



REASONS FOR FAILURE OF AFGHANISTAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCES

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the reasons for the inadequacy of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), formed by the multinational military force under the command of NATO. For this purpose, the security situation in Afghanistan in the last twenty years has been examined in three periods. The first period is International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operations from 2001 to 2010. During this period, ISAF took on the task of both ensuring national security and establishing the ANSF. The second period is the "transition" period between 2011 and 2014, in which security responsibility is transferred. The last period is when ANSF assumed the responsibility of the country's security. In order to understand the security and establishment/operation processes of the ANSF in all three periods, interviews were conducted with 28 officers (currently retired) assigned to the region by the Turkish Armed Forces (TAF). According to the results, ISAF could not stop the increasing attacks of the Taliban in the first period and could not seize the military initiative. The ANSF, which was formed in this period, entered the transition period before it could gain full operational competence due to a lack of training and equipment. Hearing that the United States of America (USA) started negotiations with the Taliban during the transition period was met with suspicion in the ANSF and negatively affected the operations. In the third period when the ANSF assumed security responsibility, the Taliban attacks continued to increase, and as a result, international forces withdrew from the country in September 2021, leaving Afghanistan to the Taliban. Other factors affecting the failure of the ANSF are the inability to set law and order in the country, the inability to prevent corruption, the lack of unity and solidarity among ethnic groups, and the lack of "national consciousness"

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Afganistan Ulusal Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin Başarısızlık Nedenleri

Öz

Bu çalışmanın amacı, NATO komutasındaki çok uluslu askeri gücün oluşturduğu Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin (AUGK), ülke güvenliğini sağlamada yetersiz kalmasının nedenlerini araştırmaktır. Bu amaçla, Afganistan'ın son yirmi yıllık süreçteki güvenlik durumu, üç dönem halinde incelenmiştir. İlk dönem, 2001-2010 yılları arasındaki ISAF(Uluslararası Güvenlik Destek Kuvveti) operasyonlarını içermektedir. Bu dönemde ISAF hem ülke güvenliğini sağlama, hem de AUGK'ni oluşturma görevini almıştır. İkinci dönem 2011-2014 yılları arasında, sorumluluğun devir-teslim edildiği "geçiş" dönemidir. Son dönem ise AUGK'nin ülke güvenlik sorumluluğunu üstlendiği dönemdir. Her üç dönemdeki güvenlik ve AUGK'nin kuruluş/operasyon süreçlerini anlamak için, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerince bölgede görevlendirilmiş 28 subay (halen emekli) ile mülakat yapılmıştır. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, ilk dönemde ISAF, Taliban'ın gittikçe artan saldırılarını durduramamış ve inisiyatifi ele geçirememiştir. Bu dönemde oluşturulan AUGK, eğitim ve donatım noksanlıkları nedeniyle tam olarak harekât yetkinliği kazanamadan, geçiş dönemine girilmiştir. Geçiş döneminde ABD'nin Taliban ile görüşmelere başladığının duyulması, AUGK'de şüpheyle karşılanmış ve operasyonları olumsuz etkilemiştir. AUGK'nin sorumluluğu üstlendiği üçüncü dönemde de Taliban saldırıları artarak devam etmiş ve sonuç olarak uluslararası güçler, Eylül 2021'de ülkeyi Taliban'a terk ederek çekilmiştir. AUGK'nin başarısızlığına etki eden diğer faktörler olarak; ülkede kamu otoritesi, kanun ve nizamın hâkim kılınamaması, yolsuzlukların önlenememesi, etnik yapılar arasında birlik ve beraberlik sağlanamaması ile "ulus bilinci" oluşmaması gibi konular belirtilmiştir.

Makalenin Türü: Araştırma Makelesi

Anahtar Kelimeler: Afganistan, Güvenlik, NATO, Taliban

JEL Kodu: D74

Yazarın Notu: Bu çalışma bilimsel araştırma ve etik kurallarına uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada etik kurul izni veya yasal/özel izin gerektirecek bir içerik bulunmamaktadır. Çalışma ile ilgili herhangi bir çıkar çatışmasının bulunmadığı SAVSAD Savunma ve Savaş Araştırmaları Dergisine yazar imzası ile beyan edilmiştir.

INTRODUCTION

After the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the strengthening of al-Qaeda and the Taliban posed a great threat to the security and stability of the country. Osama Bin-Laden, the leader of the al-Qaeda terrorist organization, led terrorist groups and organized attacks in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Sudan. The Taliban, on the other hand, allowed the Al-Qaeda terrorist organization to be established and sheltered in the regions they controlled in Afghanistan. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) declared al-Qaeda and the Taliban as terrorist organizations with Resolution 1267, adopted on October 15, 1999. This decision placed financial bans, travel restrictions, and arms sales barriers against both terrorist organizations.

Another point that destabilized Afghanistan was the assassination of Ahmet Shah Massoud on September 9, 2001, in Panshir. Ahmed Shah Massoud, who was killed in a suicide attack by two al-Qaeda terrorists posing as journalists, was one of the main rivals of the Taliban. Osama Bin-Laden strengthened his ties with the Taliban and his position in Afghanistan by organizing this assassination, which took place just two days before the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States (USA) (Bergen, 2006).

After the September 11, 2001 attacks, US President George Bush declared the "War on Terrorism". The first target was Afghanistan, where al-Qaeda and its leader are based. On October 7, 2001, the United States and Britain began to organize air campaigns against Taliban and al-Qaeda targets with the "Operation Enduring Freedom" (Hew, 2019). Soon after, US Special Forces units, along with local anti-Taliban groups in Afghanistan, began land operations. On November 9, 2001, with the capture of Mazar-i-Sharif by Uzbek General Rashid Dostum, the Taliban forces began to retreat to the Pakistani border. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC), with Resolution 1378, adopted on November 14, 2001, called on member states to establish a temporary administration in Afghanistan, send peacekeepers to the country, and begin providing emergency aid from the air. After the recapturing of the capital Kabul, the main tribes in Afghanistan formed the Interim Government on December 5, 2001, with the Bonn Treaty, and Hamid Karzai was appointed as President. The UNSC approved the Bonn Treaty with its resolution 1383, and the "International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)" was established with its Resolution 1386 (Klaiber, 2007).

ISAF Period and Security Situation (2001-2010)

ISAF started to be deployed in Afghanistan in 2001 upon the invitation of the Afghan Interim Government and the decision of the UNSC. ISAF's initial mission was to provide a safe environment in and around the capital, Kabul. The command and control structure was organized according to the division of tasks among the participating countries according to a six-month rotation. In August 2003, at the request of the Afghan government and with the approval of the United Nations (UN) organization, NATO assumed command of ISAF.

The purpose and structure of ISAF

ISAF's purpose was to help the Afghan Interim Government secure the country and establish the Afghan National Security Forces, thus

preventing Afghanistan from becoming a haven for terrorist groups again. For this purpose; first, security would be provided in Kabul and its surroundings, and then, public law and order would be ensured by being deployed throughout the country. At this stage, NATO, while carrying out security operations; on the one hand, would also handle the establishment, equipping, and training of the Afghan Security Forces (military and police). A transitional period would be planned for the transfer of responsibility to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), once the security throughout the country had been established. During the transition period, security operations would be carried out jointly, and responsibility would gradually be transferred to Afghan troops. After the transition period, the Afghan Security Forces will assume full responsibility for ensuring security throughout the country. At this stage NATO would be responsible for providing consultancy and, where necessary, supplementary training to the Afghan Security Forces, rather than conducting direct security operations (NATO, 2021a).

