

T.C.
ISTANBUL KULTUR UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES

EVALUATION OF THE US POLICY IN AFGHANISTAN 2001-2021

MA Thesis by
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Department: International Relations
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Supervisor:
Asst. Prof. Dr. Bora BAYRAKTAR

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PREFACE

First, I would like to thank my supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Bora BAYRAKTAR for his support and guidance throughout writing this thesis.

As a foreign student, I also would like to express my gratitude to Kultur University for giving me the opportunity to study in a country which has an important role in both Europe and Middle East.

I would like to also thank my dear parents who have always been by my side not only in my education life but in every aspect of my life.



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ÖZET

Afganistan, Orta ve Güney Asya, Orta Doğu ve Kafkaslar arasındaki kavşakta yer alan bir ülkedir. Afganistan, coğrafi konumu nedeniyle tarihsel, kültürel ve stratejik olarak Orta Asya'da kilit bir ülke olmuştur. Zengin enerji kaynaklarına sahip İran, Pakistan, Çin, Türkmenistan, Özbekistan ve Tacikistan gibi stratejik öneme sahip ülkelerle komşudur. Orta Asya ve Güney Asya ile Çin ve Orta Doğu'nun kavşağında yer alan Afganistan, Çin kuşağı ve yolunun orta koridoru üzerindedir.

Sahip olduğu jeopolitik özelliklerden dolayı Afganistan, tarihinde işgallere maruz kalmış. Ülke, ilk olarak 1979-1989 tarihleri arasında Sovyet işgaline, ardından 2001-2021 yılları arasında Amerikan işgaline maruz kalmıştır.

El Kaide terör örgütü dünya çapında birçok terör saldırısı gerçekleştirmiştir. Bu saldırılardan en önemlisi çok sayıda insanın hayatını kaybettiği 9/11/2001 saldırıdır. 11 Eylül terör saldırısı, ABD'nin Afganistan'a müdahalesinin ana nedeniydi. ABD ve NATO, Taliban tarafından barındırılan El Kaide'nin 11 Eylül terör saldırılarına yanıt olarak Afganistan'ı işgal etmiştir.

11 Eylül saldırılarından sonra, ABD Başkanı Jorge W. Bush, El Kaide'yi ortadan kaldırmak için uluslararası toplumu teröre karşı küresel savaşa karşı mücadeleye katılmak için birleştirmiştir. Daha sonra, terörle mücadele, Bush Doktrini olarak bilinen 2003 Terörle Mücadele Ulusal Güvenlik Stratejisinde belirtilen Bush yönetiminin dış politika gündeminin temel tüzüğü haline gelmiştir. Başkan Barack Obama göreve geldiğinde selefinden bir savaş miras almıştı. Obama 2009 yılında ülkedeki birliği artırmanın üzerinde duran yeni bir strateji açıklamıştır ve terörle mücadele yaklaşımının yerine karşı direniş yaklaşımını getirmiştir. Sonrasında tehdidin merkezi olmadığını fark ettiğinde Afganistan ve Pakistan'ın El Kaide'yi ve bağlı örgütlerini sekteye uğratma, parçalama ve yenme ve buna ek olarak Afgan Ulusal

Güvenlik Güçleri'ni kurma stratejisini açıklamıştır. Obama başkanlığından sonra, Başkan Donald Trump iktidara gelmiştir ve Afganistan'a yönelik, Afgan güvenlik kurumları inşa etmeye ve ulusötesi bir tehdide karşı terörle mücadeleye odaklanan bir ABD politikasını devralmıştır. Başkan Joe Biden, ise 2021 yılında diğer başkanlardan farklı bir politika izleyerek Afganistan'daki Amerikan askeri güçlerini geri çekerek işgale son vermiştir.

11 Eylül saldırılarından bu yana ABD'de dört başkan değişti. Her başkan Afganistan ile ilgili yeni bir strateji uygulasa da başarısızlık ile sonuçlanmıştır. 2001'de başlayan Afganistan işgali 2021'de sona erdi. Dolayısıyla, bu tez 2001-2021 Afganistan'daki ABD Politikasını değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Afganistan, ABD, El Kaide, Taliban



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ABSTRACT

Afghanistan is located at the crossroads between central and south Asia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus. Due to its geographical position, Afghanistan has been a key country in Central Asia geographically, historically, culturally, and strategically. It borders Iran, Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, which have rich energy resources. Situated at the crossroads of Central Asia and South Asia and China and the Middle East Afghanistan is on the middle corridor of Chinese belt and road.

Due to its geopolitical characteristics, Afghanistan was subject to occupation in its history. At first, the country was exposed to Soviet occupation between 1979-1989 and then to the US occupation between 2001-2021.

Al-Qaeda terrorist organization carried out many terrorist attacks around the world. The most important of these attacks is the 9/11/2001 attacks in which many innocent people lost their lives. The terrorist attack of 9/11 was the main cause of the US intervention in Afghanistan. The United States and NATO invaded Afghanistan 20 years ago in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11 by Al Qaeda, harbored by the Taliban.

After the 9/11 attacks, the U.S. President Jorge W. Bush unified the international community to participate in the fight against global war on terrorism to eradicate the sanctuary of Al-Qaida. Subsequently, counterterrorism became the core charter of Bush administration's foreign policy agenda which was stated in his National Security Strategy for Combating Terrorism 2003, known as Bush Doctrine. In 2009, Obama announced a new strategy that focuses on increasing unity in the country, and the counter-terrorism approach was replaced by the counter-resistance approach. Later, when he realized that the threat was not central, he explained the strategy of Afghanistan and Pakistan to disrupt, dismember, and defeat Al-

Qaeda and its affiliates, in addition to establishing the Afghan National Security Forces. After the Obama presidency, President Donald Trump came to power and inherited a U.S. policy toward Afghanistan that was focusing on building Afghan security institutions and counterterrorism against a transnational threat. President Joe Biden in 2021, followed a different policy from other presidents and ended the occupation by withdrawing the American military forces in Afghanistan.

Since the September 11 attacks, four presidents have changed in the United States. Although every president has implemented a new strategy regarding Afghanistan, it has resulted in failure. The invasion of Afghanistan, which started in 2001, ended in 2021. Therefore, this thesis aims to evaluate the US Policy in Afghanistan 2001-2021.

Keywords: Afghanistan, the US, Al-Qaeda, Taliban

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LIST OF ABBREVIATION

AAN: Afghanistan Analysts Network

AfPak: Afghanistan-Pakistan

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization

TAPI: Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline

UN: United Nations

UNOCAL: Union Oil Company of California and Unocal Corporation

US: United States

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

INTRODUCTION

Afghanistan is a country whose history can be described as the history of invasions. Having a strategically crucial position in Asia, Afghanistan has been exposed to invasions throughout history. The country is at the crossroads of Central and South Asia, the Middle East and the Caucasus. It has borders with strategically significant countries such as Iran, Pakistan, China, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan, all of which have rich energy sources. Owing to this vital geographical location, Afghanistan has been a pivotal country in Central Asia geographically, historically, culturally, and strategically. Therefore, it can be said that Afghanistan has become a battlefield through which superpowers try to demonstrate their dominance in the name of struggling with terrorism.

Afghanistan was first occupied by the Soviet Union between 1979-1989. After the Soviet occupation, terrorist groups emerged that resented the administrative vacuum in Afghanistan, and al-Qaeda, one of these terrorist organizations, organized an attack on America in 2001. As a result of this attack, Afghanistan was exposed to the US occupation this time. After the September 11, 2001 attack, the US, which was accepted as the superpower of the world, had to change its entire foreign policy. The destruction of the twin towers of the World Trade Center can be considered one of the worst events in American history. It changed the world order of politics, economy, and ideology. Using the attack as an excuse, the US continued its occupation of Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021. Although the US claimed that the main aim is to end terrorism in Afghanistan, the real goal was to be superpower in the region and prevent the Russian and Chinese expansion policy in the region and dominate the region.

The US intervention in Afghanistan was a turning point for the future of Central Asia. As a result of the al-Qaeda attacks on the US, Afghanistan was seen as responsible for these attacks. Therefore, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the region has not reached a certain level of stability.

The September 11 attacks caused the United States to carry out military operations under the name of counter-terrorism in various parts of the world. The “DECLARED/official” targets of the US intervention in Afghanistan can be listed as:

- Eliminating the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which provided a safe zone for Al-Qaeda and fighting against terrorism,
- Protecting territorial integrity and independence of Afghanistan, Establishing a political and economic system that can meet the expectations of the people of Afghanistan,
- Building democratic government for Afghanistan,
- Constructing powerful Afghanistan to prevent the pressure and effects of neighboring countries (Connah, 2021: 73-75).

In his historic speech to the US Congress, US President George W. Bush gave the ultimatum to the Taliban, which harbors terrorist Osama bin Laden, to immediately bring bin Laden and his men to justice. Bush listed his wishes to the leaders of the Taliban as follows: Capturing and handing over Osama bin Laden and all the leaders of the al-Qaeda organization, releasing the foreigners in Afghan prisons, evacuating all terror camps and opening them to the control of the United States. Stating that these demands are not negotiable, Bush said, "Otherwise, the leaders of the Taliban will suffer the same fate as the terrorists." When the US began its operation, it established two principal aims for Afghanistan. The first one was the removal of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which supported Al Qaeda, and the second one was the stabilization of the country till a legitimate Afghan government was founded. The US extended these aims over time. In this context, the policy performed by the US and NATO within 2002 and 2009 was to give financial aid, store safety, equip the Afghanistan army, restore the military and secure balance in the country, stop anti-smuggling actions, and make counter-terrorism actions upon Taliban elements and al-Qaeda terrorists.

In the period of President Barack Obama, the policy of the US regarded Afghanistan was revised in accordance with the US national interests. Starting in his last years in the Senate, Obama posed the question of Bush's national security and counterterrorism strategy. One of Obama's key premises was the identity of the terrorist. The perception of the “terrorist subject” was too vague for him. The

terrorist perception of the Bush administrations has not only made the entire Muslim world a target for the USA, but also racial profiling at home and abroad, interrogation of the suspect on dark sites, etc. It also caused major legal problems (Gerges, 2012: 71). For this reason, he stopped using reductive terms such as "Islamic terrorism" or "Islamic radicalism" in his speeches as part of his national security strategy. Strategically, he suggested that there is no military solution to the problem of terrorism. Thus, he preferred to separate the terrorist groups in the Islamic world one by one, tried to get the support of Muslims in condemning terrorism and against the message of terrorism, promised to close the Guantanamo Bay prison and banned torture.

President Obama's policy of Afghanistan was a policy both concerned Afghanistan and Pakistan because, during Obama's period, it was realized that stability in Afghanistan was inextricably associated with developments in Pakistan. For this reason, Obama's policy of Afghanistan was named "Obama's AfPak Policy", a new term used in Obama's period for United States foreign policy to describe Afghanistan and Pakistan as a single threat of operations.

As for Donald Trump who entered the 2016 United States presidential election as the Republican Party's candidate won the election. Donald Trump refused a complete withdraw of US forces from Afghanistan, so Donald Trump adopted America's longest-running war in Afghanistan. When Donald Trump evaluated the problems faced by President Barack Obama, he got a similar result: More training and support to Afghan forces were needed to eliminate the Taliban. He also declared that the US would no longer use its military to build democracies or rebuild other countries far from the US territory. Therefore, Donald Trump administration announced the commitment for an open-ended war and ordered the deployment of additional troops rather than a gradual withdrawal of troops.

Barack Obama gave importance to Pakistan during his administration. In this context, his Afghanistan policy was based on the AfPak policy. However, during the Donald Trump administration, Obama's AfPak policy was replaced by Donald Trump's AfPak India strategy. Because, according to Trump, Pakistan's role in providing a safe haven for the Taliban and Al Qaeda was often been a thorn in the US military's perspective. For this reason, Donald Trump threatened to cut US

support for Pakistan. Trump stated the importance and paramount role of India in stabilizing Afghanistan. In this context, Donald Trump's policies are different from Obama's strategies.

Considering the policy of the new president Joe Biden in 2021, he followed a different policy from other presidents and ended the occupation by withdrawing the American military forces in Afghanistan. However, Afghanistan was again handed over to the Taliban. Thus, the American occupation, which started in 2001, ended unsuccessfully in 2021, because four presidents promised to bring democracy to Afghanistan, but this promise was not fulfilled.

Therefore this thesis aims to make a comparative analysis and evaluation of Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021. During mentioned periods, four presidents changed in the US, and each of them had a different foreign policy regarding Afghanistan in the context of "state-building" or "war on terror". This thesis additionally intends to exhibit the political-economic and strategic implications of the United States' intervention in Afghanistan.

This study also aims to reveal the political, economic, and strategic consequences of the US intervention in Afghanistan, and answer the questions “How did US intervention with the coalition forces affect the political and economic situation in Afghanistan?”, “What are the impacts of the US on Afghanistan's security, development, and democracy?”

The importance of this thesis can be classified as follows:

- Revealing the historical and strategic importance of Afghanistan,
- Seeing how the political system formed after 2001 in Afghanistan,
- The position of Afghanistan after the American intervention and its relations with other countries.
- The comparison of George W. Bush, Barack Obama, Donald Trump and Joe Biden's policies and their speeches on Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is an important country in terms of its geopolitical and geostrategic importance. Therefore, in the first chapter, a general review of Afghanistan's history was given, and some geopolitical theories related to the country were mentioned.

The second chapter of this thesis deals with the general situation of Afghanistan before the US intervention in 2001. This chapter also focused on the Taliban period and establishment of Al-Qaeda & Osama Bin Laden in Afghanistan and the September 11 terrorist attacks. In this chapter, there were given explanations about the consequences of American intervention in Afghanistan and how this intervention affected the relationship between Afghanistan and the rest of the World.

In the third chapter, following the September 11 attacks, an evaluation of George W. Bush's policy regarded Afghanistan was given. In the fourth chapter, an analysis of Barack Obama's policy regarding Afghanistan was mentioned. The fifth chapter focused on the Trump administration's foreign policy on state-building” or “war on terror” in Afghanistan. The last chapter of the thesis focused on the newly elected US President Joe Biden's policy on Afghanistan.

Theoretical Framework

When evaluating the policies of the four presidents towards Afghanistan, it can be said that their policy in Afghanistan was influenced by realist theories. Therefore, realist theory will be applied as a guiding model. The thesis, thus, will demonstrate the George W. Bush, Barack Obama, and Donald Trump Administration’s policies, strategies, and objectives match the principles of realism, and this strategy supports the U.S.-Afghanistan fundamental national interests. For this reason, it is vital to talk about realism and its principles in order to make evaluations and comparisons about the strategies and policies of the four presidents and how much their policies match with the principles of realism.

Realism is an approach to the study and practice of international politics. Realism highlights the role of the nation-state and makes a broad assumption that all nation-states are motivated by national interests. National interest can be defined as all states try to protect their political autonomy and their territorial integrity. However, when these two interests are secured, national interests can take various forms. For example, some states may have an interest in obtaining more resources or land; other states may wish to extend their political or economic systems to other areas; some states may just want to be left alone.

National interest can also be defined in terms of "power". National power has an absolute meaning because it can be defined in terms of military, economic, political, diplomatic, or even cultural resources. However, for a realist, power is primarily a relative term: does a state have the ability to defend itself against the power of another state? Does a state have the ability to coerce another state to change that state's policies? Realists claim that they deal with the world as it functions. Realist theories emphasize state and national security issues. The concept of balance of power plays a dominant role in realist theory.

Realism is a comprehensive model ranging from classical realism to the structural realism of Kenneth Waltz. Hans J. Morgenthau, as a classical realist, had the greatest impact on realism. In his book "Politics among Nations", Morgenthau deal with the roots of the war and international conflicts in human nature. Morgenthau emphasizes the effects of nationalism, ideologies, diplomatic skills, and domestic as well as international popular support on state behavior.

In this study, I am taking Morgenthau's classical theories as a model to conduct this research. Therefore, explaining Hans J. Morgenthau's Six Principles of Political Realism from his book '*Politics Among Nations, The Struggle for Power and Peace*' is necessary.

Morgenthau proposed six fundamental principles of realism to reflect the tenets of political realism:

- 1- "Political realism believes that politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature.
- 2- "The main signpost that helps political realism to find its way through the landscape of international politics is the concept of interest defined in terms of power.
- 3- "Realism assumes that its key concept of interest defined as power is an objective category that is universally valid, but it does not endow that concept with a meaning that is fixed once and for all."
- 4- "Political realism recognizes the moral significance of political action. It is aware of the inevitable tension between the moral command and the requirements of successful political action."

