

Dr. Zahir Shah¹, Awais Ahmed², Dr. Jamal Shah³, Amina Munir⁴**Abstract**

For a long period, Afghanistan served as the superpowers' front line. America's hands lastly caused suffering for the nation when they invaded Kabul following the events of 9/11, 2001 and ousted Taliban. The US withdrawal in August 2021 provided another opportunity for Taliban to regroup and seize control of the power. Afghanistan is a developing nation; aside from this, the Taliban's takeover of power by foreigners is not a favourable sign for its future. This incident shakes the whole area. The bordering countries have catch 22 situations; particularly in China, Iran, Pakistan, and India. Both good and bad effects follow from the comeback of Taliban. It can be rather important for peace building and regional connection. On the other side, smuggling, brain drain, refugee issues, hiding the terrorist organizations, humanitarian catastrophe and other serious challenges which are waiting for the region and would cause destabilization of the region. This paper aims to examine the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan and its effects on the surroundings. The reasons for and context of the Taliban power takeover in Afghanistan have been studied in this paper. The border sharing nations will suffer as Taliban resurgence occurs. This is a qualitative kind of research, hence the question at hand was answered using several materials like books, periodicals, journals, and research papers. The Taliban's return has set havoc all around the region. Unstable Afghanistan will surely cause the region to be unstable. The Taliban has to shift from extreme views and cooperate with other countries to advance regional growth.

Keywords: Afghanistan, US Withdrawal, Taliban Resurgence, Peace Process, Doha Deal, Afghan Taliban

1. Introduction

Afghanistan was dominated by Britain in the middle of the 19th century, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in the late 20th century, and the United States in the 21st century following the longest war ever to end in defeat. The Taliban took control of the first province on August 5, 2021, and again on August 15, 2021, when they took control of Kabul. After invading Afghanistan, US-led NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) forces remained there for almost 20 years. The purpose of the large troop presence in Afghanistan was to defeat the Taliban on Afghan territory and to provide military and financial support to the Afghan government. This is the most unusual incident in contemporary history because, in spite of the presence of a 35,000-strong force that was well-trained by the US, NATO Forces, and India, nothing had ever happened against the Taliban. All things considered; the Taliban successfully seized control of all of Afghanistan peacefully in ten days. The 20-year conflict did not finish swiftly. The peace negotiations went through several stages. The events of September 11, 2001 marked the start of the war between the United States and Afghanistan. The United States invaded Afghanistan under the pretext that Al-Qaeda had attacked the United States and remained a threat to international security. The Taliban was charged with providing sanctuary to Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups. During the presidency of George W. Bush, the war was initiated. President Bush's strategy was to destroy Al-Qaeda without holding talks. However, President Barack Obama deserves the credit for starting the peace process when he established the Pakistan-Afghan Policy in 2009 and laid the foundation for it. The Obama administration believed that a war could not be resolved by force alone. In late 2010, the Taliban and US officials started holding secret talks. The political office of the Taliban was established in Doha, Qatar, in 2013, the final year of President Obama's administration (Harpviken 2021). Obama also took the initiative to form the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), which comprised the USA, China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. These four states set up various rounds of negotiations with the Taliban in an effort to find a peaceful solution to the Afghan problem. This endeavour served as the cornerstone for a peaceful resolution to Afghanistan's dilemma, despite the fact that it had no positive outcomes. Upon taking office in 2017, Donald Trump unveiled his South Asia Policy, which appeared to be antagonistic and assertive, completely dismissing the possibility of a peace process in Afghanistan. He made several suggestions for escalating the fight. However, his administration quickly came to the realization that using fewer forces would not allow America to win the war in Afghanistan. Thus, Trump started a peace process with Pakistan's assistance—a long-standing demand of the Taliban. Negotiations with the United States where their goal as long as American forces were in Afghanistan. Trump consented to the terms and started direct negotiations in Doha, Qatar. Zalmi Khalilzad was designated by the United States as its special envoy for peace negotiations in the Taliban headquarters, which was already based in Qatar. With some ups and downs, these negotiations resumed in 2018 and carried on into 2019. The Taliban and the United States signed a peace agreement for the first time on January 29, 2020. In the presence of US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, this agreement was signed by US Special Envoy Zalmi Khalilzad and Taliban Political Chief Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. Although it turned out to be ineffective, Americans believed they had won the agreement since the Trump administration could utilize it to their advantage during the election campaign.

