

THE RELIGIOUS AND IDEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION OF THE TALIBAN MOVEMENT AND ITS MAIN PRINCIPLES

¹F.M. Zaland, ²B.Sh. Abdilkhakim, ³A.A. Amangeldiyev, ³S.Ye. Shakirov

ABSTRACT

Since the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, numerous qualitative changes have occurred in Afghanistan's domestic and regional influence. The Taliban have reinvented their The Islamic Emirate idea of national governance. The hasty withdrawal of the U.S. and other international forces in August 2021 took place amidst a monopolizing power strategy of the Taliban and efforts by national and regional spoilers to destabilize the peace process. In this context, the paper will comprehensively analyze the power structure of the "Taliban", interpretation and regional policies in framing their governmental policies and authorities in more than 34 months of their government. In exploring this interaction, this research paper will attempt to answer the questions, «How much are Taliban correct in representing the Hanafi Jurisprudence and Deobandi interpretation of Islam, and how much are profound in influencing the regional economic and religious?». To respond to this question, the paper will initially provide a theoretical foundation describing political Islam and traditions in Afghanistan's political history. The article provides a historical account of the Islamic governments in Afghanistan and their different interpretation throughout history and its code of conduct. Then, the paper will apply these perspectives to comparatively analyze and understand the political performance of these Islamic codes in the view of the Taliban's governance in two eras: First Islamic Emirate from 1996 to 2001 and then the return of the Islamic Emirate since August 15, 2021, in Afghanistan.

Key words: Taliban, Islam, Deobandi, Tradition, Afghanistan, Religion.

¹Kabul University, Kabul, Afghanistan

²Nur-Mubarak Egyptian University of Islamic Culture, Almaty, Kazakhstan

³L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan

Author-correspondent:
Abdilkhakim B.Sh.
burhanhakim01@gmail.com

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Талибан қозғалысының діни-идеологиялық негізі мен басты принциптері

Аңдатпа. 2021 жылдың тамызында Талибанның Кабулды басып алуынан кейін Ауғанстанның ішкі және аймақтық саясатында көптеген өзгерістер орын алды. Талибан ислам әмірлігінің ұлттық басқару идеясын қайта ойлап тапты. 2021 жылдың тамызында АҚШ пен басқа да халықаралық күштердің Ауғанстаннан асығыс шығуынан кейін ауған елінде саяси және эконимикалық дағдарыс күшейе түсті. Осы тұрғыда мақала «Талибанның» билік құрылымын, идеологиясын және соңғы 34 айдағы саясатын жан-жақты талдайды. Өзараәрекеттестікті қарастыра отырып, бұл зерттеу жұмысы «Талибан ханафи мазхабы мен деобандиялық бағытты қаншалықты дұрыс ұстайды? Талибан аймақтық экономика мен дінге қаншалықты терең ықпал ете алады?» деген сұрақтарға жауап беруге тырысады. Бұл сауалдарға жауап беру үшін мақала алдымен Ауғанстан тарихындағы саяси ислам мен дәстүрлерді сипаттайтын теориялық негіз ұсынады. Мақалада Ауғанстандағы исламдық үкіметтердің тарихы және олардың мінез-құлық кодекстері қарастырылады. Сонымен қатар Талибанның екі дәуірдегі (1996-2001 жылдар аралығындағы бірінші Ислам әмірлігі, 2021 жылдың тамызында Талибанның қайта билікке келуінен кейінгі кезең) басқаруы тұрғысынан аталмыш ислами кодекстердің саяси көрсеткіштеріне салыстырмалы талдау жасалады.

Түйін сөздер: Талибан, ислам, Деобандия, дәстүр, Ауғанстан, дін.

Религиозно-идеологическая основа движения «Талибан» и его основные принципы

Аннотация. После захвата Кабула талибами в августе 2021 года во внутренней и региональной политике Афганистана произошло множество изменений. Талибы заново возродили свою идею исламского эмирата для управления страной. После поспешного вывода сил США и других международных сил из Афганистана в августе 2021 года политический и экономический кризис в Афганистане усилился. В этом контексте в статье всесторонне анализируется структура власти «Талибана», религиозная

идеология и политика за последние 34 месяца. Исследуя это взаимодействие, данная работа попытается ответить на вопрос: «Насколько правильно талибы представляют ханафитскую юриспруденцию и деобандийскую интерпретацию ислама, и насколько глубоко они влияют на региональную экономику и религию?». Чтобы ответить на этот вопрос, в статье сначала будет представлена теоретическая основа, описывающая политический ислам и традиции в истории Афганистана. В статье приводится исторический отчет об исламских правительствах в Афганистане, их различных интерпретациях на протяжении истории и кодексе поведения. Далее в статье будут использованы методы сравнительного анализа для понимания политической эффективности данных исламских кодексов с точки зрения правления талибов в две эпохи: Исламский эмират с 1996 по 2001 год, а затем возвращение Исламского эмирата с 15 августа 2021 года в Афганистан.

