



# Afghanistan After the U.S. Withdrawal


**NESA Event**

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# Agenda

- Introduction
  - The Taliban Road to Kabul
  - The Nature and Structure of the Taliban Factions
  - The “Emirate” Government
  - Are the Taliban Changed?
  - The situation on the ground - Economic Downturn and Humanitarian crisis
  - The Regional Fallout
  - Is the Taliban Regime Sustainable ?– What lies Ahead?
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# Introduction

- Afghanistan Enigma!!
  - It was Winston Churchill who coined the famous phrase “a riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma,” when describing the Soviet Union in 1939. Does this apply to Afghanistan?
- Why Afghanistan?
- Afghanistan: Not a graveyard of Empires but the victim of their intervention
- The key to Great Powers Military failure in Afghanistan

# The Taliban Road to Kabul

## Two key dates

1. February 29, 2020 – the U.S.-Taliban agreement on troops withdrawal and intra-Afghan peace talks
1. April 14 – Biden announcement of complete withdrawal of US troops by September 11

February 29,  
2020 -The  
US-Taliban  
agreement  
The terms of  
the agreement

- **Too much concession to the Taliban in exchange of unverifiable Taliban commitments**
- **Excluding Afghanistan government and giving legitimacy to the Taliban**
- **No implementation or enforcement mechanisms**
- **Calendar-based withdrawal**
- **No implementation or enforcement mechanisms**
- **Trusting the Taliban**

**April 14, 2021-  
Biden  
announcement  
of withdrawal  
by September  
11**

**Taliban reluctance to hold serious peace talks**

**Taliban rush to gain territory as the US forces were packing up**

**Morale decline among the ANDSF caused by a sense of abandonment**

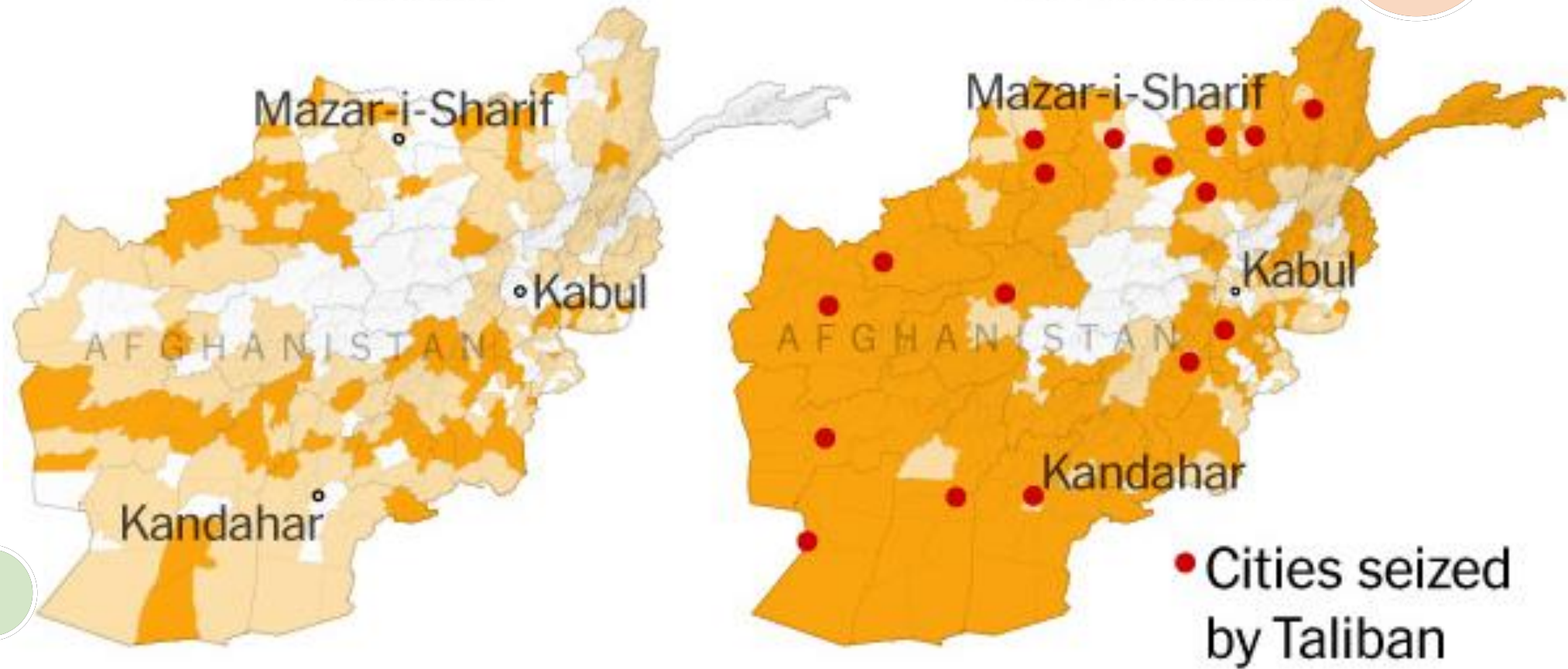
**Culminative reduction of air force capability due to reduced contractors' technical assistance**

