

Afghan Taliban

AT A GLANCE

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HOW TO CITE

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SUMMARY

Formed: 1994

Disbanded: The group remains active. The Taliban took control of Afghanistan in August of 2021 and reorganized as a state government.

First Attack: August 1994: A Taliban militia marched northward from Maiwand and captured the city of Kandahar (unknown killed, unknown wounded).¹

Last Attack: August 15, 2021: The Taliban took Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul and instated their new government, establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.²

OVERVIEW

The Afghan Taliban is a Sunni Islamist militant organization that emerged in 1994 during the Afghan civil war to establish a Shariah-governed Afghan state. The Taliban achieved this goal in 1996 and ruled Afghanistan until late 2001. After the attacks of 9/11, an American-led invasion removed the Taliban regime from power. From 2001 until 2021, the Taliban fought to drive U.S. and NATO military forces out of Afghanistan and delegitimize the government of Afghanistan. The Taliban utilized both conventional and unconventional tactics, including deploying IEDs, directing suicide bombings, and engaging in targeted assassinations, to pursue its goals and wage a large-scale insurgency. During the last twenty years of conflict, the group's power has been concentrated and

¹ Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1996.

² Mellen, Ruby. "The shocking speed of the Taliban's advance: A visual timeline." *The Washington Post*. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

maintained by its leadership council, known as the Quetta Shura. Following U.S. and NATO force withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021, the Taliban succeeded in taking over the country, reorganizing themselves as the government of their newly established state, the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.³

NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The Taliban emerged as a pro-Pashtun, Sunni Islamist militant organization under the leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar in 1994 during the Afghan civil war. The Taliban was one of many groups vying for power in Afghanistan during this period. A large majority of the Taliban's early supporters were Pashtun students from Afghan and Pakistani madrasas, schools that provided Islamic religious education. Many of these schools received foreign support, including from benefactors in Saudi Arabia, whose goal was to promote a specific hardline interpretation of Islam. At these madrassas, many future Taliban members developed a belief in the importance of implementing an Afghan state governed by a strict adherence to Islamic (Sharia) law, motivated by the suffering among the Afghan people.⁴ The name Taliban, a word that means "students" in Pashto, is derived from this early recruitment source.⁵ Many of the Taliban's original members also included former mujahideen fighters, forces that fought against the Soviet Union during the Soviet-Afghan war (from 1969 to 1989).⁶

As the group evolved, the Taliban movement sought to establish what they viewed as a 'divinely ordered' Islamic system in Afghanistan. The group's doctrine focuses on strict obedience to the *mullah* (religious leader) and a concentration of power in the *emir* (supreme commanding officer or leader).⁷

In 1994, Mullah Mohammad Omar, the future leader of the Taliban and a former mujahideen fighter, left Sang-i-Hisar Madrassa in Maiwand, Afghanistan, where he had been studying since the end of the Soviet occupation. Disappointed that Sharia law had not been implemented following the ousting of the Soviets, Mullah Omar amassed a small group of supportive students and pledged to rid Afghanistan of warlords and criminals.⁸ With an initial 50 students supporting his campaign, Mullah Omar founded the group that

³ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

⁴ Matinuddin, Kamal, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994–1997*, Oxford University Press. 1999. p. 17–23

⁵ Ibrahim, S. Yaqub. "The Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (1996–2001): 'War-Making and State-Making' as an Insurgency Strategy." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. Vol. 28, No. 6 (2017). pp. 947-972; BBC. "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News*. Updated August 12, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

⁶ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

⁷ Semple, Michael. "Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement." *United States Institute of Peace, Peaceworks*, 5 Dec. 2015, www.usip.org/publications/2015/01/rhetoric-ideology-and-organizational-structure-taliban-movement.

⁸ Matinuddin, Kamal, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994–1997*, Oxford University Press. 1999. p. 24-27

would later become known as the Taliban. Within months, the Taliban grew to more than 15,000 members, as students from madrassas in Pakistan joined the movement.⁹ Following its initial mobilization, the Taliban allegedly received financial and military support from Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency (ISI).¹⁰ ISI used the Taliban to mount an offensive stance against the Afghan government in hopes of installing a new ruling power favorable to Pakistan, as well as to secure routes to open trade to the newly independent Central Asian states.¹¹

On November 3, 1994, the Taliban took control of Kandahar in a surprise attack, losing only a dozen men in the fight.¹² The Taliban quickly gained popularity due to its success in stamping out corruption, curbing lawlessness, safeguarding roads in areas under their control, and enabling commerce to flourish.¹³ Over the next two months, the Taliban took control of 12 provinces. By February 1995, the group had grown to 25,000 fighters.¹⁴ In September 1995, the group seized Herat province.¹⁵

In 1996, the Taliban successfully took control of Afghanistan's capital city of Kabul and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Taliban leader Mullah Omar became the head of this newly formed state. Under Taliban rule, strict, Wahhabist-inspired interpretations of Sharia law were enforced in Afghanistan. The group also drew legal frameworks from Pashtun tribal code. The Taliban received widespread criticism from the global community for its treatment of women and children, as well as its denial of food and aid to underserved citizens.¹⁶

By 1998, the Taliban had come to control 90 percent of the country. The Northern Alliance, led by Ahmed Shah Massoud, became the Taliban government's main military and political opponent. This opposition has partly ethnic grounds; the Taliban is made up mostly of Sunni Pashtuns while the Northern Alliance included ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks. During this period, the Northern Alliance maintained Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations, further compounding tensions between the groups.¹⁷

⁹ Felbab-Brown, V. (2010). *Shooting up: Counterinsurgency and the war on drugs*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

¹⁰ Forsythe, David. *Encyclopedia of human rights* (Volume 1 ed.). 1999. Oxford University Press. p. 2.

¹¹ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>; Aziz, Omer. "The ISI's Great Game in Afghanistan." *The Diplomat*. 8 June 2014. Web. 20 Aug. 2015.

¹² Maley, William. *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print. .

¹³ BBC. "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News*. Updated August 12, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

¹⁴ Saikal, Amin. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. London, 2004.

¹⁵ BBC. "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News*. Updated August 12, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

¹⁶ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

¹⁷ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

In 1996, Al Qaeda arrived in Afghanistan from Sudan. The group's membership was low, hovering around 30 members. There was significant tension between Al Qaeda and the Taliban. For one, the Taliban and Al Qaeda adhered to different strains of Islamic thought. The Taliban associated with Saudi-influenced, Wahhabi style beliefs, and Al Qaeda associated with a more radical and more rigid Hanbali school of thought. Additionally, Al Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden saw action against the U.S. and other countries as crucial to success, while Mullah Omar opposed this strategic approach. However, this did not prevent the Taliban from permitting Al Qaeda members to operate in Afghanistan.¹⁸

Taliban-governed Afghanistan became an international pariah for its human rights abuses and refusal to surrender Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al Qaeda, and other internationally wanted criminals. Only three foreign governments recognized the Taliban government between 1997 and 2001: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. Following the August 7, 1998, bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania by Al Qaeda, the U.S. launched air strikes in Afghanistan, targeting sites believed to be part of Al Qaeda's network.¹⁹ The Taliban announced that Osama Bin Laden had not been killed in the attacks. On December 19, 2000, after more than a year of attempts to apprehend Osama Bin Laden through negotiations, the United Nations imposed sweeping sanctions and an air embargo on the Taliban government.²⁰

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan until 2001. After refusing to turn over Osama Bin Laden in the wake of the September 11 attacks, U.S.-led coalition forces (with the help of the Northern Alliance) invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime.²¹ Mullah Omar and Taliban leadership fled across the Pakistani border, where they were able to regroup and gain new followers, forming the Quetta Shura council in the process.²² Taliban forces lay dormant in Afghan and Pakistani hideouts for the next several years.²³

In December 2001, the United Nations convened the Bonn Conference to establish Afghanistan's post-Taliban government. Afghan representatives from across the country were invited to elect a transitional administration, which would exclude the Taliban. The resulting power-sharing agreement privileged the Northern Alliance members, who were

¹⁸ Kuehn, Felix and Strick van Linschoten, Patrick. "The Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan." Oxford University Press. August 2012.

¹⁹ McIntyre, Jamie. "U.S. Missiles Pound Targets in Afghanistan, Sudan." *CNN*. August 20, 1998. Accessed online on February 21, 2016.