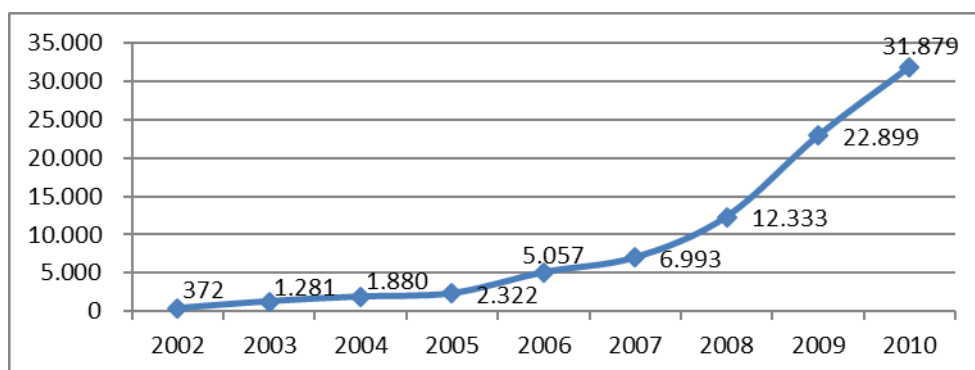
In October 2003, the United Nations authorized the extension of ISAF's mandate to the entire country with Resolution 1510. In the first stage, a unit under the command of Germany was organized as the "Regional Reconstruction Team (RRT)" in the city of Kunduz, located in the northern part of the country, in the context of pilot implementation. The northern region organization continued until October 2004, when the first phase was completed. On February 10, 2005, NATO announced that it would be deployed in the west of the country as a second phase plan. The organization in this region continued until September 2006. It was announced on December 8, 2005, that the third phase would begin to be organized in the southern region. The deployment in this region was completed on July 31, 2006, by taking command from the "Operation Enduring Freedom" units under the leadership of the USA. In the final stage, on October 5, 2006, the handover of command in the Eastern region was completed, and ISAF assumed responsibility for security throughout the country.

ISAF Period Security Situation

When ISAF began the mission in Afghanistan, the Taliban had largely withdrawn to the Pakistani border area. Therefore, in the initial period, there was a general recession in terms of security. While the number of attacks by the Taliban in 2002 was 372, this number increased to 1281 in 2003 and 1880 in 2004. With ISAF troops being deployed across the country between 2004-2006, the Taliban attacks continued to increase,

reaching 5057 in 2006. After ISAF assumed responsibility for security operations across Afghanistan under NATO command, there were large increases in Taliban attacks (12,333 in 2008 and 31,879 in 2010) (SIGAR, 2021).

Increasing Taliban attacks in Afghanistan caused a re-evaluation in the USA, which gave the biggest support to the NATO Afghanistan operation. With the plan he announced on February 17, 2009, US President Obama announced that 17,000 additional troops would be sent to stabilize the military situation in Afghanistan. Thus, the number of US troops in Afghanistan increased to 66,000. This number rose to 103,000 in 2010 and 111,000 in 2011 (Cordesman, 2021; s.43). In the same period, the number of NATO soldiers deployed in Afghanistan reached 140,000 (Hooker, Collins, 2015; s.411). Obama announced that the fight against terrorism in Afghanistan is very important. On the other hand, they will adhere to the calendar of withdrawal of troops from Iraq. In his new military strategy, which he announced on March 27, 2009, Obama emphasized the importance of stability in Pakistan for success in Afghanistan. For this purpose, on the one hand, it was envisaged to target and destroy the al-Qaeda and the Taliban terrorist posts that had been undertaken in Pakistan and to prevent border crossings with Afghanistan; on the other hand, to increase aid and support to Pakistan (CFR, 2021). In the same period, NATO countries decided to send 5,000 additional troops to support training activities in Afghanistan (NATO, 2021a). In May 2009, US Secretary of Defense Gates replaced the commander-in-chief in Afghanistan for the second time in a year. Following the change of command, security operations intensified in southern Afghanistan (CFR, 2021). In 2010, the US Commander-in-Chief in Afghanistan was replaced once again. However, Taliban attacks continued in this period. Information on the attacks by the Taliban during the ISAF period is shown in the graphic below:

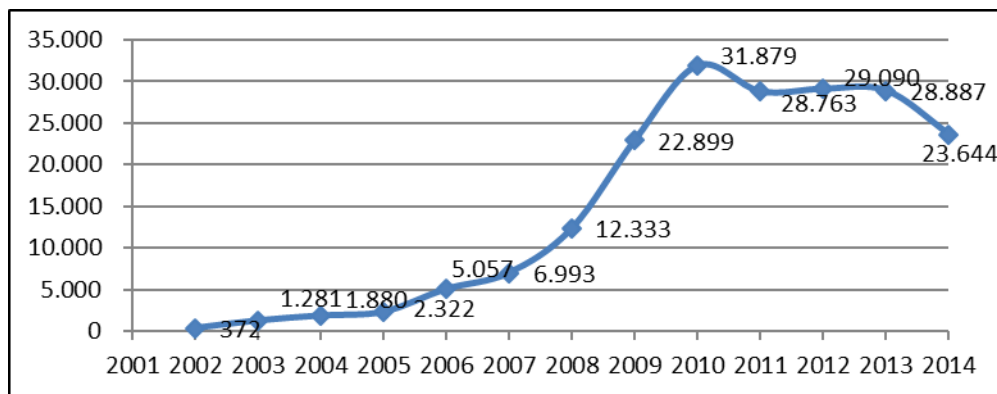


Graph 1: Number of Taliban Attacks during the ISAF Period (2002-2010)

Transition Period and Security Situation (2011-2014)

The Transition Period was launched in July 2011 with the agreement reached with the Government of Afghanistan at NATO's 2010 Lisbon meeting. A gradual handover is foreseen in this period, which is planned until the end of 2014. NATO forces gradually transferred responsibility for the operation and continued to support the Afghan Security Forces as advisors and trainers. As Afghan forces assumed regional responsibilities, NATO troops began reducing and sending back their forces along with advisors and trainers.

