News & Comment

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Russia and Afghanistan: Expanding Influence Under the Guise of Security Cooperation

(Translated)

News:

Sergey Naryshkin, Director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service, visited Kabul on Wednesday, October 14, 2026, and held talks with Abdul Haq Wasiq, Director General of Intelligence of the ruling regime in Afghanistan, as well as several senior officials of the regime. The expansion of bilateral relations, the exchange of intelligence information, and the strengthening of security cooperation between Russia and the ruling regime in Afghanistan were identified as the main topics of these meetings. (BBC Persian)

Comment:

This visit comes at a time when concerns over security threats in Afghanistan and the wider region, particularly the presence of jihadist groups on Afghan territory, have consistently been among the major issues of concern and discussion for regional powers, including Russia and China. Furthermore, recent tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have added to the complexity of the region's security dynamics.

Russia is the first country to have officially recognized the ruling regime in Afghanistan. Sergey Naryshkin's visit to Kabul can also be assessed within the broader context of Russia's expanding political and security relations with the ruling regime in Afghanistan. Russia officially recognized the ruling regime in Afghanistan in July 2025. Since then, both sides have emphasized the expansion of security and military cooperation in recent months and have reached agreements in this regard.

Russia is among the countries that have had serious security concerns regarding Afghanistan following the developments of 2021. This is because Afghanistan shares borders with three Central Asian countries, namely Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. These countries fall within Russia's sphere of influence and are regarded as its backyard. On the other hand, the presence of Central Asian jihadist groups in Afghanistan, including the East Turkestan Islamic Party, Ansarullah of Tajikistan, and Uyghur groups, has heightened Russia's security concerns at the regional level. Recently, during a meeting of the Moscow Format, Russia explicitly expressed its concerns over the activities of groups it describes as terrorist organizations.

In addition to these developments, following the events of 2021, the mining sector in Afghanistan, particularly gold extraction, has experienced considerable growth. Various countries, including China, have entered the gold-mining sector in Afghanistan, making China's presence in the country an important consideration for both Russia and the US. It should also be noted that China, like Russia, has faced serious security concerns regarding Afghanistan following the developments in the country. Accordingly, China has sought to establish close relations with the ruling regime in Afghanistan in order to reduce the security threats it perceives as originating from Afghan territory. Afghanistan shares a border with China, and the presence of Uyghur Muslims in Afghanistan is considered a serious threat by China.

One of the major objectives behind the visits of Russian intelligence officials to Afghanistan, as well as Russia's efforts to establish and expand political, economic, intelligence, and military relations with the ruling regime, is to prevent the regime from

developing excessively close ties with the US, China, and other global powers. This is because Russia considers the expansion of American influence in the region a serious threat. Russia is engaged in the war in Ukraine while simultaneously facing numerous economic and military challenges. Therefore, it seeks to manage regional crises.

One of the developments that Russia views as an opportunity and seeks to exploit to the fullest extent is the tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which has intensified in recent months. Pakistan, with the green light from the US, is attempting to exert pressure on the ruling regime in Afghanistan to compel it to comply with the demands of both countries. However, the ruling regime in Afghanistan has so far not aligned itself with their demands and objectives in the region.

Russia seeks to take advantage of this opportunity by assuming a mediating role in resolving tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, thereby highlighting its regional and historical position in the process. In this context, coinciding with the visit of the Director of Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service to Afghanistan, Russia's Minister of Internal Affairs also traveled to Pakistan on October 14 for a four-day visit, during which he held discussions with Pakistani officials. Earlier, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov had announced during a Moscow Format meeting that his country was prepared to mediate between Afghanistan and Pakistan to normalize relations and bring an end to tensions.

Meanwhile, the ruling regime in Afghanistan, under the current circumstances and due to its political and economic challenges, is seeking to engage with various countries. The closure of the borders between Afghanistan and Pakistan for nearly a year has exacerbated Afghanistan's economic and transit-related difficulties. Consequently, the ruling regime in Afghanistan is searching for ways to address these challenges and is attempting to open new routes for expanding its trade and transit relations, particularly through Central Asia and Russia.

From an Islamic perspective, seeking assistance from non-Muslim (Kafir) states is not permissible for Muslims. Therefore, any form of cooperation must be undertaken with due consideration for Islamic rulings, the interests of the Muslim Ummah, and the historical experiences of the Muslim people of this land. Afghanistan must not be allowed to become an arena for competition among major powers.

According to Islamic values, Russia is regarded as a belligerent (Muhareb) and occupying state, and its crimes will never be erased from the memory of Muslims. In particular, Muslims of this region will never forget the coups, occupations, bombardments, and millions of victims resulting from Russian interventions. From Russia's role in weakening the Ottoman Caliphate and participating in the partition of Muslim lands, to its domination over vast areas of Central Asia and the Caucasus, its occupation of Afghanistan, the bloody suppression of Muslims in Chechnya, and its support for dictatorial regimes across the Islamic world, all constitute part of this country's historical record. Russia's direct military intervention in Syria and its support for Bashar al-Assad's regime, as well as the restrictions imposed on Islamic values and activities in Central Asian countries, further demonstrate the continuation of a Russian foreign policy centered on securing colonial interests and expanding its influence.

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