²⁰ State 095538: U.S. Department of State, Cable, "Usama bin Ladin: Pressing High-Level Taliban Official Jalaluddin Haqqani on Bin Ladin," May 24, 1999. Web. 21 Feb 2016; United Nations Security Council. SECURITY COUNCIL IMPOSES WIDE NEW MEASURES AGAINST TALIBAN AUTHORITIES IN AFGHANISTAN, DEMANDS ACTION ON TERRORISM Resolution 1333 (2000) Calls for Closure of Training Camps, End to Provision of Sanctuary; Ban Imposed on Military Assistance. UN. 19 Dec. 2000. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

²¹ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

²² "The Taliban." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016. <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

²³ Haddon, Katherine. "Afghanistan Marks 10 Years Since War Started." *Yahoo! News*. AFP. October 6, 2011. Accessed online on February 21, 2016.

primarily ethnically Tajik and Uzbek (as compared to the majority Pashtun).²⁴ A new constitution was ratified in December 2003. In October 2004, acting president Hamid Karzai was officially elected president of Afghanistan.²⁵

In May 2003, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared an end to major combat in Afghanistan, and NATO took charge of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) coalition. By 2004, the United States was fully at war in Iraq, which pulled resources and attention away from Afghanistan.²⁶ Capitalizing on the opportunity, the Taliban reasserted itself with new tactics, including suicide attacks. Before 2004, suicide bombings were rare in Afghanistan. In 2004, there were just six such attacks committed by the Taliban. In 2005, the number more than tripled to 21. In 2006, Afghanistan saw 141 suicide attacks, resulting in 1,166 casualties.²⁷

The U.S. responded to the rise in attacks by sending an additional 4,500 U.S. troops to Afghanistan in September 2008. In February 2009, the new Obama administration in the U.S. sent an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan to fight the resurgent Taliban. In December 2009, President Obama announced a “surge” which sent an additional 30,000 troops, raising the total U.S. troops in Afghanistan to 100,000.²⁸

In contrast to the success of the U.S. surge in Iraq, the results of the surge against a resurgent Taliban were mixed. The additional manpower was successful in clearing the Taliban from its stronghold in Kandahar City and the surrounding districts such as Arghandab, Panwai, and Maiwand. The group, however, was still operationally functional and able to carry out suicide assaults, assassinations, and even a massive prison break. Most of Helmand province was also cleared of Taliban, which dealt a blow to the lucrative narcotics trade they had been operating from the province. The surge was less effective in Afghanistan’s southeastern provinces of Khost, Paktia, and Paktika, which served as the Taliban’s access point to its safe havens in Pakistan. The area was also of importance to the Haqqani Network, an Al Qaeda and Taliban-linked group that was considered to be one of the most dangerous and effective Taliban allies.²⁹ With U.S. and coalition forces focused on regaining control of southern Afghanistan, the Taliban was able to take control in Kunar and Nuristan.³⁰

²⁴ “Afghanistan Profile - Timeline.” *BBC*. 31 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253.

²⁵ “The Taliban.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016. <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

²⁶ “The Taliban.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016. <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

²⁷ Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: The power of militant Islam in Afghanistan and beyond*. Yale University Press, 2022.

²⁸ “The Taliban.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016. <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

²⁹ Roggio, Bill, and Chris Radin. “Obama Announces Rapid Drawdown of Surge Forces from Afghanistan.” *The Long War Journal*. Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, 23 June 2011. Accessed online on February 29, 2016.

³⁰ Roggio, Bill, and Chris Radin. “Obama Announces Rapid Drawdown of Surge Forces from Afghanistan.” *The Long War Journal*. Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, 23 June 2011. Accessed online on February 29, 2016.

On September 20, 2011, former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated, allegedly by Haqqani Network operatives. Rabbani was head of the High Peace Council and the government's chief negotiator with the Taliban.³¹

In January 2012, the Taliban opened an office in Qatar to begin political settlement talks on the future of Afghanistan with the United States. The office was instrumental in the negotiations over Bowe Berghdal, the U.S. army officer held by the Taliban and considered the last American prisoner of war. Berghdal was released in exchange for five Taliban members the U.S. had held in Guantanamo Bay, including Mullah Mohammad Fazl, who later became one of the group's early commanders.³² Despite the deal, the preliminary talks fell apart just two months later due to a perception the U.S. did not follow through on its end of the agreement.³³ Some reports indicate that the Taliban experienced factionalism and were at risk of fragmentation during this period. One notable splinter group, Feda'i Mahaz or "Sacrificing Front," emerged in 2012. This splinter group carried out attacks in 2013 and openly opposed peace talks in 2014.³⁴

In April 2013, Mullah Omar died in Pakistan from an alleged illness. The group kept his death quiet until several years later.³⁵

In 2014, Mullah Abdul Qayum Zaker, a Taliban leader for thirteen years, stepped down in hopes that U.S. military and Taliban peace talks could resume.³⁶ In July 2015, Afghan government officials and Taliban leaders met for the first round of talks in a new peace process.³⁷ In addition, Russia has coordinated with the Taliban to hinder the spread of the Islamic State in Afghanistan.³⁸

Amid July 2015 negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban made the surprise announcement of the death of leader Mullah Omar. Mullah Mansoor was selected as Mullah Omar's successor. Mullah Mansoor was believed to be close to Pakistan's

³¹ "The Taliban." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016. <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

³² Entous, Adam, and Julian E. Barnes. "Behind Bowe Bergdahl's Release, a Secret Deal That Took Three Years." *The Wall Street Journal*. June 2, 2014. www.wsj.com/articles/behind-bergdahls-release-a-secret-deal-that-took-three-years-1401673547.

³³ Council on Foreign Relations. "The U.S. War in Afghanistan." CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

³⁴ Watkins, Andrew. Taliban Fragmentation: Fact, Fiction, and Future. United States Institute of Peace, March 2020. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/pw_160-taliban_fragmentation_fact_fiction_and_future-pw.pdf.

³⁵ "Taliban Admit Covering up Death of Mullah Omar." *BBC*. August 31, 2015. www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34105565.

³⁶ BBC. "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News*. Updated August 12, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

³⁷ "The Taliban." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016. <https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

³⁸ "Isis: Russia Coordinating with Taliban Forces to Fight Terror Group." *International Business Times RSS*. 24 Dec. 2015. Web.

intelligence service and had supported the Pakistan-backed talks. The Taliban's political bureau opposed the negotiations, believing any negotiations should be conducted from its Doha office to avoid Pakistani influence.³⁹ One of these factions, led by Mullah Mohammad Rasool, formed an official splinter group that did not recognize Mullah Mansoor's leadership.⁴⁰ In September 2015, the Taliban seized control of Kunduz, the first provincial capital to fall under Taliban control since their defeat in 2001.⁴¹

The Taliban's decision to keep leader Mullah Omar's death a secret for several years, even from other Taliban members, resulted in internal tension. This manifested in the form of factionalism and the defection of individuals upset by the decisions of the Taliban's new leader, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor. Many of these defectors joined Islamic State–Khorasan Province (ISKP), which emerged in 2015.⁴²

Pakistan, Afghanistan, the United States, and China came to an agreement in late February 2016 on a road map to end the Afghan war through negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban. Taliban representatives were expected to join Afghan officials in the first round of peace talks in Pakistan in the Spring of 2016, but the death of Mullah Mansoor by a U.S. drone strike in May 2016 derailed Taliban cooperation.⁴³

By May 2017, the Taliban controlled 11 districts and exerted influence in 34 districts (totaling 11.1% of Afghanistan's districts). 119 Afghan districts (29.2%) were contested.⁴⁴ The Taliban continue to wage an insurgency against the Afghan government, deploying suicide bombers in the capital city of Kabul at an unprecedented rate. In August 2017, the Trump administration announced that it would send more troops to Afghanistan as part of the U.S. military strategy to win the war. It outlined key goals which included destroying the Islamic State, crushing Al Qaeda, and preventing the Taliban from gaining any more power.⁴⁵

³⁹ "The Taliban." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Accessed on February 20, 2016.

<https://www.cfr.org/taliban/#/>.

⁴⁰ "Afghan Taliban Close Ranks around New Leader." *Al Arabiya English*. Al Arabiya, 5 Feb. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

⁴¹ BBC. "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News*. Updated August 12, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

⁴² Watkins, Andrew. *Taliban Fragmentation: Fact, Fiction, and Future*. United States Institute of Peace, March 2020. https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2020-03/pw_160-taliban_fragmentation_fact_fiction_and_future-pw.pdf.

⁴³ "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." *Pakistan Today*. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016; "Profile: Taliban Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour - BBC News." *BBC News*. 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghan Taliban's Mullah Mansoor 'killed in US Strike'" *AJE News*. N.p., 23 May 2016. Web. 15 June 2016; Khan, Tahir. "Mullah Mansoor Was 'about to Join Peace Talks' When Killed." *The Express Tribune*. 11 July 2016. Web. 11 July 2016.

⁴⁴ Sopko, John F., Michael Bindell, Daniel Fisher, Clark Irwin, Vong Lim, James Misencik, Cameron Moubrey et al. *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Quarterly Report to the United States Congress. SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION* Arlington VA. July 30, 2017. <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-07-30qr.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Council on Foreign Relations. "The U.S. War in Afghanistan." CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

In 2018, reports indicated that the Taliban was in full control of 14 districts in Afghanistan and maintained an active physical presence in an additional 263 districts.⁴⁶ In January, the group increased the frequency and scale of their attacks, especially in the capital city of Kabul. Meanwhile, U.S. forces were deployed in rural areas of Afghanistan to support brigades of the Afghan military. The U.S. military also conducted airstrikes against opium production facilities, targeting a Taliban revenue source.⁴⁷ A brief ceasefire occurred in June.⁴⁸ The Afghan government publicly announced that it was ready to extend the ceasefire and start formal negotiations with the Taliban to end the war.⁴⁹ Renewed peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban began in late 2018.⁵⁰

In 2019, the U.S. and the Taliban continued peace negotiations in Doha, Qatar. Key elements of these negotiations included the withdrawal of U.S. military force and the requirement that the Taliban engage in intra-Afghan political negotiations with the Afghan government and key stakeholders.⁵¹ In September 2019, the Trump administration called off the peace negotiation process after a U.S. soldier was killed in a Taliban car bomb attack in Kabul.⁵²

On February 29, 2020, the U.S. and the Taliban signed a peace agreement that promised the withdrawal of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, outlined a commitment to intra-Afghan dialogue on a “permanent and comprehensive” ceasefire, and stated that Afghanistan would not be used to harbor terrorist organizations.⁵³ On September 12, 2020, the Afghan government and the Taliban met in Doha to begin intra-Afghan peace talks about the future of Afghanistan post-U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal.⁵⁴ Reports

⁴⁶ Sharifi, Shoaib, and Louise Adamou. “Taliban Threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC Finds.” *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42863116.

