

Causes for the formation of the Taliban Islamic organization and initial period of its rule

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Abstract: The Taliban Islamic organization passed several complicated development stages. Despite a long period of its formation, the way of its development as that of an Islamic organization, remains vague.

The Taliban Islamic organization appeared at the Afghan political arena in the first half of the 1990s. It was the period when the USSR army left Afghanistan that led to a certain political vacuum in the country. A severe political condition, with the nationwide instability, led to the formation of the organization. Taliban happened to be the force that succeeded in holding the ruling power and aimed to create an Islamic state in Afghanistan based on Quran and Sharia law. Mullah Omar, the organization head, succeeded in managing this political process despite being a ruler for a brief period of time.

The Taliban government carried out especially severe repressions against women. The laws imposed nationwide were far beyond the Quran and Sharia law.

For this mode of ruling the country, the Taliban rule is recognized by almost no countries, but the Taliban Islamic organization still represents a significant force for the whole world.

Keywords: Afghanistan, Islamic organization, Taliban.

I. Preface

Afghanistan faced a civil war before the Taliban formation. The USSR-backed government collapse, ethnic and religious nonconformity and involvement of external forces led to the further exacerbation of the conflict. The Republic of Afghanistan fell apart in 1992 after the Russian Federation stopped its assistance. On April 16 of the same year, Afghan President Mohammad Najibullah resigned and Afghanistan's ruling People's Democratic Party broke up. On April 24, following the Peshawar Accord, most of the political parties of Afghanistan unanimously decided to create the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and appoint a temporary government for the transitional period of time. Despite the Accord, various groups combating for power remain in conflict that led to the emergence of the civil war foci nationwide.¹

This complicated critical situation that was observed in Afghanistan, led to the necessity of creating a force that could take control of the situation and establish peace in the country. It was the period when the new Islamic Organization of Taliban was formed.

II. Causes for the formation of the Taliban Islamic Organization

The Taliban (/ˈtælibæn, ˈtɑːlɪbɑːn/; Pashto: طالبان, romanized: ṭālibān, Lit.: 'students' or 'seekers') represents a movement of Muslim Theologist Students from the Eastern and Western Pashto regions. They got educated in traditional Islamic schols. Tajik and Uzbek students were also the organization members. They played a special role in the rapid growth and success of Taliban.² Mullah Mohamman Omar was the organization founder.

¹ "Afghanistan: Political Parties and Insurgent Groups 1978–2001" (PDF), Australian Refugee Review Tribunal, 7 March 2013, pp. 18–19.

² Nojumi, Neamatollah. *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan: Mass Mobilization, Civil War, and the Future of the Region* Palgrave, New York, 2002.

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Mullah Mohammad Omar³ was born in the religious family, in the city of Kandahar. He was educated in the Afghan local schools (madrasas). In 1979, after the USSR army entered Afghanistan, he joined the Afghan mujahideen in the Soviet-Afghan war, as a military general. When the Soviet troops left Afghanistan, he did not want to engage in the civil war, but the situation forced him to get involved in it. In September 1994, Mullah Mohammad Omar and 50 students established the Taliban unification in their hometown Kandahar. Notably, the Islamic Sharia law did no longer exist in Afghanistan after the Communist rule was over that made Mullah Omar especially upset. Therefore, in collaboration with the group, he promised to liberate Afghanistan from the government who did not follow Islam and criminal people. After this statement, other students also joined him including the ones who were involved in the Afghanistan - USSR war.⁴ Several months later, 15,000 students from the Islamic Republic of Pakistan joined the group. The students included the Afghan refugees studying at the religious schools (these schools are called as the madrasas managed by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam). The main goal of Taliban was to end the suffering of the Afghan people caused by several Afghan groups fighting for power for they did not follow the Islamic moral code.

In response to International Community, the Pakistan government refused providing Taliban with military and diplomatic assistance many times, but various sources confirm that Pakistan was truly involved in the Taliban formation (in October 1994).⁵ The assistance aimed at gaining full control on Taliban, while the Taliban leaders made manoeuvres between maintaining independence and financial support. Saudi Arabia also helped Taliban as it purchased ammunition supplies and logistics required for the training bases.

