Communication Regime of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:
Socio-Political Analysis

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Abstract. The article contains the results of a pilot study of the controllability of information and communication processes in Afghanistan. The author defines the concept of "communication regime" and "controllability", describes the indicators of controllability of communication regimes and their main types. The concept of communication regime is applied for the first time in the context of Afghanistan. The author analyzes the degree of conventionality of the communication regime control center in Afghanistan and comes to the conclusion that the regime, in general, is weakly conventional. The centers of control of the communication regime inside and outside the country are considered, and the conclusion is made about the weak controllability of the communication regime on the part of the Taliban[1]. The ability of the Taliban* to transfer the communication regime from one state to another without conflict, the ability to control and achieve the target parameters of the communication regime, the ability of the Taliban* to use the mechanisms of self-organization and society are evaluated. to regulate communication regimes. A number of features of the communication regime are highlighted, for example, the presence of "blind spots" that are not always seen and understood by those who manage public communications. The article contains web analytics, statistical data on mass media, popular browsers, search engines, transmitting devices.

Keywords: Afghanistan, communication regime, public communications, political communications, media, mass media, social networks

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1   *The organization has been recognized a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court. Unified federal list of organizations, including foreign and international organizations, recognized as terrorist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of June 25, 2023). Available from: http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm (accessed: 25.06.2023);18+

Introduction

The communication regime has been the object of scientific research since 2020. Over three years of active field research in country contexts and the theoretical development of the scientific concept of communication regimes, this approach has shown a high epistemological and predictive potential for the analysis of domestic political processes in countries and regions and for the analysis of foreign policy relations. With regard to Afghanistan, this concept is applied for the first time. The relevance of the study is due to at least the following reasons:

• the insufficiency in modern Russian Afghan studies of complex interdisciplinary studies of social and communication processes in Afghanistan, the media analysis, the features of the media space and related problems. There are practically no studies on the dynamics of the modern social structure of society that predetermine the consumption of information content. The number of studies of the institutions of socialization and the processes taking place in them that form the worldview and behavioral attitudes of Afghan youth is small. In the conditions of information and cognitive wars, intensified competition of ideologies and worldviews of models, this is a deliberately losing position, both in terms of ensuring the international leadership of Russian Afghan studies, and in terms of developing analytical documents for decision-making in the field of Russian-Afghan relations;

• the formation of a model of discriminatory culture in Afghanistan. The events in the country show the admissibility of a communication model that does not take into account the interests of a number of social groups, part of the population is limited in communications with the authorities and in participating in the social process, they cannot influence the formation of their living conditions. The admissibility of a discriminatory culture model in one country can cause similar precedents in other countries, which will lead to an increase in forced migration, an increase in social tension in the host societies, and destabilization of countries and regions;

• ideological confrontation in a multipolar world, the struggle not only for natural and labor resources, for territories, but for the minds of people. This struggle involves not only civil ideologies, but also religious ones, which are much more difficult to resist, since they are based on irrational foundations, faith and unconditional trust. The loss of the influence of civil ideologies in Afghanistan will have serious (for Russia, most likely negative) political consequences.

This article has two goals: 1) to draw the attention of the scientific community to these gaps in the research of modern Afghanistan; 2) to test the concept of communication regimes developed by the author and the methodology for their study in the Afghan context.

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Materials and Methods

In addition to well-known works on the problems of Afghanistan [1, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 18, 19, 21, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33], the materials of the study were publications of experts in the field public and political communication in Afghanistan and the media [2, 10, 11, 12, 17, 20, 23, 24, 28, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38]; national and international documents regulating the activities of the media and the process of informing citizens in Afghanistan[2]; materials on the history of Afghan media and journalists[3]; materials from Afghan and Russian and other foreign analytical centers studying media and information processes in Afghanistan (Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan, Center for Afghanistan Studies of the University of Nebraska Omaha, Institute for Afghan Studies, Center for Afghanistan Studies in Jindal School of International Affairs, etc.); statistical data and web analytics tools StatCounter.

The limitations of the empirical base of the study are related to the inaccuracy and insufficiency of statistical data, the inaccuracy of open monitoring results of the Afghan media conducted by Russian structures, Russian analytical materials on the problems of the information space and social communication systems in modern Afghanistan. Accordingly, objective research and development of proposals from the Russian point of view are difficult. Operating with inaccurate, possibly biased data from foreign structures can lead to incorrect conclusions. This article will use materials published on foreign resources, the verification of which was carried out through consultations with experts from the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan. From these positions, we can consider the results and conclusions reliable.

