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## THE INFLUENCE OF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK CIVIC INITIATIVES ON THE SECURITY POLICY OF UKRAINE

*The article is devoted to the analysis of new organizational forms of activity of the global society institutions and their influence on the security policy of Ukraine. The author proposes his personal definition of international civic activity, and in particular introduces the notion of «international network civic initiatives» as new actors of the global civil society.*

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## THE INFLUENCE OF AFGHANISTAN ON RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY TOWARD CENTRAL ASIA AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001

*The article deals with the impact of contemporary events in Afghanistan on Russia's foreign policy toward Central Asia and the states of that region*

### Introduction

The Russian Federation's foreign policy concerning the Central Asian republics has evolved considerably in recent years as a result of the invasion of Afghanistan that was carried out by the United States and NATO in 2001. Russia views the stability of Afghanistan as impinging heavily upon the stability of five former Soviet Central Asian republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. Given that the latter three of these republics share a border with Afghanistan (a border which was once shared between Afghanistan and the Soviet Union), Russian authorities have been justified in giving high priority to their new Central Asian foreign policy, the nuances of which deserve to be better understood. The fact that Afghanistan was invaded

by the Soviet Union in 1979, and that the country has the ability to influence and destabilize the Central Asian republics today, has played an important role in Russia's policy choices after the events of September 11, 2001. Russia's policy toward this region is multifaceted and consists of several prongs.

### Russia's Policy of Verbal Support for the West

First, and on the surface, Russia's current official policy is to provide strong support for the presence of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. Russia initially supported the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001, and this support has been continued by Russian rhetoric in the years since. Indeed, the support given by Russia to the West in its efforts to fight terrorism and Muslim extremism can be seen as being very

much in Russia's interests, both because it serves to protect the Central Asia republics from the Taliban's influence and because it was believed that it would help prevent narcotrafficking, which is an enormous problem in the region given the porous borders between Afghanistan and the Central Asian states.

To understand this strand of Russian foreign policy, it should be remembered that the Taliban government, prior to 2001, had consistently threatened the southern borders of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). These borders were weak after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, as were the inter-state borders between the former Soviet Central Asian republics themselves. As a result, most of these borders had to be monitored by Russian military forces. To this day, these borders are still not adequately secured<sup>1</sup>.

Moreover, Osama bin Laden and other radical Islamists who were provided a safe haven by the Taliban supported Chechnya's separation from the Russian Federation. Thus Russian authorities viewed their activities as a threat to the Russian Federation's stability. Taliban-protected forces within Afghanistan also tried to influence and assist the spread the Islamic extremism in Russia's Muslim republics. Thus Russia had a direct interest in toppling the Taliban and in preventing Islamists with Afghanistan from acting to further destabilize Russia. Before September 11, the United States and other Western countries did not cooperate with Russia in dealing with the separatist movements in the Northern Caucasus; indeed, western countries were seen as being critical of Russia's harsh stance against the Chechen separatists. Meanwhile, the Taliban was the only government in the world that officially acted to recognize the independence of "Ichkeria," the separatist Chechen Republic<sup>2</sup>.

Even after harsh and outspoken criticism was levelled against Russia by the United States and

NATO following the Georgian-Russian confrontation of August 2008, Russia's verbal policy of supporting Western military initiatives in Afghanistan has not changed. For instance, Russia has continued to cooperate in allowing the German military to transit via Russian territory [3], and it did not oppose the Central Asian republics from approving similar bilateral policies with Germany, France, the United States, and others. Although in 2008, with Russia's approval, Kyrgyzstan threatened to evict the United States from the Manas Military Base, this issue was eventually resolved with the Obama administration and US forces will continue to have a presence in Kyrgyzstan for the foreseeable future.

### Russia's Behind-the-Scenes, Non-Verbal Policy Position

Behind Russia's diplomatic courtesies, however, there lurk some other layers of Russian foreign policymaking at work. These are motivated by deep concerns on the part of Russia about both the US and NATO presence in Afghanistan. Russia's position toward a *continued* presence is sceptical, and although it is not expressed in official communications, it is often witnessed in unofficial statements made by Russian foreign policy experts, and in off-hand remarks and discussions by Russian politicians, civil servants, and other elites.

This secondary layer of Russia's foreign policy toward Afghanistan has many elements to it, but in general it can be summarized as follows. First, Russia's policy position is that the US and NATO should not monopolize their influences on Afghanistan's new government. To this extent, Moscow does not want Washington to be the only player leaning on the Afghani government in Kabul to find a lasting solution to the country's political crisis. Nor does it want Washington to be the only player arbitrating Afghanistan's presidential election. Rather, Russia would prefer to have the active Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) be more actively involved in Afghanistan's internal and external politics [4].

