

US-Russian Rivalry and Political Instability in Afghanistan (2001-2021)

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Abstract

Political instability and rapid and immediate changes have existed throughout the history of Afghanistan. These instabilities can be attributed to various factors, each of which has played a role in the political instability in this country. Among the factors of political instability in Afghanistan are the great powers that have competed with each other due to the geopolitical position of this country and have caused political stability in Afghanistan. Great powers, including the United States and Russia, with their interventions in Afghanistan and the proxy wars they have waged in this country, have caused changes in the political system of Afghanistan and have made political stability in this country difficult throughout history. The question raised in this research is what role did the United States, the former Soviet Union, and today's Russia play in the political instability of Afghanistan? The hypothesis of the research is that great powers, including the United States and Russia, have played a role in the political instability of Afghanistan and have caused political instability in this country. The research findings show that the support of the United States and Russia for their preferred political parties and elites has prevented political stability from taking shape in Afghanistan and has made the country a battlefield for proxy wars and geopolitical conflicts between major powers, including the United States and Russia. Afghanistan's important geopolitical position in the new world order has attracted the attention of major powers and has placed the country in the spotlight.

Keywords: Political Stability, Political Instability, Realism, Russia, America and Afghanistan

Statement of the Problem

Throughout history, small powers in the international system have been affected by the competition of great powers. The great powers of the system have always tried to have a kind of support from small countries to secure their national interests and have sought influence and domination over smaller powers in this way. This issue has been done due to the inappropriate distribution of power in the international political arena and the great powers have always tried to maintain their position and dominance over the smaller powers of the system. The cold competition between the United States of America and the Soviet Union during the Cold War and post-Cold War had a profound impact on Afghanistan. This country, which is located in a strategic region and is considered a connecting point between Central Asia and South Asia, was particularly concerned and competed with by the two superpowers during that period. The effects of these competitions are clearly visible in various political, economic and cultural dimensions of Afghanistan. The competition between the two superpowers in Afghanistan, especially in the political dimension, has caused this country to lack political stability and national sovereignty. During this period, Afghanistan became a competitive arena for the United States and the Soviet Union, with each country supporting different regimes in Afghanistan and pursuing its own goals in the country. In the early years of the Cold War, Afghanistan was under intense political pressure; especially after the 1973 coup that

overthrew the Shah and established the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan led by the People's Party, the Soviet Union strongly supported the communist regime in Afghanistan. In contrast, the United States supported the mujahideen groups and opponents of the communist regime and strengthened its anti-Soviet forces through financial, arms, and intelligence assistance. This competition caused Afghanistan to become an arena for proxy wars and foreign interventions, instead of developing and progressing in political and social fields. These political pressures and foreign interventions weakened the Afghan governments and political institutions and contributed to the political underdevelopment of the country. The competition between the two great powers of the international system, the United States and Russia, has prevented political stability from developing in Afghanistan and has led the country towards political instability. The question raised in this research is what effect has the competition between the United States and Russia had on political instability in Afghanistan? The research hypothesis shows that the competition between the United States and the Soviet Union throughout history has prevented political stability from developing in Afghanistan and has led the country towards political instability. The importance and necessity of the research is to clarify the role of the great powers of the international system in political instability, and the purpose of the research is to examine political instability and the role of the great powers in Afghanistan. The research method is descriptive-analytical and the method of data collection is also library-based.

