

## Afghanistan in the Context of Geopolitical Processes. Historical and Modern Aspects

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**Key words:** Afghanistan, Soviet-Afghan war, Central Asia, "Heart of Asia", geopolitics, strategic corridor, security zone, ethnopolitical conflict, scientific and technical era, geostrategic project.

### **Աֆղանստանն աշխարհաքաղաքական գործընթացների համաձիւրում.**

#### **Պատմական եւ ժամանակակից ասպեկտները**

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**Անփոփագիր.** 20-րդ դարավերջին և 21-րդ դարասկզբին Աֆղանստանը դարձավ Արևելքի առավել անկայուն պետություններից մեկը: Համեմատաբար կարճ ժամանակահատվածում այստեղ տեղի ունեցան մի շարք պետական հեղաշրջումներ, որոնք արտահայտվեցին էթնոքաղաքական հակադրություններով, քաղաքացիական պատերազմով և արտաքին լայնածավալ միջամտություններով: Իր պատմական զարգացման բոլոր շրջափուլերում՝ Աֆղանստանի աշխարհաքաղաքական և տարածաշրջանային նշանակությունը աստիճանաբար աճ է գրանցել և վերջինիս նկատմամբ տարածաշրջանային և համաշխարհային տերությունների գեոռազմավարական հետաքրքրությունն առաջին հերթին կապված էր վերահսկողության, գերիշխանության, ազդեցության ոլորտների տարածման և շահերի պաշտպանության գլոբալ մրցակցության հետ:

Հոդվածի նպատակն է պատմագիտական և քաղաքագիտական գիտակարգերի հնարավորությունների համադրմամբ որոշարկել աշխարհաքաղաքական գործընթացներում Աֆղանստանի ունեցած դերակատարում: Այս նպատակի իրագործման ճանապարհին խնդիր ենք դրել ընդգծել և ամբողջացնել Աֆղանստանի աշխարհաքաղաքական և տարածաշրջանային նշանակությունը պատմաքաղաքական տարբեր շրջափուլերում, բացահայտել և համեմատել ներքին և արտաքին գործոնների ազդեցությունն Աֆղանստանում և վերջինիս շուրջ ընթացող գործընթացների նկատմամբ, ուսումնասիրել գերտերությունների աֆղանական քաղաքականության իրացման մեթոդների օրինաչափությունները:

**Հանգուցարաներ.** Աֆղանստան, Խորհրդա-աֆղանական պատերազմ, Կենտրոնական Ասիա, «Ասիայի սիրտ», աշխարհաքաղաքականություն, ռազմավարական միջանցք, անվտանգային գոտի, էթնոքաղաքական հակամարտություն, գիտատեխնիկական դարաշրջան, գեոստրատեգիական նախագիծ:

### **Афганистан в контексте геополитических процессов.**

#### **Исторические и современные аспекты**

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**Аннотация.** В конце 20 века и в начале 21 века Афганистан стал одной из самых нестабильных стран Востока. За относительно короткий промежуток времени здесь произошел ряд государственных переворотов, которые проявились в этнополитических противоречиях, гражданской войне и крупномасштабных иностранных интервенциях. На протяжении своего исторического развития геополитическое и региональное значение Афганистана росло в геометрической прогрессии; геостратегический интерес региональных и мировых держав к последнему был в первую очередь связан с глобальной конкуренцией за контроль, суверенитет, влияние и защиту.

Целью статьи является сопоставлением исторических и политических дисциплин определить роль Афганистана в геополитических процессах. Для достижения этой цели мы поставили задачу подчеркнуть и определить геополитическое и региональное значение Афганистана в разные исторические и политические периоды, выявить и сопоставить влияние внутренних и внешних факторов на процессы, происходящие в Афганистане и вокруг него, изучать закономерности реализации методов афганской политики сверхдержав.

**Ключевые слова:** Афганистан, советско-афганская война, Центральная Азия, «Сердце Азии», геополитика, стратегический коридор, зона безопасности, этнополитический конфликт, научно-техническая эпоха, геостратегический проект.

