



Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan: A Politico-Religious Perspective

Muhammad Ahad Yar Khan
Lecturer of Political Science,
Jinnah Government College,
Karachi, Pakistan
[*mahadyarkhan@gmail.com*](mailto:mahadyarkhan@gmail.com)

Dr. Tansif ur Rehman,
Visiting Faculty,
Department of Criminology,
University of Karachi, Pakistan
tansif@live.com

Dr. Sajida Parveen
Deputy Director (Inspection),
Office of the Regional Directorate Colleges,
Karachi, Pakistan
drsajidaparveen@hotmail.com

Abstract:

This research delves into the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) established by Taliban in Afghanistan in September 1996 after the Afghan civil war. Though, IEA collapsed in December 2001 when the USA dislodged it by laying blame on the 9/11 events. The rule of Taliban was an important era in the history of Afghanistan in particular, and for the whole world in general. Respective research presents a detailed background of the ascendancy of Taliban in Afghanistan and taking over its reign. Moreover, this research discusses the politico-religious background of IEA and also analyzes the aforementioned two aspects of IEA. Finally, this research briefly discusses the factors that led to the ouster of IEA from power in Afghanistan in 2001.



Keywords: *Afghanistan, fundamentalism, governance, Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan, Taliban, terrorism*

Introduction

The establishment of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) was the preliminary political and religious effort of Taliban in Afghanistan to change the structure of the erstwhile following the Afghan civil war. Initially, their efforts did not bear fruits. Following the occupancy of the capital of Afghanistan, Kabul in September 1996, Taliban set up the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan that was founded on a two-tier system of governance system, viz., a politico-military and religious leadership body popularly known as the 'Supreme Council' in Kandahar along with a policy-making office known as the 'Council of Ministers' in the capital of Afghanistan (Giustozzi, 2019).

Though, IEA was capable to capture territories, IEA's government struggled to eliminate internal enemies, getting the necessary power to be the sole source of the right to use violence, and understanding the fundamental procedure to govern the country. Indeed, the lack of resources of the government and poor governance posed critical problems for the newly established regime (Rashid, 2010).

With regards to the legitimacy of IEA, it was lacking in both aspects, i.e. internal as well as global legitimacy. On the internal aspect, because of the lack of a rational-legal basis for its legitimization, IEA regime of Taliban claimed it on Islamic accreditation. Along with poor internal legitimacy. Only a few countries recognized IEA. Thus, the assumption of power in Afghanistan in September 1996 till its departure in December 2001, Taliban struggled hard to assure world community of its legitimacy in the country (Stenersen, 2009).

With regards to the aspect of authority, Taliban had to face internal as well as external strife. The external pressure continues to build up and continued to impose severe economic and political pressure on IEA, so that it could not remain stable. Hence, IEA regime had to invest heavily in



war-making to realize a strong state-making. Nevertheless, IEA could not get enough strength to deal successfully with internal rivals and economic strength to help the people of Afghanistan (Giustozzi, 2012; Rashid, 2010).

With regards to the security of IEA, it lacked resources in terms of human resource and material. The erstwhile security force of IEA was based on traditional tribal militia. The militia was strong enough to deal successfully with internal threats, borders, and to establish a safe as well as peaceful environment in Afghanistan. IEA was heavily dependent on these militias. Moreover, the militias were mainly composed of Jihadists from Pakistan and other Arab countries (Stenersen, 2009).

During 1994-1999, more than 80,000 fighters from Pakistan fought along with Taliban. Moreover, many Jihadists from Arab and Asian countries helped Taliban to seize power in Afghanistan. Majority of these fighters was highly-trained, resourceful, and was trained by Al-Qaeda activists. A brigade of nearly 2000 fighters from Al-Qaeda proved handy to Taliban fighting for the ouster of Najibullah's government. Thus, when IEA came to power it had not erstwhile resources to be stable and to run the affairs effectively. So, it quickly lost even its authority to run Afghanistan (Giustozzi, 2019).

With regards to the capacity of IEA, the new regime had insufficient resources in terms of workforce to smoothly govern the country. Indeed, the capacity of IEA was badly affected by the poor economy as well as governance capability to provide basic services to the people. Moreover, IEA was deficient in its administrative capability to successfully run a newly-formed state (Stenersen, 2009).

In general, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan tried hard to build a strong state. It however, failed to realize its goals as a result of constant internal strife and in particular external conspiracies against the new regime. The UN and other western countries were not ready to recognize IEA. They put economic and political pressure so that the new government could collapse. It was thus against the interest of western countries to see an



Islamic fundamentalist state emerging on the world map. Thus, IEA in Afghanistan lacked the key resources to run a government, i.e. legitimacy, authority, and capacity which are all vital for a stable government (Giustozzi, 2019; Rashid, 2010).

Research Methodology

Respective research defies a simple and direct methodology of research, i.e. secondary analysis methodology was adopted and the approach was descriptive. It involved utilizing qualitative data by other scholars. This methodology provided with the advantage of saving time as well as financial resources. The disadvantages of secondary and content analysis of other studies were to a degree, offset by reliance on researches cited by eminent scholars.

Politico-Religious Background of IEA

The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan by Taliban originated from Kandahar and finally controlled Kabul in 1996. By the end of 2000, they ruled more than 90% of Afghanistan, except for their rival, namely 'Northern Alliance' who ruled the northern part, i.e. province of Badakhshan. The territories ruled by Taliban were the key cities of Afghanistan as well as connected directly to the country's highways. Nevertheless, the tribal warlords directly controlled some small cities, townships, and countrysides. IEA imposed an Islamic **Sharia law** in entire Afghanistan.

Throughout their five years rule over Afghanistan, the women were not allowed to take up jobs and they were required to observe veil in public places. Many communists were penalized and thieves as well as robbers were given harsh punishment. However, Taliban were successful in getting rid of opium production from the country by 2001.

Majority of the cabinet ministers and deputies held government posts were military commanders who could quit their administrative positions and



return to the battlefields. However, there were administrative problems when some of these leaders had unforeseen circumstances and contingencies. Nationwide, the majority of government posts were held by Pashtuns, i.e. the majority populace of the country. Nevertheless, some Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras were also part of Taliban regime.

According to a political analyst Ahmed Rashid, Taliban regime was “a secret society run by Kandaharis mysteriously” (Rashid, 2010, p. 98). Taliban did not believe in the western-based democracy as explained by their spokesman,

The **Sharia** does not allow politics or political parties. That is why we give no salaries to officials or soldiers, just food, clothes, shoes, and weapons. We want to live a life like the Prophet lived 1400 years ago, and Jihad is our right. We want to recreate the time of the Prophet, and we are only carrying out what the Afghan people have wanted for the past 14 years. (Rashid, 2010, p. 43)

IEA created an executive committee through a tribal council (**Jirga**), which Taliban believed was the part of the early Islamic period. The Council was required to arrive at a consensus after a thorough discussion. Before the invasion of Kabul, it was believed that Taliban would step down and hand over the government to some good Muslims when the law and order of the country were restored. With the rise of power, many critical issues of the country were decided by Mullah Omar after consulting his closest aides. He took the oath of allegiance from various tribal leaders, as the model of Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him) who did the same, as well as the four caliphs that followed him.

On 4th April 1996, Mullah Omar appeared in Kandahar while many people pledged in support of him. Taliban spokesman asserted that all the government decisions were taken with the consent of Mullah Omar as the decisions were to be based on Islamic Sharia. The people of Afghanistan should follow all laws compliant with the Sharia. The so-called western-styled general elections in the country were inconsistent with the Islamic Sharia and thus the people of Afghanistan rejected them. Nevertheless,



Taliban wanted to rule the country according to Islamic norms. Since, majority of them were Pashtuns, they ruled the country with little opposition from other ethnic groups.

Politico-Religious Objectives of IEA

The narratives of the emergence of Taliban reveals them as being seminary students in Pakistan, who forced by their fellow countrymen in Afghanistan to abandon their studies to support them in the ongoing civil war in the country. The disorder and anarchy were rife in the country at the beginning of the 1990s. The erstwhile Mujahidin were engaged in a deadly civil war following the exit of the Russians from the country. As stated by Mullah Wakil Ahmed, some local leaders, particularly in Kandahar, formed armed gangs that fought each other. There were widespread corruption and theft, and there were roadblocks everywhere.

Women were being attacked, raped and killed. Therefore, after these incidents, a group of students from religious schools decided to rise against these leaders to alleviate the suffering of the residents of Kandahar province. (Marsden, 1999, p. 61)

Taliban showed extreme piousness with high regard for humanitarian compulsion to achieve their objectives. A narrative showed the establishment of Taliban as stated by scholar Ahmed Rashid who stated that in 1994, Mullah Omar helped to rescue two young girls who were abducted and assaulted in a military garrison in Sangesar. Moreover, some months later, the troops of Mullah Omar also rescued a young boy who was a victim of two commanders fighting in Kandahar. "Omar did not want any reward for those deeds. He only wanted to establish a government with a strong Islamic orientation. Hence, his prestige among the Afghans rose sharply" (Rashid, 2008, p. 25).

Nevertheless, the crucial rise of Taliban was the outcome of intense support of neighboring Pakistan. As, it would help Pakistan to have safe western frontiers as well as land routes connecting Central Asian



countries. In 2004, the government of Pakistan supported the militia of Omar to rescue a convoy from a group of bandits outside Kandahar. Following the tremendous achievement of the military assault, “the government of Pakistan made Taliban under its sponsor” (Saikal, 2004, p. 221). Consequently, the militia of Mullah Omar invaded almost the whole of Afghanistan.

The immediate “aim of Taliban was to disarm opponents, fight against those who refused to surrender, enforce Islamic laws in the country, and keep the retention of all the invaded areas” (Matinuddin, 1999, p. 26). To gain a stronghold of the country, they tried to enforce Islamic Sharia, as their rivals failed to deliver such conception for the future outlook of the country. The key objective of Taliban was the empowerment of Islamic movements across the country. The government was directly linked to civil society; its objective was not only political, but also legal and moral authority.

However, the Islamists did involved in politics and worked for the betterment of the masses. Before coming to power, the orthodox leadership of Sufis (Muslim mystics) and the urban nationalists were harmed by their “unwillingness or inability to state objectives for a future free Afghanistan other than the restoration of the conditions before the events precipitating the crisis” (Naby, 1986, p. 149). Thus, the Islamist parties easily overcame them. Moreover, even when the Islamists took power before Taliban in the 1990s, they were unsuccessful to apply Islamic laws in the country. “No measures that could be labeled Islamists were taken by the government during its four-year tenure” (Roy, 1998, p. 207).

In spite of a prohibition on liquor and the implementation of veil among women, Indian films were shown in cinemas, female newscasters worked in state television and the ex-communist management was allowed to work. Hence, when Taliban took power in Afghanistan, they had the opportunity to implement a genuine Islamic program in the country that was discarded by other political parties.



Nevertheless, following the capture of Kabul, Taliban did not proclaim any political program. There was no strong administration and no foreign policy agenda. “In Kabul, Taliban did not so much take control of Afghan institutions as completely eviscerate them, erecting in their stead only three functions; morality, commerce, and war” (Kepel, 2002, p. 229). The vision for the Afghan society was outlined, as it boiled down harshly for the personal morality of the masses. Afghan men were forced to support beards. The women were compelled to wear the ‘burqa’ (a loose enveloping garment that covers the face and body) and were proscribed to work outside their homes. Many social activities like music, dancing, and kite-flying were forbidden. Also, the powerful institutions of the government were employed to implement laws in the country. Hence, the miseries of the people in Afghanistan continued unabated—and perhaps increased.

Neo-Taliban that reformed in 2002 tried to revive the moral standards in Afghanistan. Taliban took the first step re-branding itself as a holistic freedom movement instead of being a religious one infatuated by personal morality norms. They wanted to defeat the invading forces from the country and protect the people of Afghanistan from all kinds of troubles. They framed their demands as natural, rational, and binding over all other cultures. “We are not the aggressors, but only reacting to what you have instigated, if you freedom-loving people were put in the same predicament, your reactions would be same, you would defend your honor and your properties from the invader” (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2010).

The presence of foreign forces in the country helped Taliban to justify their existence in more broadly recognized ways. Through Afghan Jihad against the invading Russians showed the power of channeling nationalist feelings within a political framework, and as a minimum act, its united impact. Islamists and nationalist principles were intrinsically associated and Taliban regime often spoke of high religious and nationalist objectives for the country. Consequently, Taliban were able to mobilize a distinct rural population, as the erstwhile “Afghan Islamists of the 70s and 80s



could only muster following the invasion of the USSR” (Roy, 1998, p. 207).

Taliban capitalized upon three far-reaching aspects of the anti-soviet campaign. Primarily, the mass revolt against the Soviets connected to the strong relationship between Islam and nationalism in the country. Second, it offered justification for Taliban's notion that only Islam would lead to the liberation of Afghanistan from the foreign invasion. Third, the anti-Soviet campaign helped in understanding of a link between atheism and violence in the country. Undeniably, history proved that in the Islamic Jihad, the balance of power always favored the Islamists, i.e. tribal authority structure yielded to the religious one.

“The Jihad always implies a shift in power relations in favor of religious leaders and to the detriment of the khan... it is the external threat which gives Islam its energizing power” (Roy, 1990, p. 50). According to another writer Asta Olsen, “As a banner, the Islamist shows his beauty in a headwind” (Olsen, 1995, p. 15).

Since the nationalist forces upheld the irrefutable Islamic right to self-defense, Taliban struck a critical feature that addressed the mainstream masses. The social program put forward by Taliban was more enlightened, since their objectives were outlined as “Independence, Islamic social justice, human dignity, and national identity” (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2009). Nevertheless, the elusiveness of Taliban agenda indicated that as earlier Taliban did not work out a progressive view of what a truly Islamic system would work, and there were apprehensions sooner or later the new Taliban regime (IEA) would fail to deliver the goods promised to the masses.

The Constitution of Afghanistan

In 1998, the head of Taliban Government Mullah Omar called a meeting of several hundred politico-religious scholars to prepare a constitution of



the country. The scholars attended the meeting from every nook and corner of Afghanistan. They were accommodated for three days at the abandoned presidential palace that was never used by Omar. The officials divided the scholars into groups to examine the constitution, strike down what they believed to be against Islamic laws and then suggest a copy of the constitution they support. The document proposed by the respective scholars was simply a codification of the *modus operandi* of Taliban governing the country.

The constitution envisaged a 'Supreme Emir' as the ruler of the country, though it did not mention how he would be chosen. The 'Emir' would work with a group of the council of ministers who would be responsible to report the matters to him. The constitution stated that nothing could go against the dictates of Islam and proclaimed that Islam was the official religion of Afghanistan.

The constitution of Afghanistan left several issues to the interpretation of Sharia. It promised its citizens freedom, provided it did not infringe upon others' freedom and liberty, and did not infringe Islamic principles. It envisioned justice to people without the application of intimidation or suffering as well as freedom of thought and expression within the limits of Islamic laws. The constitution of Afghanistan consisted of a clause on telecom privacy to the people, when at that time telephones and electricity was rare in the country. Moreover, the constitution outlined compulsory military service and education to all citizens. The education of women within the limits of Islamic Shariah was also outlined through a special law.

International Relations of IEA

The countries that recognized IEA were the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The relationship between IEA and the neighboring country Iran got worsened in 1998, when Taliban occupied the consulate of Iran at Mazar-i-Sharif and killed several diplomats. After the event, Iran wanted to invade Afghanistan, but was prevented by the UN and the USA.



However, one rationale for the lack of recognition of Taliban regime in Afghanistan by the world was the so-called disregard of human rights violations in the country. When Taliban took the reign of the country, they executed President Najibullah. The President took refuge in the UN compound in Kabul, nevertheless, Taliban were able to kill him. The world community got furious since Taliban acted against international law by storming the UN compound.

Another reason for the non-recognition of Taliban was the killing of Iranian diplomats in Afghanistan. Moreover, in 1998, Taliban openly supported the Islamic groups in Palestine, Chechnya, Indian-held Kashmir, and China. In 2001, Taliban regime even gave recognition to the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and established diplomatic ties with the country.

