

RUSSIA & WORLD: SCIENTIFIC DIALOGUE

РОССИЯ И МИР

НАУЧНЫЙ ДИАЛОГ

ENGLISH EDITION

No. 2(8)
JUNE 2023

The National Communications
Development Research Institution



Science, Research,
Analytics

Consulting
Projects

Digital Technologies
and Solutions

Publishing
and Media activities

Education
and Training

Humanitarian
communications

*The art of dialogue
and confidence*

22, p. 1, lane Korobeynikov, Moscow, 119034

+7 (495) 252-67-88

www.nicrus.ru

institut@nicrus.ru



RUSSIA & WORLD: SCIENTIFIC DIALOGUE



ISSN 2782-3067 (Print)

No. 2(8)
JUNE 2023

18+



ISSN 2782-3067 (Print)
DOI: 10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)
УДК: 94; 316; 327
ББК: 60.5; 63; 66

Information about the journal

The journal «Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue»

– print media (mass media), magazine.

Published since 2021, 4 times a year.

Registration number and date of the decision on registration with the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Communications (Roskomnadzor): PI No. FS77-81013 dated May 17, 2021.

The journal is registered in the National ISSN Center of the Russian Federation

ISSN 2782-3067 (Print)

Archive:

Russian State Library

National Electronic-Information Consortium



Open Access Policy

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» is an open access journal. All articles are made freely available to readers immediately upon publication. The open access is granted in accordance with the Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) definition: all articles are available free of any charge on the public internet, permitting any users to read, download, copy, distribute, print, search, or link to the full texts of these articles, crawl them for indexing, pass them as data to software, or use them for any other lawful purpose, without financial, legal, or technical barriers other than those inseparable from gaining access to the internet itself. For more information please read BOAI statement.

Founder, Publisher

ANO «National Communications Development Research Institution»
22, building 1, Korobeynikov Lane, Moscow, 119034
E-mail: rw.journal@nicrus.ru



Partners

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 12 Rozhdestvenka str., Moscow, 107031, Russian Federation. Tel.: +7 (495) 621-18-84 www.orientalistica.com orientalistica@ivran.ru

Address of the Editorial Office

ANO «National Communications Development Research Institution»
Editorial Office «Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» 22, building 1, Korobeynikov Lane, Moscow, 119034
Russian Federation
Website: <https://www.russia-world.ru/jour>
E-mail: rw.journal@nicrus.ru

Aim and Scope

The purpose of the journal is to create a scientific discussion platform for peer discussion of problems and for the development of optimal solutions in the field of international cooperation, joint research, and publication of its results. Foreign scientists and experts are invited to publish and review the materials submitted for consideration.

The scientific concept involves the publication of scientific papers, including research insights and scholarly results, discussion articles and reviews, in the field of political science, sociology, world economy, cultural studies. The substantive and thematic profile of the journal includes topics reflecting international and regional processes, political, economic, social, cultural aspects of international relations, interstate and intercultural communications, international security and sustainable development

Scientific specialties and branches of science corresponding to them

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

HISTORICAL SCIENCES

5.6.7. History of International Relations and Foreign Policy

SOCIOLOGICAL SCIENCES

5.4.4. Social structure, social institutions and processes

5.4.5. Political Sociology (sociological)

POLITICAL SCIENCES

5.5.2. Political institutions, processes, technologies

5.5.4. International relations, global and regional studies

© «Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue», 2023

© ANO «National Communications Development Research Institution», 2023

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Vitaly V. NAUMKIN – DSc (Hist.), Full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor, Scientific Supervisor of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

DEPUTY CHIEF EDITORS

Valentina V. KOMLEVA – DSc (Soc.), professor, Deputy Director for Scientific Work of the National Communications Development Research Institution (Russia)

Alina V. GASUMYANOVA – CandSc (Law), Deputy Director for Media Activities of the National Communications Development Research Institution, Deputy Director of the Center for Strategic Studies in the Sphere of Energy and Digital Economy MIEP MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (Russia)

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Valerii A. LETIAEV – DSc (Law), CandSc (Hist.), professor, professor of the Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Russia)

EDITORIAL BOARD

Nikolay M. ARSENTIEV – DSc (Hist.), Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor, Director of the Historical and Sociological Institute of the N.P. Ogarev National Research Mordovian State University (Russia)

Kalimash K. BEGALINOVA – DSc (Philos.), professor, Professor of the Department of Religious and Cultural Studies, Al-Farabi Kazakh National University (Kazakhstan)

Andrey V. VINOGRADOV – DSc (Polit.), Head of the Center for Political Research and Forecasts, Institute of the Far East of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Editor-in-chief of the scientific and socio-political journal «Problems of the Far East» (Russia)

Vladislav V. VOLKOV – DSc (Soc.), Leading researcher at the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology, University of Latvia; Professor at the Baltic International Academy (Latvia)

Oksana V. GAMAN-GOLUTVINA – DSc (Polit.), Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor, Head of the Department of Comparative Political Science of MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, President of the Russian Association of Political Science, member of the Public Chamber of the Russian Federation (Russia)

Alexey A. GROMYKO – DSc (Polit.), Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Director of the Institute of Europe of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

Denis A. DEGTEREV – DSc (Polit.), professor, Head of the Department of Theory and History of International Relations, Peoples' Friendship University of Russia (Russia)

Vladimir K. EGOROV – DSc (Philos.), professor, Head of the UNESCO Department of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration, Honorary Doctor of the Institute of Sociology of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

Alexey E. ZAGREBIN – DSc (Hist.), professor, professor of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Chief Researcher of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

Irina D. ZVYAGELSKAYA – DSc (Hist.), Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia), Professor, Head of the laboratory «Center for Middle Eastern Studies» of the Primakov National Research Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

Arous ZOUBIR – Professor of Sociology, Director of the Laboratory of Religion and Society, University of Algiers 2, Faculty of Social Sciences (Algeria)

Fidel LEON-DARDER – PhD, professor at the University of Valencia (Spain)

Elena A. NAZAROVA – DSc (Soc.), professor, professor of the Department of Sociology of MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (Russia)

Mirzokhid A. RAKHIMOV – DSc (Hist.), professor, Head of the Department of Social and Humanitarian Sciences, Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan; Director of the Center for Modern History, Head of the Department of Modern History and International Relations, Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Uzbekistan)

Sergey V. RYAZANTSEV – DSc (Econ.), corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor, Director of the Institute of Demographic Research of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia)

Oleg F. SHABROV – DSc (Polit.), professor, professor of the Department of State Policy, Faculty of Political Science, Lomonosov Moscow State University, President of the Academy of Political Sciences (Russia)

INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC COUNCIL

CHAIRMAN

Alexander V. FEDOROV – CandSc (Law), professor, Honoured Lawyer of the Russian Federation (Russia)

DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Vladislav I. GASUMYANOV – DSc (Econ.), Director of the National Communications Development Research Institution, Head of the Basic Department of Corporate Security MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia (Russia)

Mikhail V. BELOUSOV – CandSc (Soc.) (Russia)

Armais A. KAMALOV – DSc (Med.), professor, Full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, (Russia)

Slava T. KHODKO – CandSc (Tech.) (Russia)

CONTENTS

Naumkin V.V.

Editor-in-chief Foreword 8

HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE AND MODERNITY

History of International Relations and Foreign Policy

Nessar O.M.

Genesis and Evolution of the «Taliban»¹ 12

Mitrofanenkova O.E.

Funding Sources for the «Taliban»^{*} (2001–2021) 21

Laletin Y.P.

Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2001–2021) 30

Khristoforov V.S.

American Troops in Afghanistan (2001–2021): Can Neither be Left nor Taken Out 40

INTERNATIONAL, GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

International relations, global and regional studies

Slinkin M.M.

Afghanistan and the "Great Chessboard" 52

Makhmudov R.B.

Afghan Vector of Modern Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan 61

Sultanmuratov N.

On the Issue of Kazakhstan's Policy Towards Afghanistan 72

Haghpanah J.

Iran's Policy in the Situation of the Afghan Crisis After 2021 82

CHANGING SOCIETY

Social Structure, Social Institutions and Processes

Political sociology

Komleva V.V.

Communication Regime of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan:
socio-political analysis 92

Iskandarov K.

Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation and Security Problems After Coming to Power
the «Taliban»^{*} Movement: A View from Tajikistan 110

Okimbekov U.V.

Women's Issue in Afghanistan under the «Taliban»^{*} 124

Zimin I.A.

The Social Challenges to the New Government of «Taliban»^{*} 134

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). URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>; 18+



Vitaly V. NAUMKIN,
Academician of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Editor-in-chief of the journal
«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue»

We dedicate this issue of the journal to the analysis of the controversial processes taking place in Afghanistan, the importance of which is high for ensuring peace and stability in the region.

The issue opens with a series of four articles on the history of international relations and foreign policy. Under this heading, the authors presented articles on the interconnections between history and modern processes in Afghanistan that they have identified.

Omar M. Nessar addressed the origin and evolution of the Taliban¹. Having identified five main stages in the evolution of this movement, the author came to the conclusion: "The main goals and objectives of the Taliban* have not changed much over 20 years, but the composition of the movement has undergone a transformation, which was reflected in the dynamics of the prohibitive policy." Considering in retrospect the composition of the "moderate" Taliban*, the author comes to the conclusion that now the movement is more numerous than in the 1990s. According to the author, the current lack of a well-formed and clearly articulated worldview prevents the Taliban* from defining the image of the enemy.

Olga E. Mitrofanenkova presented the results of a study of the sources of financing of the Taliban* movement for 20 years from 2001 to 2021. The author draws attention to the fact that although in 2001 the Taliban* movement was almost completely defeated as a result of the anti-terrorist Operation Enduring Freedom, exactly after 20 years later it was revived. The main role in this was played by the sources of funding, which helped to gain control over the country. This topic has attracted the attention of researchers both in Russia and in other countries. Based on the results of previous studies, the author examined how the sources of funding for the Taliban* changed from 2001 to 2021, traced which sources of income played the most significant role. As noted in the conclusions,

"it was the drug business that became one of the first sources of funding that helped the Taliban* begin to restore their strength and influence in Afghanistan after 2001."

Yury P. Laletin also turned to the same 20th period and considered the processes of economic and humanitarian cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan in 2001–2021. The author came to the conclusion that the trade and economic cooperation between the two countries during this period remained at a low level. However, positive processes have also emerged: the problem of Afghanistan's debt has been resolved, a number of joint bodies have been created, and the most favored nation regime has been introduced. But there were also obstacles: "corruption and the unwillingness of Americans to have Russian firms as competitors, which were assigned the role of nothing more than subcontractors."

Vasily S. Khristoforov devoted his article to the problem of the presence of American troops in Afghanistan in the same period. "Can Neither be Left nor Taken Out" is the subtitle of his article. The Americans failed to introduce democratic values, as they formulated their main task. The government, which was supported by American troops, fell even before the end of the withdrawal of the American contingent. The reasons for this, according to the author, were "the peculiarities of the historical, cultural, social and religious development of society, as well as the weakness of the country's political leadership."

The section "International, global and regional processes" in the field of international relations is represented by four articles.

Mikhail M. Slinkin considered the policy in Eurasia "in the context of the US claims to a key role in the world and the desire to independently manage the pieces on the Grand Chessboard." The author drew

attention to the fact that after the hasty withdrawal of their troops from Afghanistan by the Americans, they switched to another "chess game", raising their ally in the person of Ukraine, the leadership and part of the population of which profess the Nazi ideology. The author writes that "the connection between the events in the Near and Middle East and in Europe is obvious, but still requires proof," which is what the article is devoted to.

The Afghan vector of the modern foreign policy of Uzbekistan became the subject of research by Rustam B. Makhmudov. The Uzbek approach is characterized by the author through a combination of the following factors: "support for the establishment of peace and stability in Afghanistan; development of trade and economic cooperation with Kabul; promotion by Uzbekistan of initiatives for greater participation of the world community in establishing a peaceful life in Afghanistan; integration of this country into the interconnectedness projects of Central and South Asia promoted by Tashkent".

Kazakhstan's policy towards Afghanistan is reviewed by Nuriddin Sultanmuratov. The republic still relies on the CSTO and the SCO, but the Kazakh authorities, as recent events show, seek to maintain contacts with the Taliban* movement, considering it as a factor in maintaining stability in this country.

Iran's policy in the context of the Afghan crisis after 2021 was reviewed by Jafar Haqpanah. The article presents a historical overview of the relationship between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, their ties in the political, cultural, economic and humanitarian spheres. The main levers of Iran's influence on the situation in Afghanistan are shown. The author comes to the conclusion that "the return of the Taliban* to power in Afghanistan can be seen as a combination of opportunities and, at the same time, threats for the Islamic Republic of Iran. From the point of view of officials in Tehran, the opportunities currently outweigh the threats and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future."

The problems of "changing society" in the context of social structure, social institutions and processes, political sociology studies are presented in four articles.

The article by Valentina V. Komleva is devoted to the study of the communication regime in modern Afghanistan. For the first time in the context of Afghanistan, the methodology for analyzing the controllability of communication regimes is applied and its assessment is given. Based on the results of the pilot study, the features of the communication regime were identified, in particular, the presence of "blind zones" that are not always seen and understood by those who study and manage public communications. The author draws conclusions about the influence of internal and external communication control centers,

about the weak controllability of the communication regime by the Taliban*, despite the policy of controlling communication channels and information content.

A Tajik perspective on the humanitarian and security situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban* came to power is presented by Kosimsho Iskandarov. The Taliban* regime, in accordance with the conclusion of the author, threatens to destroy the centuries-old historical and cultural heritage of Tajiks in this country: "Tajiks under the Taliban* are removed from power, the policy of the Taliban* will lead to limiting the scope of the Dari (Tajik) language, which is more for thousands of years it has been the state language, the language of interethnic communication in this country". That is why Emomali Rahmon insisted on the formation of an inclusive government, taking into account the interests of ethnic Tajiks, who make up 46 percent of the population of Afghanistan.

The "women's issue" in Afghanistan after the coming to power of the Mujahedeen, and then the Taliban*, was considered by Ubayd V. Okimbekov. The author was attracted by the place and position of Afghan women in society, the development of education and the involvement of the female population in the socio-economic and political life of this country. The restrictions imposed by the Taliban* on women, the author concludes, "are the product of the views of the leaders of the movement themselves, but this is presented as the requirements of religion."

Social challenges to the new Taliban* government attracted the attention of Ilya A. Zimin. The author comes to the conclusion that the Taliban* do not have enough internal resources for a comprehensive and deep solution of social problems, so the goal of international humanitarian organizations was to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan. The author believes that "for more than a year, the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan continues to control most of the country and respond in one way or another to the challenges, the collapse of the state has not happened."

Dear readers!

The materials of this issue were prepared as part of the initiative project of our colleague, Omar Mohammad Nessar, senior researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, director of the Study of Modern Afghanistan Center.

The editorial board of the journal hopes that the materials of the issue will arouse your interest and that you yourself will become one of our authors in the future.

Academician of the Russian Academy of
Sciences Vitaly V. Naumkin

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+

HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE AND MODERNITY

History of International Relations
and Foreign Policy

An analysis of the main directions of the Taliban's policy after they came to power again leads to the conclusion that the main goals and objectives of the Taliban have not changed in 20 years, and they are now wishing to establish the same order as in the past. However, the structure of the movement has changed in 20 years. Probably, this can explain some softening and slowing down in the policy of prohibitions. Now the camp of the "moderate" Taliban looks more numerous than in the 1990s.

Nessar O.M.

Genesis and Evolution of the Taliban*

... all sources of financing of the Taliban movement for twenty years can be divided into internal and external. Internal sources of income primarily include various tax revenues (which were collected illegally), income from drug trafficking, and all types of extortion. External sources of financing include various illegal cash receipts from Arab funds, as well as from Pakistan.*

Mitrofanenkova O.E.

Funding Sources for the Taliban* (2001–2021)

... although trade and economic cooperation between Russia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan received an impetus for development, but remained at a low level. On the one hand, measures were taken to promote the growth of interaction, that is, the problem of Afghanistan's debt was resolved, a number of joint bodies were created, and the most favored nation regime was introduced. On the other hand, corruption and the unwillingness of Americans to have Russian firms as competitors, which were assigned the role of mere subcontractors, were obstacles.

Laletin Y.P.

Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2001–2021)

The 20-year presence of US military contingents in Afghanistan has not led to positive results. The Americans managed only partially to solve the set tasks related to the destruction of Al-Qaeda, but they were unable to introduce democratic principles, and the government, which had been supported by American bayonets for 20 years, actually fell even before the end of the withdrawal of American troops. Once again, it has been proven that no government in this country will have sufficient legitimacy to stabilize the situation under the condition of foreign military intervention.*

Khristoforov V.S.

American Troops in Afghanistan (2001–2021): Can Neither be Left nor Taken Out

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+

Genesis and Evolution of the Taliban^{*1}

Omar M. Nessar✉

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences,
Moscow, Russia
nessar@ya.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4236-0886>

Abstract: The article analyzes the main stages of the evolution of the Taliban' movement. Considering the transformation of the military-political activity of the movement, the author identifies five main stages: the birth of the Taliban', the first reign, a period of calm, a period of revival and re-rule. According to the estimates presented in the article, the main goals and objectives of the Taliban' have not changed much over 20 years, but the composition of the movement has changed, which was reflected in changes in the prohibition policy.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban', military-political movements.

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Nessar O.M. Genesis and Evolution of the Taliban*. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 20-31, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-20-31](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-20-31)

Introduction

The development of strategies for military-political movements is influenced by many factors, including social and political ones, so goals and objectives may change over time. The Taliban* movement has been one of the main participants in the military-political life of Afghanistan for 29 years. They have gone through different stages, demonstrating a high level of vitality. Although the Taliban* used violent methods to achieve their goals, they are the reality of Afghan life. This is one of the reasons why the international community today has to engage with them. After the Taliban* came to power again in 2021, the question

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). URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>; 18+

of their genesis and evolution is again relevant and is the subject of a special in-depth study. In this paper, we will focus on the analysis of the main stages in the evolution of the Taliban* associated with country factors.

An analysis of the transformation of the military-political activity of the Taliban* over the 29 years of its existence allows us to distinguish five historical stages:

1. The birth of the Taliban* movement (1994–1996);
2. First reign (1996–2001);
3. Quiet period (2001–2003);
4. Renaissance period (2003–2021);
5. Re-rule (2021–present).

Materials and methods

The sources of the study are reports of international organizations, statements by officials, materials from foreign analytical centers and periodicals.

The scientific basis of the study was the monographs of domestic (V.Ya.Belokrenitsky [3], R.R.Sikoev [7] and others) and foreign (S.M.Akimbekova [1], A.Rashid [6], T.Koglan [9], D.Edwards [10] and others) authors, including Afghan (N.Azimi [12], B.A.Ansari [13], V.Mozhdy [14] and others).

The author used well-known scientific methods such as system analysis, synthesis, method of comparative analysis and comparison of data.

Results

The Rise of the Taliban*

The transition of power in Afghanistan (1992) into the hands of the Islamists led to a sharp weakening of the left political camp. Islamic political movements intensified, effectively gaining control over most of the country. However, their combined influence was weakened by internal contradictions that took on the character of an armed struggle in the first half of the 1990s. During this period, interethnic disagreements began to play a large role in the formation of political alliances and associations. Anarchy and the actions of local warlords provoked an increase in discontent on the part of society. Interethnic conflict was driving the country towards fragmentation. Centrifugal processes and the dominance of non-Pashtun politicians in the political arena of the country provoked discontent among the population, especially the Pashtun. These are the conditions for the emergence of a new military-political force aimed at ending the civil war, establishing order and dominating the Pashtuns.

The Taliban* movement (the name refers to the students studying in the madrasah) first announced itself in October 1994 in the Spinbuldak district of the southern province of Kandahar [7:17]. The decisive role was played by the replenishment of the number of Afghan refugees who were in Pakistan. They were trained in a madrasah in the Afghan-Pakistani border area, which was under the control of Pakistani Islamist parties and enjoyed the patronage of the security services. Part of the Pashtun officers of the former left-wing democratic government of the country went over to the side of the Taliban* [3:15]. The origins of the Taliban* were representatives of the poor Pashtun strata, who lived mainly in rural areas in southern Afghanistan, and there were no Shiites in its leadership. Therefore, the movement had a clearly defined social, religious and ethnic character.

Researchers consider the genesis of the Taliban* in different ways. Some see its roots in the ethnic factor, that is, they believe that the Taliban* emerged as a Pashtun nationalist movement that aims to unite the country and end the civil war [11]. Others believe that religious doctrines originally played a dominant role in the movement². It is believed that the Deobandi religious school and the views of the Pakistani Jamiat-e Ulama e Islam party [3:29] had the strongest influence on the formation of the Taliban*'s worldview. At the same time, some researchers attribute the Taliban* to the followers of a separate Deobandi (Afghan) school, which broke away from the Indo-Pakistani [13:56]. There are opinions that the way the Taliban* operate can be linked to their "rural" identity [10]. A number of authors believe that the Taliban* should have played a key role in the struggle for huge oil and gas reserves in Central Asia and the establishment of resource transportation [6]. Between the Taliban* and those that emerged in the 1970s. Afghan Islamist parties can find common features associated with historical memory. The founder and most of the leaders of the Taliban* fought in the Mujahideen units against the Soviet troops and the pro-Soviet governments of Afghanistan, which allows us to call the Taliban* "children" of the Mujahideen, deprived of power [7].

One of the difficult problems in studying the origins of the Taliban*'s ideology is their connection with jihadist Salafism. The beginning of this interaction took place during the wars of the 1970s. It was carried out at various levels, including religious education and the creation of political movements. The geographical factor could not help but play its role: at that time, Al-Qaeda*³ was concentrated mainly in the Pashtun regions in the southeast of Afghanistan, in areas bordering Pakistan, where the formation of the Taliban* took place. This circumstance was the reason for the ideological interaction of the Taliban* with Al-Qaeda* and the Taliban* falling under the influence of this group.

² Lister S. Understanding State-Building and Local Government in Afghanistan // Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics, 2007.

³ *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+

First Period in Power

The next strengthening of the Taliban* movement took place in the autumn of 1996. On September 12, 1996, the Taliban* took the strategically important city of Jalalabad, and on September 24 of the same year, the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul. The Taliban* themselves called the form of their state structure, characterized by researchers as a "military-theocratic regime", the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) [3:57]. At the initial stage, when the political ambitions of the Taliban* were not yet clear, their appearance was received positively, but after the capture of Kabul, the assessments changed. One of the first steps was that the Taliban* executed former President Mohammad Najibullah, who was hiding in the UN office.

As their power spread, the Taliban* established the rules and norms of the state and social structure in accordance with their understanding of the principles of Sharia. Restrictions were introduced affecting various areas of life. Let us name the main features of the first rule of the Taliban*.

Women were deprived of basic rights. They were forbidden to: get an education, work, go out without being accompanied by a "mahram" (close male relative). Women were required to wear a veil. During the entire period of the first rule (1996–2001), the decision of the Taliban* to ban women from education and work was temporary. The Russian Afghanist R.R.Sikoev describes the situation of women as follows: "A woman was deprived of all rights, completely isolated, excluded from public life, her existence turned out to be completely limited by the family and home" [7:168].

The position of representatives of the religious minority began to deteriorate. According to Iranian authors, the Shiites did not occupy either high government positions or middle-level positions in state structures. Their general situation was also influenced by the punitive actions of the Taliban* against the Hazaras in the provinces of Bamiyan and Balkh [3:53].

One of the first steps taken by the Taliban* was to take control of the national broadcasting corporation. After that, the only official media in the country was the Voice of Sharia radio. Listening to music and owning musical instruments was considered a crime.

The Taliban* acted as carriers of the idea of Pashtun political and religious dominance, which to a large extent turned the conflict into a confrontation between the Pashtuns and the ethnic minorities of the country. In this regard, the strengthening of the Taliban* after 1996 led to the consolidation of ethnic forces on the anti-Taliban* platform. As a result, it became possible to form a broad anti-Taliban* bloc (Northern Alliance) from numerous Afghan military-political groups opposed to the Taliban* [1].

It would seem that the rural and ethnic origins deprive the Taliban* of non-Afghan ambitions, but not everything was clear. The very assignment of the title "amir ul-muminin" (ruler of the faithful) to the leader of the movement, Mullah Omar, opened up scope for the broad aspirations of the Taliban*. Their allied relations with extra-Afghan jihadist groups

(Al-Qaeda*, IMU, etc.)⁴ were seen as an opportunity to export the Taliban* socio-political model to neighboring countries [8].

The degree of interaction between the Taliban* and Al-Qaeda* reached the point that the Taliban* provided its members with military-political asylum until they themselves became a victim of the group's activity. From the territory of Afghanistan, al-Qaeda* organized the September 11 operation, which ultimately led to the launch of the US operation in Afghanistan and the collapse of the Taliban* government.

Period of Calm

After the capture of Kabul in 1996, the Taliban* were unable to quickly establish control over the entire country. They expanded their zone of influence gradually – by October 2001, they managed to capture almost 95% of the territory of Afghanistan. However, the beginning of the US operation against the Taliban* led to a change in the political situation. After the September 11 terrorist attack, having received broad international support, the United States, in cooperation with the Northern Alliance, quickly removed the Taliban* from power. From December 2001 to August 2002, the Taliban* movement actually collapsed: there were no signs of the existence of the current leadership and structure. From the point of view of security problems, the period 2001–2003 can be described as the most prosperous in the entire history of the Afghan conflict. Many people remember these years as a time when it was possible to move freely around the country, visiting any areas. The military and political activity of the armed opposition during this period was low, so it was remembered as the “golden stage of the post-Taliban* period”⁵.

Revival Period

Since the summer of 2003, attacks by Taliban* groups of 100-200 people have become more frequent. They succeeded in taking large areas in the countryside out of control of government forces, especially in the eastern and southern parts of the country. In the revival of the Taliban*, internal and external factors played a role, the most significant were: 1) the dominance of the military-political opponents of the Taliban* in power, which minimized the possibility of a deal with them; 2) ignoring the Taliban*, and in their person - a part of society in the Bonn process aimed at the formation of state institutions; 3) underestimation of the Taliban*'s ability to resist; 4) shifting US attention to the Iraqi campaign [5].

The ideological center of the Taliban* movement was still considered Mullah Mohammad Omar and his inner circle. He enjoyed great prestige in the movement, but

⁴ *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+

⁵ Kava A. The role of Karzai and Ghani in the democratic defeat in Afghanistan. Hashi-Sobh, 27.11.2021. Available from: <http://8am.af/the-role-of-karzai-and-ghani-in-the-defeat/> [In Persian].

his actual participation in the command of the armed opposition raised serious doubts [9:138-139]. Apparently, the so-called. “shuras” (councils or collective bodies) located on the territory of Pakistan and created after 2003: Kvet shura (high council), Mirakab shura, Peshawar shura, Miramshah shura. The Shuras were distinguished by their influence over individual units of the Taliban*. For example, the Peshawar Shura coordinated the activities of the Haqqani Network, while the Mirakab Shura coordinated between the councils and non-Taliban* groups. It should be emphasized that the name of the bodies and groups of the Taliban* in honor of certain territories is almost a convention.

In our opinion, one of the key changes in the activities of the Taliban* after 2003 is the “Arabization” of the Afghan conflict - the massive use of suicide bombers in Afghanistan, which was not previously on such a scale. After the start of the US operation in Afghanistan, the Taliban* became ideologically even closer to jihadist currents, and the Taliban* war acquired a more Salafi coloring. The use of al-Qaeda* tactics helped to strengthen the position of the Taliban* in the war with the Americans, but at the same time it became a weak point of the Taliban*: as a result of theoretical confusion and confusion with al-Qaeda*, some members of the Taliban* acquired more explicit takfiri views, which subsequently led to a split within the movement and the outflow of these members to ISIS-X*. After coming to power in 2021, the Taliban* justified their actions by saying that life under occupation left them no other choice, although killing people when attacking the enemy was not discussed, according to researchers, it contradicts the teachings of deobandism [13].

A serious challenge for the Taliban* was the appearance in Afghanistan in 2015 of the Khorasan branch of the IS (ISIS-X*)⁶. At a certain stage, not only foreign radicals located in the country, but also individual factions of the Taliban* began to join him. The Taliban* command saw a threat in the new group because of the ideological “proximity” that allowed the Khorasan branch to easily lure Taliban* manpower to itself. Subsequently, the conflict between the parties took on an armed character. For 2017-2018 only, there were 207 clashes between the Taliban* and ISIS-X* in 14 out of 34 Afghan provinces⁷. Although the conflict between the parties continued, the Taliban* managed to prevent a large exodus of their supporters to ISIS-X*⁸.

During the armed struggle of the Taliban*, restrictions affecting various spheres of life of the population were in effect in most areas under their control. However, the ban on girls' education was ambivalent. In a number of places, the Taliban* did not allow them to attend schools, especially girls under the age of 12.

Another feature of this period was the weakening of the Taliban*'s Pashtun-centric policy, which allowed including representatives of other ethnic groups in the armed struggle, including Tajiks and Uzbeks from the north. This tactic increased the effectiveness

⁶ The goal of ISIS-X* was the creation of an Islamic caliphate in Central and South Asia.

⁷ Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K)*. CSIS, 09.11.2018. Available from: <https://www.csis.org/programs/transnational-threats-project/past-projects/terrorism-backgrounders/islamic-state-khorasan>.

⁸ Has the outflow of Taliban* commanders to ISIS* stopped? Iranian Center for Strategic Studies “Shark”, 18.11.2019. Available from: <https://www.iess.ir/fa/event/1087/> [In Persian].

of the movement during the years of armed struggle and became one of the main success factors. Thanks to inter-ethnic consolidation, the Taliban* have dramatically expanded the area under their control, intensifying their activities in the north of the country.

The turning point in the activities of the Taliban* is the beginning of peace negotiations with the Taliban*), which subsequently led to the emergence of a new center of influence within the movement and, accordingly, to a change in the balance of power in it. The peace process was prompted by a change in US policy on Afghanistan - preparations for the completion of the Afghan mission. As part of the peace process, in 2013, with the assistance of the United States, a Taliban* representation began to function in Qatar. On February 29, 2020, a peace agreement was signed between the United States and the Taliban*⁹. One of the main conditions of the agreement was intra-Afghan negotiations (negotiations between the government of Afghanistan and legal political movements, on the one hand, and with the Taliban*, on the other), which were to end with the formation of a coalition government. However, the matter did not come to real negotiations - they repeatedly failed due to the actions of President A.Ghani and the existence of a huge gap between the political views of the Taliban* and the views of other Afghan political forces. As a result, the withdrawal of the last groups of the US military, which turned out to be unexpected for Kabul, provoked the fall of the government and the rise to power of the Taliban* [4].

Re-ruling Period

The circumstances leading up to the re-emergence of the Taliban* to power in 2021 are described in many publications (4). With the collapse of the government of A.Ghani on August 15, 2021, the Taliban* managed to quickly extend control over the entire country. For the first time in more than 40 years, Afghanistan has completely come under the control of one military-political force.

In establishing the rules and norms of the state and social structure, the Taliban* largely repeat what they did during the previous rule (1990s). The most resonant was the decision to deprive the female part of the population of the opportunity to receive a secondary education and have full access to work.

In other areas, the Taliban* also adhere to the "old line". However, it should be noted that a number of prohibitive measures were softened compared to the 1990s: some of them were introduced gradually, for example, the ban on listening to music was officially adopted only in June 2023, although in practice it had been in effect earlier. Also, we pay attention to the less negatively attitude towards Shiites¹⁰, although the analysis and monitoring group at the UN Security Council accused the Taliban* of pursuing a "Pashto-

⁹ The official title of the document is: "An agreement on peace in Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which the United States does not recognize as a state and is known as the Taliban* movement, and the United States."

¹⁰ For example, the post of Deputy Minister of Economy is occupied by a Hazara Shiite Abdul Latif Nazari. It is worth noting that the Taliban* leaders periodically hold meetings with representatives of the Hazara community.

centric" policy, violating the rights of religious minorities and maintaining links with terrorist groups¹¹.

There is no reliable data on the breakdown of relations between the Taliban* and extremist groups. In August 2022, the United States announced the elimination of Al-Qaeda* leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in the center of Kabul with the help of a UAV, which was evidence of continued cooperation between the Taliban* and non-Afghan groups. In June 2023, the authoritative publication "Long War Journal" reported on the appointment of a number of Al-Qaeda* activists to positions in the security structures of the Taliban*¹².

Despite this, after coming to power, the Taliban* declared "war" on the followers of Salafism, officially banning the activities of movements with a Salafist orientation, such as Hizb ut-Tahrir*¹³, Jamiat-e Eslah and the Najm organization*¹⁴.

Conclusions

If in the last years of the armed struggle there was a slight weakening of the Pashtun-centric policy of the Taliban*, which allowed them to strengthen their position in the north, then after coming to power, the reverse process began¹⁵.

An analysis of the main directions of the Taliban*'s policy after they came to power again leads to the conclusion that the main goals and objectives of the Taliban* have not changed in 20 years - they are still striving to establish the same order that they were moving towards in the past. However, the composition of the movement has changed over the past 20 years. Probably, this can explain some easing and slowing down in the prohibitive policy. Now the camp of "moderate" Taliban* looks more numerous than in the 1990s.

*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 Fourteenth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team. Available from: https://www.hronikatm.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023_06_01_afghanistan_taliban_un_report.pdf

¹² Al Qaeda* leaders are prominently serving in Taliban* government. LWJ, 10.06.2023. Available from: <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2023/06/al-qaeda-leaders-are-prominently-serving-in-taliban-government.php>

¹³ *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). URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>. Available from: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm> (accessed: 7.05.2023); 18+.

¹⁴ The Taliban* banned the activities of Hizb ut-Tahrir* in Afghanistan. Independent Persian, 25.11.2022. Available from: <https://www.independentpersian.com/node/286131/> [In Persian].

¹⁵ For example, the Taliban* conducted punitive operations against a number of influential commanders from among the representatives of Uzbeks, Tajiks and Hazaras who were dissatisfied with the policy of the movement's leadership.