In accordance with the terms of the Doha Agreement, the US would leave Afghanistan without using force, and the Taliban would never again provide support to Al-Qaeda on Afghan territory. Now, in an attempt to honor his word, Biden issued an order for a swift withdrawal—one that was not intended to put an end to the longest conflict in American history. Military authorities that desired a greater deployment of US-led NATO soldiers to support the Afghan Security soldiers (ASF) strongly objected to this quick exit. There was an assurance that US forces would leave Afghanistan gradually. George W. Bush, the previous US president and the man who spearheaded the US War on Terror, opposed the notion of withdrawing troops faster than planned. *"I fear that Afghan women and girls will face unspeakable harm,"* he remarked. (Who Are the Taliban?, 2022)

The Taliban entered Kabul during the Joe Biden Administration two weeks prior to the withdrawal's scheduled completion in May 2021. The Taliban first took control of Afghanistan in 1996, were overthrown by an American invasion in 2001, and have now reclaimed control after a 20-year hiatus. Through the war, the US wavered between two goals. The war's primary

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goals were to assassinate Osama bin Laden and dismantle the global terrorist organization Al-Qaeda, as well as to reconstruct Afghanistan's political structure and social structure.

Because people on both sides were impacted by the war, its costs were extremely high. Research conducted by *Brown University* found that 211,000 people, including 71,001 civilians, had perished in the Afghanistan War. The *US Department of Defense* (DOD) estimates that the cost of war for military activities was \$837.3 billion. An estimated 145 billion dollars were spent on government agencies, rehabilitation, and other activities in Afghanistan, according to a Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Report. President Ashraf Ghani escaped via self-exile to Uzbekistan and subsequently the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The world was taken aback by the abrupt and hasty ascent of the Taliban to power, which was unprecedented not only for the people of Afghanistan but also for the surrounding states and the international community.

The states in the region were impacted by the Doha Agreement and the US exit, and their responses were evident. India's reaction was particularly circumspect because it compromised its long-standing anti-Taliban stance. The agreement reached between the US and the Taliban established India's standing as a significant participant in Afghanistan, despite India's initial misgivings and considerations of self-interest. Thus, there are both formal and informal reservations from India. India was seeing this development as well and perceived a fresh security danger. Pakistan is concerned about the massive refugee problem and is aware of the previous experience. Despite Pakistan's backing for the Taliban regime, the country is always working to stabilize Afghanistan in order to further its own interests and gain access to the Central Asian Republics (CAR). Russia also applauded the agreement since it serves her interests to remove American soldiers, which will also serve the interests of the Chinese. China has referred to the US withdrawal as a reckless effort to jeopardize regional harmony.

From past history, the US-led NATO Forces' withdrawal will cause the Afghan problem, which will impact surrounding countries. Some experts and observers argued the US withdrew quickly to constrain China, a serious threat to US hegemony and dominance (Ullah, 2021). Taliban wowed and challenged superpowers. Taliban compelled a superpower to talk peace. The second Kabul takeover gave them power. Global focus falls on Afghanistan. This research examines how the Taliban retook Afghanistan. This study also shows how Taliban reemergence may affect neighbouring states. The study will illuminate Taliban reemergence. The Taliban's return and regional implications are explained here.

2. Talibanin Afghanistan Origin and Developments

Before the 1978 civil war, Muhammad Zahir Shah ruled Afghanistan. In 1933, he took power. It needed external aid after World War II due to its economic weakness. To gain influence in Afghanistan, the Soviet Union employed economic aid. In contrast, the US established military connections with Pakistan. Afghanistan asked the USSR for aid. His 1964 reforms moved toward representational governance. Parties might organize but not run for office. He was ousted by cousin Dawood Khan in 1973. He joined the Parcham faction of the People's Democratic Republic Party of Afghanistan to stage the coup. The 1965-founded party was Soviet-influenced. After two years, PDPA split into Flag (Parcham) and Masses (Khalq) (Rashid 2001).

Dawood tried to demote the Parchamis and distance the government from the USSR after seizing control. Parcham and Khalq regrouped in 1977 and assassinated Dawood on April 27, 1978, to start a coup. USSR influence returned to the PDPA. Afghanistan's ruling party was the pro-communist PDPA. The PDPA leadership under Khalq then implemented radical land reforms accompanied by mass repression. These arrested hundreds of thousands. The Afghan elite discriminated by arresting political leaders, religious figures, minorities, students, and Islamist organizations. The PDPA repressed dissent, killed thousands of political prisoners, and instituted reforms. Thus, "Mujahideens" emerged as anti-government armed groups. The late 1970s saw Afghan opposition factions' rebel against PDPA (Collin, 2011).

Fearful of the deteriorating situation, notably the army's collapse and the likelihood of a disintegrating Afghanistan endangering its security on its southern frontier, the USSR rushed thousands of troops into Kabul on December 24, 1979. To rescue the Afghan communist regime, the USSR invaded Afghanistan in 1979, with considerable help from its ally India, to fight insurgent troops backed by the US and Pakistan. Hafiz Ullah Amin, president of the Khalq party, was assassinated by USSR intelligence. The USSR intelligence forces took over the government and appointed Parchami's Babrak Karmal administration as President. During this battle, many of Afghans migrated to neighbouring nations.

During the Babrak Karmal dictatorship, there was a huge rebellion, but with the support of Soviet occupation forces, the Karmal government used mass arrests, torture, and aerial bombardment to destroy the revolt. These events fuelled resentment for the communist leadership in the capital, resulting in a high rate of refugee migration. Aside from this, there were certain Islamist groups opposing the Karmal atrocities. The Islamist organizations became the centre of the resistance, known collectively as jihad fighters or mujahedeen. The Mujahedeen were stationed in Pakistan and Iran. During the Cold War, Saudi Arabia and the United States provided support to the Mujahedeen. They were indirectly assisting Afghanistan via Pakistan (Collin, 2011). America and Pakistan sought to impose influence in Afghanistan through Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Mujahedeen militia, Hezb i Islami. Eventually, the Soviets lost the war and left Afghanistan in 1989. The PDPA weakened, and Najibullah lost control (Collin, 2011).

Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal, the rebel groups began battling for dominance. The situation escalated to civil war. Thousands of Afghans, especially women and children, went to Pakistan, its neighbour. When Pakistan failed to exert control over Afghanistan through mujahedeen groups, it sought to develop a new rebel group, the "Taliban," composed of refugees (Smith, 2011). The Taliban entered Afghanistan on September 1, 1996. They then overcame Kabul on the 26th.

The organization was founded in the early 1990s by the Afghan Mujahedeen, or Islamic guerilla fighters, who had resisted the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan (1979-89), with covert assistance from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and its Pakistani counterpart, the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) directorate. Pakistan is accused of providing logistical and financial support to the Taliban during the American war, but Islamabad denies it. Younger Pashtun tribesmen from Pakistani madrassas joined them.

The Taliban, who were already a part of Afghan society, decided to launch a campaign to cleanse Kandahar and its neighbouring areas of all curses. Several discussions were held before a foundation meeting was convened in late Autumn 1994. The first assembly of 40-50 Taliban took place at *SangeSar's* white mosque. A new movement has formed in Afghanistan with the goal of purging the country of terrorist organizations. The movement did not immediately make a clear statement about its goals or agenda. However, the media revealed the names of the movements.

The movement gained popular support in the early post-Soviet era by vowing to establish stability and the rule of law following four years of conflict (1992-1996) between opposing mujahedeen factions. In November 1994, the Taliban took control of the volatile southern city of Kandahar. By September 1996, they had deposed Tajikistan's President Burhanuddin Rabbani, whom they saw as corrupt and anti-Pashtun, and seized control of Kabul. The Taliban declared Afghanistan an Islamic Emirate the same year, with Mullah Mohammed Omar, a preacher and former anti-Soviet resistance member, serving as its "commander of the faithful," or *Amir al-Mu'minin*. Prior to its fall in 2001, the dictatorship controlled more than 90% of the country.

2.1. Peace process between United States and Taliban after 9/11, 2001 attacks for ending the war

The conflict in Afghanistan was precipitated by the 9/11 attacks, as well as the involvement of Al-Qaeda. These attacks sparked the war on terror. The United States deposed the Taliban and invaded Afghanistan under the pretexts that Al-Qaeda had launched an attack on the United States from Afghanistan and posed a threat to global security. The Taliban were accused of providing refuge to other terrorist organizations. The battle began under President George Walker Bush. The primary goal of the conflict was to defeat the Taliban without engaging in negotiations. Despite spending eight years in Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Bush administration (2000-2008) failed to conduct an interagency study to develop a regional plan for stabilizing Afghanistan and increasing Pakistan's participation in a number of programs (Fair, 2010).

2.2. Peace talk Initiatives under Obama Administration (2009-2017)

President Barack Hussein Obama is credited with starting the peace process with the Af-Pak Policy. During his first term, he established an office for Taliban in Doha. On January 21, 2010, the US State Department (USSD) issued its Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy in support of the president's counter-al-Qaeda objectives. By prioritizing a civilian surge and focusing on key regions and sub-national venues such as provincial and district administrations, the plan revived some of the March 2009 strategy's expansive state-building objectives. As part of this policy, the US committed to support a "reintegration" scheme that uses monetary incentives to lure Taliban fighters and lower- and mid-level leaders away from the conflict.

Obama's strategy for Afghanistan is to give Afghans more responsibility. This would allow the United States to reduce its kinetic military activities and establish a more conventional presence in which it would provide economic and development assistance, as well as continual training for military and civilian personnel.

Another step initiated by Obama is the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG). It consisted of Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, and the United States of America. The first meeting occurred on January 11, 2016. Different rounds of discussions were scheduled between various factions to resolve the Afghan issue peacefully. Although this approach was not as successful in laying the groundwork for future discussions (Khan, 2017). This program demonstrated that peace is an option for resolving the Afghan conflict.

2.3. Peace Talks during Trump Administration

Donald Trump assumed the presidency on January 20, 2017. He quickly unveiled his South Asia Policy, which was clearly aggressive and antagonistic. He dismissed the idea of a peace process. Furthermore, he was intensifying the confrontation. His government eventually concluded that America could not win the war with so few forces. According to Trump, the initial provocation was a suicide strike in Kabul that killed a US soldier and twelve other people. He also questioned the Taliban's trustworthiness and credibility. He questioned the Taliban's "ability to negotiate a real solution," citing their refusal to agree to a ceasefire during the discussions. Trump's decision to leave the "peace talks" after almost all of the issues had been resolved and, according to his own admission, the Taliban and the president of Afghanistan were preparing to "secretly" meet in Camp David fits into a pattern of sorts in his now-on-now-off negotiating strategy designed to agitate his counterparts by engaging in brinkmanship to obtain a better deal (Sareen 2019). Trump dodged a bad deal that was unlikely to bring peace to Afghanistan by calling off the current talks with the Taliban. The provisional agreement reached by Zalmay Khalilzad's special envoy focused mostly on giving the Taliban with what they most desired: a date for the withdrawal of American troops. However, the US was hoping that the cessation of weaponry would occur first in a genuine peace accord, rather than the US leave (Haqqani 2019).

2.4. Doha Accord February 2020

It was the outcome of long-term peace discussions between the United States and Afghanistan to end the 20-year conflict. After more than two decades of ceaseless strife, it looks that rationality has prevailed. After nine years of unsuccessful discussions, the United States eventually reached a peace accord with the strong and unstoppable Taliban, despite being hopelessly engaged in Afghanistan's 18-year-long, arduous, and intractable conflict. Zalmay Khalilzad, a US special envoy, and Taliban political head Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar signed the deal in the presence of Secretary of State Mike Pompeo (Adeel Niaz, 2020). On February 29, 2020, the US and the Taliban signed the Agreement for Peace in Afghanistan, often known as the US-Taliban Deal or the Doha Agreement, in Doha, Qatar. The following are the key points of the agreement:

1. Guarantees and enforcement measures are necessary to prevent anyone from using Afghan soil to undermine US and allies' security.
2. Assurances, sanctions, and a timetable for the departure of all foreign soldiers from Afghanistan should be provided.
3. Afghans should discuss and negotiate a long-term ceasefire. The future political roadmap for Afghanistan will be announced alongside the timing and details of a long-term ceasefire, including cooperative implementation mechanisms, to be discussed by participants in intra-Afghan negotiations.
4. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which the US does not recognize as a state, will begin intra-Afghan negotiations after the announcement of guarantees (Maizland, 2020).

After the agreement was signed, many analysts claimed that the longest war in American history had resulted in the superpower's defeat because, despite spending nearly two trillion dollars and engaging in constant sabre-rattling by succeeding administrations, the US and its allies NATO and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had nothing to brag about in terms of victories. On the other side, the Taliban gained enormously since they were able to meet their main objective, which was the expulsion of foreign soldiers from Afghan land. This was made quite apparent in the Doha Agreement, in which the IEA, the US, its allies, and the coalition agreed to completely remove all troops from Afghanistan.

3. US Withdrawal under Joe Biden Administration (A Winning Situation for Taliban in Afghanistan)

By September 11, 2021, the Taliban managed to seize control of a significant area of Afghanistan by evacuating completely from the nation. President Joe Biden said that all American personnel in Afghanistan will be removed by September 11, 2021, marking more than 20 years of American involvement in the nation's conflict. The US pledged in May 2021 to remove all foreign military personnel from Afghanistan, and in return, the Taliban agreed to prevent other groups—like Al Qaeda—from using the country as a means of posing a danger to the US. Two weeks before the completion of the withdrawal, on August 15, 2021, the Taliban took control of Kabul. This was the outcome of a quick, full-scale military assault that shocked a lot of people in Afghanistan and the United States. U.S. military personnel managed the evacuation of nearly 120,000 individuals from Kabul International Airport, including diplomats from both the United States and other countries as well as Afghan friends, before to their withdrawal on August 30, 2021. There were no American military or diplomatic personnel in Afghanistan as of August 2022.

