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## **QUEST FOR STABILITY IN AFGHANISTAN: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS**

### **Abstract**

This paper is an attempt to explore the challenges and prospects for political stability in war-ravaged Afghanistan. The absence of political stability has an impact on the country's economy, society, security and external relations. Long-term political instability in Afghanistan may exacerbate poverty, malnutrition, extremism, and whatnot. The objective of this study is to explore the answer to the question of whether Taliban-led Afghanistan would be a stable state. This paper argues that without addressing existing and long-term challenges, Afghanistan might again fall into a breeding ground for extremism and humanitarian crisis. The paper has emphasised both internal and external factors to examine how Afghanistan could be a stable state. It recommended the establishment of a consensus-oriented, humanistic, and balanced government to ensure stability in the country. This study makes a strong case that Afghanistan's stability is important for its people and people outside of Afghanistan, especially in South Asian countries.

**Keywords:** Afghanistan, Taliban, Stability, Consensus government

### **1. Introduction**

The political, economic, social, and other spheres of the lives of Afghan people have all been impacted by the country's protracted turmoil. For long-term intervention, the United States (US) has spent over US\$ 2 trillion and has incurred over 4,000 deaths and thousands of injured soldiers in Afghanistan during the last twenty years.<sup>1</sup> Afghanistan's security, economic condition, financial management, and social bonding have all suffered heavily after the withdrawal of US-North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-led forces. How the Taliban-led government plans to fill this gap is a crucial question. With a population of more than 40 million, Afghanistan has one of the world's most complex societies, made up of Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Nuristanis and others.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah Almukhtar and Rod Nordland, "What Did the U.S. Get for \$2 Trillion in Afghanistan?" *The New York Times*, December 09, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> "The Ethnic Groups of Afghanistan," *World Atlas*; "What Kind of People Are the Afghans?" *Afghan Cultural Society*; "Dominant Ethnic Groups in Afghanistan," *Deccan Herald*, 2021.

The stability of Afghanistan will contribute in achieving domestic stability and peace in the neighbouring countries. An unstable Afghanistan could spill over destabilising effects on security issues in internal and external spheres, specifically, it will have severe repercussions geopolitically and geoeconomically. Afghanistan is already suffering from the consequences of a financial crisis, breeding a favourable ground for human frustration and leading to the rise of extremism and terrorism. Against this backdrop, the central question of this study is: How can Afghanistan be a stable state? To answer the central question, we raise two supplementary questions, such as, what are the internal and external factors that hinder Afghanistan's quest for political stability? Why are these factors important for Afghan stability? With a view to exploring answers to these questions, this study focuses on the political stability in Taliban-led Afghanistan because the stability question must direct all other aspects of this country. This endeavour also clarifies the role of external actors, including India, Pakistan, Iran, the US, China, and Russia. It is argued in this paper that the political stability of Afghanistan depends on the successful balancing of internal and external stakeholders. This balancing seems to be possible if the Taliban succeeds to establish a consensus government.

Primarily, this paper follows the qualitative method based on reviewing secondary literature and also uses quantitative information from secondary sources. For qualitative data, the paper relied on existing literature sources such as academic books, research papers, newspapers, articles and other internet sources. To answer the 'How' question, this article has dealt with the internal and external factors that are responsible for stability in Afghanistan. Existing literature holds that external factors are more responsible for stability in this country. In contrast, this paper contends that internal issues, particularly government nature, as well as external factors are equally important for a stable society in Afghanistan, linking John Rawls's theory of Well-ordered Society.

## 2. Review of the Literature

Over the years, Afghanistan has been mired in all levels of conflict that blunted its ability to maintain its national interest and sovereignty. There are many academic discussions on Afghanistan's economic, political, security and other issues. But here, the paper has presented some literature related to Afghanistan's political stability due to the relevance of this research. The political stability in Afghanistan is one of the fundamentals for stability and amity for its regional countries in general. This study aimed at seeking stability of Afghan's prevailing political and security structure after NATO's withdrawal. However, their study was particularly focused on the stability and security of Pakistan. Rahman's<sup>3</sup> study talked about challenges to stability that were the outcome of struggles between the previous Afghan government and resistant forces. Khan et al.<sup>4</sup> found that the competition among religious militants and chieftains and the clash of

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<sup>3</sup> Khalid Rahman, "Political Stability and Security Challenges in Afghanistan," *Policy Perspectives* 12, no. 2 (2015).

<sup>4</sup> M F Khan, Sajid Ali and H U Khan, "Ethnic Conflict and the Political Instability in Afghanistan," *Pakistan Journal of International Affairs* 4, no 2 (2021).

tribal and ethnic groups throughout the region caused political instability in Afghanistan.

Teresa Del Pino<sup>5</sup> considered Afghanistan a failed state due to the uncertainty about its stability which has been threatened because of conflict on its territory, security and political vulnerable situation and the continuous threat of Islamist insurgency. He emphasised the international community and also the mass media to make it as a functional state. Barfield and Najumi<sup>6</sup> discussed the governance of Afghanistan, where they suggested people's open debate on how they want to be ruled rather than any fear imposed on them. Rudra and Shende<sup>7</sup> focuses on India's strategy in Afghanistan after US's withdrawal. India could serve its best interests by appointing a special envoy dedicated to Afghan reconciliation, increasing development assistance in Afghanistan and diplomatic initiatives and engagement with major actors in the world.

Zahoor Ahmad Wani<sup>8</sup> examines the emergence of neo-Taliban and their encroachment in the non-Pashtun region due to the highly fractious nature of the Afghan political climate. The neo-Taliban would be a formidable power with an agenda of peace and stability in the entire Pak-Afghan area. He explains that the mostly non-Pashtun-dominated people form neo-Taliban forces, specifically those who assisted the US-led NATO forces against the Taliban. But we can see this premise has become reversed that the Taliban-led government is in power now. Shehzad Qazi<sup>9</sup> reviews the US-led counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan. He labels that this effort has been a failure due to short-term policies, lack of understanding of local-power relations and ethnocultural divides and violation of US counterinsurgency doctrine. Sumeera Imran<sup>10</sup> examines the Sino-US involvement in Afghanistan and its implications for the security and stability in the South Asia region. She particularly focuses on the regional security of Pakistan-India and Afghanistan-Pakistan relations. Leoni Connah<sup>11</sup> explores the justification question of the US intervention in Afghanistan, where she argues that the intervention contributed to the state failure in this country.

Though there are studies on political [in]stability in Afghanistan, most of these focus much on external factors or internal issues or only one factor for long-lasting [in]stability in Afghanistan rather than giving emphasis on both dimensions. So, there is a lack of academic contributions on the recent Taliban-led

<sup>5</sup> Teresa De Los Reyes Vázquez Del Pino, "Afghanistan: The 'Failed State' as Status Quo?" *European View* 1, no 2 (2011): 187-194, 10.1007/s12290-011-0175-1.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Barfield and Neamatollah Nojumi, "Bringing More Effective Governance to Afghanistan: 10 Pathways to Stability," *Middle East Policy* 17 (2010): 40-52, 10.1111/j.1475-4967.2010.00461.x.

<sup>7</sup> Rudra Chaudhuri and Shreyas Shende, *Dealing with the Taliban: India's Strategy in Afghanistan After U.S. Withdrawal* (India: Carnegie, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> Z A Wani, "Afghanistan's Neo-Taliban Puzzle," *South Asia Research* 41, no. 2 (2021): 220-237, 10.1177/02627280211000165.

