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Security and political relations between Russia and Afghanistan (with threats and challenges)

Abstract

The relationship between Afghanistan and Russia has seen many ups and downs. Seizing control from the Taliban in Afghanistan is viewed as the initiation of a renewed era in Russian-Afghan relations following the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Although the Russians have no desire to get involved in the issue of Afghanistan, but the expansion of the Taliban's influence in this country and the establishment of a relationship between this group and the Islamists of Central Asia and the North

Caucasus, they have to pay for it. With the incident of September 11, 2001, Russia tried to improve its international status by asking for an opportunity and announcing its readiness to fight terrorism together with America. Regardless of the results of this effort, the Russians could not gain much status and benefits in Afghanistan. This article seeks to answer the question of what place Afghanistan has in the security policy of the Russian Federation. In this regard, the hypothesis was proposed that Afghanistan is very significant for the Russian Federation from a security point of view, because the threats arising from it have threatened Russia's security and interests in various dimensions. This article is done with an explanatory approach to examine and study the topic of the article, and the required data has been collected from library, electronic and interview sources.

Keywords: *Afghanistan, threat, security policy, national security doctrine, Russian Federation*

Rusya ve Afganistan Arasındaki Güvenlik ve Siyasi İlişkiler (Tehditler Ve Zorluklarla Birlikte)

Öz

Afganistan ve Rusya arasındaki ilişki pek çok iniş çıkışa sahne olmuştur. Afganistan'da Taliban'ın kontrolü ele geçirmesi, Sovyetler Birliği'nin dağılmasının ardından Rus-Afgan ilişkilerinde yeni bir dönemin başlangıcı olarak görülüyor. Her ne kadar Ruslar Afganistan meselesine müdahil olmak istemeseler de, Taliban'ın bu ülkedeki nüfuzunu genişletmesi ve bu grupla Orta Asya ve Kuzey Kafkasya'daki İslamcılar arasında bir ilişki kurulması, Rusların bunun bedelini ödemesine neden oldu. Rusya, 11 Eylül 2001 olayıyla birlikte, bir fırsat isteyerek ve Amerika ile birlikte terörizmle mücadele etmeye hazır olduğunu açıklayarak uluslararası statüsünü iyileştirmeye çalıştı. Bu çabanın sonuçları ne olursa olsun, Ruslar Afganistan'da çok fazla statü ve fayda elde edememiştir. Bu makale, Afganistan'ın Rusya Federasyonu'nun güvenlik politikasında nasıl bir yere sahip olduğu sorusuna cevap aramaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Afganistan'ın güvenlik açısından Rusya Federasyonu için çok önemli olduğu, çünkü Afganistan'dan kaynaklanan tehditlerin Rusya'nın güvenliğini ve çıkarlarını çeşitli boyutlarda tehdit ettiği hipotezi öne sürülmüştür. Bu makale, makalenin konusunu incelemek ve araştırmak için açıklayıcı bir yaklaşımla yapılmış ve gerekli veriler kütüphane, elektronik ve görüşme kaynaklarından toplanmıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: *Afganistan, tehdit, güvenlik politikası, ulusal güvenlik doktrini, Rusya Federasyonu*

Introduction

The history of relations and interactions between Russia and Afghanistan, which were neighbors with each other before the collapse of the Soviet Union, goes back to the 15th century. The relationship between the two nations has persisted from its inception to the present day, enduring various incidents, with the most significant being the Soviet forces' occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989. During this period, most of the interventions in Afghanistan's

internal and foreign policy were made by Russian forces and advisors. The people's reaction to the occupation of their country was hard; different groups started Jihad against the occupiers. The Soviet Union's occupation of Afghanistan is regarded as a pivotal moment in the history of the relationship between the two nations. In the past, there have always been threats from Afghanistan to the Russians, however, it has never caused serious concern to Russia; with this, we can see that the type of threats has changed since the time of the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet forces. Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Russians chose to distance themselves from the memory of that country. This is known as Afghan syndrome. The decision to distance themselves from Afghanistan was influenced by both the significant challenges posed by the Mujahideen's resistance against Soviet forces and the escalating internal political and economic turmoil within the Soviet Union. In the mid-1990s, a group called "Talib" started advancing in Afghanistan with a fundamentalist approach and with the aim of forming an Islamic government. This matter once again drew the attention of Russians to the former southern neighbor in the struggle of Russia's economic problems. The concern of the authorities of Russia and the neighboring countries of Afghanistan in Central Asia increased when signs of the cooperation of the extremist Muslim groups in Tajikistan and the Chechen extremists with the Taliban were revealed. It was like this that the Russians had to play their role in Afghanistan in order to improve their security and that of their allies in Central Asia, and the period of intercession in the relations between the two countries came to an end. The event of September 11, 2001 showed the danger of Afghanistan and its founding for the world, especially the Russian Federation, at the highest level. Also Russia, which has repeatedly warned the leaders of Central Asian countries about the danger of fundamentalism and Islamic extremism had often spoken with the aim of creating unity, they used the opportunity and tried to present Russia along with the United States in the fight against terrorism. This article aims to address the query, "What role does Afghanistan play in the security policy of the Russian Federation?" To tackle this question, three sub-questions can be posed: From a theoretical point of view, how Russia's security behavior can be analyzed? According to the Russian national security strategy document until 2020, what threats have been depicted on the Russian Federation? And finally, what threats can be made by Afghanistan against Russia's security and interests? The hypothesis of the article is that Afghanistan is of great importance for the Russian Federation from the point of view of security, because the threats arising from Afghanistan affect the security of the Russian Federation in various dimensions, including political, economic and operational. In the past few decades, theoretical schools of international relations

have paid more attention to security theories and have produced national security studies. One of these approaches is realism¹, which mainly focuses on the issue of security. In this article, this approach has been discussed as the theoretical basis for analyzing and explaining the position of Afghanistan in the security policy of the Russian Federation. It seems that this approach, along with the ideology of "normalized modern great power²", which is the general and long-range strategy of the Russian Federation in the foreign policy of this country, has the ability to form a framework for understanding the issue. The realist approach is one of the oldest approaches to clarify and explain international issues, and it still has an appropriate place among other existing approaches. All realists, despite the difference in views, share the three principles of "government³," "survival⁴" and "self-determination⁵"; The principles that are considered the spirit and main foundations of the realist approach. This approach has a different and different branch, which seems that neoclassical realism⁶ will be a way to understand and explain the research topic more than other branches of this approach. Under this title, offensive realism⁷ and defensive realism⁸ can be mentioned.

