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WITHDRAWAL OF U.S. TROOPS FROM AFGHANISTAN: EXIT STRATEGIES**

Abstract

After twenty long and frustrating years, America has finally withdrawn completely from Afghanistan. This paper gives an overview of American actions in Afghanistan, starting with the George W. Bush administration and the invasion of American troops, assassination of Osama bin Laden and suppression of Al-Qaeda's activities, through the Obama administration, during which the ISAF mission ended and throughout which the withdrawal of American troops was announced. After that, an overview of the activities during the mandate of Donald Trump is given, during which definite conditions for the withdrawal of troops were created, by signing the agreement in Doha between the United States of America and the Taliban, which was meant to bring the peace to the Afghanistan. At the end of the paper, an overview of the activities and the situation on the ground during the administration of Joe Biden is given, during which the complete withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan was finally completed, which the Taliban used it to reoccupy the country and declare the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.

Keywords: *War in Afghanistan, U.S. withdrawal, Taliban, Doha Agreement, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Afghanistan*

INTRODUCTION

US military intervention in Afghanistan has not been just the longest American war that lasted almost two decades, it has also been

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the most challenging mission for both U.S. army and NATO with the high cost in deaths of US soldiers and the expenditure of many billions of dollars¹ in a country that did not accidentally acquire the name “graveyard of empires” (Pillalamarri 2017).

Afghanistan became a significant US foreign policy objective in 2001, when the United States, in the response for the 9/11 terrorist attack committed by Al Qaeda operatives on US soil, conducted a military campaign against this terrorist organization and the Afghan Sunni Islamist Taliban government that harbored and supported it. Military operation (named “Operation Enduring Freedom”) that was considered as an act of USA self-defense under the UN Charter, was conducted by US led “coalition of the willing”, while NATO invoked its Article V collective defense clause on 12th September 2001 as legal basis for intervention. As the Taliban refused than-American President George W Bush demand to hand over Bin Laden (and other leaders of AQ) and to disband their camps with more than 10 000 AQ fighters that were trained in Afghanistan (BBC History 2018), military campaign followed.

US STRATEGIES IN AFGHANISTAN DURING THE GEORGE W: BUSH’S PRESIDENCY

US intervention in Afghanistan started on October 7, 2001, with airstrikes on Taliban targets throughout the country and close air support to anti-Taliban forces in northern Afghanistan. Two weeks later, small number of US Army Special Forces started their deployment on the ground helping other militant groups to fight the Taliban. At the beginning of November 2001, about 1,300 American troops were in the Afghanistan as commandos and ground troops, mostly Marines, begin to arrive. In just more than a month, the Taliban were forced to evacuate Kabul, which was soon retaken by US backed Taliban rivals (known as the Northern Alliance). When those forces approached Kandahar, birthplace of Taliban movement, the Taliban offered terms of surrender (that included amnesty for their fighters), but the US official rejected it. Therefore, the Taliban sought shelter in distant, rural parts of their country or escaped across the border to Pakistan where they tried to recover and regroup. In Kabul, Afghanistan capital,

1) Meanwhile U.S. troops lost 2,442 killed and 20,666 wounded troops in the war since 2001 (according to the Defense Department), while 1, 444 other NATO members troops died during the conflict. It’s estimated that over 3,800 U.S. private security contractors have been killed. U.S. has spent total of 2,26 trillions of dollars on all expenses in Afghanistan theater of conflict (Debre 2021)

the Americans installed new interim national government led by Hamid Karzai, that was previously (on December, 1, 2001) formed by Afghan delegates in Germany under the auspices of UN.

Overthrow of the Taliban and the formation of new Afghan government represented the beginning new phase of American involvement in Afghanistan: after the initial military objective were completed, a coalition of more than 40 countries (which included all NATO members) formed a UN led security mission (named “International Security Assistance Force” (ISAF)) to protect achieved peace and help defending new government and its nascent military.