Second, Russia is gravely concerned about what it perceives as US attempts to "encircle" the Russian Federation and its traditional "spheres of influence" with a network of US military bases and personnel. Thus, below the surface, Russian foreign policy is opposed to US bases being located on the territories of any of the former Soviet republics, such as those presently in Kyrgyzstan, and opposed to the establishment of surveillance systems aimed at monitoring the airspace above both China and Russia<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In this context there are the relevant words in the declaration of a special conference on Afghanistan of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) of 27 March 2009: "The participants... have stressed an important role of the International Security Assistance Force and the Coalition forces in assisting the Government of Afghanistan in guaranteeing security in Afghanistan and in this connection hailed the measures undertaken by the foreign contingents in concordance with the Government of Afghanistan in order to provide for the further closer coordination with Afghani authorities, that also has a special significance for increasing the effectiveness of counteracting the illegal production and circulation of narcotics" [1].

<sup>2</sup> Russia's verbal policy toward Afghanistan, and in particular its support of US and NATO initiatives there, has been echoed by senior Russian diplomats. For instance, Russia's Foreign Minister, Sergei Lavrov, stated the following in a speech in The Hague on March 31, 2009: "In the future, Russia will continue constructively to participate in the international community's efforts to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan and around it." He then added: "on the basis of our understanding with NATO, we place our territory at the disposal of the transit of non-military cargos for the International Security Assistance Force. Besides that, still several years ago, Russia has concluded bilateral agreements with Germany and France on the transit of military cargos for their contingents in the ISAF. A similar agreement has been recently concluded with Spain. We are ready to consider other variants of cooperation as well" [2].

<sup>3</sup> A general framework remark of Sergei Lavrov, Russia's Minister of Foreign Affairs, encapsulates this view. As Lavrov says: "In the American leadership and in the leadership of a number of other countries, primarily those who have chosen as their foreign policy the total loyalty to the Washington directions, there prevails a geopolitical ideology. Its sense consists only in one issue – to do everything in order to 'contain' Russia" [5].

Third, because Russia resents US “plotting” and what it sees as the open implementation of economic strategies aimed at getting around Russia’s current strategy of creating an infrastructure to channel oil and gas from Central Asia to Europe predominantly via Russian territory, Russian foreign policy has sought to qualify its verbal acquiescence to US and NATO military presence in the Central Asian republics with its utter lack of support for American and European economic initiatives in the region. In this sense, Russia continues to insist that it should provide the main transportation route and function as the transporter of gas to Europe. Meanwhile Russian policymakers have tried to stress that Russia’s recent noisy skirmishes with Ukraine over gas supply were due merely to a dispute over prices, thus portraying the issue in economic and not in geopolitical terms<sup>1</sup>.

Fourth, Russian policy is concerned that NATO forces are not doing enough to fight narcotrafficking. It is well known that Afghanistan provides for the easy passage of illegal substances and supplies into the Central Asian republics, most notably into Tajikistan, and that Afghan and NATO authorities often turn their cheek to these practices. But the increasing criminality associated with these activities directly impinges on the Russian economy as well as on Russian society, as many of these criminal elements eventually pass through Russia. Russian policy has tried for many years to fight this, and it rightly sees the US and NATO, even if they give verbal support to Russia, to be ineffectual in stopping it<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Russian mass media is full of publications depicting American strategies of “containing Russia” and undermining Russia’s (and “Gazprom”) efforts to organise the routes according to its, and not American, plans. As an example may be the following explanation of the US “guidings” to one of its present “younger allies” (Romania) upon the “misunderstandings between Russia and Bulgaria in late April 2009”: “Washington has critically reacted to a possible rapprochement between Russia and Romania. Matthew Bryza, an American diplomat responsible for the US policy in the Caspian region, has stated in his recent interview that for Romania the priority should be not the signing an agreement with the “Gazprom”, but the diversification of sources of gas delivery to Europe” [6].

