

## The New Afghan Taliban Government in Afghanistan: Governance Issues

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### Abstract

*The Afghan Taliban take over in August 2021 surprised the whole world since the twenty years long stay of the foreign troops in Afghanistan came to an end in a very dramatic way. The strategy adopted by the Taliban in the initial stages remained very normal and asked the foreign troops to move safely from the country. Taliban needs to focus on maintaining peace and stability in the country vis a vis strengthening the security paradigm of the country to thwart further incursion by the other countries. Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan has shown the failure of the theory of 'Realism' and has proved that the world can no longer be conquered on the basis of force and that negotiation and table talks must provide basis for the maintenance of peace and stability. Research questions include: how does the world see the Taliban government, what roles does the Afghanids play for bringing peace and stability and how do the Taliban rule over the country in a chaotic situation. Theoretical framework for the study is provided by the realism.*

### Introduction

Afghanistan has been observing foreign aggression and invasions since long. The Russians and the British empires had to battle over it during the 19<sup>th</sup> century while the Soviet Union and the United States had to intervene during the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Reuters, 2021). During the last 25 years, the Taliban had to take control of the country despite the fact that the United States and allied partners were still there to protect the key installations and sectors of the country. With the emergence of the Taliban in the most dramatic way while capturing the country in just 11 days may usher in a new era of victory encompassing the new Great Game which may have great repercussions for the neighboring country like Pakistan. The western world is of the view that Pakistan has close ties with the Taliban but this has been denied by the Pakistani government.

### Objectives

The study seeks to find out the issues of governance faced by the New Afghan Government

### Research Questions

- i) How does the world see the Taliban government?
- ii) What role does the Afghanids play in bringing peace and stability to the country?
- iii) How do the Taliban rule over the country in a chaotic situation?

### Problem Statement

The takeover of Kabul by the Afghan Taliban and changing the very nomenclature of the country as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan surprised the whole world when they came to power in the most

dramatic way. Not only the regional community but also the international community remained silent for the moment since their government is different from the one which they ruled during the period of 1996-2001. But situation became more complex when the Taliban imposed ban on the women's education in December 2022.

### **Significance of the study**

The study is very significant and is the first of its kind since it focuses on the issues faced by the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in the current scenario. The changing of the very nomenclature of the form the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan shows much relevance to the concept of Taliban and the religious doctrine that they have been embarking upon since the last three decades.

### **The fall of Kabul**

The takeover of the country by the Afghan Taliban created suspense in the international community since the United States and allied powers had already spent twenty years in Afghanistan. During the stay of the foreign troops in Afghanistan, different strategies were adopted by the US for maintaining law and order situation in the country. The sudden capture of Kabul by the Taliban showed the failure of the theory of 'Realism' since it believes in the doctrine of 'might is right' and proves the selfishness as the inherent element amongst the human beings besides focusing on the system of anarchy- pertaining to the absence of a determinate authority in the world for bringing peace and stability and strengthening the security paradigm of the world.

On the occasion of capture of Kabul by the Taliban, the Pakistani Prime Minister, Mr. Imran Khan termed it as the breaking of the 'shackles of slavery' by the Taliban. Since fall of Kabul to Taliban, they are in continuous struggle to work out a viable plan of government for the country which is going to be 'inclusive' of all the stakeholders in the country. Islamabad greatly remains concerned about the inclusive political settlement of the issue of

Afghanistan by bringing peace and stability in the country. But despite all the efforts that may be made by either Pakistan or by the regional dynamics the fate of the country of Afghanistan is going to be determined by the Afghan people themselves.

The Taliban have also ruled over Afghanistan during 1996-2001 while looking down upon the government of Burhanuddin Rabbani as weak, corrupt and anti-Pashtun. The four years of civil war (1992-1996) created popular support for the Taliban as they were thought to have the capability to run the country in a better way than their predecessor (Clayton, U.S. Military Withdrawal and Taliban Takeover in Afghanistan: Frequently Asked Questions, 2021 ). At that time the Taliban were able to capture Kandahar in November 1994, by launching a series of attacks that resulted in the fall of Kabul on September 27, 1996 (Clayton, 2021 ). The Taliban ruled over the country for about five years whereby they had to impose strict adherence and interpretation of Islam in areas it controlled and enforced harsh punishments, including public executions that created hatred among the international community. Such was the strictness of rules that ban was imposed on certain activities such as the use of Television, Western music, and dancing by inflicting harsh punishments on the wrong-doers and public execution of women for alleged adultery (Clayton, 2021 ).

