



Taliban Governance in Afghanistan Concerns of Bangladesh

DEPANJALI ROY

Afghanistan has a long history of conflict, brutality, invasion, Al-Qaeda, and, most recently, the Taliban. Afghanistan's strategic location makes geopolitics essential for the world's superpowers. This is why it was invaded by the British, followed by the Soviet Union. Following the invasion, the Taliban assumed control in 1996 and governed Afghanistan until 2001, when the United States attacked the nation in response to the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. During the Taliban's leadership in 1996, women and girls suffered the most since they were forbidden from pursuing school and could only leave the house if accompanied by a male member of their family. The Taliban's policies were never appreciated by Western leaders. And we are witnessing the same scenario after the United States force has been removed from Afghanistan after two decades.

After the Taliban acquired complete control of Afghanistan, it generated concerns in most nations, and the United States' two-decade presence made little sense either. This is a crucial occurrence for the countries of South Asia. India plays a vital role in this dangerous circumstance since it has no intention of recognizing the Taliban administration, notwithstanding China's ability to influence the new government's internal affairs. Bangladesh, on the other hand, is in a different situation. Bangladesh is not a large nation like India, but the new Afghan administration will have an impact on it in a multitude of ways. The word "terrorism" crops up frequently in this context. There is a clear presence of Islamic extremist groups in Bangladesh. Groups such as Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami Bangladesh (HuJi-B) and Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) exist in Bangladesh and conduct their recruiting processes using social media platforms such

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as Facebook and Twitter to persuade the youth of Bangladesh to join the struggle to establish Islamic doctrine. The whole world already witnessed the gruesome incident in Holey Artisan Bakery in 2016, which was carried out by the Neo-JMB members and killed 22 people, including 18 foreigners. It is unclear if the growth of the Taliban will have an impact on our country's extremist groups. However, the message of "Islamic triumph" has already been delivered. With inspiration from the Taliban, extreme organizations in Bangladesh may begin a strategy to destroy the government, which favors "secular" ideology in its policies.

The Rohingya refugee problem is currently the most pressing issue in Bangladesh. The role of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is intensifying day by day. Gaining support from the Taliban as a persecuted minority Muslim group is not difficult for ARSA members. As a result, Bangladesh's prime concern must be security. Smuggling of weaponry and narcotics is becoming more widespread along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, and camp refugees are also implicated in these illicit activities.

Bangladesh, being a South Asian country, is a non-player in the Afghanistan crisis. Bangladesh, according to Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen, would choose its strategy toward Afghanistan. He also stated that Bangladesh's stance toward Afghanistan will be determined after assessing Afghanistan's governance and policy formations. Even though Bangladesh's State Minister for Foreign Affairs, Md Shahriar Alam, has declared that Bangladesh is willing to help Afghanistan with humanitarian assistance by giving food and medication, the issue of recognizing the Taliban administration remains on the table.

Afghanistan, which is located in South Asia, has economic and business ties with other nations in the region, including India. As a result, India will incur penalties as a result of the highway, dam, and infrastructure developments in Afghanistan. However,

the situation is different in Bangladesh since import, export, and trade with Afghanistan are low, and no economic links have been developed. Because bilateral commerce between the two countries is less than \$20 million, it is primarily ceremonial. But we must not overlook the development efforts of BRAC, a Bangladeshi NGO. Aside from that, if Bangladesh so desires, it may engage Afghanistan not just bilaterally but also multilaterally, such as through SAARC.

SAARC can play an integral role in monitoring Afghanistan's status and exerting pressure on its surrounding nations to change their policies. Yes,



SAARC is modest, with nations such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal clashing with India on a variety of issues, and has reasons not to vigorously enforce SAARC policy, but it has shown success in combating terrorism in South Asia. As a result, the situation in Afghanistan should be considered regionally first, then internationally, because the outcome will be better than negative if a bottom-up strategy is used.

Till now, Afghanistan's approach is mellow towards the world. Bangladesh as small county should be ready to gear up and from strategies to protect itself from any other extremist incidents as recently wounds of communal violence is still fresh.