⁴⁷ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

⁴⁸ International Crisis Group. “Building on Afghanistan’s Fleeting Ceasefire.” ICG. July 19, 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/298-building-afghanistans-fleeting-ceasefire>.

⁴⁹ Ghani, Ashraf. “I Will Negotiate with the Taliban Anywhere.” *The New York Times*, NYTimes Opinion, 27 June 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/opinion/ashraf-ghani-afghanistan-president-peace-talks-taliban-

[.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FTaliban&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection](https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/opinion/ashraf-ghani-afghanistan-president-peace-talks-taliban-.html?ref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FTaliban&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection).

⁵⁰ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

⁵¹ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

⁵² “Trump cancels secret US meeting with Afghan Taliban.” BBC. September 8, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49624132>.

⁵³ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>; U.S. Department of State. Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America. February 29, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf>.

⁵⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

indicated that the Taliban pivoted in its violent tactics, engaging in targeted assassinations of key figures (including activists, journalists, and judges) rather than attacks on key cities or military bases.⁵⁵

On April 14, 2021, U.S. President Biden announced that U.S. troop withdrawal would be completed by September 11.⁵⁶ Following this announcement, Taliban forces mobilized. Beginning in May, the Taliban created checkpoints along main roads in Afghanistan and launched attacks in several provinces (including, Zabul, Ghazni, and Logar, where they held control over rural areas) with the goal of overtaking government-controlled cities. This included an attack on Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province.⁵⁷

In early August, the Taliban made advances into new territories, including attacks on the cities of Kandahar and Herat. On August 6, the Taliban took over their first provincial capital, Zaranj, in Nimruz province. On August 7, they took the capital of Jowzjan province, Shebergan. On August 8, the group attacked key cities in Sar-E Pol, Kunduz, and Takhar provinces. On August 9, the Taliban took Aybak, the capital of Samangan province, with minimal difficulties. In the following days, the Taliban took the capital cities of Badakhshan, Farah, and Baglan (August 10-11), followed by Kandahar, Herat, and Lashkar Gah (August 12-13). On August 14, Taliban forces began to amass near Kabul, the capital city of Afghanistan.⁵⁸ Finally, on August 15, the Taliban took Kabul and entered the presidential palace. The Afghan state government collapsed, and Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani fled the country.⁵⁹

Since taking power, the Taliban have reinstated many of the policies they applied during their rule from 1996-2001. The group has eliminated many of the rights that had been afforded to women and girls under the previous Afghan regime and appears to be using violence and torture to stifle dissent and opposition, including numerous reports of extrajudicial killings. As of September 2022, the group has managed to maintain its control over most parts of the country.⁶⁰

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

⁵⁵ Gunter, Joel. "Afghanistan: A year of violence on the road to peace." BBC News. February 28, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56157627>; "Who Are the Taliban?" BBC. Last updated August 12, 2022.

⁵⁶ Council on Foreign Relations. "The U.S. War in Afghanistan." CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

⁵⁷ Mellen, Ruby. "The shocking speed of the Taliban's advance: A visual timeline." The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

⁵⁸ Mellen, Ruby. "The shocking speed of the Taliban's advance: A visual timeline." The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

⁵⁹ Council on Foreign Relations. "The U.S. War in Afghanistan." CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

⁶⁰ Watkins, Andrew. "One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State." United States Institute for Peace. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state>.

Since 2001, the Taliban has been led by a leadership council called the Quetta Shura (occasionally referred to as the Rahbari Shura). This council was named after the city in Pakistan where the Taliban took refuge during the U.S.'s aerial bombing of Afghanistan in late 2001.⁶¹ In the aftermath of the Taliban's removal from power in Afghanistan, groups and factions emerged, including the Haqqani Network, the Peshawar (or Ijraya) Shura, and the Miran Shah Shura, to carry out attacks against coalition forces. These groups eventually aligned themselves with the Quetta Shura council.⁶² Some scholars have described the Taliban's organizational structure as a polycentric model, with multiple nodes of control that slowly integrated over time.⁶³ Initially, the Taliban operated in a fairly decentralized manner, gradually shifting towards centralized control as the conflict progressed. The Quetta Shura oversaw various specialized commissions, including those dedicated to political, military, and judicial tasks.⁶⁴

After the Taliban took over the Afghan government in 2021 (and transitioned from militant organization to state government), this leadership structure continued to play an important role. Most senior Taliban leaders have been appointed as acting ministers. The group's top leader, Sheikh Haibatullah Akhundzada, holds final decision-making power for any new governance policies. However, the various Taliban factions, while deferring to Akhundzada, also appear to be instituting their own policies in different regions of Afghanistan, resulting in geographic variation between provinces and communities.⁶⁵

The Taliban's key leaders are outlined below.

Mullah Mohammad Omar (1994 to April 23, 2013): Mullah Mohammad Omar was the founder and leader of the Taliban until his death in 2013. In April 1996, he was named "Commander of the Faithful" by his supporters, an important title in both Afghan and Islamic history.⁶⁶ From this point forward, his official title was "Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan." Edicts from Mullah Omar included the death sentence for anyone converting to another religion, as well as the orders to destroy Afghanistan's ancient Buddha statues at Bamiyan. Omar was wanted by the U.S. State Department for sheltering Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda operatives leading up to and following the September 11, 2001, attacks, and the United

⁶¹ Mozul, James. "The Quetta Shura Taliban: An Overlooked Problem." *International Affairs Review*. November 23, 2009; "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." *Pakistan Today*. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.}}

⁶² Giustozzi, Antonio. *The Taliban at War: 2001-2021*. Oxford University Press, 2019. p. 106.

⁶³ Giustozzi, Antonio. *The Taliban at War: 2001-2021*. Oxford University Press, 2019. pp. 17, 60; Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Last updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>; Johnson, Thomas H. "Taliban adaptations and innovations." *Small Wars & Insurgencies*. Vol. 24, No. 1 (2013), pp. 3-27.

⁶⁴ Giustozzi, Antonio. *The Taliban at War: 2001-2021*. Oxford University Press, 2019. p. 60; Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Last updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

⁶⁵ Watkins, Andrew. "One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State." *United States Institute for Peace*. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state>.

⁶⁶ "Profile: Mullah Mohammed Omar - BBC News." *BBC News*. 29 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

States offered a 10 million USD bounty for his arrest.⁶⁷ Mullah Omar's death was announced by the Taliban in July 2015. However, several sources including the Afghan government have confirmed that Omar actually died on April 23, 2013, in a Pakistani hospital.⁶⁸

Abdul Ghani Baradar (1994 to present): Abdul Ghani Baradar was the deputy of Mullah Mohammad Omar. With a U.S. bounty on his head, Omar largely kept hidden during the late 2000s. Baradar managed the day-to-day operations of the group in Omar's absence, essentially becoming the de facto leader of the group. He oversaw the Quetta Shura, managed the group's financial resources, and issued policy statements on behalf of the Taliban.⁶⁹ Baradar was arrested by Pakistan and U.S. intelligence agents in early 2010.⁷⁰ His release in 2018 occurred in the wake of talks between the Taliban and U.S. diplomats.⁷¹ After his release, Baradar was appointed as the head of the Taliban's political office in Qatar, which was engaged in peace talks with the United States.⁷² In this capacity, Baradar signed a deal on behalf of the Taliban with the United States in February 2020 that outlined an agreement for U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan.⁷³ After the Taliban seized control of the Afghan government in 2021, it was rumored that Baradar might be selected as the regime's new president.⁷⁴ He was ultimately selected to serve as a deputy prime minister.⁷⁵ As of November 2022, he still acts in this position.