- 5- "Political realism refuses to identify the moral aspirations of a particular nation with moral laws that govern the universe. As it distinguishes between truth and opinion, so it distinguishes between truth and idolatry."
- 6- "The difference, then, between political realism and other schools of thought is real, and it is profound. However much of the theory of political realism may have been misunderstood and misinterpreted, there is no gainsaying its distinctive intellectual and moral attitude to matters political."

Considering realistic theory, it can be said that four presidents of the US applied realistic theory after the September 11, 2001 attacks. Two critical questions dominate any realistic discussion of conflict. The first is whether the war is worth fighting for. The second is whether it can be won. The answer to both questions is unclear. The US has no permanent reason to maintain a strategic presence in Afghanistan or Central Asia. It has far more important strategic priorities in virtually every other part of the world, and inserting itself into Russia's "near abroad," China's sphere of influence, and India's ambitions makes no real sense.

Methodology

This thesis will employ a qualitative research method. Secondary data was used in this dissertation. Data was collected from different sources. Secondary sources were used with historical analysis. The sources were accessed from IAU library databases including scholarly journal articles, dissertations, eBooks, published reports of Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), World Bank, Department of State (DOS), Department of Defense (DOD), United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), speeches of some political figures during Summits and so forth.

To collect and adopt data, screening and comparative methods were used. Data were obtained from the sources, notes, and publications collected from media and internet researching. Written data were collected through the university library, and online academic journals on the topic were revised through the internet. Other sources of up-to-date information were collected through well-respected professional articles related to my topic. The speeches of the four US presidents' administrations related to Afghanistan were applied as the main sources.

The mentioned sources enabled me to make comparisons between cases using other people's research findings and considering the new published perspectives on the importance of recent events and gained knowledge to strengthen my own arguments.



1. AFGHANISTAN IN GLOBAL POLITICS

The effects of geographical location and conditions on human societies, states and their policies have been an interesting field of study since ancient times. After the first use of the term geopolitics by Rudolf Kjellen, the classical and contemporary approaches developed under this umbrella provided a kind of framework for the definition of countries, while at the same time they influenced the shaping of the foreign policies of the states. In this context, some countries have been described as geopolitically important countries and have become one of the directions related to the realization of foreign policy goals of global actors. Afghanistan is also considered one of the countries with high geopolitical value. The most appropriate indicator of this is that Afghanistan has been at the center of great power politics for almost two centuries. Britain and Russia adopted special policies towards Afghanistan during the "Great Game" process, while the Soviet Union and the United States followed similar methods during the Cold War. Towards the end of the Cold War, the Soviet Union intervened militarily in Afghanistan, and the military intervention of the USA in 2001 was another turning point in the history of this country. Today, Afghanistan continues to be a center of attraction for great powers in international politics. In this chapter, which is based on such a preconception, Afghanistan is discussed as a subject of investigation in geopolitical theories and approaches. Afghanistan's relationship with classical and current geopolitical theories has been examined and thus, it is aimed to draw a new picture of this country in the light of geopolitical data.

1.1. Geopolitics Theories on Afghanistan

The relations between man and the environment he lives in have been an interesting and needed field for philosophers and scientists since ancient times. The effects of the place in which human societies live and the geographical conditions they are subject to on their lives, cultures and relations with other societies have taken place widely in the works of many philosophers of history, especially Ibn Khaldun. Ibn Khaldun emphasizes physical geography and climate in his assessment of "flourishing places" and social life on earth. According to Ibn Khaldun, geographical conditions affect not only the appearance and lifestyle of individuals but also their culture and political activities (Ibn Haldun, 1977: 153-221). In addition to Ibn Khaldun, who pioneered the evaluations that formed the basis of the approach called "geographical determinism" in the XVIII century (Harris, 2001: 41), a proponent of

this approach in the Age of Enlightenment was the French philosopher Charles Montesquieu. Claiming that climate shapes the nature of human communities, Montesquieu also claimed that different political systems are the products of the climate in which they develop (Hanks, 2011: 115).

Although geographical determinism is not a new phenomenon, it is seen as a special discipline of the political determination of geography. It began to take shape with the work of Anglo-Saxon theorists in the 19th century, and geographers and political scientists such as Ratzel, Kjellen, Humbolt contributed to the clarification of Imperialist (Classical) Geopolitical thought in this field. This discipline, which was first expressed with the term "geopolitics" by Rudolf Kjellen in 1899, became popular especially for world domination and control of strategic resources in the 20th century and gave direction to the foreign policies of the Western actors who came to the fore in the international system. Although classical theories were not abandoned in the geopolitical discipline during the Cold War period, it is seen that geopolitical paradigms suitable for the conjuncture of this period gained importance within the framework of international power struggles. The change in the international system after the Cold War, on the other hand, laid the groundwork for new geopolitical approaches.

According to Nicholas J. Spykman, one of the classical geopolitics, the position of a state in the world is of fundamental importance in defining security problems. While the global position of the state determines its climate and economic structure, its regional location determines the limits of the role of the state in a collective security system, together with its potential enemies and allies. The well-defined geographical picture of a state provides a framework for understanding security problems (Spykman, 1944: 22, 23). Geopolitics, the subject of universal values, and dictated by geography in general, is not limited to the country scale, but also examines the strategies and policies that could be applied in the region and the world (Gündoğdu, 2009: 72). Cultural and economic approaches that emerged in the historical development of the geopolitical discipline made it necessary to look at countries and their positions from a different perspective. With classical geopolitical approaches, it is possible to define the advantages and weaknesses of a state arising from its geographical location, its potential threats, security perceptions, and the policies it

develops in the context of alliance relations. Afghanistan, which is one of the states that best confirms Ibn Khaldun's "Geography is Destiny" approach, has an important place in geocultural and geoeconomic approaches developed during and after the Cold War as well as classical geopolitical theories.

Geopolitical approaches, which can be examined by dividing into two periods as "Classic" and "Contemporary" (Sandıklı, 2011), are discourse based on the "Imperialist period", "Cold War", "New World Order" and the growing need for the increasing threat to the natural environment. It is also classified as "Environmental Geopolitics" (ÓTuathail, 2003: 5). The "Black Domination (Heartland) theory" by Halford Mackinder, Nicolas J. Spykman's "Border Belt" theory, George Kennan's, "The Clash of Civilizations" theory are geopolitical approaches that directly affect Afghanistan (ÓTuathail, 2003: 5). However, apart from these approaches, there are other theories also. Although Zbigniew Brzezinski's "Great Chessboard" approach does not consider Afghanistan as the primary actor, the discourse he creates is shaped around this country (Brzezinski, 2016). Moreover, it is not possible to isolate Afghanistan from the "Eurasianism (New Eurasianism)", developed by Russian political scientists and identified with Alexander Dugin today.

To start with classical geopolitical theories, the "Heartland Theory" explained by Halford Mackinder, one of the important theorists of this period, at the beginning of the 20th century is about how world domination is established. It is no coincidence that the Heartland Theory approach, based on Russia, was developed by the British theorist based on the structure of the international system of the Anglo-Russian struggle that started in Asia in the 19th century and turned into domination over Afghanistan.

In the context of the geopolitical theory he developed, Mackinder defined the area formed by the continents of Asia, Europe, and Africa as the "World Island". The region called Heartland covers the northern and central regions of the Asian Continent and extends from the glacial Siberian coasts to Balochistan and the hot and steep coasts of Iran. The western, northern, and central parts of this region, where it is impossible to enter from the north, ocean direction, is composed of plains several hundred meters above sea level. This region called the "Great Plain" includes West Siberia, Turkistan, and the Volga River basin. The region ends at the foot of the

plateau, which is about one mile high towards the south. Behind this plateau are Iran, Afghanistan, and Baluchistan, and this place is called the "Iranian Highlands". Therefore, Hartland covers the "Great Plain" and a large part of the Iranian Highlands (Mackinder, 1919: 79-94).

The Heartland, a purely terrestrial area, previously called as "Central Area" by Mackinder, is covered with Inner Crescent, composed of Germany, Austria, Turkey, India, and China, and Outer Crescent, composed of Britain, South Africa, Australia, United States, Canada and Japan (Mackinder, 1904: 435, 436). Mackinder focuses mainly on the area he calls Heartland and takes this area as the starting point for his theory. In terms of world domination, Mackinder's motto, emphasizing the importance of the Heartland on the World Island emphasizes that rather than sea power, land power will be decisive in the future, and he states that "Whoever rules Eastern Europe will dominate the Heartland, whoever rules the Heartland will dominate the World Island, and whoever rules the World-Island will rule the World" (Mackinder, 1919: 136-86). The way to take control of the Heartland is to prevent any alliance between Germany and Russia and to prevent one of them from dominating Eastern Europe. For this, he states that strong buffer states must be established between these two great powers. It is part of the goal of creating axes of instability to control Heartland in evaluating Heartland in terms of Afghanistan. The military operation in Afghanistan, for example, is a justification for having a military presence in the region.

On the other hand, although the central plain in the Eurasian Continent is accepted as the Heartland, the borders of the Heartland are determined as political borders of the USSR in the "Rimland" theory of the American geopolitical theorist Spykman, who is considered contemporary with Mackinder. The coastal region, which Mackinder calls the inner crescent, separated from the Heartland by mountain barriers, is called "Rimland" in Spykman's theory because it accurately reflects its feature. The intermediate seas surrounding the Border Belt separate the continent from the oceans. Further outside, offshore islands and continents (Great Britain, Africa, Australia, Japan) form the outer crescent (Spykman, 1944: 38).

In three world wars, Russia, which has a land power, and England, which has a naval power, did not fight each other. In other words, two states, one has land power, and

the other has sea power, did not come face to face. According to Spykman, Mackinder developed this theory in 1904 under the influence of the Russian-British struggle in the XIX century. Within the framework of all these considerations, according to Spykman, Mackinder's theory is flawed and he states that if there is a slogan for the power politics of the Old World, it should be "Who controls Rimland, will control Eurasia, and who rules Eurasia, will control the destiny of the World." (Spykman, 1944: 43). Spykman believes that the flank belt of the Eurasian mass should be seen as a buffer zone bounded to the north by the Heartland and to the south by the seas beyond the ocean (such as the Mediterranean, Arabian, Andaman Seas). This zone will function as a large buffer zone for the conflict between land and naval forces (Spykman, 1944: 41).

In this context, Afghanistan, which is located in the wide Border Belt buffer zone in Spykman's theory of Rimland, remains in the Middle Region (Heartland) until the Sefid Kûh - Kûh-i Baba - Hindukuş mountain block separating the country from the west to the east in Mackinder's theory. According to Mackinder's approach, basing his theory on the Russian-British struggle that started in Asia in the 19th century, Afghanistan is located on the southern border of the land power that will spread from the Heartland to the World Island, and at the same time forms one of the starting points of this power in the south.

After the classical geopolitical theories, George F. Kennan, one of the Cold War geopolitical theorists, developed an approach to the US policies against the Soviet Union. He states that "the main element of US policies against Russian expansionist tendencies is a long-term, patient but strict and impatient containment" (Kennan, 1947: 575, 581). When analyzed in terms of this approach, it is seen that Afghanistan was one of the countries that had the potential to contain the USSR in that period due to its location.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, the security adviser of the US President Jimmy Carter era (1977-81), defines Eurasia as "a chessboard on which the struggle for global supremacy is played" in his work "The Great Chessboard" published in 1997. He argues that a geostrategic struggle is experienced in this area. In this context, Brzezinski's Grand Chessboard thesis offers the US a strategic framework on Eurasian politics. According to the aforementioned approach, while the USA needs

to have the power to dominate Eurasia, another actor should not emerge to control this geography (Brzezinski, 2016: 14, 15). In a sense, this thesis is the foreign policy approach developed by the US towards Eurasia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. This approach, which Joseph E. Fallon defines as the "Neo-Mackinder Strategy" and was originally announced by the US Department of Defense in 1992, was refined by Brzezinski (Fallon, 2013: 2).

According to Brzezinski, the most important geostrategic actors of the Eurasian region are France, Germany, Russia, China, and India. Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Iran, and South Korea are states with a geopolitical axis. In Brzezinski's words, Eurasia, "the place where the world's most ambitious and dynamic states are politically located", is "the most important geopolitical prize for the United States," and the US's global supremacy is directly related to its dominance in the Eurasian geography. Because the dominance to be established in this area means "the control of two of the three most developed and economically productive regions of the world" (Brzezinski, 2016: 51-65). Brzezinski argues that the US should ensure that no other actors dominate this region alone and states that the liberal capitalist system, which he defines as a "global community", should have freedom of movement economically and financially in this geography (Brzezinski, 2016: 230). A manifestation of this approach was carried out over Afghanistan when Brzezinski was a security consultant, and when the Soviet Union wanted to enter Rimland with the invasion of Afghanistan, the USA took a series of measures (İlhan, 1997: 16).

In the process that started with the military intervention of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan at the end of 1979, the aim of the US aid to the Afghan mujahideen was to ensure the defeat of the Soviet army (Brzezinski, 2016: 22). Such a development could have serious military and political consequences for the USSR, as well as political advantages for the USA in line with its Eurasian domination strategy. Contrary to what the Western world often expressed at that time, the intellectual infrastructure of aid and support to the Afghan mujahideen was not a matter of concern. The aim was to give serious damage to the "Soviet Empire" in the short term and to establish a position in this region in the long term.

In Brzezinski's approach, Kazakhstan, China, and India's western part, Yemen, the Middle East, the inner and circular area of Turkey, the borders of the Caucasus, and

the eastern parts of the "Stressed Global Violence Zones" are expressed as the field of instability. Based on the fact that the word Balkan evokes "great power competition" and "ethnic conflict", Brzezinski defined another narrowed region within the said area and named it "Eurasian Balkans". According to this evaluation, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Afghanistan is located in the Eurasian Balkans (Brzezinski, 2016: 81, 176). Brzezinski thinks that the turmoil in Afghanistan has become an ethnically divided country, with the Soviet legacy of Afghanistan. In addition, he argues that the nation-state character of Afghanistan remains only in the name of the country, and is included in the Eurasian Balkans as well as being a part of the whole which he calls the "Central Asian Ethnic Cauldron" (Brzezinski, 2016: 186, 187).

The armed conflict that started after the invasion of Afghanistan, which came under the Soviet influence again with the "Saur Revolution" in 1978, became multi-actor in a short time and this political-military crisis created a geopolitical shock. It did not remain at the level of only a regional conflict, and it was the beginning of developments that would have a global impact in the following years. In this context, the war in Afghanistan has been the subject of Samuel P. Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" thesis. Huntington claimed that after the Cold War, in the Clash of Civilizations, global politics was reshaped depending on cultural patterns and turned into a multipolar and multi-civilizational state (Huntington, 2002: 23).

Huntington states that after the Cold War, ideology came to an end and the differences between societies took root and were determined by the perception of culture and identity. These policies were implemented even though the nation-state continued to exist as the main actor in the international system. Actors were shaped by the ideas of cultural sameness and difference. He argues that the Bloc and the Non-Aligned were replaced "seven or eight basic civilizations" in the world, and the superpower struggle of the leaders of the East-West blocs in this period was replaced by the clash of civilizations. Huntington counts the "major civilizations" as the Sinic, Japanese, Hindu, Islam, West, Latin America, and Africa (Huntington, 2002: 20 25). According to this distinction, although Afghanistan is within the Islamic civilization, it has an important position in the Chinese (Cynic) civilization, the Russian influence-Orthodox Civilization in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS),

the Hindu civilization, and the Muslim countries of Iran, Pakistan and the CIS due to geographical proximity to India.

Afghanistan has been under the influence of Western civilization since 2001 due to NATO intervention and is expected to remain so in the medium term. It is seen that one of the historical-geographical features of Afghanistan continues to exist today. Such a position, which is a crossroads between civilizations, contributes to Afghanistan's geostrategic value.

In Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis, it is mentioned about Afghanistan and the Soviet occupation, and especially the themes associated with Islam such as "Islamic rebirth", "globalization of jihad", "radicalism", "Islamist international warriors", "fault line war", "war between civilizations", "Afghanistan's dependence on the international Muslim community". Huntington's most striking determination about Afghanistan is that the war that started in Afghanistan with the Soviet invasion in 1979 and continued until 1989 is the first of the war/clashes of civilizations. Although this war started with an invasion, it "transformed" and gained the character of a war of civilizations. From another point of view, the war in Afghanistan, like the Gulf War in Huntington's phrase, is "the war of transition to an era where fault line wars prevail" between groups of different civilizations (Huntington, 2002: 157, 368). According to Huntington's classification, Afghanistan, which is included in the "Islamic Civilization", has been the target area of the global counter-terrorism policy by the US in the Western civilization since 2001 and is a valuable base in Asia for the regional policies of global actors.

Afghanistan is included in the "Pan-Eurasia" section and the "Islamic Continental Large Area" subsection of the "Multipolar World" thesis developed by Dugin within the scope of the Eurasian approach. Although it is not a strong actor and a strategic partner, Afghanistan is important for Russia in terms of Eurasianism and the regional integration efforts envisaged in this approach. In addition to the political and religious restructuring of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan within the CIS, the great importance attributed to Iran in terms of realizing the project of "landing to warm seas" the Russian ideal in real politics also stems from Afghanistan. According to Dugin, a strategic alliance of Russia with Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan region is important in terms of standing by both Russia

and Iran as a "free Islamic confederation". Thus, the unity of power and purpose obtained by combining the geopolitical efforts of all these countries may pave the way for a new "Central Asian Federation". Such synergy will turn the region that produces instability into an area of cooperation and prosperity (Dugin, 2014: 49-58).

With its Eurasianism and geopolitical identity, the New Eurasianism approach is closely interested in Afghanistan in line with its geopolitical arguments. As mentioned before, Afghanistan is located in the center of Eurasia and directly connected with the Russian sphere of influence. On the other hand, the fact that it has the potential to produce instability in a way that affects neighboring countries as a "Failed State" causes this country to focus on regional security considerations. In addition to the fact that such a threat perception affects regionalism initiatives, the West, especially the US, or the Eurasian approach, and the Atlantic Bloc's efforts to use Afghanistan as a geostrategic base area within the framework of its broader policies in this region in line with the international terrorism and security discourses and its intention to continue its existence causes problematic developments in terms of the basic paradigms of the Eurasian approach and Russia's regional policies (Shekhovtsov, 2009: 701). Therefore, the vacuum that emerged in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion was filled by the US and the West. The vacuum that emerged in Afghanistan after the Soviet invasion was filled by the US and the West. Thus, "Atlanticist Block" found a base in Eurasia. Russia is permanent in this region, and its close environmental policy is subject to geography.

Central Asia and the Caucasus, which were re-shaped after the collapse of the Soviet Union, became a strategic competition area in global energy geopolitics. The presence of actors with high energy needs such as China and India, as well as states such as the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan, which stand out with their proven reserves and current production in terms of fossil fuels, has increased the importance of the region in terms of global policies (Shekhovtsov, 2009: 701). In addition to oil and natural gas resources, the pipelines that transport them to the markets have covered the region like a spider web, and the development of this system with new projects continues. This illustrates the classical geopolitical approaches put forward by Mackinder and Spykman, as well as the arguments put forward in Brzezinski's Great Chessboard thesis. According to Mackinder, world

domination is possible with dominating the Heartland. The Heartland covers the mentioned energy geography today. Brzezinski, on the other hand, considered Eurasia as a geostrategic struggle area, as stated before. Today, besides many issues, global and regional powers compete fiercely for energy in this region.

Afghanistan is neighbor with Iran and Turkmenistan, where the world's second and third-largest natural gas deposits are located. Afghanistan borders Iran and Turkmenistan, where the world's second and third-largest natural gas deposits are located. In addition to its proximity to Central Asia and the Caspian Sea, Afghanistan is also included in the pipelines projects of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI), natural gas pipeline (Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline). On the other hand, the fact that stability and security have not yet been achieved in the country despite the "global fight against terrorism", and the reconstruction projects of Afghanistan, which have been initiated since 2001, brings Afghanistan to the forefront in terms of energy security. Afghanistan is currently considered a "failed state" and is accordingly seen as a country that exports insecurity and instability to its environment through radical terrorism and drug trafficking. This situation is considered as a threat in terms of energy security (Sahir and Quereshi, 2007: 2033). In addition, the failure of Afghanistan allows non-regional actors participating in international initiatives to fight terrorism and ensure stability and security to maintain their presence in this country. The fact that these actors, especially the US and England, remain in the region is not just for the sake of saving Afghanistan. Energy sharing concerns and geography determine international policies.

In terms of transferring the oil and natural gas produced in Central Asia to South Asia, Afghanistan is an energy bridge. For this reason, it is a country of strategic importance for the great powers that struggle geopolitically for the control of the resources in the oil and natural gas-rich countries around it. In this context, it is in a critical position in terms of the strategies pursued by the US in the Asian geography in line with its geopolitical purposes (Foster, 2008: 2). The primary target of the US operation in Afghanistan within the framework of the fight against global terrorism was targeting the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Controlling opium production was another goal. However, this military-political operation had two indirect geopolitical goals for the United States, one of which was to control Afghanistan's natural resources

and the other was to prevent the emergence of regional hegemonic states such as China or the Russian Federation (Fallon, 2013: 2).

1.2. Geopolitical and Geostrategic Importance of Afghanistan

Due to its geographical location and the events in its political history, Afghanistan is known as "Strategic Road", "Crossing Road of Empires", "Silk Road Crossroads", "Roof of the World", "Gate of India", "Eastern Gate of the Islamic World", "Civilizations Crossroads", "World Trade Center", and "Heart of Asia" (Duman, 2019: 9).

As a result of its geostrategic and geopolitical importance, Afghanistan has been exposed to the interventions of actors and sovereign powers in the region throughout the history of the country. Afghanistan, called Aryana in the Ancient Age, Khorasan in the Middle Ages, Afghanistan after 1838, is a country located at the intersection of Central Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and the Caucasus, and today it is the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Afghanistan is a key country in Eurasia due to its geographical location. Geographically, historically, culturally, and strategically, it is a part of Central Asia (Büyükbay, 2006: 4). According to Ansari, Afghanistan was called the crossroads of the world in the Ancient Ages because it was in a strategic position in terms of land transportation. It is bordered by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan to the north, China at the North East, Pakistan to the south and southeast, and Iran to the west (Ansari, 1998: 5)

From a geostrategic perspective, Afghanistan is geographically an important part of Central Asia alongside its shared historical and cultural examples. Central Asia geographically can be defined in various ways. It can be used to describe a region from Turkey to China, and as the Transoxiana region, which is the region between the Amu Darya and Sir Darya Rivers. In terms of administration and politics, the Soviets used Central Asia for a region that included the borders of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, and Afghanistan. Zbigniew Brzezinski specified the region as the center of global instability and defined one of the nine countries in the Eurasian Balkans as Afghanistan. The most important features of this geopolitically important region are its power gap, power generation, and power capacity. The region is also known as an important economic resource in terms of economy (Kim and Indeo, 2003: 279). The desire to dominate the Eurasian

Balkans, rich in natural gas and oil, and where important mines, especially gold, are found, reveals expansionist ideas and accelerates the international struggle. Therefore, the fact that Afghanistan is located in the Eurasian Balkans highlights the geopolitical situation of the country (Büyükbaş, 2006: 7).

Afghanistan connects South Asia and Central Asia, Iran and Western China. After the Taliban, the US, China, Central Asian states, Pakistan, and Iran, which aimed to strengthen the Afghanistan administration developed policies to make Afghanistan the center of regional trade. Purtaş states that especially since the Afghan President Hamid Karzai, various projects were mentioned. Purtaş also states that Afghanistan turned into a project competition (Purtaş, 2011: 14).

According to Purtaş, it is known that the main Central Asian initiative of the US is the basis of the movements in Afghanistan. Central Asia emerged as one of the important geopolitical axes that existed after the Cold War. Central Asia is defined narrowly as the five countries (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan) that were part of the Soviet Union in the past. However, in a broad sense, it is defined as the geographical term used to describe the region and territory that includes Afghanistan, northern Pakistan, western China (East Turkestan and Tibet), Mongolia, and parts of Russia, and northeastern Iran. (Purtaş, 2011: 14-15). At the same time, most historians disagree with the use of the term Central Asian, and they refer to the region as Turkistan or West Turkistan. The states of the region are also aware of the geopolitical importance of Turkistan. Central Asia is squeezed between China and Russia. In fact, it is possible to say that Central Asia turned into a competition area for China and Russia. According to Purtaş, China is aware of the ethnic and cultural bond between East Turkestan and Central Asia, located within the borders of China, and develops its policies accordingly. Russia does not see Kazakhstan as Central Asia and develops its policies accordingly. At the same time, Central Asian countries see the USA both as an element of pressure and a balancing factor, as they are stuck between the states of Russia and China.

After 2001, the geopolitical importance of Central Asia increased even more. In his article "The Greater Central Asia Partnership' for Afghanistan and Its Neighbors," Starr emphasizes the development of policies in the wider Central Asian region for the continuation of the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan and states that

Afghanistan has a key position in the region for the realization of the Central Asian project. He also indicates that he equates the future of Afghanistan with the future of this project. When we evaluate the geo-economics importance of Afghanistan, we come across the instability problem in this country for decades. Starr defines the causes of the problems of the country are stem from the region. It is seen that the solution to these problems is only possible with a regional approach. Starr, emphasizing the revitalization of trade with Afghanistan's neighbors and the development of regional and continental transport, counts this as one of the goals of the great Central Asian project (Starr, 2005: 8-9).

Richard Boucher, president of the South Asia Pipeline in the United States, stated at the congress in 2006 that "We bridged the opening of Afghanistan by eliminating a problem between South Asia and Central Asia, and this development is very positive for America in the region. Therefore, America aims to establish ties in the fields of transportation, democracy, trade, energy and communication issues by reviving deep-rooted ties between Central Asia and South Asia through Afghanistan." The USA aimed to create a strong network with the hydroelectric power of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and the natural gas of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan from Almaty to New Delhi, India. In this context, Afghanistan has the role of connecting Central Asia to South Asia (Purtaş, 2011: 17).

There are also critics of the US' great Central Asian project. According to the statements of Central Asia expert Zvyageskaya, there are major differences between the states of the region. He states that there is an incomparable uniqueness, especially between Central Asian countries and Afghanistan in terms of economic and political development. Afghanistan is a country with no industry or production. He also indicates that Afghanistan is a country that was subjected to civil war and Taliban destruction after the occupation of the USSR. At the same time, Central Asian countries underwent a long-term modernization in which the USSR was involved. Therefore, it would not be correct to compare an isolated country like Afghanistan with Central Asia in terms of development. But Afghanistan has an even more advantageous position in terms of geo-economics than the countries in Central Asia because Central Asian countries depend on Afghanistan in terms of trade and transportation with South Asian countries. At the same time, Zvyageskaya underlines

that the Central Asia project of the US is unrealistic and states that China and Russia, the leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), are making joint attempts in the region to seize the region. For this reason, he emphasized that the US cannot build new structures in the region (Zvyagelskaya, 2016: 75-76).

Afghanistan is known as a bridge between South Asia and Central Asia in geo-economics terms. As mentioned, Afghanistan, which is at the center of the great Central Asia project put forward by the US, is also at the center of projects such as the Trans Afghan Pipeline (TAPI) extending to Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Northern Pakistan and India. (Purtaş, 2011: 23). TAPI aims to deliver Turkmenistan's natural gas to the Indian Ocean. This project is known as part of the initiative to bring the energy of the Caspian Basin to world markets. It was also aimed to stabilize Afghanistan, connect Central Asia and South Asia, and lay the foundations of the relationship between India and Pakistan. The TAPI project, which started in Turkmenistan, reaches India by passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan. This project first came to the fore in 1991. The project was financed by the Asian Development Bank. In 1996, after the Taliban dominated 80% of Afghanistan, the project was suspended. After 2001, as a result of the Taliban leaving power, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Pakistan put the TAPI project on the agenda again (Purtaş, 2011: 27-28).

Afghanistan, which could not solve the border problem with its southern neighbor Pakistan, could not establish trade relations with its northern and southern neighbors. The civil war that prevailed for nearly thirty years has isolated Afghanistan from the world. After 2001, Afghanistan was attracted by its neighbor's countries, the region, and the world. According to the data of the Afghanistan Central Statistical Institute, the country's trade volume with Central Asian countries in 2010 was 1 billion 244 million dollars. According to these data, a trading volume of 697 million dollars was realized between Afghanistan and China and Japan, and 681 million dollars was realized between Afghanistan and South Asian countries. It should also be noted that this amount of trade volume took place between Afghanistan and the Central Asian Republics after about a century. According to these figures, it is possible to say that Central Asian countries are Afghanistan's largest trading partners (Purtaş, 2011: 26).

1.2.1. Afghanistan's Importance for the West

Afghanistan is undoubtedly within the interests of many states. Therefore, to analyze the position of Afghanistan in the US foreign policy, it is necessary to evaluate the areas of interest in which many actors have a share (Jones and Weinthal, 2002: 69).

As a result of its location in Central Asia, Afghanistan has been an indispensable country of some western states throughout history, one of which is the US (Barfield, 2010: 81). Therefore, it is necessary to determine the importance of Afghanistan for the US to evaluate the policies of the US for Afghanistan.

1.2.1.1. The US

The US did not put Afghanistan on its agenda until the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1979. After this invasion, the United States faced the danger of the Soviet Union landing in the Persian Gulf and thus in the Indian Ocean. Aware of the strategic importance of Afghanistan, the US realized its military and financial aid to the Afghan resistance groups that started the "mujahideen movement against communism" in Afghanistan. The fear of the US in the early 1980s was that the Soviet Union would target Pakistan after Afghanistan (Baizakova, 2014: 96).

Al-Qaeda, which is the number one target of the US today, is one of the organizations supported during the occupation of the Soviet Union. Osama Bin Laden, trained by the CIA and used as a pawn in many events, came out of control with his anti-US opposition in the late 1990s, causing the September 11 attacks, which were a turning point in the world agenda (Baizakova, 2014: 94).

Dr. Zakir Hussain, who is a political scientist from Afghanistan, summarizes the US and Afghanistan relations with its dates as follows:

- 1) Multi-polar international system period (1919 - 1945): In this period, Afghanistan and the US relations took place in economic and commercial dimensions,
- 2) The bipolar phase of the international system (1945 - 1989): During this period, relations between Afghanistan and the US were carried out on a political and partly economic level with the effect of the Cold War,

3) Isolation and silence phase (1989 - 2001): In this period, the US silence towards the region and acting as if nothing had happened was effective in making Afghanistan a center of fundamentalism and terrorism,

4) The post-September 11 attacks (2001): During this period, Afghanistan has become one of the central issues of US foreign policy (Esposito, 2011: 42).

September 11, 2001, changed the US view of Afghanistan and the world. Al-Qaeda was responsible for this. In Afghanistan, the Taliban fundamentalist group established the emirate regime (1996 - 2001). As the Taliban supported the training centers of Al Qaeda and other fundamentalist terrorist groups, the United States and 40 countries launched Operation Enduring Freedom against the Taliban regime and Al Qaeda. The George W. Bush administration's operations began and set two strategic objectives for Afghanistan. The first was to host and destroy the Taliban administration, which was home to Al Qaeda, and the second was to lay the groundwork for the establishment of a new democratic state in the region and to build a new security force in Afghanistan (Nord and Ströback, 2006: 85). As a matter of fact, a legal state was established in Afghanistan, but terrorist groups could not be eliminated. The Taliban and other terrorist groups, which were ignored or hidden from 2001 to 2006, gathered themselves and started to rise again between these years (Bergen, 2011: 440).

Four presidents have changed in the US since September 11, 2001, yet terrorist organizations continue their acts in Afghanistan. Today, Afghanistan's security forces carry out operations against the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, the Hakani Network, the Jehishi Mohammed, the Uzbekistan fundamentalist organization, the East Turkestan fundamentalist organization, and ISIS terrorist organizations. These terrorist groups are dangerous not only for the security of Afghanistan but also for the countries of the region and the world, Therefore, it is in the interest of all countries to provide all kinds of support to the Afghanistan security forces.

1.2.2. Afghanistan's Importance for China

Looking at the US's target in Eurasia, there are three important rivals that it may face: the European Union, Russia and China. All three elements are far from compelling the US alone, but an alliance between the three or both of them is a significant threat to the US. The rapprochement of China and Russia within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the deepening of the European Union within itself and its tendency towards an increasingly independent defense identity, and the increasing differences of opinion with the US within NATO cause the US to make new maneuvers in the 21st century. In this context, China is an important power in the region.