<sup>9</sup> Shehzad H Qazi, "The 'Neo-Taliban' and Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan," *Third World Quarterly* 31, no.3 (2010): 485-499, 10.1080/01436597.2010.488484.

<sup>10</sup> Sumeera Imran, "Sino-US Involvement in Afghanistan: Implications for South Asian Stability and Security," *Strategic Studies* 39, no.3 (2019): 53-72.

<sup>11</sup> Leoni Connah, "US intervention in Afghanistan: Justifying the Unjustifiable?" *South Asia Research* 41, no.1 (2021): 70-86, 10.1177/0262728020964609.

Afghan government and its future prospects as a stable Afghanistan. Hence, this attempt would be a major academic contribution to fill the gap in the existing literature.

### 3. Political Development in Afghanistan

Afghanistan is currently experiencing a wide range of issues, starting at the top with the state organs, as a result of a protracted power struggle. Afghanistan's current political unrest emanates from its past political trends. Afghanistan is linked to the cultures of both Asia and Europe from the Middle Paleolithic period and its advantageous placement along the ancient Silk Road. Over the course of history, numerous militaries have fought in this area, including Alexander the Great, the Maurya Empire, the Mongols, the British, the Soviet Union, and, most recently, an American-led coalition.

Although Ahmad Shah Abdali, who is regarded as the country's founder, established Afghanistan as a state in 1747, the country actually started out as an Emirate in 1823 following the collapse of its forerunner, the Afghan Durrani Empire.<sup>12</sup> It is also regarded as Afghanistan's contemporary founder state. Afghanistan was created and comprised regions like Ghilzai, bordering Ghazni and Kandahar, under the rule of the Durrani tribal groups in the southern half. The British army utilised the hostile Mohammad, Mehsud, Wazir, Khattak, Afridi, and Shinwari tribes of the eastern hills to engage in conflicts across the northwest boundary. British troops attacked and crowned Shah Shujah in 1838. The British Empire had the legal right to successfully meddle in the domestic affairs of Afghanistan following the First and Second Anglo-Afghan Wars. The country was freed from foreign occupation following the Third War in 1919 and under Amanullah Khan, who subsequently became the sovereign monarch of Afghanistan in June 1926. This monarchy existed until Mohammed Daud toppled Zahir Shah in 1973 when it changed to a republican state. But his relationship with the neighbouring Soviet Union became progressively worse since he stood against Afghan communists. A pro-Soviet coup resulted in the ouster and murder of General Daud.<sup>13</sup> Later, the Soviet Army conquered and supported Babrak Karmal's communist regime in 1979.<sup>14</sup>

But it encountered opposition from mujahideen organisations or Islamic guerrilla fighters who repelled the Soviet occupation (1979-89) under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar with US and Pakistani support.<sup>15</sup> The mujahideen, mostly younger Pashtun tribesmen who studied in Pakistani madrassas, called Taliban, received funding and weapons from the US, Pakistan,

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<sup>12</sup> Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton University Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> H A S Jafri, "Evolution of Afghanistan as An Independent State," *India Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (1986): 130-41, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/45072096>; Shaheen F Dil, "The Cabal in Kabul: Great-Power Interaction in Afghanistan." *The American Political Science Review* 71, no. 2 (1977): 468-76, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1978342>.

<sup>14</sup> "Babrak Karmal: President of Afghanistan," accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/biography/Babrak-Karmal>.

<sup>15</sup> Julie Lowenstein, "US Foreign Policy and the Soviet-Afghan War: A Revisionist History," *Harvey M Applebaum 59 Award*, 9 (2016).

China, Iran, and Saudi Arabia. The mujahideen united in Pakistan in the years that followed to cooperate against Soviet soldiers.<sup>16</sup> It is worth mentioning that ‘Taliban’ means ‘students’ in the Pashto language. The Pashtuns comprise a plurality in Afghanistan who are predominant in the country’s south and east. Besides, they are a major ethnic group in Pakistan’s north and west. This movement attracted popular support due to its commitment to Afghan stability and establishing the rule of law. After decades of instability, the Soviet Union started removing its forces after signing peace agreements with Afghanistan, the US and Pakistan, in 1988. In 1992, Najibullah was overthrown. As a totalitarian government recognised as legitimate only by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the Taliban took over Kabul in 1996. Thereafter, Osama bin Laden, founder of Al-Qaeda, is suspected of bombing the US embassies in Africa, so the US started missile attacks on his camps. After 9/11, the US-led anti-Taliban Northern Alliance forces occupied Kabul for the accusation of giving shelter to Laden. In June 2002, the “Loya Jirga” elected the US-backed Hamid Karzai as the interim leader.

**Map 01: Location of Afghanistan<sup>17</sup>**



In 2004, the parliament formulated a new constitution that established a powerful presidency. The first legislative election was held in Afghanistan after more than 30 years. Following the suicide bombing of the Indian embassy in Kabul, which took more than 50 lives, US President George W. Bush dispatched 4,500 additional US troops to the country. There were numerous Taliban attacks

<sup>16</sup> “Mujahideen: Afghani Rebels,” Britannica, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mujahideen-Afghani-rebels>.

<sup>17</sup> “Afghanistan,” Britannica, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/place/Afghanistan>.

during the 2009 presidential and regional elections, uneven voter turnout, and allegations of major fraud.<sup>18</sup> In 2010, an Al-Qaeda agent carried out a suicide bombing on a US camp in Khost, killing seven CIA agents.<sup>19</sup> This prompted NATO-led forces to begin a massive offensive in an effort to restore government control. They agreed to remove foreign combat forces by the end of 2014 during the summit meeting in 2012. Ashraf Ghani and Abdullah, the two candidates for president of Afghanistan, signed a power-sharing deal following a long-debated election outcome. The Taliban continued their struggle to control the entire of Afghanistan. Officials from Afghanistan and the Taliban gathered in Qatar for informal negotiations. Following the peace talk, the US-led forces withdrew all military occupation from Afghanistan in 2021. The Taliban returned to power and regained control of the entire country and the Taliban’s 20-year conflict came to an end. However, the difficulties of this protracted engagement have significantly impacted this nation’s humanitarian situation. Thousands of people have suffered becoming refugees, asylum seekers and even many sacrifices of lives (As shown in Table 01).

**Table 01: Number of Afghan Refugees and Asylum Seekers from 2001 to 2019 and The Number of Western Coalition Soldiers Killed Between 2001 And 2021.**<sup>20</sup>

Years	Asylum Seekers	Refugees	Fatalities among Western Coalitions
2001	0.05	3.81	12
2002	0.03	2.51	70
2003	0.01	2.14	58
2004	0.01	2.08	60
2005	0.01	1.91	131
2006	0.01	2.11	191
2007	0.01	3.1	232
2008	0.02	2.8	2295
2009	0.03	2.89	521
2010	0.03	3.05	710
2011	0.04	2.66	563
2012	0.05	2.58	402
2013	0.05	2.56	162
2014	0.07	2.59	75
2015	0.24	2.66	26
2016	0.24	2.49	15
2017	0.12	2.62	17
2018	0.11	2.68	19
2019	0.11	2.72	26

<sup>18</sup> Robert Gearty, “Afghanistan Presidential Election Impacted by Taliban Attacks, Low Turnout,” *Fox News*, September 28, 2019.