<sup>2</sup> A Russian expert from Kyrgyzstan (a citizen of Russia), director of the Bishkek section of the Institute of the CIS (a non-governmental organization headed by a Russian MP Konstantin Zatulin), speaking at a conference in Kabul in April 2009 (being the only invited person from the CIS), said: “The interests of Russia, the USA and China in Afghanistan are directly opposite, thus their cooperation is possible only in case of a rejection of one of the parties from its national interests. The coming elections [in Afghanistan] do not change the vector of the situation’s development. The Afghan Government being controlled by Washington, irrespective of the fact who would come to chair it, is an instrument of guaranteeing a stable and controlled by the Americans narcotraffick to Russia and Europe, and at the same time guaranteeing the US military presence in the region. But the key issue is that the American activities in Afghanistan accumulates protest potential under religious slogans which Americans are planning to use as a detonator for the “Islamic explosion” in Central Asia, Chinese Xinjiang (Sinkiang), and in the South of Russia. Planning such projects is a favourite occupation of the analysts from the State Department, the CIA and the Pentagon” [7]. And later in an interview upon the conference he added: “The Talibs have never created a military threat to Russia, Kyrgyzstan and other countries of Central Asia” [8].

Fifth and finally, Russia believes that US and NATO aggressiveness serves to promote political competition in Afghanistan on the symbolic level only, whereas in reality the US does not have an interest in turning Afghanistan into a truly democratic society, as this would pave the way for the rise of radical Islamists who disfavour Western presence and meddling in their country. Thus the US position of supporting Hamid Karzai has led to the quiet conviction among Russian foreign policy elites that the West functions with double standards when dealing with the leaders of Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics. Rather than promote democracy, Russia believes the US upholds leaders who promote its own interests. In this light, the recent remarks of Dr. Shah Mahmud, a lecturer at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), a noted training ground for Russia’s foreign policy elites, is telling. As he said, “The problem consists in the fact that the Americans do not have a direct interest in an Afghanistan [political] settlement. For them their presence in Afghanistan is the key lever for influencing geopolitical processes in Eurasia. Thus, the US is using Afghani territory as a bridge-head against Iran” [9].

Whether Russia’s “real,” as opposed to “verbal,” foreign policy positions are justified depends on what one makes of the rhetoric surrounding the continuing US presence in Afghanistan. Certainly, Russia’s foreign policy positions sometimes seem like heated overreactions to imagined threats. However, a number of Western analysts also fall prey to anti-Russian rhetoric as they find themselves returning to old clichés and one-sided approaches when it comes to their analysis of what is good for Central Asia. For example, S. Frederick Starr, Chairman of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the Johns Hopkins University in Washington, D.C., says the following of Russia’s foreign policy intentions. Russia’s “objective, according to Starr, has been – and they have been perfectly candid about it – to establish a sphere of influence, and they mean an exclusive sphere of influence, in the former Soviet territories, including the Caucasus and Central Asia. Of course, this seems to be directed against the United States, but in the long run, it is as much a threat to China, which has yet to respond. But the worrisome thing that we have seen in the past month is clear evidence that Russia would like to expand this sphere of influence concept to include Afghanistan. And this is an obvious step in that direction. ... We must remember that there is a whole generation of Russian military people who were in their teens and twenties at the time of the Afghan War who are now in command. And they have learned nothing and forgotten nothing, I’m afraid. They are bitter. They blame their fate on the United States [which supplied the anti-Soviet forces in that period] and they are operating out of this deep resentment” [10].

Similarly, Svante E. Cornell, Research Director of the Central Asia-Caucasus Institute at the School of Advanced International Studies at Johns Hopkins University and co-founder of the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy, weighs in with what seems like very tough “Cold War” rhetoric concerning the situation: “Moscow may not desire a Taliban victory in Afghanistan, but sees this as a much lesser danger to itself than a permanent American military and political presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Should America succeed in Afghanistan that would open up the former Soviet colonies in Central Asia, making them less dependent on Russia.... In Afghanistan, Moscow has publicly offered the U.S. to cooperate, including on logistics to supply the operation. But it is beyond doubt that it was Russian pressure and promises of aid that prompted Kyrgyzstan’s government to expel the U.S. from its only airbase in Central Asia. If Russia wants to stabilize Afghanistan, why is it undermining the U.S. efforts to do so? ... All of this indicates the key role of anti-Americanism at the heart of the ‘Putinist’ ideology. This is illustrated by the Kremlin’s harsh anti-American rhetoric at home and abroad. The Kremlin leaders see the world almost exclusively in zero-sum terms: America’s loss is Moscow’s gain, and helps undermining the ‘unipolar world’ and restoring ‘multipolarity’” [11].

In light of such comments, it would seem that Russia’s foreign policy priorities may be well-founded. Russian elites are also quick to point out instances when top Afghani politicians from Kabul are critical of the US and its purported peacemaking efforts, in the same way that they loathed Russia’s efforts to bring “stability” in the 1970s and 1980s.

### **The Psychological Dimension of Russian Policy Feelings**

During a recent conference in Moscow (which the author attended in November 2006) devoted to analyzing NATO’s role for Eurasian security [12], a well-known Russian military expert tried to compare the role of the USSR in Afghanistan with that of NATO today. Addressing the Western participants at the conferences, the Russian military expert asked: “Maybe it is time to recognize that the role played by the Soviet Union in Afghanistan in the 1970s and 1980s was exactly the same as NATO has carved out for itself now, that is, in terms of defending European and democratic values?” These words demonstrate how much the Russian psyche desires fairness from the West in its approach to the very complex history of foreign intervention in Afghanistan. Indeed, Russian elites often focus their rhetoric on the fact that the United States had been the original sponsor of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan, and that it was the US which first tried to use him to neutralize the USSR in Afghanistan.

Understanding the psychological component behind Russia’s foreign policy toward Central Asia is

crucial to understanding the politics of this region, and it remains important for scholars to correlate Russia’s desire to have a balanced view of the historical record with an explanation of Russia’s contemporary strategy regarding Afghanistan and the former Soviet Central Asian republics. This is especially so when one considers recent statements uttered by Western leaders. US President Barack Obama, for example, has stated that the “ultimate goal” of the United States “is not to occupy Afghanistan and not to run Afghanistan, but rather to provide the Afghan government the capacity to provide for its own security and ensure that it is not, once again, a safe haven for terrorists” [13]. Russian military elites remark, however, that their aim in 1979 was basically the same. Thus Russian foreign policy is justified by trying to draw a parallel between the invasion initiated by the US and NATO in 2001 and that initiated by Soviet forces in 1979.

Russian policymakers believe that US efforts to fight terrorism and state failure in the region cannot succeed without Russian support and assistance. The Russians feel this way not only in regards to Afghanistan, but also when it comes to the state of long-term US ally Pakistan. Former British prime minister Tony Blair, in a speech given in Chicago on April 22, 2009, stated: “Terror is the enemy of progress... But was it practical to let Pakistan develop as it did in the last thirty years, without asking what effect the madrassas would have on a generation educated in them? Or wise to employ the Taliban to drive the Russians out of Afghanistan?” [14]. Here was an attempt by a Western leader to have a bit of a reverence, a partial positive reply to the Russian military expert’s request for the historic fairness.

Strong Western criticism of Pakistan, especially after the downfall of President Musharaf and with the recent failures of Pakistan’s central authority, have hobbled Pakistan’s ability to fight against the Taliban. Pakistan’s developments have worried policymakers in Washington, London, Brussels, and elsewhere, and the radicalization of politics in that country has led some leaders to declare Pakistan on the verge of being a “failed state”.

The foreign policy community in Moscow has gradually started to think about such a possibility itself – in fact, if the USSR could one day collapse as the result of a failed coup; why cannot the same happen to Pakistan – and also to acknowledge the possibility that this collapsed state would be left not only with Taliban insurgents and Islamist extremists dominating the political scene, but with nuclear weapons at their disposal. Such a scenario would be as threatening to Russian interests as it would to American ones. Russia’s fears of this scenario playing out have been echoed recently in both Russian [15] and American publications highlighting the US secret plans “to find some pretext for removing Pakistan’s nuclear capacity” [16]. Similarly, one

can find a correlation between the ideas expressed by Russian analysts and the unofficial remarks made by high-ranking British diplomats and generals about finding a “moderate dictator” for Afghanistan, and the view that the NATO troops “are not a part of the solution, but rather a part of the problem” [17].

From the Russian perspective, “moderate fundamentalists” can, for a relatively long period, act as a stabilizing force for the local communities. Under moderates, Muslim states remain stable and business can be done with them. Russia itself has many Muslim territories and republics and the central authorities in Moscow believe they are adept at dealing with moderate Muslims. With the rise of extremist Muslim elements, however, Russia’s ambitions may be thwarted.

### **Russian Policy in Light of Western Interests and Radical Islamist Threats**

At the end of the 1990s, there was widespread fear in Russia that the US may try to use the Taliban to help American oil companies construct a pipeline from Central Asia to Pakistan. This fear was probably unfounded, however, given that for the West, this would be a poor direction for a potential pipeline, as it would strategically strengthen India, a growing and powerful (and democratic) competitor to the West. Rather, the preferred US and EU energy strategy was to allow the major flow of gas and oil from Central Asia to go via the Caspian and in the direction of Europe through Turkey (thus bypassing Russia).