Mullah Mohammad Fazl (unknown to present): Mullah Mohammad Fazl commanded the main Taliban force fighting the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance in 2001 and served as chief of army staff for the Taliban. Fazl was detained after surrendering to Abdul Rashid Dostam, the leader of Afghanistan's Uzbek community, in November 2001 and was transferred to U.S. custody in December 2001. He was one of the first arrivals at the U.S. detention site in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. He was held

⁶⁷ "Profile: Mullah Mohammed Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 29 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

⁶⁸ "Profile: Mullah Mohammed Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 29 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016; "Taliban Admit Covering up Death of Mullah Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 31 Aug. 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

⁶⁹ Moreau, Ron. "Meet the Taliban's New Chief." Newsweek. July 24, 2009. <https://www.newsweek.com/meet-talibans-new-chief-81727>

⁷⁰ Filkins, Dexter. "Pakistanis Tell of Motive in Taliban Leader's Arrest." New York Times, August 22, 2010. <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/23/world/asia/23taliban.html>

⁷¹ Mashal, Mujib, and Taimoor Shah. "Taliban Deputy Is Released Amid Push for Afghan Peace Talks." New York Times, October 25, 2018. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/25/world/asia/taliban-peace-talks.html>

⁷² Roggio, Bill. "Mullah Baradar appointed head of Taliban's 'political office' in Qatar." The Long War Journal, January 24, 2019. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2019/01/mullah-baradar-appointed-head-of-talibans-political-office-in-qatar.php>

⁷³ Mashal, Mujib. "Taliban and U.S. Strike Deal to Withdraw American Troops From Afghanistan." New York Times, February 29, 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/29/world/asia/us-taliban-deal.html>

⁷⁴ Ramachandran, Sudha. "Mullah Baradar: Afghanistan's President-in-Waiting?" The Diplomat, August 19, 2021. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/08/mullah-baradar-afghanistans-president-in-waiting/>

⁷⁵ Schorzman, Douglas. "Who Are the Taliban's New Government Leaders? Here's What We Know." New York Times, September 8, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/taliban-leaders-afghanistan.html>

there until his release on May 31, 2014, in a prisoner swap for U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl. He is alleged to have association with several militant Islamist groups, including Al Qaeda.⁷⁶

Mullah Dadullah (unknown to May 13, 2007): Mullah Dadullah sat on the Taliban Shura Majlis (executive council) and was the Taliban's most senior military commander. Dadullah is reported to have been one of Mullah Omar's most trusted advisors since he came to Taliban leadership in the mid 1990s. He escaped the siege of Kunduz in November 2001 and is linked to several Shia massacres in Afghanistan. He held his position until May 13, 2007, when he was killed while fighting NATO ISAF and Afghan forces.⁷⁷

Mullah Obaidullah Akhund (1996 to February 2008): Mullah Obaidullah Akhund served as Defense Minister for the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from 1996-2001. As a member of the Shura Council since 2003, Akhund was the third highest-ranking commander in the Taliban insurgency and had direct access to Mullah Omar. He was initially captured in 2002 and was released as part of an amnesty agreement shortly after. In February 2007, Akhund was detained again. He was subsequently released in November 2007 in exchange for the release of 200 prisoners held by the Taliban in Pakistan. Following his re-arrest in 2008, he died of a heart disease in a Karachi prison in 2010.⁷⁸

Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor (1996 to May 23, 2016): Mullah Mansoor was the deputy leader of the Taliban and de-facto leader between Mullah Omar's death in 2013 and the public announcement two years later. Mansoor was the Minister of Civil Aviation during Taliban rule in Afghanistan. The Taliban officially announced Mansoor as Chief commander of the Taliban in July 2015. He was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan in May 2016.⁷⁹

Arsala Rahmani (1998 to May 13, 2012): Arsala Rahmani was elected to serve as the Deputy Minister for Higher Education in the Taliban government in 1998 and was listed as a Taliban member in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1267. He was Deputy Leader of political affairs for Khuddamul Furqan, the first Islamic political party in Afghanistan, and later served in the Meshrano Jirga, the highest house of the Afghan National Assembly, from 2005 to 2010. President Hamid Karzai asked Rahmani to serve in the Afghan High Peace Council in September 2010, which attempted to bring the Taliban into the negotiation process. Just a year after his

⁷⁶ "The Gitmo Detainees Swapped for Bergdahl: Who Are They?" CNN. Cable News Network, 31 May 2014. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁷⁷ "Mullah Dadullah, Taliban Top Commander, Killed in Helmand | The Long War Journal." The Long War Journal. Web.

⁷⁸ "'Taliban Leader Held' in Pakistan." BBC News. Mar. 2, 2007; "Cover-up: Taliban Leader's Death in Karachi Confirmed - The Express Tribune." The Express Tribune. 14 Feb. 2012. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁷⁹ "Profile: Taliban Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour - BBC News." BBC News. 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghan Taliban's Mullah Mansoor 'killed in US Strike'" AJE News. N.p., 23 May 2016. Web. 15 June 2016.

removal from the UNSC Resolution 1267 designation list, Rahmani was found shot dead in his car in Kabul on May 13, 2012.⁸⁰

Mullah Abdul Qayum Zakir (2001 to present): Mullah Abdul Qayum Zakir, also known as Abdullah Ghulam Rasoul, served as a long-time military leader for the Taliban. He reportedly joined the Taliban in 1997. In December 2001, he surrendered to U.S.-led forces. Zakir was initially imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba and was later transferred to an Afghan prison in 2007. After his release in 2008, he rejoined the Taliban and secured a role on the Quetta Shura and was given oversight of Taliban military operations in southern Afghanistan. In 2010, Omar granted Zakir power to manage the group's daily military operations in Afghanistan as leader of the Taliban's military commission. Internal disagreements with then-senior leader Mansour drove Zakir to step down from this position in 2014. Further animosity between Mansour and Zakir emerged when Mansour took control of the Taliban after Omar's death in 2015. In 2020, Zakir was appointed to serve as deputy leader of the Taliban's military commission.⁸¹ After the Taliban seized control of the Afghan government in 2021, Zakir was appointed to serve as a deputy minister of defense for the Taliban regime.⁸²

Sirajuddin (Siraj) Haqqani (2015 to present): Sirajuddin Haqqani is a leader of the Haqqani Network (HN) and the son of HN founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani. He was appointed Mansour's deputy after the new Taliban commander was announced in July 2015.⁸³ When the Taliban took control of Afghanistan in 2021, he was appointed the acting minister of the interior.⁸⁴

Moulavi Haibatullah Akhunzada (2015 to present): Moulavi Haibatullah Akhunzada is a former judiciary chief of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and a religious scholar. He was appointed Mansour's deputy after Mansour ascended to the top leadership position in July 2015.⁸⁵ After a U.S. drone strike killed Mansour in

⁸⁰ "Afghan peace negotiator Arsala Rahmani shot dead." BBC News. Web. May 13, 2012.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18049265>.

⁸¹ Foulkes, John. "Iran's Taliban Connection: Mullah Abdul Qayyum Zakir." Jamestown Foundation, *Militant Leadership Monitor* 11, no. 6, July 2, 2020. <https://jamestown.org/brief/irans-taliban-connection-mullah-abdul-qayyum-zakir/>

⁸² Roggio, Bill. "Taliban Appoints Former Guantanamo Bay Detainee to Lead Fight in Panjshir." *Long War Journal*, August 21, 2022. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2022/08/taliban-appoints-former-guantanamo-bay-detainee-to-lead-fight-in-panjshir.php>; Joscelyn, Thomas, and Bill Roggio. "Taliban's government includes designated terrorists, ex-Guantanamo detainees." *Long War Journal*, September 8, 2021. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/09/talibans-government-includes-designated-terrorists-ex-guantanamo-detainees.php>.

⁸³ Shah, Taimoor, and Rod Nordland. "Taliban Pick New Chief and 2 Hard-Line Deputies." *The New York Times*, 31 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Declaration of the Leading Council of the Islamic Emirate regarding the Appointment of New Amir (leader) of the Islamic Emirate. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 30 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

⁸⁴ Joscelyn, Thomas and Bill Roggio. "Taliban's government includes designated terrorists, ex-Guantanamo detainees." *The Long War Journal*. September 8, 2021. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/09/talibans-government-includes-designated-terrorists-ex-guantanamo-detainees.php>.

⁸⁵ Shah, Taimoor, and Rod Nordland. "Taliban Pick New Chief and 2 Hard-Line Deputies." *The New York Times*, 31 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.}} {{Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Declaration of the Leading

2016, Akhundzada was selected to succeed him and serve as the Taliban's leader.⁸⁶ After the Taliban seized control of the Afghan government in August 2021, Akhundzada was named the supreme leader of Afghanistan.⁸⁷

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group. The Taliban also uses the name the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan to refer to its government in Afghanistan.

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

- 1994: 1,500 (Brookings Institution)⁸⁸
- 1995: 25,000 (Research study, Saikal)⁸⁹
- 2006: 7,000 (Al-Jazeera)⁹⁰
- November 7, 2006: 4,000-5,000 (UN Security Council)⁹¹
- January 19, 2009: 2,000-20,000 (Justice Department)⁹²
- 2008: 6,000-10,000 (Cited research study, published by Antonio Giustozzi in 2009 book.)⁹³
- October 2009: 25,000 (Al-Jazeera, citing a report presented to President Obama on October 9, 2009.)⁹⁴
- March 3, 2010: 36,000+ (U.S. Major General Richard Barrons, published in *The Sunday Times*)⁹⁵
- February 18, 2016: 25,000 (*Foreign Policy Magazine*)⁹⁶

Council of the Islamic Emirate regarding the Appointment of New Amir (leader) of the Islamic Emirate. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 30 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

⁸⁶ "Taliban." *Counter Extremism Project*. www.counterextremism.com/threat/taliban.

⁸⁷ "Haibatullah Akhundzada: Shadowy Taliban supreme leader whose son was suicide bomber." Reuters. September 7, 2021. <https://www.reuters.com/world/haibatullah-akhundzada-shadowy-taliban-supreme-leader-whose-son-was-suicide-2021-09-07/>.

⁸⁸ Felbab-Brown, V. (2010). *Shooting up: Counterinsurgency and the war on drugs*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

⁸⁹ Saikal, A. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. I.B.Tauris, 2004.

⁹⁰ "US: Taliban has grown fourfold." Al-Jazeera. October 9, 2009.

⁹¹ UN Security Council. "Sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team appointed pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1526 (2004) and 1617 (2005) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities"

⁹² "Armed Conflicts Report-Afghanistan." Justice.Gov. Web.

⁹³ Giustozzi, Antonio. "Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan (2002-2007)." Columbia University Press, (2009) p. 34-37.