A meticulous look in to the state of affairs in Afghanistan shows that there has been a clash of interest between the Taliban and the other stakeholders in the past and even now but this was thought to be determined by the future form of government in the aftermath of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan (Tariq, 2021). Till now, the Afghan Taliban is ruling the country but is going to show strictness to some extent in policies which may create problems of law and order in the country. But this time, the Taliban seems more composed and calculated by showing flexibility in their attitude as far as the formation of the government is concerned. Now, the Taliban has appointed Muhammad Hasan Akhund as the head of the new caretaker government (ALJAZEERA,

2021). The list of cabinet members issued by the chief spokesman of Taliban, Zabihullah Mujahid on September 7, 2021 was denominated by the members of the group's old guard, on the ground that no women was included in the cabinet. Among others, Abdul Ghaani Baradar, has been nominated as the deputy leader while Sirajuddin Haqqani, son of the founder of the Haqqani network, has been named as Interior Minister. Mullah Omer's son Mullah Mohammad Yaqub has been nominated as Defense Minister, Hidayatullah Badri has to act as the acting Minister for Finance, while Amir Khan Muttaqi, Taliban's negotiator in Doha, has been named as Foreign Minister (ALJAZEERA, 2021).

### **Women Seats in the Parliament during the US presence in Afghanistan**

The fall of the Taliban rule and the subsequent Bonn Agreement in 2001 provided women with never-before-seen opportunity for political participation and involvement in a variety of everyday activities (Sopko, 2021). Women were awarded 180 out of 1500 delegates in the Emergency Loya Jirga of 2002, which provided for the appointment of an interim administration (Emadi, 2008). Out of the 504 delegates to the Constitutional Loya Jirga in 2003, 114 were women (Lough, 2009). Following the implementation of a Constitution that reserved 68 seats out of the total 249 seats in the Lower House of the parliament and 17 out of the 102 seats in the Upper House of the parliament, women were able to gain the majority of seats in the elections of 2004. Afghanistan Constitution Articles 83 and 84, talk about the Women's Rights, and Gender Equality. Due to the active involvement of women in the political sphere of the nation, during the 2018 legislative elections, women won 19 seats in the Upper House and 67 seats in the Lower House, bringing their total representation in both Houses of the parliament to 86. (Tariq, 2021) The percentage of seats held by women in the Lower House is 27%, which is greater than the percentage of seats held by women in the

United States, Pakistan, and Iran, which are each at 20% and 14%, respectively.

During the fall of Kabul to the hands of Afghan Taliban, the new government pledged to include women in the Afghan Parliament and were also in favor of protecting their rights but the situation turned a dramatic event in December 2022 when ban was imposed on the women's education in the university. The Taliban seemed quite flexible as compared to their previous regime but this act of banning the girls from University education may have great repercussions on the future politics of the country. This may also invoke the wrath of the regional and the international community and may invite the foreign forces to intervene in their internal affairs as was witnessed in the aftermath of the 9/11 syndrome. The Taliban has shown stubbornness over this issue and have been pressing hard to impose more restrictions on the women's rights (Ahmadi & Worden, 2022). World leader and social activists are struggling hard to work for the betterment of women rights and bringing normalcy in the country but no positive achievement has yet been made so far (Ahmadi & Worden, 2022)..

### **The History of Taliban**

The Taliban are predominantly Pashtun, Islamic fundamentalist group that returned to power in 2021 as a result of a twenty-year waging war against the US government and allied partners (Backgrounder, 2021 ). It is an event of utmost significance that the Taliban took control of most of the important cities of Afghanistan including Kabul, the capital city, by August 2021, prognosticating their achievement in a very short span of time. As a result of the Afghan Taliban victory, the United States had to withdraw her remaining forces from Afghanistan. But it is also worth mentioning that the Taliban gave safe outlet to the US forces whom they have been fighting for the last twenty years. It is a retest for the Taliban as to whether they will impose harsh rules or would make compromises on certain issues regarding imposition of harsh rules

despite pledges to respect rights of women and minority communities by providing amnesty for the people who have extended support the US efforts for facilitating the US-Taliban peace settlement (Backgrounder, 2021 ). Previously, they had imposed strict measures against the women in the country and they were debarred from going to schools, colleges, universities and even going for jobs. It was also rumors that the US withdrawal from Afghanistan will determine whether women would be able to maintain their current status in the country or they would face the same fate as they did in the past (Tariq, 2020). It is also surprising that Taliban, like the past, banned women from going to universities (BBC, 2022). The ban further restricts women's education - girls have already been excluded from secondary schools since the Taliban returned last year.