Yet whether it is pipeline politics of geopolitics, Russia’s worry that Afghanistan can influence radical Islamization in the republics of Central Asia, and thus provide a danger to local authorities there, is a real concern. Indeed, there are several reasons that the leaders of the Central Asian countries are afraid of increased Islamism. One is that in the present political and economic climate, possible mass protests among local pauperized populations in Central Asia can easily influence larger Islamist movements. In all of the Central Asian republics, but especially in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, local illegal or semi-legal Islamists organizations exist. Some of these actors adhere the social concepts like revolutionary overthrow of the government (following the Taliban’s example), while others skilfully combine ideas of social justice with adherence to political democracy. But in the circumstances where there is a lack a pluralistic political democracy, the unpredictability of these groups can be dangerous, and indeed Tajikistan in the beginning of the 1990s and Uzbekistan in 2005 both saw large Islamic uprisings. Ultimately, these were suppressed by government forces, but they resulted in the deaths of hundreds if not thousands of citizens.

Politicized and radical Islam is considered to be dangerous by the Russians as well as by the local ruling elites in all of the Central Asian republics, and their governments, while officially Muslim themselves, have in recent years taken maximum precautions to head off radical elements in their societies. At the moment, all of the major ruling elites in the Central Asian states are the product of the old Soviet *nomenklatura* system (and, additionally, of local “clan systems”). As such, these elites, and the states in which they function, while formally rejecting communism at the same time preserve some former communist practices. By way of example, they have managed to convert their countries into hegemonic party states or even (in Turkmenistan) a one-party state, echoing how the Soviet Union and its East European socialist allies were run by a single party. The situation in Turkmenistan has always been emblematic of this. Although Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan have been more pluralistic, in Uzbekistan “democrats” have been squeezed out of all attempts at pluralism and have been wholeheartedly suppressed. While these states have been able to practice “guided democracy,” it has been necessary for them to retain Islamic traditions. Even though these states were declared to be secular, they have in reality needed the backing of the institutionalized forms of Islam within them, all while trying to subordinate the religion to state authorities (as Turkey had tried to do since it was under Mustafa Kemal Atatürk).

There is uncontroverted evidence that many followers of Islam in the Central Asian countries look up to Afghanistan as a neighboring country where their religion is not only acknowledged but actually allowed to flourish. This had led many of Central Asia’s Muslims to sympathize with the plight of the ordinary Afghans, both under old Soviet and current US occupations.

Moreover, there are other important circumstances beyond the religious connection through which Afghanistan manages to influence the post-Soviet Central Asian states. For instance, there are ethnic considerations to take note of. Neighboring Afghanistan is largely inhabited by people from similar ethnic groups as exist in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan (though not Kyrgyzstan). As a result, the leaders of the Central Asian republics, with Russia’s nod and support, have in recent years tried to establish buffer zones between kin warlords (for example, Uzbekistan did this implicitly by supporting the forces of General Abdul-Rashid Dostum [18], a former pro-Soviet high-ranking military man and an ethnic Uzbek, in Northern Afghanistan), or by establishing quite peaceful relations, and even developing systems of intensive trade, with the Taliban, as Turkmenistan was doing.

People in the Central Asian states look to Afghanistan for other reasons as well. As mentioned

already, there exists a massive (and very lucrative) narcotrafficking network that goes from Afghanistan into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. This network threatens all of the countries bordering Afghanistan, as well as Russia and the West. Likewise, the porous borders of this region allow for the smuggling and illegal trade of weapons.

Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the former Secretary General of NATO, identifies the basic problem in Afghanistan as being “not too much Taliban but too little good governance. Afghans need a government

that deserves their loyalty and trust; when they have it, the oxygen will be sucked away from the insurgency” [19]. While this may be true, Russia’s foreign policymakers are not waiting for the day for good governance to arrive. Rather, they have come up with a realistic, and multipronged, strategy to keep the situation in Afghanistan in check – all the while making sure that Russia’s interests in the war against terror are not superseded by the overarching, and in Russia’s view often conflicting, interests of the West<sup>1</sup>.

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## АФГАНИСТАН ЯК ФАКТОР ЗОВНІШНЬОЇ ПОЛІТИКИ РОСІЇ СТОСОВНО СЕРЕДНЬОЇ АЗІЇ ПІСЛЯ ПОДІЙ 11 ВЕРЕСНЯ 2001 р.

*В статті розглядається вплив сучасних подій в Афганістані на політику Росії в Центральній Азії та на її загальну політику стосовно держав цього регіону.*

<sup>1</sup> In this light, the Russian press has recently been giving detailed accusations of the extreme corruption among the Afghani leadership as well as its involvement in drug trafficking activities [20]. Moreover, the massive irregularities during the presidential election campaign in Afghanistan in August 2009 are viewed by Russia as adding instability to the region – and as not doing much to promote the rule of law in that country, or in the Central Asian region, in general.