



Anniversary of the Taliban's seizure of power. Should lessons be learned?

Rocznica przejęcia władzy przez Talibów.

Czy należy wyciągnąć wnioski?

Rahmattullah Nourozie

Badacz niezależny

It has been one year that the Taliban occupied power in Afghanistan and forced legally elected president and government to flee. This paper focuses on internal and external challenges for Afghanistan in the first anniversary of the Taliban coup and on the same type of challenges for the Taliban as governing power. Article also mentions and analyses potential threats for the regional and international community, because of unstable situation in Afghanistan.

Keywords: Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the Taliban.

It has been one year that the Taliban occupied power in Afghanistan. This article is looking to answer the questions that how the Taliban takeover Kabul on 15 Aug 2021? What are the internal/external challenges for the Taliban power as government? What are the threats that should be considered by the regional and international community?

Before answering the mentioned questions, I want to give a brief on the Taliban's patterns of governing after their re-occupation. Two decades before, in 1996-2001, the Taliban head their administration in Kabul. There was resistance in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, but they had their control over 95% of the territory. Their main objectives for administration were implementing Sharia, resistance against the innovations and development, introducing the frame for vanishing the modernization values. They also wanted to reverse Afghanistan's population to the way how the Prophet ^(ph) and Islamic Caliphs were living; one may say that Taliban are still looking in reverse, to the Prophet ^(ph)'s and the Caliphs ways, even if majority sees them as bygone. Taliban's insistence on the Islamic laws violates modern human rights, such as freedom of speech, which is one of the most essential value of being a human, to ask for the basic rights.

As Afghanistan International TV writes on Twitter, in a press conference on 22nd August 2022, Sadiq Akif Muhajir, the spokesman of Amar Bil Maroof Wa Nahi An al-Munkar (Ministry for the Propagation of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice) told: "Hijab should not be thin, too fit and filmy, well suited, colorful and shouldn't be fragrant." (Twitter, 2022).

In the governmental sector, power and wealth is/was under control of the Taliban. They prefer not to share power as asked by international community and regional states to build inclusive government. Their slogan is that they have participated in wars against foreigners and they with their allies have the right to govern Afghanistan further. Taliban wants to strengthen their status for their fighter to be ready for any sort of violation which can be labeled as anti-Islamic act by their leaders. One of the ways, to achieve it is by isolating women from engagement of social, political, cultural and economic movements in their previous/ongoing government.

By 15th August 2021, the Taliban succeed to re-occupy Afghanistan, when president Ashraf Ghani flee the country with two of his near and dear ally – security adviser Hamdullah Mohib and head of the administrative office of the president Fazal Mahmood Fazli.

Although during the 2019, the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalizad were looking to assign an agreement with the Taliban. They initiate propaganda that the Taliban have

changed. The outcome was a Joint Declaration between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the United States of America for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan signed 29th February 2020 – known as the Doha Agreement. Mike Pompeo in his remarks at the inauguration ceremony of the Doha agreement said that „the United States will never forget the solidarity of our many allies and partners who have stood with us in the long struggle to end this war. Today we also remember and honor them. Nor will the United States ever forget 9/11. We welcome the Taliban commitment not to host international terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, nor to allow them to use Afghan territory to train, recruit, or fundraise” (U.S. Embassy in Kabul, 2020). The Agreement had strengthened the Taliban soldiers in the battlefield and had negative impact of the Republic forces of being left betrayed by their foreign allies.

On the one hand, the Doha Agreement mentioned withdrawal date of the US troops from Afghanistan and not helping the Afghanistan National Army (ANA) and other forces during the clash with the Taliban. That provision in the Agreement destroyed the motivation of the Afghan military forces. The other issues which weakened and put ANA in suffering were presence of inexperienced leaders in the security sector, ongoing wide range of corruption, „ghost soldiers” and the lack of co-ordinations for management of war equipment’s and soldiers on the ground. All of those made war-effort harder for ANA, making it less willing to fight and less patient against enemies

According to the Washington Post, the Taliban had been killing Afghan forces throughout this, attempting to use the violence as leverage in negotiations, US intelligence officials believed (Philips, 2021).

In his speech on 19th May 2021, Khalizad told the congressional committee members that the key elements of US strategy is to achieve five goals:

1. Build International support for a political settlement through negotiations;
2. Encourage political unity among Afghan leaders;
3. Sustain military, political, and economic support for the Afghan Republic;
4. Incentivize the Taliban to reduce violence, accelerate negotiations for a political settlement, and agree to a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire;
5. And strengthen regional cooperation to against terror and enhance economic cooperation (U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan, 2021).

In the end, none of this was achieved.

Shortly after those events, the destabilization in internal political situation was bolstered by nepotism and growth of influence and ambitions of the Pashtun leaders as the efforts of monopoly to avoid power-sharing and involvement of other ethni-

cities for making national interest decisions occurred, which consequently also reduced the chances of a better outcome for the republic's representatives in Doha for intra-Afghan talks.