President Obama announced that preliminary talks were held with the Taliban in 2011 and that they were planning to start formal peace talks with the Taliban in 2013. In 2012, the Taliban canceled preliminary talks with the United States due to the US's failure to keep its word in the prisoner swap (CFR, 2021). However, in this period, the Taliban attacks continued with intensity, albeit partially decreasing compared to the previous period. While 28,763 attacks occurred in 2011, the number of attacks was 23,644 at the end of the period in 2014 (SIGAR, 2021). Below is the graph of the Taliban attacks that took place in the Transition Period, along with the previous period:



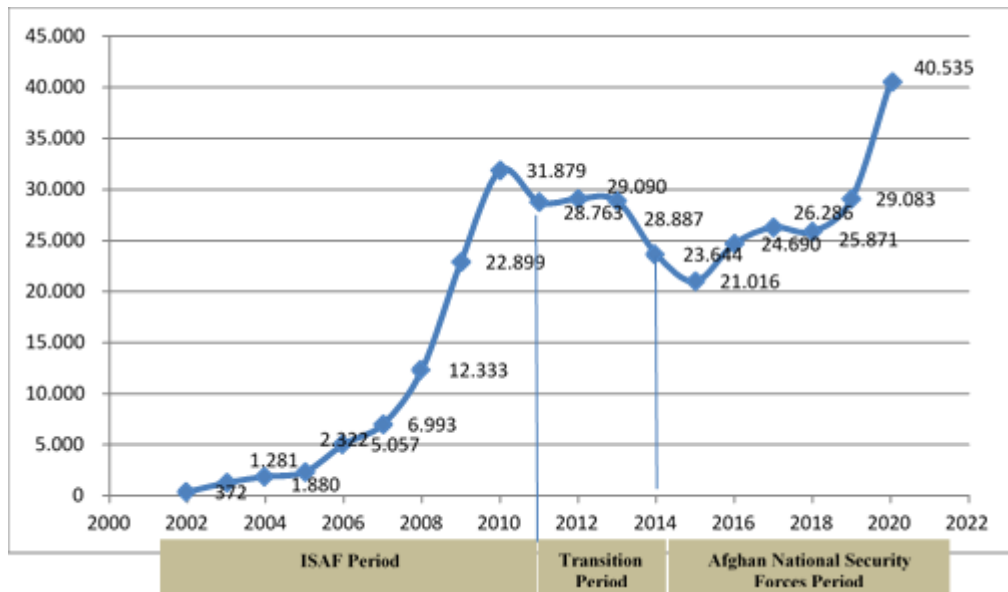
Graph 2: The numbers of Taliban attacks during the I. and II. periods

Afghan National Security Forces Period and Security Situation (2015-2021)

NATO member states and the Afghan government agreed at NATO's 2012 Chicago Summit to continue NATO's mission after the Afghan Security Forces assumed responsibility for homeland security. In this operation, called the "Resolute Support Mission (RSM)," NATO troops would not undertake combat missions and would provide training and consultancy services to the Afghan Security Forces. NATO's new mission in Afghanistan was approved by United Nations Security Council Resolution 2189. The RSM was formed from a central headquarters in Kabul and four regional headquarters: Mazar-i-Sharif in the north, Laghman in the east, Kandahar in the south, and Herat in the west (NATO, 2021b). With the launch of the RSM mandate, participating countries began to announce their plans for the withdrawal of non-training and consulting staff. US President Obama, in a statement on May 27, 2014, announced that they would withdraw the majority of their troops by 2016, including 9.800 soldiers in the first place (CFR, 2021).

The Afghan National Government and the Taliban started informal contacts in 2015, and it was decided to continue the talks. At NATO's 2016 Warsaw Summit, it was decided to increase the number of soldiers in the RSM from 13,000 to 16,000. In 2016, US President D. Trump appointed Zalmay Khalilzad, former Ambassador to Kabul, as a special envoy to hold talks with the Taliban (CFR, 2021). On February 29, 2020, the United States signed a treaty with the Taliban, agreeing to withdraw its forces from Afghanistan by May 2021. On April 14, 2021, NATO allies decided to withdraw RSM troops by May 1, 2021, considering that a military solution could not be established in Afghanistan (NATO, 2021b). The RSM ended in early September 2021 with the withdrawal of NATO troops.

The Taliban attacks continued with intensity during the period when the Afghan National Security Forces took over. Taliban attacks, which amounted to 21,016 in the first year of the mission, increased again to 26,286 in 2017, 29,083 in 2019, and 40,535 in 2020. Below is a graphic of the Taliban attacks that took place in the last two decades, when multinational forces were deployed in Afghanistan:



Graph 3: Taliban Attacks between 2002-2021

An Analysis of the Afghan National Security Forces Period (Interview)

Interviews were conducted with the officers assigned to the region by the Turkish Armed Forces to examine the period from January 1, 2015, when the Afghan National Security Forces took responsibility for security throughout the country until September 2021, when control of the country was transferred to the Taliban. The semi-structured interviews were conducted. Some of these interviews were carried out face-to-face, while the others were applied by e-mail. The 28 participants who agreed to be interviewed are still retired and have served in Afghanistan in different ranks (Major General-Major), years, duration and duties. The participants did not only answer the questions in the interview form as "yes/no", but also shared their views on the questions related to the "effectiveness of security operations across the country" at the end of each question and interview.

The US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) "Guide to Analysis of Insurgency (GAI)" was used in the review of the aforementioned period. This guide has been published in open sources since January 5, 2009 (Mason, 2015). In the beginning part of the guide, there are explanations about the definition, aims, types, and stages of insurgencies. In the section on the evaluation of insurgencies, the first part is the preparation period before the insurgency. This section includes evaluation criteria on pre-insurgency organization, militia/recruitment, training, and acquiring

sources. The second part of the guide deals with the development process of the insurgencies. In this section, there are subheadings of attitudes, organization, and security. The next section of the guide contains evaluation criteria for the last phase of the insurgency. In this section, determinants such as significant changes in internal and external support for the government, loss of control and power of the government over society are examined. Effective counterinsurgency is discussed in the last section. This section contains two topics that examine military and non-military factors (Guide to Analysis of Insurgency, 2009). In order to evaluate the "military dimension" of the security operations carried out in Afghanistan, the interview form was formed from the "Security" and "Military Factors" criteria in the mentioned guide. The data obtained through the interviews is presented below [The wording and terms of the questions in the interview form were taken from GAI as how they were written (without any changes in the original form)]:

Security

Do government forces adequately protect local supporters on a 24-hour basis?

All of the participants expressed the opinion that the government forces could not provide sufficient security to the local people. During those periods, the effectiveness of government forces in the eastern and southern parts of the country was almost non-existent. Even in the capital, Kabul, threats to public order and security were not adequately suppressed. During the examined periods, the issue of security remained one of the most fundamental problems in the country.

Do guerilla forces adequately protect local supporters on a 24-hour basis?

72% of the interviewees stated that the Taliban did not have full control over the people. However, the Taliban are organized across the country. The local organization of the Taliban goes back to the Soviet occupation period. There is a distinct Taliban influence in the eastern and southern parts of the country, especially in the countryside. The Taliban found the opportunity to get organized based on the people and to provide support from the people, especially in the regions where the Pashtun ethnic identity is widespread. In the northern and western regions, Taliban influence is weakening in areas where Turkmen, Uzbek, and Kyrgyz ethnic identities are common. However, the Taliban saw an opportunity to

maintain control locally in general due to the ineffectiveness of government forces and the fear and pressure they attempted to impose on the people.

Do national army “reaction forces” respond quickly and effectively to reports of guerilla attacks on local civilian militias or progovernment communities?