References

1. Akimbekov S. M. The Afghan knot and security problems in Central Asia. Almaty, 2003 [In Russian].
2. Akimbekov S. M. History of Afghanistan. Almaty: IMEP under the First President's Fund, 2015 [In Russian].
3. Belokrenitsky V. Ya., Sikoev R. R. The Taliban* Movement and the Perspectives of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, 2014 [In Russian].
4. Konarovskiy M. A., Nessar M. O. Taliban* Afghanistan: what's next? International Life. 2022. No. 1 (January):38-62 [In Russian].
5. Nessar M. O. Political Development of Afghanistan: Estimates and Forecasts (2001-2014). Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, 2016 [In Russian].
6. Rashid A. Taliban*. Islam, oil and the new Great Game in Central Asia. Trans. from English. Moscow: Povalyaeva. Moscow: Biblion. Russian book, 2003 [In Russian].
7. Sikoev R. R. Taliban*: religious and political portrait. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, 2004 [In Russian].
8. Jacquard P. Secret archives of al-Qaeda*. Exposing materials about the followers of bin Laden. Trans. from French by N. Kachakhidze. Moscow: Stolitsa-Print, 2007 [In English].
9. Coghlán T. The Taliban* in Helmand: An Oral History. Decoding the new Taliban*: insights from the Afghan field. Ed. by A. Giustozzi. New York-Chichester: C. Hurst&Co Ltd, 2009 [In English].
10. Edwards D. B. Before the Taliban*. Genealogies of the Afghan Jihad. Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 2002 [In English].
11. Elliot A. Political Party Development in Afghanistan: Challenges and Opportunities 'Policy Options for State-Building in Afghanistan'. SAIS Spring, 2009 [In English].
12. Azimi N. Army and politics in Afghanistan over the past three decades. Peshawar, 1997 [In Persian].
13. Ansari B. A. Religion of the Taliban*. Tehran, 2012 [In Persian].
14. Mozhdá V. Five years of the Taliban* rule. Tehran, 2004 [In Persian].

About the author

Omar M. NESSAR. CandSc (Hist.). Senior Research Fellow, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4236-0886>. Address: 12, st. Rozhdestvenka, Moscow, 107031; nessar@ya.ru

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

HISTORICAL RETROSPECTIVE AND MODERNITY
History of International Relations and Foreign Policy

Original article

Historical sciences

[https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-32-42](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-32-42)

Funding Sources for the Taliban*¹
(2001–2021)

Olga E. Mitrofanenkova ✉

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

mitrofanenkova.olga@bk.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0076-2956>

Abstract. The article examines the sources of financing of the Taliban* for twenty years. The author identifies internal and external sources of income of the Taliban* Movement. The role of illegal drug production in financing the activities of the Taliban in the struggle for power is emphasized.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban* Movement, drug business, sources of financing

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Mitrofanenkova O.E. Funding Sources for the Taliban* (2001-2021). Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 32-42, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-32-42](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-32-42)

Introduction

Despite the fact that in 2001, as a result of the anti-terrorist operation “Enduring Freedom”, the «Taliban»* Movement (recognized as a terrorist organization in the Russian Federation) was almost completely defeated, in August 2021 they managed to come to power in Afghanistan again. A significant role in their re-return was played by sources of funding, which helped them not only to recover, but also to regain influence and control over the country.

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). URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>; 18+

The sources of funding for the «Taliban»* in the period from 2001 to 2021 were considered in the works of both foreign (mainly Western researchers) and domestic researchers. Among the foreign works, D.Mansfield's work "A state built on sand. How opium is destroying Afghanistan" (8) stands out in particular. Despite the fact that the central place in the work is devoted to the illegal production of drugs and the fight against it in Afghanistan, the author also examines the role of drug trafficking in the financing of the «Taliban»* movement. Foreign research centers have also published studies related to the sources of funding for the «Taliban»*. Here it is worth highlighting the analytical materials of V.Felbab-Brown² from the Brookings Institution.

In the work of E.A.Stepanova "The role of drug trafficking in the political economy of conflicts and terrorism" [2], the sources of financing of the «Taliban»* movement were also considered. In addition to the role of drug trafficking in financing the «Taliban»*, the author also notes external sources (mainly financial assistance from Pakistan and some Arab states). In the work of E.A.Stepanova, the period of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s was mainly considered. Among domestic researchers, it is also necessary to highlight the article by U.V.Okimbekov "Afghanistan: socio-economic life under the parallel rule of the «Taliban»*" [1]. The author examines the period from 2001 to 2019. The author analyzes the sources of income of the «Taliban»* and the peculiarities of financing the Quetta Shura, the peculiarities of the Afghan economy.

The purpose of this article is to study the changes in the sources of financing of the «Taliban»* in the period from 2001 to 2021, to identify which sources of income played the most significant role.

Materials and Methods

The main sources of the research were materials from international organizations and Western scientific and analytical centers. These are the materials of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime³, The Directorate has been providing data on the Afghan drug industry and its revenues for about 30 years in its annual reports on the drug situation in the world. It is also worth highlighting the FATF (Intergovernmental Commission on Financial Monitoring) reports⁴, which provides data on the potential income of the «Taliban»* from their illegal activities.

The method of historical periodization was used in the study. The 20 – year period from 2001 to 2021 was divided into two time periods: 1) 2001–2014, the actions of the «Taliban»* to restore their fighting power and influence in Afghanistan 2) 2015–2021. The «Taliban»*'s growing influence in Afghanistan, they are already becoming a significant

² Brookings Institute. Available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/experts/vanda-felbab-brown/>.

³ UNODC. [Electronic source]. Available from: <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/data-and-analysis/world-drug-report-2022.html>

⁴ FATF. - Financial Action Task Force, FATF)). Electronic source]. URL: <https://www.fatf-gafi.org/en/home.html>.

force and in a number of provinces (mainly in the south of the country) have power and influence in parallel with the official government. At the same time, some sources of illegal income are completely controlled by them (drug trafficking).

Another method used in the study was the historical-comparative method, since the sources of income of the «Taliban»* were compared over two periods. A historical and systematic method was used with the help of which the relationship between the sources of financing of the «Taliban»* movement and their re-coming to power was shown.

Results

The Role of Drug Trafficking in the Financing of the Taliban* Movement 2001–2014.

As a result of the introduction of foreign troops led by the United States in 2001 The «Taliban»* and other anti-government groups suffered greatly and were forced to flee to Pakistan, neighboring Afghanistan. During this period, the «Taliban»* were in dire need of financial resources, since in addition to ensuring their anti-government activities, they also needed to resist the foreign military contingent.

Their main tasks in the 2000s were to build up their forces and regain their former positions in Afghanistan.

Gradually, the remnants of the «Taliban»* began to regroup and recover. It was reported that Mullah Omar contacted his deputies and instructed them to organize their fighters, pick up recruits from Pakistani madrassas, find weapons caches and raise funds. Drug traffickers were among the first to provide funds to help the «Taliban»* [9:17].

According to some estimates, the income from drugs could be from 20 to 40% of the total income of the «Taliban»* during this period⁵. This source of financing has always played a significant role in their financial support. The drug business has become a significant source that has contributed to the beginning of the restoration of the «Taliban»* Movement. At the same time, it can be attributed to internal sources of financing.

Despite the fact that in 2003 the «Taliban»* had not yet fully regained their strength (as well as influence in Afghanistan) and were poorly organized, they managed to establish control over drug production in a number of areas in the south of the country. During this period, due to financial revenues from drug trafficking, the Quetta Shura (the main military-political body of the «Taliban»* operating in Pakistan) managed to maintain control over the poorly organized «Taliban»* [9:17].

Tax revenues from peasants became another internal resource of finance. In the 2000s, the «Taliban»* secretly collected opium taxes from peasants in the territories

⁵ Felbab-Brown V. High and low politics in Afghanistan: The terrorism-drugs nexus and what can be done about it// Brookings Institute [Electronic source]. URL: <https://www.brookings.edu/articles/high-and-low-politics-in-afghanistan-the-terrorism-drugs-nexus-and-what-can-be-done-about-it/>.

under their control. They began to resort to such tax collection back in the 1990s. In those areas where there was no obvious dominant force, there were periodic clashes between «Taliban»* commanders, criminal groups and officials who also received illegal income from drug trafficking. During this period, there was an active competition between various forces for control of the drug business. There was no single center that would completely control the production of drugs in the country. The current situation contributed both to the destabilization of the situation in certain areas of Afghanistan and to the undermining of the influence of the central government.

In order to receive a stable income from drugs, the «Taliban»* acted as defenders of peasants growing opium poppies.

The traditional collection of income from drugs in the 2000s looked like this (as noted earlier, the scheme of collecting taxes from peasants has remained unchanged since the 1990s.):

1) the «Taliban»* commanders collected the ushr tax from the poppy farmers, which is equal to 10% of the value of the crop,

2) to increase their income, «Taliban»* fighters very often worked in poppy fields during the harvest (of the entire drug production process, it is the collection of raw opium that is the highest paid, as well as the most time-consuming),

3) small traders who bought raw opium from peasants also paid a tax to the «Taliban»*. In addition, drivers who were engaged in the transportation of drugs paid the «Taliban»* a transit tariff for each kilogram of raw opium or finished drug smuggled out of Afghanistan,

4) the «Taliban»* also received payment for the protection of drug laboratories, where heroin was produced from raw opium,

5) the most significant source of income for the «Taliban»* from drugs were regular payments to large organizations involved in drug trafficking. These payments were received directly to the Quetta Shura ("Council of Quetta"), which included «Taliban»* leaders who lived in or near the city of Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province in Pakistan [6:42–43].

Drug trafficking was an important source of financing for the «Taliban»*. At the same time, the main thing was that they had the opportunity to earn income in a very short time, which allowed them to re-assert their claims to influence in Afghanistan at the beginning of the 2000s.

It is worth noting that the neighboring countries of Afghanistan also played a significant role in the growth of their income from drug trafficking. First of all, the main routes of Afghan drug trafficking ran through their territory. At the same time, illegal money transfers were made through the hawala system (an informal system of transferring funds and valuables based on the offset of claims and obligations between brokers) through the same countries.

Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have become the main transaction centers for "financial flows related to the production and trafficking of Afghan opiates." Money laundering also took place in these countries. Subsequently, money was transferred from here back to drug traffickers in Afghanistan [3:31].

Diversification of Sources of Financing for the «Taliban»* Movement 2001–2014

In the 2000s, the sources of financing for the «Taliban»* began to diversify. In providing their activities with finances, they tried not to rely on one source of income, but to be able to receive money from different sources. There were created conditions in which, having lost one type of income, it was possible to replace it with another. The situation in which the «Taliban»* could find themselves completely without funds was thus minimized.

Gradually, the threat of the «Taliban»* in Afghanistan began to intensify again.

In the early 2000s, the «Taliban»* by the nature of their actions resembled the mafia (extortion from businesses, etc.). During this period, the «Taliban»* were not as organized as in the 1990s. They were more a collection of separate "bandit" groups united into a some unified whole, each of these groups operated with a different degree of autonomy in Afghanistan, having a rear in Pakistan [5:9].

In addition to collecting taxes on opium from peasants and drug trafficking, the «Taliban»* also collected a 10% "tax" (usr) from local small business owners. Quite often they also resorted to outright extortion [5:9].

A number of illegal activities acted as sources of financing for the «Taliban»*. According to some information (for example, FATF, the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering), each of the types of income in the «Taliban»* budget served to provide specific tasks. The income received from taxation of the local economy served to conduct local operations and only in some cases were sent up to the top leadership of the movement. Part of the income received from the drug business, deductions from construction and trucking companies, from mobile operators, mining companies and from aid and development projects went to the «Taliban»* finance commission (the movement already had a clear structure by that time, which in the 2010s included various "ministries"). The commission was controlled by the top leadership of the movement. Various types of donations, mainly from Arab countries, went directly to the top leadership of the «Taliban»*. According to the UN data in the period from 2011 to 2012 The «Taliban»*'s budget was \$400 million, one third of it was obtained through drug trafficking [6:42]. Of course, internal sources of financing accounted for a significant share of the budget. In addition to drug trafficking, they included various illegal taxes from peasants and businesses, transport duties, racketeering and all kinds of extortion. External sources included, of course, donations from Arab foundations (mainly from Saudi Arabia) that supported terrorist activities.

«Taliban»* Revenues from Drug Trafficking 2015–2021

Since 2015, most of the proceeds from drug trafficking began to flow directly to the «Taliban»*. The processing of raw opium into a finished product was also almost under their complete control. Drug revenues, as before, consisted of taxes that they collected from the harvest of opium from peasants, from laboratories where heroin was produced, and from

taxes paid by traffickers for the export of drugs from the country⁶. During this period, the «Taliban»* became a key force that controlled the drug trade in Afghanistan.

The «Taliban»* also used an extensive and multi-channel network to generate income from drug trafficking. Thus, drivers were charged a transport fee for using highways in regions controlled by the «Taliban»*. They also continued to collect ushr and zakat. These tax revenues, which can be considered as extortion, brought in up to \$160 million a year⁷.

If we discuss the income of anti-government groups, local warlords and the «Taliban»* from crop taxation, then all together they could receive from \$50 million to \$90 million in income. In 2018, the «Taliban»* could have received about \$10 million from taxes on the opium poppy crop. If we consider all the «Taliban»*'s drug-related activities, then the «Taliban»*'s income could reach \$400 million per year [4:6].

It is important to note that the estimates of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime of the «Taliban»*'s income took into account mainly income from raw opium and taxes. Reports from other international organizations (for example, the RAND Corporation) have already considered the total income from the entire drug industry. At the same time, it was noted that drug trafficking was not the only source of income for the «Taliban»*⁸. The greatest income was generated by the supply of raw opium processed into heroin to the final markets, as well as the process of subsequent money laundering.

Drug production and smuggling remained a very lucrative source of income for the «Taliban»* until August 2021. The connection between the armed group and the drug mafia expanded the capabilities of the latter, allowing it to come to power again in Afghanistan⁹.

As the «Taliban»* seized power in Afghanistan in recent years, the level of their income from drug trafficking, as well as from the collection of transport duties, has also increased. In addition, they actively levied taxes in almost all areas in those areas that were under their control [7].

The Role of other Sources of Income in Financing the «Taliban»* Movement 2015–2021

After 2015, the «Taliban»* continued to use other sources of financing besides drug trafficking. These sources were related to the drug business by the illegal nature of their origin. They often openly extort money from legitimate businesses, acting as an organized criminal group.

⁶ *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+

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Azami D. Afghanistan: how do the «Taliban»* make money? BBC news. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-46554097>

⁹ Afghan neighbors need to intervene if they want stability. AlJazeera. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2021/7/26/afghanistans-neighbours-need-to-step-in-if-they-want-stability>

Many mining companies, both small businesses and large companies, were forced to pay the «Taliban»* to be able to continue their business. Often the «Taliban»* threatened death to those who refused to pay them¹⁰. And since the local population remained afraid of the «Taliban»*, everyone knew that they were capable of extremely cruel actions, this forced many to pay them. The «Taliban»*'s main tools for obtaining money from the population remained violence and the fear they inspired.

They continued to receive secret financial donations from private donors around the world. Many of these donations came from charities and private foundations located in the Persian Gulf countries – from a region with which the «Taliban»* have always had close ties and which has supported them in the past. These donations could range from \$150 to \$200 million per year. According to the US government, these charities are on the list of groups that finance terrorism¹¹.

Among them, a special place is occupied by funds from Saudi Arabia, as well as from the UAE. They account for the largest volume of donations to the «Taliban»*.

Among the funds from Saudi Arabia, it is worth noting Al-Haramain foundation*, Al-Furqan.

Al-Haramain Islamic Foundation* has its branches also in Indonesia, Somalia. Allegedly it was liquidated, but there are mentions of its activity in the first half of 2022¹².

Al-Furqan¹³ is connected with Al-Haramain Islamic foundation*¹⁴, it was based in Bosnia. In 2015, she was already in Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to the UN, at the beginning of 2022 it is based in Nigeria on Lake Chad. Both organizations have been seen financing the «Taliban»* in recent years¹⁵.

Money to the «Taliban»* also came from Pakistan. In addition, they received money from poaching – hunting bustards¹⁶ for Saudi and Emirati sheikhs¹⁷. The sources of funding for the «Taliban»* were very diverse, which provided stable funding for their anti-government activities. As a result, they were not dependent on one or two sources of income.

¹⁰ The Taliban* are megarich – here's where they get the money to wage war // ThePrint [Electronic source]. URL: <https://theprint.in/opinion/the-taliban-are-megarich-heres-where-they-get-the-money-to-wage-war/564305/>.

¹¹ The «Taliban»* are megarich – here's where they get the money to wage war. The Print. Available from: <https://theprint.in/opinion/the-taliban-are-megarich-heres-where-they-get-the-money-to-wage-war/564305/>

¹² Al-Haramain Foundation*. United Nations security council. Available from: https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1267/aaq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/al-haramain-foundation-%28pakistan%29

¹³ U.S. Blacklists Al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation*. Available from: <https://tolonews.com/afghanistan/us-blacklists-al-furqan-islamic-heritage-foundation>

¹⁴ Treasury announces joint action with Saudi Arabia against four branches of Al-Haramain* in the fight against terrorist financing. U.S. Department of Treasury. Available from: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js1108>

¹⁵ The U.S. and Saudi Arabia take joint action against terrorist financing entity attempting to evade U.S. and UN sanctions and violate Saudi laws. U.S. Department of Treasury. Available from: <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jl10019>

¹⁶ Bustard is a large, rare bird, listed in the Red Book, valued in sport hunting.

¹⁷ Felbab-Brown V. Afghanistan's opium production is through the roof – why Washington shouldn't overreact// Brookings Institute. Available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2017/11/21/afghanistans-opium-production-is-through-the-roof-why-washington-shouldnt-overreact/>

It has already been noted that the «Taliban»* receive money from criminal sources of income. On average, taking into account all sources of financing, their income has fluctuated in recent years from \$300 million to \$1.6 billion. The sources note that in 2020, the «Taliban»* could earn about \$460 million in drug trafficking¹⁸, including taxes collected, subsequent processes of production, illegal sale of drugs and money laundering obtained in this way. At the same time, they managed to establish control over the main provinces where large drug production is concentrated in Afghanistan (for example, over Helmand province, which is considered a «Taliban»* stronghold)¹⁹. In 2019–2020, the «Taliban»*'s budget amounted to about \$1.6 billion²⁰.

Conclusions

The «Taliban»* movement has always been distinguished by the fact that they formed their financial security for the struggle for power well. At the same time, the development of the state's economy and economic policy were their weak side both in the 1990s and after August 15, 2021.

All sources of financing of the «Taliban»* Movement for twenty years can be divided into internal and external. Internal sources of income include various tax revenues (which were collected illegally), income from drug trafficking, and all types of extortion. External sources of financing include illegal cash receipts from Arab funds, as well as from Pakistan.

If we evaluate the sources of financing by importance, then one of the most significant resources is the drug business. It was during the first period of the «Taliban»* Movement in power in the 1990s in Afghanistan that the drug business was finally formed into a full-fledged illegal industry. It was the drug business that became one of the sources of financing that helped the «Taliban»* regain their strength and influence in Afghanistan after 2001.

References

1. Okimbekov U.V. Socio-economic life under the parallel rule of the Taliban*. Eastern analytics. 2019; 4: 91–103. Available from: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/afganistan-sotsialno-ekonomicheskaya-zhizn-pod-parallelnoy-vlastyu-talibov> [In Russian].
2. Stepanova E. A. The role of drug trafficking in the political economy of conflicts and terrorism. Moscow: 2005 [In Russian].
3. Afghanistan. Narcotrafficking: illicit financial flows. EastWest Institute, 2017 [In English].
4. Afghanistan opium survey 2020. UNODC, Vienna, Kabul. 2021 [In English].
5. Afghanistan's NARCO war: breaking the link between drug traffickers and insurgents. A report to the committee on foreign relations united states senate. 2009 [In English].
6. Financial flows link to the production and trafficking of Afghan opiates. FATF Report, 2014 [In English].

¹⁸ The «Taliban»* in Afghanistan. Council on foreign relations. Available from: <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan> (21.09.2021)

¹⁹ U.S. – «Taliban»* peace deal: what to know// Council on foreign relations. Available from: <https://www.cfr.org/background/us-taliban-peace-deal-agreement-afghanistan-war> (22.03.2021)

²⁰ Ibid.

7. Letter dated 19 may 2020 from the Chair of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011) addressed to the President of the Security Council. UN Security Council. 2020 [In English].
8. Mansfield D. A state built on sand. How opium undermined Afghanistan. Oxford University Press, NY, 2016 [In English].
9. Peters G. How opium profits Taliban*. United States Institute of Peace. 2009 [In English].

About the author

Olga E. MITROFANENKOVA. CandSc (Hist.). Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0076-2956>. Address: 12, Rozhdestvenka str., Moscow, e-mail: info@ivran.ru

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Submitted: 2023. Approved after peer reviewing: May 16, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 22, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023

The authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

* 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+

Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation Between the Russian Federation and the IRA¹ (2001–2021)

Yuri P. Laletin✉

MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, Moscow, Russia
y.laletin@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4878-4599>

Abstract. The article is devoted to trade, economic and humanitarian cooperation and cooperation in the field of education between Russia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The main obstacle to economic interaction was removed: the debt problem was settled, which opened up opportunities for state financing of economic projects. Russian firms have taken an active part in the revival of Afghanistan. The creation of a number of joint organizations and the most favored nation treatment led to the fact that in 2011 and 2014 trade between Russia and Afghanistan reached its peak. Humanitarian cooperation also developed. Russia provided assistance to Afghanistan in the field of education.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Russia, economic cooperation, trade relations, humanitarian aid

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Laletin Yu.P. Economic and Humanitarian Cooperation Between the Russian Federation and the IRA (2001-2021). *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2023; 3(9): 43-54, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-43-54](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-43-54)

Introduction

Economic cooperation between Russia and Afghanistan began to develop soon after the establishment of new authorities at the Bonn Conference at the end of 2001. In March 2002, following the visit to Moscow of the Head of the Interim Administration of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, between Russian public and private organizations and Afghan ministers of the economic bloc 20 protocols and memorandums of cooperation were signed regarding bilateral cooperation in the field of oil and gas production, industry, transport, construction, agriculture, and telecommunications. Their implementation is hampered mainly by the lack of funding sources.

The development of trade and economic cooperation was facilitated by the settlement of the problem of public debt.

Issues of Russian-Afghan economic cooperation are considered in the works of V.G.Korgun [7], D.P.Elagin and N.M.Mamedova [2], V.I.Sazhin [7], N.Mendkovich [5], V.M.Toporkov [8], N. Asef (1), M.Menkishak [9].

However, there is no description of Russian-Afghan economic cooperation during the entire period of the existence of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (from 2001 to 2021) in the scientific literature.

This article presents a comprehensive analysis of the economic cooperation between two countries. The problem of public debt, the development of economic and trade relations, as well as humanitarian cooperation are considered.

Materials and Methods

The sources of the article are regulatory legal acts, agreements on economic cooperation and trade, materials from the official websites of the Russian Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Industry and Trade, statements and speeches by the heads of Russia and the IRA, foreign ministers of both countries, the special representative of Russia for Afghanistan, the official pages of the heads of the IRA, institutions and officials in social networks.

Methods of international political economy, in particular, computational methods of economic analysis, are used for data analysis. Political science methods, content analysis and event analysis were used. The first is used to analyze the content of text arrays, and the second is used to study activities, visits and events. Historical-comparative and historical-interpretive methods were also used.

1 IRA - Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Results

Settlement of the Public Debt Problem

An important problem for bilateral relations between Afghanistan and Russia was the Afghan debt, which went to Russia as the successor to the Soviet Union. The total debt was \$11.1 billion, most of which were military loans². But already in January 2006, the Russian Federation decided to write off the Afghan debt. During the London International Conference on Afghanistan on January 31 – February 1, 2006, Afghanistan agreed to consider the problem of Russia's debt within the framework of the Paris Club. On August 6, 2007, in Moscow, the finance ministers of both countries signed an agreement on the settlement of the Afghan debt to the former USSR in accordance with the multilateral agreement on the cancellation of Afghanistan's debt within the framework of the Paris Club. The agreement provides for the cancellation of 93% of the debt, which is \$10.35 billion. And the rest of the debt of \$891 million was written off by Russia in 2010.³

The settlement of the problem of Afghanistan's debt to the USSR opened up opportunities for state financing of economic projects, in the implementation of which the Russian side is ready to assist its private sector.

Russia's Assistance in the Afghanistan Reconstruction

As it is known, from 1954 to 1990 with the assistance of the USSR, 154 objects were built in Afghanistan in almost all sectors of the Afghan economy: in the mining industry, agriculture, including irrigation, transport, communications, energy, light and food industries, and housing construction.

After 2001, Russian enterprises provided assistance in the reconstruction of the Afghan economy [2:242–243].

As a result of the active interaction of the Federal State Unitary Enterprise - Foreign Trade Organization "Technopromexport" with the Ministry of Energy and Water Resources of Afghanistan and the development of a competitive feasibility study for the restoration of the Naglu hydropower station, built in the early 1970s with Soviet assistance, with the increase in the capacity of its four power units by 5% to 105 MW, in April 2006 the Russian company won the corresponding international tender. By 2010, the \$40 million upgrade of the Naglu hydropower station was completed.

The Russian companies Inset and Normann have been cooperating with the Afghan side since 2005 in the construction of mini-hydro power plants with a capacity of 0.5 to 6

and 12 MW. In particular, the Inset company, which specializes in the construction of mini-power plants, has commissioned a hydroelectric power station in Faizabad province with a capacity of 12 MW. Similar facilities have been built in the provinces of Parvan (Gurband mini hydropower plant, capacity – 400 kW, cost of work – \$500,000), Paktia (Chamkanai settlement, 400 kW, \$400,000) and Bamiyan (50 kW, \$100,000 dollars).

Projects were launched to build oil refineries with Russian participation in Sari-Pul, Faryab and Balkh.

Between 2007 and 2010 the volume of Russian investments in the Afghan economy amounted to \$34 million [8:227].

The prospects for investment cooperation between Russia and Afghanistan are mainly associated with the restoration and modernization of facilities built with the technical assistance of the USSR, which make up a significant part of the country's industrial and economic base.

There is a good potential for developing cooperation between Russia and Afghanistan in the field of reconstruction and construction of highways, which are practically the only channel for passenger and freight transportation between provinces and to neighboring countries.

The rich experience of work and the availability of geological exploration and technical documentation by Russian companies is a favorable factor for the development of cooperation in the mining sector of the Afghan economy. In 2022, Midural Group from the Sverdlovsk Region showed interest in purchasing chromium ore and subsequently developing its deposits.

The Russian Machines Trading House continued to organize the export of light trucks with a carrying capacity of 1.0–2.0 tons, as well as passenger and ambulance minibuses, to Afghanistan.

The Russian Trading House expanded its commercial activities in Afghanistan, along with export operations, it cooperated with the Ministry of Village Reconstruction of Afghanistan to provide the rural population with drinking water, including geological exploration and drilling of wells.

The Chelyabinsk Tractor Plant has resumed work in Afghanistan, having delivered a trial batch of B-12 type industrial tractors to the northern provinces and Kabul.

The company "Vertical", having its representative office in Kabul, supplied and organized the operation of helicopters. The companies "Vertical", "Utair" and the Russian-Ukrainian "Volga-Dnepr" participated in the air transportation of goods of the International Security Assistance Force.

Multinet (a branch of Rostelecom) worked closely with the local company Roushan (the largest of the three mobile operators in Afghanistan), and also took part in the development of the local Internet network. Its domestic commercial and technical representatives worked in Kabul on a permanent basis, which made it possible to expand the scope of the Russian company's activities and ensure the implementation of projects in various provinces. In mid-2007, Russian engineers started building a third-generation mobile communication network in the north of the country. The first Internet providers and

² Agreements between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the IRA on the settlement of the debt of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Russian Federation on previously granted loans. Available from: http://www.mid.ru/foreign_policy/international_contracts/2_contract/-/storage-viewer/bilateral/page-121/45682 (accessed 20.02.2023).

³ Laletin Yu.P. Russian-Afghan relations at the present stage / MGIMO Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Available from: <https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/b57/b5731488fe76d68718d1247008145d71.pdf>

Internet cafes in Afghanistan were created with the participation of Russian specialists. Megafon is interested in working on the Afghan market.

Russian companies have shown interest in participating in the implementation of energy projects in Afghanistan. Thus, Gazprom considered the possibility of participating in the construction of the Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India gas pipeline. The participation of Russian companies in the project for the construction of a power transmission line for the export of electricity from the countries of Central Asia to Afghanistan and Pakistan (CASA-1000; two lines of 500 MW each) is also being considered. It never came to practical implementation of the projects, although the possibility of participation of Russian companies in them is discussed from time to time. And on April 8, 2019, the Chelyabinsk Pipe Rolling Plant Group (part of the Pipe Metallurgical Company Public Joint Stock Company) announced the signing of a contract for the supply of more than 150 thousand tons of pipes with a diameter of 1420 mm for the state company “Turkmengaz” in order to build the Turkmen part gas pipeline 214 km long. There are chances for continued cooperation between the Chelyabinsk Pipe Rolling Plant Group and the project operators during the construction of the already Afghan section of the gas pipeline (775 km long).

The main part of construction projects in Afghanistan is paid for by foreign sponsors, which created difficulties in their implementation by Russian participants. In fact, Russia has to conduct two negotiation processes on each of the initiatives – with the Afghan and American sides, and this led to a delay in the process and a mismatch of positions⁴.

In 2011, a list of priority Afghan projects for Russia was drawn up. These included the Kabul House-Building Plant, a nitrogen fertilizer plant in Mazar-i-Sharif, a power plant in Jalalabad, and a cement plant in Jabul Saraj⁵. It was assumed that Russian companies would participate not only in the restoration, but also in the shared operation of these facilities.

However, negotiations on such cooperation did not always reach the goal. In 2010, the subject of negotiations through the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Russian Federation was the participation of Russian companies in the repair of the Darunta Hydroelectric Power station, but at that moment the repair work was already being carried out by ANHAM (Saudi Arabia). In the first half of 2011, the issue of the participation of specialists from Russia in the restoration of the Salang highway was discussed, but these works are also carried out without Russian participation. During consultations in Moscow in 2011 between Russian businessmen and representatives of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID⁶), which is responsible for humanitarian projects

⁴ Mendkovich N. Russia's policy in Afghanistan in 2001-2011. Online public of the Center for Research and Analytics of the Historical Perspective Foundation “Prospects”. 17.02.2012. Available from: https://www.perspektivy.info/rus/desk/politika_rossii_v_afganistane_v_20012011_gg_2012-02-17.htm

⁵ Interview with Nadir Shah, President of the Afghan Business Center in Moscow. Afghanistan. ru. – 2011. – June 6.

⁶ Comment by the official representative of the Russian Foreign Ministry A.K.Lukashevich on the termination of the activities of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Russian Federation. Available from: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/news/1625294. (accessed 20.02.2023).

in Afghanistan, American sponsors stated rather harshly that they want to see Russian companies in Afghanistan only as subcontractors⁷. That is, the American side sought to limit the freedom of action of Russian business and its profits from Afghan reconstruction projects.

The participation of Russian companies in tenders for the right to develop large mineral deposits in Afghanistan is also limited by a number of difficulties. There is an opinion that Russian corporations lost the tender for the development of a copper deposit in Aynak and a similar tender in Khajigak in 2011 due to corruption⁸.

Trade and Economic Relations

In February 2007, the Russian-Afghan Business Council (RAfBC) was established at the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry. This structure unites more than 60 domestic organizations and companies. In October 2007, the RAfDS organized a visit to Moscow by a delegation of the Afghan Investment Agency, represented by 25 state organizations and private companies, to present promising economic projects. Russian entrepreneurs showed the greatest interest in cooperation in the energy and transport sectors, the mining industry and the construction industry. A memorandum was signed between the chambers of commerce and industry of Russia and the Afghan Investment Agency, which expressed the intention of the parties to develop cooperation with the participation of RAfBC. In total, from 2007 to 2009, the member companies of the Business Council invested more than \$40 million in various joint projects [9:31].

In May 2010, an agreement was signed between the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Russia and Afghanistan. In September 2010, the Afghan Business Center was opened in Moscow.

The good potential for economic and trade cooperation between Russia and Afghanistan made it possible during President Karzai's visit to Moscow to sign on January 21, 2011, an intergovernmental agreement on trade and economic cooperation, involving the creation of a joint commission. Its last meeting was held on March 3, 2016 in Kabul.

The agreement introduced the most favored nation regime in foreign trade, which increased trade between the two countries. In 2009, Russia's exports from Afghanistan amounted to \$336.4 million and imports – \$15.3 million, then in 2011 exports reached their peak – \$954.3, repeating in 2014 (\$952.9 million), and imports – \$31 million. Data on trade turnover in 2013–2020 are given in the table.

⁷ Afghanistan.ru. 2011. 24 June.

⁸ Mendkovich N. Russia's policy in Afghanistan in 2001-2011. Online public of the Center for Research and Analytics of the Historical Perspective Foundation “Prospects”. 17.02.2012. Available from: https://www.perspektivy.info/rus/desk/politika_rossii_v_afganistane_v_20012011_gg_2012-02-17.htm.

Table 1. Trade turnover between Russia and Afghanistan in 2013-2020 (\$million)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Export	630,9	952,9	149,9	184,0	205,3	118,7	121,0	153,6
Import	26,5	12,9	9,1	6,3	2,9	4,0	5,3	3,5

Source: Information on trade and economic cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (January–May 2021)⁹.

Due to the slowdown in the economic growth of Afghanistan, there was a decline in Russian exports in 2018 to \$118.7 million, and imports in 2017 to \$2.9 million. And the situation has not recovered. Fuel (35%), wood (29%), foodstuffs (mainly oil – 25%), metals and products from them prevail in the structure of Russia's exports. The main items of Russian imports from Afghanistan are the same goods as before: dried fruits (mainly raisins), fruits and nuts account for 85% of imports, another 6% – cotton, as well as fur raw materials and plants and products from them. The share of Afghanistan in Russian exports and imports is insignificant, Russia accounts for about 2% of Afghan imports¹⁰ [2:242-243].

After the «Taliban»^{*11} came to power in Kabul, trade and economic ties between Russia and Afghanistan continue to develop. Negotiations began at the end of August 2022 during a visit to Moscow by a «Taliban»* delegation led by acting. Minister of Trade and Industry of Afghanistan Haji Nuruddin Azizi. On September 28, 2022, an agreement was signed, according to which it is planned to supply a trial batch of diesel fuel with a volume of 30 thousand tons on CIF terms to the port of Okarem (Turkmenistan). In the future, Russia will annually supply Afghanistan with about 1 million tons of gasoline, 1 million tons of diesel fuel, 500 thousand tons of liquefied hydrocarbon gases and 2 million tons of wheat.

Writing off the Afghan debt and Russia's participation in programs of social and economic recovery is Russia's significant practical contribution to the revival of Afghanistan.