Upholding Universal Norms

Though any Taliban government was likely to confront the western political models. However, at the global stage they always worked not to resist them. Following the seize of power in Afghanistan in 1996, Mullah Omar assured the US government of the plan of Taliban that it was interested in a division of functions between the domestic and global policies. Taliban also assured the US administration that they had neither the intention nor the competency to attack the USA; “Whatever we are—even if we are as you say fundamentalists—we are far from you and we do not intend to harm you and cannot harm you either”(Murshed, 1999, p. 310).

Indeed, the attacks on American interests in 1998 and 2001 were thus not relevant to the stated goals of Taliban and their objectives. Thus, Taliban denied having any links to the attacks on the USA. But, due to weak political maneuverings and weakness, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan bore the brunt of the American and western propaganda against IEA. According to Gilles Kepel,

Taliban’s effect on the world was not made through a state and they had no diplomatic relations with any country except their Pakistani sponsor



and their principle commercial partner, the United Arab Emirates. They were completely indifferent to politics. (Kepel, 2002, p. 229)

Mullah Omar clearly declared that Taliban are unaffected by the events neighboring Iran and events in Sudan. He further stated, “We do not have enough information on those states’ systems” (Marsden, 1999, p. 66). Thus, the lack of effects on Afghan foreign influence was rather surprising. According to Olivier Roy, Taliban were strictly the Afghan movement. As such, “Taliban have no foreign policy” (Roy, 1998, p. 207).

Moreover, fighting against foreign invaders, Taliban in contrast had strong effects on international political arena through their rule in Afghanistan, Taliban directly affected Western politics as well as it helped neighboring Pakistan to have a peaceful western frontier. Muslims were able to face imperialist forces far beyond the borders of Afghanistan. As such, Taliban have forcefully insisted that their objectives and aims in the region were solely Afghan-centric.

Taliban have proclaimed constantly that, “We did not have any agenda to harm other countries including Europe nor [do] we have such [an] agenda today” (Roy, 1998, p. 210). Taliban also maintained that Afghanistan would not support any country against the other. Taliban further elaborated its peaceful policy on international political relationships; the Islamic regime according to its peaceful policy wanted to have cordial relationships with its neighbors that had to be based on mutual respect to develop economic growth.

However, regarding Taliban warnings to take the fight against their opponents outside the borders of Afghanistan, Anne Stenersen stated; “While individual insurgent commanders have issued threats to attack the West, the senior leaders of the Afghan Taliban are currently uninterested in pursuing such a strategy” (Stenersen, 2009, p. 2). Taliban also wanted more foreign volunteers to fight along with them against their opponents in the Afghan civil war. Hence, Taliban kept themselves aloof from both Al-Qaeda and Pakistan-supported Taliban, who were thought to be associated with their involvement in international plots. Truly, it might



cause heightened pressure on Pakistan-backed Taliban sanctuaries. Besides, promising to maintain reciprocal respect for sovereignty, Taliban championed the global legal laws in their political dealings.

During the early years of civil war in Afghanistan, Taliban avoided maligning the UN; it was because they did not want to criticize an important global actor. According to Antonio Guistozi, who stated, “Taliban needed the United Nations to act as a broker in negotiations with the ruling regime” (Giustozi, 2007, p. 135). However, when the UN Secretary-General censured the opposition forces for the massive civilian deaths in the country, Taliban blamed it of favoritism. They also rebuked him for brazenly trample down on UN principles of neutrality in order to please the White House rulers, and advised him that such remarks harmed the credibility of an august world body (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2010). Taliban demanded “all independent institutions, entities, leaders, writers, and statesmen to join voice with the Islamic Emirate to defend the common and shared values of humanity” (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2010). Moreover, Taliban urged all human rights organizations to look into the killings of thousands of innocent civilians and to carry out a neutral inquiry of their deaths.

Taliban also firmly supported the fundamental rights for free press and media. An ex-Taliban official stated that the imprisonment of Taliban spokesmen was contrary to international laws on press freedom. It was also stated by Taliban that “The Mujahidin of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan do their best to maintain security for independent journalists so that the realities can be revealed to the people” (International Crisis Group Asia, 2008, p. 8). On the contrary, “The so-called protectors of democracy and freedom of speech block our websites and spread lies against us. They efface the values that humanity has achieved after a long struggle” (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2009). Human rights organizations were demanded to denounce inhuman acts by their adversaries. Moreover, the global community was criticized for causing the people of Afghanistan with a black cloud of atrocities and violations.