Research Background

1- Rahmati, 2008, in a study titled (American Presence in Afghanistan: Opportunities and Challenges), the research method was documentary. The findings of the study show that Afghanistan has geopolitical importance and that the United States and Russia have competed over control of Afghanistan, so that they cannot control and monitor Central Asia, which is important for the United States and its allies, as well as Russia's concern. The results of the study show that the presence of the United States in Afghanistan is the biggest challenge for Afghanistan. 2- Khan and Khan, 2019, in an article titled (Peace in Afghanistan: The Role of Regional Countries and the United States), consider internal problems and regional rivalries as obstacles to Afghan peace and believe that America's strategic interests and the different interests of regional countries are obstacles to the Afghan peace process. 3- Rahimi, 2008, in a study titled (Democracy and National Security in Less Developed Countries), this research was conducted using documentary methods. The research findings show that the manifestations of political freedom, freedom of expression, and civil liberties of citizenship and its impact on national security are concentrated, especially in the countries of the Middle East and Central Asia. Afghanistan, which is considered one of the countries of Central Asia and the Middle East, Russia seems dissatisfied with this situation. 4- Shirazi, 1831, a study titled (Consequences of the September 11 attacks) was conducted using the documentary research method. The research findings show that the presence of the United States in Afghanistan has forced Russia to adopt soft and continuous policies against the United States, and it has mostly taken the form of economic aid and reconstruction in Afghanistan against the United States. 5- Dr. Elaheh Kolayi, Winter 2004, (The New Great Game in Central Asia: Backgrounds and Prospects), Ministry of Foreign Affairs Printing and Publishing Center, the author in this book has addressed the challenge of convergence among the Commonwealth of Independent States and the roots of political crises and their cooperation in the form of ECO. But regarding the competition between great powers, he pointed to the three powers of the United States, Russia, and China, which are competing for the energy to fight terrorism, fundamentalism, and extremism in Central Asia.

Theoretical Discussions (Realism and Conflict)

Realism, as a theory known as power politics, can be considered the best theory to explain America's actions in the Middle East. Realism is a theory that expresses the reality of the world as it is, not as it should be. In other words, realism speaks of what is, not of what should be and norms. (Moshirzadeh, 2009: p. 85) Realism came into existence exactly opposite to liberalism and sought to portray the realities of the world and avoid ideals. Realism places its emphasis on three certain and assumed principles. In other words, the principles and assumptions of realism are: A) Statism: Statism and the fact that states are the main actors in the field of international politics are considered to be the basic principles of realism. Realists claim that states compete with other states in anarchy for security, markets, influence, etc. The nature of this competition is often seen as a zero-sum game. In other words, more for one actor means less for another. (Bailis and Smith, 2004: p. 340) b) Survival: The second principle that unites realists of all persuasions is the belief that the ultimate goal of international politics is survival. Security is seen as a prerequisite for achieving other goals, whether these goals involve victory over others or simply maintaining independence. A recent debate among realists is whether the primary goal of states is to create security or to increase power. This debate has led to the formation of two groups, namely

defensive realists and offensive realists, and has important implications for how we view the security landscape and international cooperation. C) Self-help: The third principle that realism shares in all its branches is self-help. In the international system, there is no supreme authority to prevent and hinder the use of power, and therefore security is achieved only through self-help. In a chaotic structure, self-help is necessarily the rule of action. Of course, in the process of ensuring security for the country in question, it may exacerbate the insecurity of other countries. (Ibid.) Therefore, realism emphasizes the issue of state-centeredness, survival, and self-help, and emphasizes that in this world full of threats and fraught with threats, every state must think about its own survival and not wait for other countries to think about increasing its maximum power. This issue can make a state more prestigious and have a higher status in various international arenas.