Humanitarian Aid and Educational Cooperation

Russia provides humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. In general, from November to December 2002, more than \$30 million was spent to solve these problems. In January 2008, Russia provided humanitarian aid to Afghanistan as a voluntary contribution to the UN World Food Programme, supplying 3,134 tons of wheat flour. In total, in 2008, Russia stepped up its economic assistance to Afghanistan, supplying 15,000 tons of wheat to Kabul free of charge, and also providing financial assistance in the amount of \$4 million¹². In February

2009, at the request of the Afghan government, Russia supplied as humanitarian aid to Afghanistan about 18,000 tons of wheat flour worth \$11 million, and in 2010 for \$5 million. In total, from 2001 to 2009, Russia provided humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in the amount of \$40 million¹³.

In 2019, Russia allocated \$1 million in humanitarian aid through the UN World Food Organization. Due to the regular contribution to the UN World Food Organization, food aid was provided in 2020 for \$1 million, and in 2021 for \$2 million¹⁴.

On June 15, 2021, Russian humanitarian aid was delivered to Kabul through the World Health Organization with a total weight of 39 tons (medical kits for a wide range of applications)¹⁵.

108 tons of humanitarian aid was delivered to Afghanistan in November-December 2021¹⁶, in 2022 – 122 tons. Assistance included food, warm clothes and medicines.

As for cooperation in the sphere of education, here Moscow also is providing financial assistance to Kabul. In June 2008, the government of the Russian Federation decided to provide \$4 million through the World Bank as a Russian contribution to a multi-donor trust fund for the development of higher education in Afghanistan. Of these, \$2 million are distributed at the discretion of the World Bank, and \$2 million are spent on the restoration of the Kabul Polytechnic University, built with the assistance of the USSR in November 2008, \$2 million was transferred to the World Bank account. The rest was transferred in 2009 for the restoration of the Kabul Polytechnic University¹⁷.

Since March 2005, by the order of the President of the Russian Federation, applicants from Afghanistan have been allocated a special quota – three places each for studying at MGIMO and the Diplomatic Academy of the Russian Foreign Ministry. In addition, until 2010, young Afghans were provided with an annual quota of 80 places to study at the universities of the Russian Federation (50 scholarships were provided for students and 30 for graduate students, trainees and doctoral students). In 2010, the quota was increased to 100 scholarships, in 2019/2020 – up to 365, in 2020/2021 – up to 368, and in 2022/23 – up to 500. At the same time, more than 6 thousand applications were received from the Afghan side every year for education. And in 2022, 10.5 thousand applications were submitted from Afghans¹⁸.

On April 11, 2019, in Moscow, the Minister of Higher Education of Afghanistan Najibullah Khwaja Omari and the Minister of Science and Higher Education of the Russian Federation Mikhail Kotyukov signed a memorandum of understanding on cooperation in the field of science, education and technological innovation. At the same time, Kabul University signed cooperation agreements with three Russian universities.

⁹ Information on trade and economic cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (January–May 2021). Available from: https://www.economy.gov.ru/material/file/38f8003d61c3d4d0f024ba5b5fffd9ef/TEC_Afghanistan_May_2021.pdf

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *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⁺

¹² Dmitry Medvedev sent a reply message to Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Website of the President of the Russian Federation.

¹³ Russia and Afghanistan (on the 90th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations). Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

¹⁴ Russian-Afghan relations. Reference. Website of the Russian Foreign Ministry.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Laletin Yu.P. Russian-Afghan relations at the present stage / MGIMO Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia. Available from: <https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/b57/b5731488fe76d68718d1247008145d71.pdf>

¹⁸ Ibid.

The Russian Center for Science and Culture in Kabul helps young people from Afghanistan to get into Russian universities. Having received a quota for education, Afghans go to study in dozens of Russian cities.

Currently, Russian is taught at the Kabul State University, the Kabul Polytechnic University, the Pedagogical University, the Institute of Oil and Gas in Mazar-i-Sharif and the Kabul Automotive Institute. In general, the Russian language in Afghanistan is studied by about 7 thousand people at a time.

Summing up the above, it should be noted that trade and economic cooperation between Russia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, although it received an impetus for development, remained at a rather low level. On the one hand, measures were taken to promote the growth of interaction – the problem of Afghanistan's debt was resolved, a number of joint organizations were created, and the most favored cooperation regime was introduced. On the other hand, corruption and the unwillingness of Americans to have Russian firms as competitors, which were assigned the only role of mere subcontractors, served as obstacles. Nevertheless, trade and economic cooperation between our countries have great potential for development both in the field of trade and in the field of restoration of 154 objects built with the help of the USSR. There is no doubt that sooner or later this potential will be realized.

References

1. Asef N. Russia's return to Afghanistan: prospects for bilateral economic cooperation. Bulletin of the Peoples' Friendship University of Russia. Series: International relations. 2017. V. 17(4):781-792 [In Russian].
2. Elagin D. P., Mamedova N. M. Economy of Afghanistan. Moscow: MGIMO-University Publishing House, 2020:242-243 [In Russian].
3. Korgun V. G. Russia and Afghanistan: Historical ways of forming the image of Russia in Afghanistan. Moscow: Librocom Book House, 2009 [In Russian].
4. Laletin Yu. P. Russian-Afghan relations at the present stage / MGIMO MFA of Russia. [Electronic resource]. Available from: <https://mgimo.ru/upload/iblock/b57/b5731488fe76d68718d1247008145d71.pdf> [In Russian].
5. Mendkovich N. Russian policy in Afghanistan in 2001-2011. Network publication of the Center for Research and Analytics of the Foundation for Historical Perspective "Perspectives". February 17, 2012 [Electronic resource] Available from: https://www.perspektivy.info/rus/desk/politika_rossii_v_afganistane_v_20012011_gg_2012-02-17.htm [In Russian].
6. Russia and the Afghan Question / Ed. M. O. Nessar. Moscow: Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan, 2018 [In Russian].
7. Sazhin V. I. Bilateral Russian-Afghan relations at the present stage [Electronic resource]. Available from: <http://www.iimes.ru/?p=3946> [In Russian].
8. Toporkov V. M. Russia's national interests in Afghanistan and prospects for its regional policy. Bulletin of the Perm University. 2013. No.3(23):225-232 [In Russian].
9. Menkiszak M. Russia's Afghan problem. The Russian Federation and the Afghanistan problem since 2001 Warsaw: Centre for Eastern Studies, 2011 [In English].

About the author

Yuri P. LALETIN. CandSc (Hist.). Assistant professor. Associate Professor at MGIMO of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4878-4599>. Address: 76, Vernadsky Avenue, Moscow, Russian Federation, 117454, y.laletin@gmail.com

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023

The author has read and approved the final manuscript

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work

* 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+

American Troops in Afghanistan (2001–2021): Can Neither be Left nor Taken Out

Vasilij S. Khristoforov ✉

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia
xvsarhiv@rambler.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3964-1967>

Abstract. The article examines the reasons for the American invasion of Afghanistan, the main tasks solved by American politicians and the military in this country, the evolution of Washington's strategy and tactics during the military operation in 2001–2021, as well as the results of the 20-year American military presence in the country.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Afghan army, USA, American troops, Washington, Taliban*

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Khristoforov V.S. American Troops in Afghanistan (2001–2021): Can Neither be Left nor Taken Out. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 55–65, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-3\(9\)-55-65](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-3(9)-55-65)

Introduction

In response to the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, for which Al-Qaeda*¹ was blamed² and its leader Osama bin Laden, who was hiding in Afghanistan, Washington, with the approval of the UN Security Council³, Launched military Operation

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+

2 *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+

3 UN Security Council Resolution No. 1368 of September 12, 2001. Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. Available from: https://www.mid.ru/ru/foreign_policy/un/organs/1619678/

Enduring Freedom to fight terrorism and eliminate the «Taliban»*. The United States intended to create conditions for building a democratic state in Afghanistan [5].

The terrorist acts of Al-Qaeda* in the United States in 2001 and the subsequent American invasion of Afghanistan forced us to look for new approaches to stabilizing the situation in the region. In 2001–2020 a number of authors, including G.E.Asotryan, V.Ya. Belokrinitzky, R.R.Sikoev, Nessar Omar and others, conducted research on various aspects of the US-Afghan conflict, its impact on the international situation, the policy of the United States and NATO in Afghanistan, the evolution of their military presence, the history of the modern political development of the country, analyzed the possible scenarios of the political process in the country. They conducted a comprehensive analysis of the military-political presence of the US and NATO in Afghanistan, assessed the main instruments of Washington's foreign policy, as well as the effectiveness of the use of military force, and analyzed the real situation in this country. The updated program of actions of Washington in the Afghan-Pakistani region, the transformation of the US strategy towards Afghanistan and Pakistan during the period of different American presidents are analyzed.

A significant contribution to the study of US foreign policy, the struggle of the US military against the «Taliban»*, the ideology and tactics of the «Taliban»* was made by foreign experts in the Middle East, such as A.Rashid, B.Rubin, P.Marsden, M.Bearden, B.Riedel and others.

The goal of the article is to consider how the American military presence in Afghanistan affected security in this country, to what extent the tasks were implemented; answer questions about the reasons for the low effectiveness of American military-political efforts.

Materials and Methods

We used documents of the UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly (resolutions adopted in 2001–2021), official speeches and interviews of the UN Secretary-General; materials of the UN Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)⁴.

Another group of sources is American official documents, for example, bilateral agreements between the United States and Afghanistan⁵.

Materials of Russian and foreign mass media (newspapers “Nezavisimaya Gazeta”, “Independent Military Review”, “Rossiyskaya Gazeta”, “The Washington Post”, “8am.media”⁶) were also involved in the study etc.).

4 The United Nations. Available from: <https://www.un.org/ru/about-us/>

5 The Afghanistan Compact. The London Conference on Afghanistan, 31 January – 1 February, 2006. Available from: http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/index.html

6 8am.media [newspaper 8 am, Afghanistan, in Dari language]. Available from: <https://8am.media>

The main problems of the development of the situation in Afghanistan were analyzed using the historical and genetic method: the reasons for the entry, presence of American troops in Afghanistan, as well as their withdrawal from the country and the consequences (2001–2021) were considered.

Results

An Optimistic Start

Operation Enduring Freedom began on October 7, 2001, with strikes by American strategic bombers and cruise missiles launched from American ships against Al-Qaeda* and «Taliban»* military targets. On November 13, 2001, the «Taliban»* left Kabul without a fight; by the end of November, only the city of Kandahar remained under their control, where the leader of the movement, Mullah Omar, was located [5].

Moscow, like practically the entire international community, supported Washington's actions in Afghanistan, since the fight against international terrorism was a priority of Russian foreign policy⁷. The elimination of the «Taliban»* from the life of Afghanistan was in the interests of not only the United States and its allies, but also Russia, Iran, China [1:701–702].

However, as a result of air and missile strikes, and ground operations, the «Taliban»* detachments were not destroyed, they went to the Pakistani province of Balochistan and the North-Western Frontier Province. «Taliban»* leader Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden also fled to Pakistan. American intelligence resident in Pakistan Robert Grenier noted that the Pakistani army, while conducting operations in the zone of Pashtun tribes against foreign fighters, refrained from active operations against the «Taliban»*. He also claimed that the US CIA was not active in the fight against the «Taliban»* in Pakistan, intelligence at that time was more interested in Al-Qaeda* and Osama bin Laden [2:130–135].

Such disdain for the «Taliban»* in 2002–2005 will play a cruel joke with the Americans, since the Afghan opponents, having rested and replenished the contingent, will soon start a guerrilla war and embark on the path of open terror [5].

In an effort to restore its former influence in the Middle East, lost in the late 1970s, Washington was interested in forming Afghan political elite loyal to it. After ousting Al-Qaeda* and the «Taliban»*, the Americans embarked on state-building, the formation of an Afghan national army, security forces and other basic institutions (5). In early December 2001, an interim administration of Afghanistan was formed, headed by the American protégé Hamid Karzai [3:55–60, 170–184; 4:462].

Afghanistan was also of interest to Washington as a bridge to Central Asia, as a country that has borders with the geopolitical opponents of the United States – Iran and

⁷ Afghanistan, the war with the USSR, the emergence of the Taliban [Afghanistan, voïna s SSSR, poyavlenie talibov]. Available from: <https://jangaavaran.ir/>.

China. Once in this region, Washington began to implement its geopolitical plans by creating military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, through which American troops and cargo were delivered to Afghanistan.

Afghanistan was of interest to Washington as a bridge to Central Asia, as a country that has borders with the geopolitical opponents of the United States – Iran, China. Once in this region, Washington began to implement its geopolitical plans by creating military bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, through which American troops and cargo were delivered to Afghanistan.

Washington did not have a clear plan for normalizing the situation in Afghanistan, and the position of different departments was not the same. Thus, representatives of the US State Department, headed by Collin Powell, proposed the introduction of a peacekeeping force capable of controlling Kabul and the most important regions of the country and ensuring the security of the entire territory of Afghanistan. The US military, led by US Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, was opposed to US military contingents being outside of Kabul, they convinced opponents that the Afghans should ensure the security of their country themselves [2: 144–147]. The Pentagon was more interested in defeating Al-Qaeda* than in state building.

As a result of the debate in early 2002, the option proposed by the US military was accepted for minimal interference in Afghan affairs. At the same time, the creation of an Afghan security force of 80 thousand people began. American strategists believed that they would be able to create a combat-ready national army in five years, after which in 2007 they would be able to withdraw their troops from the country. It soon became apparent that the calculation was wrong [5].

The main reasons that hindered these processes were: corruption of officials, weakness of the Afghan state bodies, openness of the Afghan-Pakistani border, through which armed detachments of militants, weapons and ammunition freely moved, low moral motivation of Afghan military personnel, a large number of deserters, recruitment into the army mainly by recruiting recruits [3:207–208].

Moscow also faced a significant part of these problems during the period of the Soviet military presence in Afghanistan in 1979–1989 [9:426–433].

Have the Goals been Achieved?

Considering that the main goals in Afghanistan had been achieved, in 2003 Washington transferred special forces, unmanned reconnaissance aircraft, and experienced intelligence officers from Afghanistan to Iraq [2:163]. The Americans believed that the «Taliban»* did not pose a threat to them, since the number of their non-professional units was insignificant [5].

However, in 2006, the US CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency came to the same conclusion about a significant increase in «Taliban»* activity, which could lead to the loss of control by the Afghan government over parts of Afghanistan [2:250]. Additional forces were needed.

US forces, using a clear, hold, and build strategy, entered the area occupied by the «Taliban»*, drove out or destroyed militant groups, and then transferred power to representatives of the Afghan government. The Americans could occupy any area, clear it of the «Taliban»*, but they could not be present there permanently. After some time, the «Taliban»* returned to the area where the power of the Afghan government was established, regaining their lost positions. Thus, American troops fell into the “Afghan quagmire”, just like Soviet troops in the 1980s. [9:13–14].

A kind of “swing”; with a partial input-output of military contingents will operate throughout 2003–2020. However, the introduction of additional military contingents did not lead either to the destruction of the main forces of the «Taliban»*, or to a radical improvement in the political and military situation [5].

Washington's New Strategy

The coming to power in the United States in 2009 of new President Barack Obama once again placed Afghanistan at the center of American foreign policy. The head of the White House announced Washington's strategy aimed at increasing the number of US troops, creating conditions for the subsequent withdrawal of US troops from the country at the end of 2011, transferring responsibility for security to the Afghan national forces⁸, improving state building in Afghanistan [7:459].

Thus, a new date for the possible withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan appeared – 2011, it was then that the American special services carried out a special operation and on May 2 in the Pakistani city of Abbottabad (50 km from Islamabad) killed the leader of Al-Qaeda*, Osama bin Laden. It would seem that one of the main goals of the American military presence in Afghanistan has been achieved and it is possible to sum up. However, this did not happen, and in November 2011 a new deadline for the withdrawal of American troops was announced – the end of 2014 [5].

In 2012–2014 the phased withdrawal of the main American military contingents, the transfer of responsibility for ensuring security in the country to the national army and law enforcement forces [5].

However, it soon became clear that Washington did not intend to completely withdraw from Afghanistan⁹. On May 1, 2012, in Kabul, Presidents Karzai and Obama signed the Long-Term Strategic Partnership Agreement, under which Afghanistan was given the status of “principal non-NATO ally.” American military contingents remained in the country, and since 2015 they have been mainly engaged in supporting the combat operations of the Afghan army, training and instructing military personnel¹⁰.

8 The United States prefers a limited build-up of the group. Available from: <http://www.inosmi.ru/india/20091201/156778125.html>

9 Volkov K. The United States will maintain a presence in Afghanistan until 2024. *Izvestija*. 2012. April 25:8.

10 What is behind the visit of the American general to Kabul? Available from: <https://news.rambler.ru/middleeast/30966665-chto-stoit-za-vizitom-amerikanskogo-general-a-v-kabul/>

By signing the strategic partnership agreement, each of the parties pursued its own goal: the United States maintained a presence in the Middle East, and the Afghan government received security guarantees and financial support¹¹.

Despite a significant reduction in the number of foreign troops from 132 thousand to 34 thousand military personnel, strategically important areas remained under the control of the Americans, in which there were nine large military bases: Kabul, Bagram, Mazar-i-Sherif, Jalalabad, Gardez, Kandahar, Shindant, Herat and Helmand. Statements about the reduction of the military presence alternated with the intensification of the actions of the US military. In November 2014, Obama signed an executive order authorizing US troops to take part in combat operations¹².

Thus, the announced plan for the withdrawal of American troops in 2014 became only a cover for the military presence, which remained until the end of August 2021 [5].

The situation in the region did not improve, and the billions of dollars spent by the United States on a military operation did not solve security problems¹³. Foreign experts in 2016 argued that almost half of the 101 infantry battalions in the Afghan army were unable to fight; the army was weakened due to heavy losses and deserters [7:482].

Against this background, American General John Allen, who commanded NATO troops in Afghanistan in 2011–2013, called the withdrawal of American troops “too hasty” in early September 2016¹⁴.

In the future, the words about the hasty withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan will be repeatedly uttered by politicians in both the United States and Russia. At the same time, the thesis about the longest war in American history will sound¹⁵.

The concerns of the military were heard, and in June 2016, Barack Obama allowed US troops to participate in combat operations together with Afghan units. The increase in the number of American troops led to the intensification of hostilities in areas that had previously come under the control of the «Taliban»* [1:710].

The new US President Donald Trump in 2017 tried to make changes to the Afghan strategy: intensify negotiations with the «Taliban»*, announce the imminent withdrawal of American troops, that the army will not be used “to build democracy (emphasis ours. – V.Kh.) on remote territories or the restructuring of other countries in their own way”¹⁶.

11 The United States and Afghanistan initialed a strategic partnership agreement. Available from: <https://vz.ru/news/2012/4/22/575568.html>

12 Obama signed a secret decree that will expand the powers of the US army in Afghanistan. Available from: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/2617485>

13 A war without motivation: why the morale of the Afghan army is falling. Available from: <https://news.rambler.ru/world/32485039-voyna-bez-motivatsii-pochemu-padaet-boevoy-duh-afganskoy-armii/>

14 The US mission in Afghanistan is far from over – General Dunford. Available from: <https://uztag.info/ru/news/missiya-ssha-v-afganistane-daleka-ot-zaversheniya-general-danford>; The NATO mission reports a likely increase in Taliban attacks in the coming months. Available from: <http://af.gumilev-center.ru/archives/3033>

15 Imitation of a strategy. Available from: <https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3390743>

16 Afghan terrorism will be hit by unpredictability. Available from: https://www.kommersant.ru/doc/3390531?from=doc_vrez

Trump's intentions to end the intervention were combined with an increase in the number of US troops in Afghanistan from 10 to 16 thousand people (the "swing" continued to work), using new types of ammunition. In April 2017, the Americans used the most powerful non-nuclear aerial bomb, the Mother of All Bombs (with a capacity of over 11 tons of TNT), in the province of Nangarhar.

Completion of the Operation and Withdrawal of American Troops

The illusory prospects of ending the war with a victory over the «Taliban»* led to the fact that Washington began to look for an opportunity to end this military campaign and withdraw troops [5]. President Trump said Afghan missions had been completed and all troops needed to be withdrawn, leaving "strong intelligence" to monitor the situation and gather information¹⁷.

The diversified and numerous efforts of American politicians and diplomats led to the fact that on February 29, 2020 in Doha, US Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalizad and Deputy «Taliban»* Leader Abdullah Ghani Baradar signed an agreement on peace and the withdrawal of American troops [5].

US President Joe Biden confirmed Trump's course. On April 14, 2021, the American leader announced his intention to complete the operation in Afghanistan and withdraw troops by the end of August 2021.

In parallel with this, in May 2021, the «Taliban»* launched a large-scale offensive, expanding their zones of influence, gradually occupying one after another large settlements, cities and administrative centers of the Afghan provinces, took control of the borders with Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and China. Afghan security forces attempted to resist in May and June, but by early August they had virtually ceased resistance [5].

Washington faced a dilemma: to stop the withdrawal of American troops, to send additional military contingents to counter the expansion of the «Taliban»*, or to continue the same course. A conundrum arose: "American troops: Can Neither be Left nor Taken Out." A decision had to be made. American intelligence, and military circles understood that the prospects for improving the situation were illusory, and there was no military solution to the Afghan problems. It was clear that the existing regime would not hold on to power. Washington believed that the main goals in Afghanistan had been achieved and hoped that the «Taliban»* would fulfill their promises to fight international terrorists and not pose a threat to neighboring states. Washington, as a result of its twenty-year presence in the country, has driven itself into the "Afghan trap." In August 2021, Washington realized that the game ended in nothing, but there was no other way out of this situation [5].

¹⁷ Pride caused by the status of a superpower: the United States has studied the reasons for the failures of American troops in Afghanistan. Available from: <https://russian.rt.com/world/article/650131-pentagon-ssha-doklad-afghanistan-neudachi>; Under pressure from security forces: why Trump plans to keep "strong intelligence" in Afghanistan. Available from: <https://ru.rt.com/duvv>

On August 15, 2021, the «Taliban»* occupied Kabul without a fight, in which there were still American troops. The President of the country, Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, fled, the national army disintegrated, and the entire state system that had been created by the Americans for twenty years collapsed. Some residents of the capital welcomed the new government, while others rushed to the airport hoping to leave the country on NATO military transport aircraft [5].

On August 21, the US President said that Washington sent its troops to eliminate Osama bin Laden and terrorism, and the Afghans were given every opportunity to determine their future. The Americans were unable to give strength to the Afghan government and the national army to defend their interests. This, according to Biden, was the reason for such a rapid fall of Kabul (5). However, experts believe that one of the main reasons for the quick surrender of the capital by the Afghan military was the illegitimacy of the president in the eyes of many Afghans. The turnout in the presidential elections in 2019 amounted to about 2 million people out of the 32 million population of the country¹⁸.

On the night of August 31, American servicemen who had been in the region for 20 years left Kabul.

A number of Russian and foreign politicians, diplomats, military men, political scientists and journalists will call the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan "hasty", "chaotic", "sudden" and even "flight". An unbiased view of the situation indicates that the Doha agreements were signed on February 29, 2020 and the withdrawal of American troops lasted a full 18 months. Compare: Soviet troops were withdrawn from Afghanistan within 9 months (from May 15, 1988 to February 15, 1989), while no one spoke about the haste of the withdrawal. However, the consequences that came during the period and after the withdrawal of Soviet and American troops were strikingly different for the worse for Washington [5].

Conclusions

The 20-year presence of US military contingents in Afghanistan has not led to positive results. The Americans managed only partially to solve the assigned tasks related to the destruction of Al-Qaeda*, but they were unable to introduce democratic principles, and the government, which had been supported by American bayonets for 20 years, actually fell even before the end of the withdrawal of American contingents. Once again, it has been proven that no government in this country will have sufficient legitimacy to stabilize the situation under the condition of foreign military intervention [5]. The American troops, like the Soviet ones at one time, were forced to leave the country, since there was no military solution to the Afghan problem.

The Afghan National Army turned out to be weak and unreliable, the reasons for its destruction lay in the peculiarities of the historical, cultural, social and religious

¹⁸ Soldiers or ghosts: How and why the Afghan army disappeared. Available from: <https://rtvi.com/stories/soldaty-ili-prizraki-kak-i-pochemu-ischezla-armiya-afganistana/>

development of society, the weakness of the country's political leadership. In the US-«Taliban»*-Afghan peoples triangle, the Americans left, the «Taliban»* won, and the people were defeated, most of the population is below the poverty line, and the situation has not returned to be normal¹⁹.

References

1. Akimbekov S. M. History of Afghanistan. Astana-Almaty: IMEP at the Fund of the First President, 2015:848 [In Russian].
2. Jones S. The US War in Afghanistan. At the cemetery of empires / trans. from English. M. Vitebsky. Moscow: Eksmo, 2013:480 [In Russian].
3. Konarovskiy M. A. Afghanistan at the turn of the century: A new crossroads of fate: a monograph. Moscow: MGIMO-Universitet, 2020:355 [In Russian].
4. Korgun V. G. History of Afghanistan XX century. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies Russian Academy of Sciences, Kraft+, 2004:527 [In Russian].
5. Khristoforov V. S. American troops in Afghanistan (2001–2021): can neither be left nor taken out. Available from: <https://centrasia.org/newsA.php?st=1678172280> [In Russian].
6. Khristoforov V. S. Afghanistan: the military-political presence of the USSR 1979–1989. Moscow: IRI Russian Academy of Sciences, 2016:544 [In Russian].
7. Khristoforov V. S. Afghan events of 1979–1989: from knowledge to understanding and recognition. Russian history. 2019; 6:3–21 [In Russian].
8. Khristoforov V. S. On the question of the nature of the military-political presence in Afghanistan of the Soviet and American contingents. Asia and Africa: Heritage and Modernity. XXIX International Congress on Source Studies and Historiography of Asian and African Countries, June 21–23, 2017. St. Petersburg: Studio «NP-Print», 2017; 1:426–433 [In Russian].
9. Khristoforov V. S. Russia, the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan in the new geopolitical landscape: prospects for interaction, new risks and “windows of opportunity”. The World of Central Asia: a collection of scientific articles. Novosibirsk: Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2022: 652–655 [In Russian].

About the author

Vasily S. KHRISTOFOROV. Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences. DocSc (Law). Professor. Head of the Department of International Security. Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow, Russia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3964-1967>. Address: 6, Miusskaya Square, Moscow, 125047xvsarhiv@rambler.ru

¹⁹ Investigation of the causes of the collapse of the Afghan National Army; Abdul Sabur Janbaz 24 huta 1400]. Available from: <https://8am.af/investigating-the-causes-and-reasons-for-the-collapse-of-the-afghan-national-army/>; The Americans left, the Taliban won, and the people were defeated]. Available from: <https://8am.af/the-americans-left-the-taliban-won-and-the-people-lost/>

Contribution of the author

The author declare no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Submitted: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer reviewing: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

^{*} 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+

INTERNATIONAL, GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

International relations, global
and regional studies

After the defeat in Afghanistan and the hasty withdrawal of troops from this country, the United States switched to another part of the "Grand Chessboard", closer to Russia, against which their policy has always been directed in the East, and in Europe, and around the world. They raised an ally in the person of Ukraine, the leadership and part of the population of which professes the Nazi ideology. But the United States does not notice this, because the real policy of the country is directed against Russia, and, according to the United States, which European countries unconditionally follow, this is the main enemy of the so-called civilized world.

Slinkin M.M.

Afghanistan and the "Great Chessboard"

The election of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as President of Uzbekistan symbolized great changes in the development of the country. In foreign policy, there was a rethinking of its basic principles, the priority was not security, as in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, but the provision of socio-economic reforms in accordance with modern realities and system-forming trends in the global economy.

Makhmudov R. B.

Afghan Vector of Modern Uzbekistan Foreign Policy

In general, today Kazakhstan takes a cautious position on the Afghan issue. From the point of view of security policy, the republic still relies on such structures as the CSTO and the SCO. As recent events show, the Kazakh authorities seek to maintain limited contacts with the Taliban movement, which is seen as a factor in maintaining stability in Afghanistan.*

Sultanmuratov N.

On the Issue of Kazakhstan's Policy towards Afghanistan

The return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan can be seen both as a combination of opportunities and threats for the Islamic Republic of Iran. From the point of view of officials in Tehran, the opportunities currently outweigh the threats and that situation will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

Haghpanah J.

Iran's Policy in the Situation of the Afghan Crisis after 2021

*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+

Afghanistan and the “Great Chessboard”

Mikhail M. Slinkin✉

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia
mikhail.slinkin@gmail.com, <https://doi.org/0000-0003-2287-9039>

Abstract. The article is devoted to US politics in Eurasia in the context of the US claims to a key role in the world and the desire to independently manage the pieces on the “Great Chessboard”. The article examines US policy in the Middle East and the relationship between the military campaign in Iraq and the situation in Afghanistan. The author concludes that at present the United States concentrated attention on the territories around the Russian Federation, forming a belt of unfriendliness.

Keywords: Eurasia, United States of America, politics, military conflicts

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Slinkin M.M. Afghanistan and the “Great Chessboard”. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 68-79, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-68-79](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-68-79)

Introduction

The problem of scientific research is connected with the actual problem of international relations - the contradiction between the installation on a unipolar world order, in which the United States continues to claim sole leadership, and the emerging multipolar world, in which not only new economic centers, but also regional centers of power have acquired a noticeable influence. The relevance of the study is related to the current situation of international relations, military conflicts, when the old world order is trying to maintain the status quo and for this it uses force not only on the periphery of the so-called “golden billion” in South America, Asia and Africa, but also in Europe. The purpose of the study is to show, on the basis of a comprehensive analysis of sources and scientific literature, the futility of the attempts of the “only” superpower through a series

of military conflicts unleashed with the help of its satellites to maintain a unipolar world.

Materials and Methods

The study uses a comparative historical method: through a comparison of a number of military conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa, the general and the special are revealed; the conclusions are applicable to the periphery of Europe as well. The scientific problem under study has not been left without attention in recent years. However, Western authors considered it, as a rule, from the standpoint of neo-Atlanticism (Samuel Huntington, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Francis Fukuyama, and others). Domestic researchers (E.M.Primakov, L.I.Medvedko, authors who consider not only political, but also military factors, such as I.M.Popov, M.M.Khamzatov, etc.) studied this problem from the point of view of the objective development of the world community and international relations.

Results

The connection between events in the Near and Middle East and in Europe is obvious. Firstly, in Eurasia, as well as in the world as a whole, the United States is trying to play a key role, assuming sole leadership of the world and trying to independently move the pieces on the “Great Chessboard” [3].

A number of military conflicts took place in the Near and Middle East in the 21st century, and their incitement was not without the direct and indirect participation of the United States. The United States, under the guise of a global struggle against world terrorism, and then the idea of democratization of local regimes put forward by them, first unleashed aggression against Afghanistan (2001), Iraq (2003), and then (since 2011) took part in attacks on Libya and Syria. But they got bogged down in the realization of their intentions to build their statehood according to the model they proposed: a Western, liberal model alien to the peoples of these countries. Secondly, the United States is not able to complete its undertakings. Or were they not provided for, because chaos, including in the form of armed clashes, is beneficial to them? [2]

Let's start, breaking the chronology, with the events in Iraq, where the first phase of the operation of the Western coalition Freedom to Iraq (March 19 – May 1, 2003) achieved its political goal: it overthrew Saddam Hussein's regime and replaced it with a pro-American administration. However, the long-term second phase of the operation (2003–2010) did not lead to a post-conflict settlement and stabilization of the situation in the country: resistance to the occupying forces unfolded and the position of the puppet “liberal” government did not strengthen, but ethno-confessional contradictions sharply aggravated. As a result, Iraq has become a base of “international terrorism”, influencing neighboring states. The

terrorist threat has increased in other parts of Asia, Africa and Europe after professional jihadists from various countries have been trained in combat and subversion. Is this not proof that the United States does not understand the Muslim East and overestimates its capabilities? [2]

Let's skip the failures of the multinational forces' military operations against the Iraqi resistance, let's move on to the fact that on December 31, 2008, the mandate of the UN Security Council for their activities in the country expired. On November 17, 2008, after a lengthy negotiation, a bilateral US-Iraqi agreement on the presence of a contingent of the US armed forces was signed: it provided for the withdrawal of Americans from Iraqi settlements by July 2009, and their complete withdrawal from the country was scheduled for the end of 2011. Indeed, by the end of August 2010, 90,000 US troops and all military contingents of the multinational force were withdrawn from Iraq. This was a significant step. Recall that the maximum number of US military forces in Iraq reached 170 thousand people¹. Less than 50,000 US troops remained in the country, some of them were supposed to be in Iraq until the end of 2011 [2]

US President Barack Obama on September 1, 2010 announced the completion of Operation Iraqi Freedom. At the same time, Vice President Joe Biden announced the start of the non-combat operation of the US Military Forces "New Dawn" in Iraq and its leader, General Lloyd Austin (the former later became the President of the United States, and the latter became Secretary of Defense in his administration) [2]. As for the foreign policy of President Barack Obama, it was controversial, especially if we compare his campaign promises and real actions in the presidency. If his policy towards Iraq was consistent (he nevertheless, albeit temporarily, withdrew American troops from the country), but this was not the case with Afghanistan. Being a president, he called the war in Afghanistan "necessary" to protect national security, and the war in Iraq "an alternative choice" of the previous administration. In a televised address to the nation, B. Obama admitted: "Thanks to the withdrawal of our troops from Iraq, we will now be able to use the necessary resources to continue the offensive" (in Afghanistan. – M.S.)². This means that in Afghanistan the US military effort (and the number of its troops) has grown at the same time as it has been reduced in Iraq. In the same speech, he said that in August 2011 the United States will begin to transfer responsibility for ensuring security in the country to the Afghans, which will determine the rate of reduction of the American presence³. As you know, neither in 2011 nor ten years later did the situation in Afghanistan stabilize, and American troops remained until their evacuation became more like a flight⁴.

¹ Voroshilov D. Operation Iraqi Freedom is over, Obama said. RIA News. Available from: <http://ria.ru/world/20100901/270934576.html>

² From withdrawal to troop increase in Afghanistan: Why is the US contradicting itself? Zhemini Zhibao online. 2014. December 10. Available from: https://www.1tv.ru/news/2010-09-05/136512-barak_obama_vypolnil_predvybornye_obeschaniya_ssha_vyveli_boevye_chasti_iz_iraka

³ The "Afghan fracture" of the United States. BCS Express. Available from: <https://bcs-express.ru/novosti-i-analitika/afganskiy-izlom-ssha>; Baranov E. Barack Obama fulfilled his election promises: the United States withdrew combat troops from Iraq. Pervyj kanal (The First Channel).

