

CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN: THE SECURITY COMPLEX DILEMMA

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ABSTRACT

The author uses the latest theoretical and conceptual approaches to world politics and international security to analyze the Afghan problem.

He suggests that certain commonly accepted ideas about the strategic situation

in Afghanistan should be reviewed to arrive at more exact interpretations of the “traditional” and “non-traditional” threats and other concepts. He also formulates a concept of systemic securitization for Afghanistan’s future.

KEYWORDS: *Afghanistan, traditional and non-traditional threats, terrorism, the Taliban, friction, NATO, ISAF, the regional security complex.*

Introduction

The pullout of the international coalition forces from Afghanistan expected late in 2014 dominates the international agenda. Its future, as well as the future of Central Asia and the world as a whole, has moved to the fore in uncompromising political discussions. The range of assessments and expectations, stretching from alarmist (which predominate) to reassuring, is fairly wide.

The military operation in Afghanistan has been going on for twelve years now; according to certain sources, it has cost the United States about \$1 trillion. The pullout, which has been going on for over two years now (as well as the introduction of ISAF into the country, for that matter), has caused a great number of fundamental geopolitical and military problems, as well as securitization and international legal problems, most of which remain pending in the absence of theoretical and conceptual approaches to their solution.

Here I have posed myself the task of reexamining some of the approaches to the Afghan issue from the point of view of the theory of security and contemporary critical geopolitics.

Security Divided and Undivided

The principle of undivided security is one of the most prominent points in international rhetoric with respect to the common nature of contemporary threats (often described as non-traditional).

This calls for clarification. Terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking, regional conflicts, climate change, etc. are normally classified as non-traditional threats. To correctly assess the nature of contemporary threats, we should bear in mind that the commonly accepted classification into “traditional” and “non-traditional” is fairly conventional and not that important.

Interstate confrontation, conflicts, and wars are described as traditional threats; “non-traditional threats” are the product of the post-Cold War period and the end of the global opposition between the two world superpowers. Today, the term is applied to the threats seen as common for all or most states and requiring concerted efforts to oppose.

These threats were not born yesterday or the day before yesterday or even the day after the Cold War ended: they have been present in the world at all times. Terrorists, extremists, drug dealers, and other criminal elements active during the global confrontation of the two superpowers knew how to use interstate conflicts in their interests; in fact, they were the product of these conflicting interests. This means that the “new” threats to international security are traditional. What is more important is the fact that certain states refuse to close ranks in the face of non-traditional threats: the situation in Afghanistan and around it is the best example.

Not infrequently, the non-traditional nature of terrorism is explained by the asymmetric nature of its threat: in the absence of adequate might, the terrorists who challenge a state never risk direct confrontation with its armed forces.

The asymmetry of the terrorist threat makes it very different from the relatively “symmetric” confrontation of states. This asymmetry is often used to explain why a more or less prompt victory over terrorists is impossible, of which Afghanistan is one of the most glaring examples. Strange as it may seem, a stronger side (a state and its military might) cannot subdue a much weaker side (terrorists).

I have in mind not so much the threats created by the confrontation of states, but the threats created by terror. On the other hand, one cannot but wonder why we say nothing about the threats to terrorism on the part of individual states or the international community as a whole?

I think that the “non-traditional” concept should not only describe the threats to regional and international security, but also the means and methods of struggle against them. Unprecedented cooperation at the global level of states and international organizations in the face of the global nature of the old threats could have become a non-traditional method of antiterrorist struggle. From this point of view, the principle of undivided security remains so far a nicely worded slogan that has nothing in common with international reality. The international security architecture is divided into continental, transcontinental, regional, and national sectors, all of them being highly contradictory

What is a security complex? It is a group of states with security interests intertwined to the extent that their national security cannot be separately considered.¹ This means that Central Asia and Afghanistan can be treated as a single security complex; this, however, calls for a more systemic approach.

¹ See: B. Buzan, *People, States and Fear. An Agenda for International Security Studies in the Post-Cold War Era*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, 1991, p. 190.

At all times, Afghanistan and Central Asia have been and remain connected by numerous threads. Divided by state borders, however, they became a territory of the Great Game with Afghanistan serving a buffer zone. The United States spared no effort to isolate it from the Soviet Union. Wishing to pull the country to its side, Moscow waged the so-called Afghan War for ten years (from 1979 to 1989). This explains why Afghanistan remained part of the South Asian security complex with an obvious bias toward Iran and Pakistan.

