**Isolated Afghanistan: Dangerous for the world**

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The Taliban have fully controlled Afghanistan since 15th August 2021. They entered Kabul without a fight while capturing most of the provinces in three months; in most cases, the Afghan National Defence Forces (ANDF) merely surrendered or melted down. With the conquest of the Taliban came uncertainty in Afghanistan as the religious militia failed to bring economic stability or muster recognition internationally, including in the immediate neighbourhood. In the final analysis, after spending over 2.3 trillion dollars and suffering thousands of casualties, the American-led coalition had to withdraw, leaving Afghanistan unstable.

The Ashraf Ghani government fizzled out before the Taliban entered Kabul; the democracy project failed while Afghan democrats left the country to their western abodes. The hapless people were left in Afghanistan struggling for two square meals. Ever since the Taliban’s capture of the country, the poverty graph has reached 90 percent; only one percent population is comfortable coping with the daily challenges of existence.

[PM calls coalition partners' parliamentary party meeting on Wednesday](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/pm-calls-coalition-partners-parliamentary-party-meeting-on-wednesday)

The American withdrawal was not unilateral; it happened under an agreement with the Taliban whereby the latter would reduce violence, start intra-Afghan negotiations and guarantee that Afghanistan would not again become a refuge for terrorists. The withdrawal enjoyed bi-partisan support in the US as a further stay of the US forces was considered a waste of time and resources. This policy seems to have worked to the American advantage, especially by imposing a ban on Afghan banks. Consequently, Afghanistan, under the Taliban, is unable to do regular business with the world, further pushing the country to abject poverty. Afghanistan’s poverty may force the people to migrate to neighbouring countries and beyond. Over four Lakh Afghans have already crossed over to Pakistan since August 2021.

So far, none of the countries has recognized the Taliban regime. Ironically, it’s the same Taliban who are labelled as terrorists, and many of their leaders still figure in the 1267 list of the UN Security Council meant to be prosecuted. Over one hundred Taliban leaders are supposed to be arrested and tried in a court of law. But, simultaneously, the US and its allies are operating their embassies from Kabul or maintaining liaison with the Taliban office in Doha. Such an arrangement allows de facto recognition of the Taliban. It offers a channel to the Taliban and their international interlocutors to thrash out thorny issues such as inclusivity, and human rights, including women’s right to education and employment. So far, the stalemate continues on these issues.

[Imran seeks explanation from PDM for delay in Punjab Assembly polls](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/imran-seeks-explanation-from-pdm-for-delay-in-punjab-assembly-polls)

Meanwhile, the Taliban have been putting up the resistance on the issues of inclusivity and women’s rights. Still, at the same time, they do not seem to have succeeded in fulfilling their commitment to denying sanctuaries to terrorist organizations. Therefore, the Taliban have little to show the world to consider recognizing their regime. Moreover, over a dozen transnational militant and terrorist groups are now present in Afghanistan, several under the aegis of the Taliban. Much to the embarrassment of the Taliban, Al-Qaeda chief Ayman Al-Zawahiri was killed in an American drone attack in the posh locality of Kabul. Apart from AL-Qaeda and Islamic State Khorasan (ISK), organizations such as East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) from the Xingjian province of China, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) from Uzbekistan and Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from Pakistan are enjoying sanctuaries in Afghanistan under the Taliban watch. The Taliban also face a threat from the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK), which has been active in suicide attacks in the country, especially against the minority Shias.

[Nawaz Sharif wants SC justices be charged for their 'unfathomable' verdict](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/nawaz-sharif-wants-sc-justices-be-charged-for-their-unfathomable-verdict)

Contrary to popular belief, the Afghan Taliban no longer see Pakistan as an ally. A series of skirmishes at the border with the Pakistani forces and a free hand to the Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) to operate against Pakistan from Afghan soil has caused a wedge between the Taliban and the Pakistani government. Under the Pashtunwali code (Pashtun brotherhood), the Afghan Taliban provide shelter to the TTP. Ideologically also, the Afghan Taliban are bound to give shelter to the TTP as the latter owe allegiance to Mullah Haibtullah Akhund, the Taliban’s supreme leader. The Afghan Taliban’s mediation efforts failed to break the ice between the TTP and the government of Pakistan on the issue of allowing the TTP cadres to resume their activities in Pakistan, including keeping their weapons.

Surprisingly, there is a revulsion against the TTP in Pakistan; most people oppose the Taliban way of life. Swat and Malakand districts in Pakistan, once a bastion of the TTP, revolted against the presence of the TTP. Some of their cadres appeared in these districts a few months ago after the Pakistani authorities winked them to return from Afghanistan. Sensing the people’s mood and geographical compulsions, the government of Pakistan has to maintain a working relationship with the Afghan Taliban and discourage them whenever the latter try to impose their brand of Islam through the TTP.

[Masses will give befitting reply to govt for attacking CJP: Parvez Elahi](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/masses-will-give-befitting-reply-to-govt-for-attacking-cjp-parvez-elahi)

Overall, the Taliban find themselves isolated diplomatically and ideologically. However, internally, they are stable enough to face any opposition from the former warlords. In the absence of an alternate force to replace the Taliban, the latter is the only formidable force in the country to deal with, even if they do not fit the international criteria of governance or human rights norms. If the past two decades’ experience is a guide, the US-led coalition tried to implant democratic order in the country. Still, it failed to encourage the democratic process to grow following the Afghan culture and capacity. Consequently, the ministers in Karzai and Ashraf Ghani’s cabinets, or the Ulasi Jirga (Lower House) elected members, failed to make an impact and fled the country even before the Taliban could enter Kabul.

The moot question is whether normal business with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan is possible. The immediate neighbours of Afghanistan are convinced that an economically unstable Afghanistan is more dangerous to the region and the world. While the Taliban may have brought a modicum of normalcy, the economic upliftment can sustain the country. Economic cooperation and private-sector development suited to Afghan economic conditions can make a difference and benefit Afghan society through public service provision. In the immediate run, international assistance would be required to undertake connectivity and economic development projects. This would essentially arrest the exodus of the population looking for better living conditions.

[Undersized people pronounce verdict of death sentence: Bilawal](https://www.nation.com.pk/04-Apr-2023/undersized-people-pronounce-verdict-of-death-sentence-bilawal)

Before the international community embarks on improving Afghanistan’s economic conditions, the Taliban should be told unequivocally that their steps against terrorist organizations would determine the international community’s response towards the Taliban regime’s recognition and full-scale assistance to redress Afghanistan’s socio-economic challenges. However, a monitoring mechanism would be required to observe the Taliban’s behaviour regarding good governance through inclusivity and women’s right to education and employment. The proposed monitoring mechanism can work under the 1267 Committee of the UN Security Council. Similarly, the Taliban’s behaviour towards women’s education and employment should be a permanent point of contention unless resolved amicably. Concurrently, countries of the region, especially immediate neighbours, can monitor the Taliban’s behaviour for future interaction with the religious militia, including its recognition.

Finally, in view of past experience, an isolated Afghanistan, regardless of who rules there, can become a fertile ground for terrorists. Therefore, prudence demands interaction with the religious group to preempt future disasters.