Ключевые слова: Талибан, Ислам, Деобандия, традиция, Афганистан, религия.

Introduction

Taliban movement was founded in the early 1990s by Mullah Omar and his comrades; they ruled most of Afghanistan from 1996 until October 2001 and returned to power on August 15, 2021, by defeating the Afghan Republic Government supported by the United States of America for the second time in Afghanistan. The movement's founding basis- the word «Taliban» is the Arabic word for «students» – comprised of rural Afghan peasants' farmers, men studying Islam in Afghanistan, India, and Pakistan Madrassas or religious schools. The Taliban found a foothold and established their strengths in southern Afghanistan.

By September 1996, the Taliban had captured Kabul and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Taliban's first move was to interpret Quranic instruction and jurisprudence strictly. In practice, this often means merciless policies on treating women, political opponents of any type, and religious minorities. Taliban were blamed for sheltering Al Qaida and for the deployment of terrorists to other countries; therefore, Taliban were routed out from power by the US-Led campaign against Al Qaida in October 2001.

Nevertheless, the Taliban resurged against the USA and NATO in 2002, and a two-decade-long resistance brought them back to power by August 15, 2021. Taliban has adopted a change in their governance practices, interpretation of Sunni Islam, and new cultural identities. Still, more is needed to satisfy Afghans or the international community and recognize them as a legitimate government of Afghanistan. Taliban are mainly Deobandi and Hanafi in faith, but how much have they aligned their policies and authority to the Deobandi in the regional perspective? Moreover, how much do they influence the region, especially the Central Asian countries? These will be the main research questions.

Methodology

The information used in the research paper was gathered mainly through a literature review on relevant topics. At the same time, during the

past few months, structured and semi-structured interviews with Taliban government members, university lecturers, and elders, both sympathetic and hostile to the Taliban, and through conversations with well-known professors, have been collected. In total, a small number of 15 interviewees have been targeted to assist the author in completing this paper. The information gathered was used to determine the functioning of the Taliban government apparatus and to draw a rough map of the areas covered by the Taliban in the three years regarding their Shariah interpretation in decision-making and return to power in Afghanistan.

Main part Political Islam and Tradition in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is located in the heart of Asia. Over 99% of the population is Muslim, most of whom are conservative and religious. Islam has influenced governance and politics in Afghanistan from its establishment until the twentieth century [1, p. 12]. Islam and traditional identities have been integral parts of politics in Afghanistan throughout its history.

Islam and tradition (Pashtunwali) have always played an essential role in waving the social fabric and in the making of political decisions in Afghanistan, as stated by Asta Olesen (1995) in his book «Islam and Politics in Afghanistan», that the Afghan State from its inception in 1747 to the middle of the nineteenth century, Islam and Pashtunwali constituted the main ideological frame of reference of the ethnically heterogeneous and divided society. Whereas Islam plays a role as an all-encompassing way of life [2, p. 326], at least, it is not considered an ideology by most rural Afghans.

Historically, Shariah law governed the legal process of Afghanistan till 1925, when King Amanullah first began introducing a civil legal code and started training ulema (religious scholars) to become Qazis (Judges), Islamic judges [3, p. 148].

Furthermore, Islam was part of society's legal and moral basis and mediated through and coexisted with tribal codes and local customs. For centuries, all the country's learning and ed-

ucation occurred within an exclusively religious framework [4, p. 51]. While Barfield believes that Afghanistan is medieval, religion still plays a predominant role in culture and politics.

Afghan politicians (kings and equally others who were performing as Presidents of the governments) throughout history required legitimacy from tribal confederates or religious clergy domestically to govern the country, but as rightly stated by Oslean, legitimacy, like beauty, 'lies in the eyes of the beholder.' At the starting point, the Afghan State was a tribal confederacy resting on the tribal legitimacy of the ruler and religiously sanctioned by the culture [2, p. 175]. In the reign of Amir Abdur Rahman, the 'Pious Sultan' paradigm was utilized to challenge and (partly) substitute the 'tribal model' [4, p. 63]. This confirms that Islam and cultural identity are intrinsically fused [2, p. 239]; one should not be compromised for another. To elaborate further, until the nineteenth century, religious authority was not ideologically constituted by the State but based on scriptural knowledge, sacred descent, and mystical association [4, p. 78].