⁹⁴ "US: Taliban has grown fourfold." Al-Jazeera. October 9, 2009. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2009/10/9/us-taliban-has-grown-fourfold>.

⁹⁵ Hamilton, Fiona, Sam Coates and Michael Savage. "Major General Richard Barrons puts Taliban fighter numbers at 36000". Mar. 3, 2010. *The Sunday Times*.

⁹⁶ "Afghanistan on the Brink, Part 1." *Foreign Policy Afghanistan on the Brink Part 1 Comments*. 18 Feb. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

- January, 2018: 60,000 (NBC News)⁹⁷
- August 2021: 75,000 (NBC News and The New York Times)⁹⁸

D. RESOURCES

In its early days, the Taliban procured many of its weapons from retired mujahedeen fighters. These mujahedeen had received support through CIA programs during the Soviet-Afghan War.⁹⁹

Throughout the conflict with U.S. and coalition forces, the Taliban generated funding through four key sources: foreign donations (including from individuals in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar), taxation on the drug trafficking of opium, taxation on trade in areas under their control, and mining (through both taxation and their own ownership of mines).¹⁰⁰

Much of the Taliban's finances came from poppy production and drug trade, including taxes on poppy agriculture. Between 1996 and 1999, the Taliban controlled 96% of Afghanistan's poppy fields.¹⁰¹ Even after U.S. forces entered the region in 2001, poppy seed agriculture and the heroin drug trade continued to fund more than 60% of the Taliban's activity. In August 2007, a UN report estimated that Afghanistan was producing 93% of the world's heroin. Taliban control over poppy fields eventually decreased as NATO Coalition Forces secured more of the country. In 2008, a report estimated that opium trade had dropped to only funding 40% of the Taliban's operations.¹⁰²

The Taliban supplemented its opium revenue with illegal timber trading, extortion, and lucrative mining operations.¹⁰³ Some reports indicate the Taliban also solicited donations

⁹⁷ Kube, Courtney. "The Taliban Is Gaining Strength and Territory in Afghanistan." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 30 Jan. 2018, www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/numbers-afghanistan-are-not-good-n842651

⁹⁸ Kube, Courtney, Ken Dilanian, Chantal Da Silva and Yuliya Talmazan. "Taliban's Afghanistan takeover raises big questions for U.S. security chiefs." *NBC News*. August 16, 2021.

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/taliban-s-afghanistan-takeover-raises-big-questions-u-s-security-n1276911>. Sanger, David E. and Helene Cooper. "Taliban Sweep in Afghanistan Follows Years of U.S. Miscalculations." *The New York Times*. 14 Aug. 2021.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/14/us/politics/afghanistan-biden.html>.

⁹⁹ Fitchett, Joseph. "What About the Taliban's Stingers? - NYTimes.com." *The New York Times*. 26 Sept. 2001. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Azami, Dawood. "Afghanistan: How do the Taliban make money?" *BBC*. August 28, 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-46554097>.

¹⁰¹ Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud. "Opium: uncovering the politics of the poppy." *Harvard University Press*. 2010. Web. 03 Mar. 2016

¹⁰² Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's insurgency: A pragmatic approach toward peace and reconciliation," Washington, DC; United States Institute of Peace. 2008. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghanistan Taliban Could Double Opium Income Thanks to New Strain of High-yield Poppy Seed." *CBSNews*. CBS Interactive. 05 May 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰³ Rosenberg, Matthew. "Taliban Run Into Trouble on Battlefield, but Money Flows Just the Same." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, 13 June 2014. Web. 04 Mar. 2016; Domínguez, Gabriel. "How the Taliban Get Their Money" *DW.COM*. *Deutsche Welle*, 21 Jan. 2016. Web. 04 Mar. 2016.

from local mosques and businessmen.¹⁰⁴ In 2017, Afghanistan ranked ninth in the world for pistachio production, with the Taliban reportedly making \$15 million annually from the illegal harvest of pistachio trees.¹⁰⁵ In addition, the Taliban was known for its illegal taxation on citizens who refused to join the group. In 2017, it was reported that the Taliban had begun collecting revenues on electricity bills, harvests, salaries, and transportation.¹⁰⁶

The Taliban has also received financial contributions from Islamic charities and other institutions outside Afghanistan, largely from the Gulf region and neighboring Pakistan. The Taliban was widely believed to have received financial and logistical support from the Pakistani government, particularly from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency. Although Pakistan denied these claims, the Adviser to the Pakistani Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs did admit in 2016 that Pakistan had sheltered Taliban leaders and had been doing so for decades.¹⁰⁷

Since taking control of Afghanistan in 2021, the Taliban have prioritized implementing a centralized system of taxation.¹⁰⁸ Western humanitarian donors ceased foreign aid to the country after August 2021, resulting in a national economic collapse. Despite this, the Taliban have continued to demand that Afghans pay taxes in full, but it is unclear how sustainable this approach will be for continued operations.¹⁰⁹

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

Disclaimer: This is a partial list of where the militant organization has bases and where it operates. This does not include information on where the group conducts major attacks or has external influences.

¹⁰⁴ "The Taliban Have Run Out Of Money Just As U.S. Troops Prepare To Leave Afghanistan." *International Business Times*. 03 Feb 2014. Web. 03 Mar. 2016

¹⁰⁵ Walsh, John. "Funding Terrorism: Taliban Earns \$15M A Year From Pistachios In Afghanistan." *International Business Times*, 14 Mar. 2017, www.ibtimes.com/funding-terrorism-taliban-earns-15m-year-pistachios-afghanistan-2508055.

¹⁰⁶ Gall, Carlotta. "Saudis Bankroll Taliban, Even as King Officially Supports Afghan Government." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 6 Dec. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/asia/saudi-arabia-afghanistan.html.

¹⁰⁷ Domínguez, Gabriel. "How the Taliban Get Their Money" DW.COM. Deutsche Welle, 21 Jan. 2016. Web. 04 Mar. 2016; "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." *Pakistan Today*. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰⁸ Watkins, Andrew. "One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State." United States Institute for Peace. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state>.

¹⁰⁹ Rubin, Barnett R. "Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation." Stimson Center. October 20, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

The Taliban was initially founded in Kandahar province, Afghanistan.¹¹⁰ On November 3, 1994, the Taliban took control of the city of Kandahar in a surprise attack.¹¹¹ In 1996, the Taliban seized control of Kabul and governed from the capital until the group was expelled by the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. After being routed by invading forces, the Taliban's leadership moved its operations to the Pakistani city of Quetta, where it set up the Quetta Shura leadership council.¹¹² During the Taliban's insurgency in Afghanistan between 2001-2021, the group maintained camps in Afghanistan's southern provinces of Helmand, Zabul, and Kandahar. These areas made up the majority of Taliban operations in Afghanistan.¹¹³

Since the Taliban's seizure of the Afghan government in 2021, the Taliban has governed from Kabul and has maintained control over most of the country, despite the development of anti-Taliban resistance groups and attacks by Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and the National Resistance Front.¹¹⁴

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

The Taliban's primary ideological goal is to establish a Taliban-controlled government in Afghanistan, implementing and enforcing Sharia law. The group's ideology is based on the study of Salafism, a radical interpretation of Islam.¹¹⁵ The ideology of the Taliban is considered a shift from traditional Islamist views held by anti-Soviet mujahedeen fighters in the 1980s and early 1990s. It can be characterized as a combination of strict anti-modern Pashtun tribal ideology mixed with radicalized Deobandi interpretations of Islam.

The Taliban has an ideological commitment to a strict interpretation and enforcement of Sharia law.¹¹⁶ The group promoted jihad as a "divine obligation" and heavily encourages it among members, citing that failure to support jihad is a sin.¹¹⁷ The rise of the Islamic State (IS) prompted the Taliban to publicly encourage the preservation of pan-Islamic

¹¹⁰ Gall, Sandy. "Mullah Omar obituary." *The Guardian*, July 30, 2015.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/30/mullah-omar>

¹¹¹ Maley, William. *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print. .

¹¹² "Who Are the Taliban? - BBC News." *BBC News*. 29 Sep 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

¹¹³ "Mapping the Taliban: Behind Taliban Lines." *Frontline*. PBS. 23 Feb 2010. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

¹¹⁴ Watkins, Andrew. "One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State." *United States Institute for Peace*. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state.>; Rubin, Barnett R. "Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation." *Stimson Center*. October 20, 2020.

<https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

¹¹⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 88.

¹¹⁶ Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 43 (Interview with Mullah Wakil, 1996).

