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**IDENTIFYING AVAILABLE OPTIONS FOR TURKMENISTAN, UZBEKISTAN AND TAJIKISTAN TO TACKLE SECURITY THREATS FROM AFGHANISTAN**

The situation on Afghanistan deteriorates, producing security risks to its immediate Central Asian neighbors, namely Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The report provides analysis of options available for the three countries to tackle these challenges. The study is based on author’s field research in the region. The net result of the research is a chart of options dependent on a number of variables.

The report reviews in detail five alternatives Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan have to meet growing security risks from the Afghan territory. These are relying on armed forces of the central government in Kabul, sealing the border, making deals with Taliban, creating a military buffer zone on the Afghan side of the border; creating a non-military buffer zone on the Afghan side.

None of these options provide enough result alone. Thus they need to be combined. Exact combinations are dependent on three variables.

First, on the capability of the official Afghan armed forces. Second, it is important what Kabul government does in broader political terms. Does it manage to keep legitimacy through internal political crisis and next elections? Does it reach peace agreement with Taliban? Does it give more free-hand to regional power-brokers or keep centralized rule? Third, prevailing expectations of Central Asian governments are vital. They may continue with the current attitude that Taliban does not intend to attack Central Asian borders or revisit this as some point.

Options of possible combinations of responses to threats depending on variables are summarized in a chart, which classifies eleven options of such combinations.

The reports concludes that the grey zone of uncomfortable balance between threats and ability to respond to them starts from the combination of variables, when Kabul central government is legitimate, fails to make a deal with Taliban, does not give more free-hand to regional warlords, and official armed forces are stuck in stand-off with anti-governmental elements This is the current situation. But this grey zone will extend, if with all other variables staying the same, official armed forces fail to maintain the stand-off. Security risks in this case escalate, but response options remain practically the same.

**Key words**: Afghanistan, security, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan.