

Confidential

RUSSIA

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Vadim Kozyulin reports from Moscow:

THE TERRORIST INTERNATIONAL:

IS THERE A FUTURE FOR A DEMOCRATIC AFGHANISTAN?

ANNOTATION

Experts trying to predict what Afghanistan's future will look like once NATO troops leave the country typically assume that a great deal will depend on the results of the April 2014 presidential election. Analysts agree that the main problems facing the current Afghan government - corruption, poor governance, low morale in the army - cannot be resolved while Karzai's government remains in power. The election offers a measure of hope that the new president will be able to deal with these problems.

Let us imagine that the presidential election has been a success, and, of the 11 candidates standing, the country has chosen a president who is popular with Afghanistan's ethnic groups, and restores order to the government, discipline to the security apparatus, effective governance in the regions and control to the public finances. This successful new president will have to reach an understanding with the Taliban and, in all probability, with al-Qaeda. That Afghanistan will barely resemble the democratic Afghanistan the members of ISAF (the International Security Assistance Force, which has been operating in Afghanistan under NATO leadership since 2001) have been trying to build over the past 12 years.

Although the primary aim of the NATO operation in Afghanistan was to destroy al-Qaeda, it is important to understand that the main war that was waged was against the idea of radical Islamism as a whole. This war has been lost, and the reason for this is not simply the crisis facing a pseudo-democratic Afghanistan, but the collapse of the idea of democracy in Iraq, Libya and Syria, and the element of crisis that has beset conservative Islam in those Muslim states that are deemed to be stable. For evidence, we need to look no further than the fact that al-Qaeda is now stronger than it ever was before the American invasion of Afghanistan.

Vadim Kozyulin, senior researcher at the PIR Center, has been trying to measure the impact of developed Islamism. His conclusion is that it could play a key role in determining Afghanistan's future. His assessment is that there is a tremendous risk that this country will not arrive at the sort of democratic future the West would like to see, and the global terrorist international, which is gaining in strength, will turn Afghanistan into a sharia, Islamist state.

The aim of the NATO operation in Afghanistan, which began shortly after the terror attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, was to destroy *al-Qaeda*, whose main infrastructure was located on Afghan territory controlled by the *Taliban* movement. Even so, it should be understood that the main war was waged against radical Islamism and global terrorism as a whole.

- *On September 20, 2001, speaking at a joint session of Congress, US President George W. Bush promised: "We will direct every resource at our command - every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war - to the destruction and to the defeat of the global terror network."*
- *On December 1, 2009, speaking at the United States Military Academy at West Point, US President Barack Obama said: "Our security is at stake in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This is the epicenter of violent extremism practiced by al-Qaeda. It is from here that we were attacked on 9/11, and it is from here that new attacks are being plotted... Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future."*
- *On December 21, 2009, in an interview for the magazine Der Spiegel, NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said: "With our troops, we must prevent Afghanistan from becoming a safe haven and pullback area for terrorists. Otherwise, they could use it as a base from which to advance into Central Asia and further. In addition, they would continue to destabilize neighboring Pakistan, a nuclear power. All of this would be very, very dangerous, both for others and for us."*

Now, more than 12 years after NATO launched its operation in Afghanistan, what we can assert is that the terrorist network is expanding rapidly, its morale has been strengthened by the dream of an Islamic caliphate, and the member countries of the anti-terror coalition may well have to shift from attack to defense.

According to US media, a secret American database containing information on potential terrorists has grown in size by 62% over the past five years - from 540,000 names to 875,000. The intelligence services admit that they do not currently know how to handle this huge amount of information efficiently. It could be said that this situation is typical of the United States' whole counterterrorism strategy: in their rush to take the lives of terrorists, the United States forgot about their souls. In particular, in Afghanistan, they cultivated a layer of pro-Western people who grew accustomed to sponging off overseas aid contributions and the drugs trade. These ineffectual administrators and weak commanders, who on January 1, 2015, will have to assume full responsibility for Afghanistan's fate, are doomed to remain alien to Afghan society, where opposition to everything associated with the American presence in Afghanistan is strong. With all this in mind, it is difficult not to conclude that this country will not arrive at the sort of democratic future the West would like to see, and the growing strength of the global terrorist international could turn Afghanistan into a sharia, Islamist state.

