Regional Conference on Preventing Violent Extremism in Central Asia

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Security threat from Afghanistan: Under- or overrated?

Shahrbanou Tadjbakhsh shahrbanou@yahoo.com

- Governments: Part of global war on terror, opportunity to get support
- Russians, CSTO: protect the 'common' border
- China: Uighur extremism
- Afghans: Going to Central Asia
- US and Everyone: New ISIS front after Iraq/Syria?
- International organizations: Instability, Potential for massive migration.

The hype: Who wants to know?

- Since 2009, especially in past 2 years. AGE control of territory.
- Since 2009, civilian losses up by 35% In provinces adjacent to Pakistan, but by 530% in CA neighboring provinces
- 2015: 25 administrative centers, as opposed to 4 in 2014,
- 15 in provinces border CA, 11 provinces border Tajikistan, as opposed to 4 in South (Helmand, Kandahar), 2 in Farah (close to Iran), 1 in Nuristan (Eastern Af).
- CA Jihadis have left Pakistan
- Reports of training camps close to border
- Reports of CA fighters settling in Afghanistan after Syria or going there directly

What's the threat? The case for fear

- Taliban, Haqqani Network, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Islamic Party,
- ISIS flag raised in Yumgan, Warduj in Badakhshan.
- Narco mafias: drug laboratories, smuggling via Tajikistan, clashes on the border.
- Transit point to northeastern and northern provinces
- Financial center: Raghistan District infighting for goldpanning sites and emerald deposits.

Badakhshan

- The Taliban Emirate: Expand territories under their control, take power, impose their rules; capture provincial administrative centers
- New ISIS Kalifate front: Wilayat-e Khorasan: Eye to region, transnational, sectarianism
- Al Qaeda: Bridge with networks
- Central Asian jihadis: Mercenaries and ideologues
- Local salafi groups: takfirism
- Narco groups

The puzzle: Wo are «they» and what do they want?

- Radicalization growing fast and furious
- Recruitment to ISIS territory not the only story
- More problematic is the radicalization within, as a social movement: Takfiri, salafi, sectarian views
- Law and order approach to those going to ISIS, Islamic party etc. but how do you stop the minds?

Threat to Central Asia: Inside/outside radicalization connection

- Is there a push factor/ a motivation?
- Is there a pull factor/ A favorable environment?
- Is there a chance of success? (vulnerability in defense? Popular support? Depose states?)
- Is there a favorable regional/international environment? (resources, attention, center of jihad?)

The investigation: Are they coming to Central Asia?

• Direct threat:

- Limited attacks to probe the border, project power or enable small breakthrough to set up networks
- Increase in drug trafficking on Tajik and Turkmen border as territory is taken
- Parking for future jihadis
- Gradual infiltration of small groups of CA militants
- Fire growing in your neighbor's house

• Indirect threat:

- Refugee influx
- Borders challenges,
- No people to people contacts: bridges, bazaars, connections
- Impetus for emboldened potential fighters
- Influence on Radicalization

No, But still a threat

Short term

- Radicalization not necessary violent nor political. For now.
- Threat is not big enough to destabilize... yet
- Interest is not on CA

Medium to short term:

- Political radicalization, checked, but social radicalization is preparing the ground for extremist mindset
- Fracture between state and society?

Long term:

- New ISIS front in Afghanistan, bad news
- New motivation: Sectarian, bad news

Need for broad approach, open conversation, realistic scenarios

Conclusions/ predictions