

Russia Seeks to Use the Taliban in the Fight Against Islam

(Translated)

News:

On April 17, 2025, the Supreme Federal Court of Russia officially removed the Taliban from its list of terrorist organizations. The decision was made at the request of the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Security Service (FSB).

According to Russian officials, this move reflects a "realistic political approach" toward developments in Afghanistan and could lay the groundwork for formal engagement with the Taliban — although Moscow has yet to officially recognize the group.

Comment:

In 2003, amid the U.S.-led "War on Terror" and the occupation of Afghanistan, Russia designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization. That decision not only stemmed from concerns over the spread of Islamist influence in the region but also signaled alignment with Western security policy at the time.

In recent years, faced with the growing threat of ISIS in Afghanistan and Central Asia — especially in northern Afghanistan — Russia has established informal channels of cooperation with the Taliban. Despite maintaining an official posture of caution, Moscow now views the Taliban as a necessary actor in the regional security landscape.

The recent delisting is not an act of sympathy, but rather a reflection of Russia's growing concern over transnational Islamist groups — including Central Asian factions embedded within the Taliban itself. At the same time, recent security summits in the region, led by Russia and China, have explicitly identified Hizb ut-Tahrir as a significant threat, noting its active presence in Afghanistan. Russia's objective appears to go beyond engagement with the Taliban; it seeks to instrumentalize the group to contain other Islamic movements in the region.

While this move is framed as a matter of national security for Russia and its Central Asian allies, it does not represent a principled stand against the United States. Rather, it complements the very strategy Washington once pursued. The U.S., which formerly targeted the Taliban as a terrorist threat, now sees the group as a means to secure controlled stability in Afghanistan. Russia is effectively following the same trajectory — just as its 2003 designation of the Taliban mirrored Washington's position at the time, today's delisting reflects a broader shift in Western counterterrorism priorities.

During the U.S.-Taliban peace negotiations, Russia hosted several meetings that helped reinforce the Doha process. While these talks were publicly framed as efforts to foster peace, their underlying objective was to constrain ideological Islamic movements and limit the Taliban's regional role. Today, both Moscow and Washington aim to position the Taliban as a national governing authority — one that can act as a buffer against any Islamic movement that threatens the interests of either East or West. President Vladimir Putin even described the Taliban last year as "Russia's partner in the fight against terrorism."

This shift in Russia's policy illustrates a broader truth: that the modern nation-state system — regardless of its diplomatic rhetoric — ultimately functions as a tool for suppressing Islamic aspirations and neutralizing movements perceived as threats to global power and order. Like the United States, Russia is an occupying force with a documented history of violence and intervention across the Muslim world — from Afghanistan to the Middle East and Central Asia.

In this context, the Taliban's removal from the terrorist list is not a recognition of Islamic legitimacy, but a strategic move to turn the group into a geopolitical instrument for containing Islamic movements. These developments once again affirm that it is only the Islamic Caliphate that derives its political vision from Islamic belief — defining alliance and enmity not on the basis of national interest or strategic threat, but solely on the basis of faith and disbelief.

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Yosuf Arsalan

Member of the Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir in Wilayah Afghanistan