



## CENTRAL ASIA July 2018

### **Afghanistan in Cenasia after the NATO summit**

In the Summit Declaration of the NATO meeting held in Brussels, the Heads of State and Government of the 29 member nations of the North Atlantic Alliance reaffirmed NATO commitment to ensure long-term security and stability in Afghanistan, highlighting the successes of the Resolute Support Mission to provide training and advising as well as to assist Afghanistan' security forces (*Brussels Summit Declaration, Press Release (2018) 074, Issued on 11 July 2018, [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official\\_texts\\_156624.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_156624.htm)*).

Furthermore, NATO recognizes that *“regional actors have an important role to play in support of peace and stabilisation in Afghanistan, and we call on them to cooperate more closely on fighting terrorism, to improve the conditions for economic development, to support the Afghan government’s peace and reconciliation efforts”*(Brussels Summit Declaration).

In spite of positive progresses concerning the cooperation among the five Central Asian republics in the security field – in order to prevent the spread of instability from Afghanistan, linked to the Taliban’s resurgence and the presence of DAESH militants -, a deeper cooperation between NATO and Central Asia has been unfortunately hampered by several factors, such as the geographic distance and the fact that membership in the Alliance is limited to European countries (art.10).

Key priorities of NATO’s cooperation with its Central Asian partners have been identified as the improvement of the interoperability in peacekeeping operations and to develop practical cooperation to address shared security challenges. Moreover, NATO supports the adoption of reforms in the defence and security sector in Central Asia (NATO Official Website, *Partners in Central Asia*, 2014 [http://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock\\_publications/20140505\\_140505-Backgrounder\\_CentralAsia\\_EN\\_lowres.pdf](http://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/stock_publications/20140505_140505-Backgrounder_CentralAsia_EN_lowres.pdf)).

Since 1991 relations between NATO and each Central Asian country have evolved in different ways: among the Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan is the country most able to develop a high level of cooperation with NATO. In 2005 Astana’s government agreed to implement an Individual Partnership

Action Plan to enhance relations and security cooperation with NATO. In the Central Asian perspective, the cooperation with NATO would allow these republics to better implement a multivector strategy in foreign policy, balancing the influence and the ambitions of the two regional geopolitical powers China and Russia. Nevertheless, Central Asian republics are very cautious in avoiding a strong reaction from Beijing and Moscow, who have always criticised and opposed NATO's military presence in this region.

The closure of the Office of the NATO Liaison Officer for Central Asia – which was based in Uzbekistan and operated from 2013 to 2017 – will further affect the possibilities to expand cooperation with Central Asian republics.

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