraints. Although some researchers have highlighted the role Central Asia can increasingly play by re-exporting Russian products to the Afghan market (as these countries have strong trade connections to Russia),<sup>40</sup> the same researchers have, however, explained why it is difficult to bolster the Afghan-Central Asian business relationship:

*... trade between Afghanistan and Central Asian (and other) countries continues to be hampered*

<sup>38</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan for the Development and Strengthening of Bilateral Relationship and Co-operation', 21 October 2013, <http://president.gov.af/fa/news/25463> (in Dari language). There was controversy on the Afghanistan side whether the railway should cross into Tajikistan via Kunduz province or Balkh province – the Balkh way was originally planned, but the Kunduz route was finally picked.

<sup>39</sup> Murat Sadykov, 'Has Turkmenistan-to-Tajikistan Railroad Derailed?', *Eurasianet*, 18 February 2014, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68057>.

<sup>40</sup> Saeed Parto, Jos Winters, Ehsan Saadat, Mohsin Usyan, and Anastasiy Hozyainova, 'Afghanistan and Regional Trade: More, or Less, Imports from Central Asia?', Graduate School of Development, Institute of Public Policy and Administration, University of Central Asia, Working Paper No.3, 2012, 6, <http://www.ucentralasia.org/img-news/file/UCA-IPPA-WP3-PolicyBrief-Eng.pdf>.

*by corruption, inefficient formal institutions, product labeling language, and unfamiliarity of Afghan traders with Central Asian and Russian products.*<sup>41</sup>

A further complication is the "resilient oligopoly" present in major politico-economic dynamics in northern Afghanistan, where northern Afghan political, economic and commercial worlds have been dominated by a few powerful figures (e.g., Atta Mohammad Nur, the powerful governor of Balkh province, and Abdul Rashid Dostum, an influential commander-turned-politician) who provide protection and other services to allied traders and business partners. At the same time they work to exclude others from the field, both violently and otherwise (see the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan).<sup>42</sup>

### 3.2 Bilateral Ties with a Focus on Local Economic Relations

Afghanistan-Tajikistan local economic relations have considerably expanded, mainly in Kunduz and Badakhshan provinces. In Sher Khan Bandar,<sup>43</sup> especially after a bridge was inaugurated over the river Panj in late August 2007,<sup>44</sup> regular inter-governmental interactions have been taking place, including fortnightly meetings between Afghan and Tajik local government officials, customs officers and traders on both sides of the river Panj.<sup>45</sup> The Afghan-Tajik trade through Sher Khan Bandar is not without problems, though. Corruption is rampant in obtaining Tajik visas on both the Afghan and Tajik sides, including for traders.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, the trade has significant illegal aspects, from which a confusing group of corrupt Afghan and Tajik state and non-state

<sup>41</sup> Parto et al., 'Afghanistan and Regional Trade' [see FN 40], 5.

<sup>42</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, 'The Resilient Oligopoly: A Political-Economy of Northern Afghanistan 2001 and Onwards', Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, December 2012, <http://www.areu.org.af/Uploads/EditionPdfs/1213E%20Resilient%20Oligopoly%20IP%20Dec%202013.pdf>.

<sup>43</sup> For some historical detail, see Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 'Shir Khan port', <http://moci.gov.af/en/page/7760>.

<sup>44</sup> 'Tajikistan/Afghanistan: Road Bridge Opens With Aim Of Strengthening Trade', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 26 August 2007, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1078359.html>.

<sup>45</sup> Interview with local government official, Sher Khan Bandar, 3 July 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Interviews with local journalists and government officials, Kunduz and Sher Khan Bandar, July 2013.



actors benefit, including drug traffickers (see the section on narcotics trafficking).

Moreover, considerable people-to-people contact and economic activity takes place between local populations from Afghanistan and Tajikistan through at least six bridges<sup>47</sup> and three common markets<sup>48</sup> in Badakhshan. Aside from licit trade in foodstuffs, textiles, auto parts and consumer goods,<sup>49</sup> an important part of the trade is reportedly trafficking precious stones such as ruby and lapis lazuli and of almost all opiates (opium and heroin), which are sometimes exchanged for Russian-manufactured weapons, particularly Kalashnikovs.<sup>50</sup> Local security officers control this trade, and in Eshkashem it is done on a larger scale than everywhere else.<sup>51</sup> More bridges and common markets will likely be developed in the future, as recently declared by the two countries' presidents.<sup>52</sup>

Further to the west, on the Afghan-Uzbek border, local trade through the Hairatan port<sup>53</sup> (i.e., over the Friendship Bridge) is, by contrast, extremely restricted under "serious security measures" adopted by the Uzbek government under conditions that a highly placed interviewee described as like those of "a war zone".<sup>54</sup> There is also some trade between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan over the Amu Darya's waters. When, for instance, the first oil-carrying tanker arrived at Hairatan port in October 2012 after some 16 years, it "[raised] hopes of a [further] boost in trade between the two countries".<sup>55</sup> (See also the section on Uzbekistan.)

In the northwest, since late 2001, the Torghundi and Aqina ports between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have been thriving, mainly due to security-driven economic demands from tens of thousands of US/NATO-led ISAF troops based in Afghanistan. Prior to 2001, trade between the Afghan and Turkmen sides fluctuated between total closure and high or low levels at the border, given the vagaries of the time.<sup>56</sup> Trade through Torghundi and Aqina will likely decrease once ISAF supply needs are gone (see also the section on Turkmenistan).

Although trade-generated income has increased and further development, mostly in terms of infrastructure, is taking place at both Torghundi and Aqina,<sup>57</sup> new challenges are in the making. Security-related incidents have increasingly been threatening

<sup>47</sup> The bridges include (from the west to the east): (1) Shurobad-Khwahan bridge, construction began started in 2011 and is likely to be completed by end-2013; (2) bridge near Kala-e Khumb in Darwaz, built in 2004 and is an international border crossing between Afghanistan and Tajikistan; (3) Vanj, connecting with the Afghan district of Maymey, inaugurated in 2011; (4) Tem bridge near Qala-ye Bar Panj on the Afghan side and Khorugh on the Tajik side, opened since November 2002 and is an official international border crossing; (5) bridge in Eshkashem district centre, facing the namesake town on the Tajik side, open since 2006 and is an official international border crossing; and (6) bridge near Gaz Khan in Wakhan district and Langar on the Tajik side. E-mail communication with expert on Afghan Badakhshan, 15 September 2013.

<sup>48</sup> They include one in the Darwaz area, close to the bridge of Qala-ye Khumb; one near the Tem bridge in Sheghnan, which takes place on the Tajik side of the river inside a fenced area; and one on an island in the middle of the Panj River in Eshkashem. E-mail communication with expert on Afghan Badakhshan, 15 September 2013.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. An expert on the Tajik side noted, "There's a disagreement over how much of the illicit trade comes via the markets/crossings and how much via the 'green' border (i.e., unbridged river) between these locations". E-mail communication with expert based in Tajikistan, late 2013.

<sup>51</sup> E-mail communication with expert on Afghan Badakhshan, 15 September 2013.

<sup>52</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan for the Development and Strengthening of Bilateral Relationship and Co-operation'.

<sup>53</sup> For some historical detail, see Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 'Hairatan port', <http://moci.gov.af/en/page/7761>.

<sup>54</sup> Interview, Kabul, 10 July 2013.

<sup>55</sup> 'First Tanker in 16 Years Arrives in Hairatan Port', *Tolonews*, 11 October 2012, <http://tolonews.com/en/business/7920-first-tanker-in-16-years-arrives-in-hairatan-port->.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with local government official of Torghundi port, Herat, 4 June 2013. For some historical detail, see Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industries, 'Aqina port', <http://moci.gov.af/en/page/7759>.

<sup>57</sup> 'Haftad-o panj million Afghani awayed-e bandar-e Torghundi dar sal-e jari' [Afs75 Million the Revenues of Torghundi Port in the Current Year], *Herat Paper*, 3 Jaddi 1388 [24 December 2009], <http://www.heratpaper.com/?p=6147>; Pajhwok Afghan News, 'Aqina port revenue shoots up', 28 March 2013, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/03/28/aqina-port-revenue-shoots>; Office of Herat Provincial Governor, 'Bara-ye nokhostin bar, internet-e sari dar Torghundi' [For the First Time, High-Speed Internet in Torghundi], 5 March 2013, <http://herat.gov.af/fa/news/18005>; 'Commerce Ministry allocates USD 6m for industrial park at Aqina Port', *Wadsam Afghan Business News Portal*, 17 February 2013, <http://www.wadsam.com/commerce-ministry-allocates-usd-6m-for-industrial-park-at-aqina-port-989/>.



the regular flow of trade. So far, these incidents seem to be scattered and mainly include hit-and-run attacks against port facilities and trade convoys (Torghundi) and clashes between the Afghan government forces and the armed opposition groups, particularly the Taleban (Aqina) (see Appendix 6 on the security situation in Faryab and the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan).<sup>58</sup> On the road to Torghundi from Herat, many travellers who are working for the Afghan government or for national and international non-governmental organisations go to great lengths to hide their institutional identity and are generally afraid of embarking on the trip.<sup>59</sup> A similar situation prevails in Faryab, of which Aqina is an important part.<sup>60</sup>

Administratively, legal cross-border movement of traders between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan is extremely difficult and time-consuming. At Torghundi, for example, “even if a trader has a registered company, he has to wait for some two months to have his [Turkmen] visa issued.”<sup>61</sup> There are also serious complaints about corruption and misappropriation of public funds in both Torghundi and Aqina,<sup>62</sup> although local government authorities

have unconvincingly stated that “anti-corruption measures” are responsible for “[boosting] Aqina Port’s revenues”.<sup>63</sup>

All in all, prompted by the international community, the Afghan and Central (and, in the case of TAPI and CASA-1000, South) Asian governments have increasingly engaged one another on a multilateral, regional level – mainly focusing on energy and infrastructure projects. However, prospects for growing regional co-operation are uncertain, due to increased uncertainty about Afghanistan’s future security and political stability, and also because of the West-led international community’s potential imminent decline in interest in the region. On a more local and bilateral level, the Afghan and Central Asian governments (particularly Afghanistan and Tajikistan) have, to varying degrees, allowed the further development of cross-border trade and economic relations. This has, to a certain extent, inter-connected the local population and provided some economic benefits for them and possibly for people in other parts of the country and region.

#### 4. THE EVOLVING SECURITY AND POLITICAL SITUATION IN NORTHERN AFGHANISTAN

Broadly speaking, at least three major features of the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan are relevant to Afghan-Central Asian relations: the increased activity of various armed opposition groups, mostly the Taleban; the manoeuvring by political opposition groups based in or drawing their political clout from the north in the run-up to the April 2014 presidential election and their connections to neighbouring Central Asia; and the spread of loosely controlled and illegal armed groups.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, these features are highly fluid in the sense that many actors are, in several cases, simultaneously part of the Afghan government (in such capacities as provincial governors, district governors or mayors) or form part of a political party leadership, and directly or indirectly engage in illegal activity of various types (e.g., corruption or trafficking of different kinds). And now that statistics on violent incidents are no longer publicly available, it is getting

<sup>58</sup> Obaid Ali, ‘Moving East in the North: Transitioned Faryab and the Taleban’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 17 May 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/moving-east-in-the-north-transitioned-faryab-and-the-taleban>; Obaid Ali, ‘A Taleban Foothold in the North: Faryab fighting up after the transition’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 26 November 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-taleban-foothold-in-the-north-faryab-fighting-up-after-transition>; Obaid Ali, ‘Insurgents and Factions: Waves of insecurity rising in Faryab’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 21 September 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/insurgents-and-factions-waves-of-insecurity-rising-in-faryab>; ‘Afzayesh-e hamalat-e mokhalefin-e dawlat dar masir-e shahrah-ye Herat-Torghundi’ [Increase in Attacks by the Government Opposition on the Herat-Torghundi Highway], *Afghan Journalism Centre*, 21 Jaddi 1389 [11 January 2011], <http://www.ajc.af/news-archive/39-afghanistan-news/2258-1389-10-21-05-28-55>; ‘Hamla-ye Taleban bar tasisat-e nafti-ye Torghundi dar Herat’ [Taleban Attack on Torghundi Oil Facilities in Herat], *Bokhdi News Agency*, 19 Hamal 1391 [7 April 2012]; ‘Enfejar dar bandar-e Torghundi-ye Herat’ [Explosion in Herat’s Torghundi Port], *The Killid Group*, 16 Mizan 1391 [7 October 2012].

<sup>59</sup> Personal observations and discussions with local people, Herat, June 2013.

<sup>60</sup> Ali, ‘Insurgents and Factions’ [see FN 58].

<sup>61</sup> Interview with local government official of Torghundi port, Herat, 4 June 2013. See also Parto et al., ‘Afghanistan and Regional Trade’ [see FN 40], 5.

<sup>62</sup> Interviews with local journalists and residents, Herat, Kunduz and Mazar-e Sharif, June-August 2013.

<sup>63</sup> ‘Anti-corruption measures and increased imports boost Aqina Port’s revenues’, *Wadsam Afghan Business News Portal*, 13 August 2013, <http://www.wadsam.com/anti-corruption-measures-and-increased-imports-boost-aqina-ports-revenues-232/>.

<sup>64</sup> Interviews with political activists, journalists and local residents, Kabul, Herat, Baghlan, Kunduz and Mazar-e Sharif, 2013.

increasingly difficult to assess security developments in Afghanistan, including in the north.<sup>65</sup>

#### 4.1 Armed Opposition Groups

Initially, neither Afghan nor international security authorities responded seriously to security-related incidents caused by insurgents in northern Afghanistan.<sup>66</sup> From at least 2008 onwards, however, these incidents increased and took on more serious dimensions, such as major suicide bombings and complex improvised explosive device (IED) attacks.<sup>67</sup> The insurgents re-mobilised old members and engaged like-minded clerical figures while exploiting local intra- and inter-community rivalries to infiltrate and expand their presence in the north; these phenomena were facilitated by the Afghan government's ineffectiveness and corruption and by socio-economic marginalisation across northern Afghanistan.<sup>68</sup> Research for this report has found similar evidence on approaches used by armed opposition groups, particularly the Taliban, to continue penetrating into northern Afghanistan.

The insurgent groups of Afghanistan's north are complex, variegated and, in some cases, overlapping in terms of structure, operation and objectives, at least for the moment. The Taliban and – purportedly and to a significantly lesser extent – the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) are the two major armed opposition groups (taking northern Afghanistan and neighbouring Central Asia into perspective). Assessing the northern armed opposition is sometimes so confusingly misleading that even sources close to political-military

developments in the north talk of such non-existent entities as the 'Islamic Movement of Tajikistan' and 'Taliban from Turkmenistan'.<sup>69</sup>

The Taliban have made extensive inroads into northern Afghanistan in the last few years. A persistent example of this is in Badakhshan province, neighbouring the namesake province of Tajikistan to the north, mostly in Warduj district. Located strategically in both provincial (connecting the provincial capital Faizabad and Baharak with Eshkashem and Pamir) and regional (linking Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, Pakistan) terms, Warduj best represents how bad governance (e.g., harassment of local people by district and provincial authorities) has provided a widening space for the Taliban to continue disrupting security not only in Badakhshan but in the greater north (for recent reported security incidents in Badakhshan, see Appendix 5).<sup>70</sup> According to an informed local journalist, the Taliban numbered 50 to 70 people when they started moving into Warduj, but grew in number once the local Afghan government authorities ignored the threat they potentially posed<sup>71</sup> – this is similar to previous AAN research findings.<sup>72</sup>

Further to the west in Faryab, which borders on Turkmenistan, the security situation has markedly deteriorated.<sup>73</sup> The Taliban have established footholds in Almar, Ghormach, Qaisar, Qaramqol and parts of Pashtun Kot districts, launching attacks against pro-government targets, the result of which has mainly been the death or displacement of many civilians.<sup>74</sup> Moreover, inter-district roads, such as

<sup>65</sup> Kate Clark, 'War Intensifies with More Civilian Casualties: the half-yearly UNAMA report', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 31 July 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/war-intensifies-with-more-civilian-casualties-the-half-yearly-unama-report>. For why Afghanistan NGO Safety Office (ANSO) has stopped, since early 2013, making public its regular assessments of security conditions, see the website of the International NGO Safety Organisation, of which ANSO is a part, <http://www.ngosafety.org/#!reports/c22ox>.

<sup>66</sup> Giustozzi and Reuter, 'The Insurgents of the Afghan North' [see FN 13].

<sup>67</sup> Ibid. See also The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, 'ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q.4 2012', 2013, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ANSO%20Quarterly%20data%20report%20Q%204%202012.pdf>; The Afghanistan NGO Safety Office, 'ANSO Quarterly Data Report Q.4 2011', 2011, <http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/ANSO%20Q4%202011.pdf>.

<sup>68</sup> Giustozzi and Reuter, 'The Insurgents of the Afghan North' [see FN 13], 8–13.

<sup>69</sup> Interview with a source close to the northern Afghan political establishment, Mazar-e Sharif, 21 August 2013.

<sup>70</sup> Bashir Paiman, 'Mo'amma-ye hozur-e Taliban dar Badakhshan-e Afghanistan' [The Riddle of the Taliban's Presence in the Afghan Badakhshan], *BBC Persian*, 27 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/10/131027\\_k02-badakhshan-taliban.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/10/131027_k02-badakhshan-taliban.shtml).

<sup>71</sup> Jawid Rustapur, 'Che awameli posht-e hozur-e ruzafzun-e Taliban dar Badakhshan nahofa ast?' [What Are the Reasons for Taliban's Increasing Presence in Badakhshan?], *BBC Persian*, 22 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130922\\_k03-badakhshan\\_unrests.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130922_k03-badakhshan_unrests.shtml).

<sup>72</sup> Giustozzi and Reuter, 'The Insurgents of the Afghan North' [see FN 13], 8–13.

<sup>73</sup> Ali, 'Moving East' [see FN 58]; Ali, 'A Taliban Foothold' [see FN 58]; Ali, 'Insurgents and Factions' [see FN 58].

<sup>74</sup> "Dawazda hazar nafar dar Faryab az khanahayeshan bija shoda and" [Twelve Thousand People Have Been Displaced from Their Homes in Faryab], *BBC Persian*, 7 June 2011,

Maimana-Ghormach, and inter-provincial highways, such as Faryab-Jowzjan, are increasingly unsafe. Most markedly, the province's worst security-related incident in years took place in late October 2012 when a suicide bomber killed at least 40 people and injured 50 others during a religious ceremony in the centre of Maimana, the provincial capital (for recent reported security incidents in Faryab, see Appendix 6).<sup>75</sup>

As for foreign objectives, it is premature to talk about a 'Taleban strategy' towards Central Asia, but a recent public statement released by Taleban representatives when they opened their contentious office in Doha, Qatar, in June 2013 made things a bit clearer – they might look more for recognition from the broader region than for greater instability in the neighbourhood.<sup>76</sup> The Taleban stressed in their statement:

*The Islamic Emirate [what the Taleban called their rule in Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001] never wants to pose harms to other countries from its soil, nor will it allow anyone to cause a threat to the security of countries from the soil of Afghanistan.*<sup>77</sup>

Kunduz province, which borders on Tajikistan, is another northern region that has seen a rapid

deterioration in security. With its multi-ethnic composition (e.g., Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turkmens, Uzbeks) and historic situation during the civil war (including during the Taleban rule over the Afghan north<sup>78</sup>), Kunduz is not only one of northern Afghanistan's most important provinces, but has also recently become one of the least secure, particularly in Chahrdara,<sup>79</sup> Dasht-e Archi and Imam Saheb districts. Like Badakhshan and other northern provinces, Kunduz's politico-security situation is chaotic and fragmented; unlike Badakhshan and elsewhere in the north, Kunduz has a considerable Pashtun population and strong potential of support for the armed opposition, such as the Taleban. Kunduz has recently witnessed killings of a political nature (e.g., Afghan Parliament Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimi's relatives, the Dasht-e Archi district governor and the Independent Election Commission's provincial head)<sup>80</sup> and sporadic skirmishes between

<sup>78</sup> For historical detail on the conflict and its actors in Kunduz pre-2001, see Nils Wörmer, 'The Networks of Kunduz: A History of Conflict and Their Actors, from 1992 to 2001', Thematic report 02/2012, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, August 2012, [http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/The\\_Networks\\_of\\_Kunduz\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/09/The_Networks_of_Kunduz_FINAL.pdf).

<sup>79</sup> See, for example: Lola Cecchinell, 'Back to Bad: Chahrdara between Taleban and ALP – a district case study', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 6 September 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/back-to-bad-chahrdara-between-taleban-and-alp-district-case-study>.

<sup>80</sup> 'Pedar wa baradar-e rais-e majles-e Afghanistan dar yak hamla-ye entehari koshta shodand' [Father and Brother of Afghan Parliament Speaker Were Killed in a Suicide Attack], *BBC Persian*, 13 March 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130313\\_mar\\_kunduz\\_suicide\\_attack.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130313_mar_kunduz_suicide_attack.shtml); 'Woluswal-e mantaqa-ye Dasht-e Archi dar welayat-e Kunduz dar hamla-ye entehari koshta shod' [Governor of Dasht-e Archi District of Kunduz Province Was Killed in Suicide Attack], *BBC Persian*, 30 August 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/08/130830\\_k05\\_kodoz\\_suicide\\_attack.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/08/130830_k05_kodoz_suicide_attack.shtml); 'Rais-e daftar-e entekhabat-e welayat-e Kunduz dar shamal-e Afghanistan teror shod' [Head of Election Office of Kunduz Province Was Assassinated in the Afghan North], *BBC Persian*, 18 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130918\\_k04\\_kondozi\\_iec.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130918_k04_kondozi_iec.shtml). For a brief chronology of other major security-related incidents in Kunduz since 2011 (e.g., assassination of Provincial Police Chief Abdul Rahman Sayyed Khili on 11 March 2011 and suicide attacks leaving mass casualties), see 'Koshta shodan-e dast-e kam dah nafar dar hamla-ye entehari dar Kunduz' [Killing of at Least Ten People in a Suicide Attack in Kunduz], *BBC Persian*, 26 January 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130126\\_mar\\_kunduz\\_suicide\\_attack.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130126_mar_kunduz_suicide_attack.shtml).

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/06/110607\\_k01\\_faryab\\_idps.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/06/110607_k01_faryab_idps.shtml).

<sup>75</sup> 'Hamla-ye entehari ba marasem-e eid-e qurban dar Afghanistan dahha koshta wa zakhmi dad' [Suicide Attack on the *Eid-e Qurban* Ceremony Left Tens of People Dead and Injured in Afghanistan], *BBC Persian*, 26 October 2012, 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/10/121026\\_i03\\_afghanistan\\_explosion\\_.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/10/121026_i03_afghanistan_explosion_.shtml).

<sup>76</sup> On 18 June 2013, a Taleban office finally opened in Qatar's capital Doha, which planned to restart US-Taleban contacts. When, in the inauguration event, the Taleban not only portrayed their movement as 'legitimate' but described it as a 'government-in-waiting' by raising their Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan-era insignia of 1996–2001, the Karzai government protested and immediately suspended – but later resumed – talks with the US over a crucial post-2014 bilateral security pact. The Afghan government continues to press for direct talks with the Taleban, while the latter still reject such talks. US-Taleban talks have not resumed, too. See Kate Clark, 'The Opening of the Taleban Office in Qatar: A propaganda coup and an angry government', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 19 June 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-opening-of-the-taleban-office-in-qatar-a-propaganda-coup-and-an-angry-government>.

<sup>77</sup> 'Taliban agree to peace talks with US over Afghanistan – full statement', *The Guardian*, 18 June 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/18/taliban-peace-talks-us-afghanistan-full-text>.

the Afghan government, supported by ISAF, and the armed opposition.

As for the IMU, facts surrounding its presence in Afghanistan remain highly disputed to an extent that it is an almost non-existent entity in northern Afghanistan. On the one hand, NATO-led ISAF forces, as well as Afghan and some regional governments, have alarmingly referred to growing IMU infiltration and operations in northern Afghanistan, particularly in Baghlan, Takhar and Kunduz provinces (for recent incidents of alleged IMU activity, see Appendix 4).<sup>81</sup> Senior Afghan security officials in the north, such as Gen. Zalmay Weesa, believe that:

*IMU fighters . . . are all over north-eastern Afghanistan. . . . They train locals in IEDs, suicide attacks and other sophisticated attacks and are behind the assassination of a number of officials and tribal elders. They're like a virus, the more they spread, the more they spread the disease.*<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, many Central Asian analysts and government officials state that although the Taliban's ambitions are limited to Afghanistan, the Taliban's Central Asian allies, especially the IMU, "might have their own agendas, and intend to use their location [in Afghanistan's north] to push into 'Mawarannahr'" – an old term used initially by Arab conquerors to refer to present-day Central Asia to the north of Amu Darya.<sup>83</sup> They have also expressed doubts whether the Taliban can restrain the IMU in the future.

On the other hand, few allegations of increased IMU operation in northern Afghanistan are independently substantiated by evidence from the field.<sup>84</sup> According

to a field researcher who is – as of late October 2013 – studying radicalisation of Afghan youth, including in the north and northeast, "the IMU [is] a blown up phenomenon, actually having no evidence-based presence in those areas [Takhar and Badakhshan]."<sup>85</sup> This field researcher notes that the people arrested and targeted as IMU by Afghan and international security forces have, in several cases, been uninvolved civilians (such as students and teachers) and that "anyone arrested from among Uzbeks there [Takhar province] was automatically labelled as IMU".<sup>86</sup> In only one case has an IMU affiliate's activity been independently verified, in the Farkhar district of Takhar province – the local recruitment of young boys into radical religious groups.<sup>87</sup>

Additionally, it is unclear if the security-related incidents in which the IMU has been allegedly involved are consequences of violent rivalries among the numerous local Afghan commanders, powerbrokers and drug traffickers, and illegal armed groups which operate in the north, or if they are related to domestic sources of violent frustration against bad and abusive governance. What is clear is that the IMU leadership has been dismantled and most of its existing members are along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, far from any shared Afghan-Central Asian frontier, at least for the time being. It is also unclear if the IMU can significantly re-group itself and, if so, if it still can employ its connections, if any, with the other northern armed opposition groups, primarily the Taliban, to launch cross-border attacks against Central Asian states. Finally, the usefulness of the IMU in connecting the Taliban with non-Pashtun populations in the north is seriously under doubt as the Taliban can easily relate to the local people, for example, through the local non-Pashtun (e.g., Uzbek) clergy.<sup>88</sup>

As for the other regionally orientated Islamist groups such as *Hezb ut-Tahrir* and *Tablighi Jamaat* and their local sympathisers (e.g., *Jamiat-e Eslah*), they are, to some extent, growing in the north (mainly in

<sup>81</sup> Abubakar Siddique, 'IMU Takes Root In Increasingly Insecure Northern Afghan Provinces', *RFE/RL*, 8 December 2010, [http://www.rferl.org/content/imu\\_takes\\_root\\_insecure\\_northern\\_afghan\\_provinces/2242579.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/imu_takes_root_insecure_northern_afghan_provinces/2242579.html); Bethany Matta, 'Uzbek fighters gain support in Afghan north', *Al-Jazeera*, 10 April 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/04/20134910314648770.html>.

<sup>82</sup> Matta, 'Uzbek fighters' [see FN 81].

<sup>83</sup> Saule Mukhametrakhimova, 'Central Asia at Risk From Post-2014 Afghanistan', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 20 August 2013, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/central-asia-risk-post-2014-afghanistan>; Jacob Zenn, 'Central Asian Leaders Wary of Post-2014 IMU Threat', Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10, 128, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=41125&cHash=b1640e3d0f6fb6bfa47efbb914772b5#.Uj7mrT\\_VuSq](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41125&cHash=b1640e3d0f6fb6bfa47efbb914772b5#.Uj7mrT_VuSq).

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Ruttig, 'Talebs in Tajikistan? The "terrorist spill-over" hype', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 10 October 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/talebs-in-tajikistan-the-terrorist-spill-over-hype>;

Thomas Ruttig, 'Talebs in Tajikistan: Part 2 on the alleged IMU-Taliban nexus', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 11 October 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/talebs-in-tajikistan-part-2-on-the-alleged-imu-taliban-nexus>.

<sup>85</sup> E-mail communication, 9 October 2013.

<sup>86</sup> E-mail communication with a local researcher studying radicalisation of Afghan youth, 9 October 2013; Ruttig, 'Talebs in Tajikistan?' [see FN 84].

<sup>87</sup> E-mail communication with a local researcher studying radicalisation of Afghan youth, 9 October 2013.

<sup>88</sup> Giustozzi and Reuter, 'The Insurgents of the Afghan North' [see FN 13], 9–10, 15–18.



Badakhshan and Takhar provinces). However, they fundamentally differ from the IMU, in terms of their current tactics, mainly non-violent propaganda in favour of their interpretation of Islamic law regarding politics and society (e.g., preaching against elections and democracy, which they regard as un-belief, or *kufr*).<sup>89</sup> Generally, Afghanistan-based Islamist networks are orientated to the south (Sunni Islam towards Pakistan) and the west (Shia Islam towards Iran) rather than to the north (Central Asia being ruled by secular and authoritarian governments that leave little space for independent interpretations and practices of Islam).

## 4.2 Connections with Neighbouring Central Asia

The northern Afghan political heavyweights either own or provide protection for large-scale business and economic activity in the north.<sup>90</sup> In turn, most of this northern business and economic activity is, in one way or another, tied to or originates from neighbouring Central Asia and from Russia through Central Asia, particularly at Sher Khan Bandar, Hairatan, Aqina and Torghundi border ports and crossings in Kunduz, Balkh, Faryab and Herat provinces, respectively (see Afghan-Central Asian local economic relations in section 3). The income from north-based economic activity has helped northern political heavyweights consolidate their socio-political bases in economic and financial terms. A local journalist in Mazar-e Sharif noted, “Central Asian governments might [hence] be indirectly supporting the northern Afghan politicians through their trade and economic relations, particularly for coming electoral campaign activities and expenditures.”<sup>91</sup>

All major northern Afghan political opposition leaders have, in one way or another, kept their links with neighbouring Central Asia.<sup>92</sup> The leaders of *Jamiat-e Islami-ye Afghanistan* (such as former Afghan vice-

president Ahmad Zia Massud, brother to late Ahmad Shah Massud, and currently the first-presidential running mate to Zalmay Rassul who resigned from the foreign ministry portfolio to run in 2014 presidential election) have personal and other contacts within the Tajik government. Although, *Jamiat* members, at the same time, emphasise that Afghan-Tajik relations are inter-governmental. Other northern Afghan leaders, such as the Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum and the Hazara Mohammad Mohaqqueq, have similarly strong ties with the Uzbek government; although activists of their respective political parties (*Jombesh* and *Hezb-e Wahdat*) also stress that bilateral state-to-state relationships between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan are organised and functioning.<sup>93</sup> These Afghan political leaders are among the few people in Afghanistan who can quite easily secure and facilitate movements of people and trade from Afghanistan to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and vice versa.<sup>94</sup> Some of them reportedly have houses and own or protect (legal and possibly illegal) businesses and economic activities across the border, and some even have ‘wives’ in and/or from neighbouring Central Asia.<sup>95</sup>

As for the National Coalition of Afghanistan (NCA), a party alliance led by former *Jamiat* and foreign minister Dr Abdullah, ties with Tajik government officials in Dushanbe and Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) authorities in Khorugh appear to be the strongest. In July 2012 when clashes broke out in Tajik Badakhshan, one of the few people the Tajik ambassador met in Kabul to secure help from in controlling the situation was the NCA leader Abdullah, currently another presidential hopeful.<sup>96</sup> Political activists close to the NCA have stated that they continue to draw the attention of the Afghan government in Kabul and in Afghan Badakhshan to

<sup>93</sup> Interviews with political party activists, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif, August 2013.

<sup>94</sup> Interviews with journalists and political party activists, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif, August 2013.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with local journalist, Mazar-e Sharif, August 2013.

<sup>96</sup> Interview, National Coalition of Afghanistan (NCA) official, 17 August 2013. Furthermore, the meetings seem to continue, covering a whole range of issues including “upcoming 2014 presidential elections, security transition, reconciliation process, Afghanistan’s important relationship with Tajikistan, regional issues and possible ways of increased cooperation between both countries in the areas of trade, culture, business and power transmission”. See National Coalition of Afghanistan, ‘NCA Chairman Dr. Abdullah Abdullah Meets with Ambassador of Tajikistan to Afghanistan’, 18 September 2013, <http://www.nca.af/NCA-Chairman-Dr-Abdullah-Abdullah-Meets-with-Ambassador-of-Tajikistan-to-Afghanistan2013013557.html#sthash.g9yK9VRp.dpuf>.

<sup>89</sup> E-mail communication with a local researcher studying radicalisation of Afghan youth, 9 October 2013.

<sup>90</sup> For further detail, see Giustozzi, ‘The Resilient Oligopoly’ [see FN 42]. Additionally, major Afghan businesspeople such as Zmarai Kamgar, Mohammad Ismail Ghazanfar and Kamal Nabizada, who are based mostly or partly in the north, are closely linked with the northern Afghan political establishment and have extensive socio-business networks in Central Asia and Russia. Interviews with local journalists and residents, Mazar-e Sharif, August 2013.

<sup>91</sup> Interview, 22 August 2013.

<sup>92</sup> Interviews with local journalists, local government officials and political party activists, Kabul, Herat, Kunduz and Mazar-e Sharif, April-September 2013.



security along the Afghan-Tajik border, particularly on Afghanistan's side.<sup>97</sup> One senior NCA official stated, "We continue to stay in touch with political, scientific and cultural circles" in Central Asia and particularly in Tajikistan.<sup>98</sup> The same official from the NCA also stressed that Afghan-Tajik ties are mostly organised through inter-governmental channels and that "most of the time of the NCA leadership has been spent on domestic issues."<sup>99</sup>

All in all, historically rooted ties between northern Afghan political actors and the Central Asian governments continue to exist for, as one interviewee put it, "potential employment in bad times",<sup>100</sup> especially given the uncertainty around the coming second round of Afghan presidential election and the larger transition in Afghanistan. However, some relations were formed in the 1990s, and many of the notable individuals are now dead or no longer politically or economically relevant. Furthermore, the importance of each side to the other now is certainly less than when Tajikistan and northern Afghan forces cooperated in the fight against the Taliban in the late 1990s to very early 2000s. As for Afghan ties to opposition figures in Tajikistan, only the connections to commanders in Tajik Badakhshan still exist in a substantive way. Elsewhere in Tajikistan, opposition figures were killed, jailed, exiled or marginalised to the point of irrelevance.

### 4.3 Loosely Controlled and Illegal Armed Groups

Aside from insurgent forces, Northern Afghanistan is also being destabilised by the actions of loosely controlled and/or poorly managed armed groups (the Afghan Local Police, or ALP) and illegal armed groups that have been increasing in numbers across Afghanistan, including the north. As of 14 August 2013, the ALP numbered 23,550 and operated at 115 sites, particularly in the north and the northeast; the official target is 30,000 fighters in 138 districts in 31 provinces.<sup>101</sup> But many more illegal armed groups

exist across the country, including those that applied for incorporation into the ALP but did not make it through the vetting process.<sup>102</sup> This ominously implies an increasing trend of redistribution of weapons in the north.<sup>103</sup>

Kunduz, for example, has also been destabilised by the internal ethnic, political and military rivalries over the composition and operation of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and the re-mobilisation or recruitment of thousands of militia forces that operate outside the command-and-control structures of the Afghan Ministry of Interior. In Chahrdara district, the predominantly Pashtun population is, in the words of Lola Cecchinell, "caught between two evils [the Taliban and the non-Pashtun ALP], and it is not clear at all which is the lesser one", resulting in civilian deaths in several cases.<sup>104</sup> Elsewhere in Kunduz, "irresponsible" (*ghair-e masul*) and "illegal" (*ghair-e qanuni*) militia forces have rapidly expanded (numbering in the thousands) and are actively harassing the local population in various ways, such as outright mass murders (e.g., Loy Kanam village in early September 2012), abductions and illegal taxation.<sup>105</sup> Linked to northern Afghan military-political figures, the ALP and militia forces have been created and are operating in an environment of fluid infighting within the central and local Afghan administrations. They are often used as a means to settle political scores, secure economic advantages and, during the current elections, mobilise supporters.<sup>106</sup>

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2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/pluralistic-within-limits-but-not-democratic-afghanistans-political-landscape-before-the-2014-elections>.

<sup>102</sup> Ruttig, 'Pluralistic within Limits' [see FN 102].

<sup>103</sup> Interviews with local journalists, Mazar-e Sharif, August 2013.

<sup>104</sup> Cecchinell, 'Back to Bad' [see FN 79].

<sup>105</sup> Gran Hewad, 'Legal, Illegal: Militia recruitment and (failed) disarmament in Kunduz', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 10 November 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/legal-illegal-militia-recruitment-and-failed-disarmament-in-kunduz>; Gran Hewad, 'For a Handful of Bolani: Kunduz's New Problem with Illegal Militias', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 8 October 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/for-a-handful-of-bolani-kunduzs-new-problem-with-illegal-militias>.

<sup>106</sup> Hewad, 'Legal, Illegal'; Hewad, 'For a Handful of Bolani' [both, see FN 106]; Lola Cecchinell, 'The End of a Police Chief: Factional rivalries and pre-election power struggles in Kunduz', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 31 January 2014, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-end-of-a-police-chief-factional-rivalries-and-pre-election-power-struggles-in-kunduz>.

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<sup>97</sup> Interviews, Kabul, May and August 2013.

<sup>98</sup> Interview, Kabul, 18 August 2013.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with local journalist, Mazar-e Sharif, 22 August 2013.

