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*Stabilizing Regions Impacted by the Resurgence  
of the Taliban*

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## **Introduction to the topic:**

The Taliban are a predominantly Pashtun, Islamic fundamentalist group that returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021 after waging a twenty-year insurgency. Following the U.S led invasion that toppled the original regime in 2001, the Taliban regrouped across the border in Pakistan and began taking back territory less than ten years after their ouster. The Taliban have imposed a harsh interpretation of Islamic law despite pledges to respect the rights of women and minority communities and provide amnesty for people who supported U.S. efforts. Meanwhile, as they have transitioned from an insurgent group to a functional government, the Taliban have struggled to provide Afghans with security, adequate food, and economic opportunities. As the Afghan military fell apart, the hardline Islamist organization marched quickly throughout the nation, capturing province after province before capturing Kabul on August 15 of last year. The swiftness of the advance astounded the foreign forces, who had already promised to depart, forcing them to quicken their departure. Thousands of their fellow citizens and visitors who feared Taliban authority hurried to secure space on aircraft out of the country as several Western-backed Afghan government figures evacuated. Following a violent but eventually victorious guerrilla struggle that lasted for several years, the organization had reached an agreement with the Americans in 2020 for the withdrawal of US forces. As part of the agreement, the Taliban promised to hold national peace talks, which they never did, and to stop al-Qaeda and other militants from operating in their territory. Afghanistan's economy collapsed after the organization regained control, leaving a sizable percentage of the population unable to find sufficient money to feed and acquire basic necessities. As the international community wait for the Taliban to honor commitments regarding security, governance, and human rights, including enabling all girls to attend school, billions of dollars in Afghan assets held overseas have been blocked.

## **Taliban's rise to power:**

In northern Pakistan, the Taliban first appeared in the early 1990s when the Soviet army left Afghanistan. The majority Pashtun movement is thought to have originated in Saudi Arabian-funded religious institutes that promoted a harsh version of Sunni Islam. Once in power, the Taliban pledged to reestablish peace and security while enforcing their own strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law. The Taliban expanded their sway fast from south-western Afghanistan. They took control of the Iranian neighboring province of Herat in September 1995.

They overthrew President Burhanuddin Rabbani, one of the founders of the Afghan mujahideen who fought the Soviet occupation, and took control of the Afghan capital of Kabul exactly one year later. By 1998, the Taliban had about 90% of Afghanistan under their control. Their initial success in eliminating corruption, reducing anarchy, and establishing safety on the roadways and in the areas they controlled contributed significantly to their early popularity.

However, the Taliban also enacted or endorsed punishments that adhered to their rigid view of Sharia law, such as the public execution of those found guilty of murder and adultery as well as mutilations for those found guilty of stealing. Men were forced to have beards, while women were obliged to don the burka. The Taliban are guilty of a variety of well-documented wrongdoings, such as the murder of rivals and the beating and detention of journalists.

Following the US-Taliban peace agreement in February 2020, that was the result of extensive diplomatic agreements, the Taliban appeared to change their strategy from sophisticated assaults on military bases and cities to a wave of targeted killings that terrorized Afghan people.

The Taliban's targets—journalists, judges, peace campaigners, and women in positions of authority—suggested that only their tactics had changed—not their radical worldview. All American forces would leave the country by September 11, 2021—two decades to the day after the World Trade Center was destroyed—according to new US President Joe Biden, disregarding grave concerns from Afghan officials regarding the government's vulnerability to the Taliban without international support.

