



Impact of the Afghan Conflict on the Geopolitical Situation in Central Asia at the End of the 20th Century

Abdulkarim Ergashevich Pardabaev

Head of the Department for Youth Affairs, Spirituality and Education of the Jizzakh State Pedagogical Institute
named after A. Kadiri, Uzbekistan

<http://dx.doi.org/10.18415/ijmmu.v9i2.3523>

Abstract

The fall of the pro-Soviet regime of Najibullah led to a confrontation between armed groups and the division of the country into spheres of influence. Obviously, the uncontrolled conflict on the territory of Afghanistan aroused concern in the international community and directly threatened the security of neighboring states that have a common border with the warring Afghanistan (Pakistan, Iran, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan). Considering the geopolitical situation that has developed in the Central Asian region and is directly related to ensuring the security of the borders of the sovereign states of Central Asia, political scientists do not have a common opinion about the role of Russia in this geopolitical process.

Keywords: *Afghanistan; Confrontation; USSR; USA; Central Asia; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan; Mujahideen*

Introduction

The conflict in Afghanistan has not been resolved for decades, despite the active participation of the international community in its settlement. It seems relevant to analyze primarily the international aspects of its settlement.

The collapse of the USSR led to the formation in Central Asia of a group of young independent states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The young states that have appeared on the political map of the world have changed the geopolitical picture not only within the region, but also beyond its borders. The Central Asian region is located in close proximity to Afghanistan, where hostilities have not ceased for many years.

Main part

Some American political scientists (Leon Aron, Rajan Menon, Mikael Marnelbaum) wrote about the change in the policy of the new Russia in relation to the former Soviet republics in the south, the Caucasus and Central Asia [1]

In their opinion, it was in Russia's interests to preserve the low-intensity conflict in Afghanistan in order to prevent the victory of forces hostile to the Russian Federation.

Harvard scientist Mark Kramer, does not agree with this point of view, believing that the persistence of the conflict situation in Afghanistan threatens the security of Russia itself, and artificially maintaining the state of conflict in Afghanistan, especially if the country has a huge number of external and internal problems after the collapse of the USSR, does not make no sense [2].

According to the Russian orientalist E. Ya. Satanovsky, countries that have a common border with Afghanistan and are concerned about the unsettledness of the armed conflict in the country should act more actively to resolve the conflict, and not wait for Russia to take action [3].

According to R.U. Tulyaganova, who for a long time studied the security problems of Central Asia in the light of the Afghan conflict, in order to maintain a new system of regional security, the independent states of Central Asia needed to maintain the systemic integrity of the geopolitical space they occupied, while intensive contacts with the outside world could objectively lead to the disintegration of their political and social systems [4].

The American researcher Muriel Atkin, who studied the role of Islam and nationalism in the political conflict in Afghanistan, came to the conclusion that the seizure of Kabul by the Mujahideen stimulated the activities of the Islamic opposition in Tajikistan, whose leaders had previously had contacts with Afghan and Pakistani fundamentalists [5]. Representatives of Tajik Islamic fundamentalists migrated to Afghanistan in 1992-1993, finding their political allies in the person of the leadership of the most influential parties in the regions adjacent to the Tajik border - the Islamic Society of Afghanistan (IOA) and the Islamic Party of Afghanistan (IPA), which consisted of a large number ethnic Tajiks.

After the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan in 1989, the collapse of the USSR and the subsequent independence of Tajikistan in 1991, some of the Islamic fundamentalists returned from Afghanistan to form the Islamic Renaissance Party of Tajikistan (IRPT), which opposed the official government of Tajikistan. In 1992, a violent civil war broke out in Dushanbe between the IRPT and forces loyal to the government, which coincided chronologically with the fall of the communist regime in Kabul in 1992.

Rabbani, who came to power in Afghanistan, and his Minister of Defense Massoud enabled the IRPT in Tajikistan to carry out armed attacks on the official government from bases in northern Afghanistan and supplied them with weapons and training. Fleeing from the civil war, more than one hundred thousand civilian refugees also fled from Tajikistan to Afghanistan. The flow of migrants also went to Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia [6].

In 1996, the Taliban, with the support of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, captured Kabul. The Rabbani government, which fled the capital, joined Uzbek and Hazara opposition groups to form the Northern Alliance, in the hope of regaining lost ground and regaining power. At the same time, Russia and Iran, who considered the coming to power of the Taliban as a threat to their security, supported this coalition, which was dominated by Tajiks. However, over time, it became clear that such support was futile: as the Taliban continued to seize more and more territories, Rabbani's forces, which the Taliban were confidently driving out of Afghanistan, needed bases from which they could attack Afghanistan and receive aid, food and weapons, for which the countries supporting the Northern Alliance were not ready [7].

