THE COMING TO POWER OF THE TALIBAN IN AFGHANISTAN: REGIONAL AND GLOBAL EFFECTS

With the withdrawal of the US and NATO troops from Afghanistan, the Taliban, who progressed step by step, took the capital Kabul with an unexpected speed on August 15th 2021, without a war, once again shocked the whole world. There is a serious chaos in Afghanistan with the fall of the Afghan government, causing the country’s control almost over the whole country. Having regained power in Afghanistan after 20 years, the Taliban brings many questions. In this context, issues related to how the future of Afghani- stan will be shaped and who will rule it, regional and global effects to be discussed.

Why did the US pull out of Afghanistan? First of all, it is possible to say that Wash- ington has already decided to leave Afghan- istan, even though the US seems to have pulled out of Afghanistan in a hurry. In fact, the US signing the Peace-Bringing Agree- ment to Afghanistan with the Taliban in February 2020 in Doha has shown that it has now decided to leave the future and fate of Afghanistan in the hands of Afghans. The US President Joe Biden, which further clar- ified Washington’s stance, declared in his statement on April 14th 2021 that all U.S. soldiers would leave Afghanistan com- pletely by September 11th 2021. As Biden already stated in his statement, Washington has adopted that it is meaningless to keep troops in Afghanistan 20 years later. Be- cause Washington, which entered Afghani- stan with the slogan of war on terrorism, has faced an increasing reaction both in Afghan- istan and in the US in recent years. In addition, it would be costly for the US, which lost 2,352 lives and spent 2,313 trillion dol- lars in the 20-year Afghanistan war, to retain troops there.

As a matter of fact, the withdrawal of the US from Afghanistan can be considered as a ge- strategic step. It is obvious that the US, which withdraws from the Indo-Pacific region, will also withdraw from Iran and Iraq in the short term. Thus, it can be predicted that the US, which has reduced its military expendi- tures in the Middle East, will largely shift its power to the Indo-Pacific region. This could be associated with the fact that the US and its allies, which are disturbed by the increas- ing geopolitical and geo-economic moves of the rising China in the Indo-Pacific region, will have now started to focus on this region. Al- ready under the shadow of the US-China Trade War, while the alliance of the US, Australia, Japan and India against China in- creased in the Indo-Pacific region, Germany and France also joined the alliance. In this context, the Biden administration, which pursued a deeper strategy against China compared to the Trump administration, has started to strengthen its comprehensive pol- itical, commercial-economic and military cooperation with Taiwan and other coun- tries in the region that have had conflicts with China over the islands in the past years as well as further consolidating relations with the US allies. Considering that the US, which has withdrawn from Afghanistan and started to withdraw from Iraq and Syria, can “save” billions of dollars in military expenditures and it can be predicted that Washington will strengthen its military position in the Indo- Pacific region in order to reduce Beijing’s influence in the region in the coming period.

In this respect, the Indo-Pacific region, which has been the scene of a fierce rivalry between the US and China in recent years, may come to the fore in Washington’s next geopolitical game.

It is possible to say that the US wants to leave Afghanistan, which has become more unstable after its withdrawal, to its rivals in the region, to Russia, China and Iran, with all its current and potential problems. The US already knew that in the event of a seri- ous It is the Afghan people who have once again lost in the Afghanistan war, the winner of which is uncertain. It is a big question whether the Taliban, who has won power in Afghanistan, will win the peace. The US cannot withdraw from Afghanistan without weakening its social, economic, religious and ethnic prob- lems in Afghanistan were left behind. It is not yet clear what kind of management ap- proach the Taliban will adopt in the future, which is trying to display a moderate ap- proach for now. It can be stated that these problems will deepen in Afghanistan, which is in chaos and uncertainty. The country is already at the doorstep of a bloody civil war.

Even Afghan youth, born in 2001, when the Afghanistan War took place, are now 20 years old. On the one hand, there are young people whose families and relatives were oppressed by the Taliban in the past or who grew up witnessing bomb attacks, on the other hand, there are young people raised by the Taliban. In addition, considering the eth- nic and religious differences in Afghanistan, it seems difficult to achieve peace in the country. Moreover, it cannot be ignored that interest groups inside and outside the coun- try will fuel the political, social, economic, religious and ethnic problems in Afghan- stan according to their own interests.

In summary, it seems unlikely that peace and stability will be achieved in Afghani- stan, at least in the next few years. It is un- clear how long the Taliban’s power, which is trying to establish the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, will last. Destabilizing Af- ghani- stan is also facing major economic, religious and ethnic problems. From the point of view of the Central Asian countries neighboring Af- ghani- stan, the return of the Taliban to power in Afghanistan can be considered as a big problem for these countries. Therefore, Cen- tral Asian countries should closely monitor the situation in Afghanistan and be prepared for all kinds of threats. Considering that the Taliban will try to consolidate its power and stabilize its power in Afghanistan in the next few years, it can be predicted that it will not enter into any conflicts with neighboring countries. Therefore, it is vital for Central Asian countries to cooperate more closely on Afghanistan.