All of the participants gave a negative answer to this question. People in rural areas far from urban centers were left unprotected against the influence of the Taliban. In areas where the Taliban did not receive support, they were able to choose their way of oppressing the people and punishing them when necessary. In such cases, government security forces were either able to come to the scene of the incident after the Taliban had left the area or were ambushed on the way. The barracks where the security units were deployed in areas far from the city centers were mostly under the pressure of the Taliban. The security forces in these regions avoided operating in areas far from police stations or barracks, and were often able to conduct short-term operations at close ranges for their safety.

Do local government officials sleep in villages, or do they seek the protection of armed camps?

The vast majority of respondents (82%) reported that government security forces spend most of their shifts in the barracks. According to the observations of the participants, Afghan Security Forces go out of the barracks on a limited basis during the daytime hours, and take measures mainly for the safety and security of the barracks they are sheltering in at night. Even the existence of these barracks in some regions has become a security problem. An interviewee talked about some information that the security forces in some regions, such as Kapisa, had reached an agreement with the Taliban and that the Taliban gave the barracks personnel a short break every day to meet their daily shopping needs, provided they were unarmed.

Are national army troops viewed locally as threatening outsiders or as helpful allies?

A significant portion of the participants (72%) stated that the government sees the public in a neutral position. A low number of respondents (14%) thought that the government sees the public as supportive, while the other 14% believed that the government perceives the public as a threat. It is thought that this situation is caused by the

ineffectiveness of the government security forces as well as the fear of the Taliban in the public.

Are guerillas viewed locally as threatening outsiders or as helpful allies?

According to 72% of the respondents, local people do not directly support the Taliban. Because the people are afraid of the violence of the Taliban, they mostly remain silent and support them when necessary. Support for the Taliban is higher in the southern part of the country and the Pakistani border areas, and less in the northern part. In the northern region, under the control of General Rashid Dostum, in Mazar-i-Sharif, the influence of the Taliban remained almost non-existent.

Is the local militia seen as a source of protection by the rural population or as merely another distrusted police force?

According to 78% of the respondents, the public does not trust the local militia/guardians appointed by the government and considers them some sort of corrupted. It was explained by the participants that there were complaints about bribery in local security units, for example, bribes are to be paid at security points on the roads for passing without any control and investigations are made sometimes.

Military Factors

Leadership. The degree of professionalism that characterizes a country's military force.

Most of the participants (82%) stated that the security forces formed in Afghanistan were not at the level of discipline, structure, equipment, and training to resist the Taliban uprising. A national army and police force were established to ensure security in the country and suppress the Taliban uprising. The efforts to establish this power started mainly during the ISAF period. The transfer of authority and responsibility from NATO to this power began in 2011, with the expectation that the establishment works would be completed by the end of 2014. The interviewees stated that when Afghanistan National Security Forces took full responsibility of the country in 2015, they faced two main problems. The first of these problems is that the national security structure is not competent enough to stand on its own feet. As a matter of fact, after the transfer of security responsibility, NATO/US had to support this structure not only in training and consultancy but also partially with military support and especially financially. It was

additionally stated by the participants that virtual security units were created in some regions and that these units only existed on paper, and that the financial support transferred to these units was embezzled by the security unit chiefs, and investigations were opened for this reason. The second main problem in this regard is that the handover was made during the period when the Taliban attacks were at their peak. This national security structure, which could not be adequately trained and equipped, assumed the responsibility of the country before it could attain the ability and competence to resist the Taliban.

Strategy

The ability of counterinsurgent forces to employ the various unconventional strategies required for combating insurgents in the field.

All of the interviewees agree that in counter-insurgency operations, the link between the "strategic" level of planning and the "tactical" level covering the implementation in the field is broken. In other words, the command and control implementation at the strategic level is inadequate. The strategic organization suitable for and responding to the different levels of the threat posed by the Taliban in different regions and the ability to adapt to changing conditions and respond with flexibility could not be established.

Tactics

Deemphasize the concentration of forces and firepower and emphasize constant patrolling by many small, lightly armed units supported by larger backup forces.

All of the participants reported that there were serious deficiencies in this regard. The first of these shortcomings is the inability to fully establish and control the tactical-level units. On paper, units are established, but when the units are gathered and a roll call is taken, it is seen that less than half of the units are present in some regions. The main reasons for the shortage of personnel are desertion, insufficient discipline in the units, and the failure to document the number of personnel more than the actual numbers. The lack of education in the units is also at a significant level. The fact that NATO and other supporting countries did not send enough training personnel they promised, some of the incoming trainers were not competent, and the trainers from many countries could not provide training to the same

standard, prevented efficiency in training. Lack of equipment is another problem area. One reason for the lack of equipment is the insufficient supply of weapons and equipment that NATO and other supporting countries have promised. On the other hand, the non-standardization of weapons and equipment donated to Afghanistan caused significant disruptions in training, maintenance and supply. However, there are also deficiencies in the weapons and equipment distributed. In addition to the loss and damage that may occur due to combat conditions, there is also information on illegal sales of weapons and equipment. A former employee attending the interview stated that in an inspection carried out in the Paktika region, it was determined that there was only one adult in a local militia team consisting of 8 people, the others were children and there were only 5 rifles in the team.

Military Intelligence

The ability of the military-intelligence apparatus to collect, analyze, and exploit quality intelligence on guerilla personnel, modus operandi, and locations, not just on insurgent order of battle.

All of the participants stated that the collection, evaluation, interpretation of information and intelligence production were completely disrupted. They reported that, during the ISAF period, information gathering and intelligence production were mostly made with electronic capabilities, and after the transfer of authority, the intelligence production capability decreased further and therefore the operation units could not be supported with accurate and timely intelligence.

Troop behavior and discipline. The quality of the relationship between soldiers deployed in the field and the surrounding population.

Civil-military relations have been established mostly in the northern part of Afghanistan. Apart from this, civil-military cooperation and relations throughout the country have been a disruptive issue. Due to the pressure exerted by the Taliban on the public, people generally tried to remain neutral and kept a distance from the security forces when and where the pressure increased.

Air operations

The quality of air support to the government's ground counterinsurgency forces-for example, fire support, reconnaissance, supply, transport, and medevac.

Air support to the Afghan Security Forces was provided by NATO/US forces. 43% of the interviewees stated that the air support was not sufficient. Climate and terrain conditions and air defense threats/risks adversely affected the conduct of adequate air support operations. In addition, in 2020, the US completely ceased air support was a turning point in security operations in Afghanistan and the Taliban attacks reached the highest level (40,535 attacks).

Popular militia

A government's ability to establish and maintain a popular militia to assist regular forces in maintaining security.

Some of the interviewees (57%) stated that a local militia organization was established and deployed in the area. In southern and eastern Afghanistan, where the Taliban has more popular support, the establishment and deployment of local militias in the area remained weaker than in the northern and western regions. In general terms, an effective local militia organization could not be established that would give assurance to the local people, except for the big centers where foreign military elements are located (Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Jalalabad).

Additional Views on the Failure of the Afghan National Security Forces in Operations

To this open-ended question, 78% of the participants started by emphasizing the ethnic structure in Afghanistan. The population of Afghanistan consists of ethnic diversity, mainly Pashtun, Turkmen, Tajik, Uzbek and Baloch. The dominant element is Pashtun with around 40% population. The "Afghan nation" could not be formed because unity and solidarity could not be achieved among the ethnic structures in the country. Ethnic structures far from national consciousness often prioritize the interests of their group and ethnic affiliation over merit in appointments. Some of the interviewees stated that to prevent ethnic conflict in Afghanistan, an "ethnic quota" had to be set for the Afghan National Security Forces Staff. Competition between ethnic groups and lack of national consciousness caused low motivation in the security forces and inefficient operations.