The revival of the Taliban’s resistance soon showed that the enthusiasm of American officials about “easy victory” was premature and that the work in Afghanistan was far from over. “Search and destroy” mission of the remaining terrorist groups were continued, so more than 2500 US troops participated in heavy battles in the mountainous region of Tora Bora looking for Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden. The U.S. has ended the year with about 9,700 troops deployed in Afghanistan, mostly going after hidden Taliban insurgents.

At the beginning of 2002, two parallel and distinct operations were taking place in Afghanistan. First one was UN mandate (starting from the Bonn International Conference in December 2001) multilateral (“coalition of the willing”) ISAF peacekeeping and country rebuilding mission, initially deployed in Kabul to defend government institutions. ISAF role was a defensive one and it was not oriented towards fighting against the Taliban or Al Qaeda militants. Second one was US unilateral counter-terrorism operation “Enduring Freedom”, continuation of US military engagement against the Taliban and Al Qaeda (at the end of 2002 there were about 9,700 US troops still deployed in theatre of war, mostly going after Taliban insurgents). “Although in principle these two missions could have fulfilled their tasks operating in the same country in the light of a planned division of jobs, they ended up creating several problems of coordination and failing to counter the rising insurgency. Three specific aspects are underlined in this section: the problem of coordination between “Enduring Freedom” and ISAF; the illusion of ‘keeping the peace’ even if no real peace existed and the failure to recognize that the problem was neither terrorism nor traditional peacekeeping but the insurgency.” (Carati 2015, 206) Some experts even believe that the “two tracks” actions produced serious strategic mistakes in terms of goals of operations, indistinguishability of enemies (the Taliban and Al Qaeda) and created additional chaos (for example, unilateral military actions of US Marines against the Taliban relied on other militant factions in Afghanistan that

did not recognize the new authorities in Kabul, which directly undermined ISAF's goals of strengthening the new government) (Carati 2015, 206).

During year 2002 The George W. Bush administration recognized the difficulties produced by "two track" approach and tried to correct them: Bush speech in January (State of Union address) emphasize at turning the White House and the Pentagon into new strategic goals and aligning with ISAF (United States and Afghanistan were "allies against terror" and that "we will be partners in rebuilding that country"). "By early September 2002, leading Bush administration officials were apparently ready to support the notion of expanding the ISAF mission beyond Kabul, even though they still did not want U.S. personnel involved. A few weeks later, however, the administration withdrew its support for broadening the scope of the operation—no matter who led it." (Marten 2002, 37) Thus, the Americans agreed not only to participate in the multilateral, UN-led mission (ISAF) (and, also, became dominant in it), but at the same time continued to lead their unilateral operation.

As the focus of their interest shifted more and more towards Iraq and the impending invasion in late 2002, Afghanistan fell into the background and the number of troops began to decline. Therefore, in late 2003 there were about 13,100 US troops in Afghanistan. This number rose to 20,300 in April 2004 as US started building up forces along the Afghan-Pakistani border and providing security for fledgling reconstruction projects. By 2005, the Taliban regrouped in Pashtun heartland and began stronger military resistance against both ISAF and US troops, but as insurgency in occupied Iraq escalated during that period, the present US force in Afghanistan remained just over 20,000. Their number rises in late 2007 to 25,000, but still, Iraq was the priority. As the Taliban resistance continued to grow, US gradually increased their forces to around 30,000 by the end of the George W. Bush Administration.

OBAMA'S PRESIDENCY: FIRST INCREASE OF THE NUMBER OF TROOPS - THEN GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL

With the arrival of Barack Obama in the White House, the strategic focus of the United States shifted back to Afghanistan. Less than three weeks after his inauguration, Obama ordered 17,000 extra US troops to be transferred to Afghanistan and thereby boosted troops already deployed by 50%. The assessment of the new administration

was that the deteriorating situation requires new strategic attention, additional resources and swift action.