Based on the theory of aggressive realism, the countries that are faced with constant and real threats need to reconsider their nature and behave aggressively. Therefore, the main goal and motivation of countries is to maximize power and security. They try to maximize their security by maximizing their influence and relative power. The strength and security of the countries is unsurpassable. In the time and place conditions where the benefits of power maximization are more than its cost, countries achieve it at the cost of reducing the security of others (Mearsheimer, 2001, p. 37-40). In light of this perspective, Russia's incursion into Georgia and its efforts to exert control over the republics of Abkhazia and South Ossetia, along with its recent involvement in the Ukraine crisis, can be analyzed within this context. The 2008 war between Russia and Georgia highlighted the significance Russia places on its security strategy, declared post the Soviet Union's collapse, with Georgia and Ukraine occupying a position in the third tier of priority. This war proved that the Russian military has the ability to defend its security strategy against any country (Farji Rad, Iranian Diplomacy, 2012. for access <http://tinyurl.com/2u88e6mt>). From this standpoint, the security policy of the Russian

¹ Realism

² Normalized Modern Great Power

³ Statism

⁴ Survival

⁵ Self-help

⁶ Neoclassic Realism

⁷ Offensive Realism

⁸ Defensive Realism

Federation is founded on the recognition that threats to the security of the nation cannot be overlooked, and can be followed by harsh military responses. Recent events in Ukraine and Russia's military maneuvers in this conflict are also a confirmation of Russia's desire to protect its security borders based on the ideology of Russia's great power.

The second theoretical approach to explain and analyze Afghanistan's position in the security policy of the Russian Federation is defensive realism. Based on this, in the anarchic and self-governing international system, where the countries are in a state of security dilemma⁹, the structure of the international system provides little incentive to increase power. Waltz¹⁰ states that "in anarchy, security is the highest goal. Only in the form of ensuring and guaranteeing the country's survival, they can pursue other (non-security) goals such as comfort, profit and power, the first concern of countries is not maximizing power, but preserving their place and position in the system" (Waltz, 1979, p. 126). Therefore, survival, in the sense of sufficient security, can be ensured with less power than the hegemony that Mearsheimer¹¹ imagined. In the framework of defensive realism - as opposed to offensive realism, countries are basically defensive, and in an anarchy situation, they only react to security threats in insecure conditions. This defensive reaction manifests itself in the form of balancing and deterring threatening forces. Balancing is the first and most important defense strategy of smart countries in threatening and insecure anarchic conditions.

The manifestation and natural form of balancing strategy is the establishment of unions and the formation of military and non-military coalitions at the regional and global levels. When the countries feel that security and survival in the union and alliance with other countries can be ensured and guaranteed better than unilateral action, they do this (Dehghani, 2010, p. 215). Guided by the ideological perspective, the aim of the foreign and security policy of the Russian Federation is to realize the long-term strategy of positioning "Russia as a great power¹²." Based on the statements of the Russian authorities and the documents of the security and foreign policy of Russia, the realization of this idea is considered more in the political, economic and military fields. Since the new idea of Yeltsin's foreign policy to create an all-round integration with the Western world, a new idea was formed in Moscow called "Russia as a great power in the international system". It was called "multi-polar". In the strategic documents of Russia in the

⁹ Security Dillema

¹⁰ Kenneth Waltz

¹¹ John Mearsheimer

¹² Russia as a Great Power

past fifteen years, Russia's interests in a multi-polar international system have been emphasized one after another.

Russia wants to stabilize and strengthen its position in the Central Eurasian region and create cohesion in this region by forming political institutions (Organization of Independent States with Common Interests¹³), security (Collective Security Treaty Organization¹⁴) and economic agreement (Eurasian Economic Community¹⁵), its role. Strengthen and stabilize the multi-polar international system. Russians have realized that economic hegemony in this region is the most important factor for them to play such a role in the international system. Without economic integration, there will be no political and security institutions (Karmi, and Azizi, 2013, p. 145). Although this strategy has been followed more or less since the mid-1990s in Russia, but after Putin came to power, it has been presented as the priority of this country's foreign policy. Ezinero is often viewed as a national security category from a transnational point of view, and the security forces of the Russian Federation are located beyond the current borders and within the boundaries of the ideological ideal of Great Russia. Therefore, Russia's security behavior in the international arena in general and abroad¹⁶ in particular has been influenced by this historical thought. In fact, today's Russia should be found in the legacy of the Russian Empire, which is trying to play a new role (Faizi, 2011, p. 185).

2. Security threats against Russia's interests based on its national security doctrine.

The national security policy contains the provisions that are compiled and implemented to ensure national security. The national security doctrine in Russia is considered as a foundational document for the planning of the national security system of this country, in which the order of activities and actions to ensure national security is noted. This document has created the basis for the constructive interaction of Russian government institutions, organizations and social associations on the subject of security. It is of great importance and is preferred over other documents such as foreign policy and military doctrine. In this document, the Russian government defines national security as the safeguarding of people, society, and the state from both internal and external threats. This definition entails the protection of citizens' rights and freedoms, ensuring a high quality of life, upholding sovereignty and territorial

¹³ Commonwealth Independent Organization (CIS)

¹⁴ Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

¹⁵ Eurasian Economic Community (EurasEC)

¹⁶ Near Abroad

integrity, fostering the development of the Russian Federation, and securing the defense capabilities and overall security of the state.