<sup>101</sup> Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, 'The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security', S/2013/535, 5, 6 September 2013, [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/535](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/2013/535); Thomas Ruttig, 'Pluralistic within Limits, but Not Democratic: Afghanistan's political landscape before the 2014 elections', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 24 October

*To summarise, the security situation in northern Afghanistan is becoming increasingly fragmented and beyond doubt, it is at its worst state since 2001. At the same time, the electoral positioning of the northern political opposition groups continues to shift, depending mainly on the personal interests of the groups' leaders and powerbrokers. But, this deterioration in security circumstances and evolution in the northern political landscape does not automatically point to inescapable, large-scale politico-security repercussions in the adjacent Central Asian neighbourhood. Rather, it seems that northern Afghan security and political developments largely diverge from, rather than converge with, those in Central Asian countries. However, future developments, will, in a way, hinge on how the current elections in Afghanistan go and, if the elections fail to an extent that they break apart Afghanistan's post-2001 constitutional consensus, how the northern Afghan powerbrokers and Central Asian states respond to such a drastic scenario.*

## 5. NARCOTICS TRAFFICKING

### 5.1 Introduction

Afghanistan continues to lead internationally for cultivation and production of narcotics, accounting for 74 per cent of global opiate drug production in 2012, according to the latest UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report (82 per cent in 2011).<sup>107</sup> At least since 1994, the opium poppy has constituted a significant part of the Afghan economy in terms of the land allocated to opium cultivation, yield and overall share in the economy.<sup>108</sup> The opium poppy

has deeply penetrated and hugely influences the Afghan economy, politics, state and society, with serious ramifications for the region and the broader world.<sup>109</sup> Afghanistan is a key source for illicit drug trafficking, drug abuse and drug-induced HIV/AIDS in the region, particularly Iran, Pakistan and Central Asia (especially Tajikistan), and the larger world as far as Western Europe and North America.<sup>110</sup> Afghan opium cultivation has reached a record high and, additionally, two northern Afghan provinces, Balkh and Faryab, lost their 'poppy-free' status in 2013, according to the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the UNODC.<sup>111</sup>

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[http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/afg\\_opium\\_survey\\_2002.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/afg_opium_survey_2002.pdf); UNODC and Counter Narcotics Directorate of Government of Afghanistan, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2003', [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan\\_opium\\_survey\\_2003.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan_opium_survey_2003.pdf); UNODC and Counter Narcotics Directorate of Government of Afghanistan, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2004', [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan\\_opium\\_survey\\_2004.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/afghanistan_opium_survey_2004.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2005', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/afg\\_survey\\_2005.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/afg_survey_2005.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2006', [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG05%20\\_full\\_web\\_2006.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG05%20_full_web_2006.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007: Executive Summary', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/AFG07\\_ExSum\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008: Executive Summary', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/Afghanistan\\_Opium\\_Survey\\_2008.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/publications/Afghanistan_Opium_Survey_2008.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2009: Summary Findings', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan\\_opium\\_survey\\_2009\\_summary.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2009_summary.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2010', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan\\_Opium\\_Survey\\_2010\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_Opium_Survey_2010_web.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011'; UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012: Opium Risk Assessment for All Regions', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS\\_report\\_2012.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/ORAS_report_2012.pdf); UNODC and MCN, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013: Summary Findings', [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan\\_report\\_Summary\\_Findings\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghan_report_Summary_Findings_2013.pdf).

<sup>109</sup> Doris Buddenberg and William A. Byrd, eds, *Afghanistan's Drug Industry: Structure, Functioning, Dynamics, and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, UNODC and World Bank, 2006, 1–22; UNODC, *The Opium Economy in Afghanistan: An International Problem*, New York, 2003, 5–17.

<sup>110</sup> UNODC, *The Opium Economy* [see FN 110], 14–16.

<sup>111</sup> UNODC, 'Afghanistan opium crop cultivation rises 36 per cent, production up 49 per cent', 13 November 2013, <http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2013/Novemb>

<sup>107</sup> United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 'World Drug Report 2013', x, [http://www.unodc.org/unodc/secured/wdr/wdr2013/World\\_Drug\\_Report\\_2013.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/secured/wdr/wdr2013/World_Drug_Report_2013.pdf); United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2011', 52, [http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan\\_opium\\_survey\\_2011\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghanistan/Afghanistan_opium_survey_2011_web.pdf). For the most recent call for a change in counter-narcotics approach in Afghanistan, see, e.g., 'Analysis: Time for a new poppy policy in Afghanistan', *Integrated Regional Information Networks*, 4 July 2013, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/98354/analysis-time-for-a-new-poppy-policy-in-afghanistan>.

<sup>108</sup> See, eg, United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), 'Afghanistan Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2000', [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report\\_2000-12-31\\_1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report_2000-12-31_1.pdf); UNDCP, 'Afghanistan Annual Opium Poppy Survey 2001', [http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report\\_2001-10-16\\_1.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/pdf/publications/report_2001-10-16_1.pdf); United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, 'Afghanistan Opium Survey 2002',

The northern route for narcotics trafficking from Afghanistan passes through Central Asia, with Tajikistan handling the bulk of it.<sup>112</sup> The most likely aspect of the overspill of Afghanistan's on-going conflict into neighbouring Central Asia appears to be continued drug trafficking. This benefits a confusing plethora of corrupt state and non-state actors not only in Afghanistan but also in the five former Soviet republics of Central Asia.

## 5.2 A Narco-Terror Nexus in Central Asia?

A wide range of reporting puts forward the claim that terrorism and narcotics trafficking are strongly connected in Central Asia.<sup>113</sup> Viktor Ivanov, Russia's top anti-narcotics officer, warned in 2010 that there was an emerging alliance between Islamist militants and drug traffickers with the united goal of overthrowing Central Asian governments.<sup>114</sup> UNODC's head has made the exact same claim.<sup>115</sup> Internal US government documents show that at least some American policy-makers hold a similar view regarding the narcotics-terrorism nexus:

*Throughout Central Asia, there are strong connections between narco-trafficking and terrorism. Extremist groups often use the profits of the drug trade to undermine, destabilize, and corrupt government institutions.*<sup>116</sup>

One US embassy cable clearly states the concerns of the US military about narcotics trafficking through Tajikistan:

*The funds generated from the sale of narcotics are used to support terrorist activity and organized crime, and the trafficking of drugs through Tajikistan fosters corruption, violent crime, AIDS, and economic distortions, all of which are destabilizing factors in the USCENTCOM area of responsibility.*<sup>117</sup>

In Tajikistan, the US translates its concerns into action in the form of security cooperation and training. The American focus is on the National Guard (officially 1,200 soldiers), mainly tasked with protecting the president, and on Alpha Group (claimed 120 soldiers), the special forces contingent of what is still referred to locally as the KGB (officially the National Security Committee). Further American training – coordinated through CENTCOM (Central Command) and SOCCENT (US Special Operations Command, Central) – is given to the police special forces (OMON) and a special forces-type detachment of the Border Guards. For all of these units, aside from Alpha Group, the US government explicitly justifies the training as necessary within the framework of "Counter-Narco Terrorism", that is, the alleged nexus between drug trafficking and terrorism.<sup>118</sup>

Regarding Islamist and terrorist organisations' use of narcotics to fund their activities, independent analysts who conduct fieldwork in Central Asia clearly state that evidence of this nexus is weak and such groups currently have either low or non-existent involvement in the drug trade.<sup>119</sup> As for any specific

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er/afghanistan-opium-crop-cultivation-rises-a-record-36-per-cent-opium-production-up-49-per-cent.html.

<sup>112</sup> UNODC, 'Opiate Flows through Northern Afghanistan and Central Asia: A Threat Assessment', May 2012, [http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghanistan\\_northern\\_route\\_2012\\_web.pdf](http://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/Studies/Afghanistan_northern_route_2012_web.pdf).

<sup>113</sup> For example, see the opinions of analysts in: Fred Weir, 'Moscow Furious, Says US Not Pushing Drug War in Afghanistan', *Christian Science Monitor*, 19 May 2010, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0519/Moscow-furious-says-US-not-pushing-drug-war-in-Afghanistan>; *IRIN News*, 'Central Asia: Regional impact of the Afghan heroin trade', 2 August 2004, <http://www.irinnews.org/indepthmain.aspx?reportid=63026&indepthid=21>.

<sup>114</sup> Weir, 'Moscow Furious' [see FN 114].

<sup>115</sup> David Lewis, 'High Times on the Silk Road: The Central Asian Paradox', *World Policy Journal* 27:1, 2010, 39.

<sup>116</sup> WikiLeaks, 'Cable 09TASHKENT1958', US Embassy Tashkent, 3 November 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/11/09TASHKENT1958.html>.

<sup>117</sup> WikiLeaks, 'cable 08DUSHANBE1269', US Embassy Dushanbe, 6 October 2008, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/10/08DUSHANBE1269.html>.

<sup>118</sup> Discussions with various parties in Tajikistan who requested anonymity, 2012–13. See also: WikiLeaks, 'Cable 08DUSHANBE1269'; WikiLeaks, 'Cable 08DUSHANBE105\_a', US Embassy Dushanbe, 16 January 2008, [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08DUSHANBE105\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08DUSHANBE105_a.html); Joshua Kucera, 'U.S. Steps Up Training of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan GKNB', *Eurasianet*, 2 December 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/67819>. Numbers from: Boris Sokolov, 'Ili razbergutsya, ili uidut k talibam' [It Will Either Be Sorted Out, or Go over to the Taliban], *Voenno-promyshlennyi kur'er*, No. 21/489, 5 June 2013, <http://vpk-news.ru/articles/16200>.

<sup>119</sup> Sébastien Peyrouse, 'Drug Trafficking in Central Asia: A Poorly Considered Fight?', PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 218, September 2012, 2–3, [http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm\\_218\\_Peyrouse\\_Sept2012.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_218_Peyrouse_Sept2012.pdf); Filippo De Danieli, 'Counter-narcotics policies in Tajikistan and their impact on state building', *Central Asian Survey* 30:1, 2011, 129–30; Nicole J. Jackson, 'The trafficking of narcotics, arms and humans in post-Soviet Central Asia: (mis)perceptions, policies and realities', *Central Asian Survey* 24:1, 2005, 46. See also, Lewis, 'High Times on the Silk Road' [see FN 116], 40, 47.

organisation, a lengthy Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) study of Islamist terrorist groups in Central Asia stated bluntly that while the IMU may have participated in narcotics trafficking in the 1990s, “Extensive interviews in the region suggest that the IMU currently exerts far less, if any, control on the Central Asian narcotics trade today.”<sup>120</sup>

Alisher Latypov’s study of the drug trade revealed what is common knowledge in Central Asia: people in the region understand very well that law enforcement, prison and security officials are heavily involved in drug trafficking, while the government instead claims that various terrorist and extremist groups are behind the Central Asian narcotics trade.<sup>121</sup> This points away from a ‘narco-terror nexus’ and towards a cosy arrangement between elements of the state and drug traffickers – if neatly separating the two is even possible. Another more solid relationship is between (a) the governments of Central Asia, which hype narcotics role in funding insurgent and Islamist groups in order to attract international funding and divert attention from their own involvement in the trade and abusive governance and (b) international organisations, consultants and foreign militaries and governments, which combine the spectre of terrorism and narcotics trafficking while justifying their budgets and activities and working to secure further appropriations.<sup>122</sup>

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Discussions with various analysts and employees of international organisations in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (2011–14) back these assertions.

<sup>120</sup> Thomas M. Sanderson, Daniel Kimmage and David A. Gordon, ‘From the Ferghana Valley to South Waziristan: The Evolving Threat of Central Asian Jihadists’, A Report of the CSIS Transnational Threats Project, March 2010, 15, [http://csis.org/files/publication/100324\\_Sanderson\\_FerghanaValley\\_WEB\\_0.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/100324_Sanderson_FerghanaValley_WEB_0.pdf). Some analysis argues that while the IMU may not be a large player in the drug trade, it does occupy a small niche role in trafficking in order to finance its operations and may be in the position to seriously increase its role in the future. See Luke Falkenburg, ‘Trafficking Terror through Tajikistan,’ *Military Review*, July–August 2013.

<sup>121</sup> Alisher Latypov, ‘Drug dealers, drug lords and drug warriors-cum-traffickers: Drug crime and the narcotics market in Tajikistan’, translated and summarised by T. Dempsey, Vilnius, Eurasian Harm Reduction Network 2012, 19, [http://traccc.gmu.edu/pdfs/Latypov\\_FINAL\\_EN.pdf](http://traccc.gmu.edu/pdfs/Latypov_FINAL_EN.pdf).

<sup>122</sup> Personal observations and discussions in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Washington, 2011–2014; Jackson, ‘The trafficking of narcotics’ [see FN 120], 39, 44, 49; Peyrouse, ‘Drug Trafficking in Central Asia’ [see FN 120]; De Danieli, ‘Counter-narcotics policies’ [see FN 120], 129–30, 138–9.

### 5.3 Central Asian State–Trafficker Nexus

The European Union, the United Nations, the United States and Russia all fund and support various counter-narcotics trafficking initiatives in Central Asia.<sup>123</sup> David Lewis’ uncharitable assessment of counter-narcotics initiatives in Central Asia is that “all of these programs tend to be disparate and poorly coordinated (and sometimes overlaid with other geopolitical aims and priorities), but what they all have in common is that none of them have achieved any discernible impact on the actual quantity of drugs travelling through Central Asia.”<sup>124</sup> Furthermore, foreign anti-narcotics funding for Central Asian security forces has resulted less in commencing a genuine assault on drug trafficking and more in empowering corrupt local security forces to eliminate the small, independent traffickers and the occasional larger traffickers who have fallen out of favour and lost their protection. The result has been the consolidation of control over drug trafficking by those mafia figures aligned with the state – or within the state itself,<sup>125</sup> as well as the strengthening of the so-called power ministries (KGB, police, military), particularly in Tajikistan, thanks partly to foreign funding and support.<sup>126</sup>

Throughout Central Asia the narcotics trade has deeply penetrated the economic, social, political and security structures and created mutually beneficial relations. Powerful government and security figures use state resources and structures to actively assist and/or control this trade in cooperation with powerful mafia leaders.<sup>127</sup> This is also largely the case in northern Afghanistan, particularly in the eight provinces bordering on Central Asia where an unclear number of central and local government officials, parliamentarians, members of provincial councils, commanders and local influential figures vie with one another, politically and sometimes violently, for control of border crossings through which Afghan drug shipments move to Central Asia and from there to Russia and the rest of the world.<sup>128</sup> More generally,

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<sup>123</sup> Peyrouse, ‘Drug Trafficking in Central Asia’ [see FN 120].

<sup>124</sup> Lewis, ‘High Times on the Silk Road’ [see FN 116], 48. See also De Danieli, ‘Counter-narcotics policies’ [see FN 120], 129, 138.

<sup>125</sup> Discussions with several analysts in Tajikistan and Washington, 2011–2013; Lewis, ‘High Times on the Silk Road’ [see FN 116], 47–8; De Danieli, ‘Counter-narcotics policies’ [see FN 120], 138.

<sup>126</sup> De Danieli, ‘Counter-narcotics policies’ [see FN 120].

<sup>127</sup> UNODC, ‘Opiate Flows’ [see FN 113], 86; Lewis, ‘High Times on the Silk Road’ [see FN 116], 46.

<sup>128</sup> Interviews with political activists and local journalists, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif, August 2013. For a clear



key actors in central and provincial Afghan administrations have allegedly provided protection for drug traffickers and have intervened in judicial proceedings to free traffickers after their arrest or detention.<sup>129</sup>

In Central Asia, state-protected drug traffickers or employees of the state itself move most of the narcotics, while state security structures focus on their competition – the smaller independent smugglers. And often the seized drugs are merely resold rather than destroyed. However, occasionally there is some competition or score-settling within the state-protected drug trade and a previously protected smuggler may be arrested. At other times, drug-related charges are brought against political figures or former commanders who are becoming too powerful, troublesome or independent of central authority.<sup>130</sup> This does not apply, however, to those near the top. Thanks to the close relationship, no major drug trafficker has been arrested in Central Asia since 1991 and no large cartels have been dismantled.<sup>131</sup> The same largely applies in Afghanistan's case. In a major incident that leaked to the public in late January 2013, the US military blacklisted Kam Air, one of Afghanistan's largest private airline companies, over allegations of smuggling "bulk quantities of opium on civilian flights to Tajikistan" and "widespread involvement in the

drug trade".<sup>132</sup> Kam Air head, Zmarai Kamgar, rejected the accusations and ascribed them to a conspiracy on the part of his competition.<sup>133</sup> The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the US embassy in Kabul to provide evidence of Kam Air's implication in narcotics trafficking.<sup>134</sup> In early February 2013, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs released a statement, welcoming the US military's decision to once again work with Kam Air while promising further investigations.<sup>135</sup> The US backtracked and no investigation has been openly conducted into this case and, if conducted privately, results have not been made public – characteristic of almost all allegations and controversies against influential political and economic players' involvement in the illicit drug trade. All in all, the heated incident cooled down and fell into oblivion after a week or so.

The situation in Uzbekistan is difficult to discern, but the little available information suggests that drug traffickers here likely have connections to corrupt senior government security officials.<sup>136</sup> The narcotics trade in Turkmenistan is equally difficult to analyse,

provincial case, i.e. Afghan Badakhshan with its long, porous and poorly guarded frontier with neighbouring Tajikistan, see Fabrizio Foschini, 'A thin line between insurgency and local politics in Badakhshan', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 1 November 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-thin-line-between-insurgency-and-local-politics-in-badakhshan>; Fabrizio Foschini, 'Campaign Trail 2010 (1): Badakhshan – drugs, border crossings and parliamentary seats', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 19 June 2010, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/campaign-trail-2010-1-badakhshan-drugs-border-crossings-and-parliamentary-seats>.

<sup>129</sup> For an example, see *Huffington Post*, 'Karzai Releasing Scores Of Drug Traffickers In Afghanistan, WikiLeaks Cables Show', 27 December 2010, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/27/karzai-releasing-drug-tra\\_n\\_801587.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/12/27/karzai-releasing-drug-tra_n_801587.html).

<sup>130</sup> Interview with anonymous source in Dushanbe, 2013; De Danieli, 'Counter-narcotics policies' [see FN 120], 138; Peyrouse, 'Drug Trafficking in Central Asia', 2–3 [see FN 120]; UNODC, 'Opiate Flows' [see FN 113]; Lewis, 'High Times on the Silk Road' [see FN 116], 46; *The Economist*, 'Addicted: Heroin Stabilises a Poor Country', 21 April 2012, <http://www.economist.com/node/21553092>. See also David Trilling, 'Tajikistan: On Afghanistan's Heroin Highway, Corruption Fuels Addiction and HIV', *EurasiaNet*, 9 April 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65240>.

<sup>131</sup> De Danieli, 'Counter-narcotics policies' [see FN 120], 141; UNODC, 'Opiate Flows' [see FN 113], 86.

<sup>132</sup> Maria Abi-Habib, 'Afghan Airliner Ferried Opium, U.S. Alleges', *Wall Street Journal*, 25 January 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424127887324539304578261872683863576.html>.

<sup>133</sup> Abi-Habib, 'Afghan Airliner Ferried Opium' [see FN 113]. The Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries and the Afghan Ministry of Transportation backed Kam Air, the latter by saying that Kam Air has no airports and that airports are effectively secured by the Afghan government. See *BBC Persian*, 'Otaq-e tejarat wa sanayi-ye Afghanistan eteham-e artesh-e America ba Kam Air ra rad kard' [Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries Rejected the US Army's Allegation against Kam Air], 26 January 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130126\\_mar\\_kam\\_air\\_reaction.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130126_mar_kam_air_reaction.shtml).

<sup>134</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'In an official memorandum, the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the US embassy in Kabul to provide evidence on accusations that Kam Air is involved in drug trafficking', 27 January 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/fa/News/16874> (in Dari language; title translated into English).

<sup>135</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 5 February 2013, 'The Afghan Government welcomes the decision of US armed forces to re-normalise working relationships with Kam Air', <http://mfa.gov.af/fa/News/17111> (in Dari language; title translated into English); *BBC Persian*, 'Artesh-e America tahrim alaye sherkat hawapaimai-ye afghani-ye Kam Air ra mo'allaq kard' [American Army Suspended Its Sanction against the Afghan Airline Company Kam Air], 5 February 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/02/130205\\_k02-kamair-sunctions-us-force.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/02/130205_k02-kamair-sunctions-us-force.shtml).

<sup>136</sup> Lewis, 'High Times on the Silk Road' [see FN 116], 45; WikiLeaks, 'Cable 09TASHKENT1958' [see FN 117].



yet there are some clear similarities to the government-assisted drug trade patterns seen in Tajikistan, for example. The US Embassy in Ashgabat states in internal documents that while relatively little is known about drug trafficking in Turkmenistan,<sup>137</sup> it believes “at least some authorities are involved in the narcotics trade”.<sup>138</sup> The flow of information on drug trafficking from Turkmenistan has been minimal, with exiled opposition figures providing some of the stories with likely exaggerated details (e.g., a presidential vault full of heroin). However, as argued by Lewis, “the anecdotal reports have become too numerous over the years to be dismissed . . . [and] there has been increasing evidence from Turkmenistan that the state itself – both through its security structures and a variety of powerful political figures – has been directly involved in trafficking heroin across its borders.”<sup>139</sup>

Some point to Tajikistan’s Drug Control Agency (DCA) as a success. Rustam Nazarov, considered to be a competent and honest leader, runs it. However, there are limits to what the DCA can do. It is an isolated institution with limited ability to rein in other security agencies or to arrest major traffickers.<sup>140</sup> Any attempt to arrest powerful narcotics traffickers would mean the end of Nazarov’s career – or worse.<sup>141</sup> At times mid-level traffickers are arrested, including officers in the security forces. But those traffickers and officers with good connections are immune. Several DCA officers, including the head of the operations directorate, learned this in 2012 when they arrested men transporting a car full of heroin. These particular heroin traffickers were supported by powerful Tajik KGB officers who, when the DCA officers would not

back down, simply retaliated by arresting the DCA officers for narcotics trafficking, the end result of which was prison sentences of nearly 20 years.<sup>142</sup>

The lower levels of law enforcement are just as corrupt. In Tajikistan, as well as in Kyrgyzstan to a certain extent, police and prison guards distribute and sell heroin or provide protection to those who do – sometimes in plain sight in certain drug-buying areas. The prisons in Tajikistan are the worst in this regard. Here guards sell narcotics under the supervision of the prison administration, while informal religious figures in prison do their best to stop the consumption of the drugs.<sup>143</sup>

## 5.4 Narcotics as a Stabilising Factor

Since 2001, throughout Central Asia, the increased drug trade has not brought with it a wave of drug gang-related crime and instability as predicted by many, including the United Nations. Instead Central Asian governments have used the drug trade to consolidate control over their states and societies. The profits in the drug trade and the appointments to lucrative (i.e., highly corrupt) positions in the security services have been used to buy and/or ensure loyalty to the leadership.<sup>144</sup> Yet governments in Central Asia do occasionally attempt to blame drug traffickers for violence that instead has roots in other factors, such as the ethnic violence in Kyrgyzstan in 2010<sup>145</sup> and the Ashgabat shoot-out in Turkmenistan in 2008.<sup>146</sup>

<sup>137</sup> WikiLeaks, ‘Cable 08ASHGABAT1511’, US Embassy Ashgabat, 21 November 2008, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2008/11/08ASHGABAT1511.html>.

<sup>138</sup> WikiLeaks, ‘06ASHGABAT901\_a’, US Embassy Ashgabat, 24 August 2006, [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06ASHGABAT901\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06ASHGABAT901_a.html). The most notorious example of government complicity in the drug trade occurred in 1997 when an ethnic Russian major in the Turkmen border guards discovered 400 kg of heroin in a cargo plane in the Ashgabat airport. He was quickly arrested on false charges, tried and executed while the drugs then disappeared – an obvious warning to all other law enforcement personnel to stay away from government-supported drug shipments from Afghanistan. One year later the Turkmen military intervened in a fight between a convoy of drug traffickers and Turkmen border guards – in support of the traffickers.

<sup>139</sup> Lewis, ‘High Times on the Silk Road’ [see FN 116], 43.

<sup>140</sup> Interview in Dushanbe, 2013; De Danieli, ‘Counter-narcotics policies’ [see FN 120], 136–7, 138.

<sup>141</sup> Interview in Dushanbe, 2013.

<sup>142</sup> Interview in Dushanbe, 2013. See also *NewsRu*, ‘V Tadjikistane komandir pogranzastavy za narkotorgovlyu i iznasilovanie soldata poluchil 18 let kolonii’ [In Tajikistan, a Border Commander Was Sentenced to 18 Years in Prison for Drug Trafficking and the Rape of a Soldier], 24 September 2012, <http://www.newsru.com/crime/24sep2012/brdguardbossrape.html>; Igor Lekarkin, ‘AKN: V nezakonnyy oborot narkotikov vovlecheny, v osnovnom, bezrabotnye’ [Drug Control Agency: Mostly the Unemployed Are Involved in Drug Trafficking], *Asia-Plus*, 29 January 2013, <http://www.news.tj/ru/news/akn-v-nezakonny-oborot-narkotikov-vovlecheny-v-osnovnom-bezrabotnye>; Nargis Hamroboyeva, ‘Former drug control official gets long jail term for involvement in drug smuggling’, *Asia-Plus*, 23 August 2012, <http://news.tj/en/printpdf/126381>.

<sup>143</sup> Latypov, ‘Drug dealers’ [see FN 122].

<sup>144</sup> Lewis, ‘High Times on the Silk Road’ [see FN 116], 39–40, 47–8.

<sup>145</sup> On the role of the drug trade in the ethnic violence, see Peter Leonard, ‘Heroin trade a backdrop to Kyrgyz violence’, *Associated Press*, 24 June 2010, [http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2010/06/24/heroin\\_trade\\_a\\_backdrop\\_to\\_kyrgyz\\_violence/](http://www.boston.com/news/world/asia/articles/2010/06/24/heroin_trade_a_backdrop_to_kyrgyz_violence/).

<sup>146</sup> For the government’s claim that it battled drug traffickers, see *BBC News*, ‘Turkmen violence “drug

Narcotics trafficking played a role in stabilising Tajikistan after the civil war. The then weak Tajik state tolerated the drug trade to give its loyal commanders a stake in the peace-time economy and in the survival of the government. At the same time, opposition commanders moved away from fighting the state to focus on their drug trafficking operations.<sup>147</sup> These arrangements helped to deeply entrench narcotics in the system of state power. Now, if the government of Tajikistan actually attempted to arrest high-level traffickers and their backers in government structures, the backlash could result in instability and violent conflict.<sup>148</sup> The possibility of a destabilised Tajikistan is concerning to many players in Central Asia. As stated by narcotics trafficking researcher Hillary Evans, “my ultimate conclusion: without the profits of the drug trade, Tajikistan would be a failed state, which is not in anyone’s interest.”<sup>149</sup> Foreign donors and supporters of the Tajik government understand this best of all, especially regarding the need for a friendly and stable government on Afghanistan’s northern border.<sup>150</sup> As an anonymous Western government official bluntly stated, anti-narcotics initiatives in Tajikistan are “a joke. The West has accepted that narcotics are the price for relative security on Afghanistan’s northern border.”<sup>151</sup>

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related”, 14 September 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7614983.stm>. For a more realistic version, see Annasoltan, ‘Turkmenistan’s hidden Islamists, part 2: the truth behind the 2008 gun fight?’, 9 March 2011, <http://www.neweurasia.net/politics-and-society/turkmenistans-hidden-islamists-part-2-the-truth-behind-the-2008-gun-fight/>; Bruce Pannier, ‘Turkmen Opposition Leader Offers Different Version Of Ashgabat Shoot-Out’, *RFE/RL*, 25 September 2008, [http://www.rferl.org/content/Different\\_Version\\_Of\\_Ashgabat\\_ShootOut/1291534.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/Different_Version_Of_Ashgabat_ShootOut/1291534.html).

<sup>147</sup> De Danieli, ‘Counter-narcotics policies’ [see FN 120], 130–2, 140.

<sup>148</sup> Lewis, ‘High Times on the Silk Road’ [see FN 116], 48.

<sup>149</sup> Ryan Johnson, ‘Traveling To Tajikistan: Tales And Tips From Fulbright Scholar Hillary Evans’, Profellow, 19 February 2013, <http://www.profellow.com/fellowships/traveling-to-tajikistan-tales-and-tips-from-fulbright-scholar-hillary-evans/>.

<sup>150</sup> *The Economist*, ‘Addicted’ [see FN 131].

<sup>151</sup> Trilling, ‘Tajikistan: On Afghanistan’s Heroin Highway’ [see FN 131].

## 6. TAJIKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

### 6.1 How Are Tajikistan and Afghanistan Connected?

#### 6.1.1 Economic Connections

Aside from illicit drugs, trade between the two countries was almost non-existent by the end of the 1990s. Tajikistan has since 2001 seen a large increase in trade with Afghanistan, but not in overall volume, only in terms of the percentage of increase from nearly nothing to a somewhat modest figure over a decade later.<sup>152</sup> Currently, Tajikistan’s important trade partners are China, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkey. Afghanistan is far less important, only 4.4 per cent of Tajikistan’s export market and only 1.5 per cent of its imports, and much of the trade between the two countries involves re-exports – the transit of goods from China, Pakistan and Russia.<sup>153</sup> Tajikistan itself is not considered an attractive investment market because, as one business analyst states, of its distance from major markets, shoddy infrastructure, poor governance and corruption. Having Afghanistan as a neighbour also scares off investment, even if the fear is not justified.<sup>154</sup>

Aside from a large bridge connecting Kunduz province to Tajikistan’s Khatlon province, six small bridges connect Afghanistan and Tajikistan in the Badakhshan region. The Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) has financed their construction and rehabilitation.<sup>155</sup> In addition, three markets connect the local population from the two countries in Badakhshan (see Afghan-Central Asian local economic connections in the section on

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<sup>152</sup> Kosimsho Iskandarov, ‘The Withdrawal of NATO Forces and the Prospects for Afghan-Tajik Relations’, Central Asia Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum No. 8, May 2013, 3–4, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan\\_Forum\\_8\\_May\\_2013.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan_Forum_8_May_2013.pdf).

<sup>153</sup> Shokhboz Asadov, ‘Tajikistan’s Transit Corridors and their Potential for Developing Regional Trade’, Institute of Public Policy and Administration, Graduate School of Development, University of Central Asia, Working Paper No. 6, 2012, 9–11, <http://www.ucentralasia.org/downloads/UCA-IPPA-WP-6-Tajikistan-Transit-Corridor.pdf>.

<sup>154</sup> Interview with economic analyst recounting his conversation with a foreign investment analyst, Dushanbe, summer 2013. Confirmed by an interview with a businessman with long experience in emerging markets, Dushanbe, winter 2013.

<sup>155</sup> Aga Khan Development Network, ‘Regional Cooperation Activities in Tajikistan’, [http://www.akdn.org/tajikistan\\_regional.asp](http://www.akdn.org/tajikistan_regional.asp).

the Afghan government's engagement with Central Asia).

Despite modest economic connections between Afghanistan and Tajikistan, some sectors are important to both governments. In 2012, Tajikistan exported 700 million kilowatt-hours of electricity to Afghanistan and recently signed a deal to almost triple that amount, which would potentially equal 200 million USD per year in export revenue for Tajikistan.<sup>156</sup> Other ambitious projects are planned for the future (e.g., CASA-1000; see Appendix 1) and some may spread economic benefits somewhat more evenly throughout society (as opposed to rentier-state type projects such as energy exports). For example, Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan recently announced plans for a railway that would go from Turkmenistan to Andkhoy in Afghanistan and then onwards to Panj in Tajikistan, just north of Kunduz province (see Appendix 2 for detail on regional co-operation; see the section on the Afghan government's engagement with Central Asia).<sup>157</sup>

Tajikistan is now in a position where the stated concerns of the government regarding Afghanistan (e.g., terrorism, narcotics trafficking and the spread of instability) need to be balanced with the growing trade connections between the two countries.<sup>158</sup>

Nevertheless, bureaucracy and corruption on both sides of the border are the greatest barriers. Those without powerful friends and lobbyists are at the mercy of predatory border guards and corrupt consular officials. For example, cross-border travel and business is difficult as the Tajik consular officials in Afghanistan demand up to ten times the official

price for visas to enter Tajikistan – and the Afghan consular officials in Tajikistan make similar demands.<sup>159</sup> This pattern of illegal payments for visas is also corroborated by informants in Afghanistan. While the fee for a Tajikistan visa is supposed to be 60 USD, they are usually sold illegally for up to 600 USD.<sup>160</sup> As for cross-border labour flows, in 2006, before security deteriorated, as many as 1,000 citizens of Tajikistan were working in northern Afghanistan.<sup>161</sup> The numbers are almost certainly much smaller now. In Imam Saheb district, Kunduz province, for instance, some Tajiks are working as doctors (e.g., obstetricians-gynaecologists), engineers and farmers.<sup>162</sup> And in regard to southern Tajikistan, currently just over 200 Afghan citizens are working legally in Khatlon province,<sup>163</sup> mostly in small factories and enterprises while others are traders.

### 6.1.2 Ethnic Connections and Attitudes towards Afghanistan

Afghanistan perhaps has greater cultural co-operation with Tajikistan than with other Central Asian countries. There is increasing cultural interaction among Afghan and Tajik intellectuals, including academics, writers, film-makers, singers and students.<sup>164</sup> It is, however, unclear if these culturally

<sup>159</sup> Interview with well-informed resident, Panj, summer 2013.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with local government official, Sher Khan Bandar, Kunduz province, 3 July 2013. This problem became so serious that the Kunduz Provincial Council reportedly closed the consulate of Tajikistan earlier in 2013 and the Tajik consul, as a consequence, left the province, because, in the words of a senior Afghan provincial government official, "it [the consulate] had turned into a money-making hub with a busy visa black market." Source: Interview with senior provincial government official, Kunduz, 4 July 2013. At the time of writing this paper, it is unclear if the consulate has re-opened, but people applying for Tajikistan visas from Kunduz and its neighbourhood had to go to Kabul (Kabul province), Mazar-e Sharif (Balkh) or Faizabad (Badakhshan).

<sup>161</sup> Bernd Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders in Central Asia: Transactions and Attitudes between Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan*, Baden-Baden, Nomos Publishers 2013, 200.

<sup>162</sup> Interviews with local residents, government officials and Tajikistani obstetrician-gynaecologist, Imam Saheb district, Kunduz province, 3 July 2013.

<sup>163</sup> 'Dar Khatlon besh as 700 khoriji ba kor mashghul ast' [More than 700 Foreigners Are Working in Khatlon], *Tojnews*, 29 November 2012, <http://tojnews.org/node/5040>.

<sup>164</sup> Interviews with Afghan intellectuals, Kabul and Mazar-e Sharif, May and August 2013. See also Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 165, 170.

<sup>156</sup> 'Tajikistan to significantly increase power exports to Afghanistan', *Universal Newswires*, 2 April 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/tajikistan/business/viewstory.aspx?id=13899>.

<sup>157</sup> *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 'Turkmen, Tajik, Afghan Presidents Sign Railroad Agreement', 20 March 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/afghan-tajik-turkmen-railroad/24934483.html>.

<sup>158</sup> This creates a contradiction in priorities whereby the Tajik government wants to restrict movement across borders, yet at the same time wants trade to flow across them. See Sébastien Peyrouse, 'Tajikistan's New Trade: Cross-Border Commerce and the China-Afghanistan Link', PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 169, September 2011, 1, [http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresegwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm\\_169.pdf](http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresegwu/assets/docs/ponars/pepm_169.pdf). See also Muzaffar Olimov and Saodat Olimova, 'The Withdrawal of NATO Forces from Afghanistan: Consequences for Tajikistan', Central Asia Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum No. 6, March 2013, 4–5, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan\\_Forum\\_6\\_March\\_2013.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan_Forum_6_March_2013.pdf).

based exchanges will improve or undermine broader public mutual perceptions and attitudes in either or both countries in the longer run.

Some local scholars in Tajikistan have described Tajikistan and Afghanistan as being connected by “unbreakable bonds that include language, the ethnic kinship of a considerable part of the population, religion, culture, and history” and argue that public sympathy in Tajikistan for fellow Tajiks in Afghanistan translates into close relations with and support for Afghan Tajiks.<sup>165</sup> Others claim the late Ahmad Shah Massud as a symbol for cross-border Tajik identity.<sup>166</sup> But there is no consensus among Tajikistan’s intelligentsia on this. For example, one professor in Tajikistan argues that Tajiks in Afghanistan no longer carry a true Tajik identity, having become merely “Afghans”.<sup>167</sup>

In the immediate post-2001 period, some ‘ethnically orientated’ citizens of Tajikistan expressed their dismay – in ethnic terms – at the prospect of Pashtun leadership in Afghanistan at the expense of Burhanuddin Rabbani, an ethnic Tajik and former Afghan president (assassinated on 20 September 2011).<sup>168</sup> An analyst in Tajikistan noted that the elite strongly approved of relations with Afghan Tajiks such as Rabbani and Massud, but that once Karzai came to power this changed. Relations at the top level thereafter involved less of a common ethnicity, and this aspect of the relationship was de-emphasised: common ethnicity was stressed before, then less so after 2001. Ethnic concerns about Afghanistan were not high on the Tajik government’s list of priorities.<sup>169</sup>

The general population in Tajikistan has little affinity for Afghan Tajiks. One recent survey found very little empathy for Afghans, not even for Tajik Afghans, as “they had nothing in common.”<sup>170</sup> Even among Tajiks

who had visited Afghanistan, negative views were dominant.<sup>171</sup> This sentiment towards Afghans is seen markedly in Dushanbe, including towards Tajik co-ethnics across the border. Local Tajiks often refer to visitors from Afghanistan in derogatory terms. Prejudices are clearly visible: Dushanbe residents assume that, during visits to Dushanbe, Afghan businessmen and bureaucrats aim mainly to procure prostitutes and alcohol.<sup>172</sup> This is not just an assumption held by those in Tajikistan; in Afghanistan the view of Dushanbe is of a ‘sin city’.<sup>173</sup>

Beyond Dushanbe, the view of Afghanistan and Afghans is also very negative. Afghanistan is considered to be a dangerous and backwards country full of violent people who are almost always referred to as Afghans, even if they are ethnic Tajik.<sup>174</sup>

<sup>171</sup> Taarnby, ‘Islamist Radicalization’ [see FN 171], 50.

