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CHINESE PERSPECTIVES ON AFGHANISTAN

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The Digest might be of interest to those non-Chinese speakers who are interested in Chinese perspectives on global issues.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHINESE PERSPECTIVES ON AFGHANISTAN

	CHINA'S OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE AFGHAN ISSUE	
TOPIC 1	AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL AND THE UNDERLYING REASONS FOR THE U.S. FAILURE	01
TOPIC 2	RESEARCH ON THE AFGHAN TALIBAN	26
TOPIC 3	CHINA-U.S. COOPERATION ON THE AFGHANISTAN SITUATION	34
TOPIC 4	EFFECTS OF THE AFGHAN POLITICS ON INTERNATIONAL ORDER	39
TOPIC 5	THE IMPACT OF THE AFGHAN ISSUE ON THE FUTURE POLITICAL DYNAMICS OF THE MIDDLE EAST	43
TOPIC 6	CHINA-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER	48
TOPIC 7	EU-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER	53
	REFERENCES	59

CHINA'S OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE AFGHAN ISSUE (2021)

State Councilor and Foreign Minister **Wang Yi** talking about China's policy toward Afghanistan, on October 26, 2021



“As the situation in Afghanistan is undergoing a major turning point, China first put forward four expectations for the future of Afghanistan, including: first, build a more open and inclusive political structure in which all ethnic groups and factions should participate and play a role; second, implement moderate and prudent domestic and foreign policies, including the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of women and children; third, make a clear break with all terrorist forces including the Islamic State and the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and take measures to resolutely combat them; fourth, pursue a peaceful foreign policy and live in harmony with other countries, especially its neighbors.

China maintains that the international community should uphold an attitude of equality and respect, engage and communicate with all parties and ethnic groups in Afghanistan, and provide active guidance in order to reach those goals. China do not approve of indiscriminately exerting pressure, and are even more opposed to threats with sanctions. Afghanistan is a sovereign country, and the Afghan nation is a nation with a strong spirit of independence. The history of Afghanistan and many international events prove that pointing fingers at an independent nation often brings counterproductive results. Interfering in the internal affairs of a country at every turn violates the basic norms of international relations. As long as we remain patient, proceed step by step, and actively interact with the Afghan interim government and other parties and ethnic groups, I believe the Afghan Taliban will be able to understand more clearly what actions are more in line with the fundamental and long-term interests of the Afghan people, as well as the expectations of all parties, in order to be more smoothly integrated into the international community.

China is Afghanistan's neighboring country and the two peoples enjoy long-lasting and friendly exchanges. China's policy toward Afghanistan is clear and consistent. We respect the sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of Afghanistan, respect the Afghan people's active exploration of a development path that suits its own national conditions, and respect the objective reality of the Afghan interim government's efforts on governance throughout the country. China has never interfered in Afghanistan's internal affairs, nor has it sought its own interests or a sphere of influence in Afghanistan. We will continue to listen to the voices and needs of the Afghan people and play a constructive role in restoring stability and achieving development in Afghanistan within our capacity.

Regarding the temporary difficulties facing Afghanistan, we need to point out clearly that the United States and some Western countries bear the unshirkable responsibility. China calls on and urges these countries to assume their due responsibilities and take practical actions as soon as possible to effectively help alleviate any potential humanitarian crisis and truly do some practical work for the Afghan people's benefit. The international community should make concerted efforts to ensure the implementation of the "Afghan-owned and Afghan-led" principle.”

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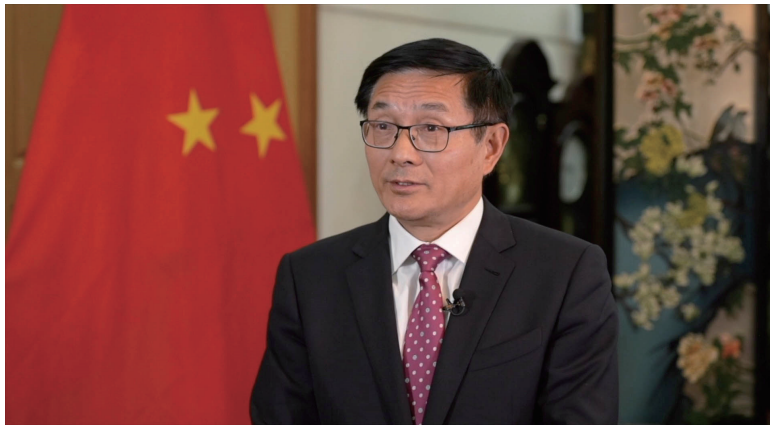
https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/gjhdq_665435/2675_665437/2676_663356/2678_663360/202110/t20211027_10413234.html



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CHINA'S OFFICIAL POSITION ON THE AFGHAN ISSUE (2021)

Special Envoy for Afghan Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador **Yue Xiaoyong**'s exclusive interview with CGTN, on August 24, 2021



First and foremost, we (China) respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan, and we want to stick to “Afghan-led, Afghan-owned” principle in all our handling of this crisis and in all our efforts both by China, and by China with other countries. We emphasize that we should bring together the unity of the international society to put our efforts together for the peace and stability and inter-talk for the reconciliation of the country.

Secondly, we (China) continue to fight the terrorism and together with the stakeholders of Afghanistan to make sure Taliban and others make a clean break away from terrorist groups.

Thirdly, we would like to see the situation calm down as soon as possible and to see the reconciliation take place.

There are still some uncertainties here and there inside the country. We hope that the Afghan people, the Taliban, and other stakeholders of the country would continue to work towards peace, stability, reconciliation, and an inclusive government which would fight against terrorism and (aim to build) a friendly relation with the neighboring regional international society. We hope that everything will go to the positive and constructive direction. On one hand, we respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity and independence; at the same time, we try to create an environment for them to realize peace and stability of the country and the security of the country.

Now, in this moment of crisis, we are with the Afghan people, we are with Afghanistan, and together working with neighboring and regional countries and the international society (to achieve peace in the region). We have been trying our best all along, both from the humanitarian side, and from our bilateral side, and from our crisis management side.

Full interview is available online:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6LaX3y8W_4



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TOPIC 1

AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL AND THE UNDERLYING REASONS FOR THE U.S. FAILURE

THE U.S. ENDED THE TWENTY-YEAR WAR IN AFGHANISTAN, WHAT ABOUT THE MESS THEY LEFT IN THE COUNTRY?

《美国结束 20 年最长战争，阿富汗的烂摊子怎么办》



Author: Prof. YU Hongjun

Former Chinese Ambassador to Uzbekistan

Former Vice Minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee

iGCU Academic Committee Member

Abstract

The author believes that after the U.S. and NATO withdrawal, different factions within Afghanistan will aggressively compete against each other to construct a new regime and the country's future development. Therefore, the entire situation inside may become precarious as the hostile competitive nature surfaces. In terms of politics, China has been participating in promoting certain fundamental principles or propositions to help solve Afghanistan's problems. To a certain extent, China's action has been recognized and supported by the Ashraf Ghani-led government (the former Afghan government) and the Taliban. The author also believes that China can play a positive role in many aspects of the Afghan issues, including the facilitation of the Afghan peace talks, the reconstruction of the country, etc.

Comments by iGCU

As Ambassador Yu's interview occurred in April 2021, no one would have known that the Taliban could quickly overthrow the Ghani government. Thus, some of the opinions that appeared in his interview might be slightly different from the current situation in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Amb. Yu still provided a thorough analysis of various parties' withdrawal backgrounds and motives, and predicted the new power dynamic in Afghanistan after U.S. withdrawal. One of the crucial reasons the U.S. pulled out from the Middle East and shifted to the Asia-Pacific region was that it now sees China as its number one competitor. Amb. Yu believes that although the United States has increased its military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, it will not completely give up on its interests in the Middle East.

Reference

Yu, Hongjun[于洪君]. 2021. The U.S. ended the twenty-year war in Afghanistan, what about the mess they left in the country? (美国结束 20 年最长战争，阿富汗的烂摊子怎么办). https://www.guancha.cn/YuHongjun/2021_04_20_588050.shtml. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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THE DILEMMA OF AFGHAN STATE BUILDING: AN INTER-ETHNIC POLITICS PERSPECTIVE

《族际政治视域下阿富汗国家重构的困境》

Author: Prof. YAN Wei

Professor of the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at Northwest University (China)



Abstract

The ethnic composition of Afghanistan is highly complex. The structural factor (problem) that has long been constraining the country's development involves building stable inter-ethnic relations to realize rational, equal distribution of power between different ethnic groups. Dr. Yan Wei identifies three complex problems that present challenges to restoring peace in Afghanistan and the reconstruction of inter-ethnic relations in the country. Firstly, the peace process will strike and damage the current fragile inter-ethnic balance and the inter-ethnic division of power. Secondly, social reconciliation, which involves the repair of post-conflicts trauma, is the foundation of political reconciliation. Thirdly, ethnic politics triggers the external forces to intervene (in the Afghan issue), affecting the country's reconciliation process. Based on these abovementioned problems, the author predicts the future situation in Afghanistan, believing that an interracial civil war or the breakdown of the country would be improbable. Moreover, it is believed that the reconciliation between different ethnic groups in Afghanistan would also be unlikely to happen anytime soon.

Comments by iGCU

Several different factors have been affecting the evolution of the Afghan situation. The complexity of the Afghan issue was reflected in the great powers' rivalries in the region and its own chaotic interethnic, partisan conflicts. The author discussed the impact of inter-ethnic conflicts on Afghanistan's national security and provided insights into the construction of national security in Afghanistan from inter-ethnic politics.

Reference

Yan, Wei[闫伟]. 2021. The dilemma of Afghan state building: An Inter-ethnic Politics Perspective (族际政治视域下阿富汗国家重构的困境). *International Forum* (国际论坛). 4:117-134.

[Published in Apr. 2021]

I. WHY THE U.S. DEMOCRATIC PROJECT FAILED IN AFGHANISTAN?

II. "EASY COME, HARD TO GO": THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE AFGHAN TALIBAN AND THE U.S. POST 9/11

《美国对阿富汗的民主改造为什么失败》

《来易来，去难去 塔利班与美国的恩怨简史》



Author: Dr. ZHAO Minghao

Senior Fellow of the Center for American Studies at Fudan University
iGCU Non-Resident Research Fellow

Abstract

In 2001, the Bush administration initiated the Afghanistan War. The Taliban was quickly defeated under the attack of the U.S., "Northern Alliance," and other forces. However, instead of directly confronting the U.S.-led coalition on the battlefield, the Taliban's strategic shift enabled it to regroup in the Pashtun base area by the Afghan-Pakistan border. In March 2009, President Obama publicly presented the U.S. willingness to hold talks with benevolent Taliban leaders for the first time. The Trump administration also showed the desire to end the war in Afghanistan as soon as possible. Finally, in April 2021, President Biden announced the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021.

Comments by iGCU

The author first notes that it is understood that Biden made a unilateral decision to withdraw the U.S. troops from Afghanistan, despite strong dissenting voices from within. High-rank officials from the United States military generally perceived that the hasty and complete U.S. withdrawal would harm its security interests. Additionally, American diplomats were concerned that the U.S. withdrawal would cause its allies to distrust the U.S. further. U.S. departure had also sparked a wave of criticisms against the Biden Administration domestically. The author believes that the rivalry between the U.S. and Afghanistan has now entered a new stage.