This new strategy, publicly proclaimed on 27th March 2009 after the intense consultation of White House with the Pentagon, State Department and foreign allies, included not only Taliban's pockets of resistance inside Afghanistan and along Afghan-Pakistani border, but also "safe havens" of Taliban and AQ guerrillas inside Pakistan. Obama stated: "So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat Al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future. That is the goal that must be achieved. That is a cause that could not be more just. And to the terrorists who oppose us, my message is the same: we will defeat you." (MacAskill 2009) For this plan to work, Obama announced to further bolster US troops in Afghanistan, increase aid to Pakistan, put the stronger pressure on Pakistan to tackle AQ and Taliban "safe havens" inside their country and intensify bombing campaign against AQ and Taliban strongholds on both sides of Afghan-Pakistani border. Also, this new policy insisted on trying to engage Afghanistan regional neighbors (even Iran) to help pacify situation in Afghanistan. "The first sharpest break from his predecessor was the idea of including Pakistan in the overall strategic approach to Afghanistan. His position towards Pakistan has been tougher compared with the Bush years and intended to exert a strong diplomatic pressure on Islamabad. That break was based on the realistic acknowledgment that the north-western part of the country was of key strategic value for the Taliban's insurgency (...) The second change was strictly related to the third one. The shift from a counter-terrorism to a counterinsurgency campaign indeed asked for more troops on the ground. That is to say that choosing for a counterinsurgency campaign meant also deploying fresh troops, since such type of operations requires huge military manpower, particularly in the infantry level" (Carati 2015, 211). Obama administration has also intensified programs for the Afghan Security forces, aiming to strengthen them by the time American troops begin their gradual withdrawal (ANSF grew significantly during next four years, from 224,000 in 2010 to 345,000 in 2014).

But before that, first of all, the presence of American troops on Afghan soil had to be increased and the counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign successfully carried out. In late 2009, President Obama announced that US will be sending 30,000 more troops to Afghanistan and for the first time set mid- 2011 as the date to begin reducing and pulling forces out of the country. With such forces deployed, Americans believed that all new main strategic goals can be achieved: that

Taliban gains in large parts of country could be reversed, AQ could be dismantled and defeated in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and that Afghan government and its military capacity can be built.

During Obama's first term in White House, US and their allies increased military presence in Afghanistan which peaked at over 130,00 (100,00 of them were US troops) in 2010, set a goal to start withdrawal by the end of 2011 and to end combat missions in late 2014. With such military capacities, allied troops led by a general Stanley Mc Crystal carried out a successful contra-insurgency campaign that weakened Taliban position in country. But overall results were mixed: "While security conditions improve in the urban areas, in the rural parts of the country they remained precarious or worsened. International troop casualties due to enemy attacks have constantly declined since 2011, however the decrease was not only an effect of the surge but it resulted also from the international progressive withdrawal and from the leading role that the ANSF are taking in combat operations. In fact, in the last three years ANSF casualties have regularly grown proving that the Transition is on track but also that the insurgency's strength remains considerable" (Carati 2015, 212). By the end of 2010, Obama Administration came to conclusion that conflict in Afghanistan had no military solution, so withdrawal accompanied with the strengthening of Afghan troops began.

On 22 June 2011 President Obama declared that 10,000 troops would be withdrawn by the end of 2011 and an additional 23,000 troops will leave the country by the summer of 2012. He pointed that the drawdown would continue "at a steady pace" until the United States handed over security to the Afghan authorities in 2014. As a part of realization of that process USA and Afghan government signed Strategic partnership Agreement officially named "Enduring Strategic Partnership Agreement between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America". According to Agreement and other American plans, on 21, May NATO leaders endorsed exit strategy during NATO summit in Chicago which foresaw that NATO led ISAF Forces will hand over command of all of its mission to Afghan force by the mid – 2013, while shifting its mission from combat to support role (Spetalnick & Ryan 2012). USA started negotiations with the Taliban which led to unilateral suspension of the "Bilateral Security Agreement" by Afghan government in June, 2013, so new Security Agreement had to be reached and signed. In that period, US troops levels down from 77,00 (September, 2013) to 46,000 (December, 2013) and 34, 000 in March, 2014 (The Associated Press 2016) As ISAF forces were reduced in advance of the scheduled 2014 transition, NATO began gradually