<sup>19</sup> Robert Windrem and Richard Engel, “Al-Qaeda Double-agent Killed CIA Officers,” *NBC News*, January 04, 2010.

<sup>20</sup> Statista 2022, accessed August 23, 2022, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/262894/western-coalition-soldiers-killed-in-afghanistan/>.

#### 4. Theoretical Framework

Though the concept of “political stability” expresses indistinctness and confusion regarding its concept formation, application, and measurement, it refers to the regularity of the political swaps. It encompasses five views and approaches.<sup>21</sup>

- a) The absence of violence
- b) Governmental longevity or duration
- c) The existence of a legitimate constitutional regime
- d) The absence of structural change and
- e) A multifaceted societal attribute

The most frequently and immediately understood view of political stability is probably the absence of domestic civil unrest and violent behaviour. A stable state is viewed as a law-abiding, peaceful society where political change and decision-making follow institutionalised processes rather than anarchic processes that settle disputes through violence and conflict. This asserts, for instance, that the quick replacement of a system’s rulers by violent processes is proof of instability. Secondly, political stability is also frequently equated with the longevity or duration of a government. For example, if Country A has a government that holds office, on average, for a longer period of time than Country B, the former is considered to be more stable. The third significant approach to political stability is characterised as “legitimacy”—the extent to which people accept the political system and its outputs as just and appropriate. This view suggests stability to be the presence of positive support and acceptance rather than the absence of negative events.<sup>22</sup> It illustrates that a lack of legitimacy, especially a trust deficit among people towards any political system, would hold back its stability. The fourth approach to political stability is associated with the absence of basic structural change. A system is considered “stable” if it has been able to avoid its core structural changes across time. The ability to preserve a pattern in the face of environmental challenges defines stable states from those that are unable to do so.<sup>23</sup> Thus if any country faces frequent changes in its core structure, like in the constitution or institution, it may be prolonged with instability. The final approach delineates political stability as a multi-layered societal aspect in the sense that it is systematic stability.<sup>24</sup> It shows that both income disparity and ethnic fractionalisation may also be significant reasons for instability. Therefore, to be a stable state or society, welfare must be greater than social mobilisation, and there must be rapid economic growth, equal income distribution, strong political capacity, and broad-based established political parties.

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<sup>21</sup> Leon Hurwitz, “Contemporary Approaches to Political Stability,” *Comparative Politics* 5, no. 3 (Special Issue on Revolution and Social Change, 1973): 449-463.

<sup>22</sup> Del Pino, “Afghanistan: The ‘Failed State’ as Status Quo?,” *European View* 10, no. 2 (2011): 187-194, 10.1007/s12290-011-0175-1.

<sup>23</sup> Chaudhuri and Shende, *Dealing with the Taliban*.

<sup>24</sup> Z A Wani, “Afghanistan’s Neo-Taliban Puzzle.”

Political scientists are always looking for the answer to what a stable society looks like. We can find such a type of society in John Rawls's "A Theory of Justice," where he introduced the notion of his well-ordered society. To analyse Afghanistan's stability issues, we may illustrate John Rawls's well-ordered society. A well-ordered society is one in which everyone upholds the same values of justice and these values regulate our society's fundamental institutions.<sup>25</sup> A well-ordered society, he explains, has a few attributes that make it a stable one.<sup>26</sup> Firstly, there is social integration; in such a society, everyone contributes to the accomplishment of what justice wants. Here, politics resembles more a joint endeavour than a contestation among the different groups. Secondly, there is public scrutiny; everybody agrees that their fundamental institutions are established to satisfy the requirements of justice. Finally, Rawls contends that when we follow the mandates of justice in a well-ordered society, we fulfil our autonomy: we behave in accordance with laws and structures that we would self-legislate or confer.<sup>27</sup> We can see that if the state ignores any attributes of this society, social integration may be hindered, rulers can exercise power illegitimately and public autonomy can be limited. In such societies, social order may break down if citizens do not think they have good reasons to follow the law from their own viewpoints.<sup>28</sup> So how can a society renovate stability once destabilised?

Rawls suggests an overlapping consensus as a way out of such a situation.<sup>29</sup> The idea of overlapping consensus refers to how followers of various fundamental ideologies, which contain seemingly contradictory concepts of justice, may agree on specific principles of justice that sustain a political community's fundamental social institutions.<sup>30</sup> Comprehensive ideologies may include religious or political ideologies and moral beliefs. Rawls thinks that each citizen backs a particular political conception of justice for reasons that are rational to her own comprehensive idea. Overlapping consensus in a society seems to produce stability where balance of power is expected to bring changes in the extreme behaviour of the contending parties. With the change of Power, the exercise of power may also be strained.<sup>31</sup>

An overlapping consensus in every society may not be possible, nor does an overlapping consensus permanently sustain once it is established. The sustainability of overlapping consensus depends on the ruling elite's capacity to uphold it among the stakeholders. Citizens in some societies might not

<sup>25</sup> Kevin Vallier, *Three Concepts of Political Stability: An Agent-Based Model* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>26</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

<sup>27</sup> John Rawls, *Political Liberalism*.

<sup>28</sup> Hun Chung, "The Well-Ordered Society under Crisis: A Formal Analysis of Public Reason vs. Convergence Discourse," *American Journal of Political Science* 64, no.1 (2020): 82-101.

<sup>29</sup> "John Rawls," Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, March 25, 2008, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/rawls/>.

<sup>30</sup> Spohn Ulrike, "From Consensus to Modus Vivendi? Pluralistic Approaches to the Challenge of Moral Diversity and Conflict," in *New Perspectives on Distributive Justice: Deep Disagreements, Pluralism, and the Problem of Consensus*, eds. Manuel Knoll, Stephen Snyder and Nurdane Şimsek (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 243-258, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110537369-016>.

<sup>31</sup> "John Rawls," Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy.



have enough conformity to converge a liberal political vision of justice. In other societies, unreasonable ideologies could proliferate until they supplant liberal institutions. Yet we may find some countries where an overlapping consensus or politics being run based on consensus and inclusivity still exists. Singapore and Malaysia might be great examples of it. They uphold and venerate their multicultural and multi-religious identity in their politics, which helps them be more or less a stable state. Being a multi-ethnic and religious country Singapore is committed to multiculturalism and pluralism termed by its political leaders. Singapore's four dividing races created by colonial authorities moved from multiracialism to communitarian multiculturalism by the postcolonial leaders as part of nation-building.<sup>32</sup> If they did not come to multiculturalism through consensus and instead became a single Chinese-ethnicity-dominated country, this might not become a peaceful, stable, and developed state. This raises the prospect of at least achieving an overlapping consensus. So, when an overlapping consensus is plausible, it is the greatest support for social stability that society may accomplish. The case of Malaysia is almost the same. In terms of Lebanon, some observers think that multiculturalism is a defining attribute in the implosion of Lebanon as a nation-state. It may be a trait of integration through inclusive and consensus efforts of stakeholders of different cultures and religions.