Reference

Article 1: Zhao, Minghao[赵明昊]. 2021. Why the U.S. democratic project failed in Afghanistan? (美国对阿富汗的民主改造为什么失败). https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_14223398. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

Article 2: Zhao, Minghao[赵明昊]. 2021. "Easy come, hard to go": The relationship between the Afghan Taliban and the U.S. post 9/11 (来易来，去难去 塔利班与美国的恩怨简史). <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1708412457486542321&wfr=spider&for=pc>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE TWENTY-YEAR WAR IN AFGHANISTAN?

《20 年战争，为阿富汗留下了什么》

Author: Dr. WANG Feng

Associate Professor of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Director of the Department of West Asia and Africa Studies at the Graduate School of
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences



Abstract

There are three main reasons for explaining the U.S. failure in the "War on Terror" in Afghanistan and its attempts to reconstruct the country. Firstly, as the U.S. launched counterterrorism wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, its strategic goal changed at the later stage of the war and was shifted away from the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Secondly, the U.S. troops' dismissive attitude toward Afghans' religious beliefs and cultural practices had aroused the anti-American sentiment in the country. Thirdly, as the ideology of Western democracy has been incompatible with the reality of Afghanistan, the forceful application has only aggravated the socio-political polarization in the country.

Comments by iGCU

The author conceives that the U.S. troops' retreat from Afghanistan marked U.S. reconstruction efforts in the country as a failure, and struck at the core of American democracy as well as the Western democratic models. The U.S. policy in Afghanistan was seemingly doomed to fail from the very start, especially considering U.S. persistent attempts to impose the Western democracy on Afghanistan, without considering the domestic situation of the country. The forceful application of the Western-style democracy in Afghanistan had severely damaged the existing political system of the country. The author believes that the U.S. withdrawal would pose challenges to the leadership of the Biden Administration, and would impair U.S. international reputation.

Reference

Wang, Feng [王凤]. 2021. What happens after the twenty-year war in Afghanistan?(20 年战争，为阿富汗留下了什么?). *Red Flag Manuscript* (红旗文稿) 14: 42-43.

THE AFGHAN TRAGEDY: THE DISILLUTION OF THE WESTERN DEMOCRATIC UTOPIA

《阿富汗是西方民主乌托邦主义的大失败》



Author: Prof. ZHENG Yongnian

The Presidential Chair Professor and Founding Director of the Advanced Institute of Global and Contemporary China Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen

Abstract

The tragedy in Afghanistan has proven to be another significant failure of the democratic experiments of the West. The formation of the western democracies was driven by capital, and it was a result of natural evolution. The attempts of the West to "export" Western-style democracy are the embodiment of democratic utopianism. Western countries see their democracy as a "universal religion." They barely reflect on whether the Western democracy is "transplantable" or not and exaggerate human beings' subjective adaptivity to institutional arrangements. The author argues that Western democracy is not a universal political system and that the world is, in fact, pluralistic where different political systems could coexist.

Comments by iGCU

Afghanistan has once again proven that the 'universality' of the Western democracy is nothing more than a fraud. Instead of exporting Western-style democracy, Western countries should respect the diversity of political civilizations. It is each country's legitimate right to choose its developmental paths freely. In the case of Afghanistan, the international community should focus on the country's post-war reconstruction and actively assist Afghans whenever there is a need. Specifically, helping the Taliban establish an inclusive new regime that appreciates Afghan religious culture and facilitates the Afghans' unity, promotes Afghanistan's economic development, and eventually helps connect Afghanistan to the world.

Reference

Zheng, Yongnian[郑永年]. 2021. The Afghan tragedy: The disillusion of the Western democratic utopia (阿富汗是西方民主乌托邦主义的大失败). https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/bZab--KAih__ujbh9zxRrQ. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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THE FUNDAMENTAL REASONS WHY THE U.S. - EU COALITION FAILED IN AFGHANISTAN

《美欧联盟败走阿富汗的深层原因》

Author: Dr. JIN Feng

Research Fellow at Shanghai International Studies University

Abstract

There are three main reasons to explain the failure of both the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan. Firstly, Western civilization's arrogance and hegemonism had led them into the trap of value interventionism. Secondly, Western countries used "human rights protections" as excuses to recklessly interfere in Afghanistan's domestic affairs for achieving their geopolitical interests. Lastly, Western alliance saw the Afghans as objects of their "democratic transformation" experiments. Their misjudgments of the situation in Afghanistan eventually led to their "disastrous defeat," both militarily and politically. Although the U.S. and its western allies had withdrawn their troops from Afghanistan, the disastrous effects from the war would be unlikely to die down anytime soon, and new turbulence might already be brewing up in the region.

Comments by iGCU

The author analyzes the failure of both the U.S. and its allies in Afghanistan from three aspects, including the arrogance and hegemonism of the West, their geopolitical interests, and their misjudgments of the Afghan political environment. Western forces' hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan have proven that it is of great necessity for every nation to respect and abide by the principles of self-determination and non-interference. It again reminded the international community to reflect on the relationships between different civilizations, and the differing interpretations of human rights and sovereignty.

Reference

Jin, Feng[金锋]. 2021. The fundamental reasons why the U.S. - EU coalition failed in Afghanistan (美欧联盟败走阿富汗的深层原因). <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1708282970604069778&wfr=spider&for=pc>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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THE TALIBAN'S STRATEGIC ADJUSTMENTS AND PROSPECTS OF PEACE IN THE POST-AMERICAN ERA

《后美军时期塔利班的策略调整及阿富汗和平展望》



Author: XI Meng

Director of the Pushtu Language Division of the Asian & African Languages Center, China Media Group

Abstract

There are two main reasons for the Taliban's gradual expansion in Afghanistan and its rapid takeover. Firstly, U.S. hasty withdrawal has significantly altered the balance of power between the Taliban and the Afghan (former) government. Secondly, the Taliban has been adjusting its strategies in politics, military, internal affairs, foreign relations, etc. By making efforts to change its global image, the Taliban strives to obtain recognition from the international community. Afghanistan is now a divided state. For the restoration of peace and order in the country, it would be of great significance for the Taliban to strictly adhere to the principle of "Led by Afghans and Owned by Afghans" work to achieve the political reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

The Taliban's success in retaking the control of Afghanistan was not only resulted from the influence of external factors (such as the U.S. withdrawal). The Taliban had also made many efforts to change its image and was trying to gain international legitimacy. The author believes that except for changing its global image, the Taliban still faces the challenges of achieving political reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Reference

Xi, Meng[席 猛]. 2021. The Taliban's strategic adjustments and prospects of peace in the post-American era (后美军时期塔利班的策略调整及阿富汗和平展望). *International and Strategic Studies Report* (国际战略研究). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/2kxI9AKLEjH42gA9kJPLhQ>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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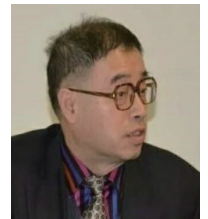
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WHY HAS THE AFGHAN INTERNAL TURMOIL TAKEN A TURN FOR THE "WORST" AFTER THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL?

《阿富汗战局为何急转直下》

Author: Dr. WANG Nan

Researcher of the Center for African Studies at Shanghai Normal University
Researcher of the Institute of Silk Road Strategy Studies at Shanghai International Studies University
Researcher of the Center for Sino-Pakistani Education and Culture Studies at Jiangsu Normal University



Abstract

The Taliban could successfully take control of Afghanistan because they were fully prepared, had clear goals, and adopted flexible and correct strategies. The establishment of an inclusive Islamic government would be the most important issue after the Taliban takeover. Thus it would be significant for the Taliban to reshape its global image and enable the world to understand better its political, strategic, military, diplomatic, and governance capacity. Specifically, how the peace and order would be restored in Afghanistan and whether the Taliban could effectively govern the country await further observation.

Comments by iGCU

The situation in Afghanistan had gone through enormous changes in three months. The author indicates that the radical change within the country was highly correlated with the transition of the Afghan Taliban itself. The powerlessness of the Afghan (former) government, coupled with external forces' withdrawal, had made the fragile balance of power in the region even more challenging to maintain. The future development of Afghanistan will depend on multiple internal factors of the Afghan Taliban.

Reference

Wang, Nan[王南]. 2021. Why has the Afghan internal turmoil taken a turn for the "worst" after the U.S. withdrawal? (阿富汗战局为何急转直下). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/c3C7YOivIFnbUTlbH30SEA>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

THOUGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS ON THE TRANSITION OF POWER IN AFGHANISTAN

《对阿富汗政治转折的几点思考和观察》



Author: Prof. QIAN Xuemei

Associate Professor of the School of International Studies at PKU

Abstract

After the Taliban takeover, the political situation in Afghanistan underwent significant changes. Various new phenomena have indicated the strategic shift of the U.S., that the focus has now been put on great powers' competitions. Although the political transition in Afghanistan is now completed, whether the order and peace could be restored in Afghanistan under the Taliban regime remains uncertain. It is believed that the Taliban would apply a different type of political system in Afghanistan under the 'new' Taliban regime. Thus, the author argues that we should take an objective view of the Taliban and their potential to stabilize the Afghan situation and counter-terrorism.

Comments by iGCU

The author notes that with the Taliban retaking control of Afghanistan, the political transition in the country is now completed. Nevertheless, the Taliban still faces the daunting tasks of reviving the Afghan economy, improving the livelihood of the Afghans, achieving political reconciliation in Afghanistan, and handling the lingering influence of external factors (i.e., U.S. influence). The author reckons that if the peace could be restored in Afghanistan under the rule of the 'new' Taliban remains uncertain and still awaits further observation.

Reference

Qian, Xuemei[钱雪梅]. 2021. Thoughts and observations on the transition of power in Afghanistan (对阿富汗政治转折的几点思考和观察). https://m.thepaper.cn/baijiahao_14132531. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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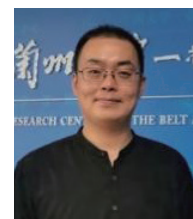
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TEN MAJOR CHALLENGES FACING THE AFGHAN TALIBAN AFTER ITS TAKEOVER

《阿富汗塔利班面临十大挑战》

Author: Prof. ZHU Yongbiao

Professor of the School of Politics and International Relations at Lanzhou University
Director of the Center for Afghanistan Studies at Lanzhou University



Abstract

The Taliban still confronts many problems since retaking control in Afghanistan. The author identified ten significant challenges facing the Taliban after its return to power. Domestically, the challenges include appeasing Afghans, supporting citizens' livelihood, resolving internal conflicts, solving the financial crisis, guaranteeing Afghan women's rights and social status, and dealing with extremist groups. Diplomatically, it still faces challenges such as deciding the country's official name, gaining international recognition, and handling the 'Northern Alliance 2.0' issue.

Comments by iGCU

An old Chinese idiom says that "it is always easier to conquer one city than guard one." The Taliban, who have regained power, still have a long way to go to execute the work of national governance. Faced with the pressure from the international community and the Afghan domestic society, whether the Taliban can effectively address relevant issues is worthy of further observation.

