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The Impact of the Cold War on the Afghan Society

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Abstract. The article is devoted to the policies of the global players of the Cold War using the example of Afghanistan. Noting the features of the Afghan policy of the Cold War, the author highlighted the key content of the very concept of the Cold War, political events in Afghanistan, internal and external challenges, ethnic problems and the problem of women during the Cold War. The influence of geopolitical processes on the development, internal and external interests of Afghan society in the 20th century, the social, economic and political consequences of the Cold War, features of the development of the political system and political culture of Afghanistan, ethnic problems in Afghan public discourse, etc. are considered. The author concludes that “The Cold War of the superpowers had a direct impact on internal political developments in Afghanistan, where parties and public organizations emerged as political structures with secular or Islamic ideology. The author comes to the conclusion that the internal political unity of Afghan society was not ensured for the reason that the Afghan elite was unable to form an ideology expressing national unity, and its individual parts preferred to serve the interests of one or another player without supporting the national interests of Afghanistan.”

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Keywords: Afghanistan, Cold War, Afghan crisis, political incubation, Islamic value system, conservative society

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Introduction

In the Central Asian region, the security system is inextricably linked with the global security system; traditional challenges and new ones dynamically manifest themselves here.

In the 20th century serious processes took place around Afghanistan and Afghan

society, which directly and indirectly led to the formation of a crisis in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region as a whole. The Afghan war, which tested the system of checks and balances of the Cold War, helped to assess the risks of confrontation and the possibilities of responding to the challenges of the two military-political systems.

The object of the study is changes in Afghan society under the influence of the Cold War, and the subject is political and social-normative changes in Afghan society in the 1950-80s.

The purpose of the article is to identify the features of the social and humanitarian policy of Afghanistan during the Cold War.

To achieve the goal, we have set the following tasks:

- to study the reasons for the split in the Afghan elite, the influence of external and internal factors on these processes;
- to describe the dynamics of the development of the party system.

Materials and methods

The scientific basis of the research is the works of Russian and foreign researchers: R. Akhramovich [1], M. Slinkin [6], A. Lyakhovsky [5], V. Spolnikov [8], V. Korgun [3], V. Maliya [16], B. Rubin [18], R. Nevel [17] and other authors.

The research was carried out on the basis of an interdisciplinary approach, historical, comparative and statistical methods, on the principles of historicism and objectivity, on a systematic study of internal and external influences on the social policy of Afghanistan

Discussion

In the Central Asian region, international terrorism, religious extremism and ethno-national separatism, drug and weapons trafficking, and illegal migration have found fertile ground. Here the interests of many participants in international relations intersect, global powers such as Russia, China and the USA, the EU, or regional ones such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India, as well as international organizations such as the UN, NATO, OSCE, CSTO, SCO and others acts.

In the 20th century, Afghanistan and Afghan society were closely involved in world politics and geopolitical shifts and became one of the axes of competition in a bipolar world. The political, military, social and cultural consequences of the Cold War are most visible in Afghan society.

Model content of the Cold War

The Cold War, as a confrontation between two opposing systems and ideologies, is a phenomenon of the 20th century and arose after two world wars, when international

relations ceased to be only Eurocentric [13:207], the ideology of the conflict changed. It has already appeared not only as a specific action or goal, but as a multi-level and disintegrative phenomenon.

Modern historiography offers various approaches to understanding the Cold War, which are based on one or another idea important for the formation of a bipolar world. Since the 1990s the studies examine not only economic (energy), political, diplomatic and social reasons, but also cultural and informational ones.

If we consider the Cold War as a form and means of conflict, then the slogans and information mechanisms used by the two warring parties (“better red than dead”, “anti-communist danger”, “colonial peoples in the light of the “torch of freedom”¹, “no to capitalist exploitation”²), indicate that the Cold War was a period of slowdown after the rapid improvement of the socio-economic existence of post-war society, the search for new patterns of development, which was manifested in the patterns of civilizational conflict (threat of nuclear war, ideological confrontation, Marxism – the danger of the spread of Leninism, paradigms of revolutionary-imperial power etc.).

The Cold War, which unfolded between the USSR and the USA in the 1940s–1980s, was a special form of international conflict in which ideological struggle, political and diplomatic competition, and threats to use force interacted.

The history of post-war Soviet-American relations witnessed a complex process of hostility and rivalry combined with elements of cooperation. This combination created the conditions for the two superpowers to help each other build and maintain a certain world order (bipolar world order), and for other countries to survive in conditions of intense competition and hostility.

