



THE AFGHAN CRISIS: THE RETURN OF ISLAMIC TERROR

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ABSTRACT- Afghanistan has fallen to Taliban, who took over the presidential palace and rechristened the country as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Ashraf Ghani, the US-backed President, resigned and fled Afghanistan saying he wanted peace and avoid bloodshed. The Taliban who allowed him to flee wanted Afghanistan. And, the US which is- believed to have negotiated safe passage for Ghani and its own nationals was in a hurry to get out of that piece of land. The result is the current situation in Afghanistan. In this paper we will first discuss about how did the Taliban return to Afghanistan, why did Afghan forces surrender. Then we will discuss about who are Taliban, what were the agreements done between Taliban and Trump and what does Taliban want? Then it discusses about where will the refugees go after Taliban takes control. And at last we will talk about different countries' take on Afghanistan like which countries support Taliban and which does not.

Responding to President Donald Trump, the Indian government has stressed on the fact that developmental assistance can play a major role in transforming Afghanistan. US mocked at India for funding a "library" in Afghanistan, saying it is of no use in the war-torn country as he criticised India and others for not doing enough for the nation's security. US also asked India, Russia, Pakistan and other neighbouring countries to take responsibility for Afghanistan's security as he defended his push for the US to invest less overseas. Most of the investments in Afghanistan were on mega infrastructure projects including the 218 km road from Zaranj to Delaram, the Salma Dam and the new Afghan Parliament building. India has also been supplying military equipment to Afghanistan besides providing training to hundreds of Afghan security personnel.

KEYWORDS- Afghanistan, Taliban, terrorism, Al- Qaeda, Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan,

INTRODUCTION

Just last week, US intelligence analysts had predicted it would likely take several more weeks before Afghanistan's civilian government in Kabul fell to Taliban fighters. In reality, it only took a few short days. On Sunday, Taliban militants retook Afghanistan's capital, almost two decades after they were driven from Kabul by US troops. Although Afghan security forces were well funded and well equipped, they put up little resistance as Taliban militants seized much of the country following the withdrawal of US troops

beginning in early July. On Sunday, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country, abandoning the presidential palace to Taliban fighters. As the United States withdrew its remaining troops in 2021, fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces intensified. An Afghan branch of the Islamic State (ISIS) also carried out attacks, including against civilians. Hundreds of civilians have been killed and injured in insurgent attacks, including targeted assassinations of journalists and officials. Indiscriminate government airstrikes added to the civilian toll. Women's rights advocates have raised concerns about shrinking space for civil society. The Taliban have imposed severe restrictions on women's rights and free expression in areas they control.

HOW IT HAPPENED?

¹Ashraf Ghani and vice president Amrullah Saleh fled to Tajikistan on Sunday after Taliban encircled Kabul, the Afghan capital. This happened while representatives from three sides- Afghan government, Taliban and the US- were sitting in Doha, Qatar to discuss transfer of power. It is believed that the US secured a 'word' from Taliban that they would not force their entry into Kabul until safety of Ghani- led government officials and American nationals were secured. Taliban entered Kabul soon after Ghani and Saleh fled the Afghan capital.

The Afghan state, built over two decades with trillions of dollars, seems to have vanished into thin air. The Taliban, thought to number not more than 200,000 soldiers, armed mostly with equipment they have seized from their enemies, have taken all of Afghanistan's urban centres in little more than a week, generally without much resistance.

The answer seems to be that what they lacked in brawn, they made up for in brains, determination and political shrewdness. For the past year, diplomats in Doha had hoped that the Taliban could be compelled to negotiate with Mr. Ghani's government to agree to some sort of power- sharing agreement. The insurgents evidently realised it would be more profitable to negotiate with Mr. Ghani's under linings, city-by-city, and hereby simply pull the rug out from underneath him.

WHY AFGHAN FORCES SURRENDERED?

In each case, the militants have made wide- ranging promises, to "forgive" those who served in the American- backed government, in exchange for surrender. In Kandahar, former soldiers who surrendered have been issued with laissez passer documents that they can show at checkpoints. In Jalalabad, in the east, the Taliban marched in without firing a shot, after elders in the city negotiated a surrender. Mazar-i- Sharif, a northern city which once served as a bastion of anti- Taliban resistance in the 1990s, folded in similar fashion.

WHO ARE TALIBAN?

