

## ИСТОРИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ И АРХЕОЛОГИЯ

## العلوم التاريخية و الآثار

## HISTORY AND ARCHEOLOGY

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### Islam and Clash of Civilizations

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**Abstract.** The article discusses the confrontation between the two cultural poles of the West and the East, the two Powers – Russian Federation and the United States, and also, to a lesser extent – China, for the period during last conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan. Despite the collapse of the socialist bloc and the emergence of a unipolar world, the US-Russian confrontation did not disappear, but moved to a different format. West and East are two opposites opposing each other. After the Second World War, this confrontation intensified, which led to a bipolar system, during which the countries of the world made their choice which of the blocs to join.

But at the same time, within these blocks there were various factions that could oppose each other, although their struggle was not ideological and systemic in nature, but more of a local everyday life. Numerous military losses of the world war made it clear that humanity would not be able to withstand another such large-scale war; they understood this, first, in the capitals of the superpowers. This forced to develop a new strategy of struggle, using local confrontations in third world countries. In such a situation, the opponents had to act informally, not through the regular army, through financial and political support, sending military specialists, weapons, no matter how many. Many Cold War conflicts and the conflicts that are going on today followed such scenarios.

Along with the main players, there are situational and strategic allies, the presence of which does not mean friendship and sympathy, but a temporary political and strategic position. The article draws an analogy between the Basmak movement in Central Asia and modern conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan in order to emphasize

historical, ideological and political parallels, as well as make a comparison between the past and the present.

**Keywords:** conflict, civilization, Afghanistan, Syria, confrontation, war, Cold War

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## Исторические науки и археология

Научная статья

### Ислам и противоборство цивилизаций

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**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается противостояние двух культурных полюсов западного и восточного, двух держав США и России, а также в меньшей степени Китая на фоне нынешних вооруженных конфликтов в Сирии и Афганистане. Несмотря на распад социалистического блока и появление однополярного мира, американо-российское противоборство не исчезло, а перешло в иной формат. Запад и Восток это две противостоящие друг другу противоположности. После Второй Мировой Войны это противостояние усилилось, что привело к биполярной системе, в ходе которой страны мира сделали свой выбор, к какому из блоков примкнуть.

Но вместе с тем, внутри этих блоков были различные фракции, которые могли противостоять друг другу, хотя их борьба носила не идейный и системный характер, а больше локально-бытовой. Многочисленные военные потери мировой войны, дали понять, что еще одну подобную крупномасштабную войну человечеству будет не под силу выдержать, понимали это в первую очередь в столицах сверхдержав. Это заставило выработать новую стратегию борьбы, используя локальные противостояния в странах третьего мира. В такой обстановке противники должны были действовать неформально, не через регулярную армию, через финансовую и политическую поддержку, отправляя военных специалистов, оружие, причем не важно в каком количестве. По таким сценариям шли многие конфликты Холодной Войны и конфликты, которые идут сегодня.

Наряду с основными игроками есть ситуативные и стратегические союзники, наличие которых означает не дружбу и симпатию, а временную политическую и стратегическую позицию. В статье проводится аналогия между Басмаческим движением в Средней Азии и современными конфликтами в Сирии и Афганистане, чтобы подчеркнуть исторические, идеологические и политические параллели, а также привести сравнение между прошлым и настоящим.

**Ключевые слова:** конфликт, цивилизация, Афганистан, Сирия, противостояние, война, Холодная война

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## Introduction

West and East confront each other; this conflict began long ago. The West was like a kind of antipode to the East, while the East is a completely different and multipolar opposite. This confrontation intensified especially after the Second World War, when a bipolar system, two capitalist and communist blocs, arose in the world. Within these blocs there were various factions that could oppose each other, but their struggle was not systemic and ideological in nature. The West is personified by the United States and European countries, as well as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, the East is primarily Russia (both the USSR and the current Russian Federation) and China. To crush the fascist system, which included Germany, Italy, Japan, the western and eastern blocs united, but at the end of the war, the preconditions were created for the emergence of the Cold War.