<sup>172</sup> Personal observations and informal discussions, Dushanbe, 2012 and 2013. See also Sayofi Mizrob, ‘Mo bo tuem, Amirshoeva!’ [We’re With You, Amirshoeva!], *Khatlon Press*, 18 July 2013; Magnus Marsden, ‘Fatal Embrace: Trading in Hospitality on the Frontiers of South and Central Asia’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 18, June 2012, 124; Khalil Qayumzod, “‘Tashakkur’, barodari afghoni man!’ [“Thank You,” My Afghan Brother!], *Ozodagon* 7 June 2013, <http://www.ozodagon.com/casia/tj/10550-tashakkur-barodari-afoni-man.html>; A.J. Ahwar, ‘Is Tajikistan a Holiday Camp for Tourists from Afghanistan and Iran?’, *The True Pen*, 12 May 2013 <http://goo.gl/nNWw6b>. The same view can be found outside the capital in southern Tajikistan. See, for example, Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 198.

<sup>173</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, ‘The Siren Call Of Central Asia: Tajik City Spells Fun, Relatively, for Afghans’, *Wall Street Journal*, 29 October 2012, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443684104578067010200662502.html>. Some Afghan boys and adult men, even if they want to go for ‘good’ intentions to Tajikistan such as visiting relatives or study or perhaps some medical purpose, feel uneasy booking and buying flight tickets to Dushanbe (there is a direct Kabul-Dushanbe flight); most travel agents in Kabul and elsewhere think that they are going for what is sometimes called ‘rest and recreation’ to Tajikistan with its *double entendres*. Source: Personal observations and discussions with Afghan boys and men in Kabul and Kyrgyzstan, 2012.

<sup>174</sup> Personal observations and informal discussions, Tajikistan, 2009, 2012, 2013. The exception is among some of the highly educated elite who hold ethnic nationalist views, among which is the idea of Tajik/Persian unity. However, one local analyst noted that even many among this class, especially journalists, have negative views about Afghans and Afghanistan. Interview, Dushanbe, summer 2013. People throughout Tajikistan, when interacting with both foreigners (Muslim and non-Muslim) and other locals, often describe Afghans in demeaning terms as “dirty”, “animal-like” (*haiwanwari*) and “uncivilised” people living in a violent country submerged in “savagery”, as opposed to their own country which is “developed” and “modern”. See

<sup>165</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘The Withdrawal of NATO Forces’ [see FN 159], 1, 3.

<sup>166</sup> E-mail communication with Thomas Ruttig, based on his interviews in Dushanbe, 2013. Note: It is quite easy to find hagiographies of Massud in the few Dushanbe book stores that still operate. Personal observations, 2009, 2011–13.

<sup>167</sup> See the case of Professor Mansur Bobokhonov, in Kirill Nourzhanov, ‘Omnibalancing in Tajikistan’s Foreign Policy: Security-Driven Discourse Alignment with Iran’, *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 14:3, 2012, 375.

<sup>168</sup> Rashid Abdullo, ‘Tajikistan and the Antiterrorist Campaign in Afghanistan’, *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, 5:17, 2002, 4.

<sup>169</sup> Interview with local analyst, Tajikistan, summer 2013.

<sup>170</sup> Michael Taarnby, ‘Islamist Radicalization in Tajikistan: An Assessment of Current Trends’, OSCE Office in Tajikistan, Dushanbe, 2012, 50.



Negative views are sometimes reciprocated on the other side of the border. According to a local Afghan government official, some Tajik women have married Afghan men in Imam Saheb district, but have abandoned them after a while and gone back to their country.<sup>175</sup> Another local government official claimed that “Tajikistan exports widowed and promiscuous women and alcohol to Afghanistan and this destroys our culture.”<sup>176</sup>

In Tajikistan the significant numbers of businessmen (short- and long-term) from Afghanistan,<sup>177</sup> lesser numbers of students (about 230 in 2013)<sup>178</sup> and several thousand Afghan refugees<sup>179</sup> are generally treated quite badly by both the government and local Tajiks, despite the refugees being mostly ethnic Tajiks.<sup>180</sup> One aspect of the dislike for Afghan refugees is resentment that many will eventually be given asylum in the West while Tajiks themselves are often just as poor and desperate.<sup>181</sup> Based on

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Gunda Wiegmann, *Socio-Political Change in Tajikistan: The Development Process, its Challenges Since the Civil War and the Silence Before the New Storm?*, PhD dissertation, University of Hamburg, 2009, 79, 105; Till Mostowlansky, *Azan on the Moon: Entangling Modernities Along Tajikistan Pamir Highway*, PhD dissertation, University of Bern, 2013, 18–20; Marsden, ‘Fatal embrace’ [see FN 173], 124. Foreign and local Muslims are also given similar descriptions of Afghans and Afghanistan. Personal observations and informal discussions, Tajikistan, 2009, 2012, 2013.

<sup>175</sup> Interview, Imam Saheb district, Kunduz province, 3 July 2013.

<sup>176</sup> Interview, Kunduz, 4 July 2013.

<sup>177</sup> Marsden, ‘Fatal embrace’ [see FN 173].

<sup>178</sup> Radio Ozodi, ‘Donishgohhoi Tojikiston khoriyiyon ‘jazzob’ shudaand’ [Foreigners Have Been “Attracted” to Tajikistan’s Universities], 22 February 2013, <http://www.ozodi.org/content/article/24910091.html>.

<sup>179</sup> There were over 15,000 Afghan refugees in Tajikistan in 2000. That number dropped to near 3,000 after the fall of the Taliban in 2001–02 and is currently about 2,500. Source: Presenter unnamed under Chatham House Rule, ‘Afghanistan’s Stability and Regional Security Implications for Central Asia’, conference organised by the Central Asia Program Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University and Europe-Central Asia Monitoring (EUCAM) with the support of the NATO Science for Peace and Security Program, 17–18 May 2012, Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

<sup>180</sup> See, for example, Edward Lemon, ‘Tajikistan: Afghan Refugees Find Security, But Seek a Quick Escape’, *EurasiaNet*, 11 January 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/62689>.

<sup>181</sup> Email communication with expatriate with long-term work experience in Tajikistan, December 2013. This attitude was also seen when one of the authors of this report told local Tajiks that immigrating to Canada was very difficult for

anecdotal evidence, both the elite and ordinary Tajiks have plenty of prejudice against the thousands of Afghan citizens who live in Tajikistan; many have applied for UN refugees status and are seeking a third country to emigrate to.<sup>182</sup> In the late 2000s, for example, the Tajik government declined to follow the UNHCR’s recommendations to consider granting citizenship to those Afghans living on their territory for over a decade. A very high-level government official in the foreign ministry told UNHCHR officials: “We cannot grant them citizenship. . . . There are some Afghan families living near my house. They are dirty unkempt people.”<sup>183</sup> Nevertheless, while the police and customs officials in Tajikistan are often predatory and disrespectful towards Afghans,<sup>184</sup> many Tajiks manage to suppress any prejudices they may have during personal interaction with Afghans.<sup>185</sup>

The general disdain for Afghans and Afghanistan may be a barrier for connections at the non-state level, but the Tajik state is a pragmatic actor and does not consult opinion polls and surveys before forming its foreign relations.<sup>186</sup> Regarding Afghanistan, the Tajik government follows this rule. However, the interests that the Tajik government and elite actually have in relation to Afghanistan are not always clear.

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them, but far easier for Afghans. Interviews in Dushanbe, 2013.

<sup>182</sup> Email communication with expatriate with long-term work experience in Tajikistan, December 2013. These attitudes were confirmed by several other researchers who work or have worked with Afghan refugees in Tajikistan. Interviews throughout 2013.

<sup>183</sup> Email communication with expatriate with long-term work experience in Tajikistan, December 2013.

<sup>184</sup> For example, see Marsden, ‘Fatal embrace’ [see FN 173], 123–4; Ahwar, ‘Is Tajikistan a Holiday Camp?’ [see FN 173].

<sup>185</sup> Personal observations in Tajikistan of how local staff and beneficiaries in an NGO interacted with an Afghan employee, 2012, and observations of how locals interacted with an Afghan researcher in Tajikistan, fall 2013. For further examples, see Emily Manetta, ‘Journey into paradise: Tajik representations of Afghan Badakhshan’, *Central Asian Survey* 30:3–4, 2011, 377.

<sup>186</sup> For example, in Tajikistan public approval is overwhelming for Russia in terms of its government (see, for example: Gallup Global Reports 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/128210/Gallup-Global-Reports.aspx>). Yet relations between the Tajik and Russian governments are at times tense and unpleasant. Furthermore, in Tajikistan it is common to hear racist comments and fear regarding the Chinese (particularly among the urban intelligentsia). But this does not stop the Tajik government from forming close and beneficial relations with the Chinese government (especially considering the level of credit that China extends to the Tajik government).



When speaking about Tajikistan and Afghanistan, some prominent intellectuals and academics in Dushanbe neglect the pragmatic aspects to relations between the two countries and – demonstrating their disconnect from the views of the general population and reality in general – instead stress ethnic affinity while treating ethnic groups like coherent single units with common strategic and political goals.<sup>187</sup>

Similarly, one American academic has argued that if Afghanistan were to splinter into openly competing ethno-religious and ethno-political groupings, Tajikistan would seek to advance the cause of Afghanistan's Tajik minority. Some Russian analysts also argue that in response to the rise of the Taliban, the governments of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan would seek to support and co-operate with their co-ethnic communities and their leadership in northern Afghanistan.<sup>188</sup> However, other analysts have cautioned against viewing ethnic sympathies as a crucial part of the foreign policies of the countries of Central Asia.<sup>189</sup>

Drug trafficking is another area in which ethnic connections supposedly play a strong role. However,

<sup>187</sup> For example, several presenters unnamed under Chatham House Rule, 'Afghanistan's Stability and Regional Security Implications for Central Asia'. For a specific published source, see an article that argues, implausibly, that Afghan Tajiks such as Ismail Khan, Atta Mohammad Nur and Bismillah Khan Mohammadi would come to Tajikistan's assistance in case of a conflict with Uzbekistan, see 'Buyi nizo': se senariyai ehtimolii mushkilot bo Toshkent' [The Scent of War: Three Scenarios for Possible Conflicts with Tashkent], *Nigoh*, 13, 19 July 2013, 341.

<sup>188</sup> Martha Brill Olcott, 'Central Asian Republics', in *Is a Regional Strategy Viable in Afghanistan?*, ed by Ashley J. Tellis and Aroop Mukharji, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2010, 53, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/regional\\_approach.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/regional_approach.pdf); Vitaliy Volkov, 'Dve strategii Tashkenta i Dushanbe na severe Afganistana' [The Two Strategies of Tashkent and Dushanbe in Northern Afghanistan], *Deutsche Welle*, 5 July 2013, <http://dw.de/p/192g5>. See also Antonio Giustozzi, 'The Next Congo: Regional Competition for Influence in Afghanistan in the Wake of NATO Withdrawal,' Central Asia Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum, No. 10, September 2013, 7, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan\\_Forum\\_10\\_September\\_2013.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan_Forum_10_September_2013.pdf).

<sup>189</sup> This is despite Uzbekistan's previous support for the ethnic Uzbek Abdul Rashid Dostum and Tajikistan's support for Ahmad Shah Massud from the late 1990s until 2001, when Central Asian governmental support for mainly northern Afghan leaders started to reduce in its scope and strength. See Joshua Foust, 'Post-Soviet Central Asian National Interests in Afghanistan', Century Foundation, 2010, 13–4, <http://old.tcf.org/publications/2010/9/post-soviet-central-asian-national-interests-in-afghanistan>.

the border is not exclusively a shared ethnic zone divided between two states. This may be the case with the border between Afghan Badakhshan and Gorno-Badakhshan in certain districts and between some districts in the Kulob region and the Afghan province of Takhar, but it is not the case between Panj (Tajikistan's largest border settlement) and Imam Saheb district across the river in the province of Kunduz. The Panj side is heavily Tajik, while the Afghan district immediately across the river is mostly Uzbek, followed by several districts heavily inhabited by Pashtuns. Ethnic Uzbeks on the Afghan side dominate the drug trade here, yet they have no problems at all co-operating with Tajiks on the Tajikistan side. Here, as noted in a UNODC report, instead of ethnicity, "profit is, of course, the ultimate driver."<sup>190</sup> In this same area the weapons trade flourished when the civil war started in Tajikistan in 1992, again irrespective of ethnicity. Tajiks crossed the border to procure weapons, and the fact that the commander on the Afghan side of the river was an ethnic Uzbek (Abdul Latif Ibrahim) <sup>191</sup> loyal to an ethnic Pashtun (Gulbuddin Hekmatyar) did not seem to inhibit the trafficking of weaponry.<sup>192</sup> Ideology and Islam were also not serious factors in the weapons trade, as Afghan *mujahedin* commanders traded with soldiers and supporters of the Popular Front, an avowedly anti-Islamist militia.<sup>193</sup>

### 6.1.3 Views on the War in Afghanistan

It is common enough in Tajikistan for local analysts (with some exceptions<sup>194</sup>) to stress that the main threat to the security of Tajikistan is from across the

<sup>190</sup> UNODC, 'Opiate Flows' [see FN 113], 64–5.

<sup>191</sup> He is a member of the Ibrahim family from Imam Saheb and brother to Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, the current Afghan parliament speaker. He has held gubernatorial positions since 2002.

<sup>192</sup> See, for example, Interfax 1504gmt, 13 May 1992, in BBC Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) SU/1381, 15 May 1992, C1/1; ITAR-TASS 1251gmt, 11 May 1992, in SWB SU/1379, 13 May 1992, C1/6; Interfax 1504gmt, 13 May 1992, in SWB SU/1380, 14 May 1992, C1/3–4; ITAR-TASS 0012gmt, 19 August 1992, in SWB SU/1468, 25 August 1992, A1/2–3; ITAR-TASS 1339gmt, 29 July 1992, in SWB SU/1447, 31 July 1992, B/5; Interfax 1617gmt, 23 September 1992, in SWB SU/1496, 26 September 1992, B/4–5; Mushahid Hussain, 'Tajikistan: a worst-case scenario come true', Inter Press Service, 22 October 1992.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with academic who researched the civil war in Tajikistan, 2012.

<sup>194</sup> For example, see the skeptical views of Dr. Kamoluddin Abdullaev in 'Tret'ya grazhdanskaya voyna v Tadjikistan mozhet doyti do ulits Moskv' [A Third Tajik Civil War Might Spill over into the Streets of Moscow], *Regnum*, 20 February 2013, <http://regnum.ru/news/1627266.html>.

border in Afghanistan, especially in the form of Islamic extremism, Afghanistan-based Central Asian militants and narcotics trafficking.<sup>195</sup> And, generally, analysts who focus on Central Asia consider Tajikistan to be the most vulnerable to negative events inside Afghanistan due to the long and poorly guarded border, ethnic connections and the violent history of the 1990s.<sup>196</sup> The government of Tajikistan also occasionally warns of the spread of instability to Tajikistan once foreign forces leave or greatly reduce in Afghanistan. However, Tajik officials, while making dire predictions, are also careful to stress that the state of Tajikistan, in their opinion, is not in danger of collapse.<sup>197</sup> President Rahmon himself usually makes reassuring statements that with the proper domestic security preparations, regional co-operation and some assistance, Tajikistan can meet any challenges emanating from Afghanistan.<sup>198</sup>

<sup>195</sup> See, for example, Professor Abdunabi Sattorzoda quoted in *Asia-Plus*, 'Usilenie deistvii talibov v Afganistane mozhet otrazit'sia na poiavlenii i razvitiu v Tadzhikistane i drugikh stran TsA religioznogo ekstremizma' [The Strengthening of the Taliban in Afghanistan Could Affect the Appearance and Development of Religious Extremism in Tajikistan and in Other Central Asian Countries, 22 January 2010, <http://news.tj/ru/news/usilenie-deistvii-talibov-v-afganistane-mozhet-otrazitsya-na-poyavlenii-i-razvitiu-v-tadzhikist>; Andrey Zakhvatov, 'Viktor Dubovitskiy: Vyvod voysk SShA i ikh soyuznikov iz Afganistana sushchestvenno izmenit situatsiyu v Tsentral'noy Azii' [Viktor Dubovitskiy: The Withdrawal of U.S. Forces and Their Allies in Afghanistan Will Significantly Change the Situation in Central Asia], *Politcom.ru*, 8 December 2010, <http://www.politcom.ru/11146.html>; Iskandarov, 'The Withdrawal of NATO Forces' [see FN 153].

<sup>196</sup> For one of many examples, see Alexey Malashenko, 'Tajikistan: Civil War's Long Echo', *Carnegie Moscow Center Briefing* 14:3 (April 2012), 2, [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/MalashenkoBrifing\\_14-3-12\\_eng\\_web.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/MalashenkoBrifing_14-3-12_eng_web.pdf).

<sup>197</sup> Stephen Blank, 'Central Asian Perspectives on Afghanistan After the US Withdrawal,' Central Asia Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum, No. 2, November 2012, 15–6, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghanistan\\_Forum\\_2\\_November\\_2012.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghanistan_Forum_2_November_2012.pdf).

<sup>198</sup> *BBC Tajik*, 'Rahmon: 'Afghoniston pas az soli 2014 baroi mintaqi khatarzo nakhohad bud' [Rahmon: "Afghanistan after 2014 Will Not Become a Dangerous Area"], [http://www.bbc.co.uk/tajik/news/2013/05/130528\\_mm\\_rahman\\_kyrgyz\\_visit.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/tajik/news/2013/05/130528_mm_rahman_kyrgyz_visit.shtml); 'Strengthening Tajikistan's Security after 2014 was Discussed in the Security Council Meeting', *Asia-Plus*, 27 August 2013, <http://www.news.tj/en/news/strengthening-tajikistan-s-security-after-2014-was-discussed-security-council-meeting>.

Various parties' claim of an imminent security danger from Afghanistan is met with scepticism by many. One Russian analyst notes that these types of claims are made in service of both the Tajik and Russian governments: the Tajik government can then justify their claimed need for external support (i.e., security and financial assistance) while Russia can argue that its continued military presence in Tajikistan is required<sup>199</sup> (the same applies to the US). Meanwhile, a Tajik analyst argues that the Taleban, if they took over in Afghanistan, would not necessarily be interested in overthrowing neighbouring governments or supporting elements that wish to do so. Instead, they would more likely be looking for states to recognise them as a legitimate government.<sup>200</sup>

At an early point, the population of Tajikistan had a pro-NATO/US view regarding military operations in Afghanistan, as the war against the Taleban was considered justified. But this has changed in the last four to five years, and the people of Tajikistan now hold more negative views towards the American and NATO presence in Afghanistan.<sup>201</sup> In 2011, one prominent Tajik newspaper editor wrote a very critical and angry open letter to the US ambassador that reflects the opinion of the small coterie of anti-American intellectuals on the war in Afghanistan.<sup>202</sup> More recently, other local journalists have expressed

<sup>199</sup> Sokolov, 'Ili razbergutsya, ili uidut k talibam' [see FN 119].

<sup>200</sup> Firuza T. Achilova, 'ISAF troops withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014: How should Tajikistan be prepared for that?', United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) and Policy Association for an Open Society (PASOS), 2012, 157–66, <http://pasos.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/firuza-achilovaPASOS.pdf>. Ruttig reaches a similar conclusion. See Ruttig, 'Talebs in Tajikistan?' [see FN 84].

<sup>201</sup> Presenter unnamed under Chatham House Rule, 'Afghanistan's Stability and Regional Security Implications for Central Asia'. Presenter was drawing from years of polling using consistent methodology.

<sup>202</sup> He wrote: "Until when will America continue to collect the blood price for its wrongful policies in Afghanistan? America for ten years supported the Afghan mujahideen against the Soviets, but when the persons it fancied did not assume office in Kabul, it brought more troubles to that country. It then abandoned the government of the mujahideen—its creatures—and supported the Taliban. Then it bombed these new protégés like a father strangling his own child. Now America does not want a complete defeat for the Taliban. It wants to use them." See Millat, 'Noma ba safari muhtarami lyoloti Muttahidai Amriko' [Letter to the Honourable Ambassador of the United States of America], 23 April 2011, translated and quoted in Nourzhanov, 'Omnibalancing in Tajikistan's Foreign Policy' [see FN 168], 369–70.

similar views.<sup>203</sup> However, these are not particularly strongly held views that arouse strong emotions among the public. One local analyst stresses that people do not follow the news from Afghanistan and anger over American military operations in Afghanistan is not a visible issue among the general population in Tajikistan.<sup>204</sup>

Several analysts have stated that the impending American/NATO drawdown from Afghanistan has created an environment of fear and worry in Tajikistan regarding spillover from the conflict.<sup>205</sup> One survey in Tajikistan showed that 43 per cent answered affirmatively when asked if insecurity from Afghanistan would spread to Tajikistan and Central Asia.<sup>206</sup> Another more-recent survey listed countries and asked which posed the greatest threat to stability in Tajikistan. Afghanistan came in second (at about 25 per cent) to Uzbekistan at 27 per cent.<sup>207</sup> However, the poor methodology of these surveys leaves these conclusions in serious doubt.<sup>208</sup> Unless a researcher initiates a discussion on Afghanistan as a topic, it is nearly never brought up as a concern.<sup>209</sup>

<sup>203</sup> For example, see M. Muhammadi in *Imruz News*, 27 February 2013.

<sup>204</sup> Interview with local analyst, Tajikistan, summer 2013.

<sup>205</sup> See, for example, Sébastien Peyrouse, 'Battle on Top of the World: Rising Tensions in Tajikistan's Pamir Region', The German Marshall Fund of the United States, Foreign Policy and Civil Society Program, August 2012, 4, [http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files\\_mf/1346248601Peyrouse\\_Tajikistan\\_Aug12.pdf](http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/1346248601Peyrouse_Tajikistan_Aug12.pdf); presenter unnamed under Chatham House Rule, 'Afghanistan's Stability and Regional Security Implications for Central Asia'.

<sup>206</sup> Taarnby, 'Islamist Radicalization' [see FN 171], 31. Another poll showed that 22 per cent of Tajiks believe Afghanistan poses the greatest threat to Tajikistan, second only to the threat posed by Uzbekistan. See *CA-News*, 'Tadzhiki schitayut, chto Uzbekistan i Afganistan predstavlyayut naibol'shuyu ugrozu dlya Tadzhikistana – issledovanie' [Tajiks Consider Uzbekistan and Afghanistan as Biggest Threats to Tajikistan: Report], 10 July 2010, <http://www.ca-news.org/news:1073474>.

<sup>207</sup> 'A Study of Tajikistan External Relations', Central Asia Barometer, 29 November 2013, [http://m-vector.com/upload/CAB\\_RT/Cab\\_relations.pdf](http://m-vector.com/upload/CAB_RT/Cab_relations.pdf).

<sup>208</sup> For example, if these surveys had instead asked respondents to list threats to Tajikistan's stability without any suggestions, the result would have been very different. Asking a respondent if they think Afghanistan is a threat to Tajikistan will likely result in many affirmative answers. But this in no way represents the day-to-day concerns or worries of people in Tajikistan. Personal observations and conversations with local analysts, Tajikistan, 2012–14.

<sup>209</sup> Personal observations and discussions of the authors, Tajikistan, 2009, 2012–14.

Even in the southern districts of Tajikistan, the subject of Afghanistan is not a concern, including among those who are politically aware and interested in current events.<sup>210</sup> Of course, there is an exception for those immediately in the path of certain smuggling routes, particularly in the Pamirs and in the southernmost districts of the Kulob zone. Here reports of Afghans kidnapping Tajik citizens for ransom,<sup>211</sup> killings Tajik border guards<sup>212</sup> and stealing livestock on the Tajik side of the border<sup>213</sup> and the killing of intruders and smugglers from the Afghan side of the border<sup>214</sup> are common. But in the Kulob region, these forms of petty criminality, usually related to drug debts by smugglers on the Tajik side of the border, are only an issue for villages right along smuggling routes by the border. But Kulob city, for example, is unaffected by problems along the border.<sup>215</sup>

## 6.2 Afghanistan as a Factor in Local Insecurity and in Foreign Relations

### 6.2.1 Geostrategic Considerations

There is a consensus that Tajikistan has, over the last few years, been conducting its foreign policy in a way that works with as many of the major players (e.g., America, China, Iran, Russia) as feasible in a pragmatic manner. Referred to locally as an 'open door' or 'multi-vector' foreign policy,<sup>216</sup> this strategy has allowed the government of Tajikistan to make pragmatic decisions based on the best interests of the state elite (i.e., the more powerful section of the government leadership and its most wealthy and connected citizens).

Despite diverging assessments of Tajikistan's strategic importance, the country has some importance for

<sup>210</sup> Observations and interviews in southern Tajikistan, 2012–14.

<sup>211</sup> This is likely related to drug debts owed to Afghans. See, for example, this incident in the Shuroobod district: *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 'Four Killed In Hostage-Taking Incident Along Tajik-Afghan Border', 22 March 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan-afghanistan-border-hostages/24935889.html>.

<sup>212</sup> For example, see *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 'Tajik Guards Killed In Fight On Afghan Border', 3 January 2011, [http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan\\_afghanistan\\_border\\_gun\\_battle/2266322.html](http://www.rferl.org/content/tajikistan_afghanistan_border_gun_battle/2266322.html).

<sup>213</sup> Ibid.

<sup>214</sup> For example, see *Afghan Islamic Press News Agency*, 'Tajik security forces kill Afghan smuggler', 8 February 2013.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with local analyst, Dushanbe, summer 2013.

<sup>216</sup> Achilova, 'ISAF troops withdrawal' [see FN 201], 162.

powerful outside players. Instability in Afghanistan clearly offers the government of Tajikistan an opportunity to at least modestly elevate its strategic importance, especially concerning its dealings with Russia and the West. While the current foreign minister's claim that Tajikistan is "on the front line and at the most dangerous point where international terrorism, extremism and drug-related crime converge" has some element of exaggeration to it, the Tajik government has been able to translate such claims into benefits extracted from the major powers thanks to its geographic location.<sup>217</sup> This has ensured that in Tajikistan, the West has primarily focused on security concerns, with human rights and democratisation a disposable afterthought.<sup>218</sup> Some Western countries, such as the UK, have short-term interests in Tajikistan – as illustrated by a transit agreement reached to facilitate the British removal of military equipment from Afghanistan.<sup>219</sup> Russia and the US, however, have longer-term interests in Tajikistan.

Tajikistan's importance to Russia lessened over the years in terms of regional power projection, notably after the initial defeat of the Taleban in late 2001 and early 2002. Before, in the mid- to late 1990s Tajikistan had a valuable role as a base for Russian support to anti-Taleban forces. Not only did Russia provide military supplies for its allies in Afghanistan from Tajikistan, it maintained its own military bases within Tajikistan, as well as controlling the Tajik-Afghan border until 2005. Dmitri Trenin, a Russian expert,

states that "the small Russian force deployed in Tajikistan . . . was the only capable military formation between Afghanistan and Russia's southern border a thousand miles north."<sup>220</sup> The now more capable Uzbek and Kazakh military and security forces would obviously reduce the significance of the Russian military in Tajikistan as a buffer. The current Russian military presence (officially 7,000 troops in three bases plus other military assets<sup>221</sup>) is the largest military deployment outside Russia and a still vital (even if less so) part of Russia's efforts to be the main security player in Central Asia.<sup>222</sup>

The people of Tajikistan – the most pro-Russian population in the world<sup>223</sup> – strongly support current basing arrangements with Russia.<sup>224</sup> But the

<sup>217</sup> Payam Foroughi, 'Politics and Human Rights in Tajikistan: Squandered Opportunities, Uncertain Future', in *OSCE Yearbook 2011*, ed. by the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg, Baden-Baden, Nomos Publishers, 2012, 107.

<sup>218</sup> Foroughi, 'Politics and Human Rights' [see FN 218], 107–8. The security co-operation programmes receive praise from various quarters; eg, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen chose to mention terrorism, narcotics and Afghanistan as the drivers for planned future co-operation with the Tajik government and security forces training in Tajikistan through 2014. See *Asia-Plus*, 'Rasmussen: NATO i posle 2014 goda budet shiroko ispol'zovat' vozmozhnosti Tadjikistana' [NATO after 2014 will make extensive use of opportunities in Tajikistan], 10 April 2013, <http://news.tj/ru/node/141162>; Anders Fogh Rasmussen comments on his official Twitter account, 10 April 2013, <https://twitter.com/AndersFoghR/status/321881616525971456> and <https://twitter.com/AndersFoghR/status/321882145658372096>.

<sup>219</sup> Mehrangez Tursunzoda, 'Tajikistan, UK sign transit agreement for recovery of UK equipment from Afghanistan', *Asia-Plus*, 18 April 2013, <http://news.tj/en/news/tajikistan-uk-sign-transit-agreement-recovery-uk-equipment-afghanistan>.

<sup>220</sup> Dmitri Trenin, 'Contemporary Issues in International Security: Central Asia', in *Central Asian Security Trends: Views from Europe and Russia*, ed. by Stephen J. Blank, Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) Monograph, April 2011, 42, 50, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/pub1063.pdf>.

<sup>221</sup> Russian military assets in Tajikistan: 7000 soldiers at three Motor Rifle Regiment garrisons (Dushanbe, Kulob and Qurghonteppa), the 998th Artillery Regiment in Dushanbe, the 1098th Air Defense Regiment in Dushanbe, an Air Group consisting of seven helicopters, the 670th Air Group (five SU-25 fighters) and a battery of MLRS Grad BM-21s in Qurghonteppa and the Okno satellite tracking and relay complex near Norak. See Andrei Kazantsev, 'Russian military base in Tajikistan is most of all needed to ensure the security of Tajikistan itself', Russian International Affairs Council, 22 March 2012, [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id\\_4=270#top](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/inner/?id_4=270#top).

<sup>222</sup> Kazantsev, 'Russian military base' [see FN 222].

<sup>223</sup> Gallup Global Reports 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/128210/Gallup-Global-Reports.aspx>; Locals in Tajikistan, minus the minority of Islamists and urban intellectuals, generally speak glowingly of Russia and the Russian government. Personal observations, Tajikistan, 2009, 2012–13. A group of 50 intellectuals in Tajikistan signed a letter demanding the issue of Russian military presence be put to a referendum. This is a good indication of the disconnect between urban intellectuals and the rest of the population of Tajikistan. For reference to the letter, see Galim Faskhutdinov, 'Rossiyskie voennye planiruyut ostat'sya v Tadjikistane eshche na 50 let' [Russian Military Plans to Stay in Tajikistan for Another 50 Years], *Deutsche Welle*, 18 November 2011, <http://dw.de/p/13Cwi>.

<sup>224</sup> Presenter unnamed under Chatham House Rule, 'Afghanistan's Stability and Regional Security Implications for Central Asia'. For the opinion of the minority who are not as enthusiastic about the Russian presence, see 'Bahsi poygohi nizomii Rusiya dar Tojikiston' [Discussion of Russian Bases in Tajikistan], *Nahzat.tj*, 4 September 2012, <http://www.nahzat.tj/1/item/6365-bahsi-poigohi-nizomii-rusia-dar-tojikiston>.



negotiations over basing rights rested on the interests of the Tajik leadership, not public opinion. So the process of renewing a Russian base deal was a lengthy and contentious process. A renewed basing deal was finalised between President Putin and President Rahmon in late 2013 whereby Russia will have the right to maintain its military bases in Tajikistan until 2042.<sup>225</sup> Furthermore, the Russian government recently announced its willingness to help strengthen the Tajik-Afghan border via the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO).<sup>226</sup> Some on the Russian side (e.g., the CSTO head) now argue that Russia – not America – is once again the main guarantor of security for Tajikistan.<sup>227</sup> However, certain analysts in Russia read recent commitments by Russia to provide funding for the Tajik and Kyrgyz military as firmly aiming not so much at preparing for Afghanistan-based threats, but at reducing US influence over those countries' security structures.<sup>228</sup>

The US government usually disproportionately mentions terrorism and narcotics as threats to Tajikistan when explaining its reasons for engaging Tajikistan in various security assistance and co-operation programmes. Despite this, the US embassy in Dushanbe and various US government analysts clearly understand that the narcotics trade in Tajikistan is dominated by actors connected to the

Tajik government (see the section on narcotics trafficking) and that terrorism is not an imminent threat to stability in Tajikistan,<sup>229</sup> so other unstated motivations for engaging Tajik security and military forces obviously come into play. The consensus opinion is that the US wants to maintain a presence in and around Afghanistan as a containment strategy for possible future threats emanating from Afghanistan. As part of this, the US military and intelligence community want as much redundancy in the system as possible. So even if Pakistan, Uzbekistan and a residual presence in Afghanistan itself are more important, an effort will still be made to form a strategic relationship with Tajikistan as well – in particular a military-to-military relationship.<sup>230</sup>

While negotiations over potential basing rights and transit of equipment have occasionally featured in Tajik-US relations, US security assistance and training is a more reliable and predictable phenomenon, and President Rahmon clearly does not want to part with this benefit.<sup>231</sup> The American motivations for supporting, supplying and training Tajik security forces are connected to strategic goals outside of Tajikistan. Internal US embassy documents from Tajikistan state clearly, "U.S. interests in Tajikistan are a stable state on Afghanistan's northern border, support for our military efforts in Afghanistan, and for Tajikistan to be a stabilizing influence and contributor to economic development in the region."<sup>232</sup>

Tajikistan's strategic importance is filtered heavily through US needs related to Afghanistan. Most major decisions by the US government about Tajikistan are taken with Afghanistan in mind as the top priority. This includes the US government balancing its human rights rhetoric with its strategic needs in Central Asia.<sup>233</sup> One source in Dushanbe describes Tajikistan as being part of the US's "strategic depth".<sup>234</sup> But in terms of rank of importance, it became clear in discussions with both foreign and local analysts and

<sup>225</sup> See, for example, Dmitry Shlapentokh, 'Russia Ramps up Pressure on Tajikistan,' Central Asia-Caucasus (CACI) Analyst, 4 September 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12808-russia-ramps-up-pressure-on-tajikistan.html>; Kseniya Solyanskaya, 'Zavershenie bazovogo torga' [Completion of Base Negotiations], *Gazeta.ru*, 1 August 2013, [http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/08/01\\_a\\_5537477.shtml](http://www.gazeta.ru/politics/2013/08/01_a_5537477.shtml).

<sup>226</sup> President of Russia, 'Press statement following the CSTO Collective Security Council summit', Kremlin.ru, <http://eng.kremlin.ru/transcripts/6025>; "'Afganskije stszenarii': ODKB rabotaet na operezhenie" ["Afghan Scenarios": The CSTO Forestalls Them], *ITAR-TASS*, 23 September 2013 <http://itar-tass.com/arhiv/739630>. For what exactly the Tajik side needs in terms of training, equipment and finances, see Alisher Niyazov, 'ODKB vooruzhit Tadjikistan' [The CSTO Arms Tajikistan], *Asia-Plus*, 26 September 2013, <http://news.tj/ru/news/odkb-vooruzhit-tadjikistan>.

<sup>227</sup> 'Russia Tajikistan's main security backer – CSTO head', *Voice of Russia*, 23 September 2013, [http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013\\_09\\_23/Russia-Tajikistan-s-main-security-backer-CSTO-head-7667/](http://voiceofrussia.com/news/2013_09_23/Russia-Tajikistan-s-main-security-backer-CSTO-head-7667/).

<sup>228</sup> Ivan Safronov et al., 'Rossiya vooruzhit Kirgiziyu i Tadjikistan. Chtoby tam ne zakrepilis' amerikantsy' [Russia Equips Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan so that the Americans Will Not Become Entrenched], *Kommersant*, 2 October 2013, <http://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2309780>.

<sup>229</sup> Discussions and interviews in Dushanbe and Washington, 2012–13.

<sup>230</sup> This emerged as the general consensus in many discussions and debates with local and foreign analysts and observers in Tajikistan and Washington, 2012–13.

<sup>231</sup> Viktoriya Panfilova, 'SShA moderniziruyut armiyu Tadjikistana [US Is Modernizing Tajikistan's Army], *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 31 July 2013, [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2013-07-31/1\\_tajikistan.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2013-07-31/1_tajikistan.html).

<sup>232</sup> WikiLeaks, 'Cable 10DUSHANBE173', US Embassy Dushanbe cable, 16 February 2012, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2010/02/10DUSHANBE173.html>.

<sup>233</sup> Interviews with anonymous sources, Dushanbe, 2012–13.

<sup>234</sup> Anonymous source, Dushanbe, summer 2013.

observers in Dushanbe that, for the US, Tajikistan is of secondary importance to the main US hope for its strategic presence in Central Asia: Uzbekistan.<sup>235</sup>

### 6.2.2 Local Insecurity and Government Responses

A five-year-old assessment of Tajikistan as having a population that is “generally depoliticized”<sup>236</sup> still stands as a fair assessment, even if the reasons for this are debatable.<sup>237</sup> While there may be little chance of popular mass mobilisation, violent resistance by former civil war-era commanders and isolated terrorist attacks are an occasional problem.

Tajik government representatives regularly claim that the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is behind violent incidents, but without providing much detail.<sup>238</sup> Official versions of incidents involving militant Islamists in Tajikistan are often contradictory and inconsistent when it comes to providing numbers and organisational affiliation of those detained or killed. And, in some cases, the ‘militants’ later turn out to be regular criminals or drug traffickers.<sup>239</sup> The government often attempts to tie old conflicts with civil war-era commanders into its narrative of a fight against the IMU,<sup>240</sup> while the IMU itself, according to

some analysts, makes false claims to bolster the perception of the scale of its presence in Central Asia.<sup>241</sup> As for independent outside analysis, two researchers with long-term experience in this area, John Heathershaw and Sophie Roche, reveal that the worst of the violence blamed on the IMU by the government (Rasht Valley, 2010–11) is not part of a larger regional phenomenon, but rather a local conflict.<sup>242</sup> While this analysis does not rule out any and all connections to Afghanistan and/or the IMU, it certainly does undermine the government’s narrative.