Aiming to open up to the world and establish economic relations with many countries, China wants to realize this with The One Belt One Road Project. The One Belt One Road project, which China attaches great importance to, is a project that directly involves and concerns Central Asian republics and countries in the region. In order to support this comprehensive initiative, the "Asian Infrastructure Development Bank" and the "Silk Road Fund" were also established by China.

With the determination of Brzezinski at the end of the 20th century, Afghanistan is located in the sphere of influence of the "Global Power Greater China" (Brzezinski, 2016: 230). Within the economic network of Afghanistan One Belt One Road Project, it is very close to two of the six economic corridors designed in this project, as it is bordered by Turkmenistan and Tajikistan in the north and Pakistan in the east, and is also located on the Silk Road Economic Belt (Murphy, 2016: 2). China has begun to attach more importance to Afghanistan than in the past due to geopolitical reasons and its sensitivity to terrorism. Investments in Afghanistan, which has become an important state in China's foreign policy since 2012, have been increased within the framework of One Belt One Road Project.

The conflicts that started in Afghanistan have the potential to negatively affect this project. Therefore, to reach various countries, China has been building alternative lines. While China implemented the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan, it also established relations with Russia and Central Asian countries within the framework of the Belt-Road Project. If the US withdraws from the region and Afghanistan stabilizes, China's new target is to make various investments in Kabul, which was included in the Belt-Road Project in 2017. In particular, China is

considering expanding the \$62 billion CPEC to include Afghanistan (Erol and Emrah, 2019: 18).

The withdrawal of the USA from Afghanistan means the removal of one of the most important obstacles in front of China regionally. While this allows China's regional influence to spread over a wider area; It will also allow access to underground resources in Afghanistan. It is claimed that there are mines worth more than 1 trillion dollars in Afghanistan. This is among the factors that attract China (Ehsan, 2013: 2030). On the other hand, China is uncomfortable with the conflicts and radicalization in Afghanistan. The instability and the power vacuum left as an undesirable legacy in the region after the US withdrawal offers a living space for terrorist organizations. With a civil war or conflict in Afghanistan, China's investments in countries such as Pakistan may be damaged, and radical movements will cause instability in lands such as the Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region (Khan, 2015: 7) Therefore, it can be said that these possibilities worry Beijing.

China, which does not want to leave its business to chance in Afghanistan, has established good relations with both the Kabul administration and the Taliban. The reason for this was uncertainty about the future of Afghanistan. Beijing's main purpose in the process is to avoid security threats in Afghanistan, not to get stuck in the Afghan swamp, and to realize its economic interests in the region.⁶⁸ At the security point, especially the fight of both the Kabul administration and the Taliban's fight against the terrorist organization DAESH against the so-called Emirate of Khorasan is in line with China's policy (Khan, 2015: 9). Another reason why China supports the Taliban is that the attacks by the Taliban forced the USA to withdraw and damage its prestige (Hausheng, 2016: 897)

After the US withdrawal and the Taliban's capture of Kabul in a short time, questions about Washington's credibility are used by Beijing as an indicator of this. China is trying to establish a significant influence in Central and South Asia. As it is known, Pakistan and Iran have important agreements with China. The American presence in Afghanistan was an obstacle for China, which also has significant investments in Central Asia. For this reason, it can be said that China supports a peace process that will result in the withdrawal of the US. Stating that the US is an imperialist country, Beijing is trying to empathize with Kabul by expressing that it was exploited in a similar way to Afghanistan. China wishes that the actor or actors who will rule the

country after the withdrawal of the USA not to create a security problem for itself (Hausheng, 2016: 897)

1.2.3. Afghanistan's Importance for Russia

When looking at Russia's Afghanistan policy, it can be seen that it is security-oriented, multilateral, flexible, and pragmatic. In this context, the main factor determining Moscow's policy is to prevent the various radical groups and Taliban elements operating in the region from spreading to Central Asian countries and then to their own lands. The Kremlin administration is taking all kinds of steps in the political and military aspects to ensure the border security of the Central Asian countries and to prevent the spread of instability. There are mainly three key elements that determine this perception of security. These are (Lukin, 2011-58-60) :

1. The geography of Central Asia, especially the Fergana region, is seen as a suitable area for the spread of radical ideas after the emergence of various terrorist organizations in the post-Soviet period.
2. Russia's view of Islam is generally cautious and a potential threat. The 10 million Muslim population living in the country and the bloody process that Chechnya went through in the 1990s and early 2000s remain fresh in the memory of policymakers.
3. There is visa-free roaming between Central Asian countries and Russia. This situation fuels Russia's fear of the mobilization of radical organizations over the borders of Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and invalidates the buffer zone view for Central Asian countries.

According to Lukin, another factor that determines the Kremlin's policy towards the region is the strengthening of its influence and the prevention or balancing of the influence of other actors. Russia, especially after 1996, together with Yevgeny Primakov, started to follow a policy aimed at not bringing the influence of the USA and the West into the "Near Abroad" and balancing it in other regions where they have common interests. In the early years of Vladimir Putin's presidency, the spread of terror and extremists was seen as more dangerous than the US gaining influence in the region. Therefore, in the post-September 11 periods, the US was allowed to base its bases in Afghanistan and its surroundings. However, the increasing interest of NATO and Western institutions in the region, the revolutions that emerged in the "Near Abroad", while affecting the threat perception of Russia, brought a return to

Primakov's strategy. In this context, balancing the influence of regional and global actors in Central Asia and even eliminating them completely, also concerns Afghanistan and the adjacent region. In addition, the Kremlin administration does not want any actor in the region, especially the Taliban, to be used as a trump card against itself and the security of its "Near Abroad". In this context, the issue of gaining influence or balancing the influence of other actors comes to the fore once again (Lukin, 2011:63). At this point, when we look at the political steps taken by Russia towards the stability of Central Asia and to increase its sphere of influence, in other words, measures on the political aspect, it is of great importance that it follows a balanced policy between the Taliban and Afghan governments and that it never loses contact with the Taliban, even though it recognizes it as a terrorist organization. Russian officials and their special representatives have relations with all actors in the country, especially the Taliban. Even though they were founded by mujahideen who were supported against him, the loss of the influence of communism and the Soviet legacy in the country, and the interest-oriented relations of both sides do not constitute an obstacle to undermining the talks from an ideological point of view. In fact, this approach reminds us of the flexibility and multilateralism of Russia's foreign policy.

Thanks to this policy, Russia consolidated its position in the country and even strengthened its influence in the process of the US withdrawal plan and the equation that emerged after the fall of Kabul. From Moscow's point of view, the ongoing negotiations with the Taliban are effective in filling the power vacuum that will occur in the region after the US withdrawal and preventing the export of instability. For example, a visit by the Taliban delegation to Moscow is an important threshold when an agreement was not reached between the USA and the Taliban in 2019. Then, following the U.S.-Taliban agreement in 2020, as the Pentagon reported, Russia began to intensify its meetings with the Taliban and other groups in Afghanistan in order to accelerate the withdrawal of the United States and gain a sphere of influence (McFaul, 2020: 99)

Although Russia has made the Taliban accept its red lines, and has received assurances, guarantees, and promises, it does not shape its Afghanistan and Central Asia policy only on this axis. Beyond political initiatives, it also takes military measures against all odds. Countries such as Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Kazakhstan,

which are adjacent to Afghanistan, are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Like other members, Russia has responsibilities on these countries within the scope of this organization. Radical elements and instability in Afghanistan are seen as a threat in terms of the safety of the CSTO and as a security organization, importance is given to the military presence in Central Asian countries and measures are taken against the terrorist threat. For example, Russia has military bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Within the scope of the CSTO, it is planned to increase the functionality and capacity of these bases (McFaul, 2020: 102).

In this context, last year, Russia deployed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) and helicopters to Kyrgyzstan and S-300 Air Defense Systems to its military base in Tajikistan. These two military bases are important for Russia to consolidate its power in Central Asia and to eliminate a possible terrorist threat that will spread to the region, especially from Afghanistan. Central Military Command, responsible for Russia's Central Asian region, regularly organizes military exercises in the region with the participation of bases in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Uzbekistan also participates in these. Parallel to the dates when the USA accelerated its withdrawal from the region and the Taliban increased its field gains, Russia first held military exercises with Uzbekistan in the border region of Afghanistan, and then a joint military exercise was organized between Russia-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan in the border region. In this context, Russia uses its individual and organizational initiatives to ensure border security and prevent terrorism from being exported to its immediate surroundings (Keskin, et. al., 2020: 219).

To conclude Afghan importance for Russia, as it is known, the Kremlin attaches great importance to its "close abroad" policy. Especially since the beginning of the 21st century, Moscow has increased its effectiveness in Central Asia and the Caucasus, which it sees as a guarantee of its own security. Moscow perceives even a small intervention in these areas as a threat to itself and opposes the creation of a new "Great Games" environment. Because the destabilization of the region may harm Russia's political, military goals, economic, and energy projects in the region, and furthermore, this instability may spread to Russia. Developments in the Middle East and Afghanistan, on the other hand, play a major role in ensuring security in Russia's near abroad. Therefore, although Moscow is pleased that the US is withdrawing from Afghanistan, it does not want Afghanistan to destabilize with the

complete withdrawal of the US, and most importantly, it does not want it to spread to neighboring geographies. This is the reason why Russia accepted the Taliban authorities, which he included in the list of terrorist organizations in 2003, in Moscow during this process.



2. 9/11 And the US INTERVENTION

Central Asia and the Caucasus, which were reshaped after the collapse of the Soviet Union, have become strategic competition areas in global energy geopolitics. In addition to the states that stand out with their proven reserves and current production in terms of fossil fuels, such as the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan, the presence of actors such as China and India, which are rapidly developing in the region and whose energy needs are high, has increased the importance of the region in terms of global politics. In addition to oil and natural gas resources, the pipelines that transport them to the markets have covered the region like a spider web, and efforts to develop this system with new projects are ongoing. This scene brings to mind the classical geopolitical approaches put forward by Mackinder and Spykman, as well as the arguments put forward in Brzezinski's Great Chessboard thesis. According to Mackinder, world domination consisted of dominating the Heartland. The heartland, on the other hand, almost covers the energy geography in question today. Brzezinski, on the other hand, evaluated Eurasia as a geostrategic struggle area, as stated before. Today, besides many other issues, global and regional powers compete fiercely for energy in this region.

Afghanistan is an energy bridge in terms of transferring the oil and natural gas produced in Central Asia to South Asia. Afghanistan is a strategically important country for the great powers that struggle geopolitically for the control of the resources in the oil and natural gas rich countries around it. In this context, it is in a critical position in terms of the strategies pursued by the USA for its geopolitical purposes in the Asian geography.

Afghanistan borders Iran and Turkmenistan, where the world's second and third largest natural gas deposits are located. In addition to being close to Central Asia and the Caspian Sea, Afghanistan is one of the prominent actors in regional energy geopolitics due to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline (Trans-Afghanistan Pipeline) project, which includes Afghanistan. On the other hand, the fact that stability and security has not yet been achieved in the country despite the "fight against global terrorism" and the projects to rebuild Afghanistan, which have been initiated since 2001, again highlights Afghanistan in the security dimension of energy considerations. Afghanistan is currently considered as a "failed state" and accordingly, it is seen as a country that exports insecurity and

instability to its surroundings through means such as radical terrorism and drug trafficking. This situation is considered as a threat in terms of energy security. In addition, Afghanistan's unsuccessful state allows non-regional actors participating in international initiatives to combat terrorism and ensure stability and security to maintain their presence in this country. The fact that these actors, especially the USA and England, remain in the region is not only for the purpose of saving Afghanistan. Energy sharing concerns and geography dictate international policies. Therefore the primary target of the US operation in Afghanistan within the framework of the fight against global terrorism was apparently targeting the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Controlling opium production was another goal. However, this military-political operation had two more geopolitical goals for the USA, one of which was the control of Afghanistan's natural resources and the other was to prevent the emergence of regional hegemon states such as China or the Russian Federation.

In this context, 9/11 attacks paved the way for the US to intervene in Afghanistan. on October 7, 2001, the United States and Britain launched a military operation in Afghanistan as a result. Therefore, in this part of the thesis, the US intervention in Afghanistan was discussed. In this context, the September 11 terrorist attacks were analyzed and the political background of the Taliban was given.

2.1. Terrorist Attack of 9/11 and the US Intervention in Afghanistan

The September 11 attacks affected many states, especially the United States. From the point of view of America, the September 11 attacks affected America economically and caused significant changes in the US foreign policy approach. In the attacks, 2 thousand 977 people lost their lives. Also, 19 hijackers who hijacked the planes died. More than 6,000 people were injured in the attacks (Özeren and Cinoğlu, 2006: 162).

In the attacks undertaken by al-Qaeda, a total of 19 hijackers hijacked four passenger planes taking off at roughly the same time. The first of these planes were American Airlines Flight 11, which made the Boston-Los Angeles flight. Shortly after takeoff, this plane changed its course to New York and crashed into the north tower of the World Trade Center south of the city. The second plane was United Airlines Flight 175 from Boston to Los Angeles. This plane crashed into the south tower of the World Trade Center 17 minutes after the first one. After the planes crashed, the

towers caught fire, and about two hours later, both towers were destroyed completely. Making a statement shortly after the second plane crashed into the tower, US President George W. Bush described the incident as a "terrorist attack". A few minutes after this announcement, the passenger plane of American Airlines, making the Washington-Los Angeles flight number 77, crashed into the US Department of Defense (Pentagon). The fourth hijacked plane was United Airlines Flight 93, departing from New Jersey for San Francisco. This plane crashed on a vacant lot in the state of Pennsylvania shortly after takeoff. Immediately after the attacks, President Bush said in his speech that these attacks were designed to frighten the American nation, and stated that they did not succeed.

The attacks of September 11, 2001, marked a turning point in the twenty-first century. While the United States was feeling its power at the highest level in the "unipolar system" shaped after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it suddenly faced one of the biggest attacks in its history. In the second half of the 1990s, the US, which was exposed to the global terrorist threat, was first shaken by the bombing of its embassies in Kenya and Tanzania. The US, which started to take global terrorism into threat assessments since that year, was exposed to such a large-scale attack on its territory for the first time.

G.W. Bush, the President of the US at the time, announced that bin Laden, the Islamic extremist believed to be hiding in Afghanistan under the protection of the Taliban regime, was the prime suspect behind the carnage, and on September 20, 2001, G. W. Bush addressed to a joint session of Congress and the nation as follow (Bush, 2001):

"It is not only repressing its own people, it is threatening people everywhere by sponsoring and sheltering and supplying terrorists.

By aiding and abetting murder, the Taliban regime is committing murder. And tonight the United States of America makes the following demands on the Taliban.

Deliver to United States authorities all of the leaders of Al Qaeda who hide in your land.

Release all foreign nationals, including American citizens you have unjustly imprisoned. Protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers in your country. Close immediately and permanently every terrorist training camp in Afghanistan. And hand over every terrorist and every person and their support structure to appropriate authorities.

Give the United States full access to terrorist training camps, so we can make sure they are no longer operating.

These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion.

The Taliban must act and act immediately.

They will hand over the terrorists or they will share in their fate.”

The attacks on the World Trade Center, one of the most important centers of the world financial sector, and the Pentagon, the headquarters of the US Department of Defense, revealed the extent of terrorism. After the attacks, President Bush said, "Terrorists attacking the United States and countries supporting this attack will not be separated." (Bush, 2001). This statement clearly showed the method that the US would follow afterward.

The US intervention in Afghanistan began in response to the US intelligence agency's demand for the surrender of Osama Bin Laden, who was shown to be responsible for these attacks and acted with the Taliban in Afghanistan during this period. But in response to this request, the Taliban government demanded evidence to indict Laden (Goodwin, 2006: 2032).

Right after the attacks, without the explicit authorization of the UN Security Council, the United States and Britain launched a military operation against Afghanistan on 7 October 2001, under the name "Operation Enduring Freedom". The United States based this operation on the right of self-defense in Article 51 of the UN Charter. With this operation, the US presence in Central Asia became concrete, and the Taliban administration in Afghanistan was overthrown in a short time (Goodwin, 2006: 2034).

