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**Beschreibung:**

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The research collected here was presented at the Fourth annual Strategic Studies Institute (SSI) conference on Russia in May 2012. They focus largely, though not exclusively, on the interactions of the great powers in, about, and around Central Asia. That said, it is imperative that anyone trying to make sense of the complex situation in Central Asia remember that the contemporary or new great game is not played upon a chessboard of inert Central Asian subjects, as was the case in Kipling's time. Today the Central Asian states are all active subjects, as well as objects of international action, and are perfectly capable of attempting, even successfully, to shape the interactions of great powers and foreign institutions upon their politics. As a result, today's version of the new great game is a multidimensional and multiplayer game that is played simultaneously on many "chessboards." Furthermore, that game is about to change dramatically and substantively. The United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) have already begun preparations to withdraw from Afghanistan. Beyond that, U.S. funding for Central Asia as a whole, probably in anticipation of long-term constrained budgets, has also begun to fall.

Since U.S. strategy in Central Asia has been officially

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presented as essentially an adjunct to the war in Afghanistan, these emerging trends oblige the United States to formulate a new, less militarily-oriented strategy for the entire region—one that sees the region simultaneously in both its integrity and diversity. For many reasons, doing so will present a difficult challenge to U.S. military-political leaders. These difficulties include the actions of external players like Russia and China, among others, and are not confined solely to U.S. interaction with Central Asia. Indeed, as the papers included here show, the complexities of foreign interaction with Central Asia are both intensifying and accelerating, obligating the United States to realign its regional strategy and policy. That strategy has been primarily focused on the military requirements of defeating the Taliban as a prelude to winning the war in Afghanistan. That outcome would, in turn, serve as the basis for stabilizing Afghanistan internally and then providing for the stabilization of the adjacent states of Central Asia, whose regional cooperation with Afghanistan is vital to its security and theirs after 2014. These states possess limited resources with which to help bring Afghanistan to a more secure condition after 2014, though they are making contributions to that end. However, the impending drawdown of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. forces, plus widespread skepticism as to the staying power of the Karzai regime after that drawdown, repeatedly leads their governments to warn that Afghanistan's and their future is, to some degree, at considerable risk. While some of these statements are fear mongering to increase pressure upon foreign donors to assist them, their fears are real enough, and they are certainly not groundless.