Concerned about the armed confrontation in Tajikistan, initiated by Afghan Islamists, then-presidents of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, informed the Tajik government of their intention to withdraw troops from areas adjacent to the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan if the Tajik conflict does not find a political solution. This decision of the heads of state was explained by the entry of Kazakh and Uzbek troops into the CIS forces guarding the Tajik-Afghan border.

Realizing the inadmissibility of such a development of events and wishing to end the civil war, the national leader of Tajikistan, Emomali Rahmon, having negotiated with the united Tajik opposition, in 1997 signed a document on the peaceful settlement of the situation in Tajikistan.

The situation in Tajikistan testifies to the presence of a direct threat of destabilization of the situation not only in Tajikistan, but also in other countries of Central Asia. The Uzbek government saw a direct link between the civil war in Tajikistan in 1992-1997. and the war in Afghanistan and feared a similar development of events on its territory. The leadership of Uzbekistan did not believe in the peacefulness of the Taliban who had come to power in Afghanistan and feared that the official recognition of the Taliban regime would provoke a surge in the activity of Uzbek Islamists, which by that time had been somewhat weakened [8].

The presence of such a hotbed of tension in the immediate vicinity of the Uzbek and Russian ones threatened to turn these borders into a hotbed of constant tension. Uzbekistan has been an active supporter of the peace process and has put forward a number of international initiatives aimed at a peaceful resolution of the Afghan crisis. At the 48th session of the UN in 1993, Uzbek President Islam Karimov emphasized the dangerous situation in Afghanistan and proposed the establishment of a permanent conference on regional security in Central Asia under the auspices of the UN.

Results and Discussions

In 1998, Tashkent proposed to establish the so-called "6 + 2" format of diplomatic negotiations with the participation of six neighboring countries of Afghanistan and two powers - the United States and Russia. This forum lasted until 2001, however, unfortunately, the events of September 11 thwarted all efforts.

According to the Russian scientist VN Spolnikov, by the end of the twentieth century, due to the coincidence of interests of the Central Asian countries in maintaining isolation from each other, Russia, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan managed to recreate at a new qualitative level the security system that existed in the Soviet period on the border with Afghanistan [9].

Along with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, which has a long border with Afghanistan, was very interested in the settlement of the inter-Afghan conflict. The Turkmen leadership managed to establish fairly even relations with all the conflicting parties largely due to the fact that it never once supported or condemned any of them.

This position is explained by the desire of Turkmenistan to export gas to Pakistan within the framework of economic agreements concluded with this country. The Argentine company Bridas tried to implement the idea of supplying Turkmen gas to Pakistan through the territory of Afghanistan [10]. In 1994, the idea of building a transport corridor between Central Asia and Pakistan through Afghanistan was close to implementation, all the necessary intergovernmental agreements were signed.

However, when the first convoy with cargoes to Turkmenistan left Pakistan along the planned trade route, it was completely plundered by the Mujahideen on the territory of Afghanistan. Pakistan considered it unproductive to establish control on each of the warring factions and decided to create a new force to ensure the security of the transport corridor, and possibly control the entire Afghanistan, bringing the Taliban to power.

The geopolitical and economic interests of Pakistan and the United States in the construction of oil pipelines through Afghan territory helped strengthen the Taliban's power without fear of their extremely reactionary religious rhetoric. However, the Taliban pursued their interests and continued "playing by their own rules," as a result of which neither the pipeline issue nor the intra-Afghan reconciliation was achieved due to the emergence of the bin Laden factor and the intensification of tension in the region for many years to come.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not have a common border with Afghanistan. Of course, relations with this country influenced them within the framework of regional geopolitics. According to A.A. Knyazev, Kazakhstan does not have a common border with Afghanistan and, therefore, is less vulnerable than some other Central Asian states to threats and security challenges emanating from Afghanistan. This, coupled with the lack of ethnic closeness between people in Kazakhstan and Afghanistan, allowed a more calm and less biased approach to the events in Afghanistan [11].

Kazakhstan has always been a major supporter of the 1992 Collective Security Treaty (CST) and can be said to rely on the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) for security issues. However, he strove for deeper cooperation with both the United States and NATO as part of his multi-vector foreign policy.

The Republic of Kyrgyzstan does not have a common border and ethnic community with Afghanistan, but Afghan drug trafficking passed through the territory of Kyrgyzstan, which significantly increased after the Taliban came to power. In 1993 in the Kyrgyz Republic law enforcement officers confiscated 153 kg of Afghan raw opium, then in 1997 this figure increased 4.5 times. In addition to opium, increasing flows of heroin from Afghanistan were transported through Kyrgyzstan: for example, in 1995 the first 305 years of heroin were seized in Kyrgyzstan, in 1996 the volume of seized heroin increased by 3.4 times, in 1997 by 13 times compared to 1995, and in 1998 the volume of seized heroin increased 80 times in comparison with 1995 [12].