According to the participants, the second factor that reduces motivation in the security units is that the security forces cannot reach the competence to operate on their own and need US/NATO support. The

departure of the US/NATO forces, which started on January 1, 2015, during the period when the country's responsibility was taken, caused pessimism in ANSF units, which did not yet have self-confidence. As a matter of fact, in 2020, when the US/NATO air support was cut off, there was a significant increase in Taliban attacks. On the other hand, the fact that the USA started negotiations with the Taliban during the transition period, damaged the determination and perseverance of the Afghan security elements in the field. The participants also added some other reasons such as serious problems in accessing clean drinking water, the very low level of education of the personnel employed in the security forces (some of them even illiterate), low salaries, widespread poverty and corruption.

Analysis

The United States and Britain began military operations in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001, with the "Operation Enduring Freedom". On 11 August 2003, NATO assumed command of ISAF. The purpose of ISAF was to help the Afghan National Government secure the country and help the Afghan National Security Forces to be established and developed, thus preventing Afghanistan from becoming a haven for terrorist groups again. For this purpose; Firstly, security would be provided in Kabul and its surroundings, and then public order and security would be provided throughout the country in stages. Afghan National Security Forces would be established, trained and equipped simultaneously with these operations, and then the security responsibility of the country would be transferred.

When ISAF took command, the Taliban had withdrawn to the Pakistani border. ISAF first started working to ensure security in the capital city of Kabul. Then, in December 2003, starting the establishment of four Regional Commands, ISAF expand operations across the country. The establishment of the regional commands was completed when the Eastern Region Headquarters, which was planned in the 4th phase, took over the command on October 5, 2006. In other words, it took three years for ISAF to be organized across the country. While ISAF was still trying to be organized across the country, the Taliban, as expected, increased their attacks in parallel with the expansion of NATO forces into the country. It suggests that NATO/USA did not learn from the ten-year Soviet occupation and came to the country without adequate preparation (Münch, 2020). Initial security operations with insufficient preparation presented an important opportunity to the Taliban, who had combat experience and competence from the Soviet occupation era. While the US/NATO troops were trying to get to know the country's geography, climate and people and to organize,

they were exposed to increasing pressure from the Taliban. Unlike NATO/US troops, the Taliban were organized in the country early. The Taliban knew the terrain, society and climate better. They were able to gain public support, albeit in various ways. While the annual number of attacks by the Taliban was 1,281 in 2003, when ISAF took office, this number increased by approximately 5 times to 5,057 at the end of 2006, when ISAF was organized throughout the country. In other words, from the very beginning, the Taliban sought to seize operational superiority by exerting increasing pressure on the tactical level.

ISAF tried to balance its security operations in the field for the first two years. By 2009, however, the Taliban had succeeded in consolidating offensive superiority and military initiative. In this process, as the US changes the Afghanistan general commander-in-chief and reinforces its forces every year, the number of attacks by the Taliban reached 22,899 in 2009 and 31,879 in 2010 annually. More specifically, US/NATO troops; in an environment where it could not establish operational superiority in the field, seize the military initiative and prevent the increase of Taliban attacks, decided to transfer the responsibility of security throughout the country (with the transition period) to the Afghan National Security Forces. In other words, the US/NATO troops have begun to hand over their already failed homeland security mission to the newly established Afghan forces, whose training, equipment and combat experience are very inadequate, and who do not even know enough about working methods at strategic level headquarters.

The interviewed participants stated that the Afghan forces could not operate alone, both in the transition period (2011-2014) and in the 2015 and later period when the Afghan National Security Forces were responsible. It has been observed that the Afghan security forces could not operate without the US/NATO forces even paying their salaries, and were generally unwilling and inefficient. The main reason for this negativity is not only training and equipment deficiencies. Even in the transition period, the news that the US had started unofficial talks with the Taliban caused suspicion and concerns in the Afghan National Security Forces. On the other hand, the fact that the NATO/US troops, which had transferred the responsibility of the operation, started to withdraw their military units other than training and consultancy, also increased the anxiety and reluctance of the Afghan forces, which will face the Taliban alone in the future.

The fact that the country has been under military occupation for many years and the lack of public order and authority is one of the main

reasons for the negative picture. The supply of clean drinking water in the country is one of the most fundamental problems. The literacy rate is very low. Illiterate police officers are inadequate in public order duties, such as document control, or are unable to report incidents. Even worse than that, it is the rivalry and contention between ethnicities. Long years of separation and rivalry prevented the formation of an "Afghan Nation". Instead of bringing all ethnic groups together and establishing a common future under the same flag, each ethnic group has tended to save itself. This contradiction and conflict not only revealed ethnic belonging instead of merit in appointments but also destroyed trust in state authority with corruption. Ethnic groups far from national consciousness, although wearing the same uniform, could not put up a common struggle for a common ideal, at the cost of their lives, and left the field to the Taliban.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of ISAF was to ensure the Afghan National Government's security and the establishment and development of the Afghan National Security Forces. Thus, Afghanistan would no longer be a safe zone for terrorist groups. However, it is seen that NATO/USA did not learn from the ten-year Soviet occupation and came to the country without adequate preparation. It was a big mistake for NATO/USA to start the operation without knowing the geography, climate and characteristics of the country's people and without the support of the local people. This situation presented an important opportunity to the Taliban, who knew the region and the people well from the very beginning. While the US/NATO troops were trying to get to know the country's geography, climate, and people, and were trying to get organized, they were exposed to increasing pressure from the Taliban. In other words, NATO/US had to start operations in adverse conditions and could not initially get field control.

In the ongoing process, ISAF neither could ensure the security of the country, nor could ensure that the Afghan National Security Forces were established, equipped, trained at proper level and reached the competence to take responsibility for the country. During this period, with the organization of ISAF throughout the country, the Taliban maximized their attacks, put pressure on the field and kept its operational superiority.

Although ISAF failed to achieve its mission of building security and Afghan Security Forces throughout the country, it handed over the mission

that it had already failed to achieve to a newly formed army that had insufficient training, equipment, and will to fight. Naturally, both the transition period (2011–2014) and the period when Afghan forces assumed responsibility for the country (2015 and later) have been periods in which Taliban dominance continued in the field.

One of the main reasons for the negative picture is that the country has been under occupation for many years. Occupation conditions have eliminated law and order. Infrastructure and superstructure in the country have been destroyed to a large extent. The education system has collapsed. The literacy rate is very low. The supply of clean drinking water in the country is one of the most fundamental problems. While this chaotic environment in the country made the operations of NATO/US forces difficult, it made the mission of the Taliban easier.

