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## THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE US INTERVENTION AFTER SEPTEMBER 11 (2001–2021)

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**Abstract.** This article examined the political situation in Afghanistan after the 2001 US intervention. Due to its important geographical position, the study of what has happened in recent decades in Afghanistan, which has always become a collision ground of the current and strategic interests of global and regional powers, is not only from the point of view of the modern history and international relations of that country, but also to clarify one of the key points of global politics, and to have an adequate understanding of the events taking place in the region and the world today. It is also important from the point of view. Since the processes are not yet finished in the research work and it is not clear what order will be formed in the region, the events that took place in and around Afghanistan after 2001 were discussed in general, and the main attention was paid to the earlier periods when their roots were hidden.

**Key words:** USA, Afghanistan, September 11 Attack, Taliban, intervention.

**Introduction.** After the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan, a civil war began. With the start of this civil war, the Soviets supported some groups. The Taliban took advantage of the weaknesses of the central government in Afghanistan after the Russians withdrew after the Soviet-Afghan War and came to power and controlled most of the country. Afghanistan came to the world's attention after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. The United States helped the Afghan allies to oust the Taliban, which harbored the Al-Qaeda terrorist group. After 20 years, the war resulted in the Taliban regaining power in Afghanistan. The topic is actual because the traces of the annexation that took place in 2001 still linger in Afghanistan's political life.

**Discussion.** During the Cold War, there was a joint action by the US and Europe against the Soviets' fundamental strategic expansionism. The ideological competition carried out over Afghanistan during the Cold War brought about ethnic groupings in which the countries of the region intervened and fierce conflicts between these groups. Thus, Afghanistan became the center of the war. Contrary to popular belief, the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan goes back well beyond the last 30 years that began with the Soviet invasion in 1979. (Ahmetbeyoglu, 2002:78) As some researchers have pointed out, it is a situation that should be considered that a decentralized administration is necessary to ensure security and good governance in Afghanistan, but that it has historically been governed by strictly centralized state structures.

The Bonn Agreement decided to establish the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to provide security and assistance in Afghanistan. When addressing the issue of security in Afghanistan, the necessity of ensuring state security has been the fundamental starting point of the international community. However, the current situation brings to the agenda the necessity of first ensuring stability and then establishing security at every stage of the state-building process determined by the Bonn Agreement. (Kaldor, 2021:27) While stability is a prerequisite for both the development of political processes and security, it is necessary to allow groups and elements that are considered to pose a threat to security to be included in processes that may mean compromising security in order to ensure stability. In this sense, solving the security-stability dilemma is possible by ensuring human and social security, which seem to be distant targets in the conflict environment in Afghanistan, and ultimately by ensuring state security.

The Afghan people living under this intertwined and multiple security problem determine their preferences over various thresholds. The first critical threshold and the most problematic situation in terms of security is the Taliban's continued existence. Rumors have spread that the people are resorting to courts run by Taliban members in Kandahar to solve their problems. The Taliban's brutal practices against government 'collaborators' continue, especially in the south and southwestern parts of the country. (Azami, 2012) NATO and coalition forces have not achieved any success beyond encouraging the people to support the government. The second critical threshold is the preferences of the masses who do not want the Taliban, but find the current government unsuccessful and are hopeless that the situation will worsen. This mass has lost its trust in the government; moreover, they think that the government will not be effective in solving the pending problems. This group also has negative thoughts about coalition forces and NATO not contributing to the construction of the country and does not trust foreigners.

The solution to the problem encountered in the security-stability dilemma lies in the fact that the vast majority of the country does not want the Taliban regime. In the case of Afghanistan, if the management of the security and stability dilemma will be carried out through human, social and state security, security problems may need to be postponed for a short time in order to ensure stability. For this reason, it is a positive step for the mentioned projects to allow militia forces and warlords to take part in the new army. First, ensuring stability and the formation of the security structure, and then ensuring that security institutions act in accordance with their primary duties are the processes that will follow each other in order to establish security.

The Afghanistan experience has also shown that a referendum or a constitutional referendum concerning the whole country cannot be held by ensuring security only in a narrow area of the capital. All groups, ethnicities and segments that will vote must be given the opportunity to vote. An example of the security-stability dilemma in Afghanistan being maintained with critical thresholds and partial success is; granting the right to vote to elements that threaten security or making partial concessions to elements that create insecurity in terms of security during the vitalization of a political institution such as elections. In Afghanistan, the management of the security-stability dilemma will be possible by restructuring the state and government structures as well as developing policies that will integrate the broad masses into the political system as much as possible. After some of the irreconcilable groups within the Al-Qaeda and Hekmatyar groups are eliminated and excluded, the remaining groups or individuals can be brought into the political system and harmonized. In this way, the legitimacy base of the political system can be expanded by increasing participation and a more dynamic and comprehensive structure can be created. In this context, some problematic groups, such as warlords, economic entrepreneurs associated with them and some militia elements, can be considered political actors and take their place in the army.