We already know that Afghanistan is a multi-ethnic and multilingual society. Different ethnic groups, including Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbeks, Nuristanis, Aimaq, Turkmen, Baloch, and some others with different customs, languages, and beliefs, consist of the contemporary Afghan people. In recent years, it has been confronted with ups and downs in different aspects, especially in running the country. It has historically been mired with troubles and struggles regarding state affairs. Dissensions within groups, ethnic conflicts, majority-minority disparity, extremism, and terrorism with never-ending geopolitical and external influence have always exacerbated struggles and prolonged instability crises concerning the governance of the state. There are still such challenges before the neo-Taliban-led government. Because the Taliban themselves are undergoing groupings on different aspects of leadership.<sup>33</sup> Besides, regarding the structure and function of government, the Taliban might face actual trouble as they would have to face a plethora of issues like whether they would allow any role for women and minorities in the public sphere. They may also encounter lots of negative views and disobedience from youth as most of them are well-educated and well-known about rights and liberties through the expansion of western liberal education following the US attack and fall of the then Taliban rule in 2001. Social and political stability will normally break down if all citizens do not think they have a valid reason to follow the rules enacted by the Taliban-led government. With all the foreseen struggles, pressures, and internal and external facts, the neo-Taliban government might again fall into the long-standing instability crises if they do not follow the right path.

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<sup>32</sup> Daniel P S Goh, "Diversity and Nation-Building in Singapore," *Global Centre for Pluralism*, National University of Singapore, 2017, [https://www.pluralism.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Singapore\\_EN.pdf](https://www.pluralism.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Singapore_EN.pdf).

<sup>33</sup> Anna Larson and Alexander Ramsbotham, *Incremental Peace in Afghanistan* (London: Conciliation Resources, 2018).

For this, if they want to have a stable and developed state, there is no alternative to government based on overlapping consensus. Rawls' well-ordered society basically entails social integration, public scrutiny, and autonomy. Here, everyone contributes to the achievement of what is reasonable and politics for everyone is like a collective endeavour rather than a power contestation. So if the Taliban government can ensure social integration in Afghanistan, regardless of their citizen's ethnicity, languages, beliefs, ideologies, gender, casts, and groups, and most importantly, the inclusion of women and minorities, it might be stable for long. Though it is hard for the Taliban but not impossible if they wish for a prosperous Afghanistan. If the Taliban can get that social integration, they will inevitably be able to meet the other two requirements for being a well-ordered society, such as, when citizens are integrated, they would obey the rules and think all the core institutions are established for justice. Besides, their foreign relations might be unprecedentedly cooperative and welcoming as decisions concerning internal and external issues would be made consensually. Hence, the Taliban government may establish a social integration of all through an overlapping consensus. Thus Taliban government may have to make laws and rules that are compatible with each citizen. Because citizens would support only when these are specific to their comprehensive ideas.

## **5. Instability Factors in Afghanistan**

As discussed earlier, political stability of Afghanistan is inextricably linked with the creation of a right balance in the management of the factors of instability of Afghanistan. The factors of instability are of types: first, internal factors and second, external factors. Foreign interference over the last few years has failed to stop the Taliban movement. However, now that the Taliban has reached its goals, the government is likely to face enormous internal problems that seem to make the country very unstable. The following part presents the internal problems that the Taliban government may face in becoming an efficient and consensus government.

### **5.1 Internal Factors**

#### *5.1.1 Political Instability Coupled with Dissensions within the Taliban*

Internal factions within the Taliban are one of the most striking factors endangering the effectiveness of their government. Anna Larson shows that some Taliban are also frustrated from being excluded from positions of power in the new government.<sup>34</sup> Participants from the north part expressed their anger with the tacit exclusion of their activists as well as the Quetta and Peshawar Taliban council's inability to elect representatives from the north as leaders in this respect. The Quetta Shura council's selection of the 12 military chiefs is lacking a social foundation. According to the western and northwest representatives, the Taliban in Badghis, which make up 90 per cent of the total, are dissatisfied with the Kandahar group that runs the entire movement. Representatives from the

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<sup>34</sup> Larson and Ramsbotham, *Incremental Peace in Afghanistan*.

southeast refuted the influence of Peshawar and Quetta councils from Pakistan and emphasised the effects of internal strife within Peshawar and Quetta, specifically between the Haqqanis and the Mansour front.

According to certain reports, three groups are now making up the Taliban leadership.<sup>35</sup> Abdul Ghani Baradar heads the political faction that negotiated the peace deal. Molavi Yaqoob, the eldest son of Mullah Mohammed Omar, the Taliban's founder and the former Emir of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, heads the military faction. Sirajuddin Haqqani heads the Haqqani network, which nominally falls under the Taliban banner but maintains separate command and control lines of action. While Mullah Baradar concentrates on political factors, Molavi Yaqoob seeks to incorporate military considerations into decision-making. According to the *Hindu Times*, Molavi Yaqoob stated publicly that those who enjoy the luxuries of Doha cannot impose their will on those who engage in askari jihad against US-led occupation troops.<sup>36</sup> The difference between Haqqani and Yaqoob, which has resulted in fighting between the two parties, is the most serious and possibly significant conflict. The conflict is also evident in their opposing views on power-sharing; the Haqqanis, who control the eastern lobby and account for about 30–35 per cent of the Taliban troops, including those in the northeast, demand the lion's share of the power. Molavi Yaqoob has the support and operational power of Taliban groups in the south, where Haqqani is not liked.

These internal disagreements could worsen, leading to the rise of domestic rebel groups and open fighting, making the country even less stable. There is a big criticism against the Taliban regarding the competency of the elite class to control the government. Instead of relying on elections to form governments, deals grew more prevalent, and the few large and prominent groups and individuals continued to hold the majority of the power.

### 5.1.2 *Exclusion of Ethnic Minority and Ethnic Conflict*

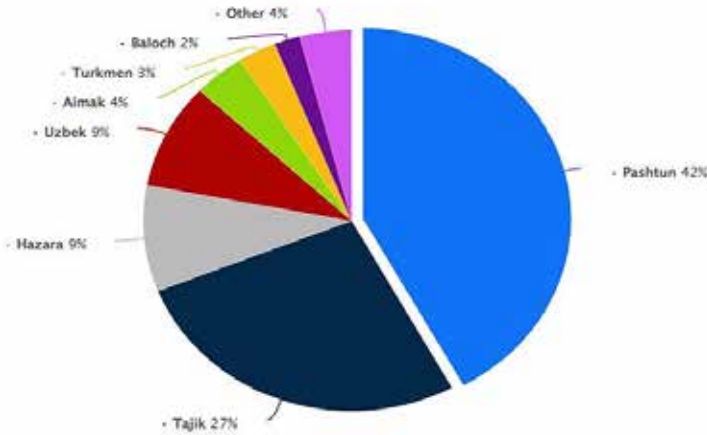
The Taliban-led government has only incorporated a small number of people from minority ethnic groups into government positions. To construct a government that works for the people, one needs to make sure that it represents a wide range of people and perspectives. However, due to the interim government's exclusion of non-Taliban members, the Taliban's efforts to portray Afghanistan as stable are hindered. In a nation where Pashtuns make up only 42 per cent of the population (see Figure 01), only four out of the 24 cabinet members are non-Pashtun: three Tajiks and one Uzbek. A few non-Taliban members would have shown that they are more tolerant than they were in the 1990s. Afghanistan might be a place of deprivation and disagreement with the prevalence of Pashtun Taliban leaders in the government, and there are worries that this could spark a new civil war if it exacerbates. Hibatullah Akhundzada, the current head of state, effectively

<sup>35</sup> Manish Rai, "Taliban a Divided House," *Times of Israel*, September 09, 2021, <https://blogs.timesofisrael.com/taliban-a-divided-house/>.