Currently, two interpretations of national security exist: in a narrow context, it pertains to the survival of the state, while in a broader sense, national security encompasses the state's survival, the development of the country, and the maintenance of credibility and influence. National security policies adopted by governments can vary in scope, depending on a range of internal and external factors. Russia is one of the countries that benefits from the general concept of national security and the broad definition of security policy (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, (4), 2012, p. 40). In this document, the national security threat is also defined as "the possibility of directly or indirectly harming the legal rights and freedoms and the quality and decent life of the citizens, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the development of the Russian Federation, power defense and security of the country" is indicated. What is discussed in this section is the identification of the axes that the Russian Federation has identified as threats to its interests and security in its latest national security strategy document published in 2009. These threats can be classified into two axes of internal and external threats, which will continue to be examined and analyzed.

2-1. Internal security threats

The first internal threat is terrorism and the activities of separatist groups in Russia. Terrorism and organized crimes are a cancer in the Russian government and society. The increase in the activity of extremist groups inside is considered a deadly poison for the economic, cultural and political development of this country. It is true that the process of approving laws related to terrorism became more intense after the September 11 incident, and in 2003, 2001 and 2006, decrees were issued by the President regarding the fight against terrorism (Beckman, 2007, p. 128-129). In Central Asia, the revival of Islam began during Gorbachev's pro-stroika period and intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and as a result, the political role of Islam was revealed (Karmi and Azizi, 2013, p. 141). The emergence of Islamic fundamentalism and violence in the North Caucasus and Central Asia is important for Russia's security policy. Islamic extremism and its special relations with Afghanistan, Pakistan and other Islamic countries have caused a serious threat to Russia's security (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, (1), 2004, p. 318-319). Another threat is the issue of illegal immigration. The dissolution of the Soviet Union resulted in emerging countries confronting numerous political, economic, and social challenges. In the economic field, after the collapse of the republics, they no longer benefited from Moscow's

subsidies to support their economies. In addition to the departure of thousands of Russian experts from this region and the suspension of industries, the leaders of Central Asia faced millions of unemployed and unskilled youth and added to the deterioration of the situation (Kolayi, 2019, p. 133). This situation leads to the migration of workers to neighboring countries, especially the Russian Federation, and in addition to the economic, social and security consequences of the presence of immigrants, they trap migrant workers who often lack qualifications and education. Traffickers smuggle people, weapons and narcotics.

Lagging in industry and new technologies is another worrying factor for Russia. The problem of technological backwardness in Russia goes back to the era of the Soviet Union. After occupying the position of the Communist Party General Secretary, Gorbachev realized that the problem of the Soviet Union is not the increase in the level and the amount of production, but the technological transformation, the growth and creativity of the workforce, the modernization of important industrial sectors and the promotion of it (Kolayi, 2019, p. 220). This concern still exists in post-Soviet Russia and it has been specially emphasized in the national security document of this country. Russia needs the knowledge-based economy of the European Union for the success of its economic development programs and the achievement of its government's goals (Pourahmadi and Khushkar, 2011, p. 53). Ezinero is expected to experience a delay in the development of advanced technologies by the year 2020, characterized by a reliance on imports for scientific equipment, devices, electronic components, and strategic materials. Additionally, concerns have been raised regarding the unauthorized transfer of competitive technologies abroad. Economic weakness and backwardness is the fourth security concern of Russia. Russia's economy is the legacy of the "Building Socialism in a Country"¹⁷ program of Stalin's era (Kolayi, 2019, p. 85). The Soviet Union's "centralized economy"¹⁸ contributed to its loss of competitiveness against the United States, particularly heightened during the military dimensions of the Cold War (Kolayi, 2019, p. 224). Following the collapse, the repercussions of the economic crisis became evident and further intensified. L Yeltsin's "shock therapy"¹⁹ policy with the help of Western consultants worsened the economic situation of the new Russia (Kolayi, 2019, p. 88-89) and led to the "financial crisis of 1998 in Russia"²⁰ Despite the increase in the price of energy in the world markets and the improvement of the economic situation of Russia in the first decades of the twentieth century, the economy of this

¹⁷ Socialism in One Country

¹⁸ Centrally Planned Economy

¹⁹ Shock Therapy

²⁰ 1998 Russian Financial Crisis or Roubi Crisis

country still suffers from weakness in various areas; to the extent that the Minister of Economic Development of this country²¹ has stated that the Russian economy will not grow as expected in the next two decades (Moscow Times, 2013), in addition to the sanctions imposed after the Ukraine crisis. The adverse effects of the United States of America and the European Union on the investment space and the economic activity in this country is so slow that it is currently not possible to accurately calculate its size and scale (Kuchma, 2014). The spread of infectious diseases, the spread of diseases such as AIDS and tuberculosis, the consumption of narcotic drugs, alcohol and psychotropic substances are also considered as serious security threats in the field of health and safety in the Russian Federation. One of the serious threats in this area is the spread of HIV/AIDS. According to the regional distribution done by the "United Nations²² Joint HIV/AIDS Program", based on the statistics in the "Eastern Europe and Central Asia²³" region, where Russia is located, there are more than 1.4 million was diagnosed with AIDS in 2011 (UNAIDS, 2011). The results show that about 2/3 (two thirds) of these patients live in Russia and about ninety percent of new diagnoses of this disease are related to the two countries of Ukraine and Russia. This disease has grown more than two hundred and fifty percent in this region since 2001, which has turned it into the center of the fastest growing AIDS epidemic in the world (UNAIDS, 2011). This situation also exists in the case of other infectious diseases including "hepatitis C" (Bivol and Sarang, 2013). The last internal threat is the expansion of environmental and ecological risks. The Russian Federation has the largest arid region in the world, and it also has various environmental problems. The important axes of environmental risks in this country include water quality, the effect of weather and climate changes, the condition of forests, air quality, and the issue of nuclear radiation (Henry and Douhovnikoff, 2008, p. 442-443)