Whoever comes to power in Afghanistan's presidential election will have to confront the *Taliban* and other radical Islamist groups. The new government will have almost everything it needs to emerge successful from that confrontation: a well-equipped army with 350,000 soldiers, trained by experienced NATO instructors; the support of the international community (not a single state anywhere in the world will dare to show open support for the *Taliban*); American troops will supply the Afghan army with data obtained from the world's best electronic intelligence; those same American troops will also provide air cover for operations by Afghan troops. This will allow the future president to retain power. But it will not help him to secure complete victory over the Islamists. After all, what we are talking about at the present time is not victory over separate Islamist groups in specific countries, whether in Afghanistan, Africa or the Middle East. Radical Islamism has evolved into a global and international terrorist network that grows new tentacles with each passing day.

In 2001, al-Qaeda was identified as the embodiment of this global evil, and it seemed to have been defeated. Now, however, young Islamists all over the world see it as an honor to attach themselves to al-Qaeda. The network's followers are waging war in many parts of the world: following the killing of Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, which had lost central control, restructured itself and set up regional franchises, both large and small.

THE MODERN GEOGRAPHY OF RADICAL ISLAMISM



Map 1. Al-Qaeda cells around the world, 2013. Source: BBC.

IRAQ

In 2013, an *al-Qaeda* plot to produce chemical weapons and to smuggle them to Europe and the US was uncovered in Iraq. Three laboratories where poisonous substances, including mustard gas and sarin, were to be produced, were destroyed. Remote-controlled toy aircraft, to be used to drop the poisonous substances, were also found. In 2006-2007, members of *al-Qaeda* in Iraq detonated 16 primitive chlorine bombs. Over the course of 2013, 8,000 people were killed by the Iraqi affiliate of *al-Qaeda*, the *Islamic State of Iraq and Syria*. According to the American press, jihadists are sending around 30 to 40 suicide bombers from Syria to Iraq every month.

In April 2013, the leader of *al-Qaeda in Iraq*, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, announced a merger between *al-Qaeda* and the Syrian Islamist terrorist group *Jabhat al-Nusra*. He also revealed plans to wage jihad in Iraq, Syria and then Lebanon, in order to create the *Islamic State of Iraq and al-Shams* (Syria's ancient name). The main stated aim of this new group is to strengthen Islam's role in the Syrian conflict, and to build an Islamic state, the *al-Shams Caliphate*.

SYRIA

Since April 2011, the US ambassador in Syria, Robert Ford, has been saying that *al-Qaeda* is operating in the country. In December 2012, the Syrian group *Jabhat al-Nusra* was included by the US in a list of terrorist organizations with close links to *al-Qaeda*. Native Syrians account for only 5-8% of the group, with foreign mercenaries comprising the remainder.

In November 2012, Damascus sent to the UN Security Council an official list of 143 foreign nationals killed "in the course of terrorist activities" on Syrian territory. The list includes mercenaries from Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Egypt, Sudan, Libya, Afghanistan, Jordan, Turkey, Yemen, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Algeria, Chad, Pakistan and Palestine, as well as Chechnya and Afghanistan. The director of Russia's Federal Drug Control Service, Viktor Ivanov, has said the number of foreign mercenaries fighting in Syria is 15,000-20,000 people, including several thousand Afghans. Quoting sources in the Jordanian security services, the Saudi newspaper *al-Sharq* has reported that there are 6,000 *al-Qaeda* militants in the Syrian opposition. According to information published by *Die Welt*, quoting Germany's BND intelligence service, only 5% of the militants in Syria are Syrians, while the remaining 95% are foreigners. The organization estimates that, in total, there are 14,800 insurgents operating in Syria.

AFRICA

According to the former commander of the U.S. Africa Command, Carter Ham, there is an *arc of jihad* forming in Africa, stretching from Nigeria through Mali and Libya to Somalia. Radical

Islamist groups are collaborating with one another with ever greater energy, endangering Algeria, Mauritania, Tunisia, Burkina Faso and Niger. According to the American newspaper *World Tribune*, in 2013 the United States deployed 3,500 troops in 35 countries across Africa in order to combat the growing threat posed by *al-Qaeda* and other terrorist groups.

Algeria

Algeria has been home to the most unyielding Islamist fighters, who have set up well-armed extremist groups across North Africa. The main activities of these extremists have included taking hostages, trafficking and spreading tough Islamic rules across Algeria, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger, while attacking government facilities. In 2006, following lengthy ideological and theological discussions, the North African groups merged with Osama bin Laden's *al-Qaeda* under a new name - *al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb*.