3.1. Causes of the US Defeat in Afghanistan

"The war [in Afghanistan] did not end on the terms we wanted," according to US Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Mark Milley. *"It is clear, it is obvious to all of us."* After a 20-year struggle, the United States has left Afghanistan humiliated and defeated. General Milley referred to the war as a "strategic pullout failure" at a committee hearing about the US army withdrawal from Afghanistan and the chaotic exit from Kabul (Afzal, 2021). The most humiliating loss the world's sole superpower has ever faced was a result of mistakes made by the United States in Afghanistan.

1. Taking part in proxy fights between Saudi Arabia and Iran and India-Pakistan, the United States engaged the continuing political problems in the area, completely ignoring the aspects that British historians have highlighted as the roots of Afghanistan's collapse. India was to play a larger part in the US strategy to prevent China and Pakistan from gaining sway over this country. It seems that the policymakers of China, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia could not afford to let the US and its allies to act against their interests. As a consequence, the war on terror turned into an interest struggle, and Afghanistan became a patchwork of interests for the surrounding governments;
2. When Hamid Karzai became the head of the newly formed Afghan government. About 42% of Afghans are Pashtuns, and they were effectively kept out of the halls of power. As was the case in Afghanistan, the outcomes of a minority dominating the majority are always terrible;
3. Americans ignored the Afghan government's worries about its sovereignty despite repeated warnings from Afghan Presidents Hamid Karzai and Ashraf Ghani. Initially, the commanders of NATO and the US were seen to be the de facto rulers of Afghanistan. This was a problem for the Afghan population, who had little faith in their government;
4. One concern was the Afghan army's training, which completely ignored their basic issues with professional leadership and literacy;
5. American attempts to win over Afghans at the grassroots level also failed miserably. The Afghan army, like the Afghan government, was also composed of members of the nation's minority communities;
6. The US's failure was also influenced by a basic lack of efficient planning and policymaking for a long-lasting peace in Afghanistan. They recruited warlords and tribal sardars, who the common Afghan was afraid of;
7. The failure of the US to include Afghanistan's neighbours in efforts to maintain regional peace and stability on an equal footing, instead choosing to honour the liberal and secular voices and do as they pleased rather than respecting and upholding the cultural norms of the local populations;
8. The US failed to secure Afghanistan's economic independence from outside donors because approximately 75% of the country's GDP was dependent on US assistance and aid from other countries that were under US influence. The US's interest in Afghanistan was not driven by a win-win situation but rather by a desire to dominate its neighbours, notably Iran, Pakistan, and China (Afzal, 2021).

3.2. Reasons of falling of Kabul to Taliban

All rational observers are left asking why the Afghan troops collapsed so quickly and why Washington and Kabul failed to do anything to resolve the problem. A solution was outlined in the Doha Peace Agreement. But had Washington done this before the end of 2001, after the Taliban's collapse, there would not have been any casualties or destruction of property, and it could have spared itself the humiliation it faces today. At the end of 2001, a Taliban delegation was greeted by Hamid Karzai at the Shah Wali Kot area, which is outside of Kandahar. In return for a comprehensive amnesty, the Taliban had pledged to relinquish control of Kabul. Mullah Omar, the head of the Taliban, acceded to Karzai's call to abandon terrorism, which led to the Shah Wali Kot agreement. The agreement said that the Taliban would surrender their weapons and go home. However, US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld called Karzai the next day, pleading with him to back out of the agreement and refuse to award the Taliban any amnesty (Aftab Ahmad, 2021). In addition to being prolonged by twenty years, the US war in Afghanistan suffered humiliation as a consequence. But two elements ultimately proved fatal to the peace talks, and the Taliban took over control of Kabul.

First off, President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan made the following declaration the day the Doha Deal was signed: *"I will not free the Taliban prisoners, despite the fact that it was agreed upon in the agreement."* Ghani's intransigent manner and self-serving desire to hold onto power caused the peace process to stagnate. Ghani and his team, in fact, were anticipating the next US presidential elections. They thought Biden would back out of the Doha Agreement, just as Donald Trump had done with the Iran Nuclear Deal, if he were to win. But it didn't happen like that. The peace process came to an end due to the US administration's conflicting approach towards Afghanistan, which was the second major factor (Aftab Ahmad, 2021).

Presidents Trump and Biden failed to devise a well-thought-out plan to keep Kabul out of the hands of the Taliban. Though he did not put enough pressure on Ashraf Ghani to take the intra-Afghan discussions seriously enough to lead to a peaceful end of the war, President Trump signed the deal with the Taliban. Like Obama, Biden waited too long to come up with a strategy that would allow for an honourable US departure from Afghanistan as soon as he reached office and also allow for a peaceful ending. Besides, Biden did not pressurize Ghani into a meaningful dialogue with the Taliban. The US was humiliated worldwide and the hollowness of US policy toward Afghanistan was made evident by Kabul's fall. Based on all the factors, the US's inconsistent foreign policy and the Ghani government's obstinacy were the main reasons for Kabul's collapse (Yousafzai, 2021).