⁴ The US President announced the end of hostilities in Iraq. Smotrim. Available from: <https://smotrim.ru/article/2053988>

The very fact of the transfer of American forces from Iraq to Afghanistan shows that American possibilities are not unlimited, and that they are bogged down in many military conflicts and can no longer fight all of them at the same time. The American authorities have an understanding of this. And then B. Obama, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2009, began to strengthen the American presence in Afghanistan by reducing troops in Iraq. This is another proof of the interdependence of US foreign policy actions [2].

Another fact from the history of military conflicts is the crisis around Libya, initiated by European countries, primarily France, as well as the use of military forces to "resolve" it. Revanchist sentiments and longing for the former colonial greatness; prevailed in the political elite of a number of European states. The US has long refrained from actively participating in the conflict, citing the unfinished war in Afghanistan. But when the aggression became a reality, the United States did not see any other alternative but to lead it, especially since they were not satisfied with the possible leading role in this of another NATO country. They still considered themselves the sole world leader, although some European countries were already seeing a weakening of the US position, which encouraged them to play a more active role in their former colonies [2].

Differences in NATO on the management of the military operation prevented the creation of a unified command and control system and the launch of an anti-Libyan campaign according to a single plan. From March 19 to March 31, 2011, different countries planned their actions independently, and therefore operations were carried out by the United States – "Odyssey Dawn", France – "Harmatan", Great Britain – "Ellamy", Canada – "Mobile" and etc. However, even then, the overall leadership of them was intercepted by the African Command of the US Military Forces (AFRICOM), which coordinated its actions with representatives of the anti-Libyan coalition⁵. Only on March 31 did the general military operation Unified Protector begin. It was led by the NATO bloc, in which the Americans occupy a leading position. This suited the US. If not for the circumstances, the United States would have tried to avoid its military participation in the Libyan events, as they did not want and were not able at that moment to disperse their forces into several military conflicts at the same time. Here is another fact to consider [2].

At the same time, the situation in Iraq and Afghanistan did not develop as it was planned by the United States, and in Libya they did not manage the events as they wanted, but followed them. As in Afghanistan and Iraq, although the political goal of the operation was achieved (the overthrow of the regime of M.Gaddafi), the country remained in a state of permanent war, and the participants of the invasion did not receive the expected all political dividends [2].

The US failed (or they wanted that?) to achieve stability in Iraq either. In 2013, the situation in the country worsened again. This was due to the transition of the organization "Islamic State* of Iraq" (later "Islamic State* of Iraq and the Levant" – ISIS*, and then simply

⁵ About the international military operation in Libya (some features of the fighting). Middle East Institute. Available from: <http://www.iimes.ru/rus/stat/2011/28-03-11.htm>.

"Islamic State")⁶ from terror to offensive actions in order to establish control over the territory of the country. This required the direct involvement of the US military. From August 2014, they were forced to start using aviation in Iraq, and then proceed to form a coalition to fight against this organization. The military operation of the coalition was called "Inherent Resolve". By the end of 2017, the positions of the Islamic State* in Iraq were undermined. However, the organization itself and its militias continued to enjoy the support of part of the local population, especially in the so-called Sunni Triangle [2]. Iraqi Prime Minister H. al-Abadi on December 9, 2017 announced the end of hostilities against the Islamic State* in the country. However, the head of the press service of the US State Department, Heather Nauert, noted that "... this does not mean that the fight against terrorism is over"⁷ The United States and the anti-terrorism coalition it created continued to provide assistance to the Iraqi military and security forces. Was that not their purpose? After all, the lobbied companies of the US military-industrial complex continued to grow rich on the ongoing hostilities.

In early February 2018, the first reports appeared about the reduction in the number of US troops in Iraq and their transfer to Afghanistan. On February 26, 2018, US Army Colonel Ryan Dillon, spokesman for the Joint Tactical Forces for "Inherent Resolve", stated that "... ISIS* continues to pose a threat... the coalition will continue to provide intelligence and advisory services to the Iraqis, as well as provide training and equipment to overcome these challenges..."⁸ Who would doubt it?

What is Afghanistan? US President B. Obama, as already noted, changed his position on Iraq and Afghanistan. Back in February 2009, he sent 17,000 troops to Afghanistan. On July 4, 2010, the leadership of the International Security Forces (ISAF) was transferred to American General David Petraeus. His appointment from the post of commander of the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) was associated with the importance of achieving success in the war in Afghanistan. We recall that before he distinguished himself in the fight against the insurgency in Iraq. And at the NATO summit in Lisbon (Portugal) in November 2010, in the approved strategic concept for the next 10 years, one of the Alliance's key priorities was the mission in Afghanistan. The transfer of security responsibilities in the country to the Afghan security forces was to be completed before the end of 2014⁹. Therefore, in addition to participating in combat operations, NATO's efforts were focused on training Afghan recruits, which was practically not carried out before [2].

But despite the gradual transfer of responsibility for security to the Afghan security forces, the number of foreign troops in the country grew. In 2010, there were more than 105

6 *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+

7 Iraq declares victory over ISIS*. Euronews. Available from: <http://ru.euronews.com/2017/12/09/iraq-announces-victory-over-islamic-state>.

8 Colonel Ryan Dillon. Joint Operational and Tactical Group for the implementation of Operation Inherent Resolve. US Department of State. Available from: <http://ru.euronews.com/2017/12/09/iraq-announces-victory-over-islamic-state>

9 Declaration of the Lisbon NATO Summit. Russian Legal Portal: Pashkov Library. Available from: <https://constitutions.ru/?p=4446>

thousand of them. In March 2011, the number of American military personnel increased to 90 thousand people (plus 16 thousand American military personnel under the command of the International Security Assistance Force), British - up to 9.5 thousand, German - up to more than 4.9 thousand people¹⁰. But the announced completion of the mission of the International Security Assistance Force assumed their reduction, and by September 30, 2013, foreign forces were brought to 65,522 people (39,253 Americans and 26,269 military personnel from other countries)¹¹.

The ceremony dedicated to the completion of the activities of the International Security Assistance Force took place on December 28, 2014 at the headquarters of the coalition forces in Kabul. Initiated by the United States in 2001, Operation Enduring Freedom, which had no time or geographical limits, continued in Afghanistan under the name Freedom's Sentinel. At the same time, the commander of the International Security Assistance Force, US General John Campbell, raised the flag of the new Resolute Support training mission. Both operations required the participation of foreign military contingents, which was enshrined on September 30, 2014 in Kabul; Agreement on cooperation in the fields of security and defense between the United States and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan" and "Status of Forces Agreement – SOFA"¹².

The mandate of the Support training mission "Resolute Support Mission" of 12.5 thousand people (10.8 thousand Americans) was originally designed for 2015-2016. Its employees were forbidden to take part in hostilities, but these restrictions did not apply to coalition forces involved in Operation Freedom's Sentinel. The support training mission was repeatedly extended, which, together with the complete dependence of the Afghan security forces on external funding, guaranteed the permanent presence, and hence the influence of the United States, in the "heart of Asia." In 2017, this was confirmed by the Secretary of Defense of the new US administration, James Mattis, stating that a long-term US presence in Afghanistan would be required¹³. President Donald Trump's strategy, unveiled on August 21, 2017, again relied on military force and did not stipulate a time frame for resolving the Afghan problem. Judging by press reports, it included sending about 4,000 people to Afghanistan in addition to the 11,000 troops already there, as well as the widespread use of private military companies in order to hide from the public the real number of foreign troops¹⁴.

In 2018, direct negotiations between the United States and the Islamic «Taliban»*

10 ISAF – Troop numbers and contributions. NATO/ISAF contributions by country. March 2011. ISAF. Available from: <http://www.isaf.nato.int/troop-numbers-and-contributions/index.php>.

11 Plekhanov I. Military news: Afghan Arithmetic. InoSMI. Available from: <http://www.inosmi.ru/overview/20131112/214697842.html>

12 Agreement between the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan on the Status of NATO Forces and NATO personnel conducting mutually agreed NATO-led activities in Afghanistan. NATO-OTAN. Available from: https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/official_texts_116072.htm?selectedLocale=en

13 The Pentagon is deciding whether to increase the presence of its troops in Afghanistan. Afghanistan.Ru. Available from: <http://afghanistan.ru/doc/111139.html>

14 Volkov V. Trump's New Afghan strategy: what is expected in Central Asia. DW. Available from: www.dw.com/ru/новая-афганская-стратегия-трампа-чего-ждут-в.../a-40417009

Movement began¹⁵. The futility of continuing the fight against "international" terrorism on Afghan soil, the impossibility of achieving any "victory" here by force led to significant concessions to the «Taliban»*. In Doha (Qatar) on February 29, 2020, the parties signed an "Agreement on Peace in Afghanistan" with the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which the United States does not recognize as a state and is known as the «Taliban»* movement. It allowed the Americans to declare their own victory, and the «Taliban»* to continue the fight against the government forces of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. When US President Joe Biden declared on April 14, 2021: "It's time to end America's longest war, it's time to bring our military home"¹⁶, – the initiative in the conduct of the war has completely passed to the «Taliban»* [2].

On August 15, 2021, the «Taliban»* entered Kabul without a fight. The security forces of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan did not resist them either in the capital or in the provinces. They fled or surrendered. And these are the forces (army, police and special services) that have been generously supplied and armed by the United States and its allies for 20 years. Their number was more than 300 thousand people, the necessary military infrastructure was created and weapons worth billions of dollars were delivered. As a result, all this went to the «Taliban»*. Government officials led by a puppet "president" and members of parliament fled to neighboring countries. This was the end of the West's efforts to "democratize" Afghanistan. The radical «Taliban»*, which was overthrown in 2001 and was the main opponent of the collective West for the next 20 years, re-came to power in Afghanistan [2].

What have the United States and its allies been fighting for two decades? Or did they foresee that new "worries" were waiting for them in another part of the Great Chessboard? Let's not exaggerate the predictive abilities of Western political theorists. But the US claims to lead the world have remained, their efforts to create so-called "controlled chaos" are seen by all unbiased observers. Obviously, it is impossible for the United States to get involved in several military conflicts at the same time. This indicates their progressive weakness, since the preliminary withdrawal of troops from one place precedes their buildup in another, focusing efforts on the most important direction [2].

Is this the reason for the hasty withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan? After all, events were ripening in Europe. The former Soviet Baltic republics pursued a Russophobic policy: despite their economic and military weakness, they pinned their hopes on NATO and followed the US-imposed course of aggravating relations with Russia. The same can be said about Poland, where revanchist sentiments and longing for the former greatness of the Commonwealth have never faded. In Ukraine, the brainwashing of the population that grew up after the collapse of the USSR reached the point where it accepted Nazi ideas on faith and in 2014 carried out a coup d'état. With the help of the United States and NATO, the country's military forces have strengthened to such an extent that, as the Ukrainian leaders believed and their foreign curators were convinced, this made it possible to begin the "liberation"

¹⁵ *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+

¹⁶ Biden announced the beginning of the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan on May 1. Interfax. Available from: <https://www.interfax.ru/world/761296>

of the territories in the Crimea and Donbass, promising huge profits for the military-industrial complex and peacekeepers' dividends for politicians, more precisely lobbying their interests in the authorities. And the events in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and Syria have shown that the United States is ready to benefit only by proxy, sharing responsibility with allies that are part of the coalitions they have created, and shifting the responsibility for conducting hostilities to local forces [2].

This is a convenient position, but understandable from the point of view of military science: when in reality there is a so-called "cloud enemy", but it does not seem to exist, and its structural elements are outside the combat areas (3:656). There are only "disposable militants" here, in our case representing the "armed forces of Ukraine" and mercenaries from different countries, and the true customers, the United States, NATO and the European Union, make them puppets and arm them, playing by their own rules, appealing from time to time to international the rules and principles of the United Nations. Hence the war is to the last Ukrainian, because this people is not a pity, but you need to take care of your own military personnel, because their own voters may be outraged. The most "bloodless war" for the West is quite acceptable and has already been tested in the Muslim East, where the local military and civilians suffered dozens of human lives, that is, hundreds of times more than foreign "peacekeepers".

Overseas sponsors pay for the war in Ukraine, so-called civilized Europe also pays, but the money is taken from the budgets, where they come from taxpayers. These funds are returned a hundredfold, but exclusively into the pockets of arms manufacturers, and the population, that is, taxpayers and voters, is impoverished. How long will this continue? Judging by the experience of Afghanistan, for a long time, because the military-industrial complex will be loaded for many years, and a powerful propaganda machine has already been launched for ordinary citizens, justifying spending with the slogans of "struggle for democracy" and achieving the freedom of an "oppressed nation". The information struggle has reached an unprecedented intensity; it is dominated by Western media that hush up the real state of affairs. Other media trying to convey the truth are simply closed and not allowed into the information space. That's the freedom of speech!

From the point of view of military art, forbidden methods of war, mockery of prisoners, shelling of civilians, their use as a "human shield", etc., previously used only by extremists, have long been adopted by Ukraine. And the point here is not the asymmetry of hostilities, because Ukrainian politicians and the media are constantly talking about their strength and rightness. It's all about the Nazi ideology, which cannot be hidden, since the ideological nationalists and accomplices of the German occupiers Stepan Bandera, Roman Shukhevych and others have long been glorified.

Conclusions

After the defeat in Afghanistan and the hasty withdrawal of troops from this country, the United States switched to another part of the Grand Chessboard, closer to Russia, against which their policy has always been directed in the East, and in Europe, and

around the world. They formed an ally in the face of Ukraine, the leadership and part of the population of which professes the Nazi ideology. But the United States does not notice this, because their real policy is directed against Russia, according to the United States, followed by European countries, this is the main enemy of the so-called civilized world. But all empires will eventually fall [2]. Even one of the main American Russophobes and at the same time politicians, recognizing this, noted that "... America's global superiority directly depends on how long and effectively its superiority on the Eurasian continent will be maintained" [1:43]. And in Eurasia, in addition to American "pawns" among the EU countries and Ukraine, which joined it, there are also "queens", Russia and China [4].

References

1. Brzezinski Z. Grand chessboard (American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives) / Trad. O.Yu. Uralakaja. Moscow: International relations, 1998: 256 [In Russian]. See also: Brzezinski Zbigniew K. Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and Its Geostrategic Imperatives. New York: Basic Books, 1997:223 [In English].
2. Slinkin M.M. Afghanistan and the Grand Chessboard. Available from: <https://afghanistan.ru/doc/150168.html> [In Russian].
3. Popov I.M., Khamzatov M.M. War of the Future: Conceptual Foundations and Practical Conclusions. Essays on strategic thought. Moscow: Kuchkovo field, 2017:832 [In Russian].

About the author

Mikhail M. SLINKIN. Cand Sc (Hist), Senior Researcher at the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2287-9039>. Address: 12, Rozhdestvenka str., Moscow. mikhail.slinkin@gmail.com

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Submitted: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

* 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+

INTERNATIONAL, GLOBAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

International relations, global and regional studies

Original article

Political sciences

[https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-80-93](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-80-93)

Afghan Vector of Modern Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan

Rustam B. Makhmudov✉

University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Institute of Advanced International Studies, Tashkent, Republic of Uzbekistan
rmaxmudov@uwed.uz, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1030-2200>

Abstract: The article discusses the foundations of the modern foreign policy of Uzbekistan in the Afghan direction. They were formed at the beginning of the reforms of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in 2016. Their concept is that Afghanistan is seen not as a threat to stability and security, but as a set of opportunities for Uzbekistan and the Central Asian region, especially for their economic development. The Uzbek approach is based on the following principles: support for peace and stability in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan will contribute to the establishment of a peaceful life in Afghanistan and greater participation of the world community in this process; the integration of Afghanistan into projects for the development of relations between Central and South Asia, which are being implemented by Tashkent. Such a realistic approach allowed Uzbekistan to build flexible and constructive relations with the Afghan authorities both before and after the events of August 15, 2021.

Keywords: Afghanistan, «Taliban»^{*1}, reforms in Uzbekistan, economization, security, settlement, interconnectedness, Central Asia, South Asia, «Termez – Mazar – I – Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar» railway

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Makhmudov R.B. Afghan Vector of Modern Foreign Policy of Uzbekistan. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 80-93, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-80-93](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-80-93)

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

Until 2016, Afghanistan in Uzbekistan's foreign policy was considered mainly within the framework of the issue of ensuring national and regional security. However, after the beginning of the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev reforms in the second half of 2016, the southern neighbor began to be perceived not as a source of challenges and threats, but as a source of opportunities within the framework of the general direction of economizing the country's foreign policy. This did not mean that security issues had receded into the background. Security is simply designed to create favorable conditions for the development of trade, economic and investment relations. The withdrawal of American and NATO contingents, which caused a wide resonance in the world and the region, accompanied by the rapid offensive of the «Taliban»* and the collapse of the government of Ashraf Ghani in August 2021, did not change the new approach of Uzbekistan in general.

The purpose of this article is to show the logic of Uzbekistan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan, which was formed and implemented after the start of reforms in the country and the change of internal priorities, which reflected on the foreign policy course.

The article is intended to attract the attention of the scientific and expert community to the study of Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan. Uzbekistan sets itself not only regional goals, but also wants to create favorable conditions for the formation of interconnectedness of Central and South Asia.

Materials and Methods

The materials used were statistical data on bilateral trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in 2016–2022, statements and speeches by officials of the Republic of Uzbekistan, reflecting the position of the state and initiatives regarding the peace process, reconstruction and integration of Afghanistan into regional trade, economic and transport connections.

Based on a systematic analysis and the application of the comparative historical method, a group of determinants of modern Uzbek politics, its unique approaches in the Afghan direction and the development of policy after the start of the country's new foreign policy in 2016 were identified.

Results

Uzbekistan's Policy towards Afghanistan until August 15, 2021

The election of Shavkat Mirziyoyev as the President of Uzbekistan symbolized a change in the baseline in the development of the country. The focus of attention has shifted from security, which prevailed in the 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s, to ensuring socio-economic

reforms in accordance with modern realities and system-forming trends in the global economy. The new foreign policy course was called “economization” in the expert community [2].

As part of the new policy, key attention was paid to the potential for cooperation with regional countries, which are considered as natural markets for Uzbek products. It should be noted that until 2016 this potential was not used to its full potential due to disagreements with a number of Central Asian countries on water and border issues.

The new course of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev showed that the sharpness and depth of the previously existing contradictions were seriously exaggerated. The proof was the rapid normalization of relations with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, accompanied by the explosive growth of bilateral trade and the expansion of humanitarian contacts. Trade with Kazakhstan also began to develop rapidly. According to the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, from 2017 to 2019 the volume of trade between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan increased from \$2.05 billion to \$3.367 billion, with Kyrgyzstan – from \$253.7 billion to \$829 million, with Tajikistan – from \$237.9 billion to \$497 million [2].

Despite the decline in trade with some Central Asian countries during the coronavirus pandemic, after its completion, it quickly recovered and its growth returned. So, if trade with Kazakhstan amounted to \$3.005 billion in 2020, then in 2021 and 2022 it increased to \$3.92 billion and \$4,621 billion. accordingly. Astana has become the third most important foreign trade partner after Russia and China. The trade turnover with Kyrgyzstan in 2022 reached a record of \$1.26 billion (6th place), and with Turkmenistan stopped at a step from \$1 billion – \$26.3 million (8th place). Trade turnover with Tajikistan has consistently grown – \$493.1 million ((2020), \$605.6 million ((2021) and \$674.4 million (2022)².

In the new “economized” foreign policy course, much attention was also paid to Afghanistan, which, during the presence of the United States in this country and large-scale injections of donor funds into the Afghan economy, has become a significant export destination for Uzbek producers. At the same time, Uzbekistan traditionally had a steady surplus in trade with Kabul. If in 2019 it amounted to \$431.2 million (exports \$433.3 million, imports – almost \$2.1), then in the coronavirus 2020, which is a record for bilateral trade – \$774.4 million (export – \$776.7 million, import – \$2.3 million)³

The Afghan market, which accounts for 5% of all Uzbek exports, has become a source of economic activity in a number of sectors of the Uzbek economy, as evidenced by the commodity nomenclature. In 2020, 662 trade items were exported to Afghanistan. Of these, the main share of exports fell on the supply of wheat flour (28.1%), electricity (17.2%), services in the field of freight rail transportation (25.3%). Exports of cement grew rapidly (by 21% compared to 2019) and ferrous metallurgy products (26.6%)⁴.

² Rapprochement with Russia, China is the main supplier. How Uzbekistan's foreign trade has changed in 2022. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/24/trade-partners/>

³ Afghanistan trade balance, exports and imports by country 2019. Available from: <https://wits.worldbank.org/CountryProfile/en/Country/AFG/Year/2019/TradeFlow/EXPIMP/Partner/by-country>

⁴ Uzbekistan – Afghanistan: Prospects for economic cooperation in new realities. Available from: <https://xs.uz/ru/post/uzbekistan-afganistan-perspektivy-ekonomicheskogo-sotrudnichestva-v-novykh-realiyakh>

In 2021, Afghanistan was the largest trade and economic partner of Uzbekistan from all countries of South Asia. It accounted for 48.9% of the total volume of trade, India – 35.6%, Pakistan – 13.2% and Bangladesh – 2.1%⁵

The potential of economic relations with Afghanistan at that time was considered as undisclosed to the end, which set the task for the Government and the Foreign Ministry of Uzbekistan to bring bilateral cooperation to a qualitatively and quantitatively new level. As the analysis of Tashkent's foreign policy activity in relation to Afghanistan in 2016–2021 shows, activities in the Afghan direction took on an active character and focused on three directions.

The first direction is to stimulate the efforts of the international community to find a model for a peaceful settlement of the Afghan conflict. 2016–2021 was characterized by an increase in military and political instability in Afghanistan. According to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the UN Office for Human Rights, in 2018 there were 3804 dead and 7189 wounded among the civilian population, among them 927 children. The cause of 63% of the victims were the actions of anti-government forces – the «Taliban»* (37%), «ISIS»–Khorasan*⁶ (20%) and 6% – unidentified anti-government forces. Pro-government forces were responsible for 24% of the casualties⁷.

Obviously, this trend inspired fears for the development of the situation inside Afghanistan. In this regard, Uzbekistan has taken the initiative to hold an international conference on Afghanistan “Peace process, security cooperation and regional cooperation”. The event was held in Tashkent in March 2018 and President Shavkat Mirziyoyev unveiled the Uzbek vision for the settlement of the Afghan conflict, which consisted in the development of a comprehensive peace process at the following three interrelated and interdependent levels:

- at the intra-Afghan level, where it was necessary to ensure the beginning of a direct dialogue without preconditions between the central government and the main forces of the armed opposition, primarily the «Taliban»* movement;
- at the regional level, in order to ensure the achievement of a strong consensus with the support of Pakistan, India, Iran, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar and the countries of Central Asia;
- at the global level, where it was necessary to provide principled political support for the peace process and financial assistance to the socio-economic reconstruction of Afghanistan from the leading world powers and donor organizations⁸.

⁵ Infographics: Uzbekistan's trade with South Asian countries 2021 (Electronic resource). Available from: <https://review.uz/post/infografika-torgovlya-uzbekistana-so-stranami-yujnoy-azii-2021>

⁶ *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+

⁷ Afghanistan. Protection of civilians in arm conflict Annual report 2018. Available from: <https://unama.unmissions.org/civilian-deaths-afghan-conflict-2018-highest-recorded-level-%E2%80%93-un-report>

⁸ Speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the international conference on Afghanistan: “Peace process, security cooperation and regional cooperation”. Available from: <https://uza.uz/ru/posts/vystuplenie-prezidenta-respubliki-uzbekistan-shavkata-mirziyoyev-27-03-2018>

Later, in 2020, Uzbekistan positively perceived the transformation of Qatar's capital Doha into a negotiating platform for the Afghan settlement. As stated by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in his speech at the 75th session of the UN General Assembly,

We fully support the peace talks between the political forces of Afghanistan that began in Doha in September this year. We hope that these negotiations will contribute to the establishment of peace and stability in the long-suffering Afghan land⁹.

The second area where the active nature of Uzbek policy manifested itself was the initiative to create a framework for cooperation between Central and South Asia with the participation of Afghanistan. The impetus for this strategic line was given by the international conference “Central and South Asia: Regional Interconnectedness” held in Tashkent on July 15–16, 2021. The expansion of cooperation between the two regions should have a positive impact on the overall security system in Eurasia, contribute to the growth of trade, economic and investment relations, and the development of cultural and humanitarian ties. Afghanistan was considered as one of the key beneficiaries, since the bulk of cargo transportation would have to be carried out directly through its territory. Tashkent proposed a project for the construction of the Termez–Mazar–I–Sharif–Kabul–Peshawar railway, thanks to which goods from Central and South Asia, CIS countries, Europe, Southeast Asia and China would go through Afghanistan¹⁰.

The third direction of Uzbekistan's Afghan policy in 2016–2021 was the creation of additional incentives and platforms for the growth of economic cooperation with Afghanistan. In 2017, a roadmap was signed to increase bilateral trade turnover to \$1.5 billion, including more than 40 contracts for more than \$500 million for the supply of Uzbek products to the Afghan market.

An agreement was signed on the construction of the Surkhan–Puli Khumri power transmission line for stable power supply to Kabul. The contract on the design, construction and operation of power lines in Afghanistan was signed between the National Electric Networks of Uzbekistan and Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat in December 2020, after which its implementation began, which was suspended in July 2021 due to the sharp intensification of hostilities in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan managed at that time to complete the construction of a part of the power line on its territory¹¹.

Among the significant steps to increase trade and economic cooperation, it is possible to highlight the agreement reached by the parties in May 2021 in Termez to accelerate the approval of the draft agreement on preferential trade to bring trade to the level of \$2 billion

⁹ Shavkat Mirziyoyev: We perceive Afghanistan as an integral part of Central Asia. Available from: <https://uzreport.news/politics/shavkat-mirziyoyev-mi-vosprinimaem-afganistan-kak-neotemlemuyu-chast-tsentrallyy-azii>

¹⁰ Uzbekistan is not only adapting to the new international environment, but also opening windows of opportunity for the formation of a new reality – expert. Available from: <https://www.podrobno.uz/cat/obchestvo/uzbekistan-ne-tolko-prisposablivaetsya-k-novoy-mezhdunarodnoy-srede-no-i-sam-otkryvaet-okna-vozmozhn/>

¹¹ The start date for the construction of power lines in Afghanistan has been extended until August 31. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/07/26/surkhan/>

per year¹². In order to stimulate transit cargo transportation to/from Afghanistan, the Termez Cargo Center was opened in 2016 in Surkhandarya region in close proximity to the Afghan border [3].

The policy of Uzbekistan during the period of Presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani was not limited only to economic interests. Tashkent, considering this country as an “integral part of Central Asia” and has repeatedly provided humanitarian assistance to it. There were several shipments of humanitarian aid during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 and the opening of an Educational Center for Afghan students in 2018, which trains specialists in the field of teaching Uzbek language and literature, construction and operation of railways¹³.

Uzbek Policy towards Afghanistan after the Return to Power of the «Taliban»*

Unexpected for many analysts, the rapid fall of Kabul on August 15, 2021 and the establishment by the «Taliban»* of control over the entire territory of Afghanistan, including the previously seemingly impregnable Panjshir Gorge immediately after the withdrawal of American troops, put all Central Asian countries in need of adjusting their foreign policy. According to the statement of Uzbek officials, the return of the «Taliban»* to power was not a surprise for them, since two more years ago. Prior to this, such a development of events was predicted and clear security guarantees were received from the Head of the political office of the «Taliban»* movement in Doha (Qatar) Mullah Abdul Ghani of Barodar¹⁴.

Uzbekistan understood that the current new reality in Afghanistan provides an opportunity to end the forty-year conflict. It was important for Uzbekistan to prevent the degradation of the humanitarian situation in this country, especially since due to the cessation of international financing and the freezing of the country's funds in Western banks, the Afghan economy and banking system were immediately on the verge of collapse. To prevent this, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, at the SCO summit in Dushanbe on September 17, 2021, called for the unfreezing of \$9.5 billion of Afghan funds and assistance to Afghanistan in solving social problems¹⁵.

A few days later, at the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, the President of Uzbekistan also called for the creation of a permanent committee on Afghanistan at the

¹² Uzbekistan and Afghanistan become “best friends”: what connects them. Available from: <https://uz.sputniknews.ru/20210526/uzbekistan-i-afganistan-stanovyatsya-luchshimi-druzyami-chto-ix-svyazyvaet-18917152.html>

¹³ Yeniseev M. Uzbekistan creates an educational center for Afghan students. Available from: https://central.asia-news.com/ru/articles/cnmi_ca/features/2017/12/01/feature-01

¹⁴ “We predicted that these events would happen”. The President about the situation in Afghanistan. *Gazeta.uz*, August 27, 2021. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/08/27/afghanistan-new/>

¹⁵ Uzbekistan has proposed to unfreeze Afghanistan's assets in foreign banks. What is known about them? *Newspaper.uz*, September 17, 2021: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/09/17/frozen-assets/>

UN. His goal was to prevent the isolation of this state, in which it would become alone with its problems¹⁶.

In order to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan constructively and pragmatically accepted the formation of the Transitional Administration of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (interim government) immediately after the capture of Kabul by the «Taliban»¹⁷. Already on October 7, 2021, the Head of the Uzbek Foreign Ministry, Abdulaziz Kamilov, visited Kabul. He met with Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaki, with whom he discussed issues of bilateral economic cooperation in the field of cargo transit, energy, trade and reconstruction of the airport in Mazar-I-Sharif.

In general, the position of Uzbekistan at the end of 2021 regarding Afghanistan and the political changes that have taken place in it can be reduced to several points voiced by A.Kamilov at the second ministerial meeting in the Italy – Central Asia format on December 8, 2021. Among them:

- the need for a constructive dialogue with the new Afghan authorities in order to avoid the re-transformation of this country into a “rogue state”;
- providing a humanitarian corridor to Afghanistan to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe;
- taking measures to lift sanctions, unfreeze Afghanistan's international assets and assist it in restoring the banking system;
- the importance of a post-conflict strategy for Afghanistan and its active involvement in regional integration processes of an economic nature and the implementation of socio-economic projects in this country;
- fulfillment by the new Afghan authorities of their international obligations: the creation of an inclusive government, the fight against terrorism and drug trafficking, the prevention of the deployment of terrorist groups on the territory of the country, the termination of contacts with them, the support of good-neighborly relations with the countries of the region, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, including women and national minorities¹⁸.

Additional aspects in Uzbekistan's policy towards Afghanistan were indicated in Shavkat Mirziyoyev's address to the participants of the international conference “Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development” held in Tashkent on July 26, 2022. In particular, he stressed that the Uzbek and Afghan peoples share common cultural, spiritual and historical values, as well as a common religion and ancestral heritage. In addition, it was noted that it is impossible to talk about the security of Central Asia without Afghanistan, because without stability south of the Amu Darya, it is impossible

¹⁶ Speech by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly. Official website of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, September 21, 2021: <https://president.uz/ru/lists/view/4632>

¹⁷ “The main thing is to prevent a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan” – Sadyk Safayev. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/09/13/afghanistan/>

¹⁸ Uzbekistan counts on Italy's assistance in regional security issues. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2021/12/09/italy/>

to achieve security and sustainable development of Uzbekistan and the whole of Central Asia¹⁹.

With the strengthening of the new Afghan authorities, who have shown the ability to keep the situation under control and revive economic activity in the country, despite limited financial opportunities, Uzbekistan has once again returned to priority attention to trade and economic cooperation, promotion of mutually beneficial infrastructure and transport projects [3]. Moreover, the «Taliban»* themselves showed a clear interest in this (5). This is evidenced by the one that took place on December 6–7, 2021. Uzbek-Afghan-Pakistani meeting in Tashkent to discuss the construction project of the Termez–Mazar–I–Sharif–Kabul–Peshawar railway²⁰. At the end of December 2021, during negotiations in Tashkent, the parties announced their intention to continue the construction of the Surkhan–Puli–Khumri power transmission line²¹.

If we analyze the situation in bilateral relations in 2022, we can note a number of positive trends for Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. Among them, the growth of bilateral trade to \$759.9 million, which is only slightly lower than in 2020, when President Ashraf Ghani was in power (\$779.1 million). Uzbek exports accounted for \$750.6 million in 2022 (\$776.7 million in 2020). At the same time, imports of Afghan goods and services increased from \$2.3 million in 2020 and \$6.2 million in 2021 to 9.3 million in 2022²².

Among the significant events, it can be noted that Tashkent has completed the provision of technical assistance for the restoration of Mazar–I–Sharif Airport, which included the repair of air navigation and meteorological equipment, the reconstruction of the runway and the restoration of power supply²³.

During the first half of 2022, a rapid increase in transit cargo traffic through Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the southern direction was recorded, which can serve as an indicator of the «Taliban»*'s ability to ensure the security of transport communications. The volume of cargo transportation increased 2.6 times to 330 thousand tons compared to the same period in 2021²⁴.

Thanks to the stabilization of Afghanistan, an opportunity has opened up for Tashkent to establish direct cargo transportation with Islamabad. Already in November 2021, the first transit cargo from Uzbekistan was delivered to Pakistan, and in March 2022, the first batch of Pakistani meat was delivered to the Uzbek market through Afghan territory. India has

19 International Conference “Afghanistan: Security and Economic Development” (Tashkent, July 26, 2022): address of the President of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev to the participants; final Statement of the host country. Available from: <https://e-cis.info/news/568/102089/>

20 International negotiations on the Trans-Afghan Corridor were held in Tashkent. Available from: https://railway.uz/ru/informatsionnaya_sluzhba/novosti/26145/

21 Uzbekistan and Afghanistan plan to resume the construction of the Surkhan–Puli–Khumri transmission line. Available from: <https://xs.uz/ru/post/uzbekistan-i-afganistan-planiruyut-vozobnovit-stroitelstvo-lep-surkhan-puli-khumri>

22 Rapprochement with Russia, China is the main supplier. How Uzbekistan's foreign trade has changed in 2022. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2023/01/24/trade-partners/>

23 Mazar-I-Sharif Airport has been restored with the support of Uzbekistan. Available from: <https://www.gazeta.uz/ru/2022/10/31/mazari-sharif/>

24 The transit of goods through Afghanistan under the «Taliban»* has increased significantly. Available from: <https://www.spot.uz/ru/2022/08/16/afghanistan-transit/>

also tested this route by sending transit cargo to Uzbekistan via Pakistan and Afghanistan²⁵.

The development of joint plans to increase the volume of bilateral trade and investment can be considered an indicator of the emerging positive mood in Uzbek–Pakistani relations. The parties have reached an agreement on preferential trade, according to which duties on several dozen goods will be reduced from 20 to 100%. Thanks to this, it is expected to increase the volume of bilateral trade from \$ 181 million in 2021 to \$1 billion in the coming years²⁶.

