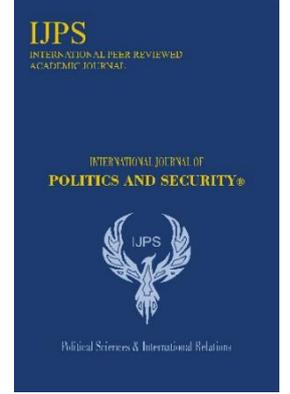


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## Evaluation of Developments in Afghanistan in the Context of Foreign Policy and Security Issues

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## Evaluation of Developments in Afghanistan in the Context of Foreign Policy and Security Issues

Hasan ACAR\*

Mustafa PEKCANDANOĞLU\*\*

### *Abstract*

*The need for security is among the basic needs that arise with the existence of human beings. With the socialization of mankind, this need has become one of the important problem areas of the states. At this point, the security of the world which come across some regions more vulnerable than others. One of these geographies is undoubtedly Afghanistan. Afghanistan has long been a sensitive country to domestic and foreign political developments. The political instability that emerged with the intervention of the Soviet Union in 1979 was deepened with the disintegration of the union. The activities carried out by the Taliban administration, which emerged as an element of power during this instability process, caused the United Nations and the United States to impose some sanctions on Afghanistan. As a result of the “Operation Enduring Freedom” carried out by the USA in Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban administration had to leave the country. Hamid Karzai was elected President at the end of the same year and was appointed as the head of the Afghan interim administration.*

*At the end of 2014, the activities carried out by NATO under the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were changed into the Resolute Support Mission. Ashraf Ghani, who was elected President in 2018, announced that he was ready to negotiate with the Taliban. As the United States played a mediator role in these negotiations, a temporary peace was established by creating conditions that would allow American soldiers to leave Afghanistan as of February 2020. This article aims to discuss the position of Afghanistan, which plays a critical role in the security of the Middle East, within the scope of domestic and foreign political developments.*

**Key Words:** *Security Policies, Afghanistan Foreign Policy, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), International Policy, International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).*

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## Dış Politika ve Güvenlik Sorunları Bağlamında Afganistan'daki Gelişmelerin

### Değerlendirilmesi

#### Özet

Güvenlik ihtiyacı, insanoğlunun varlığıyla birlikte ortaya çıkan en temel ihtiyaçlar arasındadır. İnsanın toplumsallaşması ile birlikte bu ihtiyaç, devletlerin önemli sorun alanlarından biri haline gelmiştir. Bu noktada, dünya üzerinde güvenliği diğerlerine göre daha kırılgan bazı coğrafyalar karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu coğrafyalardan biri kuşkusuz Afganistan'dır. Afganistan, uzun bir süredir iç ve dış politik gelişmelere karşı hassas bir ülke haline gelmiştir. Sovyetler Birliği'nin 1979 yılındaki müdahalesiyle ortaya çıkan politik istikrarsızlık, birliğin dağılmasıyla birlikte derinleşmiştir. Söz konusu istikrarsızlık sürecinde, bir güç unsuru olarak ortaya çıkan Taliban yönetiminin yürüttüğü faaliyetler, Birleşmiş Milletler ve Amerika Birleşik Devletleri'nin Afganistan'a bir takım yaptırımlar uygulamasına neden olmuştur. 2001 yılında ABD'nin Afganistan'da icra ettiği "Sürekli Özgürlük Operasyonu" sonucunda, Taliban yönetimi ülkeyi terk etmek zorunda kalmıştır. Hamid Karzai, aynı yılın sonlarında Cumhurbaşkanı seçilmiş ve Afgan geçici yönetiminin başına getirilmiştir. 2014 yılının sonunda, NATO'nun Uluslararası Güvenlik Destek Gücü (ISAF) kapsamında yürüttüğü faaliyetler, Kararlı Destek Misyonu'na çevrilmiştir. 2018 yılında Cumhurbaşkanı seçilen Eşref Gani, Taliban ile müzakereye hazır olduğunu ilan etmiştir. ABD'nin söz konusu müzakerelerde arabulucu rolü oynamasıyla, 2020 Şubat ayından itibaren Amerikan askerlerinin Afganistan'ı terk etmesini sağlayacak koşulların oluşturularak, geçici bir barış tesis edilmesi sağlanmıştır. Bu makale, Ortadoğu'nun güvenliğinde kritik bir rol oynayan Afganistan'ın, iç ve dış politik gelişmeler kapsamındaki konumunu tartışma amacı taşımaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Güvenlik Politikaları, Afganistan Dış Politikası, Kuzey Atlantik Antlaşması Örgütü (NATO), Uluslararası Politika, Uluslararası Güvenlik Destek Gücü (ISAF).

### 1. Introduction

Afghanistan has a strategic location adjacent to China in the east, Iran in the west, Pakistan in the south and Central Asian Republics in the north. Afghanistan has been a crossing point where many roads intersect throughout history. Afghanistan is also an ethnically rich country which hosted Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Khazars and many other ethnic groups. This valuable position and different ethnic groups can be seen as the main reasons for the instability of Afghanistan. Because the power that wants to rule in this region must have Afghanistan.

Domination established in Afghanistan has been very important for the control of the region. In addition, the countries that wanted to dominate the region used the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan. It has been easy to occupy Afghanistan for foreign countries. As Afghanistan



is a state made up of tribes, the defense has become regional. For this reason, it has been difficult to be present in Afghanistan for a long time.