The main parameters of the US security interests in Central Asia or its policy in Central Asia can be listed as follows (Özeren and Cinoğlu, 2006: 168):

- Safe access to and protection of Caspian energy resources,
- Preventing the hegemony of another power in Central Asia,
- Preventing the problems in Central Asia from spreading to other regions,
- Reducing the possibility of intra-regional conflicts or civil wars,
- Preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction,
- Preventing the activities of radical religious groups in the region.

As mentioned before, radical changes were made in American policies following the September 11 attacks. Established as the support of free nations against communism, the Truman doctrine was replaced by the Bush doctrine as the protection of free nations against terrorism. According to this document, while the greatest concern of humanity was expressed as terrorism, it was also aimed to defend the values necessary for human dignity, defend the aims required by human dignity, fight global terrorism, pacify and secure regional conflicts, ensure security against weapons of mass destruction, initiate a new era of growth in the global economy, expand the scope of development, improve cooperation with other main centers of global power, and reconstruct security institutions.

While the new vision of the US became clear with this strategy document, there was a serious break with the strategy of the previous US President Clinton. In the document, the new foreign policy concept of the US was announced, and it was clearly stated that the military intervention would primarily be against enemy states and terrorist groups that plan to have mass destruction weapons (Özeren and Cinoğlu, 2006: 170).

After the end of the Afghanistan operation, an international conference on the future of Afghanistan was held in Bonn on 27 November 2001 under the leadership of the US and the UN. At the conference, the establishment of a government that would include all ethnic, tribal, and armed groups in the country and attempts to rebuild the country were discussed. At the Bonn Conference, decisions were made to convene the traditional advisory council of Afghans “Loya Jirga”, form an interim government for six months, and take it to the general elections six months later.

Pashtun origin Hamid Karzai, the consultant of the American UNOCAL oil company, was brought to the press of the interim government (Özeren and Cinoğlu, 2006: 175-176).

As a result, after 9/11, the US administration, which disregarded the concept of the "rule of law" and did not refrain from violating the rules of international law to protect its interests and security, acted with the attitude that "every step taken in the fight against terrorism is permissible". The September 11 attacks did not only cause the deaths of thousands of innocent people in the Twin Towers in the US, it also caused the deaths of many innocent people in Afghanistan as a result of the American missiles on the people of the country (Goodwin, 2006: 2037).



3. PRESIDENT BUSH'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY (2001-2009)

In the period of terrorist attacks that took place in the United States on September 11, G.W. Bush was the president of the US. After the events of September 11, the fight against terrorism became a top priority in American foreign policy. When the US started the operation on Afghanistan, it set two basic strategic goals during the George W. Bush administration. The first one was the elimination of the Taliban, which provided a safe zone for al-Qaeda in Afghanistan, and the second one was the stabilization of the region until a legitimate Afghan government was established. Over time, the United States expanded these strategic goals. In this context, the strategy implemented by the US and NATO between 2002-2009 was to provide economic aid, ensure security, training, and rehabilitation of the Afghan army, ensuring stability in the country, conducting anti-smuggling activities and counter-terrorism operations against Taliban elements and al-Qaeda terrorists (Bowman and Dale, 2011: 125-127).

After the attacks, the US also made changes domestically. In this context, three fundamental reforms took place in the US. These are the establishment of the Department of Homeland Security, the enactment of the Patriot Law, and the adoption of the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Prevention of Terrorism Law. The main purpose of these reforms was to eliminate terrorist organizations.

3.1. The Department of Homeland Security

In the process of the September 11 attacks, the US stated that there were more than 40 federal organizations responsible for internal security. There were also organizations with internal security responsibilities at the state and local levels. In the report prepared after the attack, it was stated that there was a situation caused by the lack of intelligence and communication in the country. After the September 11 attacks, it was envisaged to establish a single unified command structure to fill the gap in this structure. In this framework, the Homeland Security Office and the Homeland Security Council were established first. While this established office was responsible for the determination and implementation of the national strategy that would be formed against terrorism, the Internal Security Council was responsible for giving opinions to the President on matters related to internal security (Thacher, 2007: 641).

In July 2002, the Office of Homeland Security published the “National Strategy for Homeland Security”. This strategy envisaged the prevention of terrorist attacks in the country, taking measures in this regard and reducing the damage after the attacks. With the adoption of this draft law, 5 undersecretaries were established, namely Management, Science and Technology, Border Transportation Security, Emergency Management, Information Analysis, and Infrastructure Protection (Thacher, 2007: 641).

3.2. Patriot Law

With the attack on its land, the US gave up its approach of looking at the fight against terrorism from the perspective of human rights and democracy. After the 9/11 attacks, the US emphasized values such as protecting the integrity of the country and nation, public order, and public security. The most basic indicator showing the changing perspective of the US is the new anti-terror legislation adopted after September 11, which considers national security as the primary objective and shows that freedoms can be violated in order to achieve this aim (Müderrisoğlu, 2002: 17).

After the September 11 attacks, the US started to experience serious insecurity and fear and panicked. The biggest indicator of this fear and panic was the harsh new regulations enacted right after the attacks. Due to extreme anxiety, the US enacted new laws and equipped law enforcement and intelligence forces with extraordinary powers. The fact that the aforementioned legal regulations were spread over a wide area was an indication that the US wanted to increase supervision in almost every field, expand and activate the control mechanism. The most important change brought about by 9/11 within the framework of the law was the expansion of the powers of the executive in a way to fight terrorism more effectively and the introduction of some regulations that increased the powers of law enforcement officers.

The US expressed its right to self-defense after the attacks and stated that the problem of terrorism threatens not only the US but the whole world, and developed a new counter-terrorism strategy within this framework. For this, several legal regulations were introduced to prevent terrorism. One of these regulations was the Patriot Law (Kerr, 2002: 607).

The Patriot Law came into force on October 2, 2001. More than 15 federal regulations were amended by this law. Although the law was enacted for terrorism and the fight against terrorism, it also covered other areas. For example, money laundering, wiretapping, increasing the jurisdiction of search warrants, conducting investigations using various computer technologies, etc. The most important part of the law was that it authorized federal and local forces to follow and wiretaps people believed to be members of a terrorist organization. The Patriot Law came into force 45 days after the September 11 attacks. The primary purpose of the law was to quickly identify individuals, groups, and organizations that had the potential to harm American society (Meyerowitz, 2005: 97).

According to Müderrisoğlu, the most important of the new regulations created by the US within the scope of counter-terrorism measures after the September 11 attacks is the Patriot Act. The main reason for the amendments to this law, followed by a series of regulations, is the elimination of terrorist organizations, the prevention of terrorist attacks, the identification of terrorist members and the acceleration of judicial processes. Some of these regulations were Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act 2004), Financial Anti-Terrorism Act, Airport and Transportation Security Act, and Terrorism Risk Protection Act. Preventing the repetition of mistakes made before and during the September 11 attacks and preventing possible attacks in this context before they occur were other important reasons behind the new regulations (Müderrisoğlu, 2002: 20-21).

Yaman gives a background of the Patriot law. According to him, after the September 11 terrorist attacks, one of the main issues that came to the agenda on the grounds that it formed the basis for the attacks was the idea that the atmosphere of freedom in the US created a comfortable environment for the preparation and implementation of terrorist acts. These factors led the US authorities to question the limits of freedom after the September 11 attacks. Within the scope of these discussions, it was emphasized that some restrictions should be made against freedoms in the name of security (Yaman, 2005: 136). According to Kaya, some weaknesses stemming from the internal security structure of the US were also effective in the failure to prevent the 9/11 attacks, and some measures were taken in this direction. According to Kaya, the second issue that came to the agenda in the US public opinion after the

attack was the opinion that the September 11 attacks could not be prevented because the intelligence units did not have sufficient information and equipment, and a smooth flow of intelligence was not provided between these units (Kaya, 2005: 23).

This law expanded the monitoring, surveillance, and investigation powers of the executive and judicial branches, giving the Federal Government the power to designate any political group as "terrorist". In addition, this Law not only legalized unannounced searches of homes and workplaces and allowed unauthorized access to individuals' financial, health, and educational records but also gave broad powers to the executive in the areas of wiretapping and monitoring internet communications. In other words, the Patriot Law increased the power of the government as never seen before. It produced mechanisms that could override judicial control over the activities of security forces, reducing public accountability and the ability of law enforcement officers to take legal action against search warrants (Ropper, 2005: 117)

The Patriot Act also relaxed many rules that protect people suspected of committing crimes from unfair investigation and false accusations. It expanded the power to search the homes and properties of foreigners and citizens without informing them. The Patriot Act also includes regulations that violate the privacy of private life and freedom of communication. To the law enforcement officers, secretly monitoring and examining the houses and computers of suspicious persons, monitoring the communication and e-mails of the persons (art. 210-216), examining the financial and educational records without informing the person (art. 507, 508), examining the library and bookstore records (art. 215) were also given. Thus, law enforcement officers had the authority to collect information about the private life and interests of individuals (Turhan and Muharrem, 2011: 77).

Therefore, Patriot Law can be described as the government's most advanced authority in monitoring people, groups, and organizations. The main premise of the law was the restriction of freedoms for the safety of the American people in the context of counter-terrorism. When the Patriot Law is examined from a legal point of view, it can be seen that it negatively affected the fundamental rights and freedoms of American citizens, freedom of religion and conscience, privacy of private life, etc. (Baldwin, 2004: 43).

3.3. Bush Doctrine

After the terrorist attacks on September 11, the United States signed the US National Security Strategy, also known as the Bush Doctrine, on September 17, 2002, and it was presented to the public on September 20, 2002. This doctrine, which reflected American interests, was based on American internationalism and was put into practice to protect the security of the US in the global system. The Bush Doctrine consisted of nine chapters, and in general, world peace, and keeping the political and economic freedom of the US were shown among the targets.

The Bush Doctrine was revealed by President Bush's speeches in various places. President Bush's preventive war strategy, which opened the way for significant domestic and international debate, envisaged the use of force against terrorists and states hosting terrorism, against those who possess weapons of mass destruction or rogue countries that want to use these weapons and their enemies. The doctrine can be accepted as the main basis that the US put forward to eliminate the governments in the countries that it considers to be a threat.

The George W. Bush Doctrine contains various foreign policy principles, practical policy decisions, and a set of rationales and ideas to guide George W. Bush's US foreign policy. Four key themes were emphasized as the core to the George W. Bush Doctrine. These are Preemption, Military Primacy, New Multilateralism, and the Spread of Democracy (Lindsay, 2011, p. 765-767).

In his speech dated January 29, 2002, which is one of the foundations of the doctrine, Bush declared the victory of the US in the Afghanistan war but stated that the "war against terrorism" was not concluded and gave the first signal that there would be new targets in this framework. In this context, the Bush doctrine was based on three pillars: defense against terrorist forces or anti-democratic regimes, globalization in the world peacefully, and world peace in freedom and prosperity. To achieve these goals, "preventive attack" and "preventive strike" approaches were adopted. The "Preventive Attack" method is a doctrine for eliminating a threat before it occurs, and "Preventive strike" means using force to suppress a possible attack from the enemy. After the September 11 attacks, the US evaluated Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as the Axis of Evil and started to implement a strict foreign policy against these countries. The US claimed that these states were in partnership with

terrorist organizations and that these states had weapons of mass destruction. In this context, the US intervened first in Afghanistan and then in Iraq with the claim of weapons of mass destruction (Woodward, 2002: 341).

To conclude, The Bush Doctrine was the basic philosophy of the new American foreign policy, embodied in the National Security Strategy document named after the President of the United States of America, George W. Bush. The document published in 2002 included the foreign policy principles that the US would follow after 9/11. After the attacks that took place on September 11, 2001, with the Bush Doctrine, the Cold War period US foreign policy, which was mainly based on the strategy of deterrence and containment, changed on the basis of the strategy of pre-emption and prevention. These two controversial concepts of international relations and law became legitimate foreign policy principles with the Bush Doctrine. Apart from these two concepts, the document is a document that legitimized the new American hegemony understanding that emerged especially after September 11, with definitions such as rogue states, the war against terrorism, and failed state (Dündar, 2018: 58-60).

When looked at the strategy adopted by the US after the Cold War, it can be seen that the following factors come to the fore (Gökırmak, 2005: 222):

— To remain the economic and technological leader of the global system to preserve the American way of life.

— To prevent Eurasia from falling under the influence or domination of a single political-military power.

— To prevent the emergence of a radical power among Third World countries that would disrupt the status quo and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction that would facilitate such a trend. When these goals are embodied, it is seen that strong industrial production and consumption, competitiveness in foreign trade, and ultimately the energy need for all this production and distribution lie at the heart of American-style living. Owning energy resources and routes is important not only for guaranteeing production, but also for controlling rival powers. Therefore, the "vital" importance of the regions where oil and natural gas is extracted, the countries on the transportation routes, energy prices and security of supply is indisputable for the US.

Considering the "vital" interests of the US, Afghanistan is the country that is at the intersection of all the elements and that also forms the center of the emerging power vacuum. With its structure, Afghanistan constitutes a suitable deployment area for the US due to its proximity to important energy resources, its location on strategic transportation and communication lines, its location in the middle of the EU, Russia and China triangle and its neighbor with Iran, its lands that allow it to intervene in a Muslim nuclear power like Pakistan when necessary, and its unstable lands that have become an important drug and terrorism training center.

The "use of military force", which should be the last tool in the resolution of international disputes, has become a tool that is more frequently preferred and primarily mobilized after the Cold War, contrary to what is expected. In particular, the competition of powerful states within the international system reminds of the expansionist policies of the 19th century. The latest developments in Afghanistan, the deteriorating situation in the country and the losses suffered by both Afghanistan and the American soldiers can be considered as a reflection of the competition in question. Due to this covert struggle in the region, the US military operations in Afghanistan and NATO's efforts to improve the socio-economic structure cannot achieve the desired success. The influence of the Taliban is increasing across the country. Despite the noticeable increase in the intensity of the military measures taken, the Taliban cannot be completely prevented. In addition to this process, the increase in instability in Pakistan, Iran's declaration that it will continue its nuclear studies and Russia's increasing influence over the former Soviet Republics in the Caucasus and Central Asia affect US policies more. For this reason, the Afghan problem necessitates the production of different solution possibilities and alternatives, in short, changing the paradigm.

Measures to be taken in this regard and the future of the Afghanistan operation are being discussed within the framework of NATO and the US. However, there are sharp differences between the views put forward. While some attribute the success in Afghanistan to the increase of the US military power (Kagan, 2009a; Kagan, 2009b), others state that this is not enough on its own, the solution can only be achieved by including the countries of the region surrounding Afghanistan in the process and creating opportunities that will provide profit to these countries (Kuchins, et., 2009).

There are also others who state that the Afghanistan operation is doomed from the very beginning with its structure, objectives and perception, and that staying in this country will only increase casualties (Innocent and Carpenter, 2009). However, the thought of the last group has not been accepted because of the negative effects it may have on the reputation of the US, its perception in Central Asia and the world, and the integrity of NATO. Although it was agreed at the NATO summit in Lisbon that the transfer of authority between NATO and Afghanistan started in 2011 and would complete at the end of 2014, it was decided that the support provided in Afghanistan's fight against the Taliban would continue after this date. Therefore, the overall strategy, as of today, is closer to the view of the latter. In other words, it is thought that the US cannot solve the Afghanistan problem only with its own military power and the help of NATO, cannot internalize the benefits it will gain in Afghanistan alone, the countries of the region should be included in the process in some way.

However, at this point, it is obvious that some vital questions need to be answered:

To what extent is a strategy involving the countries of the region compatible with the ultimate goals of the USA? If this is not a strategic approach but a tactical maneuver, will it be credible?

— While the tension between the USA and Iran continues, its relations with Pakistan weaken (Fair, 2009: 149-172), and above all, while the historical rivalry between Iran and Pakistan and Pakistan and India continues, how will Afghanistan be prevented from becoming a conflict area?

— Is it rational to expect that Russia and China will remain unresponsive to the deployment of the USA and NATO to Afghanistan through this operation and to a long-term military buildup? Is it possible for the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to stay out of the process?

— While the trauma caused by the occupations of Palestine, Iraq, and Afghanistan in the collective consciousness of the Muslim world continues, how will it be possible for the USA to "win the people" and gain credibility both in Afghanistan and other Muslim countries in the region?

— Above all, how will military operations continue, while the US's budget deficits increase, its internal economic balance deteriorates, and the interest of its own people and NATO allies in the invasion of Afghanistan is lost?