<sup>36</sup> Sishir Gupta, "Yaqoob and Haqqani Factions Fight Over Taliban Government," *Hindustan Times*, September 01, 2021, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/yaqoob-and-haqqani-factions-fight-over-taliban-government-101630474732128.html>.

ruled out the chance of any inclusive government.<sup>37</sup> While he said officials from the former government should not fear acts of revenge, he also stated that “forgiveness does not mean bringing them to the government.”

**Figure 01: Afghan Population by Ethnic Group (2020)<sup>38</sup>**



The Taliban government will probably ignore the Islamic State of Khorasan (ISK) because the terrorist group has essentially lost its relevance. Taliban, however, considers that there is no compelling reason for ISK to exist now as they have already defeated the foreign oppressors. Meanwhile, recent terrorist attacks by ISK against Hazara Shias show weakness towards order rather than strength; this is how ISK is attempting to stay relevant. Former Mujahideen, their offspring, and former regime agents from the region came together to establish the Panjshiri resistance, but it currently looks pretty fragile. However, resistance may intensify if the Taliban exploit residents in the province of Panjshir. The Shia Hazara militias, who have frequently endured mistreatment at the hands of Pashtuns, would probably continue to oppose the Taliban in the future. Taliban’s attitude toward the Shia minority was more or less hostile as a result of Iran’s recruiting of Hazara militias to fight against Sunni Muslim troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Taliban authority over the Hazara region, the ethnic group’s traditional heartland, could become more violent if Iranian support for Hazara militias continued.

### 5.1.3 Denial of Women in the Public Sphere

The Taliban were formed on an ideology that said women should have very limited roles in society. When they were in power previously, they forbade women and girls from applying for most occupations or even enrolling in school.

<sup>37</sup> Emma Graham-Harrison, “It’s Our system”: Taliban Leader Hits Out at Foreign Demands on Afghan Regime,” *The Guardian*, July 01, 2022, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jul/01/taliban-leader-hits-out-foreign-demands-afghan-government>.

<sup>38</sup> “Distribution of Afghan Population by Ethnic Group 2020,” Statista, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1258799/afghanistan-share-of-population-by-ethnic-group/>.

Additionally, women who were caught outside the house with their exposed faces experienced harsh punishment. Unmarried couples were also punished when they were spotted together.<sup>39</sup> Women in Afghanistan achieved significant progress after the American-led coalition overthrew the Taliban regime in 2001. However, many Afghan women worry that all of that progress will be lost now as the Taliban are back in power after 20 years. Many indications of these concerns are valid as the extremists take control. In July 2021, Taliban members raided a bank in Kandahar while fighting was going on. They urged nine female employees to quit and be replaced by male relatives.<sup>40</sup> The Taliban also gave the order in that month for women who had worked for the government in Kunduz, a city in the north, to quit their positions and never come back.<sup>41</sup> Another recent brutal instance is that Balkh police chief Zialuhaq Tofan said on a radio named RFE/RL's Radio Azadi on 03 August 2021, that a young woman was killed by Taliban extremists in the village of Samar Qandian because of wearing an item of skin-tight wear and being escorted by a male outside of her family.<sup>42</sup> Besides, during the American-backed government, women were given a certain number of seats in parliament, but the Taliban have not appointed any women to their new administration. Though only in a few places, girls have been allowed to continue attending classes, in other places, they remain halted or restricted. Michelle Bachelet, the UN human rights director, stated that since the Taliban retook control, Afghans "are facing the most severe and rapid rollback in the enjoyment of their rights across the board in decades."<sup>43</sup>

Thus, the vulnerability of women to their freedom and their ignorance of being included in the administration arena may persist in causing instability in Afghanistan. People are more linked with liberal lifestyles through the internet. Women are vocal about their rights all over the world. If the Taliban-led government cannot integrate the women, they may come out on the street and raise their voices against persisting problems.

#### 5.1.4 *Negative View of Youth and Community towards the Taliban*

After the Taliban took power, some civilians took to the streets to protest while hoisting the Afghan flag and dancing to the *Attan* dance, a traditional dance, with traditional Afghan music. According to some observers, the Taliban is being forced to deal with a type of political and social transformation that is taking place

<sup>39</sup> Eric Nagourney, "Who Are the Taliban, and What Do They Want?" *The New York Times*, October 07, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/who-are-the-taliban.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Rupam Jain, "Afghan Women Forced from Banking Jobs as Taliban Take Control," *Reuters*, August 15, 2021, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/afghan-women-bankers-forced-roles-taliban-takes-control-2021-08-13/>.

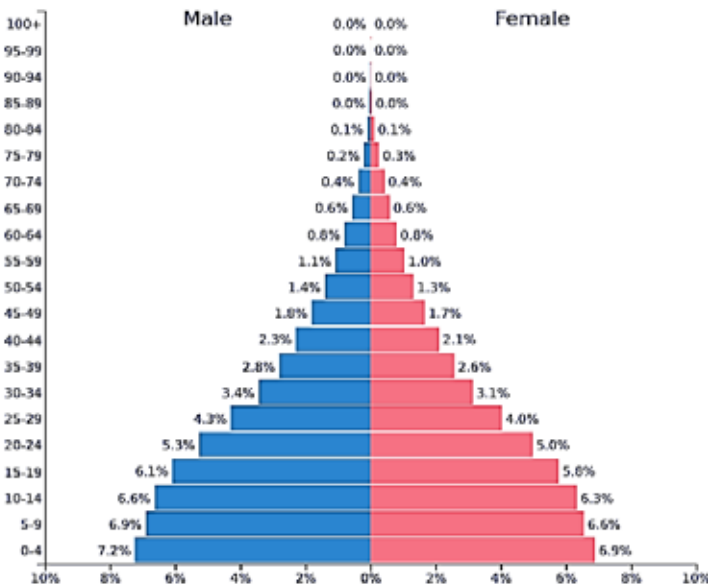
<sup>41</sup> Christina Goldbaum and Najim Rahim, "A Week into Taliban Rule, One City's Glimpse of What the Future May Hold," *The New York Times*, August 15, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/15/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-kunduz.html>.

<sup>42</sup> "Afghan Police Say Taliban Killed Young Woman for Wearing Tight Clothing," RFE/RL's Radio Azadi, August 04, 2021, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-taliban-woman-killed/31393873.html>.

<sup>43</sup> "Human Rights Council Holds Urgent Debate on the Human Rights of Women and Girls in Afghanistan" OHCHR, July 01, 2022, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/07/human-rights-council-holds-urgent-debate-human-rights-women-and-girls>.

in modern-day Afghanistan.<sup>44</sup> The average Afghan is 18 years old, and two-thirds of Afghans are under the age of 25 (Figure 02), meaning that a considerable majority of Afghans were born after the American invasion of Afghanistan. They have become accustomed to enjoying liberties like the right to education and press freedom in post-invasion Afghanistan, which was devoid of those rights during the previous Taliban regime. The Taliban’s priority will be to win over those young people who reached adulthood during those post-US invasion years since they pose the biggest long-term internal threat to its goals.