**Complication of supply of far-flung units (district centers) due to Taliban territory and roads control**

**Local conflict resolution drive by the Taliban through tribal and community leaders' mediation**

May 5

August 14



Taliban


Contested

Government

• Cities seized by Taliban



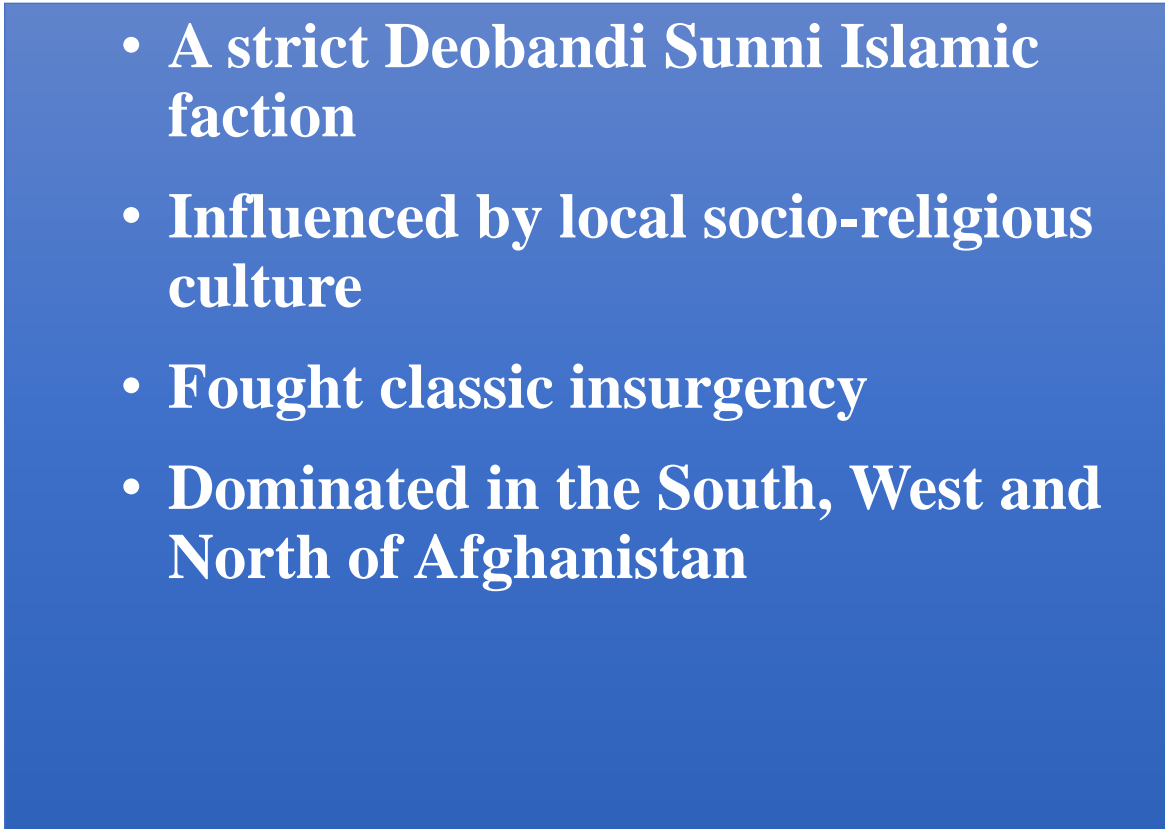
# **The Taliban Factions**

- **The two wings**
    - **The Quetta Shura (QS)**
    - **the Haqqani Network (HQN)**
  - **United in war and divided by political culture and political philosophy**
  - **The two factions compete for political power and policy choices**
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# The Quetta Shura

