

The Future Of Afghanistan Under Taliban And Its Doomsday Vision Of South Asia

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Abstract:

A paradigm shift is happening in the Afghanistan as the International community haven't predicted the endgame. Though the end hasn't arrived yet the end of rights for the Afghanistan people has begun and in future Afghanistan might become a safe haven for terrorists. State sponsored Terrorism is going to evolve into Terrorist operated State. The Taliban implemented various norms and practices which were alien to the modern Afghan state in their previous ruling and it doesn't seem to change now either. To avoid Taliban the Pashtuns were under represented and ethnic minorities were given power and external support which made them against the elected government. The progress made by the people of Afghanistan in the past two decades are significant but very fragile and post U.S. withdrawal the country is left with its own State building and the responsibility lies with infamous terrorist group Taliban. This article aims to analyze the Future of Afghanistan with the worldview of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan(Taliban) along with the geo political significance of the country. The study provides information regarding future of Afghanistan, impact on the region and the decline of rights for its people due to the Taliban takeover. The post withdrawal scenario offers more threats than the opportunities along with the possibility of political instability.

Introduction:

The World's largest democracy is celebrating the 75th Independence Day and on the same day Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan after many other provinces is being taken control by the Taliban. The U.S. and NATO forces are being withdrawn and will be completely withdrawn by the 20th anniversary of 9/11 bombings with a deal that after this withdrawal there will be Intra Afghan talks between Government and Taliban and a few other commitments by Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and U.S. as well.¹ The Intra Afghan talks was expected to happen between the elected Afghan Government and the Taliban but now the top leaders fled the country the power is being transferred to Taliban without fight which means the government has either lost public support or with selfish motives of saving their life they just fled the country with countless Afghans struggling and the latter

seems to be true. Hence now there's no party for Intra Afghan talks and Taliban can freely claim Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The U.S. even though entered with the Intent of capturing Osama Bin Laden it also tried to destroy the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which was safeguarding Al-Qaeda, after two decades the U.S. and its allies pulls out and the same government is going back into the leadership and yet the U.S. doesn't accept its defeat.

Objectives:

- To shed light on possible outcomes in Afghanistan
- To explain Geo political significance of Afghanistan

Review of Literature:

Tariq, M., Amir, M., & Bano, S. (2021). Future Threats and Opportunities in Afghanistan in the Post-US Withdrawal Scenario. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 15(7), 766–778. https://www.ijicc.net/images/Vol_15/Iss_7/15759_Tariq_2021_E1_R.pdf. This study deals about the threats and opportunities for Afghanistan in post withdrawal of foreign troops. The key focus of the study is on the implications of US withdrawal from Afghanistan on future politics security system, status of women and various challenges associated with the stability and peace of the country as well as the region. The study has employed game theory to describe the condition of competing nature between U.S. and the non state actors between elected government of Afghanistan and Taliban.

Jalali, A. A. (2006). The Future of Afghanistan. The US Army War College Quarterly: Parameters, 36(1), 4–19. <https://press.armywarcollege.edu/parameters/vol36/iss1/9>. This study deals with Afghanistan's governance, security threats and reforms, Co-alition forces, counter narcotics, development and regional dynamics. The study criticizes Afghanistan as it has met the deadlines of the Bonn Accord, yet it has not reached the ultimate goal of ending the conflict and establishing peace and security and also mentions about the devastating outcomes on leaving the country to move towards its past.

Patey, W. (2014). Future of Afghanistan. Asian Affairs, 45(3), 401–412. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03068374.2014.961721>. This text is a excerpt of a lecture delivered by Sir William Patey who apart from his other roles also served as British Ambassador to Afghanistan. He had predicted six years ago that if the International community doesn't continue to support Afghanistan the result would be a rapid reversion to instability and conflict.

Tariq, M., Khan, A. A., Ali, A., Hussain, A., Shah, A. A., Irshad, U., & Arif, I. (2020). The Theory of War and the Future of Peace in Afghanistan. International Journal of Innovation, Creativity and Change, 14(12), 1407–1418.

https://www.ijcc.net/images/Vol_14/Iss_12/15926_Tariq_2020_E1_R.pdf. This study talks about the theory of war and the possibility of peace in the US Withdrawal scenario. The study employed the theory of war to find out basic cause and purposes of war along with possibilities of peace in Afghanistan. The study had been concluded by criticising that Afghan government was no party to contract and it also added the significance of the deal to Taliban which fetched a recognition by U.S. and allied powers which grants them more legitimacy and authority.