For the first time in Afghan political history, Amir Dost Mohammad had declared himself as Amir al-Muminin (Commander of the Faithful) [2, p. 162], and Amir Sher Ali had claimed the divine sanction of his rule to enhance the dichotomy of power legislation which added religion as an external factor of legitimacy to the internal tribal system of kingship [4, p. 73]. Amir Abdur Rahman even claimed to be God-sent as an answer to the prayers of the Afghans to deliver the nation from the distress following the Second Anglo-Afghan War in 1879 [4, p. 63].

In the 'tribal state' model, authority as emanating from Allah was transferred to the Amir with the tribes in the form of the institution of jirga as an intermediary, thus ensuring that the Amir should be no more than 'the first among equals (of the Pashtuns). In the 'classic Islamic' model, on the other hand, the Amir, following the so-called 'Pious Sultan theory,' claimed the divine sanction for his rule [4, p. 45]. This model did not, in principle, allow for any popular representation but depended upon a 'concordat' between the ruler and the Ulama, who were the chief intermediaries of divine sanction.

At the same time, the Amir, to curtail the influence of tribalism, focused attention on the legal function of Islam for the first time. As Amir, by divine right and defender of the faith, imposed the shari'a in order [5, p. 23]. Tribes, as sub-units of ethnic groups, have become the building blocks of political alliances. Such tribal segmentary systems provide op-

portunities for building larger alliances and a tendency towards segmentary division at their core [6, p. 52].

Below are the two sketched approaches to gaining legitimacy to govern the country.

Mozaffari legitimizes the transmission of power in traditional Muslim societies. Asta Olesen adopted this model in his book *Islam and Politics in Afghanistan*.

Tribal solidarity, possession of power, Islam, and the nation itself are considered the main pillars of a legitimate government by Oliver Roy (1990) in *Afghanistan*. However, Power in Afghan peasant society resides neither in a specific locality nor a person but in an elusive network that needs constant maintenance and reconstruction [2, p. 241].

For the first time in Afghan history, political Islam was used as a tool to expand the authority of the Amir (King) through the establishment of fiqh-i Hanafiyya as the official creed of the country led to the active suppression of divergent religious practices, and the position of Jihad as the central concept in the political ideology of the Afghan State was given a practical meaning in connection with Amir's campaigns against Hazarajat by Amir Abdur Rahman Khan in (1891-93) and in capturing the Kafiristan; the current Nuristan (1895-6) [4, p. 87].

Amir Abdur Rahman Khan used Islam politically to galvanize the tribal tradition (Pash-tunwali) under the control of the State. At the same time, his grandson, King Amanullah, initialized the pan-Islamism ideology of global governance with the assistance of Deobandi Scholars, Indian Muslims. He inherited the scripts from Said Jamal ud Din Afghan [4, p. 34].

The reforms carried out by Abdurrahman Khan were not based on any reformist ideology. In the process, the Amir linked elements of Islamic belief with Afghan tribal customs, convincing his illiterate population that the two were identical [2, p. 169]. His conception of modernization was purely pragmatic: to rationalize the institutions of the State to make them more efficient without affecting traditional society. New techniques were adopted, and critical sectors were reformed, but something more than a simple Lashkar had become apparent piecemeal. Better to enforce state laws [5, p. 85]. Finally, Abdur Rahman Khan, the 'iron king,' revived Islam as a national political and war-fighting doctrine [7, p. 236].

Furthermore, the role of religion in politics changed drastically after Afghanistan's independence from Britain.

In the Muslim world, the 'ulama', scholars of religion and law, emerged as a profession-

al class widely supported by state patronage. They shaped and increasingly controlled religious knowledge and its application. Religious specialists were leading prayers (imaṁ), interpreting Islamic law (muftiṁ) and administering justice (qaḍī), memorizing and chanting the Qur'an (haḍīz, qaṛī') [8, p. 93].

Although a School of Administration (Dar ul-Hukkam) had been opened in the 1920s, until the early 1940s, only Shariah studies counted as educational credentials for entry into the bureaucracy. Furthermore, only graduates from government madrasas, and later on the Faculty of Shariah, were eligible for government employment. Graduates from private madrasas could apply for such jobs only after certification by a government madrasa.