One local analyst argues that local security forces just use ‘IMU’ as a convenient label to apply when sending people to prison for other reasons.<sup>243</sup> One commonly cited reason for labelling a person a member of the IMU or any other terrorist group is suspicion of Tajik men who have returned from religious studies or travel outside of the country (or who even just studied inside the country unofficially) and are displaying overt signs of religiosity usually associated with Salafism (certain beard styles, shortened pants, open criticism of uneducated or subservient local mullahs, denigration of ‘impure’ local Islamic traditions, etc.). Local security officials and dominant local religious figures perceive these men as a threat. This is further heightened by the ‘quota’ mentality of law enforcement officials who feel the need to show results in the form of numbers of arrests and convictions.<sup>244</sup> The widespread use of torture to extract confessions and the near 100 per cent conviction rate of those charged also casts serious doubt on the actual affiliation of people

<sup>235</sup> This is the clear consensus reached in interviews with a wide variety of analysts and observers in Dushanbe from 2012 to 2013. In discussions in Washington in summer 2013, this assumption was accepted without objection.

<sup>236</sup> Raissa Muhutdinova, ‘Tajikistan’, in *Nations in Transit 2008*, Freedom House, Washington, DC, 2008, 572.

<sup>237</sup> Commonly cited factors for Tajikistan’s population’s lack of interest in working to change their government or society are: the traumatic memories of the civil war, rising economic conditions for some and a preoccupation with a struggle to survive for others, mass labour migration to Russia, pragmatic attitudes of the population, strong state security structures, the elimination of any last prominent opposition figures, weak or irrelevant civil society and approval of or acquiescence to President Rahmon. See Foroughi, ‘Politics and Human Rights’ [see FN 218], 109–10; Muhutdinova, ‘Tajikistan’ [see FN 237], 572; personal observations and discussion throughout Tajikistan, 2012–13.

<sup>238</sup> For example, see the IMU numbers provided by the KGB deputy chairman in Anna Matveeva, ‘Security Sector Reform in Tajikistan’, Centre for European Security Studies, Groningen, the Netherlands, 2010, 38, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=119151>.

<sup>239</sup> Taarnby, ‘Islamist Radicalization’ [see FN 171], 28.

<sup>240</sup> See the example of the former Minister of Emergency Situations, Mirzo Ziyoev, who was likely killed by government forces in 2009 in Foroughi, ‘Politics and Human Rights’ [see FN 218], 110.

<sup>241</sup> See, for example, Marat Mamadshoev’s opinion in Lola Olimova and Nargis Hamrabaeva, ‘Tajik Authorities Struggle to Quell Militants’, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 4 October 2010, <http://goo.gl/mwuPm>.

<sup>242</sup> The authors write, “moreover, what is taking place in Kamarob specifically, and in Rasht as a whole, is not, as has been claimed by the Government of Tajikistan, a conflict with foreign terrorists, e.g. the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, representing regional Islamism. Rather it is a local conflict between the regime and former commanders, who were incorporated into the state following the peace agreement, but now find themselves excluded from it once more.” See John Heathershaw and Sophie Roche, ‘Islam and Political Violence in Tajikistan: An Ethnographic Perspective on the Causes and Consequences of the 2010 Armed Conflict in the Kamarob Gorge’, *Ethnopolitics* 8, March 2011, 4–5, [http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/exceps/downloads/Ethnopolitics\\_Papers\\_No\\_8\\_-\\_Heathershaw\\_and\\_Roche.pdf](http://centres.exeter.ac.uk/exceps/downloads/Ethnopolitics_Papers_No_8_-_Heathershaw_and_Roche.pdf).

<sup>243</sup> Interview with local analyst, Dushanbe, summer 2013.

<sup>244</sup> Interviews and discussions with a wide range of foreign and local analysts familiar with the security structures and the legal system, Tajikistan 2011–14.

convicted for membership in terrorist or extremist groups.<sup>245</sup> For example, the pre-election arrest and confession of several men on charges of plotting with the IMU to destroy the buildings of the Ministry of Interior and KGB, as well as the huge welcome gates on the outskirts of Dushanbe,<sup>246</sup> were met with scepticism and scorn by a variety of local and foreign analysts.<sup>247</sup> So, as for terrorists and Islamist insurgents, their views are extremely unpopular in Central Asia, attacks are few, convictions of terrorists are very dubious and security forces always seem to have the upper hand against groups who can not sustain a high level of resistance.

While elements of the Tajik government are often alarmist about the threat of terrorist and insurgent groups, at other times government officials play down the threat of militants based in Afghanistan and are sceptical that the IMU and the Taleban have a strong presence along the border.<sup>248</sup> Outside the country there is a small presence of Tajik *jihadis*, allegedly even in Syria.<sup>249</sup> As for Pakistan and

Afghanistan, a government spokesman stated that eleven Tajiks had been killed there in recent years, presumably as part of some insurgent group.<sup>250</sup> Isolated reports of Tajiks fighting alongside insurgents in Afghanistan are occasionally reported, such as the recent incident where a citizen of Tajikistan was killed while fighting in Kunduz,<sup>251</sup> and the arrest in Faizabad by the National Directorate of Security, Afghanistan's security service, of a Tajik citizen who had arrived from Pakistan, allegedly to join the insurgency in Afghanistan.<sup>252</sup>

Local government officials, including from the Afghan government, are quick in pointing to IMU involvement in significant security-related incidents, including suicide bombings and other complex attacks by the armed opposition, as well as reporting that it has a major and increasing presence in northern Afghanistan.<sup>253</sup> However, there are several problems with assuming that IMU fighters in Afghanistan are as significant a presence as claimed and with the claim that significant numbers of Central Asians travel to Afghanistan to join the IMU. Rather, indications are that those identified as being from post-Soviet countries are instead local Afghans, usually of Uzbek ethnicity (see the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan; see also Appendix 4 for a recent chronology of reported and alleged IMU activity in Afghanistan).<sup>254</sup> As for the

<sup>245</sup> US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, 'Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2012: Tajikistan', 2012, <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/204625.pdf>; 'Shattered Lives: Torture and Ill-Treatment in Tajikistan', Amnesty International, 2012, 18–19, <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/EUR60/004/2012/en/70f54751-5579-4f54-bcca-66a0c8856b5b/eur600042012en.pdf>; NGO Report on Tajikistan's Implementation of the Convention Against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment', NGO Coalition Against Torture and Impunity, 12 October 2012, [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/docs/ngos/CATI\\_Tajikistan\\_CAT49.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/docs/ngos/CATI_Tajikistan_CAT49.pdf). For further analysis, plus references and citations, see Christian Bleuer, 'Instability in Tajikistan? The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Afghanistan Factor', *Central Asia Security Policy Brief* No. 7, February 2012, [http://osce-academy.net/upload/file/bleuer\\_policy\\_brief7.pdf](http://osce-academy.net/upload/file/bleuer_policy_brief7.pdf).

<sup>246</sup> 'Terrorists planned to carry out attacks in Dushanbe in order to disrupt a presidential election', *Asia-Plus*, 9 September 2013, <http://news.tj/en/news/terrorists-planned-carry-out-attacks-dushanbe-order-disrupt-presidential-election>.

<sup>247</sup> Discussion with several analysts in Dushanbe and via email, late 2013.

<sup>248</sup> Dilafruz Nabiyeva, 'Militants active on Tajik-Afghan border', *Central Asia Online*, 4 October 2011, [http://www.centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/caii/features/main/2011/10/04/feature-01](http://www.centralasiaonline.com/cocoon/caii/xhtml/en_GB/features/caii/features/main/2011/10/04/feature-01).

<sup>249</sup> Earlier this year a spokesman for the State Committee for National Security (i.e., the KGB) claimed that three Tajiks had been killed in Syria while fighting alongside Islamist rebel forces. See *Asia-Plus*, 'Three Tajiks fighting on the sside of Islamist rebels in Syria reportedly killed recently', 26 May 2013, <http://news.tj/en/news/three->

[tjiks-fighting-side-islamist-rebels-syria-reportedly-killed-recently](http://news.tj/en/news/three-tajiks-fighting-side-islamist-rebels-syria-reportedly-killed-recently).

<sup>250</sup> *Asia-Plus*, 'Three Tajiks fighting' [see FN 250].

<sup>251</sup> 'Kushta shudani yak shahrvandi Tojikiston dar Qunduz' [Killing of a Tajik Citizen in Kunduz], *Asia-Plus*, 15 July 2013, <http://www.news.tj/tj/news/kushta-shudani-yak-shahrvandi-ikiston-dar-unduz>.

<sup>252</sup> 'Dar Afghoniston yak shahrvandi Tojikiston bo ittihomi uzviyat guruhi 'Ansorulloh' bozdosht shud' [One Citizen of Tajikistan Apprehended in Afghanistan in Connection with Membership in the Ansarullah Group], *Asia-Plus*, 9 August 2013, <http://www.news.tj/tj/news/dar-af-oniston-yak-shahrvandi-ikiston-bo-itti-omi-uzviyat-dar-gur-i-ansorullo-bozdosht-shud>.

<sup>253</sup> See the sources cited in Bleuer, 'Instability in Tajikistan?' [see FN 246]. See also Mukhametrakhimova, 'Central Asia at Risk' [see FN 83]; Zenn, 'Central Asian Leaders Wary' [see FN 83].

<sup>254</sup> Correspondence with former ISAF officer with several years of experience in northern Afghanistan, October 2011; Kate Clark, 'Kill or Capture 2: Another Takhar Night Raid Fans Ethnic Discontent', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 25 May 2011, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/kill-or-capture-2-another-takhar-night-raid-fans-ethnic-discontent>. See also Antonio Giustozzi, 'The Taliban Beyond the Pashtuns', *The International Centre for Governance Innovation, The Afghanistan Papers*, No. 5, July 2010, [http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan\\_](http://www.cigionline.org/sites/default/files/Afghanistan_)

actual preoccupation of the Tajik security services, they are internal political opposition to President Rahmon and the threat of neighbouring Uzbekistan.<sup>255</sup>

### 6.2.3 Afghan Connections to the Military Operations in the Pamirs

The Tajik government's military offensive in the Pamirs (i.e., the city of Khorugh in the Gorno-Badakhshan region) in summer 2012 is another recent event where some in the Tajik government claimed it was fighting foreign terrorists. While operations were underway, certain Tajik government officials made claims of Afghan and IMU involvement in the fighting in Khorugh<sup>256</sup> that were met with heavy scepticism among analysts and observers in Dushanbe and elsewhere.<sup>257</sup> The most comprehensive military analysis of the conflict makes no mention of Afghanistan in the main text the report.<sup>258</sup>

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Paper\_5.pdf; Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter, 'The Northern Front: The Afghan Insurgency Spreading beyond the Pashtuns', Briefing Paper 03/2010, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, June 2010, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20100629AGCR-TheNorthernFront1.pdf>.

<sup>255</sup> Sanderson, Kimmage and Gordon, 'From the Ferghana Valley' [see FN 121], 4. For another analyst who is skeptical of Afghanistan as a threat, see Safovudin Jaborov, 'Youth Radicalization in Tajikistan: Causes, Consequences, and Challenges to Address', *The Central Asia Fellowship Papers* No. 2, October 2013, <http://centralasiaprogram.org/central-asia-fellowship-papers-november-2013/>.

<sup>256</sup> Jim Nichol, 'Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications for U.S. Interests', Congressional Research Service (CRS) Report for Congress, 9 January 2013, 5, <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL33458.pdf>.

<sup>257</sup> Personal observations and discussions, Dushanbe, summer 2012. For sceptical foreign analysis view, see Peyrouse, 'Battle on Top of the World', 2–3; Shahrbano Tadjbakhsh, 'Turf on the roof of the world,' Norwegian Peace-building Resource Centre (NOREF) Report, September 2012, 6, [http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow\\_site/storage/original/application/168da6be07c668d37593a8ab961cf50e.pdf](http://www.peacebuilding.no/var/ezflow_site/storage/original/application/168da6be07c668d37593a8ab961cf50e.pdf).

<sup>258</sup> Faredun Khodzoda, 'Operatsiya v Khoroge i boevoe sostoyanie Vooruzhennykh Sil Tadjikistana' [The Operation in Khorog and the Combat Effectiveness of the Armed Forces of Tajikistan], Central Asia Security Policy Brief No. 10, Geneva Centre for Security Policy (GCSP) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Academy in Bishkek, 2012, [http://osce-academy.net/upload/Policy\\_briefs/Policy\\_Brief\\_10.pdf](http://osce-academy.net/upload/Policy_briefs/Policy_Brief_10.pdf). Only two brief mentions are made of Afghanistan in the

The half-hearted attempt by the government to tie the Pamiri fighters in Tajikistan to militants in Afghanistan was a failure and never gained traction.<sup>259</sup> However, even if the government failed to convince observers that forces from Afghanistan were involved in the fighting, Afghanistan may have a role to play if anti-government forces in the Pamirs were to re-arm; the southern neighbour would be an obvious supplier of weapons.<sup>260</sup>

President Karzai immediately co-operated with his Tajik counterpart by discussing the situation over the phone, by sending his interior minister as well as the (acting) national security director to Dushanbe to co-operate with Tajik authorities, and by ordering an increase in the number of Afghan security forces along the border.<sup>261</sup> Allegations were made, particularly by the Tajik government, that the Pamiri fighters had supporters across the border in the Afghan Badakhshan.<sup>262</sup> President Rahmon passed

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footnotes, neither of which assigns any importance to an Afghanistan factor during the fighting. The government's initial claims to have captured Afghans was later explained by the fact that three or four Afghans were detained during the operations, but that they were employed legally in Khorugh as auto mechanics. See Ramziya Mirzobekova, 'Khorog, 2012. God spustya' [Khorog 2012: One Year Later], *Asia-Plus*, 25 July 2013, <http://news.tj/ru/node/162907>; 'Khorog – 2012. Otchet pravozashchitnikov' [Khorog – 2012: The Report of Human Rights Defenders], *Asia-Plus*, 12 September 2013, <http://www.news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/khorog-2012-otchet-pravozashchitnikov>.

<sup>259</sup> A source in Dushanbe notes that the "'counterterrorist' rhetoric, while present in a few officials' statements, was largely absent throughout the period of the crisis". E-mail communication with expert based in Tajikistan, late 2013; Joshua Kucera, 'The Tajiks Who Fight Their Own Government,' *The Atlantic*, 28 June 2013, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2013/06/the-tajiks-who-fight-their-own-government/277336/>. One prominent exception is Sayfullo Safarov, deputy director of the Centre for Strategic Studies under the president, who continues to claim that extremists in Afghanistan have strong connections to Pamiri commanders in Tajikistan.

<sup>260</sup> Kucera, 'The Tajiks Who Fight' [see FN 260]. Note: However, Russia is the main source for weapons (eg, Kalashnikovs) in the Pamir region. E-mail communication with an expert based in Tajikistan, late 2013.

<sup>261</sup> Thomas Ruttig, 'Afghan Politicking after the Rebellion in Tajik Badakhshan (amended)', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 16 August 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghan-politicking-after-the-rebellion-in-tajik-badakhshan-amended>.

<sup>262</sup> Thomas Ruttig, 'Clashes in Eastern Tajikistan – with Afghan Participation?', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 26 July 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/clashes-in-eastern-tajikistan-with-afghan-participation>; Sajad, 'Karzai orders probe into Afghan militants link in Tajikistan clashes',



along a list of Afghans who had connections to the Pamiri commanders. This resulted in the arrest (and quick release<sup>263</sup>) of four Afghan government police and/or military commanders in northern Badakhshan.<sup>264</sup> However, as argued by Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh with a stress on the Ismaili/Sunni dichotomy, “if there is convergence among fighters north and south of the river Panj, it is most likely over business interests rather than religious or political goals.”<sup>265</sup>

While the situation continued to unfold in Tajik Badakhshan, somewhat violent politicking continued on the Afghan side. Afghan Badakhshan’s Shohada district police chief, Qari Wadud, known for his prominent role in the cross-border drug trade, was arrested on 28 July 2012.<sup>266</sup> On 14 August 2012, the administrator and the commander of border protection forces of Sheghnan district in the Afghan Badakhshan were killed, the responsibility of which was reportedly claimed by the Taliban.<sup>267</sup>

Nevertheless, it seems that, on the Afghan side of Badakhshan, the politicking and ensuing events were mostly linked to a “rearrangement in drug-trafficking networks and possibly an early positioning for the 2014 presidential elections.” The incident also provided President Karzai with the opportunity to appoint people more loyal to him in Badakhshan,

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*Khaama Press*, 25 July 2012, <http://www.khaama.com/karzai-orders-probe-into-afghan-militants-link-in-tajikistan-clashes-660/>.

<sup>263</sup> An expert familiar with Tajik Badakhshan notes that the main personality that was arrested was released quickly afterwards. E-mail communication with expert based in Tajikistan, late 2013.

<sup>264</sup> Tadjbakhsh, ‘Turf on the roof’ [see FN 258], 6.

<sup>265</sup> Tadjbakhsh, ‘Turf on the roof’ [see FN 258], 6. This reflects local opinion in the Pamirs. See Joshua Kucera, ‘In Khorog, Bracing For Another Attack,’ *Pulitzer Center*, 27 July 2013, <http://pulitzercenter.org/reporting/asia-tajikistan-khorog-afghan-connection-government-soldiers-citizens-rebel-leaders-attacks-shia-ismaili-sunni-mountain-sniper>.

<sup>266</sup> Ruttig, ‘Afghan Politicking’ [see FN 262]. Around 80 tonnes of heroin and 20 tonnes of opium are annually smuggled from Afghanistan to Tajikistan through the two countries’ border, according to the UN estimates. See Yaroslav Trofimov, ‘Afghan Drug Trade Sends Tremors: Dispute Over Trafficking Sparks Security Crisis Along Opium Route Through Neighboring Tajikistan,’ *Wall Street Journal*, 3 August 2013, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10000872396390443545504577563414182938548.html>.

<sup>267</sup> Sajad, ‘Taliban kill Sheghnan district chief in Badakhshan province,’ *Khaama Press*, 15 August 2013, <http://www.khaama.com/taliban-kill-sheghnan-district-chief-in-badakhshan-province-109>.

which is traditionally a *Jamiati* stronghold in domestic Afghan politics.<sup>268</sup>

More certainly, strategically located districts in Afghan Badakhshan have become increasingly insecure, marked by a greater presence and more intensive activity by the armed opposition groups, particularly the Taliban.<sup>269</sup> But these do not automatically link anti-government elements on both sides of Badakhshan, as violent rivalry over governmental positions, drug trafficking trade and routes and suchlike is the norm, rather than the exception, in Afghan Badakhshi politics.<sup>270</sup> This was seen, most recently, in the abortive assassination attempt on General Nazri Mohammad, currently the mayor of Faizabad, the centre of Afghan Badakhshan province (see also the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan).<sup>271</sup>

#### 6.2.4 Border Insecurity and Controls

Border insecurity in Tajikistan has consistently been a problem, but instability has not spread beyond the immediate border areas – despite the border being quite permeable in places. For example, along the border between Kunduz province and the city of Panj on the Tajikistan side, illegal crossings by Afghans are quite common, even for reasons that do not involve narcotics. Here the governments on either side have set up visa and border regimes that are so rigid – and staffed by highly corrupt consular officers – that some people will make an illegal cross-border trip instead of attempting to secure a visa. As a result, it is not uncommon to find Afghans residing illegally in some Tajik border districts.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Ruttig, ‘Afghan Politicking’ [see FN 262].

<sup>269</sup> Qurban Ali Hamzi, ‘Nofuz-e mokhalefan-e mosallah dar Badakhshan-e Afghanistan dar hal-e gostareh ast’ [Influence of Armed Opposition Is Increasing in Afghanistan’s Badakhshan], *BBC Persian*, 15 January 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130114\\_zs\\_badakhshan\\_insecurity\\_expansion.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130114_zs_badakhshan_insecurity_expansion.shtml); Rustapur, ‘Che awameli’ [see FN 71]; *BBC Persian*, ‘Dargiri-ye shadid bain Taleban wa niruha-ye amniati dar Badakhshan-e Afghanistan’ [Fierce Clash between the Taliban and Security Forces in Afghanistan’s Badakhshan], 28 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130928\\_k02-badakhshan-taleban.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130928_k02-badakhshan-taleban.shtml).

<sup>270</sup> E-mail communication with expert on Afghan Badakhshan, 15 September 2013.

<sup>271</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘Shahrdar-e Faizabad az yak sueqasd jan ba dar bord’ [Faizabad Mayor Escaped an Assassination Attempt], 3 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130903\\_k04\\_badakhshan\\_blast.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130903_k04_badakhshan_blast.shtml).

<sup>272</sup> Interview with well-informed resident, Panj, summer 2013.

The western sector of the Tajik-Afghan border is relatively easy to control, as down-river in the southwest area it is flat and the river is wide, with the opposite side being a part of Afghanistan with few people and very little in the way of transport connections.<sup>273</sup> But further up the river, as noted above, the situation gets more complicated as notable population centres are right across the river from each other (i.e., Panj and Imam Saheb). And further up the river, border Afghans make regular illegal crossings from Takhar province into Tajikistan not just to traffic narcotics, but to collect firewood and harvest pistachios and *enq* (a herb), as well as to visit relatives. Attitudes towards the border in this rural and isolated area are casual. The border here is not considered a “serious impediment” to cross-border activities.<sup>274</sup>

Occasionally the concern goes beyond relatively minor incidents of border insecurity and includes larger conflagrations, such as the December 2010 firefight between border guards and Afghan smugglers that resulted in the death of three Tajik guards.<sup>275</sup> However, more-severe incidents such as these, which seldom occur, have always been contained and managed.

In the recent past, Tajik officials have claimed that they have productive and growing ties to Afghan security officials and that border security co-operation between the two countries has produced positive results.<sup>276</sup> However, other government officials contradict this, stating that cross-border communication and co-operation are poor.<sup>277</sup> Of course, at the top level the presidents speak diplomatically and positively about the level of co-operation between the two countries, with President Rahmon even proposing to form a joint border control structure between the two states.<sup>278</sup> Equally commonly, Tajik officials call for assistance and funding in securing the border, as well as endorsements and funding by foreign donors.<sup>279</sup> As

noted by independent analysts, the required level of funding to secure the Tajik-Afghan border “will require large financial outlays” that the government of Tajikistan can not afford<sup>280</sup> and changes in the “corrupt culture of the security institutions, which likely no amount of money can fix”.<sup>281</sup>

## 7. UZBEKISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

### 7.1 Economic Relations and Cross-Border Trade

During the Taleban era in northern Afghanistan (1998–2001), trade between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan was “practically non-existent”.<sup>282</sup> Despite a nearly ten-fold increase in bilateral trade since then, the relationship is modest in comparison to that with the two countries’ other trade partners. By 2011, Uzbekistan comprised 6 per cent of Afghanistan’s trade figures, while Afghanistan is even less significant in return, making up only 3 per cent of Uzbekistan’s foreign trade turnover.<sup>283</sup> In 2011, a research centre in Uzbekistan enthusiastically endorsed the potential for increased trade volume with Afghanistan.<sup>284</sup> The governments in Kabul and Tashkent have, over the last half decade, signed numerous agreements to increase trade between the two countries.<sup>285</sup> And both sides have expressed

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Government, IOM sign agreement to enhance security of Tajik-Afghan border’, *Asia-Plus*, 5 June 2013, <http://news.tj/en/news/british-government-iom-sign-agreement-enhance-security-tajik-afghan-border>; ‘Tajik, Afghan border officers complete OSCE, UNDP border security training’, *Asia-Plus*, 27 July 2013, <http://news.tj/en/news/tajik-afghan-border-officers-complete-osce-undp-border-security-training>.

<sup>280</sup> Olimov and Olimova, ‘The Withdrawal of NATO Forces’ [see FN 159], 3.

<sup>281</sup> E-mail communication with an expert based in Tajikistan, 2013.

<sup>282</sup> Vladimir Paramonov and Alexey Stokov, ‘Constraints and Opportunities for Uzbek-Afghan Economic Relations’, Central Asia Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum, No. 5, February 2013, 1, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan\\_Forum\\_5\\_February\\_2013.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan_Forum_5_February_2013.pdf).

<sup>283</sup> Paramonov and Stokov, ‘Constraints and Opportunities’ [see FN 283], 2.

<sup>284</sup> ‘Afghan Transit: How Uzbekistan can Win Peace and Spur Economic Growth’, Center for Economic Research, Development Focus 6, January 2011, [http://www.cer.uz/upload/iblock/11b/one%20pages\\_6.pdf](http://www.cer.uz/upload/iblock/11b/one%20pages_6.pdf).

<sup>285</sup> ‘Afghanistan i Uzbekistan: iz proshlogo v budushchee vmeste’ [Afghanistan and Uzbekistan: From the Past into

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<sup>273</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 190.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, 211–12.

<sup>275</sup> RFE/RL, ‘Tajik Guards Killed In Fight’ [see FN 213].

<sup>276</sup> Negmatullo Mirsaidov, ‘Tajikistan strengthens border with Afghanistan’, *Central Asia Online*, 24 October 2011, [http://centralasiaonline.com/en\\_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/10/24/feature-01](http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/main/2011/10/24/feature-01).

<sup>277</sup> Nabyeva, ‘Militants active’ [see FN 249].

<sup>278</sup> ‘Tajikistan offers Afghanistan to convert common border into border of friendship and cooperation’, *CA-News*, 13 September 2013, <http://en.ca-news.org/news:528017/>.

<sup>279</sup> For example, see ‘Tajikistan asks EU to help defend Afghan border’, *Reuters*, 15 March 2011; ‘British

enthusiasm regarding the potential economic benefits of Uzbekistan's construction of new railway infrastructure in Afghanistan.<sup>286</sup> It is to be built at an expense of 170 million USD (165 million USD funded by the Asian Development Bank or ADB and 5 million USD by the Afghan government). The Uzbek government has been given, according to a three-year contract signed in August 2011, monopoly over the operation of the 75-kilometre railway line connecting Afghanistan's Mazar-e Sharif city with Uzbekistan's Termez and the provision of commercial services – a fact explained by the “lack of trained personnel and equipment on the Afghan side”.<sup>287</sup> The Uzbek government even officially declared that economic engagement with Afghanistan was one of the two fundamental principles that should be followed if the conflict there is to be resolved.<sup>288</sup>

Energy exports from Uzbekistan are quite significant to northern Afghanistan, and the economy there is vulnerable to possible disruptions in the fuel supply.<sup>289</sup> The Uzbek government's sale of electricity to Afghanistan should not be mistaken for a project motivated by imperatives of regional co-operation and integration. Uzbekistan withdrew from the inter-connected Central Asian electricity network and created its own line to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan

considers its electricity exports to Afghanistan not just as a source of revenue, but also as a way to undermine Tajikistan's competing export plan,<sup>290</sup> which could, by the construction of dams, affect the flow of water in downstream Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan's regional trade strategy, in the words of Bernardo Teles Fazendeiro, “downplays multilateralism and aims at zero-sum trade. Integration is therefore forsaken at the expense of Uzbekistan's regional economic supremacy.”<sup>291</sup>

As part of Uzbekistan's system of economic protectionism, the Uzbek government subsidises its exports and implements high tariffs on imports (the highest in Central Asia). Since 2001, trade between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan increased by nearly a factor of nine.<sup>292</sup> However, trade levels between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan have recently decreased and, furthermore, trade at the port of Hairatan is being hurt by rampant corruption, over-bureaucratisation and post-2014 anxiety.<sup>293</sup> While pertinent Afghan government authorities have reported further “efficiency” and “increased exports” at Hairatan port,<sup>294</sup> local realities reveal different,

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the Future Together], *Afghanistan.ru*, 25 February 2013, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/57523.html>.

<sup>286</sup> ‘Uzbekistan nameren rasshirit’ zheleznuyu dorogu Khayraton-Mazari-Sharif’ [Uzbekistan Plans to Extend the Khayraton-Mazari-Sharif Railway], *Afghanistan.ru*, 15 September 2013, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/64213.html>; Bakhtiyor Ergashev, ‘Uzbekistan i Afganistan: na puti k regional’noy bezopasnosti v Tsentral’noy Azii’ [Uzbekistan and Afghanistan: Towards Regional Security in Central Asia], *Mezon*, 21 December 2012, <http://www.mezion.uz/analytics/trends/1085-uzbekistan-i-afghanistan-na-puti-k-regionalnoy-bezopasnosti-v-tsentralnoy-azii>; Dilmurad Kholmatov, ‘Uzbekistan building new railway in Afghanistan’, *Times of Central Asia*, 3 May 2013, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/politics-analyses-and-opinions/10522-uzbekistan-building-new-railway-in-afghanistan>.

<sup>287</sup> Kristin Fjæstad and Heidi Kjærnet, ‘Afghanistan as an arena for Central Asian state performance’, unpublished manuscript, Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), Oslo.

<sup>288</sup> Ergashev, ‘Uzbekistan i Afganistan’ [see FN 287]; *Ozodagon*, ‘Voennogo puti resheniya afganskoy problemy net – Karimov’ [Karimov: There Are No Military Solutions to the Afghan Problem], 13 September 2013, <http://catoday.org/centrasia/kguru/10321-voennogo-puti-resheniya-afganskoy-problemy-net-karimov.html>. The other main principle is that there is no potential military solution to the war in Afghanistan.

<sup>289</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 336.

<sup>290</sup> Uzbekistan negotiated with the Afghan government on one supply line to put Tajikistan into a position where it could not just export its summer electricity surplus, but would have to supply Afghanistan year-round or not at all. So Tajikistan could choose between losing out on an electricity export contract or meeting the terms that were essentially set by Uzbekistan and suffering domestic electricity shortages. See Blank, ‘Central Asian Perspectives’ [see FN 198]; Viktoriya Panfilova, ‘Dushanbe podelilsya s Kabulom fotonami’ [Dushanbe Shares its Photons with Kabul], *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, 28 October 2011, [http://www.ng.ru/cis/2011-10-28/1\\_fotony.html](http://www.ng.ru/cis/2011-10-28/1_fotony.html).

<sup>291</sup> Bernardo Teles Fazendeiro, ‘Uzbekistan's Afghan Interests and its Foreign Policy after 2014: A turning point for opening Central Asia?’, Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Central Asia Series 12/3, March 2012, 6, <http://www.da.mod.uk/publications/library/central-asian-series/20120710-cas-12-03-U.pdf>.

<sup>292</sup> Fazendeiro, ‘Uzbekistan's Afghan Interests’ [see FN 292], 6–9.

<sup>293</sup> Interviews with local journalists and residents, Mazar-e Sharif and Hairatan, August 2013; Qayum Babak, ‘Cross-Border Trade Depressed in Afghan North’, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 13 March 2013, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/cross-border-trade-depressed-afghan-north>. One local official described the trade and economic situation as of late August 2013 at and through Hairatan: “It is a recession, partly because there is growing uncertainty about the post-2014 business circumstances.” Source: Interview with local official of Balkh chamber of commerce and industries, Mazar-e Sharif, 26 August 2013.

<sup>294</sup> Zabihullah Ihsas, ‘Ahadi for facilities, efficiency at Hairatan port’, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 6 June 2012 <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2012/06/06/ahadi-facilities->

deeply entrenched forms of corruption such as embezzlement,<sup>295</sup> nepotism and bribery at the port, in addition to widespread red tape. One local trader lamented, “Believe me, I have collected 15 signatures so far to obtain a lawful order, and I’ve paid out money as well. . . . I’ve been going around for three days now. I’ve grown weary of life, yet my work is still not done.”<sup>296</sup>

Aside from corrupt customs officials and border guards collecting illegal fees, the difficulties in doing business across the tightly controlled Afghan-Uzbek border are related to the Uzbek government’s strategy of strong domestic economic controls. The Uzbek leadership does not want a thriving border trade. The high customs tariffs and strict border controls are not just for protecting domestic markets and controlling prices, but also to ensure that those large corporations connected to the president, his family and his patronage networks can take advantage of cross-border trade on highly favourable terms.<sup>297</sup>

Other, more specific, complaints can be heard in northern Afghanistan. For example, traders and government officials there complain that ethnic Uzbeks dominate the trade in fuel imports from Uzbekistan, thanks to ethnic favouritism on the part of authorities and businessmen in Uzbekistan.<sup>298</sup> However, this alleged pattern of ethnic favouritism would need to be reconciled with the past and present success of non-Uzbek Afghans in the fuel import business, such as Zmarai Kamgar and Humayun Azizi Hotak.<sup>299</sup>

Trade at the border is dominated by fuel and construction material. At a lower level, shuttle traders (e.g., transporting consumer goods) from

Afghanistan were able to start cross-border trading after the Friendship Bridge reopened in late 2001. There is even an Afghan community in the Uzbek city of Termez made up of traders, small businessmen and refugees, some of whom have obtained Uzbek citizenship.<sup>300</sup> The attitude of the locals towards these Afghans is similar to that seen in Tajikistan – suspicion marked by ignorance. However, there is a pragmatic aspect to this attitude, as people will do business with Afghans if it is in their interest.<sup>301</sup> On the Afghanistan side, however, local residents sometimes come near the southern shore of the Amu Darya and imagine how “life looks so good over there.”<sup>302</sup> However, as stated by an informed interviewee, “Uzbek co-ethnics do not know one another, not even their traditionally near ones, on both sides of the Amu Darya. I can say that the majority of Uzbekistan’s people do not know if there are ethnic Uzbeks living in Afghanistan. This is what I heard during several trips to Uzbekistan.”<sup>303</sup> Western researchers who visit Uzbekistan also noted the lack of interest in and sympathy for ethnic Uzbeks in Afghanistan on the part of Uzbeks in Uzbekistan.<sup>304</sup> From this general rupture of cross-border ethnic ties one should exclude the pragmatic relations existing throughout recent history between the Uzbek state and the Afghan *Jombesh* party led by Abdul Rashid Dostum, a commander-turned-politician and currently a first vice-presidential running mate to Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai, a former senior Afghan government and World Bank official.<sup>305</sup>

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efficiency-hairatan-port; ‘Afghan imports decline at Hairatan Harbor while exports go up’, *Wadsam Afghan Business News Portal*, 26 May 2013, <http://www.wadsam.com/afghan-imports-decline-at-hairatan-harbor-while-exports-go-up-2323/>.

<sup>295</sup> ‘\$70.8m Hairatan Port Revenue Unaccounted’, *Outlook Afghanistan*, 13 February 2012, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/national\\_detail.php?post\\_id=3385](http://outlookafghanistan.net/national_detail.php?post_id=3385).

<sup>296</sup> Babak, ‘Cross-Border Trade’ [see FN 294].

<sup>297</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 23, 149–50, 325.

<sup>298</sup> Abdul Latif Sahak, ‘Afghan Fuel Traders Complain of Turkic “Mafia”’, Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 14 March 2012, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/afghan-fuel-traders-complain-turkic-mafia>. This same article also mentions the same accusations in regards to Turkmen and Turkmenistan.

<sup>299</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 172–3.

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<sup>300</sup> Ibid, 170–5.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid, 176, 232.

<sup>302</sup> Personal observations and interviews with local residents and an Afghan who had just returned from Uzbekistan through the Hairatan port, Hairatan, August 2013.

<sup>303</sup> Interview with an official director of Ai TV, Kabul, 14 May 2013.

<sup>304</sup> For example, see Peter Finke, ‘Central Asia Attitudes towards Afghanistan: Perceptions of the Afghan War in Uzbekistan’, in *Ethnicity, Authority, and Power in Central Asia: New Games Great and Small*, ed by Robert L. Canfield and Gabriele Rasuly-Paleczek, London, Routledge 2010, 66.

<sup>305</sup> See also Kate Clark, ‘A Leader Apologises: General Dostum, elections and war crimes’, *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 8 October 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/a-leader-apologises-general-dostum-elections-and-war-crimes>.



## 7.2 Security

### 7.2.1 Brief Pre-2001 History

After the 1920s, there was near total isolation between Afghanistan and the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic and a disruption of pre-existing economic, cultural and political connections between northern Afghanistan and what is now Uzbekistan. However, this changed by the 1960s as the Soviet Union became increasingly engaged in Afghanistan. Many specialists from the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic spent time in Afghanistan in the agriculture, oil and gas, and education sectors as advisors and technical experts. In return, many Afghans were educated in “natural, social and military sciences” in the Uzbek republic.<sup>306</sup> This co-operation, however, did not result in the two countries establishing cordial relations after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Uzbekistan’s problematic relations with Afghanistan began early after independence. For example, in spring 1992, Uzbekistan’s President Karimov accused Afghan President Rabbani’s government of backing the spread of foreign Islamic doctrines in Central Asia – accusations that were refuted by then Deputy Foreign Minister Hamed Karzai.<sup>307</sup>

Uzbekistan’s later involvement in Afghanistan’s civil war, in particular its support for the ethnic Uzbek commander Abdul Rashid Dostum, is well known. As early as October 1996, President Karimov, likely in response to the Taliban’s capture of Kabul, publically advocated for unified Central Asian and Russian support for Dostum as a buffer against the Taliban.<sup>308</sup> Nevertheless, the Uzbek government had more than one strategy at this time. By 2000, with no inroads made against the Taliban, Karimov stated that Uzbekistan may be willing to recognise a Taliban government.<sup>309</sup> In early 2001, President Karimov dispatched Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov to Pakistan to negotiate with Mulla Omar in an unsuccessful attempt to trade recognition of the

Taliban government in exchange for the expulsion of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.<sup>310</sup>

### 7.2.2 Ethnicity

Just like Tajikistan’s southwestern border with Afghanistan, the border here does not cut through contiguous ethnic zones. The northern districts of Afghanistan’s Balkh province (e.g., Kaldar, Qarqin and Shor Tapa) that border Uzbekistan are actually demographically dominated by ethnic Turkmens. Uzbekistan’s Surkhandarya province – the only to border Afghanistan – is itself not an exclusive ethnic zone either. Ethnic Tajiks are a considerable minority in parts of the province, including in the city of Termez near the Afghan border.<sup>311</sup> UNODC notes the involvement of ethnic Turkmens and Pashtuns from Afghanistan in the narcotics trade with Uzbekistan, a trade in which ethnic Uzbek Afghans do not dominate. Here, just as in Tajikistan, ethnic difference is put aside for other more relevant interests.<sup>312</sup>

Aside from the lack of cross-border relationships and ethnically-based relations and commonalities among the general population, the government of Uzbekistan itself has no great desire to encourage its co-ethnics in Afghanistan in any significant manner, apart from its off-and-on support for the *Jombeshis*. The Uzbek government avoids relations with Uzbeks in northern Afghanistan who advocate for more cultural and political rights.<sup>313</sup> For instance, recently, several mainly Uzbek-language TV channels have mushroomed, but the Uzbek government has almost nothing to do with them; these media represent ethno-cultural developments within Afghanistan.<sup>314</sup>

<sup>310</sup> Uznews.net, ‘Politician who talked with the Taliban returns to head Uzbek Foreign Ministry’, 24 January 2012 [http://www.uznews.net/article\\_single.php?lng=en&cid=24&aid=880](http://www.uznews.net/article_single.php?lng=en&cid=24&aid=880).