Faruque, J. A. (2021). Withdrawal of U.S. Forces from Afghanistan: A South Asian Perspective. BIPSS Commentary.

<https://bipss.org.bd/pdf/Withdrawal%20of%20US%20Forces%20from%20Afghanistan%20A%20South%20Asian%20Perspective.pdf>. This article had tried to predict the future of Afghanistan after the withdrawal of U.S. troops and the possible outcomes for the South Asian region. The study had concluded that the possibility of another Afghan conflict would be based on who forms the government and the influence by Russia and China over the government. The study has also warned about the opportunity of a co-alition between Al-Qaeda and Taliban to take over their terrorist activities all over the region.

Methodology:

The study is qualitative cum exploratory and explanatory in nature which focuses on both primary and secondary sources as there has been a total takeover of Afghanistan by the Taliban and reversal of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan to Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan is coming nearer and nearer and it is going to affect the peace of South Asia apart from the direct impact of the rights of Afghan people. The primary sources include statements and interviews by the official to newspapers or in Social media accounts, official website of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and the secondary sources includes journals, newspaper articles and other online sources.

Future of Afghanistan:

The Taliban demanded all the foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan and until then they won't be attending any talks on deciding the future of the Afghanistan and hence for the sake of Afghanistan a deal was signed between them and the U.S. which also had certain other commitments on both the parties. The main focus was Intra Afghan talks to decide on the power sharing and future of Afghanistan. Now only a few days are left for the complete withdrawal of U.S.

forces many eminent persons including the President has already fled the country and Taliban has gained the power completely. Hence, there won't be any requirement of power sharing and whatever the Taliban decides will be the rule. The Taliban ruled under the name of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan between 1996-2001 and at that time it had fierce fundamentalist policies like women had to fully cover their body and were denied education and were also only allowed to travel with a male companion from her family. It had also restricted music, TV, Painting, Photography and all forms of entertainment. The Kabul football stadium was used as a execution ground. The Taliban are well known for their hard-line Islamist rule even though few believe that the democratic gains made by the country in the past two decades will be protected there is no supporting evidence for the same. The Taliban claims to allow women to get educated as long as they cover themselves fully in burqa makes the world think they are adopting progressively but evidence shows something else. The Kandahar province was seized by the Taliban and then they entered the Azizi bank and forced the women employees out of the branch and escorted them to their houses and warned them to never return to their jobs and instead send their male relatives to their place.² This incident is an early evidence to understand how their governance is going to be.

Concerns for Afghanistan:

The Terrorism and Covid crisis is going to be a major problem to the world because of the Afghanistan. There are about 1,364 confirmed cases of Covid reported between 10th and 17th of August, 2021 which when compared to the percentage of previous week shows us that the cases have almost reduced about 51.16%.³ The people who are being rescued and escaped from Afghanistan might be a Covid carrier and can spread it to the receiving countries and the question on how Taliban is going to handle the COVID-19 crisis is going to remain unanswered. Two decades ago Taliban protected Al-Qaeda by putting the lives of the Afghan people in danger which made the U.S. enter into Afghanistan and instill democratic ideals but with their same old rigid fundamentalist ideology and continues resistance and the Taliban they have gained the power to rule once again even though they have said they won't let any other terrorist groups operate in Afghanistan or threaten the U.S. and its allies there is no guarantee for the same. The military threat has been resisted for two decades and they have achieved what they want and now even if they violate the terms the only other viable option is a Economic sanction which also might not get expected outcomes as there is already existing sanctions on Taliban and still they operate underground.

The Afghanistan has a troubling source of drugs and a lot of untapped mineral resources like gold, platinum, copper, silver, iron, chromite, lithium, aluminium and even Uranium.⁴ These minerals if tapped effectively by the Taliban could totally avoid the dependence on the foreign aid and donor

support and also give a economic success.⁵ There is a high possibility for Afghanistan becoming a Safe haven to the Terrorists as Taliban are now more stronger than ever before. The absence of foreign troops and a complete takeover by Taliban also provides a strategic advantage to Taliban i.e., in case of Taliban or anyother organizations planning a attack gathering intelligence is going to be even more difficult. The approach which is going to be taken by the Taliban is going to matter about the future of Afghanistan by properly utilizing the resources there is a possibility of job opportunity for all and a good economic development but on considering their fundamentalist approach to women's rights the former possibility has very little chances and there can be a possibility of a civil war which is again going to affect south Asia in other ways like refugee crisis, politically instable country and a breeding ground for terrorists which might lead South Asia similar to that of West Asia.