At no time was it a completely independent and fully-fledged state; this means that it never played an important role either in the South Asian, or in the Central Asian security complex. These are not idle deliberations, but an Ariadne's thread of sorts that will bring us to a correct understanding of reality and probably help us arrive at the most exact strategic assessments and new approaches to the Afghan problem.

More likely than not, Afghanistan will sink back into the prewar *modus vivendi* once the counterterrorist coalition moves its troops out of the country in December 2014. This means that the country will sink back into a perpetual internecine struggle, which keeps and will continue to keep it away from Central Asia and the rest of the world.

This does not mean that the Taliban will recapture power and that the 12-year-long efforts of the international coalition will be wasted. It should be said that from the very beginning, the Taliban did not fit the country's social context. The Afghans will resume their traditional way of life and their mostly archaic laws. The main problem is what will happen? Indeed, numerous international implications will appear that will keep the country away from neighboring regions and will interfere with the implementation of large-scale projects there.

According to well-known academic Amin Saikal, Afghanistan "has become a narco-state presided over by a corrupt and in many ways dysfunctional government...As the situation stands, once the U.S. and its allies terminate their combat operations and withdrawal of most of their soldiers the country remains at serious risk of being plunged once again into general internal strife."²

It is commonly believed that the duration and the contradictory nature of the Afghan conflict are predetermined by external interference, mostly by neighboring countries that use the ethnic and confessional groups inside the country to pursue their own interests. This is partly true, however, the problems are rooted in Afghanistan's inner structure, which for a long time survived amid internal strife and tribal contradictions. In fact, lack of internal cohesion and the absence of a fully-fledged state allowed neighbors and the great powers to wage a proxy war in its territory.

Afghanistan-2014: Strategic Friction³

No matter what is going on there and what will happen next, it cannot be said that the international community has reached an unprecedented level of "non-traditional" cooperation in its struggle against the "non-traditional" international security threats. We cannot say, so far, that a fully-fledged independent state has appeared in Afghanistan, even though the first more or less clear signs of global cooperation among states have become apparent in the course of the counterterrorist operation. In Afghanistan, NATO relied on the forces of its own members and also on the armed forces of coun-

² A. Saikal, "Afghanistan's Attitudes towards the Region," in: *The Regional Dimensions to Security. Other Sides of Afghanistan*, ed. by A. Snetkov, PALGRAVE MACMILLAN, St. Aris, 2013, p. 50.

³ For more details, see: F. Tolipov, "Strategic Friction in Afghanistan and Geopolitical Reversal in Central Asia," *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, No. 2 (56), 2009.

tries outside the Alliance (over forty countries in all). This means that ISAF can be described as a unique coalition of countries.

As the date of pullout draws closer, the international coalition has gradually been losing its original vigor; the public in the NATO member states has been growing more and more irritated by the continued presence of their military contingents in Afghanistan. NATO, in turn, has been talking about “fatigue” as the reason behind the planned withdrawal.

This is another manifestation of “non-traditional” nature (or, better, aberration) of military-political and strategic thinking. In other words, a psychological state (fatigue) predetermined the strategic decision.

Let us sum up some of military and strategic results of the operation launched in October 2001 as the War on Terror, rather than the war against al-Qa‘eda or Osama bin Laden. Has this aim been achieved? Who won the war and who lost it?

Carl von Clausewitz, a classic of the art of warfare, wrote in his fundamental work *On War* that the nature of war should be identified at the earliest stages. In the first place, he wrote, we should “impose our will on the enemy”; “it follows, then, that to overcome the enemy, or disarm him—call it what you will—must always be the aim of warfare.”⁴

And further: “If you want to overcome your enemy you must match your effort against his power of resistance, which can be expressed as the product of two inseparable factors, viz. the total means at his disposal and the strength of his will. The extent of the means at his disposal is a matter—though not exclusively—of figures, and should be measurable. But the strength of his will is much less easy to determine and can only be gauged approximately by the strength of the motive animating it.”⁵

A correct assessment of the situation calls for a clear idea about the war, its tasks, and outcome. The aim of the war/operation waged in Afghanistan has not (yet) been attained: the coalition’s will has not been imposed on the enemy. The Taliban was not disarmed and was not deprived of its opportunity to fight. The war is drawing to an end, but the moral incentives and will power of the fighting sides have not been quenched or even partly suppressed. This means that the strategy used in Afghanistan should be correctly assessed and, if necessary, corrected.