Neo-realism and Conflict

In International Politics After the realist theory, Kent and Waltz proposed the theory of structural realism, which also attracted the attention of realist thinkers. Kent Waltz's neo-realism or structural realism focuses on the structure of the international system and examines everything based on structure and system. According to Waltz, a system consists of a structure and interacting units. He believes that a definition of structure should be given that is separate from the characteristics and interactions of units (states). And this is why it is easy to distinguish between variables related to the level of actors and variables related to the level of the system. The fact that we should exclude the characteristics of actors and their interactions in defining structure means that we should ignore issues related to the types of political leaders, social and economic institutions, and ideological commitments that states may have, and also hide issues related to cultural, economic, political, and military interactions of states. (Mohammad Khani, 2009: p. 100) Theoretical assumptions of the theory of structural realism can be put forward in the following cases: First, states are in pursuit of relative and absolute interests. This means that states are interested in increasing their power and influence (absolute interests) and therefore cooperate with other states or actors in this system to increase their capabilities. However, Greco believes that states are concerned with how much power and influence other states gain (relative interests) in any cooperative action. (Bills and Smith, 2004: p. 416) For neorealists, the issue of relative interests is important, and their emphasis is on relative interests, not absolute interests. Absolute hypocrisy is impossible to pursue due to the relentless competition between states, so it is relative interests that are important to neorealists. In other words, for neorealists, it is not a zero-sum game, but a positive-sum game, and there is a win-win option for states. The second assumption of neorealism is that states pay special attention to international economic interests. The meaning of this statement is that international economic interests are important to states, and states pay special attention to this issue. Neorealists are concerned about the unequal nature of economic globalization. Inequality in the international system is perhaps the greatest security threat in the future. People who do not have food to eat will seek change, and this change will often be accompanied by violence. Most global economic forces seek the lowest cost of labor, health, and environmental regulations. This situation can create two security problems. First, the pressures and conflicts of globalization and the effort to spend the least can lead to the loss of key industries and resources that are very important for national security. Second, economic globalization can exacerbate existing differences in societies and create instability in strategic areas, thereby challenging the world order. (Bills and Smith, 2004: p. 435) Therefore, governments, as rational actors, are focused on increasing their economic interests in the international arena and increasing their share of global wealth. This can be a good achievement for them in the international arena, and wealth and power are considered two sides of the same coin. (Mearsheimer, 2012: p. 41) The third assumption of neorealism is the distrust of states in each other due to the principle of maximizing interests. Based on this principle, states in the international system are not confident about the intentions and goals of other states and it depicts a world full of threats in which states seek to maximize their interests due to distrust of other countries. (Nasri, 2007: p. 216) From the perspective of realism theory, both classical realists and structural realists, states enter into conflict and conflict for various reasons. These conflicts can be considered to be caused by various factors, including: a) Conflict over national interests: In most cases, states justify the main reason for their conflicts with other political units based on the threat to national interests. National interests are a multifaceted concept that takes on various forms in different circumstances and requirements, depending on whether governments have the necessary facilities and capabilities to influence the behavior of others in terms of content and scope. Regarding disputes over national interests, the following can be examined (Qasemi, 2010: p. 143). B) Expansion of the power vacuum into weak regions: In a situation where, under the influence of various international or domestic factors, a power vacuum exists in a region, a series of conflicts and conflicts occur in succession until this power vacuum is filled by a new power. Many international policy experts view the conflicts that have existed

in various Third World countries since the post-World War II era on this basis because the collapse of colonial empires and the emergence of new states prompted the great powers (the United States and the Soviet Union) to fill the vacuum left by the abandonment of colonial states in the newly independent countries, and this situation led to the strengthening of various factions within the said territory by the superpowers, which has been accompanied by the emergence of local and regional crises and wars (Qasemi, 2010: p. 144). c) Revisionism: The revisionist policy of governments can cause a series of international and regional conflicts and disputes because pursuing this strategy is tantamount to challenging governments that defend the policy of maintaining the status quo. For example, the adoption of a policy of changing the status quo by Nazi Germany and the forces.