One of the most important reasons for the failure of the Afghan National Security Forces is the lack of unity and solidarity among different ethnic structures in Afghanistan and the lack of awareness of the "Afghan Nation". This situation caused inefficiency in the military struggle. On the other hand, in the years when the responsibility for security was transferred to the Afghan National Forces, the USA's unofficial contacts and negotiations with the Taliban and the official announcement of this later broke the determination of the Afghan units. The inability of the Afghan security forces to be adequately trained, equipped, and united for a common purpose were other reasons for the operation's failure.

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GENİŞLETİLMİŞ ÖZET

Giriş

Afganistan’da Sovyet işgalinin sona ermesinden sonra, El-Kaide ve Taliban’ın güçlenmeleri, ülke güvenliği ve istikrarı için büyük bir tehdit oluşturmaktaydı. Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi (BMGK), 15 Ekim 1999’da kabul ettiği 1267 sayılı karar ile El-Kaide ve Taliban’ı terör örgütü olarak ilan etti.

11 Eylül 2001 Saldırıları sonrası, ABD Başkanı George Bush, “Terörizme Karşı Savaş” ilan etti. İlk hedef, El-Kaide ve liderinin üslendiği Afganistan’dı. ABD ve İngiltere, 7 Ekim 2001’de, “Kalıcı Özgürlük Harekâtı (Operation Enduring Freedom)” ile Taliban ve El-Kaide hedeflerine karşı hava harekâtı düzenlemeye başladı. Kısa süre sonra, ABD Özel Kuvvetler birlikleri, Afganistan’daki Taliban karşıtı yerel gruplar ile birlikte, kara harekâtına başladı.

Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi, 14 Kasım 2001’de kabul ettiği 1378 sayılı karar ile üye ülkelere, Afganistan’da geçici bir yönetim kurulması, ülkeye barış gücü gönderilmesi ve havadan acil yardıma başlanması konusunda çağrıda bulundu. Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi, 1383 sayılı kararı ile Bonn Antlaşmasını onayladı ve 1386 sayılı kararı ile de “Uluslararası Güvenlik Yardım Gücü (International Security Assistance Force-ISAF)” kuruldu.

Amaç

Bu çalışmanın amacı, NATO komutasındaki çok uluslu askerî gücün oluşturduğu Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin (AUGK), ülke güvenliğini sağlamada yetersiz kalmasının nedenlerini araştırmaktır. Bu amaçla, Afganistan’ın son yirmi yıllık süreçteki güvenlik durumu, üç dönem halinde incelenmiştir. İlk dönem, 2001-2010 yılları arasındaki ISAF operasyonlarını içermektedir. Bu dönemde ISAF hem ülke güvenliğini sağlama, hem de AUGK’ni oluşturma görevini almıştır. İkinci dönem 2011-2014 yılları arasında, sorumluluğun devir-teslim edildiği “geçiş” dönemidir. Son dönem ise AUGK’nin ülke güvenlik sorumluluğunu üstlendiği dönemdir. Her üç dönemdeki güvenlik ve AUGK’nin kuruluş/operasyon süreçlerini anlamak için, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerince bölgede görevlendirilmiş 28 subay (halen emekli) ile mülakat yapılmıştır.

ISAF Dönemi (2001-2010)

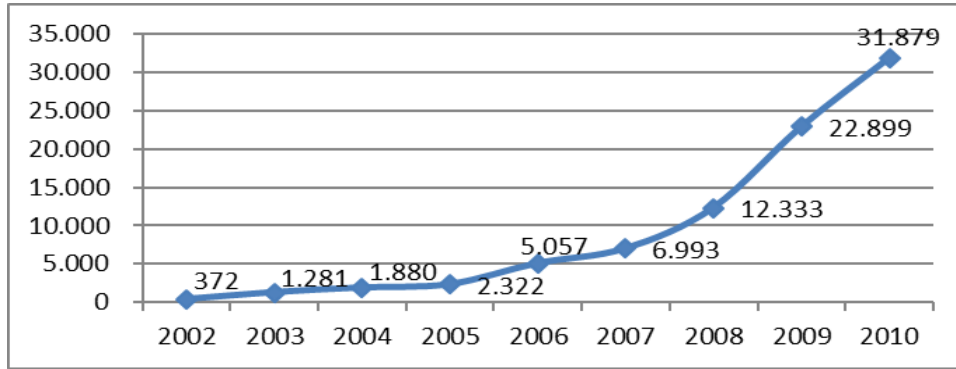
ISAF, Afganistan Geçici Hükümetinin daveti ve BMGK kararı ile 2001 yılında Afganistan'da konuşlanmaya başladı. 2003 Ağustos'ta, Afganistan Hükümetinin talebi ve Birleşmiş Milletler Teşkilatının onayı ile NATO, ISAF'ın komutasını üstlendi. Teknik olarak ISAF, Birleşmiş Milletler Sözleşmesi VII. Bölümle yetkilendirilmiş, çok uluslu bir kuvvetti.

ISAF'ın amacı, Afgan Geçici Hükümetinin ülke güvenliğini sağlamasına ve Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçlerinin kurulup gelişmesine yardımcı olmak ve böylece Afganistan'ın yeniden terör grupları için güvenli bir sığınak olmasını önlemektir. Bu amaca yönelik olarak; önce Kabil ve çevresinde güvenlik sağlanacak, ardından aşamalar halinde ülke genelinde tertiplenerek, asayiş ve güvenlik sağlanacaktı. Bu aşamada NATO, bir yanda güvenlik operasyonları yaparken; diğer yanda Afganistan Güvenlik Güçlerinin (asker ve polis) kurulması, donatılması ve eğitilmesi işlemini de yürütecekti. Ülke genelinde güvenlik sağlandıktan sonra sorumluluğun Afgan Hükümeti Güvenlik Güçlerine devri için bir geçiş dönemi planlanacaktı. Geçiş döneminde, güvenlik operasyonları ortak olarak yapılacak ve kademeli olarak sorumluluk Afgan birliklere devredilecekti. Geçiş döneminin ardından, Afganistan Güvenlik Güçleri, ülke genelindeki güvenliğin sağlanması konusunda tam sorumluluk üstlenecek, bu aşamada NATO, doğrudan güvenlik operasyonları yapmak yerine, Afgan Güvenlik Güçlerine danışmanlık ve gereken hallerde tamamlayıcı eğitim vermekle sorumlu olacaktı (NATO, 2021a).

Birleşmiş Milletler teşkilatı, Ekim 2003'de, 1510 sayılı karar ile ISAF görev alanının tüm ülkeye yayılmasına yetki verdi. ISAF'ın ülke genelinde tertiplenmesi yaklaşık 3 yıl sürdü ve 5 Ekim 2006'da Doğu bölgede de tertiplenme ve komuta devir-teslimi ile ISAF ülke genelinde güvenlik sorumluluğunu üstlenmiş oldu.

ISAF Afganistan'da göreve başladığında, Taliban büyük oranda Pakistan sınırı bölgesine çekilmişti. Bu nedenle başlangıç döneminde, güvenlik anlamında, genel bir durgunluk vardı. Taliban tarafından 2002 yılında gerçekleşen saldırı sayısı 372 iken bu sayı 2003 yılında 1281, 2004 yılında ise 1880 olmuştur. ISAF birliklerinin 2004-2006 arasında ülke genelinde tertiplenmesiyle, Taliban saldırıları artmaya devam etmiş ve 2006 yılında 5057 olarak gerçekleşmiştir. ISAF'ın NATO komutasında olmak üzere, Afganistan genelinde güvenlik operasyonları sorumluluğunu almasının ardından, Taliban saldırılarında büyük artışlar (2008'de 12.333 ve 2010'da 31,879) meydana gelmiştir (SIGAR, 2021).