Since the ultimate goal in Afghanistan is to establish permanent administrative institutions, ensure security, and replace opium trade with legal economic activities, the way to achieve this goal is to manage the security-stability tension well. What is needed most is for political authority to gain depth within the masses. The best strategy to create this depth is to compromise on security to some extent and include groups that seem irreconcilable but have a small spark of compromise as legitimate actors in the political and economic system, and to transform and domesticate them over time.

**Developments After September 11.** The terrorist attacks on the Trade Center and the Pentagon, perhaps the greatest act of terrorism in human history, have had a profound impact on the United States as well as the entire international community. The concept of security and the right of self-defense have begun to be questioned. The collective security system and the right of self-defense serve different purposes. While the right of self-defense aims to eliminate attacks against states, the collective security system serves a broader purpose of preventing a large-scale war. In his speech on July 1, 2002, US President Bush stated that the concept of security is now different from the Cold War period

and that it is not possible to expect all threats to fully emerge. Similarly, in his speech on November 2, 2002, Wolfowitz, who was the US Deputy Secretary of Defense, stated that it is not possible to foresee imminent threats and stated that the imminent threat regarding the September 11 attacks emerged on September 10, but that it is not possible to know this. In the speeches made by official officials regarding the new national security strategy, it is seen that the concepts of preventive intervention and preemptive intervention are used interchangeably.

According to the American theory, Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden was the real planner of the incident where four passenger planes were hijacked and crashed into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon building. Therefore, after the events of September 11, Islam, not the Al-Qaeda organization, began to be introduced as the real source of extremism and radicalism in the world. (Mashal, 2019) So much so that the American term president Bush even talked about the start of the Crusades in creating this mentality in the world public opinion. The widespread reaction of the Muslims of the world to this statement of Bush forced the American President to back down. Al-Qaeda, on the other hand, claimed responsibility for the events of September 11. However, another theory has been put forward regarding this. According to this, it was impossible for the plan for the events of September 11 to be carried out without the cooperation of someone from the flight security, air defense and security systems in America.

According to some, when the policy followed by the US after September 11 is examined, it is possible to say that it acted in line with the strategic plan roughly outlined by Brzezinski. (Susannah, 2021:37) Indeed, the US operation in Afghanistan had a special and important meaning in terms of the world political scene due to Afghanistan's geostrategic location. Because Afghanistan is right in the middle of three countries (Russia, China, Iran) that use openly anti-American rhetoric in the world geography and is in a position to influence all three. Interestingly, these three countries supported the US operation in Afghanistan.

The military intervention in Afghanistan after September 11 and the relations that the US initiated with the Central Asian republics in the field of military-security within the scope of the fight against terrorism and the US's beginning to settle in the region began to significantly affect the size of the threat perceptions and security structures of the countries in the region. The September 11 attacks were balanced together with the war in Afghanistan, the Iraq war and the "war on terror". These conflicts demonstrate the continuing importance of military force in settling disputes both between and within states, as well as the use of violence as a significant weapon by terrorist groups to change the status quo. Iran, which has a traditional sense of distrust towards Afghans, generally establishes relations with Shia communities in the region. Tehran's goal is to strengthen its control over Shia minorities and use them as pawns in its regional expansion policies.

In a world shaken by the September 11 attacks, the European Union's first response to the attacks was to give full political support to the US. The EU, which announced its thoughts with a declaration on September 12 immediately after the September 11 attacks, condemned the terrorist attacks and expressed its solidarity with the US government and people. The EU, which accepted that the attacks were against all humanity, stated that it would cooperate closely with the US in the fight against international terrorism and emphasized that all necessary measures regarding the fight against terrorism by the UN and other international organizations would be implemented.

The US administration defined the September 11 attacks as an "armed attack" and President Bush claimed that the US was "at war". Again, within this framework, the US announced that it would exercise its right of legitimate defense recognized by Article 51 of the UN Charter. (Karasaculu, 2011:18) Thus, the US has attempted to create a legitimate basis for the War on Terror. Because, for the first time in terms of international law and international relations, the concept of state and the scope of the law of war have been taken outside, and international terrorist organizations, those who individually engage in terrorist activities and countries that support terrorism have been accepted as enemies.

The September 11 attacks and the subsequent use of force by the US and the UK in Afghanistan have also brought about discussions about whether these states acted in accordance with international law. With the coming to power of US President Barack Obama, Afghanistan-US relations have entered a new era. The US-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership Agreement, which is of great importance for the future of Afghanistan, was signed between the two countries in the capital Kabul on May 2, 2012 (Dogan, 2012). This agreement has provided assurance regarding the commitment and responsibility of the United States to the Afghanistan problem in the 10-year period between 2014–2024.