What is said about the nature and the meaning of the operation (or war) in Afghanistan is gradually changing: today, less is said about counter-terrorism and increasingly more about counter-insurgency. This suggests a simple question: Are there terrorists in Afghanistan? Al-Qa‘eda rather than the Taliban, which when in power in Afghanistan sheltered Osama bin Laden and refused to extradite him, is described as a terrorist organization.

The new rhetoric is justified by the absence of an internationally accepted definition of terrorism, which is not completely true for two reasons.

- First, the NATO countries, the United States in particular, have their own definitions of terrorism. Their invasion of Afghanistan rested on their domestic laws related to military operations outside state borders, in this case retaliation for 9/11.
- Second, there are several international conventions related to the struggle against terror, some of them applicable in Afghanistan.

It should be said that the lessons of the Afghan campaign offer a chance to start talking about a universal convention on antiterrorist struggle that can provide an acceptable definition of terrorism.

⁴ C. von Clausewitz, *On War*, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 31.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

I am convinced that terrorism is the most dangerous and cruelest type of premeditated and ideologically motivated violence accompanied by spreading fear among the people with the desire to force state power and governance bodies, international organizations, and physical and legal persons to act or refrain from action to gain political, ideological, or personal criminal aims.⁶

The anti-rebel rhetoric can probably be explained by the desire to talk members of the Taliban into returning to peaceful life (no one, however, should talk to terrorists). Washington and the Karzai government, which for many years (from the moment it came to power) had been trying to start a dialog with the Taliban, failed for the simple reason that the initiative in this and similar cases should belong to the weaker side facing imminent defeat, rather than the stronger one.

Those who say that there is no military solution to the Afghan problem and that the country needs a coalition government of all major fighting groups refer to the foreign military presence in Afghanistan and the Taliban's irreconcilable position. These people are wrong: the civil war between the Northern Alliance and the Taliban, which came to power in Afghanistan, began long before the international coalition brought its troops into the country, while the 9/11 events are directly related to the Taliban's refusal to extradite Osama bin Laden.

The thesis of a coalition government is wrong for the following reasons:

- (1) No coalition government will be functional enough in a country with a prohibitively high corruption level.
- (2) None of the fighting factions (the Taliban included) has ever made statements about their programs and aims; the distribution of portfolios according to the principle "the wolves are sated and the sheep intact" will hardly discontinue the perpetual strife.
- (3) The conflict in Afghanistan has gone beyond its frontiers, yet destructive interference will not bring peace and stability. In other words, certain external forces do not want peace and stability in the country and no coalition government can change this.

It seems that those who are working on the concept (or model) of the country's post-conflict rehabilitation have run into so-called friction (described in detail by Clausewitz). The widely discussed Afghan-led peace process and a coalition government are impossible for the reasons outlined above.

The so-called moderate Taliban is another factor that drove the country into the situation of friction. In an effort to stumble across a formula of peace and stabilization and split the ranks of the rebels, the Afghan government and international coalition started talking about the possibility of drawing "moderate" Taliban members into the coalition government by tempting them with security, jobs, and education opportunities.

This suggests at least three very logical questions:

- (1) What are the criteria of "moderate" Taliban members; what does it mean to be moderate and, if there are moderate Taliban members, what are they doing in the ranks of the rebels/terrorists?
- (2) Even if there are "moderates" and even if they can be returned to normal life, what will the "radicals" do?
- (3) Why did the government, which promises the "moderates" protection, support, and even education, fail to offer them this when they were peaceful Afghans?

The possible answers to the above are not easy, if at all possible, to find. The same can be said about "moderate" Taliban members. This invites a fourth question: How do the rebels draw new fighters into their ranks?

⁶ See: F. Tolipov, "Isipyatnie geopolitiki terrorizmom i antiterrorizmom," *SShA-Canada*, EPK, No. 3, 2002.

On the one hand, the militants sustain losses in fighting and special operations, while on the other, they replenish the losses with peaceful Afghans. This deserves closer attention and adequate measures—it is not enough to register the fact and call on the rebels to resume a peaceful life. The Afghan government and the coalition forces must be resolved to stem the process, identify the reasons for which peaceful people join the ranks of militants, and look into the mechanisms and sources of conscription, which constitute a very specific problem.

