Afghanistan After 2014 Part 2

What might be the possible scenarios of the development of the military and political situation in Afghanistan in the period after 2014?

Scenario No. 1. Fragmentation of the country. Due to the split within the national elite of Afghanistan which emerged following the latest presidential elections, contradictions remain in the country regarding the Pashtun centre and south and the Tajik-Uzbek north. Presently, the political structure of Afghanistan constitutes a conglomerate of provinces, where there is no political coherence that would be provided by the central government, whose task should be ensuring interaction between the provincial elites, with the preservation of their self-sufficiency to a considerable extent, which has always been Afghan society's natural state.

Scenario No. 2. Confederal political order of the country. This scenario provides for keeping a limited US military presence to support the existing regime until a political solution to the Afghan problem is found that would be acceptable for the United States.

Confederal state order of Afghanistan may well be consistent with the interests of the United States. In that case, the Americans get the opportunity to exert influence by providing economic, military and humanitarian assistance for each of the regional elites separately, with the central government – a nominal symbol of a united state – being based in Kabul and governed from Washington. In this case, the Americans will be able to keep their bases and military grouping in the country for an indefinite period of time under the pretext of the need to preserve the country’s integrity, at the request of the central government and with the acquiescence of the regional elites subsidised from abroad. Thus, Washington will retain a bridgehead for exerting military and political influence on Iran, China, Russia, Pakistan and the Central Asian states. As for the Taliban, it will be squeezed out into the area of the Pashtun tribes, and the Americans will be able to neutralise the threat coming from that side with the help of targeted strikes from unmanned aircraft.

But there is also the third, most pessimistic scenario. It is the creation by the Taliban of a military and political bridgehead in the Wurduj district, Badakhshan province; they have already created an enhanced area in the north and have been gradually expanding their influence to the neighbouring districts of Jurm and Yamgan. And the Taliban carries out its activities jointly with the militants of Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

The activity of the Wurduj grouping of the Taliban can have the following implications:

- demonstrating the expansion of the zone of its influence, with the further spreading to the southern and eastern provinces of the country;
- preparing for the capture of Northern Afghanistan and the subsequent attack on the north – Central Asia. Here we can expect that the strength of the Afghan-Tajikistan border will be tested, especially considering that a large
The percentage of the militants are Tajiks;

- provoking the central government to conduct a military counter-terrorist operation in the Wurduj district in order to destroy the government forces and eliminate the influence of Karzai's government.

It should not be ruled out that the Kabul government will have to brace itself for prolonged fighting in Badakhshan. And H. Karzai will be asking the Western coalition for aviation support. But if a critical situation arises, he might go for help on this issue to the Central Asian states, and it is quite possible that his request will be heard not only in Tashkent and Dushanbe, but also by the political leadership of the CSTO.

Time will tell what the next chapter in the history of Afghanistan will be like, but one thing is obvious: the political game around this country will be increasingly multifaceted and controversial. It is unlikely that the shaping of the Afghan political system will be completed in 2014. Therefore, it is unlikely that Washington will leave this country without its security umbrella. It has already been announced that the Americans are going to keep about 12 thousand troops at several military bases in the country.

In our view, the most sensible thing to do for both Kabul and the external players in the Afghan political field would be to ensure wide autonomy of the country's provinces, while the central government would retain such key functions as the monitoring of power structures, the financial sphere, the implementation of the country's economic development programmes, the distribution of external economic aid, and the implementation of the foreign and defence policies. The importance of the stabilisation of the situation in Afghanistan is a priority area for the modern globalized world – there is no doubt about that. It is in the interests of many regional and extraregional states.

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