Islamic civilization today is not represented by any power or even country. Because since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most of the Muslim countries have been occupied by Western forces. Countries such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran escaped direct occupation, but there came to power forces ready to fully fulfill the order of the Western powers. And even after the withdrawal of Western forces from these countries, the value system there began to dominate based either on liberal Western democracy or on communism, that is, on those worldviews that, although not biblical, came from Christian civilization. Islam as a system of values was pushed into the background, but if any of the Muslims crossed the border assigned to him, then he naturally experienced the full power of the punitive apparatus that Western civilization left in his country, in the face of the new regime. This phenomenon became one of the reasons for what is today

called fundamentalism and terrorism. Numerous military losses of the world war, made it clear that humanity will not survive another such large-scale war, they understood these all over the world, and especially in the capitals of the superpowers. This forced to develop a new strategy of confrontation, using local conflicts in third countries. There, the superpowers had to act unofficially, through financial and political assistance, sending military specialists and weapons. Many conflicts of the Cold War followed such scenarios and those conflicts that continue to this day. In addition to the direct players, there are situational and strategic allies, whose presence does not mean friendship and sympathy, but a temporary political and strategic position.

## Methods

The Islamic factor is a separate political force that plays a significant role in various conflicts, while Afghanistan and the Middle East are important regions that affect the situation in the Islamic world. Historically, these regions have played an important role in the cultural, spiritual and military development of the Islamic civilization. Even in the doctrine itself, there is a mention of these lands. However, it is impossible to fully understand the essence of what is happening in these countries without studying the history of this region. Suyunbaev and Uzbekov write that the state is a historical reality, which in any historical period includes not only the present, but also the past [1]. Historically, a large Syria included not only the territory of the current Syrian Arab Republic, but also Lebanon, Jordan, Palestine, Cyprus, the Sinai Peninsula and partly Turkey. This territory was called in Arabic – Sham. Afghanistan is also part of the once large sub-region called Khorasan, located at the junction of the Persian, Indian and Turkic civilizations. In addition to Afghanistan, the large Khorasan included the territories of Pakistan, Iran, the Central Asian republics and East Turkestan.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, these countries lost their independence and became colonies and protectorates of stronger powers. After the end of the First World War and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Middle East was divided between the British and French Empires. Khorasan was divided into British (Afghanistan, Pakistan), Chinese (East Turkestan) and Russian (Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan) spheres of influence. Iran was divided between Britain and Russia. Cultural conflicts, according to Vaclav Havel, are intensifying, and today they have become more dangerous than ever before in history<sup>1</sup>. It is necessary to study the essence of these conflicts through internal and external components. The internal component is the subject of the conflict itself, and the main players who resolve their issues. The

<sup>1</sup> Havel V. The New Measure of Man. New York Times. 1994:127.

external component is those who, using the right alignment on the part of certain players, decide their own interests in the region.

On this occasion, Huntington wrote: “... in such situations it becomes clear who is considered a real friend, and who is considered not so a real friend” [2]. As Safarov writes, in recent years, the world community – Western forces represented by the United States and Eastern forces represented primarily by Russia – are seriously concerned about the emergence of a religious-fundamentalist movement, which created the image of the savior of the states of the Near and Middle East and the return of people to the foundations of the rule of the Prophet Muhammad [3]. Each of these players has a different degree of concern. If the United States fears for its oil interests in the Middle East, then Europe actually borders on a blazing region, in which the fire broke out not without its help. The degree of Russia’s concern lies both in the threat to its own interests, such as the construction of a gas pipeline from Qatar, and in the fact that this conflict may spread to the regions of the Russian Federation with the Muslim population.

Whatever it was, Russia and the United States in these conflicts act from different positions and seek to influence each other with the same force – the Islamic factor. For example, during the Soviet-Afghan War, fighters of the Afghan opposition were considered in the United States as a legal force and fighters against communism, but during the American Afghan War they are considered as terrorists, while representatives of the Taliban movement are invited to Moscow, as their predecessors were invited by ideology to Washington and European capitals. But the most important thing is that in both cases the Afghans were not executors of the interests of one or another power, as, for example, the Viet Cong – the USSR, the PRC, or the Nicaraguan contras – the United States.