The study used general scientific methods, as well as methods of retrospective analysis, content analysis, event analysis, and comparative analysis.

For the analysis and interpretation of the data, the epistemological potential of the concept of communication regimes developed by the author on the basis of the National Research Institute for Communications Development (Russia) was used [8, 15, 16, 18]. In 2020–2022, the methodology for analyzing the controllability of communication regimes was tested during monitoring of the post-Soviet countries [13, 14, 16, 22].

The results of international scientific discussions on the problems of communication regimes are reflected in the joint publications of Russian and foreign scientists presented on the pages of the journal Russia and the World: Scientific Dialogue in 2022 and 2023.

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2   Afghanistan' Mass Media Law. URL: https://afjc.media/english/killed/afghanistan-mass- media-law; Afghanistan's Access to Information Law. URL: https://afjc.media/english/killed/afghanistan-s-access-to-information-law.

3   Available from: https://afjc.media/english/a-journalist-a-story (accessed: 7.05.2023); Inside an Afghan news network's struggle to survive Available from: https://cpj.org/2022/08/inside-an-afghan-news-networks-struggle-to-survive/; Reporting Afghanistan and Iraq: Media, military and governments and how they influence each other Available from: https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/reporting-afghanistan-and-iraq-media-military-and-governments-and-how-they-influence; Afghanistan's media crisis: One year after the «Taliban»* takeover Available from: https://cpj.org/reports/2022/08/afghanistans-media-crisis/ и др.

Results

The communication regime is considered by us as a managed (with varying degrees of manageability), institutionalized (with varying degrees of institutionalization), a system of norms, rules, principles, customs, traditions, structures, actors that regulate communication processes in the country. The communication regime regulates: 1) the content of messages, content (discourse, new concepts, words, slogans, narratives, patterns, communication language, etc.); 2) communication actors, channels, formats of distribution, information exchange, building public and political relations (for example, traditional and new media, bloggers, film industry, art, forms of interaction between social groups, society and authorities, public events, etc.).

When we talk about the communication regime, we mean not only the media, but communications within society (for example, between tribes, civil society institutions, etc.) and society's communications with various institutions – government, media, business, religious institutions, etc. Terms and conditions of such communications are established by the authorities and the society itself, institutionalizing the most effective practices (they are formalized as customs, traditions, habitual behavioral patterns, stereotypes, myths, etc.).

From a social point of view, the communication regime organizes the connections and content of information. As a result, it ensures social order and the self-preservation of the social system. From a political point of view, the communication regime provides control over the content of information, information flows, channels and forms of communication. A controlled communication regime provides support and reproduction of the political order. Problems in communication regimes lead to social disorganization, political destabilization, loss of subjectivity, trust and legitimacy of power. The study of controllability of communication regimes makes it possible to predict social and political fluctuations and possible destabilizations. In fact, political stability is a function of the controllability of the communication regime. Conventionally, this can be expressed by the formula:

political stability = f (manageability of communication regime),

The more controllable the communication regime, the more likely social and political stability. But up to a certain limit. In other words, controllability is defined by us as a measure of control from the control center (subjects of control that make decisions regarding the rules and institutions of communication) with the voluntary consent of control objects with the degree of their autonomy and subordination.

In any communication regime, there are "blind zones" in which, as a rule, there are socio-cultural regulators, cognitive constructs that determine social and political communications. In the "blind spot" are the latest communication practices that are difficult to identify and understand at the initial stages of their appearance. For example, different formats of digital communications (there are known examples of game mobilization, etc.).

The basis of our methodology for analyzing the controllability of communication regimes is three significant parameters:

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1. the degree of conventionality of the control center of the communication regime;

2. location of the communication regime control center (inside the country or outside the country);

3. assessment of manageability indicators, which we include:

3.1. the ability and ability of communication regime control centers to transfer it from one state to another without conflict;

3.2. the ability to control and achieve the target parameters of the communication regime;

3.3. the ability to use the mechanisms of self-organization of control objects to regulate communication regimes.

Based on parameters 1 and 2, we proposed a typology of communication regimes in terms of its conventionality and the location of the communications control center (communication channels and information content). 4 types of communication regimes have been identified (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Conditional classification of types of country communication regimes

THE DEGREE OF CONVENTIONALITY OF THE COMMUNICATION CONTROL CENTER	Conventional	1	2
	Unconventional	3	4
		External	Internal
		LOCATION OF THE COUNTRY COMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT CENTER	

The experience of studying communication regimes in 14 countries showed the absence of "pure" types 1, 2, 3, 4.