**Figure 02: Afghanistan Population Pyramid, 2022<sup>45</sup>**



Moreover, an Asia Foundation survey revealed that to win over young people, the Taliban will need to allay their internal feelings of resentment toward Afghanistan’s pre-Taliban way of life. About 76 per cent of respondents with college degrees think they do not have enough job possibilities.<sup>46</sup> The Taliban began preaching reassuring subjects to these young people, including vows not to use violence again or seek vengeance against anyone who opposed them, as well as a dedication to respecting women’s rights. However, there are more instances of revenge killings and forced marriages, and there were also numerous signs urging women to cover up with the *burqa*; otherwise, there is a risk of being

<sup>44</sup> Sheena Goodyear, “Can a Divided Taliban Rule a Modern Afghanistan? Time Will Tell,” *CBC Radio*, August 19, 2021, <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-the-thursday-edition-1.6146340/can-a-divided-taliban-rule-a-modern-afghanistan-time-will-tell-says-journalist-1.6146400>.

<sup>45</sup> “Afghanistan Population 2022,” *World Population Review*, 2022, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/countries/afghanistan-population>.

<sup>46</sup> Yasmeen Serhan, “The Taliban’s Biggest Threat Isn’t an Armed Group,” *The Atlantic*, August 20, 2021, <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2021/08/afghanistan-taliban-youth/619800/>.

beaten on the streets of Kabul. The Taliban leadership's ability to control its members is waning, as evidenced by recent messages of restraint broadcast to Taliban members and orders to military leaders to deal with disobedient members. So, young people may become more hostile to the movement, which could make it less stable.

### 5.1.5 *ISIS Threat*

Islamic State of Khorasan Province's (ISK), affiliates in Afghanistan is one of the Taliban's major current threats.<sup>47</sup> The Taliban movement is driving the ISIS movement, which is aspiring to be an alternative to the Taliban, to a race against time to destroy it. According to Colin P. Clarke, this rivalry stems from two factors: first, the legitimacy of the Taliban is under threat from Khorasan Province; and second, there is a negative correlation between the movement's desire to fight ISIS and its capacity to address the needs of the populace and the challenging economic situation, which makes the movement's legitimacy even more vulnerable.<sup>48</sup>

ISIS sees the Taliban movement as a significant strategic rival in South Asia. Khorasan Province residents were among the first to cast doubt on the Taliban's legitimacy in Jihadi circles, which aided ISIS in gaining new adherents who broke away from the cause. ISIS can also be appealing to individuals desiring retaliation against the movement. Some former Afghan intelligence personnel and younger middle-class kids dissatisfied with the Taliban, may join ISIS.<sup>49</sup> In Afghanistan, there is also a conflict that is related to Khorasan Province between the Taliban and the Salafists. The intimidation of these Salafists from the Taliban may encourage them to join ISIS or at least give its members a safe harbour. Since the Taliban took power by force, their lack of legitimacy could cause them to lose support quickly compared to ISIS, especially if they cannot meet the people's needs and improve the economy. Thus Afghanistan could fall into a massive instability as it will be difficult for the Taliban to control ISIS.

### 5.1.6 *Geography as a Barrier to Stability*

The geographic location of Afghanistan and its present demographic composition may strain the instability factors also. The climate of Afghanistan is intimately related to the insurgency. Insurgents are more likely to be successful in rough terrain that is not well protected by roads and is far from the centres of state power.<sup>50</sup> People living in cross-border safe havens that can be effectively handled by insurgents on the local level make this situation worse. These local communities frequently find themselves opposed between their responsibilities as

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<sup>47</sup> Eric Schmitt, "ISIS Branch Poses Biggest Immediate Terrorist Threat to Evacuation in Kabul," *The New York Times*, August 25, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/25/us/politics/isis-terrorism-afghanistan-taliban.html>.

<sup>48</sup> Suraj Ganesan, "The Islamic State's (IS) Critique of the US-Taliban Deal: A Case Study of IS' Telegram Channels," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 13, no. 4 (2021): 25-31.

<sup>49</sup> Ganesan, "The Islamic State's (IS) Critique," 25-31.

<sup>50</sup> Timothy Allen Carter and Daniel Jay Veale, "Weather, Terrain and Warfare: Coalition Fatalities in Afghanistan," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 30, no. 3 (2013): 220-239.

locals and their tribal group devoted to international insurgency movements. It is a fact that the Taliban could not have comprehensive authority over all these regions, providing the rebel factions with a suitable environment.

An increase in population density, along with numerous other variables, can contribute to the political unrest in Afghanistan. For many political scientists, social unrest is more likely where population density and frequency are high. It might also increase the likelihood of protests to overthrow governments in non-democratic nations. This debate solely concerns the number of people who ignite an uprising, not the total number of participants. There are enough rebels to present a serious threat in rural areas of Afghanistan. The country's political stability has been predominantly undermined by rural populations, both in the present and in the past. Today, almost all rebel organisations are based in rural regions. They carry out all of their nefarious acts against the state. As an important illustration, during the Afghan War against the Soviets, numerous insurgent groups were located in rural areas. Extremists can rapidly and openly arrange their disruptive acts in safe havens like rural areas, which will prolong the instabilities in Afghanistan.<sup>51</sup>

## **5.2 External Factors**

The security, economy, financial planning, social awareness, and a variety of other discourses in Afghanistan would remain present among the many areas where players would try to fill the power vacuum left by the withdrawal of US-led NATO forces. External difficulties will be consistent with the domestic power structure of Afghanistan today if internal variables do not go well. Because of their reciprocal security and economic concerns, external stability players are equally crucial. A stable Afghanistan is crucial for the stability of major neighbours in this area. Problems with Afghanistan's political stability must also be explained from the perspective of outside actors. The loss and gain of external actors and Afghanistan is vis-à-vis. When considering Afghanistan's political stability, it is vital to consider the main players—China, the US, India, Pakistan, Russia, and Iran.

China has had notable involvement in Afghanistan during the past few decades. China was the very first foreign nation to offer Afghanistan RMB 200 million in urgent humanitarian relief in addition to Covid-19 vaccines. China already has invested millions of dollars available for infrastructure in Afghanistan for development. Furthermore, China has pushed for the easing of sanctions and the unfreezing of Afghan foreign assets to mobilise international assistance and support for Afghanistan's reconstruction. Beijing is aware of the country's threats, especially those posed by the "three evils"—extremism, separatism, and religious extremism. In this regard, both actors must maintain stability for it to benefit them. Strategically Afghanistan is important for China also. The spokesperson for China's Foreign Ministry Mr Wang stressed that the Taliban should establish a

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<sup>51</sup> Andrew J Enterline and J. Michael Greig, "Perfect Storms? Political Instability in Imposed Polities and the Futures of Iraq and Afghanistan," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 52, no.6 (2008): 880-915.



comprehensive and inclusive political system. He added, “We hope Afghanistan will develop a broadly based, inclusive political system, adhere to a sensible internal and foreign policy, strongly battle to all forms of terrorism, and maintain cordial relations with other nations, especially its neighbours.”<sup>52</sup>

Additionally, China has urged the Taliban to completely sever ties with other terrorist organisations, including the East Turkistan Islamic Movement and the Islamic State. Beijing wants a supportive security paradigm to safeguard its regional business interests. The issue of political stability is crucial for both Afghanistan and China as a whole. The Uighur Muslims and potential threats from Islamic terrorist organisations are the two key factors driving China’s involvement in Afghanistan. China is also aware that the Uighurs may be encouraged by the rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Before making significant investments or expanding the US\$ 62 billion CPEC up north, they will either need the Pakistani intelligence apparatus or organisations that are aligned with them to provide the security shield. Because of this, when asked if they would accept the new administration, Chinese authorities respond that the Chinese embassy remains open in Afghanistan and that they are prepared to keep in touch with the new administration’s leaders.