2-2. International security threats

Taking unilateral approaches in the international arena and trying to disrupt the strategic balance is considered one of Russia's external threats. The fall of the Soviet Union gave the United States the opportunity to pursue its unilateralist approach with greater force. The position and role that America found after the breakup of the Soviet Union, caused that country to unilaterally carry out its considered actions in the event that it does not reach a general consensus in relation to an issue in the world. The fluctuation of America's foreign policy between multilateralism and isolationism has been evident especially after the September 11

²¹ Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation

²² The Joint United Nations Program on HIV and AIDS, or UNAIDS

²³ Eastern Europe and Central Asia

incident (Alwandi, 2004, p. 112). While the current circumstances in the United States differ significantly from those of the 1990s, marked by various developments such as the U.S. challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the increased influence of regional powers like the BRICS members²⁴ in global affairs, Russia remains uneasy about the potential resurgence of America's unilateral approach, as noted by Lali Rakhdade. Simultaneously, the establishment of the U.S. anti-missile defense shield, a focal point in discussions between Moscow and Washington, stands out as one of the most crucial strategic disputes between the two sides in the post-Soviet era. In the heart of this program was advanced radar with a control range of six thousand kilometers in the Czech Republic as a complementary link to the American radars in Alaska and California and its tracking missiles in independent Poland (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, Tehran, (4), 2012, p. 208-209). The establishment of parts of the American anti-missile defense shield in Europe is one of the important security and geopolitical issues in the relations between Russia and the United States. The expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders is another big threat for Russians. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, everyone imagined that NATO would also face the fate of the Warsaw Pact; but with Washington's efforts to survive NATO and preserve its identity, not only this organization did not disappear, but it expanded in different dimensions (Mirfakhrai, 2013, p. 182). In the post-Soviet period, following the start of talks between NATO and Russia, the relationship of this alliance with its most important rival entered a new phase (Kolayi,2019: 264) and the possibility of NATO expansion in the new period was provided to some extent. Considering the fact that the geopolitical identity of Russia has given a defensive nature to the foreign policy of this country, apparently, following a pragmatic policy, Russia has accepted the principle of NATO's expansion to the east in a conditional form and only against its membership CIS member states that are Russia's surrounding environment and security barrier will resist (Ahadi, 2008, p. 127). Smuggling and use of narcotics and psychotropic substances is another threat that is included in the Russian Federation's national security strategy document. This problem, which brings negative social and economic consequences and serious health risks to Russia, in recent years, in addition to external dimensions, it has also found negative internal consequences. The number of drug users in the Russian Federation is between 2 and 2.5 million people, of which 5 to 6 percent are between 15 and 30 years old. The activity of criminal groups in Russia is the fifth external security concern of Russia. The issue of human trafficking in the

²⁴ BRICS is the name of a group led by emerging economic powers, which is formed by combining the first letters of the English names of the member countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of bad economic, political and social conditions, the citizens of the new republics were drawn to the valley of human trafficking; human trafficking became common in the second half of this decade.

Weak enforcement of the law, international virtual organizations of slave trade, lack of appropriate legislation, illiteracy of the people, and large dimensions of illegal immigration were the main reasons for this. In addition to this threat, human trafficking includes health consequences, including the spread of AIDS, the increase in organized crime, and terrorism. (Unnamed, International Narcotic Control Board: (2011) <https://tinyurl.com/5xn4n2vt>). Also, the sensitivity of the Russian Federation to the spread of various types of weapons can be witnessed in the mentioned document. This sensitivity is related to the proliferation of nuclear weapons, chemical, biological, and mass destruction weapons, raw material warehouses, and terrorists' access to these tools, and also to the uncontrolled proliferation of various types of weapons. Another threat to Russia's security from the outside world is the international economic crisis.

The global economic crisis happened at a time when Russia was experiencing an eight percent growth in gross national production and a five percent growth in industrial production. (Richard, 2021, p. 51 Strategic Research Center: 2). This crisis caused three major damages to the Russian economy: the outflow of foreign capital, the liquidity problem in the banking system; And the decrease in oil prices and its effects on the national economy (Richard, 2021, p. 15-4). It also had various social and political consequences, including the main budget deficit, the fall of the most important Russian stock exchanges, the widespread dismissal of employees and employees of governmental and non-governmental companies, and as a result, the increase More than 2.2 million people were unemployed and gold and foreign currency reserves were reduced (International Cultural Institute of Contemporary Studies and Research, Tehran, (3), 2010, p. 18). The last security threat mentioned in the mentioned document against the Federation is border conflicts. Considering the profound changes in the nature of Russia's relations with the great powers, there is practically no long-term threat against Russia in the foreseeable future. The most tangible threats to Russia in the realm of defense and security revolve around the emergence of local wars and armed conflicts in close proximity to its borders. (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, Tehran, (2), 2004, p. 359). The existence of unrest in its borders in the North Caucasus region, the illegal activities of arms smuggling and the coming and going of anti-Russian groups in this region, the existence of tension and conflict on the border of this country with Ukraine, and the

existence of the Karabakh crisis. In South Caucasus, border and territorial differences with China, Japan Georgia and the lack of a comprehensive border agreement in the Caspian Sea are among the most important border and territorial issues of Russia.

In summary, it can be said that in the national security strategy document, 2020, the Russian Federation has presented threats to its interests and security in both internal and external spheres. In the internal security threats of Russia, including terrorism and the activities of the founding and separatist groups, illegal immigration, lagging behind in industry and new technologies, economic weakness and backwardness, the spread of various diseases. Yardar is environmental and ecological risks. Russia's external threats also include the return of some powers to unilateral approaches in the international arena, the expansion of NATO towards Russia's borders, the smuggling and use of narcotics and psychotropic substances, the activities of criminal groups, and their spread. There are different types of war, international economic crisis and border disputes (Sejadpour et al, 2012, p. 35).

