

The taliban- Origin and Rise to Power

The taliban ,an Islamic fundamentalist group which first emerged around the southern Afghan city Kandhar in 1994. The term Taliban which means students in Pashto language originally withdrew its members from the mujahideens, militias formed by rural Afghans to drive out the Soviet. The Taliban promised that once in power they would restore peace and security and enforce their own version of Sharia law. The group quickly extended their influence from south western Afghanistan. They seized the territory of Herat, bordering Iran, in September 1995. Exactly one year later the Afghan capital Kabul was captured overthrowing the reign of one of the founding fathers of the Afghan mujahideen, President Burhanuddin Rabbani,whom they viewed as anti-Pashtun and corrupt. That same year, Afghanistan was declared an Islamic emirate, with Mullah Mohammed Omar, a reverend and veteran of the anti-Soviet resistance, leading as amir al-mu'mini, or "commander of the faithful ". By the year 1998 the group had influence over almost 90% of the country. The resistance began when the group started asserting its own interpretation of the law and order across the country. A combination of strict religious ideology Deobandi traditionalism and Wahhābī puritanism with a conservative Pashtun code was imposed to create a barbaric oppressive regime. The Taliban policies were strict especially for the women of the nation, the women were denied basic human rights and were completely excluded from their public life (which included employment and education). They introduced and practiced harsh punishments in the line of their understanding of the Sharia law which included public execution of those found guilty of murder and adultery and amputation of those who commit theft. Men and women had strict dress codes which required men to grow beards and women couldn't step out in anything but a burkha. They banned all sorts of entertainment sources such as music television and cinema. The group faced international outrage when it systematically destroyed the non Islamic artistic relics (the famous Bamiyan Buddha statue which occurred in the town of Bamiyan in Central Afghanistan was destroyed in 2001). Resistance had begun particularly among non-Pashtun ethnic groups—namely, the *Tajik*, the *Uzbek*, and the *Hazara*—in the north, west, and central parts of the country, who saw the power of the Pashtun Taliban as prolongation of the traditional Pashtun dominance in the country. Pakistan had continuously denied any ties with the Taliban but the many Afghans who had joined the group initially had their education in the madrassas in Pakistan. Besides Pakistan was amongst the only three nations who supported and recognised the Taliban regime , the other two being Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. It was also the last nation to cut off diplomatic ties with the group.

Removal from power

The Taliban once again withdrew the world's attention when they were accused of providing refuge to Osama bin Laden in the wake of the World Trade Centre Attack in New York and Pentagon outside Washington, D C. on September 11 2001. Osama bin Laden was also the prime suspect in organising a network of foreign born Muslim fighters, Al Qaeda, during the Afghan war. This movement had orchestrated several attacks towards the United States . The United States and its allies began launching launching attacks in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001 and provided support to Northern Alliance, an anti Taliban group which had resisted their takeover from the beginning. The Taliban regime had collapsed by the first week of December , 2001. Although the group had been driven from power The Taliban still managed to survive, many of its senior members allegedly took refuge in city of Quetta in Pakistan and

gradually extended their influence in Afghanistan. In 2005 the Taliban began recovering and bounced back even stronger, the group showed indications of greater coordination and resilience. Mullah Mohammad Omar, the founder and leader of the group, remained discreet with few contacts, but senior commanders such as Mullah Dadullah and Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar were progressively consolidating the group's command structure. It acquired new tactics formed on those being used by insurgents in the Iraq War, including the use of suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices. In September 2012, there were multiple attacks by the Taliban on Afghanistan capital Kabul. In July 2015 the Afghan government found out that Omar had died in 2013 in a hospital in Pakistan. His deputy Mullah Akhtar Mansour shortly served as his successor until he was killed in a U.S. air strike in Pakistan in May 2016. Hibatullah Akhundzada took leadership later that month; like his predecessors, he remained hidden and appeared to have a minimum role in administering military operations. The militant wing of the Taliban became more and more dominated by the *Haqqani network*, whose leader, Sirajuddin, performed duties as deputy leader of the Taliban. For the time being, the Taliban's continued resilience and the lack of ability of Afghanistan's central government to exert control throughout the country led to the central government to seek reconciliation with the Taliban. Officials under Pres. *Hamid Karzai* had met unofficially with Taliban leaders, in particular Baradar, and the first formal meeting was organised under Pres. Ashraf Ghani. The Taliban continued to see the central government as radically *illegitimate*, however, and demanded to talk with the foreign power that had formed it: the United States.

Withdrawal of the US troops

In the year following the US-Taliban peace deal of February 2020 - which was the climax of a long spell of direct talks - the Taliban appeared to shift their tactics from intricate attacks in cities and on military outposts to a wave targeted assassinations that frightened the people of the nation. The targets - journalists, judges, peace activists, women in positions of power - implied that the Taliban had not changed their extremist ideology, only their strategy. Despite deep concerns from Afghan officials over the government's helplessness to the Taliban without international support, the new US president, Joe Biden, announced in April 2021 that all American forces would leave the country by 11 September after two decades of military presence in the region was met with uncertainty and questions about the fate of Afghanistan as the country is already at a vulnerable stage with Covid-19 pandemic and the continued presence of Taliban. The American military pull out in the region at this time period will lead to shutting of all the gains the country made in the last 15 years. President Joe Biden in his address made it clear that the future of Afghanistan and the concerns about the rights of women and girls were the responsibility of the current government and not in the hands of American military. In his opinion Afghanistan's nation building was not America's purpose and it was "the right and the responsibility of Afghan people alone to decide their future and how they want to run their country." He alluded that America in the spirit of democracy has emancipated the Afghan police military and the implications of the pandemic. He stated that

dealing with eighteen months of economic disturbance and continued racial unrest in the United States are a priority for his administration.

Impact on India

India has interests in Afghanistan's future and as its ally, India can have an edge over Pakistan. Over the years India has tried to strengthen its relations with Afghanistan through investments in infrastructure, education sector, irrigation development and power generation projects. Indian engineers are helping in construction of the Shahtoot dam near Kabul and Afghanistan was among the first countries to receive anti Covid-19 vaccination from India. But despite this effort, India's strategic, economic and security related interests are dependent on how the current Afghan government deals with the Taliban its ability to keep it at bay after the Biden administration withdraws its military.

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