Mali

In March 2013, there was a military coup in Mali, which led to separatists and fundamentalists linked to *al-Qaeda* taking control of the north of the country. Following the revolution in Libya, several hundred fighters from a Touareg movement that, since the 1990s, had existed in various forms and enjoyed the patronage of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi, returned to Mali, announced plans to seek independence and set up the *Touareg National Movement for the Liberation of Azawad*. Islamist groups *Ansar al Dine* and the *Movement for Monotheism and Jihad in West Africa* are also fighting for the creation of an independent state of Azawad in northern Mali, but based exclusively on sharia law. The Touareg group, initially driven by separatism, is gradually turning into a jihadist movement.

Kenya

In 2013, the Somali group *Harakat al-Shabab* made a statement by seizing the *Nakumatt Westgate* shopping centre in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi, and killing large numbers of hostages. Formed in 2004, this group of Somali Islamists now numbers around 3,000 militants. In February 2012, it merged with *al-Qaeda*, following an announcement by the latter's leader, *Ayman al-Zawahiri*.

Tunisia

Despite the fact that the Tunisian parliament recently adopted the most democratic constitution anywhere in the Arab world, *al-Qaeda* cells have made their way into most of this country's provinces. The jihadists plan to create a Great Caliphate under the patronage of the Wahhabi state of Saudi Arabia, with the territory of Tunisia as one of its emirates.

Nigeria

Since 2002, the radical Islamist sect *Boko Haram* has been pushing for the introduction of sharia law and agitating against Western culture (democratic elections, secular education etc). Over the past few years, it has killed thousands of Christians and policemen in northern Nigeria.

CENTRAL ASIA

In the past, the republics of Central Asia have on more than one occasion been attacked by militants arriving from Afghanistan. Corruption, the clan-based nature of the local regimes, unemployment and utter poverty create an environment that is conducive to the flourishing of the most Orthodox Islamic sects.

Tajikistan

In early 2013, a group of 800-1,000 Taliban fighters, largely consisting of foreigners - Uzbeks, Chechens, Tajiks, Turkmens and Pakistanis - seized control of the Warduj area of Badakhshan province in northern Afghanistan as they tried to establish a military and political foothold. Badakhshan is a strategic foothold situated on the borders of four countries - Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and China. The most active fighters were members of the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)*.

Only with the support of a foreign contingent were government troops able to force the militants out of Warduj. But in mid-April, fresh reports emerged of militants gathering

some 30-40 kilometers from the border with Tajikistan. According to the secretary of Kyrgyzstan's Defense Council, Busurmankul Tabaldiyev, militants from Central Asia and the North Caucasus, supported by the *Taliban*, were at the heart of this group.

The way in which the confrontation developed in Badakhshan could be seen as a rehearsal for the situation that may arise in Afghanistan once the Western coalition has withdrawn all of its troops in 2014. The weapons Russia has delivered to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are meant to be used to combat these threats. Officials attending meetings of the CSTO agree that the terrorist international is standing right by the gates to Central Asia.

Kyrgyzstan

Over a number of years, analysts have been saying that radical Islam has penetrated the republic. In 2012, a court in Kyrgyzstan ruled that *Jaish al Mahdi*, *Jund al-Khalifa*, *Ansar Allah* and *Takfir wa al-Hijra*, which are all part of the Salafi takfiri-jihadi movement, were terrorist and extremist organizations. Meanwhile, *Tablighi Jamaat*, a movement that is banned in Tajikistan, Russia and Kazakhstan, openly advocates the creation of a Kyrgyz caliphate at border posts. Law-enforcement agencies estimate that there are currently around 250 Kyrgyz nationals in the ranks of the *Taliban*, and in future they may pose a threat to their homeland.

Uzbekistan

According to the analytical department of Uzbekistan's national security service, members of the *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* hiding in the mountainous Pakistani region of Waziristan have stepped up their recruitment and training of militants in the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan. *IMU* aims to topple President Islom Karimov and to set up an Islamic caliphate across the whole of Central Asia.

Turkmenistan

Despite its proven ability to reach agreement with any government in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan faces the danger of a confrontation with representatives of the so-called *Turkmen Jamaat*, which has territorial claims against Turkmenistan in the area of Mary and Serakhsa. Afghanistan's Faryab province, which borders on Turkmenistan, is turning into a theatre of combat between local police and militias, on the one hand, and the *Taliban* and members of the *IMU*, on the other. While Saparmurat Niyazov was president, Ashgabat was friendly with Mullah Omar, but the political plans of the *IMU* are linked to the countries of Central Asia - it is no coincidence that one of the alternative names for the *IMU* is the Islamic Movement of Turkestan.