3. Threats to the interests and security of the Russian Federation from Afghanistan

In this section, the threats against the Russian Federation from Afghanistan have been examined and analyzed on three levels: the first level focuses on the threats against Russia's interests in the internal environment of Afghanistan; these threats in the Central Eurasian region and especially Central Asia, which is considered to be the geographical middle ring between Russia and Afghanistan, it has been investigated and finally the emergence of these threats in it has been discussed and investigated in the Russian Federation.

3.1 Threats against the Russian Federation in the internal environment of Afghanistan

After the September 11th incident, there have been threats from Afghanistan in different dimensions towards Russia. These threats in Afghanistan can be classified into four axes. The first threat is the existence of anti-Russian thoughts and ideas in Afghanistan. Russia, England and the United States of America are considered to be three powerful players in the history of Afghanistan, and the background of Russia's relationship with Afghanistan is much longer than the relationship with other two powers. These relations at the highest level led to the occupation of Afghanistan during the Cold War, which left a very bad memory in the minds of Afghans and of course Russians. The invasion of Afghanistan by Soviet forces resulted in the tragic loss of over one million Mujahids, with numerous individuals becoming disabled, and over six million people displaced. From the beginning of the 7th Sawr coup and the revelation of its anti-Islamic nature, the people of Afghanistan started fighting against the coup regime, which was under the

protection of the Soviet Union. The situation in Afghanistan was becoming more critical day by day. The People's Democratic Party lacked a popular base and could not control and eliminate this crisis. In the years 1978 and 1979, the ruling party directly engaged with the people and started to purge the army and government offices.

This policy led to the imposition of suffocation, intense pressure, and brutal killings of the people more dependence of the People's Democratic Party on the Soviet and its members' declaration of extremism and moral corruption, which set the stage for people's uprisings in Sirta. The people of Afghanistan consider the dependents of the Soviet government in the People's Democratic Party, who came to power after the 7th Sawr coup, to be extremists with an atheist and anti-Islamic nature (Hosseini, 2001) *Iran's Modern History Studies Institute:2001, p. 189*) which provided the reasons for the Soviet invasion.

Conversely, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan compelled the United States to provide support to Islamic groups through its regional allies, namely Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, to resist the Soviet Union. "Islamic movement Taliba Karam" had its roots in the space of resistance against the Soviet Union. It is true that many people and some Afghan experts consider the Russians to be responsible for Afghanistan's current situation (Noor, 2013). Opposing political currents also threaten Russia's interests in Afghanistan. In general, there are three main political currents in Afghanistan; Jihadis, seculars and Taliban (Shafii, 2011, p. 75). Certain factions within these groups likely opposed the presence of foreign forces in Afghanistan, especially Russia's involvement.

The important point is that usually the issue of ethnicity in Afghanistan is preferred over other influential political factors and components. In other words, ideological, national interests are often relevant as long as ethnic and racial interests are not under the influence (Davodi, 2014, p. 210). Therefore, the above separation is conceivable with this assumption.

Jihadists refer to Afghan Muslim groups that emerged and engaged in combat against pro-Soviet forces and the government during the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan. Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal and the collapse of Dr. Najibullah's government, this faction assumed power in April 1992 under the name "Mujahideen." (Tanin, 2011, p. 400). Jihadists have consistently emphasized the issue of the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan. It seems unlikely that they will agree with Russia's presence and intervention in Afghanistan; On the contrary, it seems that some groups of Jihadis, such as Abdul-Rabrasul Sayyaf²⁵, are still

²⁵ Mr. Sayyaf is a politician, the leader of "Islamic Invitation Organization of Afghanistan" and a candidate for the presidential election of 2013. He was also among the Mujahideen commanders during the occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet forces

strongly opposed to the presence of the Russians. Of course, this opposition is fundamentally against the presence of foreigners, and according to the majority of Jihadis, Russia and America do not have much difference (Shafii, 2011, p. 76). Seculars are the spectrum of thought in Afghanistan that wants to separate religion from politics. Seculars are divided into two main groups; Western theorists (right-wing secularists) and communists; including Khallikis and Parchamis (secular leftists) (Shafii, 2011, p. 77-78). Among the seculars, probably only the leftist seculars will be happy with the presence of the Russians in Afghanistan; a group that, in terms of small number and political influence in Afghanistan, does not seem to be very powerful.

The third group is the Taliban of Afghanistan. The Taliban are very critical of the communists. Their criticism of the communists is due to their role in killing the people of Afghanistan, especially in the years 1978 to 1990, and also because of their extremist beliefs. (Shafii, 2011, p. 82). In addition, the Taliban are not ready to accept the power and authority of non-Muslims in Afghanistan, and from this perspective, it is unlikely that they will agree with the presence of another foreign country in Afghanistan.

The third internal threat is Afghanistan's failure in the state-nation building process. Following the September 11 incident and the military intervention of the United States in Afghanistan, one of the significant developments was the establishment of a new power structure, the plan of which was established in the Bonn²⁶ meeting (Farji Rad and others, 2011, p. 117). After that, the United States pursued three political, military and humanitarian plans simultaneously in this country. The political plan was to create a central government under the leadership of an individual who has the same reading as America; The military plan was based on a system that would put an end to the presence of warlords throughout the country; And the humanitarian plan was to create an American model of citizen life in a non-western society. After the victory in the military stage, the formation of the government in order to start the nation-building process was placed on the agenda of America. In the state building phase, several axes, including the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the organization of the Afghan armed forces (Tamana, 2008, p. 166), and the disarmament of warlords and militias (Munoz, 2012, p. 75-76) are on the agenda of the Western coalition led by the leader. It was decided in the United States.

In the chapter of nationalism, efforts are made to spread western culture through public diplomatic institutions and tools, especially radio (Munoz, 2012, p. 95) and the revival and

²⁶ Bonn Conference

reconstruction of Afghanistan's education system (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 79-80), in the working order of the powers involved in this matter is set.