Afganistan'da artan Taliban saldırıları, NATO'nun Afganistan operasyonuna en büyük desteği veren ABD'de yeniden bir değerlendirme yapılmasına neden olmuştur. ABD Başkanı Obama, 17 Şubat 2009'da açıkladığı plan ile Afganistan'da askeri durumu dengeleyebilmek için, 17.000 ilave asker gönderileceğini duyurdu. Böylece ABD'nin Afganistan'daki asker sayısı 66.000'e çıktı. Bu sayı 2010'da 103.000 ve 2011'de 111.000'e kadar yükseldi (Cordesman, 2021; s.43). Aynı dönemde NATO'nun Afganistan'da görevli asker sayısı 140.000'e ulaştı (Hooker, Collins, 2015; s.411). Mayıs 2009'da ABD Savunma Bakanı Gates, Afganistan'daki genel komutanı, bir yıl içinde ikinci kez değiştirdi. Komuta değişikliğinin ardından, Afganistan güneyinde, güvenlik operasyonları yoğunlaştırıldı (CFR, 2021). 2010'da, ABD'nin Afganistan Genel Komutanı bir kez daha değiştirildi. Bununla birlikte, bu dönemde de Taliban saldırıları da artarak devam etti. ISAF döneminde, Taliban tarafından yapılan saldırı miktarına ait bilgiler aşağıdaki grafiktedir:



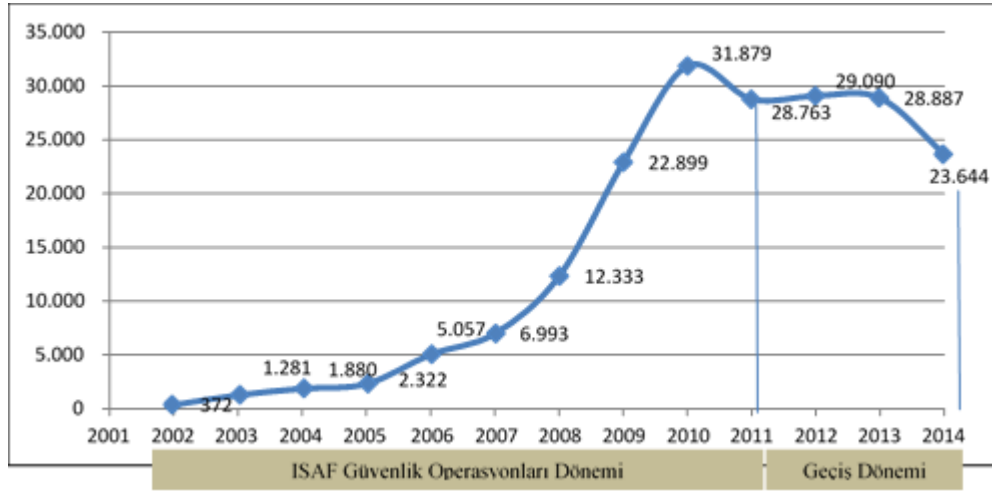
Grafik 1: ISAF Dönemi Taliban Saldırıları

Geçiş Dönemi ve Güvenlik Durumu (2011-2014)

NATO'nun 2010 Lizbon toplantısında, Afganistan Hükümetiyle varılan antlaşmayla, Geçiş Dönemi, Temmuz 2011'de başlatıldı. 2014 yılsonuna kadar planlanan bu dönemde, kademeli bir devir teslim öngörüldü. NATO kuvvetleri kademeli olarak operasyon sorumluluğunu devrederek, danışman ve eğitici olarak Afgan Güvenlik Güçlerini desteklemeye devam etti. Afgan güçleri bölge sorumluluklarını aldıkça, NATO birlikleri, danışman ve eğitici personel dışındaki kuvvetlerini azaltmaya ve ülkelerine göndermeye başladı.

ABD Başkanı Obama, 2011'de Taliban ile ön görüşmeler yapıldığını, 2013'de ise Taliban ile resmi barış görüşmeleri başlatmayı

planladıklarını açıkladı. Taliban 2012’de, mahkûm takasında ABD’nin sözünü tutmaması nedeniyle, ABD ile yapılan ön görüşmeleri iptal etti (CFR, 2021). Bununla birlikte, bu dönemde de Taliban saldırıları, önceki döneme göre kısmen azalmakla beraber, yoğunlukla devam etti. 2011 yılında 28.763 saldırı meydana gelirken, dönem sonu olan 2014’de saldırı sayısı 23644 olarak gerçekleşti (SIGAR, 2021). Önceki dönemle birlikte, Geçiş Döneminde gerçekleşen Taliban saldırılarına ait grafik aşağıdadır:

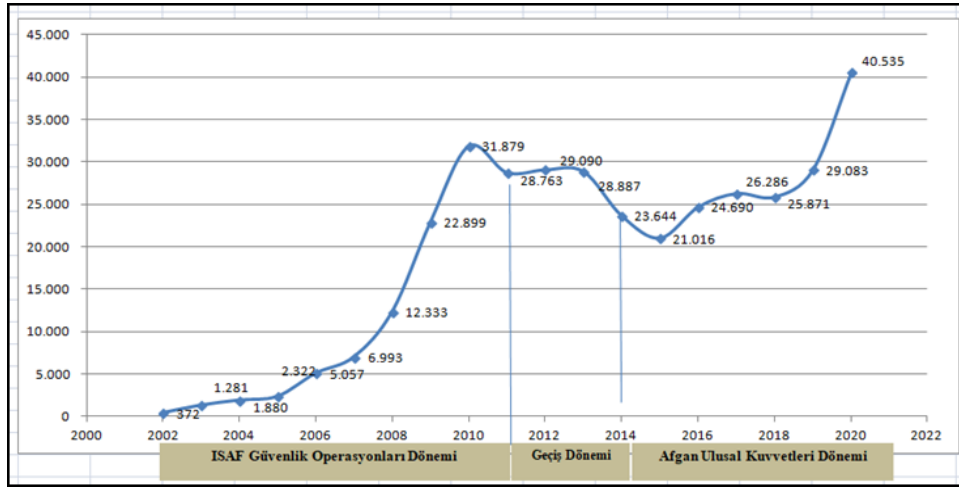


Grafik 2: I. ve II. Aşamada Taliban Saldırıları

Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri Dönemi ve Güvenlik Durumu (2015-2021)

NATO üyesi ülkeler ve Afganistan Hükümeti, NATO’nun 2012 Chicago Zirvesinde, Afgan Güvenlik Kuvvetleri ülke güvenlik sorumluluğunu aldıktan sonra da NATO’nun görevine devam etmesini kararlaştırdılar. “Kararlı Destek Görevi (Resolute Support Mission-RSM)” adı verilen bu operasyonda NATO birlikleri muharip görevler üstlenmeyecek ve Afgan Güvenlik Güçlerine eğitim ve danışmanlık hizmeti verecekti. NATO’nun Afganistan’daki yeni görevi, Birleşmiş Milletler Güvenlik Konseyi 2189 sayılı kararıyla onaylandı. RSM Kabil’de bir merkez karargâh ve kuzeyde Mezar-ı Şerif, doğuda Laghman, güneyde Kandahar ve batıda Herat olmak üzere dört bölge karargâhından oluşturuldu (NATO, 2021b). RSM görevinin başlaması ile birlikte, katılımcı ülkeler, eğitim ve danışmanlık dışında kalan personelin çekilmesi konusunda planlarını açıklamaya başladılar.

Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin görevi devraldığı dönemde, Taliban saldırıları yoğunlukla devam etti. Görevin ilk yılında 21.016 olarak gerçekleşen Taliban saldırıları, daha sonra yeniden artarak, 2017’de 26.286, 2019’da 29.083 ve 2020’de 40.535 oldu. 29 Şubat 2020’de ABD, Taliban ile bir antlaşma imzalayarak, Afganistan’daki güçlerinin, Mayıs 2021’e kadar ülkeden çekilmesi konusunda anlaştı. NATO müttefikleri, 14 Nisan 2021’de, Afganistan’da askeri bir çözüm oluşturulamayacağı gerekçesiyle, RSM birliklerinin, 1 Mayıs 2021’e kadar çekilmesini kararlaştırdı (NATO, 2021b). RSM Eylül 2021 başlarında, NATO birliklerinin çekilmesi ile sona erdi. Afganistan’da çok uluslu güçlerin de görev yaptığı son yirmi yılda gerçekleşen Taliban saldırılarına ait grafik aşağıdadır:



Grafik 3: Çok Uluslu Güçlerin Görev Yaptığı Dönemlerde Taliban Saldırıları

Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçleri Döneminin İncelenmesi (Mülakat)

Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Güçlerinin 1 Ocak 2015’de, ülke genelinde güvenlik ve asayiş sorumluluğunu alıp, ülke kontrolünün Taliban’a geçtiği Eylül 2021 tarihine kadar ki dönemini incelemek için, Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerince bölgede görevlendirilen subaylarla mülakatlar (görüşme) yapılmıştır. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin bir kısmı yüz yüze, diğerleri e-posta yöntemiyle gerçekleştirilmiştir. Görüşme yapmayı kabul eden 28 katılımcı halen emekli konumunda olup, Afganistan’da farklı rütbe (Tümgeneral-Binbaşı), yıl, süre ve görevlerde bulunmuşlardır. Katılımcılar mülakat formundaki sorulara sadece “evet/hayır” şeklinde cevap vermemiş, her soru ve görüşme sonunda yer alan “ülke genelindeki güvenlik operasyonlarının etkinliğine” ilişkin sorulara ait görüşlerini paylaşmıştır.

Anılan döneme ilişkin incelemede, ABD Merkezî İstihbarat Teşkilatı (Central Intelligence Agency, CIA) Ayaklanmaları İnceleme Rehberi (Guide to Analysis of Insurgency) kullanılmıştır. Söz konusu rehber, gizlilik derecesi kaldırılarak, 5 Ocak 2009'dan itibaren açık kaynaklarda yayımlanmıştır (Mason, 2015). Rehberin başlangıç bölümünde ayaklanmaların tanımı, amaçları, çeşitleri ve aşamalarına ait açıklamalar bulunmaktadır. Rehberin ikinci bölümü, ayaklanmaların gelişim sürecini aittir. Bu bölümde, tutumlar (attitudes), örgütlenme (organization) ve güvenlik (security) alt başlıkları yer almaktadır. Rehberin sonraki bölümü, ayaklanmaların son aşamasına ait değerlendirme kıstaslarını içermektedir. Son bölümde, ayaklanmalara karşı koymada etkililik (effective counterinsurgency) ele alınmıştır. Bu bölüm, askeri ve askeri olmayan faktörlerin incelendiği iki konuyu içermektedir (Guide to Analysis of Insurgency, 2009). Afganistan'da sürdürülen güvenlik operasyonlarının “askerî boyutunu” değerlendirmek için, mülakat formu, söz konusu rehberdeki “Güvenlik (Security)” ve “Askeri Faktörler (Military Factors)” kıstaslarından oluşturulmuştur.

Sonuç

Afganistan’da görev yapmış subaylarla yapılan görüşmelere ve yapılan incelemeye göre, ISAF görevi ile başlayan dönemde, NATO/ABD kuvvetleri, ülkede güvenliği sağlayamadıkları gibi Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin kurulup donatılması, eğitilmesi ve ülke sorumluluğunu alacak yetkinliğe ulaşmasını da sağlayamamıştır. ISAF dönemi, Taliban’ın saldırılarını en üst seviyeye çıkararak, alanda baskı oluşturduğu ve operasyon üstünlüğünü elde bulundurduğu bir dönem olmuştur.

ISAF ülke genelinde güvenlik tesisi ve Afgan Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin inşası görevlerini başaramamasına rağmen, kendi başaramadığı işi, henüz yeni kurulmuş, eğitim, donatım ve savaşma azmi olmayan bir orduya (AUGK) devretmiştir. Doğal olarak, gerek geçiş dönemi (2011- 2014) ve gerekse Afgan güçlerin ülke sorumluluğunu üstlendiği dönem (2015 ve sonrası), alanda Taliban üstünlüğünün devam ettiği bir süreç olmuştur.

Afgan Ulusal Güvenlik Kuvvetlerinin başarısızlığının askeri/güvenlik konularındaki nedenleri konusunda, mülakatlardan elde edilen sonuçlara göre; Afganistan’da farklı etnik yapılar arasında birlik ve beraberliğin sağlanamaması ve “Afgan Ulusu” bilinci oluşmaması, askeri mücadelede verimsizliğe neden olmuştur. Güvenlik sorumluluğunun Afgan Ulusal Güçlerine devredilmesine başlanan yıllarda, ABD’nin Taliban ile gayri resmi temas ve görüşmelere başlaması ve bunu daha sonra resmi olarak da açıklanması, alandaki Afgan birimlerin mücadele azmini kırmıştır. Afgan güvenlik güçlerinin yeterince eğitilememesi, donatılamaması ve ortak bir amaç için birleştirilememesi, ülkede kamu otoritesi, kanun ve nizam yetersizliği, yaygın yoksulluk ve eğitim seviyesinin düşük olması da, diğer sebepler olarak belirlenmiştir.

Thanks note:

For the interview in this article, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the former Afghanistan military attaché and Special Advisor to the Afghanistan Chief of the General Staff, retired Artillery Staff Colonel Şener TEKBAŞ, for sharing his extensive knowledge/experience and helping to get in touch with personnel who served in Afghanistan.

Teşekkür notu:

Bu makaledeki mülakat için Afganistan’da görev yapmış personel ile temasa geçmeme yardımcı olan ve Afganistan konusundakiengin birikimini paylaşan, Afganistan eski Askeri Ataşesi ve Afganistan Genelkurmay Başkanı eski Özel Danışmanı emekli Topçu Kurmay Albay Şener TEKBAŞ’a en içten teşekkürlerimi sunarım.