Looking at the history of Afghanistan, even the strongest states of their time could not exist for a long time. The different groups that ignored this powerful fighting potential of the Afghanistan nation caused a deep instability due to the power war with each other. This unstable environment still continues today. On the one hand, there is the Afghanistan government, which is standing with the support of the US-led coalition, and on the other is the Taliban. The USA, which aims to rebuild Afghanistan and bring democracy, could not fully fulfill its wish. Today, the unstable environment continues. Also, violence in Afghanistan has increased in recent years.

At the point reached today, the USA is looking for a way to make an agreement with the Taliban. Whether the agreement will be made and the situation in Afghanistan after the agreement creates great uncertainty. This article aims to discuss the position of Afghanistan, which plays a critical role in the security of the Middle East, within the scope of domestic and foreign political developments.

The purpose of this article is to review Afghanistan's geography in a historical process and to evaluate Afghanistan in the context of foreign policy, security problems and policies pursued in their solution. The article discusses what causes the persistent instability problem in Afghanistan. In this context, with the influence of the countries of the region on Afghanistan, an answer is sought to the US presence in Afghanistan. Finally, the current situation in Afghanistan has been discussed within the scope of security and foreign policy developments.

## **2. Method of the Study and Questions for Answers**

In this article, the historical process will be used as a method to express the security and foreign policy problems of Afghanistan. In this context, the history of Afghanistan was briefly mentioned and foreign political developments were designed in parallel with this historical process. It was evaluated that the most important development in Afghanistan's political instability was the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union.



The situation of authoritarianism that emerged in the region with the disintegration of the Soviet Union contributed to the existence of the Taliban administration. With the control of the Taliban, international organizations, especially the USA, have worked on ensuring stability in the region. However, it is not possible to say that political stability and security have been achieved in the present period. In order to make this evaluation, answers to some questions were sought in the article.

The article seeks answers to the following questions:

- a. How has the power focuses changed in the Afghanistan geography in the historical process?
- b. How does Afghanistan's relations in foreign policy continue?
- c. What are the reasons for the security problems that occur in Afghanistan?
- d. What are the policies pursued by the USA and international organizations trying to exist in Afghanistan?
- e. How did these policies affect Afghanistan's foreign policy and security problems?

### **3. A Brief Overview of Afghanistan History**

Afghanistan was founded in 1747 by Ahmed Han Dürrani, a Pashtun tribe. Ahmed Han Dürrani received the support of Nadir Shah. Gathering the chieftains of the Pashtun tribe, he was elected as the "king" by the "Loya Jirga" assembly. In 1760, Ahmed Shah expanded his territory to Delhi and the Arabian Sea with his campaigns. After Ahmed Shah died in 1772, the country could not be stabilized for many years. In this period, the Central-Asian geography witnessed the struggles of the imperialist states. As a result of the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), the British Empire captured France, the colony of France. He wanted to strengthen his domination in the region. On the other hand, Russia has taken steps to move south in line with its policy of landing in the warm seas. Iran, another actor in the region, wanted to protect and expand its territory. The geography of Afghanistan is in the middle of all these struggles.



After a long period of instability, Dost Mohammad Khan came to the throne in 1826. He tried to gather the tribes together. Friendly Mohammed followed a policy of balance between Russia and Britain. The British, who were dissatisfied with this situation, occupied Afghanistan in 1839. The British also captured other cities, including Kabul. The British were exposed to popular resistance and had to withdraw from Afghanistan. While the British left Afghanistan, almost all of the 16,000 forces were sworded. As a result of this war, which took place in the history as the First Anglo-Afghan War, Dost Mohammad re-entered the throne.<sup>1</sup>

After the second half of the 19th century, Russia strengthened its influence on Afghanistan. The British started the Second Anglo-Afghan War uncomfortable with this situation. Although the British occupied a large part of Afghanistan, they left the country. As a result of this war, the British started to be influential in Afghanistan's foreign and defense policies.<sup>2</sup>

After the war, Abdurrahman Khan passed the throne in 1880. Abdur Rahman Khan followed a pro-peace policy. In his 21-year rule, he tried to consolidate the tribes to the central government. Abdur Rahman Khan has implemented many reforms. In this process, the Durand Borderline agreement was signed between the British and Abdur Rahman Khan. According to the agreement, one-third of the Pashtun population remained in Afghanistan, and two-thirds remained within the borders of today's Pakistan. This agreement has caused deep problems that continue to this day. Abdur Rahman Khan died in 1901. His wooden son Habibullah Khan passed. Habibullah Khan continued to follow his father's peaceful policies. Habibullah Khan kept his country neutral during the First World War. Habibullah Khan died in 1919. His son, Amanullah Khan, was succeeded by his son.<sup>3</sup> Amanullah Khan followed policies different from those followed by his father and grandfather. Amanullah Han wanted Afghanistan to be completely independent. Amanullah Khan emphasized the independence of Afghanistan to the British. The British, who did not recognize Afghanistan's independence at first, could not

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph J. Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, (Washington D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2011), 15.

<sup>2</sup> See more at: Henry Bathurst Hanna, *The Second Afghan War, 1878-79-80: It's Causes, It's Conduct and It's Consequences*, (Creative Media Partners, LLC, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> Tim Hollifield, "History of Afghanistan", Defense Intelligence Agency U.S., Report, (Washington D.C.: Directorate for Human Capital, 2013).



achieve the result they wanted in the Third Anglo-Afghan War. As a result, they signed the Rawalpindi Agreement with Afghanistan in 1919 and accepted Afghanistan as an independent country. After King Amanullah Khan gained independence, he wanted to make western-style reforms in his country. In 1929, the people, who displayed a strict attitude towards western values, started a great rebellion.<sup>4</sup>