Applying this technique to Afghanistan, we believe that it can be attributed to the third type of internal non-conventional communication regime with a special type of influence from external control centers.

The degree of conventionality of Afghanistan's communication regime

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3. assessment of manageability indicators, which we include:

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Assessing the first indicator of manageability, that is, the degree of conventionality of Afghanistan's communication regime on a scale from -10 (absent) to +10 (accepted and approved by all), Afghanistan gets -5 points. Established norms and rules are recognized only by a part of society. The conventionality of the communication regime in modern Afghanistan is ensured not by the proper legitimacy of the current government and trust in it, but by the appeal of the government to the traditions and foundations of Islam. We are dealing with the phenomenon of the imposed reproduction of norms and rules, the effectiveness of which for the management of society is not high. This provokes resistance from the changing society. We are talking about the norms and rules of communication with women, strict censorship of the media, the narrowing of the possibilities of civil communications and the reproduction of ethno-tribal often conflicting communication models.

Note that the complexity of assessing the degree of conventionality of the communication regime in Afghanistan is related to the worldview of the researcher himself. We proceed from the need to develop an open society, create mechanisms for the influence of society on the dynamics of the norms and rules of communication (in the systems of power-society, society-society, power-media, media-society, etc.), free and equal access to information and information resources and so on. From this perspective, our interpretations, conclusions and recommendations will concern the development of a non-discriminatory culture in Afghanistan. If the worldview of the researcher is close to the worldview of the «Taliban»*, then the established norms and rules will be interpreted from the point of view of their effectiveness in maintaining controllability in Afghanistan and reproducing the established political order. Both groups of researchers, in their own way, will be right. But the fact that thousands of Afghans who did not agree with the new regime left the country, and some went into open or latent opposition, is an indicator that the regime is small effective (if it is at all interested in preserving the population on the territory of Afghanistan and its socio-economic development). So, the first sign of non-conventionality is forced refugees, the second is the presence of opposition groups that continue to fight within the country. For example, Afghanistan Journalists Center[4] considered an independent, non-governmental organization operating under the country's media law[5] to protect the rights

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4   Until 2011, it operated under the name of the Center for the Support of Journalists of Afghanistan (CSJA, license of the Ministry of Information and Culture from 2009). Official website: https://afjc.media/

5   Mass Media Law [Translation of Official Gazette] Available from: https://afjc.media/english/killed/afghanistan-mass-media-law

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of Afghan journalists and ensure freedom of speech in Afghanistan. Another organization is also involved in protecting the interests of the media in Afghanistan – Nai Supporting Open Media***[6]. There are women's rights organizations [12]. One can have different attitudes towards the activities of these centers, but they work (according to some reports, at present, the employees of both centers are outside Afghanistan).

The third sign of the non-conventionality of the communication regime is the creation of foreign consolidated communities seeking to change the situation in Afghanistan, publishing information about the policy of the Afghan authorities in relation to journalists, the media, and information content. Foreign countries support communities of Afghan immigrants, creating groups from them that form information content that is consumed not only outside, but inside Afghanistan. For example, in 2022, the German Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media launched the German Hanna Arendt initiative aimed at supporting vulnerable media workers from Afghanistan[7]. Afghan journalists who fled after the «Taliban»* came to power in August 2021 get material, methodological, educational, and informational support. The training is based on the principles of ЭMobile reportingЭ (high-quality positioning of oneself in reports made in exile). As part of the Space for Freedom project, 20 journalists (who fled to countries neighboring Afghanistan) were supported in 2022, and 45 more journalists are planned to be included in the program in 2023. All instructors are from Afghanistan and are native Dari or Pashto speakers. Dari and Pashto-speaking editorial staff at DW** act as mentors and teach journalistic safety while preparing reports.

The second criterion for evaluating the controllability of communication regimes is closely related to foreign support for non-governmental organizations specializing in communication issues - the location of the communication regime control center.

"Multiplicity" of Communication Regime Control Centers

The second indicator of the controllability of the communication regime – the location of the control center – is evaluated, like the first one, on a scale from -10 (the center is located abroad) to +10 (the center is located inside). Afghanistan's score is +5 points, since external influence on public communications through media channels, NGO channels, diaspora relations and the dependence of information systems on external actors is recorded.

An analysis of publications on the evolution of the media space in Afghanistan allows us to conclude that Afghanistan in modern history has never been a sovereign subject of its own communication regime. It was often administered from overseas centers. Since the appearance of the first newspaper Shamsunahar (1873), the first radio transmitter (1920), the first television broadcast (1978), the Afghan media has developed with external support. Almost all mass media directly or indirectly depended and depend on international funds. As international foundations cut (or stopped) funding, Afghan media began to shut down.

