

Violence and Challenges in the Pamir Hindu Kush: A Study of the Impact of Change on a Central but Unknown Region

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Abstract : Despite its particular patterns and historical importance, the remote region of the Pamir Hindu Kush still lacks public recognition, as well as scientific substance, because of the abundance of classical state-centred geopolitical studies, the resilience of (inter)national narratives, and the political utility of the concepts of 'Central Asia' and 'South Asia'. However, this specific region of about 100 million inhabitants and located at the criss-cross of four geopolitical areas (Indian, Iranian, Chinese and Russian) over a territory of half a million square kilometres features a string of patterns that set it apart from the neighbouring areas of the Fergana, the Gansu and Punjab. Moreover, the Pamir Hindu Kush undergoes a series of parallel social and economic transformations that deserve scrutiny for their strong effect on the people's lifestyle, particularly in three major urban centres (Aksu in China, Bukhara in Uzbekistan and Islamabad in Pakistan) and their immediate rural surroundings. While the involvement of various public and private stakeholders (States, NGOs, civil movements, private firms...) has undeniably resulted in positive elements (economic growth, connectivity, higher school attendance), it has in the same time generated a collection of negative effects (radicalizing, inequalities, pollution, territorial divide) that need to be addressed to strengthen regional and international security. This paper underscores the region's strategical importance as the major hotbed and engine of insecurity and violence in Asia, notably in the context of Afghanistan's enduring violence. It introduces the inner structures of the region, the different sources of violence as well as the governments' responses to address it.

Keywords : geography, security, terrorism, urbanisation

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