The era of Taliban that that ended in 2021 began in 2001 when the US and her allied powers, in retaliation to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 launched a military campaign against the Al-Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban government that harbored and supported it (Clayton, 2022). In the twenty years war, the US had to suffer a total of 22, 000 military casualties, including 2,400 fatalities in war-stricken country of Afghanistan (Clayton,2022). The US government had to spend approximately about \$144 billion for the reconstruction and strengthening of security paradigm of Afghanistan. In the backdrop of dethronement of the Taliban and the Al-Qaeda, the US placed an interim Afghan government with the US and international financial support. No stone was left unturned by the US and allied powers in installing a democratic set up inclusive of all the heterogeneous elements but no efficacious result could only last as long as the US had to stay in the country.

The most significant development reached when after over a year of deliberations by the Trump administration in 2018, an agreement was reached at between the US and the Taliban in which the US showed its commitment of withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan by May 2021. The

Taliban, in support of the peace parleys agreed to take unspecified action by preventing other groups from the use of Afghan soil to threaten the US forces and allied partners. The US officials claim that throughout 2020 and 2021, the Taliban were not fulfilling their commitments, giving increased violence between the Taliban and the Afghan government and the continued Taliban's links with the Al-Qaeda and other networks (Clayton, 2022). As a result of the peace agreement the strength of the US forces reached at its lowest position of 2,500 in January 2021.

President Joe Biden, of the United States of America, had a different opinion regarding the withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan. He stated that the US is going to withdraw their forces from Afghanistan, though several months later than the agreed US- Taliban Peace Deal. This decision was taken by the Biden administration for the long lasting peace and stability of Afghanistan and a justification of the US forces in the country for such a long time (Clayton, 2022). But the situation took a dramatic turn on August 15, 2021 just two weeks before the total withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan, when the Taliban entered the capital city of Kabul, marking the culmination of a nationwide military advance that shocked many in the United States and Afghanistan. During the last two weeks, the US oversaw the evacuation of over 120, 000 individuals including the US and international diplomatic personnel and the Afghan partners, from Kabul's international airport, before leaving on August 30, 2021. It is important to note that no US military or diplomatic personnel are in Afghanistan as of February 2022.

It is a matter of great concern that since the Taliban got control of Afghanistan in August 2021, the future of the country seems uncertain (Afghaniad, 2022). During the violence that struck the country this year, numerous innocent men, women and children were driven from their homes, or injured or killed in the armed conflict, airstrikes, explosion of Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), shelling and target killings (Afghaniad, 2022). People's homes, shops, and hospitals have also been

destroyed as a result of this conflict. Despite the fact that the hospitals have been struck as result of the conflict, also stand erected and provide treatment to the people on account of their meagre resources. At the start of the 2021, round about five lac people left their homes in a struggle to settle down in communities that are a little safer in their eyes (Afghaniad, 2022). Those who are prone to attacks and threats are likely to leave their homes in search for a more secure place and area.

### Afghanaid's Response

The Afghan aids have been striving hard for the urgent support of those families that have been affected as a result of conflict. This encompasses the continued and increased support for the refugees, medical treatment, funding flows and other assistance for their settlement in safer areas (Afghaniad, 2022). Both the public and private sectors including the Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are trying to provide assistance and continuing developmental support required for the rehabilitation and assistance of the homeless persons. The Afghan aids are supposed to work shoulder to shoulder with the local people by overcoming the challenges and preparing a more peaceful plan for the country (Afghaniad, 2022). The Afghan aids have worked with the United Nations by helping over those families that have been affected by the conflict. They also ask for the funds from the NGOs and other donor agencies in order to raise more and more funds by helping their countrymen. They have even offices and work places where men and women work by delivering significant developmental work focused on climate change adaptation and improving livelihood, and emergency assistance. It helps in providing the following services:

- The need for emergency shelter and financial support so that families can be able to have roofs over their heads for their survival;
- The need for the kitchen items for cooking purposes and safely storing things;

- The need for hygiene kits including towels, laundry soap and hand soap;
- Important household materials including lamps, stoves and gas cylinders;
- Emergency food parcels;
- Blankets and the support they need for heating their homes and keeping their families warm in case of bad and cold weather.

