

**THE SPECTRE OF AFGHANISTAN:  
SECURITY IN CENTRAL ASIA**

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Received: 23.12.2021

Accepted: 04.01.2022

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**Kirill Nourzhanov and Amin Saikal.** *The Spectre of Afghanistan: Security in Central Asia.* London, I.B.TAURIS Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., 2021, pp. 249.

In 2001, when the US and NATO troops entered Afghanistan in order to fight against terrorism and establish democracy in the country, the Central Asian countries hoped that security and stability would be established in this region. However, the US counter-terrorism campaign has not been implemented. Moreover, the announcement of the withdrawal of US and NATO troops from Afghanistan in 2014 put the Central Asian countries at a disadvantage. This decision began to lead to a weakening of the central government of Afghanistan, an increase in the number of extremists, an influx of weapons and drugs. This book, which is consisted of five parts, extensively analyzes the evolution of the Afghan threat and how Central Asian states are countering this threat.

The first chapter examines the ongoing conflicts and the process of stabilization and strengthening of security, which began in 2001 in Afghanistan. First of all, the authors focus on the background of the Taliban movement, i.e. the situation in the country before 2001. After 9/11 the US launched a military operation in Afghanistan in order to make free from the influence of the Taliban and to destruct Al-Qaeda's bases. Then authors analyze of US-Afghanistan relations, which deteriorated during Karzai's second term and Ghani's unsuccessful attempt to restore it. The last part explains that the original goal of turning Afghanistan into a stable, secure, and prosperous country, proposed by all US presidents at that period, has not been achieved, because of not taking into account Afghan local culture.

The second chapter analyzes the process of securitization and desecuritization of the Afghan threat regarding the countries of Central Asia. The authors emphasize threats such as terrorism and radicalization, drug trafficking, the spread of hostilities from Afghanistan, humanitarian crises and refugee flows, cross-border ethnicity, and the risk of involvement in the great power rivalry. This chapter compares the hierarchy and intensity of securitization of Central Asian states and concludes that they differ between countries depending on national policies. The threat of terrorism in this region has been seriously raised with the appearance of ISIS. The governments of the Central Asian countries continue to pursue an active and joint policy regarding the problem of drug trafficking from Afghanistan and pay careful attention to the problem of the spread of armed conflict from the territory of Afghanistan. The chapter puts forward the fact that the refugee problems that have arisen due to the destabilization in Afghanistan are not so acute compared to the beginning of the 2000s. The great powers can use the Afghan threat for their interests such as influence on Central Asia. Thus,

the authors have analyzed all possible threats that could affect the destabilization of Central Asia.

The third chapter discusses how the great powers influence the Central Asian states' policy regarding Afghanistan and how they are implemented in practice, as well as the reaction of the Central Asian states to the Afghan threat. The authors focus on bilateral and multilateral relations between Afghanistan and Central Asian countries in the field of economic and military cooperation as well as attempts to resolve the Afghan crisis through diplomacy. The economic contribution of Central Asia to the Afghan crisis was mainly aimed at supporting the needs of coalition forces and humanitarian projects. Central Asia did not conduct open trade and invest in Afghanistan's economy. Instead of this, they turned all their attention to strengthening their own security.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the study of the role of the foreign policy of Washington, Moscow, and Beijing regarding the countries of Central Asia. The authors examined the influence of these great powers on ensuring the national security of Central Asian countries. The great powers differ in their views on the Afghanistan question and are trying to take different convenient steps for themselves. However, influential powers do not always get what they want. Those countries on which they want to impose their policies also have own national interests. The authors noted that, unlike the US, China and Russia are more successful in the question of mutual understanding with the Central Asian states on the Afghan threat. Insufficient integration of the US with the countries of Central Asia reduces its political influence on these countries. Russia and China, on the contrary, are considered more influential because their assessment of the risk of the Afghan threat corresponds to the assessment of the Central Asian countries.

The final chapter summarizes the results of all the events that have occurred in recent years in Central Asia. It also analyzes and provides forecasts on the prospects for regional cooperation. The authors emphasize that Central Asia could become an important player in strengthening peace and stability after a number of important events such as conducting more friendly relations between Uzbekistan and its neighbors, as well as the initiative of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in achieving peace and harmony in Afghanistan. These states have shown themselves to be the main supporters of the peaceful settlement of the Afghan crisis and put forward that they are not participants in geopolitical conflicts. The authors are sure that Central Asian states have understood that cooperation with Afghanistan on security issues is possible, but complete desecuritization is impossible in the near future. The Afghan issue will not cease to be a threat to the national security of the Central Asian countries.

In this book, the authors mostly used and argued the analysis and researches of authors from Central Asia, rather than Western and third-party researchers. This kind of act positively characterizes the book, as local researchers and analysts assess the situation in fact and objectively. The book is written in an understandable language, and the issues related to the topic are studied in detail. This book is very useful for researchers who are working on the Afghan problem.