### **NATO intervention in Afghanistan:**

NATO Allies went into Afghanistan in 2001. From August 2003, NATO led the UN-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which aimed to create the conditions whereby the Afghan government could exercise its authority throughout the country and build the capacity of the Afghan national security forces, including in the fight against international terrorism. ISAF was completed in December 2014 when the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces assumed full responsibility for security across their country. In January 2015, NATO launched the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and institutions to fight terrorism and secure their country. Following the completion of the withdrawal of all RSM forces in August 2021, the Mission was terminated in early September 2021. Under the current circumstances, NATO has suspended all support to Afghanistan. Any future Afghan government must adhere to Afghanistan's international obligations; safeguard the human rights of all Afghans, particularly women, children and minorities; uphold the rule of law; allow unhindered humanitarian access; and ensure that Afghanistan never again serves as a safe haven for terrorists. In December 2021, NATO Foreign Ministers discussed the lessons learned from the Alliance's engagement in Afghanistan, reviewing a comprehensive political and military assessment that outlined key conclusions and recommendations.

### **Security and international relations:**

The Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was accused by Al-Qaeda of "replacing monotheistic imams with the nonsense of atheists and secularists from East and West" and "opening the door wide to corruption and moral degeneration" in June 2018. The statement claims that bin Salman has converted mosques into movie theaters and denounces the Entertainment Authority as a "harbinger of calamity." This shows the emergence of conservative opposition to recent social reforms, and these groups may wait for the right moment to further their ideological objectives, whether through open forums or more provocative action. The strength of resurrected Islamist forces domestically and regionally will soon confront the Emirates, which is still fighting a regional war against political Islam. The UAE is concerned that its enemy Turkey, whose government is supportive of the Muslim Brotherhood and collaborates directly with Qatar, intends to use the support of Islamist organizations to gain regional hegemony. This could widen the areas in which these rivals compete, especially in light of the recent direct communication between Turkey and the Taliban following a visit to Ankara by a group led by Afghanistan's acting foreign minister, Mullah Amir Khan Mottaki. Along with the subject of refugees and air navigation, the two parties also talked about enhancing their bilateral connections, trade, and humanitarian help. The fact that the Turkish Foreign Minister Davut Cavusoglu made this call suggests that Ankara is attempting to forge close ties with the Islamic movement, which undoubtedly worries the Emirates. Middle East Eye, a UK-based publication, claims that the Saudi crown prince has already given Al-Faisal, who has a great deal of expertise working with the Taliban and who

was influential in aiding the Afghan mujahedeen in their fight against the Soviets, the go-ahead to reestablish contact with the Taliban.

### **Regions impacted by the Taliban:**

The Taliban control of Afghanistan has an effect on the neighboring nations' economies... Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and India. These countries have accepted the Taliban: China, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Turkmenistan. The loss of exports to Afghanistan will be the main source of economic hardship for the majority of these economies. Hard cash is unavailable to the Taliban; therefore it cannot import goods. The flood of refugees will have a financial impact on Pakistan and Iran as well. The TAPI gas export pipeline and other regional economic initiatives, as well as security concerns, are all complicated by Taliban control of Afghanistan.

Each of Afghanistan's neighbors is a significant import source. The Afghan market's contribution to their overall exports varies, though. Energy was a prevalent, substantial product for all three countries in 2020, and between 6% and 7% of their total exports went to Afghanistan. In specifically, gasoline and diesel fuel are two hydrocarbons from all three that the Taliban is eager to keep importing. Afghanistan is now freer to conduct open trade with Iran as a result of the US army pullout. Natural gas and energy exports from Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are anticipated to continue in the future. Nevertheless, the continuation of imports will be reliant on Afghanistan's access to hard money, which the US administration may drastically restrict. Afghanistan might no longer be able to pay for these supplies as the Taliban's accessible hard currency reserves diminish. Afghanistan has little to contribute in any possible barter trade arrangements. The percentage of overall exports to Afghanistan from Pakistan and Tajikistan is lower—both are approximately 4%. Should the Taliban fail to pay for them, those two nations risk losing export revenue.

The biggest social and economic effects of a growing refugee crisis would be felt in Pakistan. For local governments, whose financial resources have already been strained by the COVID-19 pandemic, the expense of screening, housing, and assisting Afghan asylum applicants might be substantial. Before the Taliban took over in July 2021, the Pakistani government calculated that housing an extra 700,000 "externally displaced Afghans" would cost USD2.2 billion over a three-year period.