In fact, the communication regime has never had only an internal communications control center. In the 1970s–1990s, foreign media played a special role in shaping public opinion in Afghanistan, among which the BBC* stands out. For example, the Afghan author Nabi A. notes the role of this publication in shaping public opinion before the «Taliban»* came to power in the 1990s: the «Taliban»* were perceived by society as a force without political ambitions, an opinion was formed that their main goal was to bring to power the former king Zahir-Shah. Even during the "heyday" of the national media in Afghanistan, there were many different consulting and monitoring bodies. For example, Ayesha Tanzim (Voice of America's** director of South and Central Asia, former head of the Afghanistan and Pakistan bureau) recalls working as a media analyst under contract with the US Embassy in Kabul in 2013 and following the Afghan media[8].

External influence concerned not only media communications, but also civil communications through the regulation of the activities of non-governmental organizations. Attempts were made to break the traditional internal and inter-tribal, inter-ethnic communications, as we have already written about [18].

If successful, this would make it possible to minimize the "blind zones" of the communication regime and reduce the influence of historically established practices (traditions, stereotypes, customs) on the communication regime of Afghanistan. In other words, the phenomenon of the parallel existence of the official communication regime (formed by the official authorities) and the second communication regime, formed by public institutions, has practically almost formed. When these two types of communication regimes do not match, serious tension arises.

In addition to these centers of influence, the influence of ISIS*[9] cannot be overlooked. According to the Russian Foreign Ministry, the number of ISIS* in Afghanistan is 4-6 thousand people. "More than 20 terrorist organizations operate in Afghanistan, the total number of militants is 20-23 thousand people, and more than half of them are foreign citizens. The largest formations are: ISIS* (ISIL-Khorasan*), Al-Qaeda*[10], the «Taliban»* Movement of Pakistan, Lashkar-e Tayiba, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*[11] and the Islamic Movement of East Turkestan. In addition, a number of small groups of up to several hundred people operate in the country: "Katiba Imam al-Bukhari" (Jawzjan, Sari-Pul and

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6   Available from: https://nai.org.af/
7   About 300,000 people from Afghanistan live in Germany. Available from: https://www.deutschland.de/ru/topic/kultura/iniciativa-im-khanny-arendt-zhurnalistika-afganistan

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8   Event Extra: Afghanistan's Media Landscape Amid Taliban* Rule (January 25, 2023). URL: https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/01/event-extra-afghanistans-media-landscape-amid-taliban-rule.
9   *The organization has been recognized a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court. Unified federal list of organizations, including foreign and international organizations, recognized as terrorist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of June 25, 2023). Available from: http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm (accessed: 25.06.2023);18+
10   *The organization has been recognized a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court. Unified federal list of organizations, including foreign and international organizations, recognized as terrorist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of June 25, 2023). Available from: http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm (accessed: 25.06.2023);18+
11   *The organization has been recognized a terrorist organization by the Russian Supreme Court 04 02.2003. Unified federal list of organizations, including foreign and international organizations, recognized as terrorist in accordance with the legislation of the Russian Federation (as of June 25, 2023). Available from: http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm (accessed: 25.06.2023);18+

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Faryab provinces), the Mohammadi Sharia Movement (Varduj district of Badakhshan province), the Islamic Jihad Union (Imam Sahib and Dashti-Archi counties of Kunduz province), Lashkar-e Jangavi, Ansarulla (Kunduz), Jihad Call Group (Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan), Lashkar-e Islam (Naziyan, Achin counties and Durbaba of Nangarhar province), Al-Badr Group (Goshta, Naziyan and Momandara counties of Nangarhar province, Shigal county of Kupar province), Gorukh-e Mahaz-e Fedayi (Uruzgan, Kandahar and Helmand), Mujahedeen Movement, Islamic Jihad Movement[12]. These structures have their own channels of communication and influence.

From the point of view of media centers of influence on public opinion, there are at least the following channels of influence.

Media located within the country (public and private). The structure of Afghanistan's media resources has its own characteristics, the essence of which is the low availability of print media (due to large print runs, the difficult logistics of delivering newspapers to rural areas and, possibly, a low level of culture and reading habits). According to unofficial data, only 1% of the population reads newspapers. Television covers approximately 40% of the population (there is private television), and radio approximately 73%. Social networks are very popular (their structure was discussed below). The local branches of the National Television of Afghanistan (RTA) are currently closed, and the number of private TV channels has been markedly reduced. Against this backdrop, radio plays a large role in communications, mainly private radio stations such as Oshkula, Talim-u-Islam, Sheikh Mati and National Radio operating in the provincial capital of Kalat, and Surghar Radio in the remote Shahjoy region. A private radio station, Paigham, has recently opened in the province of Zabul. The media inside the country are controlled by the «Taliban»* more than others.