The resulting model manifestations of the Cold War were in different parts of the world – from Cuba to the Far East, where, through the distribution and balance of interests of the two superpowers, they implemented a policy of control over the rest of the world. It is possible to identify a number of specific models in which the Cold War policy manifested itself in “warm” tones. Thus, models can be divided into: Korean, Cuban, Vietnamese, Middle Eastern, Afghan and others, where pre-escalation, escalation and post-escalation stages of conflict development are noticeable.

These models have significant similarities and differences, since the regions and instruments of the Cold War policy at different times had technical, ideological, military-strategic and other differences. The only indicative phenomenon was the principle of controllability (transformation) of the Schelling conflict [10]. Indeed, every conflict that arose and developed in third world countries developed in the interests of one of the warring parties; the race for expansion of influence in third world countries led to competition (using “soft power” technologies), and then to the use of mechanisms of mutual deterrence and finally to escalation.

¹ Soviet anti-American posters. Posters from the Cold War. Available from: <http://surl.li/mwdwl>
² Ibid.

Afghanistan in the maelstrom of the Cold War

Being a multinational state burdened with religious, economic and communication problems, Afghanistan, represented by its political elites, also tried to connect with the two opposing centers of the Cold War in order to use positional opportunities, the geopolitical significance of the country, and develop easy connections with technological centers.

This is caused by extreme poverty and lack of technology. The basis of the policy was especially the benefits of combining the possible interests of world players during the period when Mohammad Daoud was Prime Minister. As M. Dowd liked to say: "I feel happier when I can light my American cigarette with Soviet matches" [18:37].

Dowd's experience with the commercialization of foreign policy in the 1950s. allowed foreign investors to invest in areas of economic and strategic importance to the country, from energy security to the military. Afghanistan entered into cross agreements with both the United States [1:126, 117] and the Soviet Union, thus being drawn into the whirlpool of a geopolitical alliance between the two superpowers. The policy of Soviet economic support for Afghanistan, which some Western researchers characterized as an "economic attack" [11:124], was intended not only to rebuild the economic type of the Afghan state, but also to try to contribute to the Afghan mission of "nation building", secondly, attempt to incubate the communist political system.

US economic interests are primarily related to the desire to benefit from changes in the political map of the region, since the destruction of British colonial rule opened up the prospect of American political and economic expansion. US Afghan policy in the 1950s. was aimed at stopping the regional advance of the Soviet Union, and investment projects carried out in the Highland Valley were aimed at precisely this goal.

During the first period of Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud's activity, despite the economic and military-financial support provided by the Soviet Union to Afghanistan, discussions of the "Pashtunistan problem" and territorial problems with the Pakistani side several times dragged the country into real wars. The moderate successes of the domestic policy of the M. Daoud regime, combined with secondary attention to Afghan interests in foreign policy, undermined the stability of the regime.

The geopolitical disposition of forces in the post-war Central Asian region was unfavorable for Afghanistan. With the formation of the new state of Pakistan in 1947 on the southern and southeastern borders of Afghanistan, Afghanistan received a potential enemy who would later become a military and political ally of the United States. In the early 1960s. the aggravation of Afghan-Pakistani contradictions and the deterioration of relations were considered by local opposition conservative forces as a result of a deviation from the traditional paths of political and economic development (limitation of the power of traditional elites and clergy, especially in the Pashtun tribal zone, some social reforms) of the country [12:37]. In such a situation, it was understandable that Zahir Shah demanded in March 1963, in the interests of ensuring internal political stability and restoring relations with Pakistan, the resignation of Prime Minister Mohammad Daud, who was replaced by

Mohammad Yusuf. This was the most visible schism in the system of government, the foundations of which lead to the politics of the Cold War.

In the post-war period (after 1954), not only the economy and military potential grew, but also the intellectual and cultural level of part of society. Foreign investment contributed to the polarization of public opinion, which was an indicator of the political crisis.

The last attempt to modernize the social and state system, the Constitution of 1964, although it established the existence of a constitutional-monarchical system in Afghanistan, provided the executive, legislative and judicial authorities with ample opportunities for independent activity, but did not establish legal restrictions on the power of tribal and religious leaders. This attempt at modernization, despite its progressive elements, did not respond to existing internal and external challenges, as a result of which the country faced new crises and political upheavals [6:535].

The political freedoms and opportunities provided by this Constitution have shaped the possibilities for the progress of Afghan society and political culture. Political parties with their own press and parties began to form in the public sphere. In parallel with the formation of the party system, various political movements and views began to emerge. For example, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan was aimed at establishing a socialist system in the country, and the goal of the radical party layers was the Islamic revival and strengthening of religious ideology in Afghanistan [15:30]. Two opposing factions [5:259] also provided the ideology and finances of these parties, because of which both the Soviet Union and the West used the party system and its potential to resolve political, economic and even cultural issues within Afghanistan.