Factors of Instability

Political instability in Afghanistan is the result of a combination of historical, social, institutional and international factors that have prevented the formation of a strong and stable state over several decades. One of the first factors is the long history of war and military occupation. The occupation of Afghanistan by the Soviet Union in 1979, and the subsequent civil wars between the Mujahideen, led to the erosion of state institutions and the expansion of informal power structures. Also, the US invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 and the continued presence of international forces, despite some achievements in reconstruction, increased the government's dependence on foreign support and failed to ensure lasting stability (Barfield, 2010: p123). The second factor is ethnic diversity and the lack of an inclusive political system. Afghanistan is a country with a great deal of ethnic diversity; including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras and Uzbeks. However, the country's political structure has always suffered from the concentration of power in the hands of one or two ethnic groups. This inequality in political participation has led to distrust, discrimination, and even local rebellions. The lack of effective mechanisms for fair participation of different ethnic groups in power has led to the recurrence of ethnic violence in different periods (www.arianafghanistan.com). Third, the weakness of government institutions and widespread corruption. After 2001, the Afghan government was heavily dependent on international aid and failed to create effective management structures within the country. Corruption in government institutions, especially at high levels, has led to the loss of public trust and reduced political participation. According to reports from Transparency International, Afghanistan has been one of the most corrupt countries in the world over the past two decades. In addition to administrative inefficiency, this corruption has also destroyed the necessary opportunities for sustainable development (Aqli, 1402: p. 155). The fourth factor is foreign interference and proxy wars. Countries such as Pakistan, Iran, India, Russia, and the United States have fueled the political crisis in Afghanistan by supporting various factions and groups. In particular, Pakistan's support for the Taliban and its use as a tool of geopolitical pressure has been a key factor in weakening the central government. Regional competition for political influence has also prevented the formation of an independent foreign policy for Afghanistan (World Bank, 2020). Finally, poverty, unemployment, and social inequality, as social grounds for dissatisfaction, have played an important role in political instability. The lack of economic infrastructure, dependence on traditional agriculture and the informal economy, as well as reliance on international aid, have failed to create sustainable economic development. According to the World Bank, more than the population of Afghanistan lives below the poverty line, and the unemployment rate in some areas reaches more than 30 percent. This economic situation has made young forces susceptible to entering various layers of social disorders.

The Geopolitical Importance of Afghanistan for Russia

If we look at Russia's practices and behavior and consider and examine its foreign policy, we will come to the conclusion that Afghanistan is of great importance to Russia and that Russia considers this country as an important geopolitical region. With the fall of the Taliban government in 2001 and new developments in Afghanistan, Russia's policy can be considered to have three different periods in Afghanistan and the region, each of which is based on Russia's interests in some way. The first period of Russia's policies can be considered the period of 2001-2002, during which Russia does not seek to use a tough policy in Afghanistan and announces its entry into the country quietly, and on the other hand, it aligns itself with the United States in the fight against terrorism. The second period can be considered the years 2003-2006, during which Russia abandoned its isolationist and calm policy and pursued a harsh and aggressive policy. It is during this period that Russia comes to the conclusion that Russia has gained the ability to confront and compete with the West and must act independently. The third period of Russian policy begins in 2007 and continues to this day, and during this period Russia enters international games with a new attitude towards Afghanistan. During this period, Russia enters Afghan issues very actively with the aim of strategic cooperation with the West and the Afghan government to create

security. If we want to have a correct and accurate assessment of why Afghanistan is so important and important for Russia, it must be said that the geopolitical issue of Afghanistan as a very important and fundamental point makes Afghanistan very important and important for Russia. Afghanistan is considered as a connecting point of very important regions in the region. For the Central Asian republics to connect with the countries of the Middle East, as well as South and Southeast Asia, they can all connect and communicate through Afghanistan. Therefore, from past centuries to the present, Afghanistan has been able to be a source of security (buffer zone) or a source of threats for Russia. From a historical perspective, Afghanistan has historically been located in lands that were considered the sphere of influence of Great Russia. In the nineteenth century, we see that when the Great Game was underway, Afghanistan was considered as the sphere of influence of Russia against England, and Russia considered this region as its own sphere of influence. For Russia, influence in Afghanistan was considered a criterion of superiority and great power of this country. Another issue is that there are many commonalities between the people of Afghanistan and the people of Central Asia in political and cultural terms. The Russian government considers Afghanistan to be the territory of Great Russia in all respects, both politically and culturally, and in terms of security, and this issue has always been present in the minds of Russian statesmen. As a result, the problems of the Afghan people and the Afghan government are considered the problems of Russia and the Russian people.