Osama Bin Laden fought against the Soviet Union starting with 1980s. He founded the international terrorist organization Al-Qaeda which was persecuted by all the civilized countries but Afghanistan. Therefore, he decided to achieve all his goals in Afghanistan. Taliban leader Mullah Omar and Osama Bin Laden had common goals and views regarding the Islamic state. Bin Laden provided Taliban with financial assistance and trained thousands of young volunteers as the Taliban fighters. The support showed by Osama Bin Laden was of high importance for Taliban, for this organization had been newly founded in Afghanistan.

The Taliban movement first showed up in the country in August, 1994. Its members aimed at setting Afghanistan free from the corruptive government and establish an Islamic community in the country. Pakistan backed Taliban for the latter was perceived as a possibility to open commercial hubs with Central Asia and ensure the protection of related interests. The traders from Pakistan who had been searching for a safe road to send their product to Central Asia, rapidly became one of the strongest financial supporters of Taliban.

Starting with June 1992, Burhanuddin Rabbani, leader of the Jamiat-e-Islam party was the temporary, acting president of the Afghan Islamic State. His authority covered only a certain part of Kabul, while various other groups shared the control of the rest of the city.⁶ The groups that were present in Afghanistan, were lobbied by the countries having a desire to gain control over Afghanistan (these countries included Pakistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and others).

On November 5, 1994, Taliban launched military activities in Afghanistan and conquered the city of Kandahar first. Afterwards, they conquered various areas and approached the capital city - Kabul. On November 20, 1995 they issued an ultimatum to the Afghanistan government - if acting president Rabani and his forces did not leave the city, Taliban would resume Kabul bombing and put it in isolation. After they received a negative answer, they restarted their fight for Kabul.

In parallel to the military activities underway in the country, based on the government and opposition's agreement reached on July 3, 1996, a ten-member cabinet was established in Afghanistan. Each party was to different ministries:

- Hikmatiar's party - Defense and Finance ministries;
- Rabani's party - Interior and Foreign ministries;
- Sayap's party - Education and Culture ministries;
- Harakat-e-Islami party - Ministries of planning, labour and social welfare.

³ Afghan Taliban publish Mullah Omar biography. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32189847>. (last review on 03.06.2024).

⁴ Matinuddin, Kamal, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994-1997*, Oxford University Press, 1999, pp. 25-26.

⁵ Shaffer, Brenda, *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy*. MIT Press, 2006, p. 267.

⁶ Casting Shadows, *War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity: 1978-2001*, The Afghanistan Justice Project, 2005, p.67.

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The remaining 12 places in the government cabinet were vacant for the other factions. All these parties/groups got united to fight against Taliban.⁷

On September 26, 1996, when Taliban assaulted Kabul, acting defense Minister Ahmad Shah Massoud reported that the government forces were under siege and he took his forces to the north in order to avoid their destruction. Besides, Hekmatiar and Hesb-e-Islami Gulbudini leader retreated from Kabul together with the government forces. On the following day, Taliban members conquered Kabul and founded the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. By this time, Taliban already controlled most of Afghanistan.⁸ According to analysts, Taliban represented a Pakistan-backed puppet force to reach its regional interests.

III. Initial period of the Taliban rule

In 1995 - 2001, Taliban's military goal was to have Abdur Rahman's (Iron Emir) union back to the northern regions of the country to restore Pashtuns' power. Taliban tried to establish an Islamic government through the interpretation of the Sharia-like law, according to the ordinances of the Islamic Jurisprudence Hanaf School and Mullah Omar across the Afghan area.⁹ In 1998, Taliban ruled almost entire Afghanistan except its north-east part which was controlled by Shah Massoud. Russia and Iran provided Massoud's forces with weapons for both countries perceived Taliban as a threat.

The eastern region countries did not approve Taliban's activities. The organization attempted to provoke a war with Iran via murdering Iranian diplomats, criticizing and persecuting the followers of Shia Islam in Afghanistan, for Shia was the state religion of Iran. The governments of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan were also concerned for the establishment of the Taliban rule. Therefore, the government of Russia decided to send its troops to protect the borders of both countries. Besides, Iran and Russia sent another military assistance to the warriors of Ahmed Shah Massoud.

