



Afghanistan National-Regional Dualism: New Scientific Approaches

Suhrob Buranov

Ph.D. In Political Sciences, Chairman Of Council Of Young Scientists At Tashkent State University Of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the study of some scientific debates on Afghan dualism. Despite the different approaches, the aim of the article is to determine the establishment of new Afghan statehood and Afghanistan's role as a bridge that connects Central and South Asian regions.

KEYWORDS

Afghan dualism, Talibanism, AfSouthAsia, Af-Pak, Durand Line, SAARC, AfCentAsia, Heart of Asia, Mazar-e-Sharif-Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif-Kabul-Peshawar, TAPI, CASA-1000, Surkhan-Pul-e-Khumri.

INTRODUCTION

The unstable and turbulent situation in Afghanistan is one of the global problems affecting world politics. There are ongoing armed conflicts on Afghan land, the involvement of new forces in the conflict, and new geopolitical trends in the policy of

interested foreign forces. As a result, the conflict remains tense and serious. Therefore, the multifaceted and complex issues of achieving peace in Afghanistan are of great importance at the regional and international levels.

METHODS

In this article systematic, logical-comparative analysis and historical methods have been adequately used.

RESULTS

Various forms of negotiations are taking place on the ground of Afghanistan to ensure peace and settle the long-lasting war. The withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and the simultaneous start of inter-Afghan negotiations, as well as internal conflicts and sustainable economic development in this country, are in particular scientific interest. Therefore, the research is focused on the geopolitical aspects of the inter-Afghan peace talks and the impact of external forces on Afghanistan's internal affairs. At the same time, the approach for recognizing Afghanistan not as a threat to global peace and security, but as a factor of strategic opportunities for the development of Central and South Asia has become a key objective of research and made the implementation of effective mechanisms a priority. In this regard, the issues of the future of Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and restoring the historical position of modern Afghanistan in connecting Central and South Asia.

From our point of view, the theoretical approach to "Afghan dualism" (Buranov, 2020, p.31-32) should be added to the list of new scientific views on Afghanistan. It is observed that the essence of the theory of "Afghan dualism" can be reflected in two ways:

Afghan national dualism

Controversial views on the establishment of Afghan statehood on the basis of state or tribal

governance, unitary or federal, Islamic or democratic, Eastern or Western models reflect the Afghan national dualism. Valuable information about the dualistic aspects of the national statehood of Afghanistan can be found in the researches of well-known experts such as Barnett Rubin, Thomas Barfield, Benjamin Hopkins, Liz Wily, and Afghan scholar Nabi Misdaq (Rubin, 2013, Barfield, 2010, Hopkins, 2008, Wily, 2012, Misdaq, 2006). At the same time, approaches to the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan's future administration in the context of intra-Afghan negotiations is becoming more relevant. For example, in Afghanistan the term "Talibanism" is used to describe the "Taliban" way of governing the country. The essence and ideological views of "Talibanism" have been studied in detail by Nazif Shahrani Professor of Indiana University. According to the scholar, the Taliban's religious teachings, "pure" Islamic Sharia law, and military-tribal claims can be broadly interpreted as "Talibanism". In his article, he writes: "The rise of the Taliban and Talibanism may be best understood within the context of the troubled history of the "modern" Afghan buffer state, perpetually indebted to foreign patrons and consistently hostile toward its subjects in general, and to the Turkic- and Tajik (Persian)-speaking peoples of western, northern, and central Afghanistan in particular" (Shahrani, 2008, p.156.).

Afghan regional dualism

It can be seen that Afghan regional dualism is reflected in two different approaches to the geographical affiliation of this country:

AfSouthAsia. According to the first approach, Afghanistan is part of the South Asian region, which is assessed by the theoretical views of

Af-Pak. It is known that the term “Af-Pak” is used to refer to the fact that American scholars consider Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single military-political arena. The term began to be widely used in scholarly circles in the early years of the 21st century to theoretically describe U.S. policy in Afghanistan. According to reports, the author of the concept of “Af-Pak” is an American diplomat Richard Holbrooke. In March 2008, Holbrooke stated that Afghanistan and Pakistan should be recognized as a single military-political arena for the following reasons:

1. The existence of a common theater of military operations on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border;
2. The unresolved border issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan under the “Durand Line” in 1893;
3. The use of an open border regime between Afghanistan and Pakistan (primarily a “tribal zone”) by Taliban forces and other terrorist networks (Fenenko, 2013, p.24-25).