Speaking about the future policy of Uzbekistan towards Afghanistan under the rule of the «Taliban»* movement, it is impossible to ignore the potential risks that may have an impact. Although the «Taliban»* controls the overall situation in the country, however, this control remains insufficiently strong. We are talking about the economy and the humanitarian situation. Currently, 6 million Afghans are on the verge of starvation, which is extremely dangerous for the «Taliban»* government. External assistance so far allows us to contain the aggravation of the situation with hunger. More than a quarter of the 40 million population receives food packages from the World Food Program²⁷.

The humanitarian situation can only be mitigated by the accelerated development of the national economy by attracting large-scale foreign investments, technologies and competencies, but for this the new authorities will need to gain international recognition, which will not be in the foreseeable future until an inclusive political system is created and the rights of women and girls to study and work are protected. It is difficult to say whether the «Taliban»* will be ready to change and go for a significant liberalization of their political and value approaches, along the way of mastering the cultural foundations of Modernity.

Nevertheless, time is running out, as the Afghan society will not wait for a natural generational change in the ranks of the «Taliban»*. As the whole history of this country shows, the discontent of the population is always a time bomb, which sooner or later will make itself felt. In this regard, the opinion expressed by the Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for Afghanistan, Director of the second Asia Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry Zamir Kabulov in an interview with the Indian magazine “The Week” in February 2023 is of interest.

He believes that the «Taliban»* have not learned how to govern the state, although they have repeatedly stated that they have learned their lessons and will not repeat past mistakes. “The «Taliban»* sometimes cannot understand very simple things, especially when there are no challenges to its power. I mean serious rivals who can oust him. This does not mean that there will be no such challenges. It won't be someone from the outside. But this will be a normal reaction of the Afghan people, because under the circumstances

25 Uzbekistan and Pakistan have agreed to increase trade turnover to \$1 billion. Available from: <https://www.spot.uz/ru/2022/12/27/pakistan-trade/>

26 Pakistan and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on expanding investments and increasing trade. Available from: <https://www.aa.com.tr/ru/экономика/пакистан-и-узбекистан-подписали-соглашение-о-расширении-инвестиций-и-увеличения-торговли/2773335>

27 Felbab-Brown Vanda. Afghanistan in 2023: «Taliban»* internal power struggles and militancy. Available from: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2023/02/03/afghanistan-in-2023-taliban-internal-power-struggles-and-militancy/>

it will be very difficult for them to survive,” the Russian diplomat said. According to Zamir Kabulov, “The «Taliban»* should take institutional steps to improve the situation or at least open the way for such an improvement, which we do not see at the moment”²⁸.

Conclusions

So, summing up, it can be noted that Uzbekistan’s policy is based on combining bilateral economic cooperation with Kabul, promoting initiatives at the international level to strengthen peace and provide assistance to Afghanistan in order to prevent its next slide into the abyss of instability and humanitarian crisis, and implementing measures to integrate this country into the system of trade, economic and transport relations between Central and South Asia, is one of the most conceptually designed lines among the states, having their own interests in Afghanistan. According to a number of experts, “Uzbekistan is in the group of countries that occupy the most constructive and positive positions regarding the Afghan problem” [1]. As the results of 2021–2022 have shown, this is already paying dividends for Uzbekistan’s foreign policy and economy, including allowing the period of power change in Afghanistan to pass smoothly in August 2021.

At the same time, the further progress of Uzbekistan’s policy in the Afghan direction will be largely related to the steps of the new Afghan authorities themselves in domestic and foreign policy, with their ability not only to control the domestic political situation, but also to implement measures of economic and social modernization, without which it will be virtually impossible to launch sustainable economic growth, increase the income level of the population, gain international recognition and improve the country’s image on the world stage.

References

1. Knyazev A.A. The Afghan policy of Uzbekistan: a comparative context. *Post-Soviet Studies*. 2023; 3(6):266–280 [In Russian].
2. Makhmudov R. Foreign policy of modern Uzbekistan. *Russia and the New States of Eurasia*. 2021; I(L):121–134. DOI: 10.20542/2073-4786-2021-1-121-134 [In Russian].
3. Mirzoev S.T. Afghanistan in the foreign policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan. *Bulletin of the Pedagogical University (Tajikistan)*. 2019; 2(79):278–284 [In Russian].
4. Safranchuk I.A., Konarovskiy M.A., Machitidze G.G., Chernov D.N., Nesmashny A.D., Zhornist V.M. Afghanistan after regime change: internal and international uncertainty: Report. MGIMO. 2022. Available from: https://mgimo.ru/upload/2022/03/MGIMO_Afghanistan_RUS.pdf [In Russian].
5. Sarimsov Z.S. On the possible threats to the security of Uzbekistan from the jihadist movements of Afghanistan. *Post-Soviet Studies*. 2022; 1(5):39–49 [In Russian].

²⁸ Nayar Mandira. India, Pakistan need to show common sense on Afghanistan: Russia’s special envoy Zamir Kabulov (Electronic resource). Available from: <https://www.theweek.in/theweek/more/2023/02/11/russian-presidential-envoy-to-afghanistan-zamir-kabulov-interview.html>

About the author

Rustam B. MAKHMUDOV. Associate Professor of the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Leading Researcher of the Institute of Advanced International Studies (Republic of Uzbekistan), <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1030-2200>. Address: 54, Mustakillik Ave., Tashkent, 10007, Republic of Uzbekistan, rmaxmudov@uwed.uz

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

* 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+

On the Issue of Kazakhstan's Policy Towards Afghanistan

Nuriddin Sultanmuratov✉

Institute of Asian Studies. Almaty, Kazakhstan

Nuriddin.sultanmuratov@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3711-4303>

Abstract. The Afghan direction has always played an important role in the foreign strategy of independent Kazakhstan, which is due to the overall regional security. Instability in Afghanistan, the associated risks for the Central Asian countries, historically determined the policy of the Republic of Kazakhstan. From the very beginning, the Kazakh authorities sought to actively participate in stabilizing and strengthening peace in Afghanistan, including providing direct humanitarian and economic assistance to Kabul. This created conditions for the development of cooperation at the interstate level, which led to the gradual expansion of trade relations. Now Afghanistan is considered as one of the important markets for Kazakh producers. It should be emphasized that Kazakhstan has always been guided by political pragmatism. This manifested itself after the events of 2021, which led to the formation of a new Afghan government by representatives of the «Taliban»^{*1} movement. Despite the non-recognition of the new Afghan authorities in accordance with international requirements, Astana continued its dialogue with Kabul on the most important topics, especially those related to supporting the Afghan population in order to prevent a sharp deterioration in the situation in the country. This is in the interests not only of Afghanistan itself, but also of regional and international forces.

Keywords: Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, foreign policy, Central Asia, security, economy

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Sultanmuratov N. On the Issue of Kazakhstan's Policy Towards Afghanistan. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2023; 2(8): 94-108, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-94-108](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-94-108)

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 situation around Afghanistan remains one of the hottest topics for the world community, especially given the latest socio-political developments in that country. Although the pessimistic forecasts of many experts related to the withdrawal of the American military contingent in 2021 and the subsequent coming to power of the representatives of the «Taliban»^{*} movement did not materialize on the whole, however, the security risk is high. This is not only about traditional military threats, but also about the potential transformation of internal contradictions between the new administration and its opponents into full-scale armed clashes with all the consequences for the surrounding region.

Today, no less pressing issue is the economic prospects of Afghanistan, which is now going through a severe crisis. Due to a sharp drop in incomes of citizens and a reduction in budget revenues, a huge number of people were on the verge of starvation. According to various estimates, up to 19 million Afghans will face severe food insecurity in 2023². A significant deterioration in the financial situation of local residents creates a threat of a humanitarian catastrophe in a state of 40 million people, which can lead to a large number of refugees, can provoke a new wave of forced migrants to other countries. In recent years, the topic of migrants from disadvantaged areas of the world has been actively discussed at the global level. A prime example is the flow of refugees from the Middle East due to the ongoing war in Syria. Against this backdrop, a more populous Afghanistan is an even bigger challenge.

One way or another, any scenario of destabilizing Afghanistan will inevitably have a negative impact on the economy and security of neighboring regions. Naturally, this will directly affect the interests of the countries of Central Asia due to cultural, historical and geographical factors; first of all, these are neighboring Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, which have long been associated with Afghanistan. Groups of kindred peoples live on its territory, which in certain periods of its history played the role of influential Diasporas. Kazakhstan is located relatively far from the Afghan borders. The republic does not belong to the line of Border States of Central Asia, which directly border on Afghanistan, and it has no kindred peoples on the territory of this country.

Despite this, official Astana has long been pursuing an active policy towards Afghanistan and is participating in every possible way in the processes of stabilization of this country. There is a high interest in the Afghan topic within the Kazakh expert community. The situation in this country often becomes the subject of public discussion. Therefore, it is important to analyze the foreign policy steps of the Republic of Kazakhstan in relation to Afghanistan.

² Afghanistan. Latest developments. 01.02.2023. Available from: <https://www.acaps.org/country/afghanistan/crisis/complex-crisis>



The works of various authors on this issue should be mentioned: the works of S.Akimbekov, in particular his books "The History of Afghanistan" and "The Afghan Knot and Security Problems in Central Asia". The issue of bilateral relations between Astana and Kabul is touched upon in the article "Between strategic and material interests: Kazakhstan as a source of stability in Afghanistan" by S.Mayer. It is necessary to note the monograph by R.Mukimdzhanova "Countries of Central Asia: the Asian vector of foreign policy" [6] and the work by D.Malysheva "Post-Soviet Central Asia and its Asian neighbors" [5]. In addition, the works of M.McCauley "Afghanistan and Central Asia: a modern history" [8], A.Saikal and K.Nourzhanov "The spectrum of Afghanistan: security in Central Asia" [9], K.Collins "The limits of cooperation: Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the new Silk Road" [7] also helped to reveal the topic of the study.

The purpose of the article is to identify the main directions and factors in the evolution of Kazakhstan's foreign policy towards Afghanistan from the moment of independence in 1991 to the present.

Materials and Methods

Books, articles, reports, official statistics, information from Internet resources were used as sources in the article. The study was conducted based on the principle of historicism. In addition, a system-structural approach was applied.

Results

History of Kazakh-Afghan relations

Diplomatic relations between Astana and Kabul were established in February 1992. Later, in 1993, an Afghan embassy was opened in the Republic of Kazakhstan. However, due to the inability to ensure the safety of employees, the Kazakh diplomatic mission in Afghanistan began to work only in 2002 - immediately after the military intervention of the international coalition led by the United States in Afghanistan, which led to the overthrow of the «Taliban»*. After creating more favorable conditions in 2003, the representation of the republic was transformed into a full-fledged embassy.

Since the formation of an independent state, Kazakhstan's interest in Afghanistan has been linked to the issue of security in the south. To do this, Kazakhstan sent in the early 1990s. border guards to the Tajik-Afghan border as part of the formed contingent of peacekeeping forces, which consisted of several CIS countries: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Russia and Kyrgyzstan.

The Kazakh military took part in the operation to protect the Tajik border from 1993 to 2001. During this mission, a well-known incident occurred when on April 7, 1995, in the Pshikhavr Gorge of the Pamirs, soldiers of the Republic of Kazakhstan lost 17 people killed

and 33 wounded in battle. At the same time, for the entire time on the Tajik border, the total losses of the Kazakh side amounted to 46 people.³.

The conclusion in 1992 in Tashkent of an agreement on collective security was due to the Afghan factor. The creation of this organization was based on the desire of the states of the former USSR to coordinate efforts in relation to Afghanistan, where in April 1992 the government of Najibullah fell. This caused the concern of the countries of Central Asia and Russia, which forced them to jointly respond to the new situation. In this regard, the CSTO appeared as a mechanism to counter external threats. Within the framework of the agreement signed by Russia, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, these countries "undertook to take part in the protection of the external borders of the former USSR in the southern direction, bearing in mind, among other things, the borders of Tajikistan with Afghanistan" [1:179].

At the first stage of independence, Kazakhstan's policy towards Afghanistan was not clearly defined. On the one hand, because in the first half of the 1990s, the processes of state building and reforms in the economy were intensively going on in the republic, the authorities were concentrated on solving internal problems, Kazakhstan then did not have sufficient financial resources to actively participate in the affairs of Afghanistan. On the other hand, in Afghanistan itself at that time there was a situation of general instability, which hampered the development of bilateral contacts. In a situation of civil war and the absence of a single central government in Afghanistan, the most reasonable strategy for Kazakhstan was non-intervention and observation from the outside.

When the «Taliban»* occupied Kabul in 1996, it caused serious concern in all countries of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. The risk of the conflict spreading to the territory of the region increased. Then, in 1996, an emergency meeting of the heads of state of Central Asia and Russia was held in Almaty⁴. A possible breakthrough by extremist and terrorist groups was more of a concern to the "front-line states" – Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. In contrast, the Republic of Kazakhstan had no direct interests in Afghanistan. Astana's strategy at that time can be characterized as following in the wake of the common interests of the countries of the region within the framework of the CSTO. Since "the degree of relevance of the Afghan settlement for the national interests of individual Central Asian states is not the same" [6:107].

At the same time, the so-called Northern Anti-«Taliban»* Alliance was formed within Afghanistan itself. This formation consisted of various ethnic groups of the country who opposed the ««Taliban»* government. The «Taliban»* as a whole represented the interests of the local Pashtuns, the most numerous people in the country. At the same time, the

³ Isenov T. The Forgotten Battalion: the first peacekeepers of the Republic of Kazakhstan still do not have the status of participants in hostilities /15.06.2019/. Available from: <https://liter.kz/3415-zabytyy-batalon-pervye-mirotvortsy-rk-do-sih-por-ne-imeyut-statusa-uchastnikov-boevyh-deystviy/>

⁴ Speech by the first President of Kazakhstan N.A. Nazarbayev at the Conference of Foreign Ministers of the participating countries of the Istanbul Process /26.04.2013/. Available from: https://www.akorda.kz/ru/speeches/external_political_affairs/ext_speeches_and_addresses/vystuplenie-prezidenta-kazahstana-nazarbaeva-na-konferencii-ministrov-inostrannyh-del-stran-uchastnic-stambulskogo-processa.

Northern Alliance was supported by Russia and Iran. Its participants relied on local Tajiks, Hazara Shiites and other minorities. The northern border areas of Afghanistan were to act as a buffer zone.

The turning point came in the late 1990s. First, in the spring of 1999, Uzbekistan ceased its membership in the CSTO⁵, after which it immediately joined the regional organization GUAM. Against this background, the so-called Batken events of 1999 take place. Then separate detachments of militants of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*⁶, hiding in Tajikistan, went to the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan in order to reach the Uzbek border. In response, Tashkent launched a large-scale counter-terrorist operation, including the use of combat aircraft [8:103]. This incident sharply actualized the problem of security on the southern borders of Central Asia.

This episode was the impetus for greater involvement of external actors in regional processes. There has been a noticeable increase in the role of Russia in ensuring security in Central Asia. Moscow initially considered the region as a "soft underbelly". Naturally, the destabilization of the countries of Central Asia was seen as a direct threat to Russia's national interests. The Afghan factor acted as a convenient mechanism for strengthening Russia's position.

Given the historical problem of separatism in Xinjiang, China's activation was natural. The logical outcome of Beijing's desire to become more actively involved in Central Asian security issues was the creation of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization in June 2001. The basis for the new structure was the previously operating "Shanghai Five", which Uzbekistan now joined. It is not surprising that the fight against terrorism, extremism and separatism was proclaimed the priorities of the new association. In 2002, the members of the SCO signed an agreement on a regional antiterrorist structure as a permanent body within this organization.

Despite the emergence of the SCO, Russia retained the status of the main player in the military defense of Central Asia, and the presence of China became an additional element in ensuring the security of Central Asia. Kazakhstan has worked closely with Moscow on the strategy for Afghanistan, providing all possible support to its initiatives.

In 2001, after the September 11 attacks, an international antiterrorist coalition was formed under the leadership of the Americans. The fight against the «Taliban»* movement has become one of the main goals of the international security assistance forces. Shortly after the intervention, the «Taliban»* government was overthrown. Under US control, the situation in Afghanistan gradually began to stabilize. Washington and other Western donors began to directly finance the Afghan budget, which contributed to the process of economic recovery and a general settlement of the situation. Against this background, for

⁵ Sarkorova A. CSTO explains the reasons for Uzbekistan's withdrawal from the bloc /30.06.2012/. Available from: https://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2012/06/120629_uzbekistan_odkb_exit

⁶ *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+

Astana, the topic of Afghanistan fades into the background due to the reduction of security risks.

As a contribution to strengthening peace in the region, since the second half of the 2000s, Kazakhstan, within the framework of an international initiative, has stepped up humanitarian and technical support to Afghanistan. In 2007, the authorities of the republic adopted a special plan to assist this country⁷. In accordance with this program; for example, it was decided to provide state grants for the education of 1,000 Afghan students in Kazakhstani universities. For these purposes, \$50 million were allocated. In addition, Kazakhstan donated funds for the construction of infrastructure facilities: schools, hospitals, roads, etc. In general, as of 2019, the total assistance of Kazakhstan amounted to more than \$80 million⁸.

It is important to note that at the first stage of the presence of coalition troops, the competition between the US and Russia in the region was important. This was also manifested in the situation with military bases in Kyrgyzstan. Washington has been using Manas since 2001 as a transit hub for operations in Afghanistan, while in 2003 Moscow signed an agreement with the Kyrgyz authorities to station its own aviation unit in Kant as part of the CSTO. Nevertheless, this rivalry did not turn into a sharp conflict.

In general, until 2014, relations between Russia and the United States were relatively even, which had a positive effect on the coordination of efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. Among other things, the Russian government allowed its airspace to be used to transport military goods to Afghanistan. From the point of view of Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy, this situation seemed quite favorable. Astana was relatively free to act, including offering various mediation efforts. But after the start of the Russian-Ukrainian military conflict in 2014, relations between the two powers deteriorated sharply. This immediately affected the position of the Russian Federation regarding cooperation with the West in Afghanistan. As a result, in 2015 Russia banned the transit of US military supplies through its territory⁹.

Characteristically, the changes that have taken place in relations between Russia and Western countries have had an impact on Moscow's position on that part of the transit of goods to Afghanistan, which was carried out through the territory of Kazakhstan. Some Russian media even put forward a version of the creation of a US military base in the Caspian Sea for the transportation of goods. In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan denied such allegations in its official statement¹⁰. Obviously, between Kazakhstan and Russia there was a misunderstanding at the official level on the

⁷ The first OSCE Summit in the new millennium will be held in Astana – the head of Kazakhstan /20.11. 2010/. Available from: https://www.inform.kz/ru/v-astane-sostoitsya-pervyy-v-novom-tysyacheletii-sammit-obse-glava-kazahstana_a2324353

⁸ Kazakhstan continues to develop a program aimed at the education of Afghan students /09.10.2019/. Available from: https://www.inform.kz/kz/kazakhstan-prodolzhaet-razvivat-programmu-napravlennoyu-na-obrazovanie-afganskikh-studentov_a3573522/amp

⁹ Russia has stopped the transit of NATO military cargo to Afghanistan /18.05.2015/. Available from: https://www.bbc.com/russian/international/2015/05/150518_russia_nato_afghanistan

¹⁰ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan denied the statements "about military bases in the Caspian Sea" /07/09/2018/. Available from: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/29352744.html>

issue of transit of goods to Afghanistan, as evidenced by the discussion of this issue at an informal level in the media. But the problem was settled after the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

When the US announced its withdrawal from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan was generally reserved about developments. Although some experts even before pointed out the existing risks for the countries of Central Asia [5:26]. But this still applied more to the states of the region directly bordering Afghanistan. In August 2021, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan issued a statement:

Kazakhstan calls on all parties involved to ensure the peaceful transit of power as the main prerequisite for internal stabilization. We support the statement of the UN Security Council on the establishment of an inclusive and representative government... The implementation of these provisions should be a necessary condition for starting a dialogue with the new government of Afghanistan¹¹.

In forming its own position on Afghanistan, the Kazakh government is guided by pragmatism. Since the main task is to prevent another round of civil war, the establishment of the power of the «Taliban»*, which would provide relative stability within the country, was considered by Astana as a more acceptable scenario compared to the alternative of starting an internal conflict.

In addition, a number of other factors should be noted. First, in recent years there has been a development of economic and trade ties between Astana and Kabul. Afghanistan has become an important market for goods for Kazakh producers. Thus, in pre-crisis 2020, bilateral trade reached \$624 million, up 55% year-on-year. At the same time, more than 90% is accounted for by Kazakhstani exports¹². Accordingly, Astana is interested in maintaining established supply channels.

It is also necessary to note the transit potential of Afghanistan. This aspect has long been discussed in expert circles as an important factor in rapprochement and economic cooperation between Central Asia and Kabul. By 2020, the tasks of creating transport corridors through Afghanistan were formulated. From the countries of the region, this idea is actively supported by Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. Kazakhstan is more reluctant to support this idea because, unlike these two border states, Kazakhstan is not as economically dependent on the southern route. For Tashkent and Ashgabat, it is extremely important to reach seaports and sales markets in South Asia, while for Astana, Europe-China is traditionally the main transit route. At the same time, the prospects for the development of the Afghan direction are not very clear. But the realization of the country's transit

11 The Foreign Ministry issued a statement on the situation in Afghanistan /19.08.2021/. Available from: <https://kapital.kz/gosudarstvo/98035/mid-opublikoval-zayavleniye-po-situatsii-v-afganistane.html>

12 The trade turnover of Kazakhstan and Afghanistan amounted to almost \$ 624 million /18.08.2021/. Available from:

<https://jltv.kz/ru/news/business/11614-pochti-624-mln-sostavil-tovarooborot-kazakhstana-i-afganistana>

potential would open up additional opportunities for the Kazakh economy. From the point of view of geography (landlocked country), the development of transport corridors has always been strategically important for Kazakhstan. It is significant that in 2022, the President of Kazakhstan, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, announced the readiness of the republic to participate in the construction of a railway along the Mazar-i-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar line from Afghanistan to Pakistan. In addition, it was said about Astana's intention to provide construction materials for the construction of this road and rolling stock¹³.

Despite the cessation of the work of banking institutions, Kazakh deliveries to Afghanistan not only did not decrease, but even increased. According to the results of January-September 2022, exports increased by 2.1 times compared to the same period last year and reached a record amount of \$635 million¹⁴. This reflects the desire to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe inside this country, as this could lead to an increase in refugees. Moreover, one of the main export items of the Republic of Kazakhstan is food. Today, Afghanistan accounts for almost half of all international supplies of Kazakh flour [4:24].

After the departure of the American military contingent from Afghanistan, the issue of regional security has again become topical. From this point of view, the countries of Central Asia, which in the past have already encountered an attempt to infiltrate individual detachments of militants into the region, are of particular concern.

It is important to note the presence of ideological risks:

since August 2021, state building in this country (Afghanistan. - Author's note) has been guided by a fundamentally different model, associated with a much greater role of religion in the organization of the state and society. Such a change in the development model from one that is oriented towards modernism to one that is obviously more archaic in nature can have important consequences. And not only for Afghanistan itself, but for the entire region. In fact, for the first time, supporters of the Deobandi direction in Islam came to power in a single country [2:11].

This form of Islam is distinguished by its radicalism, as the Deobandians call for a return to the historical role of Islam in society, "to a literal reading of the old religious tradition, idealization of the past. Hence the desire to follow the rigid religious practice of the Middle Ages" [3:469]. Given the presence in all societies of Central Asia of supporters of building a state on Islamic principles, the «Taliban»* model can become a guide for a large category of the population, including in Kazakhstan.

Speaking of potential threats, one should not forget about the potential flow of Afghan migrants. Part of the migrants will go to the north, where the Kazakh territory will be used either as a transit or as a final destination for refugees. Therefore, it is important for Kazakhstan to maintain relative stability within Afghanistan.

13 Vaal T. /Kazakhstan is ready to participate in the construction of a railway from Afghanistan to Pakistan /21.07.2022/. Available from: <https://vlast.kz/novosti/50899-kazakhstan-gotov-ucastvovat-v-stroitelstve-zeleznj-dorogi-iz-afganistana-v-pakistan-tokaev.html>

14 Kazakhstan provides Afghanistan with flour, and in return receives sugary drinks /03.11.2022/. Available from: <https://lsm.kz/tovarooborot-kazakhstana-s-afganistanom>

In October 2021, an official Kazakh delegation headed by the presidential representative for international cooperation, Yerzhan Kazykhanov, traveled to Kabul, where they met with representatives of the new Afghan administration, Abdul Ghani Baradar and Amir Khan Muttaki¹⁵. This was a signal of Astana's readiness to engage in dialogue with the «Taliban»* government, although so far the issue of recognizing the movement as the country's legitimate government has not been discussed. Kazakhstan will wait for such a decision from key international actors and only after that act in this direction.

In April 2023, news broke that representatives of the current «Taliban»* government would receive accreditation to conduct diplomatic activities at the Afghan embassy in Astana. The Kazakh side emphasized that the country “intends to build, first of all, trade and economic relations and provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.” The Republic will not yet establish official diplomatic relations with Kabul in accordance with the position of the UN¹⁶.

Conclusions

In general, today Kazakhstan takes a cautious position on the Afghan issue. From the point of view of security policy, the republic still relies on such structures as the CSTO and the SCO. As recent events show, the Kazakh authorities maintain limited contacts with the «Taliban»*, which is perceived as a factor in maintaining stability in the country. It is noteworthy that in January 2023, information appeared that Kazakhstan was resuming the educational program for Afghan students¹⁷. At the same time, Astana is ready to contribute to the opening of a transport corridor from Central to South Asia, as announced by the leadership of the republic.

Kazakhstan supports the international policy on Afghanistan on the issue of inclusive government and women's rights and other topical issues, and at the same time takes into account that these issues need to be addressed from a pragmatic point of view, as, for example, China.

¹⁵ Kazakh delegation and «Taliban»* discussed humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in Kabul /18.10.2021/. Available from: <https://rus.azattyq.org/a/31515939.html>

¹⁶ Urankaeva Zh. In Kazakhstan, the «Taliban»* were allowed to occupy the Embassy of Afghanistan /17.04.2023/. Available from: <https://kz.kursiv.media/>

¹⁷ Kazakhstan is going to resume educational program for Afghan students /23.01.2023/. Available from: <https://24.kz/ru/news/social/item/583549-kazakhstan-vozobnovit-obrazovatelnyuyu-programmu-dlya-afganskikh-studentov>

References

1. Akimbekov S. Afghan knot and security problems in Central Asia. Almaty, 2003 [In Russian].
2. Akimbekov S. Afghanistan and the Taliban*: from modernism to archaism, from resistance to recognition? // Kazakhstan Journal of Foreign Studies / Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies. 2022; 1-2(3-4):6-21 [In Russian].
3. Akimbekov S. History of Afghanistan. Astana-Almaty: IMEP at the fund of the first president, 2015 [In Russian].
4. Mayer S. Between strategic and material interests: Kazakhstan as a source of stability in Afghanistan // Kazakhstan Journal of Foreign Studies / Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies. 2022;1-2 (3-4):22-37 [In Russian].
5. Malysheva D. Post-Soviet Central Asia and its Asian neighbors //Russia and the new states of Eurasia. 2016; 4:19-30 [In Russian].
6. Mukimdzhanova R. Central Asian countries: the Asian vector of foreign policy. Moscow: Nauchnaya kniga, 2005 [In Russian].
7. Collins K. The limits of cooperation: Central Asia, Afghanistan, and the new Silk Road // Asia Policy. 2014; 17:18-26.
8. McCauley M. Afghanistan and Central Asia: a modern history. London, 2002.
9. Saikal A., Nourzhanov K. The spectrum of Afghanistan: security in Central Asia. London: I. B. Tauris, 2021.

About the author

Nuriddin SULTANMURATOV. PhD, Leading expert of the Institute of Asian Studies. Almaty, Kazakhstan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3711-4303>, Address: 19 of. 119, Kunaeva st., Almaty, Republic of Kazakhstan, Nuriddin.sultanmuratov@gmail.com

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

* 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+

Iran's Policy in the Situation of the Afghan Crisis After 2021

Jafar Haghpanah✉

Tehran University, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran

ghpanah2000@yahoo.com, <https://doi.org/0009-0007-3405-3054>

Abstract. The article is devoted to the policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran towards Afghanistan. An overview of Tehran's relations with Afghanistan is given, including ties between the two countries in the political, cultural, economic and humanitarian spheres. The main ways of Iran's influence on the situation in Afghanistan are shown. Iran's policy towards Afghanistan and the development of relations after the Taliban¹ came to power in August 2021 is analyzed.

Keywords: Iran, Afghanistan, Taliban, international relations

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Haghpanah J. Iran's Policy in the Situation of the Afghan Crisis After 2021. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2023; 2(8): 107-117, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-107-117](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-107-117)

Introduction

The turbulent events of the past four decades in Afghanistan testified to the role of both external players and regional international forces in them. One of the main factors that contributed to the continuation of the Afghan crisis can be considered precisely the external interference, rivalry and conflict of interests of competing states that turned this country into the arena of their proxy wars. To a greater extent, it was a rivalry between international interventionist forces such as the United States and NATO, and regional powers such as Iran, which have a historical commonality with Afghanistan based on

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+

geographical, demographic and civilizational ties, and, as a result, pursue their own legitimate interests in this country, since instability, insecurity and foreign interference in the affairs of Afghanistan immediately affect the interests, security and internal political stability of such states due to their geographical proximity and demographic ties with this country. Iran is considered as one of the actors that, based on its geopolitical, geocultural and geo-economic capabilities, in addition to direct influence on Afghanistan, can play a decisive role and influence the influence of other states on this country². For this reason, questions of Iran's support or opposition to regional and international alliances on the future of Afghanistan and instability after the re-emergence of the «Taliban»³ (such as the migration crisis, drug transit and terrorism), as well as the transformation of this country into a center of activity for extremist and terrorist groups, like «ISIS»⁴ and «Al-Qaeda»⁴, are of great importance. In this article, this topic is analyzed from the point of view of Iran's policy towards the Afghan problem.

The author involved for the preparation of the article research authors in Persian: Rahimi Sardar Mohammad, Hakpanah Jafar, Taniwal Mohammad Zarif, Amin Hamidulla, Sajjadi Abdul Qayyum, Uruzgani Maseh, Buzan Barri, Hakpanah Jafar [1–6]. As well as articles by authors in English: David Steven, Haghpanah Jafar, Tisheyar Mandana, Mohammed S. Mahmood [7–9]. The works of these authors made it possible to determine the scientific novelty of the study.

Materials and Methods

Theoretical works of Iranian and foreign researchers, materials of periodicals and news agencies, statements and speeches of officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran were used as materials. The study was carried out using system analysis, synthesis and system-structural approach. The main approaches of Iranian policy to the Afghan problem were identified, which made it possible to formulate hypotheses about the concept of Iranian foreign policy in the Afghan direction.

² Rahimi S M., Hakpanah J. The geopolitics of Afghanistan and the transformation into a Working Asia, Tehran. Imam Sadegh University, «Imam Sadegh», 2021:12 [In Persian].

³ *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+

⁴ *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+

Results

“Omnibalancing”: the concept of Iranian foreign policy in Afghanistan

Iran has a 950-kilometer water and land border with Afghanistan and is considered the shortest and safest route connecting this landlocked country with open waters⁵. Iran's strong influence in Afghanistan is formed by: long-standing linguistic, religious and confessional ties with the majority of the Persian-speaking Muslim population, especially with the Hazara minority, the experience of supporting Mujahideen parties and groups during the Soviet military stay, close ties with most of the ethnic, religious and political elites of this country and the forty-year presence in Iran of more than five million Afghan forced refugees⁶. Iran's economy complements and responds to the needs of Afghanistan. The volume of trade between the two countries before the fall of the republican regime exceeded \$2.5 billion and, despite the ongoing instability, remains the same to this day thanks to the railway and transit network and connections with the ports of Bandar Abbas and Chabahar, the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman. Despite not recognizing the «Taliban»* government, Iran continues to meet Afghanistan's economic needs for fuel, energy, and help complete some small infrastructure and industrial projects. The people of Afghanistan have a good relationship with Iran due to the fact that Iran provides food, medical and educational services. The combination of geopolitical, geocultural and geo-economic advantages has allowed Iran to become the only regional power that has maintained simultaneous contacts with all parties and groups, political, religious and ethnic elites of Afghanistan over the past years and is able to establish balanced relations with the armed power that has established itself in the country⁷.

This suggests that Iran's policy towards Afghanistan has ideological foundations and, in the words of Barry Buzan, is based on the idea of the “sovereignty of the system”⁸. This is support for Islamist movements, the desire for independence, the denial of the domination of world powers, support for the oppressed and the ruling regime, which gives Iran's foreign policy a strong idealistic and ideological character. Of course, along with idealism, there are pragmatic and realistic components necessary to ensure national interests, counter security threats and acquire economic benefits.

Based on the same concept, Iran uses its geographical advantages to create a safe transit for Afghanistan's trade with the world and Iran's opposition to coalition building and unilateral actions of competing powers.

⁵ Taniwal Mohammad Zarif, Amin Hamidullah. The economic geography of Afghanistan. Kabul: Kabul University, 2003:30 [In Persian].

⁶ Sajjadi Abdul Qayyum. Afghanistan's Foreign Policy, Kabul: Sobh-e Umid, 2020:339 [In Persian].

⁷ Uruzgani M. Afghanistan. Rainbow of nations. Kabul: Khorasan Educational and Publishing Center, 1995:28 [In Persian].

⁸ Buzan B. People, states and fear. Tehran: Research Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010:130 [In Persian].

This concept can be called omnibalancing. The neorealist theorist Stephen David's interpretation of this term will help explain Iran's foreign policy. Such concepts of the school of realism as etatism, the principle of survival and self-help mean the creation by regional powers of a balance between internal and external threats and their refusal to act independently to repel external threats at the regional level.

This theory explains the ability of regional powers to act independently of the international system to ensure their own interests and repel regional threats. How the principle of balancing is applied in foreign policy depends on how leaders perceive the nature of their power; dynamics of stable and unstable events and threats in the world system⁹.

As part of omnibalancing, combining idealistic and ideological approaches with realism and pragmatism, the Islamic Republic of Iran pursued a policy towards Afghanistan in 2020-2021, which is being implemented with some changes after the return to power of the «Taliban»*:

- balancing between ethnic, linguistic and religious groups, strengthening the positions of the Shiites-Khazaras and Tajiks and preventing the ethnic domination of other groups;
- a political balance between secular political, intellectual tendencies and a Western-oriented elite, influenced by the United States, with the support of traditional mujahideen groups and elites;
- Balancing and countering the threat of religious extremism brought by «ISIS»* and «Al-Qaeda»*, with the support of the central government and anti-«ISIS»* groups, including the «Taliban»* groups that have competed and antagonized Iran in the past;
- creating an economic balance in relations with competing regional and world powers through active joint participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan with an emphasis on energy, transit and trade.