Reference

Zhu, Yongbiao[朱永彪], and Wenshuo Chen[陈文硕]. 2021. Ten major challenges facing the Afghan Taliban after its takeover (阿富汗塔利班面临十大挑战). https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/CpaJrB6W2l8RV_MrlvkLTA. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

THE U.S. INTERVENTIONISM HAD LED TO HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN AFGHANISTAN

《美干涉主义导致阿富汗人权危局》



Author: Prof. HE Zhipeng

Professor of the School of Law at Jilin University

Deputy Dean of the School of International and Public Affairs at Jilin University

Abstract

The U.S. attempt to implement interventionist policy in Afghanistan was made at the expense of the entire Afghan population. Although U.S. withdrawal has represented the failure of American interventionist policy, the impact on Afghanistan is irreversible. U.S. intervention resulted in war, which had posed severe threats to the Afghans' right to life. The author first talks about the human rights crisis in Afghanistan, then further analyzes the detrimental effects that the U.S. had caused, and concludes his arguments by discussing the behavioral logic behind U.S. hegemony and interventionism. The author believes that the Cold War mentality still lies at the heart of U.S. interventionism and hegemony. The U.S. retains the zero-sum game and rejects a cooperative and inclusive multilateral international order.

Comments by iGCU

The author reckons that U.S. abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan seemingly has provided an answer to whether the U.S. had played a positive role in facilitating peace in Afghanistan by interfering in its domestic affairs (as it claimed). As the author suggested, the power imbalance between different nations has often evolved into human rights crisis. It is, in fact, an outstanding issue that every country should acknowledge and properly address.

Reference

He, Zhipeng[何志鹏]. 2021. The U.S. interventionism had led to humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan (美干涉主义导致阿富汗人权危局). <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1709465182006180706&wfr=spider&for=pc>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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WHO IS TO BLAME IN THE AFGHAN TALIBAN'S SUCCESSFUL TAKEOVER? THE U.S. POINTS THE FINGER TO OTHERS, BUT IS ACTUALLY IN NEED OF INTROSPECTION

《塔利班的胜利归因于谁？美国的不断甩锅缺乏自省》

Author: Dr. SHEN Yamei

Director and Associate Research Fellow of the Department for American Studies at China Institute of International Studies



Abstract

Faced with the unexpected power transition in Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal, authorities in the United States still insist on blaming others, avoiding the fundamental problems of its failure in Afghanistan. In contrast to the violent and drastic change in the situation in Afghanistan, U.S. authorities and professionals remain extremely conservative, closed-minded, and are lack of self-reflection. The shock, lamentation, excuses, and defenses that the U.S. authorities transmitted to the public through the media only enlarge its tactical errors in Afghanistan. It has shown that the U.S. has refused to recognize its fundamental problems in its strategies, political culture, and diplomacy. Because of these issues, the U.S. will not be able to learn from its mistakes and adjust itself accordingly.

Comments by iGCU

The debate on Afghanistan within the United States shows that Americans refuse to reflect on their fundamental problems. The author believes that the U.S. can learn three lessons from the Afghanistan War: First, it was a failure to blindly believe in the forceful application of counter-terrorism strategies. Second, the "democratization" policy of the U.S. was a failure. Third, American diplomacy is now facing a "trust deficit." The Biden administration made a unilateral decision to withdraw the U.S. military forces. It also left its NATO allies with no choice but to withdraw their troops under the U.S. framework.

Reference

Shen, Yamei[沈雅梅]. 2021. Who is to blame in the Afghan Taliban's successful takeover? The U.S. points the finger to others, but is actually in need of introspection (塔利班的胜利归因于谁？美国的不断甩锅缺乏自省). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/S5acMSSFWADXRcjfs3ixYw>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

THE U.S. ASSESSMENT OF THE SECURITY IN AFGHANISTAN BEFORE ITS WITHDRAWAL & THE LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

《撤军前美国对阿富汗军事安全态势评估及其教训》



Author: Dr. LI Chen

Associate Professor of the School of International Studies at Renmin University of China

Abstract

The Biden administration's serious intelligence failures during its decision-making process for the U.S. withdrawal put the United States in a passive position. First, the U.S. misjudged the relationship between the former Afghan government and the Afghan military. Second, the U.S. underestimated the Taliban's military capability, including the quality and quantity of their equipment. Third, the U.S. failed to recognize that the former Afghan government did not sustain the technological advancements of a modern army. Fourth, the U.S. was not able to foresee that the Afghan government could only rely on the lead of the U.S. Army in conducting military operations.

Comments by iGCU

The author conceives that the U.S. government failed to recognize the profound impacts that the U.S. military's presence could have on the current situation in Afghanistan. During the process of pulling out its troops, the U.S. authorities seriously misjudged the situation in Afghanistan and assumed the risks generated from its withdrawal were controllable. The author suggests that the U.S. misjudgment eventually caused the U.S. to lose leverage in Afghanistan.

Reference

Li, Chen[李 晨]. 2021. The U.S. assessment of the security in Afghanistan before its withdrawal & the lessons to be learned (撤军前美国对阿富汗军事安全态势评估及其教训). <https://user.guancha.cn/main/content?id=584488>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]



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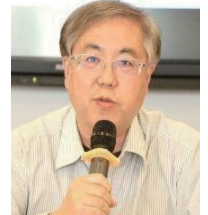
THE AFGHANISTAN WAR: THE U.S. TRAPPED ITSELF IN THE CLASH OF CIVILIZATIONS

《阿富汗战争：栽在文明冲突陷阱中》

Author: DING Gang (Editor)

Senior Editor with People's Daily

Senior Fellow of Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China



Abstract

U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan had proven that the Western countries' continuous uses of force for achieving their subjugation or transformation goals of the so-called "inferior civilizations or underdeveloped nations" were, and would continue to be, nothing but false hopes. Although the U.S. intended to westernize Afghanistan by bringing Western values to the country, their plans were up in the clouds, very unrealistic. Considering the incompatibility between Western-style democracies and Afghanistan's domestic situation, the value of the West would not be possible to convert into concepts that the Afghans would accept and thus could never be fully adopted in Afghanistan. The Afghanistan War that lasted for twenty years had made Americans live out a "self-fulfilling prophecy" – a prophecy of the clash of civilizations, where Americans trapped themselves.

Comments by iGCU

The author points out that U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan had shown that its plans of "westernizing" Afghanistan had been nothing more than a fantasy, rendering American diplomacy another severe setback. On the other hand, U.S. withdrawal represented the downsizing of the U.S. military in the Middle East and hinted at the shift of the U.S. strategic goals. Where the U.S. troops would be headed for duty next and how other countries (including China) could be affected in the future remain uncertain and thus in need of closer attention.

Reference

Ding, Gang [丁刚]. 2021. The Afghanistan War: the U.S. trapped itself in the clash of civilizations (阿富汗战争：栽在文明冲突陷阱中). <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1709465180277148894&wfr=spider&for=pc>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

THE CURRENT SITUATION OF AFGHANISTAN IS BECOMING MORE STABLE AFTER THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL

《美军撤出后阿富汗整体局势已较明朗》



Author: Prof. LI Weijian

Vice President of the China Association of Middle East Studies
Director of Foreign Policy Studies Institute at Shanghai Institutes for International Studies

Abstract

Although conflicts may occur between factions within Afghanistan after the U.S. withdrawal, the overall situation is stabilizing. There are no forces in the country that can compete with the Taliban. Hence, even though certain factions are still voicing dissents against the Taliban, they are not intending to seek for any forms of physical conflicts with the Taliban but just trying to win over some bargaining power for the future. Suppose the Taliban can fulfill its commitments, including establishing a diverse and inclusive regime in Afghanistan, its legitimacy could be recognized.

Comments by iGCU

U.S. withdrawal wreaked havoc on Afghanistan, resulting in the international community re-examining the U.S. efforts in the Middle East. The rapid collapse of the U.S.-backed Afghan government had proven that the U.S. imposition of the American-style democracy on other countries was ineffectual. Following the U.S. withdrawal, the Taliban has been favored domestically. The author believes that it would probably obtain international and domestic recognition.

Reference

Li, Weijian[李 伟 健]. 2021. The current situation of Afghanistan is becoming more stable after the U.S. withdrawal (美军撤出后阿富汗整体局势已较明朗). <http://m.mp.oeeee.com/a/BAAFRD000020210901597604.html>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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WHETHER THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN REPRESENTS THE END OF U.S. HEGEMONY

《阿富汗 | 撤军是美国霸权的终结吗? 》

Author: Prof. WANG Jianwei

Emeritus Professor from the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Macau



Abstract

As the Biden administration took the initiative to bring forward U.S. departure, U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan did not profoundly influence its regional strategic position. From the perspective of global strategic position, an important motive of the Biden administration for withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan was to shrink the U.S. presence in the Middle East, transferring the focus towards China, the most prominent strategic and security ‘threat’ of the U.S. In summary, judging from those existing signs, the impacts of the Afghanistan War on U.S. domestic politics should be far lighter than how it was during the Vietnam War.

Comments by iGCU

The article explores whether U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan marks the termination of U.S. hegemonic status, and the author offers a negative answer to the question. Firstly, it was the U.S. who had taken the initiative in making the moves in Afghanistan, meaning that it was the choice of the U.S. to be in a state of "strategic contraction." Secondly, the U.S. withdrawal did not significantly affect its regional strategic layout. Lastly, China might be facing greater pressure after the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. The author suggests that it is important to examine and analyze U.S. withdrawal in a cautious manner.

Reference

Wang, Jianwei[王 建 伟]. 2021. Whether the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan represents the end of U.S. hegemony (阿富汗：撤军是美国霸权的终结吗?). https://www.thepaper.cn/newsDetail_forward_14719785. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Sep. 2021]

PROF. DA WEI'S INTERVIEW WITH ASAHI NEWS ON THE AFGHAN ISSUE

《中美关系全国委员会委员达巍就阿富汗等问题接受《朝日新闻》采访》



Prof. DA Wei

Deputy Director of Center for International Security and Strategy at Tsinghua University
Professor of School of Social Sciences at Tsinghua University
iGCU Academic Committee Member

Abstract

The 9/11 attack changed the international community's perception of security and made the U.S. adjust its security strategies. Although the twenty years that followed the U.S. "War on Terror" in Afghanistan yielded the successful removal of the Taliban regime, its strategic demands of "democratizing" Afghanistan had been unsuccessful. In the past decades, China has been emphasizing the significance of developing the economy and education to eliminate terrorism. China's current engagement with the Taliban aims to observe if it has been fulfilling its promises of not harming (the interests of) China. Although the U.S. withdrawal did not directly impact China-U.S. relations, the evolution of the future world order and China-U.S. competition could be affected by the decisions made by other countries.

Comments by iGCU

Prof. Da Wei pointed out that although the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan did not directly influence the relationships between great powers, the political vacuum that resulted from the U.S. withdrawal has increased uncertainties in the security of China and other neighboring nations. Prof. Da Wei reckoned that there would be little chance for China and the U.S. to cooperate in the future following U.S. "strategic failure" in Afghanistan. It would become increasingly important on whether Japan and Europe could make independent choices.

Reference

Da, Wei[达巍]. 2021. Prof. Da Wei's interview with Asahi News on the Afghan issue (中美关系全国委员会委员达巍就阿富汗等问题接受《朝日新闻》采访). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/Kw6eXD7PwyJjAQM2LPzI6g>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Sep. 2021]



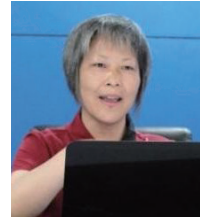
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THE AFGHAN TALIBAN & EXTREMISM: WHAT HAS CHANGED WITH TIME AND WHAT HAS NOT?