The Role of Deoband in Shaping the Ideological Framework of the Taliban

Although the influence of Deoband on the intellectual climate of Afghanistan had been very significant, King Amanullah had favored connections to the modernist College of Aligarh and limited the connections to Deoband. To restore and strengthen the old academic and educational ties with Afghanistan, the Vice-Chancellor of Darul Uloom Deoband visited Kabul to congratulate Zahir Shah on his ascent to the throne in 1933 and also to submit a memorandum to the Afghan Prime Minister on what services Darul Uloom Deoband could offer Afghanistan regarding the educating of Afghan Ulama in the future [4, p. 67]. Deoband is named after the location of its head seminary in the small town of Deoband in North India [8, p. 92]. Deoband was the second university created in the Muslim world after Al-Azhar. Deobandi madrasas centered on the Darul Uloom of Deoband in North India. They have branches in South Asia, Southeast Asia, South Africa, Britain, and North America [7, p. 74].

The Deoband school rejected religious innovation (bid'at), kept to a strict orthodoxy, and would not permit the cult of the saints; nevertheless, it accepted Sufism, and many of the teachers were Naqshbandi or Qadri, which, in itself, clearly shows how the Fundamentalism of the school is distinct from that of the Saudi Wahhabi [5, p. 24]. The Deobandis have seen Sufism as inseparable from Islamic legal norms [9, p. 73]. Once again, the link between Fundamentalism and Sufism was to be the hallmark of the orthodoxy of the 'Ulama of the subcontinent, Afghanistan included [5, p. 87].

On political matters, Deobandis preferred to protest their loyalty to the British [10, p.

11]. They were against Jihad while they issued fatwa's, raising high hurdles under which it would become legitimate to start Jihad to the extent it became almost impossible [8, p. 65]. The historical influence of Deoband has undoubtedly been crucial to the development of Islam in Afghanistan; the only opposition to this tradition has been provided by the secular parties and by the Islamists and the Wahabites, who, in their turn, set about establishing madrasa in the north-west province from the fifties onwards [5, p. 23].

The Deobandis were not a reactionary school of thought to British Colonialism in India but to reform and unite Muslim society by Mohammed Qasim Nanautawi (1833-1877) and Rashid Ahmed Gangohi (1829-1905), who were the prominent ideologues of Deoband madrasa [8, p. 12].

The first signs of a new (political) trend in Islam in Afghanistan of questioning not only the *modus vivendi* with the State obtained after 1930 but also of established orthodoxy came from the Ulama (from religious scholars) outside its organized expression, the co-opted Jamiyat al-Ulama Islam. Later, the religious opposition split into two directions, with intellectuals (Rawshanfikran) rather than theologians spearheading the most radical direction. This was the first time since Mahmud Tarzi and his 'modernist Islam' that religion and religious interpretations had been the point of focus for laymen in Afghanistan [4, p. 98].

Here too, signaled an unprecedented politicization of Islam in the form of the Ikhwan ul-Muslimin movement, founded in 1928 [11, p. 11]. A subcontinental parallel could be found in Jamaat-i Islami, founded by Maulana Maududi. While the initial inspiration in Afghanistan came from Egypt, Maududi's influence on the Afghan Islamist movement had increased dramatically since the 1970s, when several Afghan activists fled Pakistan [4, p. 75]. Maududi can be described as the first complete theoretician of the modern Islamic State [10, p. 13].

An Islamic state must apply the tenets of Islamic doctrine, and above all, Shariah, to all aspects of social and economic life. For Maududi, Islam was not a religion but an ideology, a way of life [10, p. 15]. Thus, for the traditional Ulama, the question of the legitimacy of power arose after the Ulama could apply Shariah to civil society [5, p. 75].

The Islamists were equally condemning in respect of the governmental and the private madrasa system. The private, tradition-oriented madrasas were condemned for depriving the students of acquiring political consciousness and modern education and, thus, of

coming to know the world. In Madrassas, the reason for this state of affairs was, according to the Islamists, that the educational system was based on Greek philosophy more than on the science of Quranic interpretation. Within the field of Fiqh, technical and scientific abilities were frozen, and no expansion of these laws was made to meet the requirements of the changing times and needs.

Islamic schools of thought from the fourth and fifth centuries blended with Greek philosophy were considered irrefutable facts. Hence, the staff of these private madrasas fought civilization and science in the name of Islam, neglecting physical and experimental sciences because these supposedly were anti-Islamic [4, p. 76]. Historically, throughout the period researched, the legitimacy of power has almost constantly been at issue. In the 'tribal model' and any Islamic variant, Allah is the ultimate source of legitimacy. The Interim Constitution of 1980, and it was strongly hinted that, for the first time, Shi'as could enjoy this freedom. However, Article 5 of the Fundamental Principles of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan also specified the limits of this freedom: None of the citizens has the right to use this opportunity [i.e., the religious freedom] for anti-national and anti-people propaganda and as a means for committing acts contrary to the interests of the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan [4, p. 83].