An analysis of strategic friction in Afghanistan shows that it has enriched the world community with a unique experience of ups and downs of the counterterrorist struggle. This experience should be treated as a lesson to be learned: the struggle against terror is still going on in Afghanistan and elsewhere in the world. Failure in Afghanistan will mean defeat in the world—terrorism and antiterrorist efforts will always work against each other; they will flare up in different corners of the world with corresponding geopolitical adjustments.⁷ Terror and warlordism in Afghanistan must be liquidated.

It should be said that the term “post-conflict rehabilitation” normally applied to countries that have emerged from a conflict cannot be applied to Afghanistan where the real situation is very different: suffice it to mention the alarmist expectations of its closest neighbors and the fact that there was no victory in the war on terror unfolding in its territory.

Guns are Talking, and the Muses Should Be Heard Too

Can there be a war with no victor? Can hostilities end without any clear results?

“The key element in ending the campaign is the realization that terrorism is a ‘highly problematic means of bringing about change,’ a realization that requires, among other things, inflicting demoralizing losses on the terrorists through military action and law enforcement activities; it also requires convincing the terrorists themselves that they have been defeated politically or at least they cannot succeed and actively deterring sponsors who support terrorist groups, and eliminating the conditions that gave the terrorists legitimacy in the beginning.”⁸

The above is in tune with the classical: “The real fruits of victory are won only in pursuit.”⁹

Over 500 Taliban fighters were freed from prisons in the last 15 months as part of a reconciliation program, the wisdom of which is doubted. According to private Afghan 1TV Channel, 536 people (including Pakistani citizens) were set free, 224 of them had been imprisoned as suicide attack suspects. The closest aides of Mullah Omar, the Taliban leader, were also released from prison on the strength of decrees signed by President Karzai and on the initiative of the High Peace Council. This, however, failed to involve the Taliban in the talks with Kabul. According to the same source, most of those amnestied returned to the rebel ranks.¹⁰

The report of RAND Corporation said that “it would be detrimental to U.S. national security to withdraw all U.S. military forces from Afghanistan, as the United States has done in Iraq. The United States should continue to conduct counterterrorist operations and assist the Afghans in conducting

⁷ See: F. Tolipov, “Strategic Friction in Afghanistan and Geopolitical Reversal in Central Asia.”

⁸ A.J. Echevarria II, “Clausewitz and the Nature of the War on Terror,” in: *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. by H. Strachan, A. Herberg-Rothe, Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 211.

⁹ C. von Clausewitz, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

¹⁰ See: “Osvobozhdenie zakliuchennykh talibov ne pomoglo Afghanistanu v dele primireniia s povstantsami,” available at [<https://afghanistan.ru/doc/70573.html>].

counterinsurgency after 2014. The reason is straightforward: there are several militant groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan that threaten U.S. security and its interests overseas, including al-Qae'da (which still retains its core leadership along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border), Lashkar-e-Tayyiba (which has conducted terrorist attacks in the region and had operatives arrested in the United States), Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (which was involved in the 2010 Times Square explosion in New York City), and Haqqani Network (which has conducted numerous attacks against U.S. forces and the U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan) among others.¹¹

Today, the situation in Afghanistan is far from stable and it might become even worse. This is a serious problem related to the emergence of a new world order.

British scholar Ken Booth, one of the most prominent representatives of the Critical Security Studies (CSS), has pointed out that as distinct from “the dismal ideology of political realism,” (p. viii) which speaks of violence as inevitable in international affairs and is convinced that force should be countered by force, the school of “world order” can supply the most exact and comprehensive formula of progressive change. It defends such values as non-violence, economic fairness, human rights, humane governance, and sustainable development.¹²

CSS concentrates on the individual rather than a state or any other group of people; much attention is paid to ethics and morality, while it is suggested that security should be achieved through so-called emancipatory politics. The British academic has written: “Emancipation is the theory and practice of inventing humanity, with a view to freeing people, as individuals and collectivities, from contingent and structural oppressions;” this is a discourse of human self-realization and the politics which encourages this. “Security and community are the guiding principles, and at this stage of history the growth of a universal human rights culture is central to emancipatory politics.”¹³

This approach can be accepted, but we should not ignore the “using force against force” principle.