Great Power Rivalry During the Cold War and Political Instability in Afghanistan

The rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War played an important role in the political instability of Afghanistan. Since the 1950s, Afghanistan has been the target of global rivalries due to its sensitive geopolitical location at the crossroads of great empires. During this period, the Soviet Union and the United States each tried to expand their influence in Afghanistan. By supporting the communist government in Kabul in the 1970s and intervening militarily in 1979, the Soviets intended to turn Afghanistan into one of their strategic bases. In response, the United States and Western countries supported the Afghan mujahideen to prevent the expansion of Soviet influence in the region. This rivalry not only led to civil war and the destruction of Afghanistan, but also turned the Afghan government into a tool in the hands of the superpowers. This rivalry caused severe political instability in Afghanistan. Because none of the parties involved could establish a stable and independent government in the country. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan and the US support for opposition groups turned the country's situation into a proxy war. Which continued for a decade, ultimately these competitions led to the fall of the communist government in Afghanistan and the emergence of the Taliban. The political instability that resulted from these competitions not only had negative effects on the internal structure of Afghanistan but also led the region into a period of long-term tensions and security crises, the effects of which continue to this day (Ebrahimi et al., 1401: 115). The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union turned Afghanistan into the center of the hot war, he said that many activists tried to educate and train some of the extremists in Arab countries and bring them to Afghanistan, and unfortunately, Western countries systematically supported the war that was waged against the Soviet Union in the country, and Afghanistan became the center of the hot war between the United States and the Soviet Union (<https://www.avapress.com/fa/news>). The Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union turned Afghanistan into a hot war, he said, adding that many activists tried to educate and train some of the extremists in Arab countries and bring them into Afghanistan, and unfortunately, Western countries systematically supported the war that was waged against the Soviet Union in the country, and Afghanistan became the center of the hot war between the United States and the Soviet Union (Qadri, 2013: p. 45). Proxy wars and competition between the great powers during the Cold War caused political instability in Afghanistan, and the central government changed hands, and no political stability was experienced in the country. The competition between the two great powers during the Cold War, the United States and the Soviet Union, caused political instability in weaker countries, and paved the way for more tension and civil wars.

US-Soviet Rivalry in Afghanistan After the Cold War

After the end of the Cold War and the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States and the Soviet Union continued their indirect rivalry in the country. Afghanistan became the center of regional and global rivalry, the consequences of which were significant not only for Afghanistan but also for neighboring countries, including Pakistan, Iran, and India. In particular, the US support for the Afghan Mujahideen groups, which indirectly strengthened the Taliban and extremist groups in the country after the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan, had long-term effects on the developments in Afghanistan (Barfield, 2010: 12). The Mujahideen government that replaced the Najibullah government and seized power

in April 1997 was not officially recognized by the United States, and the United States did not recognize it. "Peter Thompson, who was introduced as the US ambassador to the Mujahideen in Pakistan to open the doors of his country's embassy in that city at the same time as the formation of the Mujahideen government in Kabul, spent only a few hours in Kabul in the first days of the transfer of power under the leadership of Sibghatullah Mujadedi. At the same time, Washington also canceled his ambassadorial representation to the Mujahideen and Thompson was assigned to another mission. The United States no longer appointed a representative or ambassador to the Mujahideen government, which it had provided financial and weapons assistance to for a decade, and refrained from any cooperation or establishment of relations with the said government (Andishmand, 2005: p. 120). In an interview with Akram Andishmand, Burhanuddin Rabbani commented on the United States in such a way that the countries that helped the Mujahideen, especially the United States, pursued their own goals and never thought about Afghanistan. They provided comprehensive support to the Mujahideen as long as their interests required it, but then abandoned Afghanistan. "The assistance of countries during the Jihad period was not based on a sustainable strategy. Each country had its own agenda, and as far as the United States was concerned, it focused on two issues: one, the Cold War, which it was carrying out at great expense against the Soviet Union. And the second, the problem and complex of the defeat in Vietnam remained in the minds of the Americans. The Americans initially thought of Afghanistan as a problem for the Soviet Union. They did not think of the Soviet Union failing and falling apart. After events developed and the world gradually understood and the jihad reached a level where the Soviet Union was leaving Afghanistan, they considered their temporary policy to be almost over... Perhaps they are one of the big countries that have their intelligence interests at stake in humanitarian aid. Their political-military interests and economic interests are at stake. They invest in this way. Accordingly, changes were considered by them in their relationship with Afghanistan at the same time as we achieved victory. They wanted a system and government to be implemented based on their own ideas. Not on the basis of the claim that the people of Afghanistan had risen to form a government based on religious values, a spirit of independence, national pride and freedom. These things were no longer valuable to the world and they did not want such a government to be established on this basis, but rather they wanted to suppress it. This is where their vision and judgment about Afghanistan began (Andishmand, 2005: 127). Therefore, when the Mujahideen took power in Kabul, they found themselves in a situation where they felt alone. While we saw that no one was even implementing humanitarian plans. Even Islamic and Arab countries such as the Emirates, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, which were building schools, mosques, madrasas and clinics, left everything unfinished and left. It was not that the Mujahideen government did not want it. In the first days of the formation of the Mujahideen government, we conveyed this message to the United States that we were interested in having close relations with that country and receiving its assistance. Even during the jihad, as far as the Islamic Society of Afghanistan and we were concerned, we were thinking about what kind of long-term program to organize with the Western world and especially with the United States. The trip I had to America at that time and met with President Reagan was not just a whim to go to America. The goal was to be able to establish future relations with the world when the Mujahideen come to power, and later to be able to have political, economic, etc. relations with the United States and the international community in the future government. But when we came here (Kabul) and formed the government, we did not hear a positive answer. From now on, the work began on how this newly founded government would be formed and how it would be overthrown. In order to show that nations that want to form a government themselves and do not form a government based on the orders and guidance of the big and powerful countries of the world, can never form a government.