External media developed by journalists who left the country after the «Taliban»* came to power. They run YouTube channels, websites, and social media pages. These media are not controlled by the «Taliban»*. It should be noted that during the years of the armed struggle against the United States, the «Taliban»* quite effectively used the media: in terms of efficiency, the «Taliban»* press secretaries sometimes outperformed representatives of the authorities and foreign states. The «Taliban»* quite effectively used the principle that the media were obliged to reflect their position as well.

External international media organizations such as Voice of America**, BBC***, Deutsche Welle**, RFE/RL** are not controlled by the «Taliban»*. When their television programs were closed in Afghanistan, for example, Voice of America** launched a 24-hour satellite TV channel in Dari and Pashto that sent a signal to Afghanistan. With the closure of FM radio stations, international media switched to short and medium waves

Media from neighboring countries broadcasting in languages understandable to the population of Afghanistan. These media are also not controlled by the «Taliban»*.

Social media. The «Taliban»* do not yet have the resources to shut down social media.

This is possible, if only it will be possible to completely turn off the Internet. But this is probably not beneficial for the «Taliban»* themselves, since they used social networks before[13] and use them now. Supporters of the «Taliban»* are active in social networks. For example, recently activists of the Afghan diaspora in Belgium initiated a collection of signatures for the expulsion of a pro-«Taliban»* blogger from the country[14].

Considering the influence of the Internet and new media and social networks on modern societies, it was important to analyze the dependence of the communication field of Afghanistan on the system of social networks, browsers, search engines that create and control the possibilities for obtaining information, the possibilities of cross-border communications, and regulate information content. To do this, we used the StatCounter web analytics tool.

An analysis of the structure of social media users in Afghanistan (from May 2020 to May 2023) provides strong evidence of the impact of these resources. The leader among users, and, consequently, the leader in the distribution of content is Facebook***. Afghanistan social articles statistics are presented in tables 1 (users of all devices) and 2 (by user devices)[15].

Table 1. The share of social networks in Afghanistan on all devices (in %)

Social network	On all devices			
	2020 май	2021 май	2022 май	2023 май
Facebook***	72,9	72,46	83,31	84,5
Twitter***	19,48	20,55	10,28	9,81
YouTube	2,9	2,68	2,33	2,0
Instagram***	1,12	1,45	1,56	1,74
Pinterest	2,85	1,93	1,63	1,34
Reddit	0,25	0,36	0,5	0,44
LinkedIn***	0,26	0,33	0,22	0,13
Others	0,22	0,24	0,17	0,06

Source: compiled by the author based on the analysis of StatCounter data https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/afghanistan

The share of Facebook*** users in Afghanistan is higher than the average in the world (69.97% in the world); Twitter*** is about the same (9.85% in the world). What about the other social networks, the share of users in Afghanistan is lower than the global average.

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12 Information from the Russian Foreign Ministry on the military-political situation in Afghanistan for April 2023. Available from: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/vnesnepoliticeskoe-dos-e/krizisnoe-uregulirovanie-regional-nye-konflikty/obstanovka-v-afganistane/ (accessed 20.02.2023).

13 Emelyanova O. Taliban* take over social networks. Afghanistan.RU, 10/23/2021. Available from: https://afghanistan.ru/doc/146717.html

14 Available from: https://farsi.alarabiya.net/afghanistan/2023/06/15/

15 Statistics of social articles in Afghanistan. Available from: https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/afghanistan

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Table 2. Share of social networks in Afghanistan by user devices (in %)