Formed in 1994, the Taliban were made up of former Afghan resistance fighters, known collectively as Mujahedeen, who fought the invading Soviet forces in 1980s. they aimed to impose their interpretation of Islamic law on the country and remove any foreign influence. Since 2016, the Taliban's leader has been Mawlawi Hibatullah Akhundzada. In 2017, the Taliban was estimated to have 200,000 troops. The totalitarian Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established in 1996 and the Afghan capital was transferred

¹ Who are the Taliban and how did they take control of Afghanistan so swiftly?; edition.cnn.com , accessed 20th August 2021

to Kandahar. It held control of most of the country until being overthrown after the American- led invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001 following the 9/11 attacks.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN TRUMP AND TALIBAN

In 2017, the Taliban issued an open letter to the newly elected US President Donald Trump, calling on him to withdraw US forces from Afghanistan. After years of negotiations, peace deal was signed in 2020. The US agreed to withdraw troops and release some 5,000 Taliban prisoners, while the Taliban agreed to take steps to prevent any group or individuals, including Al Qaeda, from using Afghanistan to threaten the security of the US or its allies. But just the opposite happened. Violence in Afghanistan grew to its highest levels.

WHAT DO TALIBAN WANT?

The Taliban has tried to present themselves as different from the past. They have claimed to committed to peace process, an inclusive government, and willing to maintain some rights for women. The Taliban spokesperson, Sohail Shaheen, from Doha, said women would still be allowed to continues their education from primary to higher education. Yet the disconnect between statements made from Qatar and what is being done by Taliban commanders in Afghanistan is now canyon- sized. In Herat, where 60% of the students at the university were women, they have reportedly already been ordered back to their homes. Female employees have been told to give up their jobs to male relatives. Shaheen also said diplomats, journalists, and non- profits could continue operating in the country.

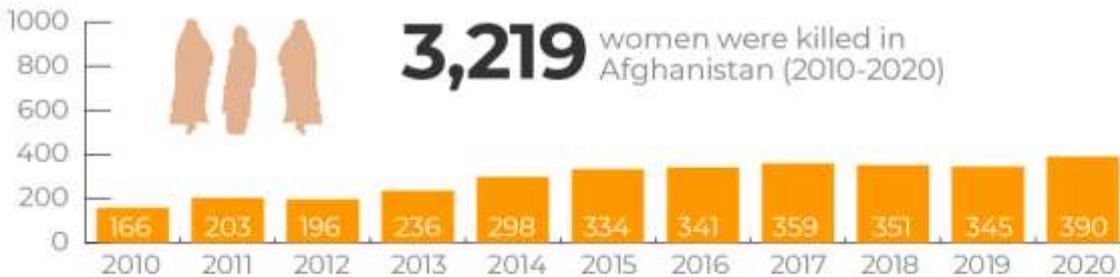
“That is our commitment, to provide a secure environment and they can carry out their activities for the people of Afghanistan,” he said.



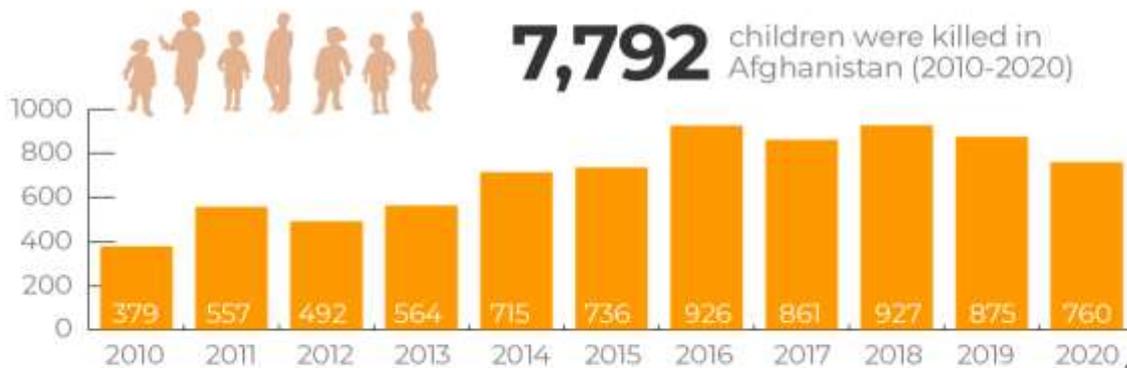
AFGHANISTAN

Attacks against women and children

2020 was the deadliest year over the past decade for women in Afghanistan with **390 deaths recorded.**



Afghanistan continues to be one of the **deadliest places in the world to be a child.**



Death tolls prior to 2009 do not follow a consistent methodology and have thus been excluded.
Source: UNAMA | Data as of February, 2021



²Fig.: Number of women and children killed in Afghanistan

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² Afghanistan: Visualizing the Impact of 20 years war on Afghanistan; <https://interactive.aljazeera.com/aje/2021/afghanistan-visualising-impact-of-war/index.html>; accessed 27st August 2021

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AFGHAN REFUGEES: WHERE WILL THEY GO?

