**Afghanistan on the brink**

**[Imtiaz Rafi But](https://nation.com.pk/Reporter/imtiaz-rafi-but)**

January 28, 2022

In the game of chess, there is a move called the “skewer”. In this move, the player loses if he makes a choice and loses if he doesn’t make a choice. This is the condition of Afghanistan at the moment, and the losing side consists of the poor people of Afghanistan, caught in the crossfire of international conspiracies, ambitions, militancy, insurgency, war and famine. After 20 years of war, there came a time when Afghanistan was being ruled by people who belonged to Afghanistan and that came with the price of hunger, death, bankruptcy, isolation and worse.

After the takeover of the Taliban and the disastrous exit of American troops, the international community and financial organisations have shut their doors to Afghanistan. It is an evil and sad state of affairs where Pakistan is left in limbo. Western countries, particularly NATO countries, have made a blunder in Afghanistan and left the poor people to mend the mess. Afghanistan and its people are now on the brink, worse than ever before. There is relevance in the words of a stoic philosopher of antiquity as he said, “my teacher taught me that most people are good and kind but my experience says otherwise.”

[Somali military kills 28 al-Shabaab terrorists in 48 hours](https://nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2022/somali-military-kills-28-al-shabaab-terrorists-in-48-hours)

The Taliban could evaluate the grave situation of the country, the day they took over from the former government installed by the United States. The country was shaking in terms of financial well-being. Forty percent of the GDP came from foreign funding. This is apart from the aid given by wealthy countries and neighbouring states. A separate stream of funds was coming directly from Washington. All that stopped on the eve of the exit from Kabul. Adding to the issue is that the IMF and the World Bank froze the foreign reserves of the Afghan Government. The argument here was that those funds would be released based on negotiations with the Taliban and their treatment of women and minorities. Within a few months, banking services collapsed and in the last week of December, more than half of the Afghan population was out of cash to buy basic goods and services. The Taliban government announced time and again that their soil will not be used against anyone, and that the Taliban is ready to reform their style of governance on modern lines, but all that has been in vain. Kabul is in complete and utter isolation.

[Western Balkans see highest COVID deaths per 100,000 globally](https://nation.com.pk/29-Jan-2022/western-balkans-see-highest-covid-deaths-per-100-000-globally)

Next comes the health and food sector. Afghanistan is facing an acute shortage of food and medical services. Over sixty percent of children are malnourished, as Afghan companies and the government are unable to pay for basic health imports. The hospital facilities are inadequate. Power shortages are hampering the provision of basic hospital services. There are long lines to visit doctors and no one has enough cash to afford surgery. Children and babies are dying every day. The only supply line is the one coming from neighbouring countries like Pakistan and international donor organisations. The Taliban government is running a race against time. Afghanistan is on the brink of a grave humanitarian crisis and the world is turning a blind eye to it.

A similar situation is being seen in the shortage of food and shelter. Afghanistan is undergoing a cold and hungry winter. Families are living under the sky and eating plants and burning plastic to stay warm. The Afghan government has no cash/payment system in place so the government is offering food for work. Laborers are receiving bags of rice and flour for a day’s work. Wheat and rice are being provided by Pakistan.

[4.5 magnitude earthquake jolts parts of Swat](https://nation.com.pk/28-Jan-2022/4-5-magnitude-earthquake-jolts-parts-of-swat)

The Western bloc of countries, under the leadership of the United States, are refusing to negotiate with the Taliban even when thousands of Afghani people are dying and starving. The crisis is catastrophic, not only in Kabul but everywhere in Afghanistan. The Chinese and Russians are supplying much-needed aid and raising a voice in the United Nations for engaging with the Taliban, but the response is too little too late. That role has now been left to Pakistan.

Pakistan suffered losses of billions of dollars and around eighty thousand deaths in the “War on Terror”. The world is failing to recognise that Pakistan has been the victim all along, and now, Pakistan is being blamed for the humiliation of the previous Afghan government and the US pullout from Kabul.

There are over 3 million Afghan refugees and the number is increasing every day. The border with Afghanistan has been fenced but it is not watertight. There is growing tension and the food and medical supplies are running short. Winter is in full swing and Afghanistan is not getting the support it needs. In a special initiative, Prime Minister Imran Khan launched an ambitious programme of aid and support for Afghanistan, combining regional and Middle-Eastern countries like Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the UAE, among others.

[PSL 2022: Peshawar Zalmi beat Quetta Gladiators in nail-biting thriller](https://nation.com.pk/28-Jan-2022/psl-2022-peshawar-zalmi-beat-quetta-gladiators-in-nail-biting-thriller)

The effort bore fruit and much-needed supplies were transported to Kabul. Pakistan is walking a tight-rope. It is not ready to recognise the Taliban Government unilaterally, but it is also not ready to let Afghanistan go down the path of fire and destruction. The Pakistan government is rallying and lobbying to support the Taliban Government and diplomatically engage with them to steer them towards a path of development and progress. Chaos in Afghanistan will not bode well for anyone, anywhere.

Recently, attacks from the Afghanistan border aimed at Pakistan have increased manifold. There have been many martyrdoms, where the brave soldiers of Pakistan Army have defended the borders against insurgents and terrorists.

The Taliban government has vowed support against any element that damages Pak-Afghan relations and the most likely culprit is the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). The Afghan Taliban helped broker a ceasefire with them for 30 days but the TTP will become an even more pressing issue if the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is not controlled. When there are too many mouths to feed and nothing in hand, it is easy to manipulate and put a gun in that hand.

[Anarkali bomb blast: JIT constituted for investigation](https://nation.com.pk/28-Jan-2022/anarkali-bomb-blast-jit-constituted-for-investigation)

As the situation evolves, one thing is certain, the current generation of Afghan children, men and women have to pass through one of the most challenging and debilitating times of their lives. But it is a time where Afghan land is in the hands of the Afghan people. Many nations like Germany, Japan, China and others were destroyed by war and it is the people, the younger generation that held up the spirits and worked tirelessly for a better tomorrow for their country.

It is times like these that foster a sense of nationhood and the ability to go forward. Freedom and happiness are not cheap. In these relentless and harsh times, the people of Pakistan must stand with their neighbours, bury old hostile memories and assist the Afghan people to make a great nation.

Support right now will be remembered by history, for a time, when the world turned their backs on a cascading nation, there were some like Pakistan, who came forward, became a voice of the voiceless and became a feeding hand in times of hunger and destruction. May Almighty Allah have mercy on the people of Afghanistan and show them the path towards a peaceful tomorrow.