¹¹⁷ Roggio, Bill, and Caleb Weiss. "Taliban Promotes 4 Previously Unidentified Training Camps in Afghanistan." *FDD's Long War Journal*, *FDD's Long War Journal*, 29 June 2017, www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/06/taliban-promotes-4-previously-unidentified-training-camps-in-afghanistan.php.

unity. The group views IS as a threat to its goal of establishing a unified Islamist movement with the goal of expelling Western powers due to its extremism.¹¹⁸

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Taliban established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on September 27, 1996, and governed Afghanistan until October 2001; however, the group's rule was only recognized by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates.¹¹⁹

The Taliban opened a political commission in 2008 to conduct international and domestic outreach. On June 18, 2013, the group opened an office for the political commission in Doha, Qatar, which received heavy international criticism and was forced to close the same month. The office, however, continued to operate in an unofficial capacity. The Taliban has been successful in leveraging the desire of Afghan leaders and international mediating nations to bring the group to the table to achieve concessions such as removal from the Rewards for Justice list, a U.S. Department of State program that pays rewards for information that prevents or resolves acts of terrorism against the United States.¹²⁰

In May 2015, the Taliban took part in informal peace talks with Afghan officials but insisted that it would not end its fighting until all foreign troops had left the country.¹²¹ Talks collapsed quickly, but a secret meeting between an Afghan delegation and Taliban members in Qatar at the end of February 2016 provided an opening to future negotiations.¹²²

A brief ceasefire was negotiated in June 2018.¹²³ Renewed peace talks between the U.S. and the Taliban began in late 2018.¹²⁴ In 2019, the U.S. and the Taliban continued peace negotiations in Doha, Qatar. Key elements of these negotiations included the withdrawal of U.S. military force and the requirement that the Taliban engage in intra-Afghan

¹¹⁸ Pollowitz, Greg. "The Taliban Warns ISIS of Being Too Extreme." *National Review*, National Review, 31 Dec. 2014, www.nationalreview.com/the-feed/taliban-warns-isis-being-too-extreme-greg-pollowitz/.

¹¹⁹ Maizland, Lindsay. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Updated August 17, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/taliban-afghanistan>; Bush, Laura Welch. *We Are Afghan Women: Voices of Hope*. Simon and Schuster, 2016. Print.

¹²⁰ Rubin, Barnett. "What Could Mullah Mohammad Omar's Death Mean for the Taliban Talks? - The New Yorker." *The New Yorker*. 29 July 2015. Web. 05 Mar. 2016.

¹²¹ BBC. "Who Are the Taliban?" *BBC News*. Updated August 12, 2022. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718>.

¹²² Donati, Jessica. "Afghan, Taliban Officials Recently Met to Discuss Efforts to End War." *Wall Street Journal*, 05 Mar. 2016. Web. 05 Mar. 2016; "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." *Pakistan Today*. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016; "Profile: Taliban Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour - BBC News." *BBC News*. 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghan Taliban's Mullah Mansoor 'killed in US Strike'" *AJE News*. N.p., 23 May 2016. Web. 15 June 2016; Khan, Tahir. "Mullah Mansoor Was 'about to Join Peace Talks' When Killed." *The Express Tribune*. N.p., 11 July 2016. Web. 11 July 2016.

¹²³ International Crisis Group. "Building on Afghanistan's Fleeting Ceasefire." ICG. July 19, 2018. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/298-building-afghanistans-fleeting-ceasefire>.

¹²⁴ Council on Foreign Relations. "The U.S. War in Afghanistan." CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

political negotiations with the Afghan government and key stakeholders.¹²⁵ In September 2019, the Trump administration called off the peace negotiation process after a U.S. soldier was killed in a Taliban car bomb attack in Kabul.¹²⁶

On February 29, 2020, the U.S. and the Taliban signed a peace agreement that promised the withdrawal of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan, outlined a commitment to intra-Afghan dialogue on a “permanent and comprehensive” ceasefire, and stated that Afghanistan would not be used to harbor terrorist organizations.¹²⁷ On September 12, 2020, the Afghan government and the Taliban met in Doha to begin intra-Afghan peace talks about the future of Afghanistan post-U.S. and NATO troop withdrawal.¹²⁸

Since taking power in 2021, the Taliban have imposed their system of governance in Afghanistan, reverting to laws and a policing approach they developed when they first ruled Afghanistan in the 1990s. This has included restrictions on educational access for girls and on permissible activities for women more broadly. The group refers to its government as the ‘Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.’ The group has altered the structure of various Afghan ministries, appointed senior Taliban leaders as acting ministers, and brought back the Ministry of Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice. As of August 2022, they had yet to codify a new constitution. They have publicly stated that they will rule Afghanistan in accordance with “Islamic law and Afghan values.”¹²⁹

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

The central targets of Taliban violence are coalition troops and Afghan government forces. The Taliban has utilized suicide bombings, IEDs, rocket attacks, assassinations, guerilla warfare, massacres, and kidnappings.¹³⁰

The group has attacked non-combatant targets, including civilians and aid workers.¹³¹ Following the surge of U.S. troops in Afghanistan in 2009, Taliban forces increased attacks against civilians. A 2011 UN report identifies Taliban forces as responsible for 76

¹²⁵ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

¹²⁶ “Trump cancels secret US meeting with Afghan Taliban.” BBC. September 8, 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-49624132>.

¹²⁷ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>; U.S. Department of State. Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan between the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan which is not recognized by the United States as a state and is known as the Taliban and the United States of America. February 29, 2020. <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/Agreement-For-Bringing-Peace-to-Afghanistan-02.29.20.pdf>.

¹²⁸ Council on Foreign Relations. “The U.S. War in Afghanistan.” CFR. Last accessed October 24, 2022. <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

¹²⁹ Watkins, Andrew. “One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State.” United States Institute for Peace. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state>.

¹³⁰ Pape, Robert Anthony; James K. Feldman. *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It*. University of Chicago Press. 2010 pp. 142. 02 Mar. 2016

¹³¹ BBC News. “UK charity worker killed in Kabul.” BBC. October 20, 2008.

percent of civilian deaths in 2009, 75 percent in 2010, and 80 percent in 2011.¹³² The Taliban has consistently targeted women in their attacks; since 2007, the Taliban has placed IEDs in more than 15 girls' schools.¹³³

The group has also employed suicide bombers, including female suicide bombers, to target international forces. The Taliban has been known to use civilians to draw coalition forces into an area and subsequently detonate an explosive device or carry out an attack against these forces. These attacks often killed more civilians than coalition forces.¹³⁴

In 2017 and 2018, the Taliban increased direct attacks against U.S. government entities, evident by the group's targeting of U.S. military bases and an attempted attack on U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis on September 27, 2017.¹³⁵ Taliban attacks continued sporadically through 2019, notably on Kabul-based targets.¹³⁶ Lower levels of violence were recorded in 2020.¹³⁷ After U.S. President Biden announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops on April 14, 2021, the Taliban began a major, nation-wide military offensive to take control of Afghanistan beginning in May.¹³⁸

After reestablishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 2021, the Taliban have used violent methods to eliminate armed resistance against their rule. This has included reports of summary executions and the torture of prisoners and detainees. The group has leveraged arrests, beatings, and detention to silence dissent against its rule.¹³⁹ The Taliban has also sought to eliminate ISKP's presence in Afghanistan through targeted campaigns.¹⁴⁰

MAJOR ATTACKS

¹³² "Citing rising death toll, UN urges better protection of Afghan civilians." UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. 09 Mar. 2011. Web. 02 Mar. 2016

¹³³ Arnoldy, Ben. "In Afghanistan, Taliban kills more civilians than U.S." Christian Science Monitor. 31 July 2009. Web. 04 Mar. 2016.

¹³⁴ Arnoldy, Ben. "In Afghanistan, Taliban kills more civilians than U.S." Christian Science Monitor. 31 July 2009. Web. 04 Mar. 2016.

¹³⁵ McKirdy, Euan, et al. "Mattis Target of Failed Kabul Airport Rocket Attack, Taliban Says." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 27 Sept. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/09/26/politics/mattis-afghanistan/index.html.

¹³⁶ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/afghanistan>.

¹³⁷ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2020: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/afghanistan/>.

¹³⁸ Mellen, Ruby. "The shocking speed of the Taliban's advance: A visual timeline." *The Washington Post*. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹³⁹ Watkins, Andrew. "One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State." United States Institute for Peace. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state>.

¹⁴⁰ Rubin, Barnett R. *Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation*. The Stimson Center. October 20, 2022. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

August 1994: Taliban militia marched northward from Maiwand and captured the city of Kandahar losing only a couple dozen men. Shortly thereafter, Kandahar became the capital of the Taliban government (unknown killed, unknown wounded).¹⁴¹

September 9, 2001: Two Al Qaeda members, posing as journalists, detonated explosives hidden in their camera during an interview with Afghan civil and military leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. At the time he was the largest opposition to the Taliban. It is speculated that the Taliban worked with Al Qaeda to assassinate Massoud. (1 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁴²

September 8, 2006: A suicide bomber drove a car into a U.S. armored vehicle outside the U.S. embassy in Kabul and detonated explosives, killing 16. Two American soldiers were killed in the attack. It was the deadliest attack since the 2001 invasion began. (16 killed, 29 wounded).¹⁴³

February 27, 2007: A suicide bomber later identified as Mullah Abdul Rahim blew himself up the front gate of the U.S. military base at Bagram while U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney was present in the compound. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack and said that Cheney was the intended target. Cheney survived the attack unharmed. The explosion killed and wounded several American and allied soldiers as well as Afghan and Pakistani truck drivers and laborers who were waiting for access at the gate. (23 killed, 12+ wounded).¹⁴⁴

July 12, 2011: Afghanistan's President's half-brother and governor of Kandahar, Ahmad Wali Karzai was shot by his head of security, Sardar Mohammed. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, calling it one of their top achievements in 10 years of war. (1 Killed, unknown wounded).¹⁴⁵

September 20, 2011: An assassin with explosives hidden in his turban was ushered into the home of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of Afghanistan's High Peace Council and a former president. The assassin embraced Rabbani and then exploded

¹⁴¹ Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1996).