<sup>311</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 159–60; UNODC, ‘Opiate Flows’ [see FN 113], 54.

<sup>312</sup> UNODC, ‘Opiate Flows’ [see FN 113], 54.

<sup>313</sup> Giustozzi, ‘The next Congo’ [see FN 189], 7.

<sup>314</sup> *Batur*, named after and owned by Dostum’s eldest son Batur Dostum, is broadcasting programmes in Uzbeki and Turkmeni languages in Sheberghan, the centre of Jowzjan province, a staunch Dostum stronghold, and via satellite. *Birlik* (Uzbeki, meaning ‘solidarity’) is supported by Mohammad Alem Sa’i, former provincial governor of Jowzjan province. *Almas* (Arabic/Dari/Uzbeki, meaning ‘diamond’) has started its broadcasting in Uzbeki in Mazar-e Sharif. Finally, *Ai* (Uzbeki, meaning ‘moonlight’) plans to go on air in Kabul and northern Takhar province. *Almas* and *Ai* are reportedly funded by some influential Uzbek businessmen in Afghanistan. Source: Interviews with an official of *Ai* TV and with senior member of *Hezb-e Jombesh-e Melli-ye Afghanistan* (Party of Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Kabul, 14 May and 10 July 2013.

<sup>306</sup> Interview with senior member of *Hezb-e Jombesh-e Melli-ye Afghanistan* (Party of Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Kabul, 10 July 2013. See also *Afghanistan.ru*, ‘Afghanistan i Uzbekistan’ [see FN 286].

<sup>307</sup> Fazendeiro, ‘Uzbekistan’s Afghan Interests’ [see FN 292], 6.

<sup>308</sup> Shahram Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States: Authoritarianism, Islamism, and Washington’s Security Agenda*, London, Zed Books 2005, 2, 42–3.

<sup>309</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States* [see FN 309], 45.

Generally speaking, and excluding the Uzbek government's on-and-off support for the *Jombesh*, which has been primarily driven by its own security needs, Uzbekistan is not looking for consistent political and cultural influence in Afghanistan.

Central Asian governments are clearly pragmatic in their dealings with Afghanistan. One researcher notes that ethnicity "hardly affects decision-making".<sup>315</sup> But the same analyst believes that if unfriendly insurgent forces gain too much strength in northern Afghanistan, the Uzbek government will be seeking allies across the border, and that Abdul Rashid Dostum may again be supported by the Uzbek government.<sup>316</sup> Many analysts point to Uzbekistan's past support for Dostum as a sure sign that if the Afghan central government weakens further, the Uzbek government will reignite its relationship with Dostum and/or other powerful ethnic Uzbeks in northern Afghanistan.<sup>317</sup> However, *Jombesh* – the political-military structure led then (and still) by Dostum – considers the Uzbek government's support as having been neither "meaningful" (*ma'nidar*) nor "effective" (*mu'aser*) as the support did not enable it to achieve "domination" (*qalaba*) over other forces in northern Afghanistan.<sup>318</sup> Ties do remain between *Jombesh* and Uzbekistan, but how the ties will evolve, given the transition in Afghanistan, is not clearly known.

It would be a mistake to view Uzbekistan's relations with powerful figures in Afghanistan through an ethnic lens, despite Uzbekistan's past support for Dostum. Rather, Uzbek President Karimov does not form his foreign relations based on ethnic affinity, but rather on common interests, and his past use of Uzbek militias was not based on nationalism or ethnic affinity but on pragmatism and vicinity – they were powerful, relatively well-organised, nearby and conducive to protecting the Uzbek government's

interests, i.e. to keep secure its southern border.<sup>319</sup> Dostum being, at the time (and still, though less so), powerful in areas of Afghanistan adjacent to Uzbekistan and he himself being friendly to Uzbekistan made him the obvious candidate for an Uzbek government proxy.

The expectation that the government of Uzbekistan prefers to deal with ethnic Uzbeks in Afghanistan is contradicted not just by the over ten years of co-operation with President Karzai, but also by the good relations between the Uzbek government and other significant Afghan politicians such as the ethnic Tajik Atta Mohammad Nur, the unusually powerful governor of Balkh province, and the ethnic Hazara Mohammad Mohaqqueq, a vice-presidential hopeful in the April 2014 elections. These relations, among others, suggest a recent diversification of the Uzbek government's relations with influential figures in northern Afghanistan.<sup>320</sup> The above analysis shows

<sup>319</sup> Fazendeiro, 'Uzbekistan's Afghan Interests' [see FN 292], 11–12; Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 128; *Afghanistan.ru*, 'Afghanistan i Uzbekistan' [see FN 286].

<sup>320</sup> Mohaqqueq's reinforced relationship with the Uzbek government is evident in the ease and frequency of his and his family's (e.g., last Nowruz) visits to Uzbekistan, particularly Tashkent and Bukhara. Most recently, in an uncharacteristic disclosure of the often hidden and behind-closed-doors nature of Afghan domestic politics, Mohaqqueq described, in some detail, how he, Dostum and Atta Mohammad Nur) swore an oath by the Koran . . . to run together in the elections. . . . But when we came back, General Saheb (Gen. Dostum) raised two issues: one that we will not run together with Dr. Abdullah [another influential Afghan Tajik politician and a former foreign minister] and second that he wanted the first-presidential running mate ticket. . . . These two demands were not practicable and not receptive to public opinions inside and outside [the country]." Source: Dawud Naji, 'Pardadari-ye Mohammad Mohaqqueq az chanazanihayeh siasi dar Afghanistan' [Mohammad Mohaqqueq's Disclosure of Political Deal-Makings in Afghanistan], *BBC Persian*, 27 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130927\\_109\\_afghan\\_leader\\_mohaqiq\\_facebook.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130927_109_afghan_leader_mohaqiq_facebook.shtml). Mohaqqueq's statement was rejected by the now practically dismantled National Front of Afghanistan (NFA), particularly Dostum's *Jombesh*, as "unexpected" and "unfounded accusations and narratives". Source: *BBC Persian*, 'Wakonesh-e jabha-ye melli-ye Afghanistan ba nama-ye Mohammad Mohaqqueq dar mured-e chanazanihayeh siasi' [Reaction of National Front of Afghanistan to Mohammad Mohaqqueq's letter about political deal-makings], 28 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130927\\_109\\_afghan\\_leader\\_mohaqiq\\_facebook.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130927_109_afghan_leader_mohaqiq_facebook.shtml).

<sup>315</sup> Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan: Insulation on the Silk Road, Between Eurasia and the Heart of Asia', Peace Research Institute Oslo, paper, 2012, 42, [http://file.prio.no/Publication\\_files/Prio/Tadjbakhsh,%20S%20%282012%29%20Central%20Asia%20and%20Afghanist%20%28PRIO%20Paper%29.pdf](http://file.prio.no/Publication_files/Prio/Tadjbakhsh,%20S%20%282012%29%20Central%20Asia%20and%20Afghanist%20%28PRIO%20Paper%29.pdf).

<sup>316</sup> Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan' [see FN 316], 42.

<sup>317</sup> As one of many examples, see Volkov, 'Dve strategii Tashkenta' [see FN 189]; Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan' [see FN 316], 50–51.

<sup>318</sup> Interview with senior member of *Hezb-e Jombesh-e Melli-ye Afghanistan* (Party of Islamic Movement of Afghanistan), Kabul, 10 July 2013.

that the Uzbek government, in times of crisis, selects allies based on vicinity and usefulness rather than ethnicity.<sup>321</sup>

### 7.2.3 The Uzbek-Afghan Border

The Uzbek government portrays the Uzbek-Afghan border as a “moral border between good and evil”.<sup>322</sup> This is not a recent development. Uzbekistan was the first of the former Soviet republics in Central Asia to militarise its border with Afghanistan. Uzbekistan’s short and flat 137-kilometre-long river border with Afghanistan is well secured compared to those that Tajikistan and Turkmenistan share with Afghanistan. Uzbekistan has few security concerns here as the capable Uzbek border guards have secured the border region.<sup>323</sup> It is among the world’s most heavily guarded borders with barbed wire and electric fences, landmines and well-armed border troops on the Uzbek side.<sup>324</sup> In addition to a well-armed and -equipped checkpoint, the Uzbek government has coast guard boats on its side of the Amu Darya – a presence visible to the naked eye from the Afghan side of the river – to prevent the illegal passage of people from Afghanistan to Uzbekistan via the river.<sup>325</sup> Nevertheless, there are occasional minor security incidents. For the first six months of 2013, over 20 border violations by Afghans were reported, resulting in over 100 arrests of Afghan citizens.<sup>326</sup> More serious incidents have occurred, at least according to Uzbek government sources. In June 2013, Uzbek border guards claimed to have killed Afghan attackers on the border. However, on the

Afghan side, local officials say they were civilians who had ventured onto an island (Aral-Paygambar) in the middle of the river (the river in some places divides into many different channels and ownership of islands that form with the changing flow of the river is not established).<sup>327</sup> Incidents of unilateral Uzbek government actions during the last decade along the border have frustrated border area residents and Afghan government officials in northern Afghanistan.<sup>328</sup> Another problem in border relations occurs at the Hairatan port where all licit Afghan-Uzbek road and rail trade occurs. Here Afghan officials and traders complain of discriminatory practices by Uzbek customs officials.<sup>329</sup> The flow of people and ideas across the border is even more restricted. For example, cross-border NGO projects are discouraged by the Uzbek government.<sup>330</sup>

### 7.2.4 The Tajik and Kyrgyz Borders as Uzbekistan’s Secondary Afghan Borders

The relationship between the governments of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan is poor and has deteriorated consistently since independence. The two countries share grievances over numerous issues.<sup>331</sup> While many of these issues have nothing to

7\_zs\_national\_front\_reaction\_mohaqeq.shtml. A key point here is that Uzbekistan is providing a space for mainly northern Afghan political opponents to discuss vital Afghan political issues. See also Fazendeiro, ‘Uzbekistan’s Afghan Interests’ [see FN 292], 11. He notes Governor Atta’s handover of IMU suspects to Uzbekistan and Atta’s medical treatment in Uzbekistan.

<sup>321</sup> While some may argue that Uzbekistan also supported an ethnic Uzbek in the civil war Tajikistan (a Loqay ‘Uzbek’ from southern Tajikistan), Uzbekistan only moved to support him after the failure of their main proxy – Safarali Kenjaev, a Tajik of Yaghnobi (eastern Iranian linguistic group) origins who set up his base near the Uzbek border where he had a strong patronage network. Source: Author’s research on the Tajik civil war.

<sup>322</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 150.

<sup>323</sup> Ibid, 235–6, 336.

<sup>324</sup> Mukhametrakhimova, ‘Central Asia at Risk’ [see FN 83].

<sup>325</sup> Personal observations and discussions with local residents, Hairatan, August 2013.

<sup>326</sup> Murat Sadykov, ‘Uzbekistan Says It Repels Afghans from Border’, *EurasiaNet*, 18 March 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66702>.

<sup>327</sup> ‘Desyat’ zhiteley Afganistana napali na uzbekskiy pogrannnpyad, est’ zhertvy’, *Interfax*, 16 March 2013, <http://interfax.az/view/569075>; ‘Uzbek border guards kill 3 Afghan civilians’, *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 17 March 2013, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2013/03/17/uzbek-border-guards-kill-3-afghan-civilians>; Sadykov, ‘Uzbekistan Says It Repels Afghans from Border’ [see FN 327].

<sup>328</sup> Fazendeiro, ‘Uzbekistan’s Afghan Interests’ [see FN 292].

<sup>329</sup> *Afghanistan.ru*, ‘Afganistan i Uzbekistan’ [see FN 286]; *Afghanistan.ru*, ‘Afganistan otpravil v Uzbekistan delegatsiyu dlya obsuzheniya situatsii v portu Khayraton’ [Afghanistan Sent a Delegation to Uzbekistan to Discuss the Situation in the Port of Hayraton], *Afghanistan.ru*, 18 January 2013, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/56118.html>.

<sup>330</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 171.

<sup>331</sup> Tajikistan’s plans for the construction of a large dam on a river that flows into Uzbekistan, cross-border pollution, restrictions on cross-border trade, the quasi-blockade of trade across the border by the Uzbek government, the mining of the border by Uzbek security forces, the closure of air routes connecting Tajikistan to Uzbekistan, the restrictive visa regime, the personal enmity between the Tajik and Uzbek presidents, Tajik-Uzbek competition to supply the Afghan and Pakistani electricity markets, Uzbekistan’s support for several military mutinies against President Rahmon in the latter half of the 1990s and various disputes over ethnic histories and delimitation of borders. Source: personal observations and research in Tajikistan and Central Asia, 2009–13. For a more comprehensive list of Tajikistan-Uzbekistan disputes, see Kh. Umarov, ‘Tadzhikistan – Uzbekistan: “Nastalo vremya ser’eznogo peregovornogo protsessa”’ [Tajikistan-

do with Afghanistan, the security measures on the Uzbek-Tajik border, including land mines and barbed wire (as well as the shooting of Tajiks crossing illegally into Uzbekistan), are due in part because the Uzbek government sees the Tajik border as just another border with Afghanistan. The Uzbek leadership has no faith in the ability of the Tajik or Kyrgyz governments to stop militants and terrorists from crossing through their countries and into Uzbekistan, especially since the terrorist attacks and insurgent incursions of 1999 and 2000 in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan.<sup>332</sup> As the Uzbek border with Afghanistan is easy to control, a potential detour by Afghanistan-based forces through the territory of Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan is more threatening to the Uzbek government's sense of security.<sup>333</sup>

### 7.2.5 Spillover from Afghanistan

The government of Uzbekistan regularly states the danger of terrorism within its borders. This is especially so regarding anti-government forces from Uzbekistan based in Afghanistan, now and after the withdrawal or drawdown of NATO/ISAF forces.<sup>334</sup> The Uzbek government has no faith in the ability of the Afghan security forces to control the country after

2014.<sup>335</sup> In May 2013, President Karimov publically stated,

*the main threat for not only Uzbekistan but also for all countries surrounding Afghanistan is the cruel war that has been continuing in Afghanistan for over 30 years. . . . Unfortunately, when [ISAF] leaves, conflicts will intensify between the forces which are opposing each other. . . . Terrorism, drug addiction, drug trafficking, and various religious and ethnic conflicts . . . will escalate. . . . Tension will definitely increase in the Central Asian countries after they pull out without having settled the problem of Afghanistan.*<sup>336</sup>

The Uzbek government's publically-stated fear of a violent anti-government spillover from Afghanistan is marked also by President Karimov's belief that Uzbekistan should be prepared to fight off these (or other) forces on its own, as neither Russia nor the United States can be counted on to consistently help ensure Uzbekistan's security.<sup>337</sup> Uzbekistan's fear of instability is matched by active preparations to counter various scenarios. And, in general, Uzbekistan's capabilities, especially its security and intelligence apparatus' ability to make independent threat analyses, is far superior to those of its Central Asian neighbours. The Uzbek government is thus able to make realistic assessments and, while Afghanistan is a top-level security priority, there are no exaggerated internal threat assessments, public rhetoric notwithstanding. These assessments are based primarily on the experience of the rise of the Taliban in the 1990s, when no mass insurgency was facilitated or triggered in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, Uzbekistan is preparing for various outcomes just to be sure.<sup>338</sup>

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Uzbekistan: "It Is Time for Serious Negotiations", *Asia-Plus*, 11 April 2013, [Vremya novostey, 10 December 2009, <http://www.vremya.ru/2009/228/5/243519.html>; Millat, 'Kadam kishvar metavonad shariki strategi va dusti Tojikiston boshad?' \[Which Country Can Offer Tajikistan a Strategy of Bilateralism and Friendship?\], 22 December 2012, <http://www.millat.tj/siyosat/3442-kadam-kishvar-metavonad-shariki-strategi.html>.](http://news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/tadzhikistan-uzbekistan-nastalo-vremya-sereznogo-peregovornogo-protessa; Arkadiy Dubnov, )

<sup>332</sup> Timur Dadabaev, 'Securing Central Asian Frontiers: Institutionalisation of Borders and Inter-state Relations', *Strategic Analysis* 36:4, 2012, 558, 565; Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 118–9, 153; US House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs, Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats, 'Testimony of Robert O. Blake before the Joint Subcommittee Hearing: Islamist Militant Threats to Eurasia', Washington DC, 27 February 2013, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/CHRG-113hhrg79581/pdf/CHRG-113hhrg79581.pdf>; Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States* [see FN 309], 30.

<sup>333</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 321–2.

<sup>334</sup> US House of Representatives, 'Testimony of Robert O. Blake' [see FN 333].

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<sup>335</sup> *Afghanistan.ru*, 'Afghanistan i Uzbekistan' [see FN 285]; Roger N. McDermott, 'Central Asian Security Post-2014: Perspectives in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan', Danish Institute for International Studies, Report 12, 2013, 47, <http://subweb.dii.dk/sw129432.asp>.

<sup>336</sup> As quoted in Jim Nichol, 'Uzbekistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests', Congressional Research Service, 21 August 2013, 14, <http://www.fas.org/srg/crs/row/RS21238.pdf>.

<sup>337</sup> Anvar Malikov, 'Afghanistan will dominate Uzbekistan's domestic and foreign policies', *Registan.net*, 13 December 2012, <http://registan.net/2012/12/13/afghanistan-will-dominate-uzbekistans-domestic-and-foreign-policies/>.

<sup>338</sup> McDermott, 'Central Asian Security' [see FN 336], 6–7, 48, 55. As argued by McDermott, "neither Kazakhstan nor Uzbekistan is showing any sign of preparing for a dam burst in the security environment post-2014; each are confident that they possess the capability to deal with the aftermath of the NATO drawdown, whatever the precise nature of that aftermath proves to be." Ibid, 58.



### 7.2.6 Afghan Refugees in Uzbekistan

Aside from direct attacks, another problem that Uzbekistan may face is a flow of refugees from Afghanistan. Previous arrivals of refugees from Afghanistan came in two small and easy-to-manage waves: after the fall of Najibullah in 1992 and again with the Taliban offensive in northern Afghanistan from 1997 onwards. The first group contained mostly elite refugees associated with the Afghan communist government. These relatively well-educated and well-connected Afghans went either to Moscow or Tashkent. People in the second group were of a more modest background – generally ethnic Uzbeks from Balkh province without the money or connections to get to Tashkent, let alone to Moscow. These refugees remained mostly in Termez near the Afghan border.<sup>339</sup> By late 2001, Uzbekistan was hosting over 8,000 Afghan refugees.<sup>340</sup> Many were resettled in third countries, such as Canada.<sup>341</sup> Some were less successful, such as those among the approximately 500 Afghans who have had resettlement in the United States blocked due to their past employment in KhAD, the Afghan communist security service. The numbers have reduced since 2001, though by 2007 Termez, near the Afghan border, still hosted 600 Afghan refugees.<sup>342</sup>

Afghan refugees are treated quite badly in Uzbekistan. They live in poor conditions and are subjected to police harassment, extortion and forced deportation back to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan is the only state in Central Asia that has not signed the 1951

Refugee Convention.<sup>343</sup> Furthermore, in April 2006 the Uzbek government – as part of a purge of foreign NGOs and international organisations – expelled the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) in retaliation for its support of refugees who fled the government forces' mass killing of civilians in the Uzbek city of Andijon.<sup>344</sup> The Uzbek government considers some of the Afghans to be economic migrants, rather than genuine political refugees. Certain asylum-seekers, unaware of how to best situate themselves for gaining asylum, even travelled back and forth from Uzbekistan to Afghanistan on business trips. Overall, the general population of Uzbekistan has a very negative perception of Afghan refugees, portraying them as uneducated, violent and engaged in drug trafficking.<sup>345</sup>

### 7.2.7 Internal Security

Uzbek security and police forces brutalise any social force – violent or non-violent – that seeks to oppose and resist the government elites and their interests. The Uzbek leadership dictates to the courts and dissidents are given long terms in prison. Torture is a regular occurrence, during arrest through to confession and continuing in prison. Uzbek security forces have enormous powers and use them regularly, against both their targets and the targets' family members.<sup>346</sup> The Uzbek government fits very

<sup>339</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 171–2.

<sup>340</sup> United States Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, 'U.S. Committee for Refugees World Refugee Survey 2002 – Uzbekistan', 10 June 2002, <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3d04c1521c.html>.

<sup>341</sup> 'Canada to take in Afghan refugees from Uzbekistan', AFP, 1 February 2005, <http://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/canada-take-afghan-refugees-uzbekistan>. This has also happened to Afghan refugees in Kyrgyzstan where 525 Afghan refugees were resettled, in co-ordination with the UNHCR, in Canada in 2004, prompting more Afghan asylum-seekers to come to Kyrgyzstan, particularly from Tajikistan, with expectations of resettlement in North America. See Said Reza Kazemi, 'Afghans in Kyrgyzstan: Fleeing Home and Facing New Uncertainty', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 9 October 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/afghans-in-kyrgyzstan-fleeing-home-and-facing-new-uncertainty>.

<sup>342</sup> Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 171–2; WikiLeaks, 'Cable 09TASHKENT194', US Embassy Tashkent, 19 February 2009, <http://wikileaks.org/cable/2009/02/09TASHKENT194.html>.

<sup>343</sup> '2013 UNHCR regional operations profile – Central Asia', UN Refugee Agency, <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e487466.html>.

<sup>344</sup> The Uzbek government labelled the refugees as terrorists, criminals and drug dealers, and demanded their repatriation to Uzbekistan. For more on the expulsion of the UNHCR, see RFE/RL, 'Uzbekistan Says UNHCR Is Protecting Criminals', 23 August 2005, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1060875.html>; IRIN, 'Uzbekistan: UNHCR to hand over refugee responsibilities to other agencies', UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 3 April 2006, <http://www.irinnews.org/report/33999/uzbekistan-unhcr-to-hand-over-refugee-responsibilities-to-other-agencies>.

<sup>345</sup> WikiLeaks, 'Cable 09TASHKENT194', US Embassy Tashkent; WikiLeaks, 'Cable 07TASHKENT1494\_a', US Embassy Tashkent, 15 August 2007, [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TASHKENT1494\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07TASHKENT1494_a.html); 'Canada to take in Afghan refugees' [see FN 342].

<sup>346</sup> Sarah Kendzior, 'Nations in Transit: Uzbekistan', Freedom House, 2013, [http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT13\\_Uzbekistan\\_2ndProof.pdf](http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/NIT13_Uzbekistan_2ndProof.pdf); 'Worst of the Worst 2012: The World's Most Repressive Societies', Freedom House, 2012, <http://www.freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/Worst%20of%20the%20Worst%202012%20final%20report.pdf>; Human Rights Watch, '“No One Left to Witness” Torture, the Failure of Habeas Corpus, and the Silencing of Lawyers in Uzbekistan', 13 December 2011,

well within Alexander Cooley's assessment that "first and foremost, all Central Asia governments have made regime survival their overwhelming political imperative, formulating domestic and foreign policies in order to maintain power, entrenching one-party patrimonial systems and eliminating threats to their authority."<sup>347</sup> This is the environment in which any resistance – violent or non-violent – to the government of Uzbekistan must operate.

Uzbekistan's experience with terrorism was primarily in 1999 and 2004, when dozens were killed in bombings and attacks. Other minor bombings in 2009 killed only several people. The Uzbek government blamed the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan for all of these attacks, with the Islamic Jihad Union<sup>348</sup> also blamed for the 2004 and 2009 attacks.<sup>349</sup> The exact number of Uzbeks travelling from Uzbekistan to Pakistan and Afghanistan to join insurgent and terrorist groups is unknown. However, in November 2011, an IMU-affiliated website released a list of what it called martyrs along with biographies. Of 87 biographies, only four were of men from Uzbekistan.<sup>350</sup> Recent claims of Uzbeks from Uzbekistan fighting in Afghanistan should be read with high caution, as those identified as being from Uzbekistan and other post-Soviet countries of Central Asia are instead often local Afghans, usually of Uzbek ethnicity.<sup>351</sup>

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[http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uzbekistan\\_1211webwcover.pdf](http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uzbekistan_1211webwcover.pdf).

<sup>347</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia*, New York, Oxford University Press 2012, 21.

<sup>348</sup> The early existence of the Islamic Jihad Union in 2004 is in some doubt. See Sanderson, Kimmage and Gordon, 'From the Ferghana Valley' [see FN 121], 8.

<sup>349</sup> For a quick summary, see Nichol, 'Central Asia' [see FN 257], 22–24; Nichol, 'Uzbekistan' [see FN 337], 15–16.

<sup>350</sup> Furqon.com, 'O'zbekiston Islomiy Harakatining 1432 hijriy yil (melodiy 2011) shahidlar' [Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan Martyrs for the year 1432 (2011)], November 2011, <http://goo.gl/BgEv0>.

<sup>351</sup> Correspondence with former ISAF officer with several years of experience in northern Afghanistan, October 2011; Clark, 'Kill or Capture 2' [see FN 255]. See also Giustozzi, 'The Taliban Beyond' [see FN 255]; Giustozzi and Reuter, 'The Northern Front' [see FN 255]. For some, such as Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, this makes no difference. Lavrov believes that ethnic Tajik and Uzbek citizens of Afghanistan have plans to destabilise Central Asia. See *Asia-Plus*, 'S. Lavrov: "Uzbeksko-tadzhikie terroristy gotovy k destabilizatsii v TsA"' [S. Lavrov: "Uzbek-Tajik Terrorist Groups are Prepared to Destabilise Central Asia"], 24 June 2013,

As for the operational capabilities of the IMU in Central Asia, one analyst from Uzbekistan argues that groups like the IMU will always present a threat to security through localised acts of violence. However, the last 20 years of counter-terrorism efforts by Central Asian governments demonstrates that extremist groups have little public support and local security forces are capable of handling the threat.<sup>352</sup> Despite alarmist assessments on the strength of terrorist organisations in the region, no group has been able to sustain a significant level of attacks against the states of Central Asia. Suspects have died in operations, fled the country or were killed or jailed later. Brief outbursts over the last decade in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have not been followed by a stream of similar attacks as seen in Pakistan, Afghanistan or the North Caucasus. Extremist groups and terrorists do not challenge the governments or security forces in Central Asia. Sources of opposition come from much different quarters.<sup>353</sup>

Many analysts skirt around the analysis that is sceptical of IMU capabilities in Central Asia by instead pointing to future threats in the way of a return to Central Asia. For example, Colonel Ted Donnelly argues that the IMU has "had more than ten years to hone their tactics, techniques, and procedures in combat against U.S., NATO, and Afghan forces. These

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<http://www.news.tj/ru/newspaper/article/s-lavrov-uzbeksko-tadzhikie-terroristy-gotovy-k-destabilizatsii-v-tsa>.

<sup>352</sup> Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 'Militant Islamic Force Signals Return to Central Asia', RCA Issue 631, 13 October 2010, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/militant-islamic-force-signals-return-central-asia>. Farhod Tolipov adds that radical Islamist groups have little support: "If their ideas were popular among the population we would have already seen large-scale disturbances."

<sup>353</sup> For example, the Uzbek government was challenged in the city of Andijan in 2005 by an uprising that cannot be considered related to terrorist forces. The most serious challenge faced in Kazakhstan was an intra-elite dispute that resulted in the formation of a new political party. In Kyrgyzstan, regional elites and opposition politicians are the main threat to incumbents. In Tajikistan the main threats have been former opposition commanders with little connection to *jehadi* forces and, more recently, commanders who were not even Sunni Muslims (see the section on Tajikistan). Sources: Sarah Kendzior, 'Inventing Akromiya: The Role of Uzbek Propagandists in the Andijon Massacre', *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 14:4, 2006; Barbara Junisbai and Azamat Junisbai, 'The Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan: A Case Study in Economic Liberalization, Intraelite Cleavage, and Political Opposition', *Demokratizatsiya: The Journal of Post-Soviet Democratization* 13:3, 2005; Scott Radnitz, *Weapons of the Wealthy: Predatory Regimes and Elite-Led Protests in Central Asia*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press 2012.

battle-hardened insurgents pose a much greater threat to Central Asia's relatively inexperienced security forces than their predecessors did in the 1990s."<sup>354</sup>

Aside from the internal security forces' effectiveness in preventing the IMU from making inroads in Uzbekistan, the IMU possibly is just not an attractive option for disgruntled and oppressed citizens of Uzbekistan and it may have shifted its focus elsewhere. The IMU's connections to Uzbekistan are increasingly weak, not just in terms of the small number of fighters that travel from Uzbekistan to Pakistan and Afghanistan, but also regarding the focus of IMU operations and public messaging. The IMU seldom mentions Uzbekistan, and the country is not portrayed as a priority for operations and goals.<sup>355</sup> IMU's capabilities in the region are quite low, and they have recently been reduced to empty threats and future aspirations in those few instances when Central Asia is given a mention in IMU public pronouncements. Terrorist groups in Central Asia such as the IMU are not vehicles for peoples' grievances, most of all due to their poor organisation

and ability to conduct operations.<sup>356</sup> Noah Tucker adds that "the IMU were never really an Uzbekistani group in the first place. In spite of the fact that their experiences in Uzbekistan's Ferghana Valley were central to the biographies of the Movement's founders, their ideas, ideology, tactics and strategies were all formed in the Af/Pak region."<sup>357</sup>

The organisational characteristics of 'groups' such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Jihad Union are not known with any degree of certainty. As noted in a 2012 CSIS report,

*Significant information gaps on the nature and extent of the IMU/IJU split highlights not only the limits of open sources on this issue, but also, and more broadly, the weakness of an organization-centric analytic paradigm. The IMU and IUJ may exist as discrete and even competitive entities, they may cooperate, or they may be orderly public facades concealing the chaotic to-and-fro movements of Uzbek extremists and a smattering of foreigners who merge, separate, and recombine for a variety of personal, ideological, and other reasons.*<sup>358</sup>

This would mean that searching for coherent ideology, long-term strategic goals, lines of communication, acknowledged long-term leadership and well-structured hierarchy within such 'groups' as the IMU would be a pointless task.<sup>359</sup>

The government of Uzbekistan regularly talks of imminent terrorist threats, much of which turns up in

<sup>354</sup> Colonel Ted Donnelly, 'Fergana as FATA? A Post-2014 Strategy for Central Asia', US Army War College Strategy Research Report, 14, February 2012, <http://fmso.leavenworth.army.mil/Collaboration/FAO/Fergana-as-FATA.pdf>. A CSIS report provides a similar warning, noting that while they are not a threat to Central Asian governments at the moment, a return of fighters in large numbers from Afghanistan and Pakistan could start a cycle of violence that may seriously destabilise Central Asia. See Sanderson, Kimmage and Gordon, 'From the Ferghana Valley' [see FN 121], 21.

<sup>355</sup> Noah Tucker, 'Uzbek Extremism in Context, Part 1: The Uzbek Jihad and the Problem of Religious Freedom', *Registan.net*, 12 September 2013, <http://registan.net/2013/09/12/uzbek-extremism-in-context-part-1-the-uzbek-jihad-and-the-problem-of-religious-freedom/>. On the internationalisation of the IMU's targets, see Jacob Zenn, 'After Afghanistan, Central Asian Jihadists Look to New Theatres', Central Asia Caucasus Analyst, Bi-Weekly Briefing 14:22, 31 October 2012, 6–8, <http://old.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/5868>. However, Zenn argues that "Islamism in Central Asia has become increasingly linked to broader internationalist trends. After the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, some of these movements may begin to return to their earlier nationalist orientations. This would involve a shift in their ideologies away from their fight against the U.S. and NATO and back towards their initial goals of 'liberating' and overthrowing the governments in their homelands for the purpose of establishing an Islamic State in Central Asia." See Jacob Zenn, 'On the Eve of 2014: Islamism in Central Asia', Hudson Institute Center on Islam, Democracy and the Future of the Muslim World, 24 June 2013, <http://www.currenttrends.org/research/detail/on-the-eve-of-2014-islamism-in-central-asia>.

<sup>356</sup> Nathan Hamm, 'Central Asia 2014: The Terror', *Registan.net*, 16 January 2013, <http://registan.net/2013/01/16/central-asia-2014-the-terror/>. Also see Neil Melvin, 'Don't Oversell "Overspill": Afghanistan and Emerging Conflicts in Central Asia', Central Asia Policy Brief No. 6, George Washington University, 2, December 2012, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Policy\\_Brief\\_6,\\_December\\_2012.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Policy_Brief_6,_December_2012.pdf).

<sup>357</sup> Tucker, 'Uzbek Extremism' [see FN 356]. Also see Joshua Kucera, 'What Are The IMU's Designs In Central Asia?', *EurasiaNet*, 11 December 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66288>.

<sup>358</sup> Sanderson, Kimmage and Gordon, 'From the Ferghana Valley' [see FN 121], 12.

<sup>359</sup> This may be a weakness on the part of such groups, but it also may be a strength. Strong leadership and an acknowledged hierarchy can leave an insurgent or terrorist organisation vulnerable to being easily dismantled by foes in certain circumstances. For a more elaborate analysis of this issue, see Abdulkader H. Sinno, *Organizations at War in Afghanistan and Beyond*, Ithaca NY, Cornell University Press 2009.

independent analysis and is accepted as fact.<sup>360</sup> Yet the security forces and the intelligence apparatus here – the strongest in Central Asia<sup>361</sup> – are often more focused on non-terrorist threats to the current leadership.<sup>362</sup> Nevertheless, Uzbekistan's military has been working, since the late 1990s, on improving its ability to fight Afghanistan-based threats. As a result, Uzbekistan's military will continue its focus on small unit training for mountain warfare and counter-terrorism operations at the expense of conventional larger, combined arms operations.<sup>363</sup>

In sum, for the IMU to be a serious threat to Uzbekistan's stability, it would need to change its focus from the international fight in Pakistan and Afghanistan, move past the fact that most of its fighters are not actually from Central Asia, and get by Uzbekistan's formidable security structures all while operating in a country with no domestic support for its ideology.

### 7.2.8 The US, Afghanistan and Uzbekistan

Karimov stated that when Uzbekistan needed help against the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) in the 1990s, the US delivered while Russia did not respond to requests for help.<sup>364</sup> US interest in Uzbekistan resulted in military-to-military co-operation in the mid-1990s, with US Army Special Operations Forces arriving in 1999 to begin regular training sessions with local security forces. The short-term goal of the US government was to bolster the Uzbek security forces to prepare for a fight against the IMU. The longer-term goal of establishing a solid military and strategic relation paid off in late 2001 when Uzbekistan gave the US military basing and

transit rights.<sup>365</sup> Uzbekistan was to become a key support for US operations in Afghanistan, with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan being peripheral to efforts at the time. By 2002, the Uzbek-US relationship appeared very strong,<sup>366</sup> despite the American rejection of President Karimov's request for NATO membership and a mutual defence treaty.<sup>367</sup>

Aside from the military relationship, the Uzbek government granted permission in 2000 for the CIA to operate unmanned surveillance flights into Afghanistan from an airbase in southern Uzbekistan.<sup>368</sup> The co-operation with the CIA continued, with the Uzbek capital, Tashkent, becoming an important transit point for CIA rendition flights of terrorism suspects after 9/11.<sup>369</sup>

The most prominent symbol of Uzbek-American co-operation in the war in Afghanistan was the former Soviet airbase at Karshi-Khanabad (K2) in southern Uzbekistan that became, in late 2001, an important facility supporting American and NATO operations in Afghanistan. However, by 2005 President Karimov was increasingly unhappy with his country's relationship with the US, as he saw an American hand in the 'Coloured Revolutions' that toppled the governments of Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan – all former Soviet republics. The break in relations came in the same year as the US government's condemnation of the Uzbek security forces' massacre of hundreds of civilians in the Uzbek city of Andijon.<sup>370</sup> Other NATO members were less critical of

<sup>360</sup> For examples related to the IMU in Uzbekistan and in the region as a whole, see Didier Chaudet 'Perceived and Real Threats Coming from the South: The Impact of Iran and of the AfPak Region on Post-Soviet Central Asian Security', *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 14:3, 2012; Regnum news agency, 'Glavnaya voennaya ugroza dlya Uzbekistana i Sredney Azii kroetsya v "effekte domino": ekspert' [Expert: The main military threat to Uzbekistan and Central Asia comes from the "domino effect"], 9 April 2013, <http://www.regnum.ru/news/polit/1519006.html>.

<sup>361</sup> Sanderson, Kimmage and Gordon, 'From the Ferghana Valley' [see FN 121], 4; Kuzmits, *Borders and Orders* [see FN 162], 146–7; McDermott, 'Central Asian Security' [see FN 336], 12.

<sup>362</sup> McDermott, 'Central Asian Security' [see FN 336], 9, 12.

<sup>363</sup> Ibid, 49.

<sup>364</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States* [see FN 309], 79.

<sup>365</sup> C. J. Chivers, 'A Nation Challenged: Special Forces; Long Before War, Green Berets Built Military Ties to Uzbekistan', *The New York Times*, 25 October 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/10/25/world/nation-challenged-special-forces-long-before-war-green-berets-built-military.html>.

<sup>366</sup> Akbarzadeh, *Uzbekistan and the United States* [see FN 309], 74–5. In 2002, the US government gave 120 million USD in equipment to the Uzbek military, 82 million USD to the Uzbek security services, and 300 million USD total in military and economic assistance to Uzbekistan as a whole – four times more than previous year. See Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348], 34.

<sup>367</sup> Bob Woodward, *Bush at War*, New York, Simon & Schuster 2003, 149.

<sup>368</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan to September 10, 2001*, New York, Penguin Books 2004, 531.