The role of the Islamic factor in the bipolar and monopolar world has always consisted of intransigence, passionarity, and rejection of extraneous ideology and alien way of life. Table 1 shows the internal component of the conflict, table 2 – the external component, revealing which countries have benefited from this war.

**Table 1. Internal Component**

| Opposing Sides |  |  |
|----------------|--|--|
| Players        | Afghan Resistance –<br>Mujahideen  | Communist government and Soviet troops   |
| Objectives     | 1. To overthrow the power of the communists and prevent the Sovietization and secularization of the people, to preserve the old Islamic way of life.<br>2. Drive the Soviet troops out | 1. To turn Afghanistan into a zone of Soviet influence – a communist country modeled on the Soviet republics of Central Asia.<br>2. Move your borders to the shores of the Indian Ocean. |

|        |  |   |
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|        | of the country.  |   |
| Result | The power of the communists was overthrown, the Soviet army left the country. Afghanistan remained an Islamic country. | 1. The USSR was unable to achieve its goal.<br>2. Soviet expansion was stopped. |

**Table 2. External Component**

| Opposing sides |   |   |
|----------------|---|---|
| Countries      | USA, China, Iran, Pakistan, Arab countries  | India   |
| Objectives     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. USA: to weaken the influence of the USSR.</li> <li>2. China: to weaken the USSR after the aggravation of relations between the USSR and the PRC.</li> <li>3. Iran: to spread influence over the Shiite population of the country.</li> <li>4. Pakistan: religious assistance to their fellow believers, whom the communists imposed their way of life, and to prevent the spread of the communist threat as in neighboring Afghanistan.</li> <li>5. Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and others) are allies of the West. Strengthening communism was not beneficial to them. This is also because these regimes began to gradually recognize Israel, and in order to get rid of the protests of the religious masses, they decided to simply get rid of it by redirecting it to Afghanistan, where they found a real use.</li> </ol> | India did not take a direct part in the conflict. The USSR and Afghanistan were India's friends and allies. This was because Kabul began to put forward territorial claims against their main enemy – Pakistan, where the Pashtun and Baluch tribes, related to the Afghans, lived. Such a plan, which, in essence, resembled Bangladesh 2, suited both India and the USSR. |
| Result         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. USA – USSR were defeated. The Americans got a new enemy, whom they once helped to crush the USSR.</li> <li>2. China – the USSR collapsed Moscow's influence in Central Asia and in the region weakened, which allowed Chinese goods to flood the markets.</li> <li>3. Iran – received the support and recognition of the Shiite population of Afghanistan.</li> <li>4. Pakistan – avoided the potential export of the communist revolution.</li> <li>5. Citizens of Arab countries who went through a military school in Afghanistan returned to their countries, bringing many problems to the authorities who wanted to get rid of them, hoping that the war in Afghanistan would destroy them.</li> </ol>  |   |



As can be seen from the tables, not everyone who won, won absolutely, because a new problem arose in place of the bygone problem, and this conflict did not fade away, but was transformed into the next one. Tables 3 and 4 discuss the **US-Afghan conflict**.

**Table 3. Opposing Sides**

| <b>Opposing sides</b> |   |   |
|-----------------------|---|---|
| <b>Players</b>        | <b>Afghan resistance – Taliban, foreign volunteers from Muslim countries.</b>   | <b>Pro-American government and NATO troops</b>  |
| <b>Objectives</b>     | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. To overthrow the power of American puppets and prevent the Westernization and secularization of the people, preserving the old way of life and the laws of Sharia.</li> <li>2. Drive American troops out of the country.</li> </ol>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Make Afghanistan an American zone of influence, a liberal and secular country.</li> <li>2. Suppress the forces of Islam, which, in the event of the victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan, will start a conflict in the Middle East, harming the interests of the United States and Israel.</li> </ol>                  |
| <b>Result</b>         | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Taliban defeated the foreigners, as when their ancestors did with the USSR and the British Empire.</li> <li>2. The Taliban have shown that they are a real political force.</li> <li>3. For the first time in the Islamic world after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, a political entity emerged, which began to play by the rules of political Islam.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Americans have not achieved their goals.</li> <li>2. The regime in Kabul, without American support, will be in the role of Saigon in front of the Viet Cong, when the Americans have left there.</li> <li>3. American foreign policy has weakened; the US economy will not pull another protracted conflict.</li> </ol> |