Kazakhstan

In 2011-2012, previously unknown jihadist groups committed a record number of acts of terrorism in western and southern Kazakhstan. Most of the terrorists called themselves *Jund al-Khalifa (Soldiers of the Caliphate)*. The group's roots lie in the tribal areas of Pakistan, where it was set up in 2001 by several militants with Kazakh passports. In Kazakhstan, the *Soldiers* have up to 10 groups involved in studying bomb-making and mine-laying, with plans to carry out terror attacks against the state and the public.

PAKISTAN

Over the course of the operation in Afghanistan, the US government was convinced time and time again that Islamabad, which in 2001 had agreed to cooperate with coalition forces out of a fear of missile strikes against Taliban bases on the Pakistani-Afghan border, had all those years been supporting the *Taliban*. Several armed groups found sanctuary in Pakistan: *al-Qaeda*, *Lashkar-e Taiba*, *Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan* and the *Haqqani* network. For 12 years, the Pakistani army and the ISI military intelligence played a double game, killing militants and at the same time helping them. Pakistan paid a heavy price for this, with a sharp upsurge in Islamism and terrorism inside the country. Now, with the climax of the Afghan drama just around the corner, the ISI will try to ensure that neither the United States nor India is a *beneficiary* from Pakistan's sacrifices.

CHINA

On October 28, 2013, an act of terrorism was committed on Tiananmen Square in Beijing. A car blew up, killing five people and injuring 38 others. The secretary of the Central Law and Politics Commission of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Meng Jianzhu, who was visiting Tashkent at the time, said that the terror attack on Tiananmen Square had *secretly been ordered* by the *Islamic Movement of East Turkestan*, which is suspected of maintaining links with the *Taliban* and *al-Qaeda*.

SPECTER OF ISLAMISM WANDERING ACROSS EUROPE

Although it has long been known that terrorist cells are operating in a number of countries in the Old World, it has become clear over the past two years that *al-Qaeda* is stepping up its activities in Europe.

In August 2013, the United States National Security Agency announced that *al-Qaeda* was planning a series of terror attacks in Europe. In November, a group of ethnic Albanians were arrested in the partially recognized Republic of Kosovo on suspicion of links to *al-Qaeda*. One of them, Genc Selimi, had recently returned from Syria, where he fought with the jihadists. During questioning, he said that the global terrorist network had serious plans in the Balkan peninsula and would soon "announce its presence for all to hear". According to the police in Kosovo, the detainees were planning to carry out a string of terror attacks in Pristina and northern Kosovo.

In 2013, the countries of Europe had to admit that they were effectively becoming suppliers of extremists to the war in Syria. A large proportion of European Islamists are members of the jihadist group *Jabhat al-Nusra*, which was set up in January 2012 and has close links with *al-Qaeda*. Based on their monitoring of Islamist websites, experts at the international centre for the study of radical trends, based at King's College London, counted some 600 Europeans among the ranks of the Syrian opposition, which they say equates to 11% of the total number of foreign mercenaries.

Aware as they are that, sooner or later, European extremists will become a problem for Europe, law-enforcement agencies from EU member countries are proposing that radical Islamists be deported. Meanwhile, the law-enforcement agencies are trying to monitor how terrorism is being funded.

RUSSIA - IN AN AREA OF RISK

In the run-up to the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi, Russia has once again experienced the terrorist threat that was commonplace in the early 2000s. In late 2013, suicide bombers attacked Volgograd three times: they blew up a bus, then there was an explosion at a railway station, and then, a day later, they blew up a trolleybus.

On November 7, 2013, 15 members of *Takfir wa al-Hijra* were detained in eastern Moscow. A large quantity of weapons and explosives was seized. It emerged that the extremists were disseminating jihadist literature in mosques around Moscow, and organising clandestine meetings at which they preached radical ideas and raised funds for Islamic fundamentalists in Russia and abroad. The Russian affiliate of *Takfir wa al-Hijra* formed in Naberezhnyye Chelny in Tatarstan, from where 17 members moved to Afghanistan in 1999 and launched an illegal armed group called *Bulgar Jamaat*. In 2001, as the United States launched its counterterrorism operation in Afghanistan, the group's surviving members moved on to Pakistan. Since 2011, the group has acquired reinforcements and has been receiving combat training from rebels in Syria. After returning to Russia in 2012-13, members of the organization carried out armed assaults and killings of law-enforcement officers.