The strategic cooperation agreement was a clear sign that the U.S. and its NATO allies were still determined to fight al-Qaeda and its extremist supporters. It sent a clear message to the militants and their supporters: “The game is not over in Afghanistan.” The agreement also left the door open for dialogue and political compromise with the insurgents. Both Obama and Afghan leader Karzai were aware that the timing of the agreement was symbolically significant. It was also probably no coincidence that the agreement was signed on the anniversary of the killing of Osama bin Laden (Shadi, 2021).

Afghan President Hamid Karzai had cut off negotiations on the agreement between the US and Afghanistan on June 17, 2013, in response to the Taliban opening an office in Qatar. The mission of NATO forces in Afghanistan under the leadership of the US was to end in 2014. This new agreement envisaged that US soldiers would remain in Afghanistan after 2014. (Mashal, 2019) The new agreement would allow US paramilitary forces to remain in Afghanistan after this date. The mission of these soldiers would be to combat Al Qaeda in the country and continue the training of Afghan soldiers.

Shortly after September 11, the US-led war against the Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan was widely supported at the time. NATO continues to play a leading role in the stabilization and reconstruction of that country. At the same time, the war on terror has breathed new life into the ongoing securitization of nuclear weapons. The withdrawal of US troops will continue until the end of 2014, and by the end of 2014, US military operations in Afghanistan will have ended. Following this, Afghan security forces will be expected to take full responsibility for all security-related matters in Afghanistan. The increase in the economic, political and human resource costs of the kinetic and non-kinetic operations conducted in the country after 2010 forced the coalition countries, especially the USA, to seek an exit strategy. (Halatchi, 2016:85) Accordingly, as of 2014, the administrative and security responsibilities of the country were handed over to the reorganized ministries and the trained and equipped security forces, and the units conducting kinetic operations were withdrawn from Afghanistan. From this date on, the military units that remained only for consultancy and training purposes within the NATO Resolute Support Operation also left the country as of 2021, based on the USA's decision to withdraw. Having effectively lost coalition support, the Afghan administration and security forces quickly failed against the Taliban and were forced to hand over the administration of the country to the Taliban at the end of August 2021 (Kaldor, 2021).

**Approbation of research results.** The main provisions of the article are reflected in the author's theses submitted to scientific conferences in Azerbaijan and abroad, as well as in scientific articles published in various journals in Azerbaijan and abroad.

**Conclusions.** It is known that the security issue in Afghanistan is still problematic. The remnants of the Taliban regime and elements of al-Qaeda continue to try to derail progress throughout the country. However, when we look back twenty years, it is possible to see that the rule of law has been partially formalized in the country. We see that there is a weak respected national army or national police force. The country was devastated by almost 30 years of war and was ostracized from the international community. Only three countries in the world recognized the Afghan government. Moreover, there was no security in Afghanistan. The Taliban was harboring al-Qaeda, one of the most dangerous and deadly terrorist organizations in the world. Today, Afghanistan has ceased

to be a haven for al-Qaeda. Although security has been provided, there is an authoritarian gap in the implementation of the laws. Companies need to be very careful about the agreements they make with local companies and personnel, and they need to take every written document into consideration. Even having company letterheads, stamps and seals in the open can cause incidents that may cause problems for the company in the future. Afghanistan is a weak country surrounded by powerful states. Before September 11, Pakistan, India, Russia, Iran and the USA tried to protect their own interests by continuing the civil war in Afghanistan. Today, the possibility of multilateral peace talks to solve the security problems in Afghanistan is being questioned. In other words, the facts show that the problems cannot be solved only militarily.

After the September 11 terrorist attacks on the USA in 2001, the developments in Afghanistan and its surroundings are closely followed both regionally and globally. Interest in the Taliban, Al Qaeda, other terrorist activities and security problems in Afghanistan and its surroundings has increased. Today, news of attacks carried out by the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan is heard almost every week. The conflicts and terrorist attacks in Afghanistan and on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border are part of the regional problems. There are also problems such as drug trafficking, lack of education, internal instability and economic inadequacy. Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world. Despite 10 years of reconstruction efforts, a stable regime has not been established. The government relies on foreign aid and is unable to cope with economic/social crises and criminal organizations. Therefore, the security relations to be addressed cover very interrelated issues. It remains unclear how security and stability will be achieved in the future.

However, the general situation in Afghanistan, strategic and political mistakes have made the Taliban, which was seen as the country's biggest threat after 20 years, a security and stability factor in Afghanistan. The personnel inadequacies of gendarmerie-type military units, the national restrictions of the countries, the weaknesses and general problems of the Afghan society have been the most important obstacles to the success of these activities. However, from a positive perspective, it can be interpreted as evidence that gendarmerie-type military units will play a critical role in interventions and crisis management efforts to be made in post-conflict areas as a result of strategically accurate planning and decision-making processes within a more limited mission definition.

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