Although the US forces have left Afghanistan, this does not mean that the US has simply given up this nation. China’s concern about the Afghan issue suggests that the US is still interested in this area in terms of economic and strategic points of view. According to Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, the Taliban government desires friendly relations with all nations and has no grievances against the US. The terrorist attack on 26 August 2021 at Kabul Airport, which was claimed by ISIS’s local offshoot Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP), shows that Afghanistan is not entirely free from extreme activity. If sufficient attention is not given, extremism could spread. Ensuring Afghanistan is stable can also stop extremism and extreme actions in this nation. The support of the US is also needed for the Taliban government to rebuild and reconstruct the war-ravaged country.

Douglas London, a retired Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) counterterrorism chief for South and Southwest Asia, asserted Afghanistan views India as an existential threat and that each problem or difficulty they face is seen through that lens. A big concern for India would be the development of a policy-coordinating axis between Afghanistan, Pakistan, and China. Pakistan will gain from the Taliban since Pakistan has been actively involved in the Afghan crisis since the start of the unrest. With the Kashmir dispute, India is in a challenging situation because insurgents are expected to try to drive personnel into this area. In 2019–2020, there was US\$ 1.5 billion in bilateral trade between the two nations. During the 2020 Afghanistan summit, the Indian External Affairs Minister claimed that India had completed over 400 projects throughout all 34

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<sup>52</sup> “China Endorses the Taliban Government in Afghanistan,” *The Hindu*, September 08, 2021.

provinces of Afghanistan.<sup>53</sup> On one hand, a peaceful Afghanistan is important for India from a security and economic perspective and Afghanistan needs India from the lens of its economic interests on the other.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share a border of 2,670 kilometres (1,659 miles) long, and Pakistan has gone through a chequered relationship with Afghanistan. Armed organisations could have developed along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in the event of future instability. Since years ago, Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistan Taliban) and Baloch terrorists have been assaulting targets in Pakistan, killing more than 83,000 people and causing the Pakistani economy to suffer billions of dollars in losses.<sup>54</sup> Political scientist Ayesha Siddiqi predicted that “the Taliban ascendancy will boost the confidence of other Pakistani radical religious groups.”<sup>55</sup> She added, “Compared to what lies ahead in Afghanistan, the upcoming few months will probably be tranquil, but after that, extremism will likely begin. If the Taliban are successful in any way, terrorists will have more justification to call for an Islamic regime to rule Pakistan. So, if instability continues, it might be the worst-case scenario for Pakistan.”

Pakistan is allegedly ignoring the Taliban training camps situated in the dangerous borderlands. Madrassas, or Islamic religious institutes, are a significant source of Jihadist recruiters sending young men to battle for the Taliban in Afghanistan. According to Asad Durrani, a former director of Pakistan’s renowned Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)<sup>56</sup>, “the populace would be delighted that the Taliban took control of Afghanistan.” The UN Security Council report in 2020 stated that strategic cooperation between ISKP and the Haqqani Network has been a crucial component of the Afghan Taliban and was referred to as a “veritable arm of Pakistan’s ISI.” It is important to know how Pakistan takes relations with the Taliban. On the one hand, they may use it to destabilise India. They may also use the Taliban against domestic separatist groups on the other. In this light, the Taliban’s takeover of Kabul and the pull-out of US troops may be viewed favourably in military and policy circles in Islamabad.

Due to its geopolitical location, zero-sum approach to security policy, and competition with the US, Russia has an interest in Afghanistan. Another indication of the Western alliance’s gradual decline is the removal of US-NATO forces from Afghanistan. Moscow views the western defeat in Afghanistan as another step toward a multipolar world order. The combination of Islamist organisations in the Russian North Caucasus, refugees from conflict areas like Syria, and trans-border terrorist networks, on the other hand, are seen as a very serious threat by Russia because it has recently experienced several terrorist attacks with an Islamist motivation. Afghanistan’s instability increases the

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<sup>53</sup> Nirupama Subramanian, “Explained: What are India’s investments in Afghanistan?” *The Indian Express*, July 16, 2021.

<sup>54</sup> Zahir Sherazi, “Will Afghanistan’s Powerful Neighbours Engage the Taliban?” *Al Jazeera*, October 16, 2021.

<sup>55</sup> Hannah Ellis-Petersen, “Pakistan Divided Over Success of Taliban in Afghanistan,” *The Guardian*, August 17, 2021, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/aug/17/pakistan-divided-over-success-of-taliban-in-afghanistan>.

<sup>56</sup> Ellis-Petersen, “Pakistan Divided Over Success.”

likelihood that it may serve as a haven for radicalism that targets Russia or its allies. According to Russia's 2016 official foreign policy paper, the continued instability in Afghanistan began in the aftermath of all but a few multinational contingents and constituted a severe security issue for members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).<sup>57</sup>

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi described the US withdrawal from Afghanistan as a "military disaster" in a statement on 16 August 2021.<sup>58</sup> Due to its 921 km (572 miles) of shared border with Afghanistan, Iran has long been harmed by the unrest plaguing its neighbour. Tehran is especially concerned about the Hazara Shia people in Afghanistan, which suffered terribly under the previous Taliban administration. Kabul is significant for Iranian economic potential in addition to political significance. With about US\$ 2 billion in exports and a sizable amount of Afghan imports travelling through Iranian ports, Iran emerged as Afghanistan's largest trading partner in 2018. Additionally, terrorist acts have occurred in Khorasan and Sistan-Baluchistan on Iran's frontiers in recent years, which have been attributed to extremist groups that operate along the Pakistani and Afghan borders, respectively. Afghanistan's instability will hurt the status of this nation's economy and security. Similarly, the support of Muslim countries like Iran is also crucial for Afghanistan. Being one of the South Asian countries, even Bangladesh may not remain free from the political development in Afghanistan. This issue is discussed in the following section.

## 6. Stable Afghanistan and Bangladesh

Like India and Pakistan, Bangladesh seems to have implications following the Taliban's further appearance in Afghanistan. Afghanistan and Bangladesh have a long historical connection since both were run under the Maurya Empire. In medieval times, Bangladesh also experienced rules run by some Afghan rulers like Muhammad Bakhtiyar Khalji and Sher Shah.<sup>59</sup> During the liberation war of Bangladesh, the Afghan Kingdom gave sanctuary to civilians who fled from Bangladesh, and its then political party, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, helped a newly born state gain recognition. Stability in Afghanistan is as important for Bangladesh as other regional countries for economic and security purposes. Since there is a fear that the Taliban's takeover may rejuvenate the rise of radical Islam in Bangladesh, they want all regions of Afghanistan to uphold the status quo and establish peace and stability and protect everyone's safety. In terms of economic relations, Bangladesh imports significant amounts of dry fruits and carpets and exports pharmaceuticals, jute, and ceramic products to Afghanistan. Besides, nearly 170 Bangladeshi non-profit organisations are working in Afghanistan<sup>60</sup>, while only BRAC operates in more than 173 offices

<sup>57</sup> Diana Janes, "Russian Interests in Afghanistan," *Utrikespolitiska Institutet*, SCEEUS Report no. 1, 2021, <https://www.ui.se/forskning/centrum-for-osteupastudier/sceeu-report/russian-interests-in-afghanistan-sceeu-report-no12021>.

<sup>58</sup> "Iran Says U.S. 'Failure' in Afghanistan a Chance for Durable Peace," *Reuters*, August 16, 2021.