Tajik leader Habibullah Kalakani led the revolt. Amanullah Khan could not resist anymore and left the country. Habibullah Kalakani ruled the country in chaos for 9 months. In addition, it removed the reforms by Amanullah Khan. The cousin of Amanullah Khan, Nadir Shah, took the throne back in 1929 after his struggle. Instead of Nadir Shah, who died in 1933, his son Zahir Shah came to the throne. Zahir Shah ruled for a long time between 1933 and 1978. Because of Zahir Shah's young age, his uncles had an influence over his power until 1953.<sup>5</sup> By the 1960s, almost half of the Afghanistan budget consisted of foreign aid from the US and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).<sup>6</sup>

During this period, the USSR had a great influence over Afghanistan. Some officers in the Afghan army have become an important positions. In 1973, ex-Prime Minister Mohammed Daoud Khan withdrew Zahir Shah with the support of some officers. Although Daoud Khan came to power with the support of these groups, he did not implement the policies they wanted. Daoud Khan implemented balance policies between the US and the USSR in its early years. He later established closer relations with the United States. The groups, who were uncomfortable with this situation, overthrew Daoud Khan with a coup in 1978. A government supported by the USSR was established in Afghanistan. The new government wanted to make ambitious reforms. But the Afghan people have not adopted these reforms that do not match their values. The Afghanistan government pressured opposition groups and made mass arrests. As a result of these events, the people started a big rebellion. Taking advantage of this confusion, the USSR made a military intervention in Afghanistan in November 1979. Mujahideen groups have formed in the country against this occupation. The mujahids were supported by the USA,

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<sup>4</sup> See more at: Louis Dupree, *Afghanistan*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

<sup>5</sup> Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, 19.

<sup>6</sup> See more at: Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan, State Formation and Collapse in the International System*, (Lahore: Vanguard Books, 1996).



Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China. India supported the USSR-backed Afghanistan Government. This war had a global impact not only regionally. Military intervention could not yield a definitive result in Afghanistan. The USSR, which had a hard time in 1979, could not continue this war with heavy costs anymore. The USSR withdrew completely from Afghanistan on February 15, 1979. After the USSR withdrew, it continued to support the Necibullah Government in Afghanistan. In addition, the USA continued to support mujahideen. The civil war between the government of the USSR-backed Necibullah Government and the Mujahideen happened between 1989 and 1992. After the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the Necibullah Government weakened.<sup>7</sup>

In 1992, a temporary government was established in Afghanistan with the help of the UN. Burhanuddin Rabbani was chaired by this government and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, supported by the Pakistan government, became prime minister.<sup>8</sup>

Although a temporary government was established in Afghanistan, stability could not be achieved. The atmosphere of war and unrest continued in the country. Local war barons continued to dominate their territories. This situation caused the Temporary Government of Afghanistan to lose power. There has been a group that turned this situation into an opportunity in Afghanistan. The "Taliban" movement, which means students in the Pashto language, has started to get stronger since the 1990s. The Taliban was founded with the support of the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) and ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence).<sup>9</sup>

The Taliban was founded by the Afghan Mujahideen to fight the Soviet invasion. The war between the Mujahideen both broke their own forces and caused the public to react against the Mujahideen. This chaotic situation turned into an opportunity. The Taliban entered the city of Kandahar in November 1994.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See more at: Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, *Bargains for Peace? Aid Conditionalities and Reconstruction in Afghanistan*, (The Hague: Clingendael Institute: 2006).

<sup>8</sup> Collins, *Understanding War in Afghanistan*, 35.

<sup>9</sup> Lindsay Maizland and Zachary Laub, "The Taliban in Afghanistan", *Council on Foreign Relations*, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan> (02.05.2020).

<sup>10</sup> Maizland and Laub, "The Taliban in Afghanistan".



Then they took over the big cities one after another. The Taliban took over the city center of Kabul in 1996. The Taliban, which also dominated the capital, has taken over the entire country with this incident. As a result of this situation, the Taliban started to be taken into consideration more in the international public. After the Taliban captured Kandahar in 1994, the Clinton administration in the USA contacted the Taliban.<sup>11</sup>

The Taliban faced reactions due to its management style. The Taliban wanted to prohibit the values of the western world and devastated values other than their own ideology. This strict attitude caused damage to the Taliban Government in terms of international relations. Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden moved from Sudan to Afghanistan in 1996. In 1998, Al Qaeda carried out a bomb attack on the foreign representatives of the USA in Kenya and Tanzania. In addition to the strict and repressive policies implemented by the Taliban, the US administration has disturbed its close relations with Al Qaeda. Despite the calls made by the USA, Taliban Leader Molla Ömer Al-Qaeda did not return the terrorists. By 2001, the Bush administration put pressure on the Taliban administration economically and politically. Moreover, it supported this structure, which is located in the north of Afghanistan, consisting of Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaralar and Pashtuns dissatisfied with the Taliban administration.<sup>12</sup>

On September 11, 2001, four-passenger aircraft were hijacked by hackers in the USA. These planes damaged the strategic points in the USA. The first two attacks were made to the New York World Trade Center. The third plane was landed on the US Department of Defense Pentagon and the building was damaged. The last plane wanted to target the White House due to the US capital Washington. But the plane crashed to the south of the state of Pennsylvania. With the attack, over 2600 people were at the World Trade Center; 125 people in the Pentagon; 256 people and 19 hackers died in the aircraft.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Kenneth Katzman and Clayton Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy", Report, (Congressional Research Service, RL30588, 2017).

<sup>12</sup> Katzman and Thomas, "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy".

<sup>13</sup> See more at: The 9/11 Commission Report, "Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist attacks upon the United States", (New York and London: WW Norton and Company, 2004).