3.3. The Impact of the Taliban's Return on Afghanistan

There is now a problem in Afghanistan under Taliban authority. Millions of people are hungry, the health care system collapses, and wages decline. The 38-million-person country was heavily reliant on foreign assistance prior to the Taliban taking control. Now that billions of dollars in assistance have been stopped and sanctions have been imposed, slowing down rescue attempts, the international reaction has seriously harmed it. Representatives from the UN have urged the US and other countries to greatly expand assistance, but these governments are facing challenging circumstances now that the Taliban are in charge. Michael McKinley, a former US ambassador to Afghanistan, states that "any increased aid to Afghanistan runs the risk of being accused of strengthening the Taliban's position of authority and reducing leverage to change their behaviour" (Maizland, 2019).

There are a number of significant issues that the US departure from Afghanistan will provide to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and the US. Rebuilding and preserving stability in war-torn Afghanistan, which has been devastated by almost thirty years of violence and has included several major foreign actors, is the biggest challenge. Similarly, US concluded that in order to preserve permanent peace in Afghanistan, talks with the Taliban were necessary. Afghans too appear weary of the protracted conflict and want a solid, long-lasting peace. (Akbar 2021)

The resurgence of the Taliban in Afghanistan would give rise to unconventional security challenges that will be of great concern not just to Central and South Asian countries but even beyond. These problems will include people trafficking, migration, weapons smuggling, and more, in addition to illegal drug trafficking and the rise of international terrorism (Deep 2021).

Taliban's return to Kabul is the result of a drawn-out process rather than an accident. The US misinterpreted the actual state of affairs. Overconfidence in the Taliban's power and a lack of consideration for the geopolitics of the area were present. Funds for rehabilitation and other help to Afghanistan were utilized to strengthen the puppet regime's hold over Kabul. (Khan 2021), One might view the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan by considering both of its aspects. The positive side of the coin could seem to be beyond comprehension to the average person, since the Taliban managed to win in only eleven days. The lack of opposition from the Afghan security apparatus to the Taliban reflects the complete breakdown of the Afghan forces' ability to fight. However, this was also a result of the United States and its allies' unwillingness to concentrate more on bolstering the nation's security paradigm. The dangers from both the inside and outside that might endanger the Taliban's existence are referred to as the dark side of the coin (Tariq, 2020).

Human rights breaches have grown since the Taliban came to power. They have contributed to the public execution of several people, an increase in threats against journalists and activists, a decline in the number of females enrolled in school, and stricter laws pertaining to women. Humanitarian supplies will not breach restrictions for a year, according to a recent decision by the UN Security Council. Researchers assert that more work has to be done to address the extensive damage, nevertheless. US banks possessed nine billion dollars in Afghan cash, which the US quickly blocked. Afghan funds at the US Federal Reserve totalling \$7 billion; however, US President Joe Biden issued an Executive Order ordering 3.5 billion of those funds to be diverted for reimbursements to 9/11 victims' families. This occurs at a period of extreme financial and international relief need for the Afghan people (Maizland, 2021).

Merely 2% of Afghans are estimated by the World Food Program to be sufficiently nourished. More than three million children suffer from malnutrition. Numerous factors contribute to the hunger issue. Cross-border assistance has been suspended due to many issues, including rising prices for staple items, a severe drought that harmed crops, and other factors. If circumstances don't improve, the Food and Agriculture Organization has warned that Afghanistan would experience a famine this year (Maizland, 2021).

Nearly all Afghan inhabitants were impoverished by the middle of 2022. The primary reason for this is the cessation of foreign assistance. Before the Taliban took control, contributions from international allies were thought to cover around three-fourths of the Afghan government's costs. Afghanistan isn't involved in the global financial system anymore. The United States frozen the assets of the Afghan central bank, which left it with insufficient liquid money to fulfil withdrawal demands. The assets were valued at \$9 billion. The International Monetary Fund has projected that the Afghan economy might contract by thirty percent (Maizland, 2021).

During the previous Administration, Afghanistan's healthcare system was reliant on outside assistance. In the absence of it, hospitals have run out of medications and supplies, primary care facilities have been forced to shut, and medical personnel has not received their pay checks on time, raising concerns that they may soon stop coming to work. The collapse takes place as Afghanistan battles to suppress epidemics of cholera, Covid-19, malaria, measles, and polio.

In 2021, 7,000 000 people were forced to move to various parts of Afghanistan after being forced to flee their homes. They went to live among the nation's already three million displaced people. Numerous families arrived in Kabul after fleeing violence, destitution, and drought; many are lodging with relatives or renting cheap apartments.