The evacuations from Kabul airport have restarted after the devastating bomb attacks on Thursday that targeted fleeing Afghans - but they are entering their final stage ahead of the 31 August deadline agreed with the Taliban for foreign troops to withdraw.

Several European nations have already ended their rescue flights and the UK operation is also coming to a close. UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said on Friday that between 800 to 1,100 Afghans eligible to be relocated to the UK would be left behind.

The US says it has facilitated the evacuation of more than 105,000 people from Kabul airport, currently the only operational one in the country, since 14 August - although it's not clear how many of those were Afghan nationals.

The UK Ministry of Defence says it has flown out nearly 14,000 of those people and that about 8,000 of them were Afghan nationals.

Many of those being flown out of the country are being taken to emergency processing centres that have been set up in several countries, including Qatar and Uzbekistan.

Country	Refugees
Pakistan	1,352,160
Iran	951,142
Germany	46,292
Austria	20,220
Sweden	16,558
Italy	16,033
Greece	11,440
United Kingdom	9,752
Switzerland	5,675
Turkey	3,423

³Fig.: Top Hosts for Registered Afghan Refugees, 2016.

OTHER COUNTRIES TAKE ON AFGHANISTAN

PAKISTAN'S SUPPORT

For Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban's return delivers a strategic defeat to rival India, but also potentially a boost to an afflicted insurgent group, the Pakistani Taliban, that threatens Pakistan itself. Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan who has been strongly endorsing the Taliban take over on Afghanistan has said his message to all world leaders will be to stay engaged with Afghanistan to economically support the people of the war- ravaged country. Imran Khan has always opposed the presence of US military and his neighbourhood and championed a promise between Afghan authorities and Taliban. He has termed the Taliban takeover as "breaking the chain of slavery." "You take over the other culture and become psychologically subservient. When that happens, please remember, it is worse than actual slavery. It is harder to throw off the chains of cultural enslavement. What is happening in Afghanistan now, they have broken the shackles of slavery", he said.

CHINA

Wang was quoted as saying by China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

"The international community should encourage and guide it in a positive direction instead of exerting more pressure", which will be conducive to stabilising the situation, he added. China has emerged as one of the first nations to develop diplomatic relations with the Taliban.

UNITED KINGDOM

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Friday Britain would work with the Taliban if necessary after the militants capture of Afghanistan, and defended his foreign minister who has come under fire for his handling of the situation.

³ Afghanistan: Displacement Challenges in a Country on the Move; <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/afghanistan-displacement-challenges-country-move>

"What I want to assure people is that our political and diplomatic efforts to find a solution for Afghanistan, working with the Taliban, of course if necessary, will go on," Johnson told media.

INDIA

India on Monday said it would stand by Afghans who have been its partners in developing the country and will help facilitate their travel out of the war torn country along with Indian nationals and members of the Afghan Sikh and Hindu communities.

A statement from the Indian foreign ministry said the "the situation in Afghanistan is being monitored on a constant basis at high levels." "The Government will take all steps to ensure the safety and security of Indian nationals and our interests in Afghanistan," it said.

CONCLUSION

After 20 years of war, the Taliban have swept to victory in Afghanistan.

The group completed their shockingly rapid advance across the country by capturing Kabul on 15 August. It comes after foreign forces announced their withdrawal following a deal between the US and the Taliban, two decades after US forces removed the militants from power in 2001.

The conflict has killed tens of thousands of people and displaced millions.

Taliban forces have pledged not to allow Afghanistan to become a base for terrorists who could threaten the West.

But questions are already being asked about how the group will govern the country, and what their rule means for women, human rights, and political freedoms.

The situation in Afghanistan could potentially set off a domino effect in the Indian subcontinent. As the Taliban gains near-total control of the country, India will be closely looking at how Afghanistan's relationship evolves with Pakistan.

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