transferring security duties to Afghan forces which assumed full responsibility for security nationwide. In late 2014 the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) ended and the noncombat “Resolute Support Mission” (RSM) started on January 1, 2015 that continued training and advising Afghan military. At that time troop levels were cut down to 16,100, while in the March, 2015 only 9,800 of them remained in Afghanistan.

But, in October 2015, Obama proclaimed that situation in Afghanistan is too fragile for US troops to complete their total withdrawal and announced that he plans to keep the current number of troops (9,800) in place during most of 2016 in order to continue counterterrorism missions and advise Afghans battling a resurgent Taliban. “The plan is for the number to decrease to about 5,500 troops by December 2016. Saying the security situation in Afghanistan “remains precarious,” Obama announces that instead of dropping the U.S. troop level to 5,500, he will keep it at about 8,400 through the end of his term on Jan. 20, 2017. He said his successor can determine the next move” (The Associated Press 2016).

TRUMP – DOHA AGREEMENT AND THE BEGINNING OF THE END

In a statement from May 27th, 2014, Barack Obama described the role of the USA as the weakening of Al-Qaeda and the elimination of Osama Bin Laden, which prevented Afghanistan from becoming a haven for members of the AQ and its associates. The ISAF mission has officially taken over the mission of training, advising and preparing the Afghan national security forces (ANSF) for the moment when they take over the role of maintaining order and peace in the country (Griffin 2014, 447). However, one of the problems in the task of handing over the role of security guarantor to the Afghan forces during the process of withdrawing a number of troops throughout Obama’s term was the fact that the Taliban, hiding in the mountains and shelters, have meanwhile regrouped and grew into a serious military-political group, and the fact that Afghan government hasn’t actually controlled the entire territory of the state. Some of these territories were in the hands of the Taliban, others in the hands of local warlords, who have no political loyalty or higher goal than their profits and power, and are willing to work one day with the government and next day with the Taliban. The US administration itself infamously acknowledged that Afghan forces, although numbering about 300,000 people, have only about 10%

combat ready (Kabulov 2013, 8).

Donald Trump, while he was a candidate for the president, has pointed out for a number of years that the American presence in Afghanistan is a terrible mistake that needs to be corrected (Diaz 2017). Moreover, part of his campaign was based on a promise to bring American troops home, that is, to withdraw from Afghanistan. Certainly, there is often a strong dichotomy between ideas and reality, which was also shown in this case, because the Taliban movement continued to strengthen, in parallel with the reduction of the number of troops in the country. In addition to this, a branch of the Islamic State, the so-called ISIS-K or ISKP, or the Islamic State of Korasan Province, has surfaced and became a new threat (Liptak 2021). Although he based his campaign on a promise to withdraw troops as soon as possible, he himself admitted in August 2017 that conditions on the ground proved to be a vicissitudes to that end, refusing to give a definite timeline for when he would withdraw, but that this is the course on which America definitely remains. Namely, Trump claimed that America has learned a lesson from Iraq, alluding to the fact that the rapid withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan would leave a power vacuum that would allow the ISIS-K faction to strengthen, which would further have strong negative implications for locals (Diamond 2017).

There were two streams of opinion in Trump's circle, one of which was isolationist and thought that the plan to withdraw the troops should continue with its course, while the other thought that due to the ISKP, the situation on the ground should be strengthened, troop-wise. A compromise solution prevailed, sending an additional 3,900 troops, raising the number from the official 8,400 to about 12,300, although later reports showed that despite the fact that those were official figures, there actually were not 8,400 members on the ground, but 11,000 which would make the total situation, in mid-August, about 15,000 people (The Trump's administration's Afghanistan policy 2017, 2).