As in the 1964 Constitution, in cases where the law was not clearly defined, the courts would settle the cases following Shariah and the principles of democratic legality and justice (Article 56). Daud Khan ignored the ulema and tribes; he allied himself with the leftist educated and committed a coup in 1973, establishing an Afghan republic [4, p. 134]. Therefore, both Marxists and Islamists stepped up their recruiting efforts, seeking to replace Daud and committee a coup; the Marxists (Khalqis and Parchamis) were quick to a military coup against Daud in April 1978, which brought the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power in the newly democratic Republic of Afghanistan [4, p. 65].

Considering the actual content of the PDPA's policy vis-a-vis Islam, it is first of all clear that, as far as the legitimacy of power is concerned, the 'PDPA model', according to the interim constitution of 21 April 1980, passed by Loya Jirga on 25 April 1985- did not seek recourse to any Islamic values [4, p. 76]. The three significant aspects of Khalq's policy were agrarian reform, eliminating illiteracy, and strengthening the state machine. The communist leaders have always been conscious that they have been creating a revolution by

proxy, faced with a nebulous working class and an apathetic peasantry [5, p. 81]. They were obsessed with Amanullah's precedent and thought it necessary to strike swiftly and ruthlessly before the «counter-revolution» could organize itself [4, p. 13].

To achieve this, they adopted three means: repression, made possible by the existence of a loyal and well-equipped army; agrarian reform which, they thought, would win the support of the mass of the people; and the elimination of illiteracy, to rescue the people from the influence of the clergy and to spread the new ideology [4, p. 13]. The communist regime also rejected the country's traditional Islamic symbols of legitimacy by striking religious salutations from their speeches and decreasing and changing the tri-color flag to red [2, p. 89]. Among the tribal Pashtuns, rather than seeing the refugee situation as hijra, they conceived of it in terms of the Milmastiya (hospitality), Nanawati (refuge), or Panah (asylum), obligations which Pashtunwali integrity and honor of the individual, since ownership of land (Zamin), is an essential part of Pashtun identity [4, p. 12].

Again, the invocation of Zan, Zar wa Zamin (women, gold, and land) [12, p. 98] and Nang Wa Namus, as well as the violation of the patriarchal order emancipation of women involves – also point to traditional values beyond a strictly religious discourse [2, p. 190]. The PDPA-led government failed to attain public legitimacy for their government; the party was split into two rival groups, Khalqi and Parchami, and failed to implement their new economic policies across the country [4, p. 191].

The failure of the PDPA government invited the Soviets to invade Afghanistan and spark a new movement of liberation and resistance against the infidels in the country [7, p. 271]. This time, the urban Islamists were joined by the rural traditionalists to defend their country against the invaders; the decade long Soviets occupation motivated a new wave of global Jihad; Afghanistan became the battlefield for global Jihadists across the globe who CIA and Western countries supported to revenge the Soviet's support for Vietnam and apply the «Saigon syndrome» to revenge Soviets in Kabul [7, p. 345]. The US and Saudi Arabia were willing to bankroll dollars for the resistance and mujahideen in Afghanistan, which reached a billion dollars a year in the mid-1980s [2, p. 243].

The Afghan mujahideen were sucked into two more significant conflicts: the cold war struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union and a new struggle by Saudi Salafis who wanted to make the war in Afghan-

istan the vanguard of global jihad [2, p. 54]. The civil war between the Islamists (mujahideen) seems the turning point in Afghanistan's religious conflicts, which have been going on for the past four decades; the Taliban are merely the side-effect of this chaos, while now they are drastically confronted by The Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISIS-KP), who is looking after a more prominent geographical approach than the Taliban in the region.

The Soviet Union's withdrawal in 1989 caused a gradual fall of Najibullah, which took only three more years to resist the mujahideen's surge and fall in April 1992 [13, p. 156]. Once mujaheddin defeated their common enemy on the battlefield, they lost the goal of uniting themselves under the shell of an Islamic government [2, p. 78]. They started fighting each other to gain power in Kabul, which initiated a new era of civil war in Kabul.