<sup>369</sup> Stephen Grey, *Ghost Plane: The True Story of the CIA Torture Program*, New York, St. Martin's Press 2006, 181.

<sup>370</sup> For a couple of the many articles and reports discussing these events, see Azad Garibov, 'The U.S. in Central Asia: Still an Important Balancer?', *Journal of the Turkish Weekly*, 28 May 2013, <http://www.turkishweekly.net/news/150929/the-u-s-in->



the government of Uzbekistan. Germany, for example, avoided openly criticising the Andijon massacre and, as a result, has been able to continue using its military transit base in Termez.<sup>371</sup>

Despite being evicted from Karshi-Khanabad, the US was still able to use Uzbek airspace for civilian overflights,<sup>372</sup> giving contractors room to carry out operations for the US government. Aside from American transit moving to other hubs (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Middle East), the cargo transit capacity of Karshi-Khanabad was replicated by 2009 with the initiation of cargo flights at the airport in the Uzbek city of Navoi for the transit of 'non-lethal goods' to NATO in Afghanistan. The presence at Navoi was in the form of contractors and third parties, especially the parent company for Korean Airlines.<sup>373</sup> An August 2009 visit by General Petraeus resulted in permission for military overflight rights to resume.<sup>374</sup> Relations between the Uzbekistan and US government have steadily improved ever since.<sup>375</sup> Various visits by top CENTCOM commanders and high-ranking US government officials are a regular occurrence, with the July 2013 visit by General Lloyd Austin being the most recent.<sup>376</sup>

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central-asia-still-an-important-balancer.html; Jeffrey Mankoff, 'The United States and Central Asia after 2014', CSIS Russia and Eurasia Program Report, January 2013, [http://csis.org/files/publication/130122\\_Mankoff\\_USCentralAsia\\_Web.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/130122_Mankoff_USCentralAsia_Web.pdf).

<sup>371</sup> Alexander Richter, 'Buying Uzbek help for Afghanistan withdrawal', *Deutsche Welle*, 28 November 2012, <http://dw.de/p/16qri>; Konrad Zashtowt, 'NATO–Central Asian Republics Cooperation Until the End of the Mission in Afghanistan and beyond 2014', *Bulletin of the Polish Institute of International Affairs* 47/380, 7 May 2012, 724, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?size780=10&ots777=0c54e3b3-1e9c-be1e-2c24-a6a8c7060233&lng=en&id=142255>; *Uznews*, 'Germany – base in Uzbek town of Termez has no alternative', 25 May 2012, [http://www.uznews.net/news\\_single.php?lng=en&cid=31&nid=19901](http://www.uznews.net/news_single.php?lng=en&cid=31&nid=19901).

<sup>372</sup> Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348], 40.

<sup>373</sup> Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348], 45–6.

<sup>374</sup> Nichol, 'Uzbekistan' [see FN 337], 22.

<sup>375</sup> Ibid, 18–20. A typical statement on US-Uzbek friendship and co-operation on security issues can be found here: Euro Dialogue, 'Ambassador: USA and Uzbekistan equally interested in strengthening security in Central Asia', 30 August 2013, <http://eurodialogue.org/Ambassador-USA-and-Uzbekistan-equally-interested-in-strengthening-security-in-Central-Asia>.

<sup>376</sup> 'President Islam Karimov met with Lloyd Austin, Commander of the Central Command of the United States', *Jahon News*, 25 July 2013, [http://www.jahonnews.uz/eng/sections/politics/president\\_](http://www.jahonnews.uz/eng/sections/politics/president_)

The most visible sign of co-operation is the Northern Distribution Network (NDN), an alternative supply route for NATO/ISAF forces that overwhelmingly transits through Uzbekistan. However, with the reopening of the supply route through Pakistan, military equipment could again be removed through the shorter and cheaper Pakistan route.<sup>377</sup> The NDN is now significant only as a back-up route, with merely 4 per cent of outbound US cargo going through this region.<sup>378</sup> The renewed American-Uzbek relationship no longer includes any serious civil society programmes, educational exchanges or human rights advocacy. The new relationship is strictly military and is dominated by American needs related to Afghanistan and Uzbek needs related to regime survival and prosperity.<sup>379</sup>

## 8. TURKMENISTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

### 8.1 The Turkmen Government and Afghanistan

#### 8.1.1 From Independence to 2001

Turkmenistan has consistently, albeit mostly in theory, proclaimed its neutrality in foreign affairs. As for Afghanistan, the government in Ashgabat has, as stated by Alexey Malashenko, "been prepared to cooperate with Afghanistan no matter who was in power there".<sup>380</sup> The Turkmen government has

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islam\_karimov\_met\_with\_lloyd\_austin\_commander\_of\_the\_central\_command\_of\_the\_united\_states\_07.mgr; Nichol, 'Uzbekistan' [see FN 337], 22–3.

<sup>377</sup> Joshua Kucera, 'U.S. Begins Afghan Withdrawal – But Not Through Central Asia', *Eurasianet*, 12 February 2013, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66545>.

<sup>378</sup> Joshua Kucera, 'With Return of Pakistan, Central Asian Role in U.S. Logistics Declines', *Security Assistance Monitor*, 22 October 2013, <http://securityassistancemonitor.wordpress.com/2013/10/22/with-return-of-pakistan-central-asian-role-in-u-s-logistics-declines/>.

<sup>379</sup> Interviews and discussions with various analysts and academics in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Washington, 2011–13; Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348], 6. The US military plays a special role in this new relationship. Cooley argues that "after a decade of military operations in Afghanistan, U.S. diplomacy in Central Asia has been subordinated to the needs of the U.S. military, especially the powerful regional command CENTCOM, which has emerged as an influential and, at times, autonomous political and economic player." Ibid, 5.

<sup>380</sup> Alexey Malashenko, *The Fight for Influence: Russia in Central Asia*, Washington, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace 2013, 14.

shown its pragmatism in its dealings with local authorities in neighbouring areas of Afghanistan – a good example from the 1990s being its relations with Ismail Khan (who resigned as minister of energy and water to run in the 2014 presidential election) in western Afghanistan before the rise of the Taliban.<sup>381</sup> Although removed from his powerful gubernatorial position in his Herat stronghold in 2004, Ismail Khan enjoys continued, but weakened, ties with officials within the Turkmen establishment, most recently in his former ministerial capacity.<sup>382</sup>

Once the Taliban became dominant in Afghanistan, the Turkmen government extended ties to the new Taliban government. According to Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkel, the Taliban's last foreign minister, the Turkmen government and the Taliban enjoyed good relations with each other, particularly regarding

<sup>381</sup> Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan' [see FN 316], 48. One Russian analyst even claims that the government of Turkmenistan allowed deliveries of fuel, ammunition and military equipment to the Taliban in the 1990s. See Régis Genté, 'Afghanistan withdrawal 1/3: Ashgabat quiet but active', *Chronicles of Turkmenistan*, 25 March 2013, <http://www.chrono-tm.org/en/2013/03/afghanistan-withdrawal-ashgabat-quiet-but-active/>. However, from where these supplies would be coming is completely unclear, as is why the Taliban would have needed supplies through Turkmenistan when they were so easily receiving them across the border with Pakistan.

<sup>382</sup> Interviews with local residents, intellectuals and government officials, Herat, June and September 2013. See also *Hambastagi* (Dari, meaning "solidarity", 'The Official site of Amir Mohammad Ismail'), 'Molaqat ba wozara-ye enerzhi wa manabe-ye ab-e keshwar-e Turkmenistan' [Meeting with Ministers of Energy and Water Resources of the Country of Turkmenistan], <http://www.hambastagi.com/2012/MeetingWithTurkministanMinisters.pdf>. Seemingly afraid of the post-2014 politico-security situation in Afghanistan, Ismail Khan is reportedly preparing for the West-led international community's drawdown from Afghanistan by, *inter alia*, re-activating, re-mobilising and re-arming the remnants of his former *mujahedin* forces, sympathisers and supporters. See Fabrizio Foschini, 'Guns, Girls and Grizzled Warriors: Ismail Khan's mujahedin council project in the West', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 17 November 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/guns-girls-and-grizzled-warriors-ismail-khans-mujahedin-council-project-in-the-west>; Fabrizio Foschini, 'Back to Stopgap Appointments: The story behind the replacement of Herat's governor', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 24 July 2013, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/herat-governors-dismissal-government-reverts-to-stopgap-appointments>; Christian Neef, 'Return of the Lion: Former Warlord Preps for Western Withdrawal', *Spiegel Online International*, 23 September 2013, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/afghan-warlords-like-ismail-khan-prepare-for-western-withdrawal-a-924019.html>.

business connections.<sup>383</sup> Mutawakkel notes that Turkmenistan had kept its consulate active in Afghanistan, and in return hosted an unofficial Taliban representation in Ashgabat. He noted that, furthermore, the Turkmen government made efforts to mediate between the Taliban and the opposition.<sup>384</sup>

In the late 1990s, the government of Turkmenistan facilitated meetings between the Taliban and the then Northern Alliance in its capital Ashgabat. Mutawakkel was representing the Taliban and Mohammad Yunus Qanuni, former Afghan parliament speaker, the Northern Alliance. The talks happened under UN auspices, but the negotiations led nowhere as the violent conflict between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance continued unabated.<sup>385</sup>

The government of Turkmenistan never officially recognised the Taliban government; despite that, Turkmen diplomats, on occasion on certain issues, "advocated the Taliban's case in international forums".<sup>386</sup> Nevertheless, as part of their policy of neutrality, the government of Turkmenistan, alone among the governments of Central Asia, maintained cordial relations with the Taliban government, although this may have been motivated more by a desire to successfully export gas to and through Afghanistan (i.e., TAPI) than adherence to a principle

<sup>383</sup> Fakhim Sabir, 'Turkmenistan i Afganistan: ot neytraliteta k sotrudnichestvu' [Turkmenistan and Afghanistan: From Neutrality to Cooperation], *Afghanistan.ru*, 5 July 2012, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/23210.html>; Wakil Ahmad Mutawakkel, *Afghanistan wa Taliban* [Afghanistan and the Taliban], Kabul, Maihan Bookstore 1384 [2006], 83–84.

<sup>384</sup> Mutawakkel, *Afghanistan wa Taliban* [see FN 384], 56, 83–84.

<sup>385</sup> See, eg, 'No agreement on cease-fire in Ashgabat talks', *Afghanistan News Centre*, March 1999, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/1999/march/mar15k1999.htm>; 'Taliban told to keep talking peace', *Afghanistan News Centre*, March 1999, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/1999/march/mar26e1999.htm>; 'Taliban undecided on next round of talks with opposition', *Afghanistan News Centre*, March 1999, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/1999/march/mar25h1999.htm>; 'Chasm Between Afghans Widens', *Afghanistan News Centre*, March 1999, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/1999/march/mar25i1999.htm>; 'Brahimi fails to convince Taliban on time frame for future talks', *Afghanistan News Centre*, March 1999, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/1999/march/mar25e1999.htm>.

<sup>386</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War through the War on Terror*, New York, Oxford University Press 2013, 37.

of neutrality.<sup>387</sup> One reason for this good working relationship was that good relations between the Taliban and Turkmenistan protected the interests of Pakistan, particularly regarding potential energy exports from Turkmenistan. Pakistan, therefore, pushed the Taliban towards engagement with Turkmenistan.<sup>388</sup>

In addition, it seems that the Turkmen government was also partly pursuing a strategy of appeasing the Taliban through establishing a de facto diplomatic relationship with them, facilitating unusually easy visits of the Taliban to Turkmenistan and supplying some of the Taliban's essential economic needs, at least in western Afghanistan. In return, the Taliban prevented further de-stabilisation of border areas and areas within Turkmenistan proper.<sup>389</sup> Similarly, Mutawakkel stressed that the Taliban-Turkmenistan relationship consisted of more than just oil and gas plans. He wrote that Turkmenistan agreed to sell electricity to Herat and Mazar-e Sharif and that the Aqina port was re-opened along the border. Turkmenistan was, however, cautious in many ways, due to international pressures.<sup>390</sup>

### 8.1.2 Post-2001

In the years after 2001, Turkmenistan made it clear that the Turkmen government, unlike Uzbekistan, would not provide any serious level of support for US military operations in Afghanistan, while at the same time it strengthened its relations with Russia.<sup>391</sup>

<sup>387</sup> Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan' [see FN 316], 39, 48; Rubin, *Afghanistan from the Cold War* [see FN 387], 37. Mutawakkel himself mentions the importance of oil and gas pipeline plans in the Taliban's good relations with Turkmenistan. See: Mutawakkel, *Afghanistan wa Taliban* [see FN 384], 83–84. A great deal of bottled cooking gas was coming to Afghanistan from Turkmenistan then and it was said that the business was being run by a brother of Amir Khan Muttaqi, who held ministerial positions (education, information and culture) in the Taliban government. E-mail communication with Thomas Ruttig, 7 November 2013.

<sup>388</sup> Sabir, 'Turkmenistan i Afganistan' [see FN 384].

<sup>389</sup> Interviews with Afghan Turkmen parliamentarians, Afghan Turkmen intellectual and senior local government official, Kabul and Herat, April and June 2013. See also 'Taliban team visits Turkmenistan to seek aid for drought victims', *Afghanistan News Centre*, July 2000, <http://www.afghanistannewscenter.com/news/2000/july/jul2g2000.htm>; 'Turkmen Warm to Taliban', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 21 February 2005, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/turkmen-warm-taliban>.

<sup>390</sup> Mutawakkel, *Afghanistan wa Taliban* [see FN 384], 83–84.

<sup>391</sup> Luca Anceschi, 'Integrating domestic politics and foreign policy making: the cases of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan', *Central Asian Survey* 29:2, 2010, 151.

However, since the death of the Turkmen dictator Saparmurad Niyazov in 2006, new President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has moved the country away from its isolationist position towards an attempt to play a role as a regional mediator in a variety of disputes, including the on-going armed conflict in Afghanistan.<sup>392</sup> But the above analysis refers to the public face of the Turkmen government. Privately, since 2002, Turkmenistan has allowed some 1,600 US military overflights per year, which the US intentionally does not publically discuss so that Turkmenistan can maintain a façade of neutrality. Turkmenistan also facilitated CIA rendition flights through Ashgabat.<sup>393</sup>

Later, in 2007, the Turkmen authorities, while being superficially involved in multilateral peace initiatives, also may have provided (non-lethal) supplies to Taliban fighters. In exchange, they moved away from the border with Turkmenistan.<sup>394</sup> At the same time, the US military is able to use Turkmenistan as an aviation re-fuelling station and flight path, with both sides having strong incentives to co-operate.<sup>395</sup> Of the 1.3 billion USD the US government spent in Central Asia in support of military operations in Afghanistan during fiscal year 2012, over 820 million dollars were spent in Turkmenistan, probably all on fuel purchases.<sup>396</sup> Around 85 per cent of all imports from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan through the strategic Torghundi border port is fuel intended for consumption by ISAF troops inside Afghanistan, according to a senior government official at the Torghundi port.<sup>397</sup> This is at least one reason for the

<sup>392</sup> Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan' [see FN 316], 18.

<sup>393</sup> Alexander Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348], 45, 105.

<sup>394</sup> George Gavrilis, 'Why Regional Solutions Won't Help Afghanistan: The Myth of Neighborly Harmony', *Foreign Affairs*, 18 October 2011, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/133718/george-gavrilis/why-regional-solutions-wont-help-afghanistan>.

<sup>395</sup> Deirdre Tynan, 'Central Asia: Turkmenistan Could Become Key Cog in NDN Supply Route for Afghanistan', *EurasiaNet*, 12 April 2011, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/63279>; Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348], 45; Dmitriy N. Verkhoturov, 'Aktivizatsiya Turkmenistana na afganskom napravlenii' [The activation of Turkmenistan in the Afghan sector], *Afghanistan.ru*, 14 February 2011, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/19503.html>.

<sup>396</sup> Joshua Kucera, 'Turkmenistan Big Beneficiary Of Pentagon Money, While Uzbekistan Lags', *EurasiaNet*, 3 December 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/66248>.

<sup>397</sup> Interview, Herat, 4 June 2013. This government official elaborated that commercial fuel and commodities such as wood, steel bar and iron constitute respectively 5 and 10

occurrence of (so-far) scattered security incidents mainly involving attacks against fuel delivery vehicles (reportedly by both the armed opposition and drivers who were 'inventing' ways to extract monetary compensation from NATO) along the Torghundi-Herat road (another reason, among others, seems to be rivalry over the control of drug trafficking trade and routes).<sup>398</sup>

In 2010, the Turkmen president outlined his plans to secure peace in Afghanistan. This plan included the usual points about economic co-operation, training for Afghan bureaucrats, improving transport connections and increasing energy exports. And, highlighting its imagined role as a regional mediator, the Turkmen government offered Turkmenistan again as a neutral venue for "inter-Afghan dialogue under the auspices of the UN", similar to the role it attempted to play during the late 1990s.<sup>399</sup> The initiative was shut down by President Karzai, who stopped Ján Kubiš, UN special envoy for Afghanistan, after the UN tried to take the lead on Afghan peace talks. Turkmenistan has not been able to boost its international status in the way the government has hoped.<sup>400</sup> As for Turkmenistan's imagined role in the region post-2014, one Russian analyst stated bluntly that Turkmenistan does not have the resources to accomplish this "demographically, economically, diplomatically and militarily".<sup>401</sup> The US government

has very little to say publicly about Turkmenistan,<sup>402</sup> even less so regarding its role with Afghanistan,<sup>403</sup> but maintains regular high-level contacts, involving visits of US State Department and Pentagon delegations to Turkmenistan.<sup>404</sup> The government of Turkmenistan is also reportedly further fortifying its border with Afghanistan in the lead-up to 2014, although much of the 744-kilometre-long border lies on a plain stretching from northern Afghanistan into the Karakum desert in Turkmenistan.

## 8.2 Turkmenistan and Ethnic Turkmens in Afghanistan

Despite the assistance programmes funded by Turkmenistan inside Afghanistan (mainly education, medical aid and agriculture) that mostly benefit ethnic Turkmens<sup>405</sup> and are not significant in economic terms, the government of Turkmenistan has no marked affinity for and support of Turkmens inside Afghanistan that manifests in any sort of political support. The Turkmen government has always worked with whoever was the most powerful player inside Afghanistan at the moment and, according to Nazif Shahrani, the Turkmen government in "Ashgabat doesn't seem to care much about Turkmens in Afghanistan".<sup>406</sup> Inside

per cent of remaining imports via the Turghondi border crossing. Exact data on trade balance between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan is not available, but what is clear is that the balance is overwhelmingly tipped in favour of Turkmenistan with Afghanistan only exporting potatoes, onions and Pakistan-cultivated oranges in return for oil, gas, electricity and iron. The international military and civilian drawdown in Afghanistan by and beyond 2014 might, hence, depress the growing cross-border trade between the two countries since 2001.

<sup>398</sup> Interviews with local residents and government officials, Herat, June 2013. See also Qadir Shahin, 'Khoshunatha-ye taza dar shahra-ye Herat-Turghondi' [New Violent Incidents on Herat-Turghondi Highway], *Bokhdi News Agency*, 18 Dalv 1391 [6 February 2013].

<sup>399</sup> Tadjbakhsh, 'Central Asia and Afghanistan' [see FN 316], 18; 'Turkmen leader proposes inter-Afghan peace talks', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 12 June 2010, <http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2010/06/12/turkmen-leader-proposes-inter-afghan-peace-talks>.

<sup>400</sup> Thomas Ruttig, 'Qatar, Islamabad, Chantilly, Ashgabad: Taleban Talks Season Again?', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 31 December 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/qatar-islamabad-chantilly-ashgabad-taleban-talks-season-again-amended>.

<sup>401</sup> Régis Genté, 'Afghanistan withdrawal 2/3: A risky geopolitical vacuum', *Chronicles of Turkmenistan*, 1 April 2013, <http://www.chrono-tm.org/en/2013/04/afghanistan-withdrawal-13-ashgabat-quiet-but-active/>.

<sup>402</sup> Very occasionally, the US government offers its praise publically. For example, see 'U.S. Hails Turkmenistan's Contribution to settlement of Afghan situation', *Azernews*, 14 January 2014, <http://www.azernews.az/region/63361.html>.

<sup>403</sup> For some brief references to border security, see, for example, 'Testimony of Robert O. Blake, Assistant Secretary of State on Islamic Militant Threats in Eurasia before the House Committee on Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Europe, Eurasia, and Emerging Threats and Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade', 27 February 2013, <http://docs.house.gov/meetings/FA/FA14/20130227/100314/HHRG-113-FA14-Wstate-BlakeR-20130227.pdf>.

<sup>404</sup> Dmitriy N. Verkhoturov, 'Aktivizatsiya Turkmenistana na afganskom napravlenii', *Afghanistan.ru*, 14 February 2011, <http://www.afghanistan.ru/doc/19503.html>; Jim Nichol, 'Turkmenistan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests', Congressional Research Service, 17 August 2012, 11–13, <https://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/97-1055.pdf>.

<sup>405</sup> Nazar Dovletli, 'Turkmenistan pomagaet turkmenam Afganistana' [Turkmenistan helps the Turkmens of Afghanistan], *Central Asia Online*, 13 August 2013, <http://centralasiaonline.com/ru/articles/caii/features/2009/08/13/feature-04>; Genté, 'Afghanistan withdrawal 1/3' [see FN 382].

<sup>406</sup> Régis Genté, 'Interview with Nazif M. Shahrani', *Chronicles of Turkmenistan*, 25 April 2013, <http://www.chrono-tm.org/en/2013/04/afghanistan-withdrawal-33/>. This is evidenced by the government of



Afghanistan, ethnic Turkmen are not as socio-politically organised and active as are ethnic Tajiks and ethnic Uzbeks – the two other major neighbouring Central Asian ethnic groups in Afghanistan.<sup>407</sup> An Afghan Turkmen activist and parliamentarian remarked that “Afghan Turkmen consider themselves closer to the southern Afghan Pashtuns than to Turkmen Turkmen.”<sup>408</sup> Nevertheless, there are some very limited cross-border interactions between ethnic Turkmen in Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, particularly concentrated around border areas. *Anjoman-e Farhangi-ye Turkmanha-ye Afghanistan* (Cultural Association of the Turkmen of Afghanistan) has been a largely pro forma gathering point for an unspecified number of Afghan Turkmen. It has offices in Kabul, Herat, Balkh, Badghis, Jowzjan and Faryab provinces, which engage in cultural, rather than politico-economic, activities, such as releasing publications in the Turkmen language and attending different ethnic Turkmen ceremonies in Turkmenistan with the most important being the regular meetings of the Humanitarian Association of World Turkmen, which is supported by the higher echelons of power in the Turkmen government.<sup>409</sup> More recently, ethnic Turkmen clerics from Afghanistan – some who had ties to the Taliban in the past – were invited to Turkmenistan to meet with a government delegation.<sup>410</sup> However, both the activities of ethnic Turkmen in Afghanistan and cross-border interactions between ethnic Turkmen in both

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Turkmenistan’s disregard for Turkmen refugees in the 1990s and its current policy of keeping the border as closed as possible and extremely restricting visa procedures for Afghanistan, even for ethnic Turkmen. For the pessimistic view of one Afghan Turkmen regarding the role of Turkmenistan in the field of language and culture, see Sabir, ‘Turkmenistan i Afganistan’ [see FN 384].

<sup>407</sup> Despite this, some Afghan Turkmen individuals, such as Nur Mohammad Qarqin, a former minister of labour and social affairs, Karzai’s electoral campaign chief in the 2004 presidential election and Afghan ambassador to Kyrgyzstan, occasionally play some important, but not very high-profile, roles.

<sup>408</sup> Interview, Kabul, 29 April 2013.

<sup>409</sup> Interview with Afghan Turkmen activist who is a senior member of the Cultural Association of the Turkmen of Afghanistan, Herat, 6 June 2013. See also ‘XV Conference of Humanitarian Association of World Turkmen held in Turkmenistan’, *Turkmenistan.ru*, 23 October 2012, <http://www.turkmenistan.ru/en/articles/16806.html>.

<sup>410</sup> Muhammad Tahir, ‘Turkmenistan: The Achilles Heel of Central Asian Security?’, *Qishloq Ovozi*, 16 February 2014, <http://www.rferl.org/content/turkmenistan-achilles-heel-central-asian-security/25265841.html>.

Afghanistan and Turkmenistan have so far remained sporadic and very limited.

### 8.3 Energy, Trade and Transport Connections

The proposed TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline is the best-known and largest potential project that involves Turkmenistan and Afghanistan. Talks reconvene occasionally, plans are revised and promises made between the countries involved and with prospective companies.<sup>411</sup> Nevertheless, a gas pipeline with an estimated cost of over 7 billion USD that would transit southern Afghanistan and Pakistan’s troubled Baluchistan province has unsurprisingly been unable to generate any real commitments.<sup>412</sup> This is especially so now that security is so much worse than in the half-decade since 2001 and with natural gas prices being significantly lower (see also Appendix 3 for recent TAPI-related developments and the section on the Afghan government’s engagement with Central Asia). The prospects for an agreement reached by Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan to connect the three countries with a railway link are also unclear at this time, despite the inauguration of the project by the presidents of the three countries in early June 2013.<sup>413</sup> Despite this, the Afghan

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<sup>411</sup> The entire saga of the TAPI project since its conceptualisation in 1991 is shrouded in conspiracies and controversies: the vicissitudes in the relationship between Bidas, the Argentinian firm, and Saparmurat Niyazov, the then Turkmen leader; Niyazov’s sudden abandonment of Bidas and Unocal’s courting of him (Unocal being the American company for which Hamed Karzai, the Afghan president, and Zalmay Khalilzad, the former US ambassador to Afghanistan, used to work as advisors); the involvement of the Pakistani government and the Taliban including visits by the Taliban representatives to Argentina and the US; the then US administration under Bill Clinton contemplating both the *de facto* and *de jure* recognition of the Taliban; the sudden departure of Unocal possibly over alleged links between the Taliban and the al-Qaeda; and, overall, the lack of the project’s materialisation thus far. For historical detail, see Martha Brill Olcott, ‘International gas trade in Central Asia: Turkmenistan, Iran, Russia, and Afghanistan’, in *Natural Gas and Geopolitics, From 1970 to 2040*, ed by David G. Victor, Amy M. Jaffe and Mark H. Hayes, Cambridge. Cambridge University Press 2006, 202–233; Coll, *Ghost Wars* [see FN 369].

<sup>412</sup> Rainer Gonzalez Palau, ‘The TAPI Natural Gas Pipeline: Status & Source of Potential Delays’, Civil-Military Fusion Centre, February 2012, 1–4, [https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/CFC%20AFG%20Social%20Well-being%20Archive/CFC\\_Afghanistan\\_TAPI\\_Feb12.pdf](https://www.cimicweb.org/Documents/CFC%20AFG%20Social%20Well-being%20Archive/CFC_Afghanistan_TAPI_Feb12.pdf).

<sup>413</sup> *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, ‘Afghan, Tajik, Turkmen Presidents Open New Railway Construction’, 5 June 2013,

government has predictably presented a very optimistic socio-economic assessment of the 590-kilometre tripartite railway project, around 400 kilometres of which would cross Afghan territory from Aqina to Sher Khan Bandar ports via Andkhoy, Sheberghan, Mazar-e Sharif, Kholm and Kunduz (see also Appendix 2 for the railway project's evolution and the section on the Afghan government's engagement with Central Asia).<sup>414</sup>

## 8.4 Cross-Border Security Concerns

Domestic security problems and cross-border issues are not easy to analyse in Turkmenistan, which is off-limits to investigative journalists and researchers. Analysing events just across the border is somewhat easier. In late April of this year, Afghan police near the Turkmen border in Faryab province claimed that police and local defence forces had been recently battling Taleban and IMU fighters in three districts.<sup>415</sup> As usual, local Afghan security officials claimed that the fighters included foreigners (notably Chechens and Uzbeks). However, the police also mentioned that local Afghan Turkmens were fighting alongside the insurgents. The same sources then also stressed that the fighting was a trans-border threat to both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Turkmen exiles and some Russian analysts agree, pointing to the IMU in Faryab as a particular threat to Turkmenistan, while noting the weakness of the Turkmen security forces. Faryab's police chief lamented the insufficient level of cross-border co-operation.<sup>416</sup> However, these analysts provided no evidence of this trend. The opposite argument is that Turkmenistan does not face the same level of risk as does Tajikistan or even Uzbekistan<sup>417</sup> and that the government of

Turkmenistan is not worried about any spillover of insecurity from Afghanistan.<sup>418</sup> Nonetheless, security has been deteriorating in northern Afghanistan (e.g., Badghis, Faryab, Kunduz, Badakhshan provinces), including areas bordering on Turkmenistan in the north and northeast. It is still not clear whether and how a potential further drastic exacerbation of the security situation will impact not only northern Afghanistan but also the neighbouring countries in the north, including Turkmenistan (for further detail, see the section on the evolving security and political situation in northern Afghanistan).

## 9. KYRGYZSTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

### 9.1 Connections to Afghanistan

Kyrgyzstan's most important economic connection to Afghanistan is the planned CASA-1000 electricity network where Kyrgyzstan would send surplus power to Afghanistan through Tajikistan (see Appendix 1 on CASA-1000's evolution and the section on the Afghan government's engagement with Central Asia).<sup>419</sup> At a more modest – but more active – level a trade route goes from Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan, with a connecting spur to China, through to Tajikistan across the sparsely populated eastern plateau all the way to the small city of Khorugh and then across the border into Afghan Badakhshan. As a result, Osh, Khorugh and Faizabad have all elevated their importance as “gateways for trans-frontier trajectories” via the modest trade that occurs here.<sup>420</sup> Of course, this trade route is somewhat less modest when the narcotics trade is factored in to trade totals along this popular corridor.<sup>421</sup> There is apparently a second route from Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan through Uzbekistan down to northern Afghanistan, which is reportedly also used for other kinds of trafficking such as human trafficking or illegal movement of persons across borders.<sup>422</sup>

<http://www.rferl.org/content/afghanistan-turkmenistan-tajikistan-railqay-construction/25007658.html>.

<sup>414</sup> Yama Yari, ‘Rah-e ahan-e shamal; khati ba soy-e omid wa ayanda-ye Afghanistan’ [Northern Railway: A Path towards Afghanistan's Hope and Future], *BBC Persian*, 10 June 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130608\\_zs\\_afghan\\_tajik\\_turkmen\\_railway\\_yama.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130608_zs_afghan_tajik_turkmen_railway_yama.shtml).

<sup>415</sup> The security situation has markedly been deteriorating in Faryab province. For further detail, see Ali, ‘Moving East in the North’ [see FN 58]; Ali, ‘A Taleban Foothold’ [see FN 58]; Ali, ‘Insurgents and Factions’ [see FN 58].

<sup>416</sup> Vitaliy Volkov and Ziyarmal Nadzhibulla, ‘Aktivnost’ IDU v Afganistane sozdaet novuyu situatsiyu dlya Ashkhabada’ [IMU Activities in Afghanistan Creates a New Situation for Ashgabad], *Deutsche Welle*, 9 May 2013, <http://dw.de/p/18Usm>; Vitaliy Volkov, ‘Faryab is Near’, *Chronicles of Turkmenistan*, 21 May 2013, <http://www.chrono-tm.org/en/2013/05/faryab-is-near/>.

<sup>417</sup> Genté, ‘Afghanistan withdrawal 1/3’ [see FN 382]; Volkov, ‘Faryab is Near’ [see FN 417].

<sup>418</sup> Presenter unnamed under Chatham House Rule, ‘Afghanistan's Stability and Regional Security Implications for Central Asia’; Tahir, ‘Turkmenistan: The Achilles Heel’, [see FN 411].

<sup>419</sup> See the official page of CASA-1000 for a summary, <http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php>.

<sup>420</sup> Steven Parham, ‘Controlling borderlands? New perspectives on state peripheries in southern Central Asia and northern Afghanistan’, Finnish Institute of International Affairs, Report No. 26, 2010.

<sup>421</sup> For a description of this trafficking route, see UNODC, ‘Opiate Flows’ [see FN 113], 58–76.

<sup>422</sup> Personal observations and interviews, Osh, September 2012. One person was even suggesting an author of this paper consider travelling from Osh back to Afghanistan via Uzbekistan. Ethnic Uzbeks in Kyrgyz, Uzbek and Afghan

There are small numbers of Kyrgyz in Afghanistan and Afghans in Kyrgyzstan. The last of the ethnic Kyrgyz in Afghanistan are at most 2,000 individuals, who continue to live as pastoralists in the harsh environment of Afghanistan's northeasternmost Pamir region.<sup>423</sup> The repatriation of ethnic Kyrgyz living outside their titular homeland has been largely a nationalist project that post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan developed after the dissolution of the USSR in late 1991. Successive Kyrgyz governments have issued presidential decrees and announced state programmes in 2001, 2006 and 2008 to assist repatriation and to provide citizenship for some 22,000 *kairylman*, or ethnic Kyrgyz abroad, including those from Afghanistan (as well as from China and Tajikistan).<sup>424</sup> Emil Dzhuraev, a lecturer and researcher in Bishkek, states that Kyrgyzstan's action "has so far remained at the level of 'political' decisions and policy intentions".<sup>425</sup>

There are also currently several hundred Afghans in Kyrgyzstan, including migrants, refugees, students and businesspeople.<sup>426</sup> Of late, new asylum-seekers have been joining them, fleeing Afghanistan's uncertain future with the coming drawdown of NATO troops and using Kyrgyzstan as a transit stop on their routes to North America, Western Europe and/or Russia.<sup>427</sup> Students are perhaps the most interesting category of Afghans in Kyrgyzstan. There are currently fewer (tens of) Afghan students, both stipend-funded

and self-financed, in universities, mainly in Bishkek as well as in Osh and Jalalabad in southern Kyrgyzstan. Several students have been sent there by the Dostum Foundation, the 'charity organisation' established by Abdul Rashid Dostum, leader of the Afghan *Jombesh* party.<sup>428</sup> Afghan students in Kyrgyzstan, in the words of an Afghan diplomat in Bishkek, "seek secular education away from the dominant largely religious Pakistani and Iranian education abroad".<sup>429</sup>

On 21 June 2013, a Kyrgyz ambassador finally began work in Afghanistan, making Kyrgyzstan the last of the five Central Asian states to have an embassy there. At this occasion, then Afghan Foreign Minister Zalmai Rassul and the ambassador stressed that "the two countries will continue to actively develop bilateral political, economic, scientific and educational cooperation."<sup>430</sup>

## 9.2 US-NATO Co-operation

As with all other Central Asian states, Kyrgyzstan supports the US-led war effort in Afghanistan. The American and NATO use of the Manas airbase in Kyrgyzstan, starting from late 2001 and set to expire in 2014, is the most obvious and well-told story of Kyrgyzstan's support for US and NATO operations in Afghanistan.<sup>431</sup> Without major changes, the continued dominance of the major players on issues related to Afghanistan – and the coming closure of an

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territories seem particularly active employing this second route.

<sup>423</sup> Said Reza Kazemi, 'On the Roof of the World: The Last Kyrgyz in Afghanistan', *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 3 November 2012, <http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/on-the-roof-of-the-world-the-last-kyrgyz-in-afghanistan>. For historical detail and academic research on the eventful history of the Kyrgyz in Afghanistan, see M. Nazif Shahrani, *The Kirghiz and Wakhi of Afghanistan: Adaptation to Closed Frontiers and War*, Seattle, University of Washington Press 2002; Ted Callahan, 'The Kyrgyz of the Afghan Pamir Ride On', Social Research Centre, 2007, <http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital-Library/Publications/Detail/?ots591=cab359a3-9328-19cc-a1d2-8023e646b22c&lng=en&id=145126>.

<sup>424</sup> Marlène Laruelle, 'The Paradigm of Nationalism in Kyrgyzstan: Evolving Narrative, the Sovereignty Issue and Political Agenda', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 45, 2012, 39–49. In the most important act so far, Kyrgyzstan's then labour minister Aigul Ryskulova visited the Kyrgyz in Afghanistan's Pamir region in 2008. See Chris Rickleton, 'Kyrgyzstan: Kyrgyz Community in Afghanistan Looking for a Way Out', *EurasiaNet*, 7 May 2012, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/65369>.

<sup>425</sup> E-mail communication, 15 October 2012.

<sup>426</sup> Kazemi, 'Afghans in Kyrgyzstan' [see FN 342].

<sup>427</sup> Ibid.

<sup>428</sup> Interviews, Kabul and Osh, August and September 2012. The three main destinations for students in Bishkek are the American University of Central Asia (AUCA), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Academy and the International Atatürk Alatau University (IAAU).

<sup>429</sup> Interview, Bishkek, September 2012.

<sup>430</sup> *Kabar*, 'Kyrgyz Ambassador presented credentials to President of Afghanistan Hamed Karzai', 21 June 2013, <http://kabar.kg/eng/politics/full/7458>. Avazbek Abdurazakov, a fluent Farsi speaker, began his career in 1985 as a translator of Middle Eastern languages for a Soviet publisher aimed at foreign audiences before becoming a translator for a joint Soviet-Afghan air cargo venture in 1990. He joined the diplomatic service of Kyrgyzstan in 1996 with a posting to Iran, where he ended his service in 2004 as senior advisor to the ambassador. In the years before his appointment as ambassador to Afghanistan, he worked as a director of a railway service company. Source: E-mail communication with researcher from Kyrgyzstan who has conducted research on Afghanistan-Kyrgyzstan relations, 8 October 2013; 'Avazbek Abdurazakov naznachten poslom Kyrgyzstana v Afganistane' [Avazbek Abdurazakov Appointed Kyrgyz Ambassador to Afghanistan], *Kabar*, 2 May 2013, <http://kabar.kg/rus/personnel-policy/full/54461>.

<sup>431</sup> See, for example, the many references to Manas in Cooley, *Great Games, Local Rules* [see FN 348].