With no restrictions on females' access to school or work, the Taliban has pledged to restore all shuttered educational institutions by March 2022. The European Union's (EU) move is commendable since it would facilitate the distribution of humanitarian supplies to Afghans and aid the Taliban in their legitimate and humanitarian requests by facilitating communication with them and helping to comprehend their intentions.

4. Implications of a Resurgent Taliban for the Region

The rapid progress of the Taliban into Kabul has left a majority of the West in disbelief. Afghans are going to be the most affected by the extremist group's authority. The nations that border Afghanistan will suffer the most direct effects. As far as Russia, China, and Pakistan are concerned, political dialogue and diplomacy should determine Afghanistan's destiny.

Iran: Iran has expressed concerns to Pakistan. Hassan Raisi, the president of Iran, made a pointed comment to Shah Mahmood Qureshi, the foreign minister of Pakistan, during a meeting approximately ten days after the fall of Kabul. He said, "*paternalism toward Afghanistan is the American failed model and does not stand the chance to create lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan.*" "*Paternalism, just like occupation, is condemned to failure*" (Tookhy 2028). Some Iranian thinkers are afraid that Russia and Turkey will take over northern Afghanistan if Iran doesn't support the Tajiks and Hazaras (Tookhy, 2022). Iran, our friend to the east and a distance of 572 miles, has long asked for American troops. Iran's long-term goals were hindered by the chaos caused by the Taliban takeover. Iran wants to stop the flow of migrants and refugees, control drug trade,

keep cross-border business going, lower the danger from the Khorasan branch of the Islamic State, share water resources, and protect Afghanistan's Shia population. Afghanistan has been calmed down by Iran through political means. Iran worked with the Taliban and the Afghan government more after President Biden said the US would be leaving Afghanistan. Taliban and Afghan leaders got together in Tehran for peace talks in Warsaw. The US pulling out of Afghanistan was seen as "a chance to restore life, security, and durable peace" by Iran's new president, Ebrahim Raisi. He also asked all sides in Afghanistan to "Establish a National Agreement."

4.1. Central Asian Republics

Because the Taliban were a part of Central Asian states in the 1990s, it will take some time to get used to them again. There was no special reason for the leaders of Central Asia to keep things the same in Afghanistan or support the crooked, incompetent, and disorganized government in Kabul. If Afghanistan got into a civil war, it would be very bad for Central Asia's economy and safety. Afghanistan could become a base for terrorist and criminal groups again, which would make the area very insecure and slow down efforts to integrate economies, trade, and travel between South and Central Asia (Helf, et al. 2018). As a response, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan—three frontline governments in Central Asia—have all tightened border controls to show how strong their militaries are. Some people who work for the Afghan government as security have fled to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan is said to have set up tent camps for hundreds of Afghans who were trying to escape and taken in many of them. In case more people try to cross their border, they have also asked the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is run by Russia, for help (Helf et al., 2021).

China: China intended the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan to be followed by a "smooth landing". China is in favor of a stable Afghanistan. What worries Beijing most is a time of instability that might result in widespread bloodshed, a humanitarian crisis, and an Afghanistan that serves as a breeding ground and supply base for transnational extremism and terrorism. China, which has never been satisfied with the American military presence there, had quietly hoped that Washington's efforts would provide the unstable country long-lasting stability. Practical in nature, Beijing's communist authorities have always not cared who governs Afghanistan as long as China's vital interests are safeguarded. Beijing will maintain two distinct diplomatic channels with the Taliban. Initially, it will be capitalist. Since China's initiatives would bring in much-needed revenue, the Taliban are likely to welcome the attempts to revive Afghan economic enterprises. The Afghan economy is fragile and mostly depends on foreign aid from Western nations, which is probably about to stop. Thus, we will be grateful for any funding, even if it does not include human rights lectures. Second, neither party may meddle in the other's business without the other's consent. This means that the Taliban will not be able to protest the Chinese government's mistreatment of Uyghur Muslims in the area or transmit extremism into China's unstable Xinjiang province, which shares a small border with Afghanistan, according to Beijing. This implies for the Taliban that China will not inquire into the group's breaches of human rights unless Chinese individuals are implicated.