The US then carried out an airstrike against Afghanistan with the operation "Operation Enduring Freedom". The US and the United Nations Taliban were asked to return Osama Bin Laden weeks before the operation started. Canada, Australia, Germany and France have pledged to assist this operation in the future. The coalition forces launched the ground operation on 12 November 2001 after bombing the Taliban targets with the air operation. Coalition forces have made rapid progress. Taliban forces had to withdraw from the capital of Kabul towards the end of December. He also lost the city of Kandahar, where the Taliban was the strongest city. Along with the successes in military operations, works were also carried out for the construction of Afghanistan's future. In Bonn, Germany, the UN invited large groups of Afghanistan, representing the people, to the conference. Ex-King Mohammed Zahir Shah also attended this conference. The United Nations Security Council decided to establish a temporary government in Afghanistan with the decision numbered 1383 dated 5 December 2001. Hamid Karzai chaired this interim government.<sup>14</sup>

Immediately after this agreement, ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) was established in December 2001 with the United Nations Security Council decision numbered 1386. In addition to providing training and security to the army and police, ISAF also undertakes tasks such as rebuilding damaged schools and hospitals, installing water and power lines, improving infrastructure and supporting local government structures.<sup>15</sup>

NATO took over and commands to command ISAF in 2003. Afghanistan has become more stable as a result of these efforts. During this period, Hamid Karzai won the elections in 2004 and became the head of state. This election marked the beginning of the new democratic process in Afghanistan. Hamid Karzai asked ISAF to continue to increase its presence in Afghanistan. The countries under ISAF are mostly NATO countries. The steps taken by the United States on Afghanistan have been binding on the Afghanistan strategy for other countries. The USA had difficulty in maintaining this situation in the long term after its deterrent

<sup>14</sup> Council Foreign Relations, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2020", Timeline, 2001, <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan> (02.05.2020).

<sup>15</sup> BBC News, "Uluslararası Güvenlik Destek Gücü: ISAF", August 12, 2009, [https://www.bbc.com/turkce/ozeldosyalar/2009/08/090812\\_afghanistan\\_isaf](https://www.bbc.com/turkce/ozeldosyalar/2009/08/090812_afghanistan_isaf) (02.05.2020).



intervention against the Taliban in the first operations. For this reason, the number of soldiers sent by the USA to Afghanistan increased in certain periods. 17,000 US troops were transferred to the region by the President Obama administration in 2009 and 32,000 US troops in 2010.<sup>16</sup>

In addition, the capacity of the Afghanistan army and police was tried to be increased during the Obama era. With the increase of military capacity, 20 of the 30 top executives of Al-Qaeda were killed in 2011. Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden was also killed in Pakistan in 2011. Although Obama increased his military capacity, he wanted to weaken the Taliban in the country and then withdraw his troops from here. By June 2013, Afghanistan has taken over the security forces.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. withdrew plenty of its troops from Afghanistan in 2014. Meanwhile, Ashraf Ghani won the presidential elections in 2014 and started his post. As of the end of 2014, ISAF has completed its duty and since 2015, NATO's new mandate has been designated as 'Resolute Support Mission/RSM'.<sup>18</sup>

Elected as the President of the USA in 2016, Donald Trump's election promises were to withdraw American soldiers from Afghanistan. But Trump later stated that a quick withdrawal from Afghanistan would create a lack of authority there. Trump's aim was to withdraw from Afghanistan, but he argued that this should be systematic and timely.<sup>19</sup> Taliban started negotiations with the USA in February 2019. An agreement was signed in February 2020. According to the agreement, the USA will withdraw some of its troops from Afghanistan, and the Taliban will not allow terrorist elements in return. Despite this agreement, some conflicts have occurred between the US and the Taliban.

#### **4. Afghanistan and Foreign Political Developments**

Due to the ethnic diversity and geopolitical position of the population of Afghanistan, it has a complex foreign policy outlook. First of all, Pakistan has been one of the most important

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<sup>16</sup> BBC News, "Obama to Send 30,000 More US Troops to Afghanistan", December 02, 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8388939.stm> (02.05.2020).

<sup>17</sup> Council Foreign Relations, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2020".

<sup>18</sup> Merve Seren, "Trump Afganistan'da Neyi Hedefliyor?" *SETA*, August 25, 2017, <https://www.setav.org/trump-afganistanda-neyi-hedefliyor/> (02.05.2020).

<sup>19</sup> Council Foreign Relations, "The U.S. War in Afghanistan 1999-2020".



countries in terms of Afghanistan's foreign relations. The economies of the two countries have been tightly linked. In addition, the two countries had deep historical and cultural relations. Since Pakistan is a seashore, it has been an important trade route for Afghanistan. However, the Durand Line has been a problem between the two countries. With this border drawn, one-third of Pashtuns remained in Afghanistan and two thirds in Pakistan. Pakistan sees itself as the heir of the Durand Line, determined in the colonial period. Afghanistan does not know this line and claims that it is on the other side of the border. This limit has also been the source of many problems in the region. Pakistan constantly intervened in Afghanistan to protect its interests here. Pakistan's support for the Taliban has been one of the main problems between the two countries. The Taliban occupies a position in the southern region of Afghanistan, which borders with Pakistan, and in the Pashtunistan region in Pakistan, across the border.<sup>20</sup> Besides, another problem is the water problem. With the infrastructure and energy investments made by Afghanistan, the amount of water going to Pakistan decreased. Considering the drought in the region, it is seen that this issue will be more important in the following years. Bilateral relations between India, another country in the region, and Afghanistan have been on the rise in recent years. The trade volume between India and Afghanistan was around \$ 1 billion in 2017.<sup>21</sup>