- First, the state has been and remains the central entity of international relations with its monopoly on the use of force;
- second, emancipatory politics cannot be applied to terrorists who are unaware of “a universal human rights culture.”

I would like to point out here that the “Afghan problem” calls for more differentiated approach.

The new theory offers a wider security concept based in *systemic securitization of the national prospects* of Afghanistan which describes security as military, regulatory, legal, cultural and economic problem. This brings to mind the fairly popular “When guns talk, the Muses fall silent” which can be changed to, “guns are talking, and the Muses should be heard too.” In other words, a systemic approach is needed to pool military and non-military efforts based on systemic securitization of the Afghan perspective.

These systemic efforts should consist of the following:

- (1) *Improving the information dimension of the campaign.* This should be done to end the domination of alarmist, superficial, simplified, and highly distorted ideas about the situation in Afghanistan and in the region; consistently and insistently repeated they create

¹¹ S. Jones, *After the Withdrawal: A Way Forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Testimony presented before the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Joint Subcommittee on Middle East and North Africa and Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific on 19 March, 2013*, available at [www.rand.org].

¹² See: K. Booth, “Beyond Critical Security Studies,” in: *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*, ed. by K. Booth, Viva Books, New Delhi, Kolkata, 2005, p. 267.

¹³ K. Booth, “Emancipation,” in: *Critical Security Studies and World Politics*, p. 181.

corresponding expectations. Here is a typical example: “The American withdrawal in 2014 will transform Russia’s southern border into a frontline... To call a spade a spade, the Taliban, now in control of 70 percent of Afghan territory, is winning the war against the U.S. and NATO troops. Having seized power in the mountainous country, the Taliban will pour into the post-Soviet space like a stream of iron. Russia might become a warring state.”¹⁴

Similarly absurd, false, or even provocative statements create a strategic “neverland” and might interfere with unbiased decision-making.

The time has come to clarify what we know about the alleged re-Talibanization of Afghanistan. There are many more reasons to say that after 2014 the country will become a “Taliban-free zone.” This should not be taken to mean that there will no Taliban members left; this means that their advent to power looks extremely doubtful. Over half of the country’s population describes the Taliban as the most dangerous of forces; a mere 8 percent believe that it will regain power once the counterterrorist mission has been completed.¹⁵

Much is said about the civilian deaths caused by ISAF; few people, however, point out that about 80 percent of the civilian deaths are caused by fighters.¹⁶ Indeed, if the Taliban remain in control of 70 percent of the country’s territory it will mean that the U.S. and ISAF had done nothing during their twelve years in Afghanistan.

2. Active articulation and stronger emphasis on *the regulatory and international components* of studies, reports, discussions, political rhetoric, and strategic solutions. In all wars there are guilty parties, which means, and this constitutes a central point of the international anti-terrorist strategy, that they should be identified. The classical theory related the concept of strategy to the individual state that was implementing it. Today, we can talk about international strategy (or the strategy of the world community): in this respect the current efforts in the international security sphere are non-traditional.

We should not forget the special role of the United Nations created by its regulatory authority, which is unavailable to other organizations and states. The U.N. should be firm and principled when dealing with Afghanistan as a whole and the Taliban in particular. For example, it could condemn the terrorists/rebels in specific terms (that is, by name) rather than abstractly; it should refuse to accept the governance of Taliban after the pullout of 2014.

It seems, however, that instead of governing the process of rehabilitation and securitization of Afghanistan, the U.N. remains in the shadow of NATO and the United States. Meanwhile, the U.N. leadership could have deprived the rebels of their trump card of anti-Americanism.

The U.N. should show the world that the presence of the counterterrorist coalition in Afghanistan is not an American campaign or geopolitics American-style; it is rather inter-

¹⁴ M. Albanov, A. Primov, “S boevikami nado umet ne tolko voevat, no i razgovariavt,” *Mir novostey*, No. 23 (1016), 5 June, 1013, available at [www.mirnov.ru].

¹⁵ See: G. Langer, Director of Polling, ABC News, “Afghanistan: Where Things Stand,” *Public Opinion Trends in Afghanistan*, CSIS, 11 February, 2009.