The current state of Afghanistan suggests that the nation has struggled to effectively accomplish the process of nation-building in the contemporary era. Today, Afghanistan has a weak government that lacks central authority and control over the territorial integrity of the country. Furthermore, the nationalization process remains incomplete, hindered by a lack of national cohesion and the prevalence of ethnic loyalties superseding national allegiances. Therefore, Afghanistan is known as a weak state-weak nation.

The findings suggest that in countries where the government is plagued by corruption and the leadership is weak, certain outcomes or consequences are observed and the society is suffering from ethnic mosaic are moving towards ethnic armed conflicts (Hadiyan, 2009, p. 145). Extremism, terrorism and narcotic substances have been counted as a part of the insecurity in Afghanistan and its surroundings in the past decade. Narcotics have been a millstone and with the annual flow of several hundred million dollars from the place of production, processing, distribution and smuggling of these products, it has ensured the economy of active extremists in Afghanistan (Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Islamic Republic Afghanistan, 2013, p. 5). Drug smuggling from Afghanistan has major local, regional and global security implications. Over the past two decades, the problem of narcotics has evolved into a significant threat to both human and national security for Russia (Stepanova, 2013, p. 12). Afghanistan is known as the largest producer of this substance, producing 5500 tons out of 6883 tons of opium produced in the world, which is 80 percent of the world production. The production of heroin in this country is 560 tons per year (Davis et al., 2014, p. 21). In 2012, the value of opium produced in Afghanistan was 717 million dollars and about four percent of Afghanistan's gross domestic product²⁷. Also, 40 to 50 percent of the seized opium has been converted into morphine and heroin and exported outside the country (Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 2013, p. 27) one of the important and main destinations of Afghanistan's narcotics, has been Russian Federation.

4. Afghanistan's threats against the Russian Federation in Central Eurasia

The Central Eurasian region, as the peripheral region of the Russian Federation, is a part of the third security ring of this country, and in other words, the strategic depth of Russia. Central Asia, as a constituent of this region, is situated along the southern the Russian

²⁷ Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

Federation borders, serving as the intermediate zone between this country and Afghanistan. Afghanistan shares a common border with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, and naturally, the greatest impact of threats from Afghanistan is in these countries. It is through this route that the security of the Russian Federation can also be under the influence of Afghanistan's issues. It is true that Russia's security policy in the near-foreign region, in addition to regional interests, is mainly aimed at ensuring security for the Russian Federation borders and preventing crises and insecurities from spreading inside Russia's borders (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 134). The first threat in this region is the spread of Islamic extremism and terrorism. Terrorism and Islamic extremism in Central Asia are complicated and it is very hard to separate them. In fact, extremists believe that "pure Islam²⁸" is the only solution to political, cultural, moral and religious corruption, and this can only be attained through the religious revival of societies and the establishment of Islamic governments in Central Asia (Omelicheva, 2013, p. 2). The first visible signs of the activity of Islamist groups in Central Asia were observed in the 1970s. During this period, the secret entry of some Salafi propaganda groups from countries such as Jordan, Iraq and Afghanistan provided the time for the influence and presence of Islamic extremism in the region (Shakari, 2006, p. 109). This trend was reproduced during Gorbachev's pro-stroika period, it strengthened after the fall of the Soviet Union, and as a result, the political role of Islam became apparent (Karmi and Azizi, 2013, p. 141). With the fall of the Soviet Union, the fear of Afghanistan's northern neighbors, such as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan, increased due to the transfer of Islamic movements from Afghanistan to these republics by the Mujahideen government. The presence of the opponents of the government of Tajikistan under the leadership of Seyed Abdallah Nouri in Afghanistan also adds to this concern (Rahmani and Hosseini, 2012, p. 48). Moreover, numerous Muslim fighters traveled to Afghanistan with the consent of the Kabul government, then under the leadership of President Burhanuddin Rabbani and Ahmad Shah Masoud, the Minister of Defense, established bases in Afghanistan. Immigrant Islamists were trained in Afghanistan, armed and sent to Tajikistan to fight. Also, Mujahideen guerrilla attacks against the Tajik government were organized from Afghanistan (Rashid, 2008, p. 135-136). Following the capture of Kabul by the Taliban in September 1996, Osama bin Laden and the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda found refuge under the leadership of the Taliban, and in this way, Afghanistan became a center for the production and distribution of Islamic extremism. International tourism has changed (Kargon, 2005) and it raised the concern of Russia and

²⁸ Pure Islam

Central Asian countries about the effect of this victory on Islamist movements and regional security (Hunter and Others, 2012, p. 573). The September 11 incident and the fall of the Taliban weakened the position of Islamic extremism in Central Asia by drying up its original roots; but the main causes of extremes and of course the potential danger of future threats did not go away. Basically, the Islamization trend in the Central Asian region has been more influenced by the active Islamization trends during the Jihad against the Soviet regime. This Islamist trend, which went against the Slavic-Orthodox identity in the Muslim lands, was supported by countries such as Arabia, Pakistan, the United Arab Emirates, and Afghanistan. In addition, the Westerners, especially America, supported or at least kept silent about this trend in order to erode Russia's power and strategic territory. (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 172). Islamic Movement Party and Islamic Resurrection Party of Tajikistan, Tahrir Party, Islamic Justice Party, Islamic Party of Uzbekistan, local branches of Islamic Movement Party in the countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, and its party Alash Orda²⁹ "in Kyrgyzstan, among the more or less active groups in the Central Asia region after 1991 And the collapse of the Soviet Union(Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 172-173) .The second threat factor is the formation of the phenomenon of drug smuggling through Central Asia to Russia and the West. Drug smuggling from Afghanistan has major local, regional and global security consequences. In last twenty years, the issue of narcotics has turned into a threat to human and national security of Russia. Based on the United Nations Office on Narcotic Drugs³⁰ and Crime, Russia is the largest source of heroin in Afghanistan, the amount of which is equal to the amount of heroin consumed in Western and Central Europe (Stepanova, 2013, p. 12).

