**Challenges ahead for the New Afghan Government**

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The unplanned and hurried US withdrawal from Afghan soil-descending the country into unrest-provided the Taliban with an opportunity to take over Kabul and immediately announce their interim government has flabbergasted the whole world. The terrible defeat in the two-decades-long war at the hands of the Taliban was no small feat. The Taliban’s unflinching armed resistance in the face of the US has finally proved Afghanistan to be the graveyard of empire for this superpower as well. However, there is no guarantee that a party best at fight can also be best in running a state. Governing a state is indubitably a daunting task that requires complete consciousness and expertise about politics, diplomacy, administration, and variable choices in the formulation of foreign policies.

Being conservative and radical, the Taliban are fully acquainted with the art of war. But this expertise stops right there. They are not that much of an expert when it comes to strategising or steering a newly-formed government. Thus, the establishment of a new regime by the Taliban is set to face myriads of impending challenges.

Apprehensions loom large that the Taliban government would not be recognised by the international community due to them not honouring their commitments. Forming a new cabinet that is entirely based on male members while ignoring representation by women and minorities is a stark deviation from the broad-based and inclusive government the Taliban had promised. The inclusion of hardliners into the cabinet, who have remained indulged in the deadliest terrorist attacks, has offended global powers. Taliban have inexpediently declared Mullah Sirajuddin Haqqani as interior minister, who is not acceptable for the US. American government views him to be a global terrorist who was involved in orchestrating attacks against US and coalition forces. Such controversial moves by the Taliban are attracting antagonism from the US and European Union that may become a hindrance to the international recognition of this new regime.

However, Pakistan, Russia, China and Iran seem ready to legitimise this new government in return for assurances from the Taliban to never let Afghan soil be used by insurgents and terrorists against them.

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Incorporating and adjusting the Afghan Army and Police Force is also a challenging task for the Taliban to tackle. This new regime has to sustain its services by making them part of the current government machinery. If the two aforementioned tiers are ignored and their salaries are stopped, they may fall prey to anti-Taliban insurgent groups: the most dreadful situation for the Taliban. Therefore, the Taliban should handle this serious issue mindfully before Afghan Army and Police ally with non-state actors; leading to a renewed disastrous civil war.

On the economic front, Afghanistan has suffered a major setback in the past couple of months and its currency has been depreciated significantly due to obstruction in the flow of foreign aid to Afghanistan. International reserves of approximately $9.4 billion worth have been frozen by the US in Afghanistan. The IMF has also suspended more than $400 million in emergency reserves after the Taliban’s resurgence to power. European Union has also halted its plans to disburse about $1.4 billion as an aid to Afghanistan by 2025. Moreover, Germany was going to announce development aid of $503 million to Afghanistan, which it abruptly suspended seeing the Taliban in power. The Taliban will have to fix the dwindling economy by ensuring funds flow into the country to escape from further economic regression.

The unbridled economic crisis further begets another crisis of food shortage and insecurity. According to the reports of the “World Food Programme” 14 million Afghans are expected to be forced to starvation if Afghanistan is not provided with financial assistance and food aid. Rein Paulsen, Director of Food and Agriculture Organisation told reporters that four million Afghans are already under food emergency and 7.3 million Afghans are severely affected by drought in the rural areas. Under such adverse circumstances and rising inflation, people are forced to sell their possessions in impromptu markets to make both ends meet. To avert this economic and food crisis, Prime Minister Imran Khan has emphatically urged the world to engage with the Afghan new government and provide them with humanitarian assistance in this high time. However, China has announced a $31 million aid package for Afghanistan, including food supplies and coronavirus vaccines.

ISIS Khurasan Chapter is another gigantic challenge for the Taliban government to repel. This lethal terrorist group comprising more than 5000 fighters emerged in 2015 from the disgruntled members of both Taliban and Al-Qaida in Afghanistan. ISIS-K had acquired control of a larger part of astern Afghanistan in 2016, debilitating the Taliban’s position in those areas; therefore, this faction will keep posing threats to the Taliban even After they are in power. After few days of Kabul Takeover, horrific bombings at Kabul airport were done by ISIS-K claiming no fewer than 177 casualties. The new government should not underestimate the deep-rooted network of this militant outfit rather it should be focused to dismantle ISIS-K for the smooth functioning of their government.

There are also equal chances of internal rivalries and sectarian violence erupting among varying ethnic groups and warlords that can push the country to civil war. Hence, integrating these multi ethnicities into a national stream is a challenging task for the Taliban. The new government needs to reconcile with all these existing factions by including them into government is only the way forward to ward off any impending rivalry that could be a disaster for this new regime.

Last but not least, the brain drain remains yet another big challenge for the current Afghan government. The terror-stricken Afghanistan, under a precarious and turbulent situation, is pushing educated people to leave the country, which is certainly a great loss for the Taliban regime. In an attempt to secure their lives, people, including IT experts, policy analysts, administrators, educated and experienced people, moving from Afghanistan to other countries means the Taliban will simply have fewer hands to run their government machinery.

To overcome all aforementioned challenges, the Taliban have to be moderate and gentle from being hardliners in their treatment of others. They need to endorse their commitments and covenants to attain world recognition. They should also respect human rights especially those of women to acquire a soft image of their government. They must not allow Afghan soil to be used by terrorists, which will help them earn an international favour. The Taliban must ensure a provision of food to starving people. Finally, fixing the dwindling economy is the need of this high time for the Taliban so that an impending humanitarian crisis can be prevented.

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