In this process, India has made some investments in Afghanistan. In addition, bureaucratic visits between the two countries continued intensely. India's Afghanistan policy has not continued only through trade. India wanted to get the support of Afghanistan, an Islamic country, in the Kashmir problem that India had with Pakistan. Considered historically, during the Soviet occupation, India was included in the block opposite Pakistan. India wanted to break Pakistan's pressure by establishing good relations with the legitimate government of Afghanistan. India and Afghanistan signed a strategic partnership agreement. This situation was also against the India-Pakistan competition. The U.S. wants India to pursue a more effective policy on Afghanistan. Russia, which is located beyond the northern Asian neighbors of Afghanistan, has established Afghanistan policy both regionally and globally. Russia was uncomfortable with a long-term NATO presence in the region. Russia saw the bases established

<sup>20</sup> See more at: Abdullah Yegin, "Afganistan Siyasetini Anlama Kılavuzu", Rapor, (İstanbul: SETA, 2015).

<sup>21</sup> Embassy of India Kabul Bilateral Brief, <https://eoi.gov.in/kabul/?pdf0354?000> (02.05.2020).



by the USA in Afghanistan as a danger for itself. In addition, Russia wanted NATO forces to remain in Afghanistan until it stabilizes. Russian President Vladimir Putin stated in a statement that NATO forces should remain until stabilization in Afghanistan and said: "*Afghanistan has difficulty in maintaining its own security, let alone NATO to fight there for us!*"<sup>22</sup>

In 2012, Vladimir Putin allowed the establishment of a NATO base in the city of Ulyanovsk, on the banks of the Volga River, for shipment to the operation in Afghanistan. With the completion of the ISAF mission in December 2014, Russian Prime Minister Medvedev decided to close the NATO base with a decision signed on May 18, 2015.

Another actor in the region was the People's Republic of China (PRC). China is not only a regional actor but also a country on the rise due to its global position. Chinese Afghanistan relations should be considered not only regionally but globally. When we look at the relations between the two countries, it is seen that China has global efforts through Afghanistan. First of all, the relations between China and Afghanistan were shaped by the Cold War conflict. Since the beginning of the 21st century, this relationship has been getting stronger.<sup>23</sup> The ideological divergence between China and the USSR has been one of the most important developments shaping China's Afghanistan policy in the military intervention of the USSR in Afghanistan. China supported the mujahideen, the Islamist resistance groups in Afghanistan, which are against the Soviet Union.<sup>24</sup>

Another neighbor of Afghanistan is Iran, which is on the western border. Some regions within the borders of Afghanistan today were once within the territory of Iran. Iran has deep historical, cultural, economic and deep relations with Afghanistan. Dari (Dari Persian), one of the two official languages of Afghanistan, is a language very similar to the official language of Persian-Iran.<sup>25</sup> Iran has become one of Afghanistan's largest trading partners. After the Iranian

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<sup>22</sup> Euronews, "Putin: "Nato Afganistan'da bizim yerimize savaşıyor", August 2, 2012, <https://tr.euronews.com/2012/08/02/putin-nato-afganistanda-bizim-yerimize-savasiyor-> (02.05.2020).

<sup>23</sup> Kubilayhan Erman, "Çin Halk Cumhuriyeti Dış Politikasında Afganistan", *Karadeniz Uluslararası Bilimsel Dergi* 42 (2019): 169-170.

<sup>24</sup> See more at: Y. Volkov, K. Gevorkyan, M. Mikhailenko, A. M. Polonsky and A. Svetozarov, *The Truth about Afghanistan: Documents, Facts, and Eyewitness Reports*, (Moscow: Novosti Press, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Bernard Lewis, *Ortadoğu İki Bin Yıllık Ortadoğu Tarihi*, (Ankara: Arkadaş, 2005), 286.



Islamic Revolution in 1979, the Iranian administration adopted a policy on spreading and supporting the Shia Islam ideologically. Persian nationalism policy was added to this in the following years. In addition to protecting its regional interests in Iran, Iran has established policies that we can consider as soft power. Within the scope of these policies, it has carried out educational, cultural and media activities especially in places where the Shia Islam population is widespread. There are other nations belonging to the Shia Islam in Afghanistan.

Iran opposed the USSR's invasion of Afghanistan in line with the policies it adopted after the Islamic Revolution. However, he did not want to disrupt his relations with the USSR due to his bad relations with the USA. For this reason, Iran did not directly intervene but especially supported the mujahideen groups over the Shia Islam population. With this support, Iran aimed to establish a government in Afghanistan where it will establish good relations after the war. Taliban forces distorted Iran's plans. Taliban is a Sunni-dominated group. For this reason, the relations between the Taliban and Iran have been troubled. So many Taliban killed Iranian diplomats and massacred the Shia Islam population. For this reason, the soldiers accumulated on the Iranian border. But then Iran took a step back due to the balances in the region and especially the policies of the US-Saudi Arabia. Iran has supported the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan against the Taliban. The Northern Alliance is generally made up of Tajiks, but Uzbeks also took place. After the overthrow of the Taliban, Iran persuaded its groups to support the new President Karzai. With this role, Iran has taken steps for the stability of the central government. Iran followed a policy prioritizing stability in Afghanistan. Despite Iran's efforts, the US, under the Bush administration, followed hostile policies against Iran. Besides the Shia Islam and Persian nationalism policies in the region, Iran has also taken steps to establish good relations in the future of Afghanistan. As the USA begins to withdraw from Afghanistan, it predicts that the Taliban will be effective in Afghanistan again. For this reason, Iran also has political negotiations with the Taliban.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> See more at: Emma Graham-Harrison, "Afghan Taliban Send Delegation to Iran," *The Guardian*, 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/03/afghan-taliban-send-delegation-iran> (02.05.2020).



