**Taliban on the Verge of Ire**

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Post Unites States withdrawal on August 30, 2021, Kabul may have signed a few traditional and economic pacts with its neighbours but has not yet won international legitimacy. Despite the international community’s perpetual refusal to recognize them, the Taliban’s top leadership continues to demand legitimacy on its terms, both domestically and internationally.

The Taliban’s explicit criticism of Islamabad indicates its growing anger toward Pakistan. Terrorist organizations, “including those targeting Pakistan, are present and active in Afghanistan,” Prime Minister Shahbaz told the world community during the 77th grand assembly session last month. Interestingly, several other Muslim countries’ prime ministers have voiced similar concerns. Specifically, Saudi envoy Faisal bin Farhan has urged international cooperation to stop Afghanistan from becoming a breeding ground for terrorists.

However, the Taliban’s top leadership showed strong opposition to PM Sharif’s remarks. Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Sher Abbas Stanekzai released an uncooperative statement, accusing Islamabad of profiteering off the Afghan conflict divergent. This drew a torrent of responses from various Taliban warlords. Since the Taliban now have evidence of Pakistan’s manipulative involvement in Afghanistan, Stanekzai’s statement, “If we rise against this, no one will be able to stop us,” can be seen as a threat indicating they have considered retaliation when the time is right.

The Taliban claim they have been falsely accused because they are struggling to counter the risk posed by the Islamic State-Khorasan chapter of Afghanistan. They seek global recognition for their struggle to combat the organization. While they promised the IS-elimination Ks within weeks of their takeover, the group’s ideological opponent has been under their skin ever since. Since the Taliban took control of Kabul, more than sixteen diplomatic missions have opened. The IS-K has a plan to undermine the credibility of the Taliban’s promise of protection. The same interpretation applies to the IS-K assault on the Russian embassy in Kabul.

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The growing ire of the Taliban is being directed primarily against Pakistan.

However, the Taliban’s efforts to gain worldwide support are being hampered by Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan. China and the Central Asian governments are worried that the return of the TTP may provide ground to Al Qaeda and other same school of thought groups like the East Turkestan Islamic Movement and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Except for Pakistan, the Taliban regime has been able to negotiate trade and economic assistance arrangements with China, Uzbekistan, Russia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Turkey, Iran, and several other countries. The United States has also lifted its freeze on the Taliban’s assets. The Taliban know that trade alone is not enough to manage the country and that informal contacts between governments are necessary.

A statement by Chinese envoy Wang Yi in the General Assembly, in which he said that Kabul was transitioning from anarchy to order and encouraged the international community to help Afghanistan in this crucial evolution, should have encouraged the Taliban’s morale. While Russia and other neighbours had made similar declarations, the Taliban saw Pakistan siding with the US and the West at this critical time.

The Taliban regime’s resentment towards Pakistan is harming relations between the two countries and exposing and widening internal divisions within the Taliban. Human rights organizations and other foreign groups are careful about developments. Education for females is a major concern for them. Not all Taliban commanders share the Taliban elders’ view that girls should not be allowed to attend school, and Stanekzai is one of them.

In a public assembly, Stanekzai chastised his elders and declared that the prohibition on girls’ education violated Islamic injunctions and was an affront to Afghans’ basic liberties. He argued that all religious authorities in Afghanistan and the Muslim ummah believe that educating oneself is morally imperative for everyone. There was talk, following his remarks, that he could be deprived of his official duties. That will not be simple, though, because he has the backing of regular Taliban fighters.

The Taliban and the Pakistan security establishment share a fundamental flaw in their methods. They both dislike and are incapable of handling inclusiveness. That putting all of Pakistan’s diplomatic eggs in the Taliban’s basket could be risky had been warned against for quite some time. Since The Taliban takeover, the Afghan de facto political elite has been invited to Islamabad for a conversation about an inclusive administrative setup in Afghanistan, but this opportunity was wasted. It was a futile effort that inflamed the Taliban’s hatred toward Pakistan.

Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada and his closest advisors share a common worldview with the rest of the Taliban leadership. They are staunchly opposed to deviating from conventional wisdom on government and political compromise matters. They are unyielding in their ideological convictions and remain blind to the wide range of political, public, ethnic, and religious exigencies and socioeconomic groups they must now serve. We all know what happens when people follow such strategies: they fail.

Islamabad’s backing of the Taliban has not yielded productive benefits, notably in protecting Pakistan’s borders, dismantling terrorist networks, and improving the country’s ability to trade and interact with Central Asian nations. Islamabad’s Afghan policymakers have not given up hope, though. They believe the Taliban rule will emerge as Pakistan’s finest partner once it has dealt with its current economic and humanitarian challenges. Such statements rest on shaky ground and, if supported by facts on the ground, should be brought to light, especially in the legislative arena.

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