Social Networks	Desktop[16]				Tablet				Mobile			
	2020 май	2021 май	2022 май	2023 май	2020 май	2021 май	2022 май	2023 май	2020 май	2021 май	2022 май	2023 май
Facebook***	36,09	32,76	36,25	21,61	71,69	63,48	72,74	68,63	74,7	74,12	84.99	86,17
Twitter***	20,04	23,85	16,09	26,42	11,57	19,75	15,52	13,73	19,49	20,42	10.06	9,37
YouTube	21,76	22,5	23,9	28,64	6,46	7,69	5,4	5,88	1,97	1,85	1,56	1,29
Instagram***	0,61	0,77	0,78	-[17]	1,04	2,08	2,16	-	1,15	1.48	1,59	1,78
Pinterest	15,5	10,85	9,56	8,75	8,27	5,47	3,1	7,84	2,21	1,55	1,35	1,13
Reddit	3,42	5,74	9,4	9,4	0,4	0,83	0,67	3,92	-	0,13	0,19	0,14
LinkedIn***	1,92	2,7	3,16	3,16	-	-	-	-	0,18	0,23	0,12	0,12
VKontakte	-	-	-	0,51	-	-		-	0,13	-	-	-
Tumblr	-	-	-	-	-	0,28		-	-	-	-	-
news. ycombinator. com	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,27	-	-	-	-	-
The others	0,67	0,83	0,85	0,51	0,3	0,49	0,13	-	01,6	0,22	0,15	0,04

Source: compiled by the author based on the analysis of StatCounter data Available from: https://gs.statcounter.com/social-media-stats/all/afghanistan

The table materials clearly show the annual increase in the number of Facebook*** users on mobile devices. If we take into account the dynamics of the mobile device market in Afghanistan (Table 3), we can predict in the future the growth of Facebook's*** influence on the communication regime in Afghanistan, including the structure of communication and its content.

Table 3. Share of mobile devices in the structure of user devices in Afghanistan [18]

	2020 May	2021 May	2022 May	2023 May
Mobile devices	75,95	78,32	78,39	82,24
Desktops	23,32	21,01	20,96	17,36
Tablets	0,74	0,67	0,64	0,4

Source: compiled by the author based on the analysis of StatCounter data Available from: https://gs.statcounter.com/platform-market-share

16   Desktop – stationary, personal computer.
17   Здесь и далее пропуск значений в ячейке означает, что в базе StatCounter нет данных.
18   For comparison, the share of mobile devices in Afghanistan is significantly higher than in the global market, where mobile devices account for 50.71% of the market, desktops – 47.41%, tablets –1.88%.

An indicator of possible external control of communications on the Internet is the market share of browsers. The browser is, in fact, a communication window, on which the features of information search, content uploading on computers or mobile devices depend. This intermediary between the Internet and users sets the conditions for searching and posting information, determines the degree of security of personal data and the degree of their accessibility to external actors. The browser war has been going on for years. Currently, the undisputed world leader is Google Chrome (64.9% worldwide). Safari accounts for 19.21% of the global market. Other browsers play a smaller role (less than 5%). Afghanistan is no exception. The market share of Google Chrome among all browsers in Afghanistan is 73.48%, Safari – 17.79%, Samsung Internet – 3.63%, Edge – 1.29%, Opera – 1.18%, UC Brauser – 1.06 %, Firefox IE – 0.91%, Android – 0.19%. The share of other browsers is 0.23%. Compared to 2022, in 2023 the share of Safari is declining, while the share of Google Chrome is increasing. In other words, the security of Afghanistan's communications regime depends on Google Chrome and the policy of its owners, the American transnational corporation (Alphabet holding).

Another indicator of the control of communication regimes is the market share of search engines, operating systems and mobile devices. The world leader is the Google search engine (93.12% of the world market). In Afghanistan, Google's share in May 2023 was 96.64%. Among other search engines in Afghanistan, we note bing (2.45%). The rest (Yahoo!, Yandex, DuckDuckGo) have less than 1% each. Android (34.98% of the world market) and Windows (29.27%) are leading among operating systems in the world. In Afghanistan, Android is also leading (66.12%), it is practically a monopolist. Windows (11.36%) ranks third after IOS (16.18%). OS X, Linux and others have significantly lower indicators.

In the structure of the global mobile device market (as of May 2023), a third is occupied by Apple (31.44%), a quarter of the market - by Samsung (25.27%). In Afghanistan, the situation is different. Samsung is leading here (56.39%), while Apple has 19.56% of the Afghan market. The rest (Xiaomi, Hauwei, Oppo, Vivo and others) occupy less than 5% of market.

In other words, the economic, social, political, and technological features of Afghanistan's communication regime show its dependence on external actors, despite the Taliban's* attempts to establish the framework, rules and conditions of communication within the country. There is a high probability that the considered centers of influence on the communication regime, alternative to the current government, will become the driving forces of change.

Ability to Achieve Target Parameters, Adapt and Use Self-Organizing Communities

Controllability indicator – the ability to control and achieve the target parameters of the communication regime.

For any management system, it is difficult to accurately define and verbalize in documents the target indicators of the communication regime, that is, the goals for which

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such a system of norms, rules, actors and channels of communication is being built, for the sake of which it is being reformed (or destroyed).