The issues of Human rights is also a concern for that of the Afghan citizens especially after witnessing their views on women's rights in education, employment and social life. The democratic ideals obtained during the Afghan elected government's period seemed impossible to abolish few months ago when there was a expectation of Islamic republic of Afghanistan(after Intra Afghan talks) but now it seems like a distant cry.

The Taliban are still referring to themselves as Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and has promised amnesty for all those who worked for the previous government or U.S. and its allies if they pledge their allegiance to Taliban.⁶ Moreover the Taliban has stated that they are determined to appoint military and civilian personnel according to their abilities and talents to serve the country. They also have said to provide certain roles for women in the government according to Sharia but the details haven't been given yet.⁷ They also aim to include all the minority sects and co exist as Afghanistan is a joint home for all its people.⁸ They also promised to consider protection of lives, property and honor of its people as their primary responsibility to the nation and also added that it is not interested in anyone's private property(land, house, market, shops, cars, etc). They concluded with a message to the businessmen, industrialists, investors and neighboring countries that it will provide a safe environment for the business and also not create any problems for the neighboring countries and assured to provide safe and secure environment to the diplomats, embassies, consulates and charitable workers of both National and International organizations.⁹

Importing didn't last, should look for Homegrown solutions:

The future of Afghanistan doesn't seem so clear but it is definitely not going to be the same like how it was in the past decades. The people have enjoyed democratic ideals and now since they know the essence of those values they need to thrive for it from within the society rather than just waiting for

an external agency or a country to come and give them everything. There is a possibility of another civil war or a safe haven to Islamic terrorism or even both and whatever it is the problem is not going to be fenced within Afghanistan it is going to severely affect the South Asia and Central Asia and this might even become another Syria. For the past few days, there are number of protests happening in various parts of the country against Taliban which shows some form of resistance from the common people and the reason for that might be the freedom and rights they enjoyed in the past two decades. If the elected government was a bit strong and had used its army they might have received public support as well and if there was bloodshed the Taliban's regime would not have been recognized and there could have been at least a possibility of winning. Back in the early 1970s the U.S. withdrawn from the Vietnam had same level of criticisms but today Vietnam is in a good shape but the only difference between withdrawing from Vietnam and Afghanistan is Vietnam was left with humane forces but Afghanistan is being left into Inhuman Terrorist organization. The fight against terrorists should be a priority for the International community, we can't afford to sit back and watch out fellow humankind suffering under 7th Century rigid barbaric laws. Even if the Taliban does a good governance by creating employment opportunities and tapping untouched resources there are other militant groups who still posses arms and they might join as a group or join hands with forces such as ISIS and could fight and not let people in peace. Even now the Northern Alliance flag has been raised in Panjshir, a province in the North Eastern part of the country which is also a Anti-Taliban stronghold. The Northern alliance movement is officially active since 2001 and the founder, commander Ahmad Shah Massoud's son Ahmad Massoud is said to be gathering forces to start up resistance against Taliban. When the resistance gains public support based on the intensity of public support the peace will prevail in Afghanistan. It is time for the people of Afghanistan to fight for their Freedom and rights from Taliban.

Significance of Afghanistan & Support from Neighbors :

The International community has heavily invested into Afghanistan since the removal of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan(IEA) and the benefits for women and girls access to education and public life was in many instances called as a great success but now even before the complete transfer of power evidence suggests the reversal of the gains made in past two decades. Russia, China, U.S.A. and Pakistan in a Joint statement at the March Conference of Russia agreed to not to support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate and have a Islamic Republic which comprises of elected Afghan government and Taliban.¹⁰ Now since the prominent elected government officials has fled the country and the transfer of power happened along with many military officials surrendering to Taliban and the Taliban has took over the power and considering the Strategic interests China is

violating the essence of the point mentioned about not supporting restoration of Islamic Emirate, UNSC resolution 2513 (2020).¹¹