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has been given contradictory names by the representatives of different disciplines - "atomic age", scientific and technical age, then - the period of information revolution. In addition to that, the above-mentioned period was a period of universal, political-social conditions, world wars, social revolutions, collapse of empires and scientific-technical progress.

In this context, Afghanistan and the phenomenon of the Soviet-Afghan war becomes the subject of investigation.

At the end of the 20th century and at the beginning of the 21st century, Afghanistan became one of the most unstable countries in the East. In a relatively short period of time, a number of coups d'etat took places here, which were manifested in ethno-political contradictions, civil war, and large-scale foreign interventions.

Afghanistan is a landlocked country between South Asia and Central Asia [1, p. 3]. Afghanistan borders Pakistan to the south-east, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan-Tajikistan to the north, and China to the northeast. The area is about 652 thousand square kilometers, most of which is the Hindu Kush mountain range [2, p. 117].

According to geopolitical theorists, Afghanistan is located in a region of the world called Rimland, the strategic importance of which has been under scrutiny since the end of the 19th century. According to the American political scientist N. Spykman, "*Rimland is the key to world domination, so whoever controls it, controls the whole of Eurasia and whoever controls Eurasia, controls the destiny of the whole world*" [3, p. 6]. And according to modern political science circles, "*control over Afghanistan is automatically comparable to control over South Asia*" [4, p. 15]. The most pronounced, geopolitically unstable zone of conflicts in the above-mentioned region is especially connected with Afghanistan. The growing presence of regional and world powers in the region, the conflict of their interests turned Afghanistan into a center of geopolitical confrontation.

The aspirations of the leading powers were to transform the structures of the state-political systems of Afghanistan in the first place, and finally to establish control over the internal resources, communications and basic infrastructure of the Afghan state [17].

Afghanistan's geopolitical position plays an extremely important role in both the country's domestic and foreign policy. Over time, with Afghanistan's extremely favorable geostrategic position, the influential neighboring countries have tended to expand their sphere of influence in the Central Asian region and particularly in Afghanistan. Researchers - historians, geographers,

representatives of other disciplines - have given this country various names: "Gates of India", "Eastern Gate of the Islamic World", "Crossroads of Civilizations", "Crossroads of Conquerors", "Strategic Corridor", "Heart of Asia", etc. [5; 6, p. 381].

Throughout its historical development, Afghanistan's geopolitical and regional significance has grown exponentially; the strategic interest of the regional and world powers in the latter has been primarily linked to global competition for control, domination, influence, and advocacy. The result of this kind of competition were the crises, armed conflicts, local wars, weakening of the state, periodic coups, uprisings, unprecedented growth of religious intolerance, revolutions and civil strife in the internal political life of Afghanistan. It can also be emphasized that the above-mentioned political processes, the similar development of events in the country, in fact, mainly proceeded in accordance with the scenarios of geopolitical players. Eventually, these processes led to political and social instability in Afghanistan.

It should be noted that the Central Asian region is considered one of the key hubs for increasing tension in the system of geopolitical processes in the modern world. From a geographical, historical, political and religious point of view, Afghanistan is a corridor connecting the region, as a result of which the interest and competition of the world's leading powers towards the latter has increased [7, pp. 162-192]. The world system of international relations has undergone new transformations, as a result of the aggravation of the geopolitical struggle, new models of expression have appeared. In the second half of the 20th century, global changes took place - manifestations of systemic development, which significantly affected the complete transformation of geopolitical and geoeconomic ties in the region.

The significance of this region, in addition to natural resources (hydrocarbon resources), is determined by its geographical location. Afghanistan's position is unique in this respect: at the crossroads of Asia-Europe, East-West, North-South, intercontinental, international transport routes, at the crossroads of three dominant world religions: Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. The famous Eastern poet Muhammad Iqbal considered Afghanistan the "heart of Asia", and in the early 20th century, Indian viceroy Lord Curzon described Afghanistan's position as Asia's "captain's bridge" [8, pp. 17-18].