However, a year later, Trump entrusted the task to Zalmay Khalilzad, an experienced Afghan American diplomat, to be the bearer of negotiations with the Taliban, which should lead the war to an end, that is, towards reaching a peace agreement. Interestingly, the Afghan government led by democratically elected President Ashraf Ghani was largely excluded from these talks (Pilster 2020, 121). Khalilzad participated in five rounds of negotiations with the Taliban during the Doha, Qatar negotiations, which lasted until March 2019 (Behuria, Ul Hassan & Saroha 2019, 127). In September 2019, Trump invited a Taliban delegation to Camp David to negotiate with the U.S. and Afghan government officials in the hopes of reaching some type of

agreement, but the meeting was soon canceled due to the killing of U. S. soldier (J Sullivan 2021, 275). Also, what's interesting is that even after this and over 2300 of other killed U.S. soldiers (Ben-Meir 2021, 3), the U. S. Department of State never designated the Taliban as a foreign terrorist organization, presumably because they wanted to broker a sort of settlement with them and complete their planned withdrawal (J. Sullivan 2021, 276).

Eventually, on February 29th, 2020, an agreement was reached to achieve peace in Afghanistan, better known as the Doha Agreement, between the US and the Taliban, which set a course for the complete withdrawal of US troops in exchange for guarantees from the Taliban, who committed to reduce violence and sever ties with terrorist groups (State Gov., Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan). One of the main problems with this agreement lies in the fact that it does not contain a permanent ceasefire agreement, nor a way to resolve disagreements between the Afghan government, led by then-President Ashraf Ghani and the Taliban, and the agreement itself does not contain any measures to implement and enforce promises such as violence reduction and severing ties with terrorist groups (Boot 2020). It should also be noted that the number of troops was reduced to 8,600 American soldiers after the signing of the agreement (J. Sullivan 2021, 276), and that on January 15th, 2021, the number of troops was further reduced to 2,500, which was the record lowest since 2001. based on the order of Donald Trump from November 2020, which marked the end of Trump's mandate (Thomas 2021, 2).

BIDEN – KABUL 2021: SAIGON *DÉJÀ VU*

Long before he even became the candidate for the presidency of the USA, Joe Biden already thought about how to solve the problem called "Afghanistan". As Obama's deputy, he proposed to him a complete withdrawal from Afghanistan, however, his proposal was rejected. Eventually, in early 2021, by becoming POTUS, he was finally given the opportunity to put an end to an event that, in his eyes, represented a war without a purpose (Liptak 2021). Although there have been reports (and hope among the people of Afghanistan) that the Biden administration could reconsider and review the agreement signed between the US and the Taliban on February 29th of 2020 (Qazi 2020), their examination of the agreement has been reduced to establishing the actual state on the ground - whether the Taliban are keeping their promises. However,

in the tradition of American presidents and their habit of continuation of the foreign policy decisions of their predecessors, Biden and his administration reaffirmed the provisions of the agreement - to end this “endless” war, but with the desire to maintain a certain ability to resist a possible surge of terrorism (BBC 2021). In addition, Biden’s decision to remain true to the final withdrawal from Afghanistan has to do with extremely high accumulated costs (over 2 trillion, as well as over 2,000 soldiers killed), with frustrating successes on the ground, in terms of suppressing the Taliban and the process of state-building (Brands & O’Hanlon 2021, 48).

In the Doha Agreement, the Trump administration set May 1st, 2021, as the date for complete withdrawal from Afghanistan (Kiely & Farley 2021). However, on April 14th, 2021, US President Joe Biden announced that the United States would begin the final and complete withdrawal of its troops from Afghanistan on May 1st, which is to be completed in full, symbolically, on September 11, 2021 (Thomas 2021, 2). The Biden administration justified the final decision to withdraw completely from Afghanistan by the fact that the initial US mission ended a decade ago, when Osama bin Laden was assassinated in Pakistan, and when AQ capabilities in Afghanistan were significantly reduced, again referring to how wars should not be “without end” (Miller 2021, 37).