US-Russian Competition During the Republic and Political Instability of Afghanistan

After the events of September 11, 2001, in October of that year, the US began its airstrikes on Afghanistan, initially bombing cities such as Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-e-Sharif, and Kunduz. Afghanistan, which had very little capability and no military defense capability, soon lost its little capability. The Northern Alliance joining the US in the ground battle caused the US attacks to intensify and continue with greater intensity and ferocity (Tamana, 2008: p. 130). After seven weeks of US and Northern Alliance military operations and the end of the attacks, due to the nearness of victory, the international community sought to form an interim government and put this issue on its agenda. For this purpose, a conference was held in Bonn, Germany, which was managed by the United Nations and the US State Department. All military groups, various ethnic groups, representatives of the former Afghan king Zahir Shah, etc. participated in this conference, each seeking a share in it. At first, there were many differences between the participants and each sought a greater share of power, but the pressure from the great powers forced them to reach an agreement. Nine days of negotiations passed, and finally a major agreement was reached on December 5 between the various Afghan groups. The

United States and Russia, as well as the United Nations, played a major role in creating an agreement between the participants. This was considered a great success for the United States. The Bonn Agreement was not a comprehensive peace agreement, but it created an opportunity to establish peace, security, and protect human rights. This agreement appointed Hamid Karzai as the head of the interim government (Tamana, 2008: p. 144). On December 16, 2001, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld met and held talks with the leaders of the interim government. He proposed that he would provide long-term support to the Karzai government and its Minister of Defense, General Fahim, and promised long-term support. It was here that the leaders of this country thanked and appreciated the American aid and support for the support. George Bush raised the issue in his speech that American forces would remain in Afghanistan for a long time and this would continue until Afghanistan reached an acceptable stability. Following these events, on December 20 of the same year, the issue of the establishment of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was agreed upon. ISAF was a multinational force that was responsible for maintaining peace and was led by Britain. The plan was that these forces would be in Afghanistan for six months and try to establish order and stability in the country. It was here that a division of labor was established between American forces and ISAF. Britain was responsible for air operations and the final authority belonged to the United States. What was considered the main goal for the United States was the capture of Osama and his followers of Al-Qaeda. Karzai took over the presidency on December 22, 2001 (Tamana, 2008: p. 155). Russia initially pursued a policy of cooperation with the United States, but over time it began to oppose American policies and strategies in Afghanistan. If we look at Russia's practices and behavior and consider and examine its foreign policy, we will come to the conclusion that Afghanistan is of great importance to Russia and that Russia considers this country as an important geopolitical region. With the fall of the Taliban government in 2001 and new developments in Afghanistan, Russia's policy in Afghanistan and the region can be considered to have three different periods, each of which was based on Russian interests in some way. The first period of Russian policies can be considered the period of 2001-2002, during which Russia did not seek to use a tough policy in Afghanistan and announced its entry into the country calmly, and on the other hand, it aligned itself with the United States in the fight against terrorism. The second period can be considered the years 2003-2006, during which Russia abandoned its isolationist and calm stance and pursued a harsh and aggressive policy. It is during this period that Russia comes to the conclusion that Russia has gained the ability to confront and compete with the West and must act independently. The third period of Russian policy begins in 2007, which continues to this day, and during this period Russia enters international games with a new attitude towards Afghanistan. During this period, Russia enters Afghan issues very actively with the aim of strategic cooperation with the West and the Afghan government to create security (Balkhi, 2011: 235). If we want to have a correct and accurate assessment of the issue of why Afghanistan is so important and considered important for Russia, it must be said that the geopolitical issue of Afghanistan as a very important and fundamental point makes Afghanistan very important and important for Russia. Afghanistan is considered as a connection point of very important regions in the region. For the connection of the Central Asian republics with the countries of the Middle East, as well as South and Southeast Asia, all can be connected and communicated through Afghanistan. Therefore, from the past centuries to the present, Afghanistan has been able to be a source of security (buffer zone) or a source of threats for Russia (Balkhi, 2011: 233).