This policy is carried out through: the construction of the Mashhad-Herat railway, the strengthening of border exchanges through the creation of small border bazaars, as well as cooperation with such an interested power as India, which in 2016 led to the conclusion of a trilateral agreement between Tehran, Kabul and Delhi for the development of the port Chabahar in southeastern Iran.

From 2002 to 2021, this policy was carried out in the form of simultaneous cooperation with most parties, organizations, elites and media, from the elites associated with the central government in Kabul to the leaders of the mujahideen parties and critics of the governments of Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. Despite understanding that the Afghan governments, and especially Ashraf Ghani's cabinet, are puppets and dependent on Washington, Tehran officials supported the central government. Even after the Doha agreement between Zalmay Khalilzad and Mullah Baradar and the U.S. decisive shift from supporting the political regime in Kabul to a deal with the «Taliban»*, Tehran officials have not stopped cooperating with Ashraf Ghani's team, according to former Iranian

⁹ David S. Choosing Sides: Alignment and Realignment in the Third World. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991.

ambassador to Kabul Bahador Aminian. According to the same Aminiyan, until the last days of the fall of Kabul, he was personally in contact with First Vice President Amrullah Saleh and National Security Advisor Hamdullah Mohib and informed them of Tehran's readiness to provide all kinds of assistance and become an intermediary between the government and the «Taliban»¹⁰.

One of the unclear points in Iran's foreign policy in Afghanistan is related to the content of contacts or possible Iranian support for the «Taliban»* in the 2010s. and at present. Western, and especially American, media, as well as Ashraf Ghani's team, have always accused Tehran of supporting the «Taliban»* and argued that Iran's ties with the «Taliban»* were the reason for the coming to power and legitimization of this group. In response to this, Aminian notes that this accusation by the United States and Ashraf Ghani's team is put forward in order to justify and hide their own inefficiency and wrong policies, which led to the fall of the republican system, since at that time Iran had only informal contacts with the moderate wing. «Taliban»*. These contacts became official in 2020 during the visit of Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar to Tehran and his meeting with the then Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. Said visit and other contacts with the «Taliban»* were generally reported to officials in Kabul, and Hamdullah Mohib, national security adviser to Ashraf Ghani's government, was informed of this during meetings with his Iranian counterpart, Ali Shamkhani¹¹. And this was despite the fact that White House officials reached an agreement in advance with the «Taliban»* in Doha (Qatar) and, in addition to giving official status to the «Taliban»* and accepting its demands, including the release of five thousand dangerous prisoners from among the members of this movement, completely excluded government under their control in Kabul from the process of negotiations and agreements.

Currently, Iran's relationship with the «Taliban»* is based on the notion that the «Taliban»* are an integral reality of traditional Afghan society and have a desire for independence, opposition to Western culture and American dominance, that is, those features that are more or less similar to the approach that prevails in foreign policy. Iran. In addition, this movement is trying with all its might to disengage from extremist movements and «ISIS»*.

Of course, all this does not mean complete unanimity and the absence of serious disagreements in the principles of governance or the absence of rivalry and problems between Tehran and Kabul. Despite the agreement of the parties to continue border economic exchanges in the field of energy, fuel transit and mining, cooperation in the field of education and Iran's constant support for Afghan refugees, as well as joint efforts to protect border security, the behavior of the «Taliban»* towards the Shiite religious minority and their educational politics are very far from the views of the Iranian side. The parties did not come to a solution to the problems associated with forced refugees, border rivers and wetlands, as well as Iran's water use on the Girmānd River, the implementation of economic agreements in the field of mines, transterritorial agriculture, exports and imports. In

¹⁰ Interview with Bahador Aminian, former Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan. Kabul: ToloNews, декабрь 2022. Available from: <https://tolonews.com/fa/must-see-videos-177521>

¹¹ Ibid.

such a situation, Iran's general policy will continue to be to continue sporadic and limited cooperation with the «Taliban»* without their recognition, and the activities of the Afghan embassy in Tehran, as well as consulates in Mashhad and Zahedan, will be carried out without official recognition of the «Taliban»*¹². This means that Tehran will keep its distance and, at the same time, continue contacts with the leaders of the opposition groups to the «Taliban»*, who, despite the lack of a strong base inside the country, the fragmentation and weakness of the organization and leadership, put forward the slogan of overthrowing the «Taliban»*.

Another complex and contentious aspect of Iran's policy in Afghanistan has to do with the country's opposition to US goals and actions in Afghanistan. This is due to the strategic rivalry and ideological contradictions between Iran and the United States. In general, Tehran sees the presence and influence of Washington in the peripheral regions of the Middle East as an existential threat.

Anti-Americanism is one of the foundations of the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic and is important for its identity¹³. To the extent Iran's policy can be considered suffering from anti-Americanization so much that it overshadows even normal relations between the two neighboring countries.

From this point of view, Iran regards the change of power in Afghanistan in 2021 as a shameful expulsion of US forces and a failure of US plans in the region and, compared to the threats associated with the US presence in Afghanistan, considers possible problems with the «Taliban»* to be less serious and manageable. One of the incentives for Iran's cooperation with the «Taliban»* will be to create maximum distance between this group and America and its allies.

From the same point of view, Iran's cooperation with Russia and other powers that have great influence in Afghanistan should be considered. One can predict increased cooperation with US competitors such as Russia and China, which are exposed to threats from Afghanistan, such as the spread of extremism, the rise of «ISIS»*, drug smuggling and other forms of organized crime.

Conclusions

The return of the «Taliban»* to power in Afghanistan can be seen as a combination of opportunities and threats for the Islamic Republic of Iran. From the perspective of officials in Tehran, the opportunities now outweigh the threats and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the period of stabilization and institutionalization of relations and cooperation with the «Taliban»* has taken a long time, and during the long-term transition, things will not go beyond limited cooperation without recognition of the «Taliban»*. In terms of recognition, Iran will not be the first country to recognize the

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Hakpanah J. Kurds and the foreign policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Tehran: Abrar Center for International Studies, 2008:190–193.

«Taliban»* and will follow in line with international decisions regarding the «Taliban»*. The expansion of bilateral relations, as well as the recognition of the «Taliban»*, will depend on the fulfillment of Tehran's preconditions, which include such important internal transformations in Afghanistan as the formation of an inclusive government and ensuring the rights and security of Shiites, ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities, obstructing the activities of terrorist groups and preventing Afghanistan from becoming a base for anti-Iranian activities of rival states, as well as solving problems related to the border wetlands and rivers of the two countries.

Regarding the chronic problem of forced migration and the presence of about 8 million Afghan refugees, Iran will also continue its assistance and hospitality, despite the lack of support from the world community¹⁴. Another important point is Tehran's regionally oriented approach to the crisis in Afghanistan, joint efforts to establish cooperation and security of regional states, which can be continued within the framework of the SCO and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Iran's excellent geographic location and transit advantages, soft power can serve as a basis for regional cooperation to help Afghanistan overcome the current challenges and ensure the security, stability and well-being of the people of Afghanistan and the countries of the region.

References

1. Rahimi Sardar Mohammad, Haghpanah Jafar. Geopolitics of Afghanistan and Transformations in Western Asia. Tehran: Imam Sadegh University, 2021 [In Persian].
2. Taniwal Mohammad Zarif, Amin Hamidullah. Economic geography of Afghanistan. Kabul: Kabul University, 2003 [In Persian].
3. Sajadi Abdul Qayyum. Foreign Policy of Afghanistan. Kabul: Sobh-e Umid, 2020:339 [In Persian].
4. Uruzgani Maseh. Afghanistan. Rainbow of Nations. Kabul: Educational and publishing center "Khorasan", 1995 [In Persian].
5. Buzan Barry. People, states and fear. Tehran: Research Institute for Strategic Studies, 2010 [In Persian].
6. Khakpanah Jafar. Kurds and the Foreign Policy of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Tehran: Center for International Studies "Abrar", 2008 [In Persian].
7. David Steven. Choosing sides: Alignment and Realignment. The Third World. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991 [In English].
8. Haghpanah J., Tisheyar M. Iran and immigration crisis. Escaping the Escape. By Bertelsmann Stitung (ed.), 2017 [In English].
9. Mohammed S. Mahmood. The significance of Omni-Balancing theory. Clarifying: Third World leaders Policies. Baghdad: University of Mosul, 2019 [In English].

¹⁴ Haghpanah Jafar, Tisheyar Mandana. Iran and Immigration Crisis. In: Escaping the Escape. By Bertelsmann Stitung (ed), 2017.

About the author

Jafar HAGHPANAH. PhD (hist), assistant professor at the University of Tehran, Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, Head of Afghanistan Studies Center, <https://doi.org/0009-0007-3405-3054>. Address: 16th Azar Str., Enghelab Sq., Tehran, Iran, ghpanah2000@yahoo.com

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

* 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+

CHANGING SOCIETY

Social Structure,
Social Institutions and Processes.
Political sociology

RUSSIA & WORLD: SCIENTIFIC DIALOGUE

**РОССИЯ
И МИР**
НАУЧНЫЙ ДИАЛОГ

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.

Komleva V.V.

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

In Tajikistan, they are sure that the Taliban with its ideology, their interpretation of Sharia, Pashtun nationalism poses a threat to the Tajiks of Afghanistan. Tajiks under the Taliban* are removed from power, the policy of the Taliban* will lead to limiting the scope of the Dari (Tajik) language, which for more than a thousand years was the state language, the language of interethnic communication in this country. The Taliban regime* threatens to destroy the centuries-old historical and cultural heritage of Tajiks in this country.*

Iskandarov K.

Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation and Security Problems after Coming to Power the Taliban*
Movement: A View from Tajikistan

Whatever the ultimate goals of the Taliban on the women's issue are, one thing is clear: they look at the issue of women's rights from the point of view of religion, while being guided by their own, special interpretation of Sharia. That is, the restrictions they imposed on women are the product of the views of the leaders of the movement themselves, but this is presented as the requirements of religion.

Okimbekov U. V.

Women's Issue in Afghanistan under the Taliban*

The new Afghan authorities had to deal with extremely difficult socio-economic and natural challenges. Nevertheless, for more than a year, the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has continued to control most of the country and respond to the challenges in one way or another, the collapse of the state has not happened.

Zimin I. A.

The Social Challenges to the New Taliban Government*

*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+

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

Valentina V. Komleva ✉

National Research Institute for Communications Development, Moscow, Russia

komleva@nicrus.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5376-0984.ru>

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 Taliban¹. The ability of the Taliban¹ 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 Taliban¹ 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

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Komleva V.V. Communication Regime of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan: socio-political analysis. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023;2(8): 118-141, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-118-141](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-118-141)

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.

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 Afghanistan²; materials on the history of Afghan media and journalists³; 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.

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:

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

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

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 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 regime.

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).

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 Center⁴ considered an independent, non-governmental organization operating under the country's media law⁵ to protect the rights

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>

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 Media⁶. 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 Afghanistan⁷. 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 *EMobile reporting* (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 DW⁸ 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.

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-afghanistan>

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 media⁹.

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 ISIS⁹ 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-Qaeda¹⁰, the «Taliban»* Movement of Pakistan, Lashkar-e Tayiba, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan¹¹ 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

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+

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 Kuper province), Gorukh-e Mahaz-e Fedayi (Uruzgan, Kandahar and Helmand), Mujahedeen Movement, Islamic Jihad Movement¹². 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.

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).

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 before¹³ 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 country¹⁴.

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.

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>

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	-	-	-
Tumbir	-	-	-	-	-	0,28	-	-	-	-	-	-
news.ycombinator.com	-	-	-	-	-	-	0,27	-	-	-	-	-
The others	0,67	0,83	0,85	0,51	0,3	0,49	0,13	-	0,16	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 Browser – 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, Huawei, Oppo, Vivo and others) occupy less than 5% of the 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

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 Kabulov²¹, 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

¹⁹ Konarovskiy M.A., Belkov E.A., Zimin I.A. Afghanistan: challenges and prospects. Available from: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/afghanistan-vyzovy-i-perspektivy/?sphrase_id=102528128

²⁰ Konarovskiy M.A., Belkov E.A., Zimin I.A. Afghanistan: challenges and prospects. Available from: https://russiancouncil.ru/analytics-and-comments/comments/afghanistan-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>

some of the incidents, while the rest of the incidents, according to AFJC²², 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 data²³, 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 restrictions²⁶. 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

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/>

country. Now the number of women in the media has decreased by 67%, 899 women have lost their jobs in the media²⁷. According to IMS²⁸ in 16 provinces there are no working female journalists or media employees at all²⁹.

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.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ IMS (International Media Support) — an international non-profit organization founded in 2001. Headquartered in Copenhagen (Denmark), regional offices around the world. The main funding is provided by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Denmark, Norway.

²⁹ 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/>

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.

References

1. Akimbekov S.M. The Afghan knot and the security problems of Central Asia. Alma-Ata: KISI, 2003:163 [In Russian].
2. Bahadari A.F., Qasemi M.A. Political development of Afghanistan after 2001. *Voprosy politologii*. 2022, Vol. 12, № 3(79):816-828. DOI 10.35775/PSI.2022.79.3.020 [In Russian].
3. Belokrenitsky V.Ya. Pashtuns and Pashtun tribes of Afghanistan – number of population and settlement. *Afghanistan*.<url>, 2022. 13 January. Available from: <https://afghanistan.ru/doc/147751.html> (accessed 20.02.2023) [In Russian].
4. Belokrenitsky V.Ya., Sikoiev R.R. Authoritarianism and democracy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moscow: IV REN, 2013:176 [In Russian].
5. Belokrenitsky V.Ya., Sikoiev R.R. The Taliban’ movement and the prospects of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, 2014:216 [In Russian].
6. Bosin Yu.S. Afghanistan: Multiethnic Society and State Power in a historical context. Moscow: Humanitarian, 2002:232 [In Russian].

* 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+

** Included in the register of foreign agents (as of June 25, 2023); 18+

*** Activities in Russia blocked at the request of Roskomnadzor; 18+

7. Bosin Yu.S. The ethnic factor in the intra-Afghan conflict (historical analysis). Vostok. 1999. 5:69–79 [In Russian].
8. Gasumyanov V.I., Komleva V.S. Communication regime as a factor of cross-country interactions: problem statement. Mezhdunarodnaja zhizn'. 2020,10:38–49 [In Russian].
9. Iscandarov K. Regional and international factors of the collapse of the Republic in Afghanistan. Mezhdunarodnyje otnoshenija I besopasnost'. 2022, 3(3):49–62 [In Russian].
10. Katkov I. Or. Social aspects of the tribal organization of the Pashtuns. Afghanistan: History, economy, culture. Moscow: Nauka, 1989:39–57 [In Russian].
11. Komleva V.S., Nessar M.O. The potential of the network approach in the study of the dynamics of political orders in Afghanistan. Vostochnaja Anaitica. 2023, Vol. 14, №1:90–103. DOI 10.31696/2227-5568-2023-01-090-103 [In Russian].
12. Komleva V.S., Nessar M.O. The role of NGOs in the transversal three-dimensional model of the Afghan community. Obosrevatel. 2023, 3(398):56–70. DOI 10.48137/2074-2975_2023_3_56 [In Russian].
13. Komleva V.S. The role of NGOs in the transformation of the traditional network model of Afghan society. Observatel–Observer. 2021, 12:5–12. https://doi.org/10.48137/2074-2975_2021_12_5 [In Russian].
14. Komleva V.S. Securitization of national Identity in the Communication regimes of Central Asian countries. Mezhdunarodnaja zhizn'. 2021, 12:66–74 [In Russian].
15. Komleva V.S. Country communication regime as a socio-political phenomenon. Russia and the World: Scientific Dialogue. 2021, 1(1):13–26. <https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2021-1-1-13-26> [In Russian].
16. Komleva V.S. Methodology for analyzing the manageability of country communication regimes. Russia and the World: Scientific Dialogue. 2022, 3(5):94–107. [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-3\(5\)-94-107](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-3(5)-94-107) [In Russian].
17. Komleva V.S. Manageability of country communication regime. Communicalighija. 2022, 10(1):139–154. <https://doi.org/10.21453/2311-3065-2022-10-1-139-154> [In Russian].
18. Komleva V.S. Nessar M.O. The role of NGOs in the transformation of the traditional network model of Afghan society. Obosrevatel. 2023, 3(398):56–70. DOI 10.48137/2074-2975_2023_3_56 [In Russian].
19. Konarovskiy M.A. Afghanistan at the turn of the century: a new crossroads of fate. Moscow MGIMO-University, 2020:355 [In Russian].
20. Korgun V.D. The history of Afghanistan. XX century. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Kraft+, 2004:581 [In Russian].
21. Cousho F. The state of education in Afghanistan after September 11, 2001. Historic. 2020, 2(22):163–171 [In Russian].
22. Laletin Yu.P. Afghanistan's Political System as an Ideal Type: the impact of Tribes. Moscow MGIMO University, 2008:105 [In Russian].
23. Leger I. Communication Regime of the Republic of Moldova: Assessment of Manageability. Russia and the World: Scientific Dialogue. 2022, 4(6):86–109. [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-4\(6\)-86-109](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2022-2-4(6)-86-109) [In Russian].
24. Mohammad K. Features of the formation and development of the structure of official, independent and opposition media in Afghanistan (1980–1990): specialty 23.00.03 “Political culture and ideology”: abstract of the dissertation for the degree of Candidate of Historical Sciences. Moscow, 1993:22 [In Russian].
25. Nessar M.O., Komleva V.S. The Afghan model of decentralized network structures. A look at the dynamics of political order in Afghanistan. Observer. 2022, 2(385):50–71. DOI 10.48137/2074-2975_2022_02_50 [In Russian].
26. Nessar O. Political development of Afghanistan: Estimates and forecasts (2001–2014). Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, 2017:140 [In Russian].
27. Nessar O. Government of National Unity in Afghanistan. Vestnic of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. 2018, 3:145–154 [In Russian].
28. Nessar O. The ethno-tribal factor and the political process in modern Afghanistan. Islam in the Middle East. 2015, 9: 379–383 [In Russian].
29. Nikityuk V.A. “Court liberalism”: the socio-political life of Afghanistan in 1910–1920. Theory of Law and Interstate Relations. 2021. Vol. 1, № 8(20):540–544 [In Russian].
30. Plastun V. Pashtuns and their role in political life. Asia and Africa today. 1995, 10:49–50 [In Russian].
31. Romodin V.A. Some historical and demographic data on the Afghan (Pashtun) population of Afghanistan. Countries and peoples of the East. Issue XV. Africa and Asia. Moscow: Nauka, GWRL, 1973:169–172 [In Russian].
32. Slinkin M.F. The People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan at power. The period of Taraki-Amin

- (1978–1979). Simferopol: Simferopol State University, 1999:359 [In Russian].
33. Khaneev M.V. The ethnic factor in the political construction of the Afghan statehood. Abstract of the dissertation for the degree of Candidate of Political Sciences. Moscow: Russian Academy of State Services under the President of the Russian Federation, 2010:25 [In Russian].
34. Khristoforov V.S. (Afghanistan: the military and political presence of the USSR, 1979–1989). Moscow: IRI RAS, 2016:544 [In Russian].
35. Sharifi M.S. Problems of education development in Afghanistan: abstract of the dissertation for the degree of Candidate of pedagogical sciences. Monday, 2010:25 [In Russian].
36. Pohanyar R.S. The role of scientific and academic institutions in strengthening peace in Afghanistan. Actual Science. 2021, 2(43):55–62 [In English].
37. Seyed H.M. Religious systems in Afghanistan. Actual Science. 2021, 2(43):73–79 [In English].
38. Ushakova E.V. The existence of Afghanistan in the conditions of a “stateless society”. Social Phenomena and Processes. 2022, 2:18–26 [In English].
39. Wahid S. Media role in Afghanistan presidential elections. Vestnic of Young Scientists of St. Petersburg State University of Technology and Design. 2021, 1:427–431 [In English]

About the authors

Valentina V. KOMLEVA DSc (Soc.). Deputy Director on Scientific Work of the National Research Institute of Communications Development, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5376-0984>. Address: 22/1, Korobeinikov per, Moscow, 119571, Russian Federation, komleva@nicrus.ru.

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Submitted: 20 April 2023. Approved after peer reviewing: 25 May 2023. Accepted for publication: 15 June 2023. Published: 25 June, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation and Security Problems after Coming to Power the Taliban^{*1} movement: A view from Tajikistan

Kosimsho Iskandarov✉

National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan

ikosimsho@gmail.com, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7933-2037>

Abstract. The article analyzes the attitude of Tajikistan to the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and to security problems in this country after the Taliban^{*} came to power in August 2021. Unlike many states in the region, which were not particularly worried about the transition of Afghanistan under the control of a terrorist organization, this event negative reaction in the Tajik society. It perceived the threat to the Tajiks of Afghanistan as a threat to itself, its language, culture, values and, in general, the very existence of the nation. Tajik President Emomali Rahmon openly insisted on the formation of an inclusive government, on the obligatory consideration of the interests of ethnic Tajiks, who are about 46 percent of the population of Afghanistan. The consequences of the coming of the Taliban^{*} to power are for the first time seen in Tajikistan as a threat to the national identity of the Tajiks, Tajiks as a nation.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Taliban^{*}, humanitarian situation, Tajiks, Tajikistan, security

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Iskandarov K. Afghanistan Humanitarian Situation and Security Problems After Coming to Power the Taliban^{*} Movement: A View from Tajikistan. *Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue*. 2023; 2(8): 142-157, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-142-157](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-142-157)

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

After the flight of the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, M.A.Ghani, from Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, and the transition to the control of the «Taliban»^{*} throughout the country, a difficult socio-economic, political, and humanitarian situation has developed. Events developed rapidly, and perhaps, with the exception of the president himself and his closest aides, no one could have imagined that the state would disintegrate so quickly and most importantly without resistance, just its surrender to the «Taliban»^{*} terrorist organization, the 300,000-strong army trained according to NATO standards would crumble. But if you analyze the whole situation of recent years, you can understand that the collapse of the republic was not sudden, it happened gradually. The prerequisites were laid back in 2014, when a deep political crisis began as a result of massive falsification of the results of the presidential elections, and the legitimacy of the political power of Afghanistan was called into question. Although the formation of the Government of National Unity temporarily mitigated the severity of the crisis, the ineffective policy and political ambitions of President M.A.Ghani, his selfishness, and an unprecedented level of corruption led to a weakening of the state, discontent among the population and the political elite of the country. This could not but affect the mood in the army, the policy of foreign countries towards the regime of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

During the period of negotiations between the United States and the «Taliban»^{*}, in the capitals of some leading countries and states of the region, aspirations to establish broader cooperation with the «Taliban»^{*} intensified, and the rhetoric towards this terrorist organization changed. Many countries offered assistance in holding a meeting between the «Taliban»^{*} and representatives of other political forces in Afghanistan. A campaign began on the pages of the press and on television to create a new image of the «Taliban»^{*} movement, which began to be called a “political organization”, a “national movement”, was considered almost the only real force in the fight against ISIS-Khorasan^{*3}, etc.

This process, in a situation where the «Taliban»^{*} was banned as a terrorist organization in these countries, and its leaders were blacklisted by the UN, looked strange in Tajikistan.

Unlike other countries, Tajikistan's policy towards the «Taliban»^{*} has not changed. Tajikistan did not take part in behind-the-scenes games with the «Taliban»^{*} and, given the experience of the 1990s, adhered to a clear and unambiguous policy that viewed the «Taliban»^{*} as a terrorist organization with all the ensuing consequences. The leadership of Tajikistan has always advocated a political solution to the conflict in Afghanistan.

² *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+

³ *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+

There are not many scientific works on this topic yet. The author used the works of both domestic and foreign authors, which touch upon such issues as the history of the resettlement of Afghan tribes to the north of Afghanistan, attempts to limit the scope of the Dari language and the monopolization of power by the nationalist circles of the Pashtun establishment, which have not lost their relevance today. In particular, this is the work of P.Alekseenkov [1], R.Makhmadshoev [3], Kh.Nazarov [5], Afghan historian M.S.Farhang [6]. The security problems of the region in the context of the coming to power of the «Taliban»* are considered, in particular, in the works of J.Latifov [2], Sh.Rizoen and M.Giyosov [4], and others.

The purpose of this article is to analyze the current situation in Tajikistan and the security problems in Afghanistan after the «Taliban»* came to power.

Materials and Methods

The study used the historical method, as well as methods of comparative analysis, induction and deduction, observation, etc.

The material was: speeches and interviews of the Presidents of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin, of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon and former President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I.Karimov, of the Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation S.Shoigu, Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation N.Patrushev and Director of the Second Department of Asia of the Russian Foreign Ministry Z.Kabulov and others, who served as the most important sources for writing this work.

The nature of the work required the analysis of a large amount of empirical material in the Tajik segment of Facebook, books of poems published in support of the struggle of the Panjshirs, and the author's personal observations of the reaction of Tajiks to the events in Afghanistan.

Results

On February 29, 2020, in the capital of Qatar, Doha, an Agreement was signed between the United States and the «Taliban»*, which, according to many experts, created all the prerequisites for the transfer of power to the «Taliban»*. In the opinion of Professor J.Latifov, "the participation of the «Taliban»* in the negotiations was a screen, a spectacle behind which the goal of seizing power was hidden" [2:69].

April 14, 2021, when US President Joe Biden announced the complete withdrawal of the American military contingent from Afghanistan by September 11, 2021, should be considered the starting point for the collapse of the state. Until that time, some circles still hoped for intra-Afghan talks in Doha, for the results of the Istanbul Conference and formation of a coalition government.

The «Taliban»*, apparently, were looking for an excuse to refuse to participate in the Istanbul Peace Conference in order to seize power by force. Therefore, J. Biden's statement

on the completion of the withdrawal of troops by September 11, 2021 was considered a violation of the Doha Agreement, which provided for the complete withdrawal of American troops by May 1, 2021. The «Taliban»* announced their refusal to take part in the work of the Istanbul Peace Conference and in general from participating in any or negotiations until foreign troops are withdrawn. The «Taliban»* leaders said they considered themselves free from their obligations and promised to take "adequate measures". The result was a massive forceful seizure of territories under the control of the state.

It is noteworthy that representatives of leading countries, including the United States, publicly warned the «Taliban»* during the negotiations to refuse to seize power by force, called for the formation of a coalition transitional government, and spoke about the inadmissibility of the revival of the regime of the Islamic Emirate by the «Taliban»*. They promised that otherwise the «Taliban»* regime would be isolated and without financial assistance. Such statements were made by representatives of Troika (USA, Russia, China) and Troika Plus (USA, Russia, China, Pakistan, Iran) in Moscow. Now they watched the "triumphal procession" of the «Taliban»*, and then de facto recognized the Islamic Emirate of the «Taliban»*.

It seems that many leading countries and countries of the region were aware of the behind-the-scenes games taking place; they were not particularly worried about the transition of Afghanistan under the control of the «Taliban»* terrorist organization. In Russia, some official circles also believed that the «Taliban»* did not pose a threat to the countries of Central Asia. Moreover, Zamir Kabulov, Special Representative of the Russian President for Afghanistan, Director of the Second Asian Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, speaking at a round table organized by the Foundation for the Support of Public Diplomacy named after Gorchakov said that "the presence of the «Taliban»* in northern Afghanistan will curb the growth of threats from the Islamic State terrorist group"⁴ concerning the countries of Central Asia".⁵

The only country that from the very beginning was concerned about the ongoing transition under the control of the «Taliban»* of vast territories without resistance and by order from Kabul was the Republic of Tajikistan. The leadership of Tajikistan was especially worried that the collapse of the Afghan state and the transition under the control of terrorists began from the northeastern provinces, from areas directly bordering Tajikistan. In the 1990s, the «Taliban»*, despite repeated attempts, failed to capture the northeastern provinces, which served as the main base of the anti-«Taliban»* resistance under the command of Ahmad Shah Massoud. This time, the «Taliban»* took into account the experience of the 1990s, and, in an effort to prevent the formation of a new anti-«Taliban»* resistance in the north, they took control of the entire territory along the perimeter of the

⁴ *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+

⁵ The Foreign Ministry explained the need for the presence of the «Taliban»* in Afghanistan. Available from: <https://ria.ru/20210803/afghanistan-1744148413.html?ysclid=li8xk6jtpb591177251> (accessed 20.02.2023).

Afghan-Tajik border. Hundreds of government troops crossed into Tajikistan without much resistance.

After the transition of the border districts of Afghanistan under the control of the «Taliban»*, as the National News Agency of Tajikistan (NIAT) Khovar wrote, “On July 22, 2021, at four o’clock in the morning, by order of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces of Tajikistan, for the first time in the history of the independent state of Tajikistan, throughout the republic began checking the combat readiness of the Armed Forces, law enforcement agencies and personnel of mobilization reserves under the name “Marz-2021” (“Border-2021”). 100,000 servicemen of the Armed Forces and law enforcement agencies, as well as 130,000 officers and soldiers of the mobilization reserve, a total of 230,000 people, gathered in response to an alarm signal in the areas of operation and checked their combat readiness. 20 thousand officers and soldiers of the mobilization reserve were additionally sent to the border regions of Tajikistan with the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to replenish the units of the Border Troops.⁶ All this testified to the special concern of the leadership of Tajikistan in connection with the current “extremely complex and uncertain situation” in the neighboring country.

All this testified to the special concern of the leadership of Tajikistan in connection with the current “extremely complex and uncertain situation” in the neighboring country.

The transfer of entire counties and then provinces to the «Taliban»* was explained in Kabul as a tactical retreat with a promise to return them to state control. However, as events unfolded, it became clear that no one was going not only to return the lost territories, but also to protect at least the capital of the country.

After the country’s President M. A. Ghani and his closest aides left Afghanistan, power passed to the «Taliban»*, most people in Afghanistan were horrified. People tried to leave Afghanistan as best they could, even climbing onto the on the chassis of an American transport plane.

The second period of the «Taliban»* in power caused a particularly negative reaction in Tajik society. In Tajikistan, they closely followed the events and sincerely worried how the achievements of the last 20 years were crumbling, people’s hopes for freedom of speech, for the establishment of democracy, for the observance of human rights, women’s rights, the rights of non-Pashtun ethnic groups, especially Tajiks. Various segments of the population in Tajikistan for the first time began to perceive the «Taliban»* as a threat not only to the security of Tajikistan, which has always been said, but “as an anti-Tajik phenomenon that threatens, first of all, the Persian-speaking population of Afghanistan” [4:266].

The other neighboring countries also warned about the negative consequences of the policy of discrimination and non-observance of the interests of various ethnic groups in Afghanistan. For example, on December 6, 2001, the President of Uzbekistan I. Karimov, in his speech at the VII session of the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan, noted that “based on the centuries-old history of this country, the situation requires that no one ever

⁶ “MARZ-2021”. In Tajikistan, the state of combat readiness of 230 thousand people was checked with an alarm. Available from: <https://khovar.tj/rus/2021/07/marz-2021-v-tadzhikistane-proverili-sostoyanie-boegotovnosti-230-tysyach-chelovek-s-obyavleniem-trevogi/>

forget that incomplete observance of the interests all segments of the population living on this earth, belonging to different nationalities, nationalities and religions, was the cause of many bloodshed and led to negative consequences.⁷

The Tajik intelligentsia is seriously concerned about the «Taliban»*'s policy against the Dari or Tajik language, the removal of Tajiks from power, and in general against everything Tajik in Afghan society. Thus, the formed interim government consists of Pashtuns and exclusively from among the supporters of the «Taliban»*, with the exception of the symbolic presence of representatives of Tajiks and Uzbeks in it; all government regulations are issued in Pashto only, and thus Dari is limited in government business. In the past, there have been repeated attempts to legally restrict the Dari language in office work and in the field of education, but they have not been successful. In the official newspaper *Islah*, on March 3, 1937, a decree of the king was issued on the “development and revival of the Afghan language”, according to which measures were taken to train all officials in the center and localities in Pashto language courses [6: 632]. The program was designed for 3 years, but it did not lead to results. Therefore, the government was forced to extend it for another three years. Moreover, the government unexpectedly switched all schools in the country to Pashto. According to M.S.Farkhang, “these government measures, apart from harming the education system and the country’s economy, did not lead to anything. But the greatest harm from the implementation of this program and the discriminatory policy in general, was the emergence of a feeling of distrust and enmity between different peoples” [6:634]. Although in the Constitution of Afghanistan, which was adopted in 1964, the Pashto and Dari languages were both recognized as official, however, a few years later, a group of nationalist-minded deputies in parliament initiated the issue of giving official status only to the Pashto language, which led to heated debates in parliament and resonance in society. According to H.Nazarov, “a sharp debate over the language led to an aggravation of the conflict and national-ethnic contradictions between Tajiks and Pashtuns” [5:555].

The policy of the Pashtunization of Afghanistan is clearly implemented in the personnel policy of the «Taliban»* and at the local level. At present, the governors in all provinces and responsible officials in state authorities, commanders of military corps and other units are Pashtuns.

With the advent of the «Taliban»*, the resettlement of Pashtuns from the southern and eastern regions, and even from Pakistan in the territory inhabited by non-Pashtun peoples to the north of the country and the forced resettlement of Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras from their ancestral lands, is again relevant. The resettlement policy is not new in the history of Afghanistan, it began at the end of the 19th century and is designed to ensure a Pashtun majority in areas inhabited by non-Pashtuns. The Tajik scientist R.Mamadshoev writes that the State Archives of the Republic of Uzbekistan has an interesting document in Tajik:

⁷ There is no other goal for us except the interests of our people, our motherland. Speech of the President Islam Karimov at the VII session of the Oliy Majlis (December 6, 2001). Available from: https://buxgalter.uz/doc?id=412972_vystuplenie_prezidenta_islama_karimova_na_vii_sessii_oliy_majlisa_6_dekabrya_2001_goda&prodid=1_vse_zakonodatelstvo_uzbekistana&ysclid=licz0ws07z265118029#

Emir Abdurakhman ordered the relocation of 50 thousand households of Afghans (Pashtuns) from the city of Herat and the Kandahar region and the region to Chorviloyat. 12,000 households have already been resettled from Herat to the river bank and endowed with land, freed from state service for 12 years... 38,000 go to Andkhoy, Akcha and Kelif on the river bank, where a place has been prepared for them... [3:162].

During the reign of Abdurrahman, the regions of Rustak and Chahab were also settled by several thousand Afghans [1:84]. The entire region between Mazar-i-Sharif and Balkh was inhabited exclusively by Afghans (Pashtuns), the indigenous population, Tajiks and Uzbeks, remained to live in islands in the Davlatabad region and several villages"[1:83]. The resettlement policy continued and continues.