The Afghan drug mafia recruited drug couriers from among the inhabitants of Central Asia, taking advantage of the economic difficulties in these countries. The implementation of this plan led to the creation of real prerequisites for the formation of criminal communities in the region, for the establishment of a drug supply system, the involvement of a large number of people in the drug business interested in destabilizing the situation and continuing armed conflicts. The ground was prepared for the heroin expansion from Afghanistan [13].

Due to socio-economic problems, the local population, including women and adolescents, was increasingly drawn into the drug business, as couriers and drug users.

The tendency can be illustrated by the following example: in 1992, 91 people were registered with a diagnosis of drug addiction in the Osh Narcological Dispensary, then in 1998 - 7 times more. The majority of drug users at the end of the 1990s were unemployed and not studying young people aged 13-22 [14].

The drug expansion from Afghanistan can be overcome only by combining the efforts of the Central Asian states. In connection with the drug problem, it was Kyrgyzstan that was the first in the region to join the UN Conventions against Drugs in 1992, and developed a comprehensive program to combat drug addiction. An independent department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs for combating drug trafficking was created in the country.

Conclusion

The coming to power of the Taliban in 1998 and the crushing defeat of the anti-Taliban alliance provoked a restrained reaction from the leaders of the Central Asian countries. Political scientists believe that the main reaction to this event was the Uzbek-Russian negotiations, which took place in Tashkent in the summer of 1998 with the participation of the Minister of Defense of Uzbekistan Kh.Tursunov, First Deputy Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, Chief of the General Staff A. Kvashnin, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan A. Kamilov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation B. Pastukhov. During the negotiations, the parties confirmed the right to take "the necessary measures to strengthen their external borders in accordance with the Collective Security Treaty of May 15, 1992" [15].

References

1. Michael Mamdelbaum (edit). *The New Russian Foreign Policy*. The Council on Foreign Relations, N.Y., 1998, p. 54
2. Kramer, Mark, *The collapse of the Soviet Union*. Boulder, CO: Westview Press 2000, p. 84.
3. Satanovsky E.Ya. *Globalization of terrorism and its consequences*. *International life*, 2001, No.9-10, p. 17
4. Tulyaganova R.U. *Afghan conflict and its consequences in the context of the formation of a new security system in Central Asia* diss. to apply for an account. degree of Doctor of Political Science Tashkent, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2006, p.92
5. Atkin Muriel. *Tajikistan: reform, reaction and civil war*. // *New states, new politics: Building the post-Soviet Nations* / ed. By Bremmer J., Taras R. - Cambridge, 1997, - p. 623
6. Fazel Ahmad *Political process in modern Afghanistan: diss. for the degree of cann. Philosophical Sciences M.*, Institute of Youth, 1997, p. 64
7. Belokrinitsky V.Ya., Sikoev R.R., *The Taliban Movement and the Prospects of Afghanistan and Pakistan* Moscow, IV RAS, 2014, p. 44
8. Mirzoev S.T. *The Afghan crisis and its impact on the regional security of Central Asia: geopolitical aspect: author. diss. to apply for an account. doctorate polit.* Dushanbe, 2019, p. 71
9. Spolnikov In N. *Afghanistan. Islamic opposition: origins and goals*. M., 1990, p. 81
10. Shenin S.Yu. B. *Clinton's administration and the formation of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (1993-1996)* // *Bulletin of the Saratov University. New episode. Series History. International relationships*. 2012. T.12 issue 4 p.78
11. Knyazev A.A. *The Afghan crisis and the security of Central Asia (XIX - early XXI centuries)*. - Dushanbe: Donish, 200, p. 57
12. Zelichenko AL *History of Kyrgyzstan's integration into the international process of counteracting Afghan drug expansion: 1991-2002: diss. to apply for an account. degree of Cand. historical sciences* Bishkek, 2003, p. 66
13. Zelichenko A. L. *History of Kyrgyzstan's integration into the international process of counteracting Afghan drug expansion: 1991-2002: diss. to apply for an account. degree of Cand. historical Sciences* Bishkek, 2003, p. 69
14. Zelichenko AL *History of Kyrgyzstan's integration into the international process of counteracting Afghan drug expansion: 1991-2002: diss. to apply for an account. degree of Cand. historical Sciences* Bishkek, 2003, p. 68
15. Tulyaganova R.U. *The Afghan conflict and its consequences in the context of the formation of a new security system in Central Asia*. Diss. to apply for an account. doctorate in political science. Tashkent, MFA, 2006, p. 148

Copyrights

Copyright for this article is retained by the author(s), with first publication rights granted to the journal.

This is an open-access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).