According to Pakistani political leaders, Islamabad is wary of acknowledging the Taliban administration on its own and prefers to work with other regional countries, most likely China and Russia. But doing so would exacerbate Pakistan's already tense relations with its partners in the West, thereby jeopardizing the financial support and lending on which Pakistan has come to rely so heavily. One of the main exit routes for Afghanistan's significant illegal substances production and trade is Tajikistan's lengthy, hilly, and inadequately guarded border with Afghanistan. Given that the Taliban may find it hard to get legal export income in the face of pervasive international sanctions, the drug trade may be encouraged as a source of additional income. Tajikistan's security would be compromised by an increase in the flow of narcotics through that country. The ongoing improvement drive in Uzbekistan is also threatened by security challenges. Growing Islamic radicalism in the area would jeopardize the nation's expanding foreign investment image and put the Uzbek political orientation, which supports the reforms, in a dominant position. Although the Taliban has provided the Uzbek government with security guarantees, the Afghan government's capacity to manage associated groupings of foreign terrorists will have a massive effect on Uzbek security and, consequently, its investment climate.

## **Timeline:**

- 2001 - Thousands of people were killed on September 11, 2001, when hijackers took control of four commercial aircraft and crashed them into the World Trade Center Towers in New York, the Pentagon outside of Washington, D.C., and a field in Pennsylvania. Days later, U.S. officials claim that the primary suspect in the attack is bin Laden, a Saudi fugitive who is thought to be hiding in Afghanistan.
- Dec. 7, 2001 - As the Taliban armed group's control over Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, its members leave their last stronghold in Kandahar. Taliban leaders give up control of Zabul province, the group's last stronghold in Afghanistan, two days later. The action prompts the Afghan Islamic Press, a publication based in Pakistan, to declare that "the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan has completely ended." Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun royalist, is sworn in as the head of Afghanistan's interim government on December 22, 2001. Karzai returned to Afghanistan after spending years in exile in the neighboring country of Pakistan. Karzai already has American backing at the U.N.-sponsored conference to choose an interim government, and by the end of the conference, he has been chosen to lead the six-month administration.
- 2002 - The Loya Jirga, or great council, chooses Hamid Karzai as the country's interim president in June. Karzai selects the members of his cabinet who will hold office until 2004, when elections must be held.
- 2003 - In August, NATO assumes control of security in Kabul amid an uptick in violence. The operation is the security agency's first-ever overseas involvement. Elections for the presidency are conducted in October 2004. 18 presidential candidates, including interim leader Karzai, are up for election, and more than 10.5 million Afghans have registered to vote. With 55% of the vote, Karzai is declared the winner.
- 2005 - First legislative elections in more than 30 years are held in the country. The calm voting results in the first meeting of the parliament in December.
- 2006 - NATO extends its peacekeeping mission to the southern region of Afghanistan amid ongoing fighting between Taliban and al-Qaida members and Afghan government forces. Taliban insurgents conduct a violent wave of suicide strikes and raids against the multinational troops after the forces assume control from the American-led troops.
- 2011 - On May 2, American forces occupy a facility in Abbottabad, Pakistan, and murder Osama bin Laden, the head of al-Qaida.
- 2013 - NATO soldiers hand over control of all military and security actions to the Afghan army.
- 2014 - Obama proposes a timeline in May 2014 for drastically decreasing American soldier numbers in Afghanistan by 2016. September 2014 Following two rounds of voting, allegations of election corruption, and a power-sharing arrangement with his primary competitor Abdullah Abdullah, Ashraf Ghani is elected president of Afghanistan in September. As of December 2014, NATO's combat involvement in Afghanistan has formally concluded. NATO forces under American command continue to teach and counsel Afghan forces.
- Oct. 15, 2015 - Obama decides not to evacuate American troops by the end of his term and will exit office in 2017 with 5,500 troops still stationed in Afghanistan.
- 2019 - The United States and the Taliban establish a peace agreement in February 2019 that serves as the initial framework for the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan by May 2021. September 2019: Following the death of an American soldier in a Taliban attack, Trump suspends peace negotiations.
- 2020 - Days before Vice President Biden's inauguration, the United States announced intentions in November 2020 to reduce the number of American troops by half, to 2,500 by January.