Just as dangerous is the renaming of the historical names of cities by the «Taliban»*, the destruction of the historical and cultural heritage of Afghanistan. For example, the city of Charikar is renamed Imami Azam. Of particular concern is the fact that the «Taliban»* carry out their nationalist policy or the general Pashtunization of Afghanistan under the slogans of Islam. To strengthen their monopoly right to power, the «Taliban»* have closed hundreds of independent newspapers and magazines, television and radio, all political parties and public organizations have been banned, there is no constitution and parliament.

The experience of almost 30 years of «Taliban»* history shows that this organization never makes concessions in negotiations, does not deviate one iota from its principles, even for the sake of peace and stability in Afghanistan. Evidence of this is the gradual tightening of policies regarding women's rights to study, work and other freedoms, the lack of attention to the calls of the international community for the formation of an inclusive government.

Therefore, a significant part of the population in Tajikistan closely followed the events taking place in Afghanistan, especially in Panjshir, the only province that was temporarily still outside the control of the «Taliban»*, and the son of the legendary Ahmad Shah Masood, Ahmad Masood, raised the banner of anti-«Taliban»* resistance.

On the pages of the press and social networks, the level of support and solidarity of various groups and social strata with the Panjshir resistance fighters was extremely high. Many in Tajikistan, during the ««Taliban»*»* offensive against the positions of the defenders of Panjshir, did not sleep at night, calling through social networks to stay awake for Panjshir. Dozens of groups appeared in the Tajik segment of Facebook, where they shared news from Afghanistan, published articles and poems. A group called "Panjsher – marze nomus" ("Panjsher – the line of honor") was popular.

For the first time in Tajikistan, in relation to the events taking place in Afghanistan, to the policy of the «Taliban»*, solidarity with their fellow Tajiks in Afghanistan, the point of view of the official authorities and various layers of civil society were closely intertwined. The Tajik society perceived the events in Afghanistan as a threat to the Tajiks of Afghanistan, the Tajik language and culture in general.

The theme of Afghanistan and the heroic resistance in Panjshir became relevant in Tajik literature. In a short period, hundreds of poems, poems and stories appeared,

celebrating the heroism of the Panjshirs and the new leader of the resistance, the young Ahmad Massoud. Two literary collections were published and presented under the titles "Khamosai Panjsher" ("Poem of Panjsher") and "Noma ba Panjsher" ("Letter to Panjsher").

Through the media and social networks, Tajiks expressed sympathy for starving families in Afghanistan, women deprived of their rights to work and study, officials of the former government who were persecuted by the «Taliban»*, etc.

Such a radical transformation in the views of the population on the Afghan events is associated with a very bold, clear and stable position of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon in the fight against terrorism, protecting the interests of the Tajiks of Afghanistan, attitudes towards the «Taliban»*, monopolization of power and political discrimination against non-Pashtun ethnic groups.

On August 25, in Dushanbe, President of the Republic of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon received the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Makhdum Shah Mahmoud Qureishi. During the meeting, it was noted that today one of the main threats to regional security is the situation in Afghanistan.

The main points of the position of Tajikistan regarding the situation in Afghanistan, stated at this meeting are the following:

- "In order to urgently solve the political security problems of a neighboring country, it is necessary to create an inclusive government with the participation of all national minorities, including the Tajiks of Afghanistan, who make up more than 46% of the population of this country.
- The state system in Afghanistan should be determined by the will and taking into account the position of all citizens of the country.
- Tajikistan will not recognize any other government formed in this country through oppression and persecution, without taking into account the position of the entire Afghan people, especially all their national minorities.
- Tajiks should take their rightful place in the future government of Afghanistan"⁸.

At the current stage of the crisis in Afghanistan, President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon pays special attention, along with security problems, to the ethnic component of the crisis in this country. Never before has the President of Tajikistan so openly and persistently insisted on the obligatory consideration of the interests of ethnic Tajiks when forming a new government in Afghanistan. He said for the first time that Tajiks make up about 46 percent of the population of Afghanistan and should take their rightful place in the government. The consequences of the coming of the «Taliban»* to power are seen in Tajikistan as a threat to the national identity of the Tajiks, in general for the Tajiks as a nation.

For the first time, the Tajiks of Tajikistan so solidarily recognized the Tajiks of Afghanistan as their fellow tribesmen. Never at the level of government and society has there been such solidarity with the Tajiks of Afghanistan as this time.

⁸ Meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Makhdum Shah Mahmoud Qureishi. Available from: <http://www.president.tj/ru/node/26368>

In Tajikistan, except for specialists and part of the creative intelligentsia, even after Tajikistan gained its independence, all citizens of Afghanistan were always called "Afghans", there was no perception of them as the same Tajiks, but living on the other side of the Pyanj – Amu Darya River. The author of these lines grew up on the banks of the Pyanj River in Tajik Darvaz and remembers that in childhood, the word "Afghan" was not used in relation to the inhabitants of Afghan Darvaz, they were called "Ubarachi", i.e. living on the other side (Panja). Gradually, the word "Ubarachi" disappeared from the lexicon of the inhabitants of Darvaz, and the Darvazians of this side of the river began to call the Darvazians of that bank "Afghans".

Thus, the arrival of the «Taliban»* and the establishment of strict rules, the implementation of a policy of oppression and discrimination against Tajiks contributed to a greater sense of solidarity with the Tajiks of Afghanistan and a clearer knowledge of their ethnic community.

However, such support for the Tajiks and rejection of the «Taliban»* does not mean that there were not and are not any supporters of the «Taliban»* ideology in Tajikistan. Although a small but part of the religiously inclined youth did not hide in social networks their joy from the «Taliban»* and the "establishment of a true Islamic regime" in Afghanistan.

In the mosques of Dushanbe, under the influence of tough measures by the «Taliban»*, including the ban on music, traditional games, and the education of girls, some worshipers cautiously began to propagate and talk about the alleged existence of a verse in the Koran about the impermissibility of music in Muslim society.

With the strengthening of the terrorist regime of the «Taliban»*, some sympathizers in Tajikistan in conversations in the markets, in transport and other public places began to openly express their support for them. All this testified that the probability of spreading the radical views of the «Taliban»* and other extremist and terrorist groups located in Afghanistan remains very high.

The expert community of Tajikistan and law enforcement agencies noted that there are favorable conditions for the spread of the radical ideology of Talibanism* through social networks, the press and other means, which is assessed as a threat to national security.

Of course, the attention of the security agencies and the government of Tajikistan is focused on the activities of terrorist organizations, including those of foreign origin, in northern Afghanistan. According to information coming from Afghanistan, more than 20 terrorist organizations of foreign origin operate in Afghanistan with the support of the ««Taliban»*». Among them, more than 10 groups are similar to «Al-Qaeda»*⁹ in their ideological postulates and radical views. These are «ISIS-Khorasan»*¹⁰, the Islamic

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+

Movement of East Turkestan*¹¹, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan*¹²; Jamaat Ansarullah (Tajikistan)*¹³, Katibat-al Imam Bukhari*¹⁴, Jaishi Muhammad*¹⁵, Tahrek «Taliban»* Pakistan («Taliban»* Movement of Pakistan)*¹⁶, Tatbike Shariati Muhammad (Implementation of Sharia Mohammad)*¹⁷, Jamaat Ahror*¹⁸, Mujahideen al-Badr*¹⁹, Lashkar Tayiba*²⁰, Kashmir Mujahideen Movement*²¹, etc. The «Taliban»* protect these groups despite the demands of the international community According to various sources, «ISIS-Khorasan»* in northern Afghanistan has recently increased its activities, it was reported that it was formed in July 2022, organization «Tahreke Talebane Tajikistan»*²² («Taliban»* Movement of Tajikistan»

11 *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+

12 *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+

13 *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+

14 *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+

15 *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+

16 *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+

17 *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+

18 *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+

19 *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+

20 *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+

21 *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+

22 *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+

based on the terrorist organization Ansarullah^{*23}, consisting of people from Tajikistan.

What worries the Tajiks is that Tajiks are part of many terrorist groups operating in Afghanistan, including «ISIS-Khorasan»*. This is evidenced by published data on the perpetrators of terrorist acts in Afghanistan, Iran, Turkey, etc.

The expert community of Tajikistan believes that Afghanistan, especially the north of the country, is turning into a haven for international terrorist groups, into a training center for terrorists. Some Tajik experts write about the trend of Badakhshan turning into a new North Veziristan, and Afghanistan into a new world center of attraction for Islamic radicals. This can be facilitated by the creation of numerous schools of jihad in every province, a network of madrasahs and mosques, like Pakistan.

Therefore, the decisive statements of the President of the Republic of Tajikistan and his firm position regarding the formation of an inclusive government with the participation of representatives of all major ethnic groups, including Tajiks, as conditions for recognizing the government, proceed from the national interests of Tajikistan, the interests of peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region as a whole.

Of course, for many observers in Tajikistan and for international partners, this decisive statement by the President of Tajikistan came as a surprise. Especially against the background of how the main allies of Tajikistan in the CSTO and the SCO, including the Russian Federation, China, Uzbekistan, have taken not only a wait-and-see, but clearly benevolent position towards the «Taliban»*, building relationships. The author witnessed how, at various scientific conferences, some experts from different countries close to government circles criticized the President of Tajikistan for his «tough and special position» against the «Taliban»*.

But President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon has not changed his position on the events in Afghanistan. He argued it, and it seems to us, he was able to some extent to convince the leaders of the allied countries about the tragic consequences of the policy of discrimination pursued by the «Taliban»* against non-Pashtun peoples, the monopolization of power by the «Taliban»*, about the existing clear threats to the security of the region from the «Taliban»* Afghanistan.

For example, in his statement, President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin at a meeting of the Valdai International Club confirmed E. Rahmon's words about the number of Tajiks in Afghanistan. According to him, the composition of the government formed by the «Taliban»* movement consists mainly of Pashtun groups. "But there are Tajiks there," Putin said. "And they are from 40 to 47 percent according to various estimates. Look, that's a lot."²⁴

Statements by representatives of Russia's power structures and special services also

²³ *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+

²⁴ There are many Tajiks in Afghanistan. This was stated by Russian President Vladimir Putin at a meeting of the Valdai International Club. Available from: <https://khovar.tj/rus/2021/10/tadzhikov-v-afganistane-mnogo-ob-etom-zayavil-prezident-rossii-vladimir-putin-na-zasedanii-mezhdunarodnogo-kluba-valdaj/?ysclid=ldblc80ucy349551446>

indicate that the presence of international terrorist groups in Afghanistan and the policy of the regime seriously worry them, the hope for the «Taliban»*, who can effectively fight «ISIS-Khorasan»*, is not justified.

The Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation, General of the Army Sergei Shoigu, at a meeting of the Ministers of Defense of Russia and the states of Central Asia in June 2022, said that "the leaders of international terrorists consider Afghan territory as a base for infiltrating neighboring countries and creating an extensive network of jihadist underground, replenished, in including through the transfer of militants from hot spots."²⁵ And the head of the Security Council of the Russian Federation, N.P.Patrushev, in his interview to "Arguments and Facts" on January 10, 2023, in fact, equates the «Taliban»* movement with such odious terrorist groups as «Al-Qaeda»* and «ISIS»*.

They (that is USA – K.I.) themselves created terrorist organizations such as «Al-Qaeda»*, the «Taliban»* or «ISIS»* to achieve their goals, and they themselves fought against them. Arranging a demonstration liquidation of terrorist leaders like Osama bin Laden, a hundred new ones were trained and armed, he said.²⁶

The well-known Russian expert A.Serenko, in his article in "Nezavisimaya Gazeta", quotes the theses of the speech of the «Taliban»* leader Maulavi Haibatullah Akhund before the ulema (Islamic scholars) in Kabul, which cannot but disturb the leaders of the countries of the region. Haibatullah Akhund, in particular, stated that "the establishment of Sharia in Afghanistan is only the first stage of the successful jihad of the «Taliban»* (the organization is banned in the Russian Federation)." According to him, "in the future, the «Taliban»* and the Afghan ulema are obliged to lead the whole world to Sharia leadership."²⁷ Thus, the leader of the «Taliban»* made it clear that the jihad of his militants would not be limited to the territory of Afghanistan.

Certain circles in Russia, Iran, China and Uzbekistan are beginning to realize the futility of cooperation with the «Taliban»* against the backdrop of the «Taliban»* regime unwilling to compromise and the intensification of the terrorist activity of «ISIS-Khorasan»* and other terrorist groups in Afghanistan.

However, the participants of the Fourth Ministerial Conference of Afghanistan's neighbors in Samarkand, which was attended by the Foreign Ministers of Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, called on the new Afghan authorities to form an inclusive government, lifting all restrictions on women and national minorities called on the United States to lift sanctions on the country. This was reported by

²⁵ Sergei Shoigu: international terrorists consider Afghanistan as a base for infiltration into Available from: neighboring countries <https://paodkb.org/events/sergey-shoigu-mezhdunarodnye-terroristy-rassmatrivayut-afganistan-kak>

²⁶ "They want to turn Russia into Muscovy." Nikolai Patrushev – about the West and Ukraine. Available from: https://aif.ru/politics/world/rossiyu-hotyat_prevratit_v_moskoviyu_nikolay_patrushev_o_zapade_i_ukraine

²⁷ Serenko A. The leader of the "Taliban" proclaimed a course for global jihad. Available from: https://www.ng.ru/world/2023-03-29/100_world29032023.html

“Nezavisimaya Gazeta” on April 13, 2023.²⁸ However, this does not mean that the «Taliban»* leadership is ready to hear the calls of the conference participants.

Under these conditions, some experts believe that the «Taliban»*, like the American project in Afghanistan, will never be allies and friends of the countries of the region. Therefore, in the face of the activation of terrorist groups and the growing threat emanating from Afghanistan, they have no other way but to resort again to the support of the National Resistance Front under the leadership of Ahmad Massoud or to try to help to create a broader anti-«Taliban»* front on its basis.

Conclusions

Thus, for many reasons, Tajikistan is following the developments in Afghanistan with concern and concern.

In Tajikistan, they are sure that the «Taliban»* with their ideology, their interpretation of Sharia, Pashtun nationalism poses a threat to the Tajiks of Afghanistan. Tajiks under the «Taliban»* are removed from power; the policy of the «Taliban»* will lead to a restriction of the use of the Dari-Tajik language, which for more than a thousand years was the state language, the language of interethnic communication in this country. The «Taliban»* regime threatens to destroy the centuries-old historical and cultural heritage of Tajiks in this country.

In Tajikistan, they are concerned about the possibility of members of terrorist groups penetrating the territory of Tajikistan and spreading the radical ideology of «Taliban»*ism. Despite assurances from the «Taliban»* not to threaten neighboring countries, the presence of dozens of terrorist organizations in this country cannot but worry the leadership of Tajikistan.

References

1. Alekseenkov P. Agrarian issue in Afghan Turkestan. Moscow: International Agrarian Institute, 1933:107. [In Russian].
2. Latifov J. L. Afghanistan: one step forward, two steps back. International relations and security. 2022; 3 (3):68–74. [In Russian].
3. Makhmadshoev R. The history of the ethno-political development of the Tajiks of Khorasan (Afghanistan). Dushanbe: Irfon, 2009:205. [In Russian].
4. Rizoan Sh., Giyosov M. Afghanistan: relationships before and after the Taliban' came to power // Kazakhstan Journal of Foreign Studies. 2022; 1–2 (3–4):98–117. [In Russian].
5. Nazarov H. Tajiks Place in the history of Afghanistan. Dushanbe: Donish, 1998:657. [In Tajik].

²⁸ Petrov G. Russia and Afghanistan's neighbors called on the United States to give money to Kabul. Available from: https://www.ng.ru/world/2023-04-13/6_8706_afghanistan.html?ysclid=li8xpjfwre45289478

²⁹ 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). URL: <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>; 18+

6. Farhang M. M. S. Afghanistan in the last five centuries. Vol.2. Tehran: Irfon, 2005:1170. [In Persian].

About the author

Kosimsho ISKANDAROV. Doct Sc. (Hist.) Chief Scientific Secretary of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, Tajikistan, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7933-2037>, Address: 33, Rudaki Ave, ushanbe, Republic of Tajikistan, 734025, ikosimsho@gmail.com

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received by the editorial office: April 25, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 5, 2023. Accepted for publication: June 2, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

Women's issue in Afghanistan under the Taliban^{*1}

Ubaid V. Okimbekov✉

Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia

ubayd@inbox.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3452-3630>

Abstract. The article is devoted to the study of the rights and status of women in Afghan society over the past 30 years, after the end of the secular system in the country. A brief overview of the situation since the beginning of the 20th century is given, the place and position of Afghan women in society after the coming to power of the Mujahideen and then the Taliban is shown, the development of education and the process of involving the female population in socio-economic and political life after 2001 and the change in the situation with the return to power of the Taliban are studied.

Keywords: Afghanistan, women's rights, education, Sharia, Taliban, Mujahideen

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Okimbekov U.V. Women's issue in Afghanistan under the Taliban*. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 158-170, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-158-170](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-158-170)

Introduction

Women's rights in Afghanistan have always been in the spotlight, but they became especially relevant after the «Taliban»* came to power again in August 2021. The issue is being keenly discussed in the media, reports of international organizations working in this country. There are no special works in the scientific literature devoted to this issue during the period when the «Taliban»* were in power, and only sometimes it is touched upon when considering certain aspects of the life of Afghan society. However, there are articles [2, 3]

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+

in which gender relations under the Islamic Republic (2001–2021) are comprehensively studied on the basis of field materials of the UN and other non-profit organizations.

Materials and Methods

The author used well-known methods of scientific research, such as systemic analysis, synthesis, comparison and comparison of data. The source base was the materials of Afghan information Internet resources, statistics.

Results

The population of Afghanistan according to various estimates is from 33² to 40³ million, of which 49% are women. The role and place of women in Afghan society relate to those issues that, for all governments since the restoration of political independence (1919), were interpreted differently, remaining constantly relevant. The independence of Afghanistan, the Reformer, Amanulla-Khan (1919–1928), made the first attempts to expand the rights of women, in particular, to receive education, employment and so on, but the short-term coming to power of Bachai Sakao (January–November 1929) again limited women in all areas. Since that time, for more than sixty years, that is, until April 1992, when the power was seized by the Mujahideen, Afghanistan managed to take important steps in the matter under consideration. The short rule of the Mujahideen government, and later the appearance of the «Taliban»* movement in the political arena and their seizure of power (1996) returned the country to a state of comprehensive crisis. Hope for the improvement of the status of women in Afghan society appeared after the overthrow of the «Taliban»* regime in 2001, when positive changes took place in the next twenty years under the influence of the outside world. The re-seizure of power by the «Taliban»* (August 2021) has again become painful for the female population of Afghanistan.

The actions of the «Taliban»* to determine the place and role of women in society are surprising not only representatives of the Western community, but also the entire Islamic world. Among Afghans, most of the population is not ready to accept the restrictions imposed by the «Taliban»* authorities on women. Former officials and politicians who are now outside Afghanistan criticize the «Taliban»*'s policy particularly strongly. Among them there are Mujahideen field commanders, their heirs, whose authorities themselves did the same in the early 1990s. In August 1993, for example, the Supreme Court of the Mujahideen Government issued a fatwa as follows:

² Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020. National Statistics and Information Authority. Kabul, 2021:7–9.

³ World Population Dashboard, Afghanistan. United Nations Population Fund. Available from: <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/AF>

Muslim women of our Islamic State still continue to work in government offices, schools, radio and television. They still walk around the bazaars without an Islamic veil. Thus, there are no changes compared to the past. In this regard, we seriously and persistently demand that all responsible persons take immediate practical measures to implement all divine instructions, especially regarding the wearing of the veil and the removal of women from State institutions. Women's schools, in fact, which are hotbeds of adultery and prostitution, should be closed, and all women should be fired from radio and television [1:119–120; 4:170].

The leader of the Islamic Party of Afghanistan, G.Hekmatyar, who is one of those who, while in Kabul, openly advocates women's education and women's right to employment, in the 90s, as prime minister of the Mujahedeen government, ordered women to be dismissed from all state institutions [1:120; 4:171]. Then the problem reached its peak with the seizure of power by the «Taliban»* movement. In the modern history of Afghanistan, this period can be called one of the most difficult, particularly for the female population, but history repeats for Afghan women.

Since the Mujahedeen came to power in April 1992 and until the fall of the «Taliban»* regime in October 2001, strict norms introduced in the country severely restricted the rights and participation of women in Afghan public life. Over the past two decades, after the overthrow of the «Taliban»* regime and the formation of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (2001–2021), the female part of the Afghan population took a more active part in the social, economic and political life of the country, which was one of the few achievements of the government with the support of the international community. During this time, primary and secondary schools for girls, universities were opened, where women studied along with men, women received seats in parliament, worked in various positions in government institutions, engaged in commerce, worked in the field of art and culture. In large cities and centers, the issue of women's rights was less relevant than in the provinces, which was explained by the security, psychology of the rural population, the lack of appropriate conditions (in the educational sphere, starting from the necessary textbooks and ending with the presence of schools themselves).

Women's rights were officially enshrined and guaranteed at the legislative level. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, adopted in early 2004, stated

“Citizens of Afghanistan, both men and women, have equal rights and obligations before the law” (article 26). The Basic Law guaranteed education for women (the Government is responsible for creating a balance and developing education for women, ... developing and implementing effective programs (Article 44), ensured equal right to participate in elections to the “Volusi Jirga” – the lower house of Parliament (Article 83), allocated minimum quotas for women (2 seats with provincial houses of Parliament), and the President had the right to appoint 50% of the members of the “Meshrana Jirga” – the upper house of Parliament from among women (Article 84).

Women could occupy key positions in many ministries and departments, were hired as specialists and employees of state institutions. To show in which direction the Afghan society

has been moving over these two decades, in which areas and provinces the female population of Afghanistan has been more active, let us turn to the data of official Afghan statistics.

Since 2002, public and private primary and secondary schools have been opened in Afghanistan for both boys and girls, and the number of students has grown rapidly every year. Although there were “dead souls” during the republic both in the reports of law enforcement agencies and the education system, the available information does not reflect the real picture. By 2004, the total number of students in primary and secondary schools was 5,425 thousand, of which 1,306 thousand people⁴, or 24% were girls. By 2010, the total figure increased by 24% and amounted to 7101 thousand students, and the share of girls in it reached 38% – 2710 thousand, which is twice as much as in 2004⁵ According to 2020 statistics, 9135 thousand students attended schools throughout Afghanistan, of which 3561 thousand, or 39% were students of girls' schools⁶.

The indicators varied greatly by region and province. According to the same sources, in Kabul in 2004, about 38% (248.6 thousand) of the total number of schoolchildren in 652 thousand were girls⁷, and by 2010, there was a significant increase – the share of pupils in girls' schools reached 44% (376 thousand out of 854 thousand)⁸ and in the last years of the republic's existence (2020), it increased to 47% (546 thousand and 1148 thousand)⁹.

As for the regions, in 2004 only in three provinces the proportion of girls in primary and secondary schools was higher than 40% (Badakhshan – 44%, Takhar – 41%, Balkh – 40%), and in four others – below 10% (Paktia and Helmand 6% each, Kandahar and Uruzgan by 8% in each)¹⁰. By 2010, the number of provinces with a share closer to fifty had grown to 11 (Badakhshan 47%, Herat – 46%, Nuristan – 45%, Bamyan and Laghman – 44%, Balkh, Daikondi, Nimroz and Faryab – 43%, Takhar – 42%, Panjshir – 40%). In the same year, the indicators for Helmand (20%), Zabul and Paktia (21% each), Paktika (22%) were relatively low¹¹. In ten years, provinces with a large number of female school students have become only one more. In 2020, over 40% of girls in 12 provinces had access to primary and secondary education. The highest rate was in Panjshir (47%), followed by Badakhshan, Bamyan, Herat and Daikondi (46% each), then Balkh – 45%, Sari-Pul – 44%, Nuristan and Takhar – 43%, Samangan and Jauzjan – 42%, Laghman – 40%. The lowest figure was traditionally available in Uruzgan – 11%, Paktika – 15%, Helmand – 21%, Zabul – 22 and Kandahar – 25%¹².

⁴ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005. The Economic Ministry's Central Statistics Office. Kabul, 2006: 44.

⁵ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-12. Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 2012: 6.

⁶ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020. National Statistics and Information Authority. Kabul, 2021:61.

⁷ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005. The Economic Ministry's Central Statistics Office. Kabul, 2006:44.

⁸ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-12. Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 2012:80.

⁹ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020. National Statistics and Information Authority. Kabul, 2021:61.

¹⁰ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005. The Economic Ministry's Central Statistics Office. Kabul, 2006:44.

¹¹ Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-12. Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 2012:80.

¹² Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020. National Statistics and Information Authority. Kabul, 2021:61.

In public and private higher education institutions, the situation was slightly different, since in 2004, according to statistics, out of 39.5 thousand students, the female part was 8.3 thousand people (21%)¹³, and by 2010, the total number of students became noticeably more (84 thousand), and the number of girls although relatively increased (15 thousand), but in the overall indicator its share decreased (18%)¹⁴. The number of students also grew significantly by 2020, reaching 388 thousand, of which 109 thousand¹⁵, or 28% were female.

There is also information on the number of people employed in Afghanistan: out of 276 thousand employees of state institutions in 2004, 18% were women. Traditionally, their activity (except for the Ministry of Women's Affairs) was the highest (25% and 21%, respectively) in the two largest number of employees – education and healthcare¹⁶. Here, too, a comparative analysis shows a slight increase in subsequent years: in 2010, 20% of all employed in state institutions were women, in particular, 25% in education and 22% in health care¹⁷, and in 2020, respectively, 26%, 33% and 24%. In 2020, in two other ministries, women made up the majority of the employed: this is the Ministry of Labor and Employment – 65% of all employed in 6080 people, and the Ministry of Women's Affairs – 54% of 789 employed¹⁸.

These data indicate the progress achieved during the existence of the Islamic Republic (2001–2021) in the involvement of the female population in the socio-economic life of society. However, the movement in the opposite direction began from the first days of the re-seizure of power by the «Taliban»* (August 2021). Over the past year and a half, the «Taliban»* authorities, as the situation in the country relatively stabilized, allowed the opening of secondary schools, but only for boys, and girls over the sixth grade could initially attend classes only in Herat, Balkh and some other provinces. Representatives of both sexes continued to attend classes at universities, and women could partially find a job. By the end of 2022, gradually restricting the rights of Afghan women in all spheres, the «Taliban»* closed their access to higher education institutions. Thus, today the rights of Afghan women are the most painful issue of concern to both the Afghan society and the outside world.

Recall that the problems related to the rights of Afghan women and the processes that are currently taking place in Afghanistan took place in the second half of the 90s of the last century in exactly the same form as today. As then, the current authorities present a variety of arguments in defense of the decisions taken by the leadership: some explain this by the need to comply with Sharia law, others talk about the economic side of the issue, others associate restrictions with the customs and culture of Afghans. At the first press

13 Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005. The Economic Ministry's Central Statistics Office. Kabul, 2006:64.

14 Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-12. Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 2012:46.

15 Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020. National Statistics and Information Authority. Kabul, 2021:87.

16 Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2005. The Economic Ministry's Central Statistics Office. Kabul, 2006:27;35.

17 Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2011-12. Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 2012:24.

18 Afghanistan Statistical Yearbook 2020. Central Statistics Organization. Kabul, 2012:54.

conference held in Kabul on August 17, 2021, «Taliban»* spokesman Zabiulla Mujahid stated that “the «Taliban»* respect the right of women to education and work, but this activity will take place within the framework of Sharia law”¹⁹.

The reasons for this attitude of the «Taliban»* movement to the women's issue are considered in different ways. An Afghan expert who has already died, Wahid Mujda (in the 1990s he was an employee of the «Taliban»* Foreign Ministry), saw the roots of a tough solution to the women's issue in the social origin of members of the movement. He said:

“The «Taliban»* came from rural areas of the country, and there was a negative attitude towards the city among the villagers. Many believed that the urban system contributes to the growth of godlessness... This group of villagers looked suspiciously at the students of secular schools. There were no girls' schools in remote villages. The «Taliban»* came to the city with the same mindset, and among them those who had a more modern worldview also fell under the influence of the majority, who did not want to dissolve into the urban environment, accept the values of the urban system, and tried to turn the city into a village” [5:109].

However, he gave the «Taliban»* a twofold characterization, which indicates the contradictions between the values and the actual actions of many members of the movement. In theory

The world to which the young «Taliban»* were accustomed consisted of uniform people. ... In order to look like a proper Muslim in the eyes of people, they sought to have an appearance corresponding to Sharia. ... A woman had no right to enter their environment. An educated city woman was considered a dangerous being, ... [however]... the inner world of the majority of the «Taliban»* was inclined to another, different from all this. After the capture of Kabul, Mazar-I-Sharif and Herat, many «Taliban»* married city women and educated girls [5].

Mullah Muhammad Gauss, one of the leaders of the «Taliban»*, as Foreign Minister, told a group of doctors from the international organization Doctors without Borders: “It is not true that they say that the «Taliban»* opposes education for women. I myself dream that my future wife will be a doctor!” [5:33].

In those years, as today, the leadership of the movement, using sometimes extremely primitive arguments, tried to justify the decisions made regarding women's access to education and employment before representatives of other countries and various organizations. Thus, the «Taliban»* Foreign Minister at a meeting with a United Nations delegation explained the restrictions on women's rights in this way:

We have obligations to our fighters, one of which does not allow women to study and work. If we violate this commitment, the soldiers will leave the front and return to their villages. Therefore,

19 For Afghan women, the Taliban is more than a matter of life and death). Independent Persian, 19.08.2021. Available from: independentpersian.com

as long as we have opponents in front of us and we need warriors from villages and tribes to fight them, we are forced to continue this policy. It can be changed when the war ends" [5:110–111].

The outside world offered its help to get out of the situation. When once again the leadership of the movement referred to economic problems that prevented the provision of safe and Sharia-compliant education to women, the international community, which did not put up with this discrimination, tried in various ways to force the «Taliban»* to change their policy, including by the fact that the European Community agreed to pay the costs of five girls' schools in Kabul on the conditions put forward by the «Taliban»*. Representatives of the «Taliban»* authorities in Kabul said they were ready to accept the proposals received, but each time "the question was rejected by Kandahar" [5:110–111].

Representatives of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, during a meeting in Kandahar, asked high-ranking «Taliban»* officials to point out the existing Sharia norms that do not allow women to be trained in order to discuss together "whether the problem is Sharia, political or social," but here Kandahar could not give a clear answer, and according to tradition, the deputy Foreign Minister of the «Taliban»*, Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanakzai explained in Kabul that this is not the official line of the «Taliban»*'s policy towards the female population, but temporary measures [5:111]. Then, indeed, individuals from among the ministers and deputy ministers understood the absurdity of many decisions, but the radical wing of the movement had always greater influence and strength [5].

Statements by representatives of the movement seems to show that the «Taliban»* is divided into two groups: the first, consisting of officially appointed persons who had previously participated in negotiations with the United States and other countries, is in Kabul, and the other, headed by the emir and his entourage, is in Kandahar. Politicians from Kabul, judging by their speeches, can be called moderate, more progressive, and politicians from Kandahar, conservative. Kabul sometimes directly, sometimes indirectly expresses dissatisfaction with some of the decisions taken by Kandahar, in particular, on the women's issue. However, there is an opinion that this is just a game of the «Taliban»* to divert eyes, delay time and "there are no serious disagreements and conflicts between the «Taliban»* leaders about the education of girls." Consequently, the division of the «Taliban»* into "moderates" and "radicals" has been used for many years "by a number of political activists and experts who feel close to the movement, but anyone who is familiar with the structure of the «Taliban»* organization knows that decision-making in the leadership of the «Taliban»* is in the hands of several people in Kandahar, and if some of the top officials have objections to Amir al-mu'minin, his opposition will not change anything. In such a situation, it is pointless to talk about moderate and extremist «Taliban»*. It should always be remembered that the «Taliban»*'s decision-making is strictly centralized and focused on Kandahar." Thus, by their very nature, the «Taliban»* categorically oppose the presence of women in society, they want to spread the "backward values of the rural environment" to the entire Afghan society, especially to the city²⁰. To some

extent, this opinion is justified, since it is based on mentality: judging by the statistics given, most of the girls' schools with the highest attendance were in non-Pashtun regions.

As for the relations within the leadership of the movement, it is impossible to fully agree with the conclusions of the Afghan author: there are many people in power in Kabul who disagree with the decisions of the top leadership from Kandahar. The current «Taliban»*, at least the officials in Kabul, are undoubtedly radically different from those who ruled Afghanistan in the second half of the 1990s, there is visible progress on many issues, but the position of the supreme leadership of the movement regarding women's rights remains the same rigid. There is no reason to believe that the problem is economic, since the «Taliban»* accept material assistance from the outside world, as it is willingly done in other directions. That is, everything speaks of the unwillingness of the leadership of the movement to make any compromises on the women's issue. Several versions can be put forward regarding the reasons for the persistence of the «Taliban»*. Perhaps the leadership of the movement intends to demonstrate a new, under the slogan of "correct Islam", a special model of governing society, to embody something unusual that did not exist under the previous government, or not in other Muslim countries. In other words, it seems that in Afghanistan there is an attempt to conduct another unsuccessful experiment, similar to those that the Afghan society repeatedly experienced during the first Anglo-Afghan War (1838-1842), reforms of the administrative and tax systems, the army under the rule of the People's Democratic Party (1978–1992), etc. These are, for example, unsuccessful land reforms, the last 20 years of the rule of the Islamic Republic before its collapse and the intervention of the United States and its coalition allies in all spheres of life. But the current "experiment" associated with the complete renunciation of the female population from socio-economic life is unique and can become a serious problem for both its authors and residents. On the other hand, it can be a political combination, thanks to which it is possible, hiding behind the problem of women's education, to push the issue of inclusive government into the background.