The civil war did not result from a blood feud or tribal rivalries. However, this resulted from the division among Mujahideen's divided parties funded by political-military factions in Pakistan [2, p. 98]. Mujahideen started abusing the population, engaging in rape and pillage without any fear of punishment; therefore, no fiction was able to establish either political legitimacy or military hegemony, which staged the Taliban and spread in such a context [2, p. 72].

In the 1990s, the Taliban movement emerged as an ultra-traditionalist network of madrasa students, many of whom fought on the frontlines in greater Kandahar against the Soviets [14, p. 54]. The group came to be known collectively as the Taliban, which means «religious students» or «seekers of knowledge» (Taliban is the plural of «Talib») since most of them had religious training [15, p. 98]. Taliban religious ideology is a crude mixture of Salafi Islam and traditionalism (Pashtunwali) [2, p. 94]. The rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan is a clear example of what Roy has called 'neo-fundamentalism' following the crisis of the Islamist political model [16, p. 18].

The attempt to enforce traditionalist standards – meaning prioritizing dispute resolution and the cultivation of virtues resonant with rural Pashtun life – in a diverse society, the original Taliban sought to reject modernity itself [17, p. 317] as well as the attempt to mold informal networks into the iron cage of a bureaucratic state, was an exercise fraught with contradiction [2, p. 94]. As rightly drawn down by Oliver Roy (1990), by traditionalism, we mean the desire to freeze society to conform to the memory of what it once was: it is society as described by our grandfathers. Taliban have been trying to take Afghan society back to its origin by revers-

ing the traditional decision-making process and interpreting the Islamic religion in its very conventional and extreme ways. Mullahs are pushing for the adoption of Shariah as opposed to Pashtunwali [18, p. 83].

The Taliban groups were somewhat set apart from the other mujahideen, partly because they observed specific rules and habits, which some other fighters – in the rollicking freedom of the times – considered too strenuous or perhaps too strenuous even ascetic. Mujahideen affiliated with the comparatively liberal Mahaz-e Milli party of Pir Gailani or Rabbani's Jamiat-e Islami say they viewed the Taliban units as naysayers and too strict by far [19, p. 81].

To conclude, Afghan political Islam movements were the shadows of Islamic movements in Egypt and the Indian subcontinent, which were establishing social and political groups by some individuals as a reaction to the abolition of the caliphate in 1924 by Mustafa Kamal Atatürk, the new world order, and Muslim backwardness in various fields [1, p. 53].

At the end of the twentieth century, political and cultural Islam took an upswing across the Muslim world, successfully challenging and ultimately unseating nationalism and socialism as the primary sources of political legitimacy, ideological mobilization, and cultural identification [8, p. 121]. Furthermore, the war against the Soviets had three consequences: politicization, «Wahhabization,» and the enlisting of a second generation of refugees in Pakistani madrasa [20, p. 19].

The Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt and Jamiat-e Islami of Mawdudi, known as predecessors of Islamist movements, influenced politics in Afghanistan after the 1960s [13, p. 88]. Hasan al-Banna's moderate ideas spread in the 1960s through the Afghanistan Muslim Youth Organization's leaders, who were educated in Al-Azhar and returned to the country with the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideas about Islam, government, society, etc. Jamaat-e Islami of Mawdudi, which formed in the Indian subcontinent in 1941, is another Islamic movement that influenced Afghan Islamists [1, p. 9].

Mawdudi's ideas about the Islamic government became a basis for Afghan Islamists. Sayed Qutb influenced Afghan Islamists, especially radical Islamists, through his ideas expressed in his «ignorance» theory during the Afghan-Soviet battle in the 1980s [5, p. 148]. To conclude, as stated above, Afghanistan has a long history of instability, political and tribal feuds, and foreign invasions. However, political Islam has proved to be one of the major players in destabilizing the country in its recent history.

The Return of the Taliban to Power

As landlocked, Afghanistan lies in the heart of Asia. It links three major geographic regions: the Indian subcontinent to the south-east, central Asia to the north, and the Iranian plateau to the West [2, p. 89]. Therefore, any turmoil, conflict, or failing state scenario can easily spill over to any of the regions it connects, which can destabilize not only the Asian continent but also threaten global security. Whereas, after the withdrawal of the Soviet forces in 1998, the Najib Government could not stay longer than four years in power, and the state failed to grab a successful transition process from Soviet-backed government to a new democratic structure run by Mujaheddin and supported by international community lead by USA; as Diego Cordovez (1995) writes that the superpowers rivalry dominated the Cold War world but not by the superpowers where both superpowers treated Afghanistan as a pawn in their global struggle. In addition, Burnet Rubin (1995) extends the fact that the main obstacle to civic order is not the culture driven by ancient hatred but the weapons the superpowers have provided.