Taliban's Governance

Taliban took the reign of Afghanistan with the key objective to cleanse respective society from notorious criminals and to make it peaceful. The Islamic tone was preponderant in their political governance. In 1996, the head of the country, Mullah Muhammad Omar was proclaimed 'Amir-ul-Momineen' by some 1200 Islamic jurisprudence experts. As well, Taliban renamed the name of the country from the erstwhile 'Islamic State of Afghanistan' to 'Islamic Emirates of Afghanistan'. The political structure in the country was run under the name of Shura that pointed out the Islamic tone of the political system of consultation among the selected members.

According to Peter Marsden (1999) the vision of Mullah Omar was, "His main goal was to get rid Afghanistan of corrupt, western-oriented time servers" (Marsden, 1999, p. 61). Accordingly, there were three governing bodies of Shura in Afghanistan, i.e. 1) Kandahar - The Central Shura, 2) Kabul Shura, and 3) Military Shura. The Central Shura at Kandahar was empowered to take all political decisions. Moreover, all provincial governors were appointed by the Central Shura. "The distinctive feature of the governance of Taliban was that there existed no demarcation between the military commanders and the minister who could hold both the offices at the same time" (Ghufran, 2001, p. 465).

Islamic Approach

According to their Islamic objective, the first and foremost task of Taliban was to announce Islamic Sharia in Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. To eliminate all kinds of crimes and warring groups from the country, a strong united and powerful Islamic regime was vital to run the country smoothly. Besides, IEA regime consisted of 20 ministries that were given the task to work for the realization of Islamic laws in its true spirit.

Among the ministries, the key ministry of Religious Affairs was most prominent. The Ministry of Religious Affairs set up a law enforcement agency titled 'Amar Bin Maroof Nahi Anil Munkir'. Besides, the ministry



was given the task for the detailed and complete implementation of the Islamic penal system to be applied to criminals and war-mongers. The acting foreign minister of Afghanistan stated that the enforcement of Sharia's Hudood had made the lives and properties of the countrymen secure. No one could dare to commit crimes in any part of the country. He further stated that Allah Almighty has ordained to His Prophet Muhammad "Those who consider the imposition of this law against human rights are insulting all Muslims and their beliefs" (Marsden, 1999, p. 63).

It shows the strong beliefs of Islamic principles in Taliban and their firm application of Islamic laws in the country to ensure peace, security, and safety of common people. Hence, the public hanging of criminals, speedy justice and spot trials were frequent through Taliban rule which brought peace in the country. Their rivals acknowledged the fact that "robbery, rape, and murder had virtually vanished from Kabul since the first accused thief has been amputated" (John, 1996).

Bamyan Statues' Issue

At first, Taliban expressed no opposition towards the cultural objects of other religions. In 2000, they did not object to the Afghan National Museum administrators for the exhibition of cultural objects of other religions that included Neolithic figurines, Hindu objects, as well as Indian and Greek inventories in Bamyan. The art inventories were nevertheless plundered during the civil war in the country that included ancient art articles and thousands of gold coins worth millions of dollars from the National Museum.

But, on 26th February 2001, Taliban issued an official policy that the culture icons, shrines would be destroyed so that no one would show respect and revered them, i.e. "All shrines must be annihilated so that no one can worship or respect them in future" (Manhart, 2001, p. 387).



Following the official policy, Taliban carried out mass destruction of cultural icons. As the head of the Afghan National Museum stated, “From afternoon till evening they broke statues... A few days later, they came back and they followed the same procedure. They came back many times” (Lawler, 2002, p. 1202). Consequently, the action by Taliban led to a global condemnation against IEA.

Also, the head of the UN called those events in Afghanistan deplorable. The Islamic body, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and other world organizations tried to save cultural relics in Afghanistan, especially, Bamiyan Statues, but could not prevent their destruction. Many Asian countries like, Japan and Sri Lanka who had a close affinity with the Buddha relics requested IEA, but their request went in vain.