《阿富汗塔利班极端性的变与不变》

Author: Dr. FANG Jinying

Research Fellow of China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations



Abstract

The Afghan Taliban, which again takes over Afghanistan, has undergone many changes compared to twenty years ago when it first took control. First, the Islamic world generally has focused on modernization, development, and improvement of citizens' well-being. Second, the characteristics of the Taliban's governance policies have shifted from being harsh and extreme to moderate and pragmatic. Third, the new Taliban government has drawn clear boundaries with terrorist forces and stressed its disentanglement. Whether the Taliban can establish a government capable of stabilizing the chaotic situation in Afghanistan and continuing to stand against extremism (specifically policy-making) still awaits further observations.

Comments by iGCU

With the Taliban regaining power in Afghanistan, many people still have lingering fears that history will repeat itself. However, the Taliban of today is no longer the same Taliban of twenty years ago. It has experienced many apparent changes in the last two decades. The author discussed the Taliban's history of extremism and the reasons behind its current changes from comparative perspectives, its international context, Afghan leaders' political and ideological claims, and the government's relationship with radical organizations.

Reference

Fang, Jinying[方金英]. 2021. The Afghan Taliban & Extremism: What has changed with time and what has not? (阿富汗塔利班极端性的变与不变). <http://taiheinstitute.org/Content/2021/09-22/1641457358.html>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Sep. 2021]

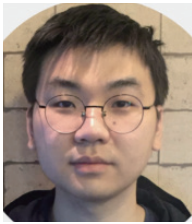
HAS THE "SUEZ MOMENT" FOR NATO IN AFGHANISTAN ARRIVED?

«北约在阿富汗遭遇“苏伊士时刻”?»



Author: Dr. SUN Chenghao

Assistant Research Fellow at the Center for International Security and Strategy, Tsinghua University



Author: DONG Yifan

Assistant Research Fellow at the Institute of European Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Abstract

Western countries' hasty withdrawal of military and diplomatic forces from Afghanistan amidst the chaos triggered heated discussions on both sides of the Atlantic, especially among NATO member states. An article published by the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) opined that another "Suez Moment" for the Europeans and the NATO countries had arrived with the Taliban retaking control of Kabul. Mr. Armin Laschet, Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, once criticized that the hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan was "the biggest debacle that NATO has suffered since its founding." In all aspects, the changing political environment in Afghanistan symbolized the unprecedented crisis facing the NATO regarding its capability in crisis response, sense of responsibility, and ability to keep commitments. It has become increasingly unrealistic for European countries to merely rely on treaties for their security guarantees.

Comments by iGCU

Jeremy Shapiro (Researcher Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations) once pointed out that, "only when the vital national interests of the U.S. are threatened, would it seek practical cooperation with its allies". The future security crisis management of the NATO would probably be conducted under a similar logic. With the evolving geopolitical order and the changing trend of international counter-terrorism at hand, intervening in Afghan affairs would be less beneficial for guaranteeing the security of the United States. Consequently, when European states needed NATO to provide more public good of (military) protections, the U.S. chose to be the "hands-off shopkeeper," withdrew its troops from Afghanistan recklessly, intended to take little responsibility in the region, and allowed European countries bear the risks generated from the spillover effects of the Afghan issue. The author suggests that European countries' distrust of the NATO might be irreversible. After the "Trump's shockwaves" and the shocking U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, Europe might need to jump out of its "comfort zone" and explore a new path.

Reference

Sun, Chenghao[孙 成 昊], and Yifan Dong[董 一 凡]. 2021. Has the "Suez Moment" for NATO in Afghanistan arrived? (北约在阿富汗遭遇“苏伊士时刻”?). <http://ciss.tsinghua.edu.cn/info/zlyaq/3973>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Sep. 2021]



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COUNTER-TERRORISM IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER

《阿塔重新掌权后阿富汗的反恐困境与前景》

Author: Dr. LI Wei

Associate Research Fellow at China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations



Abstract

The twenty-year war the United States fought in Afghanistan aimed to export American democracy and seek private gains in the name of "counter-terrorism." The U.S. conducted its "War on Terrorism" in a selective manner. As a result, it undermined regional security and the Afghan economy, leading to the intensification of terrorism in the country. To realize regional peace and improve people's livelihood, the Afghan Taliban government should prioritize Afghanistan's national interests, strengthen its counter-terrorism will, and properly handle the relationships of different factions within the country. Meanwhile, the international community should also actively aid and support the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

The U.S.-initiated Afghanistan War had put Afghanistan in turmoil, leading to economic stagnation, drug proliferation, and other humanitarian disasters. U.S. failure in Afghanistan again showed that military intervention had no win. The forceful cultivation of American democracy in another country would not work. Only a political system that adapts to the domestic situations of that other country and is accepted and supported by the locals can be regarded as a "good" system.

Reference

Li, Wei[李伟]. 2021. Counter-terrorism in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover (阿塔重新掌权后阿富汗的反恐困境与前景). *Contemporary World* (当代世界). 10:26-30.

[Published in Oct. 2021]

THE PERFORMANCE OF THE AFGHAN TALIBAN INTERIM GOVERNMENT AND THE CHALLENGES IT FACES

《阿富汗塔利班建政现状及面临的挑战》



Author: Prof. WANG Shida

Deputy Director of the Institute for South Asian Studies at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations

Abstract

On September 7, 2021, the Taliban announced the formation of an interim government in Afghanistan, putting an end to the three-week-anarchy in the country. Contrary to external expectations, the structure of the Taliban interim government was non-inclusive, and the Taliban's promises of establishing an inclusive government have yet to be fulfilled. Whether the Taliban could effectively govern Afghanistan in an inclusive manner still awaits further observations. The Afghan Taliban would have to deal with the challenges of solving the conflicts between different factions within Afghanistan, establishing an effective governance system, cutting ties with extremists of various sorts, seeking international recognition, and connecting with the international community.

Comments by iGCU

This article evaluates the inclusiveness of the Taliban interim government's structure in Afghanistan regarding ethnic and gender composition and the background of the Taliban personnel. The author suggests that the structure of the Taliban interim government does not reflect sufficient inclusiveness, and the effects of its future governance still await further observation. The author also analyzes the dilemma and challenges facing the Taliban in four aspects, including the conflicts between different factions in Afghanistan, the efficiency of the Taliban's governance, its relationships with extremist groups, and the international community.

Reference

Wang, Shida[王 世 达]. 2021. The performance of the Afghan Taliban interim government and the challenges it faces (阿富汗塔利班建政现状及面临的挑战). *World Affairs* (世界知识). 19:22-23.

[Published in Oct. 2021]



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WHEN WOULD THE CHAOS IN AFGHANISTAN COME TO AN END?

《阿富汗乱局何时休》

Author: Dr. CHENG Honggang

Senior Fellow of Taihe Institute
Central Asia and Eastern Europe Expert



Abstract

In 2019, the United States struggled with making policies toward Afghanistan. With the overall security situation in Afghanistan deteriorating, U.S. troops stationed in the country were deeply trapped in the mire of counter-terrorism war. There had been many twists and turns in the road to peace. Nevertheless, to maintain its position as a significant participant in Central Asia, the U.S. would keep Afghanistan at the core of its geopolitical strategy. Facing the political chaos both inside and outside of Afghanistan (which the U.S. should be taking the main responsibility for), the international community should accept that the Taliban has now taken full control in Afghanistan. It is now important for different parties (within the international community) to work with one another to promote the peace process in Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

In 2019, with the armed conflicts in Afghanistan intensifying, the U.S. had struggled to alter its Afghan policies accordingly. Starting from analysing the overall security situation in Afghanistan back then, the author further evaluates the U.S. policies towards Central and South Asia, and discusses the probable strategic shifts of the U.S. on the handling of Afghan issues in the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the author advocates for global cooperation, and suggests ways to encourage the Taliban to participate in the Afghan peace process.

Reference

Cheng, Honggang[程宏刚]. 2019. When would the chaos in Afghanistan come to an end? (阿富汗乱局何时休). <http://www.taiheinstitute.org/Content/2019/10-28/1013327751.html>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Oct. 2021]

CHALLENGES FACING THE TALIBAN AFTER ITS RETURN TO POWER

《阿富汗塔利班匆匆赶考》



Author: Prof. LU Zhongwei

Former Dean of China Institute of Contemporary International Relations
Member of the 10th and 11th CPPCC National Committee

Abstract

With the Taliban announcing its cabinet's list on 7 September, 2021, it marked that the state apparatus was restarted and order was gradually restored in Afghanistan. First of all, rebuilding the domestic economy and securing supplies for the Afghans would be two 'must-do' for the Taliban to firmly establish its regime in the country. Second, it is believed that the resurfaced 'Islamic State Khorasan' organization would be hard to eradicate. Third, it is still difficult for the Taliban to establish formal diplomatic relationships with other countries. Fourth, internal conflicts as well as the inter-ethnic relations within Afghanistan remain complicated. All in all, the author emphasizes that China has always respected the choice that the Afghans made, and would be happy to see that if the Taliban could lead Afghanistan and its people into stability and peace.

Comments by iGCU

The author suggests that although it might be easy for the Taliban to seize power, whether it would be good at nation-building could be another story. The author believes that the international community has already seen that the Taliban has been making efforts to change its global image. Still, after all, only time would tell whether it could continue to be "successful" in handling the challenges it faces in many different aspects. China's stance on this matter remains unchanged, which is to respect whatever the choice that the Afghans made.

Reference

Lu, Zhongwei[陆 忠 伟]. 2021. Challenges facing the Taliban after its return to power (阿 富 汗 塔 利 班 匆 匆 “ 赶 考 ”). *People's Political Consultative Daily* (人 民 政 协 报) <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/LKmqDDejxZluTUdO4kCwHw>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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NATIONAL RECONCILIATION IN AFGHANISTAN AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER

《阿富汗塔利班再度执政后的政治和解》

Author: Prof. QIAN Xuemei

Associate Professor of the School of International Studies at PKU



Abstract

The process of achieving political reconciliation in Afghanistan during the past four decades was proceeded under a consistent state of war and was dominated by external forces. In recent years, four types of risks emerged in Afghanistan. Including the dangers of terrorism, armed insurgency, social unrest, and large waves of migration. Aside from terrorism threats, which would require force to resolve, the prerequisite to solving the other issues is to achieve political reconciliation in Afghanistan. After its takeover, the critical tasks for the Taliban would be to establish its authority domestically, restore the order and peace in the country, obtain the public's trust, gain international recognition, and eliminate the potential threats to the country. Hopefully, the Taliban regime can eventually lead Afghanistan to peace, stability, and prosperity.

Comments by iGCU

The author points out that as Afghanistan is a country that has lived through four decades of war, one of the most evident challenges facing the Taliban is the national reconstruction in the country. The author conceives that the most crucial task for the Taliban right now is to fully achieve political reconciliation in Afghanistan. It is believed that if the Taliban wishes to re-establish its authority, gain legitimacy and international recognition, and ultimately lead Afghanistan into stability and prosperity, the political reconciliation must be achieved first.