¹⁴² "Afghanistan in the Shadow of Ahmad Shah Massoud." *Al Jazeera English*. 09 Sept. 2014. Web. 05 Mar 2016.

¹⁴³ "Suicide bomber kills 16 in Afghanistan." *USA Today*. 08 Sep 2006. Web. 05 Mar 2016.

¹⁴⁴ Wafa, Abdul Wahleed. "Cheney Unhurt After Bombing in Afghanistan." *The New York Times*. 27 Feb 2007. Web. 05 Mar. 2016.

¹⁴⁵ "Afghan President's Brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, Killed" *BBC News*. 12 July 2011. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

the bomb, killing him and dealing a blow to the effort to reconcile with the Taliban and end 10 years of war. (1 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁴⁶

June 11, 2013: A suicide bomber detonated a bomb outside Kabul's Supreme Court killing six judges, among others. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack and said the court employees had been targeted for "legalizing the infidels" and "cruel" behavior against Afghans. (17 killed, 40+ wounded).¹⁴⁷

January 17, 2014: A Taliban suicide squad attacked a restaurant in Kabul's diplomatic quarter. In what was regarded as the worst attack on foreign civilians in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. The 13 foreign victims included the country head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and four UN staff members. (21 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁴⁸

September 15, 2015: Taliban insurgents seize the city of Kunduz marking the biggest advancement made by the Taliban since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. The attack did not result in many casualties but gave control of the city to the Taliban and resulted in the release of 500 prisoners from the local jail. (4 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁴⁹

April 19, 2016: Armed militants in Afghanistan stormed a key government security agency in Kabul as part of a coordinated assault, killing at least 28 people and wounding more than 320. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which included a suicide car bombing. (28 killed, 320 wounded).¹⁵⁰

April 21, 2017: Taliban militants disguised as Afghan army personnel attack an army base in the Balkh province. The attack was conducted by multiple suicide bombers and gunmen. Afghanistan's defense minister and army chief of staff resigned following the attack. (100 killed, unknown wounded).¹⁵¹

August 3-5, 2017: 600 militants attack a village in the Sar-e Pul province, capturing the village after a 48-hour battle against the Afghan local police. Afghan officials claimed it was a joint operation conducted by the Taliban and ISIS yet the Taliban

¹⁴⁶ Rubin, Alissa J. "Assassination Deals Blow to Peace Process in Afghanistan." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 20 Sept. 2011. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁴⁷ Cahall, Bailey. "17 Afghan Civilians Killed in Taliban Attack on Supreme Court." *Foreign Policy*. 12 June 2013. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁴⁸ "Taliban Suicide Attackers Kill at Least 21 at Kabul Restaurant." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 17 Jan. 2014. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁴⁹ "Taliban Overrun Afghan City of Kunduz". *BBC News*. 28 Sept. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁵⁰ Smith, Josh, and Hamid Shalizi. "Afghan Taliban Kill at Least 28 in Major Attack in Central Kabul." *Reuters*. Thomson Reuters, 19 Apr. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

¹⁵¹ Amiri, Ehsanullah, and Jessica Donati. "Taliban Fighters Infiltrate Afghan Army Base, Kill More Than 100." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 22 Apr. 2017, www.wsj.com/articles/taliban-fighters-infiltrate-afghan-army-post-killing-at-least-eight-people-1492794202.

denied working with ISIS or any other foreign fighters. (50 killed, unknown wounded).¹⁵²

January 28, 2018: The Taliban used an ambulance as a car bomb, detonating it at a security checkpoint in Kabul. (95 killed, 191 wounded).¹⁵³

June 20, 2018: Taliban militants attacked Afghan soldiers and captured a military base in the Western province of Badghis. This was their first major attack after a ceasefire was called for the Eid al-Fitr holiday. (46 killed, unknown wounded).¹⁵⁴

May 8, 2019: The Taliban attacked a U.S.-based aid organization in Kabul. (5 killed, 24 wounded).¹⁵⁵

July 1, 2019: Taliban militants attacked the Afghan National Army Logistic and Armory Directorate. (40 killed and over 100 wounded).¹⁵⁶

September 2, 2019: The Taliban used a suicide car bomb to attack a facility in Kabul, with offices of several international organizations (16 killed and over 119 wounded).¹⁵⁷

September 5, 2019: The Taliban detonated another suicide car bomb in Kabul, killing a U.S. military paratrooper. (12 killed and over 40 wounded).¹⁵⁸

December 11, 2019: The Taliban attacked a hospital at Bagram Airfield. (2 killed and over 80 wounded).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵² Al Jazeera. "Officials: Taliban, ISIL Coordinated Sar-e Pul Attack." *Israeli–Palestinian Conflict | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 7 Aug. 2017, www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/sar-pul-taliban-isil-joined-forces-kill-afghans-170807085258761.html.

¹⁵³ Popalzai, Ehsan, Faith Karimi, and Laura Smith-Spark. "Afghanistan mourns after ambulance bomb kills more than 100." CNN. January 28, 2018. <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/28/asia/afghanistan-kabul-ambulance-bomb>.

¹⁵⁴ AAN Team. "The Eid Ceasefire: What Did (Some of the) People Think?" *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 29 June 2018, www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-eid-ceasefire-what-did-some-of-the-people-think/; "Afghan Conflict: Taliban in First Major Attack since Eid Truce." *BBC News*, BBC, 20 June 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44545131.

¹⁵⁵ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/afghanistan>.

¹⁵⁶ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/afghanistan>.

¹⁵⁷ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/afghanistan>.

¹⁵⁸ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/afghanistan>.

¹⁵⁹ "Country Reports on Terrorism 2019: Afghanistan." U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2019. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2019/afghanistan>.

March 7, 2020: Militants attacked a pro-government militia outpost in Herat province. (7 killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶⁰

May - July, 2021: The Taliban began to advance through different regions of Afghanistan taking over territory, in the wake of U.S. troop withdrawal (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶¹

August 6, 2021: The Taliban took over Zaranj, the provincial capital of Nimruz (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶²

August 7, 2021: The Taliban took over Sheberghan, the provincial capital of Jowzjan (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶³

August 8, 2021: The Taliban attacked key cities in Sar-E Pol, Kunduz, and Takhar provinces (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶⁴

August 9, 2021: The Taliban took Aybak, the capital of Samangan province (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶⁵

August 10 - 11, 2021: The Taliban took the capital cities of Badakhshan, Farah, and Baglan provinces (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶⁶

August 12 - 13, 2021: The Taliban took control of the major Afghan cities of Kandahar, Herat, and Lashkar Gah (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶⁷

August 15, 2021: The Taliban took Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, and the presidential palace (unknown killed and unknown wounded).¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁰ “Country Reports on Terrorism 2020: Afghanistan.” U.S. Bureau of Counterterrorism, United States Department of State. 2020. <https://www.state.gov/reports/country-reports-on-terrorism-2020/afghanistan/>.

¹⁶¹ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶² Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶³ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶⁴ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶⁵ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶⁶ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶⁷ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

¹⁶⁸ Mellen, Ruby. “The shocking speed of the Taliban’s advance: A visual timeline.” The Washington Post. August 16, 2021. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2021/08/16/taliban-timeline/>.

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

- United States: Although the White House initially designated the Taliban as a sponsor of terrorism under Executive Order 13129 in July 1999, the group is currently classified as an armed insurgent group.¹⁶⁹
- New Zealand: New Zealand designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization on October 17, 2002 in accordance to the Terrorism Suppression Act.¹⁷⁰
- Russia: Russia listed the Taliban as a terrorist organization on February 14, 2003.¹⁷¹
- United Nations Security Council: The UNSC had previously imposed sanctions on the Taliban in 2011 and 2015. On December 22, 2021, the UNSC approved a new exemption to these sanctions for humanitarian assistance in order to allow for international support of Afghans living under the Taliban's new regime.¹⁷²

Since the Taliban took power in 2021, no foreign government has yet to officially recognize them.¹⁷³

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

The Taliban is composed largely of ethnic Pashtuns. Accordingly, a significant portion of Taliban members follow Pashtunwali, a strict moral and cultural code of conduct for Pashtun tribesmen.¹⁷⁴

Between 1996-2001, the Taliban government was known for poor treatment of its citizens, particularly women and minorities. Food was often denied to the population when provided by the United Nations or foreign assistance. Women were punished severely for crimes, denied access to health care, education, and were forced to follow strict dress codes and curfews.¹⁷⁵ This treatment and approach to policy has resumed since the group's takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.¹⁷⁶

¹⁶⁹ Cschust. "Call the Taliban What They Are — Terrorists." 19 Feb. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016; "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁷⁰ "New Zealand Police Report." *New Zealand Police*, www.police.govt.nz.

¹⁷¹ <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>

¹⁷² "Security Council paves way for aid to reach desperate Afghans." UN News - United Nations. December 22, 2021. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2021/12/1108642>.

¹⁷³ Rubin, Barnett R. "Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation." Stimson Center. October 20, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

¹⁷⁴ Shaffer, Brenda. *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy*. MIT Press. 2006. p. 277. Print. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁷⁵ "The Taliban's War Against Women." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Web.