If we look at it from a historical perspective, Afghanistan has historically been located in lands that were considered the sphere of influence of Great Russia. In the 19th century, we see that when the Great Game was underway, Afghanistan was considered Russia's sphere of influence against England, and Russia considered this region as its own sphere of influence. For Russia, influence in Afghanistan was considered a measure of its superiority and great power. Another issue is that there are many commonalities between the people of Afghanistan and the people of Central Asia in political and cultural terms. The Russian government considers Afghanistan to be part of the territory of Great Russia in all aspects, both politically, culturally, and in terms of security, and this issue has always been present in the minds of Russian statesmen. As a result, the problems of the people of Afghanistan and the Afghan government are considered the problems of Russia and the people of Russia (Tamana, 2008: 320).

1- Political Competition between Russia and the United States during the Republic

In the field of political competition between the great powers in Afghanistan during the Republic, it can be said that the goals of Russia's foreign policy in Afghanistan are aimed at limiting the role of the United States, and the goals of the United States' foreign policy in this regard are also defined as limiting emerging powers, including Russia. Considering these points, the indicators of the political competition between the United States and Russia in Afghanistan can be seen as follows: 1- Conflict to reduce the influence of competitors and increase its own influence in Afghanistan and its

surrounding regions. The United States' foreign policy in Afghanistan has been shaped around reducing the influence of Russia and China. Reducing Russia's influence in the Central Eurasian region seems more important than any other region, and of course, Afghanistan is among the regions that each have geostrategic importance. At the beginning, the Russians praised the presence of the United States to eliminate international terrorism and supported it, and allowed the United States to build military bases in Kirghiz Khanabad, Uzbekistan, and Manas, Kyrgyzstan. But gradually it began to oppose US strategies and tried to compete with the US in Afghanistan (Aqli and Tisheyar, 1403: 149).

2- Recruiting to balance power:

Both Russia and the US were trying to influence regional actors involved in Afghan issues and shape the balance of power in the regions surrounding Afghanistan. Russia, considering the policy of blocking influence in its private life, tried to stand up to US policy in this region with China, Iran and the Central Asian countries. Russia supported China's position that the US presence in Afghanistan was problematic; Russia supported Central Asia and reduced relations of these countries with Afghanistan, they followed the same policy. Russia tried to compensate for the US presence by recruiting from among the neighboring countries of Afghanistan and balance its power globally and in the region (Aqli and Tisheyar, 1403: 155).