Throughout its history, the communication regime (more precisely, the regimes) of Afghanistan has changed significantly more than once, which is associated both with technological progress (the advent of radio, television, the Internet) and with political factors. Most often, the changes were due to a change in political regimes and, as a result, a change in the ideas of the ruling political elites about the ideal model of communication within the country. The targets of the modern regime are determined by the Taliban* "within the framework of our culture." We are talking about culture and values well described by M.A.Konarovsky and leading to isolation from the outside world of a part of the population living in remote rural areas and mountain valleys, "as a result of which the way of life and values have not changed in such communities for centuries. The authority for them is rather not the emir, but the local elder"[19], in their upbringing they are guided by the "Pashtunvalai", and "the stratum acting as interpreters of the will of Allah are rural mullahs, who in turn are the main backbone of the Taliban*. Therefore, some residents of Afghanistan, according to M.A.Konarovsky, "in one way or another share the values of the Taliban* movement and, basically, are in solidarity with the goals declared by its leadership. The policy of the Taliban* leadership regarding the observance of Sharia, the status of women, corresponds to the ideas of the rural population and a significant part of the residents of Afghan cities that have turned into provinces about the norms of public life and does not cause them the slightest rejection." [20] At the same time, there are changes (especially among urban residents), which were conducted by secular educational institutions, NGOs, media resources that influence the worldview of the population of Afghanistan. The changing Afghan society is no longer ready to fully, uncritically and unconditionally accept the framework of the traditional culture that the Taliban* are talking about. This is also noted by some Russian experts. For example, Zamir Kabulov[21], Director of the Second Asia Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Afghanistan, speaks about the need to change the Taliban* in his interview. Summarizing the above, we note that public resistance (latent or visible) shows that the Taliban* are able to control and achieve the target parameters of the communication regime mainly by force and actualization of emotions of fear.

According to the Afghan Journalists Center (AFJC), from May 2022 to May 2023, there were at least 213 cases of violence, threats, detentions, arrests of journalists (this is 64% of the number of cases from May 2021 to May 2022). ISIS* claimed responsibility for some of the incidents, while the rest of the incidents, according to AFJC[22], are related to the «Taliban»*. In 2022, Afghanistan was ranked 156th (out of 180 countries) in the Reporters without Borders (Reporters sans frontières – RSF) World Press Freedom Index, fell down from 122nd in 2020. It should be noted that the objectivity of the RSF data raises doubts, since Russia (155th place), Belarus (153rd place), Azerbaijan (154th) are next to Afghanistan in the press freedom rating. But in this article, we present the results for Afghanistan, since the UN refers to the same data[23], making decisions at the global level.

The controllability indicator is the ability of the control centers of the communication regime of Afghanistan to transfer it from one state to another without conflict.

The «Taliban»* have not yet succeeded in solving this problem without conflict. Although government spokesman and Acting Deputy Minister of Information and Culture Zabiullah Mujahid confirmed that the press law passed in March 2015 remains in force, the right field for the media is very uncertain. The media receives instructions from various government agencies, including the Ministry of Culture and Information, Istihbarat («Taliban»* intelligence agency), the Ministry of Promotion of Virtue and Suppression of Vice, the State Center for Media and Information (GMIC)[24]. Some experts believe that the contradictions in the law enforcement practice of laws on the media and information, the uncertainty of the rules for interaction between the authorities and journalists, managers and media owners create prerequisites for excessive censorship and illegal actions of the authorities, especially in rural areas.

According to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), since 2021, the media sector in Afghanistan has suffered not only from the policies of the «Taliban»*, but also from the economic crisis. A large number of journalists have left Afghanistan, and those who remain are forced to work in "an atmosphere of intimidation and fear amid tightening restrictions by the de facto «Taliban»* authorities"[25].