¹⁷⁶ Rubin, Barnett R. "Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation." Stimson Center. October 20, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

C. RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER GROUPS

The Taliban maintains relationships with a number of militant groups. Al Qaeda members, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) members, and thousands of Pakistani Islamic militants have fought for the Taliban.¹⁷⁷

Osama bin Laden and his followers who formed Al Qaeda returned to Afghanistan in May 1996 after being expelled from Sudan. At the time, bin Laden and Mullah Omar were not associated. When the Taliban took control of Jalalabad, the city where bin Laden was living, Al Qaeda operatives fell under custody of the Taliban. The relationship between Al Qaeda and the Taliban during the second half of the 1990s was often tense. The two groups had little interaction and bin Laden pursued an independent agenda, often to the detriment of the Taliban. Mullah Omar and bin Laden eventually developed a relationship, although the extent and details of their association remain unclear during these years.

Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban remained two distinct groups with different membership, agendas, ideologies, and objectives. The interaction and contacts between the two groups are found in three main forms: individual ties, a shared religious motivation, and a shared location. Following the September 11, 2001, attacks, Mullah Omar refused to apprehend bin Laden for foreign authorities. The Taliban did, however, release a statement condemning the attacks.¹⁷⁸ Throughout their relationship, the Taliban rarely made mention of its connection with Al Qaeda. In contrast, Al Qaeda regularly confirmed its loyalty to the Taliban.¹⁷⁹

In August 2015, Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri pledged his support to the Afghan Taliban.¹⁸⁰ Mansour acknowledged and accepted the pledge of loyalty in a public message, an unusual open acknowledgement by the Taliban of its continued alliance with Al Qaeda.¹⁸¹ Zawahiri was killed by a U.S. drone strike on July 31, 2022; at the time, he was living in the house of a senior Taliban leader.¹⁸²

The Taliban has also cooperated with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). The IMU is known to have integrated its operations with the Taliban in northern Afghanistan and maintains its base of support across the border in Pakistan.¹⁸³ IMU leaders also served

¹⁷⁷ Rashid, Ahmed. "Afghan resistance leader feared dead in blast." The Telegraph. September 11, 2001.

¹⁷⁸ Strick Van Linschoten, Alex, and Felix Kuehn. Separating the Taliban from Al Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan. CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. New York University, Feb. 2011. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁷⁹ Riedel, Bruce. "The Taliban Affirm Their Alliance with Al-Qaida: Afghan Peace Talks in Doubt." The Brookings Institution. 20 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁸⁰ Shah, Saeed, and Habib Khan Totakhil. "Al Qaeda Chief Purportedly Pledges Loyalty to New Afghan Taliban Leader." Wall Street Journal, 13 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁸¹ Riedel, Bruce. "The Taliban Affirm Their Alliance with Al-Qaida: Afghan Peace Talks in Doubt." The Brookings Institution. 20 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁸² Rubin, Barnett R. "Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation." Stimson Center. October 20, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

¹⁸³ Meagan, Patrick. "ISAF Launches Multiple Raids against IMU as Fighting Season Heats up". The Long War Journal. 08 May 2013. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

in the Taliban's first government. It was reported that more than 600 IMU militants were provided to the Taliban to aid in fighting against ethnic-Tajik leader Massoud in 2000 and 2001. The Taliban and Al Qaeda are both accused of providing financial and logistical assistance to the IMU.¹⁸⁴

The Haqqani Network (HN) maintains close ties to the Taliban. The group was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani and is currently led by his son, Sirajuddin, who was named a deputy head of the Taliban in 2015. The HN has been providing weapons and training to Taliban members since the mid-1990s and remains one of the largest militant organizations in the region, commanding more than 15,000 fighters throughout the FATA in Pakistan and southern Afghanistan. Though a separate entity, militants are often tied to both HN and the Taliban and take part in Taliban operations throughout Afghanistan and northwestern Pakistan. Founder Jalaluddin Haqqani pledged the loyalty of his group to Mullah Omar.¹⁸⁵

The Taliban is a separate organization from the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) in Pakistan.¹⁸⁶ The TTP was established in 2007, claiming to be an extension of the Afghan Taliban in Pakistan. The group aimed to implement Sharia law in Pakistan. It provided Taliban and Al Qaeda members with shelter and bases in Pakistan.¹⁸⁷ After the Taliban took control of the government in 2021, it released hundreds of TTP militants from Afghan prisons.¹⁸⁸ At this time, the TTP also renewed its pledge of allegiance to the Taliban.¹⁸⁹

The Taliban leadership has voiced strong opposition to the Islamic State (IS) affiliate in Afghanistan known as the Islamic State – Khorasan Province (ISKP). In June 2015, the Taliban's deputy leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor wrote a public letter warning IS to stay out of Afghanistan.¹⁹⁰ The group has publicly condemned IS actions in the region, citing that it hinders the creation of Pan-Islamist unity. Since taking power, the Taliban has sought to eliminate ISKP in Afghanistan. ISKP has engaged in numerous

¹⁸⁴ "Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism: a Dangerous Mix." Statement provided by the Department of Justice. 20 May 2003. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁸⁵ O'Donnell, Lynne. "Internal Dispute over Taliban Succession Hints at Rifts." Associated Press, 02 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016; Dressler, Jeffrey A. The Haqqani Network. Publication no. 6. Institute for the Study of War, 2010. Print.

¹⁸⁶ Shane, Scott. "Insurgents Share a Name, but Pursue Different Goals." The New York Times. October 22, 2009.

¹⁸⁷ Sayed, Abdul. "The Evolution and Future of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 21, 2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/12/21/evolution-and-future-of-tehrik-e-taliban-pakistan-pub-86051>

¹⁸⁸ Sayed, Abdul. "The Evolution and Future of Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan." Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, December 21, 2021. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/12/21/evolution-and-future-of-tehrik-e-taliban-pakistan-pub-86051>

¹⁸⁹ Joscelyn, Thomas. "Pakistani Taliban's emir renews allegiance to Afghan Taliban." Long War Journal, August 19, 2021. <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2021/08/pakistani-talibans-emir-renews-allegiance-to-afghan-taliban.php>

¹⁹⁰ "Afghan Militant Leader Backs Islamic State." RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty. Web.

terrorist attacks against Afghans and attempted to “position itself as the most legitimate jihadist group in the country.”¹⁹¹

D. STATE SPONSORS AND EXTERNAL INFLUENCES

Pakistan: The Taliban was publicly supported and funded by the Pakistani government from 1994 to 2001 during its rule of Afghanistan.¹⁹² This support emerges from the belief that a government ruled by the Taliban (with members educated in Islamic madrassas established by Pakistan) would prioritize Islamic nationalism over ethnic Pashtun ties. Pakistan’s government worries that Pashtun dominant territories might cede to Afghanistan, exacerbated by the lack of consensus around the Durand Line (the border dividing Afghanistan and Pakistan).¹⁹³ Pakistan withdrew public support for the Taliban government after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001, but the Inter-Service Intelligence agency (ISI) continued to support the Taliban covertly. Pakistan has denied claims that the ISI supports the Taliban. However, U.S. intelligence reports from the raid on Osama bin Laden’s compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan indicate that the ISI never cut relations with the Taliban.¹⁹⁴ When the Taliban took over in 2021, Pakistan’s prime minister, Imran Khan, stated that the group had “broken the shackles of slavery.”¹⁹⁵ However, the relationship since the takeover remains unclear: the Taliban has failed to accommodate Pakistan on several issues, including the group’s ongoing support for the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the Taliban’s publicly expressed interest in working with India to train Afghan troops.¹⁹⁶

Russia: In December 2015, Zamir Kabulov, President Vladimir Putin’s special envoy to Afghanistan stated that Russia is coordinating with the Taliban to hinder the spread of the Islamic State in Afghanistan.¹⁹⁷ In 2017, the U.S. military claimed that it had received reports that Russia was arming the Taliban. Russia denied the allegations.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹¹ Watkins, Andrew. “One Year Later: Taliban Reprise Repressive Rule, but Struggle to Build a State.” United States Institute for Peace. August 17, 2022. <https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/08/one-year-later-taliban-reprise-repressive-rule-struggle-build-state>; Rubin, Barnett R. “Afghanistan Under the Taliban: Findings on the Current Situation.” Stimson Center. October 20, 2020. <https://www.stimson.org/2022/afghanistan-under-the-taliban-findings-on-the-current-situation/>.

¹⁹² “The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusations.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 04 May 2011. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

¹⁹³ Miller, Manjari Chatterjee. Pakistan’s Support for the Taliban: What to Know. Council on Foreign Relations, August 25, 2021. <https://www.cfr.org/article/pakistans-support-taliban-what-know>.

¹⁹⁴ “The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusations.” *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 04 May 2011. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

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¹⁹⁶ Qazi, Raza Khan. As Pakistan’s Afghanistan policy fails, the Afghan Taliban moves against Islamabad. The Atlantic Council, September 6, 2022. <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/southasiasource/as-pakistans-afghanistan-policy-fails-the-afghan-taliban-move-against-islamabad/>.

¹⁹⁷ “Isis: Russia Coordinating with Taliban Forces to Fight Terror Group.” *International Business Times* RSS. 24 Dec. 2015. Web.

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Saudi Arabia: In 2001, Saudi Arabia began privately funding the Taliban. The Taliban finance minister claimed that the group raised money from foundations and wealthy individuals within the country. However, Saudi intelligence chief Turki al-Faisal denied that the Saudi government provided any support for the Taliban.¹⁹⁹

MAPS

- Global Al Qaeda
- Global IS

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¹⁹⁹ “Taliban, Collecting Bills for Afghan Utilities, Tap New Revenue Sources.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Dec. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/world/asia/taliban-collecting-electricity-bills-afghan.html.