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**THE EXISTENCE OF AFGHANISTAN IN THE CONDITIONS  
OF A “STATELESS SOCIETY”**

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**Abstract.** *Despite the fact the modern world community is experiencing political, economic, cultural and geopolitical development due to the accelerating pace of globalization, not all countries existing on the world map are a model of well-being.*

*Some states of Asia traditionally experience centuries-old difficulties in the process of integration into the world community, periodically rolling back in their political and economic development, exacerbating the geopolitical situation not only in their region, but throughout the world, creating a threat to international security. These outsider countries include Afghanistan, which still confirms the validity of its nickname - the “Graveyard of Empires”, given by the American researcher Seth G. Jones [1].*

*The long-term systemic crisis led the Afghan society to the actual disintegration of the Afghan state as a political institution, and, as a result, it turned out to be very weak and unstable. The internal factors of the crisis complicated the activities of the central government, causing the failure of all undertaken official reforms. The preservation of the tribal structure in Afghan society did not allow official Kabul to create effective local authorities. In Afghanistan, the official government during the crisis has always been weak, due to which, in a number of remote areas, the local population fell under the destructive influence of warring extremist groups. However, due to the important geopolitical position of Afghanistan and the interest of the superpowers in it, this country in the last decades of the last century and the beginning of the new millennium became the scene of a clash of geopolitical interests, and became the center of political aspirations and intrigues of world powers. The modern Afghan crisis is one of the most difficult problems of global geopolitics. Therefore, the existence of Afghanistan in the conditions of a stateless society requires fundamental scientific research.*

**Keywords:** *Afghanistan, Stateless Society, Anarchy, Tribal System, State Structure, Afghan Crisis.*

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**СУЩЕСТВОВАНИЕ АФГАНИСТАНА В УСЛОВИЯХ  
ОБЩЕСТВА БЕЗ ГОСУДАРСТВА**

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**Аннотация.** *Несмотря на то, что современное мировое сообщество переживает политическое, экономическое, культурное и геополитическое развитие в связи с ускоряющимися темпами глобализации, не все страны, существующие на карте мира, являются образцом благополучия. Некоторые государства Азии традиционно испытывают многовековые трудности в процессе интеграции в мировое сообщество, периодически откатываясь назад в своем политическом и экономическом развитии, обостряя геополитическую ситуацию не только в своем регионе, но и во всем мире, создавая угрозу международной безопасности. К таким странам-аутсайдерам относится Афганистан, который до сих пор подтверждает справедливость своего прозвища — «Кладбище империй», данного американским исследователем Сетом Г. Джонсом [1]. Многолетний системный кризис привел афганское общество к фактическому распаду афганского государства как политического института, в результате чего оно оказалось очень слабым и неустойчивым. Внутренние факторы кризиса осложнили деятельность центральной власти, обусловив провал всех предпринятых официальных реформ. Сохранение родоплеменной структуры в афганском обществе не позволило официальному Кабулу создать действенную местную власть. В Афганистане официальная власть во время кризиса всегда была слабой, из-за чего в ряде отдаленных районов местное население попало под разрушительное влияние воюющих экстремистских группировок. Однако в силу важного геополитического положения Афганистана и заинтересованности в нем сверхдержав эта страна в последние десятилетия прошлого века и в начале нового тысячелетия стала ареной столкновения геополитических интересов, стала центром политических устремлений и происков мировых держав. Современный афганский кризис — одна из сложнейших проблем мировой геополитики. Поэтому существование Афганистана в условиях без государственного общества требует фундаментальных научных исследований.*

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**Ключевые слова:** *Афганистан, без государственное общество, анархия, племенная система, государственное устройство, афганский кризис.*

For a comprehensive coverage of the subject hereof, it is necessary to define the conceptual apparatus and understand what is meant by a “Stateless Society”.

According to the definition set out in the Great Explanatory Dictionary of Sociology, a “Stateless Society” means a society that is not controlled by the state. This definition includes societies that existed before the formation of the first centralized states or societies, with the absence of a clearly identified state machine, and, moreover, without a stable leader (the so-called “Acephaly” or “Headlessness”) [2].