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- **A strict Deobandi Sunni Islamic faction**
  - **Influenced by local socio-religious culture**
  - **Fought classic insurgency**
  - **Dominated in the South, West and North of Afghanistan**



# The Haqqani Network

- **A sophisticated extremist Islamist group**
- **close ties with global jihadist groups**
- **Fought mostly through acts of terrorism**
- **Dominated in the East, and Southeast of Afghanistan, including Kabul,**

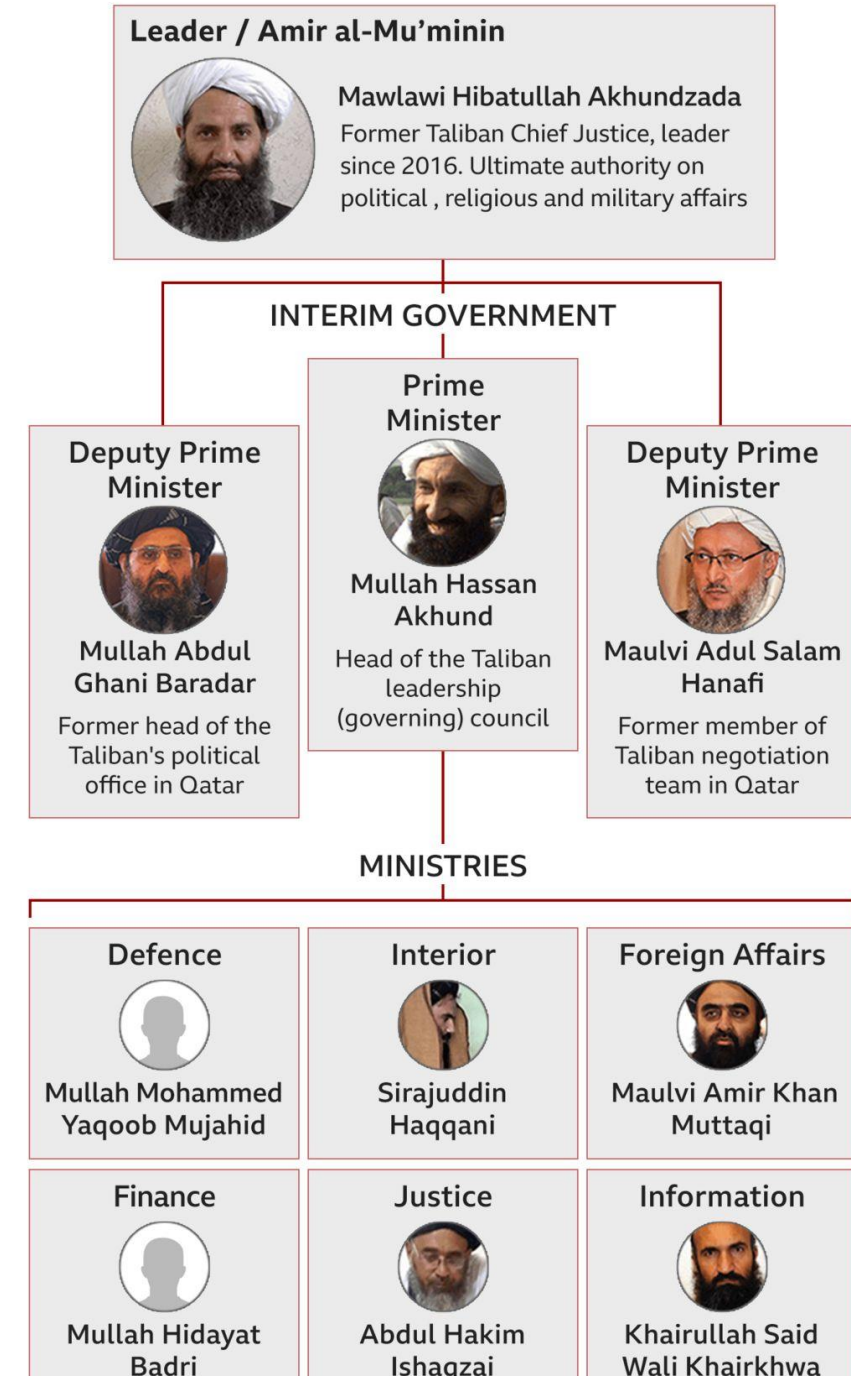
Da'ish –  
Islamic State  
Khorasan  
Province  
(ISKP)