3- Disagreement over the US presence in Afghanistan

The US strategy in Afghanistan was initially to eliminate those whom the US had assessed as a threat to itself. However, after quelling the crisis and conflict in Chechnya and other Central Asian and Caucasian republics, Russia tried to challenge the US policy of long-term presence in Afghanistan based on limiting competitors. This country not only announced its opposition through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but also responded negatively to the US presence in Afghanistan within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, calling it dangerous for the region. From the perspective of Russian policy, the US goal of its presence in Afghanistan is to manage the war in order to be present in this region so that it can defeat its political rivals, namely Russia and China. The Russians assessed the policy of presence in Afghanistan in line with US hegemony. From their perspective, the US has tried to find an excuse for its long-term presence and to gain a permanent base in this country (Aqli and Tisheyar, 1403: 160).

Building a US base in the Afghan regional network to contain Russia

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1990 and the end of the Cold War, the idea that the competition and conflict between the great powers would end and the world would move towards peace and cooperation was strongly raised among thinkers. But unfortunately, this was not the reality and the situation had developed in such a way that the relations between Russia and the United States would once again move towards confrontation and conflict and the international system would once again be involved in the bloody conflicts between the two powers. International relations are still in an anarchic state and there is still no central authority in this field. In such an anarchic situation, the most important issue is the survival of states, as each state is trying to ensure its survival and maximize its security. That is why states use all the tools and levers to increase their security. It is clear that states with greater and better offensive capabilities have the ability to ensure and guarantee their survival in the international arena. Today's Russia can be seen as the heir to a power that, in its era of power and authority, was able to balance the United States and could balance America. Given Russia's powerful past, it is possible that Russia will use all its power to stand up to America, challenge America, and balance it. In pursuing such a desire on the part of Russia, it can naturally bring America and Russia into a new competition and conflict in the international arena, and this behavior can be observed in the practical behavior of both countries. Mearsheimer, the aggressive realist theorist, states that in the new millennium, Russian leaders would very much like to look at the world through realist glasses and power politics and move shoulder to shoulder with America in the international system. When the Soviet Union collapsed, this collapse caused the international system to witness changes in the distribution of power, with superior powers pursuing hegemonic behavior. This situation arose for the United States of America, and this issue caused the United States to maintain its position and enter into relentless competition with challengers in the international arena to maintain its hegemony. To achieve this goal, the United States of America has put the issue of networking international institutions and regimes on its agenda and through this seeks to control its competitors, especially Russia and China. The United States is targeting Russia for the first time to achieve this goal. In the contemporary era, we are faced with two issues: the erosion of the hegemony of the United States of America and the renewal of Russian power, both of which are very important events in their own right. A new confrontation and confrontation has begun between these two powers, and this confrontation is going to expand its scope even further and move towards a security dilemma. The United

States is trying to pursue different strategies in order to contain Russia. American hardliners believe that Russia only understands the language of force and that it must be forced to maintain international regimes through force. Thomas Graham, in his advice to Washington to contain Russia, states that this strategy should be implemented in three perspectives; 1) A short-term strategy in which the costs of expansionism should be imposed on Russia. 2) In the medium term, it should seek to weaken Russia's power and prevent Russian maneuvering. 3) In the long term, it should create disruptions in Russia's internal affairs so that Russia's behavior changes or the system changes altogether.

Conclusion

Political instability means the lack of normal functioning of the system, which can put the system in crisis. In this regard, we have been witnessing political instability in Afghanistan for many years, and this country does not function normally and has moved more towards disorganization and instability. Various factors and causes can be considered for instability, which can range from internal to external factors. In this article, we looked for external causes of political instability in Afghanistan. The competition between great powers, including Russia and the United States, in Afghanistan throughout history has caused this country to be involved in political instability. Due to the interventions of great powers throughout the history of its independence, Afghanistan has not been able to experience good political stability, and the reason for this is that great powers such as the United States and Russia have been involved in proxy wars to secure their own national interests in this country. Afghanistan, which has attractive geopolitics and geostrategy for great powers, has always been attractive to countries such as the United States and Russia, and this attractiveness has made this country the focus of their attention. This is why the interventions of great powers have caused this country to always experience political instability, preventing it from moving towards political stability and normal functioning.

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