

FACTORS AFFECTING BORDER SECURITY IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN REGION AND SOLUTIONS TO THEIR PROBLEMS

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Abstract

This article presents border-related issues that affect border security in the Central Asian region. It also highlights the measures being implemented to ensure border security and the ways to resolve these issues.

Keywords

border security, negotiations, border issues, delimitation, demarcation, ratification.

Today, in order to ensure national security, the Republic of Uzbekistan is pursuing an open border policy based on good neighborliness and friendship. Problems arising along state borders are being resolved in advance through diplomatic means.

The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces, Sh. M. Mirziyoyev, emphasized: "In the current complex global environment, we will consistently pursue an open and pragmatic foreign policy based on mutual trust and respect. Going forward, we will continue to focus on strengthening multifaceted and mutually beneficial cooperation with all neighboring countries in Central Asia, as well as with our strategic partners around the world and international organizations. We will take our efforts to ensure national security and enhance the combat capability of our Armed Forces to a new level..." [1].

As a result of the efforts of our leadership, treaties have been signed with neighboring states on the most complex and previously unresolved sections of border lines, and border issues are being resolved through peaceful means.

In this regard, our Constitution states: “The Republic of Uzbekistan determines its national-state and administrative-territorial structure, establishes the system of state authorities, and conducts its domestic and foreign policy. The state border and territory of Uzbekistan are inviolable and indivisible” [2].

Indeed, at present, the situation in the border areas of the Central Asian states is closely interconnected with the border security of the Republic of Uzbekistan. The main objective of the Border Troops of the Republic of Uzbekistan is to ensure the security of the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

As a result of negotiations conducted by the Republic of Uzbekistan, the current status of the State Border with neighboring Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Afghanistan is as follows:

- The total length of the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan is **7,111.976 km**;
- With the Republic of Kazakhstan – **2,356.666 km**;
- With the Kyrgyz Republic – **1,476.12 km**;
- With the Republic of Tajikistan – **1,304.70 km**;
- With Turkmenistan – **1,831.49 km**;
- With Afghanistan – **143 km**.

Through an open border policy based on good neighborliness and friendship, delimitation agreements have been formalized along **4,596.31 km** of the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and demarcation has been completed along **2,356.666 km** (with the Republic of Kazakhstan).

At present, delimitation has not been completed along a total of **16 km** of the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan in **five areas**, including:

- The Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Turkmenistan junction point – **4.9 km**;
- The Uzbekistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan junction point – **2.6 km**;
- The Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan junction point – **6.2 km**;
- The “Farhod Dam” area on the Uzbekistan-Tajikistan State Border – **2.2 km**;
- The “Chashma” area on the Uzbekistan-Kyrgyzstan State Border – **0.1 km**.

Border policy pursued in the Kazakhstan direction:

- On **December 22, 2022**, in the city of Tashkent, the Agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan on the demarcation of the Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan State Border was signed. It was ratified by the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan No. **849** dated **June 30, 2023**, and entered into force on **July**

4, 2023. In accordance with this agreement, pursuant to the agreement signed on **June 15, 2001**, the starting point of the Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan State Border is defined as the junction point of the State Borders of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and the Kyrgyz Republic.

– According to the Agreement signed on **November 10, 2017**, the final point of the Uzbekistan–Kazakhstan State Border is the junction point of the State Borders of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Republic of Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan.

Border policy pursued in the Kyrgyzstan direction:

– Based on the Agreements between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic on the Uzbek–Kyrgyz State Border dated **September 15, 2017**, and **November 3, 2022**, a total of **302.29 km** of the State Border between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Kyrgyz Republic has been delimited.

– In accordance with **Article 8** of the Agreement, the High Contracting Parties agreed to regulate the territory between border point No. **484a** and border point No. **484b**, where the “Chashma” spring is located on the Uzbekistan–Kyrgyzstan State Border, by a separate intergovernmental agreement.

Border policy pursued in the Tajikistan direction:

– Based on the Agreements between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of Tajikistan on the Uzbek–Tajik State Border dated **October 5, 2002**, and **March 9, 2018**, a total of **1,296.9 km** of the State Border has been delimited, and a **49-year cooperation agreement** was signed to ensure the operation of the “Farhod” Dam.

Border policy pursued in the Turkmenistan direction:

– In accordance with the Agreement between the Republic of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan on the Uzbek–Turkmen State Border dated **October 21, 2000**, a total of **1,826.59 km** of the State Border has been delimited.

Border policy pursued in the Afghanistan direction:

– The State Border between the Republic of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan has not undergone legal ratification procedures. De facto, the State Border is defined along the course of the Amu Darya River in accordance with the Agreement on border issues between the former Soviet Union and Afghanistan (1946), the Treaty between the Government of the Soviet Union and the Royal Government of Afghanistan on the regime of the Soviet–Afghan State Border (1958), as well as the redemarcation documents of **1978–1987**. Currently, the protection of the State Border between the two countries is carried out along this border line.

However, there are also threats that negatively affect and pose risks to the border security of the Central Asian states, including:

- the geopolitical situation in the Republic of Afghanistan and existing problems along the State Border;
- the lack of agreement over certain border areas, that is, the absence of clearly defined border lines, which causes conflicts among local populations in border villages and leads to border disputes;
- problems related to the use of water and land resources;
- the expansion of activities of foreign terrorist militants and the threat they pose to Central Asia;
- illegal trafficking of narcotic substances across the State Border;
- the interests pursued by developed foreign states in Central Asia;
- mass illegal migration.

Various socio-economic factors influence the formation of the migration situation of most labor migrants, including low wages, high unemployment rates, brain drain, high levels of corruption and the existence of a shadow economy, religious revival and changes in the religious environment, as well as the threat of terrorism.

At present, another negative aspect of migration is that migrant flows from Central Asia often include supporters of radical Islamic movements and regional nationalism. Due to strict legislation against religious fundamentalists in Central Asian states, such individuals are often relocated to the territories of Russia or Ukraine in order to join local radical groups. As a result, illegal migrants frequently become involved in criminal environments, contribute to the formation of armed criminal groups, and facilitate the internationalization of organized crime. Naturally, the consequences of this situation inevitably affect the border security of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

According to experts, illegal migration routes, as a rule, coincide with routes used for drug trafficking, and illegal migration channels themselves are often used to transport terrorists, weapons, and instruments of terror and sabotage. An analysis of criminal activity related to illegal border crossings shows an unprecedented increase, posing a real threat to the security of many states. For this reason, special attention is currently being paid to border security.

At the same time, in order to strengthen trade, tourism relations, and cultural exchanges in the Central Asian region, and to increase the movement of people, emphasis is being placed on creating favorable conditions for citizens and foreign visitors when crossing the State Border through border crossing points.

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that it is necessary to:

- resolve issues of delimitation of State Borders between Central Asian states through peaceful means;
- prevent the entry of foreign terrorist militants, narcotic substances, and weapons through the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- prevent illegal migration across the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- determine priority directions for ensuring the security of the State Border of Uzbekistan, taking into account current risks and threats.

Proposals:

- to develop cross-border cooperation among Central Asian states;
- to widely use modern information and communication technologies in guarding the State Border of the Republic of Uzbekistan;
- to establish effective cooperation and coordination among border troop units, law enforcement agencies, and local state authorities;
- to comprehensively address issues related to enhancing the professional competence of border troops' military personnel, educating them in the spirit of military patriotism, and ensuring their social protection;
- to create an open platform for discussing current trends and challenges in the field of border security in Central Asian states, as well as for mutual exchange of knowledge and skills.

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