<sup>59</sup> Satish Chandra, *Medieval India: From Sultanate to the Mughals-Delhi Sultanate (1206-1526) - Part One* (Delhi: Har-Anand Publications, 2004).

<sup>60</sup> "Afghanistan Looks Eastwards at India, Bangladesh," *Dhaka Tribune*, September 09, 2017.

throughout the country. Thus, for its own interests, to keep its land safe from the threats of terrorism, Bangladesh would be willing to cooperate with the new-Taliban government to establish peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region as well. Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Dr A K Abdul Momen outlined the criteria in an interview with BBC Bangla that would guide Bangladesh's choice in this regard.<sup>61</sup> He said, "Dhaka would fully support a "people's administration" that emerges from a democratic and political process in which the people's wants and preferences are expressed. He continued that Bangladesh always chooses its foreign policy autonomously and in accordance with its interests."

The only guarantee and way of attaining sustainable security and progress in Afghanistan which is crucial for both Bangladesh and Afghanistan is a consensus-based, pluralistic, and people-driven government. Bangladesh sees itself as a possible partner in progress and a friend of Afghanistan in this regard.<sup>62</sup> However, Afghanistan's people are responsible for rebuilding their country. Bangladesh would be pleased to keep collaborating with the Afghan people and the global community for the country's socioeconomic growth.

With a general understanding of Afghanistan's political trends, given the country's volatile political climate and ongoing instability, it is apparent that the Afghan stability question is a major concern for the newly formed government. Modern state system promotes citizens' rights and for which citizens are unlikely to follow any orders of the institutions. It is expected that the people of Afghanistan would not obey only for fear of punishment rather than the willingness to follow the institutions established by the Taliban. But the Taliban government needs to be a consensus-oriented government by which every ethnic group including women can be encompassed. There are allegations that the Taliban imposed laws on the general populace that were not seen as fair by the general public.<sup>63</sup> A wide variety of people have historically inhabited Afghanistan. There is a need to unify the diverse cultural, multi-lingual, ideological, and multi-ethnic groups under a common umbrella to become a stable Afghanistan. Another issue is that Afghanistan under Taliban rule does not have a strong reputation for having cooperative political and social structures that could serve the needs of the populace because it has long been incompatible with democracy.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, it is widely believed that the Taliban has antipathy towards women, dissents, and minorities. Consequently, there may always be disagreements among the Taliban, and between Taliban and other state and non-state groups. These will make Afghanistan even less stable. Afghanistan, under the Taliban, has to have the three essential features such as durability, balance, and immunity to be a stable and well-ordered society.

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<sup>61</sup> "Bangladesh to Decide Its Policy Towards Afghanistan Independently: Momen," *The Daily Star*, September 06, 2021.

<sup>62</sup> "Taliban Takeover Will Impact South Asia and Beyond: Bangladesh," *The Hindu*, August 16, 2021.

<sup>63</sup> "You Have No Right to Complain: Education, Social Restrictions, and Justice in Taliban-Held Afghanistan," Human Rights Watch, updated June 30, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/06/30/you-have-no-right-complain/education-social-restrictions-and-justice-taliban-held>.

<sup>64</sup> Jennifer Brick Murtazashvili, "The Collapse of Afghanistan," *Journal of Democracy* 33, no. 1 (January 2022): 40-54.

Analysing instability factors both internally and externally, the impression that appears to us is that internal instability factors will be harder to achieve stability for the Taliban-led government in Afghanistan. A reasonable balance is needed with external factors by the government. If the Taliban-led Afghanistan runs the country with an inclusive government including women and ethnic minorities, ensuring human rights and distancing ties with all the rebel groups who pose threats to Afghan's stability, it will help to attain legitimacy of the government, laying one of the foundations for the stable government. When they will get the legitimacy, it would be morally and practically imperative for the international community to recognise the Taliban government. Besides, it is apparent from external factors analysis that nearly all regional and powerful actors will help Afghanistan's government to gain stability for their own benefit if the new government is able to run the country with peace and justice. Thus, the Afghan government could avert a humanitarian catastrophe, construct a step-by-step design for a durable society, and become a well-ordered state.

## **7. Future Direction for Stability in Afghanistan**

Failure to achieve stability in Afghanistan may lead to destabilisation in the region, which may have serious geopolitical and geoeconomic effects. Particularly, Afghanistan is already suffering from the terrible consequences of the financial crisis. This might have detrimental effects on the youth and citizens in general. The extreme financial crisis might even contribute to further radicalization among the youth. Moreover, intra-regional competition among the contending ethnic groups over the control of power in Afghanistan has already been evident. A number of countries, including Pakistan, Iran, Central Asian states, and India, are already involved, and China's growing influence might add fuel to the regional competition. To make Afghanistan a stable society, the Taliban might look at the elements and conditions of John Rawls's Well-ordered Society and overlapping consensus. They should make a condition that everybody agrees on a legitimate formula for governing the country. This makes reasonable people accept opposing political ideas. As a result, they would be able to live peacefully in the same community despite having diverse ideas at the same time. This might happen when the Taliban government has the intention to establish a social integration regardless of their citizen's ethnicity, languages, beliefs, ideologies, gender and groups, and most importantly, equal rights of women and minorities and inclusion of them in the decision-making process. Therefore, the Taliban government should make laws and rules compatible with each citizen. Because citizens would support them only when these are specific to their comprehensive ideas. Moreover, they need to refurbish the country's core political and social institutions with sitting all to earn people's acknowledgement.

In addition, they need to build good relationships with all actors. Therefore, to enhance that relationship in Afghanistan (internally and externally) and to make it possible for more effective humanitarian and development responses, it is vital to have a consensus-based government. To keep a focus on peace and stability through an inclusive administration, it is required to use both developmental and humanitarian activities. One of the most significant barriers to good relations and

stability is the international community's refusal to recognise the Taliban as Afghanistan's legitimate government, which calls for a systematic and long-term approach to overcome the problems that the Taliban government is facing. The Taliban administration should be relentlessly vying for recognition by concentrating on running Afghanistan with the inclusion of all ethnic groups, minorities, and women and preventing a humanitarian and economic crisis over time. Hence, by demonstrating the effectiveness of the government via coordinated action, they would gradually be able to obtain legitimacy. In order to establish a consensus-based government, it is important to reform Afghanistan's constitution along this line. The consensus-based government requires intensive negotiation involving all ethnic groups.

## **8. Concluding Remarks**

It appears from the above discussions that being a war-torn country, Afghanistan's situation is still unstable, and it may grow into much turbulence if the Taliban government fails to establish a consensus-based government. As we have discussed various internal and external factors that seem to be working for straining instability in the country. A consensus-based government based on Rawls's idea of overlapping consensus could be a possible answer to a stable government in Afghanistan. The presence of majoritarian truculence by a dominant ethnic group could make this consensus government dysfunctional. However, support by external actors may help stabilise the government in Afghanistan. The management of the Taliban's intra-factionalism is pivotal to moving forward for Afghanistan's political stability. The Taliban needs to change the internal culture by moderating radical behaviour. It needs to cut off its links with many extremist groups. The Taliban needs to learn how to achieve the goals through negotiations. The global community, regional countries and organisations must move swiftly to help them establish a government with a legislature, a voting system, effective governance, and the ability to combat terrorism and insurgency in the nation while also providing them with monetary support and releasing their assets. If the Taliban fail to form a consensus-based government in Afghanistan, the spiral of instability may revert back to Afghanistan.