It is also claimed that, despite Iran's absolute refusal, it supported the Taliban forces with weapons. Another policy of Iran in Afghanistan was established to break the Saudi Arabian influence in the region. The reason for Iran's closer ties with the Taliban than in the past can be evaluated as it aims to weaken the US in the US-Taliban negotiations. With these steps Iran has taken, it has adopted a policy that aims to be effective in the future as it is today.

## 5. Afghanistan and Security Issues

The prolonged period of instability in Afghanistan has caused security problems. The main security problems of Afghanistan have been Al-Qaeda, drug trade, the inadequacy of the Afghan National Army and the competition of the countries in the region. Al-Qaeda Terrorist Organization has been largely cleared from Afghanistan, along with US-led coalition countries. After the US operations, Al-Qaeda terrorist units fled to the tribal area in Pakistan. The Pakistani army carried out operations in the tribal area for al-Qaeda militants. Pakistan has cooperated with the USA in these operations. Pakistan has secured control in the tribal area and deployed 200,000 troops for the security of the region.<sup>27</sup> As a result of the struggle against Al-Qaeda, many senior executives, including Osama Bin Laden, the leader of the organization, were killed. However, this organization, which is supported by the Taliban, continues to exist in Afghanistan.

In addition, there is a danger of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) in the region. However, the Afghan Ambassador on this issue stressed that the ISIS hazard here is a separation within the Taliban. Some groups dissatisfied with the Taliban administration in the Taliban left the Taliban by opening the ISIS flag.<sup>28</sup> The USA has organized air operations against ISIS elements. The USA did not have a nuclear bomb on these elements, but after a nuclear bomb, the most effective bomb was the 'mother of bombs' (MOAB)<sup>29</sup>, which was the city of Nangarhar

<sup>27</sup> See more at: Masood Ur Rehman Khattak and Summar Iqbal Babar, "A Critical Analysis of the Security Situation in Afghanistan: A Way Forward", *Central Asia Journal* 82 (2018).

<sup>28</sup> "Geçiş Sürecinde Afganistan, Afganistan ve Ötesi için Yansımalar", Panel, *SETA*, October 10, 2019, <https://www.setav.org/etkinlikler/panel-gecis-surecinde-afganistan-afganistan-ve-otesi-icin-yansimalar/> (02.05.2020).

<sup>29</sup> Barış Terun, "Nükleer Özellik Taşımayan Fakat Atıldığında Ortılığı Toz Duman Eden 'Bombaların Annesi': MOAB", *Webtekno*, 2017, <https://www.webtekno.com/nukleer-ozellik-tasimayan-bombalarin-annesi-ortaligi->



on the Pakistan border. Today, with the operations carried out on ISIS elements, this organization suffered a great loss of power.

Another security problem in Afghanistan was drug trade. Afghanistan is the largest opium producer in the world. Drug production in Afghanistan has caused a global problem. Drugs in Afghanistan open up to the world in three ways. The first line opens to the world through Pakistan, the second line through Iran, and the third line through the Central Asian Countries. This situation, which is a big problem for Afghanistan, also poses a problem for the states on this line. The illegal Afghan drug economy is approximately \$ 604 million, and the value of the Afghan drug in the international market is over \$ 61 billion. Drug traffic has caused health and social problems all over the world. In addition to being an important source of income for Afghan farmers, Afyon production has become an important source of income for terrorist organizations, mafia and crime networks. Another dilemma in the drug issue is that the Taliban, which has a big dominance in Afghanistan today, has made a significant income from drug sales. The Taliban earns between \$ 300 and \$ 500 million a year from the drug trade.<sup>30</sup>

The drug problem in Afghanistan continued to grow due to political will ineffectiveness, political corruption and inadequate cooperation with the countries in the region. Another security problem of Afghanistan is that the countries of the region see Afghanistan as an area where they can excel against each other. An example of this is the India-Pakistan conflict. The main problem between India and Pakistan is caused by the Kashmir region border problem. Kashmir is a region with strategically important and rich resources that both countries claim. India wants to get the support of Muslim countries against Pakistan on the Kashmir issue. For this reason, India wanted to establish good relations with Afghanistan. Another reason is that Afghanistan has a geopolitical location and rich underground resources. Pakistan likewise wanted to strengthen its influence in Afghanistan. Providing the connection of Afghanistan with the sea, Pakistan has become an important trade line for Afghanistan. Pakistan has been in close cooperation with China to further increase its role in the region. The India-Pakistan conflict

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kavurdu-h27861.html (02.05.2020).

<sup>30</sup> Khattak and Babar, "A Critical Analysis of the Security Situation in Afghanistan".



caused great damage to Afghanistan and the region. Another security problem for Afghanistan is that the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) has been ineffective in combating elements that threaten Afghan security. Rapid action has been taken for ANSF training, which has caused poor training for soldiers. In addition, many people joined the ANSF among the Taliban forces and caused damage to the army. From time to time, some of the soldiers in the ANSF went to the Taliban side. This situation caused damages materially and morally. The USA has spent 68 billion dollars for ANSF, but the desired development has not been achieved.<sup>31</sup> The number of soldiers targeted for ANSF has not been reached.

## **6. Policies Followed in the Solution of Afghanistan's Security Problems**

It has been 19 years since the USA's "Operation Enduring Freedom" operation launched with the UK. However, when we look at the point reached in Afghanistan, there has not been a significant change today. Because the Taliban, which was dismissed from the post-military intervention, had an important dominance in Afghanistan at the present point.