**Table 4. External Component**

| <b>Outside opposing sides</b> |   |   |
|-------------------------------|---|---|
| <b>Countries</b>              | <b>Russia, China, Iran, Pakistan</b>  | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Arab countries</li> <li>2. India</li> </ol>   |
| <b>Objectives</b>             | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Russia: to prevent the USA from gaining a foothold on its southern borders.</li> <li>2. China: to push through Afghanistan the project of the New Silk Road, to stop the influence of India.</li> <li>3. Iran: to weaken US influence in the region.</li> <li>4. Pakistan wants to stop the influence of India on Afghanistan.</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The Arab countries, which supported the Afghan resistance against the USSR, changed their attitude in unison with the US policy. Jordan, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates sent their military contingents along with NATO troops to Afghanistan and supported the coalition financially. Theologians in pro-government positions began to stigmatize the Taliban, their allies, and those who expressed sympathy for them as apostates and troublemakers. The governments of these countries took criminal measures against citizens who took part in the</li> </ol> |

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|   |  | <p>conflict or showed sympathy for the Taliban.</p> <p>2. India supports the government in Kabul, which is associated with an attempt to create an unfriendly rear to Pakistan. India fears that the victory of the Taliban will indirectly make itself felt in Kashmir, especially since a certain part of the population of this state and partly the rest of the Muslim population of India is clearly sympathetic to the Taliban.</p> |
| Result  | For the aforementioned players, the main goal has been resolved – the United States has not consolidated its position in the region and they will have to negotiate with a new player. |   |
| <p><b>Note</b></p> <p>The anti-American position of Russia, China, Iran and Pakistan on the Afghan issue does not mean that they see their full-fledged ally in the Afghan resistance. They understand that the withdrawal of the United States from the country can create problems based on religious and political feelings and this can be surrendered in their countries and the countries of their allies. Moreover, such precedents have already taken place, such as the Waziristan conflict in Pakistan, Sunni separatism in Iranian Baluchistan and Uighur separatism in China.</p> |  |   |

Thus, the ending Afghan conflict solved certain tasks, but at the same time revealed new problems that were dormant before.

The Syrian conflict is presented in the Tables 5 and 6. The number of players here is undoubtedly higher and the realities of the conflict are somewhat different from Afghanistan.

**Table 5. Opposing Sides**

| Opposing sides |   |  |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|---|--|
| Players        | Syrian opposition, foreign volunteers from Muslim countries   | Syria, Iran, Russia, Hezbollah, Shiite volunteers from Afghanistan, Iraq, Yemen and Pakistan | Turkey, Qatar, Syrian National Army   | USA - NATO, Arab countries, Syrian Democratic Forces, YPG-PKK                                    |
| Objectives     | Overthrow Asada mode consisting of Alawite minority in predominantly Sunni Syria. Establish Islamic | 1. The Assad government wants to suppress the riot. The Alawite minority faces a choice:     | Turkey and Qatar want to strengthen their influence in the region through the | The interests of the West in Syria have a special position. On the one hand, the Assad regime is |



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|        | <p>rule, which was abolished after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment of the French protectorate.</p> <p>exile or extermination by the Sunni majority, which is very angry at the results of the war and the casualties.</p> <p>2. Russia does not want to lose a naval base in the Mediterranean in the city of Tartus. Does not want Qatar to build a gas pipeline through Syria. A large contingent of citizens of Russia and the CIS are fighting in the ranks of the Syrian rebels.</p> <p>3. Iran, Hezbollah and other Shiite volunteers want to make Syria a Shiite country.</p> | <p>Syrian National Army. Turkey wants to create a buffer state in northern Syria so as not to have unfriendly Shiite and Kurdish forces on the borders. A certain part of the Syrian opposition sees Turkey as the heir to the Ottoman Empire. At the same time, despite the problems with the West, Turkey is a NATO member, and its attitude towards the Syrian opposition is being coordinated with the United States, in particular on the issue of preventing the creation of a religious state in Syria on the model of the Afghan Taliban.</p> | <p>disadvantageous to the West. However, at the same time, its fall is unprofitable, since the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan showed what would happen after the withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria. Syria is not Afghanistan, Syria is the gateway to Europe and Israel. Who will be the next target for the Islamist-minded Syrian opposition is obvious to everyone.</p> |
| Result | Unknown   |   |  |