Reference

Qian, Xuemei [钱雪梅]. 2021. National reconciliation in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover(阿富汗塔利班再度执政后的政治和解). Contemporary World (当代世界). 10:43-48. <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/4LLXLf7Lk9GHcv06NBPspw?u=ca87fbd10c3244acaeef1efc13104564>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Oct. 2021]

TOPIC 2

RESEARCH ON THE AFGHAN TALIBAN

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE UNITED STATES AND THE AFGHAN TALIBAN

《美国与阿富汗塔利班关系》

Author: Prof. QIAN Xuemei

Associate Professor of the School of International Studies at PKU



Abstract

The United States' relationship with the Taliban has undergone four stages since 1994. In the beginning, the U.S. and the Taliban were in a friendly relationship (stage 1). But when irreconcilable differences emerged, conflicts between the two intensified (stage 2), and a full-scale military confrontation eventually ensued (stage 3). The U.S. and the Taliban are now seeking peaceful settling of the conflicts (stage 4). Factors that have affected the changing U.S.-Taliban relations, including the two parties' beneficial interests, differences in religion and ideology, and the influences of third-party forces, would continue to play vital roles in influencing the U.S. relationship with the Taliban for the foreseeable future. The Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan (2020) might open new doors for U.S.-Taliban relations. However, it is also important to note that the U.S. withdrawal does not mean that the U.S. is "leaving" Afghanistan for good. The Agreement does not necessarily represent the actualization of peace in the region. Other than practical interests, the third-party factors are believed to be the major determinants of future U.S.-Taliban relations.

Comments by iGCU

The U.S. has had a complicated relationship with the Taliban in the past twenty years. The author believes that after a series of adjustments, the U.S.-Taliban relations will enter a new phase with the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan again. Although the U.S. had completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan, the U.S. would still have a strong presence in the region. The author suggests that we should not underestimate U.S. future influences on the situation in Afghanistan.

Reference

Qian, Xuemei [钱雪梅]. 2020. The relationship between the United States and the Afghan Taliban (美国与阿富汗塔利班关系). *China International Strategic Review* (中国国际战略评论 2020 (上)); 135-148. <http://www.iiss.pku.edu.cn/research/discuss/202001/4064.html>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Sep. 2020]

GREAT POWERS' FAILURE IN AFGHANISTAN: WHY AFGHANISTAN IS REGARDED AS THE GRAVEYARD OF EMPIRES?

《英、苏、美在阿富汗都失败了！为什么说阿富汗是“帝国的坟场”？》



Author: Prof. WANG Yong

Professor of the School of International Studies at PKU
Director of the Center for American Studies at PKU
iGCU Academic Committee Member

Abstract

Historically, three countries have invaded Afghanistan: Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and the United States. Despite all these invasions, the outcomes have been unsuccessful. Even though it is not particularly difficult to invade Afghanistan, post-invasion governance has been a daunting task, often leading to a fragmented and disunited population. Afghanistan's domestic governance system has been fragmented considering its multi-ethnic characteristics and political, economic, and social complexities. Great powers have exploited the complexities to fulfill their political agendas; hence, the nation has been a prime venue for international political struggles. For the political situation in Afghanistan, it would be difficult to solve the problem of domestic governance, especially in dealing with the relationship between various tribes and regional warlords. Besides, neighboring countries and major powers will continue to influence the current situation in Afghanistan. The current challenge facing the Taliban would be to establish an inclusive government. We are still awaiting further updates on how successful their endeavor to unite Afghanistan would be.

Comments by iGCU

Afghanistan has been repeatedly invaded by major powers in history. It has been called the "Graveyard of Empires". The author analyzes the characteristics of Afghanistan vis-à-vis its geographical location, tribal complexity, the involvement of neighboring countries, and the political factors of great powers. He believes that the complexity of Afghanistan (in many aspects) is the main reason for the repeated frustration of great powers.

Reference

Wang, Yong[王 勇]. 2021. Great powers' failure in Afghanistan: Why Afghanistan is regarded as the graveyard of empires? (英、苏、美在阿富汗都失败了！为什么说阿富汗是“帝国的坟场”？). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/H60POR3xHRqmGb3j2uBStw>. Accessed 18 May 2022.

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THE TALIBAN'S RETURN TO POWER: WHY AFGHANISTAN HAD NEVER BEEN A PLACE OF PEACE THROUGHOUT THE DECADES?

《塔利班接管喀布尔，阿富汗历史上为何总不得安宁？》

Author: Prof. SHI Zhan

Professor of China Foreign Affairs University

Director of the Center for World Politics Studies at China Foreign Affairs University



Abstract

Afghanistan was never a place of peace in the past decades. Such a fate is, in fact, closely linked to the geographic location of Afghanistan. Because of its geopolitical position and landscape, Afghanistan has long been an "object" of conquest by great powers, and has witnessed the rise and fall of different empires at its periphery throughout the years. Afghanistan's geopolitical significance lies in its role as a bridge for Eurasia. The so-called "Afghan issue" is just a matter of great powers' competition.

Comments by iGCU

The author examines Afghanistan's fate amidst its changing political environment and the great powers' rivalry in the region. The article analyzes the geographic location of Afghanistan and further elaborates on the nation's fragmentation and its role as the bridge for Eurasia. The author argues that the geographic position of Afghanistan led to its fate of consistently being conquered by great powers. Several attempts by great powers to conquer Afghanistan were cited in the article as well. The article discusses the geopolitics of Afghanistan and great powers' competition in the region based on the history of international relations.

Reference

Shi, Zhan[施展]. 2021. The Taliban's return to power: Why Afghanistan had never been a place of peace throughout the decades? (塔利班接管喀布尔，阿富汗历史上为何总不得安宁?). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/FsYGCvqHYReL0ksPxPIwJA>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

WHY DID THE TALIBAN SUCCEED IN TAKING CONTROL OF AFGHANISTAN?

«塔利班为什么能赢？因为塔利班对自己的改变“很行”！»



Author: Dr. GAO Yang

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Abstract

The reason behind the Taliban's success in retaking power in Afghanistan is that it has learned from its mistakes, adopted practical concepts of governance, and made changes from within. Diplomatically, the Taliban's preliminary actions helped it winning over the support of the Uzbeks and Tajiks ethnic groups in Afghanistan, which made it less difficult for them in political and military terms when attacking the North. Before launching offensive moves, the Taliban was actively engaging in international exchanges, and had paid several visits to countries in the surrounding area of Afghanistan. Domestically, the Taliban values the opinions and sentiments of the Afghans. To better balance the political interests of all, the Taliban proclaimed that they would establish an inclusive Islamic government in Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

The Taliban's expeditious victory has shown that its political understanding has evolved to be more practical and rational. The Taliban is now better prepared to govern the country compared to its previous period in power. Nevertheless, although the Taliban has taken full control in Afghanistan, the outlook for the national reconstruction is still largely dependent on the Taliban's governance capability. Additionally, the Afghan Taliban still faces challenges in many aspects, such as in cutting off its ties with "extreme" organizations and improving the livelihood of the Afghans. The international community values more on whether the Taliban government will genuinely be capable of constructing an inclusive and modern Afghanistan.

Reference

Gao, Yang[高扬]. 2021. Why did the Taliban succeed in taking control of Afghanistan? (塔利班为什么能赢？因为塔利班对自己的改变“很行”！). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/6SjXyL0YeLlKF7KkiwRnMA>. Accessed 18 May 2022.

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HISTORICAL REASONING FOR THE TALIBAN'S RISE IN AFGHANISTAN

《阿富汗塔利班崛起的历史逻辑》

Author: Prof. YAN Wei

Professor of the Institute of Middle Eastern Studies at Northwest University (China)



Abstract

The Taliban regime collapsed in 2001, and twenty years later, it had revived and expanded, eventually recapturing the power in Kabul. The past two decades were a time of continued turbulence in Afghanistan. The interplay between the outward extension of Afghanistan's internal conflicts and power rivalries between its neighboring countries (or other significant forces from geopolitical terms) provided the backdrop for the rise of the Taliban. The author has identified four major factors that had resulted in the revival of the Taliban regime. First, the Taliban had filled the power vacuum in the region. Second, the Taliban successfully united tribal societies by using (people's) mutual religious and ethnic identity recognition. Third, the Afghan (former) government's focus on inter-ethnic conflicts weakened its ability to combat the Taliban. Fourth, the Taliban was strongly supported by external forces and had an unlimited supply of resources.

Comments by iGCU

The author points out an inescapable historical logic behind the Taliban's swift return to power in Afghanistan under the chronic suppression of the NATO countries led by the United States. The author suggests that the Taliban has systematically reformed its organizational structure. It has also made many efforts to fill the power vacuum after the U.S. withdrawal, unite different factions and tribes within the country, accept external support, etc. The author reckons that the Taliban's return to power is inextricably linked with Afghanistan's endless domestic strife and inter-ethnic conflicts.

Reference

Yan, Wei[闫伟]. 2021. Historical reasoning for the Taliban's rise in Afghanistan (阿富汗塔利班崛起的历史逻辑). *Contemporary Internal Relations* (现代国际关系) 8:1-8, 17.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

AFGHANISTAN'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL CHANGES CONFIRM THE BASIC NOTIONS OF "FRAGMENTATION"

《阿富汗政治变迁中的“定势”》



Author: Prof. WANG Xu

Associate Professor and Executive Deputy Director of the Center for South Asian Studies at PKU

Author: Dr. LI Runnan

Associate Professor and Executive Deputy Director of the Center for South Asian Studies at PKU

Abstract

After the U.S. withdrawal, the power transition in Afghanistan has proven the "fragmentation" of Afghan politics. With the ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan, major powers' frequent reshuffling of interests, and the severe impacts that the U.S. invasion had on the Afghan social institutions and social values, the "fragmentation" of Afghan politics has immensely intensified. In the political reconstruction after U.S. withdrawal, the exchange of the fragmented political interests still provides the most crucial clue in analyzing the political transition in Afghanistan. To facilitate the peace process in Afghanistan, all factions within the country should initiate peace talks and form an inclusive structure that aligns with the reality in Afghanistan. The international community should forge a constructive consensus to help Afghanistan assimilate to the international order and global environment.

Comments by iGCU

The author states that the "fragmented" Afghan politics describes the fundamental reality of Afghanistan and has been an obstacle to the advancement of the peace process. In recent decades, the perpetually changing interests of both the Afghan and countries worldwide have all exerted negative influences on Afghanistan, exacerbating Afghan political instability. In the post-U.S. era, the author believes that the Afghans should now dominate to construct a political mechanism that reconciles the interests of all parties. It might be one of the most effective ways to deal with the Afghan problems.

Reference

Wang, Xu[王旭], and Runnan, Li[李润南]. 2021. Afghanistan's domestic political changes confirm the basic notions of "fragmentation" (阿富汗政治变迁中的“定势”). World Affairs (世界知识). 17:16-19.