The above term is akin to another, namely “Anarchy”. According to Dahl’s Explanatory Dictionary, “Anarchy” (from the Ancient Greek – “ἀναρχία”) is the absence of a leader, organized government, strength, order in a state or community [3].

Both terms apply to the situation describing the political processes in Afghanistan.

Despite the fact the history of human settlement of the territory of this country dates back to ancient times, Afghanistan, within the approximate framework of modern borders, arose only in the 18th century, thanks to the influence of the British and Russian empires as a buffer state. In 1893, due to British pressure, the Durand Line was created, which is a 2640-kilometer border between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

However, as a result of the Third Anglo-Afghan War of 1919, Afghanistan managed to throw off the patronage of Great Britain and create its own monarchy on its territory, which lasted until 1973 and ended with the overthrow of King Mohammed Zahir Shah [4].

Starting from this period, the centralization of the Afghan state was shaken and power began to flow into the hands of the leaders of local tribes. A distinctive feature of Afghanistan is the fragmentation of national groups living in the territory of this country, the number of which is more than 20 different ethnic groups. According to the CIA’s World Factbook, there are currently no reliable statistics on Afghanistan’s ethnicity [5]. However, the 2004 Afghan Constitution mentioned Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, Turkmens, Balochs, Pashays, Nuristanis, Aimaks, Arabs, Kyrgyz, Qizilbash, Gujars and Brahuis [6]. At the same time, it should be noted that there are dozens of other unnamed small ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

The pluralism of ethnic groups in a relatively small area led to their autonomy from each other due to differences in mentality, traditions and customs. Each nationality recognized only its own rules and local laws, sabotaging the establishment of uniformity and centralization.

Despite the fact that in 1973, due to a coup d’état, a republic was proclaimed in Afghanistan by Mohammed Daoud, it was not possible to establish real centralization through reforms in the country. This period of Afghan history is characterized by extreme political instability and anarchy. The Daoud regime was overthrown in consequence of the Saur Revolution in April 1978 [7].

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As a result of the above revolution, representatives of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan of the Marxist-Leninist persuasion came to power, headed by its secretary and future Prime Minister Nur Mohammad Taraki, who a year later in September 1979 was overthrown and killed by Afghan politician Hafizullah Amin.

Amin's reign was also interrupted in connection with the introduction of Soviet troops into Kabul in December 1979 and the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan war of 1979-1989. Soviet soldiers stormed the palace of Hafizullah Amin and liquidated him along with his family.

During the years of the Soviet-Afghan war, the so-called group of Afghan Mujahideen, motivated by Islamic ideology, entered into a confrontation with the Soviet troops. They exacerbated the consequences of the military conflict in Afghanistan, resisting not only Soviet soldiers, but also waging a civil war with the indigenous population. This radical group has received extensive covert support from the governments of Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the United States [8].

The above example perfectly illustrates the lack of centralization and the presence of disunity within the Afghan society, which serves as the main foundation of state fragmentation.

Foreign volunteers of a radical Islamic persuasion, who soon formed a network known as "Al-Qaeda" (this terrorist organization banned in Russia), also joined the Mujahideen.

The withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan began in May 1988 and ended in 1989. The tasks set by the Soviet command were never resolved, and the geopolitical situation in the region was not stabilized.

Due to guerrilla warfare, the Mujahideen ousted the pro-Soviet government of Afghanistan and created their own transitional government. However, the Mujahideen were politically fragmented, and their detachments consisted of a large number of small formations, the commanders of which often fought among themselves. The reason again was the different national composition, since the group included Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks, Hazaras, Charaimaks, Nuristanis, etc., as well as representatives of various religious movements (Sunnis, Shiites, Ismailis) [9].

In connection with the escalation of the armed conflict within the above groups, in 1994 the religious and political movement "Taliban" (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the Russian Federation) appeared, which in 1996 captured Kabul.

The Taliban (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the Russian Federation) mainly consisted of representatives of the Pashtun Sunni majority, for whom the power of representatives of the Afghan minorities was unacceptable, namely the Hazaras who profess Shiism, Tajiks, and Uzbeks.