By imposing such bans, Afghanistan may lose significant resources. It is enough to cite the results of the UN assessment, according to which the Afghan budget may lose up to \$1 billion annually from such a policy²¹. It is obvious that the actions of the «Taliban»*, regardless of the goals they pursue, can create a crisis in socio-economic life in the future. The displacement of women from the health care system, firstly, leads to the closure of an entire social sector, and secondly, will force the population to travel to neighboring countries, primarily Pakistan, for examination and treatment, and Afghanistan will lose income. But the leadership of the movement is not interested in the opinion of international organizations, on whose humanitarian and economic assistance the future successes of the current Kabul depend, statements of Muslim scholars from other countries, because they understand that external assistance will still come. It is clear that a complete ban in the conditions of access to the Internet, which makes it possible to obtain distance

²⁰ Talibanism and its close association with misogyny. 8 Sobh, 03.10.1401. Available from: <https://8am.media/talibanism-and-its-close-connection-with-misogyny/>

²¹ Restrictions on women's employment will cost the Afghan economy one billion dollars. 8 Sobh, 27.08.1401. Available from: <https://8am.media/restrictions-on-womens-work-will-harm-the-afghan-economy-by-one-billion-dollars/>

education, will not work. Over the past 20 years, a generation has grown familiar with modern communication technology, which allows you to gain new knowledge distantly. Nevertheless, all Afghan families will suffer from such a policy, especially those in which a female representative is the only breadwinner, and there are many such in the country. If the «Taliban»* expect that with the help of limited financial resources they will be able to compensate for the losses in their families, it is unlikely that this will work. The problem also lies in the fact that representatives of the movement, apparently not having professional specialists in their ranks, underestimate the losses from their actions.

Conclusions

Whatever the goals of the «Taliban»* on the women's issue, one thing is clear: they look at women's rights from the point of view of religion, while being guided solely by their own interpretation of Sharia. The restrictions imposed by them on women's rights are based on the views of the leaders of the movement themselves, but are presented as the requirements of religion. Perhaps gender policy will change after a change of leadership, with the coming to power of representatives of a new generation who have been in contact with the outside world, as well as under the onslaught of socio-economic needs and realities of life. Facing economic and social problems in the future, the authorities will have to change their attitude to the women's issue, otherwise the country will face a deeper economic and political crisis than today.

References

1. Belokrenitsky V.Ya., Sikoev R.R. The Taliban' movement and prospects for Afghanistan and Pakistan. Moscow, IV RAN, 2014:214 [In Russian]
2. Vekua L. Status of women in modern Afghanistan. All about Afghanistan. 02/27/2008. Available from: <https://afghanistan.ru/doc/11394.html> [In Russian]
3. Novikova O.N. UN and women's rights in Afghanistan. Actual problems of Europe. 2015; 3: 183–206 [In Russian]
4. Sikoev R.R. Taliban': religious and political portrait. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies Russian Academy of Sciences. 2004:256 [In Russian]
5. Mozhda Wahid. Afghanistan and five years of the Taliban 5 rule. Tehran, 2003:206 [In Persian].

*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+

About the author

Ubayd V. OKIMBEKOV. CandSc (Economic). Senior Researcher, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, <https://Orcid.Org/0000-0002-3452-3630>. Address: 12, Rozhdestvenka str., Moscow, 107031, ubayd@inbox.ru

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

The Social Challenges to the New Government of Taliban*¹

Ilya A. Zimin✉

Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations,
Moscow, Russia.

guzhev.ilya1999@mail.ru, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8302-028X>

Abstract. The article is devoted to the measures taken by the new Taliban* Afghan government in social policy to get relative internal legitimacy and at the same time pursue a radical course aimed at the harsh Islamization of Afghan society. It is shown how the Taliban are implementing measures in serious social situation, and the contribution of the new Afghan authorities to the stabilization of the humanitarian situation is analyzed.

Keywords: Afghanistan, social politics, humanitarian situation, natural disasters, women rights, Taliban*

Acknowledgments: The article was prepared as part of an initiative project of the Center for the Study of Modern Afghanistan (Russia, Moscow)

For citation: Zimin I.A. The Social Challenges to the New Government of Taliban*. Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue. 2023; 2(8): 171-182, [https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2\(8\)-171-182](https://doi.org/10.53658/RW2023-3-2(8)-171-182)

Introduction

The new government that came to power in Afghanistan on August 15, 2021, consisting of members of the «Taliban»* movement, faced acute problems. They are caused by the devastating earthquakes and mudflows of 2022, the lack of humanitarian and food supplies, cash, jobs, etc. According to some forecasts, Afghanistan will face a long drought in the coming years, which is likely to exacerbate the already plight of the

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+

Afghans². The strength of the new Afghan regime and its internal legitimacy depend on how these problems are resolved.

Now the social, economic and humanitarian situation is complicated by the fact that the financial assets of the Afghan government are “frozen” in European and US banks at the insistence of these countries³. In the provinces of Panjshir and Baghlan, hostilities unfolded against the new «Taliban»* authorities with the participation of the so-called Afghan National Salvation Front led by Ahmad Massoud Jr. and Amrullah Saleh. The terrorist war against the new authorities of Afghanistan was launched by the Afghan branch of the Islamic State*⁴, and the new «Taliban»* government was unable to take measures to ensure security.

Thus, the new authorities of Afghanistan had to deal with complex socio-economic and natural challenges. Despite this, for more than a year the government of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan continues to control most of the country and respond to these challenges, the collapse of the state did not happen. This article aims to analyze the efforts of the new government based on the «Taliban»* movement to stabilize the domestic political situation.

The most dangerous challenges that potentially threaten the integrity and stability of Afghanistan are refugees (especially internally displaced persons), social dissatisfaction with the restriction of the fundamental rights of women and girls, and natural disasters. This article will examine the attitude of the «Taliban»* government towards solving each of these problems.

Since this topic is new, the social policy of the «Taliban»* has not yet received sufficient coverage in the scientific and journalistic literature; however, there are a number of articles that consider the policy of the «Taliban»* in opposition [1]. The new period of «Taliban»* rule (since 2021) is more correctly compared to the period 1996–2001. The features of the social policy of the last period of government are considered in Peter Marsden’s book “The «Taliban»*. War and Religion in Afghanistan” [2], especially the policy of the «Taliban»* to discriminate against women. Many aspects were covered in the fundamental work of R.R.Sikoev “«Taliban»*. Religious and political portrait” [3], which has not lost its relevance. The phenomenon of the “howling «Taliban»*” during the period of opposition is considered in the book of the Italian researcher Antonio Giustozzi [4].

² Assem Mayar. Global Warming and Afghanistan: Drought, hunger and thirst expected to worsen. Afghanistan Analyst Network. Available from: <https://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/en/reports/economy-development-environment/global-warming-and-afghanistan-drought-hunger-and-thirst-expected-to-worsen/>

³ Goldbaum Christina. Biden’s Decision on Frozen Funds Stokes Anger Among Afghans. NY Times. Available from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/13/world/asia/afghanistan-funds-biden.html>

⁴ *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+

Materials and Methods

Three key problems that the «Taliban»* government faced after coming to power are highlighted. The official rhetoric of the current Afghan government, statistical data and reports of international organizations, as well as oppositional Afghan media, are consistently analyzed. On the basis of these empirical materials, conclusions are drawn about the degree of vulnerability of the «Taliban»* regime and its prospects. As a methodological basis, the following were used: the principle of historicism, which consists in the study of phenomena in their development, the principle of objectivity, that is, the consideration of phenomena in relationships with a wide range of factors.

The source base for the study were: statistical and analytical data from the UN and the World Bank, reports from the official news agency of the Afghan government Bakhtar, as well as press conferences of the media center under the government of Afghanistan, materials from online media in Persian, English and Pashto (including those opposed to the «Taliban»* government), operational data of non-governmental organizations working in Afghanistan and some other sources.

Results

Refugees

According to the UN, the number of Afghan refugees who left the country by 2022 is 2.2 million people. The number of internally displaced persons reaches 3.5 million⁵, which is about 10% of the total population of Afghanistan⁶. The Ministry of Refugees and Returnees, which worked before the «Taliban»* came to power, was headed by a prominent functionary of the «Taliban»*, a figure in its radical part of the Haqqani network, Khalil ur-Rahman Haqqani⁷, included in the UN sanctions list for financing terrorist activities⁸.

Regular posts on the ministry's Twitter account report on business trips of its head to various problem areas. It also publishes reports on the financial and food assistance provided to families of internally displaced persons, the return of refugees from Iran and Pakistan.

In general, Khalil ur-Rahman Haqqani does not appear in public as often as other «Taliban»* functionaries, which is possibly due to his sanctioned status. For the same reason, the head of the Haqqani clan, the nephew of Khalil ur-Rahman and at the same time the head of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Sirajuddin, hid his face in public for a

⁵ Afghanistan situation. UNHCR. Available from: <https://reporting.unhcr.org/afghanistansituation>

⁶ Afghanistan population. Worldometer. Available from: <https://www.worldometers.info/world-population/afghanistan-population/>

⁷ Khabargozari-ye Tasnim, 16.06.1400. Available from: <https://www.tasnimnews.com/fa/news/1400/06/16/2567767/>

⁸ KHALIL AHMED HAQQANI. UN Security Council. Available from: <https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/sanctions/1988/materials/summaries/individual/khalil-ahmed-haqqani>

long time⁹. The fears of a number of «Taliban»* leaders are well founded after the alleged elimination of the leader of «Al-Qaeda»^{*10}, Ayman al-Zawahiri, who allegedly took refuge in Afghanistan, and was destroyed by an American drone on August 31, 2022¹¹. A little later, on September 7, a rumor spread about the death of Khalil ur-Rahman during a similar attack, which, however, was refuted¹².

The Ministry of Refugees is also represented at a conference within the framework of a program of accountability to the people, which the «Taliban»* launched in the summer of 2022, coinciding with its opening to coincide with the anniversary of being in power¹³. Deputy Minister, Arsala Haroti, listed the main achievements of the department for the year. They opened representative offices in all provinces of Afghanistan, as well as in Iran, Pakistan, and Turkey. About 622,000 Afghans were returned to their homeland following the results of the work of the ministry in cooperation with international organizations. At the largest border crossings (for example, Islam-Kala on the border with Iran or Torkham, Spin-Buldak on the border with Pakistan), accommodation and assistance centers for refugees were opened. Also, according to the Deputy Minister, about 78 thousand families from among internally displaced persons were returned home, about 86 thousand families from among internally displaced persons regularly receive food, medical assistance, as well as assistance in rebuilding their homes¹⁴. However, these figures do not allow us to understand the role of the Afghan ministry in achieving these results.

At the same time, during the year of the rule of the «Taliban»* regime, there has been a positive trend in relation to refugees and internally displaced persons: their number has been steadily declining. If until 2021 the number of internally displaced persons and refugees steadily increased by 380 thousand per year, then by June 2022 the number of new (since the summer of 2021) internally displaced persons amounted to 7.4 thousand people¹⁵. The main reason for migration, including internal migration, was unemployment and poverty, lack of access to healthcare and education. The social insecurity of internal refugees leads to the spread of such phenomena as forced child labor, the sale of children, forced marriages, including with children, and begging. This turns refugees into a social base for the formation of supporters of radical organizations that oppose the new authorities, for example, the Islamic State in Khorasan (IS-Khorasan – banned in the Russian Federation)¹⁶.

⁹ Fararu, 14.12.1400. Available from: <https://fararu.com/fa/news/537300/>

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 Iktisad News, 11.05.1401. Available from: <https://www.eghtesadnews.com/-512325/61>

¹² Arja Press, 5.09.2022. Available from: <https://ariapress.org/>

¹³ Herat-Times, Telegram Chanel 1.08.2022. Available from: <https://t.me/HeratTimes/75066>

¹⁴ Kanfrance-e habari-ye vasarat-e amur-e mohajerin va 'udat-konendagan, 23.05.1401. GMIC Afghanistan, 13.09.2022. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aAgqof2PfMA>

¹⁵ One year on: the «Taliban»* takeover and Afghanistan's changing displacement crisis. ReliefWeb Available from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/afghanistan/one-year-taliban-takeover-and-afghanistans-changing-displacement-crisis>

¹⁶ Protection Analysis Update. Afghanistan. Q1, 2022. Global Protection Cluster. Available from: <https://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/old/wp-content/uploads/Protection-Analysis-Update-PAU-Q1-2022-fv.pdf>

Natural Cataclysm

Afghanistan is located in a seismological active zone and is periodically subjected to devastating earthquakes. The average number of deaths per year from the consequences of earthquakes is 560 people¹⁷. On June 22, 2022, the largest earthquake in 20 years with a magnitude of 5.9 occurred in Khost province, during which more than 1,000 people were killed and more than 1,500 people were injured, many people were left homeless, entire villages were destroyed¹⁸. On the same day, the official resources of the «Taliban»* published an appeal for help to the international community of the leader of the movement¹⁹. According to official data, helicopters provided by the Ministry of Defense were used to evacuate from the devastated areas²⁰, and Mohammad Hassan Akhund, the chairman of the «Taliban»* government, ordered the provision of 1 billion afghani²¹ for financial assistance to the victims²², later reports on the distribution of funds were published on the official pages of the Ministry of Emergency Situations of the «Taliban»*²³.

Soon after the earthquake (July–August 2022), floods began in the eastern provinces of Afghanistan after heavy rains. According to the «Taliban»* Disaster Management Commission²⁴, were destroyed: 12 thousand houses, many dams, and canals necessary for agriculture, millions of fruit trees, about 50 thousand heads of small and large cattle, also 1.7 million hectares of agricultural crops were flooded, 1057 people died, and the damage is estimated at \$2 billion. About 18 thousand families were also evacuated from their places of residence, which are unlikely to be able to return and restore their housing and life in the near future, thereby replenishing the number of internally displaced persons.

During the disaster relief efforts, the «Taliban»* distributed about 100,000 tents, 350,000 blankets, 100,000 medical kits, 160,000 food kits and \$2 million in cash. Agriculture suffered the most damage, with the relevant departments (Ministry of Rural Revival and the Ministry of Agriculture) estimating the urgent cost of restoring infrastructure at \$200 million and \$60 million, respectively. Realizing the scale of the disaster, the «Taliban»* requested financial and humanitarian assistance from the world community²⁵.

Natural disasters do not add strength to the «Taliban»* regime, but their internal legitimacy depends on how well they manage to cope with their consequences. So

17 2022 Afghanistan Earthquake. Center for Disaster Philanthropy. Available from: <https://disasterphilanthropy.org/disasters/2022-afghanistan-earthquake/>

18 Al Jazeera, 22.06.2022. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/6/22/afghanistan-live-news-earthquake-kills-at-least-920-people>

19 Bakhtar, 1.04.1401. Available from: <https://bakhtarnews.af/>

20 Bakhtar, 1.04.1401. Available from: <https://bakhtarnews.af/en/mod-helicopters-medical-teams-arrived-south-to-assist-earthquake-victims/>

21 Afghani is the currency of Afghanistan since 1926

22 Bakhtar, 1.04.1401. Available from: <https://bakhtarnews.af/>

23 Safar-e mo'in-e mali va idari va sarparast-e vazarat-e davlat dar amur-e rasidagi ba havadis ba paktika; komak-hai nokdi barai madzhruhini va varesa shohadai zalzala ahir tavzi' shod. Ministry of Emergency Situations of the IEA, 9.07.2022. Available from: <https://www.andma.gov.af/dr/>

24 Kanfrans-e habari-je vazarat-e amur-e mohadzherin va 'udat-konendagan, 23.05.1401. GMIC Afghanistan, 13.09.2022. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DUqjVozOYNk&t=58s>

25 Haama Press, 1.09.2022. Available from: <https://www.khaama.com/persian/archives/103009>

far, international organizations have been playing a leading role in overcoming the consequences, which has been saving Afghanistan from a humanitarian catastrophe for more than a year.

Women's Question

The infringement of the fundamental rights of women and girls by the «Taliban»* determined their reputation as savages even in the first period of being in power in Afghanistan (1996–2001). However, in 2021, when they were in power for the second time, the movement's spokesman, Zabiullah Mujahid, at the first conference of the «Taliban»* stated that women's rights would be preserved, including the right to education, including in universities²⁶. The movement urged women to observe the hijab, but this was not a mandatory requirement. Thus, the world community has hope for preserving at least those rights of women that were in the republican period (2001–2022). This is the right to receive education, including higher education, and the right to work, including doing business²⁷.

The relevance of this issue in the region in 2021–2022 has only increased. The problem of restricting women's rights and excessive strictness in the mandatory observance of the Islamic dress code was among the key factors contributing to the Iranian protest in September–October 2022. Residents of Afghan cities dissatisfied with their unclear situation (approximately 25% of the total²⁸) repeatedly went out to protest, in solidarity with the Iranians²⁹. Despite protests, many educational organizations in Iran offered various educational opportunities for Afghan women, including online education³⁰.

Experts consider the “right to education”, including for girls, the most striking indicator of the “adequacy” of the new Afghan regime. The possibility of educating children is one of the main issues that potential Afghan repatriates are thinking about (2:105–106). Some Afghan theologians insist on opening schools for girls³¹: there are about 3 million schoolgirls in the country and about 100 thousand women employed in the field of education, who work in a semi-legal position.

The issue of resuming women's education in Afghanistan has become an object of close attention from the world community. It became one of the conditions for diplomatic recognition of the «Taliban»* regime³². Since September 2021, schools for girls over the 6th grade have remained closed for some “technical reasons”; boys of this age went to schools³³. The

26 Afghanistan Satellite, 17.08.2021. Available from: <https://af.sputniknews.com/20210817/.html>

27 Tolo-news, 13.06.1400. Available from: <https://tolonews.com/fa/afghanistan-174753>

28 Urban population (% of total population) – Afghanistan. WorldBank. Available from: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.URB.TOTL.IN.ZS?locations=AF>

29 Afghanistan International, 29.04.1401. Available from: <https://www.afintl.com/202209200185>

30 Salamat-news, 5.10.1401. Available from: <https://www.salamatnews.com/news/349489/>

31 Afghanistan International, 11.04.1401. Available from: <https://www.afintl.com/202205013553>

32 «Taliban»* Seek Recognition But Offer Few Concessions to International Concerns. United States Institute of Peace. Available from: <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/09/taliban-seek-recognition-offer-few-concessions-international-concerns>

33 «Taliban»* ban girls from secondary education in Afghanistan. The Guardian. Available from:

ban on education cannot be justified by Islamic values³⁴, therefore, in the future, in connection with the ban on education for girls, the «Taliban»*'s rhetoric will remain “ambiguous wording”, and for example, they will talk about the need to create an “Islamic environment”³⁵. It should be noted that in some provinces (Balkh, Kunduz, Sari Pul, Bamiyan, Herat), secondary and high schools for girls (some temporarily) were still opened in the fall of 2021³⁶.

Many hoped girls' schools would open at the end of March 2022³⁷. The US Special Representative for Afghanistan said in early 2022 that if the «Taliban»* opened schools for girls in March, the US would take the cost of teachers' salaries³⁸. However, the hope did not come true and on March 23, 2022, schools for girls remained closed until a special “Islamic program” and “school uniform” were developed³⁹, which greatly undermined the credibility of the «Taliban»* regime and pushed back its recognition indefinitely. The preservation of women's rights to education for the world community was a kind of “litmus test” for the recognition of the «Taliban»* regime, since, unlike other requirements (for example, to reduce the level of terrorist and drug threats), they were able to ensure women's rights, at least declaratively.

The solution to the problem of women's education was delayed. On December 20, the Emir of the «Taliban»* issued a decree that schools remain closed until further notice. In an interview, Minister of Higher Education Sheikh Mohammad Neda Nadeem justified the decree with the following reasons⁴⁰: 1) girls for education should not go to other provinces without a mahram⁴¹; 2) most of the girls do not observe the “full hijab”, however, the «Taliban»* did not provide its sample; 3) in most educational institutions it is not possible to organize separate education for girls and boys; 4) girls should not study specialties that are not appropriate for them to teach, according to Afghan traditions, such as engineering.

This ban, together with a further ban on women working in non-governmental organizations, led the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) to suspend the very same cash assistance to Afghanistan's central bank⁴². However, already on January 14, 2023, the Central Bank of Afghanistan announced the next tranche of financial assistance⁴³. This can obviously be connected with the permission of the «Taliban»* for medical and office

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/sep/17/taliban-ban-girls-from-secondary-education-in-afghanistan>

34 Sahih al-Bukhari. The Book of Knowledge (Hadith 59-134). Available from: <https://isnad.link/book/sahih-al-bukhari/3-kniga-znaniya/35-glava>

35 Killid Group. 15.07.1400. Available from: <https://tkg.af/pashto/2021/10/07/>

36 TOLO News. 17.07.1400. Available from: <https://tolonews.com/fa/afghanistan-174966>

37 On March 21 (in a leap year March 22), according to the solar Hijra, the New Year (“Nowruz”) begins in Afghanistan, after which a new academic year begins, respectively.

38 TOLO News. Twitter. Available from: <https://twitter.com/tolonews/status/1484443647303389187?lang=en>

39 Bakhtar. Twitter. Available from: <https://twitter.com/bakhtarna/status/1506479246625103872?lang=en>

40 Ter amrisani puri d unaso d pohantuno d bandedo py ara d lvaro zdak Sponsored by Minister Sara Dzangera Maraka. RTA Pashto. Available from: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJ0MtZL5wkE>

41 Mahram is a close male relative with whom women are allowed to go outside in Afghanistan by decree of the «Taliban»* government.

42 Da Afghanistan Bank – Afghanistan. Twitter. Available from: <https://twitter.com/afgcentralbank/status/1602948874859151362?s=46&t=K4XpA8fXCWH7Yy5oqhBqpg>

43 Da Afghanistan Bank – Afghanistan. Twitter. Available from: https://twitter.com/afgcentralbank/status/1614212925635559430?s=46&t=_DitbIVdD6_ecGOsGXRVCa

workers of non-governmental organizations (International Rescue Committee⁴⁴, Save the Children) continue your work. Thus, the women of Afghanistan and their position become the subject of political bargaining between the «Taliban»* and the world community, which causes dissatisfaction among the urban and emigrant stratum of Afghans.

Conclusions

With the coming to power of the «Taliban»* movement, Afghanistan continues to face numerous social problems. In order not to lose at least relative internal legitimacy, the «Taliban»* have to solve these problems. The «Taliban»* takeover had a positive impact on the situation of internally displaced persons, whose numbers have declined for the first time in a long time of the Afghan civil conflict. At the same time, the «Taliban»* lack their own internal resources (financial and managerial) for a comprehensive and deep solution of social problems, which is well understood by international humanitarian organizations that aim to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe in Afghanistan and respond to social challenges. At the same time, the work of humanitarian projects in the country is complicated by the sanctions imposed on the «Taliban»*, as a result of which, for example, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan is forced to bring money into Afghanistan in cash for subsequent distribution to the population as part of humanitarian assistance⁴⁵.

A separate problem is the women's issue, in the solution of which the conservative-radical line of the «Taliban»*'s policy prevailed. The current status quo is associated with the inability of the public stratum of the top of the «Taliban»*, which is represented by such functionaries as Abdul Ghani Barodar, Mullah Yakub, Sirajuddin Haqqani and some others, to agree with the West on the diplomatic recognition of the Islamic Emirate or on at least partial lifting of sanctions.

Thus, it can be stated that in the near future the established balance will be preserved: the West will continue to provide significant humanitarian support to the new Afghan government, while the «Taliban»* government will look for options to modernize its policy. At the same time, a tough policy towards women has already led to a reduction in the volume of assistance, and as a result, a deterioration in the social situation of the population of Afghanistan.

44 Operational Note: Update on IRC's Operations in Afghanistan as of January 13 / International Rescue Committee Available from: <https://www.rescue.org/press-release/operational-note-update-ircs-operations-afghanistan-january-13>

45 Satellite Afghanistan, 07.12.2022. Telegram Channel. Available from: <https://t.me/sputnikaf/17544>

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+

References

1. Okimbekov U.V. Socio-economic life under the parallel rule of the Taliban*. Eastern analytics. 2019; 4: 91–103. Available from: <https://cyberleninka.ru/article/n/afganistan-sotsialno-ekonomicheskaya-zhizn-pod-parallelnoy-vlastyu-talibov> [In Russian].
2. Marsden P. Taliban*. War and Religion in Afghanistan. Moscow: LLC "Gorodets-izdat", 2002:173 [In Russian].
3. Sikoev R.R. Taliban*: a religious and political portrait. Moscow: Institute of Oriental Studies RAS, Kraft+ Publishing House, 2004:256 [In Russian].
4. Giustozzi A. The Taliban* at war 2001-2021. Oxford University Press: London, 2022:408 [In English].

About the author

Ilya A. ZIMIN. Junior Researcher at IMEMO RAS named after E. M. Primakov. Postgraduate student, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8302-028X> Address: 23, Profsoyuznaya str., Moscow, Russian Federation, 117418, guzhev. ilya1999@mail.ru

Contribution of the author

The author declares no conflicts of interests.

Article info

Received: March 2, 2023. Approved after peer review: May 1, 2023. Accepted for publication: May 15, 2023. Published: June 25, 2023.

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Peer review info

«Russia & World: Scientific Dialogue» thanks the anonymous reviewer(s) for their contribution to the peer review of this work.

The National Communications Development Research Institution

invites you to join our scientific projects

The results of joint scientific research are published in journals, collective monographs, and are represented in scientific reports.

The developed recommendations and proposals are directed to government agencies and international organizations.

Communication modes and communication procedures in international practice: the international scientific laboratory is available to the scientists and experts from Russia and foreign countries. Thematic areas of research are:

- theory and methodology of countries and regions communication regimes research;
- modulation and fragmentation of the global communication order;
- models and types of country communication regimes;
- sociocultural factors of formation and reproduction of communication regimes;
- political factors of formation and reproduction of communication regimes;
- controllability of communication regimes;
- friendliness of communication regimes;
- problems of information security in some types of communication regimes;
- the influence of new actors and new practices on the rules and structures of communication regimes.

The first rating of the friendliness of communication regimes – the international expert group is available to the scientists, analysts, specialists in the field of international relations, political regionalism, international communication, information policy, social engineering, public relations, mass media. The National Communications Development Research Institution has developed a methodology for analyzing and evaluating the friendliness of country communication regimes. The first rating of the friendliness of the countries' communication regimes was published in December 2021. We invite scientists and analysts from different countries to join the experts.

International Humanitarian Communications is a scientific project available to the scientists and experts from Russia and foreign countries. The project is being implemented for developing and testing the models and technologies of international humanitarian communications for developing good-neighborly relations. Thematic areas of research are:

- systems of international humanitarian cooperation in integration organizations (CIS, SCO, EAEU, EU and others);
- institutionalization of international humanitarian communications;
- cross-border models of humanitarian communications;
- strategies and priorities of the language and cultural policy of the neighbor countries;
- the policy of social memory in the neighbor countries;
- digital formats of international humanitarian communications.

The Neighborhood Belt is a scientific project available to the scientists and experts from Russia and foreign countries. The Neighborhood Belt is a group of countries with which the Russian Federation borders, and countries with which Russia does not directly border, but historically has or is establishing cultural, economic, political ties.

The project is aimed at finding new directions, promising participants, models and technologies for the development of good-neighborly relations, prevention of possible conflicts and improvement of mutual understanding between countries and peoples. Project participants are free to choose research topics, provided that international teams are formed and they correspond to the concept of good neighborliness. The concept of good neighborliness reflects the meaningful and valuable side of the neighborhood – peace, mutual assistance, respect for each other's values and traditions, expansion of spheres and instruments of cooperation.

Digital solutions for intercultural, interethnic, and interfaith dialogue. Monitoring of digital projects is available to the authors of the projects dedicated to intercultural, interethnic, interfaith dialogue from Russia and foreign countries. The purpose of monitoring is to identify and support the best projects in the field of intercultural, interethnic, interfaith dialogue in the digital environment. The National Communications Development Research Institution promotes the popularization and implementation of the best digital solutions for the development of intercultural, interethnic and interfaith dialogue.

International Non-profit organizations and Civil Communications is an international laboratory, available to the experts from Russia and foreign countries. The purpose of the scientific project is to develop proposals for optimizing the use of the resources of Non-profit organizations for the development of good-neighborly relations and friendly civil dialogue. Thematic spheres of research are:

- organizational and legal, cultural, political, economic factors of the activities of international Non-profit organizations;
- models and work methods of international Non-profit organizations.

Scientific diplomacy is a scientific and publishing project available to the scientists from Russia and foreign countries. The project is aimed at the development of scientific communications in the neighborly countries and the development of models of international scientific cooperation. Thematic spheres of research are:

- state policy and strategies of countries in the field of international scientific cooperation;
- improving the directions and tools of cross-country scientific communications;
- diplomatic mission of scientists;
- new cooperation forms for Early-career scientists.

The National Communications Development Research Institution contributes to the development of international mobility programs for Early-career scientists. Graduate students and Early-career scientists from different countries are included in research scientific Institute's projects groups and common projects of The National Communications Development Research Institution and scientific and educational Russia and foreign institutions.

In the next issues of the journal «Russia & World: Sc. Dialogue» we will continue to take you through the projects of The National Communications Development Research Institution. You are able to discuss your participation with the project managers by sending an application to: komleva@nicrus.ru.

RUSSIA & WORLD: SCIENTIFIC DIALOGUE

Peer-reviewed academic journal

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Vitaly V. NAUMKIN – DSc (Hist.), Full member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, professor, Scientific Supervisor of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Russia).

DEPUTY CHIEF EDITORS

Valentina V. KOMLEVA – DSc (Soc.), professor, Deputy Director for Scientific Work of the National Research Institute for the Communications Development (Russia)

Alina V. GASUMYANOVA – CandSc (Law), Deputy Director for Media Activities of the National Research Institute for the Communications Development, Deputy Director of the Center for Strategic Studies in the Sphere of Energy and Digital Economy MIEP MGIMO (University) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Valerii A. LETIAEV – DSc (Law), CandSc (Hist), professor, Professor of the Institute of Public Administration and Civil Service, Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (Russia)

Editor-translator – DSc. (Filol) Leah E. Bushkanets

Proofreader – CandSc (Filol) Ilya A. Emelin

Languages for publishing articles in the journal: Russian, English.

LAYOUT AND PREPRESS

Publishing House «Project Media Group» (Department of media-projects)
5, 2d building, 1st floor, 2d office, Gagarinskiy pereulok, Moscow Tel. +7 495 146 83 02

Signed in the press on 25.06.2023

Printed in the LLC «Podol'skaya fabrika ofsetnoj pečati» 80/42, Revolyucionnyj prospect, Podolsk, Moscow oblast
Circulation 2000 copies

ISSN 2782-3067



9 772782 306007 >

> УДК: 327 ББК 66.4

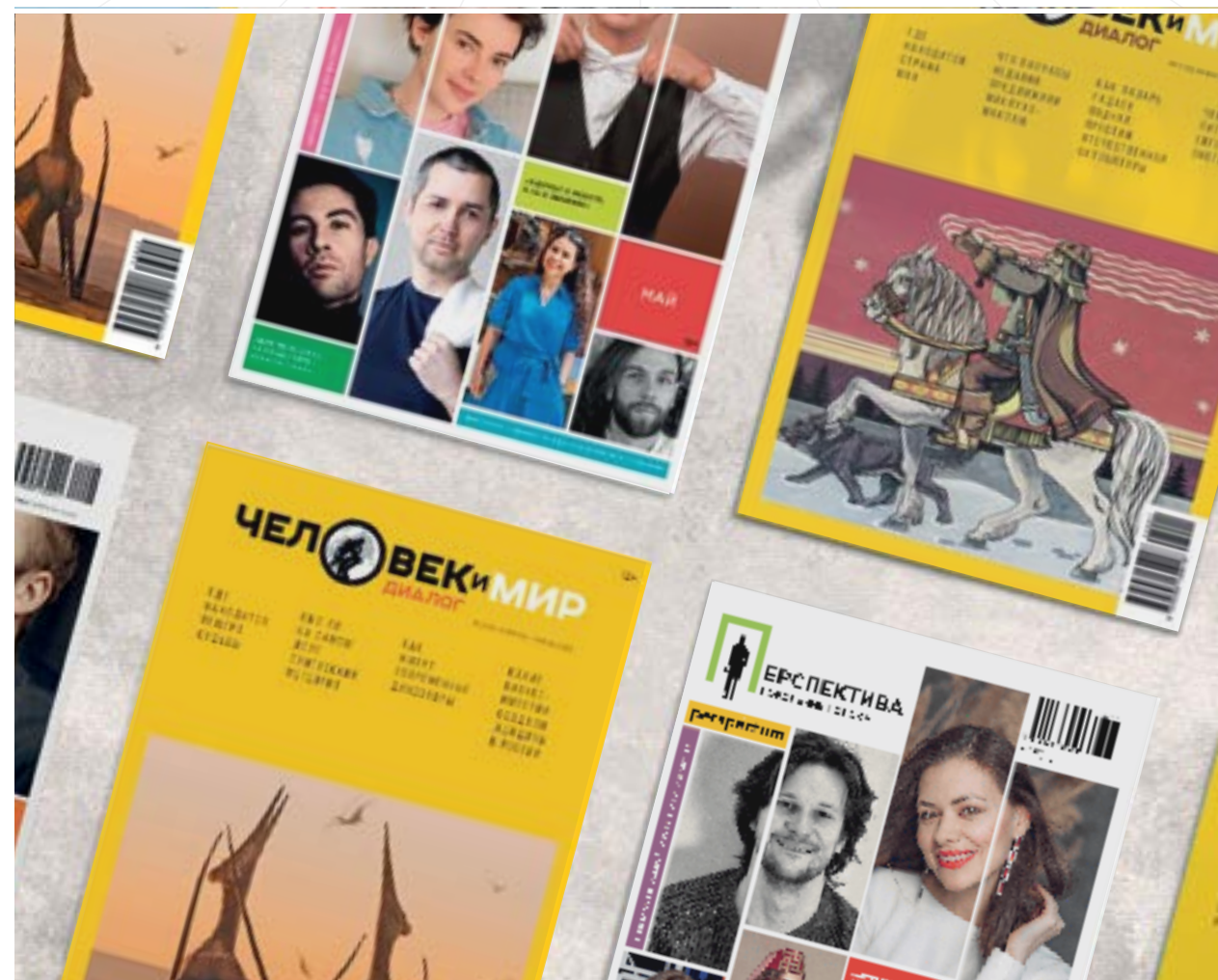
perspéctum


ЧЕЛОВЕК и МИР
ДИАЛОГ

ЕРСПЕКТИВА
ПОКОЛЕНИЕ ПОИСКА

Subscribe to Perspéctum magazines

explore the life and traditions
of Russia and 27 countries around





The cover design is based on the work of Wassily Wasilyevich Kandinsky (1866, Moscow - 1944, Neuilly-sur-Seine). Russian artist was one of the founders of abstractionism, later he was a theorist of fine arts. He became a professional artist at the age of 30 and had a huge impact on the development of world culture. He participated in exhibitions of the art association "Jack of Diamonds", in Munich he became one of the founders of the "Blue Rider" group; was engaged in teaching activities in Moscow and Berlin; was a theorist of the Bauhaus school. The creative heritage of Wassily Kandinsky continues to inspire artists, designers, architects around the world. In June 2017, the "Painting with White Lines", which until 1974 could be seen by visitors to the Tretyakov Gallery, was sold at Sotheby's for \$42 million.