Afghanistan has been a difficult country to understand with its complex structure. ISAF has determined a program in five basic areas in Afghanistan. However, the determined targets could not be met. For example, the US, which assumes the task of establishing and developing the army in Afghanistan, has created an army that is inadequate in terms of both quantity and quality. Germany took part in the establishment of the police force in Afghanistan. Germany was insufficient in the number of targeted police. For this reason, the USA, which took this task under its responsibility, increased the number of police, but it was incomplete in the training of the police. Italy, which was commissioned to make the Afghanistan Constitution, carried out its duty with an understanding based on western values.

A constitution, which contains the traditional and religious sensibilities of Afghanistan, could not be created. The legal structure prepared has created a conflict between the Afghan Government and the Afghan people. The UK has been commissioned for drug trafficking, one

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<sup>31</sup> John F. Sopko, "Assessing the Capabilities and Effectiveness of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces", *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)*, February 12, 2016, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-16-17-TY.pdf> (02.05.2020).



of the most important problems in Afghanistan. The approach to the drug problem, which is an important source of income for the Afghan people, has led to a deepening of the crisis rather than solving the problem. The United Kingdom tried to solve this problem by burning the fields that are planted in opium. The Afghans, who could not obtain an alternative income by cutting the income from drug (afyon) production, found the solution by the Taliban. In this way, which was taken with the aim of defeating the Taliban, it actually helped the Taliban. The final assignment was for Japan with the mission of disarming the public.

### **6.1. US Policies**

US President Bush stated that their presence in Afghanistan is to help the Afghan people, to bring democracy and it does not matter how long it takes.<sup>32</sup> This task undertaken means the reconstruction of Afghanistan beyond a military operation. The USA continued to stay in Afghanistan after the Taliban administration was overthrown and tried to establish a new order. However, the fact that the Taliban was expelled from Kabul did not destroy the Taliban. The Taliban started to grow stronger over time. In addition, the new administration in Afghanistan remained ineffective despite all the support. The Afghanistan Government is economically dependent on foreign as well as its political and military shortcomings. 20% of Afghanistan's national income is provided by foreign aid.<sup>33</sup> In addition, the conflicts that Afghan politicians entered with each other created negative effects for Afghanistan. These conflicts were felt more effectively especially during the election periods.

Problems such as corruption and nepotism have made Afghanistan politically unstable. US President Donald Trump said: "Our support is not unlimited. Americans want to see real reforms, real progress and real results." Thus, it was stated that the support given to the Afghan people is not continuous.<sup>34</sup> He also announced that after the controversial election, there was no agreement between the current Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani and his rival, Abdullah

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<sup>32</sup> See more at: Steven Simon, "Review: Can the Right War Be Won? Defining American Interests in Afghanistan", *Foreign Affairs* 88, no. 4 (2009).

<sup>33</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, "An Ailing America Must Not Abandon Afghanistan", *Foreignpolicy*, March 26, 2020, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2020/03/26/afghanistan-aid-taliban-ailing-america-must-not-abandon/> (02.05.2020).

<sup>34</sup> Jonathan Marcus, "Trump'ın Afganistan stratejisi ne anlama geliyor?" *BBC News*, August 22, 2017, <https://www.bbc.com/turkce/haberler-dunya-41010290> (02.05.2020).



Abdullah, who demanded his presidency, US Foreign Minister Mike Pompeo reduced the aid of Afghanistan to \$1 billion. Pompeo expressed this situation in his statement as; "This leadership failure poses a direct threat to US national interests."<sup>35</sup>

This management shows how serious the situation is in Afghanistan. Looking at these developments, the effort to build a new Afghanistan targeted by President Bush in Afghanistan has been fruitless. The Obama administration, which took over after President Bush, stated that this goal was unrealistic.<sup>36</sup>

Although Obama criticized Afghanistan policy during the election process, he increased the number of American soldiers in Afghanistan at the first stage. The number of soldiers, which was 69,000 in 2009, the date when Obama started his duty, reached its peak in 2010 and reached 96,900. The increase in the number of soldiers also increased the cost of the war in Afghanistan. The policy pursued by Obama in Afghanistan was to weaken the Taliban in such a way that the Afghan National Security Forces could fight and then transfer the security responsibility there to the Government of Afghanistan. In the context of this policy, the Obama administration has gradually reduced the number of soldiers in Afghanistan. In 2016, when Obama's mandate expired, the number of American soldiers in Afghanistan dropped to 9,800.<sup>37</sup> The Obama administration has been subjected to criticism that American troops in Afghanistan were withdrawn with the wrong timing. The Taliban got stronger by finding space with the withdrawal of American soldiers. According to some analysis, the Taliban has become stronger than ever. Today, the reality of the Taliban has been accepted in Afghanistan. The Trump administration has started negotiations with Afghanistan. But today, the US-Taliban negotiations have created a complex picture. There is a power struggle within both the Afghanistan Government and the Taliban. This power weakness has had a negative impact on the negotiations.

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<sup>35</sup> Rubin, "An Ailing America Must Not Abandon Afghanistan".

<sup>36</sup> Simon, "Review: Can the Right War Be Won?"

<sup>37</sup> Kimberly Amadeo, "Afghanistan War Cost, Timeline, and Economic Impact, the Ongoing Costs of the Afghanistan War", *The Balance*, April 08, 2020, <https://www.thebalance.com/cost-of-afghanistan-war-timeline-economic-impact-4122493> (02.05.2020).