The postponement of the deadline for full withdrawal of the troops, agreed in the agreement between the United States and the Taliban, met with negative reactions from Taliban leaders, who said that it represented a violation of the Doha Agreement, which, in principle, gives the Taliban the green light to take all necessary countermeasures, and that the American side will be responsible for everything that could potentially follow (Thomas 2021, 2). Speaking to the House Foreign Affairs Committee on May 18th, Special Afghan American Envoy Zalmay Khalilzad argued that Biden’s decision was correct for the time being and that the withdrawal was proceeding at the expected pace, without major incidents, expecting it to remain so (C-Span 2021). Shortly thereafter, on June 8th, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tells Foreign Policy that after foreign forces leave Afghanistan the group’s goal is to create an “Islamic government,” and that they will be compelled to continue their war to achieve their goal (Kiely & Farley 2021).

Eventually, due to more frequent attacks by Taliban fighters, a decision was made to speed up the withdrawal deadline. On 2nd July, the US handed Bagram Airfield, that used to be known as a symbol of US military might, to Afghan forces (Liebermann, Sidhu & Coren

2021). A few days later, on July 8th, in his addressing to the American people, Biden moved the deadline for withdrawal even further back, to August 31st. At the same time, he pointed out that the Taliban would otherwise start attacking American troops if they did not adhere to the agreement reached during Trump's mandate. He has also mentioned how they have reorganized and how the Taliban, militarily speaking, are the strongest they have been since 2001. In addition, Biden tried to convince the Americans that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan is not inevitable, and that the situation in Afghanistan does not resemble the one from Vietnam, claiming that there will be no scenario where people can be seen evacuating from the roof of the embassy from Afghanistan (Remarks by President Biden on the Drawdown of US Forces in Afghanistan, 08. 07. 2021).

The month of August started violently. The Taliban, despite a signed agreement with the United States in which they themselves committed to reducing violence and starting negotiations with the democratically elected Afghan government, occupied the province of Nimroz on August 6 (Da Silva, Yusufzai & Smith 2021). After that, the Taliban victories began to line up in their conquest for Kabul. The next day, the province of Sheberghan was occupied, then on August 8, Sar-e-Pul, Kunduz and Takhar. In the following days, the provinces of Samangan, Baghlan and Badakhshan were also occupied.

August 12th was of great importance, because very important provinces were occupied on that day. Namely, Ghazni was occupied, after which local government officials fled to Kabul. At the same time, Herat, the third largest city in Afghanistan, fell to the Taliban, as did Kandahar and Helmand. Along with several other conquered provinces in a row, on August 14th, the Taliban occupied the province of Mazar-i-Sharif, then the capital of Logar province, which is only 70km from Kabul. On 15th August, Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar province, was also occupied, effectively encircling Kabul by the Taliban, announcing the imminent takeover of Kabul (Al Jazeera 2021). On the same day, the former president of Afghanistan, Ashraf Ghani, fled the country by helicopter and thus abdicated from his position.

General chaos broke out very quickly. Thousands and thousands of people, both local and foreigners and diplomats, flocked to Hamid Karzai International Airport in hopes of being able to safely evacuate the country and escape life under the Taliban regime (NPR 2021). Although, in his addressing to the public, Biden pointed out that the situation in Afghanistan is different from the one in Vietnam, it is difficult to get rid of the impression that they are very similar, with the exception of being 46 years apart. Due to the situation on the ground,

Biden sent 6,000 American troops to secure the airport in Kabul, as well as provide the safe evacuation of citizens and Afghan allies who helped during the war, due to the fear of possible retaliation by the Taliban. However, the evacuation deadline remained August 31st, as Biden already announced, which included the 6,000 troops sent on the day the Taliban took over Kabul (Carvajal & Vazquez 2021). And that was it. The last American plane to leave Afghanistan took off on August 31st at 7:29 pm, marking the 100% withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan (NDTV 2021) and starting a new-old era for Afghanistan, the one under the Taliban regime.