The Taliban in the mid July, 2021 approached certain neighbors reassuring them their territorial integrity and a commitment to keep the wars within Afghanistan borders.¹² This visit was made to Russia and China. Their Chinese visit also had one more reassurance that if they could get China's support in rebuilding Afghanistan as an exchange the Taliban promised to ignore the suppression of Uyghur Muslims.¹³ A Government spokesperson Hua Chunying said China respects the right of the Afghan people to independently determine their own destiny and is willing to continue to develop friendly relations with Afghanistan.¹⁴ Dmitry Zhirnov, Russian ambassador to Afghanistan had made a remark on Taliban saying that Taliban has made Kabul safer in the first 24 hours than it had been under previous authorities.¹⁵ He also added that their approach is good, positive and the situation is peaceful and everything has calmed down in the city.¹⁶ The Taliban are still designated as Terrorist by the Courts of Russian Federation.¹⁷ Russia wants to ensure the Afghanistan's issues doesn't spill over to Russia and the presence of Uranium enrichment technology makes Russia to support these terrorist organizations because it can take advantage of that whereas it was almost impossible as the previous government was allied with U.S.. A enormous number of Afghan citizens are trying to flee the country because of Taliban takeover, even though countries like Canada, U.K. and U.S. has special programs for accomodating Afghan refugees there are still going to be some refugees who are going to cross border to neighboring countries and since Pakistan and Iran host about 14,00,000 and 7,80,000 refugees¹⁸ people might prefer them. Pakistan's National Security Adviser Moeed Yusuf had already mentioned in a interview that they are not in a position to accept any more refugees.¹⁹ Apart from this the country's highland topography makes it a very significant place to position Inter Continental Ballistic Missiles(ICBMs) and could target whole of Europe, Asia and the U.S. presence was a direct threat to Russia as well and hence the resistance is being supported. The Taliban has a longstanding relationship with Pakistan as its early leaders studied in Pakistani seminaries in 1980s before returning to Afghanistan and joining the Islamist government that took power in 90s. The current Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan has always been pro-Taliban and despite this image he never criticised when Yousufzai Malala was shot in 2012 and now on the Taliban takeover he commented that Afghans had broken the shackles of slavery and his special assistant Raof Hasan took twitter to say that it was a virtually smooth shifting of power from Ghani's corrupt government to Taliban rule.²⁰

Afghanistan has a geographical significance as it connects Central Asia, South Asia, Middle East and Europe and acts as a gateway. This is a landlocked country which is surrounded by seven countries

which makes its position prominent in Asia. Even despite the country's vast natural resources and linkage with various regions it ought to depend on its neighbors to reach the world. The Pakistan, China and the rest of the world would benefit from Afghanistan's route to Central Asia and in the same way Afghanistan would benefit from providing that route.²¹ China's belt road initiative was resisted for these many days by the elected government of Afghanistan but now China can officially consider Afghanistan as a part of its initiative and also can secure access to its resources. The China for building roads and other transport options would require stability in the country but the stability totally depends on the ideology of Taliban if it considers a strict Sharia law people are going to resist and if China could effectively influence the policies of Taliban the stability can be guaranteed but the latter has less chances.

India has spent a lot of money as aid for the development of Afghanistan. Afghanistan and Pakistan share a long history of mutual relations apart from their shared ethnic bond. The India and Afghanistan had a good relation until Taliban's takeover the Taliban's tie with Pakistan and the rivalry of India with Pakistan will make the ties disappear. Also now the China's support to Taliban, the tri alliance of Pakistan, Taliban's Afghanistan and China is a severe threat to India. There are possibilities of infiltrations across borders in the coming days. Central Asian states and Iran are rich of energy resources while Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and India are energy thirsty nations, so they need access to Iran and Central Asian nations which is being offered by Afghanistan.²² The Afghanistan can act as a energy corridor for market access of oil and natural gas in the region. The countries of Central Asia are hoping to find ways to export their oil and gas resources in order to put an end to their seclusion and economic dependence on Moscow and the hope of Turkmenistan to revive the pipeline through the war torn country Afghanistan into Pakistan and then into India, revealed the grief these states are facing.²³

Conclusion:

A single party cannot be blamed for the current state of Afghanistan. Afghanistan's difficult terrain, ethnic issues, poor financial system and to top it all a weak Central government were the reasons for today's state of Afghanistan. The U.S. was successful in eliminating Al-Qaeda in the country with its counter terrorism strategies to protect its national interests but the mistake made was underestimating the resistance of Taliban and considering them as insurgents instead of Terrorists. Between 2001-2005 the U.S. when had its focus on Iraq, relied on Afghan warlords to defeat the Taliban regime this option can now be reworked by providing proper assistance(arms, logistics and money) to the groups(that has people's support at the local level) thriving against Taliban even though this seems practically impossible this is the only viable option to get rid of Taliban and attain

relative peace. The terrorists usually see the organizational success of other terrorist organizations and try to implement the same and in that way this precedent has given a conclusion that with prolonged resistance and power a Terrorist group can take control of a state and could gain a seat in the U.N. this is going to be an inspiration for the other terrorist groups to follow the footsteps of Taliban. Negotiating with the terrorists/insurgents that too in the absence of the elected government gave the terrorist a International political recognition which indirectly means that we are purposefully ignoring their terrorism, criminal activities for political gains. U.S. has spent billions of dollars in its military and humanitarian actions for the past two decades yet the Taliban has resisted and a politically strong government was never formed now with the lack of foreign forces and funds we can only dream about Afghanistan's future. The military solutions, economic solutions hadn't worked and so is going to be the result if Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan(IEA) is not going to be recognized instead the International community should find ways to pressure IEA to provide basic human rights according to the International standards or revamp and setup Trusteeship system to provide a proper self government or joining neighboring independent countries.