India: The conflict between India and Pakistan and its tensions with China are the lenses through which New Delhi views the emergence of the Taliban in Kabul, making the collapse of the India-friendly Ghani administration a severe danger to India's security. Many people who follow events in New Delhi saw the U.S. military pullout and the subsequent Taliban takeover as victories for Pakistan's Afghan strategy. A resolution calling for an immediate halt to all hostilities in Afghanistan and the establishment of a new government that was inclusive, cohesive, and representative was pushed through by India, who chaired a special session of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). There was discussion in New Delhi before the Taliban took control about possible cooperation with the Taliban while continuing to support the Ghani government, but with the collapse of Kabul, India's primary concern today is the impact on the region. The main concerns India has about the Taliban are whether or not the group would use violence in the future, how it will deal with its linkages to terrorist groups that threaten India, and how it will engage with Pakistan (Tharoor 2021). India invested \$3 billion on the country of Afghanistan. It's understandable that Indian officials would be hesitant, considering that the Taliban presently controls everything. Furthermore, the Modi administration has not helped itself by continuously using anti-Muslim language and internal policies that will probably exacerbate tensions across the Islamic world. (Tharoor, 2021). A nuclear-armed state, a hostile superpower to the northeast, and a Taliban regime to the northwest pose ongoing challenges to India's territorial integrity. In the months and years to come, maintaining both national security and regional stability will provide an unprecedented challenge for Indian diplomacy (Tharoor, 2021).

Pakistan: Islamabad is aware of the dangers of a Taliban government that does not defer to Western sanctions and end up being a burden. The US, China, and Russia collectively known as the "troika" would be consulted before Islamabad makes a decision on recognition, according to top authorities. The organization is advised by Islamabad to engage in negotiations with significant Afghan personalities, such as Ashraf Ghani's close aide Abdullah Abdullah and Hamid Karzai, the country's first president after the U.S. invasion. The aim is to stay out of trouble. Pakistan may recognize the government even if it is liberal, especially if China and Russia do the same.

Restoring economic connections is another concern. Tensions between the governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan have caused the commerce between the two countries to decline from \$2 billion in 2013 to less than half. Improved connections with Kabul and Taliban rule are seen by many Pakistani businesses as opportunities to increase that amount. There is a downside to the new strategy: thousands of refugees may flee to Pakistan if Afghans continue to live in poverty and fear for their safety.

There are worries after many captives, including TTP leaders, were released. Although Pakistan has sealed off a large portion of its border with Afghanistan, the state may still be threatened by TTP terrorists, particularly in the recently merged districts. Though they have expressed concerns over the Afghanistan-Pakistan border barrier and have been reluctant to take a firm stance on the TTP issue, the Afghan Taliban have consistently asserted that Afghan territory will not be used for international terrorists' attacks against other nations. The political and economic isolation of the new Taliban government will give Pakistan more power over the TTP issue, even if it's not ideal for Pakistan (Ahmed, 2022).

Pakistan has maintained that cross-border assault plans were hatched by terrorists from Afghanistan. In order to stop terrorism and maintain law and order, Pakistan walled the Durand Line, one of the most permeable, unstable, and controversial boundaries in the area and a point of contention between the two neighbours (Wakeel 2021).

For Pakistan's multifaceted strategy to promote socioeconomic cooperation in Southwest and Central Asia to be effective, Afghanistan must continue to be peaceful, stable, sovereign, and prosperous. To secure lasting peace and prosperity, Pakistan

actively developed a regional framework and strategy for post-conflict Afghanistan as well as for Southwest and Central Asia. Afghanistan's stability therefore rests on the timely completion of infrastructure projects related to connection with Pakistan, Iran, and Central Asia.

5. Conclusion

Under the first Taliban regime, which forbade women from working in certain professions, jailed journalists, prevented female students from enrolling in universities, and other measures, extremism was rampant. The world's disbelief at the Taliban's takeover of Kabul has made them vulnerable targets for their people. If we compare the two groups, it is evident that the Taliban of today are better than those of the past. Their understanding of world affairs has led them to adopt a diplomatic strategy. The Taliban were first hailed by extremists, and they are now being subtly welcomed. According to some reports, they are now promoting media freedom, allowing females to attend school, and promoting global peace. These days, the government is efficiently run.

However, a major and concerning problem brought on by a high volume of migrants, instances involving smuggling, and the danger that the region might become unstable in the event that a terrorist organization makes a credible threat. Therefore, an all-inclusive government that represents all Afghani ethnic groups and social groupings must be established in order to enable women to engage completely, fairly, and meaningfully in the system on the basis of their professional background, education, and experience. The international community has to hold the United States responsible for the present humanitarian and economic crisis, because it has destroyed Afghanistan with billions of dollars over the last 20 years and will need to spend far more to reconstruct the country. The frozen foreign deposits of the Afghanistan Bank need to be released as quickly as possible so that the government can manage the escalating humanitarian and economic issues.

All well-known political figures and government personnel who left the nation during political unrest and want to return must be allowed to communicate with the Taliban. In order for the newly formed government to establish permanent diplomatic posts overseas for friendly relations with other UN members, the international community must acknowledge the legitimacy of the government if it is to achieve long-term peace and security in Afghanistan and beyond its borders.

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