CONCLUSION

After twenty long years, America has finally, on August 31st, 2021, withdrew the last soldier from Afghanistan. The policy and manner of participation have changed over time, from the original intention to search for Osama bin Laden, overthrow the Taliban and suppress Al Qaeda, through the process of building a state based on democratic principles while gradually reducing the number of US and Allied troops operating on the ground, and eventually handing control over to the trained Afghan forces. In time, the direction that America decided to take, after the frustrating results on the ground, was to gradually, in the foreseeable future, withdraw completely from Afghanistan.

One of the steps towards that was the signing of the agreement in Doha, during the mandate of Donald Trump, between the USA and the Taliban, which aimed to “bring peace” to the country, and indeed, the agreement did bring peace, but only if interpreted from the position of the Taliban. Namely, despite the provisions in the agreement on how to reduce the level of violence (which, in itself, represented an empty wording, because it was a priori difficult to quantify how much violence there was before the agreement, while the additional problem was that the agreement did not contain mechanisms for implementing this provision) and how they would enter into talks with the Afghan government, the Taliban continued their campaign to reconquer the country. An event that further encouraged them to continue with their conquest of the country was the postponement of the deadline for the complete withdrawal of American troops, which, according to the agreement, was supposed to be May 1st, 2021, but Biden moved that date to, symbolically, September 11th, 2021, which was corrected shortly afterwards on 31st August. An escalation of violence followed, with an extremely successful campaign by the Taliban, who won over new provinces day after day, until they arrived at the front of Kabul, on

August 14th. The day after, Kabul itself was conquered, allowing the Taliban to *de facto* take control of the country; meanwhile, the then-President Ashraf Ghani abdicated and fled by helicopter to Tajikistan.

At the end, the results of the military intervention, in which over 2 trillion dollars were spent and in which almost 3,000 American soldiers were killed, are extremely debatable – even that is a stretch to say. Certainly, America has, at least declaratively, fulfilled its original goal for launching the military intervention, which was the elimination of Osama bin Laden and the suppression of AQ's actions, however, they have failed to build a functioning state, despite the enormous amount of money invested. In less than three months of the offensive, the Taliban, almost without breaking a sweat, took near complete control of the country, regained power and proclaimed the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. In the north, there is still the so-called The Northern Alliance, or National Resistance Front led by Ahmad Massoud, helped by other local warlords, however, Afghanistan and its people, until further notice, are left at the mercy of the Taliban regime.

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ПОВЛАЧЕЊЕ АМЕРИЧКИХ ТРУПА ИЗ АВГАНИСТАНА: ИЗЛАЗНЕ СТРАТЕГИЈЕ**

Резиме

Након двадесет дугих и фрустрирајућих година, Америка се најзад потпуно повукла из Авганистана. Овај рад даје преглед америчких акција у тој земљи, почевши са инвазијом за време администрације Џорџа Буша Млађег, преко ликвидације Осаме бин Ладе-на и сузбијања активности Ал Каиде, до Обаине администрације, током које је међународна ИСАФ мисија завршена и за време које је најављено повлачење трупа. Након тога следи преглед активности за време мандата Доналда Трампа, за време којег су се створили услови за дефинитивно повлачење, кроз потписивање споразума у Дохи између САД и Талибана. Последњи део рада посвећен је ситуацији на терену за време администрације Џоа Бајдена и током комплетирања повлачења, које су Талибани искористили да поново заузму целу земљу и прогласе исламски емират.

Кључне речи: *рат у Авганистану, америчко повлачење, Талибани, Споразум из Дохе, Исламски емират Авганистан, Авганистан*

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