Thomas Barfield (2010) explores that for Afghanistan to be prosperous, it requires less reliance on a Kabul government and more emphasis on the country's key regions, which was a lost focus in the United States lead occupation in the past two decades; this fact is supported with William Dalrymple's (2013) assessment as he reiterates that in the historical perspective, there are striking parallels between the twenty-first-century occupation of Afghanistan and that of 1839-1842. He noticed that despite a dozen countries' efforts and a thousand agencies over a decade since 2001, the government still needs to be fixed [21, p. 418].

It took two more years for the Taliban to open an official political office in Doha, Qatar, to engage with the United States in peace negotiation; the Taliban opened their political office in Doha on June 18, 2013 [22].

After the Trump administration, the full implementation of the Taliban and the United States peace accord was considered by the Biden Administration. This led to a failed attempt at intra-Afghan negotiation, which faced deadlock from the beginning of the talks and could not achieve tangible results.

President Joseph Biden announced that international forces would depart by the fall of 2021, which caused the failure of the intra-Afghan negotiation and a military triumph for the Taliban. Taliban started taking over the district and provincial centers on August 10, and within 11 days, on August 15, Kabul fell to the

Taliban; Ashraf Ghani escaped the country to UAE. Therefore, the results that were planned to be gained from a peacebuilding process in Afghanistan were never achieved.

There were main factors in the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan, but the literature review found the following main causes of the failure of the USA's peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan, which made the Taliban victorious in their two-decade insurgency against the Republic of Afghanistan. They are as follows:

1. *Improper Balance of power* – Galtung, J. (1967). *Theories of peace. A synthetic approach to peace thinking*. Oslo: International Peace Research Institute.

2. *Stigmatization* – Unfried K., Diaz M.I., Restrepo-Plazaz L.M. (2022). *Discrimination in post-conflict settings: Experimental evidence from Colombia*. *World Development*, 154.

3. *Hostility, International Capacity & Local capacity to change* – Doyle M.W., Sambanis N. (2000). *International peacebuilding: A theoretical and quantitative analysis*. *American Political Science Review*, 94(4), 779-801.

4. *Spoilers* – Spoilers have been highly influential in academic and policy literature (Newman & Richmond, 2006; Menkhaus, 2006/7). As literature defines spoilers, what has come to be known as «spoilers» in a peace process is an endemic problem. (Shepherd, 2010) In addition, spoilers are actors who view peace as a threat to their interests.

5. *Local autonomy via socio-economic development & state legitimacy*: Krampe F. (2016). *Empowering peace: Service provision and state legitimacy in Nepal's peacebuilding process*. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 16(1), 53-73.

6. *Control over geography* (Natural resources): Ross M.L. (2004). *What do we know about natural resources and civil war?* *Journal of peace research*, 41(3), 337-356.

7. *Civil Resistance*: Chenoweth E., Stephan M.J., Stephan M. (2011). *Why civil resistance works: The strategic logic of nonviolent conflict*. Columbia University Press.

8. *Lack of effective mediation*: Clayton G., Dorussen H. (2022). *The effectiveness of mediation and peacekeeping for ending conflict*. *Journal of Peace Research*, 59(2), 150-156.

9. *Others: Poor governance and short-sighted vision*.

The existing literature has outlined several factors that may negatively impact peacebuilding mechanisms. However, the understanding of the failure of the U.S. peacebuilding efforts in Afghanistan remains limited. Because of the dubious methods employed during military action, the War on Terror has harmed the moral standing of the West. For their efforts to «permanently incapacitate Bin Laden and

other al Qaeda leaders and their Taliban enablers,» the USA, in particular, has paid a heavy price [23, p. 586]. The West's «appetite for military intervention» has decreased due to the protracted military operations in Afghanistan and their inability to accomplish the intended goals. The U.S. population is growing opposed to using military action in the future after learning about some of the crimes committed during the military intervention in Afghanistan.

Apart from all this, the study provided that the peacebuilding efforts failed as the U.S. needed to gain knowledge of local culture and power dynamics and was, thus, unable to gain the support of the local population. Besides, local structures were not provided autonomy, and their role was minimal in the peacebuilding process. Moreover, there needed to be more effective mediation and a long-term vision for the people of Afghanistan. As a result, the U.S. had to withdraw from the region. The current study will guide future leaders, bureaucrats, and other stakeholders in managing the peace-keeping processes and ensuring sustainable peace.