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Politics, Foreign Affairs, and Security

• The President of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev made a phone conversation with the President of the European Council Charles Michel. The politicians discussed the current situation in Afghanistan, chemical attack in Tashkent, and the decision to close it demonstrated a clear commitment to nuclear safety and non-proliferation. The United States Department of State thanked the Government of Kazakhstan for continued partnership and congratulated the country on this occasion noting that the decision to close it demonstrated a clear commitment to nuclear safety and non-proliferation. Over 42 years of the existence of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the total of 456 tests of all types of nuclear weapons were carried out on its territory, which led to the spread of radioactive over large areas (Kazinform, 27.09.2021).

• The General Directorate of the Turkish Employment Service (SIKUR) notes a significant increase in the number of trips by Turkish citizens to Uzbekistan for the purpose of employment. During June-July 2021 the number of Turkish citizens visiting Uzbekistan through the ISKUR line increased by 21.6% compared to January-June 2021 reaching 411. Throughout this period, some 7.461 thousand Turks visited Uzbekistan for continued partnership and congratulated the country on this occasion noting that the decision to close it demonstrated a clear commitment to nuclear safety and non-proliferation. Over 42 years of the existence of the Semipalatinsk nuclear test site, the total of 456 tests of all types of nuclear weapons were carried out on its territory, which led to the spread of radioactive over large areas (Kazinform, 27.09.2021).

• The opening ceremony of the monument to a well-known hero of the Kyrgyz epic Manas took place on the main square of the Kleinen municipial city of Ankara. The ceremony was attended by representatives of the Administration of the President of Turkey, members of the Parliament, diplomats and heads of local administration. The President of Kyrgyzstan Sadyr Zhaparov made a video message conveying his congratulations on this occasion. The ceremony was timed to the 30th Anniversary of the Independence of the Kyrgyz Republic (Komit. 20.08.2021).

Economy, Finance, and Energy

• In 2020, the volume of traffic by all types of transport in Kazakhstan totaled almost 4 billion tons, decreasing by 26.7% compared to the results of 2019. The Ministry of Industry and Infrastructure Development of Kazakhstan reported that the railway traffic was stable with a growth of 4%. At the same time, the transit traffic demonstrated significant growth of 37% over seven months due to transit between the European countries and China (Qazag TV, 31.08.2021).

• In 2021, bilateral trade between Kazakhstan and Russia amounted to almost $1 billion increasing by 26.7% compared to the numbers of 2020. Kazakhstan exported to Russia a wide range of products including wheat, rice, cement, iron ores, natural-gas condensate, and fertilizers. Russia’s investments to Kazakhstan also showed positive dynamics increasing by more than 10 and exceeding $12 billion. Russia mainly invests in manufacturing, trade, financial and insurance fields (Qazag TV, 31.08.2021).

• Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan Sardor Umurzakov had a meeting with the Minister of Economy of the United Arab Emirates, Abdullah bin Tuk al – Marri. The Ministers agreed to the implementation of 15 joint investment projects worth $5 billion. Uzbekistan is interested in attracting Emirati investors to participate in its state privatization program. The officials mentioned successful activities of the Uzbek-Emirati Investment Company, which channelled over $100 million towards the implementation of joint investment projects in Uzbekistan (Uz-Report, 26.08.2021).

• During the 6 months of 2021, the export of Belarusian computer services (IT) increased by 21.1% compared to the same period of 2020, reaching almost $1.5 billion. The share of the computer services in Belarus’ total services exports amounted to almost 30%. In the first half of 2021, the country’s total services exports exceeded $4.9 billion, increasing by 17.6%. Services imports amounted to $2.7 billion, demonstrating 21% growth. As a result, trade surplus in services reached $2.2 billion (BelTA, 31.08.2021).

• Bilateral trade between Turkey and Kyrgyzstan is increasing. During the first seven months of 2021, the value of Turkey’s export of grain and legumes to Kyrgyzstan demonstrated a significant growth, increasing by almost 39% and reaching $3.6 million. In general, Turkey’s exports of grain and legumes increased by 18.3% compared to the same period last year and amounted to $4.8 billion. From July 2020 to July 2021, Turkey’s export of grain and legumes exceeded $8 billion (Kabar, 25.08.2021).

• According to Azerbaijan’s Ministry of Economy, the country spent $1.4 billion in the development of agricultural parks. The Entrepreneurship Development Fund of the Ministry of Economy has allocated $600 million for the development and development of 50 agro-parks in total. Around 25 agro-parks have been granted $19 million discounts to import machinery, technological equipment and other facilities. The country’s private sector, in turn, invested $710 million. The Ministry created the campaign and more than 4,800 seasonal jobs through agro-parks (AzerNews, 25.08.2021).

Society and Culture

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• The US National Academy of International Development (USAID) organized a Women’s Summit entitled “The Power of Women: Growth Trends of Post-Pandemic and Beyond”. The online event was attended by 100 women leaders, entrepreneurs, diplomats, women-led business associations, and relevant non-government organizations from Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and India. The participants shared their views and success stories in tackling the challenges of the pandemic and highlighted the unique role of women in coping with the impact of the pandemic: The event was aimed at supporting gender gap reduction in the countries of the region (Usaid.gov, 24.08.2021).

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