According to FSB Director Alexander Bortnikov, around 200 Russians are fighting against government troops in Syria, on the side of *Imarat Kavkaz* under the banner of *al-Qaeda*. Wahhabis have spread out across Ingushetia and Dagestan, and have started to rear their heads in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan. In 2012, Tatarstan's ministry of internal affairs said that there were 103 members of the international terrorist organizations *Hizb ut-*

Tahrir al-Islami and *Tablighi Jamaat* in the republic. Graduates from the Yoldyz Islamic school, located in Naberezhnyye Chelny, have been seen fighting for armed Islamist groups in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Tajikistan. After the law-enforcement agencies received this information, Yoldyz was closed down.

Observers note that Chechen militants are prominent in many of the world's conflicts, including in Afghanistan, Syria and Iraq. According to the US-based Jamestown Foundation, there are currently three groups operating in Syria that have significant numbers of people from Chechnya: *Jaish Muhammad*, *Qataib Khattab* and *Qataib Muhajirin*.

So whereas at one time Russia used to attract radicals from around the world, today our country has turned into a supplier of militants for the world's hotspots.

EPILOGUE

If, in 2001, the international community could list its main enemies by name - *al-Qaeda* leader Osama bin Laden, *Taliban* leader Mullah Omar and several lesser figures - now, the old *mujahidin* who came together during the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan are starting to be squeezed out by young militants from the so-called fourth generation. What sets them apart is their radical maximalism and their cruelty. They have inherited an attitude of irreconcilability to occupation, but, influenced by sponsors from the countries of the Persian Gulf, their plans have gone further: they want to *destroy the Old World completely*, and to build an Islamic caliphate in its stead.

The next president of Afghanistan will have almost everything he needs in order to succeed in the struggle against the Islamists. Those who will be confronting him will have neither artillery nor aviation, neither heavy materiel nor air defense systems. They will have to be ready for the prospect that their communications systems could be used by drones and high-precision missiles to target them. But the idea of an all-conquering radical Islam may be a factor that will outweigh all others, because it represents the glory of victory over two superpowers and an extensive international network that lures new generations of fighters with promises of the pleasures of paradise.

Afghanistan's leader is hardly likely to find other ideas and words that exert as much of an influence on Afghanistan's Muslims. He will need either to wait until the Islamists themselves lose the trust of the public in the areas they have conquered (something that should happen sooner or later), or to adopt their radical slogans and lead an upsurge in Islamist sentiment.

Maybe that is why President Karzai unexpectedly span out of control and started issuing demands to the Americans, the like of which, previously, might only have been heard from representatives of the *Taliban*: for example, the release of Afghan prisoners from Guantanamo, an end to U.S. special forces operations against the *Taliban* in Afghanistan, or an end to bombings of *Taliban* bases in Pakistan. In the next few days, the Afghan authorities plan to release several dozen *Taliban* fighters from the Bagram military base, despite the fact that Washington considers them to be dangerous if freed. Much to the disappointment of the United States, Karzai has point-blank refused to sign the Bilateral Security Agreement. Are we not seeing signs that Karzai is already readying a safe place for himself, on the side of the *real victors*?

April's elections in Afghanistan may signal that an optimistic road map for Afghanistan passes through an Islamic caliphate. But will that sort of Afghanistan inspire optimism among Western sponsors? And how will the secular states of Central Asia be able to live with that type of neighbor, if that neighbor becomes a banner and a stronghold for the Islamist international?

(c) Trialogue Club International: trialogue@pircenter.org;

(c) Centre russe d'études politiques: crep@pircenter.org

Moscow - Geneva, February 2014

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As you know, we are always very happy and appreciative when current members of the Club **recommend Club membership** or participation in our events to their friends and colleagues. Such a recommendation means an automatic membership offer. In addition, we are offering rewards for bringing new members to the Club; the details are outlined below. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact my colleagues at: +7 (985) 764-98-96, or email: trialogue@pircenter.org.

The Club's doors are always open for you and your colleagues!

Best regards

Dmitry Polikanov
Chairman
Trialogue Club International

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