Scholars viewed that the statues did not affect any harmful impact, but the government in Afghanistan did not pay any heed to it. Taliban were adamant in their clear-cut policy and showed no leniency in that regard. The foreign minister of Taliban stated that no statues in the country would be left intact. UNESCO also carried out a strong campaign to save Bamiyan Buddha from annihilation. Moreover, UNESCO wrote several letters to the ruler of the country Mullah Omar. Organized meetings were also held with the countries that recognized Taliban regime to put pressure on Afghanistan to desist it from the destruction of Bamiyan Buddha.

Furthermore, UNESCO also sent a delegation comprising Muslim leaders to Afghanistan to persuade Mullah Omar not to destroy the Buddha statue. Different explanations are put forward regarding the Bamiyan Statues by various analysts. They considered it in the context of Islamic iconoclasm (Flood, 2002) and others saw it with the timeline of UN sanctions against Taliban regime. Nevertheless, Taliban did not accept these versions. Taliban’s Foreign Minister asserted that there wasn’t any connection. That was only an internal issue of Afghanistan and thus had no political link.

Taliban hated Western pressure, because they believed that Western institutions were hypocrite as they were prepared to grant millions of



dollars to protect statues, though were reluctant to spend money to protect the lives of the people of Afghanistan due to a civil war in the country (Flood, 2002). Similarly, Syed Rahmatullah Hashmi, an ex-Afghan diplomat validated his point about the destruction of Bamiyan Statute “When your children are dying in front of you then you do not care about a piece of art” (Flood, 2002, p. 641). Nevertheless, the head of the National Museum in Kabul stated, “First you heard of people burying their children, then they buried their history” (Lawler, 2002, p. 1202).

Collapse of Taliban Regime

Taliban regime became very unpopular amongst Western countries who considered it dangerous to their interests in the region. The issue of Bamiyan Statue and the rejection to hand over Osama Bin Laden to the USA worsened the relations with the West. Osama Bin Laden was considered as the prime attacker on American embassies in Kenya and Tanzania in 1998. Initially, the US administration took some time to see how to handle the new regime in Afghanistan. The Americans were averse to IEA from the beginning. It tried to gather a uniform policy to tackle the growing power of IEA. It called upon like-minded countries of the West to work under its leadership to destabilize the newly formed government in Afghanistan.

The preliminary approach of the USA and other Western countries was to safeguard their commercial interest regarding petrocarbon reserves of Central Asian countries bordering Afghanistan. Indeed, their main concern was the safe transportation of oil and gas through Afghanistan bypassing the Russian routes.

However, the fall of Kabul to Taliban alarmed the USA and its allies, and they put immense pressure on the new regime to be toppled immediately. Hence, the USA blamed IEA of harboring terrorists in the country which pose danger to the USA as well as its interests all over the world.



Moreover, the USA wanted Osama Bin Laden, once its hero, should be expelled from the country.

Consequently, the USA with the support of several NATO countries attacked various Afghan cities to destroy the so-called terrorist camps. Moreover, the USA put pressure on the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia to hand over Osama. Besides, the USA blamed IEA for gross human rights violations in the country. So, Osama Bin Laden became the main irritant to the USA. Ultimately, with the 9/11 events, the USA was convinced that the destructive event took place as a result of the machinations of Al-Qaeda headed by Osama.

Conclusion

The establishment of Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA) was the preliminary political and religious effort of Taliban in Afghanistan to change the structure of the erstwhile following Afghan civil war. The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan by Taliban originated from Kandahar and finally controlled Kabul in 1996. By the end of 2000, they ruled more than 90% of Afghanistan, except for their rival, namely 'Northern Alliance' who ruled the northern part, i.e. province of Badakhshan.

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Many thieves as well as robbers were given harsh punishment. Taliban were also successful in getting rid of opium production from the country by 2001. Since, majority of them were Pashtuns, they ruled the country with little opposition from other ethnic groups. In spite of a prohibition on liquor and the implementation of veil among women, Indian films were shown in cinemas, female newscasters worked in state television and the ex-communist management was allowed to work. However, subsequently, the women were not allowed to take up jobs and many communists were also penalized. Social activities like music, dancing, and kite-flying were forbidden. Hence, the miseries of the people in Afghanistan continued unabated—and perhaps increased.



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