The task of all governments [1:122] that followed M. Daud was to prevent the collapse of the existing "democratic" value system, and those medium-term solutions with which they tried to solve the existing public and social crisis had the opposite effect.

Along with the activities of those party bodies that developed liberal, progressive ideas, fundamentalist organizations "Muslim Youth" and other organizations that received financial and ideological support from Pakistani, Egyptian and other fundamentalist organizations were also active, i.e. there was also hidden presence of the Western bloc. The crisis was entering its climax.

The development of social and political thought was greatly influenced by the newly created parties and their media, and the main object of their influence was the urban, mainly Kabul, educated mass of the population.

In this context, the activities of the newspapers "Khalq" and "Parcham", published by the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, were noted, as well as the ideological and political activities of the teaching staff of the theological faculty of Kabul University [8:12, 56], who, uniting around themselves progressive and radical strata of society have become a real opposition to the current government and an indicator of a split in the elite within the state.

Let us emphasize that in the 1960s the two blocs have reduced not only geopolitical interest in this country, but also financial support and investment policy in Afghanistan.

For example, US investment in the late 1960s decreased several times³ [17:144], and Soviet ones – approximately twice⁴ [17:144].

In the context of such a geopolitical reality, former Prime Minister M. Daoud again came to power in 1973. The coup was accomplished precisely because of his reputation [6:418].

Daoud's domestic political experience, the involvement of various political forces and organizations in the sphere of political and state activities led to the formation of the "Afghan model" of the republican order, as defined by the Afghanist V. G. Korgun – "progressive Afghan nationalism", which then turned into "national nationalism", or "Daudism" – social progress without violence, reforms under the slogans of Islam, ideology without imitation of others [3:379]. There is a noticeable complementary component in Daoud's foreign policy, and in order to ensure the neutrality of foreign policy, the latter excluded from the management levels both representatives of the pro-Soviet (People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan) and the radical, left-wing extremist opposition ("Afghan Mellat", "Shoalei Javid") [3:379, 381]. The main goal of this policy was to contain the growing Soviet presence [14:57].

Despite the warmth of relations with the Soviet leadership and mutual visits, during the last period of power of the Daoud regime, there was a noticeable cooling of relations with the USSR, which was the reason for ensuring the Soviet presence by alternative means. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, in fact, became the only political organization opposing the authorities. Under pressure from official Moscow, two factions of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, Khalq and Parcham, united under a joint Central Committee (Central Committee) [14:17].

The Daoud regime failed to rally around itself all the forces of society capable of ideology, to create a balance of social justice and foreign policy, the accumulated unresolved problems led to a crisis, the attempts of the Daoud government to change the situation (change the constitutional, foreign policy course) were already able to weaken the internal political crisis, and the success of the Saur (April) Revolution of 1978 was the result of this [2]. Whether the USSR was directly involved in the preparation and organization of the Saur Revolution, to what extent it was controlled by Soviet intelligence services, is still not clear, but the revolution and Daoud's departure from his post were in the interests of the regional policy of the USSR. We can agree with the opinion of M. Slinkin that "the Afghan crisis did not fall from heaven overnight. It was the immanent fruit of the political and socio-economic development of the country and society. At the same time, he was not and could not be free from external influence" [6:540].

After the Saur Revolution, Afghanistan was proclaimed the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, a new government was formed and Nur Muhammad Taraki became the general secretary of the Central Committee of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. Despite the loud ideas and efforts of the revolutionary government, some Western researchers characterize the program of radical reforms as an "incorrectly implemented

³ US grants and loans to Afghanistan decreased from \$387.9 million (before 1967) to \$1,440 thousand (aid in 1969-1970).

⁴ Soviet-Afghan relations. 1919-1969: Doc. and materials / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the USSR, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan. Moscow: Politizdat, 1971: 202, 231, 242, 254, 310, 343.

program" [16:29], and according to representatives of Russian historiography, the new government showed "excessive radicalism and unjustified haste, ignorance of the nature of social relations in the village and often ignored national characteristics and historical traditions" [3:407; 2:44]. Some Soviet authors expressed the opinion that Taraki was trying to repeat the experience of the USSR in Central Asia. We believe that the intentions of the new government aimed at implementing the program affected social institutions that are important for Afghan society: the establishment of gender equality, freedom of marriage and choice, the prohibition of child marriage, and compulsory school education for girls, which was not accepted by traditional society. However, when raising these questions, the revolutionary authorities underestimated the important role of Islam and the Muslim clergy in the spiritual and social life of Afghan society.