- A rebranded Taliban adapted by the ISIS
- A violent extremist movement with wider regional and global agenda
- Anti-Shia and Hazara communities
- Based in eastern Afghanistan with cells in Kabul and northern provinces
- Fought foreign forces and Afghan government targets
- Now switching to attack the Taliban
- Reinforces by freed Da'ish prisoners

# Taliban Cabinet September 7, 2021

- **33-member cabinet**
- **All male ministers**
- **17 of them under UN sanctions**
- **4 of 5 Gitmo-five included**
- **4 Haqqani network members in the cabinet**
- **All ethnic Pashtuns with only one ethnic Uzbek and one Tajik**
- **The head of Haqqani Group and his uncle in the cabinet still listed as**

## Taliban: Key leaders



# Other Cabinet Members

Sheikh Molvi Nurullah Munir	Education minister
Mullah Khairullah Khairkhwa	Minister Information and Broadcasting
Qari Din Mohamad Hanif (Tajik)	Ministry of economic affairs
Sheikh Noor Muhammad Saqib	Minister Hajj and Auqaf
Molvi Abdul Hakim	Law minister
Mullah Noorullah Noori	Minister for border and tribal affairs
Mullah Muhammad Younas Akhundzada	Minister for development
Sheikh Muhammad Khalid	Minister for Dawat and Irshaad
Mullah Abdul Mannan Umeri	Minister for public works
Mullah Muhammad Essa Akhund	Minister for minerals and petroleum
Mullah Abdul Latif Mansoor	Minister for water and power
Hameedullah Akhundzada	Minister for civil aviation and transport
Abdul Baki Haqqani	Minister for higher education
Najibullah Haqqani	Minister for communication
Khalil ur Rehman Haqqani	Minister for refugees
Abdul Haq Waseeq	Int chief

# Are the Taliban Changed?

With limited image building concessions, no major behavior change that is proportioned to the socio-political shifts in Afghanistan in the past 20 years

Women banned from going back to their jobs

Untraditional Hijab imposed on women

Commitment to implementation of Sharia law in legal system

Schools opened for male but not yet for girls and women

Limitation imposed on funds withdrawal from personal bank accounts

Seizing property of some senior former officials

Limiting free media causing self censorship

The current situation  
on the ground

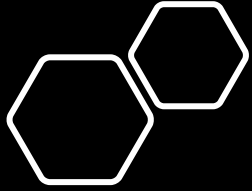
The situation on the  
ground - Economic  
Downturn and  
Humanitarian crisis

- The end of U.S. War and departure of U.S./NATO military forces
- Taliban in control of most of the country, but yet to gain international recognition
- Afghan government federal reserves are frozen
- International donor countries and IMF blocked funds
- Reduced public services amid uncertainty, fear, institutions' breakdown and hardships
- Growing exodus of urban population to leave the country
- Uncertain fate of human rights and women status
- Seeds of anti-Taliban opposition being detected.

# The Regional Fallout

- No country decided to recognize the Taliban Emirate
- Security of paramount concern
- Regional powers call for engaging the Taliban to encourage the emergence of an inclusive responsible government
- International calls for responding to economic and humanitarian crisis
- Individual countries policy approaches
  - Pakistan
  - Central Asia Iran
  - Gulf states
  - Great powers: U.S, Russia, China, EU





# Is the Taliban Regime Sustainable? What Lies Ahead?

## Five challenges are of note:

- Lack of Taliban capacity and resources to respond to the deepening economic crisis in the country that affects 95% of the population with potentials of civil disturbance
- Internal division within the movement that inhibits the formation and function of an effective administration
- The absence (so far) of domestic and international legitimacy that may encourage or fuel anti-regime resistance leading to the government repression
- Galvanization of militant groups in and around Afghanistan including al-Qaeda and ISKP
- Taliban dependence on Pakistan and its regional interests



# Questions

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