These questions and problems can be increased even more. The solutions brought can also be presented within the framework of classical colonial models, but it is becoming increasingly clear that the world of the 21st century is very different from the 19th century. Now, the awareness levels of individuals and societies have increased, the policies implemented are more familiar, the classical "hard power" elements are less deterrent, and the demands of the masses have become more intense with the imbalance created by the global economy in the last thirty years. On the one hand, there are the poor and embargoed peoples who have nothing to lose, and on the other hand, there are more educated, more conscious opinion leaders and leaders who do not hesitate to take action with the expectations of "equality" and "justice", who recognize their opponents and are radicalized. This creates a very complex, explosive mixture that can create a chain reaction.

Therefore, the expectation that Russia and China will remain unresponsive to the deployment of the USA and NATO to Central Asia with the Afghanistan operation and a long-term military power build-up does not seem logical. Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries can't stay outside or behind this process. It does not seem possible for the US to achieve success in Afghanistan policy and to create the expected regional cooperation with the Northern Distribution Line while the US is trying to arm Taiwan against China, trying to penetrate the Black Sea and Caucasus region against Russia, supporting Georgia and making plans to join NATO with Ukraine, supporting the Baloch in the south despite Iran and Pakistan.

4. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY (2009-2017)

When the Bush Administration and the Obama Administration are compared, it can be seen that there are serious differences between their approaches to the Middle East. Obama tried to construct his own presidential image as the opposite of the Bush style, both before he was elected and while he was in office. Instead of the assertive, preventive intervention-based aggressive policies preferred during the Bush era, Obama preferred a less assertive, less costly, softer and multilateral foreign policy.

While other parts of the world remained important to American foreign policy, Obama followed a "pivot" to East Asia, focusing on US diplomacy and trade in the region. President Barack Obama's East Asia Strategy (2009–2017) represented a significant shift in US foreign policy. It took the country's focus from the Middle Eastern/European sphere and began to invest heavily in East Asian countries, some of which are in close proximity to the People's Republic of China.

Additional focus was placed on the region with the Obama administration's 2012 "Pivot to East Asia" regional strategy, whose key areas of actions are: "strengthening bilateral security alliances; deepening our working relationships with emerging powers, including with China; engaging with regional multilateral institutions; expanding trade and investment; forging a broad-based military presence; and advancing democracy and human rights.

When Barack Obama took office in 2009, he took over the Afghanistan War, which was launched to destroy Al-Qaeda, from the George W. Bush era. With this war, Obama also inherited the anti-Americanism/hostility created in the world public opinion in general and in the Middle East in particular, along with a large defense budget. President Obama, who won the elections with the slogan of "Change" did not hesitate to criticize this legacy from the previous administration, and even before he took the presidential chair, he expressed these criticisms openly and increased the expectations that he would create serious transformations in the US foreign policy (Huber, 2015: 59-60). For example, in his article published in Foreign Affairs magazine in 2007, Obama stated that due to the aggressive policies followed by the administration in the period after September 11, the trust in the US was seriously damaged in the world, and therefore the US had to rebuild its leadership in the world. According to Obama, the fight against terrorists that threaten world peace should not

be based solely on military force and military intervention. Moreover, the billions of dollars and thousands of lives sacrificed for this cause were not sustainable for the US (Obama, 2007).

On the other hand, in his Cairo speech, which is known as Obama's most symbolic speech shortly after he became president, Obama, who said that Islamophobia was triggered by the New Conservatism that escalated after 9/11, underlined that the Islamic world and the US are prejudiced against each other due to wrong people and policies, and he expressed that he was looking for a new beginning between the USA and the Muslims (Dalacoura, 2005: 967)

Obama's general thought regarding the intervention in Afghanistan before the elections in the US was that the September 11 attacks were carried out through Afghanistan, therefore he stated that the US military presence in Afghanistan would remain until the elimination of Al-Qaeda, responsible for the attacks, and other terrorist-related groups with similar plans (Halper, 2011: 8).

Hence, in February 2009, as soon as he was elected president, he signed the decision to send 17,000 additional troops to the southern region of Afghanistan close to the Pakistani border to prevent foreign fighters join the rebellion initiated by the Taliban and supported by Al-Qaeda (Starr, 2009). When this decision is taken into consideration alone, it can be interpreted that Obama acted with the understanding of continuity in the US foreign policy, that is, he acted in accordance with the impression of the Bush administration. However, it should be noted that the decision was taken in a conjuncture where the conditions in Afghanistan were almost completely against the US. It would be appropriate to see this decision as a reflection of the policy of preventing the situation from getting worse until a new strategy is developed to respond to the criticisms of the Republicans, which stated that "Democrats cannot put forward an effective national security policy" (Halper, 2011: 8).

Although it was quite a short time since the decision to send additional troops was made, General Stanley McChrystal, who led the US operations in Afghanistan, warned Obama that his mission would fail without sending more troops (Schmitt and Shanker, 2009). Upon McChrystal's request for additional troops, Obama gathered

his advisers and made his country's first general strategic assessment on Afghanistan. In this evaluation, those who thought like McChrystal stated that the option of “doing nothing for Afghanistan” was used before and this resulted in the September 11 attacks; They argued that an option such as handing back the power to the Taliban would make the country a safe zone for anti-US terrorists again, would cause further attacks with perhaps heavier losses in the future, and its regional and global repercussions would endanger US interests much more (Coll, 2009). From this point of view, it was claimed that without meeting the demand for more soldiers, it would not be possible to prevent a possible uprising under the leadership of the Taliban in the south of the country, and thus to protect the Karzai government that was established in Kabul (Bapat, 2010: 217).

On the other hand, Vice President Biden stated that completely disarming or defeating the Taliban in Afghanistan was very difficult in terms of time and material resources to be spent during the struggle, as well as human losses. He also stated that there is no direct threat from Afghanistan to the United States. In this case, considering the increasing costs, the resources owned in Afghanistan, including the soldiers, should be used primarily by targeting al-Qaeda, which was the main responsible for the September 11 attacks (Bapat, 2010: 222).

At a meeting on October 26, 2009, attended by Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Obama rejected the request for additional 40,000 troops. Addressing the public at the meeting, the President said, "It will cost at least 1 trillion dollars", "it will take 10 years", "I am not in a long-term nation-building". The core principles of the new US strategy were redefined as preventing, dividing, and defeating the al-Qaeda organization, destroying its ability to pose a threat to the US and its allies, and blocking and weakening the Taliban until they are minimized (Woodward, 2010:21-22).

While making his statement on the new Afghanistan strategy on December 1, 2009, Obama announced in his speech that 30,000 additional troops would be sent to the country, but the entire US military presence would leave earlier than expected in 2014. It was stated that the reasons for the decision to send additional soldiers were to support the Karzai government, prevent the attempts of Al Qaeda and the Taliban to expand their presence in Afghanistan, defeat the conservatives while gaining the

support of the moderates, and to maintain order among the people (Bapat, 2010: 222).

According to Ra'ees, the difference between George W. Bush's and Obama's policy of achieving goals was that Barack Obama recognized that a focus on soft power was necessary to find a solution to the situation in Afghanistan. As international relations theorists Paul Viotti and Mark Kauppi note, Non-material capabilities such as reputation, culture, and value appeal that can aid the attainment of a state's objectives" are crucial in the exercise of soft power. (Viotti and Kauppi, 2013, p. 203) According to Obama, the policies of George W. Bush led to a stalemate in Afghanistan and he had to consolidate the power of the central government to get out of this impasse. Otherwise, terrorist organizations could come back. This necessity caused the US to be involved in Afghanistan policy. In Obama's time, the United States played a stabilizing role. At this point, Obama's policy was different from George W. Bush's Afghanistan policy (Ra'ees, 2010, p. 80).

According to Armitage and Berger, when compared to George W. Bush, Barack Obama placed more value on the civilian dimension than the military dimension in Afghanistan. However, they also state that this value was not enough, and they argue that Barack Obama should have increased the number of local experts to increase the civilian capacity in Afghanistan (Armitage and Berger, 2010, p. 43).

It is possible to say that the new strategy of the Obama administration, which focused on winning or, at least, not losing the war in Afghanistan, was based on three main areas: defense, increasing civilian capacity and diplomacy, and including international efforts for all three areas. In this context, it was aimed to increase the American forces fighting in Afghanistan in the field of defense and to strengthen the local army and police organizations. In the context of civic capacity building, focusing on development assistance, providing support for basic services, and solving infrastructure problems were aimed, and in terms of diplomacy field, it was aimed to unite Pakistan, Iran, Russia, and Central Asian countries around a common regional security approach.

4.1. Defense Strategy for Afghanistan

When Obama came to power, his strategy for Afghanistan was based on two main determinations. According to this (Armitage and Berger, 2010, p. 48):

1-The United States and its allies were unlikely to win a protracted, grueling armed struggle in Afghanistan,

2- The longer the US military presence remains in Afghanistan, the more blurred the line would be between the counterterrorism mission and the post-Taliban Afghan state-building.

Therefore, instead of destroying the Taliban together with all its elements, the new strategy was to eliminate al-Qaeda, which was determined as the main target, together with its leadership, and reduce the resistance movement initiated by the Taliban (Armitage, et al., 2010).

Within the scope of this strategy, the Obama administration first sought to increase the military capacity in Afghanistan, as in the Bush era. For this purpose, 17,000 US soldiers in 2009 and 30,000 US soldiers in 2010 were transferred to the region. Thus, the number of combatants in Afghanistan exceeded 100,000 in total from the spring of 2009 to the end of summer 2010, while the capacity of the US Special Operations Force was increased threefold (Armitage, et al., 2010).

Unlike the previous period, the target to be achieved by sending troops to Afghanistan one after the other was to break the momentum of success displayed by the Taliban. The new strategy was based on “turning the general course of the struggle in favor by bringing as many soldiers as possible into the conflict area in a short time, and then quickly withdrawing from the conflict area”. It was predicted that it would soon become clear whether this strategy would be successful. The aim of this strategy was not to completely defeat the Taliban but to give the Afghan government and security forces time and space to dominate the region. For this purpose, the removal of the Taliban and rebels from cities such as Kandahar, which is located in the south of the country and whose population density was high, was sufficient to prevent the Taliban from regaining power. (Dorani, 2019: 29).

However, being aware that the war could not be won with US soldiers alone, Obama aimed to increase the number and capacity of the Afghan security forces and thus develop internal combat elements against the Taliban. In this context, it was decided to send 4,000 American soldiers to Afghanistan to train the Afghan security forces, and it was planned to increase the Afghan army, calculated as 80,000 in January 2009, to 189,000 by 2011, and the Afghan police force, calculated as 73,000, to

148,000. The estimated figure for the total Afghan security forces was revised then and, increased to 352,000 for February 2013. The amount of money spent by the US for the targeted figures exceeded approximately 50 billion dollars as of 2012. As of July 2010, to increase the number of anti-Taliban combat forces, NATO officials agreed with the Afghan government to form a local defense force and train, organize and arm this structure under the authority of the interior ministry (Fair, 2010: 124).

4.2. Civilian Capacity Building in Afghanistan

The Obama administration stated that the defense strategy towards Afghanistan could not be successful by taking security measures alone. He noted that terrorist organizations would not lose their effectiveness in the region until the Afghan government gained a capacity to provide basic services in various fields. By emphasizing this need, the Obama administration aimed to develop new policies in the civilian area. For this purpose, it was aimed to increase the local expert staff who would help the development of institutions and systems that would increase the civilian capacity in Afghanistan and especially establish the basic infrastructure at the local level. It was also decided to send a large number of agricultural experts, educators, and engineers to the region to save the economy from the drug monopoly and create a basis that could provide alternative income sources to the people of the country. For this purpose, international organizations and non-governmental organizations, especially the United Nations representing the international community, were encouraged to participate more actively in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the realization of the needed reforms. In this context, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton promised that approximately \$16 billion aid would be sent to Afghanistan from 70 countries until 2015. In addition, economic aids that could be evaluated under the headings of direct budget support, development aid, infrastructure investments, and technical assistance were foreseen for Afghanistan. For example, in the 2009-2010 fiscal year, the amount of aid provided to the agricultural sector, where 80% of the Afghan people earn their living, amounted to \$2.6 billion (Fair, 2010: 129).

The Obama administration was aware that it was almost impossible to restore order without removing the elements that paved the way for the formation of organizations such as Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Therefore, the Obama administration agreed that the current administration in Afghanistan should establish civilian capacity, provide

basic services and develop in almost every field. In this context, it was accepted that not only the Karzai government but also the US administration was to be held responsible for their actions towards Afghanistan. However, the increasing prevalence of corruption and bribery in the Afghan state administration, the delivery of services based on nepotism, the fact that the aids were largely distributed to those close to the government circles instead of the targeted people resulted in Afghan people's loss of trust in the Karzai government to a large extent (Borger, 2009).

4.3. Diplomacy

Considering the speeches he made during the election campaign, it can be seen that Obama thought that it would be difficult for his country to fight alone against the new threats caused by globalization. In this context, even at a time when the United States was stronger than ever, it needed to persuade other actors to act together rather than forcing them. Therefore, when the world view expressed by Obama is applied to the Afghanistan problem, the result is that act as far from individuality as possible and try to bring together almost all regional and international actors whose interests are united on the solution. Based on the belief that anyone can be contacted within the framework of determination and diplomacy, the Obama administration pursued the goal of developing a common understanding of Afghanistan in the international community. In addition, unlike the unilateralism policy of the previous administration, the US tried to develop a more regional approach that included neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asian Republics in the search for a solution (Ra'ees, 2010: 84).

It can be seen that the defense strategy of the Obama era did not differ much from the Bush era in terms of the target, the method used, and the escalation strategy. Another detail that can be identified as a difference is that Obama, unlike Bush, clearly stated that his country's goal was to ensure that Afghanistan was not a safe area for Al-Qaeda and that there would be no attack from Afghanistan to the US and its allies.

Perhaps one of the most important elements that differentiated the Afghanistan strategies of the two successive presidents was Obama's attempts to increase civilian capacity in the country, realizing that it was not possible to solve the problem with armed struggle alone. By this initiative, it was aimed primarily for the local elements, namely the Afghan people, to control their own living space and then to have a say in the future of their country.

Another practice that distinguishes the two presidential terms emerged in the field of diplomacy. Obama did not only try to gather the warring elements from different countries but chose the path of reconciliation with the current Afghan government, local authorities including the Taliban, regional countries, and international partners. In this context, there is an important process achieved in Obama's period in terms of diplomacy. One of them is Obama's AfPak strategy.

4.3.1. Obama's AfPak Strategy

While Obama's new Afghanistan-Pakistan (AfPak) strategy was taking shape, the idea of transferring security responsibility in Afghanistan to Afghan security units emerged. In his speech at the US Military Academy on December 1, 2009, Obama announced the new AfPak strategy and stated that the US forces would withdraw from July 2011. The pressures of the public opinion of the countries that contributed to the NATO operation in Afghanistan, especially the US, and the upcoming US elections, the war fatigue of the US, the financial dimension of having soldiers, and the increasing discontent with the presence of foreign soldiers in Afghanistan were the main factors in making such a decision (Woodward, 2010: 335).

With the new AfPak Strategy, the US gave up the idea of bringing democracy to Afghanistan and rebuilding the Afghan Nation and State. Instead, the priority was given to combating terrorism, accelerating the formation of Afghan security forces, and enhancing the capacity of the Afghan government by focusing on the defense and ministry of the interior. In addition, "Afghanization" in all areas as a security responsibility, ensuring greater involvement of the international community and regional actors in the Afghanistan problem, and reconciliation with the Taliban were prominent issues (Ahmad, 2010: 196).

According to Shaikh, with AfPak Strategy, it was aimed to focus on five goals, These are (Shaikh, 2010: 33-34):

- Destroying the international terrorist action capacity of terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and Pakistan,
- Increasing the capacity of the Afghan Government to ensure internal security,
- Making Afghan security forces capable of combating terrorism and insurgency with reduced US support,
- Increasing the capacity of the Government of Pakistan to ensure civilian control and providing economic support,

- Increasing the support of the international community and ensuring that the UN takes a leadership role.

To conclude, when Obama took office in January 2009, Taliban operations and persecution near Kabul were intensifying. Obama was already against the Iraq war, claiming that the Iraq war was the result of a failed policy. However, he was pro-war in Afghanistan. But, the demand for 30,000 extra forces in addition to 35,000 already existing troops by NATO and ISAF U.S. commander Gen. McKiernan from the Bush administration had not complied. Afghanistan was a priority for Obama, who announced a broad strategy in March 2009, deciding to send 21,000 US forces in addition to the 4,000 trainers training the ANA in Afghanistan (Indurthy, 2011: 25).