American airbase as the US moves operations to Romania<sup>432</sup> – will marginalise Kyrgyzstan even more as an actor on regional security issues related to Afghanistan.<sup>433</sup>

### 9.3 Threats to Kyrgyzstan from Afghanistan

The issue of Afghanistan in Kyrgyzstan is marked by widespread ignorance among local experts and on the part of the public. According to Emil Dzhuraev, “when the subject of Afghanistan is invoked and discussed, the dominant view of the country is invariably one that depicts it as a source of imminent security threats, the kind of view that some have dubbed ‘the discourse of danger’ – above all in connection with narcotics and extremists.”<sup>434</sup> The reaction, in terms of public opinion and government policy, is to “shield oneself off from Afghanistan and thereby relegate the country to the status of *terra incognita*”.<sup>435</sup> Local media outlets in Kyrgyzstan are extremely alarmist and occasionally feature stories about Afghanistan- or Pakistan-based threats to local security.<sup>436</sup> Generally, conspiracies are massive and threats are dire. This type of analysis is occasionally picked up by outside media as well, such as a Kyrgyz KGB-sourced article published in a CENTCOM-supported news site that blamed a local bombing and other late-2011 security incidents on al Qaeda, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU), the United Tajik Opposition and ex-President Bakiev’s family – all of whom allegedly

attended a Taliban-sponsored meeting in Afghan Badakhshan.<sup>437</sup> In fact, the main culprit here was *Jaish al-Mahdi*, a Kyrgyz group whose members received training in Russia’s North Caucasus region.<sup>438</sup>

The government in Kyrgyzstan has dramatically referred to Afghanistan as the “main outside threat” facing that country, particularly in the form of drug trafficking.<sup>439</sup> During the September 2013 Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) summit, Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambaev expressed his concern about increased activity of Afghanistan-based terrorist and extremist groups.<sup>440</sup> Other government officials express much more alarmist views,<sup>441</sup> but reactions of independent observers to these views are almost always extremely sceptical.<sup>442</sup> Officially, as seen in Kyrgyzstan’s ‘National Security Concept’, the government places Afghanistan-based threats prominently in its national security priorities. However, this needs to be read in the context of a country that has weak security and military forces and is seeking as many forms of foreign assistance as possible.<sup>443</sup> Furthermore, the phenomenon of foreign terrorist connections link Kyrgyzstan more to the Russian Federation (i.e., the North Caucasus) rather than to Afghanistan.<sup>444</sup>

<sup>432</sup> ‘US to use Romanian air base for Afghan pullout’, *BBC News*, 18 October 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-24590082>.

<sup>433</sup> Emil Dzhuraev, ‘Reflections on the Problem of “Not Knowing” Afghanistan: The Case of Kyrgyzstan’, Central Asia Program, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum, No. 4, January 2013, 2, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan\\_Forum\\_4\\_January\\_2013.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan_Forum_4_January_2013.pdf); ‘Muratbek Imanaliyev: “So far no one has even tried to model the situation that will arise after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan”’, Roundtable Speech by Muratbek Imanaliyev, President of the Institute for Public Policy, 23 May 2013, <http://www.ipp.kg/en/news/2615/>.

<sup>434</sup> Dzhuraev, ‘Reflections on the Problem’ [see FN 334], 3, 6. For a discussion of the ‘discourse of danger’ in Central Asia, see John Heathershaw and Nick Megoran, ‘Central Asia: the discourse of danger’, *Open Democracy*, 16 June 2011, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/od-russia/john-heathershaw-nick-megoran/central-asia-discourse-of-danger>.

<sup>435</sup> Dzhuraev, ‘Reflections on the Problem’ [see FN 334], 3.

<sup>436</sup> Personal observations in Kyrgyzstan, August–December 2011.

<sup>437</sup> Yevgeniya Nuranskaya, ‘Al-Qaeda reaches into Central Asia’, *Al-Shorfa.com*, 8 February 2011, [http://al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en\\_GB/features/meii/features/main/2011/02/08/feature-02](http://al-shorfa.com/cocoon/meii/xhtml/en_GB/features/meii/features/main/2011/02/08/feature-02).

<sup>438</sup> Nichol, ‘Central Asia’ [see FN 257], 19.

<sup>439</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 10 September 2012.

<sup>440</sup> ‘SCO Summit Focuses On Afghanistan, Economic Cooperation’, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 13 September 2013, <http://www.rferl.org/content/shanghai-cooperation-organization-summit-bishkek/25104495.html>.

<sup>441</sup> The chair of the Parliamentary Committee for Defence and Security was very alarmist, stating that an incursion from Afghanistan into Kyrgyzstan was possible in 2013. See *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 27 November 2012.

<sup>442</sup> Discussion with academics, students and analysts in Kyrgyzstan, August–December 2011. For a summary of the reporting style of the CENTCOM-sponsored websites such as Central Asia Online and Al-Shorfa, see David Trilling, ‘Propagandastan’, *Foreign Policy*, 22 November 2011, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2011/11/21/propagandastan?page=full>.

<sup>443</sup> See also: McDermott, ‘Central Asian Security’ [see FN 336], 14–15.

<sup>444</sup> Nichol, ‘Central Asia’ [see FN 257], 19.



## 10. KAZAKHSTAN AND AFGHANISTAN

### 10.1 Connections to Afghanistan

Kazakhstan has been expanding its political and economic relations with Afghanistan since 2001. It has supported Afghanistan's involvement in regional structures such as the Central Asia Regional Economic Co-operation (CAREC), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (whose presidency was held by Kazakhstan in 2010) and the Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO), thereby trying to boost its own leadership role in the Central Asian region and its image in the international arena.<sup>445</sup> In the tradition of some major countries (e.g., the US, the UK, Russia) and organisations (e.g., UN, NATO), Kazakhstan, too, has appointed a Special Representative for what is now typically called the AfPak region.<sup>446</sup> It has provided development assistance to Afghanistan, pledged 50 million USD for a university scholarship fund for Afghan students to study in Kazakhstan and bolstered its trade relations, mainly through its bilateral trade commission with Afghanistan and through the approximately 2,000 Afghans who live in that country.<sup>447</sup> In July 2013, the two countries moved to further expand their business co-operation, with the Kazakh ambassador in Kabul

urging the visiting Kazakh business delegation to invest in Afghanistan, particularly in infrastructure projects such as roads and railways, and Afghan businesspeople to invest in Kazakhstan.<sup>448</sup> In addition, Kazakhstan intends to further expand its relationship with Afghanistan not only diplomatically and economically but also in the security field by repairing and modernising Afghan military equipment and possibly training Afghan security forces in its military training institutions.<sup>449</sup>

Kazakhstan's diplomatic efforts on Afghanistan seem to be part of some of its larger plans to build international prestige, rather than a reflection of any importance of Afghanistan to Kazakhstan. The Kazakh government has expressed its intention to open what it calls a "regional centre of multilateral diplomacy"<sup>450</sup> in Almaty (following hosting meetings between the P5+1 and Iran over the latter's disputed nuclear programme and the third Afghanistan-focused 'Heart of Asia' / Istanbul Process in early 2013). In addition, it aims to establish KazAid as its international development assistance agency that will provide aid to countries such as "Afghanistan and [those in] the

<sup>445</sup> Kazemi, 'Afghanistan Conference' [see FN 16]; Kazemi, 'Over-promising, Under-delivering' [see FN 16].

<sup>446</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Deputy Foreign Minister meets with Kazakh Special Representative for Afghanistan', 16 September 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/deputy-foreign-minister--3>.

<sup>447</sup> The economic assistance includes the reconstruction of Taloqan-Kunduz-Sher Khan Bandar road, construction of a high school in Dar-e Suf district, Samangan province, and a hospital in Waras district, Bamyan province, and provision of wheat and food aid. See Svetlana Kozhirova, 'In Search for a Long-Term Partnership: Kazakhstan's Afghan Policy', Central Asia Programme, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, Afghanistan Regional Forum, No. 7, April 2013, [http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan\\_Forum\\_7\\_April\\_2013.pdf](http://www.centralasiaprogram.org/images/Afghan_Forum_7_April_2013.pdf). Of the 1,000 scholarships offered by the Kazakh government, some 500 have already been utilised and the remaining are planned to be offered to Afghan students by 2020. See Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 'Afghan Foreign Minister meets with the President of Kazakhstan', 29 April 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/News/19747>; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan, 'Joint Statement of Second Kazakhstan-United States Strategic Partnership Dialogue', 10 July 2013, <http://www.mfa.kz/en/#!/news/article/10874>. Moreover, there is also a 'Social Association of Afghans in Kazakhstan'. See Ahmadullah Vastok, 'Relations of Kazakhstan and Afghanistan in the Framework of Istanbul Process', *Outlook Afghanistan*, 26 November 2012, [http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post\\_id=5993](http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=5993).

<sup>448</sup> Zabihullah Jhanmal, 'Kazakhstan Ambassador Urges Increased Investment in Afghanistan', *Tolonews*, 3 July 2013, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11082-kazakhstan-ambassador-urges-increased-investment-in-afghanistan>; Zabihullah Jhanmal, 'Eight Kazakh Companies Find Afghan Business Partners at Two-Day Investors Conference', *Tolonews*, 4 July 2013, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11092-eight-kazakh-companies-find-afghan-business-partners-at-two-day-conference>; Zabihullah Jhanmal, 'Kazakhstan Interested in Developing Afghan Infrastructure', *Tolonews*, 10 July 2013, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/11173-kazakhstan-interested-in-developing-afghan-infrastructure>. At the same event, officials from the independently run Afghan Chamber of Commerce and Industries criticised the Afghan government for its failure to provide security for business activity and rampant corruption in the Afghan state bureaucracy.

<sup>449</sup> Renat Tashkinbaev, 'Sovmestno zashchischat' granitsy predlagaet Afganistan stranam Tsentralnoy Azii' [The Countries of Central Asia Offer to Jointly Safeguard the Borders of Afghanistan], *Tengri News*, 11 December 2013, [http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan\\_news/sovmetno-zaschischat-granitsyi-predlagaet-afganistan-stranam-tsentralnoy-azii-247087/](http://tengrinews.kz/kazakhstan_news/sovmetno-zaschischat-granitsyi-predlagaet-afganistan-stranam-tsentralnoy-azii-247087/); Richard Weitz, 'Kazakhstan Expands Security and Economic Co-operation with Afghanistan', Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor*, 10:74, 19 April 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=40756&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=27&cHash=530f8717cca5762098239ae44e1b4f18#.UklAmhD4XAk](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=40756&tx_ttnews[backPid]=27&cHash=530f8717cca5762098239ae44e1b4f18#.UklAmhD4XAk).

<sup>450</sup> 'Regional diplomacy center, KAZAID agency to be set up', *Inform.kz*, 18 January 2013, <http://www.inform.kz/eng/article/2527376>.

South Caucasus”.<sup>451</sup> Engaging in regional and international diplomacy, particularly over the Afghanistan (and Iran) issue, as well as giving aid to Afghanistan, certainly lets the Kazakh government represent itself as an important and successful state on the world stage.

## 10.2 Co-operation with the US and NATO

Starting in 2007, the US and Kazakh governments discussed a possible deployment of Kazakhstan’s peacekeeping brigade (KAZBRIG) to Afghanistan – on the heels of the 2008 withdrawal of its battalion (KAZBAT) from Iraq after five years of operations – and the imminent planned deployment of several Kazakh officers to the US/NATO-led ISAF headquarters in Kabul. However, the Kazakhs were clearly hesitant and stated a deployment would not happen any time soon.<sup>452</sup> In 2011, the Kazakh government announced its intention to send four of its military officers to ISAF Headquarters in Kabul. However, there was public backlash and Kazakhstan’s senate vetoed the deployment.<sup>453</sup> Some feel that Taliban threats made the Kazakh government change its mind,<sup>454</sup> but one military analyst instead argues that officials who saw no real Kazakh security interests in Afghanistan thwarted the Kazakh military’s enthusiasm for a deployment.<sup>455</sup>

The incident did not put any obvious public dent in Kazakh-US relations, nor in their co-operation regarding Afghanistan. In summer 2013, both governments issued a joint statement confirming “Kazakhstan and the United States will continue to work closely together to support stability, peace, and

prosperity in Afghanistan and the region.”<sup>456</sup> More recently, a NATO envoy praised Kazakhstan as a “very reliable partner” in support of NATO goals for Afghanistan.<sup>457</sup> There was speculation – that later proved wrong – that Kazakhstan would offer the Aktau airbase to the US government as a transport facility.<sup>458</sup> But for now the main aspect of the generally positive US/NATO-Kazakh co-operation is over-flight rights and the transit by train of equipment leaving Afghanistan,<sup>459</sup> an area of cooperation that will only decrease in the future as the US/NATO needs less transit to and from Afghanistan.

## 10.3 Threats to Kazakhstan from Afghanistan

In 2010, while Kazakhstan was chairing the OSCE, the government of Kazakhstan stated that Afghanistan would be one of its foreign policy priorities.<sup>460</sup> However, this may have been a nod to the OSCE priorities rather any sort of policy that it actually intended to implement. McDermott found instead that the Kazakh government is not making any plans for domestic defence and security policy in relation to Afghanistan or Afghanistan-based threats.<sup>461</sup> A comprehensive analysis of Kazakhstan’s military and security doctrines finds that Afghanistan is seldom mentioned and, when mentioned, is accorded a low priority. Government officials and experts in Kazakhstan simply do not see Afghanistan as any sort of threat.<sup>462</sup> While Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev has stated, “we are all interested and worried by the problem of Afghanistan”,<sup>463</sup> he has

<sup>451</sup> ‘Kazakhstan to establish KazAid’, *The Times of Central Asia*, 9 April 2013, <http://www.timesca.com/index.php/m-news-by-category/social-education-and-health/10403-kazakhstan-to-establish-kazaid>.

<sup>452</sup> WikiLeaks, ‘US Embassy Astana Cable 09ASTANA1967\_a’, US Embassy in Astana, Kazakhstan, 5 November 2009, [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ASTANA1967\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/09ASTANA1967_a.html); WikiLeaks, ‘US Embassy Astana Cable 07ASTANA2581\_a’, US Embassy in Astana, Kazakhstan, 18 September 2007, [http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07ASTANA2581\\_a.html](http://www.wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/07ASTANA2581_a.html).

<sup>453</sup> Tadjbakhsh, ‘Central Asia and Afghanistan’ [see FN 316], 52–3; Kozhirova, ‘In Search’ [see FN 448], 4.

<sup>454</sup> Heidi Reisinger, ‘How to get out of Afghanistan: NATO’s withdrawal through Central Asia’, NATO Research Paper No. 79, 2012, 2, [http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current\\_news.php?icode=411](http://www.ndc.nato.int/news/current_news.php?icode=411).

<sup>455</sup> McDermott, ‘Central Asian Security’ [see FN 336], 33.

<sup>456</sup> MFA of Kazakhstan, ‘Joint Statement’ [see FN 448].

<sup>457</sup> ‘Kazakhstan – naibolee nadezhny partner NATO v Tsentral’noy Azii – spetspredstavitel’ [Envoy: Kazakhstan is the most reliable NATO partner in Central Asia], *Trend*, 9 November 2013, last <http://www.trend.az/regions/casia/kazakhstan/2209679.html>.

<sup>458</sup> Blank, ‘Central Asian Perspectives’ [see FN 198], 14.

<sup>459</sup> Nichol, ‘Central Asia’ [see FN 257], 24.

<sup>460</sup> Kozhirova, ‘In Search’ [see FN 448], 3.

<sup>461</sup> McDermott, ‘Central Asian Security’ [see FN 336], 22–3.

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid*, 6, 16–7, 21, 24, 26. McDermott leaves no ambiguity in his assessment: “Kazakhstan’s cool reception of the type of scaremongering that can pass for analysis elsewhere is diametrically opposed to regarding the post-2014 security environment as offering grounds for genuine anxiety; unlike in the other Central Asian capitals, Astana does not place Afghanistan at the forefront of its security agenda”. *Ibid*, 21.

made it very clear that he does not see an Afghan threat to Kazakhstan. In a prominent public forum, Nazarbayev stated that he does not agree with any of the 'catastrophic theories' circulating about future instability in Central Asia connected to Afghanistan. Most emphatically he rejected the idea that 2014 will bring any serious changes.<sup>464</sup> As for those responsible for a spate of domestic attacks in 2011, the foreign connections of the perpetrators were, like those in Kyrgyzstan, linked closely to Russia's North Caucasus region.<sup>465</sup>

## 11. CONCLUSIONS

Central Asia-Afghanistan relations since 2001 have formed in an inconsistent manner across different sectors. Some connections between the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan are solid and enduring, such as narcotics trafficking. Other relations are formed on a weak and temporary basis, for example the numerous cross border co-operation programmes made possible by short-lived international interest and funding. And some cross-border connections are nearly non-existent despite often-exaggerated perceptions, the prime case here being the trans-border terrorist connections and the alleged 'narco-terror' nexus. Likewise, ethnic connections between Afghanistan and Central Asia have since 2001 – just as in the 1990s – failed to result in any significant

engagement across the frontier at either the state or non-state (people-to-people) level. Instead, the governments and individuals in the region continued to make decisions based on a pragmatic strategic or economic basis.

The US strategy of militarily and economically disconnecting Central Asia from the Russian sphere of influence and orienting the region towards Afghanistan and South Asia has been an abject and predictable failure, with the only notable success being the hope for continued and increased electricity exports from Central Asia to Afghanistan and further to South Asia, primarily Pakistan. Rather, Central Asia is increasingly connecting with China in terms of trade and energy exports while maintaining its strategic and economic connections to Russia. Other regional initiatives and projects – the much-hyped 'Heart of Asia'/Istanbul process, the long-standing TAPI and the recently discussed CASAREM and TAT – face an uncertain future, too. This is not only due to serious concerns over security and political stability in Afghanistan and, to some extent, in the larger Central and South Asian region, but also because of a potential impending decline in international interest. An important, silent victims in this and other similar circumstances are the local populations in both Afghanistan and Central (and South) Asia whose lives have somewhat improved due to some developments in regional co-operation, in certain border areas and beyond.

Analysing relations and interactions between Afghanistan and Central Asia requires disaggregating Central Asia (and, to a lesser extent, disaggregating Afghanistan as well). Regarding Central Asia's own failure to co-operate successfully on multilateral projects,<sup>466</sup> this region is composed of five very different countries with very different needs, goals and socio-political structures. Each will formulate different relations with Afghanistan, and Afghanistan will affect each in different ways. As argued by George Gavriliis, "Central Asian regimes do not treat their proximity to Afghanistan as a threat worthy of banding together; instead, they see it as an opportunity to justify unilateral policies and to reap further benefits from international donors who have money to spend on security and development initiatives."<sup>467</sup> And even within each of these

<sup>463</sup> Kozhirova, 'In Search' [see FN 448], 3. Similarly, the Kazakh foreign minister characterised the situation as a threat to regional security, but did not specifically mention a direct threat Kazakhstan. See Selina Williams, 'Kazakhstan Sees Threat from Afghan Instability', *Wall Street Journal*, 20 January 2014, <http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424052702304302704579332364284021906>.

<sup>464</sup> Meyrambek Baygarin, 'Prezident Kazakhstana N. Nazarbayev ne soglasen s teoriyami o katastroficheskom razvitiy sobyitiy v Tsentral'noy Azii' [President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan Does Not Agree with the Theories of Catastrophic Developments in Central Asia], *Inform.kz*, 25 April 2013, <http://www.inform.kz/rus/article/2553492>.

<sup>465</sup> Islam Tekushev, 'Kazakhstan: ot religioznoy obshchiny k vooruzhennomu podpol'yu' [Kazakhstan: From a Religious Community to an Armed Underground], *Radio Ozodi*, 17 May 2013, <http://rus.ozodi.org/content/terrorism-in-kazakhstan-/24989431.html>; Talgat Mamyrayymov, 'Mifologemy i realii Kazakhstanskogo ekstremizma i terrorizma' [Myths and Realities of Kazakhstani Extremism and Terrorism], *Anti terror*, 9 December 2012, <http://counter-terror.kz/ru/article/view?id=81>; Almaz Rysaliev, 'West Kazakhstan Under Growing Islamic Influence', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 21 July 2011, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/west-kazakhstan-under-growing-islamic-influence>.

<sup>466</sup> For example, see Aitolkyn Kourmanova, 'Regional Cooperation in Central Asia: Nurturing from the Ground Up', The Central Asia Fellowship Papers, No. 1, October 2013, <http://www.gwu.edu/~ieresgwu/assets/docs/KourmanovaCAP.pdf>

<sup>467</sup> George Gavriliis, 'Central Asia's Border Woes & the Impact of International Assistance', Open Society Central Eurasia Project, Occasional Paper Series No. 6, May 2012,

countries, there are varying degrees of internal incoherencies: different actors have different ideas about, and interests in, being connected to Afghanistan. Speaking of common regional strategies and concerns on the part of Central Asian governments would be misleading. On the Afghan side, different groups of people (political-military figures, government authorities, traders, students, former migrants and other local people), mainly in northern areas, interact with neighbouring Central Asia on a restricted basis. This does not amount so far, however, to a full-fledged, systematic relationship that would be mutually beneficial in a significant way.

Kazakhstan appears to be by far the most secure and the most removed Central Asian country from Afghanistan. Although the Kazakh government has actively pursued initiatives to expand its political, economic, business and educational ties with Afghanistan, it has done so mainly to boost its image as a thriving state in regional and international arenas. It has no vital need to expand its markets to the south, with its own natural resources and economic connections to Russia, China and the West providing the country with a relatively high level of prosperity. In terms of security, the capable Kazakh security forces quickly eliminated the few militant Islamists who have challenged local security forces in recent years. Furthermore, these militants look to the North Caucasus for support and training. Kazakhstan has little to worry about regarding Afghanistan, and the government and analysts here have expressed this clearly.

Kyrgyzstan does not enjoy the prosperity that Kazakhstan does, nor does it have the stable government and capable security forces as in its larger neighbour. While removed economically from Afghanistan – with its economy overwhelmingly dependent on Russia, Kazakhstan and China – its physical separation has not been as removed. During incursions in 1999 and 2000, IMU fighters, based in both Tajikistan and Afghanistan, carried out some attacks into the Batken region of southern Kyrgyzstan. At that time, Tajikistan did not function as a buffer between Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. This is no longer a problem as Tajikistan is now far more capable of controlling its territory. The country still provides an open corridor for narcotics traffickers, but not for militants. Kyrgyzstani society does have connections to foreign-based Islamists, but the South Asian connection is to the (at least so far) non-violent *Jamaat ut-Tabligh*. A more serious connection to violent Islamists is in the form of *Jaish al-Mahdi*'s ties

to Russia's North Caucasus region. Kyrgyzstan's further modest socio-economic engagement with Afghanistan depends on CASAREM/CASA-1000's evolution and on more, or less, people-to-people interaction with Afghans (e.g., students, traders, migrants/asylum-seekers).

For both Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, the possibility of future terrorist attacks with connections to Afghanistan or Pakistan should not be ruled out. What can be ruled out is that attacks such as these offer serious resistance to the rule of government in these countries in the near future. Militant Islamists with connections to Afghanistan and South Asia have neither a broad base of support nor the capabilities to sustain their activities in the two countries. They can cause only isolated incidents of insecurity among the greater challenges faced in northern Central Asia, e.g., labour unrest in western Kazakhstan, ethnic violence in southern Kyrgyzstan or elite-level political manoeuvring in either country.

In the case of Turkmenistan, its government's self-representation as a neutral state doing its best to not get entangled in contentious regional politics and security issues is a poor attempt to create a public image of being an uninvolved, yet still relevant, player on the world stage. Turkmenistan's role is more accurately described as one of a state that will deal with any entity that can provide it with benefits, whether it is a powerful Afghan commander or politician, the Taleban, Russia, Iran, the CIA or the Pentagon. This may fit a mercenary definition of neutrality, but allowing the CIA and the US military to secretly use Turkmenistan as a rendition transit point and a US military fuel depot in support of the American fight against the Taleban and their allies would violate an important tenant of neutrality. This assessment, however unfavourable it may sound, perhaps demonstrates a trait that will allow Turkmenistan to safely adapt, in the most ideologically and strategically flexible manner, to any potential rapidly changing security challenges in the future. As for economic issues regarding Afghanistan, the likely failure of the TAPI project (and the uncertain future of the TAT railway) may hurt Turkmenistan in that it leaves the Turkmen government without a truly diverse range of energy export options. But it is likely that the country (i.e., the Turkmen elites who support the state) could tolerate this economically.

Uzbekistan, and its relatively formidable security forces, is often looked to as being the key to stopping any possible northward spread of instability from Afghanistan. The vigorous Russian and American courting of the Uzbek leadership in recent years acknowledges the prominent role that Uzbekistan has played – and will likely continue to play – in the Central Asian security system. However, Uzbekistan

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37,  
<http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/sites/default/files/OPS-No-6-20120601.pdf>.



also has a strong tendency towards isolationism when it can no longer get what it wants from a neighbour. Uzbekistan is capable of both engaging both the Afghan government and powerful northern political-military figures and of disengaging completely from Afghanistan and closing the border. The Uzbek government has no affinity whatsoever for ethnic Uzbeks in northern Afghanistan, despite the wax and wane of its support for *Jombesh*. The low level of cross-border trade allows Uzbekistan to close the border with no serious qualms or consequences – ideologically or economically. For now, the Uzbek government is acting cautiously and preparing for various contingencies involving Afghanistan, but not with any exaggerated sense of a threat from Afghanistan as the government here is capable of making a realistic threat analysis.

Tajikistan appears to be the most vulnerable Central Asian country to instability emanating from Afghanistan. The long and unsecured border, the relatively higher level of interaction and the less competent security forces worry powerful outsiders such as Russia and the US. Russia's significant military presence and the US's considerable security assistance confirm these worries. Tajikistan is far more secure than it has been in the past, despite recent bouts of localised violence in eastern parts of the country over the last few years. Beyond concern about Tajikistan itself, Russia and the US are clearly interested in using Tajikistan as a buffer and as a base from which to project power or maintain a presence in the region. Both the Russians and Americans have reconciled the Tajik government's blatant complicity in the narcotics trade with their security goals in Tajikistan and throughout the region. But other – often exaggerated – concerns remain in the near future, such as possible overspill of violent conflict, insurgents, terrorism or refugees from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, the importance of Tajikistan should not be exaggerated. Russia's main concerns with violent Islamists are at home, especially in the North Caucasus, while the level of US support is tiny when compared to its security assistance elsewhere in the world. Tajikistan will continue to portray itself as a broken and vulnerable country, appealing for international funds and assistance while making dire statements about potential security risks from Afghanistan – even if the concerns of the Tajik leadership have little to do with Afghanistan but much with domestic politics and instability.

Making predictions about the exact nature of future relations between the countries in this complicated region and the arguably even more complicated state and society of Afghanistan will likely prove futile. Besides, an important question is how various population groups in northern Afghanistan will, in the long term, orient themselves within the larger

national Afghan field, not just in security and political terms, but also in terms of cultural geography and orientation to life and livelihood such as trade and agriculture. Longer-term scenarios may include the drastic possibility of a separate country in northern Afghanistan – even if only in the form of a powerful individual or group who wields power comparatively separately from central government control.<sup>468</sup>

Putting aside the difficulties in predicting future trends in such a complex environment, preparing for various outcomes means exploring the range of possibilities in a critical and informed manner. Being prepared for possible spillover from Afghanistan is often mentioned, yet the threat of Islamist insurgents connected to Afghanistan is, and has been, consistently exaggerated. Some foreign analysts can be faulted for their ignorance and poor analytical skills, but local governments' alarmist public assessments (excluding that of Kazakhstan) have more to do with their desire to justify their oppressive and authoritarian internal politics while seeking funding from foreign patrons. The many dire predictions about the region are now being balanced, to a lesser degree, with systematic deconstructions of alarmist assessments.<sup>469</sup> However, an overblown threat does not mean that a threat does not exist at a lower level; unseen future events in Central Asia or Afghanistan could create a more conducive environment to such disruptions. Furthermore, there is now no doubt that security has been aggravating in northern Afghanistan, but there is no automatic overspill into Central Asia, although the future evolution of politico-security dynamics in Afghanistan as well as Central Asia (in reverse, such as coming elections, political successions, other tensions) need to be continuously monitored.

The future of Afghanistan is so unsure and unpredictable that present and future variables affecting Central Asia, itself a diverse range of states and actors, are innumerable and not fully understood. One should not wait for the end of 2014 – now considered by many as the 'crucial' year for Afghanistan and the region. In the short run,

<sup>468</sup> There is such a discourse in parts of Afghanistan, at least in parts of the north. However, there is, at the same time, a greater ethno-geographical intermingling in the country since 2001.

<sup>469</sup> For example, see Scott Radnitz and Marlene Laruelle, 'Will Afghanistan Take Central Asia Down with It?', *The National Interest*, 1 August 2013, <http://nationalinterest.org/commentary/will-afghanistan-take-central-asia-down-it-8815?page=show>; Bayram Balci, 'The Myth of Rising Radical Islamism in Post-2014 Central Asia', *World Politics Review*, 30 December 2013, <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/13459/the-myth-of-rising-radical-islamism-in-post-2014-central-asia>.

Afghanistan has a second round of presidential elections ahead of itself on 14 June 2014. In a scenario where the run-off presidential elections challenge the existing Afghan constitutional consensus, it is not clear what the responses within the region and from the broader international community will be. It is not known with any certainty whether, for instance, the Central Asian governments, particularly Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, will replay a 1990s situation by increasingly supporting northern Afghan political forces. As for the Taliban, if they return to power, whether they seek cordial relations with governments in Central Asia, as some of their representatives have recently claimed, can not be known with any certainty.

The various scenarios put forward include: the flow of Afghan refugees into Central Asia, a fully closed and militarised border, an ineffective security cordon and a cross-border overspill of insecurity, mutually beneficial and peaceful relations between Central Asian states and future political forces in Kabul and northern Afghanistan, or a combination of the above. Central Asia or individual states here may become buffer zones; Central Asia may be used as a base for containment strategies by outside powers; Central Asia might, with or without outside support, interfere directly in the internal political and security situation in Afghanistan. The multitude of scenarios and speculations are hurt by poor knowledge of the region (e.g., exaggerations regarding militant Islamist networks, the exaggerated focus on such issues as counter-narcotics), but even with relatively good knowledge of a region, accurately predict specific outcomes (e.g., the Arab Spring, the fall of the Soviet Union) is not possible.

Central Asia will likely never have the importance on the world stage that it did immediately after 9/11. Nor will it ever be as important to the US as when large numbers of American military forces based in or transited through Central Asia. Now, even the region's use as an exit for US and NATO forces has diminished (down to 4 per cent of outbound cargo) with the re-opening of the (still somewhat vulnerable) Pakistan route and the scheduled replacement of the air transit centre in Kyrgyzstan with one in Romania. These phenomena also make Central Asia less important for Russia, at least as far as any competition for Central Asian influence with America goes. Nevertheless, certain Central Asian governments may be able to negotiate more American benefits for themselves as the US is possibly looking for one or more air base locations

from which to launch drones into Pakistan (to replace drone bases in Afghanistan).<sup>470</sup>

For those Central Asian countries north of Afghanistan, the over-decade-long period of increased importance may be ending and, reducing the ability to extract concessions from foreign powers. Border assistance programmes will remain, as will, very likely, training of Central Asian security forces by the Russians and Americans. What is less clear is how many US forces will remain in Afghanistan, if any, after 2014, given the increasingly distrustful and still-inconclusive negotiations between the US and Afghanistan (as represented by an unflinching President Karzai), despite the support of a recent *Loya Jirga* for a bilateral security and defence pact between the two countries. Also an open question is what any Central Asian role will be in supporting those forces in Afghanistan and, if none remain, what possible participation there will be with the US in monitoring and containing perceived threats in and from Afghanistan. Beyond the US's interests, Russia – perhaps cooperating with countries like Iran and India – could possibly again support anti-Taliban forces in Afghanistan, a role that would require co-operation from and continued basing in Central Asian countries, especially Tajikistan.

The view from Afghanistan is also unclear. The interests in, and strategies towards, Central Asian states that future Afghan governments or northern Afghan powerbrokers have is not known with certainty. Central Asia will never gain the level of importance that Pakistan and Iran have, as the region certainly has less involvement in Afghanistan's politics and economy. However, some positive aspects of the relationship may have a good chance of surviving. Some economic and people-to-people interactions are mutually beneficial, if still at a modest level. The broader scenarios for the coming years could fall somewhere between cautious engagement, isolation or a strict military-to-military relationship. As far as the spread of instability is concerned, the question of whether countries of Central Asia will be seriously affected in the long-term by any of the potential threats emanating from Afghanistan is still open. A similar question is, to a much lesser extent, whether instability from potential crises in or between Central Asian countries, linked to

<sup>470</sup> Ken Dilanian and David S. Cloud, 'U.S. seeks new bases for drones targeting Al Qaeda in Pakistan', *Los Angeles Times*, 16 February 2014, <http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-drone-bases-20140216,0,2170648.story#axzz2tVgejQPn>; Joshua Kucera, 'Where in Central Asia Would The U.S. Put A Drone Base?', *Eurasianet*, 17 February 2014, <http://www.eurasianet.org/node/68053>.

bumpy succession in individual regimes, ethnic conflict or deteriorating relations between individual countries, will spill back into Afghanistan.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix 1: A Chronology of Recent Developments Related to CASA-1000 Regional Electricity Transmission Project

*This chronology is a summary and non-exhaustive.*

**2005.** The governments of Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan and Tajikistan begin multilateral negotiations among themselves and with a number of international financial institutions on the trade and transmission of summertime surplus electricity from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan southwards to Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>471</sup>

**28 October 2006.** The four governments sign a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the development of Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.<sup>472</sup>

**16 November 2007.** The four governments, in Kabul, Afghanistan, reaffirm the Dushanbe MoU by endorsing an additional Kabul MoU and establishing an inter-governmental council (IGC) and secretariat to be based in Kabul.<sup>473</sup>

**4 August 2008.** The four governments sign an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) for the development of CASA-1000 Power Transmission Project and for the further development of CASAREM in Islamabad, Pakistan.<sup>474</sup>

**2007, 2009, 2011.** Feasibility studies of the CASA-1000 electricity transmission project are funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and conducted by SNC-Lavalin International Inc. (SLI), a Canadian firm. A Phase 1 report containing a pre-feasibility assessment of the technical-economic viability of electrical transmission interconnection is produced in December 2007; a Phase 2 report including a detailed feasibility assessment comes out in January 2009; and

the two feasibility study reports are updated in February 2011.<sup>475</sup>

**Mid-2009.** The ADB withdraws from the project, reportedly citing “the existing challenging security situation in Afghanistan”. The four CASAREM governments approach the World Bank for support in continuing with the project.<sup>476</sup>

**December 2010.** The World Bank contracts Integrated Environments Ltd. (IEL), another Canadian company, to carry out an environmental and social impact assessment and environmental and social management plan (ESIA/ESMP) of the CASA-1000 project.<sup>477</sup>

**20 September 2011.** The four governments, in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, reaffirm their previous agreements, endorse feasibility studies and agree to establish national institutions with a view to co-ordinating the implementation of the CASA-1000 project.<sup>478</sup>

**31 August 2012.** The World Bank makes it clear that “the CASA-1000 Project and Roghun are not linked.”<sup>479</sup>

**13 December 2012–6 September 2013.** At least 13 meetings of the CASA-1000 Joint Working Group (JWG) and four (including sellers-only) meetings of the Legal Subcommittee are held to hammer out institutional, financial and operational project matters. An IGC meeting is planned to take place in Pakistan in 2013.<sup>480</sup>

**27 August 2013.** Afghan Finance Minister Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal discusses the CASA-1000 project with

<sup>471</sup> Integrated Environments Ltd. (IEL), ‘ESIA and ESMP of the Central Asia South Asia Electricity Transmission Project (CASA 1000): Feasibility Stage’, August 2011, [http://www.casa-1000.org/3.%20Islamabad%20Agreement%20ENG%20\(Signed%204%20Aug%2008\).pdf](http://www.casa-1000.org/3.%20Islamabad%20Agreement%20ENG%20(Signed%204%20Aug%2008).pdf).

<sup>472</sup> ‘Memorandum of Understanding for the Development of the CASA 1000 Power Transmission Project and the Future Development of a Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM)’, 20 September 2011, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, [http://www.casa-1000.org/4.%20Bishkek%20MoU%20ENG%20\(Signed%20Sep%202020,%20202011\).pdf](http://www.casa-1000.org/4.%20Bishkek%20MoU%20ENG%20(Signed%20Sep%202020,%20202011).pdf).

<sup>473</sup> ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ [see FN2].

<sup>474</sup> ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ [see FN 2].

<sup>475</sup> Integrated Environments, ‘ESIA and ESMP’ [see FN1]; SNC-Lavalin International Inc. (SLI), ‘Central Asia-South Asia Electricity Transmission and Trade (CASA-1000) Project Feasibility Study Update Final Report’, February 2011, E-2, [http://www.casa-1000.org/1\)Techno-EconomicFeasibilityStudy\\_MainRep\\_English.pdf](http://www.casa-1000.org/1)Techno-EconomicFeasibilityStudy_MainRep_English.pdf).

<sup>476</sup> Fozil Mashrab, ‘Tajikistan Deviates from CASA Script’, *Asia Times*, 24 January 2013, [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central\\_Asia/CEN-01-240613.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Central_Asia/CEN-01-240613.html); Integrated Environments, ‘ESIA and ESMP’ [see FN1].

<sup>477</sup> Integrated Environments, ‘ESIA and ESMP’ [see FN1].

<sup>478</sup> ‘Memorandum of Understanding’ [see FN 2].

<sup>479</sup> World Bank, ‘Q&A with Saroj Jha, Regional Director for Central Asia, on the Rogun Assessment Studies’, 31 August 2012, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/speech/2012/08/31/saroj-jha-q-and-a-rogun>.

<sup>480</sup> For more information, see the official CASA-1000 web-site at <http://www.casa-1000.org/MainPages/CASAAbout.php>.