For the five-year history of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996-2001), the Taliban regime interpreted and explained the Sharia law according to the ordinances of the Hanaf School of Islamic Law and Mullah Omar. Taliban banned consuming alcoholic beverages and user technologies including music, TV and films, participation in sports, fine arts and photography. Besides, Taliban made mosques out of cinemas. The women were deprived the right of being employed and were obliged to follow the Purdah (social partition of the sexes) and Avra (covering one's body with clothes) rules¹⁰. Praying became mandatory. Gambling was prohibited. Thieves were subject to be punished with the amputation of their hands or legs. Initially, Taliban leader Mullah Omar permitted opium's cultivation and commerce with drug substances nationwide that represented one of the main financial incomes for Afghanistan, while in 2000, opium cultivation and drug sales were officially banned. Taliban strictly persecuted those consuming or selling drug substances.

As Mullah Omar said: "The Sharia law does not recognize politics and political parties. Therefore, we do not give salary to officials and soldiers, but only provide them with food, clothes, shoes and weapons. We want to live the way our prophet lived 1,400 years ago, as Jihad is our duty."¹¹

As Taliban's power was getting stronger, Mullah Omar continued making decisions independently, without any consultations with Loya jirga and other representatives of the country. One of the cases was when he rejected the decision made by Loya jirga¹² on expelling Osama Bin Laden from the country. While being in power, Mullah Omar visited the Kabul capital city only twice.

In the initial period of the Taliban rule, emirates often observed cruel repressions of women. Religious police often abused them.¹³ Women could be employed only in the medical sector, as male doctors were not allowed to provide women and girls with treatment. The ban on women employment caused the closure of elementary schools, for before

⁷ Issue Papers, Extended Responses and Country Fact Sheets, AFGHANISTAN CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS JANUARY 1995-FEBRUARY 1997 February 1997, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, 12 October 2017.

⁸ Federal Research Division. <https://www.loc.gov/services/federal-research-division/about-this-service/>. (last review on 03.06.2024).

⁹ Ayoob, Mohammed "The Taliban and the Changing Nature of Pashtun Nationalism". The National Interest. 10 January 2019.

¹⁰ Purdah. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/purdah>. (last review on 03.06.2024).

¹¹ Rashid, Ahmed Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil and Fundamentalism in Central Asia. Yale University Press. 2000.

¹² Loya Jirga- An Afghan Tradition Explained. <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-loya-jirga-explainer/25174483.html>. (last review on 03.06.2024).

¹³ Graham-Harrison, Emma, Makoi, Akhtar Mohammad, "The Taliban took years of my life': the Afghan women living in the shadow of war", 9 February 2019.

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the rise of Taliban, almost all teachers were female. All this led to further limitation on the education availability for girls and boys as well.

The decrees issued by the Taliban government prohibited women from being educated, forced the girls stop going to schools and colleges. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan used the policy of isolationism when communicating with external world. The Taliban government supported non-involvement in other countries' affairs and did not want the other countries to interfere with its interior affairs. Despite the policy of isolationism, Taliban concluded a deal on oil, electric power and gas with Turkmenistan, as an allied member of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline.

In 1998, China established first communication with the Taliban regime. In November 2000, China's Ambassador to Pakistan Lu Shulin became the first representative of a non-muslim country who held a meeting with Mullah Omar.

In 1996-2001, only three countries - Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates (UAE) recognized the Islamic Emirate as the lawful government of Afghanistan. The Taliban government received Turkmenistan's support as well, but the latter did not officially recognize the Afghan government.¹⁴

On October 15, 1999, the UN Security Council imposed sanctions on the persons and subjects associated with Al-Qaeda, Osama Bin Laden and Taliban. In 2000, the UN Security Council imposed the arms embargo for the military support of Taliban. The UN officials strictly emphasized Pakistan in this respect.

In July 2001, several countries, including the US blamed Pakistan in the infringement of the UN sanctions and providing Taliban with military assistance. As unofficially reported, the Taliban government was given the financial aid of about 40 million from Pakistan.