Pashtuns are/were insisting that Afghanistan only belongs to Pashtuns. Other ethnicities have no-choice but to accept their leadership silently. As Kamal Nasir Osoli (then MP of Afghan parliament) has told in interview to Shamshad TV, if the Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek and other ethnicity want to stay in Afghanistan they should accept the Pashtun as the leaders and major ethnicity (YouTube, 2017).

On the other hand, the absence of clear strategy in respect to how to fight the Taliban was added to the complicated situation that had paved the way for the Taliban to re-occupy Afghanistan.

The most serious situation was created on 15th August 2021. Afghanistan lost all the governmental institutions, economic sectors, and all the two decades of democratic achievements in relation to human rights, involvement of women in different sector of social, economic, judicial, cultural, political and other governmental and non-governmental sectors.

The occupation has caused Afghanistan to lose the most essential element, which was the recognition of government by international community and other states. Now, although the Taliban has captured the government by force, but they are scrimmaging with the issue of recognition and relation with other states in the world. In the last one year, the Taliban could not bring changes as asked by the international and regional states to be recognized.

Internally, Taliban has failed to convince people for supporting their government. People are suffering poverty, economic crisis, insecurity, oppressive administration and violation of private freedom and human rights.

The Taliban cannot tolerate critics and tries to oppress the voice of women who were the only earned member in family, due to loses of their male member in suicide bomb attacks, road bombs or being killed by the Taliban as government employee during their campaign in the last two decades. For instance, the protests of women in Kabul on 14th August 2022 Kabul with the slogan of "food" "freedom" and "job" been organized, as Taliban have celebrated their anniversary, but this protest had been oppressed by them through firing, beating with lash and imprisoning protesters to prevent such situations in the future.

The protests have routes to the first days of occupation which were held in other provinces beside Kabul, but now the main focus is in Kabul due to limitations and

wide open hand of Taliban to target women in provinces. The ban of girls for the secondary and high school, plus avoiding the women to work in governmental sector are other issues which decrease the internal support for Taliban.

Another important dimension of internal Afghan problems is lack of inclusivity in governmental sectors. As was mentioned before, current power circles are dominated by Pashtuns, which situation creates unrest in other ethnical groups. Interestingly, official narration of Taliban and its particular officials, especially Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaqi, has always claimed that in Afghanistan they have an inclusive government.

Response to internal problems is resistance. Shortly after the Taliban came into power, many forces which include both “old” resistance groups (operating during the previous Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001) and “new” loyalists of the former government made an agreement and formed the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRF), which operates in Panjshir region and other, mostly northern, provinces of Afghanistan. NRF is led by Ahmad Massud, son of Ahmad Shah Massoud, famous guerilla-fighter from time of Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, and has its own quasi-governmental institutions such as foreign affairs office; former vice-president of Afghanistan, Amrullah Saleh, proclaimed himself as a caretaker President of Afghanistan and leader of the Government in Exile. Internally, the resistance efforts are to convince the Taliban for accepting the diversion in Afghanistan and provide equal opportunities for all ethnic groups in this country.

Current external situation of Afghanistan is very difficult and complicated. One of the most important and influential powers is Pakistan. For the Taliban, it is a key ally that provided them shelter during their guerilla campaign against the Afghan and international forces, have started lobbying around the world to create consensus for their recognition. It is also who Pakistan hosted gathering of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Islamabad on 19th December 2021, where the Pakistani officials insisted, that international community should immediately help the people of Afghanistan (Relifweb.int, 2022). Shortly after this kind of statements, Pakistan found, that the Taliban cannot be trustable as a partner and relations between both states became a little less cordially.

From the Western countries it was Norway, who organized the conference where the Taliban was asked to join and participate. A joint meeting in January 2022 was aimed to de-escalate the conflict and start a dialogue between the Taliban and the Afghan opposition with the support of experts and authorities from Norway (Government of Norway, 2022). Later, Norwegian officials confessed that due to the acts

of the Taliban, they have lost hopes. Under the new consensus, the United Nation Security Council have cancelled the travel permit of Noorullah Munir and Abdul Baqi Haqqani that under the Taliban they lead the ministry of education and ministry of higher education.

The main challenges from external aspect for the Taliban are facing challenged to recognition the human rights, support for women and provide them opportunity to work, reopening the schools for secondary/high education, and share the power with other ethnicities, beside respecting the diversities in Afghanistan's society by building inclusive government. It is a challenge that has increased suspicion on the faith of Taliban to accept and implement the modern values in Afghanistan. The implementation of at least some of the above demands would significantly facilitate international recognition of Afghanistan, which would help improve the lot of the people.

However, beside the above-mentioned issues, as was also mentioned before, the Taliban are an ethnical movement of Pashtuns and they are influenced by the Pashtunwali codes. Their organization is based on self-interpreted Islamic values, which also have roots in the influence of Pashtunwali codes. If they want to build government with the modern values, they have no choice but to violate the principle of Pashtunwali codes and re-explain them for harmonization with the modern value. That is a challenge to happen due to the militarized movement and the Taliban's radical perspective. On the other side, the changes will conclude a price for the leaders of the Taliban, that they might lose control over the soldiers. Leaders cannot risk losing control over their fighters.