The first target for "Afghan drugs" is Central and Western Europe and the Russian Federation, which has a total value of about thirteen billion dollars (WDR, 2011, p. 31). About 90 tons out of 365 tons of heroin exported from Afghanistan in 2009 were smuggled from the northern route³¹ through Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan or Uzbekistan (through the Ferghana Valley) to Kazakhstan and from there to Russia (Golunov, 2006, p. 4) .One of the primary concerns in dealing with the phenomenon of drug and illegal drug smuggling is the worsening of the security situation on the Afghan-Tajik border, which has occurred after the Russian border forces left the region. The security situation on the Russian-Kazakh border is not much different, and considering that heroin is smuggled into Russia from this border, the number of

²⁹ Alash Orda

³⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

³¹ Northern Rout

border guards seems to be insufficient (UNODC and Paris Pact Initiative, 2008, p. 8). In addition, the establishment of the free trade regime between Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, which abolished customs controls along the long Russian-Kazakh border, made smuggling easier and taking anti-smuggling measures along the northern route. It has become more complicated (Stepanova, 2013, p. 13). In the end, we should mention Russia's concern about the spread of regional crises and its consequences to its territory. The fall of the Soviet Union was the beginning of periods of political, religious and ethnic crises in most of the new republics. Among the crises affected by Afghanistan, we can refer to Central Asian crises (civil war in Tajikistan and Tajik-Uzbek conflicts) and North Caucasus (Chechnya, Dagestan and Ingush). The latest crisis is in the North Caucasus and within the Russian Federation borders, and it is considered a closer threat to the Russians. Even though Tajikistan's conflicts did not pose direct threats to Russia, but through the growth of illegal immigration to this country and other ways, it undermined its interests. Also, the extensive dependence of the new republics on Russia in different dimensions has been one of the facilitating factors for the spread of the crisis inside Russia's borders (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 177). Instability in the region threatens Russia's national security in two ways; First, in order to endanger the interests of Russia in the countries involved in the crisis; and secondly, the spread of the crisis and its consequences within the borders of Russia. For example, with the prolongation of the civil war in Tajikistan, around 80,000 people immigrated to Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Afghanistan (Rashid, 2008, p. 135). In addition to this, while endangering the lives of honest people living in the region, by suppressing the wave of immigration to Russia, it facilitated the possibility of smuggling weapons, narcotics and other forms of insecurity to that country (Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 177).

5. Afghanistan's threats to Russia's interests and security within Russia's borders

Threats from Afghanistan are also protecting themselves in the borders and territory of Russia. One of these threats is the spread of Islamic extremism and separatism. For this reason, after the September 11th incident, the Russian authorities have repeatedly emphasized on the strengthening and enforcement of anti-terrorism laws in the Russian Federation and have taken legal actions in this direction. Although the Russian Federation lost part of the multi-ethnic structure of the Soviet Union after the fall of the Soviet Union, it still remains a land composed of separate ethnic groups. Now, it is necessary to adopt an arrangement more or less similar to the Soviet era for the administration of this country. Anyway, after the fall of the Soviet Union,

the possibility of disunity in the Russian Federation was one of the important political-security issues in this country.

Bloody conflicts in the North Caucasus, between independence activists and Russian forces, separatist movements of the republics of Chechnya, Bashkirstan, Tatarstan and also some provinces such as Karachay-Circassian, Kabardino-Balkaria, Adyghe, Federa. Zion plunged Russia into a deep crisis. In late 1990s, the Russian Federation was overwhelmed by ethnic tensions and separatist tendencies. (The Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 4, 2012, p. 263-264). The emergence of the Islamic factor in ethnic-national struggles is a serious threat to the territorial integrity of Russia Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 1, 2004, p. 319) the concentration of most of the Russian Muslim population in the composition of the autonomous republics that are currently Graphics also have a large distance from the center, the capacity itself It has created a threat that it can pose a huge challenge to the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation by forming claims demanding dismemberment in these republics (The Cultural Institute of International Contemporary Studies and Research, 4, 2012, p. 263-264). The most important challenge of Islamic extremism and separatism in Russia is related to the autonomous republic of Chechnya. In recent decades, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its political, structural, and security vulnerabilities, the Chechens have demanded independence from the Russian Federation. This is an undeniable fact that before the rise of the Taliban as a dominant political force in Afghanistan, there was a close relationship between the Taliban and Chechen forces. According to the available reports, since the beginning of January 1995, several marches were held in Herat, calling all true Muslims to join the "Jihad on the Chechen and Tajik fronts" (Hunter et al, 2012, p. 609-608). The official relations between the Taliban and Chechnya expanded after the 1996 ceasefire in Chechnya and the capture of Kabul by the Taliban. The Taliban was not recognized internationally, but it was acting as the draft government of Afghanistan. Chechen behaved like an independent government with the head of the Aslan Maskhadov³² republic. Therefore, post starting of the Second Chechen War and after the meeting with Yanderbaif³³, the Chechen political representative from Kandahar, he officially recognized the Chechen Taliban. After the United States attacked the Taliban, the revelation that a significant number of Chechens were fighting on the Taliban's frontlines bolstered Russia's stance (Hunter et al, 2012, p. 610-669). In addition, Russia, due to its