Depanjali Roy is a Program Assistant, Centre for Governance Studies

How Delhi deals with the Daredevils: India's Security Concerns after Taliban's Take Over

DON MCLAIN GILL

AYANANGSHA MAITRA

The rise of the Taliban and its steady accumulation of power can further exacerbate the already-tumultuous issues of terrorism and insurgency in South Asia. Moreover, as the power structure of the Taliban interim government continues to be marred by controversy among its factions, more instability can be expected. India, being the status-quo power in the region, is aware of the devastations and destruction the Taliban can cause. The last time the Taliban were in power, India witnessed the problems caused by regional and global terror groups that used Afghan soil as haven. India has seen a number of terror attacks throughout its territory leading to the December 1999 hijacking of an Indian Airlines flight IC 814. After Taliban's assumption of incumbency, Islamic State Khorasan

Province (ISKP) has carried out several deadly attacks in Afghanistan. Their unorganized arm Islamic State Hind Province (ISHP) claimed the responsibility for the recent attack that caused death of a street hawker in Sri Nagar. On the other hand, Al Qaeda Indian Subcontinent recently released a video statement to spread their terror propaganda. As India seeks to safeguard its national interest and maintain the peace and stability of the region, it must continue to bank on proactive strategies to maximize its function and role as security provider.

Needless to say, Afghanistan is a pivotal component of India's foreign, security, and economic policies. India has invested over three billion USD in the war-torn country. In addition, a large percentage of trade from India intended to Central Asia also transits through

Afghanistan. Most importantly, India is a major development partner of Afghanistan and is a top source of foreign aid grants. Furthermore, the 2003 preferential trade agreement between both countries allowed Afghanistan to tap India's large market for a variety of its products.

However, with the reemergence of the Taliban, the bilateral relationship between the two countries has been put into question. The Indian government is faced with a dilemma given its wariness towards the group while putting the plight of the Afghans at its core. While

India has been reluctant to consistently engage with the Taliban, a significant development took place at the side lines of the Moscow Format Consultations, where an Indian official delegation formally met with the official Taliban team.

Against this backdrop, Taliban spokesperson

Zabihullah Mujahid said, "The delegation of the Islamic Emirate met with the special representative of India for Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan." Moreover, the spokesperson also highlighted that India expressed willingness to provide significant humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. This demonstrates India's willingness to maintain a formidable presence in regional discussions in order to avoid being marginalized by other key stakeholders in the region. In addition, India's support in terms of humanitarian aid significantly reflects its prioritization of the welfare and wellbeing of the Afghans.

Moreover, amid their efforts to gain external legitimacy and limit the degrading conditions in Afghanistan, the Taliban have expressed their intentions to improve diplomatic and economic relations with India. In fact, they have also emphasized their readiness to receive



Indian diplomats and look after their security. In this context, key Taliban official Suhail Shaheen stated that "We are open to receiving all diplomats and committed to providing security for their routine diplomatic functions."

Beyond these efforts, India has also tapped on its role as an Indo-Pacific power, a vital member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), and a crucial strategic partner of the United States to address the potential regional instability the Taliban may cause in the long term. A recent development focuses on the creation of what many term as the Middle Eastern or Western Quad comprising the US, Israel, the UAE, and India. This arrangement seeks to preserve and strengthen the security architecture of West and Central Asia, as well as the western Indian Ocean Region amid the uncertainties brought by the Taliban's consolidation of power. While it is quite early to point to the possible direction this new arrangement will be heading, it is safe to say that such a collaborative effort of key partners will contribute to the peace and stability of the greater region. India's Regional Security Dialogue, a NSA-level talks of Afghanistan's neighbours, is expected to bring some positive outcomes.

While the geopolitical situation remains tumultuous, India must continue to spearhead a wide array of proactive policies to address its strategic interests amid the evolving international political landscape. The need to avoid putting its eggs in one basket will be paramount in securing its ability to effectively maneuver amid the uncertainties the world is heading towards.

***Don McLain Gill** is a resident fellow at the Manila-based International Development and Security Cooperation (IDSC), director of South & Southeast Asia at the Philippine-Middle East Studies Association (PMESA), and the director of research at the Forum for Global Studies (FGS).*

***Ayanangsha Maitra** is an Indian freelance journalist, and associated to CGS, Dhaka and The Peninsula Foundation, Chennai India. He tweets at @Ayanangsha*

CGS Upcoming Events

Bay of Bengal Conversation

Governance • Security • Development

28-30 May 2022

We are delighted to announce the inaugural edition of the Bay of Bengal Conversation which will be hosted by the Centre for Governance Studies, Bangladesh from 28-30 May, 2022. The three day conversation will discuss both the emerging regional and global political order and the associated institutional framework. It will focus on elucidating a human-first growth and development policy paradigm. This unique platform will convene around 200 delegates from over 70 countries to join the 400 brightest minds in Bangladesh to discuss, ideate, and debate the most pressing global issues. We expect to host ministers, members of parliaments, political leaders, and senior bureaucrats, military officials, diplomats, leading technologists, industrialists, journalists, civil society leaders and academics. The conversation will bring together diverse voices across sectors and geographies. The initiative intends to promote new ideas and to propose effective solutions that will help build a new humanitarian world order.