It should be noted that back in April 1992, shortly after the collapse of the USSR, Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah, elected in 1987, was finally removed from power. For four years, he hid in the territory of the UN mission in Kabul with his brother, but in September 1996 they were kidnapped, tortured and killed by the Taliban (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the

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Russian Federation), who captured the city, despite the fact that Mohammad Najibullah himself was also an ethnic Pashtun and enjoyed wide support indigenous population of the country [10].

With the help of Al-Qaeda (this terrorist organization banned in Russia), by the summer of 2001, the Taliban (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the Russian Federation) established control over more than 90% of Afghan territory and proclaimed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan throughout the country [11].

In early September 2001, the militants of the above organizations assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud, a well-known leader of the Northern Alliance Mujahideen of Tajik nationality, who held control over a small part of northern Afghanistan and unsuccessfully sought US support [12].

The next round of escalation and intensification of tension on the territory of Afghanistan is due to the introduction of NATO troops (in particular American ones) into the territory of the United States in connection with the events of the famous terrorist attack on September 11, 2001. The Afghan campaign began in secret on September 26, 2001. A Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) team known as the “Jawbreaker” arrived in Afghanistan and, together with Afghan anti-Taliban allies, initiated a strategy to overthrow the regime [13].

After the overthrow of the radicals, international attention turned to the restoration of democracy in Afghanistan.

In April 2002, US President George W. Bush announced the “Marshall Plan” for Afghanistan in a speech at the Virginia Military Institute, promising financial assistance [14].

The first democratic elections in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the Russian Federation) were held in October 2004, and approximately 80% of registered voters elected Hamid Karzai as President of Afghanistan for a five-year term. Thus, the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was established. A year later, parliamentary elections were held in which dozens of women competed for the seats allotted to them to ensure gender diversity [15].

The Constitution approved in 2004 gave Afghanistan a strong central government but weak regional and local governments, i.e. a structure that contradicted the country’s long-standing traditions [6].

Over the next 16 years, the level of confusion and dissatisfaction with the official government increased in the country, along with the increase in the influence of the Taliban (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the Russian Federation). In 2014, Ashraf Ghani, a newly elected pro-American president belonging to the Ahmadzai tribe of the Ghilzai Pashtun tribal union, became the president of Afghanistan, replacing Hamid Karzai. However, the new president was politically even weaker than his predecessor [16]. At the same time, the corruption component among the state apparatus and disunity with local peripheral leaders increased.

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Government corruption in Afghanistan has been a major barrier to private investment, significantly increasing the costs and risks of doing business. Insecurity in some parts of the country created an environment in which poppy cultivation flourished, fueling a growing drug industry that not only financed terrorist activities but also fueled government corruption. Despite the fact that poppy cultivation during the years of the presence of the US military in the country has significantly decreased in 29 of the 34 provinces, explosive growth was observed in the remaining 5, especially when Afghanistan accounts for about 90% of the world's opium production [17].

In August 2021, after the successful attack of the Taliban terrorist movement (this organization is under UN sanctions for terrorist activities and banned in the Russian Federation) on government forces, the government of Afghanistan fell, and President Ashraf Ghani lost his post, which went to the Taliban leader, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar [18]. The Taliban re-proclaimed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Thus, the 20-year efforts of the world community to establish a democratic regime in Afghanistan and build a stable state came to naught.

Summing up the above, it should be noted that without strong state institutions it is very difficult to build a market economy and ensure the peaceful coexistence of disparate population groups within the country. Incentives are needed to create such institutions not only among the population, but also among the official government. Their construction also depends on funding sources and low levels of corruption.

As a rule, if official taxes received from individuals and legal entities or “white” market trade serve as a source of financing for the country's budget, then investments favorably influence the formation of state institutions.

In contrast to the above, proceeds from the slave trade, the production of poppies, or other illegal substances are more likely to be used to bribe corrupt government members, finance weapons and illegal groups, rather than establish a centralized state and support official institutions.

Thus, as of 2022, the key task of building sustainable state institutions in Afghanistan has completely failed, and the country was never removed from the list of countries with a “Stateless Society”, along with the Republic of the Congo and Yemen.

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