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Afghanistan is a full member of SAARC, the main organization for the integration of the South Asian region.

AfCentAsia. According to the second approach, Afghanistan is geographically an integral part of Central Asia. In our perspective, it is scientifically logical to call it an alternative to the term AfSouthAsia with the term AfCentAsia. This concept is a term that defines Afghanistan and Central Asia as a single region. In assessing Afghanistan as an integral part of the Central Asian region, it is necessary to pay attention to the following issues:

- **Geographical aspect.** According to its location, Afghanistan is called the “Heart of Asia” as it is a central part of Asia, and theoretically embodies Mackinder’s “Heartland” theory. Alexandr Humboldt, a German scientist who introduced the term Central Asia to science, described in detail the mountain ranges, climate, and structure of the region, including Afghanistan on his map (Humboldt, 1843, p.581-582). In his doctoral dissertation, Capt. Joseph McCarthy, an American military expert, argues that Afghanistan should be viewed not only as a specific part of Central Asia but as the enduring heart of the region (McCarthy, 2018).
- **Historical aspect.** The territories of present-day Central Asia and Afghanistan were an interconnected region during the statehood of the Greco-Bactrian, Kushan Kingdoms, Ghaznavid, Timurid, and Baburi dynasties. Uzbek professor Ravshan Alimov in his work cites as an example that a large part of modern Afghanistan was part of the Bukhara Khanate for a number of centuries and the city of Balkh, where it became the residence of the heirs of the Bukhara Khan (khantora) (Alimov, 2005, p.22). In addition, the graves of great thinkers such as Alisher Navoi, Mavlono Lutfi, Kamoliddin Behzod, Hussein Boykaro, Abdurahman Jami, Zakhiriddin Muhammad Babur, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Boborakhim Mashrab are located on the territory of modern Afghanistan. They have made an invaluable contribution to civilization, as well as cultural and enlightened ties of the people of the whole region. The Dutch historian Martin McCauley compares Afghanistan and Central Asia to the “Siamese twins” and

concludes that they are inseparable (McCauley, 2002, p.19).

- **Trade and economic aspect.** Afghanistan is both a road and an unopened market leading the region of Central Asia, which is closed in all respects, to the nearest seaports. In all respects, this will ensure the full integration of Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan, into world trade relations, eliminating some economic dependence on external spheres.
- **Ethical aspect.** Afghanistan is home to all Central Asian nations. An important fact that needs special attention is that the Uzbeks in Afghanistan are the largest ethnic group in the world outside of Uzbekistan. Another significant aspect is that the more Tajiks live in Afghanistan as the more Tajiks live in Tajikistan. This is extremely important and vital for Tajikistan. Afghan Turkmen are also one of the largest ethnic groups listed in the Afghan Constitution. In addition, more than a thousand Kazakhs and Kyrgyz from Central Asia currently live in the country.
- **Linguistical aspect.** The majority of the Afghan population communicates in the Turkic and Persian languages are spoken by the peoples of Central Asia. According to the Constitution of Afghanistan (The Constitution of IRA, 2004), the Uzbek language has the status of an official language only in Afghanistan, except Uzbekistan.
- **Cultural traditions and religious aspect.** The customs and traditions of the people of Central Asia and Afghanistan are similar and very close to each other. For example, Navruz, Ramadan and Eid al-Adha are celebrated equally among all people of the region. Islam also binds our peoples

together. One of the main reasons for this is that about 90% of the population of the region confesses to Islam.

For this reason, as the current efforts to involve Afghanistan in the regional processes in Central Asia intensify, it is expedient to take into account the relevance of this term and its popularization in scientific circles.

DISCUSSION

In general, the theory of “Afghan dualism” requires the replacement of dualistic ideas and views that cause conflict in Afghanistan with universally recognized principles of equality and unification. Although different views and approaches to the geographical location of Afghanistan have some scientific basis, today the factor of assessing this country not as a specific part of Central or South Asia, but as a bridge connecting these two regions, is a priority. Without restoring Afghanistan’s historic role as a bridge connecting Central and South Asia, it is impossible to develop inter-regional interdependence, ancient and friendly cooperation on new fronts. Today, such an approach is becoming a prerequisite for security and sustainable development in Eurasia. After all, the peace in Afghanistan is the real basis for peace and development in both Central and South Asia. In this context, there is a growing need to coordinate the efforts of Central and South Asian countries in addressing the complicated and complex issues facing Afghanistan.

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