On December 1, 2009, Obama announced sending 30,000 troops to the Military Academy at West Point, Afghanistan. This was been termed the AF-PK strategy, which targets counter-terrorism and its periphery stabilizes Afghanistan and emphasizes a coercive approach to repel the Taliban. The aim was to disrupt, mortify and defeat Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan and prevent their growth so as not to target the US and its allies in the future (Centcom, 2009). However, after nine meetings with Obama's senior colleagues, civilians, and Pentagon officials, they opposed this rise. Obama declared the surge, then the US strategy changed from Counter-Terrorism to Counter-Insurgency strategy (Indurthy, 2011: 29).

Therefore Obama's strategy emphasized three issues: the al-Qaeda sanctuary should be rejected, the Taliban movement should be rejected, the Afghan administration should be given time to train its troops to be able to undertake and ensure the security of their country in the future, and develop good governance where the US and coalition forces can return home (David, 2015).

The new Obama strategy result in the deterioration of the security situation, especially in the eastern and southern regions of Afghanistan. International troops and Afghan forces suffered massive losses in 2009, a fifty percent increase, as opposed to 2008, a deadly year for both. And more than 500 coalition forces were killed, including about 1,000 ANA forces and 300 US soldiers. As a result, insecurity expanded from south to west and into northern provinces including Kabul (Mullen, 2009).

Obama sought to curb the tide of war in Afghanistan because the United States paid a significant human and financial cost, with 6,000 Americans killed in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars, and \$1 trillion spent in both wars (BBC, 2011). Therefore, Obama tried to gain public opinion, for which a new change in the thinking of the American public was emerging. Otherwise, he would have faced a lack of support for the 2012 re-election campaign; If he had continued the war in Afghanistan.

Therefore, the following conclusion can be drawn from Obama's Afghanistan policy: Obama was aware that the US, which was able to overthrow some of the regimes in the system with remarkable speed for a while, lost its ability to easily suppress uprisings or rebuild deteriorated governments. In a world where globalization redefines the geopolitical space and creates a multitude of threats that go beyond national borders, from terrorism to nuclear armament to climate change, the power of the US cannot be enough to meet all these threats. In this sense, it was almost impossible for the USA to come up with a solution on its own and impose it on others, as it was in the Bush era. Based on the findings, the new strategy of the Obama administration, which focused on winning or at least not losing the war in Afghanistan, it is possible to say that it was founded on three main areas: defense, increasing civilian capacity and diplomacy, and that there was an effort to include international efforts for all three areas. In this context, in the field of defense, Obama administration tried to increase the American forces fighting in Afghanistan, strengthen the local army and police organizations, support the delivery of basic services and the solution of infrastructure problems by focusing on development aid in the context of civil capacity building, and to support the solution of infrastructure problems in the field of diplomacy in Pakistan, Iran, Russia and the Middle East. It was aimed to try to unite Asian countries around a regional common security approach.

5. PRESIDENT TRUMP'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY (2017-2021)

After the Obama era came to an end, Trump became president in 2017. The US presidents who occupied the country followed different policies. For example, While Bush was trying to rebuild Afghanistan, Obama tried to strengthen the current order. Trump, on the other hand, has adopted a “situation-oriented approach”. Trump's most important slogan was "America first". In this context, Trump made some suggestions on the future of the US. In general, Trump made three main points: regaining US supremacy in international affairs, less interference in other countries' internal affairs, and joint work with the elected president on radical Islam. Under the Trump administration, in the defense and foreign policy of the US, the shift of interest towards the Asia-Pacific, or the Indo-Pacific region continued. In this context, the US, which had been reducing its military presence in the Middle East region and countries such as Afghanistan, through agreements and pacts with its historical allies in the region not only increased its own military presence in the Asia-Pacific region, but also showed its biceps against the rising power of the region, the People's Republic of China. In this context, the prominent policy in the Trump era was balancing China.

During his presidency, some changes were made in the foreign policy of the US, different from the Obama era (Munir and Shafiq, 2017: 39). Trump promised in the last election that the United States would "end its ridiculous endless wars". On 21 August 2017, President Trump announced his administration's strategy for Afghanistan as follow:

“now the most protracted war in the history of United States.....Attacking our enemies, obliterating ISIS, crushing Al-Qaeda, preventing the Taliban from taking over Afghanistan, and stopping mass terror attacks against America before they emerge,” (Jalali, 2017, p. 23-25).

The main policy of the Trump administration of Afghanistan was based on more training and support to Afghan forces to eliminate the Taliban. According to Tourangbam, there were five key points in Donald Trump's Afghanistan policy. These were troop levels, greater military autonomy, political dialogues, more focus on India rather than Pakistan, and winning this war as a result (Tourangbam, 2017, p. 6).

Donald Trump declared three main interests in Afghanistan. The first of these was to seek an honorable, permanent and functional outcome of the US intervention in Afghanistan. The second one was about the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan. In this context, Trump stated that the withdrawal of US troops from Iraq created a vacuum that was filled by terrorists such as al-Qaeda and ISIS. Therefore he claimed that the US would not repeat this Afghanistan. In this context, Trump reversed Barack Obama's opinion of a withdrawal of US troops under deadlines, by stating that the "time-based approach" would be based on "conditions", which means that if the conditions are ripe, US troops will be pulled out and sent home (Munir and Shafiq, 2017: 41). During the Obama era, he tried to end up the military intervention in Afghanistan, and he aimed to bring troops back to the US. But, Donald Trump did not intend to bring the troops back to the US. He aimed a comprehensive triumph in the region. He also pointed out that the US would no longer use its military to establish democracies or to rebuild other countries, which are far from their lands. Hence, he implied that the US would not be in a "nation-building again" position in Afghanistan (Tourangbam, 2017, p. 7-8). The third one was that the ultimate main concern was the security threat from Afghanistan and the region (Tellis and Eggers, 2017, pp. 13-15).

During the Obama era, Pakistan was given great importance, and Obama's Afghanistan strategy was the AfPak policy. However, during the Trump administration, Obama's AfPak strategy was replaced with Donald Trump's AfPakIndia policy. US President Donald Trump accused Pakistan of giving "a safe haven to agents of chaos, violence, and terrorism", and emphasized the role of India asking "how they can help us more in stabilizing Afghanistan." For this reason, Donald Trump threatened to cut off US support to Pakistan. In a clear message to Pakistan, Trump said (Behuria, 2017: 3):

"We can no longer be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond. Pakistan has much to gain from partnering with our effort in Afghanistan. It has much to lose by continuing to harbor criminals and terrorists. In the past, Pakistan has been a valued partner...But Pakistan has also sheltered the same organizations that try every single day to kill our

people. We have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars at the same time they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting.

“But that will have to change, and that will change immediately. No partnership can survive a country’s harboring of militants and terrorists who target U.S. service members and officials. It is time for Pakistan to demonstrate its commitment to civilization, order, and to peace.”

Trump recognized the importance of India's role in stabilizing Afghanistan, but wanted it to do more by stating (Munir and Shafiq, 2017: 46): *“We appreciate India’s important contributions to stability in Afghanistan, but India makes billions of dollars in trade with the United States, and we want them to help us more with Afghanistan, especially in the area of economic assistance and development.”*

To conclude Trump’s Afghan policy, the principal contours of Trump’s new Afghan policy included (Behuria, 2017: 4):

- Giving US forces more autonomy to deal with the ground situation in Afghanistan,
- Sending a message to the Taliban that the US would not withdraw in haste, and to support the idea of incorporating the Taliban into the government in Kabul through dialogue,
- Urging the Afghan government to display “determination and progress”, and share “military, political and economic burden”.
- Emphasizing the fight against terrorism rather than nation-building,
- Putting pressure on Pakistan to eliminate terrorist shelters on its border,
- Inviting India to play a larger role in Afghanistan in the realm of economic and development assistance.

5.1. Afghan Peace Talks (Doha)

When looking at the historical development of the peace process, after the first contacts established in 2011, the Taliban announced in a statement in 2013 that they would open an office in Doha, the capital of Qatar. Approved by the USA, a healthy communication channel was established between Taliban and Afghan administration. One of the most important details regarding peace processes is the existence of a dialogue channel between the two sides. The agreement provided a significant advantage in terms of getting to know each other closely, eliminating

misunderstandings and contacting again even if the negotiation attempts were unsuccessful (Islam, et. al.,2021: 2129).

During the talks held in Doha, Kabul's biggest concern was that the Taliban was seen as a legitimate actor. By 2014, the USA announced that it would withdraw most of its troops from Afghanistan and that it would end its military presence by 2016. Because the US soldiers announced that they would no longer participate in combat operations and would provide air support to the Afghan Army. In 2015, the Kabul administration and the Taliban faced each other for the first time for official peace talks in Pakistan, but no progress was made. In 2017, Donald Trump won the elections held in the USA. Even though there were various contracts between the parties, there was no ceasefire in Afghanistan. Officials from China, India, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan met in Moscow in April 2017 to rekindle the dialogue between Kabul and the Taliban. In October, Washington announced its willingness to negotiate. Besides the positive atmosphere between the parties, the clashes between Kabul and the Taliban continued, and the Taliban greatly increased its influence in rural areas. That's why the USA and the Kabul administration are trapped in the city centers (Islam, et. al.,2021: 2130).

Pakistan was one of the most trusted actors in the US operations in Afghanistan. However, relations with Pakistan began to deteriorate and the Washington administration claimed that Pakistan was destabilizing Afghanistan. The Trump administration started to meet with the Taliban in 2019 through the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad. Mullah Abdul Gani Birader, one of the founders of the movement, represented the Taliban in the meetings held in Doha. The interesting thing is that Birader was released by Pakistan at the request of Zalmay Khalilzad, as he was considered a name to contribute to peace. The release of Birader led to a rapprochement between the parties. The Taliban refused to meet directly with the Kabul administration. Therefore, as a result of the negotiations between Zalmay Khalilzad and the Taliban, negotiations continued on a two-stage process. First, the international aspects of conflicts, such as the withdrawal of foreign troops, would be discussed. Afterward, inter-Afghan talks would be held on the government, planned to be formed in the future, and how a constitution would be adopted. The Kabul administration, on the other hand, argued that the peace negotiations should be under its leadership and that, as the elected sovereign power,

the decisions about the future of the country could not be discussed by others (Khan, 2020: 96).

During the negotiations, the most important issues between the US and the Taliban were the withdrawal of troops, the ceasefire, and Afghanistan not turning into a threat center. The Taliban did not consider a ceasefire without the United States making a firm commitment to troop withdrawal. Because the Taliban did not trust Washington on this issue. The US, on the other hand, was not considering announcing its plan to withdraw troops before the Taliban started talks with the Kabul administration. However, as a result of these negotiations, an agreement was reached.

During the negotiations, an attack was organized. The Taliban had not normally targeted foreign soldiers for some time. However, after the death of a US soldier in the incident, Trump announced that he suspended the negotiations. While there were discussions about the end of the peace talks, Negotiations resumed in the last quarter of 2019. Eventually, the negotiations between the USA and the Taliban were concluded and after 18 years of war between the US and the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Doha Agreement was signed on February 29, 2020 (Khan, 2020: 96-98).

They agreed that the US would withdraw its troops in return for the Taliban agreeing not to work with al-Qaeda and starting talks with the Afghan government. However, the Afghan government was not involved in the deal and the Taliban subsequently refused to engage with the Afghan government's negotiation team; this raised questions about the applicability of the agreement and its prospects for peacemaking. A week before the agreement was signed; an 8-day "reduction in violence" period successfully resulted in a significant reduction in security incidents. But after the era of de-violence ended with the signing of the agreement, the Taliban stated that "the war will continue" against the Afghan government, not against foreign troops. The Taliban's Military Commission reportedly sought assurances from the main leaders of the Taliban that the war would continue regardless of agreement (Behuria, et. al., 2019: 127).

The two main components of the agreement were the guarantee for all foreign military forces to gradually leave Afghanistan within 135 days, and, in turn, establishing mechanisms to prevent the use of Afghanistan by groups (especially the

Taliban and Al Qaeda) or individuals who pose a security threat to the United States and its allies. It was also stipulated that intra-Afghan negotiations towards "true peace talks" would take place in March 2020, leading to a lasting and sustainable ceasefire and agreement on Afghanistan's political future (Khan, 2020: 99). However, Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN) observed in March 2020 that the Taliban had "few obligations" under the agreement. The release of the Taliban's prisoner agreements also raised concerns about a return to violence. The United States signed a "joint declaration" with the Afghan Government in accordance with the Doha Agreement. Thus, it was aimed to confirm the continued support of the Afghan security forces and avoid interference in internal affairs, while ensuring political reconciliation and a permanent ceasefire between the Afghan government and the Taliban. In mid-June 2020, the Taliban and the Afghan government finally accepted Doha as the venue for the first session of the high-level "Intra-Afghan dialogue", but delayed confirmation of ongoing disagreements over the release of detainees (Azhar, et. al. 2021:322).

6. PRESIDENT BIDEN'S AFGHANISTAN POLICY (2021)

After the election on December 14, 2020, Joe Biden, who served as vice president for eight years in the Obama administration, was officially entitled to become the 46th President of the United States. After he was elected as President, he made important changes in the foreign relations of the US. One of these changes is that the US made a radical change in Afghan policy. In the latest statements from the White House, it was stated that the goals of catching the terrorists who carried out the September 11 attacks, capturing Osama bin Laden and preventing Afghanistan from becoming a base that constantly threatens the US with terrorism were achieved. For these reasons, it was announced that a withdrawal from Afghanistan would take place. In the statements, it was also stated that the US did not go to Afghanistan to build a nation. It was also emphasized that the Afghan people should make their own decisions about the administration and future of their country (Sözübir, 2021). Therefore, the occupation of Afghanistan which began in the Bush period in 2001 ended with Joe Biden in 2021 with these remarks:

“This decision about Afghanistan is not just about Afghanistan. It’s about ending an era of major military operations to remake other countries. My fellow Americans, the war in Afghanistan is now over. I’m the fourth President who has faced the issue of whether and when to end this war. When I was running for President, I made a commitment to the American people that I would end this war. And today, I’ve honored that commitment. It was time to be honest with the American people again. We no longer had a clear purpose in an open-ended mission in Afghanistan.”
(Biden, 2021).

Although America occupied Afghanistan for more than 20 years, it failed to destroy the Taliban. In other words, the US is back to where it started. However, the new US President Biden reflected this failure to the American people and the world with a different discourse, as if the US had achieved its goals. As he stated:

“To those asking for a third decade of war in Afghanistan, I ask: What is the vital national interest? In my view, we only have one: to make sure Afghanistan can never be used again to launch an attack on our homeland.

Remember why we went to Afghanistan in the first place? Because we were attacked by Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda on September 11th, 2001, and they were based in Afghanistan. We delivered justice to bin Laden on May 2nd, 2011 — over a decade ago. Al Qaeda was decimated.” (Biden, 2021).

On August 16, 2021, amid a chaotic evacuation from Afghanistan after the Taliban captured Kabul the day before, President Joe Biden held a press conference to remedy a damage-control over the incident. In this conference, he stated that:

“I stand squarely behind my decision. After 20 years, I’ve learned the hard way that there was never a good time to withdraw U.S. forces. That’s why we were still there. We were clear-eyed about the risks. We planned for every contingency. But I always promised the American people that I will be straight with you. The truth is: This did unfold more quickly than we had anticipated. So, what’s happened? Afghanistan political leaders gave up and fled the country. The Afghan military collapsed, sometimes without trying to fight.” (Biden, 2021).

After the withdrawal of American troops, the Taliban quickly surrounded the country. The Afghan state and its troops could not show any resistance to the Taliban and its forces. Thus, it became clear that the US, during its intervention in Afghanistan, actually had no mission of nation-building as stated in the Bush era, and train the country's army; otherwise, the Taliban's invasion would have been countered. As Biden stated that:

“The fundamental obligation of a President, in my opinion, is to defend and protect America — not against threats of 2001, but against the threats of 2021 and tomorrow. That is the guiding principle behind my decisions about Afghanistan. I simply do not believe that the safety and security of America is enhanced by continuing to deploy thousands of American troops and spending billions of dollars a year in Afghanistan. But I also know that the threat from terrorism continues in its pernicious and evil nature. But it’s changed, expanded to other countries. Our strategy has to change too.” (Biden, 2021).