Global Directions Conclave

01-10 October 2022

The Global Directions Conclave (GDC) is an annual intensive ten-day policy workshop organized by the Centre for Governance Studies (CGS). Each year, the conclave will bring together 50 outstanding young leaders, between 25 and 35 years of age, from diverse backgrounds, geographies, and sectors. The young leaders will be nominated by heads of governments, leaders of private sector and global experts.

The aim of the Conclave is to foster leadership qualities among the selected fellows, to engage them in discussions on issues that are trending worldwide, and to serve as a networking platform. Through cross-border dialogue, deliberations and debates with prominent figures from the world of politics, business and academia, fellows of the Conclave will get opportunities to assess as well as challenge conventional interpretations of the global challenges. The first edition of the Global Directions Conclave is scheduled to be held from 01-10 October 2022 in Dhaka and Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.

Taliban rule in Afghanistan: A South-Asian Perspective

"[T]here exist in the world certain places that have for mankind a strange and fatal existence, in that they give directions to his conquests. In these places victories are decisive and defeats mark the consummation of national ruin. These places are the doorways through which nations come and go; sometimes arches of triumph; sometimes those narrow exits through which nations, like men, pass to return no more. Herat is one of these places, Kabul another."

(Homer Lea, 1876-1912)

MAHMUDUR RAHMAN

Afghanistan lies on the heart of the Asian continent, connecting South and Central Asia. A landlocked country surrounded by the Hindu Kush mountains, these mountains have shaped the political, economic, and social life of the Afghans. History shows how these mountains have protected them from numerous invaders but also hindered the growth and prosperity of the nation. Most notable, the Hindu Kush mountains have allowed Afghanistan to be used as a breeding ground of extremist ideologies.

The fall of Kabul to the hands of the Taliban and their subsequent rise to power, call into question the ability of the West to assert sustainable dominance in the region. The balance of power has once again shifted in this highly volatile region of geopolitical significance. This shift is already affecting South-Asia and the continent as a whole.

The geopolitical realignment has put pressure on south Asian countries to reconfigure their interest and priorities in the region, nations are hurriedly evacuated their diplomats and citizens, leaving behind two decades of work and investments.

To make matters complicated, Taliban rule is under threat of the Northern Alliance, who are putting up resistance to the regime. Whether or not Taliban will hold on to power, or for how long is anyone's guess.

Recognition of Taliban Regime

Since seizing power this August, the Taliban have often voiced their desire that the international community will recognize their authorities as the new government of Afghanistan, and have taken a number of procedural efforts to that end. However, the Taliban has done

nothing to show that it is willing to accept the demands of Western powers and certain regional governments.

Much of the Taliban's attempts to get international recognition appear to be motivated by the regime's urgent financial requirements, as well as a desire to see assets unfrozen and different sorts of aid supplied.

Pakistan is the only state to openly call for Taliban recognition stating humanitarian concerns, but when it comes to Afghan policy, Pakistan does not stimulate a lot of trust, with their history of support for the Taliban, the Haqqani faction, and tolerance of terrorism as a whole. Though Pakistan itself hasn't recognized the Taliban rule, probably due to pressure from the U.S., this has caused friction between the two neighbors.

Bangladesh is playing its cards close to its chest, analyzing the situation and waiting for more developments before taking any steps in the matter. Foreign Minister Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen laid out the principles that would determine Bangladesh's recognition of Taliban government. A "people's government" that comes through a political and a democratic process where the people's will and desires are reflected will have Dhaka's full support, Momen said.

A similar stance is taken by the Sri Lankan and Nepalese governments. These two nations are expected to maintain a neutral position regarding recognition of the Taliban regime.

Among the few available mechanisms by which the US and other nations may apply pressure on the Taliban leadership is international recognition. Therefore, the more countries agree on how to utilize that lever, the more powerful it becomes.