¹⁶ See: A. Cordesman, “The Afghan-Pakistan War: A Status Report: 2009,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, available at [www.csis.org/burke/reports], 18 June, 2009. In his report submitted to the U.N. SC by the United Nations, Special Representative for the Secretary-General in Afghanistan and Head of UNAMA Ján Kubiš pointed out that opposition groups are responsible for most of the civilian deaths (see: [http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=12254&ctl=Details&mid=15756&ItemID=37557&language=en-US]).

national peacekeeping cooperation, which presupposes, among other things, an anti-terrorist struggle. The reports of the UNAMA (the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) demonstrate that this organization has not yet completely revealed its potential and remains content with monitoring and diplomatic missions.

So far, the U.N. has failed to demonstrate determination; this has been amply confirmed by the deaths of members of several international organizations (including the U.N.) killed on 17 January, 2014 in a Taliban attack at a Lebanon restaurant in Kabul. U.N. Secretary General Pan Ki Moon condemned the act, but failed to accuse the Taliban, which assumed responsibility.

The OIC should become more active: it should express its opinion about what is going on in Afghanistan as corresponding or not corresponding to Islam.

Amin Rashid, a prominent expert on Afghanistan, has pointed out that the West wrongly associates Islam with terrorism à la bin Laden and the Taliban: “Many Western commentators do not particularize the Taliban, but condemn Islam wholesale for being intolerant and anti-modern.”¹⁷

We should not forget that the Taliban is moved by religion; this means that the OIC should not remain indifferent to the fact that “Chief of the Pakistan Ulema Council Allama Tahir Ashrafi issued a fatwa which justified jihad and suicide bombers in Afghanistan”¹⁸ (for more on Pakistan’s role see below).

There is a growing understanding that to remove the Taliban the world community should put an end to Islamic extremism in the region, a mission impossible in the near or medium-term future.¹⁹

3. *The military campaign, sustainable governance, and economic development* should be regarded as the cornerstones of Afghan settlement: “everything is geared toward security, everything affects security, and everything depends on security” should become the systemic approach to Afghanistan 2014. Security, on the other hand, depends on the continued presence of the peacekeepers.

The future agreement between Kabul and Washington will help create a “security umbrella” for still weak and far from stable Afghanistan. Under a decree of President Obama, “the Department of State will set up a temporary organization to be known as the Afghanistan and Pakistan Strategic Partnership Office (APSPPO), a strategic partnership between the U.S. Government and the governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan, promoting further security and stabilization, and transitioning to a normalized [U.S.] diplomatic presence in both countries.”²⁰

This security agreement looks like a logical part of the U.S. Silk Road Strategy, according to many, the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) being its prototype.

This is what Frederick Starr has to say about the economic future of Afghanistan: he points out that security in Afghanistan will be determined by the level of its political stability and that its economic status should be improved as soon as possible. “The economy

¹⁷ A. Rashid, *Taliban. Militant Islam, Oil & Fundamentalism in Central Asia*, Yale University Press, Nota Bene, 2000, pp. 211, 215.

¹⁸ K. Iskandarov, “The Pakistani Factor in the Afghan Conflict,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 14, Issue 3, 2013, p. 91.

¹⁹ See: M. Darkhor, S. Kafi, S. Sadati, “United States Strategy and Afghan National Security,” *Central Asia and the Caucasus*, Vol. 14, Issue 3, 2013, p. 38.

²⁰ [<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/01/17/executive-order-establishment-afghanistan-and-pakistan-strategic-partner>].

cannot wait... Given the extreme poverty in which most Afghans live, signs of economic progress have become the essential condition for political progress and social peace.”²¹

No matter how attractive, this approach leaves out the fact that the forces engaged in the struggle against the state and the international coalition, that is, rebels and terrorists, are not very concerned about the country’s economic status: they regularly attack humanitarian echelons carrying aid to the country’s population.

The same authors have also pointed out: “The U.S. Geodetic Survey, on the basis of careful study, has announced the presence there of more than \$1trillion in natural resources—fifty times Afghanistan’s current GDP. These riches include gas, oil, copper, iron, other minerals, and rare earths... This means opening internal, regional and continent-wide channels of transport and trade.”²² To achieve this and realize the country’s considerable economic potential, the destructive and anti-modernist forces must be defeated.

Economic rehabilitation will require large foreign investments; this is absolutely correct, but that axiom should not disorient strategic considerations: neither investments, nor other forms of economic aid should detract the world community from the task of strategic importance, viz. liquidation of seats of terror in Afghanistan.

