

## All about Taliban Takeover of Afghanistan

### Why in news?

With the withdrawal of the U.S. forces, the Taliban took control of Afghanistan's capital Kabul, declaring end of war.

### What led to the birth of the Taliban?

Taliban means "students" in the Pashto language.

- Soviet invaded Afghanistan in 1979.
- "Mujahideen" fighters (separatist group), with the U.S.'s support, repelled Soviet forces in the 1980s.
- Soviet withdrew in 1989 and the government collapse.
- Subsequently, civil war erupted for control of the country.
- Taliban was founded in 1994 by Mullah Mohammad Omar, a local imam in Kandahar, as a faction for gaining control.
- Afghans were weary of the mujahideen's excesses and infighting.
- Taliban rose to popularity due to successfully curbing corruption & lawlessness, making the roads and providing safety for commerce.
- Proclaimed an Emirate in 1996 with a harsh interpretation of Islamic law.

Public executions, Amputations, Men required to grow beards, Women had to wear the all-covering burka, Banned television, music and cinema, Disapproved of girls aged 10 and over going to school and Cultural abuses including the destruction of **Bamiyan Buddha**

- Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and UAE were the only three to recognise the Taliban government when it was in power [1996 - 2001].

### Why did the U.S. come in?

- Sep 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S. by Al-Qaeda, killed nearly 3,000 people.
- Al-Qaeda's leader Bin Laden was in Afghanistan, under the protection of the Taliban who refused to hand him over.
- The US intervened militarily; US-backed forces in the north swept into Kabul and conducted heavy airstrikes.
- The US -
  1. Removed the Taliban from power (who moved into remote areas)
  2. Vowed to support democracy and eliminate the terrorist threat
- NATO allies had joined the US and a new Afghan government took over in 2004.

## How costly was the war (2001-2021)?

- Estimated 69,000 losses in the Afghan security forces
- Number of civilians and militants killed - about 51,000 each
- More than 20,000 US soldiers injured
- Afghanistan now has the third-largest displaced population in the world.

## Why is the U.S. withdrawing now?

- Killed Osama bin Laden (2011 itself)
- Ousted Al-Qaida from Afghanistan.
- In 2014, NATO's international forces ended their combat mission, leaving responsibility for security to the Afghan army.

## What was the Taliban doing meanwhile?

- Since 2011, despite a continued international presence and billions of dollars of support, the Taliban regrouped and gradually regained strength in more remote areas.
- They were engaged in insurgency against the Afghan government and its Western allies.
- After 2014, Taliban seized more territory.
- Peace talks between the US and the Taliban started in 2018.

## How did the peace talks fare?

- In February 2020 the two sides struck a peace deal in Doha.
- It committed the US to withdrawal and the Taliban to preventing attacks on US forces.
- Other promises included not allowing al-Qaeda or other militants to operate in areas it controlled and proceeding with national peace talks.
- However, the Taliban continued to target Afghan security forces and civilians.
- The [agreement](#) on a US withdrawal came in February 2020 in Qatar.

## What is the recent happening?

- In April 2021, Biden, declared that all US troops would leave the country by Sept. 11 2021.
- Taliban stepped up its campaign to defeat the the government in May as foreign forces started to withdraw.
- With a few troops left, the capital Kabul finally fell to the Taliban.
- President Ghani flew out of the country stating to avoid any more bloodshed.
- Many Afghan leaders formally handed over power to the Taliban.
- The Taliban have now -
  1. Declared the war is over as Afghan forces surrendered and President fled the country.
  2. Installed themselves in the presidential palace with little resistance.

## Why did the Afghan army fell so soon?



- Not effective without residual US air and ground support.
- Corruption and lack of local legitimacy.
- Lack of sound political and administrative backing.
- Soldiers don't receive regular pay, and not properly supplied and equipped with.

A study in 2017 showed the Taliban were in full control of a number of districts

US intelligence assessment itself reported that the Afghan government could fall within 6 months of US departure.

### Who will preside now?

- Decision will be taken after a consultation among top Taliban leadership.
- Likely President candidate - Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar
  1. Taliban's deputy commander and its most public face
  2. Chief negotiator
  3. Oversaw the signing of the agreement for the US troop withdrawal

### What are the key concerns now?

- Fears of a worsening civil war in Afghanistan as the likely outcome.
- Return to the cruel and repressive practices as in Taliban's previous regime [1996 - 2001].

### What is the Taliban's response to these fears?

- Denies claims that it would return to strict rule under the Islamic law
- Wants a "genuine Islamic system" for Afghanistan and build "an open, inclusive Islamic government".
- Pledges for national peace talks
- Promises to make provisions for women's and minority rights, in line with cultural traditions and religious rules
- However, there are already signs of the group prohibiting women from working in some areas, attending schools and universities, and leaving the house without a male escort.





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# A BRIEF HISTORY OF TALIBAN TAKEOVER OF AFGHANISTAN

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**1994**

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**1996**

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**SEPTEMBER 9, 2001**

9/11 attacks in the U.S. by Al-Qaeda, killing nearly 3,000 people.



**OCTOBER 7, 2001**

US President George W Bush launches "Operation Enduring Freedom" in Afghanistan, after the Taliban refuses to hand over al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden.



**2002**

Transitional govt government led by Hamid Karzai is established in Kabul.

**2003-2008**

Taliban regroup, Bush sends more troops



**MAY 2, 2011**

Bin Laden killed in Pakistan by US Special Forces



**JUNE, 2011**

Obama announces troop withdrawal



**2014**

NATO ended their mission leaving responsibility to the Afghan army. Taliban seized more territory.



**APRIL, 2021**

Biden declared US troops would leave Afghanistan. Taliban continued to target Afghan forces and were in full control of a number of districts

**AUGUST, 2021**

Kabul finally fell to the Taliban



SINCE 2004

Source: The Indian Express, The Guardian, BBC