Recognition of the Taliban regime by Afghanistan's closest neighbors would provide the Taliban a certain

level of legitimacy and open them up to much-needed financial resources — but it would also significantly reduce the United States' power and influence to press the Taliban on the most pressing issues of humanitarian access, freedom of movement for Afghan refugees, and not to mention the wider priorities of inclusive governance, protection of human rights, and counter-terrorism assurances.



(LTTE), popularly known as the Tamil Tigers. Thus, the Taliban's reappearance with more modern weaponry and drug supplies, at a time when Sri Lanka is seeing an uptick in Islamic terror, Sinhala-Muslim tensions, and rumors of resurgent Tamil separatism, has sparked widespread concern.

Terrorism and Supporting Activities

Afghanistan has never been on the best of terms with their neighbors, and the Taliban rule isn't making them any more friends either. Several anxieties of terrorism have resurfaced on the minds of South Asian nations because of close links of Taliban to various terror groups both inside and outside of Afghanistan and their incapability to govern the whole area of the country. This is bound to provide safe havens to terrorist and opportunity for them to carry out their activities. This inevitably acts against the national interests and integrity of the smaller South Asian nations.

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), an anti-Pakistan terrorist group have resumed their campaign of terror inside Pakistan, mostly against Pakistani state interests. In its brutality against Pakistan, the TTP has undoubtedly been empowered by the Taliban's return to power.

Sri Lanka will be cautious of the Taliban regime, because the last time the Taliban were in power, they traded weapons with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Conclusion

Historical analysis shows, the region has a lot to gain, or lose, from what transpires in Afghanistan. In the globalized world, a continuance of the Afghan conflict, in whatever shape it takes, will not be restricted to Afghanistan, but would most likely extend and consume the whole region. A zero-sum approach by regional countries to the Afghan conflict will only exacerbate Afghan suffering while impeding regional progress and development due to spillover effects.

Regardless of how the region develops: Afghanistan will remain a security and geostrategic hot spot in the future. In the words of Homer Lea: Afghanistan will stay a "doorway through which nations come and go; sometimes arches of triumph; sometimes those narrow exists through which nations, like men, pass to return no more."

Mahmudur Rahman is a Research Assistant at Centre for Governance Studies (CGS), Dhaka.

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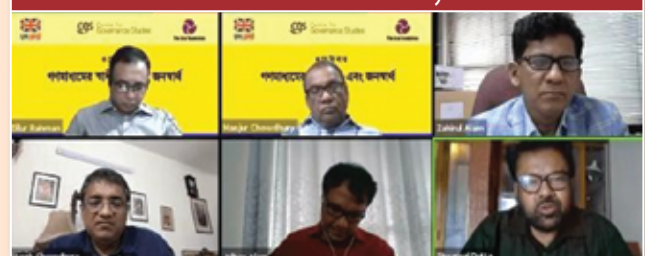
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Executive Director's Note

On behalf of the Centre for Governance Studies, I am pleased to announce the release of the latest issue of Clips, the Centre's monthly newsletter. The issue's topic is "The Fate of Afghanistan." Afghanistan, under Taliban rule, is currently the hot topic in international politics. Historically embroiled in geopolitical machination, foreign invasions, and internal political turmoil, the struggling people of Afghanistan now teeter on the edge of one of the worst humanitarian crises of recent times. Under Taliban rule, several Islamist organizations have carried out acts of terror both domestically and internationally. The rigorous ideology of the Taliban is also uniquely opposed to girls and women attending school and being independent. As the rise of the Taliban once again may have an impact on regional stability in South Asia, this topic focuses on the Afghanistan issue from different viewpoints from South Asian countries.

Following the recent evacuation of the United States Army from Afghan territory, the Taliban seized power without opposition from the Afghan government. In this scenario, the United States' assistance to Afghanistan was ineffective and unclear, making it virtually impossible for the Afghan government to survive without external support. In a broader sense, South Asian countries must appraise the situation to deal with potential consequences. In this subject, the perspective of Bangladesh's security is addressed since many terrorist groups in Bangladesh adhere to their philosophy. India, being the largest country in South Asia, has its perspective on the situation, and other South Asian countries are also paying attention to this topic. The rise of the Taliban will surely impact the geopolitical aspects of South Asia, as very few countries recognize the Taliban government. Concerning issues of trade, economy, and security, South Asian countries must come up with new strategies to deal with the Taliban government of Afghanistan.



Zillur Rahman