[Published in Sep. 2021]



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THE HISTORY OF POLITICAL TRANSITION IN AFGANISTAN AND THE DECISIONS MADE BY THE TALIBAN

《历史转折与阿富汗塔利班的选择》

Author: Dr. WANG Feng

Associate Professor of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
Director of the Department of West Asia and Africa Studies at the Graduate School of
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences



Abstract

Currently, the Afghan Taliban has become the only political and military force capable of managing the situation in Afghanistan. Thus, an in-depth understanding of the Afghan Taliban and the evaluations of Afghanistan's political future is of great importance. The development of the Afghan Taliban (from its rise in 1994 to its recapture of power in 2021) underwent three critical stages. While changes of the Taliban have been open and moderate, it needs to reform itself consistently considering the everchanging (political) situation. In addition, its future development depends not only on how the Taliban would cope with the coming political crisis at home and abroad but also on how the Taliban could reposition itself and set new development goals for Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

As the only significant force that can control the situation in Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban has quietly changed its organizational structure and leadership compared to the 1990s. The author proposes that the Afghan Taliban has undergone three stages of development, arguing that its reform may hardly touch its ideological and political power centers.

Reference

Wang, Feng[王凤]. 2021. The history of political transition in Afganistan and the decisions made by the Taliban (历史转折与阿富汗塔利班的选择). *Contemporary World* (当代世界). 10:37-42.

[Published in Oct. 2021]

TOPIC 3

CHINA-U.S. COOPERATION ON THE AFGHANISTAN SITUATION

FOUR ISSUES THAT NEED TO BE ADDRESSED TOGETHER BY THE U.S. AND CHINA CONCERNING AFGHANISTAN

《今后这四个问题需中美共同应对》

Author: Dr. FU Xiaoqiang

Vice President at China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations



Abstract

After the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan is still in a chaotic and devastated state. Whether Afghanistan can restore its stability and peace, and eventually become an effectively governed nation requires the international community's joint efforts. Notably, the international community wishes for the coordination and cooperation between China and the U.S., as they are the two permanent members of the UN Security Council and vital participants in the contemporary international system. Especially in guiding the Taliban to form a rational and acceptable concept of governance and preventing humanitarian disasters in Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

Faced with the risks that come with the Taliban regaining power in Afghanistan, the author of this article believes that China and the U.S. should take the current tension within Afghanistan as an opportunity to respond to the international community's expectations. Based on relevant UN resolutions, the two countries should collaborate to further coordinate regional neighbors (of Afghanistan) and the international community to develop relevant works and lead Afghanistan to exit the chaos and turbulence the war had caused. Afghanistan would become less of a threat to global security only when it restores its social and political order.

Reference

Fu, Xiaoqiang[傅 小 强]. 2021. Four issues that need to be addressed together by the U.S. and China concerning Afghanistan (今后这四个问题需中美共同应对). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/r3bggkYOY8UdoABYWd0imQ>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

THE SOLUTIONS TO THE CHAOS IN AFGHANISTAN RELIES ON GLOBAL COOPERATION

《阿富汗乱局与国际社会的共同应对》



Author: Dr. FU Xiaoqiang

Vice President at China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Abstract

The U.S. war in Afghanistan and its irresponsible withdrawal are the fundamental causes of chaos in Afghanistan today. It is worth noting that while the spill-over effects of the turmoil in Afghanistan are emerging, all parties in the international community are working hard to control those destructive effects. Nonetheless, the rise of the Taliban has become the most prominent factor influencing Afghanistan's future situation. The international mechanisms and arrangements made on the situation in Afghanistan need to be revised. China is supportive of all parties in Afghanistan adopting an "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned" perspective in building inclusive political structures that are consistent with the domestic situation. China can participate in many Afghan-related mechanisms and cooperate with the Afghan people to promote regional security.

Comments by iGCU

The author believes that the U.S. irresponsible withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan has led to a sudden and drastic change in Afghanistan's situation, resulting in the Afghan Taliban launching an unprecedented offensive upheaval. The author reckons that considering Afghanistan's geopolitical and economic value, the international community should forge a consensus to control the destructive effects of the chaos in Afghanistan. In sharp contrast to the United States, China advocates the notion of "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned," using its power to contribute to peace and stability throughout Afghanistan.

Reference

Fu, Xiaoqiang [傅小强]. 2021. The solutions to the chaos in Afghanistan relies on global cooperation (阿富汗乱局与国际社会的共同应对). *World Affairs* (世界知识). 17:19-22.

[Published in Sep. 2021]



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AFGHANISTAN'S FUTURE AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER

《阿富汗局势的未来走向》

Author: Prof. SU Hao

Professor of International Relations at China Foreign Affairs University (CFAU)
Director of Asia-Pacific Research Center and the Center for Strategic and Conflict Management, CFAU



Abstract

The Taliban has been pursuing a pluralistic form of governance as it faces many internal difficulties centralizing power in Afghanistan. There is a discrepancy between the world's imagination and the portrait of Afghanistan, and the country's reality. The Taliban can become a relatively reasonable political force in the future. Although the United States lost its credibility after its withdrawal from Afghanistan, it symbolized the U.S. strategic adjustments explicitly targeting China. China is crucial to the future of Afghanistan, even though it may not be the first country to give the Taliban regime political recognition. It is believed that the Taliban will be dominating the future of Afghanistan. Nevertheless, it does not necessarily mean that the Taliban would solely control the political power in the country. It still needs to coordinate and accommodate different political power in the country.

Comments by iGCU

The evolution of the Afghan situation keeps attracting global attention. The author analyzes the status in Afghanistan from the five aspects. Including how the U.S. had misjudged the Afghan problem and the underlying reasons for that; the complexity of Afghan politics, the changes of the Taliban; and the international community's efforts in handling the Afghan issue. The author further suggests that the solution to the problems in Afghanistan would require multilateral collaborations and need a joint effort by the U.S. and China.

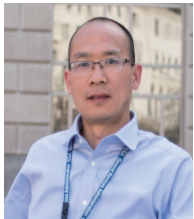
Reference

Su, Hao[苏浩]. 2021. Afghanistan's future after the Taliban takeover (阿富汗局势的未来走向). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/8v0UThx0g9aaKumd119xZw>. Accessed 18 May 2022.

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WHY THE UNITED STATES NEEDS TO WORK WITH CHINA IN THE HANDLING OF THE AFGHAN ISSUE?

《为什么美国在阿富汗需要与中国合作》



Author: Prof. WANG Zhen

Research Professor of International Politics at the Institute of China Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract

After the U.S. withdrawal, Afghanistan faced uncertainties in political, economic, and security aspects. Nevertheless, the Biden administration's ability to directly intervene in Afghanistan would reduce significantly following the U.S. departure, and it will face enormous challenges in initiating policies toward Afghanistan. As a neighboring nation to Afghanistan, China is looking forward to a stable political situation in Afghanistan, which could help maintain its surrounding areas' security. It is in the U.S. and China's mutual interests to promote the stability and reconstruction of Afghanistan. The U.S. needs to recognize that China is an important partner in handling the Afghan issue regardless of how it defines its "strategic competition" with China.

Comments by iGCU

The author suggests that the United States faces enormous risks and challenges on the Afghan issue, but its ability to intervene in the domestic situation in Afghanistan is weakening. The author emphasizes that the U.S. should abandon biases toward China. China and the U.S. can achieve "win-win" cooperation in handling the Afghan issue. Together, China and the U.S. can prevent Afghanistan from becoming the prime venue for the great powers' political struggles. Nevertheless, the author believes that the China-U.S. cooperation would not happen in an unplanned manner, as the strategic mutual trust between the two countries has been continuously sabotaged. The future of China-U.S. cooperation requires both parties' efforts, especially the United States.

Reference

Wang, Zhen[王 震]. 2021. Why the United States needs to work with China in the handling of the Afghan issue? (为什么美国在阿富汗需要与中国合作). <http://cn.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/20210907/42394.html>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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TOPIC 4

EFFECTS OF THE AFGHAN POLITICS ON INTERNATIONAL ORDER

DIALOGUE ON THE CHANGING WORLD ORDER: THE AFGHAN ISSUE AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE EURASIAN ORDER

《阿富汗问题与欧亚秩序构建 - 关于世界大变局的对话》



Author: Dr. FENG Shaolei

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iGCU Academic Committee Member



Author: Prof. ZHANG Xin

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Deputy Director of the Center for Russian Studies at East China Normal University
Non-Resident Research Fellow of iGCU



Author: Dr. CUI Heng

Assistant Research Fellow at the Center for Russian Studies of East China Normal University

Abstract

The U.S. and its NATO allies concealed their genuine intentions in Afghanistan by claiming that their military operations in the country were for "counter-terrorism" purposes. By initiating wars, Western countries attempted to forcefully promote the "superior" American democracy in Afghanistan. However, the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan had proven that the forceful transplantation of the Western political system to a country with no social foundation for democracy, would be nothing but a complete failure. The changing political environment in Afghanistan has triggered different parties in the international community to ponder over several questions. For example, are the Western concepts of "modernity" and "democracy" universal? Could the existing international system tolerate the emergence of new types of (political) systems that might be very different from the so-called "mainstream" political system today? In the future, "decentralization" might become the new theme of global cooperation.

Comments by iGCU

Afghanistan's unique geographic location and its distinctive cultural background made it a political hotspot where great powers' rivalries occurred. However, under the influences of the changing world order and the evolving political environment within Afghanistan, further observations will show whether the new Taliban regime can be independent of external forces, determine a developmental path for Afghanistan, and bring stability, prosperity, and peace to the country as well as its surrounding area in the long run. The author suggests that with Russia changing its attitude towards Afghanistan, and the Taliban trying hard to present themselves in the international arena, the Afghan issues might provide new opportunities for the future China-Russia cooperation. China could also assist Afghanistan in the handling of issues like disaster management, infrastructure construction, counter-terrorism, and anti-drug campaigns, following the principle of "Led by Afghans, Owned by Afghans".

Reference

Feng, Shaolei[冯绍雷], Xin Zhang[张昕], and Heng Cui[崔珩], 2021. Dialogue on the changing world order: The Afghan issue and construction of the Eurasian order (阿富汗问题与欧亚秩序构建 - 关于世界大变局的对话). Russian Studies (俄罗斯研究). 04:3-21.

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THE U.S. DEBACLE IN AFGHANISTAN AND ITS IMPACTS ON THE WORLD ORDER

《美国阿富汗大溃败对世界格局的影响》

Author: Prof. HUANG Jing

Dean of the Institute of International and Regional Studies at Beijing Language and Culture University



Abstract

The U.S. debacle in Afghanistan symbolized the decline of American hegemony. It could be understood from three perspectives: First, the U.S. failure in Afghanistan had brought disastrous effects and great uncertainties to the region's stability. Second, the U.S. had lost its credibility among its allies. Third, there had been a huge gap between the U.S. strategies and its actual strategic ability. The U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan continues American strategic contraction, aiming to lighten their burdens on the land and lay the foundation for a new global strategy. The United States' new global strategy is to take control of the oceans (in the Indo-Pacific region), which had already been implemented through the AUKUS. By cooperating with the U.K. and Australia, the U.S. intends to establish American maritime hegemony and eventually be able to exert American influences on other international affairs.

Comments by iGCU

The author focuses on analyzing the strategic intentions of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, and points out that the new global strategy of the U.S. would be to establish maritime hegemony. The dramatic changes in Afghanistan has embodied the U.S. failure to intervene in the affairs of the Middle East, and exposed the fact that the U.S. hegemony is in decline. The United States has shifted its strategic priorities, and is now cooperating with the U.K. and Australia, in order to take control of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and acquire strategic initiatives.