Investors are invariably guided by their interests and specify the conditions they expect to find in the receiving country. Can Afghanistan be described as an attractive recipient? The answer is obvious; it should be said that foreign investors demonstrate a lot of caution when dealing with stable and developed regions (Central Asia being one of them) because of the high corruption level, the “formal” democratic institutions, etc.

4. *The military campaign should go on with a clearly defined aim.* The absolute majority (71 percent) of Afghans believe that the talks with the Taliban should be conducted if and when it discontinues its armed struggle. Slightly more than one-third of the country’s population believes that the Afghan National Army will be able to defeat the anti-government forces on its own.²³

It seems that the Taliban, no matter how strange, would have preferred the international forces remaining indefinitely in the country as the “raison d’être of the Taliban’s project:” withdrawal will deprive it of a “dear enemy.”

Contrary to expectations, the Taliban did not trim its militant activities and did not rejoice at being heeded. Fighting and attacks on civilians and members of international organizations involved in the country’s rehabilitation are going on unabated. No wonder: the planned pullout will deprive the Taliban and other rebels of their business; their continued belligerence should be interpreted as a message: Do not leave because we will continue fighting even when you get out.

The current operation is intended to preserve and defend the territories and win “the hearts and minds” of the local people. According to STRATFOR analysts, this strategy is indispensable for intelligence, which may decide how the war will end. “With a degree of security comes loyalty. With loyalty comes intelligence. If intelligence is the insurgent’s strategic advantage, this is the way to counter it. It strikes at the center of gravity of the insurgent. Intelligence is his strong suit, and if the insurgent loses it, he loses the war.”²⁴

²¹ F. Starr, A. Farhadi, “Finish the Job: Jump-Start Afghanistan’s Economy. A Handbook of Projects,” *Silk Road Paper*, November 2012, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program, 2012, p. 10, available at [www.silkroadstudies.org].

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12, 7.

²³ See: A. Cordesman, *op. cit.*, pp. 79, 142.

²⁴ G. Friedman, “Strategic Calculus and the Afghan War,” available at [http://www.stratfor.com/], 13 July, 2009.

Strangely enough, STRATFOR insists that al-Qa'eda should remain the main target, otherwise the strategic aim of the war becomes doubtful and the equation might change. These analysts prefer to ignore the totally proven fact of the Taliban's responsibility for 9/11 and its close cooperation with al-Qa'eda and other armed groups.²⁵

"The High Peace Council (HPC) said that recent efforts undertaken by the U.S., Pakistan and Saudi Arabia could mark critical steps toward the restoration of longstanding peace in Afghanistan."²⁶ Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Pakistan recognized the Taliban regime; it is commonly believed that these countries have preserved their contacts with Taliban members. Until the failure of the talks in Doha, their influence in Afghanistan was regarded as an attempt to pacify the rebels. It seems that the convincing military victories of the coalition forces remain the key to final pacification.

5. *Interaction between the CSTO and NATO in any form.* This interaction would have been too premature at the height of the ISAF operations when NATO could not be detracted from the theater of war. Today, the time has come to talk about cooperation. Where might, resources, and political weight are concerned, the CSTO is inferior to NATO; yet the lower level and profile of the Western military presence in Central and South Asia after 2014 should be compensated for by certain collective and joint measures designed to preserve the security of all the countries in the macro-region. Today, the Central Asian countries that cooperate with NATO and CSTO put them between the "two fires"—the Euro-Asian and Euro-Atlantic security architectures; this creates a dilemma: the countries of the region cannot be members of the Western alliance, yet their cooperation, including the operation in Afghanistan, was efficient enough. Being marginally involved, the CSTO had no opportunity to prove its effectiveness; on the other hand, it remains the only collective security system in Eurasia that the countries of the region can join.

In the context of NATO's global outreach mission and its enlargement, any delay in a dialog with the CSTO will preserve the traces of the Cold War geopolitical tension and mutual mistrust between the sides.

At the same time, the region's countries should finally make their geopolitical choice: they have vacillated for over twenty years now. This requires an unbiased and reliable analysis of what is going on and of the essence and nature of all the security challenges; they should find their niche on the international arena. Meanwhile, any form of interaction between the CSTO and NATO will serve as a litmus-paper of sorts, a test for the modality of this choice and, on the whole, for the new architecture of international security.