**Table 6. External players**

| <b>Opposing sides – from outside</b> |   |  |
|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <b>Countries</b>                     | <b>Israel</b>   | <b>China</b>   |
| Objectives                           | Israel is supporting the Syrian rebels because it does not want Hezbollah and pro-Iranian forces to be strengthened on its borders. | China is supporting the Assad government because it sees its downfall as a threat to its own interests in the Middle East. The support stems from the fact that there are many Uighurs among the Syrian opposition, who in the future, gaining experience, may pose a threat to Chinese interests. |

The tables 5 and 6 examined the confrontation between the United States and the USSR – Russia in the context of Syria and Afghanistan. The similarity with the Cold War lies in the fact that they do not fight directly, but with local forces. The difference is that local forces do not always share the ideology and politics of the one whose interests coincide with their struggle. In addition, if today they were allies, then tomorrow they may be opponents. As an example from the past, we can cite the Basmak movement in Central Asia and its relationship with British intelligence. Soviet propaganda unequivocally branded the Basmachis as the fifth column of the British Empire in Turkestan, and this version is partly correct. Of course, the Basmachis were a strong buffer for keeping the exports of the World Communist Revolution, and especially for the campaign of the Red Army to the Bay of Bengal, which was planned by Trotsky L. D. Britain was not profitable for the victory of the Basmachis and for Turkestan to gain independence from Russia, since this would automatically inspire the Muslim population of British India to similar actions. Britain wanted to leave Turkestan to Russia, but at the same time delay its advance south. Something similar can be seen today in the conflict in Syria, where the role of the Basmachi is played by local Sunni rebels. The United States, Israel and Europe do not like the regime of Bashar al-Assad, behind which are their opponents in the person of Russia, Iran and China, but at the same time, they are not interested in overthrowing this regime, because what happened in Afghanistan after the execution of Najib should not in their opinion, it will be repeated in Syria.

Plastun writes that in the emergence of new challenges, response measures were taken both at the national and at the level of international structures and organizations<sup>2</sup>. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization was established, which actively cooperates with NATO, with both organizations having a number of overlapping tasks in conducting political events in the region. In this regard, Singer and Wildavsky, 1993 wrote that scientists analyze the world in terms of East-West, North-South, and center-periphery pairs [4]. Muslims traditionally have a division into the world of Islam and the world of another faith, or the world of confrontation. According to Shaimerdenova, one of the

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dialog.tj/news/saifullo-safarov-osnovnye-puti-i-factory-vlovlecheniya>

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factors, uniting the Central Asian states is their belonging to the Muslim world, however, the role of Islam in each state is not the same and the current interaction of the Central Asian states is developing rather ambiguously [5]. Saz proposes to apply the balance of power model in Central Asia, applying the American and Turkish models in addition to the Russian and Chinese ones [6]. However, the growing religious influence in the region also cannot be ignored, especially given the fact that the Central Asian region is part of a large sub-region of Khorasan, which for thousands of years was the intellectual granary of the Islamic world and the center of the Great Silk Road.

## Conclusion

The conflicts in Syria and Afghanistan are attracting the attention of global players. Syria is a gateway to Europe, Afghanistan is a gateway to the CIS, China and India. It is necessary to approach the problems of this region with the utmost attention and caution, to study in more depth its religious, social and cultural eclecticism. An overview of this topic through the prism of the conflict of civilizations gives us the opportunity to understand and determine how circumstances will develop in the future if we do not make timely and appropriate decisions. Each civilization and culture has its own values, and in countries where different interests intersect, this can either result in a constructive partnership, or develop into another conflict. Especially considering that every global, regional, national player has its own understanding of the balance of power. In conclusion, the author wishes to cite *Koran, Sura Al-Imran, 104: Let there be a group among you who call others to good, and enjoin what is right, and forbid what is wrong those who do this shall be successful* [7], [8], [9], [10].

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