With the recent elections in Afghanistan, an uncertain atmosphere prevailed in the country. In the results announced only five months after the elections, Ashraf Ghani became the president again. However, his closest rival, Abdullah Abdullah, did not accept the election results. In addition, Abdul Rashid Dostum, who is a supporter of Abdullah Abdullah, stated that they would establish a parallel government by claiming that cheating was done in the elections. On the other hand, the Taliban includes many different groups. Whether all groups of the Taliban will act jointly after an agreement with the Taliban is reached is uncertain. Another problem has been the reluctance of the Taliban about reconciliation with the Afghanistan government. It is possible to state that an environment of peace and stability cannot be achieved in a process in which not all groups in Afghanistan are included.

## ***6.2. Policies of International Organizations***

Within the scope of the Bonn Agreement, ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) was established on December 20, 2001, with the United Nations Security Council resolution numbered 1386. The main task of ISAF is to support security and development in Afghanistan, thus providing an environment of public order and stability that will facilitate the strengthening of the new administration.<sup>38</sup>

In August 2003, NATO took ISAF command at the decision of the United Nations. Forming the national security and defense forces of Afghanistan over the next decade has been an important part of the ISAF mission. ISAF, initially operating in Kabul and its vicinity expanded its field of duty in 2003. ISAF has started to operate in all provinces of Afghanistan since 2006. In line with the UN Disarmament, demobilization and reintegration program, around 100,000 mujahedin and officers were disarmed and many were not allowed to serve in the Afghan security forces again. This meant that the Afghanistan security system was set up from scratch. The lack of experience in the past caused security problems today. As of the end of February 2016, 3515 coalition members and tens of thousands of Afghan security forces and civilians died. In December 2014, when ISAF completed its mission by gradually transferring

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<sup>38</sup> BBC News, "Uluslararası Güvenlik Destek Gücü: ISAF".



the country's security to Afghan officials, Afghanistan gained 352,000 troops and police force. However, this quantity, which is high in quantity, is incomplete in terms of quality. Looking at the Taliban's dominance today, it is seen that the soldiers are inadequate.<sup>39</sup>

ISAF has been replaced by the "Resolute Support Mission (RSM)", which will no longer take on a war mission as of 2015.<sup>40</sup>

As of February 2020, RSM exists with 16,551 soldiers from 38 different countries. In this process, many international aid organizations operated in Afghanistan. However, due to the unstable environment in Afghanistan, studies continue with many difficulties.

## Conclusion

Afghanistan has been geography with constant wars since its establishment. It was first caught up in the power struggle "Great Game" between Britain and Russia. Despite gaining independence in the following years, instability has not ended. This time, there was a period of coups in Afghanistan. Amanullah Khan, who has a modern understanding of western style, has been subjected to a coup. Afghanistan continued to experience problems in the "Cold War" years after the Second World War. This time, the disasters that will continue to date have started for Afghanistan, which is in the middle of the struggle between the USA and USSR. Firstly, the USSR made a military intervention in Afghanistan. People organized against the occupation of the USSR formed mujahideen groups.

After the end of the occupation of the USSR, this time mujahedin groups fought against each other. Using this situation, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan. The Taliban administration acted with the radical Islam ideology. This management style adopted by the Taliban caused great reactions both domestically and abroad. Also, the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization, which has fought against western values, has found space in Afghanistan. Despite

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<sup>39</sup> Mohammad Shafiq Hamdam, "Afganistan'ın Yanında Olmak: Stratejik Seçim", *NATO Review*, May 4, 2016, <https://www.nato.int/docu/review/tr/articles/2016/05/04/afganistan-in-yaninda-olmak-stratejik-secim/index.html> (02.05.2020).

<sup>40</sup> Merve Seren, "NATO'nun Afganistan Gerçeğiyle Yüzleşme Zamanı", *SETA*, April 29, 2017, <https://www.setav.org/natonun-afganistan-gercegiyle-yuzlesme-zamani/> (02.05.2020).



all the warnings, the Taliban administration did not make a sound to this situation. It even took a stance that supports Al-Qaeda.

After the September 11 Attacks by Al-Qaeda, the US-United Kingdom intervened in Afghanistan with a joint operation. Later, under the name ISAF, a coalition force, mostly composed of NATO member countries, started to work in Afghanistan. The Taliban was soon removed from management. It is aimed to establish a democratic administration with the support of ISAF. A new government was formed with the elections. Since Afghanistan has never had a serious democracy experience, the new order has faced huge problems. Afghanistan has faced many problems such as corruption, nepotism, ethnicity discrimination and allegations of fraud in elections. Besides, there are many different sub-identities in Afghanistan. The struggle of these different nations, which do not want to compromise with each other, still continues today.

Some countries that wanted to reach their goals through Afghanistan continued to support this negative situation. They have done this with the aim of creating an Afghanistan government, where they will be more suitable for them. Afghanistan is an important country with its strategic location and rich underground resources. This situation in Afghanistan has put the country in a deadlock in terms of administration. In addition, the US-led ISAF has failed to establish a structure that meets these sensitivities of Afghanistan. The USA wanted to solve the security problem in Afghanistan by increasing the number of troops and by increasing the number of troops of the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces). These forces, which are inadequate in terms of education, were not effective enough.

Foreign forces in Afghanistan have made mistakes in this process that have driven Afghan people away from them. The Taliban regained its strength due to the mistakes made and the US attaching greater importance to the invasion of Iraq. It has been met by the American public that the war that has been going on for years creates huge costs. The USA has accepted the reality of the Taliban in Afghanistan. By making a deal with the Taliban, it wanted to withdraw from Afghanistan completely by pulling out very few soldiers compared to the past. However, negotiations continued in a very sensitive environment. Because it has been difficult



to balance both the Afghanistan Government and the Taliban. It remains unclear how negotiations will end. It seems likely that instability will continue after the US withdraws in the region where there are precise balances. Finally, it is not possible to say that political stability and security have been achieved in the present period.

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