Pakistani officials and signs a number of agreements with them.<sup>481</sup>

**16–17 September 2013.** The fourth IGC ministerial-level meeting is held in Islamabad, Pakistan. The meeting decides to complete negotiations and finalise agreements by end-2013 with a view to ensuring implementation and operationalisation by 2018, while Pakistan pushes for 2017. Moreover, Russia states that it will provide a “considerable amount of money” in funding, provided it is granted “equal participation right” in the project.<sup>482</sup>

**28 September 2013.** The World Bank completes its CASA-1000 study, estimating the project to cost 820 million USD. It is reported that out of the total project cost, the World Bank will provide 510 million USD, the Islamic Development Bank 280 million USD and “bilateral agencies” 30 million USD. It is also stressed that “no additional generation capacity will be required or built for the project”.<sup>483</sup>

**22 October 2013.** Tajikistan again links Roghun with CASA-1000, continuing to complicate the regional electricity project. Russia also plans to join the project by increasing its capacity from the planned 1,300 MW to a target of 5,000 MW.<sup>484</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Afghan Ministry of Finance, ‘Pakistan, Afghanistan sign accords to boost trade’, 27 August 2013, <http://mof.gov.af/en/news/pakistan-afghanistan-sign-accords-to-boost-trade>; Afghan Business News Portal, ‘Afghan Finance Minister believes Pakistanis are sincere in their pledges’, 30 August 2013, <http://www.wadsam.com/afghan-finance-minister-believes-pakistanis-are-sincere-in-their-pledges-232/>.

<sup>482</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA), ‘The trend of CASA 1000 project expedites at the 4th Intergovernmental Session’, 18 September 2013, accessed 22 September 2013, <http://mfa.gov.af/en/news/mfa>.

<sup>483</sup> Dawn.com, ‘CASA-1000 to cost \$820m’, 28 September 2013, <http://dawn.com/news/1046120/casa-1000-to-cost-820m>.

<sup>484</sup> Umida Hashimova, ‘Controversy over Rogun Dam Complicates CASA-1000 Plans in Central Asia’, Jamestown Foundation, Eurasia Daily Monitor 10:188, 22 October 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/regions/centralasia/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=41519&tx\\_ttnews\[backPid\]=53&cHash=f6cfaef095744c88d669a18b4929c1e5#.Umub8BD4Uk0](http://www.jamestown.org/regions/centralasia/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41519&tx_ttnews[backPid]=53&cHash=f6cfaef095744c88d669a18b4929c1e5#.Umub8BD4Uk0).

## Appendix 2: A Chronology of Recent Developments Related to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan (TAT) Tripartite Railway Project

*This chronology is a summary and non-exhaustive.*

**20 March 2013.** Presidents Hamed Karzai, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Emomali Rahmon of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan respectively signed a trilateral memorandum of understanding (MoU) in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan. They also agreed to hold, within one month, expert meetings for “detailed study of routes, as well as organizational, legal and financial bases for the practical implementation of the railway construction project” in early July 2013.<sup>485</sup>

**26 March 2013.** The Tajik section of the TAT railway will be 50 kilometres from Kolkhozobod district through Panj-i Poyon to the Afghan border and will connect to the country’s railway network, according to Tajik Deputy Minister of Transport Jumakhon Zuhurov. Concerns were also raised that Tajikistan might not have adequate funds to finance the building of its section of the TAT railway.<sup>486</sup>

**14 May 2013.** The Turkmen president assigns Deputy Prime Minister Akmyrat Yegeleyev and Railway Transport Minister Bayram Annamerodov to prepare for the launch of the construction of the TAT railway.<sup>487</sup>

**22 May 2013.** Islamic Development Bank (IDB) President Ahmad Mohamed Ali said in Dushanbe, Tajikistan that the bank would support the construction of the TAT railway, including providing funding for the Tajik section of the railway. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon also drew the attention of the IDB to the TAT and called for its support.<sup>488</sup>

**26 May 2013.** Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs Zalmay Rassoul and Turkmen Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Rashit Meredov discussed “good and close relations between the two brotherly and friendly countries” and Afghanistan-focused regional co-operation in Kabul,

Afghanistan.<sup>489</sup> Meredov also invited Karzai to attend the launch ceremony of the TAT railway.<sup>490</sup>

**5 June 2013.** Presidents Hamed Karzai, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and Emomali Rahmon of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan attended a ceremony in Atamyrat, Lebap region, eastern Turkmenistan to launch the construction of the TAT railway on Turkmen soil from Atamyrat to Imamnazar.<sup>491</sup> Earlier during the day, the three presidents discussed their mainly economic bilateral and trilateral co-operation (TAT railway, CASA-1000 electricity transmission project, expansion of economic and trade ties) in Garlyk in eastern Turkmenistan.<sup>492</sup>

**5 June 2013.** The TAT railway is estimated to cost 350 million USD; will be 85 kilometres long in Turkmenistan and over 300 kilometres long in Afghanistan; and will be connected to Tajikistan’s railway grid via Shir Khan Bandar, Kunduz province, northern Afghanistan, according to Afghan Deputy Minister of Mines Ahmad Shah Wahid.<sup>493</sup> Wahid also said that this railway would then be extended to Mazar-e Sharif-Hairatan railway and then to Uzbekistan’s railway grid.

**10 June 2013.** The TAT railway will start in Atamyrat and Imamnazar on Turkmen soil and will cross a route involving Aqina, Andkhoy, Sheberghan, Mazar-e Sharif, Kholm, Kunduz and Shir Khan Bandar to reach Tajikistan’s railway grid, according to Yama Yari, an advisor in the Afghan Railway Authority.<sup>494</sup> Around 400 kilometres of the estimated 590-kilometre-long

<sup>489</sup> Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ‘Dr. Zalmay Rassoul meets with Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan’, 26 May 2013, <https://www.facebook.com/mfa.afghanistan/posts/525482384176413>.

<sup>490</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 30 May 2013.

<sup>491</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ‘President Karzai Leaves for Turkmenistan to Inaugurate Railway Project between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan’, 5 June 2013, <http://president.gov.af/en/news/21026>.

<sup>492</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 6 June 2013.

<sup>493</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘Tarh-e rah-e ahan-e Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan ejra’i meshawad’ [Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan Railway Project to Be Implemented], 5 June 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130605\\_k02-afg-turmanistan-tajikestan-railway.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130605_k02-afg-turmanistan-tajikestan-railway.shtml).

<sup>494</sup> Yama Yari, ‘Rah-e ahan-e shamal; khati besoy-e omid wa ayanda-ye Afghanistan’ [Northern Railway: A Way to Afghanistan’s Hope and Future], *BBC Persian*, 10 June 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130608\\_zs\\_afghan\\_tajik\\_turkmen\\_railway\\_yama.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130608_zs_afghan_tajik_turkmen_railway_yama.shtml).

<sup>485</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ‘MoU of Railway Construction Signed Between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan’, 20 March 2013, <http://president.gov.af/en/news/18555>.

<sup>486</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 26 March 2013.

<sup>487</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 15 May 2013.

<sup>488</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 24 May 2013.

railway will traverse Afghan territory. The ADB will also financially contribute to the construction of the TAT railway.

**16 June 2013.** Afghan Minister of Public Works Najibullah Ozhan and Balkh Provincial Governor Atta Mohammad Noor inaugurated the construction of Kaldar-Aqina railway.<sup>495</sup> The railway is 330 kilometres long, is estimated to cost 150 million US dollars that will be funded by the ADB and will boost trade and commerce in Afghanistan and its region, according to Ozhan and Noor. (Reza's comment: This should be the Afghan section of the TAT railway, although the press report does not explicitly mention it.)

**9 July 2013.** Hundreds of local people held a demonstration, demanding the TAT railway extend from Afghanistan to Tajikistan through Kunduz province instead of Balkh province, as originally planned. It was reported that the Afghan government had changed the original plan due to insecurity in Kunduz.<sup>496</sup>

**17 July 2013.** Afghan Ambassador to Tajikistan Abdul Ghafur Arezu and Tajik Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Nizomiddin Zohidov called the TAT railway a "priority" among Afghanistan-focused regional projects.<sup>497</sup>

**18 July 2013.** Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov ordered "strict control" of Turkmen government officials, including Deputy Prime Minister for Transportation and Communication Akmyrat Yegeleyev, over construction of the TAT railway on Turkmen soil.<sup>498</sup>

**16 August 2013.** Afghan Minister of Finance Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon discussed the construction of the TAT railway in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.<sup>499</sup>

**21 October 2013.** Afghanistan and Tajikistan expressed their understanding on selecting the route for the construction of the railway, involving

Atamyrat (in Turkmenistan), Aqina, Andkhoy, Sheberghan, Mazar-e Sharif, Kunduz and Sher Khan Bandar (in Afghanistan) and Panji Poyon (in Tajikistan).<sup>500</sup>

**22 October 2013.** Turkmenistan, Afghanistan and Tajikistan are to select one final route for the TAT railway. Once this is done, they will commence the funding and bidding processes.<sup>501</sup>

<sup>495</sup> *TOLONews*, Ghafoor Saboor, 'Construction of Mazar-e-Sharif-Aqina Railway Project Inaugurated', 16 June 2013, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/business/10878-construction-of-mazar-e-sharif-aqina-railway-project-inaugurated>.

<sup>496</sup> Hidayatullah Hamdard, 'Traders want railroad to pass through Kunduz', *Pajhwok Afghan News*, 9 July 2013, <http://www.elections.pajhwok.com/en/2013/07/09/trader-s-want-railroad-pass-through-kunduz>.

<sup>497</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 19 July 2013.

<sup>498</sup> *BBC Monitoring Afghanistan*, 20 July 2013.

<sup>499</sup> Central Asia Online, 'Tajiks, Afghans Discuss Gas Pipeline, Transit Trade Agreement', 16 August 2013, [http://centralasiaonline.com/en\\_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2013/08/16/newsbrief-06](http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2013/08/16/newsbrief-06).

<sup>500</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Republic of Tajikistan for the Development and Strengthening of Bilateral Relationship and Co-operation', 21 October 2013, <http://president.gov.af/fa/news/25463> (in Dari).

<sup>501</sup> *Central Asia Online*, 'Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan to pick railway route', 22 October 2013, [http://centralasiaonline.com/en\\_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2013/10/22/newsbrief-04](http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/newsbriefs/2013/10/22/newsbrief-04).

### Appendix 3: A Chronology of Recent Developments Related to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Natural Gas Pipeline Project<sup>502</sup>

*This chronology is a summary and non-exhaustive.*

**23 May 2012.** The Asian Development Bank (ADB) reported what it called “historic agreements” after “more than 20 years of delicate negotiations”, including the signatures by India (GAIL Ltd) and Pakistan (Inter-State Gas System Pvt Ltd) for gas sales and purchase agreements with Turkmenistan (Türkmengaz) and by Afghanistan (Ministry of Mines) for a memorandum of understanding on long-term gas co-operation with Turkmenistan.<sup>503</sup> According to the ADB, the 1,800-kilometre-long pipeline, estimated to cost at least 7.6 billion dollars in 2008, will supply 90 million cubic metres of natural gas on a daily basis, turning it not only into a “peace pipeline” but also into a “pipeline to prosperity”.

**9 July 2013.** Afghanistan and Turkmenistan signed a gas sales and purchase agreement in the framework of TAPI in Ashgabat.<sup>504</sup>

**11 July 2013.** Iran raised challenges facing the implementation of TAPI, including insecurity along the pipeline route and political disagreements between Afghanistan and Pakistan and between India and Pakistan.<sup>505</sup> This is unsurprising as Iran is trying to bypass TAPI by promoting and furthering the idea of the Iranian natural gas pipeline to South Asia.

**17 July 2013.** Upon return from a TAPI-related meeting in Ashgabat, the Afghan Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani gave a briefing on recent developments related to TAPI in a press conference: a 9,000-to-12,000-strong security force will be created by the Afghan government to ensure security for the project on Afghan soil based on a previous security survey; Afghanistan will not only transit gas but also consume it; the pipeline will pass through Herat, Farah, Helmand and Kandahar provinces; it will cost some 8–11 billion dollars to construct; construction will start by 2014 and the pipeline will be operational

by 2017. Afghanistan also became a member of TAPI Ltd., according to Shahrani.<sup>506</sup>

**17 July 2013.** Around 735 kilometres of the estimated 1,700-to-1,800-kilometre-long TAPI natural gas pipeline will cross Afghanistan, starting in Turghondi in Herat province and ending in Spin Boldak in Kandahar province. Afghanistan is also to receive three billion cubic metres of natural gas from TAPI over 30 years. The Taliban are yet to comment on TAPI, but Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s *Hezb-e Islami* (Islamic Party) reportedly voices its support for the regional project.<sup>507</sup>

**25 July 2013.** Herat provincial government officials, including Provincial Governor Sayyed Fazlullah Wahidi and Head of Department of Mines Abdul Jamil Elyasi, welcomed the signing of the TAPI contract between Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, emphasising its economic benefits including revenue generation, employment creation and provision of heating and lighting in areas through which the pipeline will pass.<sup>508</sup>

**1 August 2013.** TAPI will be constructed by end-2014 and will be operational by end-2017, according to Abdul Jalil Ahmad Jomrani, head of the petroleum department at Afghanistan’s Ministry of Mines. The bulk of the natural gas pipeline will traverse Herat and Kandahar provinces under ground.<sup>509</sup> Spokesperson of the Afghan Ministry of Interior Sediq Sediqi also said that security forces will employ all their facilities to provide security for the TAPI project.

**15 August 2013.** Afghan Minister of Finance Hazrat Omar Zakhilwal and Tajik Minister of Energy and Industry Sherali Gul discussed the construction of a natural gas pipeline from the Sheberghan deposit in Afghanistan to Tajikistan, which could constitute a branch of TAPI.<sup>510</sup> The deposit reportedly contains 67–77 billion cubic metres of natural gas.

**21 October 2013.** Afghan and Tajik Presidents Hamed Karzai and Emomali Rahmon discussed transit of gas and power to Tajikistan via Afghanistan, but did not declare if the gas component is part of the larger regional TAPI project.<sup>511</sup>

<sup>502</sup> For some historical detail from 1992 to 1999, see World Press, ‘Timeline of Competition between Unocal and Bidas for the Afghanistan Pipeline’, [http://www.worldpress.org/specials/pp/pipeline\\_timeline.htm](http://www.worldpress.org/specials/pp/pipeline_timeline.htm).

<sup>503</sup> ADB, ‘Historic Agreements Bring Long-Awaited TAPI Pipeline Closer to Reality’, 12 May 2012, <http://www.adb.org/news/historic-agreements-bring-long-awaited-tapi-pipeline-closer-reality>.

<sup>504</sup> BBC Monitoring Afghanistan, 11 July 2013.

<sup>505</sup> BBC Monitoring Afghanistan, 14 July 2013.

<sup>506</sup> *Tolo TV*, 06:00pm news, 17 July 2013 (authors’ media monitoring).

<sup>507</sup> BBC Monitoring Afghanistan, 19 July 2013.

<sup>508</sup> BBC Monitoring Afghanistan, 28 July 2013.

<sup>509</sup> BBC Monitoring Afghanistan, 3 August 2013.

<sup>510</sup> Central Asia Online, ‘Tajiks, Afghans Discuss’ [see FN 29].

<sup>511</sup> Office of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, ‘Joint Declaration’ [see FN 30].



## Appendix 4: A Chronology of Recent Reported and Alleged IMU Activity in Afghanistan and Counter-Activity by Afghan and International Security Forces

*This chronology is a summary and non-exhaustive.*

**26 October 2012.** An IMU-affiliated suicide bomber killed over 40 people and wounded around 50 others in a mosque in Faryab's provincial centre, Maimana.<sup>512</sup>

**30 November 2012.** The IMU planner of the 26 October 2012 suicide bombing in Maimana is killed in an operation in Almar district, Faryab province.<sup>513</sup>

**9 February 2013.** An "IMU leader" is arrested in Baghlan province.<sup>514</sup>

**8 April 2013.** "IMU facilitator Juma Khan" is killed in Takhar province.<sup>515</sup>

**12 April 2013.** A "senior Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan leader" is captured in an operation in Baghlan province.<sup>516</sup>

**22 April 2013.** A "senior Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan leader, Feda Mohammad" is killed in Balkh province.<sup>517</sup>

**April 2013.** Insurgents including IMU affiliates gathered 30–40 kilometres from the Afghan-Tajik border in Afghan Badakhshan, Afghan Badakhshan provincial governor tells Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).<sup>518</sup>

**April 2013.** Foreigners, including the IMU, tried to destabilise northern Afghanistan, particularly Baghlan, Kunduz, Faryab and Badakhshan provinces.<sup>519</sup>

**8 May 2013.** "Uzbek, Tajik, Turkmen, North Caucasian, and Afghan IMU fighters" tried to take control of a water basin near the Afghan-Turkmen frontier.<sup>520</sup>

**29 May 2013.** Both the IMU and the Taleban claimed responsibility for the attack on the provincial governor's compound in Panjsher. Two Uzbeks, one Kyrgyz and three Afghans are named among the six suicide bombers who were killed in the attack.<sup>521</sup>

**28 August 2013.** 3,000–4,000 Central Asian militants including Uzbeks, Tajiks, Turkmen and Kyrgyz operated within the IMU in North Waziristan along the Afghan-Pakistani border and in Afghanistan's northern region.<sup>522</sup>

<sup>512</sup> *TOLONews*, '90 Killed, Wounded in Suicide Attack on Faryab Mosque (video)', 26 October 2012, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/8101-90-killed-wounded-suicide-attack-faryab>.

<sup>513</sup> *TOLONews*, 'Planner of Faryab Suicide Attack Killed', 1 December 2012, <http://www.tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/8551-planner-of-faryab-suicide-attack-killed>.

<sup>514</sup> *TOLONews*, 'IMU Leader Captured in Baghlan Raid', 9 February 2013, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/9371-imu-leader-captured-in-baghlan-raid>.

<sup>515</sup> *TOLONews.com*, 'IMU Facilitator Killed in Takhar: Isaf', 8 April 2013, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/10072-imu-facilitator-killed-in-takhar-isaf>.

<sup>516</sup> *TOLONews*, 'Senior Taliban, IMU Leaders Arrested: Isaf', 13 April 2013, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/10123-senior-taliban-imu-leaders-arrested-isaf>.

<sup>517</sup> *TOLONews*, 'Senior IMU Leader Killed in Balkh Raid', 22 April 2013, <http://tolonews.com/en/afghanistan/10238-senior-imu-leader-killed-in-balkh-raid>.

<sup>518</sup> Saule Mukhametrakhimova, 'Central Asia at Risk From Post-2014 Afghanistan', Institute for War and Peace Reporting, 20 August 2013, <http://iwpr.net/report-news/central-asia-risk-post-2014-afghanistan>.

<sup>519</sup> *TOLONews*, 'Some Countries Support Insurgents in Afghanistan', accessed 22 September 2013, <http://tolonews.com/goftman/1213-some-countries-support-insurgents-in-afghanistan-?lang=pa&device=desktop>; *Ariana News*, 'Security forces being clearance operations in Badakhshan province', 10 April 2013, accessed 22 September 2013, <http://ariananews.af/regional/security-forces-begin-clearance-operations-in-badakhshan-province/>.

<sup>520</sup> Jacob Zenn, 'Central Asian Leaders Wary of Post-2014 IMU Threat', Jamestown Foundation, *Eurasia Daily Monitor* 10:128, accessed 21 September 2013, [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx\\_ttnews\[tt\\_news\]=41125&cHash=b1640e3d0f6fb6fbfa47efbb914772b5#Uj7mrT\\_VuSq](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/edm/single/?tx_ttnews[tt_news]=41125&cHash=b1640e3d0f6fb6fbfa47efbb914772b5#Uj7mrT_VuSq).

<sup>521</sup> Bill Roggio, 'IMU, Taleban launched joint suicide assault in Panjshir', *The Long War Journal*, 1 June 2013, accessed 22 September 2013, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/imu\\_taliban\\_launched.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2013/06/imu_taliban_launched.php).

<sup>522</sup> Hasan Khan, 'IMU militants flock to Pakistani-Afghan region', *Central Asia Online*, 28 August 2013, [http://centralasiaonline.com/en\\_GB/articles/caii/features/pakistan/main/2013/08/28/feature-01](http://centralasiaonline.com/en_GB/articles/caii/features/pakistan/main/2013/08/28/feature-01).

## Appendix 5: A Chronology of Recent Reported Security-Related Incidents in Badakhshan, Afghanistan

*This chronology is a summary and non-exhaustive.*

**August 2010.** Ten aid workers, including two Afghans and eight foreigners, affiliated to the NGO International Assistance Mission (IAM), are killed by the armed opposition along the Badakhshan-Nurestan border.<sup>523</sup>

**15 January 2013.** Provincial authorities in Afghanistan's Badakhshan (Governor Shah Waliullah Adib, Police Chief Imamuddin Motma'en and Provincial National Security Director Ali Ahmad Mobarez) said security is markedly deteriorating in Badakhshan. Armed opposition groups, particularly the Taliban, have established bases in at least seven of Badakhshan's twenty-seven districts: Warduj, Zibak, Yaftal, Raq, Jorm, Tagab and Yamgan. The Taliban were present in 90 per cent of Warduj district, using this strategically located position to destabilise the rest of the province, particularly by disrupting reconstruction work such as the construction of Baharak-Eshkashem road. Armed opposition groups, particularly the Taliban, used adolescents and youth to strengthen their footholds in the province. Meanwhile, Badakhshan youth council urged the province's youth not to co-operate with the Taliban – a move welcomed by provincial governor Adib.<sup>524</sup>

**6 March 2013.** Taliban shot dead 16 Afghan army soldiers in Warduj.<sup>525</sup>

**12 March 2013.** In Badakhshan province, 288 households (some two thousand people) left their village (Akhshira) for the district capital due to fear of the Taliban. Some local residents were deceived by the armed opposition, left for and were trained in

Pakistan, and came back to fight the Afghan government, according to Warduj District Governor Dawlat Mohammad Khawar.<sup>526</sup>

**22 March 2013.** Afghan government officials said they killed 43 Taliban members, including some commanders, in an air and land offensive on Warduj.<sup>527</sup>

**25 March 2013.** Taliban took ten Afghan army soldiers captive. Afghan government authorities said tribal elders are negotiating with the Taliban for the release of those in captivity.<sup>528</sup>

**1 June 2013.** Three senior Taliban commanders and 27 other members are killed in Warduj and Ishkashim districts, according to the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan's intelligence service. The NDS accused Pakistan's ISI of supporting the Taliban in Badakhshan in order to obstruct the implementation of the Silk Road project (construction of a road via Warduj from Afghanistan to China) and the economic development of the broader region.<sup>529</sup>

<sup>523</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Aghaz-e tahqiqat darbare-ye qatl-e 10 emdadgar dar Badakhshan' [Start of Probes into the Killing of 10 Aid Workers in Badakhshan], 7 August 2010, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2010/08/100807\\_l20\\_afghan\\_aidworkers\\_killed.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2010/08/100807_l20_afghan_aidworkers_killed.shtml).

<sup>524</sup> Qurban Ali Hamzi, 'Nofuz-e mokhalefan-e mosallah dar Badakhshan-e Afghanistan dar hal-e gostareh ast' [Influence of Armed Opposition Is Increasing in Afghanistan's Badakhshan], *BBC Persian*, 15 January 2013, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130114\\_zs\\_badakhshan\\_insecurity\\_expansion.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/01/130114_zs_badakhshan_insecurity_expansion.shtml).

<sup>525</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Taliban 16 sarbaz-e artesh-e Afghanistan ra tirbaran kardand' [Taliban Shot Dead 16 Afghan Army Soldiers], 6 March 2013, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130306\\_k04\\_national\\_army\\_badakhshan.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130306_k04_national_army_badakhshan.shtml).

<sup>526</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Dahha khanewada dar welayat-e Badakhshan-e Afghanistan az tars-e Taliban khanaha-ye khod ra tark kardand' [Tens of families in Afghanistan's Badakhshan province abandoned their homes due to fear from the Taliban], 12 March 2013, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130312\\_k05\\_badakhsha\\_taliban.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130312_k05_badakhsha_taliban.shtml).

<sup>527</sup> *BBC Persian*, '43 Taleb dar welayat-e Badakhshan-e Afghanistan koshta shodand' [43 Taliban Are Killed in Afghanistan's Badakhshan Province], 22 March 2013, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130322\\_k05\\_badakhshan\\_taliban.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130322_k05_badakhshan_taliban.shtml).

<sup>528</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Taliban 10 sarbaz-e artesh ra asir kardand' [Taliban Take 10 Army Soldiers Captive], 25 March 2013, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130325\\_k04\\_national\\_army\\_badakhshan.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/03/130325_k04_national_army_badakhshan.shtml).

<sup>529</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Amniat-e melli-ye Afghanistan: 31 Taleb dar Badakhshan koshta shodand' [Afghanistan's National Security: 31 Taliban Members Were Killed in Badakhshan], 1 June 2013, last accessed 24 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130601\\_k05\\_badakhshan\\_wardoj\\_nds.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/06/130601_k05_badakhshan_wardoj_nds.shtml). For a similar take on Badakhshan insecurity, see Neda Kargar, 'Posht-e parda-ye naaramiha-ye Badakhshan-e Afghanistan' [Behind-the-Scene of Unrests in Afghanistan's Badakhshan], 29 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130929\\_k02-badakhshan-taliban-attacks.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130929_k02-badakhshan-taliban-attacks.shtml).

**3 September 2013.** Faizabad Mayor Nazri Mohammad escaped an assassination attempt, which killed four of his bodyguards and injured another.<sup>530</sup>

**9 September 2013.** A NATO airstrike killed 13 Taliban members in Argu district of Badakhshan province.<sup>531</sup>

**28 September 2013.** A fierce clash occurred between the Taliban and Afghan security forces in Keran wa Menjan district of Badakhshan province. The Taliban's claim of capturing the entire district is rejected by the Afghan government authorities, who, instead, claimed that the local population has started rebelling against the invading Taliban.<sup>532</sup>

**29 September 2013.** The Afghan police forces conducted a "tactical retreatment" in the wake of attacks by the armed opposition on government security posts in Keran wa Menjan district. The Taliban claimed they are in full control of the district.<sup>533</sup>

**30 September 2013.** The Taliban have been driven out of Keran wa Menjan district, said the Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI). The claim is, however, rejected by the Taliban. At the same time, Badakhshani MPs accused the government of "incompetency".<sup>534</sup> On the same day, it is reported that transnational mafia operating in Afghanistan and

the wider region including Central Asia and religious extremists such as the IMU are aiding the Taliban in their offensive on Keran wa Menjan.<sup>535</sup> Furthermore, Badakhshan Provincial Governor Shah Waliullah Adib and Provincial Police Chief Gen. Imamuddin Motma'en blamed the ISI, the Pakistani intelligence service, of supporting the Taliban in Badakhshan.<sup>536</sup>

**27 October 2013.** "Injustices" committed by provincial government authorities and "rape of a woman" by a person affiliated to Asadullah Hakimi, the district police chief in Warduj, prompted that woman's husband along with other people frustrated with the Afghan government to go "up the mountain" and take up arms to fight the government, according to Fawzai Kufi, a parliamentarian from Badakhshan. Kufi's explanation is also supported by another Afghan expert: "those who are currently fighting the government are frustrated with and have run away from oppression by a government-affiliated commander. . ." Warduj District Police Chief Hakimi, however, denied the charges as "an absolute conspiracy", claiming that he was himself injured fighting the Taliban in Badakhshan who, he went on to say, are supported by the Pakistani ISI and the Taliban leadership based there.<sup>537</sup>

<sup>530</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Shahrdar-e Faizabad az yak sueqasd jan ba dar bord' [Faizabad Mayor Escapes an Attempt on His Life], 3 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130903\\_k04\\_badakhshan\\_blast.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130903_k04_badakhshan_blast.shtml).

<sup>531</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Talafat-e sangin-e Taliban dar amaliyat-e NATO dar shamalsharq-e Afghanistan' [Taliban's Heavy Casualties in NATO Operation in North-Eastern Afghanistan], 9 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130906\\_k03\\_nato\\_operation\\_in\\_badakhshan.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130906_k03_nato_operation_in_badakhshan.shtml).

<sup>532</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Dargiri-ye shadid bain-e Taliban wa niruha-ye amniati dar Badakhshan-e Afghanistan' [Fierce Skirmish between the Taliban and Security Forces in Afghanistan's Badakhshan], 28 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130928\\_k02-badakhshan-taliban.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130928_k02-badakhshan-taliban.shtml).

<sup>533</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Polis-e Afghanistan az wuloswali-ye Keran wa Munjan-e Badakhshan "aqabneshini-ye taktiki" kard' [Afghanistan's Police Makes a 'Tactical Retreatment' from Badakhshan's Keran wa Munjan District], 29 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130928\\_k03\\_afghan\\_badakhshan\\_district.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130928_k03_afghan_badakhshan_district.shtml).

<sup>534</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Maqamha-ye amniati-ye Afghan: Taliban az Keran wa Munjan birun randa shodand' [Afghan Security Officials: Taliban Were Driven out of Keran wa Munjan], 30 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130930\\_k02-badakhshan-keran-o-menjan.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130930_k02-badakhshan-keran-o-menjan.shtml).

<sup>535</sup> *8am*, 'Na-aramihaye Badakhshan' [Badakhshan's Unrests], 8 Mizan 1392 [30 September 2013], <http://8am.af/1392/07/08/badakhshan-instability-taliban/>.

<sup>536</sup> Saihun, 'Wali-ye Badakhshan: ISI baraye Taliban-e Badakhshan khana wa emkanat faraham karda ast' [Badakhshan's Governor: ISI Has Provided the Badakhshan Taliban with House and Facilities], *8am*, 8 Mizan 1392 [30 September 2013], <http://8am.af/1392/07/08/badakhshan-taliban-security-isi/>.

<sup>537</sup> Bashir Paiman, 'Mo'amma-ye hozur-e Taliban dar Badakhshan-e Afghanistan' [The Riddle of the Taliban's Presence in the Afghan Badakhshan], *BBC Persian*, 27 October 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/10/131027\\_k02-badakhshan-taliban.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/10/131027_k02-badakhshan-taliban.shtml).

## Appendix 6: A Chronology of Recent Reported Security-Related Incidents in Faryab, Afghanistan

*This chronology is a summary and non-exhaustive.*

**5 November 2010.** A 16-year-old Afghan boy blew himself up, killing at least ten people and injuring 30 others in front of a restaurant, in which Rahmatullah, provincial council head, was eating at the time of the explosion.<sup>538</sup>

**4 April 2011.** A man clothed in Afghan border police uniform shot dead two NATO soldiers and ran away in Faryab.<sup>539</sup>

**7 June 2011.** Around 12,000 people were displaced from around 200 villages in Qaisar district, Faryab province due to violence caused by increased clashes between government troops and the Taliban and the activity of illegal armed groups, according to the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS).<sup>540</sup>

**4 April 2012.** A suicide attack in Maimana, the provincial capital of Faryab, killed several people, including four foreigners, one Afghan translator/interpreter, two police officers and four civilians (two women and two children), according to Abdul Khaleq Aqsai, Faryab provincial police chief.<sup>541</sup> The attack occurred near the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) field office when a number of NATO soldiers got out of their vehicles and started talking to the local people.

**14 April 2012.** Violent demonstrations which started three days earlier disrupted normal life in Maimana, following the killing of Mowlawi Qiamuddin, a local religious leader, on 10 April 2012, whom NATO and

Afghan security forces suspect of having been behind the 4 April 2012 suicide attack.<sup>542</sup>

**14 May 2012.** An explosion in a shop killed at least seven people, including a provincial council member, and injured eight others in Ghurmach district of Faryab province, according to the Afghan Ministry of Interior.<sup>543</sup>

**9 June 2012.** A vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Kariz Qala area of Maimana, killing at least eight civilians, including three women, and injuring seven others, according to Provincial Police Chief Aqsai, who blamed the armed opposition.<sup>544</sup>

**23 June 2012.** Taliban shot dead five members of a family (three women and two men) for refusing to provide them with food and accommodation in Almar district of Faryab province, according to northern Afghan police authorities.<sup>545</sup> It is reported that the Taliban do not have a fixed base and ask villagers to provide them with boarding and lodging.

**26 October 2012.** A suicide bomber killed over 40 people and injured over 50 others during a religious ceremony marking *Eid-e Qurban* (also known as *Eid al-Adha*) in a mosque in downtown Maimana, the provincial capital of Faryab. A local police spokesperson said that the explosion took place "when our compatriots were congratulating one another on the occasion of *eid*".<sup>546</sup> In a gesture of

<sup>542</sup> Kaneshka Turkestani, 'Naaramiha-ye Maimana; aya amniat-e shamal-e Afghanistan shekananda ast' [Maimana Unrests; Is Security in Northern Afghanistan Fragile], *BBC Persian*, 14 April

2013 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120414\\_I09\\_north\\_af\\_unrest\\_demonstration.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120414_I09_north_af_unrest_demonstration.shtml).

<sup>543</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Enfejar dar shamal-e Afghanistan haft qair-e nezami ra kosht' [Explosion Kills Seven Civilians in Northern Afghanistan], 14 May 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/05/120514\\_k01\\_faryab\\_explosion.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/05/120514_k01_faryab_explosion.shtml).

<sup>544</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Enfejar-e kenarjaddahi dar shamal-e Afghanistan hasht qair-e nezami ra kosht' [Roadside Explosion in Northern Afghanistan Kills Eight Civilians], 9 June 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/07/120719\\_k02-faryab-civilians-killed.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/07/120719_k02-faryab-civilians-killed.shtml).

<sup>545</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Qatl-e a'za-ye yak khanewada ba dalil-e nadadan-e qaza ba Taliban' [Killing of Members of a Family Due to Not Giving Food to the Taliban], 23 June 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/06/120623\\_k02-faryab-taliban-killed-family-members.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/06/120623_k02-faryab-taliban-killed-family-members.shtml).

<sup>546</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Hamla-ye entehari ba marasem-e eid-e qurban dar Afghanistan dahha koshta wa zakhmi dad' [Suicide Attack on the *Eid-e Qurban* Ceremony Left Tens of People Dead and Injured in Afghanistan], 26 October 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/10/121026\\_I03\\_afghanistan\\_explosion\\_.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/10/121026_I03_afghanistan_explosion_.shtml).

<sup>538</sup> *BBC Persian*, 'Hamla-ye entehari-ye nowjawan-e Afghan chandin koshta wa zakhma bar jai gozashta ast' [Suicide Attack by an Afghan Youngster Has Left Several Dead and Injured], 5 November 2010, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2010/11/101105\\_I03\\_faryab\\_suicide.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2010/11/101105_I03_faryab_suicide.shtml).

<sup>539</sup> *BBC Persian*, '"Polis-e marzi-ye" Afghan du sarbaz-e NATO [ra] az pa dar award' [Afghan "Border Police Officer" Kills Two NATO Soldiers], 4 April 2011, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/04/110404\\_k01\\_nato\\_faryab\\_attacked.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/04/110404_k01_nato_faryab_attacked.shtml).

<sup>540</sup> *BBC Persian*, '"Dawazda hazar nafar dar Faryab az khanahayeshan bija shoda and"' ["Twelve Thousand People Have Been Displaced from Their Homes in Faryab"], 7 June 2011 [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/06/110607\\_k01\\_faryab\\_idps.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2011/06/110607_k01_faryab_idps.shtml).

<sup>541</sup> *BBC Persian*, '"Yazda koshta" dar hamla-ye entehari dar shamal-e Afghanistan' ["Eleven Killed" in a Suicide Attack in Northern Afghanistan], 4 April 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120404\\_k01\\_faryab\\_suicide\\_attack.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/04/120404_k01_faryab_suicide_attack.shtml).



sympathy, President Karzai travelled to the province to meet and support the survivors.<sup>547</sup> The Afghan Ministry of Interior blamed the Taliban for the attack – a claim denied by the Taliban.<sup>548</sup>

**5 February 2013.** An explosion in a restaurant killed three civilians and injured nine others in Khaja Sabzpush district of Faryab province, according to provincial security officials.<sup>549</sup>

**27 April 2013.** 63 Taliban members, including the Taliban shadow district governor in Ghaisar and some of their commanders, are killed in operations by the Afghan security forces in Ghaisar and Almar districts of Faryab province, said Faryab police spokesman Jawid Bidar.<sup>550</sup> The Faryab police report of the death of six officers in the operations is rejected by Naqibullah Faiq, a Faryabi parliamentarian, who claimed that the skirmishes resulted in the deaths of “tens of Afghan security forces”.<sup>551</sup> Tens of families are displaced.

**17 September 2013.** The Taliban attacked a village in Ghaisar district, killing at least four people, burning houses and displacing some four hundred families, according to Faryab provincial government authorities and some local residents.<sup>552</sup> The Taliban rejected the claim, attributing it to “personal enmities of local commanders affiliated to the government”.<sup>553</sup>

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<sup>547</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘Didar-e Karzai ba bazmandagan-e qurbanian-e hadesa-ye eid-e qurban dar Faryab’ [Karzai’s Visit to the Survivors of the Victims of the *Eid-e Qurban* in Faryab], 29 October 2012, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/10/121028\\_zs\\_karzai\\_faryab\\_visit.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2012/10/121028_zs_karzai_faryab_visit.shtml).

<sup>548</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘Didar-e Karzai’, [see FN 77].

<sup>549</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘Enfejar dar resturani dar shamal-e Afghanistan se qair-e nezami ra kosht’ [Explosion Kills Three Civilians in a Restaurant in Northern Afghanistan], 5 February 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/02/130205\\_k02-faryab-blast.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/02/130205_k02-faryab-blast.shtml).

<sup>550</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘“Na-arami dar Faryab talafat-e sangini baja gozashta ast”’ [“Unrest in Faryab Has Led to Heavy Casualties”], 27 April 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/04/130427\\_k02-faryab-insecurity.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/04/130427_k02-faryab-insecurity.shtml).

<sup>551</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘“Naarami dar Faryab”’, [see FN 80].

<sup>552</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘“Taliban dahha khana ra dar shamal-e Afghanistan atesh zadand”’ [“Taliban Set Fire to Tens of Houses in Northern Afghanistan”], 17 September 2013, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130917\\_l09\\_north\\_afghanistan\\_faryab\\_taliban\\_attack.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/persian/afghanistan/2013/09/130917_l09_north_afghanistan_faryab_taliban_attack.shtml).

<sup>553</sup> *BBC Persian*, ‘“Taliban dahha khana”’, [see FN 82].

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