The Soviet side became the main donor of Afghan foreign policy, numerous memorandums and agreements were concluded, the purpose of which was "to ensure the security, independence and territorial integrity of the two countries"⁵.

Disagreements within the elite of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the decline in the role of Nur Muhammad Taraki and the conquest of power by Hafizullah Amin, the possible abolition of the dominant Soviet presence, the expansion of US security policy and other problems led to the fact that at the end of 1979, Soviet troops entered Afghanistan and carried out the forced removal of H. Amin from power, after which a new, pro-Soviet government was formed. The entry of Soviet troops was justified by the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation signed with Afghanistan, which was not understood by the international community. The UN General Assembly (A/RES/ES-6/) adopted a resolution "The situation in Afghanistan and its consequences for international peace and security", condemning the introduction of a limited contingent of Soviet troops into Afghanistan (104 votes in favor, 18 countries against and 18 abstained). With this resolution, the UN General Assembly called for the "immediate, unconditional and complete withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan" and granting the Afghan people the right "to determine their own form of government <...> without any interference, <...> coercion or pressure from outside"⁶.

To give an ideological character to the Soviet presence, the USSR began to spread Soviet ideology and established a system equivalent to the Soviet model of government as in other communist countries, while ignoring the customs and culture of understanding power and its distribution in Afghan society. As a result, a negative attitude towards the Soviets grew, a split occurred in the apparent unity of society, which ultimately led to the expansion and public support in Afghan society of religious ideological movements – Islamic fundamentalism.

In the Afghan policy of the Soviet state, local traditions and social sentiments in Afghanistan were not initially considered a priority. Only later Soviet scientists began to study the ethnic problems of the Afghan community and the cause-and-effect relationships

⁵ Foreign policy of the Soviet Union and international relations. 1978: Collection of documents / Compiled by I. A. Kirillin, N. F. Potapova. Moscow: International Relations, 1979:223-231.

⁶ 6th session – The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security [Requested by the Security Council on 10-14 January 1980. Available from: <https://www.un.org/en/ga/sessions/emergency.shtml>

of the split in society, but even these measures did not make it possible to restore social unity. Soviet approaches and concepts ignored such indicators inherent to the ethnic community as: the importance of ethnicity, public support for leaders and authorities (heroes) in ruling clan systems, and public sentiment. Those programs and activities that were implemented by Soviet military and civilian representatives received support only among representatives of the elite centered on Kabul, and the majority of society did not support the content nor had benefits from the implementation of these programs [7:191–192].

The introduction of a limited contingent of Soviet troops into Afghanistan received conflicting assessments in Russian and Western historiography. Various authors interpret this event from opposite positions, characterizing it as the “Soviet-Afghan war”, “intervention”, “occupation” or “aggression of the USSR”, and as for the need to send troops, it is presented by Western historiography from two positions: as part of “ grand strategy” [4:143] expansion of the USSR or as a continuation of security and defense policy. Russian historiography also expressed different opinions about whether the entry of Soviet troops into Afghanistan was correct and whether it met the interests of the USSR. It is worth highlighting the recognition of the orientalist V. S. Khristoforov that “the decision of the Soviet leadership to send troops to Afghanistan caused enormous damage to the USSR both in the international arena and within the country” [9:373], and according to Major General A. Lyakhovsky, the political goal of the USSR was “support Kabul regime” [5:617-618] and the sacrifices made for it are not justified.

Conclusion

As a result of the Second World War, the formation of a new geopolitical balance and political-legal relations was accompanied by the formation of a balance of forces and checks, which we call the “Cold War.” The Cold War policy demonstrated its approaches in different regions and countries where they tried to apply military-ideological influence. The strategic, geopolitical position of Afghanistan and internal problems, disproportionate approaches to responding to external and internal challenges served as the basis for considering Afghanistan as a means of ensuring the security of the southern borders of the USSR. The Soviet side developed the Afghan economy, various industries, directly and indirectly influenced the formation of the Afghan elite and internal political relations, and after the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan came to power, it completely transformed its Afghan policy, considering Afghanistan as a springboard of Soviet influence in the Third World.

The Cold War had a direct impact on the internal political development of Afghanistan, where parties and public organizations were formed and ideologically became political bodies carrying the Soviet or Islamic value system. Internal political unity was not ensured because the Afghan elite could not form an ideology expressing national unity, and its individual parts preferred to serve the interests of one or another player.

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Contribution of the author

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