

REVIEWS

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**The War Against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Afghanistan
in the Years 1994–2012**
[review of the book *Wojna z talibami i Al-Kaidą. Afganistan
w latach 1994–2012*]

The book by Łukasz Jureńczyk entitled: „The war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. Afghanistan in the years 1994–2012” (original title: *Wojna z talibami i Al-Kaidą. Afganistan w latach 1994–2012*) presents a broad spectrum of actions that have been taken by the international community and local activists, who set themselves the goal of overthrowing the Taliban groups in Afghanistan and combat the world’s most dangerous terrorist organization – Al-Qaeda. The basis for author’s dissertation was the situation in the country since the seizure of power by Al-Qaeda through a period of keeping it, until the most recent period. Ł. Jureńczyk took into account cultural contexts, the international situation, and the differences in the exercise of power by

the terrorist organization and the socio-economic outline.

The reviewed publication was released by Scientific Publishing ‘GRADO’ in Toruń in 2013 and partially funded by the Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The book consists of 5 chapters – ‘The Taliban road to power’, ‘The Taliban regime’, ‘The causes of the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda’, ‘The Taliban war with Al-Qaeda’ and ‘The attempt to democratize Afghanistan’.

Chapter one entitled: ‘The Taliban road to power’ presents geographic and historical conditions of Afghanistan, Taliban origin and their military operations. The author outlines the geography of the country, some ethnic elements of

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its citizens, as well as historical outline of Afghanistan.

The second chapter is called 'The Taliban regime.' This very interesting part presents: the structure of political power, the organization of the army and military situation. Furthermore, the reasons for the Taliban's military successes and patterns of the society organization were described. This section appears to be extremely interesting. The reader has the opportunity to learn about the history of Mullah Omar and why he is considered among the local people as a hero and moral authority. Extremely interesting are also sections pertaining to the enslavement of women, their overall situation in the country and repressions. The author also outlines the punishment that was executed on men who did not comply with the imposed rules (e.g. the rejection of an order to wear a long beard was punished with employee dismissal or flogging) (Jureńczyk, 2013, p. 89–100).

The next chapter entitled: 'The causes of the war against the Taliban and Al-Qaeda' can be regarded as a description of the factors that led to the war with a group of Taliban. Ł. Jureńczyk analyzed the international situation, which had become one of the reasons for the initiation of hostile actions on the territory of Afghanistan. The local disagreements between the opposing influential groups were discussed. Furthermore, the position of the United States and their rela-

tion to the issue of the Afghan war was also presented. In this part, certainly, it is worth paying attention to the section entitled: 'September 11th', which relates to the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers in New York 11.09.2001, as well as the international response to this horrific act of aggression. The author quoted not only the occurred facts, but also provided interpretation of their meaning and discussed the consequences that were associated with the events of that day.

The fourth chapter can be regarded as the proper part of the book. The reader has the opportunity to understand the situation that took place prior to the start of the war against the Taliban, the concepts of combating terrorism, the preparations for the war and military actions that took place. The author in his publication also discussed the ISAF mission – presenting its status, objectives and performance.

The last part entitled: 'The attempt to democratize Afghanistan' is a description of steps that had been taken to implement the principles of democracy in the country. Furthermore, the reader can learn about the efforts to pass democratic constitution along with the first general presidential elections and considerably visible social changes in the country. Certainly, worth mentioning are the sections in the book relating to changes in the lives of ordinary citizens e.g. widespread access to the phones, the emergence of Internet cafes, emerging of the exclusive stores

with clothes from the famous designers like: Gianni Versace and Giorgio Armani.

Jureńczyk in this chapter also presented the current situation of women and men. The author provided a conclusion that the fall of the Taliban was the biggest gain for disadvantaged and oppressed women and this situation helped to grow the equality movement in Afghanistan in a form of special committees (Jureńczyk, 2013, p. 270). The last part of the reviewed publication is devoted to an analysis of the economic situation, prospects of the reconstructed state and scenarios for the future.

Despite the subject matter, which Łukasz Jureńczyk presented, this book reads smoothly and pleasantly. The structure of the book is clear and concise. The division on the sub chapters is clear, and vivid narration does not make the reader weary. The great advantages of the book are certainly the quotations from the life of individuals. It enables the reader to feel the emotions associated with the live events instead of being bored with the historical report. The work is written in the matter-of fact, simple way, which is understandable to the average reader, who does not necessarily have to be zealous explorer of the history of Afghanistan and the Afghan war.

The subject presented in the book is extremely important from historians, sociologists and political scientists' point of view. Undoubted advantages of the publication are also extensive references to

literature and foreign publications, numerous newspaper articles, websites, etc.

Despite many advantages, which the reviewed publication cannot be denied, the author has not, however, managed to avoid making mistakes. Firstly – the final turning point of the selected timeframe (2012 year) is not very clear. Łukasz Jureńczyk supported this thesis stating that it was 'the last moment when the change of strategy towards Afghanistan was possible' (Jureńczyk, 2013, p. 18). I think, however, that after a thorough analysis of the subject it would be have been possible to more accurately select the final turning point, so that it is more closely related to the root of the problem. Secondly – some of the descriptions seem to be overly detailed. As examples can serve the descriptions of beards, that Taliban only could have (p. 100), or methods of acquiring opium (p. 107). Another drawback can be found in the sentences that add nothing to the discourse except from tautologies e.g. 'This military intervention is an armed interference in the internal affairs of another country' (p. 180). In the publication the reader can also encounter linguistic errors such as structural errors: "wielotysięczne oddziały talibskie **zaczęły przejmowały** realną kontrolę nad poszczególnymi terytoriami" (p. 17) – many thousands of Taliban troops began taking over the real control over individual territories, "(...) odbyły się **wybory do dwuizbowego**

parlamentu, w którym po raz pierwszy wzięły udział kobiety” (p. 37) – (...) the elections to a bicameral parliament were held, in which for the first time women took part; lexical errors, e.g. “Stany Zjednoczone (...) oficjalnie wycofały się z integracji w sprawy kraju” (p. 129) – The United States (...) officially withdrew from the integration in the affairs of the country; or spelling errors, e.g. “wieloletnia okupacja Afganistanu przez Związek Radziecki doprowadziła do masowej fali uchodźstwa” or “zwarzywszy na istotne podziały narodowościowe” – The long-term occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union led to a massive wave of refugees; given the high importance or ethnic divisions.

Łukasz Jureńczyk’s publication can certainly be recommend to various

readers. Not only can historian, political scientist and sociologist find in this book interesting facts, but also a reader looking for a thorough, clear and factual reading based on reliable sources. Owing to the fact that this publication is targeted at numerous readers the average reader who does not have a broad knowledge of the situation in Afghanistan will understand what the Afghan war meant for the local community and what was the role in this war of the United States, the Taliban or Al-Qaeda.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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