Reference

Huang, Jing[黄靖]. 2021. The U.S. debacle in Afghanistan and its impacts on the world order (美国阿富汗大溃败对世界格局的影响). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/D-EYwxXnv-wlzYGkZK5OBQ>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Oct. 2021]

AFGHANISTAN AT A CROSSROADS AND THE RIPPLE EFFECTS OF CHANGING GEOPOLITICAL ORDER

《十字路口的阿富汗与涟漪的地缘政治效应》



Author: Dr. LOU Chunhao

Deputy Director and Associate Research Professor of the Institute of South Asian Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Abstract

The Afghan-Taliban is facing three challenges after its takeover. First, to (re)construct the political structure and national identity in Afghanistan. Second, to lead the Afghan economy to grow at a steady pace and further improve the welfare of its people. Third, to transform itself, move towards "de-extremism", and keep its promises to take a more moderate approach to governance. The situation in Afghanistan has once again undergone fundamental changes. It marks the re-adjustments of America's foreign strategies, and represents that the international counter-terrorism war is now entering a new phase. It is believed that there would be a redistribution of power in the region and new rounds of competitions between major geopolitical forces might begin.

Comments by iGCU

The author points out that Afghanistan once again stands at the crossroads of history and faces challenges in its domestic development. The Afghan situation remains uncertain after the Taliban takeover. The Taliban regime still needs to deal with the political instability and potential threats to its national security. It should strive to revive the damaged Afghan economy and improve the livelihood of the Afghans.

Reference

Lou, Chunhao[楼春豪]. 2021. Afghanistan at a crossroads and the ripple effects of changing geopolitical order (十字路口的阿富汗与涟漪的地缘政治效应). *China Review* (中国评论). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/frre1ehFuFC0QvqY8zNs5w>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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TOPIC 5

THE IMPACT OF THE AFGHAN ISSUE ON THE REGIONAL POLITICAL DYNAMICS

FACING THE SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN, WHAT IS THE ROLE OF TURKEY?

《面对阿富汗，土耳其为何一反常态、跃跃欲试》



Author: Dr. LIU Zongyi

Research Fellow with Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
Secretary General of the Research Center for China-South Asia Cooperation at Shanghai Institutes for International Studies

Abstract

Turkey's takeover of the Kabul Airport mainly serves two purposes. First, to repair its alliances, specifically with the U.S. and NATO. Second, to expand its influences in Afghanistan or Central Asia generally and become the sole representative of the Turks population. Facing Turkey's changing Afghan policy, it is worthy to pinpoint that the Afghan-Taliban's nationalist sentiment has transcended their pan-Islamist sentiment, which has provided an opportunity for India that had long been marginalized. Moreover, Turkey's ambition of reviving the Pan-Turkism should not be neglected.

Comments by iGCU

In August 2021, Turkey announced its withdrawal from Afghanistan, marking the end of its mission of guarding the Kabul Airport. Turkey saw its intervention in the Afghan situation as a new strategic foothold, an embodiment of its 'Look East' strategy that reflected its ambition of expanding Turkish influence in Central Asia. However, Turkey is not an economically and technologically advanced nation, which has objectively confined its ability to interfere in Afghanistan's current situation. Nevertheless, Turkey remains an influential actor in the cultural aspect, which should not be overlooked.

Reference

Liu, Zongyi[刘宗义]. 2021. Facing the situation in Afghanistan, what is the role of Turkey? (面对阿富汗，土耳其为何一反常态、跃跃欲试). https://www.guancha.cn/liuzongyi/2021_08_15_602990.shtml. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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DRAMATIC CHANGES IN THE GEOPOLITICAL ORDER OF AFGHANISTAN

《阿富汗地缘政治格局出现重大变化》

Author: Prof. WANG Shida

Deputy Director of the Institute for South Asian Studies at the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations



Abstract

A new round of geopolitical rivalry in Afghanistan is underway after the U.S. withdrawal. Different stakeholders have been busy adjusting their Afghan policies and figuring out how to keep intervening in the Afghan issue. The U.S. retains its influence on Afghanistan's security. At the same time, Russia intends to expand its influence in Afghanistan, which could afford Russia the leverage to compete against the U.S. While India and Pakistan have opposing interests and policies in Afghanistan, Middle Eastern countries like Iran and Turkey have all been keeping their eyes on the evolution of regional security dynamics. Facing the intervention of external forces and power transition in the country, the geopolitical landscape of Afghanistan is facing profound transformation.

Comments by iGCU

The author points out that the "power vacuum" that the U.S. left in Afghanistan has stimulated other countries to step in and seek greater interests of their own. As one of the significant powers close to Afghanistan, Russia has historical ties with Afghanistan. Consequently, Russia's role in affecting the evolution of the Afghan issue has once again attracted considerable attention. The author indicates that although the U.S. has withdrawn from Afghanistan, it still (secretly) maintains its intelligence and military presence in the country. On the contrary, Russia has openly announced its engagement with different forces within Afghanistan and has been using collective security organizations to deploy Russian forces in Central Asia. The author suggests that the U.S. and Russia's political rivalry is again underway in Afghanistan.

Reference

Wang, Shida[王世达]. 2021. Dramatic changes in the geopolitical order of Afghanistan (阿富汗地缘政治格局出现重大变化). *World Affairs* (世界知识). 17:13-16.

[Published in Sept. 2021]

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RUSSIA AND AFGHANISTAN: PAST AND PRESENT

《俄罗斯与阿富汗的关系：历史与现实》



Author: Dr. LI Yonghui

Research Fellow of the Institute of Russian, Eastern European & Central Asian Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract

Great powers' rivalries have brought years of war in Afghanistan to a certain extent. Russia sees Afghanistan as a country of significant strategic status, and the relationship between the two countries has undergone complex historical changes. Russian policy towards Afghanistan has shifted away from expansion, moved to security and counter-terrorism, and is gradually returning to a rational path based on neorealism. The return of the Taliban to power has influenced Russian policy toward Afghanistan. The author suggests that the Russian side would be vigilant against the Taliban's actions in three aspects: to prevent the Afghan Taliban's re-radicalization, to avert Afghanistan's security threats from spilling over into the Central Asian Countries, and avoid the zero-sum game of great powers in the region.

Comments by iGCU

The author has analyzed the history of Russia-Afghanistan relations and predicted how the relationships between the two countries might evolve after the Taliban takeover. The political decisions of the Taliban will not only affect the relationships between Afghanistan and Russia but will also have a direct impact on peace in the region.

Reference

Li, Yonghui[李勇慧]. 2021.The relationship between Russia and Afghanistan: Past and Present (俄罗斯与阿富汗的关系：历史与现实). *World Affairs* (世界知识). 20:45-47.

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DIFFERENT PERCEPTIONS OF THE MIDDLE EASTERN COUNTRIES ON THE CHANGING POLITICS OF AFGANISTAN

《阿富汗“变天”，中东国家“几家欢喜几家愁”》

Author: Dr. TANG Zhichao

Director of the Division of Middle East Studies at the Institute of West Asian & African Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences



Abstract

The changing political climate in Afghanistan had profoundly impacted its neighbors. For now, it seems that Iran is one of the "winners" in this chaotic situation, as the strategic security environment in Iran's surrounding areas greatly improved following the U.S. withdrawal. The withdrawal had created a strategic opportunity for Iran to fill the power vacuum in the region. Qatar's international standing had also been rising. It is a critical window for the international community to come to terms with the Afghan Taliban. Turkey had been attempting to play the role of a leader in managing Afghan affairs and wanting to expand its influence in both Central and South Asia. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel were worried about the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

The author pointed out that the changing situation in Afghanistan had significantly impacted regional security and geopolitical relations. Middle Eastern countries generally had a strong sense of presence in the changing political environment in Afghanistan. The Afghan situation following the U.S. withdrawal has reflected the close ties between the Middle East and South Asia in geographical, historical, cultural, and religious aspects, and highlighted the significantly enhanced geopolitical linkage between the two regions.

Reference

Tang, Zhichao[唐 志 超]. 2021. Different Perceptions of the Middle Eastern countries on the changing politics of Afghanistan (阿富汗“变天”，中东国家“几家欢喜几家愁”). *World Affairs* (世界知识). 20:55-57.

[Published in Oct. 2021]

TOPIC 6

CHINA-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER

WHAT DOES THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER MEAN FOR CHINA?

《塔利班上台对中国意味着什么》

Author: Dr. LIU Zongyi

Research Fellow with Shanghai Institutes for International Studies
Secretary General of the Research Center for China-South Asia Cooperation at Shanghai
Institutes for International Studies



Abstract

The rise of the Afghan Taliban could bring opportunities and challenges to China-Afghanistan relations. On the one hand, as it is of great urgency for the Taliban to develop the domestic economy and improve the living standard of the Afghans, it might seek cooperation with China to boost the Afghan economy, alleviate poverty, and reconstruct its public infrastructure, etc. The Taliban retaking control of the country has also created favorable conditions for China to extend the BRI's link. Hopefully, it would better connect China with the countries in Central Asia. On the other hand, concerning the fact that the Taliban's Islamic fundamentalist ideology remains unchanged, China might still face challenges in resolving the "East Turkistan" issue.

Comments by iGCU

The author believes that whether the Taliban takeover could positively impact the China-Afghanistan relationship would mainly depend on its ability to stabilize its authority in the country, make a long-term commitment to a smooth transition, and cut ties with extremist organizations. The Taliban's governance capability, ideology, and behaviors would be the critical determinant of how China-Afghanistan relations would evolve. Facing the complex situation in Afghanistan, countries worldwide have been cautiously discussing response plans. Given that the Taliban had been intricately involving with certain extremist organizations, whether to recognize the political legitimacy of the Taliban regime as well as how to establish diplomatic ties with the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan properly would be one common dilemma that the majority of countries are facing.

Reference

Liu, Zongyi[刘宗义]. 2021. What does the Taliban takeover mean for China? (塔利班上台，对中国意味着什么). https://www.guancha.cn/liuzongyi/2021_08_19_603501_3.shtml. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

[Published in Aug. 2021]

WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM THE CHANGING POWER DYNAMIC IN AFGHANISTAN? & WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIC CHOICES OF CHINA?

《阿富汗变天的启示与中国的战略选择》



Author: Prof. CHEN Dingding

Professor of International Relations and Associate Dean of the Institute for 21st-Century Silk Road Studies at Jinan University
Founder of the Intellisia Institute

Abstract

Facing the current situation in Afghanistan, China might need to reconsider its stance and how it wants to be involved with the Taliban-controlled Afghanistan in the future. Concerning the probable impact of the Afghan issue on China as well as the bilateral relations, the prime concerns of China have always been about regional security and stability. Thus, on the one hand, China is concerned about the Taliban's relationship with the East Turkestan Islamic Extremist organization. On the other hand, China recognizes that the Taliban is, in fact, in need of the support of China for reviving its national economy and reconstructing its public infrastructure. From the perspective of China, the relationship between China and Afghanistan has always been important, considering the rich mineral resources that Afghanistan possesses as well as how it could provide new opportunities for the BRI. As China has no intention to rush into any decisions to recognize the Taliban's political legitimacy formally, it would continue to keep a close eye on the Taliban's next moves while still making sure that the bilateral communications keep rolling forward.