The countries location attracted a lot of nations to invest and meddle in its affairs. The Taliban is being expected to keep up its end of promise of a more inclusive government with rights to all minorities and women and not use/let use the country for attacking U.S. and its allies. So far the Salafi Jihadist groups has always targeted everything against the west despite any lack of power and recognitions but now providing a sanctuary and expecting them to hold up a promise against their ideology is a grave mistake. This can be expected for a while and then after setting up a proper governmental structure by reorganizing their current hierarchy setup and including them into the governmental setup they'll slowly start to take sides with stringent laws like the ones prevalent in their previous period and this honeymoon period won't last long. Considering the massive victory by the Talibans the other terrorist organisations will also look up to Taliban and there are going to be a contestation for biggest global Jihadi power which is going to shake the International community. Eventhough Taliban stays away from attacking U.S. proxy attacks are still a possibility.

Overall Afghanistan is going to remain as a country in which other countries are going to compete for power and if China is able to achieve its goals it can become a super power as well. The governance of Afghanistan need not be "good" according to American terms but it must be good enough for its people and you cannot expect Terrorists to do good. The lack of peace in West Asia is a result of terrorism and Afghanistan might become Syria of South Asia and threaten the region's peace. A peaceful Afghanistan is necessary for regional peace and stability.

ENDNOTES & REFERENCES

¹ The deal can be accessed via <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/02.29.20-US-Afghanistan-Joint-Declaration.pdf>

² A interview of a employee to Reuters can be accessed via <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-women-bankers-forced-roles-taliban-takes-control-2021-08-13/>

³ WHO database accessed via <https://covid19.who.int/region/emro/country/af>

⁴ Data sourced from <https://thediplomat.com/2020/02/afghanistans-mineral-resources-are-a-lost-opportunity-and-a-threat/>

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Statement of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on latest developments in the country accessed via <http://alemarahenglish.net/?p=48412>

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Joint Statement in Moscow on 18th Mar, 21 can be accessed using https://www.mid.ru/en/foreign_policy/news/-/asset_publisher/cKNonkJE02Bw/content/id/4641844

¹¹ UNSC Resolution 2513(2020) <https://usun.usmission.gov/un-security-council-press-statement-on-the-escalating-violence-in-afghanistan/>

¹²Published in <https://www.usip.org/publications/2021/07/central-asia-prepares-taliban-takeover>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Can be accessed via <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20210816-china-says-ready-for-friendly-relations-with-taliban-after-rout>

¹⁵ Russian Ambassador praising Taliban https://inshorts.com/m/en/amp_news/russia-praises-taliban-says-situation-in-kabul-better-than-it-was-under-ghani-1629177797849

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Unified Federal list of Organizations, designated as Terrorist by the Courts of Russian Federation can be seen via their National Antiterrorism Committee website <http://en.nac.gov.ru/unified-federal-list-organizations-including-foreign-and-international-designated-terrorist-courts.html>

¹⁸ The UNHCR's reports of Pakistan can be accessed at <https://www.unhcr.org/pakistan.html> and that of Iran can be accessed at <https://www.unhcr.org/ir/refugees-in-iran/>

¹⁹ The Interview to VOA News can be read at <https://www.voanews.com/south-central-asia/pakistan-refuses-host-additional-afghan-refugees>

²⁰Interview of PM at a ceremony in Islamabad <https://www.dawn.com/news/1640988>, Twitter handle of Raof Hasan <https://twitter.com/RaofHasan/status/1426439475845009408>

²¹ Ijaz Khan. (1998). Afghanistan: A geopolitical study, *Central Asian Survey*, 17:3, 489-502, Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02634939808401049> [Accessed: 18 August 2021]

²² Khan, I., & Shirazi, S. A. (2021). Geostrategic importance of Afghanistan for Pakistan. *Pakistan Geographical Review*, 76(1), 137–153.

²³ Ibid