Challenges for the Taliban Regime

The new government declared in Afghanistan has been a disappointment for most Western countries that had been the main donors to the previous regime of the war-torn country. Following the Taliban's announcement of a new interim cabinet, the West was quick to alarm that the group's promise of an inclusive government would not be kept.

What disturbs the West is not only that the interim cabinet excludes women, but most of the people in it are from the previous Taliban regime of the 1990s. This has sent waves of fear that the group will slip back to the excesses of the past. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a press conference at US Air Force Base in Ramstein, Germany that the new Taliban regime "does not meet the test of inclusiveness" and that "it includes people who have very difficult backgrounds." The US maintains that any US support for an inclusive government should be earned by Afghanistan.

So far the Taliban regime has not gained any international recognition. The promise made by Western governments seems to remain unfulfilled. There are deliberate actions made to keep Afghanistan backward, and the country is being forced into economic and political isolation.

A Dying Country

Afghanistan's economy is dying due to the continuous war in the past half-century. Post 9/11, when America occupied the country in 2001, massive amounts of foreign aid flowed there. International aid was a major contributor of the economic flow in the country, comprising more than 40 percent of GDP. After the Taliban came back, most international aid was suspended. Similarly the Taliban does not have any access to Afghan central bank funds that were seized by the US as its bargaining chip with the new regime. This economic crunch could spell disaster, as the Taliban has to pay government employees and manage critical infrastructures like electricity and water. The United Nations has even warned of a humanitarian crisis signalized by the decreasing food supply given the uncertainty.

Earlier there were suggestions that Afghanistan's economy will remain functioning and integrated into the global economy despite the Taliban regime. China was supposed to play a major role in this regard. However, sanctions imposed by the West and US are making this idea difficult to realize, as these sanctions hamper the Taliban from offering any peaceful resolution to the country's internal differences.

> *"Afghanistan and DAB under the Taliban are likely to be treated as sanctioned entities by the rest of the world. In addition to the financial implications, there will be additional consequences to this situation. Afghanistan's physical money supply will be impaired. This is because the central bank does not print its own currency."(Bloomberg, Sept. 2021)**[1]***

Analysts are predicting that these sanctions will not apply only to the financial transactions, but to Afghan businesses as well. Western media in particular has started their propaganda against the Taliban for their misuse of money.

> *"While the Taliban have been subject to American terrorism sanctions for years, the group's newfound control of Afghanistan's government institutions and domestic resources will significantly increase its wealth and influence. If the new Taliban government's central bank, ministries and agencies are not explicitly subjected to U.S. sanctions, the Taliban will be better able to use that money as it wishes." (The Wall Street Journal, Sept. 2021)**[2]***

Former governor of the central bank of Afghanistan has suggested the Taliban to adhere to an inclusive government and answer the economic challenges to get out of this situation.

> *"The Taliban will face the same economic challenges as the previous regime — but under sanctions and with much less international financial support. Afghanistan's new rulers must face this reality, form an inclusive government and adhere to international standards. Otherwise, they will further impoverish*

*themselves and the Afghan people."(Bloomberg, Sept. 2021)**[3]***

Inclusivity for Survival

The Taliban has full control of Afghanistan now. The deal of US withdrawal was signed in broad daylight with the whole world as the witness. The Taliban has dealt successfully with the rebellious group in the Panjshir valley. The Taliban is no longer an armed group with limited resources. However, there is a big challenge for the Taliban, which is more of an internal than an external challenge. The challenge is to save war-torn Afghanistan from a looming civil war. There are many regional and international actors who are ready to fuel such a problem in Afghanistan. If the Taliban failed to prevent the civil war, it will create players with vested interests, who will push the Taliban to the wall. People in the West are trying their best to support elements who oppose the Taliban.

> *"A leading figure in the Afghan resistance has retained a Washington lobbyist to seek military and financial support in the United States for a fight against the Taliban, according to a lobbying contract and a representative of the resistance leader. Ahmad Massoud, the leader of one of the most prominent groups of fighters seeking to oust the Taliban from power, signed the contract this week with Robert Stryk, who built a lobbying practice during the Trump administration working with clients that others on K Street were wary of representing. The contract, which was filed with the Justice Department on Wednesday evening and indicates that the work will be pro bono, comes as an array of Afghan constituencies are seeking lobbying help as they jockey for recognition in Washington and the international community. While Afghan opposition groups have support from some Republicans in Washington, the Biden administration has made clear that it has no interest in playing any further role in a civil war in Afghanistan." (Newyork Times, Sept. 2021)**[4]***

The Taliban needs to create an inclusive government. This will not only make Afghanistan stronger, it is also necessary for the survival of the Taliban itself. Also, the best opportunity for the Taliban to get support from the US is to benefit from the need of the US to balance its opposition to the Taliban's rule and its need for assistance on issues like evacuating the US and its allies' citizens left in the country. With international recognition, it would be easier for the Taliban to seek international funding and legitimacy to resuscitate the country and cement its position.

[1] The Taliban can't mint money and other business challenges in Afghanistan https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-09-07/the-talibar

[2] Beefed-Up Sanctions Could Limit the Damage in Afghanistan *https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistan-withdrawal-biden-imf-world-bank-sanctio*

[3] The Taliban can't mint money and other business challenges in Afghanistan https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2021-09-07/the-talibar

[4] Struggle for Control of Afghanistan Comes to K Street
https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/15/us/politics/afghanistan-taliban.html?searchResultPosition=14