Although the new President Joe Biden stated that he would support Afghanistan when America withdrew from Afghanistan, within a week, the Taliban encircled Afghanistan and made radical changes that hinder human rights. Therefore, by handing over Afghanistan to the Taliban, America did exactly the opposite of what it said. As Biden stated that:

“And let me be clear: We will continue to support the Afghan people through diplomacy, international influence, and humanitarian aid. We’ll continue to push for regional diplomacy and engagement to prevent violence and instability. We’ll continue to speak out for basic rights of the Afghan people, especially women and girls, as we speak out for women and girls all around the globe. And I’ve been clear that human rights will be the center of our foreign policy.” (Biden, 2021).

Biden decision on Afghanistan was interpreted differently by many. Ron Klain, Biden’s chief of staff, said, “When someone writes a book about this war, it’s going to begin on September 11, 2001, and it’s going to end on the day Joe Biden said:

“We’re coming home. We completed one of the biggest airlifts in history, with more than 120,000 people evacuated to safety. That number is more than double what most experts thought were possible. No nation — no nation has ever done anything like it in all of history. Only the United States had the capacity and the will and the ability to do it, and we did it today.” (Biden, 2021).

From the astonishingly rapid collapse of the Afghan government to a devastating suicide attack that killed US soldiers, President Joe Biden was determined to end America's longest war. There are some of the key moments in the run-up to the departure, on Tuesday Kabul time, of the last US troops nearly 20 years after the invasion. Biden entered the White House with an urgent choice to honor the February 2020 deal with the Taliban insurgents, which his predecessor Donald Trump reached to withdraw US troops by May 2021. After unsuccessfully pressing to wind down the war when he was Barack Obama's vice president, Biden confirmed his decision in April: Biden said he would withdraw all his troops by September 11 (20th anniversary of the al-Qaeda attacks that led to the US invasion). The decision

echoed a growing bipartisan consensus, even though some Republicans blamed Biden for handing a symbolic victory with the date, leading Biden to move it up to August 31. The 2020 deal in Doha linked the US withdrawal to the Taliban not providing sanctuary to international extremists such as Al-Qaeda, and set up the first talks between the insurgents and the Kabul government. Biden, in an April 14 speech, made clear that the pullout would go ahead regardless of conditions on the ground, arguing that the United States has already achieved its core mission of holding Al-Qaeda accountable and that there was no further reason to invest US lives and treasure (Zurcher, 2020).

Afghanistan's elected president, Ashraf Ghani, urged Biden at a White House meeting in June to use discretion, not wanting the United States to telegraph that it thought the government would fall. On July 14, however, with the Taliban making rapid gains, the United States began "Operation Allies Refuge" to evacuate hundreds of thousands of allies by air, fearing Taliban revenge. Biden's critics lashed out at what they called a late effort to save Afghans who put themselves at risk for the United States. But the Biden administration stated that the Special Immigrant Visa program that brought in Afghans, had been virtually at a standstill under Trump, a fierce opponent of non-European immigrants. More than 123,000 people, including 6,000 US citizens, were eventually flown out, most in the final days after US forces took over the Kabul airport, in one of the largest airlifts in history (Gilli, 2021: 561).

On the other hand critics say that the United States has erased 20 years of efforts and sacrifices in the longest war in which it has been involved, that recent developments have led to a humanitarian crisis and damaged the United States' reputation in the world. Biden has also been criticized for the expectation that the Kabul government will ensure security in the country on its own. But actually Biden's decision was not a surprise. While vice president in the Barack Obama administration, Biden insisted that the Afghanistan war should be limited in terms of its mission, favoring the withdrawal of troops (Haass, 2021: 85).

Brett Bruen, a diplomat in the Obama administration, also stated that Biden's foreign policy experience played an important role in shaping Biden's foreign policy. "He saw not only the Vietnam and Iraq Wars, but also the Kosovo and Granada wars. This experience allowed him to look at challenges with calmness and a bit of

weariness," he says. Speaking to CBS television in 2020 as a presidential candidate, Biden said that the United States should have troops in Afghanistan only to make it impossible for the Taliban, ISIS or Al Qaeda to nest there. Brett also stated that polls show that the blood spilled and the costs incurred in the 20-year war, the years of withdrawal promises tired the Americans and the withdrawal plan was supported. Former US President Barack Obama promised to withdraw during his presidency. Trump also referred to the "endless war" during his presidential campaign, and gave the date of May 1, 2021 as the withdrawal date of the US troops (Moore, 2021: 73).

To conclude, the US's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan and then the Taliban's rapid takeover of almost all of the country caused great repercussions in the world public opinion, especially in the US. It was interpreted that the US failed the people in Afghanistan, which was occupied by promising a democratic order after the September 11 attacks. It is argued that such an unplanned withdrawal signals negative signals for America's allies in many parts of the world. Most of the American public was opposed to the costly US presence in Afghanistan, but the manner of the withdrawal and the media coverage shocked the international community. While the reactions from the Western public left US President Joe Biden in a difficult situation, Biden stated at the press conference that he is behind the decision to withdraw from Afghanistan. In terms of the international system, the main issue to be discussed was the strategic meaning and consequences of NATO's withdrawal from Afghanistan. Ending NATO's military presence in Afghanistan, which was occupied by the NATO alliance after 9/11, is the most concrete indication that the "global war on terror" bracket has been closed.

It took four presidencies for America to finish leaving Afghanistan. George W. Bush was distracted shortly after the American Special Forces rode in the northern mountains and the first female students gathered in the freezing classrooms. After months of scrutinizing the issue, Barack Obama rallied and withdrew troops in a single indecisive move aimed at keeping the war on the A13 page. Donald Trump made a deal with the Taliban that left the future of the Afghan government, Afghan women and Al Qaeda to their fate. Until then, most Americans were unaware that the war was still going on. It fell to Joe Biden to complete the task.

7. CONCLUSION

Interpreting and making understandable the attitudes and behaviors of states in the international arena is the effort of International Theories. It constitutes a clue for the theory that will interpret it, with which reflexes the states act in the events that occur and what results they try to achieve.

In this context, it can be said that the US acted according to its realist theory in the context of invading Afghanistan. When the discourses of the theorists who make up the philosophical infrastructure of realism are examined, they say that there is evil and sinfulness in human nature, people have natural evil in their states, people and states have to act according to their own power, where there is no higher authority, states do not have a moral concern, the continuation and interests of the state when it comes to morality, so it can be understood that morality remains in the second stage and that the influence of one state by another state poses a danger to the other state. According to realism, the international system consists of a struggle for interstate interests. And states must always be strong in this system. As mentioned above, it is obvious that the absence of an authority over the states will require states to always be on the alert. Due to the fact that the international system is related to human nature, states are trying to dominate the weak states by increasing their power and influence, as in human nature.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the current international system has lost its validity. The bipolar system left its place in uncertainty. While classical security concerns lost their influence in world politics, new security concerns such as ethnic/inter-communal conflicts, terrorism, environmental pollution, but more comprehensive new security concerns emerged where previous measures were not sufficient. With the help of the uncertainty and softening in the international system, there have been noticeable improvements in the relations between states. With this change that occurred at the system level, states, which are the main actors of the international system, had to determine new foreign policy orientations, roles, targets, approaches, and strategies. Even international/regional organizations, such as the UN and NATO, were forced to make new job descriptions and had to adapt their current structuring to changing conditions. Changes in the external environment also affected the United States, which became the world's sole superpower. During the 1990s,

American administrators, who had theoretical discussions on the structure of the international system, determined new foreign policy targets, priorities, and methods of action, along with the new role of their countries. Acting immediately after the attacks on the Twin Towers on September 11, 2001, President Bush and the Neo-Conservatives, based on the New National Security Document announced in 2002, first intervened in Afghanistan in 2001, then to Georgia, and then to Iraq in 2003. While some states supported the operations carried out with the slogan of "Bringing Freedom and Democracy", others criticized it heavily.

September 11, 2001 is an important turning point in terms of changing the interrelationship between security and human rights. Again, due to the terrorist attacks in Bali in 2002 and 2005, Istanbul in 2003, Madrid in 2004 and London in 2005, the measures taken by Western states indicate that human rights and freedoms may be eroded for the sake of ensuring the security of the society/state. and proved to be highly limited. Just as the September 11 attacks were the turning point for the US to choose a different path in the fight against terrorism, these other terrorist attacks also became an important factor in Western states' acceptance of terrorism as a serious problem and enacting radical anti-terrorism laws.

In terms of Europe's security, the fight against terrorism is an issue that has been on the agenda of Western countries and the European Union (EU) since the end of the Cold War. Illegal immigration, drug trafficking and organized crime, which are closely related to terrorism, started to come to the fore as issues that European states should struggle with after the Cold War. Therefore, within the organizational development of the EU, various legal and institutional mechanisms were developed against terrorism and these issues related to terrorism. However, the September 11 attacks and the terrorist attacks that took place in Europe afterward caused a new era to begin in the fight against terrorism.

After September 11, Western democracies, especially the USA and England, introduced new legal regulations in order not to be exposed to similar attacks again, they introduced new regulations to expand the security measures in the existing legal regulations and tried to restrict some freedoms. Western states have greatly increased the duties and powers of law enforcement and intelligence units with these measures.

As for the US, its general foreign policy has four primary pillars. These pillars can be stated as the protection of the US, its citizens, allies, and interests, continuous access to international markets, the preservation of the world balance of power (under the leadership of the US), and the protection of human rights and democracy. In the light of this basis, it should be assumed that the US general foreign policy is evaluated realistically from the perspective of the balance of power in an academic and analytical context. When a country or a region is analyzed by the US within the scope of foreign policy, rather than the country's compatibility with democracy and the US system, it is analyzed in terms of the interests of the US.

In the case of Afghanistan, for more than four decades, Afghanistan has been in a state of war and violent conflict that has devastated much of the country's physical and social infrastructure and hindered the development of a state stable enough to establish law and order. In these processes, as always, the local people had to shoulder the most intense pain.

In addition to its many ethnic origins, Afghanistan's compelling geographical structure and ideological differences, and especially external factors have prevented the establishment of a stable structure in the country. Increasing corruption in the country and the establishment of 'puppet governments' have been some of the biggest factors that brought terrorism to the country. Afghan Taliban, which caused the greatest damage to the country among the emerging terrorist organizations, was established under the spiritual leadership of Mullah Mohammed. The main aim of the Taliban is to establish a state in which the rules of Islamic Shariah law are applied.

On September 11, 2001, terrorists using passenger planes to attack the Pentagon and the World Trade Center, and the USA's inability to prevent such an attack, showed that even the world's superpower could be helpless against terrorism. After the attacks, international terrorism became an important threat and enemy for the US. In addition, "radical Islam" was also considered a threat due to factors such as the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks being Muslims, carrying Muslim symbols, and having ties to the Al Qaeda organization. For this reason, while the US declared a global war on terrorism, it overthrew the Taliban regime in Afghanistan in December 2001, which it claimed was the home of the al-Qaeda terrorist

organization and was responsible for the attacks. In the second stage, the US invaded Iraq for similar and other reasons and ended the Saddam regime in April 2003.

The attacks against the US on September 11, 2001, created a common will to take serious measures in the fight against terrorism in the world. While the terrorist acts that took place until September 11, 2001, affected a country or a geographical region; after the attacks on September 11, 2001, all concepts and approaches to terrorism changed. First of all, the US chose to start an all-out war against terrorism by presenting terrorism to the whole world as a 'new global threat', in other words, a 'common enemy'. The starting point in this struggle was the Al Qaeda organization and other similar organizations, which were believed to be the name behind both September 11 attacks and many other terrorist acts against the United States.

The terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001, can be regarded as one of the most important actions in US history in terms of its tragic and terrible consequences as well as the consequences it caused in the international system. After the terrorist attacks, human rights violations emerged in many countries of the world, especially in the US. Concepts such as democracy, human rights, and freedoms were replaced by trust and stability. To ensure security, war was waged by many states against their opponents inside and outside the country, and the most basic rights and freedoms were restricted in this direction. Thousands of innocent people lost their lives, many more were injured, and thousands more were labeled as 'terrorists', or deported, deprived of their right to work, subjected to rape, humiliation, and insult.

The United States Armed Forces was scheduled to withdraw completely from Afghanistan by August 31, 2021, completing Operation Independence and NATO's Resolute Support Mission. The war that emerged as a result of the US and allied forces' invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 after the September 11 attacks, was the longest military engagement of the US.

On February 29, 2020, the United States and the Taliban signed the Doha Agreement. The agreement included the withdrawal of all American and NATO troops from Afghanistan, a commitment to prevent al-Qaeda from operating in areas under Taliban control, and provisions for talks between the Taliban and the then government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The agreement was supported

by China, Pakistan, and Russia and was unanimously approved by the United Nations Security Council.

The Trump administration agreed to reduce the number of troops from 13,000 to 8,600 by July 2020, and then withdraw completely by May 1, 2021, if the Taliban fulfilled their commitments, but the Biden administration agreed that the U.S. will no longer have to wait until May 1st. and announced that it would not withdraw until 9/11. On July 8, Biden set August 31 as the deadline for the US withdrawal. Biden's decision was not a surprise. While vice president in the Barack Obama administration, Biden insisted that the Afghanistan war be limited in terms of its mission, favoring the withdrawal of troops.

Biden's critics say that the United States destroyed 20 years of efforts and sacrifices in the longest war in which it has been involved since 2001. The critics also state that recent developments led to a humanitarian crisis and damaged the United States' reputation. Biden was also criticized for the expectation that the Kabul government will ensure security in the country on its own.

It is not possible to say that a healthy peace process mechanism is operating in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of the USA and the escape of Ghani from the country led to the disintegration of the Kabul administration and the Taliban seized power. For this reason, it is not possible to talk about a government established as a result of consensus. Therefore, while considering the establishment of an agreed system and administration in the peace process, the countries necessarily changed their policies and the expectation that the Taliban would establish a healthy system and administration emerged.

To conclude, the attack of September 11 caused a new role change in the balance of the world and a war earthquake, especially in the Middle East geography. In Afghanistan, which was the subject of this study, the situation remained unsolved. Although four presidents changed in the US, neither of them could solve the Afghanistan problem even if each had different policies and strategies towards Afghanistan. Therefore, the Afghanistan occupation which began in 2001 ended in 2021 without any success.

For a definitive solution in Afghanistan:

- The armed groups in Afghanistan must surrender their weapons as soon as possible, and continue to stay in the region until stability is achieved under the UN,
- The establishment of a national army and the transfer of the administration to the government by making an election in which all ethnicities will participate fairly,
- Agreeing on non-interference in Afghanistan's internal affairs that the UNSC and neighboring countries will agree on,

Classical and contemporary theories developed with the emergence of the discipline of geopolitics, on the one hand, provide a kind of framework for defining countries according to their geographical locations, while at the same time they are effective in shaping the foreign policies of states. Regional and global actors try to somehow exist or gain influence in geopolitically important countries in line with their national interests. Afghanistan is one of the countries with high geopolitical value and despite the fact that it has turned into an unsuccessful state with the Soviet military intervention that started at the end of 1979, it maintains its geopolitical value. This status of Afghanistan is primarily due to the fact that it is located almost in the center of the Eurasian area, which is prominent in all geopolitical theories. Afghanistan has reigned as one of the main crossroads of the ancient Silk Road for centuries. Several of its cities, from Kabul and Balkh to Kandahar and Herat, are major transit corridors connecting the Eastern and Western worlds. In this area, it is also geographically close to the actors that affect global policies such as China, Russia and India, as well as to energy resources and pipelines, making it impossible to isolate Afghanistan from regional policies and regional domination struggles.

As indicated throughout the thesis, mistaken/incompetent policies of the US administrators and the Taliban's undeniable growing power, compare to the pre-2001 periods, which is stronger than before, played a major role in making the stage for the peace agreement which was signed between the US and the Taliban in 2020. As a result of analyzes, this thesis found that following the Afghanistan invasion in 2001 by the the US pursued wrong/incompetent policies which had a limited vision towards Afghanistan, leading to the re-emergence of the Taliban. For a solution in Afghanistan, a sustainable strategy, in which not only military and political methods

but also economic and sociological initiatives can be made, needs to be implemented decisively.



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