●2021 - Biden sets a goal to have all American troops out by 9/11 in April 2021. On July 5, 2021, the US departs the Bagram airfield without informing the new Afghan commander of the base. As the Taliban seize control of Kabul, the Afghan government falls.

### **The Threat Taliban poses:**

The Taliban pose a threat to the civil and political rights of Afghans, which are enshrined in law drafted by the government with U.S. support. The Taliban have acted in a manner similar of their ruthless rule in the late 1990s since regaining power. Numerous abuses of human rights have been recorded by the UN mission in Afghanistan. Numerous news outlets have shut down as a result of the Taliban's intimidation of journalists and restrictions on press freedoms.

The Taliban also pose a threat to the improvements in Afghans' quality of life that have occurred in the 20 years since the American invasion. Since their capture, the economy of the nation has gotten worse; according to UN estimates, by the middle of 2022, nearly all Afghans may be living in poverty. Over 90% of the population has experienced some kind of food insecurity. A halt in help from several nations and international organizations, which had been the lifeblood of the economy and public health sector, is aggravating the issue.

Protesters and activists have been watched and taken away by force. Additionally, the Taliban reinstated the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, which was previously in charge of enforcing laws against actions judged to be against Islam. Women's rights have been completely destroyed. Most girls aren't allowed to go to secondary school, and women aren't allowed to work anywhere in the nation thanks to the Taliban. Amnesty International notes a sharp rise in the number of women detained for disobeying discriminatory laws, such as those mandating that women always wear full body coverings and only appear in public with male chaperones. Additionally, the number of child marriages has increased.

International observers are nonetheless worried that the Taliban support terrorist groups, especially al-Qaeda, endangering regional and global security. After Afghanistan refuses to give over Osama bin Laden, the architect of the 9/11 attacks, the United States attacked the country. Despite Taliban claims that "Afghanistan's soil will not be used against the security of any other country," analysts fear that under the Taliban's authority, Afghanistan might turn into a refuge for terrorists who could conduct strikes against the US and its allies.

According to the UN team that monitors the Taliban, the organization "remains tight" with al-Qaeda and that the organization "has a safe haven under the Taliban and improved freedom of action," according to its report from April 2022.

### **Parties involved:**

#### **NATO:**

Under a United Nations (UN) Security Council mandate, NATO Allies and partner nations have had military personnel stationed in Afghanistan for nearly 20 years. After the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States, NATO allies entered Afghanistan to make sure the nation wouldn't once again serve as a refuge for foreign terrorists planning strikes on NATO member countries. A deal was reached between the Taliban and the United States in February 2020 on the departure of foreign troops from Afghanistan by May 2021. NATO's foreign and defense ministers agreed to quickly remove all Allied forces from Afghanistan in April 2021. NATO has stopped providing any assistance to Afghanistan in light of the current situation. Any future Afghan administration must defend the rule of law, respect Afghanistan's international commitments, protect the human rights of all Afghans, particularly women, children, and minorities, and guarantee that Afghanistan never again serves as a refuge for terrorists.

**USA:**

To make sure the Taliban completely complies with these pledges, the United States still engages with them. The United States no longer offers support for Afghanistan's restoration since the Taliban took control in August 2021.

**Afghanistan:**

Represents that Taliban as it took over the government. The nearly 20-year-old War in Afghanistan, which had started after the United States invasion of the nation, came to an end in 2021 with the Taliban offensive, a military offensive by the Taliban insurgent group and other affiliated militants against the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. The offensive resulted in the fall of the Kabul-based Republic. The Taliban's victory affected human rights and the propagation of terrorism on a large scale both domestically and internationally.

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