



# Taliban Controls Kabul

## Why in News

Recently, the [Taliban](#) has seized Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan, raising questions over the US and [NATO \(North Atlantic Treaty Organization\)](#) trained Afghan Forces.

- The Taliban have proclaimed that there will be no witch hunt, that it will respect a transitional process, and that it will work for a **future Islamic system that** is acceptable to all.



## Taliban

- The Taliban, or students in the Pashto language, emerged in the early 1990s in northern Pakistan **following the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.**
- It is an **Islamic fundamentalist political and military organisation** operating in Afghanistan. They have dominated Afghan polity for quite some time and feature regularly in international affairs.
- The Taliban have been fighting against the U.S.-backed government in Kabul for around 20 years. They **seek to reimpose their strict version of Islam in Afghanistan.**

## Key Points

- **Background:**
  - **Terrorist Attack:**

- On 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001, terrorist attacks in America killed nearly 3,000 people.
- So, a month after 9/11, the US launched airstrikes against Afghanistan (**Operation Enduring Freedom**).
- **Transitional Government in Afghanistan:**
  - After the attacks, the **NATO** coalition troops declared war on Afghanistan. The US dislodged the Taliban regime and **established a transitional government in Afghanistan**.
  - The US had reached the conclusion long ago that the **war was unwinnable and approached for peace talks**.
- **Peace Talks:**
  - **Murree Talks:**
    - In 2015 the US had sent a representative to the **first-ever meeting between the Taliban and the Afghan government** that was hosted by Pakistan in Murree in 2015.
    - However, the **Murree talks did not progress**.
  - **Doha Talks:**
    - **In 2020**, before the [Doha Talks](#) started, the Taliban had maintained that they would hold direct talks only with the US, and not with the **Kabul government, which they did not recognise**.
    - In the agreement, the **US administration promised that it would withdraw all American troops from Afghanistan by 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2021**.
      - The deadline has been pushed to 11<sup>th</sup> September 2021.
      - This **provided the Taliban a sense of victory** and demoralised the Afghan troops.
    - The Taliban promised to **reduce violence, join intra-Afghan peace talks and cut all ties with foreign terrorist groups**.
- **US Exit:**
  - By July 2021, the US claimed that it had withdrawn 90% of the troops and Taliban claimed that it had controlled over 85% of the Afghan Territory.
- **Current Scenario:**
  - Taliban has seized Kabul and Many ministers along with the former President have fled the country.
    - This is the **first time since their ouster 20 years ago in the wake of the 9/11 strikes that Taliban fighters have entered the city** — they first seized the Capital in 1996.
  - Among the cities that fell is Jalalabad in the east, and many evacuation missions are set in motion.
- **Cause of Capitulation:**
  - **US' Unconditional Exit:**
    - The US **decision to pull out its troops unconditionally without waiting for a negotiated political settlement regardless** of consequences that were almost entirely predictable other than the speed with which it occurred.
  - **Afghan's Psychological Denial:**
    - Afghan's psychological denial that the US would indeed leave as they warned, a **lack of military strategy, poor supplies and logistics, indefensible and thinly manned posts, unpaid salaries, phantom rolls**, and a sense of betrayal,

abandonment and demoralisation, all played a role in the capitulation

- The Afghan had technical dependence on the US for **air support, weapon systems, intelligence etc.**

- **Lack of Preparation:**

- The **Afghan Army was unprepared and caught by surprise** by the Taliban offensive.

- **Lack of Training of Afghan Forces:**

- The **Afghan National Army (ANA) was never really trained and equipped with the normal attributes of a national army** capable of defending territory with adequate mobility, artillery, armour, engineering, logistics, intelligence, air support etc for rugged terrain; and infantry battalions and doctrines designed for it.

- **Role of US in Current Situation:**

- **Invested on the War on Terror:**

- Most of the US' effort went into grooming **Special Forces units meant to recover targets of urban terrorist attacks**, at which they acquitted themselves admirably, but not offensive operations.
- In sum, they **invested just enough for the war on terror, but not the defence of Afghanistan** although it was perfectly aware of the connection between the two in the Pakistani role in nurturing the Taliban.

- **No Strategic Importance:**

- After the end of the Soviet intervention and the fall of the Soviet Union, the **US has never really considered Afghanistan of strategic importance.**

- **No attempt to integrate the economic sphere:**

- For all its USD 1 trillion investment in Afghanistan and its awareness of Afghanistan's mineral wealth, the **US never really invested in the Afghan economy or attempt to integrate** it to its economic sphere of influence (including India) as it did after its interventions after **World War II** in Europe, East Asia and later in the oil economies of the Gulf.

- **Implications for India:**

- **Securing Indians:**

- The first concern is for **Indian diplomats, personnel and citizens** based in Afghanistan.

- **Strategic Concern:**

- The Taliban's control will also mean a **bigger hand for the Pakistani military and intelligence agencies** to influence outcomes for the country, which will mandate a much smaller role for Indian development and infrastructure work that has won it goodwill over the past 20 years.

- **Threat of radicalisation:**

- There is the **threat of growing radicalisation and space for pan-Islamic terror groups in India's neighbourhood.**

## Way Forward

- First option for India is to **stick to its principle of backing only a democratically-elected government in Kabul**, and providing political and humanitarian support while that lasts.
- Also, India can **learn from US-Taliban talks** where two opposing parties came to the negotiating table for talks on Afghanistan's future.

- For India, given its abiding interest in Afghanistan's success and traditional warmth for its

people, making that leap should be a bit easier. Thus, **India can consider the appointment of a special envoy and start Track II diplomacy with the Taliban.**

- India **should facilitate emergency visas and evacuation of those close to India** who will be under threat.

**Source: IE**

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