Comments by iGCU

The author points out that the rise of the Afghan Taliban represented the arrival of another "Saigon moment" for America. U.S. failure in "transplanting" Western-style democracy to Afghanistan has proven that it is always vital to take public opinion and the country's domestic situation into consideration before making any moves. The peace negotiations on Afghanistan have shown that each party of the international community perceived the issue differently, based on each country's different national interests. The author believes that from the perspective of China, the reconstruction of Afghanistan under the new Taliban regime could bring both opportunities and challenges to China as well as China-Afghanistan relations. The prime concerns of China have always been regional security and stability.

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Chen, Dingding[陈 定 定], Xinrong Zhu[朱 信 荣], et al. 2021. What can we learn from the changing power dynamic in Afghanistan? & What are the strategic choices of China? (阿富汗变天的启示与中国的战略选择). <https://www.intellisia.org/#/details?id=2311>. Accessed 6 Apr 2022.

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THE AFGHAN ISSUES & PROSPECTS OF CHINA-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS

《阿富汗相关问题及未来中阿关系走势（上）（下）》

Author: Dr. WANG Nan

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Researcher of the Institute of Silk Road Strategy Studies at Shanghai International Studies University



Abstract

Afghanistan is located at the strategic center of Asia and has a unique development history with diverse transnational ethnic groups. The period of Taraki and Amin opened the prelude for unrest in Afghanistan. In 1979, the Soviet invasion marked the beginning of a long period of war and poverty in contemporary Afghanistan. The country's political environment was deteriorating in the decades that followed, with Afghanistan fighting the Afghan war and a civil war consecutively. It is believed that Afghanistan will move from chaos to stability as the Taliban has retaken control. Domestically, the Taliban is facing the challenges of consolidating its regime, facilitating political reconciliation in the country, and improving people's livelihood. Diplomatically, the Taliban still needs to work on the issues like gaining diplomatic recognition and preventing external forces from interfering in Afghan domestic affairs. China and Afghanistan have been in amicable relationships for decades, and the changes in the Afghan situation have provided more opportunities for China and Afghanistan to deepen their cooperation.

Comments by iGCU

The political environment of Afghanistan has long been in a chaotic state. The interests of various parties were affected by it. With the Taliban retaking control of Afghanistan, this abrupt regime shift has made the current situation in Afghanistan more complicated and even harder to predict how it may evolve. The author gives an overview of the domestic situation in Afghanistan in terms of geography, race, and religion. By singling out three historical periods of Afghanistan, the author traces the internal political turmoils during Afghanistan's development process and analyses how the Afghan situation might evolve under the Taliban regime and where the relationship between China and Afghanistan would be heading.

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Wang, Nan[王南]. 2021. The Afghan issues & Prospects of China-Afghanistan Relations (阿富汗相关问题及未来中阿关系走势). https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/GmeBXChkNQPVf8O25YvL_A. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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HOW WOULD THE SHANGHAI COOPERATION ORGANIZATION (SCO) COPE WITH THE AFGHAN CRISIS?

《上合组织如何应对阿富汗危机？》



Author: Prof. WANG Zhen

Research Professor of International Politics at the Institute of China Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences

Abstract

Afghanistan has been left with a geopolitical vacuum following the withdrawal of the U.S. and NATO. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a critical regional organization intended to maintain peace and stability in Eurasia. Its role in coping with the Afghan situation has attracted the international community's attention. In combination with its geopolitical features and organizational structure, the SCO could benefit from its strategic location (China's proximity to Afghanistan) to promote conflict resolution in Afghanistan. This stance would, in turn, bring about regional counter-terrorism efforts to dispel the negative impacts of the diverging interests of member states. These collective efforts would jointly assist the government in Afghanistan in constructing its counter-terrorism capacity and potential. Meanwhile, SCO's active participation in the handling of the Afghan issue and its effectiveness would help promote the transformation of its own.

Comments by iGCU

The situation in Afghanistan has been an issue of concern for the international community. The author points out that different from certain countries that have been reaping the benefits from geopolitical games, the SCO is a Eurasian multilateral organization committed to resolving political and regional disputes. It is believed that its inherent advantage would help achieve long-lasting peace in Afghanistan. However, the SCO also needs to face its insufficiencies, such as its limited capability to provide assistance to foreign countries as well as the diverging opinions among its member states. Consequently, the author conceives that to effectively help resolve the Afghan conflict by making full use of its strengths and overcoming its weaknesses would be vital for the transformation of the SCO.

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Wang, Zhen[王 震]. 2021. How would the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) cope with the Afghan crisis? (上合组织如何应对阿富汗危机). <http://cn.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/20211012/42421.html>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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TOPIC 7

EU-AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS AFTER THE TALIBAN TAKEOVER

IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BOTH THE U.S. AND THE EUROPEAN STATES TO TACKLE THE AFGHAN REFUGEE CRISIS

《应对阿富汗难民潮，美欧责无旁贷》



Author: Prof. DING Long

Professor of the Middle East Institute of Shanghai International Studies University

Abstract

At present, refugees in Afghanistan can be divided into three categories, which respectively are: those who were affected by the War; those who used to work for the (former) Afghan government or the U.S. army; and those who had long been in stark poverty. The most recent wave of refugees was a group of victims of the power transition in Afghanistan, and U.S. abrupt withdrawal is to blame. The key to resolving the country's refugee crisis lies in the smooth transition of power in Afghanistan. The priority of the Taliban after its takeover should be about forming an inclusive government and leading the work of national reconstruction. The international community should also assist Afghanistan in handling its current problems.

Comments by iGCU

The political upheaval in Afghanistan has resulted in a resurgence of refugee issues and has attracted considerable attention worldwide. The author reckons that in the past twenty years, the development of Afghanistan was in pause and the country is now facing significant challenges. The author conceives that the U.S. and its allies should take full responsibility for the Afghan dilemma.

Reference

Ding, Long [丁 隆]. 2021. It is the responsibility of both the U.S. and the European states to tackle the Afghan refugee crisis (应对阿富汗难民潮，美欧责无旁贷). <https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/ZOg44la-kmHGuqlaHkFLjw>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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THE DEBACLE IN AFGHANISTAN STRUCK A BLOW TO EU-U.S. RELATIONS

《阿富汗“大溃败”重创欧美关系》

Author: Dr. Cui Hongjian

Director of the European Institute of the China Institute of International Studies



Abstract

After U.S. hasty withdrawal from Afghanistan, its European allies became skeptical about whether the U.S. support for multilateralism was declining and if the U.S. would still be strategically capable of dominating the overall situation in the region. The failure of U.S. interventionism exposed its shortcomings in military and diplomatic aspects and intensified the negative impacts of the refugee crisis in Europe. The outcomes of the U.S. withdrawal severely harmed the relationship between Europe and the United States. To avoid the collateral damage that the U.S. actions might have on the EU, the EU should first be unequivocal about its interests, reflect upon its connections with the U.S., and eventually advocate for the European strategic autonomy.

Comments by iGCU

The author reckons that the U.S. withdrawal was a reckless and unilateral move. It had not only negatively influenced its international credibility but had also left its European allies with distrust. The author further points out that as the "irresponsible" acts of the U.S. had bitterly disillusioned the EU, Europeans might reconsider their relationships with the U.S. It is believed that, the priority of the EU would be about protecting its interests and pursuing strategic autonomy.

Reference

Cui, Hongjian[崔洪建]. 2021. The debacle in Afghanistan struck a blow to EU-U.S. relations (阿富汗“大溃败”重创欧美关系). <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1709014815183594957&wfr=spider&for=pc>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN HAS FACILITATED THE EU TO REINFORCE ITS STRATEGIC AUTONOMY

《阿富汗撤军促欧盟加强战略自主》



Author: Prof. ZHENG Chunrong

Professor and Director of the Center of German Studies at Tongji University

Abstract

The EU's new defense and security initiatives were designed to help member states improve their defense capabilities and deepen defense cooperation within Europe. It is believed that the motive behind the EU's new initiatives was out of European's strong feelings of insecurity that emerged when pulling their troops out of Afghanistan. U.S. abrupt withdrawal undoubtedly had fomented European distrust. The EU has been trying to become a more self-reliant international actor and build up Europe's economic sovereignty, industrial sovereignty, and digital sovereignty. Thus, it becomes increasingly important for China and Europe to strengthen cooperation, deepen mutual recognition, and collaborate in handling global challenges.

Comments by iGCU

The author indicates that the EU's decision to form a "rapid response" force was a result of European's mounting distrust of the U.S., and it was an embodiment of European's persistent pursuits of strategic autonomy. The author points out that new opportunities are available for China and Europe to cooperate. Under the current circumstances, China and the EU would need to strengthen cooperation and work together to cope with future challenges.

Reference

Zheng, Chunrong[郑春荣]. 2021. U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan has facilitated the EU to reinforce its strategic autonomy (阿富汗撤军促欧盟加强战略自主). <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1710093915662584031&wfr=spider&for=pc>. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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EVALUATING THE IMPACT THAT THE U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM AFGHANISTAN HAD ON EUROPE

《美国撤军阿富汗对欧洲影响评估》

Author: Dr. SUN Chenghao

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Abstract

The majority of strategic policy-making authorities in Europe had been disappointed and frustrated by the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, feeling abandoned. First of all, they were unpleasant that the U.S. did not confer with them (the NATO allies) about its withdrawal beforehand. Second, it is believed that the U.S. withdrawal could be indicating that the U.S. would weaken its security commitments to Europe. Third, it worried many that the U.S. strategic shift to the East might harm the interests of Europe. U.S. withdrawal undoubtedly has its influence on Europe. The top priority of European has become controlling the influx of refugees, and the EU was forced to reexamine its interventionist policies. Additionally, the U.S.-EU relations, seemingly on the upbeat, now suffer another setback. The eagerness of the European countries to achieve ‘strategic autonomy’ is now on the rise.

Comments by iGCU

U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan had a significant impact on the regional security of the Middle East and had also immensely influenced its allies' global strategic layouts. The author believes that the U.S. pull-out had made the Europeans feel abandoned. As a result, the EU member states have actively sought "strategic autonomy" and are willing to adopt more "Europe-oriented" policies.

Reference

Sun, Chenghao[孙成昊]. 2021. Evaluating the impact that the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan had on Europe (美国撤军阿富汗对欧洲影响评估). https://mp.weixin.qq.com/s/totHG3Luv698p1IjAa_wJA. Accessed 1 Apr 2022.

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FRENCH STRATEGIC ASPIRATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST

《法国试图以阿富汗议题为切入点布局中东战略》



Author: Dr. YANG Chengyu

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Abstract

The Middle East is a region of great strategic importance. France has been plowing into the Middle East for years and has precise demands on many issues, such as security, energy, trade, and economy. The author first analyzes French participation in the Baghdad Conference on Cooperation and Partnership hosted by Iraq and then discusses French strategic aspirations in the Middle East. Specifically about how France has been handling the refugee issue, combatting terrorism, and strengthening its economic and trade cooperation with other countries in the region. In addition, the author offers the reasons for France's anxiety about deploying its strategy in the Middle East, including the complicated strategic environment in the region and the limited role it played amidst the chaos in Afghanistan.

Comments by iGCU

The author states that the strategic position of the Middle East attracts the predatory grabs of many countries. However, the complexity of the situation in the area has been a significant obstacle for many countries. For those Middle Eastern countries, the refugee crisis and other problems caused by years of wars have yet to be resolved.

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