So, the function of Afghan aids is multi-faceted that remain too much concerned with the Afghan people. It is this department that has been engaged in providing food, shelter, and financial assistance; provide medical facilities and other necessities of life. They also keep in touch with the different NGOs, donor agencies and the volunteers for timely provisions of daily commodities and necessary items. The role of Afghan aids is very crucial in the wake of the current scenario in the country since the United Nations have warned that Afghanistan is wrapped in threats and challenges of rise in poverty rate, soaring of hunger, and the crisis of economic sector. Working on this track, the Afghan aids would be in a better position to take the country out of the turmoil and provide assistance to the Afghan Taliban as an when required.

### The Government of Afghan Taliban

September makes a landmark in the history of Afghanistan. In September 2001 the government of Afghan Taliban was toppled down by the US forces and allied partners. But September 2021 retaliates the lost prestige of Taliban by converting them into a victorious force. The interim government pronounced by the Taliban comprised the hard-liner leaders by terming their government as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). By changing the nomenclature of the government from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan into the Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan, will have great repercussions on the subsequent political culture and stability of the country. In the former case, the system is based on the universal suffrage in accordance with the international law and the state is represented by the president. In the latter case, no schedule and time

frame has been announced for the elections, normally represented by the religious clerics and leaders. No women or officials were included from the preceding government with the exception of a few representatives. Moreover, for a country like Afghanistan, federal form of government representative of the heterogeneous elements would provide panacea for all the ills of the despotic form of government.

### World's Response to the Taliban

For the last two decades, governments and the International Community have tried to oust the Taliban and strengthen the Afghan government's democratic institutions and civil society in the following ways:

- The US troops overthrew the government of Taliban soon after the 9/11 syndrome by invading Afghanistan in October 2001. Consequently, the Taliban waged an insurgency against the US-backed Afghan government.
- The International Community resisted the counter-insurgency with the help of the world's most powerful alliance, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- The war killed more than 6,000 US troops and contractors and over 1,100 NATO forces.
- Some 47, 000 civilians died, and an estimated 73, 000 Afghan troops and police officers were killed during 2007 to 2021.
- Thousands of Taliban are also believed to have been killed in the long fighting of twenty war.
- At the peak of the war, the strength of the NATO forces stood at 130, 000 from fifty nations stationed in Afghanistan.
- In the 2020 US-Taliban peace deal, the US made commitment for the withdrawal of US troops and NATO forces from Afghanistan provided the Taliban carried out commitments including cutting ties with the terrorist groups.

The announcement of the formation of the new government in Afghanistan dominated by Taliban loyalists on September 7, 2021 shocked the regional and international actors. The constitution of the government by Taliban and the resultant suppression of peaceful protests against its rule indicate the prioritization of internal cohesion and unity amongst the different actors of Taliban. As of February 2022, no opposition seems to appear in the way of Taliban save the regional Islamic State affiliate (Clayton, 2022). It is also a matter of fact that some anti-Taliban elements have sought support from the US yet of no avail. It is also a matter of great concern that the Taliban's renewed rule has been detrimental for the status of women and girls in Afghanistan, which has hitherto been, a long standing US interest in Afghanistan.

### Conclusion

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan as its nomenclature was changed by the Afghan Taliban since their takeover of Kabul in August-September 2021 from the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan has been viewed to be moving towards the old styled form of government as was witnessed during its first tenure during 1996-2001. It is worth mentioning that at the initial stage of the Taliban regime in the post-US withdrawal scenario, the Taliban showed quite softness and flexibility in their policies but with the passage of time, in December 2022 their attitude towards women education changed they were banned from going to universities. The Taliban needs to reconsider their strictness of policies so as to avoid any external intervention and pressure from the international community. This will help them avoid the possibility of any intervention from any quarter. The Afghanids have been in struggle to bring peace, stability and normalcy to the country on account of their services rendered by them. They have already been contributing a lot by working shoulder to shoulder with the United Nations and the international community to improve the living standard of the people of Afghanistan.

But the most significant role need to be played by the Taliban themselves since they are the real stakeholder of the country and have the reigns of the government in their hands. The element of flexibility of softness in their attitude can save their country and can divert the attention of the regional and the international community from Afghanistan. The fall of Kabul to the hands of Taliban have shown the word the lesson that 'Realism' has failed

to be a theory of force and that no country can be suppressed for long through force and military operations. The same can also be true for the Taliban and other forces who to get things done through the use of force and strictness of policies. The world can be a better place to live in provided the element of patience and tolerance is shown by all and sundry.

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