In our time, women journalists have been particularly affected due to additional restrictions[26]. According to unofficial data, before the fall of the republic, approximately 1,300 female journalists and media workers were in the media sector throughout the

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19   Konarovsky M.A., Belkov E.A., Zimin I.A. Afghanistan: challenges and prospects. Available from: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/afganistan-vyzovy-i-perspektivy/?sphrase_id=102528128
20   Konarovsky M.A., Belkov E.A., Zimin I.A. Afghanistan: challenges and prospects. Available from: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/afganistan-vyzovy-i-perspektivy/?sphrase_id=102528128
21   Zamir Kabulov: we predicted the development of the situation in Afghanistan 8 years ago Available from: https://www.interfax.ru/interview/821601

22   World Press Freedom Day 2023: AFJC records 213 incidents of press freedom violations in a year Available from: https://afjc.media/english/events/press-release/world-press-freedom-day-2023-afjc-records-213-incidents-of-press-freedom-violations-in-a-year
23   Future of Afghanistan's media in the balance as world marks world press freedom day. Available from: https://unama.unmissions.org/future-afghanistan%E2%80%99s-media-balance-world-marks-world-press-freedom-day
24   Available from: https://rsf.org/en/country/afghanistan
25   Future of Afghanistan's media in the balance as world marks world press freedom day. Available from: https://unama.unmissions.org/future-afghanistan%E2%80%99s-media-balance-world-marks-world-press-freedom-day
26   Restrictions for female journalists and media workers include: men and women cannot work in the same TV program, working studios for men and women must be separated, women must cover their faces when appearing on the screen, the «Taliban»* can interfere with who can act as analysts in political programs, restrict speeches by critics of the «Taliban»*. The de facto authorities have announced that women are not allowed to choose journalism for university entrance exams. This means that no woman will receive a formal journalistic education. The «Taliban»* wants Afghan women in media to become invisible. Available from: https://www.mediasupport.org/blogpost/the-taliban-wants-afghan-women-in-media-to-become-invisible/

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country. Now the number of women in the media has decreased by 67%, 899 women have lost their jobs in the media[27]. According to IMS[28] in 16 provinces there are no working female journalists or media employees at all[29].

The controllability indicator is the ability of the «Taliban»* to use self-organization mechanisms of control objects to regulate communication regimes.

This ability is currently low. Firstly, because such mechanisms are practically not developing inside Afghanistan in the current conditions (we are talking about public initiatives, feedback tools with civil activists, etc.). Secondly, trust has been undermined and the conflict potential is growing even for those communities that have traditionally used self-organization mechanisms to achieve their goals (tribes, clans). Ignoring new mechanisms and actors will probably lead to increased pressure on the communication regime of grassroots social structures. The «Taliban»* will most likely be forced to make concessions in terms of liberalizing the norms of public communication or increase control and repression. However, in the case of increasing pressure, reaching the limit indicators, the measure that we talked about will be exceeded, and the communication regime will go out of their control.

Conclusions

Despite the tough policy of the «Taliban»* in the norms and rules of public communication (both in narratives and content of information, and to communication channels), despite the decrease in the ability of the media and civil society to influence communication regimes, they still remain not fully controlled the «Taliban»*.

The main actors of the communication regime in Afghanistan are within the country – the «Taliban»*, ethnic, tribal groups, the media, NGOs; outside the country – investors (international funds and governments of foreign countries); international NGOs; members of the political elite who have left and have the resources to influence the Afghan society; international media, social networks, international corporations that control information technology.

The institutional basis of the communication regime is formally formed by the «Taliban»* (although from time to time they are forced to retreat from their decisions under the pressure from international actors). Although the legal framework governing the media has been preserved, the «Taliban»'s* elective enforcement of it has increased distrust of them, making their status as a center of control less conventional. The development of a discriminatory type of communication culture provokes the growth of discontent among the disadvantaged groups of the population.

Under the conditions of imposing the norms of "traditional culture", a situation is provoked in which laws recede into the background, and the mode of communication is regulated by informal, historically established communicative practices, traditions and customs. Under these conditions, the circles of communicators narrow down to "their own" people. There is a high probability of an increase in radicalization and an increase in opposition in these communication circles.

The goals of the communication regime set by the «Taliban»*, ideally designed to consolidate society in order to achieve them, on the contrary, split society into supporters and opponents. Repressions against dissenters led to the formation of alternative centers of influence outside the country. Violation of the well-known "Ashby's law" of the necessary diversity will eventually lead to the inability of the system to adapt to a changing reality. There is a high probability of its self-destruction, the speed of which will also depend on the strength of the influence of external actors.

The communication regime of modern Afghanistan is extremely unstable, characterized by inconsistency in the norms and rules of social and political communication, inconsistency between the actual practice of regulating the regime and the provisions of laws, and numerous "blind spots" (poorly visible, but affecting the real channels and content of communication). Given the contradictory norms and rules of communication, the presence of external centers of influence and control, low trust in official information channels, and the high role of informal communication structures, informal communication structures, the degree of manageability of the communication regime in modern Afghanistan is low. This article was prepared as part of our pilot project with the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan. We hope that it will interest readers and will be continued in joint research with Russian and foreign scientists.

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