The Taliban are entangled in an inflation between realism and radicalism. On the one hand, the presence of Haqqani organization (Haqqani Network) with the high support of ISI (Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence), ironic ties with the Al-Qaida and the Kandahari, who has the experience of leading Afghanistan in the last two century. On the other hand, presence of other terrorist groups such as Islamic Movement of Turkistan, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan and others, who support Uyghurs in Chinese border have helped them during the guerilla wars. It has complicated the situation for the Taliban to implement the changes that international and regional states asks for. The presence of these groups has affected the policies of regional and international power to reconsider regarding the relation with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

The emergence of Islamic States-Khorasan (IS-K) branch as their enemy have weakened the Taliban for the implementation of the international demands. If they

fail to convince their fighters, what would be the reaction of foreigner terrorist fighters present inside Afghanistan? They have the choice to switch from the Taliban to IS-K, which pursues more radical Islamic ideology.

Although the Taliban still have succeeded to have control on their fighters, despite the fragile economy, if the changes happen soon each group and the homogeneous fighter may seek to join their enemy – IS-K. And that makes the internal situation more dangerous, and this scenario can point serious terroristic threats, launching operational plans to operating and targeting the regional and international goals in near future. For the regional and international community, trusting the Taliban, who are tribal forces and proxy warriors of different secret agencies and terrorist groups, will be more costly. Internal threats for the Taliban may imply more barbaric brutality that the international community and those who believe that the Taliban have changed, will be surprised.

Conclusion

After the Taliban have re-occupied Afghanistan on 15th August 2021, despite propaganda, that the Taliban have changed, many facts indicates, that their new administration have not changed at all. They still believe that women should stay back home instead of working and has banned the secondary and high schools for the girls.

The Taliban have claimed that Afghanistan is secure, but internally the bombing of Hazara minority as Shia's mosques and Sufi gathering in Kabul, plus the target killing has increased during first year of occupation.

Afghani people are suffering poverty, economic crisis, oppressive administration, controlled media, ban of freedom for speech, ban of freedom for women clothing, ban of criticizing their government, ban of travel for women which insist on having a man with are the issues that has limited the movement in this country. The Taliban has introduced Islamic conditions as the frame that all Afghani people should fit. For the Taliban, being Muslim should be a reason for pride and Muslims should ,decorate their faces and faith' or they will not be governmental employees.

The Taliban are a collection of terrorist groups with radical interpretation of Islamic values and the Pashtunwali codes. Their administration in Afghanistan created the opportunity for the world terrorism and drug dealers for recruiting soldiers, train and plan for operation from Afghanistan to any corner of the world due to vacuum of responsible government in Kabul.

Bibliography

Afghanistan International. (28.03.2022). The Taliban prevented government employees from entering because they had „short beards”. Pobrane z: <https://www.afintl.com/202203287723> [dostęp: 24.08.2022].

Government of Norway. (2022). *Talks on Afghanistan in Oslo*. Pobrane z: https://www.regjeringen.no/en/aktuelt/talks_oslo/id2897938/ [dostęp: 23.08.2022].

Philips, A. (2021). Trump's deal with the Taliban, explained. *The Washington Post* (26.08.2021). Pobrane z: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2021/08/20/trump-peace-deal-taliban/> [dostęp: 21.08.2022].

Relifweb.int. (2022). CFM in Islamabad is the Second „ministerial meeting” to Promote OIC Efforts in Afghanistan. Pobrane z: <https://relifweb.int/report/afghanistan/cfm-islamabad-second-ministerial-meeting-promote-oic-efforts-afghanistan#:~:text=Convened%20by%20the%20OIC.,on%20the%20humanitarian%20situation%20therein> [dostęp: 22.08.2022].

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). (2021). *Security. Report to the United States Congress*.

Twitter account of Afghanistan International (22.08.2022). فکاک قداص دمحم، و نیزم، کزان، کی راب، گنت دی اب باج دیوگیم، نابل اطفور عم هب رما ترازو یوگنخس دشابن رطعم. Pobrane z: <https://twitter.com/AFIntlBrk/status/1561621599027167240> [dostęp: 24.08.2022].

U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. (2020). *Remarks by Secretary of State Michael Pompeo at the inauguration of Afghanistan Peace Negotiations, Doha, Qatar*. Pobrane z: <https://af.usembassy.gov/remarks-by-secretary-of-state-michael-pompeo-at-the-inauguration-of-afghanistan-peace-negotiations-doha-qatar/> [dostęp: 22.08.2022].

U.S. Embassy in Afghanistan. (2021). *Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad Opening Statement for Afghanistan Briefing – As Delivered*. Pobrane z: <https://af.usembassy.gov/special-representative-for-afghanistan-reconciliation-zalmay-khalilzad-opening-statement-for-afghanistan-briefing-as-delivered/> [dostęp: 22.08.2022].

YouTube channel Basir .M. (06.04.2017). کی جات ماوقا رب یلوصا رصان نی هوت، کیبزا مرازه. Pobrane z: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mW-URgP7ic8> [dostęp: 20.08.2022].