³² Aslan Maskhadov

³³ Zelimkhan Yanderbaev

vulnerability to terrorism and Islamic extremism, economic weaknesses, and the need for Western investment, was looking for a more appropriate relationship with the West, after the September lesson, there was an opportunity. It has been created for the final use; because this incident in the first place gave Russia the possibility of playing a wider role in the international community and also the possibility of suppressing internal dissidents, especially Chechen separatists, under the title of fighting terrorism and using the theory it provides preventive war. Pavlovsky³⁴, one of Putin's senior political advisers, said that for Russia, accepting America in Uzbekistan is easier than accepting the Taliban in Tatarstan (Mankoff, 2010, p. 125-128). The second and perhaps the most important threat to Russia originating from Afghanistan is the smuggling and use of narcotic substances. The Russian Federation has only two million drug addicts (WDR, 2013: 51). Although the Russian authorities have announced this number up to five million (Rossiyskaya Gazeta, 2014, p. 18) and some writers up to eight million people (Ortung, and Latta, 2008, p. 56). Most of these people are addicted to heroin. Russia has the largest number of heroin consumers in the world. The market value of Russian heroin is about six billion dollars. According to the UNODC report, the total value of heroin in the world is 60 billion dollars, and with this account, Russia has allocated the only percentage of this market to itself. Twenty percent of people aged 15-64 in Russia use drugs through injection, which has the highest number of injecting drug addicts from this point of view. In these four countries, injection drug users with HIV make up 62 percent of the population of injection drug users with this disease in the world (Davis et al, 2014, p. 7). Another problem that has been captured by narcotics in Russia is health issues. The use of narcotic substances through injection, in case of non-observance of health issues, leads to the occurrence and spread of diseases such as AIDS and hepatitis. In terms of the number of people who inject drugs, Russia is among the four countries, alongside China, Pakistan, and the United States of America, accounting for 6.2 percent of all drug addicts globally (Ibid)

Conclusion

Relations between Russia and Afghanistan started centuries ago and have continued more or less until now. These interactions occurred when the two countries were neighboring nations before the collapse of the Soviet Union. It was during this period that the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. After the forces of the Red Army left Afghanistan in 1989, the Soviet Union was involved in processes that led to the downfall of this superpower, after that, the Russian Federation, as the inheritor of the superpower, faced many political, economic and

³⁴ Gleb Pavlovsky

security problems for more than a decade. As discussed earlier, some of these disturbances had their roots in Afghanistan. It was for this reason that the Russian statesmen, who had given low priority to the issues of this country after leaving Afghanistan, inevitably paid attention to it again. Russia's return to the problem of Afghanistan started with the strengthening of the Taliban in this country and ended with the attack of the United States. As stated in the introduction of the article, the research aims to address the question of Afghanistan's position in the security policy of the Russian Federation. To answer this query, three sub-questions were posed to the respondents. In answer to the first question, the research findings show that Russia's security behavior can be explained and explained more in the form of defense realism through its special geopolitical location. In the post-Soviet era, Russia has sought to maintain its surrounding regions as strategic depth and a security buffer zone. The Russians have considered maintaining the security of their surrounding area as their own security and in the direction of it. Russia's stance in cases like Georgia and Ukraine can be seen as resistance in the direction of defending Russia's security. In addressing the second sub-question, an analysis of the Russian national security strategy document revealed perceived threats to the interests and security of the country organized into two axes: internal and external threats. In this order, the main security threats of Russia at the internal level include terrorism, organized crimes and the activities of separatist and separatist groups, illegal immigration to the Russian Federation, backwardness in the field of technology, development economic growth, the spread of health and environmental risks, and on the external level, including threats, including the return of unilateralism to International relations, the efforts of some powers to upset the strategic balance, the expansion of NATO to the east, drug and psychotropic drug trafficking, the activities of terrorist and organized crime groups, the global financial crisis, the proliferation of war weapons. There are common massacres and border disputes. The findings indicate that in the mentioned document, Russia has expanded the scope of security to various areas, including environment, culture and health, and considers security in its broadest sense. Another point is that some of the mentioned threats, such as extremism, drug smuggling and evil, have mainly come from Afghanistan and have affected the security of the Russian Federation. In response to the third question, threats have been classified into three levels and have been investigated. At the first level, the actual and potential threats in the internal environment of Afghanistan against the Russian Federation were examined, which include anti-Russian thoughts and ideas, opposing political currents, failure in the state-nation building process, and the production of narcotics. On the second level, which is the regional level, Afghanistan's threats in the Central

Eurasian region against the Russian Federation include Islamic extremism and terrorism, as well as drug smuggling through Central Asia to Russia and the West. At the third level, it was imperative to identify the threats emanating from Afghanistan within the borders of the Russian Federation. This analysis was guided by the insights gathered in this particular axis. Islamic extremism and separatism; and the smuggling and use of narcotic substances are the main security threats facing Russia with Afghan origins. Afghanistan holds significance in the foreign policy of the Russian Federation for various reasons, including its geopolitical location, longstanding political, economic, and cultural ties with Russia, and religious affiliations with Central Asian countries, which are regarded as Russia's security shield. Additionally, Afghanistan's importance extends to its connection with Russian Muslims. Also, today's Afghanistan is a link between the interests of the United States of America and its western allies; Islamic countries including Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia; South Asian countries including India and Pakistan; It is China and Central Asian countries. For this reason, it has an undeniable position in the regional and global arena, and Russia, as a country that claims to be a "standard modern great power", cannot be indifferent to acting in this field. Furthermore, Afghanistan occupies a distinct position in the perspective of Russians concerning security. The findings indicate that, firstly, multiple and important threats in different levels and dimensions with the origin of Afghanistan threaten the security of Russia. Secondly, these threats align with those identified in the National Security Strategy document of the Russian Federation, particularly highlighted in the 2009 edition. In the comparison between the general threats faced by the Russian Federation and the factors that threaten this country from Afghanistan, we are witnessing a high level of overlap between these two types of factors. In other words, the set of threats against Russia's security with the origin of Afghanistan are consistent with a significant part of the threats that Russia considers to its own security; Therefore, in the eyes of the security men of the Russian Federation, Afghanistan is perceived as a major threat that can be the defense and depth of the Russian strategy in Central Asia and even this country itself with multiple security challenges. It can be asserted that Afghanistan holds a crucial position in the security policy of the Russian Federation due to the significant threats emanating from it. Statesmen in Russia accord special attention to Afghan-related issues.

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