The Taliban government failed to use the economic opportunities of Afghanistan. Kabul's economic condition remained stable in the first months of being occupied by Taliban, but shortly, the situation changed radically. Every companies that operated in the country faced a 50% tax imposed by the government and the latter abused them if the companies refused to pay the tax. Besides, they imposed 6% tax on the imported goods. By 1988, they controlled the main airports and border checkpoints. As a result, they experienced monopolic mode of commerce.¹⁵In 2001, the income per capita was less than 200 USD in the country where the number of population equalled 25 million and it meant that the country was near a total economic collapse. As Ahmed Rashid said, Afghanistan's transit commerce, agreed with Pakistan represented the key official source for the Taliban income.¹⁶

In 1996-1999 Mullah Omar changed his attitude to the drug substances. For the Taliban members, the income gained through the opium export became the main basis the country's economy relied on. According to Rashid, the money, gained from the drugs was used to buy arms, military materials and fuel for war. The Taliban government relied on the opium and support shown by the Pakistani officials and Bin Laden. But from the economic point of view, he had no other choice by that time. Because of the delayed war with the northern alliance, the income received from the constant production of opium ensured the country to stay protected from starvation. Despite the severe economic background, Omar officially prohibited the opium cultivation. Most experts said that this prohibition - which represented an attempt of being internationally recognized by the UN - was issued only for the reason which aimed to increase profit from the sales of existing vast supplies of opium. Besides, it also intended to increase the opium prices. Trade with the opium supplies accumulated by Taliban continued in 2000-2001. In 2002, the UN discovered the other significant supplies of opium.

On July 6, 1999, US President Bill Clinton signed an executive order N13129 which banned trade between the US and the Taliban regime. Later, on August 10, the United States froze \$5,000,000 Ariana assets. On December 19, 2000, the UN adopted the resolution N1333, which implied freezing all the Taliban assets. Besides, it urged the other countries to close Taliban-owned, namely, Ariana Afghan Airlines offices. In 1999, the UN passed its resolution N1267 on banning all international flights of Ariana but for those that were carried out for the pre-approved humanitarian missions.

Despite the complicated economic situation in the country, Taliban continued to rule Afghanistan according to the course it had chosen. Al-Qaeda leader Bin Laden was perceived as an organizer of the series of terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001. These terror attacks influenced the US significantly, especially, its domestic and external politics. George Bush Junior, the US President, declared a global war against terrorism that led to long-term wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.¹⁷On October 7, 2001, the US officially launched its military operation in Afghanistan

¹⁴ Mohammed Omar. https://military-history.fandom.com/wiki/Mohammed_Omar. (last review on 03.06.2024).

¹⁵ Pugh, Michael C. Neil Cooper Jonathan Goodhand War Economies in a Regional Context: Overcoming the Challenges of Transformation, International Peace Academy, 2004.

¹⁶ Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, Opium: uncovering the politics of the poppy, Harvard University Press, 2010.

¹⁷ The attacks. <https://www.britannica.com/event/September-11-attacks/The-attacks>. (last review on 03.06.2024).

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named Resolute Freedom against Taliban. Two weeks of intense fighting passed and the Islamic press reported the end of the first Taliban rule.

Conclusion

In 90s of the 20th century, amidst the background of the Afghan civil war, the Islamic Organization Taliban came to power and started its rule. The rule continued for five years. The first period of this rule happened to be too hard in terms of the domestic and external politics of the country, for the Taliban organization established an Islamic regime and stopped communicating with the rest of the world. The change of Afghanistan's external political path was unacceptable for the International Community countries, therefore, International Community refused to recognize Taliban's rule.

The Taliban rule was based on the Sharia law, according to which a lot of laws were subject to being amended in Afghanistan. The Afghan women faced especially strict repressions. According to the Taliban regulations, the women were deprived of their right to be educated and employed nationwide. This changed led to the closure of most of the elementary schools in Afghanistan, for teachers were female in the vast majority of the schools. As a result, the education availability was significantly restricted for the girls and boys in this country.

The end of the first period of the Taliban rule is linked with the entry of foreign troops in Afghanistan, for this international mission mainly aimed at creating a democratic governance form and defeating the Taliban Islamic organization which ruled Afghanistan.

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