It must be borne in mind that the change of the world order takes place through the complex, divergent processes of the formation of new systems of international relations. At the same time, the geopolitical interests of the superpowers and

regional powers clash over the formation of different systems, as a result of which an ambiguous situation of uncertainty, contradictory solutions and approaches is created in the given region over internal political and foreign policy crises. A typical example of such a situation is the crisis around Afghanistan, where the severity of ethno-political and interstate conflicts has not yet tended to subside.

The new alignment of geopolitical forces in the Central Asian region may have a negative impact on the military-political situation in Afghanistan, as it remains in the traditional area of interest not only of Great Britain but also of other world powers [9, pp. 653-658; 10, p. 22; 11, pp. 83, 86]. Britain, the most powerful superpower of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, has repeatedly worked out plans for the conquest of Afghanistan, including the removal of unwanted rulers (even to the point of physical destruction) and it is obvious that the latter was a strategic task to bring to power more manageable regimes in Afghanistan, which are ready to give up full control of the country [12, pp. 701-725]. In this context, Great Britain planned to create a security (buffer) zone, which would protect its rights against India from possible Russian threat [13, p. 36]<sup>1</sup>. At the same time, the British side planned to create a platform for intervention in the Central Asian region, aimed at preventing the advance of the Russian Empire in the region and consolidating its political presence.

It is logical that the Russian Empire, then the USSR, defending and expanding their geopolitical interests and influence, were not free from interfering in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. Until 1947 (India's independence from Great Britain) Afghanistan maintained its status as a "security zone". Nevertheless, Afghanistan continued to serve as a "safe haven" for the USSR, protecting Soviet Central Asia from outside influence [14, p. 5]. In the 20th century, the British ceded the lead in regional processes to the United States, which sought to gain control and expand its influence in the region of Central Eurasia, a vital area of the USSR and Russia.

In modern Afghanistan, the interests of not only two superpowers collide, but also the coalition interests of a number of other powers, especially Iran, Pakistan, various Islamic forces and organizations, China, India, Turkey, and to some extent the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia. One of the main geopolitical tasks of these countries is the definition and implementation of control mechanisms over the region [15, p. 276].

The geopolitical significance of Afghanistan is conditioned by the following factors:

1. The country is rich in vital natural resources.
2. It is located at the crossroads of the Central Eurasian region and plays an important role in the New Silk Road project, which aims to create a common market and transport corridor in the region.

Based on the above, it can be noted that Afghanistan will soon remain a zone of vital interests of regional and world powers. Historically, the leading powers in the area have not been able to establish common mechanisms, to establish a balance of interests, in terms of which the idea of researcher A. Borokhova is understandable that *"History is like a play, where the costumes, the decorations and the characters are updated, and the content remains the same"* [16, p. 56].

The military conflicts and wars in the history of Afghanistan have a continuous sequence; it should be noted that as a result of foreign interventions and the civil wars, the Afghan people suffered enormous, irreparable damage. The most negative consequence was the mass migration of the population, as a result of which more than a third of the population left the homeland. Afghanistan became the epicenter of a violent, bloody armed conflict that endangered not only the security of the country but also the security of the region, indirectly affecting the setting of global security agenda priorities.

At different historical periods, Afghanistan has gone through a period of long-term crises. These crises were characterized by sharp divisions, the dichotomy of the society, the use of different social groups to establish and strengthen political hegemony, the expression of the group interests of the ruling elite, which were conditioned by Afghanistan's supra-strategic position of influence on regional processes. It should be noted that national, ethnic-religious elements were involved in the systemic crisis processes, as a result of which Afghanistan became a source of dangers, challenges and threats to the region and the world community.

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<sup>1</sup> 1850s The Prime Minister of Great Britain Palmerston (1855-1858) believed that "Afghanistan should be either ours or Russian."

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