Conclusion

The complexity of the Afghan religious and traditional status has depended on its actors and their ideological inclination; historically, Afghanistan is known for its tribal and conservative national norms, but due to foreign invasions in past decades, it has empowered the extremists' ideological forces within the country. Taliban's current ideological synthesis seems to be a side effect of the domestic and global Jihadi groups to the Soviet invasion and the atrocities committed by the civil war parties. Finally, it was embedded in the resistance to the 21st century, the USA invasion.

Whereas, the segmentary characteristic of the social and political lives within tribes, as noticed by Ernest Gellner (1984), is not helpful to the Taliban's legitimation domestically; therefore, they are a far more religious traditionalist than tribal traditionalist in the sense of creating their governance strategy across the country. Recently, Afghanistan's ideological and political divisions have been exacerbated by the influence of the neighboring countries (Pakistan, Iran, Russia, China, and India), each of them playing both ideological and ethnic cards in the context of a decade-long competition of East-West through the numerous «regional conflicts» from Afghanistan to Kashmir and the Middle East.

How can we change the very nature of the Taliban? It will take time, longer than what we expect, to change the Taliban, their nature of

governance, and their very identity of fundamentalism and tribalism; therefore, continuous engagement of the international community with Taliban on different levels is highly significant, issues like girls' education, civil society empowerment, the inclusive (participatory and representative) government should be the short-term objectives to be achieved through means of diplomacy, meanwhile, empowering Afghan political parties, tribal elders, Civil Society, media, Ulema who believe in change should be the priority of any empowerment decisions.

To be sure, such engagement is unlikely to yield short- or even medium-term benefits. Instead, international actors should take a long-term approach by engaging with and cultivating ties with religious networks – the madrassas and sheiks that form the world from which Haibatullah Akhunzade emerged and from which he draws guidance. This transnational network spans the Afghan-Pakistani border and is centered on Deobandi madrassas and institutions of higher learning. There is a diversity of opinion in these spaces, and sources here should be cultivated for potential engagement. At the same time, this transnational network remains the most poorly understood aspect of the Taliban; hope for engagement lies, first and foremost, in developing an adequate understanding of this world and then in identifying potential partners who can serve as interlocutors to critical figures in Amir's retinue.

The facts of girls' education or international engagement are less important than who is delivering those facts, what relations of trust they have, what authority they yield, and how these facts are being framed. That means identifying individuals from this transnational madrasa world – Pashtun Deobandi Mawlawis and Sheiks.

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INFORMATION ABOUT AUTHORS

Muhammad Zaland Faiz

PhD, Kabul University, Kabul Afghanistan, email: zalandj@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0002-3861-9100

Burkhanadin Abdilkhakim

Associate Professor, PhD, Nur-Mubarak Egyptian University of Islamic Culture, Almaty, Kazakhstan, email: burhanhakim01@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-8271-866X

Assan Amangeldiyev

Senior Lecturer, PhD, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, email: a.azimkhanuly@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-9257-1609

Symbat Shakirov

Senior Lecturer, PhD, L.N. Gumilyov Eurasian National University, Astana, Kazakhstan, email: simba_004@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8354-5844

Мухаммед Заланд Файз

PhD, Кабул университеті, Кабул, Ауғанстан, email: zalandj@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0002-3861-9100

Бурханадин Шарафутдинұлы Абдилхаким

доцент, PhD, Нұр-Мұбарак Египет Ислам мәдениеті университеті, Алматы, Қазақстан, email: burhanhakim01@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-8271-866X

Асан Азимханович Амангельдиев

аға оқытушы, PhD, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан, email: a.azimkhanuly@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-9257-1609

Сымбат Еркебаевич Шакиров

аға оқытушы, PhD, Л.Н. Гумилев атындағы Еуразия ұлттық университеті, Астана, Қазақстан, email: simba_004@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8354-5844

Мухаммед Заланд Файз

PhD, Кабулский университет, Кабул, Афганистан, email: zalandj@gmail.com, ORCID: 0009-0002-3861-9100

Бурханадин Шарафутдинұлы Абдилхаким

доцент, PhD, Египетский университет исламской культуры имени Нур-Мубарак, Алматы, Казахстан, email: burhanhakim01@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0002-8271-866X

Асан Азимханович Амангельдиев

старший преподаватель, PhD, Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева, Астана, Казахстан, email: a.azimkhanuly@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-9257-1609

Сымбат Еркебаевич Шакиров

старший преподаватель, PhD, Евразийский национальный университет имени Л.Н. Гумилева, Астана, Казахстан, email: simba_004@mail.ru, ORCID: 0000-0002-8354-5844