6. *Pakistan has concentrated all the problems of the South Asian security complex in its territory.* To quote Professor Saikal, "for now, the priority must be the stabilization of Afghanistan and Pakistan. This cannot come soon enough."²⁷

Contacts between Pakistan and the Afghan militants is old news: in the 1980s, the ISI supported the Afghan mujaheddin; "in the 1990s, the ISI helped support the Taliban. According to declassified U.S. documents, U.S. State Department officials understood that 'ISI is deeply involved in the Taliban takeover in Kandahar and Qalat.' ISI officers were deployed to such Afghan cities as Herat, Kandahar, and Jalalabad—and stationed in Pakistani consulates—to provide assistance and advice. Another U.S. intelligence assessment con-

²⁵ S. Jones, op. cit.

²⁶ "HPC Lauds U.S., Pakistani, Saudi Peace Efforts," available at [<http://www.toloneews.com/en/afghanistan/13357-hpc-lauds-us-pakistani-saudi-peace-efforts>].

²⁷ A. Saikal, op. cit., p. 54.

tended that the ISI was ‘supplying the Taliban forces with munitions, fuel, and food,’ and ‘using a private sector transportation company to funnel supplies into Afghanistan and to the Taliban forces’.²⁸

Barnett R. Rubin and Ahmed Rashid have written that until the Pakistani decision-makers attach more importance to stabilization of the Afghan government rather than concentrating on the Indian threat, the riot that stems from the bases in the territory of Pakistan will go on and on. Islamabad’s strategic aims fan its contradictions not only with Afghanistan and India, but also with the United States (which has its interests in the region) and the international community.²⁹

Conclusion

Carl von Clausewitz offers an instructive comment: “Conquering Moscow and half of Russia in 1812 was of no avail to Bonaparte unless it brought him the peace he had in view. But these successes were only a part of his plan of campaign: what was still missing was the destruction of the Russian army. If that achievement had been added to the rest, peace would have been as sure as things of that sort ever can be. But it was too late to achieve the second part of his plan; his chance had gone. Thus the successful stage was not only wasted but led to disaster.”³⁰

The lesson is: peace can be reached only if the enemy is completely routed.

Here is another example of the same: during World War II, the Soviet Union did not limit itself to driving away the German fascist troops from the Soviet territory, but defeated them in their own territory and forced the enemy to capitulate.

At first glance, the anti-terrorist struggle looks non-traditional, yet its asymmetric nature and relative novelty should not dupe anyone into believing that terrorism cannot be eliminated, otherwise we could find ourselves in the grips of a strategic and mental paradox that says we can “win the battle but lose the war.”

Today, state/international forces are waging a limited war in Afghanistan to draw the Taliban into a dialog. The Taliban, much weaker in the military respect, is engaged in a total war to expel or to liquidate the coalition troops. This asymmetry is not the result of a special, non-traditional threat, but of a completely traditional approach to it.

German academic Wulf Lapins has analyzed the war in Afghanistan to arrive at the following conclusion: “The war in Afghanistan has been waged since 2001 very much in line with Carl von Clausewitz’ formula ‘the war is a mere continuation of politics by other means.’ This explains the talks with the Taliban... To the Taliban of Mullah Omar the talks with the U.S./Karzai (politics) look like continuation of the war.”³¹ This is the most sober and strategic opinion about the situation in Afghanistan.

The strategy of international presence in Afghanistan should be readjusted on the basis of a systemic approach and the securitization process.

I would like to point out that not only the future of Afghanistan, but the future of a new world order is being resolved today, which will define the political and moral status of the United States, Russia, and other Great Powers.

²⁸ S. Jones, op. cit.

²⁹ See: *Foreign Affairs*, November/December 2008.

³⁰ C. von Clausewitz, op. cit., p. 226.

³¹ W. Lapins, “Kontsa voyny v Afghanistane ne vidno,” in: *Afghanistan: nastoiashchee i budushchee. Stabilnost i bezopanost v Tsentralnoy Azii. Materialy mezhdunarodnoy konferentsii*, F. Ebert Fund, Almaty, 2011, p. 33.

The main international actors will pay much more attention to the Central Asian countries as the closest neighbors of Afghanistan, which are unlikely to remain on the periphery of world processes; this has invigorated and will further invigorate their regional activity.
